



Ministering During Covid

SNE
MINISTRY NETWORK

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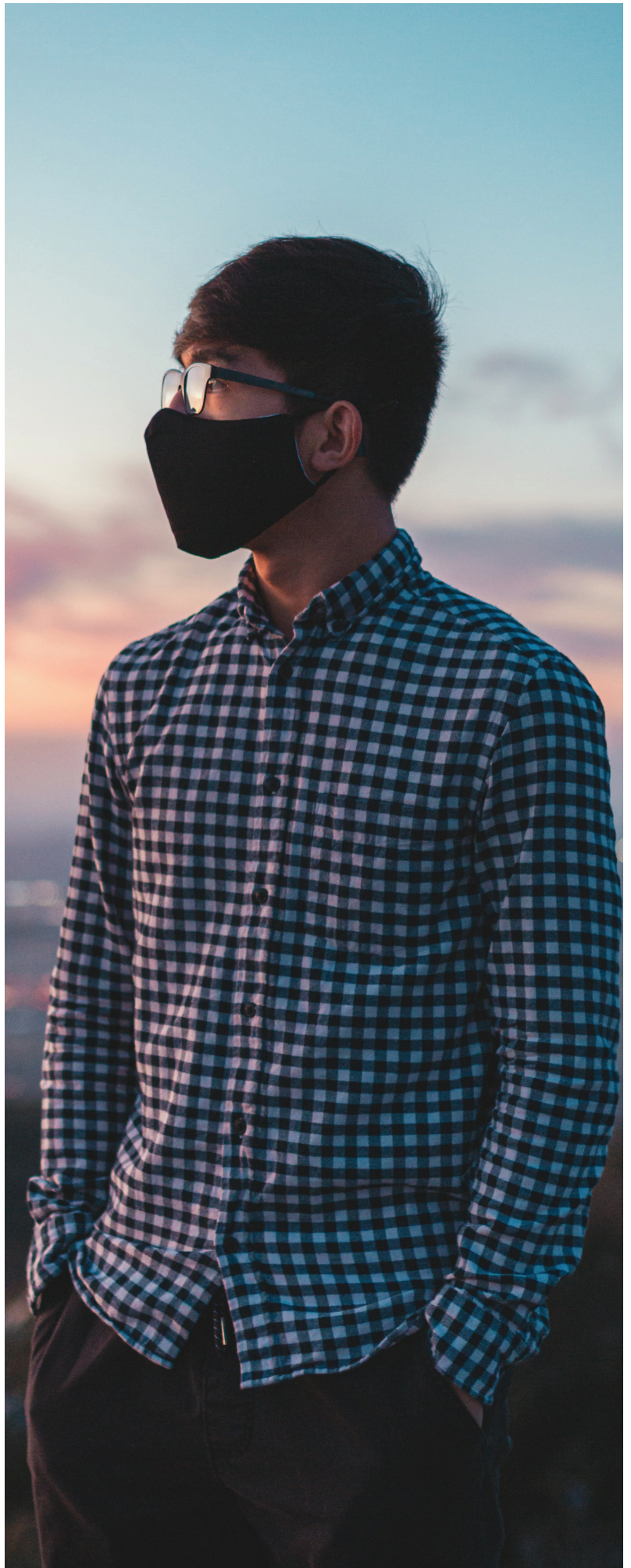
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God has entrusted us to lead well during this historic moment in church history. Let us rise to the occasion!

GUIDELINES

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles serve as the lens through which decisions can be made. It is easy in seasons like this one to allow urgency or fear to play a greater role than it should when making good and sound choices. The following are some of the factors that should be considered as you lead:

- Public witness of the church
- The prayerful wisdom of your staff and leadership team(s)
- The safety of your congregation
- The particular needs and circumstances of your local congregation
- The plans of other churches in your community and state
- The guidance of your insurance company and legal counsel
- The latest recommendations/orders from your state/federal government and the CDC

PHASING

The phasing process has been established by your local state government to support the efforts of containing the virus and ensuring the health of our communities. Phasing varies from state to state and often from month to month. It is essential that you are well aware of the current phase your state is in and how the restrictions of that phase affect your in person gathering size limitations. For updates on phasing, please use the below websites and text lines to ensure you remain up to date.

MASSACHUSETTS:

State website: [MA.gov/reopening](https://ma.gov/reopening)

Text Alerts: <https://member.everbridge.net/index/406686158291020/#/signup>

CONNECTICUT:

State website: <https://ct.gov/Coronavirus>

Text Alerts: Text your zip code to 888-777

RHODE ISLAND:

State website: reopeningri.com

<https://health.ri.gov/covid/>

Text Alerts: Text your zip code to 888-777

MASKS

CHURCH MANDATES/GUIDELINES

Our churches are a vital contribution to the culture and community of our states. Implementing state mandates and guidelines within our churches will lower the risk of COVID-19 infection and keep our congregation and community safe. We encourage you and your staff/leadership team to lead by example in this area.

STATE MANDATES

Masks are used to help protect yourself and others from being infected with COVID-19. Each state has its own mask mandate that you and your church staff should be aware of. In addition, some states have issued individual county mandates for masks in areas where there has been an outbreak or higher infection rate. It is important to stay informed on your state, federal and CDC mandates and guidelines regarding mask usage. See “Phasing” for a list of your state government website for the latest mask mandate updates.

COMMUNICATION

It is vital that you communicate your churches expectations for mask wearing both inside your church and during church gatherings of any kind. Setting clear expectations and modeling them will help your congregants to feel safe and well cared for. Should you encounter a congregant that does not feel comfortable wearing a mask, suggest they join you virtually for service from the comfort and safety of their homes.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Practicing social distancing is a challenge. Much of our church culture is conducted in small gatherings, groups and meetings. We understand. However, during this time, it is essential that proper social distancing etiquette be implemented as we continue to preserve the health of those around us.

Hugs and Handshakes. Church culture is filled with shaking hands, embracing and laying hands on the sick. Your church will need to consider an updated policy on carrying out these actions. Perhaps you consider waving instead of shaking hands or stretching out your hands instead of laying on of hands during prayer.

Thorough Communication. Post Social Distancing reminders on doors, video screens, and make announcements. Avoid printed bulletins and handouts if possible.

Reduce Capacity. Churches should follow the recommendations of their state government for capacity limits on in-person gatherings. Please check your state government website for phasing and capacity limit information. Please note, state phasing is regularly updated.

Limit Contact. Churches should encourage families to sit together as a group and sit seated at least 6 ft. from other families.

Masks. Churches should adhere to local state guidelines for wearing masks both indoors and outdoors. Staff pastors should be encouraged to lead by example in modeling proper masking protocols. Read more under “masks”.

Stagger Entry and Exit. Churches should consider staggering dismissals (eg. Dismiss by section or alternating rows) to eliminate crowding. If a church is holding multiple services, it is recommended that congregants be asked to leave using a different exit door in order to maintain the cleanliness of the entrance.

COMMUNICATION

With your team of leaders, outline a strategy for how your church will communicate your upcoming plans. Keep in mind the following perspectives:

- Carefully consider whatever you post on social media since it will need to be viewed through the lens of what the watching world will see. The unchurched may not readily understand your enthusiasm for reconvening in group settings.
- Guidelines and recommendations are being updated continually. It will be important for your people to be fully informed of your church’s plans and protocols via email, website, and phone calls as new phases are implemented.
- Some people in your church will be thrilled to meet again, as soon as possible and others will feel that a “wait and see” approach is more fitting. Choose your words as carefully as possible when conveying your plans.
- As sensitively as possible, help families with young children, senior citizens, those who are at risk, etc., to understand why others in your congregation will reasonably have concerns about their attendance. For example, some parents will be disappointed and concerned if other young children come near their own while in the church service.

CLEANLINESS

Offer Sanitization. Offer plenty of hand sanitizer in various locations and encourage usage. If possible, provide cleaning wipes and face masks

Deep clean your entire church. Assess where will germs may be transferred. Consider shampooing carpets, sanitizing pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, and microphones. Have volunteers do a thorough cleaning after each service and disinfect hard surfaces every 15 minutes while the building is occupied.

Communicate Preparedness. Tell people through flyers on the doors, email, and social media about how the church/ministry has prepared for their arrival. Be sure to use the words “non-touch worship experience” or something similar.

Shorten Exposure. Consider shortening service times to 45 minutes or less in order to cut down the exposure time and to decrease the number of people needing to use the rest room.

Limit Transfer Surfaces. Assess the variety of transfer surfaces used within a service. Consider how you might limit the usage or prepare other means. Some ideas can be found below:

- It is suggested to not “Pass the Offering Plate” from person to person. Some proposed solutions are the use of a “giving box” at the entrances or promoting online giving. Ushers are encouraged to wear gloves when counting the money.
- Minimize microphone passing on stage and sanitize microphones that may disassemble.
- If your church offers communion, it is recommended to use individual communion packets distributed at a table upon entry
- We recommend withholding coffee stations and/or cafes and group meals at this time.



LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION

Administrative policy. Adjust to and set criteria for the return of administrative scenarios such as: return to work, staff meetings, board meetings, and other such meetings.

Staff/leadership job descriptions. Does rebounding from this crisis require adjustments to existing staff/leadership/volunteer job descriptions? A few leaders may be forced into temporary bi-vocational ministry. If so, put the what, how, and when on paper. It is hard to solve problems that are yet to be articulated.

Sustaining online presence. Dates and strategies should be determined to maintain and sustain online services and distanced spiritual care for vulnerable populations. It would also be wise to find ways for your people to connect with your new virtual community watching online.

Rework budget. Revisit your church budget to make sure it can finance the needs and realities of this new season. Some items will need to be eliminated, reallocated, or added in light of COVID-19.

Following are a few questions that may help you begin that process:

- What are the basic necessities to operate our current facilities and pay staff?
- What new streams of revenue should we explore?
- How much of our cash reserves did we exhaust?
- Do we have an understanding of how unemployment has affected our community?
- Does that reflect our budget?
- How are we going to build something into the budget to care for these in need?
- How can we get 2-3 months of emergency funds saved to operate in the event of another outbreak or emergency?
- Are we prepared with a solid, reasonably priced online giving company?
- What ministry areas are producing and need more funding?
- What was stopped during the pandemic and does not need to restart?
- What areas are receiving funding but are not producing?
- What do we find to be less valuable after COVID-19? Does it need to continue?
- What new ministry outlets do we want to continue?
- If our budget is solid, how can we support or care for newer or struggling churches?
- Are we funding anything that does not align with the vision to move forward?
- How are we thanking those who are generous?

Prepare for the next phase. Federal and state governments will continue to increase the maximum number of participants allowed in group events. It would be wise for you to think through those stages now and what ministries will be impacted and how.

DEPLOYING OUTREACH

Identify high potential volunteers. Some people will turn inward and need to be ministered to. Others will be challenged and eager to reach out to others. Encourage those who are ready and willing to engage.

Dispatch ministry teams. Dispatch able and willing people to serve the town/city or other organizations when restrictions are lifted:

- Serving the sick
- Weathering financial need and uncertainty
- Launching virtual small groups
- Loving and serving their community well

Financial empowerment. Resource those facing negative economic ramifications (job loss, position reduction, or transfer). This may involve:

- Creating an online jobs-needed list and make available to your Facebook group or page on your church website.
- Résumé center where people in your church can get an idea of the qualifications of those needing work in order to better recommend them to others.
- Create an employment need prayer list.
- Send a weekly email of encouragement from the pastoral staff to those needing work.
- Create a system to provide letters of recommendation from influential people in your church.
- If you do not have a benevolence policy, you will need a simple one to help you better steward your limited resources.



WHAT TO DO IF A STAFF MEMBER TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID

Below are important steps that we encourage churches to consider taking when it learns that a staff person has tested positive for COVID-19.

1. RESPOND
2. COMMUNICATE
3. REPORT

RESPOND

It is essential that the potential/infected staff member feels supported. Please find the below suggestions on how to respond when you are notified that a staff member is:

Experiencing COVID like symptoms or Has received a positive COVID test result

- **Establish a COVID-19 reporting policy and procedure for your church staff** and have them sign that they agree to uphold your policy.
- **Identify what type of COVID test you feel is adequate to return to work and consider covering the expense** for the test should the staff member not have health insurance. The 3 types of COVID tests are: Molecular Test (aka RNA or PCR), Antigen Test (aka rapid test), and antibody test (aka blood test).
- **If the staff member is experiencing 2 or more COVID like symptoms**, encourage the staff member to schedule a COVID test and work from home until they receive their negative test result. All meetings/business should be rescheduled or moved to a remote option.

Or, **if the staff member has tested positive for COVID-19**, the staff member should quarantine at home for 14 days and obtain a negative COVID test result before returning to work.

- **Contact trace:** Determine whether other employees may have been exposed to the potentially/infected staff member. This includes anyone whom were within 6 feet distance or unprotected direct contact with the infected individual.

COMMUNICATE

Communication is key to ensure your staff feel supported and safe to continue their work. Below are some recommendations on how to communicate to your staff when a team member is either exhibiting symptoms/ tests positive for COVID.

Notify staff: It is critical to communicate to your staff (in writing) when a team member reports exhibiting COVID like symptoms or testing positive for COVID. Your message might look or sound something like this:

"It has come to our attention that a staff member is experiencing COVID like symptoms. This staff member will be scheduling a COVID test within the next 24 hours. As a precautionary measure, we will be closing the office today for a deep cleaning. Please work from home until otherwise noted. We will communicate with you the results of the test as soon as we have them. Thank you."

"We've determined that on [DATE] you had prolonged close contact with a staff member/individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. Under CDC and state guidance, we recommend that you get tested immediately. Please work from home until the results of your test are administered. Should your results be negative, you may then return to work. Should your results be positive, we ask that you quarantine at home for 14 days and until you can provide a negative test result."

REPORT

If you are experiencing a COVID cluster amongst your staff, volunteer leadership and/or congregation, we encourage you to report it to the SNE Ministry Network office and work with your state public health officials.

1. **Report positive COVID-19 cases of any credential holder to Network Superintendent**
2. **Notify your public health officials.** Your state and local health authorities may have requirements for reporting for infections occurring in places of worship. Check your state government website or contact your state hotline for further information.
3. **Alert Network Superintendent immediately of COVID clusters at your church**
4. **Alert church members as needed**



WHAT TO DO IF A CONGREGANT TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID

Below are important steps that we encourage churches to take when it learns that a congregant has tested positive for COVID-19.

1. RESPOND
2. COMMUNICATE
3. REPORT

RESPOND

1. Establish a **COVID Reporting Policy and Procedure for volunteers** and encourage volunteers to read and sign it
2. Encourage volunteers and/or congregants **to get tested for COVID-19** should they be exhibiting symptoms before returning to church
3. If a confirmed COVID-19 case is reported from a volunteer and/or congregant, **encourage all church staff to get tested**. See What To Do If a Staff Member Tests Positive For COVID-19 section
4. **Contact Trace:** Encourage the volunteer/congregant to create a list of anyone whom they were in contact with from the church and encourage the infected person to reach out to those individuals
5. **Consider closing the church office and hiring a company to clean/sanitize the facility**
6. **Consider hosting service virtually** for a week or two

COMMUNICATE

1. **Notify church staff** of pertinent information regarding the infected person(s)
2. **Notify congregation** that there has been a positive COVID case of a congregant via email/social media and website
3. **Clearly define what is being done as a church to address the issue**
4. **Reinstate church COVID protocols for gathering**

REPORT

1. Consider your town ordinances for reporting isolated cases and/or clusters
2. Report clusters to the SNE Network Superintendent
3. Report clusters to your local public health officials

MEDIA GUIDELINES

Should your church experience a COVID cluster, you may be contacted by the media for a statement. The below guidelines will help you prepare for such an event.

1. Establish one “point person” who will speak on behalf of the church. This should be the only person to speak to the media regarding the incident
2. Form your response off of a key messaging document that phrases your responses in an effective way and highlights what you want the media outlet to know
3. Consider running your statement by the Network office first for input and further guidance

EXTENDED CARE

Hindsight is 20/20

WHAT ARE YOU LEARNING?

As in all ministry, taking time to reflect and learn is critical to moving forward. As we continue to journey through the effects of leading our ministries through the pandemic, we encourage you to consider asking yourself these reflective questions:

- What are the top five things I am learning in this season of crisis?
- What am I doing now, that I wasn't doing before, that I will keep doing?
- What am I not doing now, that I was doing, that I will leave behind?

This crisis has changed us forever. It has forced us to be more creative, innovative, and adaptive. It has helped us identify more authentic ways to exist. It has given us a great appreciation for things we once took for granted as churches and ministries. A planned approach to moving into a new season will help you abandon irrelevant practices and embrace new ones.

This crisis will require the church to extend new ministries to the sick, grieving, unemployed, and vulnerable in our cities. Our previous season may not have provided enough margin for the new ministries our future will demand. Therefore, failing to plan will result in irrelevance. Now is a time to innovate and think about the purpose, role, and function, of your church in this new context.

COMMUNITY ASSESMENT

In order to assess the needs of our communities, you might consider contacting several community leaders to request a short interview by phone to determine the pressing needs of your city/town. This can include a combination of the mayor, city manager, various city council members, fire and police chiefs, command staff, school principals, city departments, neighborhood services, county commissioner, nonprofit leaders, and social services.

Some questions you might ask are:

- What are the most pressing spiritual, personal, and social needs people have in our town/city/neighborhood?
- What are the five (5) greatest needs our city/neighborhood is facing right now?
- How can we support the existing work our local government agencies are doing?
- What gaps need to be filled in this area that only a faith-based work can do?
- What vulnerable population in our community is underserved and how?
- Who in our town/city is effectively meeting COVID-19 needs?
- What local resources are available to help our citizens that we can share with our congregation and community?

Then evaluate how you might strategically align your church/ministry to help in these areas as well as others you may need to jump in and get "on-the-job training" for.

PRAYER

How can you mobilize people in prayer for God's miraculous intervention for those affected by the virus in your church and community.

Consider crafting intentional prayer focuses for:

- People who have lost jobs
- People who tested positive
- Business owners you know
- Your church's outreach in the community
- Those most vulnerable to the virus
- Governmental leaders (including the President and governor)
- Health care professionals
- Scientists, researchers, and the vaccine
- Those financially impacted
- Those mourning the loss of loved ones
- Churches to be ready to minister
- Pastors as they lead
- The hurting, homeless, and hopeless
- Those far from God to come close and know Christ.

LEADER CARE

Ministry leaders cannot maintain the fast pace, emotional engagement, continuous innovation, and instant availability that the crisis initially demanded. Important questions to consider are:

- What spiritual disciplines need to be strengthened?
- What boundaries need to be determined?
- What expectations are both reasonable and sustainable?

Leading in crises requires you to write emotional, physical, and spiritual checks every day. Are you making spiritual deposits into your soul that can cover the leadership checks you are writing? How are your marriage and family relationships? How are you processing the many shifting emotions?

What type of emotional/spiritual support will you need to include for yourself (i.e. peer support, counseling, coaching, etc.)?

See Resource Section for Counseling and Mental Health Resources.

RESOURCES

CHURCH RESOURCES

[CMN and Act2 ReLaunch Kit:](https://covid19.ag.org/en/Resources/FR-Church-Leadership/Church-Relaunch-Kit)

<https://covid19.ag.org/en/Resources/FR-Church-Leadership/Church-Relaunch-Kit>

[AG Covid- 19 Resources:](https://covid19.ag.org)

<https://covid19.ag.org>

[Vanderbloemen Group \(Re-Opening Resources for Churches of Various Sizes\):](https://www.vanderbloemen.com/reopening-church)

<https://www.vanderbloemen.com/reopening-church>

[Whitehouse Opening Up America Again Guidelines:](https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica>

[Made to Flourish:](http://www.madetoflourish.org)

<http://www.madetoflourish.org>

[Ed Stetzer's COVID-19 Website:](https://coronavirusandthechurch.com)

<https://coronavirusandthechurch.com>

[Christianity Today:](https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/april/what-relaunching-church-might-look-like-over-next-312-month.html)

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/april/what-relaunching-church-might-look-like-over-next-312-month.html>

[Pastor Resiliency Resources \(Soul care resources for ministers\):](https://coronavirusandthechurch.com/resiliency)

<https://coronavirusandthechurch.com/resiliency>

[Center for Disease Control:](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

COUNSELING, COACHING AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:

[Christian Counselors Network:](http://www.christiancounselors.network)

<http://www.christiancounselors.network>

[Pastor Wellness Resources](http://PastorWellnessResources.org)

<http://PastorWellnessResources.org>

[Zoom Fatigue:](https://curtthompsonmd.com/a-body-of-work/)

<https://curtthompsonmd.com/a-body-of-work/>

[American Christian Counseling Association:](https://connect.aacc.net/?search_type=distance)

https://connect.aacc.net/?search_type=distance

[Clearpoint Coaching:](http://clearpointcoaching.com)

<http://clearpointcoaching.com>