

These guidelines were sent out by the Missouri District. These are useful for churches and congregations in the FLGA District as we begin our re-opening process. The guidelines include restrictions on the building capacity based upon formulas for the fire or building code occupancy. These restrictions also include the six-foot social distancing requirement.

Congregations may not all return to public worship as local restrictions may differ, but the way that the congregation serves the needs of the members may also differ. Pastors should discuss possible scenarios with other pastors within the circuit in advance of a return to public worship. Some congregations have been offering “drive-in” worship services after consultation with local health departments. Some of those may choose to continue for the moment or others may cease the “drive-in” service in favor of the return to worship in the sanctuary.

To maintain these restrictions, congregation leaders may find it necessary to offer more worship service opportunities than are normally offered.

Plans for a return to public worship therefore should include the congregation leaders offering a process for signing up to attend a specific service so as to limit the number of attendees.

Congregation leaders and pastors may wish to involve health care professionals in developing a plan for public worship.

Here are a number of suggested steps for a return to public worship:

- Anyone planning to attend should be symptom free and not considered “at-risk.”
- Prior to each service, the pews should be sanitized/disinfected.
- Hymnals and pew Bibles should be removed temporarily.
- A gloved usher should hold the door open for people coming and going. If there are multiple doors, the congregation may wish to direct people to specific doors so that the door can be opened for them.
- The service should be printed out in a (disposable) bulletin or projected (if this is part of the congregation’s practice).
- Rope off pews to maintain social distancing (one or two pews between family groups)
- Families should be directed to not sit directly behind other family groups.
- Offering plates should be placed in entry ways and not passed.
- There should be no shaking of hands or physical contact.
- At this point, there should not be face-to-face Sunday School, Bible class, choir or other gatherings beyond worship.
- Arranging the church parking lot so that there are empty spaces between vehicles.

Congregation leaders should also give careful consideration to the matter of distributing Lord’s Supper. Here are some specific steps to consider:

- The preparation of the Communion vessels should be taken with great care to limit contact of people, vessels and elements. Those preparing the vessels should wash hands before and after and may wish to wear latex gloves if available.
- The pastor should wash his hands prior to distribution. He may choose to wear latex gloves if available.

- Distribution should take place separate from a communion rail so that communicants need not kneel or come in contact with hard surface.
- Distribution should be done one family group at a time rather than continuous flow.
- Pastors should carefully consider the process of distributing the host in relation to the contact with the communicants and the handling of both the hosts and the vessels.
- Individual cups should be used and spaced out across the tray so that there are empty spaces around each cup.

Congregations that are currently recording or livestreaming services should continue to do for the sake of those who are at-risk or not comfortable attending public worship for the foreseeable future.

Congregations should also provide intentional care for shut-ins and at-risk members who are not able to attend public worship.