

Post -

COVID-19 & Church Facilities:

Are You Prepared?

Facility suggestions and topics to help
you navigate gathering together.





Post COVID-19 Full Facility's Guide

It is no surprise COVID-19 has turned our worlds upside down. Just about every single person has been impacted by the pandemic in some way, and we are still not in the clear quite yet.

Smart Church Solutions has consulted various churches during the season we are in; however, our team has noticed the topics, dialogues and questions proposed within the last few months have had more twists and turns than a ride at Universal Studios.

What data and information is correct? Whose perspective should we side with? How far should we take cleanliness, safety, precautions, etc.? Are our efforts "enough"? All-in-all, the abundance of information is quite overwhelming.

So where does that leave us? As church leaders, we need to be judicious, wise, and well-prepared in order to stay on top of outdated information, procedures and practices.

The good news: you are not in this alone. Our team has compiled this guide to provide you with information and suggestions on how to go about daily operations during the pandemic. Please note this is not a "one size fits all" guide: the locality, size, denomination and other nuances might impact how you operate during COVID-19. However, our hope is that the suggestions and topics discussed in this guide will help you navigate the season we are currently in.

Section 1: Re-Opening Checklist

Facility Utilization Guide

Section 2: Facility Event's Guide

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Section 4: Filtration and Fresh Air Makeup

Section 5: Volunteer's Guide

Section 1:



Early during the pandemic, our team provided tools to help churches navigate addressing facility cleaning, safety, operations and other related resources. Even though a few months have passed, these tools may still have relevance for your church. The following two pieces are a great way to get started if you have either not opened your facility quite yet or are in the very early stages of reopening:

1A. Re-Opening Checklist

1B. Facility Utilization Guide

POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

PARKING LOTS

- Check and clean all entrances
- Clean all debris from parking areas
- Check striping and directional arrows, repaint as needed
- Check all signage and repair as needed
- Patch any cracks or holes, especially along walkways
- Check all parking lot lighting, replace/repair as needed

EXTERIOR LANDSCAPING

- Clean all debris as necessary
- Check operation of all irrigation, repair as necessary
- Schedule irrigation back-flow preventer inspection (if necessary)
- Trim all trees and plantings, especially around entrances, and walkways
- Refresh all beds
- Inspect all exterior signage, repair and replace as necessary
- Check operation of any landscape lighting, repair/replace as needed

FACILITY EXTERIOR

- Check all entrances, remove any collected debris
- Check operation of all exterior doors, lubricate all hardware as needed
- Clean, replace, or add entrance matting as needed
- Check all exterior facility lighting, repair/replace as needed
- Ensure any pest control stations are still operational
- Inspect and clean all awnings (if applicable)
- Inspect porte-cochere (drive-thru's), clean as necessary
- Clean and sanitize all playgrounds, exterior children's areas

FACILITY EXTERIOR (cont.)

- Check all fencing, repair as required. Lubricate all gates and locks
- Inspect dumpster storage area, clean as necessary
- Inspect all accessible parking and routes, ensure all contrasting color sections are correct
- Clean all exterior glass. Check all seals and caulking. Repair/repaint all trim as needed
- Inspect all fire or emergency exit pathways/routes
- Check all downspout discharge areas, ensure they are clear of debris

GAS

- Check all gas appliances for proper operation, re-light as necessary
- Inspect gas meter(s), visual inspection only. If anything appears incorrect, contact utility company
- Run all gas appliances for a typical cycle before you allow operations to resume

PLUMBING & WATER

- In restrooms, check all fixtures and run/flush/let them run for a bit.
- Ensure all fill valves and flappers function, replace as necessary
- Empty and clean ice makers. Let them fill one time, dump the ice, then refill
- Inspect any back-flow preventer valves in the facility (if applicable)
- Pour at least a half-gallon of water down every active floor drain

POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

ELECTRICAL

- Inspect all panels for clearance and tripped breakers
- For tripped breakers: investigate for cause, resolve issue, reset breaker
- Take a section of the facility at a time to restore power/turn-on equipment/reset power strips
- Inspect all GFCI outlets/circuits for correct operation
- Inspect all automatic doors, low-voltage operators
- Inspect any extension cords in use for proper gauge, condition, and necessity. Replace as required

HVAC

- Inspect all exterior components. Clean coils, remove any debris, check for proper operation of electrical disconnect, and ensure suction line insulation is intact
- Inspect interior components. Replace filters as required, check the piping for the over-flow pan, ensure disconnects function, and inspect coil (if applicable)
- Operate all the HVAC equipment in both modes to ensure proper equipment operation and control operation
- Inspect back-flow preventer valves (if applicable)
- Clean all HVAC supply vents in the facility
- Check belts for proper tension/condition. Ensure spares are available for all equipment
- Set correct temperatures at all units.

LIFE SAFETY

- Inspect AED pads and equipment. Check dates and ensure spare pads and batteries are present
- Inspect all first-aid supplies, especially dates, replace as required
- Check all portable fire extinguishers (monthly inspections)
- If applicable, check firefighter operation of elevator(s)
- Check all emergency exit signs and lighting for proper operation. Replace fixtures/batteries as required

LIFE SAFETY (cont.)

- Inspect any foodstuffs in the facility for condition and date range
- Inspect all flashlights and any other emergency operations materials
- Check operation of all locking systems
- Inspect fire, intrusion alarms, sprinkler systems for proper operation. Will require a licensed company to perform

VEHICLES

- Ensure registration on all motor vehicles and trailers is current
- Ensure all insurance on motor vehicles and trailers is current
- Check all fluids (washer, oil, transmission, etc.)
- Check tires, replace/rotate as required
- Inspect wipers, window seals and gaskets. Replace as required
- Check all lights for proper operation, replace as required
- Drive all motor vehicles to ensure proper operation prior to taking on passengers
- Ensure all first-aid and safety supplies are in vehicles. This includes a first-aid kit, fire extinguisher, safety cones, spare fuses, jumper cables, flashlight, etc.

FACILITY INTERIOR

- Check ceiling tiles for stains and/or damage. Replace/repair as required
- Ensure proper operation of all space lighting
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all tables and chairs, paying attention to the underside of each
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all toys
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all "high touch" areas. This can include keyboards, phones, door hardware, elevator call buttons, handrails, water fountains, bathroom partition hardware, backs of chairs/pews, offering plates, touchscreens, badge printers, etc.

POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

FACILITY INTERIOR (cont.)

- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all trash receptacles, changing tables, cribs, and the walls in children's areas, between 18"-32" off the floor
- Inspect all spaces to ensure they are clean and in good condition.
- Run your HVAC system or open windows to allow for a fresh air exchange prior to occupation

WORSHIP AREAS

- Condition the space and have pianos tuned as required
- Inspect/check lighting system, to include the dimmers and theatrical lighting (as applicable)
- Inspect/check sound system for proper operation
- Inspect/check all AV equipment for alignment, focus, and operation
- If possible, perform a tech run-through at least a week prior to the onset of services
- Perform additional dusting and cleaning on the seating areas.
- Fill and perform a function check on the baptistery (as required)
- Check pews/seating for all required envelopes, inserts, and hymnals. Ensure they are up to date

ROOFS

- Walk, inspect the roof and repair any area required
- Check operation of all drains, gutters, scuppers, and downspouts
- Check roof (if low slope) for any debris and remove as necessary

GENERAL

- Ensure all custodial supplies and equipment are clean, stocked, and available (to include consumables). Check the SDS book and make sure to list all chemicals and have a copy of the current SDS
- Ensure all maintenance, custodial, and supply closets/rooms are cleaned and organized
- Remove all unnecessary items from the property
- Walk entire property prior to allowing operations to fully commence. Check all areas (including the exterior) and perform a final visual check for any items out of place or requiring adjustment

Post- COVID-19

Facility Utilization:

Social Distancing, Ministry Considerations, and More...

Smart Church Solutions has developed this guide to help you consider how you can effectively and intentionally resume a limited live meeting and worship experience while still adhering to the ever-changing recommendations. We have attempted to present many of the more difficult choices you will need to consider prior to the resumption of operations, albeit in a limited capacity.

Whether you personally agree with some of the suggestions and restrictions on large group gatherings (that vary from state to state and sometimes county to county), we encourage you to take the lead in adhering to public gathering safety guidelines. To intentionally disregard suggested measures is not prudent nor is it a good witness.

This list is NOT exhaustive and must be considered at the local church level. Be wise and prudent as you navigate these highly unique times.

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Facility Event's Guide

Whether you have faced cancellations or have had to pivot toward the virtual realm, it is very likely COVID-19 has changed the way events have been held and planned at your church. Thankfully, we have learned a lot on how to navigate these changes! This section is meant to provide some tips and tricks on managing COVID and post-COVID events.

Plan Accordingly

Would your event be best held virtually? Is meeting in person crucial? There has been a major spike of events hosted virtually since the pandemic. While some events can easily be shifted to online, others are best to be held in person.

For those in-person events, it is wise to plan accordingly. Here are some important questions to consider/track when planning your event:

- How many people will be attending? Should we use event registration to know the exact number of attendees?
- Is our space large enough to accommodate the number of guests and social distance comfortably and responsibly?
- Will we be serving coffee or other beverages? If so, do we have enough disposable cups available?
- How many sanitization stations are appropriate?
- How will we notify attendees to wear a mask?
- Will we take temperatures prior to entry?
- Which restrooms may be used, and are social distancing/sanitization protocols in use there?
- Can my event take place outside?

For reference, regarding events, the CDC stated the following: "CDC does not have a limit or recommend a specific number of attendees for these types of events and instead encourages event organizers to focus on ways to limit people's contact with each other. Each event organizer will need to determine the appropriate number for their setting in collaboration with local health officials. They should also check state, county, and city rules regarding any current restrictions limiting the number of attendees at events.

In general, the number that is chosen should allow individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart from each other. Rather than focusing on an ideal number, event organizers and administrators should focus on the ability to reduce and limit contact between attendees, staff, and others. In general, the **more people** you interact with, the **more closely** you interact with them, and the **longer that interaction**, the higher your risk



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of getting and spreading COVID-19. Indoor spaces are more risky than outdoor spaces because indoors, it can be harder to keep people at least 6 feet apart and the ventilation is not as good as it is outdoors.” (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html>)

Postponing and Cancelling Events

When considering cancelling or postponing an event due to COVID-19, we will always recommend being safe rather than sorry. The CDC recommends to consider the following when making these types of decisions:

- Overall number of attendees or crowd size
- Number of attendees who are at higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19. This includes older adults and people with underlying health problems such as lung or heart disease and diabetes.
- How close together attendees will be at the event
- Amount of spread in the local community and the communities from where your attendees are likely to travel
- Needs and capacity of the local community to host or participate in your event

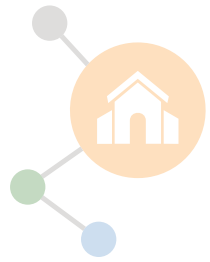
All that to say, if your event can be virtual, we recommend making it virtual! Technology is our friend during these times; however, we understand there are some events that need to stay in person.

Event Hosting Platform

Having the right event scheduling tools will not only save you time in scheduling your events during this time, but they should also track and store all of the data necessary to abide social distancing and safety procedures recommended by the CDC. Therefore, if your event scheduling software cannot easily do the following, we **highly** suggest you look into a new program like eSPACE Event Scheduler:

- Store links for virtual events
- Allow for event registration
- Accommodate max/min capacity rooms and conflict detection (modified with social distancing)
- Ability to specify special notes per room or resource (breathing problems/allergies, sanitize stations, etc)
- Ability to notify your attendees of certain accommodations/protocols

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Communications in Your Facility

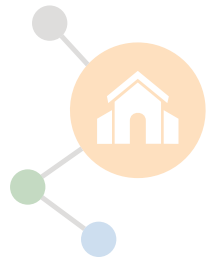
If you host an event inside your facility, it is important your attendees clearly know the recommended safety procedures. We recommend clearly stating the safety procedures via email prior to the event as well as displaying signs throughout your entire facility.

It is also important you are aware of all entrances available for your attendees to enter the facility (it is wise to only allow one entrance point for sanitation reasons). Masks should be required upon entry, and we recommend having face coverings available for those who forget, so they can still attend the event.

Display signs in highly visible locations such as entrances, restrooms, and gathering halls to reiterate protective measures and to describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and wearing a mask). There are multiple communication resources provided by the CDC you can find [here](#).

Make sure you and your staff are prepared before hosting any events in your church's facility! If the event can be virtual or outdoors, we recommend going down this route since it is safer than indoor events. However, if you have to host an event indoors, make sure you are following all CDC guidelines and are enforcing social distancing.

If you have any doubts about your readiness to host attendees in your facility, you should consider postponing or cancelling your on-site events. As we stated previously, it is better to be safe than sorry!



Cleaning the Facility

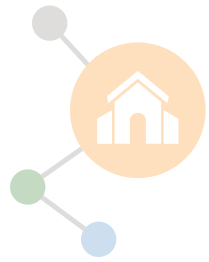
Your facility's team will have a major role in the safety of your staff and attendees by cleaning/sanitizing your facility properly before and after events. The importance of cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing surfaces (as well as understanding the difference) is no longer a skillset that can be approached haphazardly. Now more than ever, it is important to ensure your cleaning team is properly supplied, has access to the necessary equipment, and is trained in how to maintain the cleanliness of the facility effectively and safely. The efficiency of electrostatic sprayers is something every facility would benefit from, and now is the time to review your chemical usage to make sure you have the right product for the task at hand.

In addition to training, there is one other step the reality of church life in the pandemic has allowed many to consider: do you really need that? When you go through your facility and consider how you will maintain it, ask yourself if it is really necessary to have that chair, that table, that doo-dad in the hallway.

For every item you can remove from the facility (that does not directly impact your ability to host an event), you remove one more surface that can become a vector for germs. Remove the possible vectors, reduce the number of surfaces requiring attention, make your cleaning team's time more efficient, and you have a cleaner facility. In addition, below are some recommendations by the CDC we recommend reviewing:

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces within the venue at least daily or between uses as much as possible—for example, door handles, sink handles, grab bars, and hand railings.
- Clean and disinfect shared objects between uses—for example tables, countertops, bars, and chairs. Consider closing areas such as drinking fountains that cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected during an event.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. Plan for and enact these cleaning routines when renting event space and ensure that other groups who may use your facilities follow these routines or prevent their involvement altogether.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaners and disinfectants to avoid harm to employees and other individuals. Always read and follow label instructions for each product, and store products securely away from children.
- Use EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19. Cleaning products should not be used near children. Staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent attendees or themselves from inhaling toxic vapors.
- Use disposable gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. After using disposable gloves, throw them out in a lined trash can. Do not disinfect or reuse the gloves. Wash hands after removing gloves.
- Avoid offering any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars, and drink stations. Consider having pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible — for example, by opening windows and doors and prioritizing outdoor seating. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to guests or staff (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).

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Filtration and Fresh Air Makeup

What to do with our HVAC systems has been studied and discussed throughout the pandemic. There is a real concern that these systems can create an issue with indoor air quality as well as potentially distribute the virus from space to space.

ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) has several resources available to help guide in the process. On April 14, 2020, ASHRAE presented its Position Document on Infectious Aerosols, which has informative and practical tips for building owners. While much is geared towards healthcare facilities and those that deal with an expected high viral load potential, churches can also benefit from the following considerations:

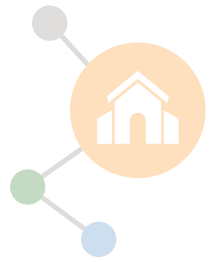
- Increase outdoor air ventilation (disable demand control ventilation). By increasing the air-exchange within the facility, you reduce the potential viral load.
- Considering running the systems longer pre- and post- event.
- If increased air-flow is not possible in certain areas, consider adding portable room air-cleaners with HEPA or high MERV filters
- Maintain temperature and humidity as best you can. Relative humidity (RH) should be between 40-60%, if possible.
- Clean your indoor HVAC equipment at the coils (when applicable).
- Increase the MERV rating of your indoor air-handlers if possible. Work with a qualified HVAC contractor or engineer to make sure that the increased filtration does not adversely impact the air velocity achieved by the unit.

The steps you should take to ensure the best indoor environmental quality (IEQ) will assist in keeping your building occupants safe. These steps include:

- Reduce the dirt and allergens in the facility through proper cleaning
- Clean and maintain the HVAC systems
- Supply fresh air and air filtration systems
- Choose the proper (and least perfumed) chemicals for cleaning/disinfecting/sanitizing so your occupants can breathe easier.

Better Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) will lessen the likelihood of your facility becoming a contributing factor that weakens an individual's immune response.

SECTION 5:



Volunteer's Guide

Volunteers are crucial for every church's operations, but how do we best manage them during COVID-19? Volunteers represent the church; therefore, they need to be committed to setting the example for whatever precautions the church has established. Training is now more important than ever. Volunteers must know the job they are tasked with along with the added precautions. Do you have an action plan to train and educate your volunteers on safety procedures?

Volunteers need to be given the authority to enforce the rules, and your staff must support the volunteers. No "oh we all know Ms. Jenkins, we can let her slide" mentality. Background checks are also very important still depending on the role the volunteer may have.

We recommend sharing videos and other documents provided by the CDC for your volunteers to view prior to coming on-site. This would be in addition to any other training the volunteer may need before going about their role. We recommend strictly enforcing sanitization, social distancing, masks, and other safety precautions.

Here are a few examples of how you can utilize your volunteers during COVID-19:

- **Medical check-in.** Complete temperature reading of volunteers and church attendees if applicable for signs of illness prior to serving in their roles.
- **Attendance capacity.** Count attendees entering the worship center to ensure capacity guidelines are maintained.
- **Restroom volunteers.** Monitor use of restrooms to ensure cleanliness and social distancing guidelines are maintained.
- **Digital group directors.** Lead in the implementation of biblically-focused online communities for adults, students, and children.
- **Digital group leaders.** Facilitate online community groups of church goers.
- **Digital group member care.** Organize care for online group members.
- **Porch drop-off coordinators.** Print, organize, and deliver Bible study materials to group participants.
- **Livestream directors.** Oversee production and delivery of livestream for services.
- **Media operators.** Responsible for all media (such as lyrics and slides) displayed during the livestream or recording of the service.
- **Live stream assistance.** Help with live streaming including video, follow-up, comfort/introduction, etc.
- **Parking team.** Place parking cones to block off every other parking space to maintain social distancing guidelines in the parking lot and greets attendees as they arrive.

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- **Entry team.** Prop open doors for arriving attendees and stand in the lobby or entry way to greet attendees while maintaining social distancing.
- **Welcome center volunteer.** Provide a welcoming environment to all first-time guests, clean the welcome center area, and ensure adequate supplies such as hand sanitizer and protective masks are available.
- **Seating/Ushering team.** Ensure seating barriers are in place to maintain social distancing, props open doors for arriving attendees, and dismisses attendees by row or section to ensure social distancing after service ends.
- **Guests services team lead.** Alert volunteers when service or event reaches maximum capacity and directs attendees to overflow areas or online viewing options.

As indicated at the start, this is not exhaustive, and by the time you read this, things may have changed again. Please accept our advance apology if there are new guidelines or regulations since the writing of this guide. We have tried to be as relevant as possible, but let's face it, this is **ALL** new to everyone. We have never been here before, and we are all doing our best to provide the most accurate information as it comes available.

Stay safe and stay vigilant. We will get through this!

ONWARD!

Reach out to us with any questions at:

SmartChurchSolutions.com or **Lee@SmartChurchSolutions.com**



Smart Church Solutions

Charlotte, NC 28270

1.888.448.5664