



RE-GATHERING GUIDE FOR

Louisiana Baptists'

Next Generation
Ministries

As churches begin to think about regathering ...

... there are several things to consider. Dr. Steve Horn, Executive Director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, urges leaders to “plan to regather as soon as possible, but also as safely as possible, and

finally to be sure we regather as successfully as possible.” The following guidelines are designed to help the local church in regathering our ministries to preschoolers, elementary children, and youth.

The following steps are suggested as a first step:

1. Establish a leadership team to design and implement a ministry plan.
2. Remember the ministry plan should compliment the plan for the whole church body.
3. Keep in mind there is no “one size fits all” plan. Each church will discover areas that are unique to its context.

PHASE ONE:

Our recommendation is that we do not gather the preschool/children/youth ministries in face to face ministry settings. Attempting to honor the social distancing requirements in Phase One will be nearly impossible. Therefore, we urge patience during this time.

PHASE TWO:

With some ingenuity and creativity there may be some possibility for some gathering of these age-graded areas. Our recommendation is to consider carefully how you can gather each age group as soon as possible, as safely as possible, and as successfully as possible. The guidelines mentioned in the attached age graded guides will help you to determine if you can achieve the success and safety goals for your local church setting.

PHASE THREE:

During this phase these guidelines will be most helpful. We encourage ministries to carefully consider each topic listed in this guide, establish ministry goals, and design a plan to re-gather age-graded ministries successfully.

Preschool and Elementary Children Guidelines

The following topics should be considered before gathering for ministry.

Cleanliness and Sanitizing:

Prior to opening classrooms to children and teachers:

1. *What items need to be removed?*

This would include items that cannot be properly cleaned, such as stuffed animals, play clothes, shared playdough, etc.

2. *What items need to be deep cleaned?*

This would include toys, furniture, any touchable surface.

3. *What cleaners are being used?*

Cleaners should be non-toxic, and a solid disinfectant used to clean every area of the room, including rugs and floors. Area rugs may need to be removed.

As classrooms are occupied:

1. *Are hand cleaners easily accessed and clearly indicated?*

Hand sanitizer and/or a sink with soap should be accessible as children and adults enter the room and after touching anything that is shared.

2. *Will you require or suggest face masks?*

The response to this question will be different in each setting. Establishing and communicating a policy ahead of time is crucial.

a. Consider the impact on young preschoolers.

b. Consider if children should wear them.

c. Establish a policy on permitting a child or volunteer that arrives without a mask.

d. Determine if having extra masks on hand is necessary.

Preschool and Elementary Children Guidelines

(Continued)

Multiple-Use Classrooms:

If space permits, use a classroom once and then move the children to another room if another hour of ministry begins. Do not introduce new children into a room for a second hour unless that room has been fully sanitized.

- ***Preschool***

When transitioning from Sunday School to Extended Session/Worship Care, move the children to another room if some of the children will be different.

Preschool is acceptable in Phase 1, so long as there are no more than 10 in one room, including teachers (social distancing must still be observed). No mixing of children for food or playground or joint teaching.

Classroom Procedures:

- Establish classroom procedures during this re-gathering time.
- Do not allow children to bring bags from home. Parents of preschoolers should place their necessities in one-use bags provided by the church.
- Do not allow children to bring toys from home.
- Design your room setup to encourage social distancing.
 - *Push tables together to make a larger table and place chairs apart from each other around the table.*
 - *Engage games that are distance games such as charades, tossing with one-use items such as a balloon, review games like jeopardy, etc.*
 - *Help children to not gather at the door when they arrive or when it is pick-up time. Have them come to the door one at a time.*
 - *Purchase all new crayons, markers, other items and place a group in a sanitized zip-lock bag that is kept at the church with a child's name on it for their personal use.*

Preschool and Elementary Children Guidelines

(Continued)

Volunteers:

Check with your regular volunteers to discover who is planning to return.

- Give permission to those in a high-risk group to not return at first.
- Be prepared to urge some volunteers to not return if they are in a high-risk group, even if they want to return.
- Consider those that care for high risk family members or neighbors.
- Prepare to limit classes based on number of volunteers available.

Training – be creative in how you implement training for these volunteers

- Even long-tenured volunteers will need to be briefed and trained on new procedures.
- Implement training that has been needed for a while.

These measures are all temporary and all volunteers will be welcomed back at the appropriate time.

Communication:

Develop a communication plan that does three things:

1. Makes your volunteers experts in all things pertaining to their classroom.
2. Prepares parents/caregivers on what to expect for their children and the classroom.
3. Creates a welcoming environment for guests who are unfamiliar with your procedures so that they feel safe, secure, and welcome.

Preschool and Elementary Children Guidelines

(Continued)

Corporate Worship Tips:

When re-gathering, we strongly suggest including preschool and children into the corporate worship experience. This is a temporary situation until we can establish a safe and successful preschool experience (and kids church experience for those that offer that option).

Tips:

- Encourage families to sit in the same general vicinity while still incorporating social distancing. This will help parents feel less nervous about their child disturbing someone without children.
- Offer a separate worship experience for families with children. If possible, set up tables in a separate venue and broadcast the service to that room. Limit one family per table and encourage them to bring activities for their own children.
- Encourage parents to bring a pad of paper and markers for their children for during worship. DO NOT hand out activity sheets during Phases 1 and 2.

Rule of thumb: If the offering plate should not be passed then church should not provide handouts.

- Encourage parents to engage their children during worship (i.e. stand during singing, pray during praying, and draw something pertaining to the sermon during the sermon). Children can be directed.
- Email activity sheets related to the sermon for each week ahead of time for them to print and bring with them.
- Invite parents to download the LifeWay Kids app on a smart phone or tablet. The Sunday School section provides access to children's activities and stories related to their Sunday School lesson.
- In all these things, remember to include guests and introduce them to this information. For example, have some sanitized bags with the printable activity sheets you emailed out and include markers or crayons in them that will be single use. Reserve these for guests only and not for members/attenders.

Youth Ministry Guidelines

The following topics should be considered before gathering for ministry.

Venue:

- Determine the capacity of Sunday School/Small Group rooms and dedicated youth spaces. If those spaces are small, youth groups can meet in a larger area in the church (*i.e. fellowship hall, gym, etc.*).
- Consider dividing high school and middle school into separate spaces. Selecting alternative days (*i.e. high school on Tuesday, middle school on Wednesday*) could result in additional meeting spaces being available (*i.e. the worship center*).
- Having students register to attend a gathering will be helpful in controlling the number of attendees.

Platforms:

- If you gather Sunday School/Small Groups, additional times may be necessary. Meeting in a larger room (*i.e. fellowship hall, gym*) and around tables may be more helpful than smaller classrooms.
- Larger gatherings, like Wednesday night services, can be divided by high school and middle school. If multiple spaces are available, each group can meet separately. If multiple spaces are not available, move one group to an alternative day/time.
- While we want youth to gather at church, remember families will be at varying levels of comfort regarding re-gathering. It will be important to continue offering on-line gatherings and digital resources for those students.

Youth Ministry Guidelines

(Continued)

Communication:

- Communicating your plans for re-gathering the youth group is crucial. Social media, website updates, emails to parents and students, group texts, and USPS should all be carefully considered and utilized. Parents will be most interested in day and time, how social distancing will be enforced, and how the space(s) will be cleaned before each meeting.
- It is also important to communicate to parents that each family's decision regarding their level of involvement will be respected. If parents choose to delay participation, the youth ministry should provide resources for them to use at home. If parents require their student to wear a mask while on campus, the youth ministry leadership should not tolerate bullying or that student being made fun of.

Parents:

- Take time to teach and encourage parents the Deuteronomy 6 mandate that they are to be the primary discipler(s) of their children. Providing resources and training will help parents to lead family devotions, Bible study, and engage their student in spiritual conversation at home.
- Youth Ministry leaders should schedule times to contact youth parents as well as students.
- Designing on-line events for families will help connect them to the youth ministry, as well.

Youth Ministry Guidelines

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Volunteers:

- In Phases 1 and 2, limit the number of adult leaders to Youth Ministry Staff and/or volunteers with a specifically assigned role.
- Consider requiring that adult leaders wear masks during Phases 1 and 2.
- Check with your regular volunteers to discover who planning to return. Prepare to limit classes based on number of volunteers available.
 - *Give permission to those in a high-risk group to not return at first.*
 - *Be prepared to urge some volunteers to not return if they are in a high-risk group, even if they want to return.*
 - *Consider those that care for high risk family members or neighbors.*
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These measures are all temporary and all volunteers will be welcomed back at the appropriate time.

Food and Refreshments:

- We recommend that during Phases 1 and 2 youth ministries suspend offering food or refreshments at Youth Ministry gatherings.
- If suspending is not acceptable, offer pre-packaged selections.
- If home-cooked food is desired, assign servers who will wear masks and gloves.