

DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

A values-based framework for making decisions about resuming church gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. — Philipians 4:6-7

THEOLOGY

- Consider what guidance your church's theology can give for making decisions.
- Examine the spiritual promptings you and your congregation may sense.
- Have intentional prayer experiences for seeking guidance from God.
- Reflect on the impact your congregation's liturgical needs may have on spiritual engagement (such as communion, proclaiming the Word, church music).
- Study the applications that the greatest commandments to love God and to love neighbors and self might have.

QUALITY

- Consider the quality of the experience for people who choose in-person worship and for those who choose online engagement.
- Reflect on the level of fulfillment of your church mission and calling in the options you are investigating.
- Examine the ways your congregation is connecting in fellowship and care for one another.
- Contemplate how the choices you make might impact the level of stress and workload on church staff, volunteers, leadership and attendees.

COLLABORATION

- Involve church leadership teams and staff in your considerations and follow your local church polity procedures.
- Consider how to foster congregational decision making.
- Collect and summarize data relevant to your local church context.
- Seek solidarity with other local churches, when possible.
- Reflect on the impact actions might have on the work and well-being of staff and volunteers including the resources you have available.

WELL-BEING

- Consider the entirety of a person's well-being, including emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual and social aspects for your congregation and guests.
- Build confidence in the level of well-being you feel you can provide for your church members and guests.
- Determine how comfortable you are with the level of safety the church can provide.
- Reflect on the overall sense of connectivity and fellowship that would impact the well-being of the body of believers.
- Examine local trends from resources such as state and local Health Departments and the CDC to set benchmarks that might guide you.
- Set expectations for what in-person gatherings will be like.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Ask these questions about your possible choices for church life:

- Is there a compelling reason to return to gathering instead of what we are doing now?
- What will be missed and what will be gained by resuming at this time?
- What must stay the same when we resume? What must change for us to resume?
- How do we set expectations?
- How do we evaluate our choices?
- What is our plan for contact tracing and church-wide communication if an attendee tests positive for COVID-19?
- What do our state officials and local authorities recommend right now?
- How do the people in our church feel about gathering publicly? How do the people in our community feel about gathering publicly?
- Do we have a real sense of how volunteers will participate?
- What is the wise thing to do?