

To:
From:
Date: May __, 2020
Re: Reopening Facilities During Covid-19 Pandemic

As parts of the country start to reopen, we have received questions about when and how to safely reopen church facilities. Providing guidance on this topic is difficult – recommended best practices continue to evolve and the pandemic’s severity varies widely among communities. Although we cannot give specific direction about whether or how a particular facility should reopen, there are principles that we believe you should follow in making this decision.

1. Remain Vigilant: While some segments of society are reopening to various degrees, the Covid-19 pandemic has not ended, and it continues to pose serious health risks. Until the pandemic is truly over, you must keep this in mind when deciding how your facilities are used.
2. Stay Informed: Circumstances in communities, and advice from public health experts, have changed over time – sometimes rapidly. Stay informed of the latest expert guidance from local, state, and national health authorities. In addition to information from state and local governments, the [CDC's website](#) provides a vast amount of information, including specific guidance for churches. See also the [Insurance Board's guidelines for reopening church offices](#), which is linked on our Covid-19 resource page.
3. Mitigate: Once it is appropriate to reopen, put specific measures in place to help reduce the chances of transmitting the virus. Steps recommended by the CDC have included improving cleaning and disinfection, social distancing, modifying worship services, and directing staff and congregants not to attend if they are ill. The CDC’s website provides [detailed strategies for churches to use in various circumstances](#).
4. Communicate: When reopening facilities, communicate with your congregation about the continued risk of attending in-person services and the mitigation measures they will be expected to observe if they attend. Those at greater risk of complications from Covid-19 and others, such as those who have been ill, should be told not to attend in-person services while the pandemic continues. Communicate these messages directly to individuals through means such as email and text, and more broadly by posting the information on your website and prominently displaying it at the facility itself.
5. Third Parties: If you begin to allow third party organizations to use your facilities, provide the same general communications to them regarding the risk of in-person activities and ask them to confirm they are providing similar guidance to their attendees and employing at least the same mitigation measures as you have in place for worship services. If an organization is not willing to observe these same precautions, it may not be appropriate to allow them to use the facilities.

Again, while we cannot provide a single set of instructions that will apply to every community, we believe that these principles offer guidance in deciding when and how to safely and responsibly reopen facilities.