

COVID-19 REOPENING OF CHURCHES



**COVID-19 TASK
FORCE**

20 MAY 2020

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Covid-19 protocols: Reopening of Churches

OPENING OF CHURCHES

1. Churches will be opened from 7am to 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays
2. Ensure services do not last for more than 90 minutes. An additional 30 minutes will be allowed to facilitate the departure of everyone. More than one service can be held on the same day, however there must be at least 2hrs between each service, to facilitate proper sanitizing of the venue.
3. Churches may have multiple services during the opening time of 7 am to 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Consideration should be given to persons that are most vulnerable to have a separate service and be done during the first church service.
4. Members with underlying health conditions; adults over 65-years-old; individuals with disabilities and those who might not be able to wear a mask, for the duration of the service, should be encouraged to attend a separate service or connect to Church virtual service, until further notice.
5. Church leaders over 65-years-old, required to officiate in a service will be allowed to host the service.
6. Church Leaders are encouraged to use virtual media such as online media, social media (youtube, facebook, whatsapp), video conferencing and utilize local radio and TV broadcasting services.
7. Drive-in church or open air services can be held with the required hygiene protocols, physical distancing of at least 6 feet apart. Praise team, musicians and church leaders can perform service in open space.
8. All protocols must be observed

RESPONSIBILITIES OF HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES

1. Ensure all persons attending each service are recorded to keep records on the attendance at each service.
2. Calculate the number of attendees to be allowed in the building. The measurement to be used is 36 square feet, per person (using the seating space). Markers must be used on benches and chairs must be placed no less than 6 feet, in every direction.

3. Provide for each service, appropriate facilities and adequate supplies not limited to, but including handwashing facilities, running water, soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer and disinfectant. A sanitizing station must be set up close to the door, for people entering and leaving the building.
4. Establish visible signs and notices encouraging members to observe the protocols and practices to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
5. Ensure that all persons entering the building are wearing a mask and that it is worn for the duration of the service. When addressing the gathering, a speaker may remove his mask but **MUST** observe physical distancing of at least 6 feet, always.
6. Sanitize the building, before each service. Frequently touched areas must be carefully sanitized before, during and after each service. All cleaning products must be used according to the directions on the labels and guidance from the Bureau of Standards. Masks and gloves must always be used by cleaners.
7. Churches may wish to invest in an Infrared thermometer to perform temperature checks of persons before entering the Church
8. Singing in church should be limited to solos and small groups of about 6 to 8 persons that observe physical distancing protocols. Pre-recordings of Praise Teams and song can be done and play during each service.
9. Members should be encouraged to have their personal devotions at home
10. Ensure that transportation arrangements are in place, to ensure that all individuals leave immediately after the service. Please be guided by the regulations which only permit two passengers per row, seat at the end in a stagger manner.
11. Announce, to the hearing of all members present at each service (before, during and at the end), the hygiene, sanitization, and physical distancing protocols to be followed.
12. Ensure physical contact among congregants is not allowed.
13. Provide options for congregants to use collection boxes or baskets for tithes and offering, ensuring a distance of 6 feet is maintained between those who are going to the box. Ensure a protocol is established for handling of monies. Hands must be sanitized immediately after. Alternatively, congregants should be encouraged to organize salary deductions for tithes and offering to be sent directly to the church bank account.

14. Ensure that physical distancing is observed where communion services are held. Individuals involved in distribution must wear gloves and must use hand sanitizers (containing at least 70% alcohol). For religions where this applies, 'sharing of the cup' is **not** allowed, at this time.
15. Ensure that microphones and podiums are not shared. Each person must be assigned a microphone and/or podium, for the duration of the service, and it must be sanitized immediately after each service.
16. Avoid the use of Air Conditioning (AC) units. Keep all windows and doors opened, during the service, if possible.
17. Assign a member(s), in each service, to monitor the observation of all protocols.
18. Share protocols and expectations with all members before the date of reopening

PASTORAL CARE & VISITATION TO VULNERABLE AND SHUT-INS

1. Visitation can continue; however, Pastors have a serious responsibility for not taking the virus to the vulnerable and the Shut-Ins. Pastor must wear a face mask, sanitize your hands and there must be no physical contact (observe 6 feet physical distancing) with the vulnerable person.

BAPTISM

1. Head of the Church and the assistants involved in performing the Baptism must observe all hygiene protocols and must sanitize between the baptism of each candidate
2. Where it is practical and safe to do so, all officiating Pastors and Assistant should wear a Face Masks to reduce the spread of the virus. Ensure that the Face Mask is fitted properly in a way that allows for comfort and breathing freely.
3. All Baptismal Candidates within the same space, should practice physical distancing.
4. If the Baptism is conducted at a beach, this must be done during the limited curfew days
5. All relevant protocols must be observed.

WEDDINGS

1. Where Weddings are permitted in accordance with the regulations, a person may attend a Wedding except:
 - (a) no more than ten persons should be in attendance;
 - (b) no more than one officiant should be in attendance;
 - (c) only essential camera technicians should be in attendance;
 - (d) only the two essential witnesses should be in attendance;
 - (e) the wedding shall have a maximum duration not exceeding one half hour;
 - (f) all persons, except the bride and groom, shall adhere to social distancing and physical distancing protocols of 6 feet apart.

FUNERALS

1. There should be a maximum of 25 individuals inclusive of the Pall Bearers and persons officiating the funeral will be allowed to attend funeral services, whether in the church building, or at the graveside.
2. All relevant hygiene protocols and physical distancing must be observed.

CHILD DEDICATION

1. The parents should hold the child throughout the ceremony and the Pastor can pray for the child and proceed with the dedication service. All physical contact between the Pastor and the child must be avoided.
2. Physical distancing must be observed

OTHER CEREMONIES

1. A maximum of 10 individuals will be allowed to attend weddings, whether at the church, or the reception.
2. All relevant protocols must be observed.
3. All other ceremonies should be suspended until further notice.

ENFORCEMENT

Pastors should encourage their congregants to ensure the hygiene and health protocols are consistently and strictly followed.

Emails concerning the reopening of churches must be addressed to the Chair of COVID-19 Task Force or send emails related to the reopening of churches to abdias.samuel@gov.kn. **The members of the Compliance Task Force will be available to assess the capacity of churches based on size and provide recommendation to the church.**

For further clarification and details please call **466-5100**.

Government of St. Kitts and Nevis