

During this time of uncertainty, faith communities and religious leaders are working together to provide safe ways to serve and encourage their communities. This updated guidance provides recommendations as places of worship prepare a plan for services during the next stages of Indiana's reopening. The purpose of this guidance is not to restrict religious liberty, but to provide safe environments and save lives during these extraordinary times.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the right of Hoosiers to worship and freely exercise their own religions. Accordingly, when the state government issues orders it is in a way that respects these rights.

Places of worship are strongly encouraged to continue to livestream, use virtual services, or alternatively, conduct drive-in services.

Faith communities quickly adapted to these alternative services and it continues to be a recommended practice. Preparing for the livestream services and the drive-in services should be conducted in accordance with Center for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") guidelines.

cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.htm

Places of worship can continue to slow the spread of the virus and help protect vulnerable members and guests when returning to in person services.

Places of worship play an important role in protecting the progress made by all the Hoosiers that hunker down daily. Places of worship can consider implementing strategies for services held in person with the goal of continuing to slow the spread of COVID-19 while uplifting each other during a difficult time.

When services are in person consider the following practices:

- Ask all individuals who are 65 and above or who have an underlying at-risk health condition to stay home and watch services online.
- [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html)
- Provide a service specifically for those who are 65 and above.
- Ensure 6 feet between individuals or family units of the same households during services.
- Each seat should be spaced and marked, alternating rows when possible.
- Clean between each service and disinfect high contact surfaces regularly.
- Place hand sanitizers in high contact locations (e.g. bathroom, entry, exit) and ask staff, members and guests to sanitize their hands before entering the building.
- Recommend putting on a face covering before entering the building.
- Place signage telling staff, members and guests to not enter if they are symptomatic or if they have tested positive.
- Implement non-contact greetings.
- Avoid handing out materials.
- Cafés, coffee and other self-service stations should remain closed.
- Establish safe protocol for any communion and collection to avoid contact.
- Dismiss services in a way that supports social distancing.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider waiting to reopen the preschool and children areas until schools reopen. If open, do not place a mask on children 2 and under per CDC guidelines and limit leaders in the preschool and children's areas to those who do not have pre-existing conditions and those under 65 years old.
[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html)
- Clean entire facility. (e.g. shampooing carpets, sanitizing bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, and microphones)
- Consider offering multiple service times to encourage a greater chance of social distancing.
- Consider having a sign up for services to allow for an attendance and capacity plan.
- Consider suspending in-person praise teams or choirs and using previously taped performances. If in person teams are used, require proper social distancing and limited team members.

Under the exceptional times in which Hoosiers temporarily connect with their faith communities, these guidelines provide that places of worship may remain open. The guidelines make only recommendations because of the compelling interest of the state to stop the spread of COVID-19.