

Returning to public worship --- Faith & Worship

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New PC(USA) resource offers theological and practical guidance for those deciding on when and how to worship in public again

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LOUISVILLE — The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has released “Returning to Public Worship: Theological and Practical Considerations” for congregations and leaders in the midst of making decisions about how and when to return to public worship in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

While strongly encouraging churches to follow state and local rules, regulations and guidelines as minimum standards for re-opening, the resource includes many important points in relation to re-opening. This resource will help churches make faithful and responsible decisions about reopening for public worship.

We are a church in transition, changing each and every day, truly working towards keeping up with the realities of our day. Acknowledging this is not a one-size-fits-all document, and that sessions and presbyteries will make decisions based on the latest COVID-19 developments and local circumstances, one of the primary concerns was to provide resources to help church leaders think theologically and pastorally about their decisions.

Congregations and leaders need to use their own wisdom and judgment, informed by experts, as they discern how and when to return to public worship. The critical thing is that congregations continue to be the church, and the body of Christ, in this complicated time as decisions are being made, even as information and understanding about the coronavirus is changing all the time. As we move through these challenging times, we must seek the mind of Christ, stay connected, care for each member and honor the gifts of all.

The offices of Theology and Worship and Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency have released a one-page document, “Beginning Conversations for Re-Entry,” for use with both the “Returning for Public Worship” resource and an updated “Remote Faith Formation For the Long Haul with Guidelines for Re-Entry.”

I have downloaded all the above documents, including the previous six (most of which were referred to in previous Daily Faith Devotionals). I have also made them available to our elders in their mailboxes all during March, April and May. I will be producing and circulating a shortened, condensed document tomorrow, by e-mail to all the Session, highlighting all seven documents, for discussion and to help lead us into a plan for re-opening.