BEST PRACTICES
OPENING CONGREGATIONS FOR WORSHIP

PREPARING FOR OPENING

CLEANING
Deep clean and disinfect the sanctuary and other areas of use. Plan placement of and distribution of hand wash and disinfectant.

SOCIAL DISTANCING
Develop a social distancing plan for seating, i.e., six feet apart and every other pew. Family members who live together may sit together.

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS
Develop specific guidelines for numbers allowed in the sanctuary at any one time. No more than 50% of capacity.

ENTERING
Develop a plan for seating individuals safely. This includes a plan for keeping people six feet apart when entering the building and seating them individually to maintain social distance.

EXITING
Develop a plan for exiting. Perhaps row-by-row, initiated by the ushers. Emphasize maintaining social distancing in the parking lot.

THE WORSHIP SERVICE

LENGTH OF SERVICE
Limit length of service, e.g., 50 minutes, to limit exposure and use of vulnerable facilities, such as restrooms.

MULTIPLE SERVICES
Consider offering multiple services if the attendance warrants. Remember, the sanctuary will need to be cleaned and disinfected between services.

ONLINE SERVICES
Continue online services/worship in order to minister those who need to remain at home.

DISCONTINUE
Discontinue using common items that may be shared between people, e.g., books, hymnals and pew Bibles. Rather than using offering plates in gathering tithes, consider a container at the back of the sanctuary to collect parishioner’s offerings.

WATER FOUNTAINS
Cover water fountains.

MUSIC
We discourage music selections led by choirs and engaging in congregational singing. Consider the use of pre-recorded music/videos instead. (See link on page 2 for options and creative alternatives.)

WORSHIP AIDS
Project call to worship, prayers, etc., onto a screen. If projection equipment is not available, use one-page paper handouts to be disposed of in trash cans or recycling bins immediately after the service. Discontinue the use of bulletins.

CHILDREN’S STORIES
Tell the children’s story with children staying in place in the sanctuary

PASTOR’S DISTANCE
Ensure the pastor is an adequate distance from the congregation to ensure no passage of droplets (12-15 feet). There will be no pastoral greeting at dismissal.

MASKS
Wearing of masks is required for indoor spaces in Va. per the latest guidelines issued by Governor Northam on May 26th. Pastors and church boards can make plans to accommodate members who cannot wear a mask due to extenuating circumstances (Per Governor’s Guidelines).
RESTROOM MONITOR
Appoint a restroom monitor to ensure one person is in the restroom at a time. Disinfect the restroom area between restroom uses.

SOCIAL DISTANCING MONITORS
Appoint individuals (deacons) to gently remind folks to maintain social distancing.

OTHER ACTIVITIES
Suspend activities other than the Sunday morning worship. This includes Christian education and nursery facilities. Also suspend the use of Children’s play areas, both indoor and outdoor. (Families should be informed ahead of time that these facilities will not be available for children.)

FOLLOW UP
CLEANING CREW
Develop a cleaning crew responsible for cleaning between services.

MONITORING COVID-19
Develop a group (pastor and deacons) to be alert for COVID-19 cases in the congregation. Consider developing a process for reclosing should members of the congregation become ill with COVID-19.

DISCLAIMER
These are intended to serve as some suggestions or “best practices” for congregations to consider as they begin to transition back to in-person services. This list is not intended to be exclusive; there certainly may be other precautions that would appropriate depending on the congregation’s particular circumstances and style of worship. Continue to monitor and heed guidelines as circumstances evolve.

Singing and Hymns
https://worshipmentor.dudaone.com/pause-before-singing

Cleaning
https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

General Guidelines
West Virginia Schedule and Guidance
BDM
https://covid19.brethren.org/information/
State of Virginia
https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia/#856622
Va. Safer at Home
Religious Services

Masks
Dr. Byrd Advisory http://images.acswebnetworks.com/1/929/MasksDrGregByrd.pdf