

Beginning Conversations for Re-Entry

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). So begins the account of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in the book of Acts. As we approach the day of Pentecost in the year 2020, we understand that it may not be possible for the members of our congregation to be “all together in one place” this year. While some restrictions are being lifted in some places and for some people, the ongoing threat of the Covid-19 global pandemic will require that we return to church in a way that is measured and mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable among us. While some may begin to attend public worship in person, we know that some will need to continue to worship at home for some time.

Resources as you plan for re-entry

Resources from Theology and Worship and Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency have been released and are intended as guides for faith community leadership. Whether or not you are ready to gather in-person it is not too early to talk about guidelines and phases of re-entry for your community. The resources include theological touchstones and practical suggestions to consider. Find resources for re-entry at pcusa.org/formation and on the PCUSA [COVID-19 resource page](#)

Consider this as you prepare to meet with your leadership

- Gather leadership that is representative of the entire church and church activities (worship, education, youth gatherings, summer programs, building support staff etc..) All should come to the table together for these discussions.
- There are many guides, suggestions and opinion articles out there. You may be gathering these materials for your leadership to consider. Remember the unique characteristics of your community—both geographically and your practices. Some information from across the country may or may not be helpful. Have leadership read and discern ahead of your meetings. Make sure to have all the facts for your city, county and state on-hand.
- Allow time and space for lament and fears to be named. Recognize that your people will come with their own situations and viewpoints. Needs for pastoral care may arise that weren't previously known. The world and certainly the church are entering uncharted territory and things will not return to “normal.” Recognize that this change may bring grief.
- This is the time to tap into strategic leaders in your community as well as strong pastoral leadership. Do you need to reach out for more resources? A coach? A Presbytery leader? Someone in your faith community that offers certain gifts?
- Consider developing phases of re-entry for your community that last weeks or months before moving to the next phase. Make sure you have a process in place for determining when to go to the next phase or take a few steps back. Communicate that plans may need to change depending on the health of the community.
- We are a connectional Church. Remind leaders that mid-councils, synods and the national body offers guidelines and suggestions but not typically mandates. Empower your leaders to make decisions for your church but to reach out for support and connection with others especially mid-council leadership. Make sure all health guidelines and orders of local governments are being followed.

We give thanks, then, for the promise of our faith—that the Lord God will bless and keep us, the risen Christ is with us, and the Holy Spirit connects us with believers near and far. We take comfort and inspiration from the example of the earliest believers, who “spent much time together in the temple” *and* “broke bread at home ... with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46). As we anxiously track the news in these times—with numbers of new cases, numbers of persons who have died, and numbers of those who are recovering—we remember the good news of the gospel: “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).