

Dear Grace PCA Family,

The Session has been wrestling with what to do with the apparent rise of COVID-19 cases in St. Charles County and how we can best protect and lead our congregation. We have spent countless hours praying, researching, evaluating, and planning which brings rise to plans needing to be constantly reevaluated and changed. Much of our planning has been based on the requirements of the CDC and following the lead of the St. Charles County Board of Health. On Thursday, the Board of Health dropped off 200 masks and advised us that due to cases rising in St. Charles County, it would be prudent to wear them.

In this politically charged climate in which we live today, there is probably nothing more polarizing than the wearing of masks. In spite of that, the Session has made the painful decision to require the wearing of masks inside the facility from anyone age 9 or above. This includes those attending Sunday School, the worship service, and youth events in the Youth House at Grace until further notice. We ask that you keep it on during the service except to remove it for communion. If you do not have your own mask, we have them available in the foyer as you enter the building.

We are well aware that fellowship has been significantly strained during this time due to physical distancing measures and the like. We want to encourage people to visit with one another *outside* of the building before and following the service so that we can maintain appropriate physical distancing within the facility. This may make some of you upset and we regret that, but we feel it is necessary in order to avoid discontinuing our ability to meet in person. We are also asking that you continue to register for the service by doing so online, calling, or emailing the church office so that we can monitor attendance. We also are aware that some of you may be unable to wear a mask for many reasons and we request that you please enjoy our streaming services at home on our YouTube channel which can be accessed through our website.

We realize that this may seem as though we are infringing on our liberty and rights as Americans. We have taken this into account as we looked to Scripture for guidance. Let us consider 1 Corinthians 8 where the Apostle Paul is talking about the weaker brother and the eating of meat offered to idols. He argues, "Food [masks] will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat [or wear masks] and no better off if we do...Therefore, if food [masks] makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat [or refuse a mask], lest I make my brother stumble."

Some have faith to believe that God will protect them from the virus without a mask, and some believe that we should not put the Lord our God to the test. We want to urge everyone to treat one another "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3). This means each of us will need to sacrifice some measure of our preferences and opinions in order to make others feel welcome.

As it stands now, here is a brief summary of what we have been doing and will be doing:

1. If you are not feeling well for any reason, we ask that you remain home and watch our service through our website or YouTube channel.
2. We are still able to accommodate 100 people. Please continue to submit a reservation online, or by calling, or emailing the church.
3. Everyone above the age of 9 will be required to wear a mask while inside the facility, including the Youth House. If you did not bring your own mask, they will be available in the foyer.
4. If you are unable to wear a mask due to health issues, please take advantage of our streaming service by going to our website or subscribing to our YouTube channel.
5. The facility is cleaned and surfaces are disinfected prior to Sunday morning.
6. Please continue physical distancing in the facility. You are encouraged to visit *outside* before and following the service.
7. We will continue offering the Lord's Supper. Worshippers will be dismissed per row to pick up their own cup which includes the juice and wafer.
8. A secure offering box is available in the sanctuary in addition to the ability to give online through our website.

In conclusion, the church is still here! We continue to seek ways that will assist the body in living out the Gospel. If you should ever need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact your elder, deacon, or church staff. As your shepherds, we lovingly ask that you respect these decisions and pray for wisdom as we navigate the troubled waters in this unprecedented time. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation in this matter.

-Elder Tom Dell, on behalf of the Session of Grace