

RE-OPENING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can we reopen in-person worship services when numbers are rising?

In conversation with Cass County Public Health and leading medical professionals at the center of this battle, the consensus is that numbers will continue to rise in our country all winter long. Working in tandem with our city and state officials, we can lead the charge of demonstrating how we can gather for worship together safely following and enforcing CDC guidelines.

On Friday, our governor released updated guidelines for capacity limits based on seating occupancy.

Event Tiers 1 – 4: Attendee Calculator for Indoor Public Assembly Facilities, Allowable in Orange/High Risk Level

Event Tier	FOR NON-SEATED EVENTS <u>Max Occupancy Load*</u> <u>by Net Square Footage</u> (max number of people at one time in a designated area or space)	FOR SEATED EVENTS <u>Max Occupancy Load*</u> <u>by Assigned Seat</u> (max number of people seated at one time in a designated area or space)	25 Percent of Max Occupancy but no more than CAP (whichever is fewer)
1	Over 10,000 people Net space \geq 20,000 sq ft	seating capacity \geq 3,500	1,000
2	5,001 – 10,000 people Net space 10,000 - 19,999 sq ft	seating capacity 2,001 - 3,499	600
3	2001 – 4,999 people Net space 5,001 - 9,999 sq ft	seating capacity 1,001 - 2,000	300
4	Up to 2,000 people Net space \leq 5,000 sq ft	seating capacity \leq 1,000	150

On Monday our city amended their mandates to reflect our state guidelines. Based on these new guidelines, we have achievable capacity limits to be able to gather for worship at a 25% or less capacity. We will work to follow these guidelines. We can be a model for how gathering for worship together can be done safely.

What do you do if more people show up?

We have prepared overflow spaces at our campuses. We analyzed our numbers this fall, and we did not exceed capacity limits. Our ushers and staff will count people attending and direct people to overflow spaces when capacities are met.

Will you require masks?

Yes. In addition, we are posting clear signage at all our entrances that includes:

- CDC guidelines of mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing and sanitization will be required, and strict cleaning protocols will be followed.
- All large group gatherings will be limited to 25% capacity of the space. Overflow spaces are readily available for worship, also limited to 25% of capacity.
- Have you been tested or come in contact with anyone who has tested positive or has a test pending for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
 - Do you have **ONE** of these symptoms:
 - A fever at or greater than 100.4
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Do you have **TWO** or more of these symptoms with new or worsening onset:
 - Fatigue
 - Headache
 - Muscle/Body aches
 - Chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion/runny nose
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting

- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- **If you answered YES to any of these questions, you should NOT enter the building. You are welcome to return when your answer to all questions is NO, please join us for worship online.**

What about weddings?

Our pastors and wedding coordinators are working with each couple to ensure compliance with CDC guidelines. While at Hope, wedding gatherings are held to the same standards as any worship service.

What about funerals?

Funerals will follow the same guidelines as all other worship services. Being able to commend our loved ones into God's unfailing care at a funeral is a pivotal reason for us to be able to gather. At this time, no receptions will be held or food offered.

What are you doing to sanitize?

Here are some of the things we have been doing to keep the church sanitized:

- Every other pew is roped off at North and South Campus and between services we rotate and sanitize the pews. The sanctuaries are fogged to kill viruses between services. At West Campus chairs are set up spaced apart.
- Sanitizing kits are stationed at every table where people gather. Tables and chairs are cleaned, wiped, and then sanitized every time.
- Hand sanitizing stations and masks are available in multiple locations.
- We are currently having ionizers installed in our air handling systems that effectively kill viruses.

Should some people not come to worship?

The CDC has comprehensive guidelines for assessing your personal risk. Please visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) to determine your risk and comfort level.

What if I am a volunteer and I am not comfortable coming?

No pressure and no worries. Please just let us know. We do not want anyone to feel they have to participate in-person if they are uncomfortable in any way.

What about Christmas?

We are planning multiple worship services and times at all three campuses. New this year will be a online reservation process. To ensure we keep capacity limits, you will be asked to go to our website and reserve your seat. This helps us to carefully plan. Those who come without reservations will be seated in the designated overflow areas. If those areas reach their limits, they will be asked to come to another service.

Will we still have online options?

Absolutely! We will continue to provide streaming options for Worship, Hopekids, Confirmation and Adult Growth ministries. In fact, it is perhaps easier than ever to invite someone to church. Like and share us on Facebook, invite someone to watch on YouTube or direct them to our website [fargohope.org](https://www.fargohope.org). We also have an exciting Christmas online only event coming in December (I am not allowed by our staff to tell you more than that). New this year will be online Alpha beginning in January. If you have not been through Alpha, I would consider it to be one of the most important ministries for anyone to participate in at least once in their lifetime. I encourage everyone to sign up and participate.

What can we do to help at this time?

Here is a list with some suggestions:

- **Sign up to be a prayer warrior.** To receive and pray over the needs of our faith community and congregation email prayer@fargohope.org. Pray for our church, our city and state leadership, our nation and our world.
- **Join a virtual small group.** We have worked hard to prepare small group materials for all our sermons. If you would like to participate in or host a small group, go to fargohope.org/adults. If you have any questions, reach out to Dawn at dstreifel@fargohope.org.
- **Support the Need.** For some, this time of Covid-19 has given unprecedented financial success. For others, they have experienced great hardship. Many are somewhere in between. We are hearing and seeing from our ministry partners that needs are increasing. Our counseling centers are full, homelessness is on the rise, addictions and mental health concerns are staggering, and hunger needs are greatly increasing throughout the state. At Hope, we support over 42 ministry partners in our community, both financially and through volunteers. This advent we will be raising funds for the Backpack Program at the Great Plains Food Bank. The schools have seen a 20-30% increase in food insecurity needs this year. More information to come this advent.
- **Reach out and make a phone call.** Check in with each other. It is incredibly important. Galatians 6:2 reminds us to “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way, you fulfill the law of Christ.”
- **Give Generously.** Perhaps the greatest temptation of faith at this time would be to operate out of a mindset of worldly scarcity and keep it all for myself. God calls us to give generously. Faith calls us to put our trust in God, even with our finances and trust in His abundance and provision.

Is this all really necessary?

If there is any gathering at this time, online or in-person, that is truly essential, it is the church. The good news we have in Jesus Christ is the most important news in the world. The local church is the hope of the world. We have a clear calling to bring the light of Christ to our broken world. We can do this safely.

In a world of deep division, let us instead be known for unwavering unity, irresistible humility, abundant generosity, and unconditional love. This is not about our needs or our politics. It is about the calling we have, “to encourage all people to know the love of Christ.”