

# GRACE BFC RETURN to IN-PERSON SUNDAY WORSHIP

*Guidelines Reviewed by the Elders and Deacon, June 9, 2020 ... updated July 23, 2020*

## WELCOME BACK ... AS YOU ARE ABLE

We are all excited to welcome you back to in-person worship at Grace. We know you are all eager to see and talk with each other face to face. We also know that Covid-19 still exists within our surrounding community and state. We offer the guidelines below as a way to begin meeting while also taking precautions not to endanger the health of our people or of our community. We know that a number of you have very legitimate concerns that may make it unwise or uncomfortable to gather again at first. We are committed to caring for you and plan to continue our Streaming Worship, Online Gatherings and some of our Online Small Groups throughout the summer. Some of our church staff, Elders and Deacons will be participating in the In-Person Gatherings, and some will be remaining in their homes at this time and will be participating in the Online Worship and Gathering. Please see our Returning to In-Person Worship Summary Document as well as our Return Video for an overview of summer worship at Grace (available at [gracebfc.org/reopen](http://gracebfc.org/reopen)). Below is the more detailed description of guidelines and procedures prepared by the staff and reviewed by the Elders and Deacons. Please refer questions or concerns to Pastor Mark ([mbickel@gracebfc.org](mailto:mbickel@gracebfc.org)) or any of our church staff.

## WHY RE-GATHER?

Biblically, there is a call to God's people to not give up meeting together. Why? Because there is a need for people to step out of their normal work, to take a day of rest, and to join together as God's People in worship of God the way He has pictured in Scripture. There should be a hunger to hear and respond to God's Word. God gives grace to His people through corporate prayer, reading of His Word, and the Lord's Supper. There is a call for each person to use their gifts to edify and build up the saints. While there can be some appropriation of these in our homes as we participate with recorded services, the Scriptural pattern is for God's people to gather, with personal interaction and relationship central. Considering the wide variety of gifts God has given to our church as a whole these all fit best in the larger Sunday gathering than simply in one's home or even in small group settings.

The reason we have not insisted on these being in the church building in the past several weeks is due to the unprecedented contagiousness of covid-19, the widespread nature of it in our particular geographic area and our neighborhood response to the virus. We want to love and care for our congregation and neighbors in a way that reduced the risk of serious health consequences that can occur as people gather in larger numbers at this time.

In recent weeks in infection rate in Delaware County has been decreasing, scientists have gained a better understanding of the virus and its spread, and our communities have developed standards to help mitigate the threat of spread while returning to more normal social relationships. We believe we can now begin to safely meet again as a body. There will need to be some modifications to our procedures at first, and not all will feel it wise to join us at the start, but we want to begin the process of reopening. As we proceed, we will continue to monitor the situation around us and make adjustments as warranted. What follows is how we hope to implement the best practices we have seen in a way that begins to restore the rightful worship of God in all its dimensions.

## PHASE ONE GUIDELINES

*Reopening Sunday morning worship and allowing Grace Group gatherings in-person*

### 1. PREPARE THE BUILDING

- a. Doors – all exterior and interior doors remain open to avoid contact
- b. Cleaning – Gym, Entry Ways, Hallways and Bathrooms accessed on Sunday's will be cleaned before each service. (the church recently purchased a spray disinfecting system in addition to using recommended cleaning supplies throughout)
- c. Communications – A walk-through video will be prepared and sent to the congregation prior to initial service. Signs will also be posted throughout the building to direct traffic and remind people of safety procedures – wear masks, maintain social distancing, hand washing, no contact greeting, etc.
- d. Seating – In order to safely social distance, restrict traffic flow throughout the building, and ensure proper sanitizing of surfaces, we will worship together in the gym. The gym allows for greater capacity, is easier to arrange proper seating, and has safer air circulation (when AC is on). Seats will be placed in groups (for families) with six feet of separation between groups. (Gym is 90x63 feet and can seat 120 – 150 people seated in this way while leaving extra space for entry, stage, etc.)

- e. Target, recruit and train volunteers able to assist with temperature checks, entrance lines, seating, bathroom monitoring, parking lot safety, etc. Limit volunteers initially to those who do not have conditions that make them vulnerable and those who are under age 65.
- f. Work with Tech Team and Worship Leaders to assure safety of set-up, tear-down and practices
- g. Work with Finance Committee to assure safe handling / counting of offerings.

## 2. SERVICE TIMES and DESCRIPTIONS

- a. Offer one in-person service at 10AM
- b. Begin with a “Dry Run” for volunteers and their families on June 21 and opening to the congregation on June 28
- c. Retain online presence - Continue to provide a recorded and/or livestreamed version of the worship service for those who cannot join us in person at this time. We will develop our Ring Meeting gatherings to effectively connect those worshipping in person and at home.
- d. Urge those at risk, those showing any symptoms, or those who have tested positive in the past 14 days, to remain at home and worship with us online.
  - i. Elders will communicate with their Grace Link groups and shepherd people as they think through their own participation – both helping those who are vulnerable make wise decisions, and over time helping those tempted to stay home out of fear or ease to understand reasons to gather.
  - ii. Leaders should model wise decision making themselves.
- e. Gradually increase attendance
  - i. Week one – DRY RUN - limited to a few families (some elders, deacons, and volunteers)
  - ii. Week 2-3 – limited to 50 attendees plus volunteer team
  - iii. Week 4-5– limited to 75 attendees plus worship and volunteer teams
  - iv. Week 6 and beyond – limited to 100 attendees plus worship and volunteer teams
- f. Sign-up - Provide a method for those who are ready to gather in person to sign-up in advance so that we can limit the number of people to those we can safely accommodate, and provide a way to assure that we rotate through those able to return so everyone gets equal opportunity to join in person (use Realm Reservation Event with phone registration option ... At first limiting people to registering for one week at a time, to assure any not able to attend one week can easily register for future weeks).
- g. Monitoring - Continue to monitor both national / state recommendations and very local community virus levels and responses, making temporary adjustments as the local situation warrants.

## 3. ACTUAL SERVICE

- a. Begin Safety in Parking Lot – Encourage people to social distance in parking lot as they arrive and to put on mask as they exit their car since they will be standing in line with others before entering the building.
- b. Mask Required – Masks required at all times when in building (including when singing), with the following guidelines:
  - i. Children 2 and under: should NOT wear masks (CDC notes choking hazard for 2 and under).
  - ii. Children ages 3-4: Recommend, but don't require masks.
  - iii. Children ages 5-8 : Required to be in possession of a mask and to wear it when they enter the gym until they are seated. Once they are socially distanced in their seat, we recommend that they wear a mask, where practical, especially when they are singing.
  - iv. Everyone age 9 and older: Require to wear a mask over nose and mouth for the duration of their time inside of the church building.
- c. Health / Temperature Check – have health check stations at each entrance – ask health questions below, and check temperature before entry to gym by head scan units. Those with temperatures above 100.4 will be asked to return home. (note: Health Check questions will be sent to people in advance and posted outside building where people enter)
  - i. If you have come in close contact with anyone that has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last two weeks, please stay home and quarantine for the recommended time.
  - ii. If, in the last 72 hours, you have had a fever over 100.4, please stay home.
  - iii. If, in the last 72 hours, you have any symptoms below that are new or not attributable to an existing condition, or if you are not feeling well, please stay home.
    - 1. Cough, Shortness of Breath, or Difficulty Breathing
    - 2. Sore Throat
    - 3. Chills or Shakes
    - 4. Muscle Ache or Headache
    - 5. Loss of sense of Taste or Smell
- d. Ushers will to guide people to seating / rearrange seating for families and safely dismiss people when the service ends (people will not select their own seats)

- e. Children – are to remain with their families at all times. No separate children or teen programs.
  - i. A sanitized room will be provided for nursing mothers only.
- f. No paper bulletins — only electronic.
- g. Online giving encouraged. Have a station at the church where people can place their offerings.
- h. Components of Worship
  - i. Congregational Singing – people need to keep masks on during singing as the spread of respiratory molecules is greatly increased when singing
  - ii. Worship Teams
    - 1. Pre-recorded music as presently arranged will continue for weeks 1-3.
    - 2. Worship team safely distanced and including only 1 singer (no mask) for weeks 4-5.
    - 3. Worship team safely distanced and including only 2 singers (no masks) for weeks 6 and following.
    - 4. Any unmasked singer / leader will be behind a plexiglass barrier
  - iii. Sermon, Prayer, Announcements, Benediction, other Speakers – There should only be one person at any podium at a time. Set up chairs with gap in front of podium so person at podium can speak without mask without risk of infecting people in front of them. If conducting an interview or something else with multiple people on stage masks should be worn and 6-foot distance maintained. (note: opening weeks gym set-up has no one sitting in front of stage)
  - iv. Communion – done with pre-packaged, sealed elements that people pick up on entry so no personal contact. People dispose of containers when they leave.
- i. Exit – After service people should exit to parking lot before socializing. Ushers will direct the exit through the gym doors, exiting those closest to the doors first and working toward those furthest away.
- j. No coffee or snacks provided. If people bring their own food or drink they must social distance from others before removing their mask to consume, and must put their mask on again immediately after.
- k. Parking Lot – People may socialize in the open air of the parking lot but will be encouraged to maintain safe distances and respect other people. Masks are options outdoors after the service.
- l. Bathrooms – People should be encouraged to use bathroom before they come. The church bathrooms on the first floor will be open for those that need them but can only be used by one person at a time to assure social distancing (or one parent with kids). There will be bathroom monitor to direct.

#### **4. GRACE GROUPS**

- a. Existing Grace Groups will be permitted to meet in-person if the group so desires
- b. We will not necessarily encourage groups to meet in person, but we will not discourage it.
- c. Group host leaders will submit an in-person plan to the staff for approval including ways they intend to pursue safety, distancing, disinfecting, etc.
  - i. The staff will happily work with hosts in developing a plan.
- d. Individuals will be offered opportunity to be re-placed in a different group if they prefer the social options provided by alternate groups.

#### **5. OTHER USE of the BUILDING**

Please see separate “Use of Grace Church Facilities in Time of Covid” document

#### **6. RESPONSE if SOMEONE DIAGNOSED with COVID-19**

- a. In general, if someone test positive for Covid-19, all that had close contact with that person within 48 hours of his/her displaying symptoms should be notified of the + Covid test.
- b. If anyone had close contact with the + Covid person the previous Sunday, then that person/persons should be in a 14-day quarantine and should not attend service the next Sunday.
- c. If no close contact, and everyone wearing masks previous Sunday, then those people should be ok to attend service the next Sunday.
- d. Since CDC is now saying that the virus does not live as long on surfaces as they originally said, we will simply assure that all areas of the building accessed by those who tested positive are fully cleaned and disinfected before anyone else would be allowed to use them. Once cleaned the building will reopen according to normal rules.

## **PHASES TWO and THREE**

We are eager to resume children and teen ministries, on-site outreach events, classes, and additional conferences and meetings. Phase two will likely get underway in September and will include our plan for children and teen ministries moving forward. It will be in certain ways contingent upon recommendations from the state and procedures followed by local schools. Phase three will be the full resumption of life and ministry at Grace Church.