

I got this from the Redstone Presbytery website...just passing it on to you after editing...

## What Our Church Must Know Before Reopening Our Building

Aaron Earls



Pastors and church leaders faced difficult decisions when most ended normal, physical congregational gatherings in March due to the COVID-19 crisis. As some states begin to lift stay-at-home restrictions, church leaders again face difficult decisions about gathering again.

There are numerous needs to consider and questions to ask. Leaders should be constantly in prayer while listening to government officials and health experts to make the best decision for their congregation. **There is another group, however, that leaders must listen to before they start the re-entry process: their congregation.** Understanding the concerns of everyone in the local church will help leaders better assess their current situation and make the proper plans before welcoming worshippers and guests back to the building.

To help with the process, LifeWay Research has developed and made available a free survey church leaders can send to everyone in their congregation. The questionnaire asks about expectations of when to begin worship services, comfort level in attending large and small groups, precautions that should be made for the entire church and specific ministry areas, and more. Church leaders won't be able to please everyone when making decisions around gathering physically again. But having **congregational feedback** can help leaders avoid causing undue stress on their people or making radical changes that most find unnecessary. LifeWay Research is intentionally releasing the survey as a Word document to allow church leaders to customize it to their congregational needs and terminology. If your church isn't willing or able to take some of the steps asked about in the standard questionnaire, remove those before you send to your people.

For example, it won't be beneficial to ask if people expect your church to set up one-way foot traffic entering and exiting the building if that isn't possible in your location. Church leaders are free to print the document and mail it to their congregants, email the Word file to them, or freely distribute the questionnaire in any other means as needed. Once you've gathered the results, you can determine what the best course of action for your church is with the confidence that you know the perspective of your congregation.

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**I have already downloaded the LifeWay Research COVID-19 Congregational Survey, and am working on it now.**

Pastor Jim