

5 Tips and Best Practices for Church Disinfecting Protocols



Church facilities who can show and maintain diligent sanitation practices will better manage an indefinite period of transition to a new normal.

[By Alison Istnick](#)

In upcoming weeks and months, our states, cities and local communities will begin lifting stay at home restrictions as non-essential businesses start reopening. Fluid social distancing mandates will affect how we all move forward into society. More than ever, diligent sanitation practices will become a necessity as people begin to gather in higher numbers.

Your church facility will undoubtedly be scrutinized for social distancing and other precautionary measures. Churches who can show transparency in their efforts to provide the safest church environment possible for their staff and congregants, will better manage this indefinite time of transition. With this in mind, now is the

time for houses of worship to brush up on their cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

On the Frontline

It's important for your church leadership to recognize your janitorial staff and volunteer team for what they really are: health care providers. The crew at your church who tackle infectious surfaces with chemicals are on the frontline of ensuring safety for your community against viral transmission.

Recognizing the difference between cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing.

While these familiar terms seem interchangeable, they entail very different aspects of the overall cleaning regime. Cleaning loosens and removes grime, dirt and germs from surfaces and does not necessarily kill germs, but by reducing them, it lowers the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting uses EPA registered chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on surfaces after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Sanitizing uses chemicals that lower the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safer level, generally using FDA approved chemicals that are less toxic.

Not All Chemicals are Created Equal

Today there are janitorial chemical manufacturers with products that can

greatly benefit church facilities. The idea of bringing in unfamiliar chemical solutions may be daunting to some facility managers. Refer to available guidance when selecting and questioning the use of cleaning chemicals. Organizations like ISSA ([International Sanitary Supply Association](#)) offer resources such as paid online training. Google searches will locate online product demos and video tutorials to help familiarize yourself with available cleaning solutions and proper applications.



Facility Specialist with [Smart Church Solutions](#), Nathan Parr has been involved with worship facility management specifically for 15 years. He advocates for the investment of a professional line of cleaning products because of the many advantages they offer. “Most commercial cleaning supply houses will offer training material and information on their products, says Parr. “Oftentimes their salespeople will even come out and train church teams on how to use chemicals properly. It's a valuable service that a lot of churches don't take advantage of it.”

According to Parr church facilities can actually use less chemicals than they realize, as many of the professionally designed janitorial chemicals will handle multiple tasks. “I could use my Hillyard hydrogen peroxide base cleaner, which has a disinfectant formulation and a multi-surface (non-disinfectant registered) formulation, in multiple areas throughout the facility. One chemical, two formulations, and I can safely clean most surfaces in my facility. The non-EPA registered product has more solvents to help remove soils, the EPA registered version has a neutral PH which allows for safe disinfecting on various products and finishes. The hydrogen peroxide in both is also relatively safe for most of the population. There's a level of comfort there.”

When questioned about which brands are compatible with serving a church facility Parr shares, “I'm very familiar with Hillyard. I like their stuff and the fact that they've been around for a long time. 3M, S.C. Johnson & Son Inc, and Diversey Inc, Kimberly-Clark, Ecolab Inc, and others all make very good chemicals. There's an assurance you get by using a quality product, especially one with the feature of dilution control. Most major manufacturers make pre-concentrated liquids that you add water to, as well as ready to use quarts and gallons; some also make and sell pre-measured chemical packets that conveniently drop into a bucket or a spray bottle to make.”

Parr cautions against defaulting to more commonly used, caustic chemicals to disinfect a church facility. “We like to get away from using bleach and ammonia. These two old school chemicals are effective, and relatively inexpensive, but if you mix them incorrectly, people can die. However, modern chemicals, with their water dilution control systems are always going to provide you with a product that’s effective for what it claims to do—but is safer for you to use.”

When applying chemicals, it’s important to carefully follow usage instructions. Wear proper PPE and dilute chemicals according to directions. Some commercial chemicals require a longer dwell time on surfaces to be effective. When a chemical solution is made at a safe concentration for use, the solution takes longer to kill off germs.



Worship, Sunday Services & Events

When staffing a facility janitorial crew for high traffic events, creating a game plan is a smart move. Whether churches are small, medium, or large, the most pressing places to disinfect will be restrooms, children’s areas and entrance ways. Cleaning teams

need to plan on attacking high impact areas first, and then later, secondary areas can receive attention.

Smart Church Solutions advises best practices to ensure efficient and thorough disinfection of a facility after high influxes of people:

Hi Touch Area Tips

- Children’s ministry volunteers, if they received training, can properly sanitize toys, changing tables and high touch areas after services. They can spray everything down, let it sit for correct dwell time, rinse with water and let items air dry.
- When going through and checking bathrooms, saturate all hard surfaces with disinfectant. You don’t have to worry about a secondary rinse because no one is eating in there.
- Stock your restrooms with an antibacterial foaming hand soap and encourage people to follow good hygienic habits.
- Invest in hospital grade disinfectant wipes. While a higher cost per use, gloves and a container of these wipes can be distributed to volunteers who can then tackle facility door handles and door push bars. It’s easy and extremely effective in minimizing risks of virus transmissions.
- Make sure you have proper hygiene stations readily available throughout

the facility. There will be a higher demand for hand sanitizer stations throughout facilities, which was already trending and is only going to increase and remain.

Art of the Application

Wearing proper PPE is the first step in the cleaning and disinfecting process. Next? Choosing your cleaning tools.

Today, microfiber rags are the textile of choice over more traditional materials for cleaning professionals. “Microfiber is a modern material that if you’re not using, then you’re missing out on a readily available product that makes your life easier and your building cleaner,” explains Parr. “The material is very advanced and more affordable than even two years ago. If you buy cheaper microfiber cloths from an off-brand store, they are thin and poor quality. But commercial supply houses sell microfiber cloths that are thicker, and they have a gazillion little fingers that will hold tight to pick up the microscopic bad stuff. With proper care—cleaning them in a high efficiency washer with very little soap and spinning them to almost dry—the quality cloths are good for four to five hundred washings,” says Parr. “Whereas cotton leaves a lot behind that it shouldn’t and creates an environment where things can grow. Lots of people are a fan of cotton rags, because they can bleach them. But then you're also introducing a caustic

chemical that may or may not be a smart choice for your facility.”

Color Coding

Another benefit of microfiber is the array of available colors. Parr suggests using a color-coding system to organize cloths for facility staff and volunteers. “If a facility team keeps their rags color-coded, then you're not inadvertently mixing chemicals. I prefer using red for general disinfectants, green for the secondary rinse/FDA approved sanitizer, yellow rags are used in restrooms on fixtures (except mirrors), blue is for glass and mirrors, orange is dusting, and black or white is for maintenance only. And so, theoretically anybody on my team could come up and see what color rag you're using and know exactly where you were in the process, what you were cleaning, and what you were engaged in.”



OSHA and SDS Planning

Regardless of our current situation, OSHA guidelines should be followed by churches with more than three paid non-ministerial employees. OSHA requires employers to maintain current **Safety Data Sheets (SDS)**

on all chemicals used in the facility, train employees on their use and make SDS books readily available in the work area. Your facilities steward needs to be responsible for learning the best choices in chemical selection and for providing adequate training for staff and volunteers.

Parr was still actively working as a church facility steward when the threat of Ebola emerged during the Fall of 2014. “Our church didn't have to change anything that we were doing, because as a team we were already cleaning to the standards that is recommended to protect against Ebola. Consistency and training are two of the biggest factors in protecting against infectious diseases. As long as a cleaning crew for a church can say and prove their process, then that's to me the biggest assurance of safety to staff and the congregation.”

