

Reopening Church Facilities: By What Day Can We Reopen?

From the Conference Minister from June 4, 2020 Coconut Wireless

We are finding ourselves a bit worn out, for while we are done with COVID-19, the novel coronavirus is not done with us. COVID spread is ongoing and continues to develop in real-time, meaning our governor and county mayors continue to adjust and change ordinances accordingly. In turn, pastors and church leaders continue to review their congregations' COVID-19 reopening plans and revise them as necessary to remain within the guidelines of these government entities.

This time is proving a challenge for many of us. We miss each other and long to gather together again, even while observing common sense physical distancing practices. It has been tremendously heartening to watch as our congregations have graciously adjusted to changes in platforms for worship and fellowship, working to keep the community gathered while physically distant.

The Conference office published its recommendation and suggestions for a phased approach to reopening church facilities and in-person worship a number of weeks ago. The document, "Recommendations for Reopening Church Facilities," can be found on the [Health and Safety Page](#) of the conference website. The goal of this document is not conformity, that every congregation is doing all the suggested steps in the suggested order at the same time. As a result of the differing patterns of spread across the individual islands, conformity would prove a hinderance to facilities that can open and to those facilities which need to remain closed.

Rather the goal of the document is uniformity across our congregations. That is, that each of our congregations is engaged in the following:

- 1 Prepare a COVID-19 reopening plan which includes under what circumstances and timeline your facilities can reopen.
- 2 Be in touch about county ordinances with your county mayor's office: ask questions and walk through your plan with them:
 - a Hawai'i County Mayor's Office: East Hawai'i: 808.961.8211; West Hawai'i: 808.323.4444
 - b Maui County Mayor's Office: 808.270.7855
 - c Kaua'i County Mayor's Office: 808.241.4900
 - d Honolulu City and County Mayor's Office: 808.768.4141
- 3 Once your hygiene benchmarks and physical distancing practices can be sustained and you are within County guidelines then you are prepared to reopen.
- 4 Continue your online presence as some folks will choose to remain home.
- 5 Be flexible, for what is open today may be closed tomorrow by a new county ordinance.

There is nothing we can do to make our facilities "COVID FREE" environments. The best we can do is to measure how high or low the risk is to gather, how we can continue to minimize the risk of spread, and what we will do should spread occur in our church. There are several helpful documents about preschools, renters, and other matters on the [Health and Safety Page](#) along with the Recommendations for Reopening Church Facilities.

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