



Florida District Pastors,

Greetings on this beautiful Wednesday evening. It's days like today that make us all glad we live in Florida.

I'm writing to you tonight, because this afternoon, Governor DeSantis announced that as of Monday, May 4th all but three counties in Florida (Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade) will begin Phase One of reopening.

Phase One of the federal and state plan includes the following guidelines:

- ALL VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS should continue to shelter in place.
- All individuals, WHEN IN PUBLIC (e.g., parks, outdoor recreation areas, shopping areas), should maximize physical distance from others.
- SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZED YOUTH ACTIVITIES (e.g., daycare, camp) that are currently closed should remain closed.
- RESTAURANTS AND RETAIL STORES CAN REOPEN AT 25% OF CAPACITY.
- MOVIE THEATRES, BARS, GYMS, AND PLACES WHERE SOCIAL DISTANCING IS DIFFICULT WILL REMAIN CLOSED.
- GATHERINGS OF MORE THAN 10 PEOPLE SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

The Florida District Resource Center is recommending the following guidelines for Phase One:

Worship Services: Should continue online and/or via a "Drive-In" model

Small Groups: Should continue using video or phone conferencing

Children's and Student Ministry: Should continue online only

Ministry Events and Trips: Should be cancelled if they fall in the next month.

We are encouraging churches to make plans for re-opening of worship services during Phase Two of the State Reopening Plan.

- At least one county (Seminole) is applying the 25% capacity threshold to "Religious Services". If your county applies the 25% capacity threshold to "Religious Services", and your church leadership team chooses to begin meeting, we recommend the following guidelines be followed:

- Encourage vulnerable congregants to stay home (elderly and those with secondary health issues)
- Continue streaming your worship services for those who cannot attend and for outreach purposes
- **Follow STRICT SOCIAL DISTANCING and sanitation protocols.** (at least 6 feet between individuals/family groups, require attendees to wear masks, worship service only - no SS, groups or choirs, no communion or greeting times, no passing of offering plates, doors propped open, have a sanitation team prepare the building and sanitize during and following worship)
- Ensure the 25% capacity threshold is not exceeded

As your congregation continues to make plans for reopening, **we are providing three helpful resources to assist you as you plan.** (You can find them attached to this email)

1. 24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before Reopening
2. A Church Restart Plan matrix
3. Guidelines for Reopening and Returning to Church Buildings

One final note...

As we think through how our churches will go about the reopening process, I'm reminded of Paul's words from Philippians, *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* Philippians 2:4

During today's press conference, Governor DeSantis mentioned four examples of "Super Spreaders" of COVID-19, three of those examples were from churches. As our state reopens, it is essential that we do our part to prevent the spread of this disease.

Thanks for looking out for the interest of others, and continuing to prioritize the mission of making Christlike disciples in all you do as you lead Jesus' church in reopening over these next days and weeks.

Grace and peace in abundance today!

Dale

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