



As you think about opening up your Unity Center...

As states begin to consider phasing in the re-opening of businesses and religious institutions, spiritual leaders and boards are also considering how to proceed. Unity Worldwide Ministries recognizes that each individual center will make decisions and establish plans that are right for them.

The most important considerations are the health and safety of your staff, congregation, and community. No matter how eager your members are to return, and no matter what other churches in your area may be doing, your leadership must weigh all the factors to determine the best approach for you. There is no one-size-fits all approach.

Here are some questions for you to consider as you create your plan.

Local, state, federal, and health professional guidelines

- What are the guidelines and mandates of your city, county, state, and country?
- What are the mandated minimum requirements for opening your center? Can you meet those minimum requirements?
- What are the general suggestions of the health professionals in your area?
- Weigh both the recommendations of health experts with the local guidelines in making your decisions.

Composition of Congregation

- What percentage of your congregation is in a protected category based on age or health condition?
- Will your congregation be willing to practice physical distancing upon returning to face-to-face meetings?
- Will you require in-person attendees to wear masks?

Children and Youth

- Will you offer in-person programs for children? If so, what ages?
- What hygiene and safety practices will you have for infants, children, teens, and their teachers?
- What non-essential items can you remove from the children's areas in order to limit contamination and simplify cleaning?
- What online programs will you offer for children and youth?
- How will you accommodate social distancing within your classrooms?

Facilities

- Do your facilities allow for proper physical distancing? Is there enough seating and space in your meeting rooms?
- Will you need to add extra services in order to accommodate group size limitations?
- Do you have the resources, including staff, to thoroughly clean your facilities as needed before opening up, as well as on an ongoing basis between services and activities?
- Do you have adequate cleaning and sanitization supplies on hand (hand sanitizer, disinfectants, etc.)?
- Do you have enough ongoing supplies to ensure safe and sanitized facilities (hand sanitizer, gloves, and face masks for volunteers and staff; disinfectant spray, disinfectant wipes, etc.)?
- Will you make restrooms available?
- Are there items in the pews or chairs that can be removed to avoid spreading germs? (e.g., hymnals, welcome cards, envelopes, etc.)

Classes and Groups

- Do your meeting rooms allow for physical distancing? How can you prepare the rooms in advance of any meetings?
- For some groups and classes, would it be preferable to continue meeting online?
- Do you want to consider offering online classes by Unity Worldwide Spiritual Institute (UWSI)?

Technology

- How is your current practice of virtual online services and programs meeting the needs of your congregation and community? What is working well and what needs improvement?
- How much of your virtual online offerings (i.e., Zoom, Facebook, livestreaming) do you want to carry into the future, regardless of whether you decide to hold face-to-face meetings?
- Do you want to upgrade your capacity to provide quality online offerings?

Staff

- How is your staff doing working virtually? Do you want some of your staff to continue to work mostly virtually even if you are not required to do so by local ordinance?
- Do you have staff with special needs that can best be accommodated by working from home?
- Do your spiritual leader and staff feel safe to be in face-to-face group situations?
- Can your office set-up allow for physical distancing?
- How will you handle the receiving line at the end of service with your spiritual leader?

- Do you need to add staff to handle the ongoing technology opportunities?

Volunteers

- What percentage of your volunteers are in a protected category and may not feel safe coming to church? Are there others who will be able to step in?
- How will you handle each volunteer activity safely? (For example, you may want to consider propping doors open and having greeters stand six feet away from the doors.)
- How will your prayer chaplains pray with congregants?

Traditions

- Some traditions will no longer be considered safe and sanitary, such as hugging and holding hands during the Peace Song.

Offering

- How will you receive the offering during services since passing the offering basket will not be considered sanitary?
- Will you have a basket where people can deposit their offerings?
- Do you have a text-to-give or online option which people can easily use instead? And perhaps use during the service?
- How will you ensure safety and sanitization in counting the offering?

Food and Refreshments

- Will it be wise to offer food and refreshments? Probably not.
- Do you want to minimize free-flowing fellowship time in order to support physical distancing?

Communication

- What is your communication plan?
- What tools do you have to let your congregation know how you have prepared your facilities for their arrival? In addition to your usual emails and social media, you may wish to post notices on the doors and throughout as appropriate.
- How can you celebrate the “return” to church?