



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

A Guide for Alabama Baptist Churches

INTRODUCTION

The days in which we are now living have been unprecedented for our generation. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has certainly caused us to pause and evaluate life.

One of the impacts of social distancing, along with stay-at-home and shelter-in-place orders, has been the closing of our church buildings. For weeks now, we have relied on new and creative methods to participate in worship with our church family. Words like Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube and Drive-In Worship are now standards in our vocabulary.

Looking ahead, we foresee a time when we will be allowed to gather again with our family of faith in our facilities. As we anticipate such a time, it would serve us well to begin preparation.

Of course, there are many questions that we must ask, suggestions to consider and resources to explore. Because we do not know exactly when the day will come, we must begin preparing now to reopen the church facilities. We want to be as prepared as possible to welcome our church family and guests.

The plan that is developed by your church should include several dynamics. It is for that reason this guide has been written to assist you in thinking of concerns as you prepare to reopen your church facility.

Here are some simple words that might guide your thoughts as you plan:

- Reopen in a **MEASURED** way. Use caution and be aware of and follow the recommendations of national, state and local leaders and agencies.
- Reopen in a **PRIORITIZED** way. Determine what your priorities are regarding which services and ministries you will provide immediately, with a desire to add ministries as possible.
- Reopen in a **FOCUSED** way. Focus on the Great Commission. Focus on the spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of all. Focus on making much of Jesus!

Here is an outline for your consideration:

PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

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Questions to Consider :: Suggestions to Consider :: Resources to Consider

FACILITIES

- Cleaning and Sanitizing
 - Before We Gather
 - While We Are Gathered
- Contact Mitigation While on Campus
- Deferred Maintenance

LEADERSHIP

- Staff
- Volunteers

WORSHIP

- Sunday
- Midweek
- Special Events

MINISTRIES

- Sunday School/Bible Study/Small Groups
- Student Ministry
- Preschool and Children's Ministries
- VBS
- Camps/Retreats
- Mission Trips
- Families
- Other

FINANCES

- Church Finances
- Online Giving

FACILITIES

As we plan for What's Next, we must prepare our facilities to reopen. Keep in mind that extra care must be given to make people feel comfortable after this time of stay-at-home orders and continued social distancing. Added precautions should be taken to ease the worries and concerns that our people will have.

Doing all you can in advance will show your concern and care for your congregation and the community. Remember to follow the guidelines of federal, state and local leaders and agencies as you reopen your facilities.

GENERAL CLEANING/SANITIZING

Questions to Consider

1. Do we understand the Alabama Department of Public Health recommendations in order to reopen?
2. Do we have proper sanitizing products and, if difficult to obtain, adequate substitutes?
3. Do we need additional volunteers to prepare for reopening?
4. Have we considered the traffic flow of people and areas in which social distancing will be difficult? Could we reroute traffic flow?
5. How can we eliminate the touching of surfaces to the best of our ability?

Suggestions to Consider

1. Regularly wipe down surfaces with disinfectant, especially those surfaces that would likely be touched. These would include tables, pews, counters, door hardware, light switches, electronic equipment and so on.
2. Consider having carpets cleaned and/or use a professional cleaning service to deep clean the church, especially restrooms.
3. Clean/wipe down restrooms between services or between Sunday School and worship.
4. Install hand sanitizer stations throughout the church.
5. Consider making your church as "touchless" as possible.
 - a. Prop doors open with greeter stationed six feet outside or six feet inside.
 - b. Place offering plates at each exit instead of passing the plates.
 - c. Consider using sealed, self-contained Lord's Supper kits which include cracker and juice cup.
 - d. Do not provide a printed bulletin at this time.
 - e. Consider removing Bibles and hymnals from pew racks especially if you have multiple services.

Resources to Consider

1. GuideStone COVID-19 Resources – [guidestone.org/promotions/COVID-19-Resources](https://www.guidestone.org/promotions/COVID-19-Resources)
2. Church Law and Tax – [churchlawandtax.com](https://www.churchlawandtax.com)

CONTACT MITIGATION

Questions to Consider

1. What measures could we implement that will mitigate the spread of germs while on campus?
2. How can we encourage social distancing during worship?
3. How will we handle ministry to children? Will they attend worship with their family?
4. What needs to change about worship?
5. Do we have any plans for limiting the size of groups that attend? Can you take advantage of live streaming to reduce attendance numbers on a temporary basis?

Suggestions to Consider

1. Discourage any physical contact such as handshakes and hugs.
2. Honor the six-foot social distancing guideline. Keep a safe distance between family groups.
3. Children and youth/students should sit with their families. Do not offer a nursery or children's worship.
4. Bulletins and other handouts are discouraged initially. As things improve, they can be reintroduced in a way that reduces contact.
5. Discourage the use of hymnals and pew Bibles. Consider removing them from pew racks for the immediate future.
6. Multiple worship options, multiple gathering areas on site and continued live streaming may need to be used to mitigate personal contact.
7. Encourage handwashing and hand sanitizing with restrooms being used by one person at a time.
8. Designate some hallways, aisles and doors as one-way to help with traffic flow and contact mitigation.

MAINTENANCE ISSUES

Questions to Consider

1. What needs to be done to make the building look clean and refreshed?
2. What will it cost?
3. Do we have volunteers/church members capable of doing these projects well?
4. What are priority needs? Which one(s) can be deferred?
5. How do we resource those needs?

Suggestions to Consider

1. Utilize the skills and expertise of your members who are willing to volunteer.
2. Seek outside help for projects that require great skill.

Resources to Consider

Ask the State Board of Missions to provide a consultant who will put an unbiased, knowledgeable set of fresh eyes on your needs. Contact State Missionary Rick Barnhart for assistance at rbarnhart@alsbom.org.

LEADERSHIP

Leading well through these days of uncertainty is essential and can be challenging. The demands upon leadership can take their toll on those who are looked to for guidance and wisdom.

Prayer is our greatest resource to enable us to lead well. We must remember to connect with God as our Source of wisdom and strength. As a leader, your example of prayer will be an encouragement to those you lead. Spend time seeking the Lord. Listen carefully to God's leading. Pray with and for your leadership, both staff and lay leaders. Continue to lean upon the Lord as you lead.

Remain focused on your calling. Keep the mission of the church in the forefront of your efforts. Be sensitive to God's direction in this new day of ministry.

Questions to Consider

1. How can we communicate to our church and community the steps we are taking to maintain clean and safe conditions on campus and a relevant ministry future?
2. Are there ministries that we need to initiate as a result of these challenging times?
3. Are there ministries that we need to improve?
4. Are there ministries that we need to discontinue that have become obsolete because of this new reality?
5. What adjustments will we need to make to staff responsibilities?
6. How will we handle the issue of volunteer resignations due to their concerns over COVID-19? Will those presently serving continue for an extended time?
7. What policies do we need to adjust due to this new reality? How will areas like constitution/bylaws, policies/procedures, financial and personnel issues and others be affected?
8. How will we conduct our meetings – business, deacons, committees and others – in this new day?

Suggestions to Consider

1. Have a weekly prayer time with staff/leadership.
2. Use your website and social media platforms to effectively communicate your efforts to reopen the church.
3. Mail information about your reopening strategy to members. Initiate a phone campaign to stay in touch with members in the absence of online options.
4. Evaluate with leadership the ministries of your church. Start new ones, revamp existing ones, and discontinue those which are ineffective and obsolete.
5. Work to update procedures and policies to allow effective ministry during extreme times.
6. Evaluate staff responsibilities and adjust as needed for efficient ministry.
7. Determine how emergency decisions can be made without a business meeting.
8. Encourage volunteers to remain faithful and adjust to those who might resign due to current situations.

Resources to Consider

1. The Office of LeaderCare & Church Health has resources that can assist with these concerns. Contact Linda Hicks at (334) 613-2263, lhicks@alsbom.org for printed resources or go online for help at alsbom.org.
2. A very helpful article has been written by Tony Wolfe, director of Pastor/Church Relations for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, entitled "Spiritual Preparation for Re-Gathering the Church." Access it at tonywolfe.net/2020/04/22/spiritual-preparation-for-re-gathering-the-church/.

WORSHIP

When we can reopen for corporate worship on our church campus, we will have to adjust to comply with the guidelines given to us by federal, state and local leaders and agencies. In the process of seeking to comply with all the guidelines, do not fail to focus on the awesome God we serve. Celebrate and worship Him. He is worthy of all our worship!

Questions to Consider

1. Do we want to continue having an online worship presence? What resources, scheduling procedures, personnel and equipment are needed?
2. Should we consider having a praise team rather than a full choir in live worship?
3. What will congregational singing look like? Will spacing guidelines be practical? Should we sing congregationally at the risk of spreading the virus?
4. How do we receive the offering, celebrate the Lord's Supper and welcome each other and guests with limited physical contact?
5. How do we monitor attendance based on governmental guidelines utilizing our worship space(s)?

Suggestions to Consider

1. A small praise team is preferable over a choir in this situation.
2. If the decision is made to limit congregational singing, use congregational Scripture reading and/or responsive readings to promote congregational participation.
3. If more than one worship service is scheduled, offer services based on risk tolerance and age instead of dividing the congregation alphabetically. Provide monitored access to worship space(s) by using assigned parking areas with signage and specified entrances for the worship space(s).
4. Ask families to sit together.
5. Limit the use of microphones to platform personnel.
6. Restrict seating closest to platform.
7. Have security teams available to address the actions of people who may be opposed to the resumption of services.

Resources to Consider

Visit resourcingworship.com/ for a thorough compilation of online blogs and articles dealing with worship service issues for reopening.

MINISTRIES

Realizing that group ministries are a vital part of the believer's spiritual growth, we need to stay connected to these specific ministries that impact our lives.

Because of the uncertainty of when small group ministries will be allowed to relaunch in person, we must be willing to start slowly and incrementally. As we engage with others in these meaningful relationships, we will have to comply with the guidelines from federal, state and local leaders and agencies.

This new reality will necessitate the development of new ways to minister to current and prospective members. Online platforms will become a reality for ministries in the days ahead.

Questions to Consider

1. Will we be able to maintain social distancing guidelines for the specific ministry?
2. What will be our plan for cleaning and sanitizing before, during and after these gatherings?
3. Will we have adequate leadership if some step down out of health concerns?
4. How will we address social and greeting functions that often are a function of group ministries, such as greeting, handshakes, hugs, coffee, snacks, childcare provisions and so on?
5. Do our meeting areas allow for proper social distancing given the average attendance in the past? Will we be limited in some areas when multiple groups such as Sunday School are gathering?
6. What ministries or groups would be better served through virtual gatherings and making provisions of materials and curriculum to homes? What about mission trips?
7. How will we address the needs of senior adults who are not technologically engaged and have feelings of isolation and loneliness?

Suggestions to Consider

1. Ministries such as Sunday School may need to remain virtual and home-assisted for a longer period because of the unique needs of preschoolers, children and senior adults. Develop a technology task force to assist and answer questions. The size and age groups of your gatherings will be a determining factor of eventually gathering at the church on Sunday, Wednesday, or for summer ministries such as VBS and/or camps.
2. Ministries such as disaster relief and needs-based community help may already be functioning. Please keep in mind suggested guidelines for health and safety.
3. Small groups and home groups may be possible if safety guidelines can be followed.
4. Do not abandon your virtual presence in any ministry for now. It can always be scaled back later, if needed.
5. Emphasize connecting with people over gathering, so ministry needs can be discovered and met. Mission trips may need to focus more on local needs for a season due to travel restrictions.
6. Prioritize cleanliness as groups begin to gather in the church. Develop a task force to address this priority need.

7. As you begin to return to normal, emphasize equipping in addition to teaching. This will prepare the church and families for what might happen in the future.

Resources to Consider

1. Sunday School and Bible Study meetings: alsbom.org, for topical Zoom meetings, alsbom.org/ss, OneGreatSunday.org, sundayschoolleader.com, kenbraddy.com and on Facebook join Alabama Baptist Sunday School & Discipleship (facebook.com/SundaySchoolandDiscipleship).
2. Disciple Making groups: aldiscipleshipconference.com, disciplemakingal.com, disciplealabama.org
3. Men's Ministry: AlabamaMen.org, or Facebook.com/alabamamen1/
4. Student Ministry: YMLink.org also on [Facebook](https://Facebook.com), [Twitter](https://Twitter.com), [Instagram](https://Instagram.com), [YouTube](https://YouTube.com) and [Vimeo](https://Vimeo.com)
5. Preschool/Children/ VBS Ministry: KidzLinkAL.org, and on Facebook, [VBS AL: Tips and Training](https://VBSAL.org)
6. Senior Adult Ministry: On Facebook at Alabama Baptist Sunday School & Discipleship (www.facebook.com/SundaySchoolandDiscipleship)
7. Mission Trips: sgoldman@alsbom.org or cmcintosh@alsbom.org

FINANCES

This unique time has certainly put a strain on church and personal finances. With that reality in mind, we must adjust both as a church and as individuals and families in the days ahead. We will have to evaluate our resources, make wise decisions and be good stewards of all that God has provided. Budget planning is a critical element for ministry consideration as you plan towards reopening your church campus.

If your congregation does not have an online giving option, you might consider [GiveThree65](https://GiveThree65.com), which is available only for churches affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention. GiveThree65 has NO setup fee, NO monthly fees and NO contract requirements.

Questions to Consider

1. What impact has this time away had on church tithes and offerings?
2. How will we adjust the budget to reflect these new projections?
3. Which budget items must be added? Which should be eliminated or reduced?
4. Should we consider making an online giving option available if it's not already?
5. How can we assist our members to be effective stewards of their resources?

Suggestions to Consider

1. Project long-term trends on giving.
2. Forecast the bottom-line impact of these giving trends related to church receipts.
3. Identify budget items to be eliminated.
4. Reduce budget items where possible.
5. Identify budget items which must be increased.
6. Realize that cleaning and contact mitigation efforts will be an ongoing expense that is most likely beyond current budget planning. Consider how you will fund these required resources (donations of cleaning supplies, budget adjustments, etc.)
7. Identify new ministry opportunities and their associated costs.
8. Make immediate church budget adjustments according to church policy.
9. Consider [GiveThree65](#) as a digital giving platform.
10. Encourage families who have not been significantly impacted financially to consider being a blessing to those in need in the church.
11. Assist those families in need with resources to help with family budgeting and stewardship principles.
12. Remind church members of the impact their giving continues to have on local ministries as well as worldwide missions endeavors through the Cooperative Program.

Resources to Consider

1. Is Your Church Budget Useless? (PDF) alsbom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Is_Your_Church_Budget_Useless__Busby_TCN.pdf
2. "Church Finances in a Pandemic" article by Ralph Moore, exponential.org (exponential.org/church-finances-pandemic/)
3. Church Ministry Budgeting (cooperativeprogramresources.org/shop/church-ministry-budgeting/)
4. Budgeting for Churches Without a Written Budget (PDF) alsbom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Budgeting-for-the-Church-without-a-Written-Budget_color.pdf
5. Deciding What to Remove from Your Budget (PDF) alsbom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Priority-Based-Budgeting_color.pdf
6. New Ministry Budget Proposal (PDF) alsbom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/How-to-budget-Ministry-Sheet.pdf
7. GiveThree65 – an online giving solution from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and The Baptist Foundation of Alabama: givethree65.com
8. Stewardship resources are available from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions through the Office of Cooperative Program & Stewardship Development. Contact Jim Swedenburg, (334) 613-2283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.
9. Christian Financial Planning Booklet cooperativeprogramresources.org/shop/christian-financial-planning-booklet/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions: alsbom.org
- *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper: thealabamabaptist.org/index.php?s=covid
- The Baptist Foundation of Alabama: tbfa.org
- Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission: erlc.com/resource-library/series-index/covid-19
- GuideStone Financial Resources: guidestone.org/promotions/COVID-19-Resources
- LifeWay Christian Resources: lifeway.com/coronavirus
- ALtogether Alabama: altogetheralabama.org
- Alabama Department of Public Health: alabamapublichealth.gov
- Guidelines for Opening Up America Again: whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov

Your State Board of Missions is interested in receiving feedback regarding this set of questions, suggestions and resources for “Preparing for What’s Next.” Please send comments and suggestions to State Missionary Keith Hinson in the Office of Communications & Technology Services at khinson@alsbom.org.



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