



Southern California Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists®

Considerations for Ongoing Church Operations

Dear friends,

During this time of a world-wide pandemic, in the Southern California Conference, it is our duty to make decisions and give guidance based upon our historical focus on physical, mental and spiritual health. This pandemic is like the thief referenced by Jesus in John 10:10 that comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came so that we may have life and have it in abundance. Jesus has instructed us to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Our recommendations are based on prioritizing the health and safety of our employees, members, families and communities in this very difficult time, while encouraging ministry to continue and expand in new ways with a focus on protecting the physical well-being of our congregations. Although we know we have the special blessing of God, we are also told by Jesus in Matthew 5:45 that our heavenly Father causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and that He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Our guidance is given within the context of knowing that we are not immune to the effects of this pandemic and must at this time prioritize the physical health of our members and guests.

Although the state of California re-opened on June 15, 2021, we strongly urge you to consider these basic health principles as outlined in this document for the health and well-being of your church members, families and communities.

Coronavirus Intervention Committee
Southern California Conference

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STATE, COUNTY & CITY GUIDANCE & MORE

Please visit the appropriate website(s) from the following list regarding COVID-19-related information for your local county (and/or city, if applicable).

CALIFORNIA	https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/
L.A. COUNTY	http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/
L.A. CITY	https://corona-virus.la/
PASADENA	https://www.cityofpasadena.net/covid-19/
LONG BEACH	https://www.longbeach.gov/health/diseases-and-condition/information-on/coronavirus/
KERN COUNTY	https://kernpublichealth.com/2019-novel-coronavirus/
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY	https://sbccovid19.com/
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY	https://publichealthsbc.org/
VENTURA COUNTY	https://www.venturacountyrecovers.org/
CDC	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

QUESTIONS ON VACCINATION

We recommend that you **do not** treat vaccinated and non-vaccinated members and attendees differently or offer a different set of protocols. Considerations in this document should be applied to all members, regardless of vaccination status.

According to the CADPH order (effective June 15, 2021), face masks are still required to be worn during indoor in-person church services by non-vaccinated people, while fully vaccinated people may generally be without a face mask in indoor public settings.

SERVICE CONSIDERATIONS

PREPARING THE FACILITY	
PARKING	Please consider blocking off every other parking spot either using a taped "X," printed signs or with cones, if you have them available.
SIGNAGE	Consider posting signs at the entry to the site that include the verbiage outlined on page 13 of this document to communicate with visitors.
AIR CIRCULATION	All doors that open from the sanctuary to the outside should be blocked open to allow for outside air circulation as much as possible. Ceiling fans should not be used. If using portable fans, these should be used at non-entry doors with fan blowing air outdoors only. Consider opening any others doors and/or windows to allow outside air to come in the building.
HAND CLEANERS/ DISINFECTANT	It is recommended to make hand cleaner/disinfectant available at entry and other places as appropriate for attendees and identified locations in church plan.
MOTHER'S ROOM	Mother's rooms should only be used for parents with infants. If a mother's room is large enough to allow more than one family unit while maintaining social distancing, consider marking out "sections" of the room for individual family units that allows six feet of separation between each family unit. Parents should diligently supervise toddlers.
BEFORE THE SERVICE	
MONITORING & SCREENING AT ALL ENTRANCES	Temperature screening and symptom checking on arrival remains good practice. Consider continuing to screen attendees: <i>Symptom checking must include a check-in concerning cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing and fever or chills as well as whether the person is currently under isolation or quarantine orders. If any individual does not clear all elements of the temperature and symptom checking box, including if they are under quarantine or isolation orders, they must be denied entry and sent home along with given copies of quarantine or isolation orders, depending on which applies. Isolation and quarantine orders can be found at https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/quarantine or https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/isolation.</i>
DURING THE SERVICE	
SOCIAL DISTANCING	It is still good practice to continue to follow social distancing guidelines, and we strongly urge that you consider asking congregants to do so. This includes refraining from any physical contact, such as shaking hands, hugging, kissing or elbow bumping, etc. It is strongly recommended that social distancing (six feet or more between any individual/household unit and another individual/household unit) be maintained at all times, including on the platform during speaking, introducing others, etc. This includes a minimum of 15 feet in front of any speaker to the nearest individual while he or she is speaking without a mask.

MASKS	<p>CDPH states that masks are required to be worn by non-vaccinated indoor service attendees at all times (fully vaccinated attendees may be without a mask), excluding speakers and presenters while speaking. Masks may only be removed by a non-vaccinated speaker immediately before speaking and must be re-applied immediately following speaking. A speaker must not return to their seat or move to the side for another speaker to speak without re-applying their mask.</p> <p>This requirement is for all attendees except when unable or unsafe, i.e., small children or others to whom wearing a mask would present risk. Masks must always cover both the mouth and nose. Have extra cloth masks on hand for attendees who come without required facial coverings.</p> <p>SOURCES:</p> <p>CDPH https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx</p>
DISINFECTION	<p>Disinfection of podiums/microphones should occur prior to any individual use and at each change of users.</p>
CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER/GARDEN OF PRAYER	<p>Consider asking for prayer requests to be submitted electronically during the service or via email in advance. For any prayer requests submitted verbally, consider reminding congregants to do so <u>without</u> removing their mask. <u>There should be no physical gathering at the front of the church or elsewhere for a Garden of Prayer.</u></p>
SINGING & WIND INSTRUMENTS	<p><u>Due to the increased risk from congregational singing, especially indoors, we ask that you seriously consider not having congregational singing at this time.</u> If a praise team will be singing, we encourage spacing of 10+ feet side to side and 15+ feet in front of each singer to the nearest individual. Please also consider asking the praise team singers to wear masks while singing. For a musician playing a wind instrument, please consider the same distancing, as well as adding a covering to the wind instrument.</p> <p>SOURCES:</p> <p>https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-private-events--en.pdf</p>
CHILDREN'S STORY	<p>Please consider keeping children with parents at all times and not asking children to physically gather in front.</p>
OFFERING COLLECTION	<p>Consider continuing to offer online giving options and/or having stations in the church where people can drop offering instead of passing a plate.</p>
COMMUNION	<p>Please consider providing prepackaged unleavened bread and grape juice to be picked up prior to service (or made at home). You may want to also consider maintaining social distancing during foot washing and asking participants to perform the foot washing only within family units living together.</p>
BABY DEDICATION	<p>You may want to consider the following precautions for baby dedications conducted in person: Avoid congregating of a large group of family members (no more than 6, including parents and pastor). Social distancing and masking must be observed. The pastor may hold the child as long as he/she is wearing a mask.</p>

BAPTISM	For guidance on conducting baptisms, please refer to the document found at https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/baptism . Continue to take appropriate precautions.
SERVICE LENGTH	Due to the fact that risk of virus transmission increases with the length of time a gathering continues, consider keeping service times as short as reasonably possible.
BULLETINS	Virtual/digital options are strongly encouraged. If you prefer to print, place bulletins on the pews or chairs and ask people to take bulletins home with them.
ATTENDEE DOCUMENTATION	As part of the check-in process, we encourage you to gather attendee name and phone number, along with service date. It's best if this can be done electronically. This process facilitates contact tracing, in the event someone who was in attendance tests positive for COVID-19 soon after.
AFTER THE SERVICE	
FOOD SERVICE	<p>Providing bottled water or prepackaged food is encouraged. Please consider not holding potlucks yet or similar family-style eating and drinking events that increase the risk of cross contamination, as well as to temporarily disconnect and block off water fountains. It is wise to maintain social distancing and masking during food preparation and for the person distributing the food to be wearing gloves, and we encourage you to continue these practices.</p> <p>Rather than handing food to people all from a single location, consider distributing it to people in their cars so they don't have to get together.</p>
DISMISSAL	Please consider asking deacons to dismiss rows/groups while practicing social distancing and allowing enough time between rows/groups for attendees to exit. Consider reminding attendees to avoid mingling of household groups following a service without observing social distance and masking.
MEETINGS, CLASSES & OTHER GATHERINGS	
ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL & PRAYER MEETING	<p>If your church board chooses to hold adult Sabbath school (SS) in person before church service, please consider keeping it as reasonably short as possible. Due to the way this virus spreads, you may want to consider holding class without discussion at this time and keeping a presentation-only format. Also consider holding SS in the same place church service will take place and asking attendees to refrain from changing seats (each person stays in the same seat for both services).</p> <p>Prayer meeting has the same considerations as SS at this time.</p>
BOARD & OTHER BUSINESS MEETINGS	Consider holding meetings virtually. If you choose to meet in person, consider practicing social distancing and masking in a room that is well ventilated. It is encouraged to in-person meetings as brief as possible.
IN-PERSON SMALL GROUPS	Consider using digital tools/platforms.
VESPERS	For in-person vespers, consider maintaining the practices outlined in this document for a church service, as well as cleaning and disinfecting between church service and vespers.

CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMS (CHILDREN'S SABBATH SCHOOL, PATHFINDERS, VBS)	<p>When resuming children's programs (children's Sabbath school, Pathfinders and VBS), please consider following the principles outlined in both the CDC guidance for day camps and Appendix K: L.A. County's guidance for day camp.</p> <p>When planning and holding these programs, please pay close attention to issues of physical distancing, masks, group and room size, accommodation, food, disinfecting and sanitizing, and the sharing of equipment, materials and tools. These items are addressed in the PDFs linked below.</p> <p>Although the state of California opened up as of June 15, we strongly urge you to continue with these precautions even after that date. It would still be extremely wise, even after the 15th, to continue to take some precautions to protect our children even though the state will open up.</p> <p>SOURCES:</p> <p>CDC guidance for day camps – https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html</p> <p>Appendix K: L.A. County's guidance for day camp – http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protocols/Reopening_DayCamps.pdf</p>
OTHER	
WEDDINGS	<p>You may want to consider the recommendations in this document as you plan to provide a safe and healthy wedding that will consider the well-being of the participants and attendees.</p>
FUNERALS	<p>You may want to consider the recommendations for church services in this document as you plan to provide a funeral or memorial that will protect the well-being of the participants and attendees.</p>

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Individuals who either are or who reside with a family member who is defined by the CDC as part of the vulnerable population should seriously consider attending in-person services at this time, understanding the risk they assume in doing so.

Individuals in this group who are fully vaccinated can more safely attend these services, while being careful to take precautions for their own safety and the safety of those around them.

The vulnerable population is defined as follows: *People 65 years and older; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including: people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher), people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, people with liver disease.*

PREPARING & MAINTAINING A SAFE FACILITY

Although the state of California is opening up and lessening or lifting many restrictions as of June 15, 2021, the items listed on the following two pages of this guidance remain good practice for health and hygiene as we seek to provide the safest, most comfortable and respectful worship environment possible.

We urge you to consider continuing with the items listed for your facility and services in this section on an ongoing basis.

PREPARING & MAINTAINING A SAFE FACILITY

PREPARE DISINFECTION PROTOCOL & ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES

If your church *hasn't* met in person for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following are the first items that are encouraged be done once your church chooses to open for in-person services.

- Establish and meet with your church reopening team prior to the first Sabbath of in-person services.
- Follow a specific disinfection protocol for facilities, including plans for cleaning during services & between multiple services.
- Assign individual team members to be responsible for preparing (cleaning & sanitizing) all areas within the church. Use this printable chart to track cleaning & sanitizing progress: <https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/disinfection-tracking-chart>.

CLEANING & SANITIZING PRACTICES

- Regularly clean your entire church.
- Please consider sanitizing pews, bathroom, light switches and microphones. Please also consider shampooing carpet if this has not been done recently.
- Use chemicals and disinfectants as directed, including allowing for the necessary proper dwell time (the amount of time disinfectants need to remain wet on surfaces to properly disinfect). (Make sure you use COVID-19 approved disinfectants.)

RESTROOM PROTOCOL

- Restroom capacity should be determined based upon proper social distancing and should be clearly stated via signage.
- Post signs in the restrooms above the sinks to remind people about proper handwashing practice (L.A. City general posters, p. 6, downloadable at <https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/signage>) also post signage reminding people to use paper towels when touching surfaces after washing their hands (turning off faucet, opening door, etc.). It is also recommended to make hand sanitizer available.
- Consider assigning individuals to clean restrooms (wipe down fixtures, countertops, doorknobs, etc.) between uses.

PREPARING & MAINTAINING A SAFE FACILITY

OTHER PREPARATIONS & COMMUNICATION

- Consider temporarily removing shared items like Bibles, hymnals, information cards, etc., from the backs/bottoms of chairs/pews. Any remaining pencils, pens, etc., in the pews are encouraged to be cleaned and sanitized if the church will be used within three days.
- Inform your congregation through phone calls, text messages, emails and social media about how you have prepared the church for their arrival. Inform them that the church facility is clean and safe for a healthy worship experience.
- If your church is holding in-person service, consider posting printed signs at the entry to the site that state:
 - *In this current climate, there is an inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 in any place where people gather. COVID-19 is caused by a virus and spreads from person to person and through contact with infected surfaces. Its symptoms range from no symptoms to mild to severe illness or even death. It is also spread by infected individuals that have no symptoms. While everyone is at risk of contracting this illness, the CDC has advised that there is a special, higher risk for adults and people of any age who have underlying medical conditions. **By attending, you acknowledge that you are aware of these risks and that you personally and voluntarily assume any and all risk of exposure to or any illness from the COVID-19 virus, including the possibility that you could infect others.***
 - If your membership has groups of attendees that do not understand English, consider creating additional signage in the appropriate languages as well.
- In addition, it is also encouraged to post signage at all entrances to the site or building that state:
 - *If you are currently under a quarantine or isolation order, or if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, dry cough, tiredness, aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, and chest pain or pressure, do not enter this site and return to your home. If any symptoms are unusual or severe, seek appropriate medical attention immediately.*
- More details regarding this signage may be found at: <https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/signage>.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, please contact the Southern California Conference
Coronavirus Intervention Committee (CIC):

**James G. Lee, Chair • Kathleen Diaz • Lauren Lacson
Fred Warfield • Harold Crook**

Email the committee at cic@sccsda.org.