

10 Tips to Keep in Mind When Creating Your Reopening Plan

You may like to think about and discuss the following points with your leadership team as you plan the reopening of your church buildings:

1. Determine 2 things:

Will people be safe when they return? Do they feel safe about returning?

Get in touch with your congregation's feelings about the current situation. You could send a simple online survey to gauge people's response to the idea of returning to church. Survey Monkey is a great tool for this purpose.

2. Stock up. Place orders for hand sanitiser, cleaning supplies etc

3. Re-evaluate policies and procedures. Some policies will need updating, some adding, and some eliminating in light of the COVID-19 safety and health protocols. Use the links & ideas below to help you think through the changes you'll need to make before reopening.

- Volunteer roles – Not all of your volunteers will be able or willing to jump back in right away. Make contact with each person to find out how they're feeling about returning to serve. You'll also want to set up a time to train volunteers about the new policies and procedures before returning in-person. In the meantime, encourage your volunteers to be part of the ministry you're doing digitally.
- Drop off and pick up – What can you do to minimise traffic for drop off and pick up times? Will you have one person running the digital check-in stations or hand-writing the list so supplies aren't passed around? Will you allow parents to walk children to the ministry rooms, or will parents stop at a designated drop-off area?
- Cleaning procedures - Depending on the policies your church puts in place, you may need to disinfect as often as every hour, or at the very least in between services. So you might need extra volunteers to help you clean, and you'll probably need more time in between services to allow surfaces to dry and sterilise.
- While written for a USA context, [these questions](#) could be worth considering before reopening your doors.

4. Go slow. The first Sunday your church is open might not be the best Sunday for your children's ministry to reopen too. Consider keeping all children's ministries closed for a couple of weeks, then slowly re-introducing different age levels at different times.

This article on The Confident Kidmin website looks at 10 things to consider as you reopen your CM [here](#).

5. Be creative. We've all been waiting for things to go "back to normal" but let's be honest, normal has now been changed forever. Reduced seating? Additional service times? Intergenerational family services? Reopening will look different for every church, but you'll have to be creative in how you do it no matter what approach you take.

- Now's your chance to try new things! Get creative, and don't be afraid to tweak things as you go. Test new ideas, see if they work and adjust as you go. Your people are likely to be more open to change than previously.
- If you'll be offering intergenerational services before opening the children's ministry, design your family services with children in mind. [Don't just try to occupy them; engage them.](#) Are there elements of your children's ministry that you could incorporate into the main family service? What resources can you provide to help kids engage with the service?
Brittany Nelson from Deeper Kidmin recorded a FB conversation on this topic which can be watched [here](#). **Keep in mind our NZ context.**
- If you don't use this time to try new things, well known Canadian pastor Carey Nieuwhof warns about what you'll miss [here](#).

6. Rethink your physical spaces. You might have to include signs reminding people to wear a mask or use hand sanitiser, or even tape lines on the floor to remind people to stay 2m apart. Kids are such visual thinkers that using floor signage can help remind them to stay apart. Are your ministry rooms or children's space large enough to maintain safe physical distancing? Now might be the chance to repurpose different spaces within the church as a whole. How can you restructure the layout of the worship space to encourage family worship while also keeping people apart as required?

7. Lay out a potential timeline. Together with the whole church staff, map out a timeline of reopening phases that begin cautiously, and then gradually reopen more and more as time goes on. Having (and knowing) a plan – even if it changes – will help your congregation feel more at ease and give them something to look forward to.

8. Communicate, communicate, communicate. You'll want to share the reopening plan for your church or ministry with parents and volunteers before actually reopening. Include any new details like physical distancing protocols or reminders about any changes, and emphasise how excited you are to see them again. Share the plan with your people as often as you can, through as many platforms as you can. Email, mail, website updates, social media posts, your church app, and more. Then utilise signs in the buildings to remind people of the new procedures or protocols.

9. Consider staying online anyway. Even if you do reopen right away, you probably won't see 100% attendance that first Sunday, or even that first month. Consider continuing your online and digital resources so families (especially those with young children) can continue to stay connected to your ministry.

10. Be flexible. If we've learned anything through all of this, it's to take things week by week. The first plan you create may need adjusting as the weeks go on. Continue to listen to health officials, govt, and other church leaders to stay up to date, and be mindful of any policy changes for your area.

Give grace. To yourself, your staff, and your families. We're all coming out of a traumatic experience of sudden change, leaving many feeling shocked, anxious, worried, angry, sad, stressed, apathetic, and more. Give yourself

grace as you navigate this new way of doing ministry. Give your staff grace as you work together as a team to serve and lead your people. Give kids grace as they re-enter the world and may have trouble with separation anxiety after so much time at home or with understanding why they can't hug their friends.

Remember there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. We all have different ministry contexts in different locations, so what works for one church might not work for the next. Use the research and resources you find to create a plan that's unique for your ministry's context.

Some of this content was sourced from the Deeper Kidmin website.