



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Releases Guidance on Reopening Houses of Worship**

**NASHVILLE, TENN.** – Today, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives released guidance for faith communities on gathering together in houses of worship.

"Tennessee's faith leaders have been incredibly innovative in finding alternative ways to worship that incorporate social distancing so they can continue to provide spiritual guidance, fellowship, and service to their neighbors during these challenging times," said Tennessee Governor Bill Lee. "Religious liberty is important and must be protected, and that's why the State has always deemed religious services as essential gatherings throughout this pandemic. As we look to reopen our economy in a safe fashion, the decision on in-person gatherings will be up to each individual faith community. We're confident in their ability to determine the proper time and how to incorporate these guidelines to worship in a way that protects the health of their congregation."

The full guidelines can be found [here](#) and include:

- A phased approach to resuming in-person gatherings is recommended. Vulnerable populations (everyone 65 years and older, people with disabilities, people with serious respiratory or cardiovascular conditions, people who are immunocompromised, and others) and children's activities/nursery programs should not gather in person until a later time.
- Consider solutions to minimize close personal contact that may be part of your services, such as handshakes or sharing food and drink.
- As the phased approach begins, limit the size of attendance in your sanctuary and other confined spaces to create seating arrangements that provide at least 6-foot distancing between families. It is recommended not to exceed 50% of maximum capacity of the room and should enable full compliance with CDC recommendations for social distancing and hygiene.
- Wear face coverings.

- Encourage members of the community to stay at home if they are symptomatic, have a fever, have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, or have traveled internationally or to a domestic hot spot in the past two weeks.
- If a member of the congregation has tested positive for COVID-19, consult CDC guidelines and local health department recommendations to determine whether in-person gatherings should cease immediately, the building should close for additional cleaning, or other protocol changes are required.

View the full guidelines [here](#).

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