



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What about clergy with pre-existing conditions? Will we be required to go back to public ministry?

Please have a conversation with your DS and your SPRC. We do not want any clergy or laity who are high risk to be made even more vulnerable. Laity who are comfortable returning to public worship can lead the service. Lay leaders, worship leaders, and others are encouraged to be part of this planning. Preachers could use Facebook, Zoom, Skype, Bluejeans or other formats to be virtually present in the sanctuary.

2. What about HVAC systems (air conditioning and heat)? (updated 5/26/20)

From the most recent webinar on HVAC systems:

For those with Central Air, experts now agree there is minimal risk that running your HVAC will increase exposure to the virus. Though, it is still recommended to close off spaces not in use during this season of cautious reentry. Experts encourage you to run your central air throughout the week as it helps keep humidity down; humidity keeps the virus airborne longer than the normal 3 hours.

They further recommend high-efficiency filters that are created for allergens as they can remove particles of equivalent size.

For those with window model air conditioning, it is recommended you do not run your system, instead open windows for airflow.

After the gathering, everyone must leave the space for 3 hours to allow any airborne pathogens to settle. After that 3-hour window, the cleaning and sanitizing crew may go through. After sanitizing occurs, you can have the next service. Remember folks attending worship are still encouraged to mask except for those under the age of 3 or having a condition that prevents masking.

HVAC questions? Go to: <https://www.nafahq.org/covid-19-corona-virus-and-air-filtration-frequently-asked-questions-faqs/#What%20filter%20should%20I%20use%20to%20protect%20those%20in%20my%20building%20from%20COVID-19?>

3. What do these HVAC guidelines then mean?

The most common response by communities of faith is they are planning for a singular early morning service; for larger congregations - many are trying to incorporate the 3-hour aerosol time and clean-up - some are doing so by adding a late morning or early afternoon worship inside - or moving their folks to different parts of the building. Many are aiming for outdoor services only. Weekly filter change is still recommended.

4. What about children's ministry?

Children are not immune to the Covid19 virus. Children also will struggle to maintain a 6-foot perimeter of social distancing around them without 2 adults present. If you can envision this possibility, it is recommended 2 adults and no more than 8 children in a space. Adults can rotate (i.e. VBS rotation) while children will remain in their appointed space for all activity.

5. What about music ministry?

If there are 12 feet between the organist/musician/praise band (socially distanced from one another) and the front row of the appropriately distanced congregation - live music can happen. However, worshipers are encouraged to *not* sing and to remain masked. (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm>) All worship team members (including the pastor) are encouraged to mask when not singing or speaking.

Socially distanced bells/chimes are an option. You may consider non-wind instruments during this season.

6. What are the guiding questions that will help my congregation make the decisions they need to make?

- A. What is the hoped-for experience? Shall we do parking lot worship like "trunk or treat" and have tailgates open or chairs out - staying socially distanced by household? How would we set worship up outdoors? What other venues could we use? i.e. Where we could do a drive-in church in the round?
- B. Shall we begin with small group, home church, outdoor venues only?
- C. How do we best care for our congregation and mitigate their fears?
- D. Will we be able to meet our expectations around ministry of worship or do we wait?
- E. How do we best connect with our children? Shall we meet with select age groups?
- F. What can we offer Middle and High School students? i.e. - Zoom online or Campfire distanced worship.
- G. How do we connect with members? I.e. lawn chair ministry where you drive to their front porch - meet with a socially distanced group of people - bring your own lawn chair - and chat, pray, teach and connect.

7. What about baptism protocol?

Work with your leadership on best practices for your setting. Our recommendation is:

- A. Respond to requests of the parents or individuals for baptism on timing of baptism and their expectations.
- B. Review the current health of all participants (pastor, individual(s) and family members of the one(s) being baptized).
- C. Review the service for everywhere that physical touch is usually a part of the liturgy and ask them about their feelings about this. Share with them when/if you feel comfortable about it or not.
- D. Wearing of masks is mandatory unless the child is under the age of 3. The pastor may remove their mask for liturgy and baptism if comfortable doing so. The family is asked to remain masked.
- E. Stay six feet apart from the family as far as doable. We recognize in the baptismal act there will be a necessary closeness. If the family or the pastor is not comfortable with this, please consider alternatives. For example, if the clergy has pre-existing conditions, they may have another clergy conduct the baptism.
- F. Parents hold the child.
- G. Use something like a small shell to pour or gently sprinkle the water on the crown of the head: any water used will run toward the back of the head. (For your own comfort and self-care, you may choose to wear gloves as the officiant.)

8. What about funeral protocol?

Worship expectations apply as funerals are a worship service. The pastor, church leadership and funeral home directors are encouraged to have a conversation on what Covid19 protocol will look like:

- A. in the church for funerals held in that setting;
- B. funerals held at the funeral home
- C. funerals held at the graveside.

We recognize funeral directors are guided by their professional and licensing standards and trust you will want to coordinate closely with them.

All clergy and local churches in the Iowa Conference should use discretion and best practices when holding funerals at this time: these are limited to 10 people and participants need to observe six feet of social distance with masking strongly encouraged. Handle each funeral case by case, ensuring that you are working with the families concerning their needs and how best to protect their health and well-being. Be mindful of church geography and seating as you determine how best to observe a six feet social distance between all present. Social distancing is an important component to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Be sure to also make use of the whole church. If a church has a chapel, make use of these spaces as well. At funerals, be mindful of grieving families and practice sensitivity as these should be ceremonies of comfort especially through the expression of hugs.

This link is to the National Funeral Directors Association and can serve as a guiding resource in conversation with your local funeral homes. <https://www.nfda.org/covid-19>.

9. How do we use our City and County's data to help us determine if we can move into the yellow phase? (updated 5/26/20)

Please contact your city or county health department or public health agency to determine the trends in your area. They are excellent at resourcing, as well.

If there is not at least two weeks of decline tracked, please refrain from in-house worship.

A few Iowa-specific resources:

<https://coronavirus.iowa.gov/>;

<https://idph.iowa.gov/emerging-health-issues/novel-coronavirus>

Here is an example of a good Public Health resource from Linn County.

<https://www.linncounty.org/health>

One of the very best county resources in Iowa is:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TjWz_rfnpwLvQYirfYKCCQeCni-UbAgsJzrTG8SdE0A/edit?fbclid=IwAR08propE_HtRCVGpkFimXW1GfPtYvMRQqDWqmJWvcvSFdaannzbJk_U4ow#gid=544609725

10. Is singing and spoken communal liturgy safe outside? (updated 5/26/20)

The CDC and local/state have differing opinions on this. It is agreed, however, that singing and communal liturgy are safer outside, although still not recommended. While Mother Nature helps with ventilation in outdoor spaces, folks gathering must still adhere to social distancing guidelines. If people are properly distanced, and congregations choose to sing and be-of-one-voice in other ways, the risk of passing contagions is lowered somewhat. That said, all high-risk folks in attendance are encouraged to mask or stay at home. Further, you are encouraged to live-stream or record the service so that those staying at home can join you for worship virtually.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Forganizations%2Fguidance-community-faith-organizations.html

11. How do Pastors travel safely between multiple charges or multiple services? (updated 5/26/20)

- A. Visit with your SPPR and DS to create a plan if this is particularly stressful for you.
- B. You may request to be first in/first out of your churches.
- C. How might this look? You might do Call to Worship from the entrance and have folks follow you in socially distanced filling pews front to back. Then you might choose to do the benediction from the back of the sanctuary leading your folks into the world as you all exit and return to your cars. When your congregation exits have them do so from rear to front of the church.
- D. It is recommended to change your mask and observe good hand sanitation between congregations. Masks are less effective the longer they are worn as they get damp.

12. How Do You Disinfect Cloth Seats? (updated 5/26/20)

The go-to for this answer is Pew cushion specialists. Check out Waggoners, Inc for cleaning and disinfecting church furniture during Covid19. <https://www.pewcushions.com/covid-19-cleaning-and-sanitizing-guide/>

13. Will UV Filtration in Newer HVAC Systems help? (updated 5/26/20)

The National Air Filtration Association has been a great source for all things HVAC related for all size churches in Iowa. Their website is: <https://www.nafahq.org/covid-19-corona-virus-and-air-filtration-frequently-asked-questions-faqs/>

Specifically, about UV and other technologies:
What about ultraviolet (UV) lamps, do they work?

A properly designed and maintained UV system, often in concert with filtration, humidity control, and airflow management, has been shown to reduce infections from other viruses. The details of the system are very important (e.g., design of fixtures, lamp type, lamp placement airflow amount and mixing, etc.). Simply adding UV to an existing system without consideration of these factors has not been demonstrated to have a benefit.

What about ionizers, ozone generators, plasma, and other air cleaning technologies?

None of these technologies have been proven to reduce infection in real buildings, even if they have promise based on tests in a laboratory or idealized setting. Some of them come with substantial concerns about secondary issues (such as ozone production).

14. If our space is only used once a week, why is it important to disinfect everything? (updated 5/26/20)

If you can be 100% people-free for 5 days, you should be good-to-go if the HVAC is building-wide. If you have more than one HVAC system - avoid the spaces of the one shared with the sanctuary for 5 days.

15. How do we serve communion and keep everyone safe? (updated 5/26/20)

During outdoor worship, you may provide single-serving communion kits (purchased or handmade by health-vetted volunteers) or invite your folks to bring their own elements from home and lead the communion service outdoors.

For those returning to indoor services; when serving communion, please use disposable single-serving kits, as well. Be mindful of where people are taking their masks off and on and provide adequate hand-sanitizing options for before and after. Ask your congregants to dispose of the containers in a marked receptacle on their way out following the worship service.

16. Is it possible for Pastors transitioning between one appointment to the next to be included in the receiving congregations conversation about re-entry? (updated 5/26/20)

It is both possible and encouraged. Please reach out to the new SPPR chair / outgoing pastor / District Superintendent to set this up. Further, you are encouraged to attend the Right Start

Webinar for IAUMC on June 1st. Please contact your DS if you have not been invited into that event.

17. What are the recommendations for receptions (graduations, weddings, funerals, etc.) held at the church? (updated 5/26/20)

Receptions and other gatherings in the church building are not recommended at this time.

18. Is singing by a soloist or a praise band recommended? (updated 5/26/20)

The guideline has been one single vocalist with 12-15 feet between the vocalist and the “front pew” - this is the same directive for the preacher and liturgist, as well. All worship team folks are encouraged to remain masked when they are not speaking or singing. Those leading worship are asked to take their temperature before worship, to refrain from participation if they have been exposed to Covid19, and to explore other creative ways to lead worship.

19. Can we continue to offer live-stream communion, even after we’ve moved into the Yellow Phase? (updated 5/26/20)

Live-Stream Communion will continue to be allowed until we move to Green Status.

20. Are there limits on how many total people can be gathered in the building at one time for larger churches? (updated 5/26/20)

Many conferences are following the 25% plan. In order to maintain proper social distancing, each individual/family unit must have at minimum a 6-foot circumference around them. In some locations, that means operating at 25% capacity. Your reentry team is encouraged to map out spaces for individuals and family units.

21. What are the protocols for bulletins if a church doesn’t have projection capabilities? (updated 5/26/20)

Have gloved personnel hand bulletins out and have a place for recycling for congregants to easily dispose of them after worship. You may also send out an email copy that folks could pull up on their phones. Now might also be a great time to explore a screen and projection capabilities for your church.

22. What are the best practices for confirmation, youth, children’s, and adult discipleship ministries? (updated 5/26/20)

Learning from one another is critical. We encourage you to check out the Conference’s Good Ideas Webinars <https://www.iaumc.org/goodideawebinar> and the resources from Discipleship Ministries at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/content-library/tags/covid-19>
Also, check Amplify through Cokesbury.

23. Do the conference trustees have guidance for those churches under the conference policy regarding liability? (updated 5/26/20)

You are advised to contact your agent.

24. How do you sanitize a headset and microphones? (updated 5/26/20)

Use a bit of pure isopropyl alcohol and add 20% water to prevent evaporation and allow for disinfecting to take place.

A guided website:

<https://www.dpamicrophones.com/mic-university/proper-mic-hygiene>

25. Will the conference be hosting a social media training event to help churches move into the digital space? TikTok, Insta, Twitter, etc.? (updated 5/26/20)

This sounds like a great future webinar, and we will make a note. Until then, a great guide is YouTube and Google, in addition to your colleagues who are already doing this well. Again, several of our Good Idea Webinars, particularly “Youth Ministry: Staying Connected” with Kelsey DeRus is an excellent resource for ideas on using TikTok and Instagram to engage the digital space.

26. Is the conference willing to continue offering free online giving past June for churches? (updated 5/26/20)

We are checking into this.

27. What are the recommendations for churches that share space with other groups to ensure that everyone is following the rules? (updated 5/26/20)

Hosting outside groups is not recommended at this time. However, if there are small groups meeting at your church, form a covenant of agreement and ask the leadership to review it with participants and sign together.

28. How do we keep our elderly safe? They want to worship but many don't have computers. (updated 5/26/20)

Congregations continue to connect with the homebound without computers population in creative ways. In addition to giving copies of sermons or recorded services, one recommendation is front-porch retellings. In this model, designated folks from the congregation visit the homebound person and do a retelling of the sermon, reading of Scripture and prayer time together. Not only is this a great discipline, but it is also fantastic pastoral/congregational care. Another option is Driveway Worship, where groups of less than 10, socially distanced (Adult Sunday School Classes, or other natural groupings) gather together to read the scripture, discuss their spiritual life and pray together. The pastor may choose to itinerate between these groups to offer leadership, connection, and sacrament of Communion.

29. If you have access to helpful information/resources that may benefit our work and further our recommendations as we seek to care of our communities of faith, please reach out to:

Rev. Dr. Lanette Plambeck

Director of Clergy and Leadership Excellence

lanette.plambeck@iaumc.org

Other Helpful Resources:

Iowa Department of Public Health: <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus/Business-and-Organizations>

Center for Disease Control & Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>