



## Ideas for alternative service options for the congregation & Tips on how to keep Religious Organizations and their members safe from Coronavirus.

### Overview

With all the restriction happening now we want you to know that there are so many service options that could be offered to the congregation. This information below can help the congregation stay safe and help stop the spread of the Coronavirus. Also, we are offering new ideas on how to still have service during these very challenging times.

#### *One person carries offering plate to each row*

- Try designating one usher, deacon, altar boy, or chosen member of the congregation to be the collector. This is much more sanitary and eliminates the number of germs passed.
- If there is enough room have members get up and drop donations directly to the basket. This is an even more effective way to reduce the potential spread of germs.
- When the offering plate is carried row-to-row then passed down, each member touches the plate and distributes germs to the other members.

#### *Singing and loud projection (12 feet apart)*

- **Singing and loud projection is not recommended during the pandemic.**
- If singing or loud projection needs to occur, it should be done by single singers who are at least 12 feet away from anyone else.
- Face shields will add to the protection of others around, but are not an alternative to the 12 feet distance.
- Group singing is strongly discouraged as it easily spreads the virus into the air for people to become infected.
- Singing can be one of the most important parts of praise and worship for many congregations. During this very difficult time we want to keep all our parishioners as safe as possible by minimizing singing out loud. Mouthing the words as one person



sings in person or as a video or teaching everyone to use American Sign language for a song or hymn are innovative ways to address the issue.

### *Have services outside or Have an online broadcast of service*

- Many churches benefit from the beautiful California weather and are happy to gather outside. Choose an open space such as the parking lot or open space near the statuary.
- Make sure seating for is at least 6 ft apart in all directions. Hint: Take a string and measuring three and a half feet on it, with a little more on each end for people to hold. Put a piece of chalk on one end and have someone hold the other end where you want to place a seat. Draw a 7ft diameter circle and put a chair in the middle. Start the next circle with the chalk on the edge of the first circle.
- Consider recording services and uploading them to **YouTube, Facebook, Zoom, etc.**, so that your parishioners can still get the word and be safe at home. Note: online conferencing platforms make it hard for people to sing together or speak together.

### *Communion: use pre-sealed packaging*

- Consider getting individual portion servings that are pre-packaged for the congregants. This is a much safer way for everyone to participate. This is a **safer** option!

### *Keep Children's services separate from seniors*

- Children are known for spreading germs. Creating a children's service separate from the seniors gives the children a safe place to learn. This is beneficial to the learning style of children and allows our older parishioner to not be distracted by the children's movements.
- Both our children and seniors are a very vulnerable population, and we all love the children and seniors in our communities. Yes, children need the valuable information that they receive during service, but children do not learn the same way that adults do.



### *Make Hand sanitizer and disposal masks available for everyone*

- We are not able to control whether the parishioner's mask was washed or not before arriving to service. Reusable masks are a breeding ground for germs.
- Having someone provide disposable masks to each parishioner as they arrive is a great way to ensure that everyone is wearing a clean contagion free mask during service.
- Remember to set out a trash receptacle for proper disposal of the mask at the end of service if needed.

### *Baptisms, Christenings and Bris-*

During this time, we know that there are still traditions that need to be observed. When performing this type of ceremony that involves infant/child please take these recommended precautions:

- Have only immediate family come up and have only one person, or people from the same household hold the infant
- Keep a 6 ft buffer for everyone, not in the same household
- Use as little contact as possible with the infant /child
- Everyone should be wearing a mask

**With all the restriction happening we want you to know that there are still so many service options to be offered!**

### *Zoom App*

- 40-minute sessions are free on the zoom app [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)
- Use the breakout room feature so people can have fellowship after the service, with people coming back to the main room and breaking out again every 10 minutes or so
- Create fun virtual events for the congregation
- Congregation can connect with each other with mini 30-minute session



### [Zoom App Virtual Event Ideas](#)

- While the cost of a dedicated zoom account varies, you can do 40-minute sessions for free to hold Bible or book studies by Zoom. Even mediation or prayer by Zoom can be helpful to keep parishioners feeling connected during the Quarantine
- Get outside of the normal day-to-day by hosting a game night
- Have a senior event where members can talk about their experience as a member of the congregation or having been alive for an historical event. This can be a great way to connect with the seniors and younger generation
- Even creating zoom pals where people to sign up to reach out to each other in zoom sessions to do readings or sharing a reflection or just catching up. Groups of eight to ten people work well, so if someone cannot make it, the group still meets

### [The Holiday Season](#)

- Zooming (using the Zoom App) while having dinner is great idea for people to share a meals together. Caroling and playing holiday themed games can be a great way to bring people closer together while keeping the socially distant. Remember one person singing or reading something at a time, otherwise it will be cacophony.
- Collect email addresses and email greeting cards rather than purchasing hard copy greeting cards.
- Utilize the postal service for cookie exchanges. *Please follow the safer at home guidelines for COVID-19.*
- Any gifts that are being exchanged need to be prepared, wrapped, and delivered 48 hours before opening. The virus only lives for 48 hours on surfaces.
- If you are handing out toys and supplies (Toy Drive, etc.) wrap and package toys or supplies 48 hours before handing it out to allow any germs to die before being picked up by the participant.
- Online platforms are great to have large virtual gatherings where everyone can share a holiday tradition that they enjoy or perform a song or poem or reading.
- Other ideas for virtual events are setting a time that the congregants will log in and put up their holiday decorations together, or bake holiday treats together.
- Make a list of common items found in a house and have everyone participate in a scavenger hunt to find them for an hour. Then meet on Zoom and people can hold up their items for others to see, as the facilitator calls off each item on the list.



- People needing support during the holidays can find free self-help groups at [www.shareselfhelp.org](http://www.shareselfhelp.org). This is a good time to address issues such as quitting smoking, improving relationships, overcoming depression and many, many more. For in person referrals, please call 310 305-8878.

### *How to help the poor*

Many people have lost jobs and are in need of food and shelter during the pandemic.

- Walk up and drive thru food, clothing and toy distribution
- Disabled and other low-income individuals needing housing can call **SHARE! Collaborative Housing at 1-877-SHARE-49** from 10am-6 pm Monday through Friday
- During this time of year, it is common to gear up and reach out to our homeless community and the less fortunate. Even during times of crisis, we want to provide help for others even more! We want to remind you that there are other organizations that can provide the services needed to these communities that are in need. For specific needs call 211 Los Angeles.

Please visit our website at [shareselfhelp.org](http://shareselfhelp.org) for an updated resource list with drive thru food distribution information and more

Remember that even when being of service we want to stay safe!

hand washing, wearing face mask, and social distancing is important.