

Re-Gathering: 7 Key Areas To Consider

☐ #1 - (Facilities) Preparing The Facilities

A - Where Should We Start?

- It's been several weeks since the facilities have been used. The first step is to allow plenty of time to get the facilities ready for family and friends to arrive.
- Walk through the facilities, making a list of problem areas.
- Hymnals, pew Bibles, and other pew materials should be temporarily removed and stored properly.
- Put together a good list of cleaning supplies needed. Don't forget those items needed after people arrive. (Disinfectant - Wipes - Hand Sanitizer - Gloves - Masks.)

B - What Is The Cleaning Plan Once Family & Friends Arrive?

- Identify and clearly mark those areas of the campus that will remain closed for the first few weeks. (Classrooms - Rec Facilities - Age-group Areas, Etc.)
- Make sure hand-sanitizer is available in all common areas.
- Identify contact areas that must be cleaned regularly and create a schedule for cleaning. (Door Handles/Knobs - Stair Rails - Rest Rooms - Elevator Buttons, Etc.)
- Identify who will be responsible for cleaning contact surfaces.

C - What Contact Policies Will Be Followed Before, During And After Worship?

- Social distancing rules will still be in effect. 6-feet for non-family members is the rule.
- All hospitality items should be bottled or individually packaged.
- Doors should be safely propped open during periods of entry and exit.
- Know the crowd size limitation local authorities have in place. These limitations may be a specific number or a percentage of capacity, depending on your community.
- Hugs and handshakes are to be avoided. This is a good time to rethink how the "Welcome" will be offered during the service.

☐ #2 - (Leadership) Everyone Has A Role

A - Do We Need A COVID Logistics Team? Yes!

- Determine a budget amount the Logistics Team will need for supplies.
- It is important to identify who will be:
 - Doing the walkthrough prior to family and friends arriving.
 - Cleaning contact surfaces regularly.

- Cleaning/preparing for the next service.
- Deep cleaning and disinfecting during the week and getting ready for the next weekend.
- Having a team in place to address these areas will provide a large measure of confidence to all members and guests.
- Greeters/Ushers are the first line of defense, helping to keep contact surfaces clean. They can help with communicating “no contact” and “safe distance” policies too.

B – How Should Leadership Be Recruited And Trained?

- Identify those in the fellowship with expertise in this area. (Custodians – Medical Professionals – Health Department Officials.)
- Recruit for the long-haul. Plan for this team being in place the next six months.
- Everyone is becoming comfortable with technology like Zoom, FaceTime & Facebook Live. Use these resources to make training available for everyone. Consider recording the training for those that cannot attend the live sessions.
- Be considerate of volunteer work schedules when planning training sessions.
- It is better to “Re-Gather” a few weeks later with trained volunteers & staff.
- Remember, the available workforce will be reduced as senior adults may not immediately reconnect with in-person worship.

C – How Should The New Policies Be Communicated To The Church Family?

- Prior to reuniting, the church family should be made aware of:
 - The deep cleaning that is being done.
 - The contact surface cleaning policies.
 - The creation of the COVID Logistics Team.
 - 6-foot & crowd size rules still being in effect.
- It is most important that the church family hears the new policies before returning to in-person worship and large gatherings.
- This same information should be communicated weekly during all gatherings. Using digital announcements is a big help with this communication.

☐ #3 – (Worship & Gatherings) A Time For Celebration

(“Let’s Talk” is a weekly Zoom-cast, offered by the Worship & Music Office, addressing current worship challenges and best practices. Wednesdays, 2:00. Meeting ID: 987-1015-1065, PW: 481471)

A – How Will Social Distancing Affect The Number Of Seats Available In Worship?

- The 6-feet of separation between families dramatically affects the number of seats available in the worship facility. Adding worship services may be necessary.
- Know your community regulations. Is there a crowd size limit in affect? (100 – 50 or a percentage of capacity.) If so, this will have a significant impact on larger congregations.
- Service times and length of the services should be altered to accommodate additional worship times.
- It is a good practice to have at least 15 minutes between services, for contact service cleaning.

B – Will A “Worship Only” Strategy Be In Place When The Church Family Reunites?

- Many churches will continue to meet online for Sunday School/small groups.
- See recommendations below for Preschool/Children & Students.
- Make sure all decisions regarding mid-week and special services are made and communicated prior to the first in-person worship service.

C – How Should The Worship Service And The Worship Order Change?

- Services will be shorter, allowing for multiple services and the presence of younger children.
- Announcements should be moved to a digital platform. This will help reduce the length of each service.
- Worship teams and ensembles should distance themselves and avoid sharing microphones.
- Choirs should consider using smaller ensembles, allowing for social distancing on stage.
- If multiple venues on campus are available for worship (Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall) consider having two services at the same time, flipping the order of music and message for each service.
- Dismiss each worship service safely, reducing the chances of forced close contact.

D – How Will The Church Family Receive New Members, Celebrate Baptism & The Lord’s Supper?

- Those accepting Christ and uniting with the church family must be received well and received safely. Having a good plan in place will make everyone more comfortable. Consider using a decision room if this is not a current practice in your fellowship.
- Using pre-packaged elements for the Lord’s Supper is a must. Avoid passing Lord Supper trays. Utilizing multiple “pick-up” stations on the way in reduces individual contact points.
- Celebration of Baptism is a wonderful way of acknowledging how God has been at work over the past few months. Make sure every candidate is comfortable with protections put in place before moving forward.

E – What plans are in place should a spike in COVID-19 cases occur in your community?

- Best practices learned over the past few months are key. What has worked well during the time away can once again benefit the church family. Have a plan in place to resume distance worship should this become necessary.

☐ #4 - (Preschool/Children & Students) Caring & Providing For Our Children

(The SC Baptist Convention offers weekly Zoom-cast for Children's ministry. For upcoming webcasts, visit www.ystuff.org/videoconferences. See www.ystuff.org for regularly scheduled Student Ministry Zoom-casts.)

A - Will Your Fellowship Be "Worship Only?"

- Provide both encouragement & resources as parents continue to disciple their children at home.
- Consider providing a separate simple (and brief) children's church video each week.
- Parents are looking for communication, safety and consistency. Their knowing what must happen in order for children's small groups to return, and what safety and cleaning measures will be in place once small groups do return will be received very well.

B - What Policies and Procedures Should Be Considered Prior To The Return Of Children's Small Groups?

- Registration - check in & check out.
- Modified classroom procedures and maximum classroom numbers.
- Overflow plans.
- Cleaning & sanitizing.
- Training leaders.

C - What Leadership Changes Need To Be Made?

- Assess current leaders and volunteers to identify those that will and will not be available when children's small group resume.
- Recruit replacements and recruit to fill new positions. Remember, numbers per class may need to be reduced, creating the need for more classes.
- Determine the best way to train all volunteers on any new procedures, prior to the first-time small groups meet.

D - (For Student Ministry) Will Student Small Groups Begin Meeting Before The Children?

- Determine if student ministry guidelines will be different from children's ministry.
- Know how many students can gather in the facility, honoring all distancing guidelines.
- Consider using other larger spaces for students to gather.

E - What Adjustments Should Be Made To Summer Programming?

- If VBS has been affected, determine and communicate what the alternate plan will be.
- If children and student camps have been affected by COVID-19, communicate schedule changes or cancelations with parents.

- Begin discussions with children and student leaders about alternate summer plans.

□ #5 – For Those Still At Home ~ Retaining An Online Presence

A – Should The Church Continue To Offer An Online Worship Service?

- In the short-term the answer should be, yes. Many will be hesitant or unable to return immediately. Having an online option retains their connection to the church family.
- For many churches, their influence has increased greatly through the use of technology. Protecting and enlarging this influence is most important.
- Should significant social distancing restrictions return, ministry will continue uninterrupted.

B – What Should Be Considered When Offering An Online Service Long-Term?

- Identify a strategy for incorporating the online service as part of the larger church vision.
- Clearly present ways for connecting online attenders in other spiritual growth opportunities.
- Identify those that will have responsibility for the logistics involved.
- Determine if the correct equipment is available and any cost involved in securing the necessary equipment.
- Connecting with and caring for those with only an online bond to the church is challenging. Providing a “Connections Team,” and specific connecting points will be necessary. Simple examples are a dedicated email address that is monitored daily and a phonenumber monitored during, and immediately following, each online service.

C – What Should Be Considered If The Online Service Is Discontinued?

- Connect the viewers with other online options available? (Small groups/Sunday School classes)
- Determine the plan for discontinuing the service, including how this will be communicated.
- Consider special opportunities for online viewers to be invited to in-person experiences.

□ #6 – (Finances) Encouraging Faithful Giving

A – Have We Effectively Shared Our Spending Plan And Needs?

- This is the perfect time for the fellowship to learn how the church is continuing to minister during these challenging times.
- This is also the best time to say thank you to those who have been faithful in their giving.
- The church family should be made aware of the effect COVID-19 has had on giving.
- Clear, consistent communication is an important element in giving.

B – How Will The Offering Be Collected When In-Person Worship Resumes?

- Now is not the time to use the traditional method of passing the offering plate. Consider adding several locked “Giving Stations” around the worship area. Make sure the church family knows of their existence and location.
- Provide the mailing address of the church in all publications and emails.

C – Does Our Church Provide An Online Giving Option?

- The SC Baptist Foundation is offering an online giving option for all SCBC churches. A video offering a step by step explanation of the process is available at www.scbaptist.org/online-giving.

☐ #7 – (Logistic) Beyond The Reunion. Questions To Answer Moving Forward

(The goal with this first round of questions was to prepare SC Baptist church leaders to consider gathering again for in-person worship. In the coming days, a “Top 10” list will be available for each of the categories above.)