

CHURCH

The earliest the City of Hattiesburg recommends resuming corporate services is May 31, 2020. However, many congregations are choosing to wait until June or July, and those decisions are welcome.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUR CONGREGATION



- If someone is over the age of 65, consider staying home. It is okay.
- If someone is considered “at risk” because of an underlying or chronic health condition, it is okay to stay home.
- Ask members of your community to stay at home if they are symptomatic, have fever, been in close contact with someone who has tested positive or has traveled to a hot spot in the past two (2) weeks.
- Put the needs of others above any slight inconvenience, whether it’s wearing a mask, waiting to be seated or sitting in a place other than your normal spot.
- Be flexible.
- Communicate with members of your faith community about the steps being taken to prepare the house of worship for their arrival and ways that in-person gathering will be different. Remind them social distancing protocols and face coverings will be enforced.

GUIDELINES ON CAPACITY



- Consider strongly encouraging the use of face coverings by all persons in the house of worship.
- Consider having a supply of face coverings available at each entrance.
- Consider the square footage and layout of your house of worship and determine a number of people that would be conducive to social distancing guidelines.

STAFF + ATTENDEE PROTECTION



- Consider strongly requiring the use of face coverings by all persons in the house of worship.
- Consider having a supply of face coverings available at each entrance.

PROCESSES: BEFORE ENTERING THE SANCTUARY/WORSHIP CENTER



- Consider parking parishioners every other space.
- Keep people/families separated as they enter the building.
- Ensure everyone has a face covering before they enter the building.
- Have hand sanitizer at each entrance and exit.
- Space people out - 12’ is recommended - outside the sanctuary as they wait to enter the sanctuary.

PROCESSES: ENTERING AND EXITING



- Seat people/families one at a time from front to back, by section.
- Keep six (6) feet of space between people/families in all directions. This means skipping chairs and/or rows of pews, depending on the style of seating in your worship center.
- Remind parishioners that masks are to be worn during the service.
- Organize a way of ushering parishioners out after the service - back to front - to avoid attendees passing each other.
- Designate controlled points of entry and exit from the sanctuary/worship center. Ask the community to enter and exit immediately to their own vehicles to maintain social distancing and not gather in groups.

OTHER GUIDELINES TO KEEP YOUR STAFF AND CONGREGATION SAFE



- Replace choirs with solo performance or recorded music.
- Close coffee or refreshment areas until further notice.
- Close common areas outside the sanctuary to discourage group gathering and proper social distancing measures are enforced.
- Consider adopting a phased approach to resuming in-person gatherings.
- Communicate with vulnerable populations and families requiring child care during the service. Encourage them to delay their return for several weeks.
- Continue virtual services.
- Consider hosting a separate worship service for vulnerable populations.
- Consider solutions to minimize close contact that may be a part of your service, such as handshakes or sharing food and drink.
- Delay resumption of children's activities and nursery programs.
- Consider broadcasting the service to other rooms in the facility to allow proper social distancing.
- Avoid passing a plate or cup and modify distribution protocols if your tradition involved shared drink or food.
- Delay the start of Sunday School, Sabbath School or other religious classes.
- Make announcements verbally or by using social media, email or direct mail instead of passing out pamphlets or bulletins at the door.
- Prop doors open to minimize multiple contacts.
- Deep clean before opening.
- Sanitize all high traffic areas including but not limited to: restrooms, doorknobs, counters, microphones, arm rests, booklets, etc.
- Sanitize shared resources after each use and between services.
- Ensure flow of fresh air and that ventilation systems are operating properly. Cleaning of HVAC intake and return is recommended.
- Restrooms should be cleaned and sanitized daily. Disposable paper towels are recommended and air dryers should be deactivated.
- Give careful attention to preschool and children's areas. Consider removing nonessential items to minimize high contact surfaces. Sanitize areas between use.