



August 4, 2020

Preparing for Re-entry to the Sanctuary: An Overview of What's in This Document

The following document serves as a member and congregation guide for re-starting in-person worship within the Church walls at Grace Baptist Church at our 17 West Ave location. This document is not intended to be a final printing but rather an evolving work in process as we continue to monitor Federal, State, and City guidance related to Covid-19, its prevention and treatment.

As God's people, we ask that you read, understand and help enforce the guidelines put forth below. Our compliance to the standards below is not only required by the CDC, but also is our duty as disciples as we carry out Christ's greatest commandment: to love one another.

In **Section I** of this document, you will read a summary of how the Reopening Committee approached its task and how it is managing the ongoing sanitizing and disinfecting of Ministry areas within the church as well as the processes by which Grace serves its many members.

In **Section II**, you will also read the CDC's guidance as it relates to entering the church building and engaging with other members before, during and after service. Guidance includes social distancing rules as well as requirements regarding the use of masks, gloves and how we will enforce temperature checks prior to members entering the building.

Finally, the document, while comprehensive, is not exhaustive. To

that end, **Section III's FAQs** below will attempt to address the many questions regarding attending church and how the various church ministries will interact until further notice based on state and federal guidelines.

Also, the document will include a list of **helpful links to CDC resources** the Reopening Committee will continue to use which reflect the latest thinking by Federal and State medical officials specifically addressing the needs of Houses of Worship.

In short, we recognize our church and worship experience will look and feel a bit different in the coming weeks and months. However, what has not changed is the presence of the Lord in our midst and Grace's personifying our Lord's "Sweet Sweet Spirit" in any worship experience we are assigned to undertake. Despite Covid, our new worship experience *still* focuses on giving our God the glory and praise He deserves.

We invite your comments and concerns and ask that you share them with any committee member listed below. Again, please read this document with intent and a spirit of compliance and help us all safely lift up the name of the Lord. We welcome you back to the Sanctuary at Grace and look forward to providing updates as needed.

While we call it a "reopening," Pastor reminds us that Grace has never closed its doors. We continue to effectively minister as often as possible each week to best hear what the Lord has assigned to our Under Shepherd. Your Reopening Committee consists of:

- Pastor Lindsay Curtis
- Trustee Lunda Asmani
- Dea. Hugh Burke
- Trustee Charles Burns
- Sis. Nadine Campbell
- Dea. Jesse George
- Dea. Ian Hardman
- Sis. Sharon Maxwell
- Trustee Keith Williams

General Guidance on How To Safely Re-enter the GBC Sanctuary:

Under the leadership of our Pastor, Rev. Lindsay Curtis, we have prayerfully considered dates for possibly re-entering the Church Sanctuary. We are preparing to re-enter the building for worship on August 9, 2020 pending a weekly review of CT Covid-related infections, hospitalizations and deaths over a rolling 7-day period as recommended by the CDC. While it is our desire to have everyone join us for the worship experience, we fully expect members and friends to only attend based on their individual comfort level regarding risk of infection and, of course, their ability to adhere to all the guidelines put forth below.

Out of an abundance of caution, before entering the building, we will require your compliance with:

- Temperature checks
- Social distance seating and rules of engagement with others
- Mask use
- Glove use
- Sanitizer use
- No children under 6 years of age in attendance
- Selected church offices, rooms and lower level access closures
- All CDC rules around disclosing symptoms and quarantine
- Finally, placards, signs, posters and instructions on room use and “traffic flow” to limit close contact between members at all times

As always, our overarching policy is one of brotherly/sisterly care for our neighbor—in particular, concern for our senior members. To that end, if you don’t feel comfortable or are not medically/physically able to comply with the above, we kindly encourage you to stay home and continue to engage with Grace Ministries via our Facebook Live broadcasts, Adult Sunday School audio classes, Zoom conference calls for Youth Hour and of course, Facebook Live Bible Study classes.

Section I.

Actions to Date to Prevent Covid-19 Transmission:

We continue to diligently work on your behalf to ensure the building and church grounds pose a limited risk of infection or transmission of the virus. While there are no guarantees, we also realize it is incumbent upon all members and friends who enter the building to remain vigilant in its compliance of CDC rules and guidelines if we are to limit the chances for a virus to spread. The work below has been completed however there are ongoing sanitization efforts performed daily/weekly or as needed to minimize risk in the Sanctuary, common areas and selected rooms within the church.

Summary of Work By Ministry Area:

Sanctuary:

- For both the balcony and main levels, pews, Holy Communion holders, Bibles and hymnals have been sanitized and properly disinfected (shared use of Bibles and hymnals will not be available). The pulpit seating area as well as lecterns have been cleaned and sanitized as well. Common use items such as microphones, A/V equipment, floors, door handles, communion, baskets, offering trays, etc. have been cleaned and sanitized per CDC guidelines.
- Church Bulletins will not be printed or distributed per CDC guidelines.

Church Lower Level including Chapel, Fellowship Hall and Classrooms:

- All tables, chairs, pews (Chapel), classrooms and supply areas have been sanitized and disinfected per CDC guidelines. Out of an abundance of caution, the entire Lower level will remain closed until further notice.

Kitchen and Pantry Storage:

- Kitchen and storage areas have been sanitized and disinfected per CDC guidelines. Again, after prayerful consideration, the Kitchen and pantry areas will remain closed until further notice.

Bathrooms:

- There has been and will be ongoing cleaning and sanitizing multiple times during the week as well as before, during, and after Sunday services. The same applies to Lower Level bathrooms however, to minimize risk to our congregants, lower level bathrooms are off limits unless medically necessary.

Church Offices, Church Library and Meeting Rooms:

- All Church offices and meeting rooms to include surface areas, storage, carpets (where applicable) have been sanitized and disinfected per CDC guidelines.

Section II.

Preparing for Re-entry-- Expectations Before, During & After Sunday Services:

Immediately Before Morning Service:

To reiterate, we expect all members and friends on Church grounds or entering the building to consent and accept the terms of participation in worship.

As highlighted above, the Sanctuary as well as any publicly available meeting rooms/offices within the Church will be re-sanitized and disinfected for our members' protection.

Under no circumstance, should you feel compelled to worship in person and take on risks that make you feel uncomfortable or expose others to greater risk. As a loving reminder, we reiterate that you refrain from participating in the in-person worship experience in the GBC Sanctuary if you:

- Exhibit covid-19 or any flu-related symptoms, have a cold, elevated temperature (equal or greater than 100° F), experience coughing, sneezing or have recently had any of the symptoms listed above.
- Have recently received a positive Covid-19 test or possibly been exposed within the last ten (10) days.
- Have been in close contact (within 6') with someone who has

Covid-19.

- Have traveled and have returned to/from a state or country designated by the State of CT as a potential risk and requires quarantine per state guidelines.
<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/travel>
- Have difficulty breathing for the duration of the service with a CDC approved face covering or N95 mask.
- Have medical conditions that increase the risk of transmission or increase *your* risk of contracting the virus.
- Have a child less than 6 years of age and are required to have them in your care during Morning Service.
- Are not willing to accept temperature checks prior to entering Grace Baptist Church. Temperature checks will be managed by GBC's Nursing and Usher Ministry.
- Are not willing to sit at least 6' between attendees per CDC guidelines for Houses of Worship. Members of the same household may sit more closely together if desired. Also, it is possible that your previous seat location pre-pandemic will not be available based on availability of Committee approved seats and the need to space members out.
- Are not willing to adhere to signs and placards enforcing traffic flow, entry and exit as well as room use including bathrooms.

During Service:

- Where practical, the GBC Reopening Committee and other Church officers, will help to enforce all CDC guidelines and recommendations. In adjusting to our new normal, it's likely we will all need a reminder of the CDC guidelines from time to time to best manage our risk against infection. We ask that you kindly receive these reminders not as a personal attack but as a gentle nudge for us to properly care one for another!
- To prevent transmission of the virus during service, Church officers will help manage the flow of foot traffic to and from restrooms on the main level of the Sanctuary.
- Restroom use will be limited to 3 persons at any one time.
- Church Officers will sanitize and disinfect as much as practical during service as it relates to A/V and musical equipment.
- The Balcony will be open for seating during morning service

- however we ask that you kindly fill in the main level seats first.
- Sanitizer stations will be available for use.
 - Water fountains and other communal areas will have signs prohibiting use until further notice.
 - Use of the Church offices, Classrooms, Library and the Choir Room will be suspended until further notice.
 - Use of the Chapel, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen and Pantry areas will be suspended until further notice.
 - At our Pastor's request and in accordance with CDC guidelines, in-person ceremonies of Baptism, Right Hand of Fellowship, funerals, weddings and baby dedications are suspended until further notice. Holy Communion will take place on First Sunday via a contactless format in the Sanctuary. Members may still participate in Holy Communion virtually as we have managed to effectively do so since March.

After Service:

- It is our hope and expectation that we will be spirit-filled at the conclusion of each Sunday's service. However, it is imperative that all congregants exit the building as soon as possible to minimize the risk of infection.
- For any GBC Ministry meetings, we ask that you continue to conduct the Lord's work by phone, email and zoom as you have been effectively doing so since March. Again, certain Ministry meeting rooms and areas are closed for the protection of all congregants.
- Prior to each Sunday service and post services, church van use will be suspended until further notice.
- CDC guidelines currently recommend against neighboring church visitations, dinners, banquets, celebrations, retreats, and programs until further notice. Where possible, we ask you to continue your specific ministry's effectiveness using all technologies available to us.

Section III.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

When will GBC reopen?

- Our target date for re-entering the Sanctuary is August 9, 2020.

What should I do if “I’m not feeling up to it” or have cold or flu symptoms? Also, suppose I’m “just getting over a cold...”

- Kindly stay home! We ask that you engage with the Ministry via Facebook Live or GBC’s other points of distribution for the Word of God.

Is it Safe to re-enter; shouldn’t we wait until the pandemic is over?

- The Committee is doing everything possible to minimize risk to our members. Our charter and commitment has been to *safely* open the building based on changing CDC guidelines. That said, it remains an individual decision to join in-person worship when you feel completely physically and emotionally comfortable, not before.

Will the entire church be open or just certain rooms?

- Only the Sanctuary, main floor access and bathrooms will be open. By joining in-person worship inside GBC’s walls, you are consenting to reading, understanding and complying with the signs and placards marking approved seating areas, foot traffic flow, and off limits areas.
- Building entry will be from the rear parking lot and narthex only until further notice. We recognize this may pose challenges for our disabled members; we ask that you allow more time for exiting your car and receiving assistance from Ushers and other helpers at the rear doors.
- Within the Sanctuary, the balcony level will be open (and social distance compliant). There is restricted use only for the choir lofts, Sacristy, Baptismal areas and Prayer Room.
- Member use of the Church during the week must be cleared with the Reopening Committee 1 week prior or more so we can ensure proper disinfecting per CDC guidelines.

What about bathroom use? What are my responsibilities if I need to go?

- We ask that you use the bathrooms on the main floor only. The lower level bathrooms may only be used in case of emergency or medical necessity. If the downstairs bathrooms must be used, we ask that you let an usher or Trustee know so we can make arrangements to disinfect pre/post your use.
- While bathrooms may be used by more than one person at a time, social distancing is required. No more than 3 persons should be in a lavatory at any one time. We kindly ask that before entering, you knock or check if the total number of people using the bathroom will exceed 3 people. If so, please do not enter.
- Once an individual uses the bathroom, we ask that you use a cleaning/disinfecting wipe available in each bathroom to wipe down the surface areas used including the seat, handles, etc. This one act of kindness ensures others who come behind you do not come in contact with your germs leading to possible transmission of the virus.
- Once a cleaning/disinfecting wipe(s) is used in the bathroom, please dispose of it in the trash receptacle. It is imperative you do not flush the cleaning/disinfecting wipes in the toilet.

I have a medical condition; will I still have to wear a mask indoors? Does a face shield work just as well?

- If you have a medical condition preventing your proper mask use 100% of the time while in the building, we advise you to stay home.
- Wearing a face shield only is not acceptable as Covid-19 is an aerosolized virus that suspends particles in the air. To date, only a CDC approved mask or face covering minimizes the transmission of these droplets.
- However, a face shield or goggles may be worn with a face covering or mask to reduce possible transmission to the eyes.

Suppose someone coughs or sneezes—should I alert someone, ask him or her to leave or give ‘em the “evil eye?”

- There’s no need for you to give the evil eye or break out your pepper spray. Most people, with masks and face coverings worn properly, will dramatically reduce the number of airborne particles or droplets transmitted. If you have a coughing spell, feel free to exit to the main floor rest room or outside the building for fresh air or a drink of bottled water which you may bring with you.
- Of course, if you witness a medical emergency, please alert an usher or nurse on duty for assistance.

Who’s taking temperatures, handing out masks, etc.?

- Prior to members entering the premises, the GBC Nurses Unit and Usher Ministry will provide temperature checks and hand out masks, gloves or sanitizer if needed.
- Congregants displaying a temperature of 100° F or higher will not be allowed to enter the building.

Can I park in the garage?

- Yes. However, do remain vigilant about meetups and social distancing in the garage when people arrive at the same time.

Can I “borrow” something from the kitchen, pantry or the fellowship hall and bring it back later?

- No. For the protection of all members and the ongoing need to disinfect per CDC guidelines, use of the Kitchen, Fellowship Hall and pantry areas are suspended until further notice.
- Under no circumstances should members remove any items (furniture, food, utensils, etc.) from the Church as all items have been sanitized and returned items could contaminate other items still in the Church.

What about accepting Christ...Can I do that? If so, can I be baptized during the pandemic?

- By all means—YES! If you know anyone who feels Christ tugging at their heart for a change, please prayerfully encourage them to reach out to Pastor or any Deacon. If

Pastor or a Deacon isn't available, please pray with them; anyone can be a conduit to Christ! We all see the immediate need of prayer and hope especially during this time of uncertainty.

- Pastor or a Deacon will contact them and prayerfully work through next steps and timing per CDC guidelines.

How are funerals handled?

- At the recommendation of CDC guidelines regarding services and gatherings, funeral services held in the sanctuary will be suspended or modified to limit use on a case-by-case basis as the CDC guidelines change.

How will The Lord's Supper be handled on First Sundays?

- At the recommendation of the CDC guidelines for houses of worship, Holy Communion will be held in a "contactless" form.
- On first Sundays, Communion cups will be placed in the front narthex lobby on a table for each congregant to retrieve prior to entering the Sanctuary.

How are Offerings handled?

- Other than your giving completed online, we ask that all offerings and giving be completed via baskets in the front narthex prior to entering the Sanctuary.
- No offering plates or Holy Communion trays will be distributed during service.

Where are the Church Bulletins, Bibles and Hymnals?

- Per CDC guidelines for Houses of Worship, there will be no communal or shared documents during services. Hymns, Bible verses and announcements will be shown on the Sanctuary A/V screens. Hymnals and Bibles will return to the Sanctuary when approved by the State however, we encourage everyone to bring their personal Bible or favorite Bible phone or tablet app if they choose.
- If you do bring a Bible (or other personal items), we ask that you remove them upon leaving the Sanctuary.

Will the Sanctuary and building be sanitized and disinfected between services and weekly use of the church?

- Yes. Our devoted sexton, Trustees, Committee members as well as outsourced service providers will clean and disinfect weekly per CDC guidelines.

Will there be other Ministries such as Choirs, Dance, Youth Hour, etc. involved during Sunday Services? What about practice times for Choir, Dance ministries, Sunday School, etc. between services?

- Ministries will not participate in Sunday Services at this time. CDC guidelines have reinforced that all churches stay in a “worship only” model for the next several months which prohibits choirs, dance or other ministries that will have difficulty remaining social distance compliant.
- Practices and virtual gatherings—especially for our young people and those technologically enabled, are encouraged via Zoom video calls or Facebook Live.

Will the GBC Church van be in service during the pandemic?

- No. The van or GBC driver(s) will not be available. Please only consider CDC recommended travel options where you can remain social distance and guidelines compliant.

Whom should I reach out to for GBC re-entry questions or concerns?

- The Reopening Committee maintains a working email account for anyone to send questions or comments impacting the safety of GBC’s members. The email box is monitored daily and you should normally expect a response within 24-48 hours. To leave a question or comment, please go to the “Contact Us” portion of the GBC Website:

<https://www.gbcsoulpurpose.org/contact-us>

Helpful Links to CDC Resources:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery/Guidelines-for-Houses-of-Worship_FINAL.pdf

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>