

Dear Members and Friends of Grove Presbyterian Church,

I've heard a few people ask the question: "When are we getting back to Church?" Our President has asked that Churches be looked at as essential parts of the community, and we'll be moving to the "Green Phase" next Friday. First of all, I want to share the thoughts of our Executive Presbyter, Steve Cureton, with you:

*With the president ordering that all churches reopen, some of you may be confused about what that means. He is requesting that governors allow places of worship to be on the essential business list. **Please be aware that in Pennsylvania churches were always on the essential business list.***

It is still up to the session of your church to decide when you will return to worship in your sanctuaries. No one can order when, where, and how you have public worship. It is your decision.

What changes in Pennsylvania regarding Churches? Nothing really, we have always been labeled essential businesses and have always had the ability to function as any other essential business does. Throughout the last two and a half months, we've worked to comply with all state mandated regulations to make sure that we all remain safe. The staff have been working from home. We've limited the number of people in the sanctuary. We have not had any cases of Covid-19 that can be traced back to Grove.

I want to echo the statement I've heard from many pastors: the Church never closed. This week is ascension week and I've seen a meme going around on Facebook that says, "ascension is when Jesus began working from home." I thought it was humorous, but also insightful: even though Christ is not present with us, he still cares for us, still prays for us, and still looks over us. Church has always been essential, and it has never stopped functioning. The Church building is a gathering place that has seen limited use over the last few months, but the people of God have been very active. We've been diligent to reach out to our congregation members in as many ways as we can. I've seen people reach out to one another on a daily basis. We continue meeting together and doing committee work. We continue our work in mission with things like the Ronald McDonald house. People are giving generously to help pay for our essential functions and staff. Lynne has continued children's choir, Sunday School, and Kindermusik to connect the children. Many people have participated in leading worship either from their homes or pre-recorded from the Church. We have learned how necessary it is to provide worship for people outside of the sanctuary. Many of our homebound Church members have noted that they feel more connected than ever because of our online worship.

I've been very proud to see how Grove has responded in this crisis. I'm glad that God has called me here, as it is said in the book of Ester, "for Such a Time as This." I can see God at work in many ways through everything that has happened, and I think in the years to come there will be much to learn from this event.

I want to assure you that, going forward, we have a plan for how to safely begin to transition back to worship in the Church. This plan is outlined in the *Phases to Re-Entry* document [See following pages]. Phase 1 of reopening the Church building for worship begins this weekend. We're going to livestream worship this week with less than 12 people in the physical Church. That means that, at 10:15 on Sunday morning, we'll be broadcasting Church live on Facebook. There are many precautions we're going to take. Traffic will move in the same direction. Hand sanitizer will be used. We will practice social distancing. All of this is being done in the name of safety, and not fear. In the coming weeks, as we learn our new live streaming technology, we plan to introduce more people into the congregation. We hope to soon begin to invite families of people who are participating in worship. This will allow us to introduce more people to the congregation slowly. We will be keeping track of everyone who has been in the building and if someone tests positive for Covid-19 we'll take a step back from live worship and make sure everyone is informed.

With all this being said, session has made the decision to limit congregational usage to livestreaming through at least the end of June. This gives us a chance to learn the new technology and properly establish our safety protocol. We want to take things slow so that we're diligent in following Jesus' command to care for "the least of these." If you have any questions, please contact me. God Bless you, and I pray that we can safely see one another soon.

Pastor Jason Email: pastor@grovepres.org Phone: 570-441-9550

Phases to Re-Entry at Grove Presbyterian Church

Phase 1: Movement to Live Streaming Worship

Step 1: Meeting of Jason, Joy, Lynne and Scott on Thursday, May 21, 2020.

- Label participant spots.
- Setup pathways for traffic—entrance at courtyard and exit sanctuary doors—tape will make this path
- Setup sanitizer, mic covers and extra masks (Scott says that there are enough mics and that they can be sanitized so covers are not needed.)
- Participants lined up and parameters explained.
- Hi-risk individuals will not be asked to be lay readers or worship participants.
- Position cameras and mics.
- One person unlocks doors and turns on lights and gloved hands are used.
- All Bibles, hymnals, and Grove Sings Praises removed from nave of the church but left in the choir loft.
- No one allowed in balcony except for Scott.
- Start cleaning list for Sandy.

Step 2: First live stream of worship on May 24, 2020 – Services will be kept at a max of 45-min for now.

- Only people present in sanctuary: pastor, organist, lay reader, children's sermon person, recorder, 2 musicians, one runner.
- Participants must not bring other family members.
- Participants must only be present in sanctuary, fellowship hall, and upper bathroom areas.
- Participants must use masks (except when actually speaking), use hand-sanitizer, remain 6 ft apart.
- Participants will have designated sitting and standing places.
- No congregational singing. Use of cantor instead.
- Continue safety precautions setup in Step 1.
- Start taking attendance so can track exposure.
- Put signage on all doors to the effect "If you are sick or showing symptoms please refrain from entering building."
- Purchase touchless thermometer.

Step 3: Jason, Joy, Lynne and Scott will evaluate how it went and make adjustments.

Step 4: Live Streaming will continue in this manner with evaluation adjustments until Phase 2

Notes: Within this Phase 1 no more than 12 people will be in the sanctuary at a time.

Should a child be a worship participant, he/she is accompanied by one parent, no family members.

Sandy Lewis cleans and sanitizes following each time the sanctuary is used. This does not have to be immediately following the service. It could be 72 hours after giving germs time to die/settle before she goes in.

Should Jason, Joy, Scott, Lynne be diagnosed positive for COVID19 before May 24th, then we go back to pre-recording the service.

Practices (traffic flow, etc.) are being established and followed at this phase and will continue into Phase 2 in order to start the education process and have more leaders knowing the procedures who then can teach and guide as others enter.

Phase 2: Movement to Congregational Worship

Step 1: Beginning date determined by government regulations and Session, most likely not before July.

Step 2: Once the starting date is determined.

- An email will be sent to the entire congregation urging those who are at high risk to continue to view the service through live stream, informing those who attend need to have a face mask, hand sanitizer and follow traffic pathways.
- Attendance limited to 25.
- Sanctuary will be mapped out defining 6 ft. distances and closed pews.
- Attendance might be grouped by family units.
- Might consider taking reservations or assigning families certain Sunday to attend
- Consider taking temperatures of participants and asking those key questions re: symptoms.
- There will be no fellowship hour.
- There will be no child care.
- There will be no congregational singing. Instead continued use of cantor.
- Worshippers will use the traffic pathways established in Phase 1.
- Worshipers encouraged to bring own gloves, mask, sanitizer and bulletin. Hand-sanitizer and face masks will continue to be available for those in need.
- Children need to be with an adult at all times. Children stay with parents during the children's sermon.
- No worship bags used.
- Participants will be encouraged to access bulletin on phones. (?)
- Certain pews will be roped off to maintain social distancing.
- There will be no physical passing of the peace.
- Doors propped open in nice weather or one person holds door eliminating door handling.
- Bulletins need to be emailed to congregation by Thursday so people have time to print on own.
- Front sanctuary doors locked and used for exit only.

Notes: If at anytime during this phase, some attendee tests positive for COVID19, we will move back to pre-recorded worship.

Advertisement in newspaper remains the same as currently is (join online) since we can not accommodate visitors at this time.

Phase 3: Movement to less Restrictive Worship

Step 1: Beginning date determined by government guidelines, Session and the effectiveness of Phases 1 and 2. But most likely not before August.

Step 2: Childcare providers prepare nursery by cleaning, sanitizing and making certain appropriate cleaning materials are available.

All children required to wash hands/sanitize hands before entering room.

Adults in the room will wear masks.

Step 3: Continued use of masks and sanitizer. Continued cleaning sanctuary following use

Step 4: Possible use of Fellowship Hall as added service space.

Phase 4: Unrestricted Worship

Step 1: Date chosen dependent upon the governmental guidelines, Session and COVID19 curve. Who knows when this will be.

Step 2: Fellowship Hour resumes

Extra Notes:

- Joy has purchased 2 boxes of masks. Dave reports there is a supply of hand-sanitizer. Lynne has purchased 2 gal for child use when needed. This product might be sprayable.
- Stephanie Cooney has a supplier we can tap into if there is a need.
- Dave will do traffic pathways, checklist for Sandy and move hymnals, etc.