

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150-1200

May 19, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Safely Returning to Church Meetings and Activities

On March 12, 2020, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles announced that all public gatherings of Church members were temporarily suspended worldwide due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With this letter, we now authorize some meetings and activities to be resumed on a limited basis using a careful, phased approach. Area Presidencies will work with the member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Presidency of the Seventy who supervise them in deciding when and where meetings can begin in their area. Using caution and adhering to local regulations, they will inform stake and ward leaders when to function using phase 1 or phase 2 guidelines and when to return to standard practices.

The enclosure with this letter provides principles and details to guide this process, which may be adjusted by Area Presidencies as conditions require. Within guidelines provided by the Area Presidency and in counsel with his bishops, each stake president will determine the specific timing for resuming ward and stake meetings and activities.

We are grateful for the faith of our members as they have worshipped at home and are grateful for the blessings that will come as we gather for worship and activities.

Sincerely,

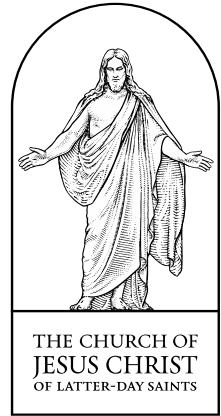
Russell M. Nelson

Dallin H. Oaks

Henry B. Eyring
The First Presidency

Guidelines for Safely Returning to Church Meetings and Activities

May 19, 2020



On March 12, 2020, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles announced that all public gatherings of Church members were temporarily suspended worldwide due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These Brethren have now authorized that meetings and activities may be resumed using a phased approach *when local government regulations allow and Area Presidencies inform local leaders*. When such permission is granted for your location, please proceed in a cautious, carefully planned and coordinated manner based on local government regulations.

General Guidelines

Please see the enclosed First Presidency letter of April 16, 2020, “[Administrative Principles in Challenging Times](#),” including the enclosures “[Administrative Principles in Challenging Times](#)” and “[Directions for Essential Ordinances, Blessings, and Other Church Functions](#).” Also, reference the document “[Responding to COVID-19: Answers to Questions](#).”

Please consider the following additional principles and guidelines:

- Use an abundance of caution in protecting the health and safety of members. Pay particular attention to members whose health or age puts them at high risk.
- Advise individuals who do not feel well, or who have been asked to self-quarantine, or who exhibit any of the following symptoms that they should not attend meetings: fever, cough, shortness of breath, headache, runny nose, or sore throat.
- Follow social distancing, handwashing, and other practices described in “[Preventative Measures for Members](#).”
- Follow government regulations in each location regarding public gatherings, including meeting size, frequency, and duration. Please apply government regulations.
- Please return to regular practices slowly, continuing to function remotely using technology while beginning in-person meetings in a phased approach as described below. Priority for in-person gatherings should be given to meetings where ordinances are performed, such as baptisms and sacrament meetings.

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Phased Approach

Area Presidencies, with approval of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve and the Presidency of the Seventy who supervise them, will inform stake and ward leaders when to function using phase 1 or phase 2 and when to return to standard practices. The following chart provides examples and may be adjusted by Area Presidencies, as conditions require. Within guidelines provided by the Area Presidency and in counsel with his bishops, each stake president will determine the specific timing for resuming ward and stake meetings and activities.

Meetings	Phase 1	Phase 2
Sabbath Day	Shortened meetings at the meetinghouse with up to 99 individuals, following local government regulations	Meetings at the meetinghouse with 100 or more individuals, following local government regulations
All other meetings and activities, including funerals, and weddings	Shortened meetings, following local government regulations or may be held remotely using technology	Meetings at the meetinghouse may be held following local government regulations.

Social distancing. Consider ways to maintain appropriate distance during meetings and classes and when entering and exiting the chapel and classrooms. Individuals from the same household may sit together, but others should sit with appropriate distance. It is recommended that choirs be temporarily suspended.

When more members desire to attend. When more members desire to attend than the above guidelines allow, leaders may hold multiple meetings during the day or invite members to attend on alternate weeks.

Multiple wards or branches in a meetinghouse. When more than one ward or branch attends in one meetinghouse, stake presidents should temporarily adjust meeting times to avoid overlapping schedules.

Areas with large wards. Wards with large attendance at meetings may need to wait to begin holding meetings at the phase-2 level. These wards may also need to alternate weeks of attendance to accommodate all members. On Sundays when members are not participating at the meetinghouse, they can hold home worship services and, when authorized by the bishop, have the sacrament administered at home by a worthy priesthood holder.

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Primary. During phases 1 and 2, leaders may determine whether to have nursery and some younger Primary classes. They may also determine whether to hold both singing time and classes.

Sanitary procedures. Leaders should ensure that buildings are thoroughly cleaned after each set of meetings, especially areas that are touched, such as doorknobs, light switches, water fountains, microphones, and pulpits. Wards may post signs in restrooms as a reminder to wash hands. Where available, hand sanitizer should be provided in meetinghouse foyers. According to local government regulations, members may be encouraged to wear face masks. Wards may consider discontinuing printed programs until conditions return to normal.

Blessing of children. The bishop may authorize blessings to be performed either at the family's home or at the meetinghouse.

Baptism and confirmation. Baptism and confirmation requires approval of priesthood leaders with the appropriate keys. Baptismal services may be held with as few as four people, or more where allowed. Others can view the baptism using remote technology. Until sacrament meetings return to normal schedules, converts may be confirmed immediately after their baptism rather than in a sacrament meeting. The Aaronic Priesthood may also be conferred upon males of the appropriate age immediately following their baptism and confirmation, under the direction of the bishop.

Administering the Sacrament—General Principles

To help keep members healthy and safe, priesthood holders in all cases should follow these general guidelines in the preparation and passing of the sacrament regardless of where it is administered:

- Priesthood holders who do not feel well should remain at home.
- Where available, priesthood holders may wear face masks while preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament.
- Before preparing, blessing, or passing the sacrament, priesthood holders should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hand washing is not available, they should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. They should then avoid shaking hands or touching their eyes, nose, or mouth before preparing, blessing, or passing the sacrament.
- All should cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue. They should then throw the tissue in the trash and wash or sanitize their hands. Surfaces on sacrament trays, including handles, should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.

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Administering the Sacrament in Homes

- Some members may not be able to gather for a time and should be ministered to individually. Where needed, bishops may continue to authorize worthy priesthood holders to prepare and administer the sacrament at home. If there are no worthy priesthood holders in the home, the bishop may authorize other worthy priesthood holders in the ward to prepare and administer the sacrament in the homes of members who request it.

Administering the Sacrament in Meetinghouses*

- Bishops may consider adjustments in passing the sacrament. For example, they might ask members to sit in every other bench or have chairs spaced so that priesthood holders can offer the trays to all members, rather than having individuals pass trays down the row.

**Photos that demonstrate how these principles may be properly applied are available at [Newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org).*