

Oakland Presbyterian Church

"Coming Together Again"

COVID 19 REOPENING GUIDELINES

Gathering together to worship and praise our God and to encourage one another in the faith is at the core of our congregational life. We have returned to our sanctuary and continue our online worship option as we journey together in faith. What future we will find ourselves in depends not only on the behavior of the virus, but on the actions of people – as individuals, churches, communities, and governments. The way forward will not be a matter of following a timetable, but of faithfully discerning the signs of the times, and responding accordingly. It has always been that way for the church: “You have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown....”

Please understand that for at least the next year, we anticipate our lives to be shaped by the timeline set by COVID-19. We face difficult choices between conflicting needs and imperatives. But we must avoid framing our situation in terms of a false choice between reviving the economy -- or our church -- and saving lives. If we don't continue our efforts to contain the virus, a new wave of infections and deaths will cause further damage, and we will lose what we've gained from the measures we've already taken. And if we push the envelope too far by reopening our buildings and resuming gatherings prematurely, we may unfairly force on our more vulnerable members the choice between keeping themselves and others safe and participating in congregational life like everyone else.

At its meeting in April 2021, the session appointed a task force to review CDC guideline updates and update our own protocols in the light of CDC current advice. We offer these guidelines as our best efforts in determining our way forward based on current information. These guidelines are and will be a “work in progress”. We must continue to listen to the advice of our health experts and adjust these guidelines as the situation changes and our knowledge of the virus increases. It may become necessary to move back and forth between phases if second or third waves of infections emerge.

We pray for a spirit of discernment, wisdom, and patience. We pray for researchers and medical professionals; for the planners; for the ill and recovering; for those grieving and struggling with the weightiness of these times. We pray for the watchers and wonderers, and all those who wait upon the Lord.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

SCALING UP OPERATIONS:

- Establish and maintain communication with local and state authorities to determine current mitigations levels in our community. AS CDC guidelines change we will modify protocols.
- Provide protections for staff, church members, and visitors that are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (adults over 65 and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk. This should include continued virtual worship services and inclusion in other activities by various digital platforms.
- Personal meetings with the minister and other staff members should be done via pre-arranged appointments.
- Organizations that share our facilities (Hope Group, scouts, etc.) should follow these guidelines just as our own various groups will be required to do.
- Once guidelines are adopted, ask our insurance carrier to review the guidelines, recommend any additional action needed and advise us of any deficiencies in our coverage.

PROMOTE HEALTHY HYGIENE PRACTICES:

- Encourage staff, members, and visitors to maintain good hand hygiene, i.e. washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizers (with at least 60% alcohol), wipes, and no-touch trash cans. Appropriate items should be available at main points of entry/exit around the campus.
- Encourage staff and members to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
- Signs demonstrating the benefit of these practices should be placed around the campus and included in the before and after worship slide shows.

CLOTH FACE COVERINGS:

- Staff, members, and visitors should always wear cloth masks when in proximity to others. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

PROMOTE SOCIAL DISTANCING:

- The size of allowable gatherings should be based on the guidance of the CDC as well as state and local authorities.
- Social distancing of at least 6 feet should be practiced at worship and all other gatherings.
- When small groups gather, meeting rooms will be assigned so that adequate space is available for the group to practice social distancing. Each group should request space using a Facility Request Form and will be notified in advance of which space is assigned. This process will minimize exposure to active viruses.

INTENSIFY CLEANING, DISINFECTION, AND VENTILATION:

- A schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection should be developed and implemented.
- Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily and shared objects should be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- Items that are not easily cleaned and disinfected easily should not be used.
- Where possible, entry and exit should be designated to promote one-way traffic.

CHECKING FOR SIGNS & SYMPTOMS:

- Encourage staff and members who are sick or have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to remain at home.
- Should it become known that a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in any room on campus, local health officials and any persons that had been potentially exposed should be notified. Care should be taken that all individuals' personal and medical privacy is maintained.

Our Journey Back



OAKLAND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 ROOTED IN CHRIST

	<i>Where We Are:</i>	<i>Our First Step:</i>	<i>Continuing On:</i>	<i>Walking Together:</i>
Social Distancing	6' Minimum Distance	6' Minimum Distance	Minimum Required	New Normal
Vulnerable Population ¹	Remain at Home	Return with Precautions	Return with Precautions	Discretionary
Maximum Group Size ²	10	50	Room Capacity	No Limits
Campus Activities:				
Worship Services	Online	In Sanctuary ⁵ & Online	In Sanctuary ⁵ & Online	In Sanctuary & Online
Sunday School	Online	Subject to Guidelines ⁶	Subject to Guidelines ⁶	New Normal Activity
Church Office & Staff	Work from Home	On Campus or Home	On Campus	New Normal Activity
Pre-School	Limited Activity	Limited Activity	Limited Activity	New Normal Activity
Hope Group	Limited to FH	Limited to FH	Limited to FH	New Normal Activity
Other Church Groups ³	Online	Subject to Guidelines ⁶	Subject to Guidelines ⁶	New Normal Activity
Other Outside Activities ⁴	Online/Off Campus	Subject to Guidelines ⁶	Subject to Guidelines ⁶	New Normal Activity

Footnotes:

¹ Vulnerable Populations include those over 65 years old and persons with underlying medical conditions. These people are encouraged to consider continuing to participate in worship online in the "Our First Step" phase.

² Maximum Group Size as defined and determined by Orange County leadership and CDC guidelines for social distance.

³ Other Church Groups include: Session Meetings, Deacon Meetings, Committee Meetings, Choirs, Youth Groups, Prayer Breakfast, Sewing Group, Mahjong Group, etc.

⁴ Other Outside Activities include: Scouts, Voting Precinct, etc.

⁵ In Sanctuary Worship will limit numbers per service to allow for necessary distancing, masks required, names recorded and temperature taken upon entry.

⁶ Subject to Guidelines refers to group meetings on campus subject to scheduling, group size and facility sanitizing procedures. *Updated April 2021

Steps Toward Reopening Worship Services

- Two Sunday worship services will be offered at 8:45 – 9:30 (1 ½ hour break) & 11:00 – 12:00.
- Attendance will be limited to the number of persons who can be seated in the pews configured for social distancing per service to allow for social distancing. Ushers will record attendance upon entry.
- Entry will be through the N.E. sanctuary door and exit through the S.E. sanctuary door. Exit one row at a time from front to back. AC units will be set to maximize outside makeup air.
- Seating will be designated to ensure social distancing. Family groups and friendship groups that have been fully vaccinated may sit more closely together.
- Attendance will be recorded for notification purposes in the event of a positive diagnosis of an attendee.
- Masks will be required during services (available at the sanctuary entrance).
- Hand sanitizer and wipes will be provided in the narthex.
- Bulletins will be posted on the church website for pre-printing and will be placed in the designated seating areas by an usher before each service.
- Plexiglas shields will be placed on the pulpit for the minister and the lectern for the liturgist.
- Passing of the Peace will be done without physical contact and with social distancing observed.
- Communion will be conducted using prepackaged elements in disposable containers.
- Offering will be taken in drop boxes at the entry and exit doors.
- There will be no organized fellowship time before or after services. Attendees will be encouraged to exit the sanctuary and narthex directly and maintain social distancing outside.