

## **Resilience: Mitigating Risk During State Re-Openings**

May 7, 2020



*Observing health protocols at the Kılıç Ali Pasha Mosque in Istanbul  
Yaskin Akgul/AFP via Getty Images*

*Follow On Guidance from Rutgers' Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience  
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### **Part V: Is Your State Reopening?**

As states begin to relax the restrictions on meetings and movement they imposed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, it is vital that communities of faith play a leadership role in preventing the unnecessary spread of disease and death within their communities and among their neighbors. The resumption of more traditional forms of

worship will be a cause for celebration, but only if it is accomplished responsibly, with due consideration for the most informed guidance for preserving the health and well being of worshippers and their neighbors alike.

As of April 28, 2020, a number of states have begun to reopen, or plan to, in the coming days. While this is not the recommended guidance by many health care experts, following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggestions will be critical to prevent mass exposure and increased COVID-19 infections. As we endure as one nation, let us be reminded that our actions directly impact life and death for all our friends and neighbors.

### **What Should We Do?**

*If Your State is Opening and/or Lifting Some Restrictions, Plan for CDC Recommended Modifications to Traditions of the Service:*

#### *Religious Leadership Responsibilities*

- All participants must wear masks and gloves.
- Where and when possible conduct smaller services, with social distancing, outside.
- Continue to offer online alternatives for services, which is especially important for those most vulnerable to COVID-19.
- If held indoors, schedule extra services to ensure buildings are not packed.
- Limit the number of volunteers and staff and/or stagger their participation throughout the various services.
- Consider small gatherings with inclusion of additional participants via phone or online (live or recorded) options.
- Disinfect the facility after every service as well as daycare areas and commonly used religious books or pamphlets.
- Keep doors and windows open to encourage constant air circulation.
- Change the method for collecting regular financial contributions – using a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods – instead of passing a collection tray.

- Wash hands and/or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol prior to conducting the service.
- Alter practices as needed (e.g., avoid the use of a common drinking cup and give Communion in the recipient's hand instead of on the tongue (with gloves for the administrator and recipient)).
- Provide soap/water and hand sanitizer for congregants to maintain protective measures.
- Provide prepared "to-go" bags of groceries for those congregants in need to easily take home.

#### Congregation Interaction at Services

- Nod, bow, or wave instead of shaking hands, holding hands, hugging, or kissing.
- Bow your head in recognition of the spiritual receipt of Communion instead of a physical Host.
- Wear gloves when sharing in the usage of religious hymnals or bibles available from service to service.

#### Advance Preparations for Attending Participants

- Encourage high risk populations not to attend and offer alternative (e.g., phone, online, or recorded) ways for them to participate.
- Stay home if you are sick or COVID-19 symptomatic.
- Of course stay at home if you have tested positive and are still in your quarantine period.
- Wear face masks and gloves.
- Maintain six feet social distance.

## **What Should We “Not” Do?**

- We should not spread the false choice of practicing our faith in public, with groups of any size or number, in order to be faithful.
- We should not stop providing services through video streaming, drive-thru, or in outdoor venues as much as possible.

## **What Should We Do?**

First, to learn more about your state and its Governor’s orders as it relates to religious gatherings, one resource is: <https://religionnews.com/2020/04/09/see-which-states-have-religious-exemptions-in-their-stay-at-home-orders/>

## **Resources for New Jersey-based organizations**

Please consult the State of New Jersey’s Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness “[COVID-19 Rumor Control and Disinformation Updates](#)” webpage to help distinguish between facts and rumors regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.