

Olive Branch Family,

We've missed you! We've tried hard to remain connected to each other through the last two months, but it's not the same as seeing each other in person. Since Governor Northam has allowed churches to reopen at 50% capacity under Phase 1, I have some good news! We are reopening Olive Branch Baptist Church's in-person worship services! Below is the plan.

Public Worship Services

June 7th – We will start having our two services (9 am traditional and 11 am contemporary) each Sunday again. To begin with, we will meet in the CLC because it's easier to abide by the governor's requirements meeting there. Also, we can accommodate more people that we can in the sanctuary. We will move to the sanctuary later when the governor's requirements change.

Drive – In Services

May 24th and May 31th at 10 am – We will have drive-in services with cars parked around the church cemetery. We will need time to have the CLC ready so these services will be a “bridge” until we meet on June 7th.

Online Services

We will continue to have online worship services at 11 am each Sunday for the foreseeable future. We will also continue all the other online content we currently have.

Sunday School and other Ministries

There are no plans to resume Sunday School, or youth and children's ministries as we have been doing them at this time. We are in small rooms, often shoulder to shoulder for about 45 minutes so it's almost impossible to meet the governor's requirements while holding these ministries. We will continue to reevaluate this decision. It's possible youth meetings in some form may begin sooner than others because the format of their meetings fits easier with social distancing guidelines. But no certain plans have been made. Also, VBS plans are still on hold for the foreseeable future but will continually be reevaluated.

Please understand these dates may change if Governor Northam reinstates restrictions.

Many of you are excited to worship together again, but some aren't ready to risk your health in public settings. We have varying opinions about the danger of the virus and the precautions we are being asked to take. At OBBC we want to support everyone's view and the level of risk they're willing to take. That's why we are “reopening” but also continuing our online presence. Please be considerate of each other's decisions. We don't know everyone's risk, or their family's risk. ***So, don't belittle those who don't attend as too cautious, and don't chastise those who attend as uncaring.*** More than ever, we need to heed Paul's command in Romans 12:10, “Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters.” The governor has placed requirements on churches who reopen and has given further guidelines. The OBBC leaders consulted these, suggestions from our state Baptist convention, and guidelines of other churches in making the requirements listed on the back of this letter. If you attend, please follow them so we can worship in a safer environment.

Love,
Pastor Wayne

1. We will have two worship services each Sunday in the CLC. A traditional one at 9 am and a contemporary one at 11 am. We will allow people to attend either service they like but encourage those who are in a higher risk category for COVID-19, to attend the first service. We will clean before, *between* and after the services.
2. We will not offer nursery services or children's church during either service. We realize this is inconvenient for parents with young children. However, it is not possible to maintain physical distancing with young children. For now, it is safer we do not offer this.
3. As part of our modified worship services, we are required to maintain six feet of distance from one another while we are seated. The chairs in the CLC will be set up to create this distance. Families and households are allowed to sit together, but everyone else must abide by physical distancing. This includes refraining from shaking hands and giving hugs too.
4. Hand sanitizer will be available. We encourage you to use it as you come in and when you leave.
5. We will not hand out bulletins, however there will be some bulletins available that you can pick up. We will continue to have the digital version of the bulletin online.
6. We will not pass the offering plate. Instead, at the end of the service as you leave the CLC, you can place your offering in the designated offering box. Of course, you can continue to give online and mail your offering.
7. The choir will not meet for the foreseeable future. Current evidence suggests choirs are highly susceptible to infection because of how COVID19 is transferred. So out of caution we are temporarily suspending this. However, Jan will continue to ask individuals and small groups to sing special music for the traditional service.
8. Masks are HIGHLY encouraged, but not required. The current CDC recommendations are that people should wear masks when around other people. This both protects yourself if others around you are sick and protects others if you are presymptomatic. If you don't have a mask and would like one, we can help you get one.
9. For the Lord's Supper, we are exploring ways that we can do this safely in the coming months. We don't have plans to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the near future.
10. We must ask that if you are sick to please stay home.