



Before We Gather

Checklist to Reopen South Central Conference Churches for In-person Worship

Please fill out a separate form for each of your churches

Pastor _____

Name of Church _____

Church Address _____

Church City, State & Zip _____

Number of regular attendees _____

Occupancy capacity of church building _____

Introduction

In harmony with the phased-in approach for returning to normal operations, and for the safety of all of our members, the following steps are required to be taken to prepare for in-person worship and other services. Your application to reopen may not be approved if you have not met all of the following requirements.

Preparing the Congregation

It is essential to prepare the congregation for the massively different form worship will take upon reopening. It is important for them to understand that this will not be a return to business as usual. The more the members understand the reasons for the changes, the more likely they are to cooperate.

Preparing the congregation to return to worship safely is the responsibility of the pastor and officers therefore, the church leaders and staff should be first to be educated.

Leaders and members should be made to understand that the new normal will involve the restriction, suspension and postponement of many familiar aspects of church life. At the same time, new responsibilities will be added that may be uncomfortable and unwelcomed. These changes are necessary to preserve human life.¹

¹ Carol Easley Allen, Ph.D., R.N., Response to Before We Gather: Checklist to Reopen SCC churches for in-person worship, May 28, 2020

Preparing the Facility

1. Clean and sanitize facility(s) after each usage; please check off the cleaning and sanitizing your church has done/will continue to do:

- All carpets and rugs (deep cleaned)
- Floors, pews/chairs, microphones, musical instruments, “no-hands” trash receptacles²
- All high-touch surfaces: countertops, doorknobs, light switches, remote controls, A/V board
- Children’s ministry rooms and spaces
- All restrooms - as high risk areas this cleaning should be meticulous. Please describe cleaning methods and cleaning materials used, planned frequency, specific surfaces cleaned, and arrangements for ventilation

Restroom cleaning details:

² microphones and musical instruments present special challenges for cleaning. See references on resource list for cleaning microphones and musical instruments

2. Equip and Organize

- supply closets equipped for ongoing cleaning and disinfecting
- disinfectants and other hazardous materials stored out of reach of children
- plastic linings in all trash cans (no touch trash cans only)
- soap (no bar soap), paper towels, and hot water in each rest room
- signs posted to remind worshippers to wash hands and practice social distancing
- all water fountains closed off (consider providing bottled water)
- organized for one-way entrances and exits
- sanctuary, classrooms, other meeting spaces prepared for social distancing
 - pews marked and chairs arranged for 6-foot spacing
 - floors marked for social distancing in waiting areas
- unnecessary physical objects removed to reduce potential infections
 - welcome tables, desks
 - plants and flowerpots, etc.
 - soft and porous materials, such as area rugs, seating

Safeguarding Members and Visitors

- person(s) are assigned to greet worshippers and ensure they are properly outfitted with face coverings and fill out questionnaire
- supply of face coverings on hand to distribute as needed
- Hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) available in multiple areas (specify where and how many) _____
- person(s) are assigned to take attendance in case it is needed for contact tracing (including phone numbers, other contact information)
- person(s) assigned to specifically monitor restrooms for social distancing and proper handwashing
- person(s) assigned to monitor entire building and parking lot to ensure social distancing
- prepared to collect offerings without passing collection plates (consider placing collection boxes in multiple areas)
- committed to limiting worship attendance to ensure social distancing

Some churches may need to have more than one service; please indicate number of services and times _____

- committed to ensuring that musicians and worship leaders are practicing social distancing
- organized for orderly dismissal from worship to ensure social distancing
- committed to continuing on-line service or other alternative worship options

How Duties are Assigned

Please provide the names of the persons assigned to the following duties. Use the back of this page or add pages if necessary:

- Cleaning and sanitizing

Names:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Equipping and Organizing

Names:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Safeguarding Members and Visitors

Names:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Important Additional Requirements and Notes

1. Members who are showing any flu symptoms must stay at home
2. Any members who have travelled internationally, been on a cruise ship, or been in a domestic hotspot in the last 14-days should stay at home at least 14 days past the event, before attending worship
3. Staff, officers on duty, and worship leaders will be required to sign a mandatory checklist before worship begins. Direct anyone who cannot affirm every item on the list to leave immediately and seek medical care

I have not been in close contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19

I have not had any of the following symptoms for the last 48-hours

- fever, coughing, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, vomiting, or diarrhea
- I have had a temperature check today (not to exceed 100.4 degrees)

4. If it is discovered that a past worshipper has tested positive for COVID-19, all attendees should be notified and encouraged to be tested. Worship services should be suspended immediately, and further guidance sought from the conference office. Suggestions for resuming worship may include:

- *having all worshippers tested who were present at the service*
- *performing additional cleaning of your facility(s)*
- *revisiting your safety protocols*

5. Use EPA-approved items for cleaning and sanitizing
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Conclusion

“The COVID-19 pandemic has not taken the Lord by surprise. The children of Israel, wandering in the wilderness, were given by God public health principles that even now inform public health practices. In Leviticus chapters 13,14 and 15, God outlined to Moses measures to deal with infectious disease, including initial and periodic assessment of infected persons, quarantine, isolation and control of personal items (fomites) contacted by infected persons, sanitation of the environment, and the control of bodily discharges . . .

“We must approach this crisis with a humility born of inadequate human knowledge about the nature of this pandemic and how to control it. It should be our first work, not an incidental or perfunctory activity, to seek the Lord for specific and continuous guidance in our response.

“Individual and communal prayer and discerning of the will of God should actually inform any decisions we make at the conference and local church levels with regard to reopening. Isaiah 30:21 promises, ‘Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, this is the way: walk in it.’”³

³ Carol Easley Allen, Ph.D., R.N., Response to South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists COVID-19 Church Reopening Plan, May 28, 2020, page 2

