

COFFEE HOUR AND FELLOWSHIP TIME TIP SHEET



*Social/coffee hours should be resumed no earlier than Phase 3. At that phase, food should be served wearing gloves and using utensils rather than offering open table buffets.”
(BWC Guidelines for Re-entering Well, p. 5)*

Why?

It is in relationship with others and time spent together that Christians grow in love for one another and for God. A time of fellowship before or after worship encourages these relationships. However, if being physically close poses a threat of serious illness, we must respect and love people enough to find other ways of engaging with one another.

When?

One truth has become abundantly clear during the pandemic: the church is not a building. During this time of online congregational gathering, people have discovered the importance of engaging virtually. This intentional engagement should deepen during Phases 1 and 2 as creative measures are adopted and sustained. Coffee hours may resume in Phase 3 if your meeting space allows for a safe flow of people in compliance with local and state guidelines.

Virtual Fellowship Implementation Ideas

- Before and/or after virtual worship, set aside 20 to 30 minutes for people to “chat” and share with one another. You may even consider having a virtual coffee hour after service.
- During the week, set aside time before and after online Bible studies, virtual classes, or other gatherings as opportunities for people to interact.
- Start an informal ministry of hospitality and care, inviting people to send emailse-mails, mail cards, call, or in some other way reach out to others in the congregation. Be especially mindful of those who may live alone or have shared challenges they are facing.
- Invite Sunday School teachers to correspond with their students, offering words of hope and encouragement.
- Reinstate the old-fashioned telephone prayer list that can be tailored to match the technology habits of people in your congregation.
- Ask people what they need and create opportunities for others in the church to meet those needs.

Implementation for In-person Coffee/Social Hour Checklist

- If you are gathering in-person during Phase 2, you may need to find creative ways to remind folks about adherence to the six-foot rule for distancing. One approach is to tape six-foot lengths on your floors as a visual reminder of the required distance between people. You may also consider encouraging people to fellowship outside of the building as weather allows.
- The Re-Entering Well Task Force should consider the layout of the space where coffee hour will be held.
 - Create a space in which it is easy for people to sit or stand at least six feet from one another. Note how many people can be included in this configuration of the room. If it is not possible to provide this space, consider alternative plans for fellowship or creatively inviting smaller groups to participate.
 - Using furniture and other objects, design the room so that it helps people intuitively understand how they should move through the space. Consider having one path into the room, and another out.
 - Post clearly visible signs both outside and inside the designated room asking people to continue practicing social distancing.
- Food should be served wearing gloves and using utensils rather than offering open table buffets.
- Order ample supplies of hand sanitizer, paper towels, napkins, etc., and have them readily available.
- Thoroughly clean the entire space after every event. That includes all items and surfaces such as tables, chairs, serving trays, bowls, and utensils.



Additional Resources

- “How to gather with friends while social distancing,” according to meeting expert Priya Parker, author of *The Art of Gathering*
<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/3/19/21183551/coronavirus-social-distancing-strategies-tips>
- “How to Be Together Apart in the Time of Coronavirus,” *New York Times*,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/opinion/internet-coronavirus-social-distancing.html>
- “Ways to help older neighbors and relatives in isolation (and how they can help you),” *Washington Post*
https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/05/06/seniors-isolation-quarantine-help-how-to/?utm_campaign=wp_the_optimist&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_optimist