

Preparing to Regather in Person

A Guide for Church Boards as We Move Forward

Our churches are NOT closed! Church is not a building. Our decision-making process for returning to in-person gatherings includes:

- Prayerful, practical discussion and discernment;
- patience, and an abundance of caution and care for each other, our neighbors, & those most vulnerable;
- consideration of the best scientific knowledge; and
- full trust in the grace of God, who creates us, saves us, and blesses us, and to whom we respond in faith, love, and hope.

Discernment: A Five-Step Process for Leaders

1. What ministries and activities are critical to the mission of our congregation?
2. How can we reduce our risks (of COVID-19 exposure and/or outbreak), safeguard each other, and move forward with our mission? What is our plan for regathering for our ministries and activities?
See sample *Plan for Regathering*.
3. How can we best communicate our plan (share the risks and our response to these risks) to our members, guests, vendors, our insurance company, groups using the building, and others?
4. If we cannot reduce the risks facing our congregation, what alternative means do we have to achieve our mission for the near future?
5. How often do we need to revisit questions 1-4 as conditions change? What are our decision points?

Practical Considerations

Questions for Moving Forward with In-Person Gathering

- Is the quality of the in-person experience going to be better than the online or alternate experience?
- Are worship and ministry leaders comfortable with these proposed actions? Are members?
- What legal, liability, and financial concerns have been considered? Can we “afford” this?
- Who will assure guidelines and safety protocols are implemented? Communicated? Who will do the ongoing work?
- How will guidelines created for the health & safety of everyone be enforced?

What is required on our part to:

Host in-person gatherings?

- Worship (sanctuary, outdoors, parking lots, etc.)
- Small Groups (Sunday School, study groups, leadership committees)
- Family Ministry (children, youth)
- Other ministry events (fellowship, outreach/service, hospitality)

Care for each other and our world? (Congregational Care & Outreach)

- Pastoral Care/Visitation
- Caring for each other (prayer, companioning, meal provision, transportation, etc.)

- Caring for the world (service, outreach, mission)

Ensure the health & safety of everyone?

- Hygiene Practices (hand sanitizing, high-touch surface cleaning, masks, supply purchasing, etc.)
- Protective Measures (physical distancing, facilities adaptation, physical barriers, signage, etc.)
- Capacity Considerations (every other pew, maximum capacities, etc.)
- Service Modifications (no hymnal, no nursery, no offering plate passed, no singing, communion protocols, etc.)

Make sure everyone is aware of what we are doing?

- Guidelines and Policies (clear statements of risks/potential exposure, response, safety & exposure plans)
- Communications Channels (snail mail, email, web, social media, phone calls, surveys, etc.)

Minister to our most vulnerable members?

- Online Ministries
- See caring for each other, communications channels.

Use the *Modified Church Activity Planning Worksheet* to develop your plans.

PPE Supplies & Cleaning Equipment

Minimal supplies needed for regathering:

- Hand sanitizer, touchless dispensers, stands
- Disinfectant multi-purpose cleaner
- Gloves
- Masks (re-usable and disposable)
- Signage (directional signage, public health)
- Electrostatic disinfectant applicator (sprayer)

Additional resources on regathering can be found on BCM's *Preparing to Re-Gather* [website](#), found on MoravianBCM.org.

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Modified Church Activity Planning Worksheet

Type of Gathering	Ex. Worship in Sanctuary	Your Activity
Potential Risks	COVID-19 Exposure/Outbreak Sickness/Death Liability-Legal/Financial	
Risk Reduction Options	Hygiene Measures Protective Measures Capacity Considerations Service Modifications Alternate Experiences	
Specific Risk Reduction Measures	Hand washing, Hand sanitizing (provided), Surface cleaning, Cleaning of personal items (phones), Weekly cleaning, Purchasing – PPE/Cleaning supplies, Masks (provided), Plexiglass barriers, Closed restrooms, Removal of pews, zoned worship space, 50 or fewer worshipers, multiple services, Separate space for singers, Staggered ingress/egress, Directional signage, Policy signage, No hymnals/pew Bibles, No printed materials, No right hand of fellowship, No passing of offering plates, No singing, No responsive reading, No nursery, Drive-In experience, Online experience	
Communication Plan	Who: members, regular visitors, groups using building, vendors. How: what channels?	
Risk Management	*Daily/weekly cleaning plan *Insurance co/public health notification *Exposure Plan (if someone tests positive) Deep cleaning plan (exposure) Supplies Needed?	
Leadership (who's the most in charge?)	Who is responsible for: -Guidelines -Implementation of guidelines -Communication	
What's the alternative for those most vulnerable?	Phone calls, online experiences, socially distanced visitation	

Other considerations:

SAMPLE

Epiphany Moravian Church (NC) Plan for Regathering

Phases	NC Gov. Guidelines	Worship	Small Groups	Family Ministry	Ministry Events	Decision Point (when to shift phases)
Phase 1	Stay-at-home, >10 worship allowed outside, social distancing	Online services, drive-in with safety protocols	Online, in-person discouraged – only <10 with social distancing, protective measures	Online with parent resourcing	Online and limited in-person	Government removes stay-at-home order and allows for gatherings inside of 10-99.
Phase 2	Stay-at-home lifted, larger groups allowed to gather inside for worship	Online services, drive-in, & house churches (2-3 families) with safety protocols	Online, in-person (in homes/outside) with safety protocols	Online with parent resourcing	Limited (online and in-person)	Government allows worship gatherings inside for 100+ people and safety protocols are in place
Phase 3	Decreased restrictions on vulnerable populations, increased limit on people allowed at gatherings	Online services, house churches, limited and modified onsite worship (safety protocols)	Online, in-person with precautions	Online, kids attend worship/house churches, & limited childcare available onsite, teens limited in-person activities	Limited (in-person)	Government removes gathering restrictions and the community resumes activities involving kids (i.e. sports, camps, schools, pools, etc.)
Phase 4	No definitive phase	Online services, resume onsite worship with precautions	Return to normal with precautions	Return to normal with precautions	Return to normal with precautions	Government and/or health officials recommend returning to a stricter protocol for slowing the spread of infection (another wave).

Those over the age of 65, those with underlying health conditions, and those with weakened immune systems remain at home as much as possible through at least Phase 2.

Staff works from home through Phase 1. Other than paid staff or volunteer staff with specific essential responsibilities, members should not be inside church facilities through at least Phase 1.

Updated 5/20/2020

_____ Moravian Church Plan for Regathering

Phases	Gov. Guidelines	Worship	Small Groups	Family Ministry	Ministry Events	Decision Point (when to shift phases)
Phase 1	Stay-at-home, >10 worship allowed outside, social distancing					
Phase 2	Stay-at-home lifted, larger groups allowed to gather inside for worship					
Phase 3	Decreased restrictions on vulnerable populations, increased limit on people allowed at gatherings					
Phase 4	No definitive phase					

Those over the age of 65, those with underlying health conditions, and those with weakened immune systems remain at home as much as possible through _____.

Staff works from home through _____. Other than paid staff or volunteer staff with specific essential responsibilities, members should not be inside church facilities through _____.

Updated _____