

Children & Family Ministry Team
Recommendations for Re-Entering Church for Children & Families

The Children & Family Ministry Team of the Kentucky Annual Conference includes 10 leaders with 100+ years of combined ministry experience with church families. Knowing that churches with and without large numbers of children are looking for guidance in caring for families, our team wants to offer practical, clear recommendations for how to re-introduce families with children into in-person worship and discipleship environments.

Find this information and contact us from our webpage at <https://www.kyumc.org/childrensministry>.

Phase 1 Recommendations: Facilities and Communications

- No extra recommendations.

Phase 2 Recommendations: Re-Entry into Facilities and Worship

Sanctuary worship

Without nursery and children's ministry rooms open, we expect small numbers of families with children will attend sanctuary worship. However, families who do wish to attend worship will face a difficult challenge of requiring children to remain six feet apart from anyone outside their household. Therefore, we recommend:

- *Communicate clearly and in advance to families all expectations/requirements for their children's participation in worship. Include your action plan for addressing non-compliance.*
 - *Children who cannot consistently and safely wear a mask should not enter the church building during this period of social distancing.*
 - *Children who cannot consistently and safely remain six feet from friends and adults outside their household should not enter the church building during this period of social distancing.*
 - *Families who try to attend in-person worship but find themselves unable to follow these requirements should first receive respectful pastoral care. A loving staff member should approach them and invite them to finish the worship service in an otherwise unoccupied space, such as a foyer or cry room. After worship, a pastor will make a plan with the family to comply in future or worship via online services for a period of time.*
 - *If after 1-2 weeks of in-person worship services, church staff observe that children and families are unable to comply with these strict, difficult requirements, consider returning to online worship for everyone until a later date*
 - *Discourage and take steps to prevent common area or parking lot play gatherings, where it would otherwise be natural for families to stand and visit and allow children to play together.*

- *Name the perception of judgment that families anticipate, regardless of their decision. Encourage the congregation to respect both families who choose to stay home and families who choose to attend worship, following guidelines.*
- *In every in-person worship service during this pandemic, overtly name and recognize the people who are absent, including families with children.*
- *For families with children attending in-person worship, we strongly recommend providing some kind of worship packet.*
 - *Suggested resources to include:*
 - *Free printable and online resources from [Cokesbury Kids](#)*
 - *[Sermon Notes for Kids](#) printable*
 - *free, weekly [Illustrated Ministry worship packet](#) (based on lectionary passages)*
 - *[Sheltered at Home prayer books](#)*
 - *[Free children's worship bulletins](#)*
 - *For families who prefer to download and print materials at home, send links to suggested worship aids and encourage them to bring their own markers/crayons/pencils in a bag or container.*
 - *For families who can't or don't bring their own worship aids in, prepare packets at least 3 days prior to worship in plastic bags, to allow virus germs to die before they are used by others. Instruct families to take the entire packet home and dispose of it there.*
 - *(If your church needs help with printing costs, the Children & Family Ministry Team would love to hear and help. See contact info at the bottom of this document.)*
 - *Packets should be stored in a box and picked up by families who need them.*
 - *If disposable worship aids or worship bags from home are available, including things like blank paper, crayons/pencils/markers, worship leaders should reference these packets frequently throughout the service, encouraging kids to draw pictures, take notes, etc. Engage children as much as possible in this way. Consider providing a place on social media for families to share their worship notes/art virtually.*
- *Consider what space you will provide for diaper changes, nursing/bottle-feeding parents, and children who need to use the restroom. Communicate the availability of these options to parents upon arrival.*
- *If your church has a playground, we recommend roping it off during times of worship to discourage gathering.*

Ongoing recommendations, ideas and assistance will be provided for children and family leaders on our webpage (<https://www.kyumc.org/childrensministry>) as well as our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/KYUMCKIDS/>). If you would like to consult with a member of our ministry team by phone or e-mail, we'd love to hear from you! Please reach out to us at children@kyumc.org or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/KYUMCKIDS/>