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| **Preparation and Communication** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Assess the risks associated with decisions you will make about the timing and extent of returning to in-person gatherings. |  | * Establish and maintain communication with local and State authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community. * Check state and local health department notices daily about transmission in the community and adjust operations. |  | According to last week’s Zoom call with Montco supervisor Dr. Valerie Arkoosh – churches have been considered life-sustaining business and state guidelines have never been mandatory. That doesn’t mean they aren’t sensible for us to implement. We continue to have the responsibility to balance what we are allowed to do with what is prudent to do.  Additionally, nothing in this policy shall be construed to affect the operations of:   * Religious institutions. However, religious leaders are encouraged to find alternatives to in-person gatherings and to avoid endangering their congregants. Individuals should not gather in religious buildings or homes for services or celebrations until the stay at home order is lifted.  What does this order mean for life-sustaining businesses? Life-sustaining business activities must abide by this order, but they are permitted to maintain physical operations in support of providing life-sustaining goods and services, while abiding by social distancing and other mitigation measures to ensure employee health and safety. | * PJ - Should we survey the congregation on their attitudes toward return to worship? * SEPA suggests that we confer with conference and ecumenical partners to coordinate reopening to avoid overcrowding the first churches to reopen. * SEPA – Bishop recommends no return to worship before July 1. |
| When you prepare to return to in-person worship, and throughout this time, be sure to communicate clearly with your congregation through all appropriate channels, including: mail, newsletters, email, websites, and social media. Identify and address potential language and cultural barriers and barriers associated with having different abilities so that all can access the information you need to communicate. |  | * Communicate clearly with staff and congregants about actions being taken to protect their health. * Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Staff, clergy, volunteers, and congregants should know who this person is and how to contact them if they become sick or are around others diagnosed with COVID-19. This person should also be aware of state or local regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings. * Train all clergy and staff in all safety actions. Consider conducting the training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that social distancing is maintained. * As volunteers often perform important duties (e.g., greeters, ushers, childcare), consider similar monitoring, planning, and training for them. Consider that volunteer and staffing may need to increase to implement cleaning and safety protocols and to accommodate additional services with reduced attendance. * Encourage any organizations that share or use the facilities to also follow these considerations as applicable. * If your community provides social services in the facility as part of its mission, consult CDC’s information for schools and businesses and workplaces, as relevant, for helpful information. |  |  | SEPA - Plan for how to invite and limit groups to comply with the restrictions |
| Review the church’s membership rolls and designate leaders or teams to check in on members in ways that are safe and appropriate. Make extra efforts to connect with those who live alone, have suffered loss and grief, are less comfortable with technology, or struggle with mental health concerns. |  |  |  |  | SEPA - High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff or volunteers, should continue to shelter in place. |
| Use clear signage that describes church policies and best hygiene practices. |  | * Consider posting signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and how to promote everyday protective measures, such as washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, and properly wearing a face covering. * Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., entrances, restrooms, gathering halls/community rooms/gyms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering). * Include messages (for example, videos) about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff and congregants (such as in emails and on community websites and social media accounts). * Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on CDC’s communications resources main page. |  | * Businesses conducting in-person operations or serving the public are required to make employees and customers aware of the guidance provided by the commonwealth to keep people at their establishment safe. In addition, businesses are required to publicly acknowledge their responsibility to conduct their operations to ensure the health and safety of employees. * Businesses must print, sign, and post the “COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Businesses” flyer on their premises. Businesses must post the signed flyer in employee common space and, if the business serves the public, the business must also post the flyer near the business’s public entrance(s) in prominent location(s). * Businesses must sign the flyer on the space provided. The signature is an acknowledgement that the owner or management is aware of the COVID-19 safety procedures and understands their responsibilities to carry out the guidance and procedures. |  |
| Follow guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting all spaces prior to people returning |  | Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires’ disease and other diseases associated with water. |  | Clean and disinfect high-touch areas frequently and continue to regularly clean all other areas of the building(s). | SEPA - Consider professional cleaning of the building, flushing water system, and cleaning air  handling system before reopening |
| Ask people not to attend worship if they are feeling ill, have been exposed to COVID-19, have compromised immune systems, or are at high risk of exposing others. Let them know they are welcome to participate in other ways such as online worship and protect those at high risk from any social stigma associated with their decision not to attend. |  | Encourage staff or congregants who are sick or who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. Share CDC’s criteria for staying home with staff and congregants so that they know how to care for themselves and others. Consider posting signs at entrances with this information. |  |  |  |
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| **Physical Building and Grounds** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Study what is possible or not for your worshiping community, including “drive-up” worshiping options where worshipers remain in their cars for the duration of the event. Consider initial small gatherings held outdoors (where this is an option). Research all applicable local fire codes and seek the advice of the local fire department. |  | Consider appropriate mitigation measures, including taking steps to limit the size of gatherings maintaining social distancing, at other gatherings such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups and any other programming, where consistent with the faith tradition. |  | Large Gatherings of More Than 25 Prohibited | SEPA - Consider online-only worship, resuming recording in the sanctuary with as few people as possible  SEPA - Consider how to continue offering online worship for those who are vulnerable or homebound, as well as new audiences you have found online  SEPA - Churches that gather more than 25 people might consider how to do small- group worship, with appropriate cleaning between uses. |
| Determine if your normally-used worship space is the most suitable space in your building for gathering at this time. Are there larger rooms, such as a fellowship hall, if your worship space is small? |  | Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow. |  |  |  |
| Close spaces/rooms in the building where people do not need to be. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Map clear routes of movement from the entryway into the worship space, and plan ways to maintain physical distancing while people move along those routes. |  | Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways). |  |  |  |
| As applicable, set HVAC systems to introduce fresh air into the worship space and/or open windows and doors to encourage fresh air over recycled air. |  | Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility. |  |  |  |
| Make preparations for restroom distancing. Limit the number who may enter at the same time using tape on the floor for those waiting in order to maintain proper physical distancing. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do not provide nursery care at this time |  | If a nursery or childcare will be provided during services and events, refer to CDC’s information on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in childcare settings and adapt as needed for your setting. |  |  |  |
| Remove materials from the worship and gathering spaces such as bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, welcome pads, children’s bags, etc. |  | Consistent with the community’s faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encouraging congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means. |  |  |  |
| Remove any items made with soft/porous materials (rugs, chairs, cushions), if possible, to reduce challenges for cleaning and disinfecting them. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consider not handing out bulletins. Projection onto a screen may be an alternative in some worship spaces. If possible, pre-place bulletins in the sections where seating is allowed. This will provide another visual cue for physical distancing. |  |  |  |  | SEPA - Use projection/screens when possible instead of hymnals or bulletins.  SEPA - Bulletins, if used, should be single-use and disposed of safely |
| **How do we reinstate “office hours”, whole or in part?** |  |  |  | * Conduct business with the public by appointment only, whenever possible; * Discourage non-essential visitors from entering the business premises; | * SEPA - staff should telework where feasible, limit office functions. |
| **What about other church functions?** |  |  |  |  | SEPA - Consider keeping Bible studies, faith formation online-only   * SEPA - Church councils should meet online only. * SEPA - Limit life events (weddings, funerals) to fewer than 25, including officiants. |
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| **Hygiene and Safety** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Provide hand sanitizer at all entrances and in the pews/seating area |  | * Whenever soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used. * Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans. |  |  |  |
| Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily. Overall cleaning and disinfection should happen at regular intervals, especially after and between worship/events. |  | * Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects in between uses. * Develop a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. * Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected. * Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep them away from children. * Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes. |  |  |  |
| Require face masks/coverings; have some available for those who arrive without them. |  | Encourage use of cloth face coverings among staff and congregants. Face coverings are most essential when social distancing is difficult.  Note: Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.  Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. |  | * However, individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years per CDC guidance) may enter the premises and are not required to provide documentation of such medical condition. |  |
| Continue to encourage good hygiene practices. |  | * Encourage staff and congregants to maintain good hand hygiene, washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. * Encourage staff and congregants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed. |  |  |  |
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| **Physical Distancing** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Offer multiple services with fewer attendees instead of one or two services |  | If your faith community offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between services. |  |  |  |
| Encourage people to sign up for worship services in advance, up to a set number, while still allowing for a few new people to drop in. This will be helpful in maintaining a record of who was physically present in the event a case is identified and assistance is needed with contact tracing. |  | Take steps to limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities and subject to the protections of the First Amendment and any other applicable federal law. |  |  |  |
| Make preparations and plans for reorganizing seating when necessary. This is easier with flexible seating; fixed pews are more of a challenge. Use tape to close off rows in order to guide worshipers to sit at least six feet from each other, such as every third row. This does not apply to family members in a single household. |  | Promote social distancing at services and other gatherings, ensuring that clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and attendees at the services follow social distancing, as circumstances and faith traditions allow, to lessen their risk. |  |  | SEPA - Consider how to maintain distancing at entrances/exits, in hallways and parking lots as well as in the sanctuary |
| Limit people’s movement in worship to reduce their occupying of the same air space and the likelihood of inadvertent close contact. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consider how ushers and greeters will guide those entering and exiting in new ways that maintain proper physical distancing. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Speaking, Singing, Playing Instruments** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Singing together, even from a distance, is one of the riskiest behaviors due to the spread of aerosol and droplets that can carry the virus a significant distance and remain suspended in the air. A cloth mask is unlikely to protect you or your neighbor. |  |  |  |  | SEPA - There is growing evidence that singing, especially indoors, is not safe, as aerosols spread well beyond 6 feet when singing or speaking forcefully. |
| Similar caution applies to unison speaking, such as reciting the Lord’s Prayer and other communal speech. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Like singing, playing a wind instrument initiates a spread of aerosol and droplets and poses a strong risk of infection. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consider how church musicians can best be supported financially and otherwise during this difficult time. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Feature instrumental music and find other ways for worshipers to participate: for instance, clapping, moving in rhythm, or using small percussion instruments. |  |  |  |  |  |
| When and where it is safe to do so, feature music from soloists or small ensembles, with the congregation praying through attentive listening. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use online worship opportunities and soloists or small ensembles to teach and learn new songs from the hymnal or other sources; have a song of the week or month and invite worshipers to sing it at home. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Encourage members to order hymnals to keep and use at home, especially if they must continue to worship at home for some time. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Worship Practices** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Refrain from passing a collection plate or basket during the offering; have stations where people can place offerings and/or provide them with online giving options. |  | Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the main, or electronic methods of collection regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets. |  |  | . |
| Omit offering processions where others handle money/plates or communion vessels. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide alternate methods of sharing the peace outside of family households. These could include the exchange of words, waves, offering a reverent bow, or using American Sign Language. |  | Consider whether physical contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, or kissing) can be limited among members of the faith community. |  |  | ] |
| Avoid greeting “receiving lines” at the door before and after worship. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Sacraments** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Keep baptismal fonts empty of water or, if they are filled as a visual reminder, discourage the practice of remembering your baptism by touching the water. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sanitize the font and fill it with fresh water before a baptism |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Consider postponing all baptisms until Green Phase** |  |  |  |  | . |
| The practice of sharing in Holy Communion is not advised until well into the final phases of gatherings of 50 or more people |  |  |  |  | SEPA - Carefully consider whether or not to offer communion, as it will be difficult to distribute safely and sharing of food and close-contact are discouraged. |
| Those preparing and serving communion should sanitize their hands immediately before distributing communion; doing so in view of the congregation may help in reducing anxiety. |  |  |  |  |  |
| During the Great Thanksgiving, the presiding minister may stand back from the table and not further touch the bread and cup. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Congregations should refrain from kneeling or standing close together at a communion rail or in a line. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wafers may be a safer option than bread during this time. A package of wafers can be emptied onto a paten with minimal touch. Bread requires more handling. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Common cup and intinction are not recommended |  |  |  |  |  |
| If distributing wine in small glasses in trays, ensure that the glasses are spaced far enough apart to minimize people’s touching of other glasses. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communion in one kind may be encouraged. A chalice may also be filled with a minimal amount of wine, and communicants could reverence the cup while not partaking of the wine, still hearing the words “the blood of Christ, shed for you.” |  |  |  |  |  |
| The use of pre-filled, disposable wine and wafer cups may appear to be convenient and safer but are not without risk; they are also challenging to open and may be cost-prohibitive. |  | If food is offered at any event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid buffet or family-style meals if possible. |  |  |  |
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| **Worship Leadership** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| Worship leaders may not need to wear masks if they are over six feet away (an analogy for this would be public health officials who do not wear masks for press conferences when following physical distancing protocol). Leaders may still choose to wear masks and should if they come into closer proximity with others. |  |  |  |  | SEPA - Worshippers and leaders should wear masks |
| Presiding ministers should use a stand, chair, etc., for books rather than have these held by an assisting minister. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preachers and presiders must be mindful of physical distancing when speaking, especially because leaders need to project their voices. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leaders should refrain from greeting worshipers at the door before or after worship. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Incident Planning** |  | **CDC Recommendations for Faith Communities** |  | **State and Local Guidelines/Recommendations** | **Considerations** |
| **Consider what to do if church becomes aware of a person with COVID-19 has been in the building.** |  | * In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, it is strongly suggested to dismiss attendees, then properly clean and disinfect the area and the building where the individual was present before resuming activities. |  |  | SEPA - If you become aware of someone in the church or a building user infected with COVID- 19, put your communication plan into action, and cooperate fully with contact tracers. |
| **Consider what to do if a person in the building has visible symptoms of COVI-19.** |  | * Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 during hours of operation and ensure that children are not left without adult supervision. * Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children. * Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes sick at the facility to their home or a healthcare facility. * Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices. * Advise those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. * Advise staff and congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC’s criteria to discontinue home isolation. |  | Establish and implement a plan in case the business is exposed to a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 that includes:   * Securing and decontaminating the affected areas by:   + Closing off areas visited by the person who is a probable or confirmed case of COVID19;   + Opening outside doors and windows and using ventilation fans to circulate air in the area;   + Waiting at least 24 hours, or as long as practical, before cleaning and disinfecting the affected area;   + Cleaning and disinfecting all shared areas such as offices, bathrooms, break rooms, shared electronic equipment (tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls) and ATM machines used by the sick person; |  |
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**COMMONWEALTH OF PA GUIDELINES**

#### Yellow Phase

As regions or counties move into the yellow phase, some restrictions on work and social interaction will ease while others, such as closures of schools, gyms, and other indoor recreation centers, hair and nail salons, as well as limitations around large gatherings, remain in place.

This purpose of this phase is to begin to power back up the economy while keeping a close eye on the public health data to ensure the spread of disease remains contained to the greatest extent possible.

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| **YELLOW PHASE** |
| **WORK & CONGREGATE SETTING RESTRICTIONS** |
| * Telework Must Continue Where Feasible * Businesses with In-Person Operations Must Follow Business and Building Safety Orders * Child Care May Open Complying with Guidance * Congregate Care and Prison Restrictions in Place * Schools Remain Closed for In-Person Instruction |
| **SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS** |
| * Stay at Home Order Lifted for Aggressive Mitigation * Large Gatherings of More Than 25 Prohibited * In-Person Retail Allowable, Curbside and Delivery Preferable * Indoor Recreation, Health and Wellness Facilities and Personal Care Services (such as gyms, spas, hair salons, nail salons and other entities that provide massage therapy), and all Entertainment (such as casinos, theaters) Remain Closed * Restaurants and Bars May Open Outdoor Dining, in Addition to Carry-Out and Delivery (effective 6/5/2020) |

* [All businesses must follow CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html) and DOH guidance for social distancing and cleaning
* Monitor public health indicators, adjust orders and restrictions as necessary

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**SEPA GUIDELINES**

YELLOW PHASE

*The purpose of this phase is to begin to power back up the economy while keeping a close eye on the public health data to ensure the spread of disease remains contained to the greatest extent possible.*

* Stay at home order lifted, aggressive mitigation (distancing, masks, cleaning) in force
* In-person gatherings of more than 25 persons are banned

• Preparations:

o Consider professional cleaning of the building, flushing water system, and cleaning air handling system before reopening  
o Evaluate your space and how you will handle and enforce physical distancing, limit attendance, limit entrances, and do any screening (temperature, symptoms) for people entering the building  
o Clearly communicate and post signs encouraging at-risk individuals and anyone with symptoms or who has been exposed to stay at home  
o We suggest that you confer with your conference and ecumenical partners to coordinate reopening to avoid overcrowding the first churches to reopen. Maintain a good stock of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer and disposable paper towels for drying hands.

o Clean the building regularly and between user groups, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces.

• **Evidence suggests that indoor gatherings, attended for a significant amount of time, and people are stationary in one room, are not safe at this time.**

o Consider online-only worship, resuming recording in the sanctuary with as few people as possible

o Consider how to continue offering online worship for those who are vulnerable or homebound, as well as new audiences you have found online

o While small gatherings are permitted, this requires adhering to rules for distancing, masks, and cleaning exposed surfaces between every use of the building

o Worshippers and leaders should wear masks  
o Family units should be separated by at least 6 feet in all directions  
o There is growing evidence that singing, especially indoors, is not safe, as aerosols spread well beyond 6 feet when singing or speaking forcefully.  
o Carefully consider whether or not to offer communion, as it will be difficult to distribute safely and sharing of food and close-contact are discouraged.  
o Churches that gather more than 25 people might consider how to do small- group worship, with appropriate cleaning between uses  
o Plan for how to invite and limit groups to comply with the restrictions

o Use projection/screens when possible instead of hymnals/bulletins.

o Remove hymnals/Bibles from pews to avoid contamination  
o Bulletins, if used, should be single-use and disposed of safely  
o Consider how to maintain distancing at entrances/exits, in hallways and parking lots as well as in the sanctuary

* Consider keeping Bible studies, faith formation online-only
* Church councils should meet online only.
* Limit life events (weddings, funerals) to fewer than 25, including officiants
* Staff should telework where feasible, limit office functions
* If you become aware of someone in the church or a building user infected with COVID- 19, put your communication plan into action, and cooperate fully with contact tracers.
* High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff or volunteers, should continue to shelter in place.