

# Questions To Answer Before People Return

1. **What if your worship gathering is limited to no more than 10 people or 50 people?** How many church services can you hold? Do you have the resources to clean after every one? If limited to a smaller number of people, what's the plan to provide a place and time for them?
2. **What adjustments will you make to offering life passage rituals?** Do you believe you can conduct weddings, memorials, pet blessings, etc. like you have in the past? Your church's tradition may involve passing elements around. What about the church's choir program? Standing side-by-side isn't practical.
3. **Should we engage the choir again as well as congregational singing?** Something to think about... a choir does not practice safe, physical distancing. Congregational singing means everyone is standing with their mouths open spraying droplets, potentially virus droplets. We love our music, and are we willing to hold off?
4. **Is a physical "pass the plate" offering a thing of the past?** How would you feel about touching the basket or offering plate after many others have touched it? What's your plan for in-person giving? If at all? Will you install boxes at the doors, perhaps some of those in the lobby, so that people can slide their envelopes, cash, or checks into those boxes or baskets? Who will touch those offerings? Are you equipped for online giving?
5. **What are you doing now to sanitize and sterilize your church building?** Now is the time to wipe down all classrooms, toys, books, etc. EVERYTHING. Have you sprayed pews and chairs with disinfectant? Who is wiping door knobs and handles? Have you had carpet cleaned and disinfected? Do you have the resources to clean every time someone has been in the building?
6. **Are you going to continue offering children's church?** As a short-term alternative, perhaps consider the Sunday service for everyone. Should parents even take their kids to church? Physical distancing is near impossible with little ones. Many churches are not even engaging in reopening youth ministry until well into the fall.

7. **Are you going to continue hosting special events?** Which ones will continue, and which ones will be put on hold? Which ones can you do online? Do you have a communication plan on how will let people know and the criteria for deciding?
8. **Are you continuing to provide fellowship time after service?** Tables and chairs may need to be placed in storage so that people don't congregate within a couple of feet of one another. Perhaps you don't have coffee/fellowship social time for a while.
9. **Will you continue offering virtual online worship?** Hopefully. Some churches may think of their recent innovations into Facebook Live, Youtube Live, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Teams, and more as a stop-gap measure - and are more than happy to get back to how things used to be IN PERSON. This is a death nell.
10. **What is your plan when volunteers step down?** People are afraid. Many feel it is too risky to reopen. And if they do attend, it may only be if people are wearing masks. Will you be able to fully staff your classes, events and programs like you did back in February? Do you have a supply of cloth masks and are you offering attendees a cloth mask?
11. **What's your strategy to clean and sanitize your church in real time?** It's one thing to prepare in advance of people's return to the church building, but how will you keep the place clean and disinfected on a Sunday? Or any day the church building is being used for events, or those who rent space from you? Is this a new team of people whose ministry is to walk around wiping door knobs and other surfaces? Who is going to clean restrooms throughout the morning or evening? Remember you'll have MANY - maybe hundreds or thousands of times - people touching things.
12. **Do door greeters do their jobs differently, or at all?** But in a COVID-19 world, do you want a door greeter holding the door open while someone walks by within a foot or two of them? Are you providing masks for everyone?
13. **Is this the time to suspend or end your church's "meet and greet" time?** At least temporarily. This practice has been on the decline for many years, and churches have already abandoned it because of its ineffectiveness with guests, not because of COVID-19 concerns.
14. **Because people may return very slowly to church, how will you count attendance and effectiveness?**

15. **Do you have a plan for reducing expenses if your church's offerings don't rebound?** This is the time for a "budget scrub" – while offerings are still decent and expenses have been lower because of reduced activities. Churches need to be thinking, "What if..." – what if our offerings don't hold steady because of rising unemployment of members? Before the church returns to the building, every church needs a "plan B" strategy just in case giving drops in late summer or early fall.
16. **How will you deal with the rise of COVID-19 related addictions and mental health issues?** Alcoholism, drug addiction, watching pornography online, domestic violence, developmentally disabled abuse, sex addiction... to name a few.
17. **Should you be investing in new digital equipment right now?** Yes, we've all hopped online and used Facebook Live to broadcast our worship services. Some of us are doing that with iPads and other devices, but is this the time to admit that online worship is probably here to stay? Yes it is.
18. **Will a new staff or volunteer position emerge from COVID-19?** This list of questions is not exhaustive. It's representative of many things we should be thinking about right now, before we get the OK from government leaders to gather again.
19. What would you add to this list? What have I left out? Let's pool our experience and wisdom to help Jesus' bride be prepared for the new world we find ourselves in. I'd love for you to respond to this post, share your thoughts, and then share it in social media. We've got to get the church thinking and talking about these things.

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