

# Re-Opening for **In Person Worship** at Grace Lutheran, 2020

(Draft Presented to Council June 9, 2020)

**Subcommittee:** Pastor Julie Hart, Dave Nicholson-Director of Music, Ron Lesher-President, and Faith Howarth-Council Rep

**Note:** 1. Any mention of Worship unless otherwise noted is for In Person Worship (inside the building)

2. This is a **working document** from which to operate. It will always be under constant review as time goes on and as situations change. So, there will not be anything called a Final Document or Draft.

## EVALUATION OF PLACE OF WORSHIP:

### Outdoor Worship

**Pro:** 1) The virus dissipates more quickly outside. 2) Social Distancing of 6' can be maintained. 3) It is a public Witness to Grace's vitality and fortitude 4) People can bring a chair which suits them for comfort and ease of getting up and down 5) Worship will be invitational to those passing

**Con:** 1) With unreliable Weather, a) Worship will be inconsistent, b) heat and humidity will be a factor 2) There will be no access to the building; not even for restrooms 3) Should it start to rain while worshipping, the building may not be accessed; a) worship will end, b) if we know the weather is not going to be favorable we cancel ahead of time, c) it will not be easy letting people know, except through Shepherds 4) We do not have a portable PA system; meaning no one will hear the words of the Service 5) We are on a busy street corner and there will be noise 6) Some may not be able to carry their chair(s) from their car to the yard 7) Uneven ground can be difficult to walk on 8) too many variables over which we have no control

*(Please Note: That when the suggestion for outdoor worship was posed, they were thinking of churches with parking lots and/or lawns. They were not imagining city or intown churches locked in by buildings or at intersections with traffic noise)*

### Indoor Worship

**Con: 1)** The virus is contained for a longer period of time 2) Even with distancing people will be closer together 3) People will not be able to sit in their favorite spot 4) Air Flow Considerations 5) Cleaning and Disinfecting Worship Space and restrooms before and after, 6) Must have working AC.

**Pro:** 1) Worship in the familiar sanctuary 2) Organ and Piano Music 3) Distancing will be controlled by marking 4) No weather worries 5) Worship will be consistent, e.g., every Sunday 6) People are more comfortable and confident with 'the known' 7) Restrooms are available 8) Adequate Sound System 9) People are expecting to return to Worship in their own church 10) Worship space and restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected, 11) Ushers will be able to monitor Masks and distancing, as well as seat and dismiss people, 12) While Air Flow may not be the best, with distancing and the high ceiling we are better off than in a room with a low ceiling.

## General Statements on Worship as a Result of the Covid19 Crisis

*It is the Council's responsibility to see that regular worship is provided (unless there is a state of emergency declared by the Governor and or the Bishop). People have the right to make their own decision on attending worship, regardless of variables.*

*There will be no judgment on those who do not choose to come to Worship, which ever format is chosen; outdoor or indoor.*

*Members present or not present are under the care and concern of Grace, in particular through the Pastor and the Shepherd's care.*

*The New Pastor will have a Worshipping Community to come to as opposed to a building that is shut down.*

*The longer we wait to resume In Person Worship, the less likely it is that people will return.*

*The Online Worship Service in Thursday TWAG will continue for those who do not come for In Person Worship.*

*As necessary, by Governor and/or Bishop's orders, we may have to once again shut down when it is deemed unsafe for gatherings of any size.*

*Restoring Worship is a witness to our community of Grace's Faith and Resiliency. It shows stability and commitment to our Neighbor and beyond.*

*When it is necessary to shut down due to crisis or emergency such as covid19, that is also a witness to our neighbors of the seriousness of the current situation.*

## Worship Resumes Inside when the following Conditions have been met.

The Church will meet all the necessary requirements as directed by the State of Maryland, and the Office of the Bishop.

1. Occupancy—Whatever % is declared by the Government as safe. Currently 5/20, a 50% capacity has been designated as 'safe.' However, the **distancing factor of 6-7'** may require fewer people. For Grace that would be @ 50 people. **Our current goal is 15-20 based upon average worship attendance of 20-30 so far in 2020.**
2. The usable space for Worship which also includes restrooms and stairs, will be **cleaned and disinfected before and after a Worship Service.** **This may mean increasing the contract hours of the present cleaning team. (Members of Grace are not expected to do this, due to age and ability)**
3. **Handwipes and hand sanitizer** will be at both entrances of the Church; as well, hand sanitizer is in all pews. Everyone should use one or both as they enter. *Council is recommending that for Worship, entrance be only at the double front doors.* **Temperatures** will be monitored as one enters. **Masks are required** of those coming to worship and will remain on until a person leaves the building. Only the Pastor and Worship Assistant are excused from Masks (who will be distancing @ 20'), as well the Lector for the time of reading. *To guarantee the 20' no one will be seated in rows, one and two, for safety until otherwise recommended by those in authority; Government/Bishop.* The sharing of microphones is not recommended. **Ushers will serve as monitors** to make sure that regulations are followed.

4. **All Hymnals** have been removed from the pew racks, as advised. However, a safe format has been determined for a Worship Bulletin for Services. a. The Office will continue to produce the weekly bulletin. b. Felice will place these on x's in the pews where you will pick up one for the order of Worship. c. After Worship one **MUST** take their bulletin with them or put in the recycle bin at the doors. *It is recommended that Pastors not greet people at the door to maintain safe distancing.*
5. **Pews, and 6-7' distances on the floors** will be marked. The Pews will have masking tape "X's" marking places where people may sit. All distances must be observed. Families or those co-habiting may sit together in specially marked pews. Again, Ushers will make sure regulations are followed.
6. **The Outer Doors (and the doors to the nave) will remain OPEN**; weather permitting, for air circulation. (There was some discussion on floor fans to move air; noise was a consideration. No recommendation either way at this point.)
7. At the Present time (5/20), the Celebration of Holy Communion is not being considered until we become used to the distancing and 'new' form of worship. Pastor in conjunction with the Altar Guild and Director of Music, as well as the Executive Committee will make the determination of 'when' this may begin. The Bishop recommends Communion in one form: wafer.
8. At the recommendation of the Bishop, the time allotted for Worship is to be decreased, such as we have been doing in the TWAG Sunday Liturgy. A goal of no more than 40 minutes **decreases the time of personal enclosure.**
9. **Singing is discouraged and abandoned at this time.** **However**, we had serious discussion on this; about how important music is in Worship. For the time being, it is our recommendation to have only the Organ/Piano music: with Prelude, 2-3 Hymns and Postlude. On the Hymns the options are--record the Hymn(s) (not all verses) with Soloist then play it through the Sound System; or have one hymn that is played while congregants reflect on it prayerfully. We are comfortable with The Director of Music deciding how this will work.
10. There is **NO passing of the Peace**. It is a verbal exchange between Pastor/Worship Leader and Congregation.
11. **The Offering plate will be placed at the entrance of the nave** for in-house offering. Following Worship, the Altar Guild Server will, with gloves, remove the plate to the Office. (They may choose to move the offering to a basket for this purpose) **We encourage online giving through Simply Giving so that envelopes and money do not pass through the hands of the Counters.** The Offering Plate will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after Service. **Gloves** will need to be provided in the Office for the Counters.
12. Before, During and After Worship, **Ushers serve as Monitors** to assure worshipers that the requirements and regulations are being adhered to. This also gives confidence to congregants.
13. The Fellowship Hall will be off limits (except for meetings). Only the absolute necessary opening of space is the goal. The fewer Restrooms used, the better. Signs should be posted saying, CLOSED.
14. For the time being, any form of Coffee Fellowship will need to take place outside, with masks and distancing factors.

**Please Note: That at this time these requirements and precautions are just for Grace Lutheran Membership for Worship. It is NOT recommended at this time that our Outside Groups be allowed to use the facilities, until we, ourselves have become secure in our**

procedures. Further advice and direction is needed from the Bishop's Office, and others in cooperative ministries who can give guidance. We put these groups at risk. These groups put us at risk. Neither situation is desirable.

### The New Order for Worship

Some items have been addressed above.

Since the Bishop has directed **shorter duration for Worship Services**, it is up to the Pastor and Director of Music to determine the Ordo--Liturgy for Worship. (A goal of 30-40 minutes is desired.) When there is a Worship Life Committee, they too will have input as to the shape of the Worship Service.

As Liturgical Seasons change and Festivals arise, there may be changes in the length and order of Worship, worked out through the Pastor and the Director of Music, in consultation with the Head of the Altar Guild.

Without the use of Hymnals, a full order of Worship will be printed in the **bulletin**, noting permissions for print and music. A safe distribution method has been worked out through the Church Office.

The Subcommittee did have a discussion on projecting the full Service on the large wall behind the Lectern, so NO bulletins would be needed; or using a screen. Pastor said, "We'll let your new Pastor decide on that."

**The Bishop is recommending Holy Communion in one Form (wafer) as the safest. But he also said to not rush into the Sacrament until the Congregation has become familiar with the new spacing and form of Worship.**

### THE PLAN FOR RE-OPENING GRACE FOR WORSHIP

1. Requirements approved and accepted by Council
2. Give Congregation 7-10 Days' notice of Return to Worship through TWAG, 1<sup>st</sup> class mail, or by Shepherd's phone contact. Council will decide what is the best means of communicating Re-Opening. Whereas, "as soon as possible" is desired, more time may be needed to implement all of the requirements.
3. **Meet with Cleaning Team** to be sure we are on the same page for what needs to be done; both Before and After Worship
  - a. **Have available:** masks, hand sanitizer/wipes, **and** gloves for Servers
  - b. **Signs will be placed on the doors advising people of Masks, distancing, etc...**
  - c. **Lysol or similar disinfectant spray**
  - d. **Hand sanitizer and wipes have been present since March 14**
4. First Sunday: 3-5 days before, meeting of Pastor, Worship Assistant, all Servers including Altar Guild to go over the before and after requirements. Instruct all Servers to arrive 45 min before Service to assure everything is in place. Check "X's" for distance placement, in pews and on carpet.
5. **Usher(s) will monitor** at the door to ask if Worshipers are feeling well, have any symptoms, temperature; be prepared to ask them to leave. Ushers will remind those entering for Worship to follow the directions for distancing, especially.

6. Ushers will make sure all the doors are open for air flow, weather permitting during Worship, and monitor congregation for masks and distancing.
7. Following Worship Ushers will make sure Worshipers take their bulletins with them. (They may deposit them in a recycle bin at the doors) Remind people of distancing as they leave. Ushers will do pew checks to make sure all has been picked up; for which they should wear gloves. **It is recommended that Ushers seat and dismiss Worshipers, so that distancing can be maintained (as done at Funerals and Weddings)**.
8. Following Worship for the first 2-3 weeks, the Pastor, Director of Music, Ushers, Altar Guild, and Exec Committee will meet briefly to evaluate how things went and what needs to be changed.
9. At the next closest regular Council meeting, a general evaluation of the Services held so far, with recommendations, will be shared. Ahead of this, Shepherds are asked to get input from their flocks. Flocks must be reassured but also be made aware that we are in a New Situation over which we have no control of some elements.
10. After a month to two months of Worship, discussion on introducing Holy Communion begins as stated above.
11. A Date will be chosen to begin the celebration of Holy Communion on a regular weekly basis. The Pastor, Director of Music, Altar Guild Chair, the Subcommittee will monitor and as necessary make changes in the procedure of distribution.
12. ***When it is necessary to shut down due to crisis or emergency such as covid19, that is also a witness to our neighbors as to the seriousness of the current situation***.
13. After a period of 2--3 months, **discussions on Outside Groups'** procedure will begin.
  - a. It is our recommendation that once these regulations and requirements are adopted, that another subcommittee begin to work on what the shape of ministry concerning Outside Groups will look like. Having said that,
  - b. any Outside Group using any of our facilities will need to abide by the adopted regulations and requirements. (That includes the duration of Worship.) They MUST. It could 'cost' Grace Lutheran its insurance if requirements are not met.
  - c. Further, it is our recommendation that the subcommittee seek guidance from the Synod, or other Non-Profits who have similar sharing of space situations.
  - d. Seeking support documentation on Agreements for use of space as rental/donation, is advised. Again, the Insurance Company may be sought out for advice and approval.
  - e. When all documentation is set, the subcommittee on Outside Groups will present the plan to the full Council for approval. Then a date can be set for implementation.
  - f. It is up to the Executive Committee to meet with the leaders of the Groups, present documentation with expectations and have each Group sign an agreement promising to fulfill all requirements.
  - g. **Some form of monitoring will need to be in place to make sure that the Groups are following the agreement. This is not a head nod or word of mouth type of monitoring. It requires presence. It may be necessary to hire someone to monitor the Outside Groups to make sure they are in compliance and that they also follow the cleaning and disinfecting of the spaces used.** The Subcommittee could not see Grace members volunteering for monitoring AA (M-F), or either Latino Congregation (M-F evenings). But this is a reality which must be addressed.
14. **At least every 3 months** Pastor, Director of Music, the Subcommittee and the Executive Committee will review Worship to that point.

**The Following is For Discussion: without Subcommittee recommendation.**

- 15. The Synod of Alberta and Territories** recommends a Worship/Space usage Check-off list for safety and keeping track; both in preparing for Worship and then following Worship. **Council found this idea to be helpful.**
- 16.** Still under discussion is how to alert people of when someone in the congregation becomes ill (specifically with the signs of or actual Covid19), who has attended Worship. The **means** of notification, protecting privacy, is still under discussion. For Instance: *One local church is having people sign in each week as they enter.* **If you have not been feeling well for whatever reason, DO NOT COME TO GRACE CHURCH FOR WORSHIP.**
- a. After discussion with other churches, it seems expedient and easiest to have worshipers sign in when then they enter the church.**
  - b. Each week a new Sign In Form with Date and general attendance will be kept.**
  - c. The Completed forms will go into a Notebook in the Church Office.**