

On May 29, Illinois will enter Phase 3 of the Governor’s COVID-19 Pandemic response. The state has offered specific guidelines for implementing each of the phases described in the table below for several segments of society. There are substantial restrictions that continue in the “Recovery Phase”, but businesses are allowed to reopen; good news for those needing to return to work.

Faith communities were not given specific guidelines to follow. The Catholic Church requested a set of guidelines for reopening based on that church’s needs, and the Illinois Department of Public Health worked with them to develop one. Our needs as a church are not quite the same, but their guidelines do give us some direction. With these in hand, along with rules from the Center for Disease Control, several United Methodist Annual Conferences around the country, and our own Northern Illinois bishop and cabinet, we have developed guidelines for Grace UMC that we believe will allow some activity of the church to return while doing our best to keep people safe.

Grace Church has been "all about relationship", but new guidelines for in-person gatherings restrict the practice of fellowship, making in-person meetings difficult and not always the best choice for us as we enter this "Recovery Phase". We are doing what we can to integrate the best science available with the values we hold, as we sift through the information to find that which applies during this time. When in doubt, we will err on the side of safety. The church has never been "closed", but is finding new and creative ways to worship and serve. We long for the days when we will worship together again in-person.

Phase 1 Rapid Spread	Phase 2 Flattening	Phase 3 Recovery	Phase 4 Revitalization	Phase 5 Illinois Restored
<p>Strict stay at home and social distancing guidelines are put in place, and only essential businesses remain open.</p> <p>Every region has experienced this phase once already and could return to it if mitigation efforts are unsuccessful.</p>	<p>Non-essential retail stores reopen for curb-side pickup and delivery.</p> <p>Illinoisans are directed to wear a face covering when outside the home and can begin enjoying additional outdoor activities like golf, boating & fishing while practicing social distancing.</p>	<p>Manufacturing, offices, retail, barbershops, and salons can reopen to the public with capacity and other limits and safety precautions.</p> <p>Gatherings of 10 people or fewer are allowed.</p> <p>Face coverings and social distancing are the norm.</p>	<p>Gatherings of 50 people or fewer are allowed, restaurants and bars reopen, travel resumes, child care and schools reopen under guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health.</p> <p>Face coverings and social distancing are the norm.</p>	<p>The economy fully reopens with safety precautions continuing.</p> <p>Conventions, festivals and large events are permitted, and all businesses, schools and places of recreation can open with new safety guidance and procedures.</p>

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP MEETINGS AT GRACE

1. GROUPS & CLASSES CONTINUE TO MEET ONLINE – THE BUILDING REMAINS CLOSED.

We continue to ask groups to meet virtually as they have been doing. The building will remain closed except for vital administrative functions that cannot be performed off site. If you are part of a group that has not been meeting online and would like to do so, or if you are not part of a group and would like to be, please contact Pastor Daniel for assistance at daniel.cochran@peopleofgrace.org.

Phase 3 is much the same as Phase 2 for many. Schools are still closed; stores and restaurants are still under restrictions, and gatherings are still limited to ten or fewer participants.

So, what does this change mean for Grace?

We could, conceivably, open the church building to small groups of 10 or less. But the reality is, we have more to consider than do many other organizations. With a higher percentage of our membership in the most vulnerable category, we have to be especially cautious. We will monitor the impact of easing restrictions in other segments of our community as we determine what is appropriate for Grace.

Barriers to Re-opening the Building for Group Meetings

If we were to open the church now for in-person gatherings of less than 10, the following measures would be necessary. These are **not** currently in place and would be difficult to manage. We would need to:

- provide volunteer hosts to monitor meetings to ensure compliance to requirements such as wearing masks, physical distancing, room usage and number of participants.
- offer face masks for those entering the building.
- have custodial staff in place to insure adequate sanitizing between each meeting. (The NIC is also recommending a 24 hour lapse between the use of each room.)
- limit the number of participants in a group. (Sending people away is not in keeping with our desire for hospitality and would be difficult for many to enforce.)
- turn away those under the age of 18, as retail stores are being asked to do.
- monitor the flow of traffic in the building.
- ensure there is no sharing of food or supplies.

As much as we miss in person gatherings, we cannot allow group meetings in the building until we feel we can manage them safely and provide a welcoming and positive experience.

2. MEETINGS OUTSIDE ON GRACE PROPERTY ARE ALLOWED WITH RESTRICTIONS

Some Grace groups have asked if they might meet in cars in the Grace parking lot or meet together outside, on church property. Outside spaces are said to be safer than enclosed areas, so this might be a good alternative for those wanting to meet in person. This is only possible if participants agree to abide by the guidelines in place for such meetings at Grace.

GUIDELINES FOR MEETING OUTSIDE GRACE:

- Participants must be 18 or older
- Group size is limited to 10
- Participants must wear masks (unless staying in your vehicle.)
- Participants must space themselves at least 6 feet apart on all sides
- Participant must not share food, equipment, supplies.
- There should be no person-to-person contact.
- Outside meetings must be scheduled with the Church Office (630-355-1748) .
- Remember the building is locked; restrooms are not available.

Grace UMC Plan for Use of the Building during COVID-19 Phase 3 Beginning May 29, 2020

IF the guidelines for meeting outside on the church property can be followed, your group may decide to meet outside at Grace. If you cannot be sure everyone in your group will follow these guidelines, or do not feel comfortable enforcing these guidelines, please do not plan to meet outside at Grace. We understand it can be difficult to ‘call out’ a friend who is noncompliant, but to ignore these guidelines is to put the church and its people at risk.

These photos show how a small group meeting on Grace property should look. These persons are wearing masks and distancing themselves for the duration of their meeting. (Masks are not required of those sitting inside cars.) Participants shown here are not sharing food, papers or any other supplies. There is no in-person contact. Participants are all over the age of 18.



If meeting outside of your cars please observe the group size limit (ten or less), wear masks and stay at least six feet apart. Do not plan meetings that include those under the age of 18 and do not share food or supplies.

Photos courtesy of Rev. Melissa Meyers, pastor of Faith United Methodist Church, Freeport, IL



GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

As we enter Phase 3, staff may continue to work from home as they are able. They will continue to meet regularly online. Staff and vital volunteers will have access to the building. Those who choose to come back to the building to work will need to do so in shifts to avoid close contact. Masks and physical distancing are required for staff unless they are alone in their offices. Staff must schedule their visits to the building to ensure proper sanitation measures can be followed.

The office itself will remain locked. Church members requiring access for vital administrative purposes should call the office (630-355-1748) to schedule their time in the building and to receive instructions as to guidelines and room usage. The office is staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday in the summer. Those needing to meet with staff in the building are required to schedule that work with that staff person. Meeting online or via telephone is still recommended.

GUIDELINES FOR WORSHIP

1. WORSHIP WILL CONTINUE ONLINE

We will continue to provide worship online through Phase 3.

The ability to gather in groups of less than ten does not allow for congregational worship as we know it. We can, however, begin recording some of the elements of worship in the building. So, you will begin to see more of the beautiful Grace sanctuary in our online worship in the weeks to come.

2. WORSHIP PREPARATION – For Worship Leaders

We will not be holding worship services in the building under Phase 3. We can, however, allow our worship leaders to prepare elements of worship in the building, keeping within the following parameters:

- **The recording of instrumental music** in the Sanctuary or Activity Center will be limited to string or keyboard players who can adequately distance themselves, and who are wearing masks. Instruments should be properly cleaned after use and mics cannot be shared.
- **The recording of vocal music** in the Sanctuary or Activity Center will be more limited: Scientists are still researching whether singing spreads the Covid-19 virus more widely than other activities. For now, to be safe, we will limit singing to that of one person being recorded for worship. The singer should be the only person in the space.
- **We will continue to encourage individual recordings in homes** and the use of recordings of prior performances as they fit with our worship. We hope everyone worshipping at home sings “lustily and with good courage,” as John Wesley said.
- **The recording of sermons or spoken liturgy** will be allowed with the restriction that only the person being recorded is in the space.

We are grateful for the creativity and skill of our staff in providing for this essential piece of our online worship through technology.

3. OUTDOOR WORSHIP is a Possibility

Outdoor worship may be possible for the future. We are currently working to see how we might use our outdoor space for worship this summer and maintain the safety of everyone involved.

4. WORSHIP IN PHASES 4 AND 5: What does the future hold?

Grace UMC appreciates excellence in worship through word, sacraments and music. We are sadly realizing that it is unlikely we will be able to worship together physically as a congregation in our sanctuary until we reach Phase 5. Even in Phase 4, when we are able to gather in groups of 50, we will have to carefully consider whether the restrictions are such that worship at home would provide a better (and safer) experience. We are exploring such issues as:

- What would it be like to have to register for worship to limit numbers?
- How would we welcome visitors who can't preregister?
- How would we turn away anyone over the limit?
- How would it impact our worship experience to:
 - Wear masks.

Grace UMC Plan for Use of the Building during Covid-19 Phase 3 Beginning May 29, 2020

- Sit in every other pew to maintain the proper physical distance,
- Limit worship to 50 participants and leaders,
- Provide volunteers for up to ten small services each weekend,
- Enter one door and exit another for one-way traffic flow,
- Worship without hymnals, Bibles and printed bulletins,
- Worship without live singing,
- Worship without passing the peace,
- Worship without passing the offering,
- Worship without greeting or fellowship?

These are considerations we wrestle with as we plan to progress beyond Phase 3.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Activities for children and youth will be online until in-person restrictions are lifted.

Grace *Parents' Day Out* program will follow the public school's schedule. Please continue to check the website at peopleofgrace.org for updates and to stay connected. There are many activities to join!

GRACE GARDENING/MAINTENANCE

1. Outdoor gardening and maintenance is allowed as long as spatial distancing guidelines are followed.
2. Indoor maintenance projects sponsored by our Trustees are being allowed following guidelines for wearing masks, proper distancing, group size limit and reporting visits to the office.

NON-GRACE UMC GROUPS

Groups sponsored by organizations other than Grace UMC will not be allowed to meet in the building during Phase 3.

A Note from the Senior Pastor

These guidelines may seem excessive to those who are ready to move forward, to get back to 'normal.' But an outbreak caused by the willful actions of members or guests ignoring the guidelines on Grace property would negatively impact this community of faith for decades to come. Please honor those who have sacrificed their attendance at family weddings, funerals, graduations, those who have missed being at the bedside of a loved one, those who have missed half a school year, or those who have lost four months of employment income. Please be sensitive to others in discerning how you will behave. This will not last forever. Let us err on the side of safety in planning events during this transitional Phase 3 and continue to encourage one another to gather in all the ways we can, until the day when this will all be behind us. God is with us in all the ways we are together, apart. Let us show unity with all who are suffering and alone, for by doing so we honor Christ in our midst.

Stay Calm, Stay Connected, Stay the Course.

Peace in Christ,

Pastor Cindy