



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

Mississippi Baptist Convention Board Restart Conversation Guide for MBCB Churches

As we prayerfully consider returning to physical gatherings, churches must be particularly sensitive to both the needs of their congregants and health directives recommended by appropriate authorities. Churches should consult the Centers for Disease Control and all national, state, and local government agencies for up-to-date suggestions and requirements as the situation continues to evolve. In particular, please consult the White House's "Opening Up America Again" guidelines (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>).

At a minimum, the MBCB strongly encourages ministry leaders to answer the following questions. (Note: These questions are not intended to prescribe *when* a church should reopen but to think through the process *of* reopening.)

- 1. Does the church have online ministry options in place?** Online worship? Online giving? Should the church consider adding or updating digital resources/equipment at this time in order to provide better quality? How can we assist members who cannot immediately return to church but need assistance accessing the technology?
- 2. How will the church address gatherings if official guidelines provide for limited numbers (e.g. 10, 50, 100)?** Does space allow for several groups to meet at the same time in different locations on the campus, or should the church conduct multiple services with adequate time allotted for transitioning of people between services? Does adequate space exist for observing social distancing recommendations (i.e. six feet apart)? What adjustments in seating may be necessary to meet requirements? Could attendees sign up for specific service times via email or Facebook in order to allow for ample room?
- 3. How will the church address those who are considered "at risk" (e.g. over age 65, underlying health issues, etc.)?** Following the most recent CDC guidelines, should church leaders encourage certain individuals NOT to attend in-person gatherings while still providing ministry opportunities to and for those individuals?
- 4. Are the church's facilities regularly and properly sanitized?** Are floors mopped and carpets shampooed? What about the following germ-transfer areas: pews, bathrooms, doorknobs or push bars, light switches, water fountains, etc.?

- 5. Can the church provide safe accessibility while maintaining security?** Can certain doors remain open to limit contact with doorknobs while being monitored by security personnel?
- 6. What unique considerations should a church give regarding preschool and children's ministry?** How will classrooms be set up and activities structured to conform to social distancing and hygiene requirements? If a daycare or Mother's Day Out program exists, how will the decision be made regarding if or when it will reopen?
- 7. Should churches discontinue "meet and greet" or "fellowship" times during services?** What are other creative ways that people can make one another feel welcomed before, during, and after service time while engaging in social distancing?
- 8. Should a church discontinue "passing the plate" and opt for other means of giving?** Are collection boxes available at strategic locations in the building? Does the church have an online giving option?
- 9. When gathering, does the church provide sanitary items stationed at appropriate locations throughout the facility?** Hand sanitizer? Facemasks? Gloves? Adequate handwashing supplies in restrooms (if accessible)?
- 10. How will the church address other regularly scheduled activities, such as Wednesday night meals or choir rehearsals?** What alternatives to these ministries are available? Should these ministries be temporarily suspended, or can they be adjusted or altered to a different format?
- 11. How will the church address special events?** Baptisms? Lord's Supper? Weddings? Funerals? Revivals? Vacation Bible School? What events should be cancelled and what other events can be postponed or "retooled" in a different format?
- 12. Are staff and volunteers well-informed regarding safety and hygiene procedures?** Do teachers or ministry leaders understand expectations and know how to communicate them to people in their area of responsibility?
- 13. Is the church prepared in the event that individuals cannot or will not return to their volunteer positions?** Temporarily? Indefinitely?
- 14. Has the church developed a means of effective and consistent communication with the entire congregation in order to keep members informed of ministry opportunities or schedule changes?** Weekly mail out? Email? Facebook? Text messaging?
- 15. In light of recent experiences, what plans should the church put in place in the event of future closures due to a possible "second wave" of the virus?** What worked before and what did not? How will major decisions be made and business meetings conducted? How will we minister to individuals in the church and in the community?

16. What adjustments should be considered regarding the church's budget and finances for the remainder of this year? For 2021?

17. What new ministries should our church begin in response to the recent crisis?
Counseling opportunities? Benevolence assistance?

As churches and leaders address the above questions, MBCB staff are available to dialogue about these or other issues. Please contact us at any time in order to be connected to the appropriate department.