



Important Takeaways for Churches on Governor's Reopening Guidelines

One of our goals at the Church Ambassador Network is to keep you all in the faith community up-to-date and informed about the current COVID crisis. On Friday, May 1st, the Governor made some important changes in the stay-at-home order that we wanted to make you knew.

Here are some takeaway points for pastors and church leaders from the May 1st press conference with the Governor and Secretary of Health:

1. Here's what we know after the press conference:

- 24 counties were moved to yellow. [Click here for more information.](#)
- On Monday, May 4, the administration will release guidance for businesses permitted to reopen on May 8th in these 24 counties. Guidance will build on existing safety and building safety orders released in April.
- **Specifically relevant for churches:** Gov. Wolf was asked by the media -
 - Question: "Can churches in the yellow phase resume having services provided they follow CDC guidelines?"
 - Answer: "Again, the guidance we've given to religious institutions is they have can have services, but most religious organizations have done everything they can to keep their congregants safe. And that means they've kept to, we have a limit of 25 people gathering together. They've had services online, and they've done everything in their power to keep people from getting sick. That will continue to be operational. The guidance is there, we can say this is what we'd like you to do. Religious organizations will do what they intend to do."

2. Historically Speaking:

- **(April 4) Governor's Stay-at-Home Order - Religious Institutions:** Here is the current language used in the guidelines, "Religious institutions [are exempt to order]. However, religious leaders are encouraged to find alternatives to in-person gatherings and to avoid endangering their congregants. Individuals should not gather in religious buildings or homes for services or celebrations until the stay at home order is lifted." [Citation link.](#)



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- **(April 15) Essential Business Safety Measure Guidelines to Stay Open:** Here is a list of safety guidelines for essential buildings/facilities in PA, which could be good guidelines for churches. [Click here to see the guidelines.](#)
 - "In addition to the social distancing, mitigation and cleaning protocols, businesses that serve the public within a building or defined area are ordered to implement the following, based on the size of the building and number of employees."
 - "Conduct business with the public by appointment only and, to the extent that this is not feasible, limit occupancy to no greater than 50 percent of the number stated on their certificate of occupancy as necessary to reduce crowding in the business and at check-out and counter lines in order to maintain a social distance of 6 feet, and place signage throughout each site to mandate social distancing for both customers and employees."