

OSLC ONLINE HOST GUIDELINES

Introduction

Welcome to the world of online hosting! You have been called to fulfill a very important role of being a welcoming guide while creating relationships with those that watch our online worship services each week. This guide will help you understand the critical role you play each week while hopefully answering any burning questions about how this all works. You are not here by accident and God is about to use you to bring people closer to Him. Thank you for being willing to share yourself with God's people in this creative and unique way!

What is our purpose as hosts?

“To create relationships with online worship participants through hospitality and informational facilitation (**Welcome**), personal interaction (**Discuss**) and prayer (**Prayer**)”

What Hosts Do...

So, what do Church Online Hosts do? They do three easy but powerful things—welcome, discuss, and pray.

Welcome

Hosts welcome each new guest into the chat area. A friendly welcome can be made even friendlier by using exclamation marks, emojis, and a follow-up question to get to know them.

Example: Hi @johnfromtacoma, welcome to our church! We're so happy you're here today. How's your day going so far?

During the service, hosts are also the primary resource for online links to help people take “Next Steps”. For example... sharing the link of certain announcements (oslc.com/b4k- for backpacks for kids etc) or inviting people to share a story of what God has done in their lives.

Discuss

Next, Hosts can spark discussion in the chat area. Asking icebreaker questions, recapping key points from the message, or posting a scripture or particular line of a song is a great way to engage attenders in the chat. Open-ended questions—those that can't be answered with a “yes” or “no”—and questions beginning with who, what, when, where, why, or how are always great conversation starters, too.

Example: *“I love that Pastor Tim just mentioned _____. That’s so powerful! How do you think we can apply this into our everyday lives?”*

Pray

Finally, Hosts can offer prayer to guests in the chat area. They can pray with people right in the chat area or encourage them to click the Live Prayer button if they’d rather talk and pray with a volunteer privately. It’s amazing to see how loved people feel when someone reaches out to pray with them!

Instead of simply replying “Thanks for sharing; we’ll pray for you!” we found that typing out the prayer is a better way to meet the attendee’s need.

Example: *“Hi @martha75, I’m so sorry to hear that you lost your grandfather this week. Could we pray together here for you and your family? Let’s pray: God, we lift up Martha and pray that you would be with her and her entire family today. Give them comfort and peace during this hard time.”*

Communication Tips for Hosts

Beside the message video, communication at watch.oslc.com is primarily written, so it lacks some of the nonverbal cues we typically use in face-to-face conversations, such as facial expressions and tone of voice. Here are a few hosting tips to help you hone your communication skills online.

1. Avoid all caps. TYPING LIKE THIS can come across as virtual yelling, so use standard capitalization and be sure your Caps Lock is off.
2. Use proper punctuation. Proper punctuation prevents misunderstandings and helps Google Translate accurately translate your messages into other languages, presents your church in a tidy light, and clarifies meaning for non-native English speakers.
3. Use emojis! Written communication can sometimes seem emotionless or impersonal, but it doesn’t have to. To convey joy, sorrow, or virtually any other emotion, try adding some emojis to your posts! You can also OVER-USE emoji’s...Just be aware of too much of a good thing here 😊
4. Avoid using slang or churchy words that can cause confusion, such as “What up?” or “sanctification.” The best approach is to use simple language and provide explanations for any words or jargon that unchurched guests might not understand. Remember that what might seem obvious to you, is probably not to someone who is new to church or new to online experiences or chat.
5. Tag a person or use someone’s name when responding. You wouldn’t want someone who just said in chat that their dog died to see your “That’s amazing! Praise God” comment and think it was meant for them. @ tagging or using the person’s name helps make it clear exactly who you’re talking to in chat.

6. We understand that each person is a unique creation of God with their own ideas, thoughts, preferences and opinions. The OSLC community is made up of a wide variety of people from different backgrounds who are gathered together to love God, love people and live like Jesus. While serving as chat hosts, we represent Christ and the OSLC community to people in that little chat box. Because of this great opportunity, we ask that you not share personal bias' or political opinions while actively hosting.

Remember, in the online realm, our communication truly is our ministry—that's why we strive to make it as excellent as possible. Learn from your teammates, have fun, and never forget our mission: to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus!

How to Handle Sticky Situations

Disruptive Behavior

From time to time as a host you may need to mute the chat of a participant who exhibits inappropriate behavior or shares links to sites that the OSLC community does not support. Muted guests can still watch the message and see chat. They will also see their own posts appear, but their posts will not show up to anyone else. Before a Host mutes a guest, they should be given a friendly reminder in both public chat and then in direct chat if needed. Remind them that this is an open and welcoming space for all. We always act out of love and grace and try to keep our chat community as safe and positive as possible. With anonymity can come messiness—people saying or doing things that may not happen in a physical building. But, as believers, we embrace the messiness and use those opportunities as a way to minister to people in need.

Muting should be a last resort—and sometimes it's hard to know if it's the right thing to do. Here are a few things to remember:



Mute A Guest When...

- they continue to use profanity after being asked not to do so
- they post pornographic links or phrases
- they continue to post racist or hateful remarks
- they bully others



Don't Mute A Guest When...

- they discuss off-topic things
- they Have a weird username
- they say they don't like God or Christians
- they annoy you

“Deeper Care” Situations

Sometimes you may encounter a person who seems to be crying out for help that you might not feel equipped to deal with at that moment in the chat box. Some examples of this might be...

- Threats of personal bodily harm or suicide
- Prayer concerns that you don't feel equipped to handle alone
- Any other comment or post that you feel you need to “Hand off” to a Pastor or Director

When any of these occur, please feel free to let that person know via personal chat (Don't post a reply in the room chat so all can see it) that you would be happy to pull in one of the pastors or directors in the room to meet with them one-on-one. Then message the Pastor or Director in the “host” chat area and they will take it from there.

Final Thoughts

Thank you for being willing to be on the frontlines and help people navigate this weird world of online worship. We have a wonderful opportunity to reach way beyond the walls of OSLC and to help bring the Gospel to people around the world through this medium. God is going to do great things through your time in that little chat box. Please don't ever hesitate to ask questions or bring concerns to our pastors or staff, we are all learning this and experiencing it together

