



# Oregon Conference OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

## CHURCH RE-OPENING PLAN

As a Conference team, we can't wait for the day that every church building is open and hosting worship for our faith community. At the same time, the safety of every church member is of high importance. There is a lot of things to consider prior to reopening your church. Safety for your most vulnerable members should take priority. It's important that every church prayerfully considers how to proceed. Here are the Oregon Conference guidelines for re-opening.

Both Washington and Oregon are taking a phased, county-by-county approach to re-opening their economies. **Oregon Conference Churches may re-open in phases, at the same pace as the county and municipality in which they reside.** (I.e. When Clackamas County moves to Phase 1, all Clackamas County Oregon Conference Churches may do the same.) Since these phases can change quickly, our communications team will be sending out updates as necessary. ***Each Church is Expected to Follow State/County/Municipal guidelines for reopening and/or operating in accordance with OHA/CDC/WHO recommendations.***

**UPDATE:** Governor Brown has updated her phased approach adding a "Baseline" phase. Every county is currently in the Baseline Phase. This means that in Oregon, any church that has under 25 participants, including the pastor, can open for Sabbath services. Please note, that just because you can open, doesn't mean your church is ready or wants to open. Please meet with your church leadership to determine your churches next steps. See link at end of the document for Oregon's County and Phase information.

### General Guidelines for All Phases:

We will be living with the threat of COVID-19 until there is an effective treatment or vaccine for this disease. The following guidelines apply to every phase of re-opening.

1. Encourage personal hygiene and effective handwashing.
2. No physical contact should take place while on church property.
3. Develop habits of effective sanitation for all high-touch surfaces and all A/V equipment (no shared microphones. 1 person/1 program/1 microphone)
4. Limit or eliminate items that are "handled" by parishioners (I.e. bulletins, hymnals, pencils, etc.)
5. Maintain adequate physical distancing at all times. (at least 6 ft except in household units)
6. Do not pass offering plate. Establish alternate forms of returning tithes/offerings.

## Before You Re-Open

### 1) Develop a local church, step by step, plan for keeping your membership safe.

- Plan should include:
- Sanitation of church, with a disinfectant product, after each meeting.
- How physical distancing will be accomplished.
- Who will need to wear face coverings?
- Encourage “high risk” individuals to stay home.
- Have a plan to relate to “high risk” individuals who refuse to stay home
- Encouraging personal hygiene.
- Train your volunteers on how to safely greet and serve others without contact and physical distancing guidelines.
- Consider sending your members a survey of how they feel about reopening your church.
- Implement plan for identifying who has attended each gathering.

### 2) Preparing Your Church for Reopening

- Deep clean your entire church
- Consider where germs will be transferred most frequently.
- Consider shampooing carpets and upholstered chair or pews, sanitize hard chairs, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, etc.
- Where possible remove chairs that cannot be sanitized on a regular basis
- Make sure your church has adequate hand sanitizer and tissues available and in multiple locations in your facility.
- Consider having masks available for those who wish to use one but forgot to bring their own.
- Postpone potlucks and other social activities until the Conference communicates it is okay to resume these activities.
- Have a plan for contact tracing in place if someone does become ill.
- We recommend encouraging members to bring their own bibles and remove Bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, etc. from the backs of chairs/pews.
- Consider roping off every other row and other approaches to ensure physical distancing.
- Communicate with your congregation through door posters, email, and social media about how your church team has prepared the church for reopening.
- Remind your members that if they are sick, they need to stay home and enjoy the service online
- Turn off drinking fountains. Have other options for water available.

## Oregon Conference Phased Re-Opening Guidelines based on Current OHA Guidance & WHA Guidance

- 1) Limit all gatherings to the phase-appropriate size. (Oregon Baseline Phase & Phase 1: less than 25, Washington Phase 2: less than 5, Washington Phase 3: less than 50) This applies to all meetings of the church: Worship services, Bible studies, Staff meetings, Board meetings, etc.**

- Recommend 1 service per day. If more than one service, there must be a minimum of 2 hours between worship services per day with thorough sanitation of touch surfaces, restroom, and open airflow of spaces used.
- All events must maintain appropriate physical distancing.
- Meetings should be as short as possible. No groups should spend more than 90 minutes in the building per day.

### **2) Worship services**

- Maintain a six-foot physical distancing policy. Members from the same household can sit together.
- Avoid handing out bulletins. Instead project announcements on screens.
- **Group singing is discouraged. If congregation chooses to incorporate congregational singing, at least 15 ft of physical distancing must be maintained.**
- Change the way you offer communion.
  - We suggest you have a table where single serving plates with cup and wafer are placed for individuals to pick-up on their own and no cross contamination can take place
- Please do not pass the microphone on stage. One mic per person per service.
- Continue offering online giving options.
- Do not pass the offering plate. Find an alternate way to return tithes/offerings.
- Come up with a fun way to greet others in a non-contact way.
- Clean the pulpit after every use.
- Consider dismissing in an orderly way to ensure physical distancing.
- Remove toys, blankets, and other objects from your mother's room. Remember to sanitize this area each week.

### **3) Praise teams and other platform participants**

- In Baseline or Phase 1 we do not recommend any congregational singing.
- If music is necessary, please utilize only 1 singer for special music and have them at least 15 ft from congregation and they are assigned a mic for their use only.
- At this time, we are also not recommending using any instruments that require air to be blown into it.
- Wipe down music stands after each use.
- Platform participants should have physical distancing of 15 ft from the first row.

#### **4) A/V Teams**

- Clean microphones, headphones, computers, laptops, etc. after every use. DO NOT USE WATER! Rubbing alcohol or alcohol-based cleaners are best. Keep record of when each item was cleaned.
- Rotate your tech team if possible.
- Keep using the online services. Facebook may be more accessible as many people have accounts but consider other options like YouTube for those who want to watch on their smart TVs.
- Secure a CCLI license for copyright compliance, if you have not already done so.
- If you don't have media support for announcements or singing, then print texts and place them in the pews/chairs. Encourage people to take the sheets home with them and not leave them in the pews.

#### **5) Greeters and other volunteer staff**

- Train greeters on how to greet post-quarantine: NO hand shaking or hugs.
- Ensure doors are propped open or have the greeters hold them open.
- Train greeters and volunteers to answer questions on procedures and policies upon the return to the building
- Determine how many volunteers to assist.
- Limit volunteers to those who do not have preexisting conditions and those who are under 65 years old.

#### **6) Food and snacks**

- Hot drink stations, snacks, potlucks or other group meals, should not take place at this time.
- As local and state guidelines change in this area, the Conference will notify pastors of how best to reintroduce these services.

#### **7) Sabbath School and small groups for adults**

- Only one service should take place on Sabbath that lasts no more than 1 ½ hours. Please choose if you would like to do a worship service or Sabbath school activity.
- Consider restarting small groups that meet during the week.

#### **8) Children's classes**

- We do not recommend offering children's classes at this time.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children 2 years of age and under should not wear face coverings.  
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/masks-and-children-during-covid-19/>
- Consider not reopening the children areas until area schools are also open.

***When Children's classes are resumed:***

- Limit leaders in the children's areas to those who do not have preexisting conditions and those under 65 years of age.
- Have a check list of what has been cleaned and when, in each room.
- Develop a list of procedures for your volunteers. Train them on this list prior to reopening.
- Consider removing everything nonessential from the children's classrooms to limit surfaces for potential contamination
- When possible, consider holding children's classes outside.

**9) Special Services**

- Normal in-person Anointing of persons may take place in accordance with state and county guideline allow for physical contact (otherwise COVID-19 Oregon Conference guidelines are still in effect)
- Normal in-person Baptism of candidates may take place once state and county guidelines allow for physical contact (otherwise COVID-19 Oregon Conference guidelines are still in effect)
- Normal in-person Child Dedication may take place once state and county guidelines are still in effect (otherwise COVID-19 Oregon Conference guidelines are still in effect)

**10) Drive-in Services Option**

- Participants should remain in their vehicle at all times. NO "mingling".
- Have cars parked far enough apart that if they had their window down, they would be abiding by the 6ft physical-distance guideline.
- Have an offering box available for guests to leave an offering as they leave or come to the church property. Having this box unmanned will allowing for physical distancing to be maintained.
- The church building should remain locked and not opened during these services.
- Communion should not be offered at these services.

**Oregon State Reopening Guidelines:** <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-covid-19>

**Washington State Reopening Guidelines:**

[https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SafeStartWA\\_4May20\\_1pm.pdf](https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SafeStartWA_4May20_1pm.pdf)

<https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov/>

**Remember:**

Even though your church has opted to reopen, many of your members may not be ready or able to rejoin you. Please continuing to offer services online.

We will continue to update you on protocols as Phases change. If you follow these guidelines and the guidelines of your County/State, and the guidelines outlined here, you will not have any difficulties with compliance.