

Phase I guidelines for Religious and Faith-Based Organizations

Phase I operations

Under Phase I of Rhode Island's reopening plan, religious and faith-based organizations will be able to resume in-person activity on a limited basis with significant restrictions in place to protect public health and safety. Under Phase I:

- **General Guidance:** Please review the general business guidance document posted on www.reopeningri.com. This includes:
 - Space and occupancy limits including capacity guidelines
 - Social distancing rules
 - Signage including downloadable and printable posters
 - Information on face masks and other personal protective equipment
 - Information about testing, required access to cleaning materials and hand hygiene, facility cleaning
 - Disinfection procedures and procedures to respond to cases of illness
- **Live-Streaming and Small-Groups:**
 - Live-streaming and in-person services are allowed with up to 5 people in attendance (including staff or officiants). During such live-streams, all individuals that are not within the same household must adhere to social distancing requirements at all times, including 6 feet of spacing between persons.
 - For any in-person events, it is recommended that attendees be required to sanitize their hands upon entry to the space.
 - It is recommended to hold a half-hour period after each gathering to clean all frequently touched surfaces, including pews, doorknobs, religious scriptures, and artifacts, when applicable.
 - Outdoor services are encouraged, when possible. If indoors, open windows to allow for ventilation when possible.
 - Shared ceremonial materials are discouraged (e.g. holy water fonts must be emptied). It is recommended that any religious scripture be projected electronically, provided via a disposable paper version, or carried in individually (personal version) rather than having any shared materials that must be cleaned between uses. If shared materials are truly necessary, they should be sanitized between uses.
 - Collection/donation plates should not be passed. Collection/donation boxes should be placed at the entrance rather than holding collections during the service. Encourage people to use checks instead of cash, if possible.
 - Suspend choir or musical ensembles; individuals singing must be at least 12 feet apart from other individuals.
- **Drive-In, Stay-In-Your-Vehicle Services:** Limited drive-in, stay-in-your-vehicle religious services are permitted. Drive-in services may be conducted only under these conditions:
 - Attendees remain inside their vehicles at all times. No one may exit a vehicle at any time, except to use the portable bathroom.

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- Attendees should not interact physically with clergy, staff, or participants in other vehicles
- Vehicles should contain only members of a single household. Do not bring your neighbors or others outside of your household.
- Cars must be spaced the equivalent of every other parking spot or at least 6 feet apart.
- Portable toilet facilities “porta-johns” are allowed on the premises and church facilities may be used by attendees. Cleaning (for moderate- and low-use facilities) should occur as follows:
 - Thorough cleaning and sanitizing once per day by the vendor.
 - Cleaning wipes and/or cleaning materials available for individuals to clean surfaces before and after use.
- **Thrift Shops:** Thrift shops may be opened in accordance with retail guidance at reopeningri.com
- **End of Life Services:** End of life services are permitted with a total gathering size of 10 individuals (not including funeral personnel). All individuals that are not within the same household must adhere to social distancing requirements, including 6 feet of space between persons. Outdoor services are encouraged, when possible.
- **Communion:** As recommended by the CDC, religious leaders should decide whether to modify specific religious rites, rituals, and services, consulting with local health officials as needed. Examples of specific preventive actions include:
 - Nodding, bowing, or waving instead of shaking hands, hugging, or kissing.
 - Avoiding holding hands during the service/prayers.
 - Considering modification of practices that are specific to particular faith traditions. For example, congregations that practice Communion could consider modifying or suspending this practice. Modifications could include:
 - Ensuring that religious leaders always wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol prior to conducting the service and Communion.
 - Placing the Communion elements in the recipient’s hand, not on their tongue, and avoiding use of a common cup.
 - If there was contact, the individual distributing Communion elements is encouraged to sanitize their hands before continuing the service.

