

Dear Grace Family,

Like many of you, we have been longing for the day when we can gather together for worship in the Sanctuary. We are happy to tell you that day is not far off!

Following a plan developed by the reopening committee and approved by the Council, we are planning on beginning in-building worship with limited attendance beginning March 21. This is dependent upon remaining in unmitigated Phase 4 or better, and on individuals being willing to volunteer for greeting and ushering after having been trained on the new procedures.

Changes to the Worship Services

Please understand that services when we reopen will be different than pre-pandemic. We will continue to celebrate God's presence in our lives but the look and feel of Sunday worship will be different. These changes include:

<https://www.gracewoodstock.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2.18.21-General-Guidelines-for-Worship-in-the-Sanctuary-2-002.pdf>

Our Responsibilities to Each Other

Our primary goal is to keep our congregation, staff, volunteers, and visitors as safe as possible from exposure to COVID-19. We cannot do that unless everyone abides by these policies and procedures. Please view following these measures through the lens of love, honor, and respect for one another. For the time being, we ask you to commit to:

- Wearing a mask at all times if you are over two years old;
- Maintaining a six-foot distance from those outside your home or household at all times;
- **Pre-registering** for the service online or by calling the church office Monday through Thursday. Reservations will be taken for the following Sunday only. Once our capacity is reached, no more reservations will be taken. If your plans change, please notify the office to free up your spot. This will help us manage our seating limitations;
- Monitoring your health and **STAYING HOME** If you feel sick or think you might be or, if you believe you were exposed to the corona virus;
- Notifying the church office if you become sick or test positive for COVID-19. Your name will be kept confidential but, we will notify that service's attendees of possible exposure, if necessary;
- Using your best judgement as to whether you and your family can attend safely or should continue worshipping with us online.

Our church has weathered this pandemic with patience, ingenuity, and grace. We have endured self-quarantining, isolation, and the changes to so much in our day-to-day lives. And even though our facilities have been closed, our church has remained open. Thanks to our livestreaming and those who keep our Sunday services going, we have reached new people who would not normally come on Sunday and old friends who have moved away.

As we prepare for the day we reopen, we ask for your prayers, your patience, and your participation. Pray that we would have the people and resources we need in place. Be extra patient with one another as we wait and as we worship in different ways than what we are used to. Be ready to do your part by following these guidelines faithfully and treating one another with love, compassion, and grace. Consider helping out as well because we need people to help with ushering, greeting, and more.

In God's Grace,

Pastors and Council

Grace Lutheran Church General Guidelines for Worship in the Sanctuary

- Service capacity and protocols will be determined based upon governmental regulation and guidelines, which are dynamic and may change based upon pandemic data. We will follow best practices and advice from multiple sources to minimize risk to the safety and health of our congregation, visitors and staff.
- Worship services in the sanctuary will be video recorded and posted online.

Preparation for Services

- Sanctuary, narthex, entrances, exits and bathroom will be cleaned with antiviral products approved for use against COVID-19.
- Doors between the sanctuary and narthex will be open to reduce common touch surfaces (example, door handles). Access to the rest of the building will be restricted.
- Restroom use will be available for urgent use by one person or household at a time.
- Water fountains will be unavailable. The congregation should bring water bottle(s) from home for personal use if needed.
- Greeting station to have check-in materials, sanitizer, and a small supply of masks.
- In advance of services, staff, service participants and congregational volunteers will receive instruction and training as appropriate and needed for their roles, responsibilities and duties.

Reservations

- We will be taking reservations on a first come basis both to ensure anyone wishing to take part in worship in the building can be accommodated appropriately, and to have a record of attendance for contract tracing if needed.
- Reservations can be made Monday through Thursday- online through Grace's website or by calling Grace's office.

Arrival

- Everyone in the Grace facility over the age of 2 **MUST** wear an appropriate mask or face covering when in the building, except as noted for service participants or when taking communion. Upon arrival, attendees will be greeted, checked-in with basic health screening questions, and asked to sanitize hands (sanitizer available at the greeting station).
- Attendees will be directed to wait in a designated spot for seating by an usher. There will be marks on the floor and/or pews indicating appropriate social distancing between groups (group defined as people living in same household or arriving together). Each group will be seated in designated locations from the front to the back of the sanctuary.
- Those requiring special seating accommodations are to notify the greeter.
- Participants are to be seated upon arrival, with no social congregating in the narthex or sanctuary before or after services.
- The coat rack and nursery room will not be available. Please keep your coats with you.

Worship structure overview

- Worship will be similar to that in our online and parking lot worship services.
- Communion will be offered every Sunday, elements will be pre-packaged and distributed upon check in. Please dispose of packaging in the waste receptacles as you leave the sanctuary.
- Worship services will continue to available online.

Additional worship details...

- Portions of the service will be projected on the screen. The service folder will continue to be available on Grace's website and by email.
- All shared items will be removed from pews (hymnals, Bibles, pencils, etc.)
- There will be no congregational singing and only limited responsive speaking. There will be "no-contact" sharing of the peace.
- All vocal and/or wind instrumental music will be pre-recorded.
- To facilitate communication, the pastor or reader may, while maintaining social distancing, temporarily remove their mask while speaking during the service.
- Offering plates will not be passed, though they will be located at the sanctuary exit doors. Electronic giving is highly encouraged.

Dismissal

- Service attendees will remain in their pews until dismissed, group by group, by an usher.
- Orderly dismissal will begin with the back and work towards the front.

- Offerings may be placed in the plates, and communion packaging in the waste receptacles, as you exit the sanctuary.
 - Attendees are to exit the sanctuary and then building, going directly to their vehicles as efficiently as possible. There will be no “receiving line” with Pastors or congregating in the narthex.
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COVENANT OF CARE

- Everyone who enters and gathers in the building commits to care for one another through the practice of health safety precautions, including wash/sanitize hands, wear a mask at all times*, stay a minimum of six feet apart. (*Staff are permitted to remove face mask if working alone in a room; worship participants may briefly remove face masks to receive Holy Communion).
 - If you test positive for COVID-19 within the next two weeks of being in the building, you commit to informing the church office ASAP.
 - Please review the screening questions below, if you answer “**YES**” to any of the questions, please do not enter the building, and seek care from a health care professional.
1. Have you received a confirmed diagnosis for coronavirus (COVID-19) by a coronavirus (COVID-19) test or from a diagnosis by a health care professional in the past 14 days?
 2. Have you been in close contact* with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 OR has experienced any COVID-19 symptoms in the last 14 days? *A close contact is defined as any individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes throughout the course of the day and would also include all household members (parents/guardian, siblings, etc.).
 3. Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days: fever (temperature of greater than 100.4°F), chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea?