

A person in a plaid shirt is seen from behind, opening a double glass door. The person's arms are extended, holding the handles of the doors. The background is a bright, overcast sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey filter.

TIPS FOR

# REOPENING YOUR CHURCH

[NCBAPTIST.ORG](http://NCBAPTIST.ORG)

# As North Carolina is phasing in reopening, N.C. Baptist churches are anxious to gather in person for worship. Below is a helpful guide of ideas to help you make the most of this reengagement.

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Please note, the items below are suggestions and in no way should replace guidelines from government officials and health care professionals. Every local church is autonomous and must therefore make their own decisions about how to move forward in order to be the church, honor earthly authorities, and love their neighbors.

Pastors, consider making a video to share with your church telling them what to expect their first Sunday back in the building. The video should outline traffic flow, seating guidelines, children and preschool expectations, etc. Emphasize safety! Think in terms of over-communicating the precautions you are taking as a church.

Keep in mind that while gathering together is a gift to believers and a witness to unbelievers, our desire to return to the building should never replace our Great Commission responsibility to “go and tell.” We pray that soon, you will be able to say to your church, “See you on Sunday!”

## Preparing the Facility

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### Sanitize

Deep clean your entire church. Consider shampooing carpets, sanitizing seating, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches and microphones.

### Preschool / Children Areas

Pay attention to the preschool and children’s areas. Consider removing everything nonessential from the room to limit surfaces for potential contamination, and do a thorough cleaning in between uses.

### Fellowship / Greetings

Post signs about not shaking hands and doing noncontact greetings. Coach ushers and greeters to use appropriate social distancing.

### Offer Sanitizer

Place hand sanitizer stations throughout the facility.

### Traffic Flow

Designate one-way pedestrian traffic flow to facilitate social distancing.

## Service Options (including ideas for limited gatherings)

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### Stay Outside

Continue or consider drive-in worship gatherings (where permitted by local authorities).

### Stay Virtual

Stay virtual on Sunday with smaller in-person prayer gatherings during the week using an online sign up to limit the number.

### Multiple Services

Organize multiple worship services by Sunday School classes/small groups or age. (Use online registration and cap the number).

### Simultaneous Services

Simultaneous services in two areas of your buildings may work if attendance is restricted per gathering rather than per facility.

### Small Group Meetings

Have small groups meet in homes to tune into worship together. (Offer training for group leaders to handle follow up, invitations, discussion, etc.)

### **Those Not Joining**

Keep a virtual service option going for those who cannot or are not ready to rejoin.

### **Instructional Video**

Film a walk-through video to prepare guests for flow of traffic when they return.

## **Worship Service Considerations**

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### **Social Distancing**

Arrange seating to maintain social distancing. Either remove chairs from the usual setup or block off pews. While families can sit closer together, there should be appropriate spacing on either side of each family unit.

### **Offering**

Have offering boxes in various entrances to receive offerings instead of passing the offering plates. Encourage online giving, as well.

### **Lord's Supper**

Consider using prepackaged communion sets. The individual sets can be picked up from tables as people enter the service and used at the appropriate time in the service.

### **Baptism**

It may be best at this time to limit baptisms to one person per filling of the baptismal pool in the sanctuary. Consider the use of a chlorinated swimming pool for larger services.

### **Older Members**

Older members and those with vulnerable health conditions may be fearful of returning at once, and it may be advised for them not to. Continue offering online worship and discipleship for this population of your church.

### **Cleaning Between Multiple Services**

For those who have multiple services, have a plan in place to sterilize as much as possible between services. Actions such as wiping down pews and placing hand sanitizer generously around the church and encouraging its use.

### **Choirs**

With social distancing in effect, traditional plans are probably not feasible. Consider holding a rehearsal in a large room that allows people to sit with appropriate distances to begin getting the groups back together.

### **Bulletins**

Do not distribute bulletins unless they are distributed electronically.

### **Masks**

If wearing masks is suggested by health officials, consider providing masks for those who don't have them.

### **Volunteers**

Many volunteers may step down for a period of time. Roles may need to change. There will be a need for a sanitation team to keep things clean. The greeting ministry will look different while maintaining social distancing.

### **Health Monitoring**

Consider temperature checks for all staff and volunteers.

### **Coffee Stations**

Eliminate coffee stations until we receive an "all-clear."

### **Meet-and-Greet Time**

These times may need to be eliminated altogether or have people just wave from a distance.

### **Hymnals and Pew Bibles**

It may be best to eliminate the use of these items until after the threat is over.

## **Preschool and Children**

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### **Toys**

Eliminate toy boxes and an overabundance of toys. Bring out only the amount of toys that volunteers are willing to clean at the end of the session.

### **Train Leaders**

Train leaders on sanitation guidelines for handwashing, diaper changing and cleaning toys. Clearly state expectations for sanitizing during the session.

### **Take Temperatures**

Purchase no touch thermometers, and perform temperature checks on children and leaders before being allowed in preschool or children's classrooms.

### **Restrict Numbers**

Restrict numbers and ages of those who can be part of the preschool or children's ministry, or open without preschool or children's classes.

### **Check-in Station**

Have volunteers staff the check-in station to limit physical contact with the check-in station.

**Drop-off and Pick-up**

Consider options for dropping off and picking up children: Allow only one parent to drop off and pick up children, or have designated drop-off and pick-up locations at the entry to children's areas with only the teacher escorting the child to class.

**Restrict Personal Items**

Restrict diaper bags and other personal items from being brought into classrooms. Consider allowing only those items needed for the day to be placed in individual containers or baskets in the room. (Make sure bags, diapers, wipes, bottles, etc., are clearly marked.)

## **Sunday School / Small Group**

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**Seating Guidelines**

Provide seating guidelines to maintain social distancing in classrooms.

**Provide Training**

Provide training for leaders to understand guidelines, as well as pastoral care responsibilities for the group.

**Care**

Keep the emphasis on caring in between meetings.

**Stay Virtual**

Consider virtual small groups for a season to limit traffic throughout the facility.

**Those Not Joining**

Consider virtual groups for those not yet comfortable or not able to return.

**Sanitize Between Meetings**

If rooms are shared by multiple hours, sanitize between hours.

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*Resources compiled by the staff of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina with contributions from BSCNC president Steve Scoggins, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville (N.C.), worship consultants from various state conventions, the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, and the Florida Baptist Convention.*