



newground
CHURCH
SAFE START PLAN

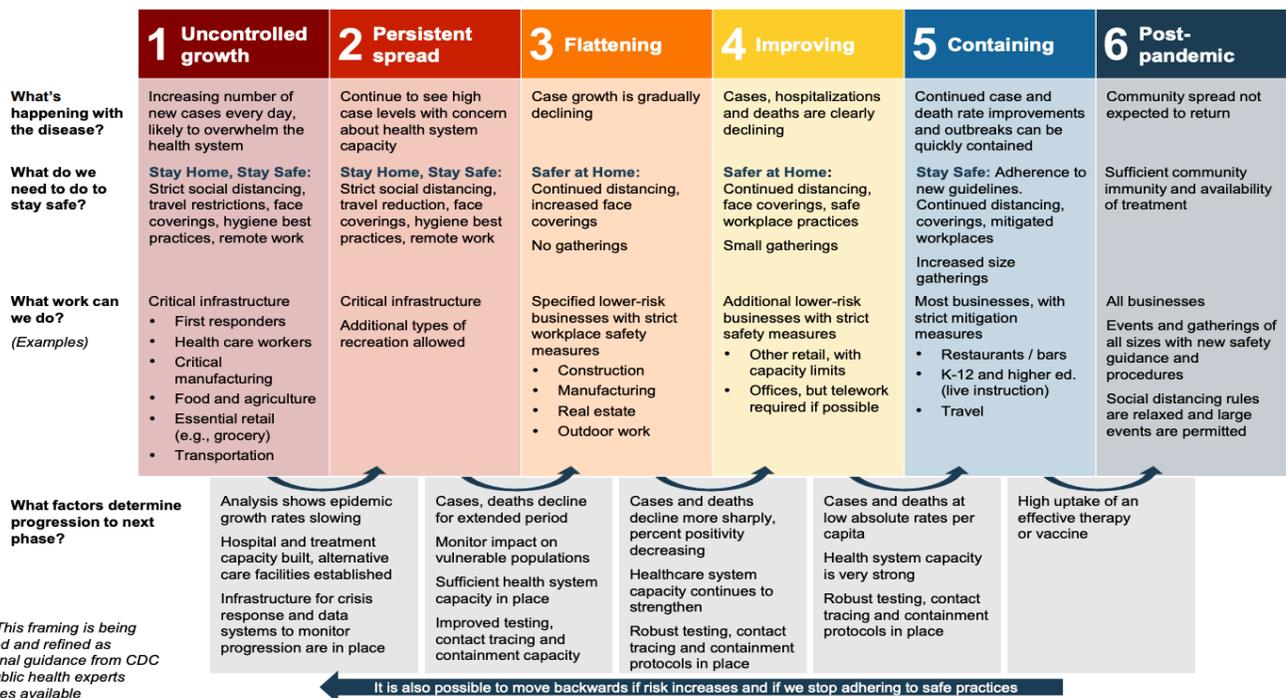
June 2020

Introduction

From March to May, we have been abiding by the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” executive order issued by Governor Whitmer. While the executive orders issued by the governor have included an exemption from penalty for religious organizations who host worship gatherings in their facilities, New Ground Church abided by the Executive Orders.

As we consider our church facility for worship, a clearly written, clearly communicated plan and strategy are crucial for the well-being and comfort level of our ministry partners and the entire community.

Current Michigan Plan for Reopening¹:



Values: What guides us in our decisions?

Values must ground us in all decisions, including consideration of New Ground Church’s mission and vision. A strong plan will give our congregation confidence that we have considered most of the options in light of best practices for the diversity of our church and greater community.

¹ For full State of Michigan reopening plan, please visit: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_SAFE_START_PLAN_689875_7.pdf

The plan to reopen the church facility encompasses the following values:

- We value guidance of medical experts and government leaders.
- We value meeting in person.
- We value community with growth informed by the gospel, recognizing that can be done in a variety of mediums.
- We are aware of our perceived leadership role in the larger community.
- We value the protection of life, including the most vulnerable.
- We will not pressure others into making decisions about their comfort and safety.
- We honor differing concerns and desires with respect to safety, reopening, etc. and approach our Christian brothers and sisters with gentleness, humility, and respect, as well as grace when we differ.

Staged Approach: How will we reopen?

Like the government, New Ground Church should consider a phased reopening process. Phase labeling are in conjunction with the current Michigan phased plan above but may not be executed alongside the state of Michigan's plan. All decisions should be guided by our agreed values. All of these phases and practices are subject to change as we adapt to changes from government leaders and medical professionals.

PHASES 1-3: Stay Home (0 people allowed to gather)

- No Sunday services held at the New Ground Church building.
- All phases of the worship service pre-recorded and published on YouTube and Facebook, with the New Ground Church website as the main conduit for access to communication.
- Possibility of simulcasting our worship gathering, with social distancing and safety measures written, prepared, staffed/trained, communicated, and in place before relaunch.
 - Possibility of recording our live service and then republishing later online, like an alternative service time.
- Consideration of care and disciple-making resources in phases of distancing, especially digitally. Continuing to develop system to share it amongst the greatest number of leaders.
- Develop continued contingency plans for each phase based on improvement or regression.
- Deep clean entire facility before beginning of Phase 4.
 - Kitchen
 - Classrooms
 - Bathrooms
 - HVAC system
 - Chairs/tables

- Offices
- Computer Keyboards/computer mice
- Sound booth
- Tech equipment (microphones/cords)
- All commonly touched surfaces (i.e., door handles, light switches, faucets, etc.)

PHASE 4: Outdoor Worship at Legacy Stables and Karin’s Horse Connection (250 or fewer people allowed to gather outdoors)*

***Through current data from State of Michigan**

- If you or anyone in your family are not feeling well or have symptoms, for the safety of all, **PLEASE STAY HOME.**
- Masks are highly encouraged, and disposable masks will be available.
- Sanitize all used surfaces accessed by people (chairs, tables, etc.), and possibly have others bring their own chairs.
- “Cleaned” and “Used” bins for all items used in worship (Bibles, pens, etc.)
- No communal food or drinks (coffee, doughnuts, etc.) until deemed appropriate.
- No children’s ministry on-site.
- Bathrooms: Porta Potty with sanitizer station will be available.
- Seating: No communal seating available. Chairs to be situated by family and with six feet between families (4-6 chairs).
- Singing and preaching: Live singing and preaching. Limit songs sung initially and then open up as more data is available.²

PHASE 5: Initial Indoor Gathering (100-500 or fewer people allowed to gather)

- If you or anyone in your family are not feeling well or have symptoms, for the safety of all, **PLEASE STAY HOME.**
- Cleaning practices: Sanitizer stations, disinfecting wipes readily available, detailed list displayed for both custodial staff and for those using the building on cleaning practices.
 - Masks are highly encouraged. Disposable masks will be available.
- All fellowship and congregating will be done outside the building before and after worship. Please maintain six-foot social distancing while inside the building.
- No communal food or drinks (coffee, doughnuts, etc.) until deemed appropriate.
- Signs for parishioners on cleaning practices

² See Erin Bromage, “The Risks – Know Them – Avoid Them,” @<https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>. Bromage is an Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. He specializes in epidemiology (study of diseases) and immunology (study of immunities). His post specifically addresses the amount of droplets spread through various mediums, including congregational singing in churches. The CDC recommended when we started this process to not sing together face-to-face, they have subsequently removed that recommendation and not said why. We are talking precautions to limit singing at first and evaluate its effects.

- “Cleaned” and “Used” bins for all items used in worship (Bibles, pens, etc.)
- No children’s ministry on-site, and all classrooms locked (including nursery) initially. Will evaluate resumption of children’s ministry as more data and staffing are available.
- Bathrooms: Clear signage on hygiene
- Seating: No communal seating available (hi-tables okay). Chairs six feet apart by family (4-6 chairs).
- Singing and preaching: Live singing and preaching if able to simulcast, otherwise gathering at building to participate in pre-recorded service. Limit songs sung initially, then open up as more data is available.³
- No additional meetings outside of Sunday worship to be held in the church building.
- Groups are encouraged to meet in homes observing government guidelines.

PHASE 6: Normal Indoor Gathering (Most/All Things Reopened/No size restrictions)

- If you or anyone in your family are not feeling well or have symptoms, for the safety of all, **PLEASE STAY HOME.**
- Gather fully as a congregation, continuing to evaluate whether simulcasting is sustainable.
- Evaluating what “regular” items we can conduct on Sundays and whether we have the staffing/ministry partners and safe processes to execute it well.
- Plans of adaptation should something similar to COVID-19 happen in the future.

³ See previous footnote in Phase 4 regarding singing above.

Best Practices: What does re-opening look like on Sunday initially?

Worship Best Practices	
Worship Teams	Model social distancing on stage Avoid shared microphones; sanitize weekly
Greeting Time (Worship Meet and Greet)	Physical touching discouraged
Communion	Pre-packaged dispenser
Physical Distancing	Families strongly encouraged to sit 6 feet apart from other families. Ask families to sit with their own family only.
Offering	At facility, have an usher (with mask) physically collect tithe/offering from each family group; online giving still available as option.
Welcome Cards/Bibles	Have cards available. Possible digital card. Pens and Bibles available with "Clean/Used" bins.

Facilities Best Practices	
Sanitizing	All used surfaces/areas sanitized weekly, with special attention to high-touch surfaces.
Evaluate Spaces	Close off unused sections of the church; remove lobby seating areas. Sanitizer stations available and clearly marked.
Seating	Families strongly encouraged to sit 6 feet apart from other families. Ask families to sit with their own family only.
Bathroom	Posted hygiene at sinks (washing hands)

Air Flow	Consider running HVAC continuously or opening doors and windows if possible. Have duct cleaning before meeting indoors.
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Hospitality Best Practices	
Food, Coffee	None until further notice; consider new safety precautions when serving food and coffee begins again.
Hand-outs; Bulletins; Worship Folders	Stacks available, also available online.
Greeting time (Before and after worship)	Physical touch discouraged.
Greeting/Greeters	Doors propped open, physical touching discouraged, greeters wear masks.
Check-in tablet	Welcome team checks everyone in. No self-serve check-in.
Other	Masks and sanitizer available