

Cross of Grace Church

Safety Team

Guiding Principles

Role and Scope of Safety Team

The church's responsibility in this time of pandemic and increased concern about safety is in some ways unique and in other ways, the same as it has always been. The situation surrounding COVID-19 is unique because of the unique way this virus has reshaped many aspects of life, because of its novelty and limitations in our ability to treat or prevent it, and unique in its danger to those with pre-existing health issues.

However, the church's role has always included the following for its gatherings:

- Providing a safe environment for as many as possible to worship in (e.g. kids ministry sickness guidelines, sanitation of kids ministry, etc.)
- Determining which practices promote hospitality and unity in the church (e.g. visitor packets, coffee and donuts, etc.)
- Setting limits on activities at the church (e.g. giving coffee but restricting it from children)
- Bearing the liability and responsibility for those who come into the church building (e.g. liability insurance, etc.)
- Providing policy guidelines for activities and meetings not occurring on church grounds (e.g. youth trip, CG childcare disclaimer, etc.)

The pattern of the New Testament reflects that elements of the Christian life and worship gathering must be directed by the church in order to promote care for the church as a whole and orderly worship. For example, in Acts 15 in order to promote orderly worship, care, and unity between the Jewish and Gentile parts of the church the Apostles specifically ask the Gentiles to refrain from eating meat with blood in it. This is not a strictly biblical requirement for the Gentiles in the new covenant, but an accommodation meant to allow the church to function together. Or, similarly, in 1 Cor 11 Paul allows for different individuals to bring their own communion elements, but places stipulations on what these elements can be so that the rich do not flaunt their wealth over the poor. The safety team will seek to use biblical principles to provide direction to the church in an effort to lead to orderly worship, care, and unity.

However, it should be noted that many aspects of the Christian life are handled on an individual basis and left to individuals to order on their own. Orderly worship and care does not mean the church organization regulates everything in the lives of its members. For example, Paul leaves it up to individual conscience whether to eat meat offered to idols (1 Cor 10), instead appealing to mutual care for one another in the matter. Men and women decide for themselves whether to marry or not (1 Cor 7). Even on a weighty and serious matter Paul refrains from commanding and prefers to appeal to a brother (Philemon). The scope of the safety team cannot include

every detail of the lives of members and instead is focused on those matters which could lead to disorderly worship or destruction and division within the body.

The Safety Team will be tasked with helping the church fulfill its responsibilities toward safety and care to the unique season of COVID-19. It will do this by applying the general principles of safety given identified by the elders to the specific applications necessary for the church to operate well in this season. The safety committee will serve the elders by allowing the eldership as a whole to remain uniquely focused on the task of teaching the Bible (see Acts 6). It will also serve the church as a whole by allowing the church's main focus to remain the work of making disciples (Matt 28:18-20).

The staff Safety Team shall consist of:

- Joe Alcantar - elder, chair
- Todd Peterson - elder
- Teresa Filyes - deacon for kids ministry
- Chuck Mosely - deacon for care and benevolence

In addition to the specific staff Safety Team member a number of church members will be recruited to an advisory role. This formal or informal Safety Advisory Team will help provide specific guidance that members may have on issues such as medical knowledge and risks, childcare best practices, compliance with city and state mandates, and other matters.

Guiding Principles of the Safety Team

In guidance for the orderly of the church's worship the body is still subject to the two great commands: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

1. Love for God by Commitment to Gather for Worship

From the the beginning of the history of God's people we see God's people gathering for worship. This is clear across the Old Testament, in the many assemblies from the period of the exodus through the wilderness, to the temple gatherings, to even after the exile (Neh 8-10). This pattern continues in the New Testament where we see the Christians quickly gathering with one another for worship, prayer, teaching, and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47). The very word used most often of the church (ekklesia) most literally means "assembly", illustrating how tightly the identity of the church and its gatherings is tied.

The worship of God should be done as a gathered people and should not be neglected: Hebrews 10: [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (ESV)

Therefore, our commitment as a church is to continue to gather in whatever we can, in order that God might be honored and the church built up.

Practical example: Treating the gathering as essential and diverting greater church resources to make it possible to meet, even if it means additional work

2. Love for God by Living Under the Lordship of Christ

Worship practices and life of the church practice are governed by God and his Word not by the state. In both Old and New Testaments, God has prescribed certain elements as part of his worship. He tells his people to gather, how to gather, what the gathering should look like, even what elements are to be employed in that gathering. We call this the regulative principle of Scripture, where Scripture, inspired by God, is the governing authority as to what our gatherings entail. No other institution but Jesus is the true authority of the church.

Ephesians 1:20–23 [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [22] And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (ESV)

Therefore, we follow what the Lord has prescribed our corporate gatherings should look like and include, in the right worship of him.

Practical example: If the government says to not preach from the Bible, we will preach from the Bible; if the government said not to take communion, we would take communion; if the government said not to pray to God, we would pray to God.

3. Love for God by Commitment to Obey God-Given Authority

In the New Testament era where Christians are ruled by a separate government, Christians are charged to default to receive that government as God-given. The Apostle Peter sees submission to God-given governmental authority as submission to God who instituted that authority. Paul the Apostle works within the system of Roman governance, rather than rejecting it. While not every command of the government should be obeyed, the occasions for disobedience are those in which the church is charged not to proclaim the gospel or to sin against God.

In Romans 13 we are charged: [1] Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment...[7] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (ESV)

In 21st century America Christians bear two responsibilities: First, they have been given a role in the governance of their country and should exercise their rights in as godly and wise a manner

as possible. Second, they are still subject to and under the authority of those instituted by God. The Lord puts leaders in place as he sees fit, either through kingly succession, democratic vote, or statement appointment.

Therefore, our commitment to God is to honor and obey those governing authorities instituted by God, as God commands.

Practical example: Following city orders related to COVID-19 even when we would differ

4. Love for Neighbor by Caring for Our Neighbor's Life and Safety

In the Old Testament, there was a clear understanding of personal property and responsibility. However, there was also a strong requirement in the law to go out of one's way to care for others, even at personal expense. For example, sojourners were to be treated with care and offered shelter and food (Lev 19:33-34). The poor were to have food preserved for them (Lev 19:9-10). Even the requirements to cast away from the camp those with diseases like leprosy were enacted to protect the safety and health of the whole community.

In Luke 11 Jesus provides a compelling illustration of what it means to love our neighbor and he specifically uses care for safety and health: Luke 10:[33] But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. [34] He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. [35] And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' [36] Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" [37] He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." (ESV)

Therefore, our commitment to love our neighbor means taking appropriate care for their life and safety while they are participating in church activities.

Practical example: Requiring those in our church to follow COVID-19 best practices such as sanitizing hands, seating people apart from each other, etc.

5. Love for Neighbor by Pursuing Sacrificial Unity

The New Testament carries a great concern for the unity of the body. The church is charged to maintain the unity that God has given it supernaturally through the reconciling work of Christ and the uniting work of the spirit (Eph 4). The church is meant to, by its unity, point to Jesus (1 Peter 2). Jesus says that we are not simply to love one another as ourselves, but rather love one another as he has loved us (John 13).

Paul charges us that our own individual rights should be laid down for the greater good of serving one another: Galatians 5:[13] For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. [14] For the

whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” [15] But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. (ESV)

Therefore, our commitment to unity in the church means that we will call the church toward whatever practical path we believe can result most in unity.

Practical example: Beginning kids ministry classes outdoors partially because out of the man parent opinions, this has the most support and allows greatest number of kids to participate.

6. Love for Our Neighbor by Practicing Hospitality

In the early church, while gatherings were primarily aimed at the worship of God, the church was also called to be hospitable and aware of those God was drawing to the church. For example, in 1 Cor 14 Paul is concerned that their practice of the gift of tongues would be unintelligible to outsiders, and that not understanding what is happening would mean that they be driven out of the assembly thinking the church has lost its mind. Paul instead charges them to remember outsiders in their gatherings, helping those people understand and be welcomed in.

Hebrews 13:2 charges us: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” And even within the church Peter encourages us in 1 Peter 4:9: “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

Therefore, our commitment to practice hospitality means creating an environment where as many guests as possible can feel welcomed.

Practical example: Ensuring clear signage, communicating clear expectations and rules, tilting our policies to be understandable to someone walking in off the street.

7. Love for Our Neighbor By Caring for the Vulnerable

In the Old Testament laws special provision was made for the most vulnerable such as the sojourner or widow (see Exodus 22:21-24). Through the prophets God sharply criticized his people for not caring for those who were vulnerable among them. And in the New Testament the pattern of care continues (1 Timothy 5). In fact, this love is meant to be active not just passive such as when God charges his people to plead the cause of the widow (Isaiah 1:17).

James 1:27 sets us an example when it says, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” The principle is clear: Those that are more vulnerable should be the objects of the special care of the church community.

Therefore, our commitment to care for the most vulnerable means we gladly do what we can to protect those who are vulnerable as they seek to gather.

Practical example: Providing a livestream for the most vulnerable and trying to provide safe spaces and areas for those who are more vulnerable