



## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### About This Resource

Bishop Holston and The Cabinet, along with the offices of Connectional Ministries and Congregational Development offer [Reset | Restart | Renew](#) – a resource for local churches as they prepare for the return of in-person worship.

Between now and when it is determined that it is safe to come together again for in-person gatherings, we recommend that pastors and congregations plan how they are going to return to worship. [Reset | Restart | Renew](#) offers a process through which churches can do that, as well as guidelines, questions to answer during this time of preparation, and other resources.

This has been a time of disruption, but also a season of being church in new and exciting ways that provide opportunity. We are hearing anecdotally from many United Methodist churches in South Carolina that more people are watching their livestream worship services and participating in conference calls than had been attending worship services in-house. We hope congregations will seize this opportunity and continue their virtual presence.

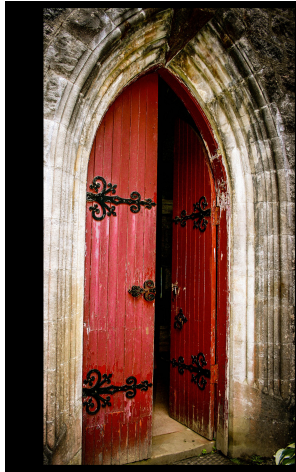
We encourage local churches to make use of [Reset | Restart | Renew](#) in whatever way best fits your needs. Our prayer is that congregations will thrive and be more vital every day. God bless you all in your ministry efforts.

### Design Team

Rev. Jim Arant, interim director of [Connectional Ministries](#)  
Rev. James Friday, director of [Congregational Development](#)  
Rev. Cathy Joens, [congregational specialist](#)  
Chris Lynch, [congregational specialist](#)  
Rev. Millie Nelson Smith, [congregational specialist](#)

### Questions about restarting?

Send an email to:  
[restart@umcsc.org](mailto:restart@umcsc.org)



# RESET

## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### The Safety of God's People

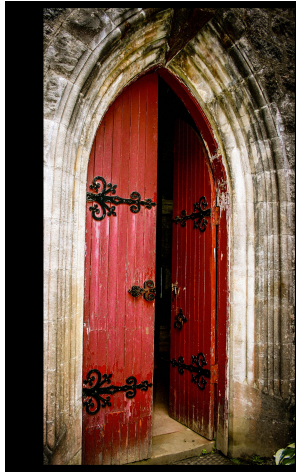
As shepherds who have been entrusted with the care of God's children, consideration for their safety is foremost in our hearts and minds. When people enter God's sanctuary, they should be able to trust that their wellbeing is important so that they can have a meaningful worship experience with peace of mind. Consider:

**Treat others as you want to be treated** – Not only is this [biblical](#), it is practical. If we feel we can enter our facilities and be at ease with our own safety, chances are we have taken the necessary precautions to ensure that.

**Education is key** – We cannot afford to assume that everyone understands [how COVID-19 is spread](#) and [how to protect themselves and others](#). Pursue every avenue available for teaching as a continuing process. It is easy to become comfortable and shift back into old patterns of behavior that will put all at risk. Signs are a good way to provide instructions, maintain boundaries, and to remind people of precautions. The CDC has [posters you can download](#).

**Leadership should model the standard** – When leaders adhere to and show enthusiasm about implementation of your safety procedures, it can inspire and motivate others to do likewise. These new practices will help us all gain some sense of freedom to settle in to a new way of being together as a people of faith and as the Body of Christ.

**People are seeking sanctuary, a safe haven** – When you can provide that to them – along with a loving atmosphere in which they can experience God's love – they will be back. Churches that provide safety and healing for the children of God will not only rebound, they will grow.



# RESET

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### The Importance of Leadership

Leadership gets real in a time of crisis. It is often said, “As goes the leader, so goes the church.” Healthy, intentional, non-anxious leadership is crucial. Here are some ways to manage your own anxiety and, by extension, help your congregation:

#### Own where you are emotionally

- Identify [where you are emotionally](#).
- Practice those things that bring you joy and reduce your anxiety.
- Talk with other clergy and share what makes you grateful.
- Find time to play.
- Sleep is essential.
- Remember counseling and coaching are gifts, not signs of weakness.

#### Educate yourself

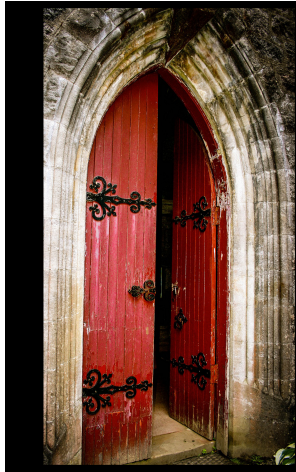
- Read updates from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the South Carolina [Department of Health and Environmental Control](#), and [other state officials](#).
- Listen to podcasts from authoritative health experts and take advantage of training opportunities with other clergy.

#### Be consistent in the decisions you make

- Stay the course...
- ...but be willing to adapt based on guidance from health experts.

**Communicate clear and concise instructions** to ease the anxiety of your congregation and yourself as a leader. Examples:

- “No choir singing”
- “No use of hymnals”
- “Wear masks and use hand sanitizer”



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### The Pastor's Role

As you are considering the right time to restart in-person worship and ministries, remember that you as the pastor – working with church lay leaders – have the authority and responsibility to protect yourself and your congregation to the best of your ability.

Pastors and leaders might decide that it would be best to wait a little longer to restart if they lead churches with members [who are considered more at risk](#) of serious illness or death if they were to contract COVID-19.

The bottom line: Every church is unique in its context. Church pastors and lay leadership know their context better than anyone does, so they must work together to make a decision. There are no right answers here – as no one has ever been through what we are currently experiencing – so trust is paramount.

Trust first in God's work in you through the Holy Spirit, but also trust in those fellow leaders – clergy and laity – whom God has placed in your circle of influence. Know that you are being lifted up in prayer by leaders from around our conference as you move forward.





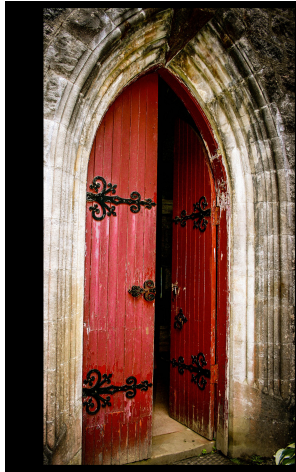
## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Common Themes

As our country, states and communities have begun to make plans for what it looks like to reopen, a multitude of resources have been released by different entities.

As we reviewed those resources, we found a number of common themes:

- There is a strong likelihood that we will not return to “normal.” The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic might significantly change how the church functions moving forward.
- The safety of parishioners and church leadership is a top priority and might be handled differently from church to church. If you serve a congregation that has a higher ratio of [individuals considered “at-risk”](#) or you are in an identified [COVID-19 “hotspot.”](#) you might find yourself waiting longer than other churches to return to in-person worship.
- Restarting is a process, and now is the time for church leaders to determine a plan of action that might include slowly transitioning back to in-person worship.
- Once we return to in-person worship, there still might be limitations – such as a limit on the [number of persons who can gather](#), the need for continued [social distancing](#) and the use of [masks](#) or other personal protection equipment. As leaders, it is imperative that we restart in a manner that ensures we are following guidelines from health experts and church and elected leaders.
- A good first step is forming a team of leaders – clergy, staff and laity – to create a restart plan, implement it, regularly evaluate it, and make needed adjustments as you proceed.



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### Restarting with At-Risk Populations

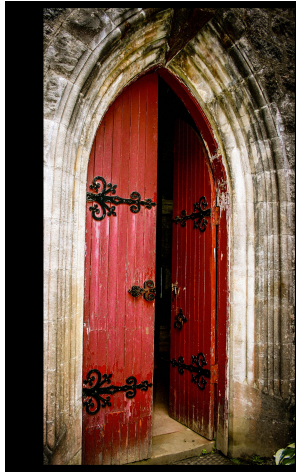
We are all eager to return to some sense of normalcy in our lives. How and when we do that is one of the most important things to consider. For some communities and populations, this is more critical than it is for others. COVID-19 affects some populations in disparate ways:

- Persons [aged 65 and older](#) make up a significant proportion of those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and those who have died as a result of it.
- Persons with [serious underlying medical conditions](#) – such as [asthma](#), [chronic lung disease](#), [diabetes](#), [heart conditions](#), [chronic kidney disease](#), [HIV](#), [severe obesity](#), [liver disease](#) or who are [immunocompromised](#) – seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.
- In South Carolina, [African Americans](#) make up 27 percent of the population, but 46 percent of COVID-19 deaths.

Given that, it is understandable that pastors and leaders of churches with large numbers of these populations might desire to proceed with greater caution. This is completely acceptable – pastors and other church leaders know their congregations better than anyone, and know the pace of return that would work best.

Keep in mind that this experience has created trauma. If you serve a population that has been categorized as high-risk, there will be an even greater element of fear in returning to life as we knew it. This presents an opportunity for education and support that will begin the healing process. As people heal, they may become more comfortable with returning to church based upon the recognition of boundaries and other safety practices we all are learning.

It is important to remember that you are not alone in this. We all are navigating this together. Should you need assistance developing your process, contact your [district superintendent](#) or district [congregational specialist](#).



# RESET

## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### New Reality – New Opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected how we are in ministry within our congregations and communities – and likely will continue to do so long after our forced isolation ends. While our understandable tendency might be to view this new reality as a negative, we know that God can use any situation for good.

We already are seeing churches moving elements of their programming online. Some churches have started [live-streaming worship](#) experiences that are drawing more participants than their in-person worship services have.

There clearly is a desire or longing among some to be connected to the church in new ways. As we begin to plan for restarting in-person worship and other activities, we must be careful not to turn away from these new “online campuses” as avenues for connecting the message of the Gospel with an audience that is eager to hear it.

Now is the time for the church to recalibrate its systems to show this online community that we care enough to invest in them as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We must be prepared to provide resources – time, talent and money – at higher levels than in the past.

As we navigate this new opportunity, here are some questions to consider.

- Do we continue (or begin) to livestream our worship? Other ministries?
- Is the way we present ourselves online sufficient, or do we make it more “professional”?
- How do we reach online participants in real time?
- How do we engage participants through social media?

- How do we get to know them and what they need from us? What they like? What they don't like?
- How do we create opportunities for them to sow into our ministry through online giving as they participate?
- How do we create a "next step" to help move them to a stronger connection to our community of faith?
- How do we offer them an opportunity to share prayer requests or other needs?
- What will it take to make this a reality – both financially and in the time and talent of our staff and members? (Make sure to ask this question last, so we don't quash creativity and outside-the-box ideas.)



## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Preparing The Space – Before Restart

- A thorough [cleaning and disinfecting](#) should be performed before we welcome people back into our churches.
- If you offer multiple worship services, what's your plan for wiping down pews, doors, door handles, etc., between gatherings?
- Will you require attendees to [wear masks](#)? If so, will you have masks available for guests and others who show up without one?
- Will you set up hand sanitizer stations throughout the space?
- How will you handle restrooms, especially smaller restrooms where social distancing can be a struggle?

### Preparing The Space – After Restart

- Continue at least daily routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces frequently touched by multiple people in high-traffic areas, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches and faucets.
- More frequent cleaning and disinfecting might be needed, based on the level of use.
- Identify a team of volunteers and create a schedule.



## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Worship & Gathering Considerations

- If your regular attendance is larger than capacity limits placed on gatherings by government officials – a certain number of people per square foot – how will you ensure that you are in compliance? Can you add additional services?
- What is the maximum number of participants you can safely host in your space? How can you best arrange seating for worship participants to ensure proper social distancing requirements? How do you communicate and enforce those limits to ensure you don't end up with more people than allowed in your space?
- What role will online worship and small groups play after restart? Live-streaming could result in fewer people attending in person, which would contribute to a safer environment.
- Plan how attendees will arrive and depart the worship space safely, while observing social distancing guidance. Can you set up one door as an entry and another as an exit? Consider propping open each entry/exit door or having a greeter to open and close doors to reduce the need for people to touch doorknobs and handles. Can you make hallways one-way?
- Consider removing Bibles, hymnals (see below), forms and writing utensils from pew racks – or create a plan to clean and disinfect all of those items between services. Encourage attendees to use Bible smartphone apps, or project scripture during your service. Consider recording attendance and visitors digitally. Remember, when counting online attendance, it is a separate line (Table 1, Line 7a) on the [GCFA Report of Membership & Participation](#).
- Is it time to eliminate physical contact during the passing of the peace? Be creative and consider engaging ways to connect during this time.
- Avoid passing an offering plate to guard against spreading germs. If online giving is not an option for some, consider placing an offering plate near entrances and exits where attendees can drop off their offering.
- Avoid communion until there is a safe way to administer the sacrament.



## About choirs and singing

There seems to be ample evidence to suggest that singing creates a quantity of fine aerosols that can stay suspended in the air for long periods of time, move with air currents, and stay infectious for many hours, exposing virtually everyone in a building.

Medical, science and public health experts strongly recommend against singing indoors in public until a vaccine is widely available and widely used.

We recommend reading [this in-depth guidance about singing](#) prepared by the Wisconsin Council of Churches.



## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Communication

As you develop your plan for restarting ministries, make sure to include a comprehensive communication plan to share with all potential attendees new expectations for participation.

- Consider communicating beyond your traditional formats – including websites, bulletins/newsletters, telephone, text messaging, social media and more.
- The more you communicate your clear and consistent expectations, the better informed your potential attendees will be as they make a decision about when they will return.
- Post signs prominently throughout your facility – from the parking lot, through doorways and into all spaces (including restrooms) – to help remind attendees of the new expectations.
- Make sure signs contain helpful, concise and clear information about what is expected of attendees. Use large type on signs, so they can be read easily from several feet away.

[Download and print posters from DHEC.](#)

[Download and print posters from the CDC.](#)



## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Giving

Because we have not been able to gather safely for in-person worship, some congregations are experiencing financial woes. Churches can provide alternative ways for members and others to make financial contributions beyond the Sunday offering plate.

Congregations with a history of excellent stewardship are not experiencing financial problems from this downturn. One of the keys of successful stewardship is to help the congregation experience the joy of giving. Most people give to the church because it feels good to do so. The Christian understanding of stewardship is an important part of our [UMC membership vows](#) – in which we pledge to support the United Methodist Church with our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.

- One way to start making up ground on giving is to preach the joy of being a generous giver. Educate your congregation that giving is a spiritual discipline that leads them closer in their walk with God. Not sure where to start? [Download this resource from Discipleship Ministries](#).
- This is also a prime opportunity to overcome the hesitation by many to give to the church [online or via smartphone giving apps](#). This hesitation seems more prevalent in rural churches and in those with older congregations. Some also will balk when they see that online giving often comes with an administrative fee (usually about 2 percent).
- We need to educate those who are hesitant about how they can give electronically and the benefits of doing so. (Are we really going to turn away a \$100 donation because \$2 of it covers the cost of the transaction?)
- We know younger members are more comfortable with electronic giving. We also know they will give on a regular basis, but many are not able to donate large amounts at a time.

- There are many options for online giving. Start with the bank your church already has a relationship with, and ask them what online bill paying options they provide. These are typically free services.
- Since a lot of us seem to live on our smartphones, a church giving app is a good alternative. We have collected links to some of the best apps in the [Giving Section of the UMCSC Coronavirus Resources](#).
- Once you start offering ways for members to donate online, don't forget the traditional methods.
  - Let your members know they can mail a check to the church.
  - Some churches also are providing a secure lockbox where members can drop off their donations.
    - If your church offers this, make sure you are doing so safely – no personal contact and no handing off checks to a person.
    - Health experts recommend leaving checks and cash in the lockbox for at least two days before removal.
    - Make sure bonded persons count and take money to the bank.



## **Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19**

### **A Place to Start the Conversation**

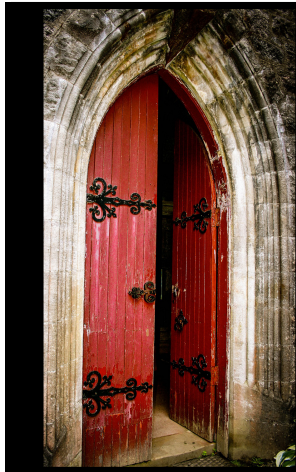
In small contextual groups (based on church size, geography, ethnicity, etc.), conversations are helpful when considering restart. Before reopening for in-person worship, planning discussions with the leadership of the church is critical. Here are some questions/prompts that might guide that conversation:

#### **Dreaming Big**

- What might be?
- Can we design what it should be?
- Discover being innovative/creative

#### **Basic Ministry Questions**

- What have we discovered during this crisis season?
- What is most important?
- What are our priorities?
- How do we focus our efforts moving forward?
- What do we need to stop doing because of what we discovered?
- What challenges us most during this time?
- What did we do well?



# RENEW

## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19



*Who are we now? | Who is our neighbor now? | What are we here for now?*

Many of our churches have gone through Forward Focus or are in the middle of the process. What do we do now? We continue from the new place we in which we find our ministry. This worksheet is designed to help you to assess the information you already have gathered by working through some new questions about your story, your leadership and needs.

### Debrief the COVID-19 Experience

- Brainstorm how the pandemic has affected your life together.
- What ministries have you been focusing on during this time of separation?
- What did you learn about yourselves and your community?
- In what ways did your faith grow together?

### Focus Group Discussion

- How has your vision shifted since COVID-19?
- What were your learning and growing edges?
- What challenges affected your ability to meet the needs of those around you?
- What ministries are important as you move into the future?

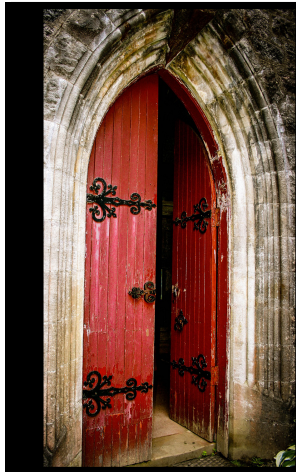


## Finances

- What are your giving avenues? What are the benefits? What are the questions and challenges?
- How will your budget change in light of any added ministry in the wake of the pandemic?
- What were the costs of tools used during the pandemic? Will there be additional cost in the future?

## Leadership

- In what ways did your leadership function during pandemic?
- Did you feel you had enough leadership for the workload and skill necessary?
- Finish this sentence:  
Our leadership was: \_\_\_\_ proactive \_\_\_\_ reactive \_\_\_\_ active \_\_\_\_ non-active.
- In what ways did your leadership communicate? In what ways was this helpful? What were the challenges?
- What are the different ways you can plan and work together in the future?
- What has been the discussion among your leadership to address your ministry needs since COVID-19?

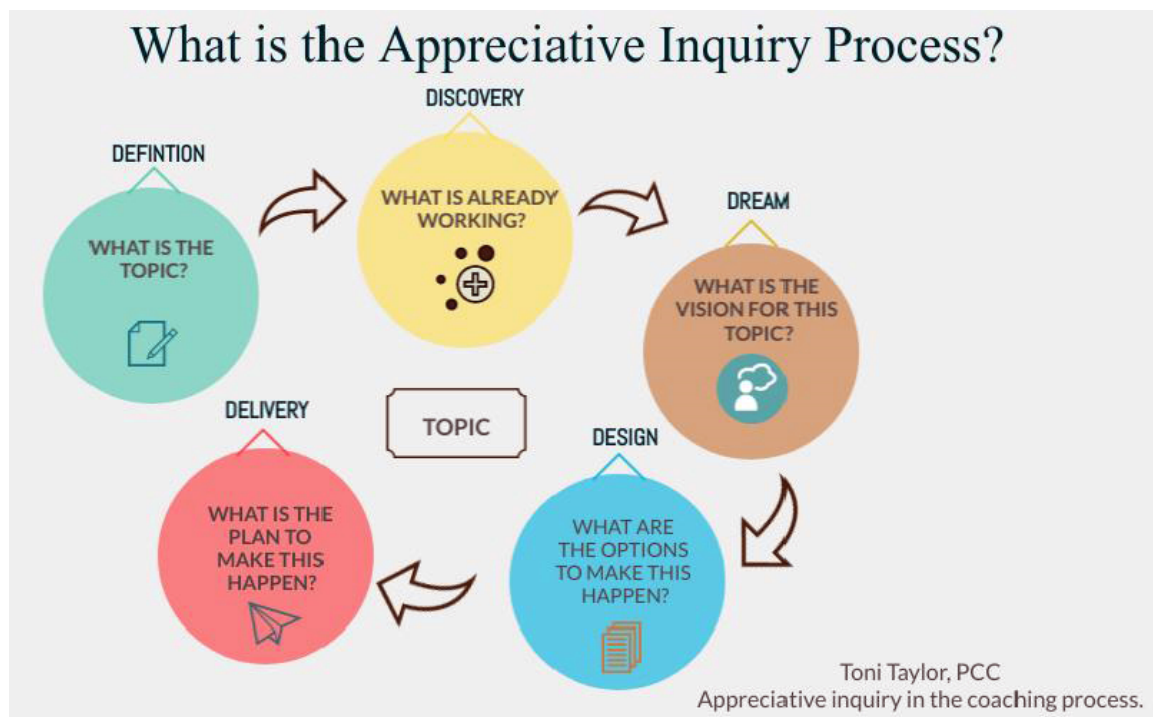


# RENEW

## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a way for churches to collaborate in a positive way to discuss, evaluate and dream. Clergy and lay leadership can use this process to identify what is already working and doing more of that – rather than looking for problems and trying to fix them. AI encourages trust in leadership through listening and co-designing the work.



[Download Appreciative Inquiry Workshop Model](#)



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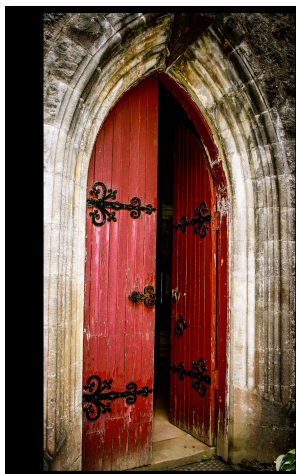
### **Mental Health First Aid**

Robyn Ellison, education coordinator with Prisma Health and a United Methodist, offers a free program to educate congregations about "[Mental Health First Aid](#)."

This can be done remotely or in person.

Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues.

Contact: [Robyn.Ellison@prismahealth.org](mailto:Robyn.Ellison@prismahealth.org)

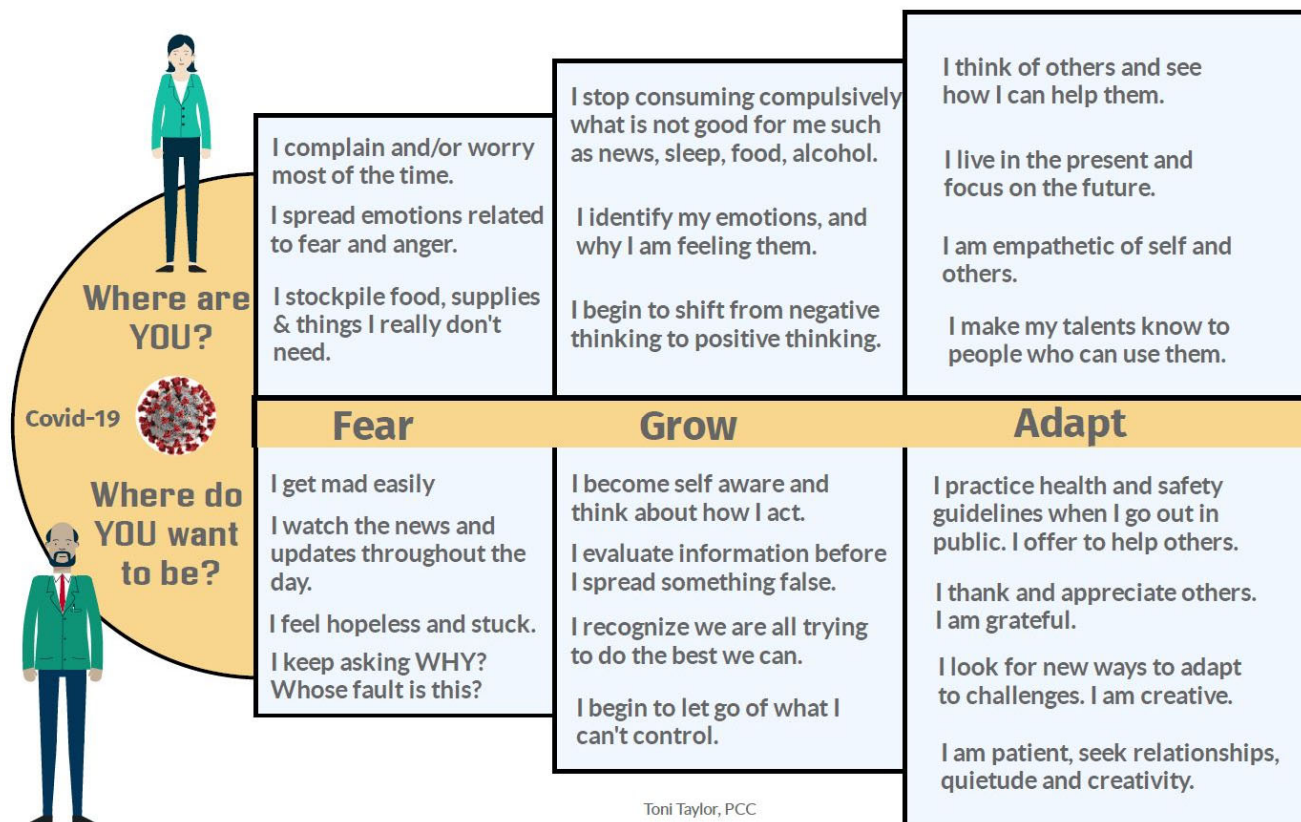


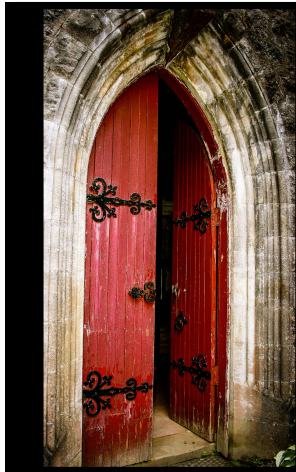
# RENEW

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### COVID-19 Coaching Tool

Toni Taylor, a licensed coach and a United Methodist, offers this resource to help church members and leaders begin to have honest conversation about how the pandemic has affected us and how we are managing, both emotionally and mentally.





# RENEW

## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### Trauma 101

*Dr. L. Marinn Pierce, a United Methodist who teaches crisis and trauma counseling at Winthrop University, offers this free resource as a guide to assess where you might be in this stressful time and to discern what you need to be your best self.*

COVID-19 is presenting us with an invisible threat. For individuals with trauma histories that have not been sufficiently “worked through,” this may activate certain responses they may not be able to connect with a particular event or experience.

It is important to know that in these trauma responses, higher-order functioning and processing is shut down to conserve energy. Therefore, abilities for rational thinking and problem-solving are not readily accessible to the individual.

The best and most proven intervention for trauma and shock is positive social engagement. That is at a minimum right now, so get creative.

## Two Main Trauma Responses

**Sympathetic Nervous System** (*Fight-or-Flee*) – The body is preparing to defend itself. Heart rate and breathing increase to transport necessary energy stores to the extremities. All non-essential functions are shut down. Much harder to maintain during prolonged traumatic situations or when the threat is invisible.

- Fight – The body prepares to defend the boundary.
- Flee – When fight is not an option, the body attempts to escape the attack.

**Dorsal Vagal** (*Parasympathetic Nervous System – Friend, Freeze, Dissociation, Collapse*) – Unable to defend itself or escape, the body prepares to survive by any means necessary. Heart rate and breathing decrease, bringing blood flow to the center of the body to reduce blood loss. Endogenous opiates flood the system to reduce pain of attack. All non-essential functions are shut down.

- Friend – Maintain social engagement with attacker, so this can feel less threatening. This is trauma bonding or Stockholm Syndrome. Becoming friends with the attacker or people pleasing.
- Freeze – Immobility.
- Dissociation – Disconnection from the experience through escaping out (not feeling present in the body) or escaping in (excessive daydreaming). We all dissociate from time-to-time. Ever driven home and not remembered going through that one red light?)
- Collapse – The individual feigns death (think playing possum) to increase the chance of survival.

All of these are occurring in various forms and will continue to do so over the next few years. One of the things we have learned fairly recently is that the impacts of trauma aren't always immediate and can show up years or even decades after the experience.

## Common Signs and Symptoms of Unresolved Trauma

- Intrusive thoughts
- Nightmares or difficulty sleeping
- Visual images of the experience
- Loss of memory and/or concentration
- Confusion
- Brain fog
- Mood swings
- Avoidance of activities and places
- Social isolation
- Lack of interest
- Easily startled
- Fatigue
- Tachycardia
- Edginess
- Chronic pain or muscle tension
- Sexual dysfunction
- Change in eating patterns
- Extreme alertness
- Fear
- Obsessive/compulsive behaviors
- Avoiding people and emotions
- Numbing (through dissociation or addictions)
- Depression and anxiety
- Guilt and shame
- Shock
- Denial
- Irritability
- Rage/terror
- Panic attacks



# What can you do?

## **Now:**

- Know your referral sources – Know their specializations and billing policies.
- Self-care first – You can't help your congregations through shock if you're in shock.
- Pastoral Care – Have you checked in with every person (not family unit) in your congregation? If not, meet with your leadership regarding how to initiate this. Pay particular attention to individuals with heightened possibilities for loneliness – older adults, single adults, LGBTQ+ individuals living in non-affirming spaces, incarcerated or just-released individuals, persons you know are at risk for harm in their surroundings.
- Provide clear, concrete messaging. (More on this below.)

## **Transition:**

- Do this slowly.
- How do you help folks understand that their discomfort in not being together is necessary to protect the vulnerable among us? As a society, we struggle to distinguish between begin uncomfortable and unsafe. These are two very different things.
- We have missed Holy Week, Easter and Mother's Day, and we will miss Pentecost. The impulse might be to try to recreate these experiences when you return, please do not do this. The first few weeks back should be quiet and slow. Our nervous systems will need to be gradually reintroduced to the idea of being together. Loud sounds (i.e. organs, orchestras and bands) and big celebrations are likely to increase the shock in the system.
- Most trauma actually happens in poorly handled transitions. Keep this in mind as you support your congregations in returning. Go gently and slowly.

## **Long-term:**

- We're likely to experience this again – possibly around Christmas. Prepare yourselves and your congregations for this. What planning needs to occur in order for Advent and Christmas services to be accessible?
- Grief and Loss – We typically think about a grief cycle lasting two years. In this grief cycle, it will likely be two to four years before we can begin to assess for resolution. It's time to pull out all those CPE skills. Again, know your referral sources.
- How do we help our folks learn to love each other in the midst? This experience provides fertile ground for some exploration and evaluation. What needs to happen, from a discipleship perspective, once you are back to together, to better prepare us to love in a way that sacrifices our comfort for the safety of others?

## **If you're transitioning to a new appointment:**

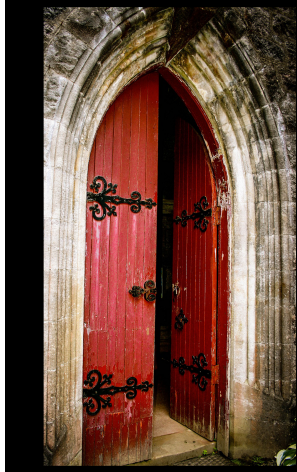
- Saying goodbye – You might not be able to say goodbye in person. Take some time to allow yourselves to grieve this and then explore how you might say goodbye to those you have led. Work with your leadership team (those remaining with the congregation – whether clergy, staff, or laity) to develop supports for congregational grief for this.

- Saying hello – It is also possible you will not be able to say hello in person and will be walking into a space where folks did not get to say goodbye. There's some complicated grief here. Honor this. Begin now connecting with your leadership team to explore how best to say hello.

**Communication:**

*Understanding the functions of the brain described above supports us in developing communication strategies during crises.*

- Be clear and concise – Most folks are operating from more primitive or “younger” parts of the brain. Think about the concreteness of talking to a young child.
- Avoid speaking in hypotheticals or unknowns – For example, when asked about reopening, consider something like, “The leadership team decided to follow “The \_\_\_\_\_ Model” for COVID-19 projections and reopening. Their current recommendation is that we begin considering transitioning from social distancing measures on \_\_\_\_\_. The team will provide updated information on this date regarding our transition to in-person gatherings.” This provides a concrete date and the data guiding the decision making process.
- There will be persons who will want you to open sooner than is responsible. You are likely to encounter trauma responses of rage and irritability. Responding with empathy and congruence to support increased safety in their nervous systems (part of why your own work around this is so, so important) will likely be more helpful than trying to provide rational explanations.



# RESOURCES

## Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19

### More Resources

Guidance from trusted sources to use in a way that best fits your congregation and your context.

- [Restart Checklist](#) – The basics of the restart process.
- [RE-Launch](#) – Embracing the Ministry Possibilities of 2020 (Discipleship Ministries)
- [24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return](#) (Ken Braddy Jr.)
- [10 Considerations for Reopening Church](#) (Pinnacle Leadership Associates)
- [Finding Masks and Hand Sanitizer](#)
- [UMCSC Coronavirus Resources](#)



**Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19**

### **Addenda**

The resources that follow this page were added after the publication of [Reset | Restart | Renew](#).



## **Helping Churches Reopen Amid COVID-19**

### **Vacation Bible School**

#### **Virtual VBS ideas and suggested practices:**

- Offer intergenerational/family or children's VBS
- Two days (or more)
- Offer teaching sessions online and practice off-line. Teach the lesson and share the craft and instructions online. Family does the craft together off-line.
- Offer VBS as resource packets or challenges. Create faith-based scavenger hunts or crafts. Participants take photos of their activities to post internally for the congregation.
- Offer a VBS supply kit to go with whatever sessions you provide.

#### **If you don't want to change your VBS tradition:**

- "Summer Adventures" – Offer a "Summer Adventures" program (or a name that works in your context) and provide a box or bag they pick up. Post brief videos with lessons. Encourage children/families to participate at a set time (or whenever they want to) and take photos of their activities to post internally for the congregation.
- Neighborhood Groups – Find hosts and provide them the tools to minister with small groups in person (adhering to CDC guidelines and proper social distancing). A nice break from all of the screen time our children and teens have been experiencing.
- Weekly Virtual Resource – Consider providing a once-a-week virtual resource throughout the summer, based on the VBS curriculum you had planned to use.

### **What some churches already have decided:**

- If VBS is scheduled before July 26:
  - Many churches are offering virtual VBS or canceling.
  - Virtual can be prerecorded and viewed when desired.
  - VBS resource packets or boxes provided.
  - VBS challenges, crafts, etc., can be performed off-screen.
- If VBS is scheduled after July 26:
  - Some churches have canceled due to issue of logistics, safety and volunteers.
  - Churches with 50 or more students are planning for both virtual and in-person VBS, but leaning toward virtual.
  - Churches with 50 students or less are considering in-person VBS.
    - Students separated by age levels.
    - Ten or fewer persons per room, to observe social distancing.
    - Assemblies and large-group events live-streamed into rooms.
    - Outdoor activities provided with social distancing.
    - Church disinfecting protocols used.

### **Resources:**

- [A Different Kind of Summer: Facebook Chat Ideas](#) (GenOn Ministries)
- ["Knights of North Castle" VBS Super Starter Kit Plus Digital](#) (Cokesbury)
- ["To Mars and Beyond" VBS Super Starter Kit Plus Digital](#) (Cokesbury)
- ["Champions in Life" VBS Starter Kit](#) (Cokesbury)
- ["FOCUS: Take a Closer Look" VBS & Virtual Experience](#) (Orange VBS)
- ["Rocky Railway" VBS & Modified VBS Options](#) (Group)