



PENDEL MINISTRY NETWORK
HEALTHY PASTORS. THRIVING CHURCHES.

REOPENING CHURCHES IN
PENNSYLVANIA & DELAWARE

SAFETY GUIDELINES



Dear Pastor,

As the COVID-19 pandemic loosens its grip, Pennsylvania and Delaware are beginning to modestly move forward in their phases of reopening. Because our network covers two states and reopening looks different between the six regions in Pennsylvania and from county to county, we thought it would be beneficial to our network Assembly of God churches to receive guidance from our leadership team about planning worship gatherings and re-engaging in church life.

To that end, we have created a list of safety guidelines that may serve as a checklist as you assess your unique church context. I encourage you, your staff and board to develop a plan that will set you up for success as you welcome back your church family.

I am so proud of the way our pastors have navigated this season of disruption. By the grace of God, you have continued being the Church when hosting church was not possible. You have adapted and utilized every available means to continue leading and feeding God's flock and reaching those who are yet to become followers.

The COVID crisis and its effects on our economy and society will continue for a season. There will be a wide variety of ministry needs and opportunities that will emerge as a result. Be prayerful. Be faithful. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as He leads us to serve in ways that bless others and bring glory to God.

We are praying for you as you assess, plan and respond to the needs of your church and community.

God bless you,

Don Immel
Superintendent
PennDel Ministry Network

AS WE GATHER

1 PROVIDE TIMELY NOTICE

Announce your reopening or in-person gatherings far in advance. This pandemic has created a major shift for our culture and restarting in-person gatherings will be a significant transition for all. Provide at least a 2-week notice; more if possible.

2 DEEP CLEAN AND DISINFECT

Best practices require wiping down high-touch surfaces with approved cleaning/disinfectant solutions before and after every gathering. Be sure to assign a person(s) with this task, providing them with proper equipment disposable gloves.

3 MOBILIZE YOUR TEAM

Your team will act as both hosts and models. They will model the behavior you are expecting. As you prepare your team, be sure they know where they need to be, what their role is and is not, what to say and how to interact with people. When your congregation arrives in-person, they should see your team “waiting” for them.

AS WE GATHER

4 CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

You and your leadership team (staff/board) should develop a specific set of expectations for those who are comfortable worshipping in-person. Be very clear about what you expect from them (i.e., masks, where to enter/exit, seating arrangements, etc.) and what they can expect from you (i.e., providing masks, open doors, arrangement of the sanctuary, no nursery or kids ministry, offering & communion handling).

5 MITIGATE RISKS

Ideas might include shorter services (1 hr or less) so bathrooms are not needed, one-way entrance & exit, doors propped or managed by a team member, disabling water fountains and not re-opening cafe areas. Most churches are opting to delay nursery and kids ministry.

Rule of Thumb: Make high-touch areas into low-touch or no-touch areas.

6 SOCIAL DISTANCE

This provides great opportunity to make your people feel safe. Arrange your sanctuary to meet social distancing recommendations, use models that many commercial stores have in place especially at entrances. Ensure your worship team honors social distancing on the platform. Some churches are requiring attendees to pre-register for their service(s) so that each service is ticketed (depending on the size of your congregation and the occupancy of your building).

AS WE GATHER

7 NOTIFY YOUR LOCAL OFFICIALS/POLICE

We have noticed that those who have conducted drive-in services and those who have hosted on-site events (services or outreaches) had very favorable results simply letting their officials know that they were opening and assuring them that they were taking appropriate precautions. You are not asking for permission, you are simply partnering with their effort. It helps them respond to anyone calling to report your activity.

8 ASSURE YOUR PEOPLE

Some cannot wait to return to an in-person gathering while others will be uncomfortable. At times, these two opinions are in the same household. Reassure those returning that they will be entering a safe and healthy environment. Also reassure those who feel vulnerable, are in a high-risk category and those who do not feel comfortable returning that they are as much a part of the spiritual family as those who are in-person. Attending church online does not make someone any less spiritual than those who are in-person.

9 HAVE FUN, DON'T MAKE FUN

We want to keep the needs of our people in focus. This is an opportunity to create an informal, fun and engaging environment. Help your people laugh and enjoy themselves, but make sure politics do not enter into your talking points or that of your leaders. Also, do not minimize the impact the pandemic has had on our society or your people.