**Seventh-day Adventist Church (Victorian Conference) Limited** 

**COVID-19 SAFETY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR RE-OPENING CHURCH BUILDINGS**

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| **Document**: COVID-19 Safety management plan for reopening church buildings | |
| **Approved by**:Adcom | **Approval date**:17.6.2020 |

***God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Psalm 46:1-2***

**Four Commitments for Reopening**

* **Humility:** Humbly examine your possible biases, influences, pressures, and your church’s strengths and weaknesses that could have a negative effect on your ability to make wise decisions.
* **Love:** Follow the biblical call to love your neighbor (Mark 12:31) in how and when you reopen your church and in-person ministries so that your actions help and do not inadvertently cause harm.
* **Persistence:** Mentally approach the process of reopening and helping your church navigate COVID-19 as a “marathon”—not a “sprint”—by keeping a long-term view in mind (e.g., Scripture talks about finishing the race, not being first in the race).
* **Wisdom:** Stay up to date on the latest information and scientific findings about COVID-19, track the number of local cases, and consult Vic Conference, state, and local guidelines for guidance.

**CLEANING & HYGIENE**

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| **What do you need to do?** | **How will you do this?** | **When will it happen** | **What supplies do you need?** |
| Implement steps to sanitize the entire building in addition to restrooms (Instructions can be found at:  [Recommended cleaning supplementary information](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/cleaning-table-covid19-26May2020.pdf) | e.g.: Identify frequently touched  items, e.g. light switches, electronic equipment, AV aids, etc | e.g. Once a week | e.g.: Detergent, disinfectant wipes |
| Smaller rooms like Sabbath School classrooms, the mother’s room, and even the restroom make it challenging to practice social distancing. Look for ways to minimize the number of people in each Sabbath School room or find larger places to meet. You may also want to limit the number of people in the restroom at the same time. Display signs inside the restrooms about the correct procedure for washing hands and ensure that adequate cleaning supplies are provided. |  | Signage for washing hands to be displayed |
| Ensure all volunteers and church members  are aware of their hygiene requirements while attending church building | Prop the doors open during services. Increase the number of hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the building and post signs that promote proper hygiene tips. Designate a volunteer to clean door handles before, during and after the service. |  | e.g. Soap and water available in all amenity areas, and hand sanitiser at entry and exit points and throughout the premises  Signage |

**SOCIAL DISTANCING AND SPACE**

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| **What do you need to do?** | **How will you do this?** | **When will it happen** | **What supplies do you need?** |
| Follow State and Department of Health requirements.  More information found at:  [social distancing guidance](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-social-distancing.pdf) | Social distancing space on pews should be marked out. Seating arrangements may need to be temporarily changed to keep social distancing in place. This can be done by marking which areas are available for seating. Distancing space is still at 4 square meters per person. |  | Use the following [physical distancing checklist](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/COVID-19-Physical-Distancing-Checklist.pdf) to ensure a proper 1.5 meters.  E.g.: Signage/posters |
| Have a strategy in place for if a person/visitor arrives who is beyond the restriction numbers. Example, some members may be on standby who are willing to make space for a visitor and can join an online gathering. |  |
| Ensure as much as possible (using dividing lines if need by) that worshippers enter through one door/area and exit through another to minimize people coming in close contact in doorways |  |
| Make clear the instructions re greeting that does not including physical contact. |  |

**OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

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| **Stage two requirements (From June 1, 2020)** | **Recommended control measures** | **Action required** |
| Places of worship can open for private worship or small religious ceremonies for up to 20 people in a single undivided indoor space, subject to the four-square metre rule plus the minimum number of people reasonably required to perform the service or ceremony. | A record must be kept (including name and contact) of those entering the building  Maintain social distancing requirements  Maintain hygienic practices  Encourage the use of the COVID-19 government app and for people to have their Bluetooth on so that the app works correctly.  Churches should temporarily remove hymnals and Bibles from the backrest of the pews and consider using an AV display to project hymns and other information. If you have not previously done this in your church, please be sure you have the necessary licenses to avoid violating copyright law.  Where larger numbers are allowed consider implementing two short services with an interval in between to limit the number of worshippers at one given service. Make sure that total numbers in the building at any time are in compliance with state regulation at that point. During the break time, have volunteers clean areas used in the building.  It is recommended that the kitchen not be used at this time, and all group meals suspended. This minimizes the need for extreme cleaning during the preparation and serving of meals . It also cuts down on times when social distancing is challenging to achieve.  Communication: Regardless of what guidelines you choose to put in place, the pastor should send an email to all families with information about the changes they might experience on their return. These changes should be on display in the foyer or reception area and mentioned in the bulletin. Remind the congregation that anyone who is sick, especially those suffering from possible COVID-19 symptoms should stay at home and arrange to be tested. Attending when unwell can lead to an increased spreading of disease, especially among the elderly and at-risk members of the congregation. | e.g. A Register book containing name, phone number  Avoid passing hand held mics without a cleaning process in place between people using the mic. |
| 20 people in addition to the celebrant and couple being married can attend a wedding. If a wedding is held in a home, a maximum of 20 people is allowed, including the celebrant and the couple. |
| 50 people can attend a funeral in addition to the officiant and funeral staff, subject to the four-square metre rule. If a funeral is held in a home, a maximum of 20 people can be present (including the officiant and funeral staff). |
| **Stage three requirements (from 22 June 2020)** | **Recommended Control measures** | **Actioned required** |
| Places of worship can open for private worship or small religious ceremonies for up to 50 people in a single undivided indoor space, subject to the four-square metre rule plus the minimum number of people reasonably required to perform the service or ceremony. Groups must be no larger than 20 people and be divided into separate areas. i.e. groups like Sabbath School Classes. | A record must be kept (including name and contact) of those entering the building  Maintain social distancing requirements  Maintain hygienic practices  Encourage the use of the COVID-19 government app and for people to have their Bluetooth on so that the app works correctly.  Churches should temporarily remove hymnals and Bibles from the backrest of the pews and consider using an AV display to project hymns and other information. If you have not previously done this in your church, please be sure you have the necessary licenses to avoid violating copyright law.  Where larger numbers are allowed consider implementing two short services with an interval in between to limit the number of worshippers at one given service. Make sure that total numbers in the building at any time are in compliance with state regulation at that point. During the break time, have volunteers clean areas used in the building.  It is recommended that the kitchen not be used at this time, and all group meals suspended. This minimizes the need for extreme cleaning during the preparation and serving of meals . It also cuts down on times when social distancing is challenging to achieve. | e.g. A Register book containing name, phone number  Avoid passing hand held mics without a cleaning process in place between people using the mic. |
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**RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT OF COVID-19**

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| **What do you need to do?** | **How will you do this?** | **When will it happen** | **What supplies do you need?** |
| Notify Department of Health | Call COVID-19 Hotline: 1800675398  [COVID Hotline Facts Sheet](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/covid-19-national-health-plan-primary-care-central-patient-covid-19-triage-hotline_2.pdf) | Immediately | e.g. Contact details for people  who have specific roles or  responsibilities under the  emergency plan. For example,  pastor, head elder, church clerk |
| Organise cleaning of the area as directed by Public Health | [Clean and disinfect](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/how-to-clean-disinfect-your-workplace-covid19.pdf) workplace after 24 hours of the incident.  Review the Safe Work Australia guidance on cleaning and disinfecting workplaces  Wear PPE: face mask, protective eyewear and gloves  Remove soiled or contaminated items and  dispose of them in a safe way  Clean and disinfect all surfaces or items that may have been in contact with the ill person. |  | Ensure cleaning products and PPE are available. Instruct volunteers in their safe use and make sure Safety Data Sheets are available |
| Report incident using an incident report form | Contact Samuel Shehata  [samuelshehata@advnetist.org.au](mailto:samuelshehata@advnetist.org.au) | Immediately |  |

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH PASTORS AND CHURCH BOARDS WHEN PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

**Legend:**

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| Green | Ok to proceed following guidelines as outlined |
| Orange | Be cautious, seek advice from Conference |
| Red | Do not proceed – Government and Conference directive |

This document will be reviewed regularly in the light of new developments and state and government instructions accordingly. Pastors, head elders and church clerks are change the colours accordingly, i.e. from yellow to green after consulting accordingly with Conference Office based on new developments and instructions.

Always check [COVID-19 Information Page](https://vic.adventist.org.au/health-safety-alert-coronavirus-information/)

Summary of Q & A on [Religion and Ceremony](file:///C:\Users\Craig\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\DET6PLPY\Religion%20and%20ceremony), Department of Health and Human Services

For questions for these guidelines, please contact the following:

**Graeme Christian**, Conference President

**Craig Gillis**, Conference Secretary

**Samuel Shehata**, OH&S Manager

| **Meetings of Groups** | **Church Worship Service** | **Children’s Ministry** | **Adventurers, Pathfinders & Youth** | **Socials** | **Other** |
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| Church physical locations may re-open for worship and all church affiliated meetings and activities with **a maximum of 50 people per premises at one time**  **Groups can be no larger than 20 people and be divided into separate areas (i.e. Sabbath School Classes** | Church physical locations may re-open for worship and all church affiliated meetings and activities with **a maximum of 50 people per premises at one time, this includes all people involved in leading and producing the worship service**  **Groups can be no larger than 20 people and be divided into separate areas (i.e. Sabbath School Classes** | Church physical locations may re-open for worship and all church affiliated meetings and activities with **a maximum of 50 people per premises at one time**  **Groups can be no larger than 20 people and be divided into separate areas (i.e. Sabbath School Classes** | Church physical locations may re-open for worship and all church affiliated meetings and activities with **a maximum of 50 people per premises at one time**  **Groups can be no larger than 20 people and be divided into separate areas (i.e. Sabbath School Classes** | Church physical locations may re-open for worship and all church affiliated meetings and activities with **a maximum of 50 people per premises at one time**  **Groups can be no larger than 20 people and be divided into separate areas (i.e. Sabbath School Classes** | Church Lunches, Morning Teas, Breakfasts and any other food related initiative is not permitted to be served on church premises at this time. |
| Larger churches can break their services and meetings up, and run them at different times of the day, to meet the 50-person quota | Larger churches can break their services and meetings up, and run them at different times of the day, to meet the 50-person quota | Larger churches can break their services and meetings up, and run them at different times of the day, to meet the 50-person quota | Anyone considered vulnerable should consider the need to attend.  [Vulnerable people guidelines](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/vulnerable)  Talk with church pastor | Food is not permitted at social events | ADRA activities may occur using guidelines set out ADRA Work Health and Safety Management System and government guidelines |
| Signage  Each church needs to have appropriate signage displayed at the front of the facility | Signage  Each church needs to have appropriate signage displayed at the front of the facility | Signage  Each church needs to have appropriate signage displayed at the front of the facility | Signage  Each church/facility needs to have appropriate signage displayed at the front of the facility | Signage  Each church needs to have appropriate signage displayed at the front of the facility | Signage  Each church/Church facility needs to have appropriate signage displayed at the front of the facility |
| Food is not permitted at gatherings on church premises | Food is not permitted before or after worship | Food is not permitted before or after Sabbath School or children’s events | Food is not permitted before or after meetings held on the church premises | If meetings held on church premises, fully disinfect and clean premises in between gatherings including toilets, chairs, audio/visual equipment used, benches, door handles | Funerals with a maximum of **50** people |
| Anyone considered vulnerable should consider the need to attend. | Anyone considered vulnerable should consider the need to attend. | Fully disinfect and clean premises in between gatherings including toilets, chairs, audio/visual equipment used, benches, door handles |  | Holding board approved Socials off premises | Weddings with a maximum of **20** people |
| Record attendees contact details and store data securely | Keep to 4 square meters per person when indoors. Physical distancing (1.5-2m)  Family members from the same household can sit together in rows or pews. Those attenders who are not of the same household must sit 1.5m radius away from other attendees.  Leaders to plan seating arrangements before worship service and designated ushers to lead attendees to appropriate seats. Be aware of number of people present in the room including restrooms, parents/mothers’ rooms and ensure social distance of 1.5 metre radius. | Record attendees contact details and store data securely | If meetings held on church premises, fully disinfect and clean premises in between gatherings including toilets, chairs, audio/visual equipment used, benches, door handles | Record attendees contact details and store data securely | Church recreational and camping activities can occur at Vic Conference convention sites with a maximum of 20 people and following all guidelines outlined in [COVID-19 information page](https://vic.adventist.org.au/health-safety-alert-coronavirus-information/) |
| Gatherings of more than 50 people | Worship services of more than 50 people.  **Under current directives the combined total of all persons on site (adults & children) at any one time cannot exceed 50**. | Corporate singing is allowed. Keep musicians to a minimum and ensure all equipment is disinfected after use. | Record attendees contact details and store data securely | No choirs permitted | Church groups of up to 20 Hiking, camping and other recreational activities in national and state parks, public spaces and lagoons and convention site directions. Record attendees and contact details and store data securely |
| **Board Approved Home Gatherings:**  Home owners hosting gathering are expected to ensure homes are cleaned and sanitized  Maximum of 20 visitors allowed from separate households  Household members and visitors are to confirm if they are healthy and no fever and all present to maintain 1.5m social distancing. No sharing of meals and beverages unless BYO | **Giving Options**  Give via flexible Tithe and offering options  Offering box or baskets placed in convenient places for churches who wish to take up collections at a worship service  Treasurer to work with pastor/head/senior elder to facilitate the pickup of tithe and offerings of those who are unable to give otherwise | Zoom gatherings can occur using guidelines provided by Vic Conference  **Zoom meeting safety tips** | Camping and activities permitted by pathfinders and leaders with the number not exceeding 20 maximum present at any one time.  Church recreational and camping activities can occur at Vic Conference convention sites with a maximum of 20 people. Record attendees and contact details and store data securely  Church groups of up to 20 hiking, camping and other recreational activities in national and state parks, public spaces and lagoons and convention site directions. Record attendees and contact details and store data securely | Zoom gatherings can occur using guidelines provided by Vic Conference  **Zoom meeting safety tips** | **Private Home Gatherings:**  Homeowners hosting gathering are expected to ensure homes are cleaned and sanitized  Maximum of 20 visitors allowed from separate households  Household members and visitors are to confirm if they are healthy and no fever and all present to  maintain 1.5m social distancing. |
| Zoom gatherings can occur using guidelines provided by Vic Conference  **Zoom meeting safety tips** | No passing of offering bags or other devices to collect offering during worship service |  | Corporate singing is allowed. Keep musicians to a minimum and ensure all equipment is disinfected after use. |  | **Renting of Church Facilities**  Please contact the General Secretary to discuss requirements needed |
| Corporate singing is allowed. Keep musicians to a minimum and ensure all equipment is disinfected after use. | No Corporate communion serves on church premises |  | Zoom gatherings can occur using guidelines provided by Vic Conference  **Zoom meeting safety tips** |  |  |
|  | Online communion services can be held with emblems made/poured at home |  |  |  |  |
|  | Baptisms permitted with maximum 50 people present including pastor, baptismal candidates and others involved in the service |  |  |  |  |
|  | Corporate singing is allowed. Keep musicians to a minimum and ensure all equipment is disinfected after use. |  |  |  |  |
|  | Record attendees contact details and store data securely. |  |  |  |  |
|  | Worship livestreams and Zoom gatherings can occur using guidelines provided by Vic Conf guidelines are also to be used.  **Zoom meeting safety tips** |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Use of School Facilities for worship Service**  Please contact the General Secretary to discuss requirements needed |  |  |  |  |
|  | Fully disinfect and clean premises in between gatherings including restrooms, parents/mothers rooms, chairs, audio/visual equipment used, benches, door handles etc. |  |  |  |  |

**Annexures**

Cover your cough and sneeze poster

Gel Your Hands Before Entry

Wash your hands regularly poster

Zoom Meetings Safety Tips

Virtual Meeting guidelines-AdSafe