

Suggested Guidelines and Recommendations for Indoor Worship

As we begin a new phase in corporate worship, let me first state that our overall goal in offering an additional indoor worship service is to provide as much opportunity for as many as possible to participate in corporate worship with fellow church members. Our church family and guests are currently meeting outdoors in our “drive-in” service with live streaming for others to view online when convenient. Some have expressed disappointment with the decisions by many churches to discontinue indoor gatherings and long to return to times of worship as a church family. At Olive Branch, we have tried to comply with the governmental issued mandates and recommendations. Now, as we see restrictions being lifted, we are implementing a plan to return to our normal worship setting as conditions allow.

Our first step is to begin offering an additional indoor service each Sunday morning at 11:15 immediately following our 10:00 am drive-in service. Live streaming remains an option for many and will be available during the second service each week. This service will be linked to our website for viewers who do not use social media. In addition, we will again meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 for our midweek service with our youth and children’s choirs meeting in the educational building. Sunday evenings will be reserved for our youth and children’s Awana program which will meet 5:45-7:00 pm.

The NC Dept. of Health and Human Services has offered recommendations to churches when reopening. NCDHHS believes *Any place where people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission*. Therefore, Olive Branch will take precautionary measures to ensure safety for our congregants while minimizing the risk of spreading Covid-19. Anyone planning to participate in our indoor gathering should note the following.

- Entryways and exits will be marked to maintain social distancing.
- Before entering you will be asked about possible symptoms and/or exposure to the virus. We will also request permission to use a contactless thermometer to check your temperature.
- We will also request using our alcohol-based sanitizing stations before entering the building.
- Face coverings are strongly recommended to all who attend our indoor gathering. This has been a contentious issue among many, and the available data is confusing and sometimes conflicting. As a means of compromise, I would ask that congregants consider wearing a face covering while entering and exiting the sanctuary. Once seated and socially distanced (six feet apart), removing the facial covering would seem suitable. We hope that everyone will show respect for individual decisions and not allow the issue of masks to be a point of contention as we meet each week for worship.
- Upon entering, you will note that seating is marked and limited. Members from the same household are asked to sit together and space themselves from others to allow for safe distancing.

- There will be no congregational singing during our service. Special music will be offered with proper distance considerations.
- We ask that all present avoid any physical contact and hand to hand exchanges. We expect this request to be the most difficult, but we respectfully ask that everyone refrain from hugging and handshakes as we meet together.
- At the conclusion of the service, we ask that any time of fellowship be conducted outdoors with social distancing measures in place.

Please note that during our 11:15 service, a single nursery will be available to families with infants and toddlers. Nursery workers will follow safety protocols to ensure your child's safety.

As a final note, we would hope that everyone would respect the individual decisions of church members and their families as we transition into the next phase of reopening our church. Opinions vary regarding the use of safety precautions. Please show consideration to others as we all navigate these turbulent times during the days ahead.

I also remind you that we may alter our current schedule and policies from month to month due to changing conditions. With the winter months approaching, we may be forced to briefly discontinue the drive-in service. This may cause our indoor numbers to grow causing certain health concerns. At that time, we will review and revise our current schedule and policies to reduce the risk of any spread of viruses and sickness.