

**Presbytery of San Gabriel**  
**Guidelines for On-Site and Indoor Gatherings**  
**April 27, 2021**

**These recommendations from the Presbytery Executive Commission are intended to support the Sessions as they determine their re-opening plans. Sessions may choose to be more restrictive as best meets their congregation. These recommendations are based on the following references from the State of California, LA County, and Pasadena Departments of Public Health. Please read these references as well for more detail.**

**References:**

- State of California (4/23/21 for Places of Worship): <https://covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance/>
- Los Angeles County (4/14/21) See specifically item h on page 15: [http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/H00/H00\\_SaferatHomeCommunity.pdf](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/H00/H00_SaferatHomeCommunity.pdf)
- City of Pasadena (4/14/21): <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/public-health/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/Places-of-Worship-Public-Health-Reopening-Protocol.pdf?v=1618211045955>
- Los Angeles County (4-16-21) [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protocols/Reopening\\_LiveIndoorEvents.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protocols/Reopening_LiveIndoorEvents.pdf) (Faith Communities were referred to Indoor Performance protocols for guidance on singers and instrumentalists)
- Los Angeles County (Appendix A 3-5-21): [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protocols/Reopening\\_SocialDistancing.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protocols/Reopening_SocialDistancing.pdf)
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Cleaning and Disinfection Matrix (4/21/21): <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/docs/protection/CleaningMatrix.pdf>

**What has not changed:**

1. Mask up—all the time you are in the presence of others, indoors or outdoors
2. 6-foot distancing between households is still in place, indoors or outdoors. There had been mention of 3-foot distancing for children in school, but this does not apply to churches.
3. Online worship is still safest, so churches are encouraged to continue online worship even after indoor worship is reinstated. Outdoor worship and activities are safer than indoors.
4. Singing is strongly discouraged even outdoors. For singing **outdoors**: all singers (including leaders) should stay masked and people from different households should be at least 8-10 feet apart. If a leader is not masked, each singer must be 12 feet apart from the congregants.  
For singing **indoors** (leaders only): According to the current State of California guidelines for the Red/Orange/Yellow tiers, any leaders singing indoors must wear face coverings at all times, maintain physical distancing, and are strongly recommended to obtain a negative PCR test within 72 hours prior to the service.
5. Wind instrumentalists must also keep an extended distance from one another (or separated by Plexiglas shields); wind instruments are strongly discouraged indoors at this time.

6. No food or drink should be consumed in a group setting. (Even when it was pointed out that large crowds at a baseball game are being allowed to consume food and drink, the County Health Officer confirmed that churches should not serve food or drink except to-go.)
7. Children should remain in the care of those in their household unit and not interact with children of other parties at any time while visiting facilities. Close play areas and discontinue activities and services for children where physical distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained.
8. Communion elements should be served in a “no-contact” manner
9. Likewise, offering should be received in a “no-contact” manner
10. Continue to have masks and hand sanitizer easily available, as well as regular cleaning
11. Ventilation is important; keep doors and windows open, and maintain one-way traffic as people enter and exit church buildings
12. Building owners should set protocols for activities on their premises and communicate to all who use the facility, with advance notice and on-site signage. All groups using the facility should follow the protocol (conversely, if a church rents space, they must follow the protocol of the building owner).
13. Employer protocols are still in place, including:
  - a. encouraging working from home or staggering hours in the office
  - b. regular cleaning ( at least once daily)
  - c. 6-foot social distancing
  - d. send any employee or volunteer with symptoms home for self-quarantine with pay
  - e. reporting: if 3 or more cases of COVID-19 occur among employees within a span of 14 days, the employer must report the outbreak to the Department of Public Health at (888) 397- 3993 or (213) 240-7821, or online at [redcap.link/covidreport](https://redcap.link/covidreport).
14. In PC(USA), the Session approves the protocols for safe re-opening.

### **What is changing with Orange or Yellow Tiers:**

1. 12-step groups (Alcoholics Anonymous) and therapy groups can now have up to 12 participants (limit was 10).
2. Indoor worship must still maintain 6 feet between household groups (greater if singing), with a maximum capacity of 50% building occupancy. That means that if a worship space can only hold 30% of building occupancy to maintain 6-foot distancing (for instance, if there are many individuals from different households), then 30% would be the maximum capacity.
3. Office work is more allowed, but still with 6-foot social distancing, cleaning, etc.
4. Cleaning is required at least once daily (not hourly)

### **Some recommendations and things to consider:**

1. Again, online worship is safest, and outdoor worship is safer than indoors. You do not have to rush to worship indoors! Sessions need to consider what is best for their members, given the design of their physical facility. Consider worshiping in the fellowship hall if it has better ventilation. Many churches have a committee to focus on opening plans.
2. To ensure compliance with capacity limits and ability to do contact tracing if necessary, consider setting up a pre-registration process for indoor worship and other indoor events. At minimum, require sign in with contact info upon arrival by all participants.

3. Ask attendees if they have symptoms, fever, recent exposure to COVID, or have traveled recently when they pre-register; post clear signage on-site asking people not to enter if they say yes to any screening questions (as well as wearing masks, etc.).
4. Communion elements can be offered as self-contained kits or placed in multiple places for small groups.
5. Continue to encourage online offering or ask people to drop offering in baskets (do not pass offering plates from person to person).
6. Have ushers to ensure sufficient distance between household groups and consider asking people to leave row by row to lessen cross-traffic.
7. Teach church members a no-contact way of greeting and showing care for each other
8. Phase into opening (start small and grow month by month) and set and communicate a backup plan (e.g. if an outbreak occurs).
9. Shorten worship services or the length of time people meet. For instance, one church is planning to have congregants go outside for communion.
10. Look for ways to encourage vaccination for members and neighbors in your community.

### **Preparing for June 15:**

1. Masks will still be required.
2. Singing (and playing of wind instruments) will continue to be “risky behavior.” (Humming is safer than shouting.)
3. Continue to maximize ventilation. Either avoid using air conditioning or consider keeping doors and windows open even with air conditioning. (Cool the space ahead of time with doors closed, then open doors when congregation gathers.)
4. Continue to safeguard children, especially until they can be vaccinated.
5. Continue safe practices such as:
  - a. continue online worship
  - b. minimal physical contact
  - c. always have masks and hand sanitizer easily available
  - d. continue to disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
6. Consider ways to honor those who passed away during the pandemic.
7. Be sensitive to post-pandemic stress, including
  - a. depression or anger as the crisis subsides
  - b. stress related to going back into the workplace, commuting, and adapting to the “new normal”
  - c. grief for who and what has been lost
  - d. give permission for gradual reentry, coordinating vacations, seeking help/therapy and intentional ways to process the past year.
8. Be gentle with yourselves, and each other!