



1. **Are you planning or preparing for retirement?**

Retirement planning is important because it can help avoid running out of money in retirement. So, I started planning for retirement years ago; and I, like most people after 25 years of service, am preparing to retire. Although my wife and I are actively considering this opportunity for the near future, we are unable to share a definitive date. To this end, there is a clause in the Constitution and Bylaws that provides a protocol for pastors removing themselves because of retirement. This establishes in detail any guidelines and decisions regarding retirement.

2. **Why am I on someone else's Family Care List?**

Given the rapid changing of the climate outside our church that affects the operations of our church, a few of our deacons have stepped down and yes, unexpectedly left. It seems clear that our church life is affected by this crisis, yet we must be a voice of hope and encouragement. As a result, the Family Care List required careful rearranging to strategically give our family the attention required. It is with much prayer and supplication, we decided to incorporate some of the deaconesses into assisting with the Family Care List. It is my prayer that you embrace the deacons and deaconess, as they are faithful servants. We want to celebrate in our communications that the church continues to make an impact.

3. **What is the status of the Constitution and Bylaws as created by the Board of Directors?**

The Constitution and Bylaws is a requirements document with 4 stages. This is a 50-page, 16,000-word labor-intensive document *created as an initial draft*, after review and editing from the four (4)-member core group on August 6. The 2<sup>nd</sup> step, *input and answers questions* obtained from the remainder of the Board and myself. The document should be distributed for our review by August 14. The 3<sup>rd</sup> step, collecting a *deliverable for final review* and the 4<sup>th</sup> step, *finalize deliverable* by September 30 (projected).

It is essential that these amended and restated Constitution and Bylaws be completed as they govern the affairs of the One Way Baptist Church, a Texas religious nonprofit corporation. The Church is organized under the Texas Business Organizations Code (BOC), Chapter 22. Please note however that while the BOC allows a general-purpose clause other laws, including the Internal Revenue Code, provide purposes of obtaining and maintaining tax-exempt status. Additionally, this document will be reviewed by the attorney before filing with the Texas Secretary of State.

4. **Who are the board members and their essential responsibilities?**

Board members are the fiduciaries who steer the organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance and financial management policies, as well as by making sure the nonprofit has adequate resources to advance its mission.

Sister Jan Coffey, Vice-Chairman (Acting Chairman)

Sister Henrietta Hawkins, Treasurer  
Brother Ayo Anise, Secretary  
Deacon Al Campbell  
Deacon Anthony Crenshaw  
Reverend Robert Enchil  
Sister Simona Hamilton  
Sister Hilda McKissick

Sister Lucille Green, resigned April 2020  
Sister Addye Parker, resigned June 2020  
Deacon Hosea Faison, resigned July 2020  
Reverend Jerry Richardson, resigned July 2020

## 5. **What are the responsibilities of the Board of Directors?**

A board is needed to incorporate a nonprofit, to get it tax exemption, to apply for a bank account, to properly file annual reports, and to do most important transactions. This is so because the principal roles of the board of directors are to represent the public (or membership) interests in the organization and to represent the organization as its legal voice.

The logic goes as follows: Nonprofit and for-profit corporations are not natural persons, meaning that they have rights and responsibilities but cannot read, write, think, or execute for themselves; corporations need a human group or person to do so and to guide decisions so that they positively influence the organization and the commitments it has made, including the choice of its chief executive and how it will carry out its mission.

In virtually every state, therefore, a nonfunctioning board is a cause for the involuntary closure of the organization by the attorney general, because this means it has no guiding or accountable voice—the CEO being the agent or instrument for implementing what that voice approves.

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### 1. **When will it be safe for houses of worship to resume some form of in-person gatherings?**

Houses of worship should look to publicly available health data in their state to decide when to resume limited in-person gatherings. Sadly, [many governors](#) allowed in-person worship services to continue during the initial spike in COVID-19 cases in the United States. Recently, more governors are lifting restrictions due to political pressure, including from those few religious groups that never saw a reason to stop gathering in the first place.

Houses of worship should continue to suspend large group gatherings [until the following benchmarks are met](#) in their state:

Transmission is controllable as evidenced by a low level of incidence—the rate of occurrence of new cases. The CDC defines a low level of incidence as 10 or fewer new cases per 100,000 people over a period of 14 days.

Testing capacity is adequate to detect outbreaks and identify and isolate positive cases as well as their contacts, and testing achieves a positive test rate of 2 percent (when only 2 percent of people tested are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19).

The state has sufficient contact tracers and instantaneous contact tracing technology in order to enable tracing within 48 hours of at least 70 percent of the contacts of a person testing positive for COVID-19.

Importantly, houses of worship may want to exercise additional caution if the city or county in which they are located has not yet met these benchmarks, even if the state as a whole has.

## 2. What restrictions for the size of gatherings should remain in place once some in-person gatherings resume?

Once the three thresholds noted above are met, houses of worship can consider holding large group meetings again. Until then, however, gatherings should be limited in size so that members of different households are not spaced any closer than 6 feet apart in any direction. Generally, this means gatherings should be limited to 25 percent of the capacity of the room where the gathering is taking place or a maximum of 50 people—whichever amounts to the fewest people. Specific precautions to limit the spread of the virus are detailed below. Online options for [vulnerable populations](#) should be offered throughout the phased reopening. Some houses of worship are setting up online registration to allow households to take turns attending in-person services.

Only after local public health experts determine it is safe enough to do so should the capacity limit can be relaxed to 50 percent or 50 people—whichever amounts to fewer people. While many state, county, and local governments have exempted religious gatherings from public health orders and are relaxing a number of restrictions, this is not necessarily an indication that large gatherings are safe. Rather, as indicated above, houses of worship may in fact present a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 than some other communal settings. This is because many worship activities involve physical contact, sharing of food or objects, and congregational singing or other group vocalizations which are superspreading in nature. (see FAQ 8 below)

In addition, it may be safer to reopen larger gatherings sooner in some geographical areas than in others depending on the local incidence rate, positive test rate, and contact tracing capacity, as indicated above. Local public health departments are most likely to have the best up-to-date information regarding those rates in the local population surrounding a house of worship.

Again, it is important to note that houses of worship should not consider gathering in groups of more than 50 people until the benchmarks listed in #1 have been achieved.

## 3. When can all restrictions be safely lifted?

It will likely be some time before it is safe to lift all restrictions, and houses of worship will need to plan accordingly. Transmission is likely to become under control only through the widespread use of a vaccine or effective nonpharmaceutical interventions. COVID-19 will continue to be a dangerous condition for those infected until there are effective and widely available treatment options. This may be difficult news for many congregations. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is recommending that [congregations plan for ongoing virtual gatherings](#) and operations through May 2021. While houses of worship may consider holding limited in-person gatherings as outlined in FAQs 1 and 2, the UUA's guidance is prudent in going above and beyond basic precautions before all of the aforementioned restrictions can be lifted.

## 4. How do outdoor services fit into reopening plans?

Worship services conducted outdoors are likely to be significantly safer than those conducted indoors, and houses of worship may wish to resume gathering exclusively outdoors before the thresholds mentioned above are met. Gathering in person, even outdoors, still presents some risk, and it is important to take the same precautions that one would for any indoor services. Research regarding the risk of exposure across many contexts—including outdoor gatherings—is still in development, and much is still unknown.

Some houses of worship have begun offering [drive-in worship services](#) that allow congregants to attend provided that they remain in their cars, which significantly reduces the risk of exposure. In these

cases, community members should take precaution to maintain a 6-foot distance between vehicles if the vehicles' windows are open. There should be no shared worship materials or access to building facilities for these services.

5. **What steps are necessary for houses of worship to maintain physical distancing with limited in-person indoor worship services?**

Individuals who are not in the same household should maintain 6 feet of distance in every direction, including movement in, out, and around the facility. Houses of worship must establish a plan for movement so that foot traffic only flows in one direction and designate separate doorways for entering and exiting. They must also ensure that all instructions for movement and physical distancing are communicated in advance, marked with signage, and facilitated by trained staff or volunteers. Internal movement at the house of worship should be as limited and controlled as feasible.

Absolutely no physical contact should be permitted between people of different households. It is important to closely observe children to help them maintain physical distancing and avoid conducting any children's programming where children might come into contact with members of other households.

Specific rituals requiring physical contact between a faith leader and congregant should be adapted to avoid physical contact or postponed altogether. If the house of worship considers it absolutely necessary to continue these rituals, the following additional precautions should be taken: Close proximity between individuals should last no longer than a few seconds; both parties must wear masks; physical contact should only occur with both parties wearing gloves or unless hand-washing can occur immediately afterward; and the same gloves or other shared surfaces should not come into contact with multiple people without being properly disinfected after each use.

6. **Should masks be required with limited in-person indoor worship services?**

Masks or other face coverings should be required for all people. Children younger than 2 years old or anyone who has trouble breathing and cannot wear a mask should not attend in-person services until all restrictions can be safely lifted.

7. **What precautions regarding shared objects and surfaces must be taken during limited in-person indoors worship services?**

Houses of worship should avoid any shared objects or surfaces. Worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts, bulletins, books, or any other item that multiple people could touch should be removed from spaces where members visit. Houses of worship may consider distributing digital versions of scriptural readings, previously recorded recitations, or other materials.

Community members should bring with them items such as prayer rugs or head coverings in order to avoid sharing objects or surface areas. For example, mosques may want to require that individuals bring their own prayer rugs or sheets to avoid prostrating on the same surface; if individuals do not bring these items, the mosque may want to provide disposable options.

Any religious rituals that require communal food and beverages should either be halted or distributed in a manner that allows for prepackaged individual options.

Ritual washing should be similarly modified to avoid touching shared surfaces. Any regularly touched objects or surfaces should be disinfected after each use. Houses of worship may wish to encourage members to engage in ritual washing at home or to provide alternatives such as providing prefilled disposable cups in order to avoid touching shared faucets.

Houses of worship must modify their methods to receive financial contributions, as no money or checks should be exchanged in person.

8. **What about congregational singing?**

Choirs and congregational singing are among the most dangerous activities because they generate a larger number of infectious aerosol particles over an extended period of time. For example, a [choir rehearsal](#) in a church with 61 members present resulted in 53 cases and two deaths. Singing during services should be avoided and replaced with recorded music or live instrumental music.

For gatherings held outdoors, the risk is still present, though somewhat reduced, even if all congregants are appropriately distanced and wearing masks. Singing or call-and-response activities could undermine the efficacy of masks, even outdoors, as they may become saturated with moisture more quickly and serve as a less effective barrier.

If singing or recitation is an important part of a service, houses of worship could limit those activities to one individual—for example, a soloist or cantor—who is further distanced from the rest of the congregation. In such an instance, the use of a face shield or another clear barrier such as plexiglass between the individual and the rest of the congregation would maximize safety. Another option includes remote viewing of the individual through video streaming. In cases where the individual faces away from the congregation, such as in Islamic prayer, no such barrier is necessary.

Wind and brass instruments should similarly be avoided until more research can determine their safety. [A preliminary study](#) suggests that some of these instruments may produce aerosol droplets in a similar fashion to singing.

9. **What steps should be taken to monitor and screen members for COVID-19?**

Staff and volunteers may wish to take congregants' temperatures before they enter the house of worship with a noncontact thermometer or thermal imager. Any individual with a temperature of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher or signs of illness should be denied entry. If an individual with a known case of COVID-19 has been to the house of worship, they should immediately notify local health officials and congregation. Houses of worship should work with local public health officials to determine how to trace others with whom that person may have had contact and whether to suspend in-person gatherings again. The list of COVID-19 symptoms should be posted and communicated to congregants before they attend services. Congregants should be advised to not attend services if they have any of the following symptoms, as [determined by the CDC](#):

- a. Fever or chills
- b. Cough
- c. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- d. Fatigue
- e. Muscle or body aches
- f. Headache
- g. New loss of taste or smell
- h. Sore throat
- i. Congestion or runny nose
- j. Nausea or vomiting
- k. Diarrhea

10. **How can houses of worship ensure facilities maintain proper sanitation and hygiene?**

Houses of worship should clean and disinfect any regularly touched surface areas according to [CDC guidelines](#). In addition, they should make restrooms available to only one person at a time and disinfect any shared surfaces after each use. They should also be sure that any services or gatherings held on the same day are scheduled in such a way that allows time to clean and disinfect between gatherings.

Houses of worship should make sure hand sanitizer, hand-washing facilities, and open trash cans are all readily available. They should [post signs](#) near hand-washing stations to remind staff and congregants about the importance of frequent and thorough hand-washing.

Finally, houses of worship should use fans or ventilation systems to maintain constant airflow from the outdoors throughout indoor spaces. They should keep doors and windows open unless doing so would be hazardous to small children.

11. **How should houses of worship protect vulnerable populations in particular?**

Individuals who are [at higher risk](#) of serious illness due to COVID-19 should not attend in-person indoor gatherings until all restrictions are safely lifted. Houses of worship should continue to provide remote options for worship services for the benefit of those who may be at higher risk.

12. **What about social services and community care programs?**

Social services provided by houses of worship should address only essential needs and may be subject to additional regulations or guidance under their state, county, or local governments. For example, many houses of worship have continued to provide meal services to individuals in need by transitioning to serving as pick-up locations offering individually packaged meals.

13. **Should special exceptions be made for life events such as weddings and funerals?**

No. The same restrictions listed above still apply.

14. **How should houses of worship enforce health safety requirements?**

Houses of worship should communicate all of the above restrictions and procedures to all staff, congregants, and potential visitors, particularly in advance of any in-person gatherings. Advance communication is necessary to prevent any conflict or confusion. It may feel uncomfortable for staff or volunteers to deny someone entry, monitor physical distancing, require masks, or enforce other similar requirements, but these precautions are necessary. Successful adherence to the new guidelines and procedures is only possible if the entire community agrees to participate. For example, [one denominational group](#) established a policy of ending services if any one individual refuses to comply with requirements.

The development and enforcement of new restrictions and procedures should be led by a team of individuals at the house of worship to ensure that the burden of responsibility does not land on any one single member of the community. As a first step before engaging in any in-person worship, houses of worship should establish a committee whose role is to advise the community's senior faith leaders or boards on how best to execute these new policies. It is recommended that this committee include a senior clergyperson or religious instructor, a senior lay leader or program director, a member of the board, a community member who serves as an usher or greeter, and, if possible, a medical professional and an attorney.

15. **How can houses of worship ensure they have taken all necessary precautions?**

Since the coronavirus pandemic began to spread in the United States, public health experts have been working quickly to understand more about COVID-19 and how it spreads. Yet, much is still unknown. By following the guidance listed above, houses of worship can engage in their best efforts to keep visitors safe.

In addition to the guidance above, CAP recommends consulting the relevant regulations and guidance that state, county, or local governments may have provided. House of worship insurance companies may also have criteria that are related to the conditions that must be present in order to engage in certain activities.

If houses of worship are under the authority of a larger religious entity or denomination, that may be another source of guidance or recommendations. The Sikh Coalition, for example, regularly updates a spreadsheet of statewide guidance for houses of worship [here](#). (See FAQ 17 for a list of public health guidance from faith-based and other nongovernmental organizations.)

## 16. What are good resources for faith communities struggling to reconcile faith and science?

Some people of faith have expressed concerns that to follow public health guidance would be a failure to trust in divine intervention to keep them safe from COVID-19. Others feel that public health guidance was itself divinely facilitated in order to help keep them safe. National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins—who is an evangelical Christian, physician, and scientist—was recently awarded the [Templeton Prize](#) for bridging divides between faith and science. In an interview with *The Washington Post*, he said:

Theology was once called the queen of all the sciences because it was also an effort to deduce knowledge. That’s really what atheists and scientists look for: different kinds of knowledge. Faith leaders ask questions about why. Scientists ask questions about how.

Collins also founded [BioLogos](#), an organization for evangelical Christians to learn about science. Other religious traditions also have resources for exploring science and religion, including [Sinai and Synapses](#), which approaches questions from a Jewish perspective. The American Association for the Advancement of Science also runs a [Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion](#).

## 17. Where can more guidance and recommendations specific to my faith tradition be found?

The following list provides additional guidance for different faith communities.

- [“Resuming Care-Filled Worship and Sacramental Life During a Pandemic”](#) by the Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship, and Sacraments, published by an ecumenical group of theologians, scientists, physicians, pastors, bishops, and practitioners from United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic traditions
- [“COVID-19 Resource for Faith Communities”](#) by the Interfaith Health Program at Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health
- [“Spiritual and Communal Responses to Covid-19”](#): a Facebook group of interreligious clergy
- Religious bodies’ specific resource pages:
  - [Sikh Coalition](#)
  - [The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)
  - [The Episcopal Church](#)
  - [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#)
  - [Union for Reform Judaism](#)
  - [The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)
  - [Christian Reformed Church](#)
  - [Reconstructing Judaism](#)
  - [Islamic Medical Association of North America](#)

- [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)
- [“When Your Church Reopens, Here’s How to Meet Safely”](#) by Daniel P. Chin, *Christianity Today*
- [“Churches have much to consider before reopening”](#) by Joey Butler, United Methodist News
- [“Recommendations for a Safe Return to Worship”](#) by Church Mutual Insurance
- [“Church Preparation and Response to Potential Pandemics”](#) by Rev. Miriam J. Burnett, African Methodist Episcopal Church International Health Commission
- [“A Church ‘Re-Opening’ Information Resource List”](#) by Rev. Jennifer Sanders

## Conclusion

Faith communities can and must successfully navigate the process of reopening safely by following public health guidelines. And while the Trump administration has made this process difficult by sending mixed messages and politicizing the reopening of houses of worship, many states and faith-based organizations have stepped up to fill this leadership void and are proceeding prudentially for the common good. The recommendations presented here provide the best available guidance for houses of worship to continue some activities while reducing the risk to their congregations.

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*The authors would like to especially thank epidemiologists Anna Bauer, Ph.D., and Kimberly Powers, Ph.D., of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Tara C. Smith, Ph.D., of Kent State University for their helpful insights and review of this publication. The authors would also like to thank John Blevins, Th.D., of Emory University and Tahil Sharma of the United Religions Initiative for their consultation on this publication.*

**To find the latest CAP resources on the coronavirus, visit our [coronavirus resource page](#).**

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