



November 14, 2021

Grace Family,

Good day to you all. This letter is an update from Grace's Council, to share our plan as we continue to make space for people to be church together. Transmission of the virus is less widespread than it has been for much of the fall, and we are rejoicing that the present situation - while not resolved - is considerably better.

As of today, Grace will not be requiring all people who enter the building to wear a mask while they are indoors. This decision was made in consideration of local rates of hospital occupancy due to the virus, new cases of the virus, and the percentage of positive test results, as well as the recommendation from Grace's Health and Wellness Committee.

This decision is an informed response to the current realities of the pandemic in our area. This step is reasonable *today*, but please be aware things could change in the future if the situation worsens. We hope and pray that we will not need to return to the kind of precautionary measures taken earlier in this pandemic, but we will continue to discern what kind of response makes us faithful stewards of holistic health - body and spirit alike.

As we move forward together, our approach will continue to feel slow for some, and fast for others; this has been true from the earliest days of the pandemic. We trust that members of Grace will continue to embody the principle of our namesake: we will continue to show grace to one another. Some of us will continue to wear masks in worship - the pastors will continue to be masked, particularly when presiding at Communion. Others will only wear masks when singing. Still others of us will begin to participate without a mask. What matters most amid this variety of choices is not uniform practice, but commitment to our shared purpose. Our purpose is to extend grace to one another, continuing to welcome, nurture, equip, and send for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your support of this ministry, including all your prayers for faithful discernment in this time. If you would like to discuss this decision further, or your individual discernment about how best to participate at Grace in this time, please reach out; Pastor Rachel and I would be happy to have that conversation.

Peace in Christ,

Pastor Gregg Hoffman

## **Returning with Grace (Updated)**

Starting on November 14:

1. Worship services will continue to be accessible online. We continue to improve this experience, valuing the feedback we receive.
2. Masks are not currently required in the building, but will remain optional.
3. Worship services in the Sanctuary will continue to include hymns and liturgy, sung by all.
4. We continue to ask all who join us for worship to complete a Tear and Share for attendance/contact.
5. Communion will continue to be distributed in the Sanctuary during the worship service.
6. Social distancing is not required in the Sanctuary, though it is still encouraged, where possible.
7. Those who attend worship in-person may continue to gather in the Fellowship Hall following worship services.
8. Indoor Sunday School for children under the age of 12 is a goal for the new year.
9. Adult Sunday School (Confirmation-aged Youth and older) will continue to meet indoors.
10. Committees may meet indoors, provided that all meetings are scheduled with the Church Office beforehand.
  - Committees are responsible for making it possible for members to attend in-person meetings via Zoom if some members do not feel comfortable attending meetings in-person (pastors will help facilitate this).
11. Outreach programs that take place indoors can continue, provided that the necessary volunteers communicate their willingness to participate in-person in advance of any dates being scheduled.
12. Outside groups may meet indoors, following Grace's protocols, and will assume responsibility for contact tracing, as well as responsibility for informing the church office if one of their members has tested positive for the virus. All coordination and decisions regarding outside groups continue to be made by Grace's staff.
13. Council will continue to evaluate these measures, and make determinations regarding future alterations.