



COVID-19 Protocols¹

Updated: Illinois Tier 3, December 2, 2020

We are learning to live out the gospel to worship, pray, share our testimony, disciple, serve and encourage others in creative ways during the coronavirus season, much like the early church and other periods of history. In order to be clear about the protocols for this unique COVID-19 season, this document provides protocols so that tiered reentry-points can wisely continue during Phase 4 of the *Restore Illinois Plan*. Grace will monitor and adapt our protocols to fit the fluidity of the current coronavirus environment. Our decisions are not made on the basis of political conversations, but rather on the deep desire to shepherd people with care and discipleship.

Major Goals

The following specific protocols are provided in order to move forward with these major goals:

- To welcome people into new ministry opportunities. Our message is, “We’re glad you’re here.”
- To make reentry as simple and clear as possible within the boundaries of our COVID-19 protocols so that people may apply the protocols to varying opportunities.
- To propel opportunities for discipleship and family ministry in new ways that may actually create fresh, healthy future practices. We are particularly focusing upon helping younger families with children find opportunities for fellowship and study.
- To provide a safe, healthy environment for people as they reenter ministry opportunities.
- To be a good community neighbor so that our community “sees our good works and gives glory to our Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Summary for Sunday Volunteers during Tier 3

The following protocols for staff, volunteers, and special facility purposes are a summary of the sections which follow in the later pages of this document. They are particularly important for staff and volunteers on Sundays.

Individuals may wonder about the reason that Grace increases the capacity number in the sanctuary on Sundays, rather than keeping the Sunday capacity similar to other times of the week. Illinois declared that “religious services” are different from other meetings. In gratitude for such recognition, Grace therefore chooses to provide worship services for more people in religious services than in other group capacities throughout the week, while at the same time providing a safe, healthy environment.

Grace also holds the option to simply have Sunday services online if the numbers of cases in our region/state exponentially rise and positivity rates increase.

Please read the whole document for the full explanation of protocols as you plan ministry opportunities.

¹ Please note that this document highlights our protocols. It does not describe each ministry’s activities.

1. **Grace will offer in-person worship services, beginning again on Sunday, December 6, dependent upon declining numbers in our region and state.** We will communicate these onsite, in-person worship services online and in e-newsletters by Fridays.
2. We would like to invite people to worship in the facility as long as we **continue to keep our current health practices. Current health practices include, but are not limited to:**
 - Continue to RSVP for worship services with the current seating capacity of 250 in the sanctuary and 100 in the gym.
 - An RSVP system that explains that worship is *offered* for people who wish to attend, but onsite worship is not *required*—therefore communicating that it is OK, even encouraged, to stay at home if a person is in at-risk group or does not feel comfortable attending worship in the facility. Our communications will clearly offer online opportunities with excellence.
 - Multiple signage in the building about masks, as well as not entering if feeling sick
 - Multiple entrances available for entry and exit, in order to spread people out
 - Masks available for people
 - Hand sanitizer in rest rooms and around the building
 - Ushers encouraging people to move into the center of rows so that we can get other people on the row with good social distancing
 - Seating is to be spread significantly more than the normal six-foot distancing, preferably keeping our current ten-foot distancing so that people can sing
3. **Individuals shall wear face coverings in all common areas of the office and church building.** Common areas are: walkways around the circle of workstations in the office, as well as the walkway to the offices on the western side of the building; staff kitchen; restrooms; open space around the receptionist's desk and Welcome Desk in the atrium; atrium; hallways of entry and exit; public restrooms. Upon entering a room for meetings of 10 or less, individuals may remove their face coverings if they are assured of proper social distancing between individuals. Face coverings should be worn in rooms when it is impossible to socially distance from others. Social distance is considered as 6 feet from another individual who is not from your household.
4. **Ushers will seat people in the sanctuary at all indoor worship services with 10-foot distancing between individuals or families. Individuals are required to wear masks during the whole worship service—i.e. for entry, egress, interactions, singing, and sermon.**
5. **The church facility will not be open for groups until further notice.** We would like to take one step at a time in light of the higher numbers in our region and state. We will monitor COVID rates and metrics, and then determine whether to open more options in the future. We want to welcome people to worship services, but we will wait until January before opening the building to groups, according to the size of groups in the Restore Illinois Plan at that time.
6. **The church will cleanse and disinfect the building and materials as appropriate for Sunday services and the church office.**

7. **Staff may return to the church office for work, according to employee protocols and appropriate social distancing.**

Employee COVID-19 Protocols

In light of changing statistics and metrics in the *Restore Illinois Plan*, as well as our desire to be clear about protocols for our church staff during the pandemic season, please note the following protocols for all employees.

Definition of Terms

An “outbreak” refers to positive cases in a location where five or more cases are epidemiologically linked to a specific setting during a 14-day period.

A “potential exposure” refers to a location where someone who tested positive went in the time before they were symptomatic or tested positive.

By “exposed to infected individuals,” we refer to exposure within less than six feet from someone who has the virus for 15 consistent minutes or more. The definition of exposure is irrespective to whether the person was wearing a mask or PPE (CDC guideline).

“Quarantine” refers to someone who might have been exposed to the virus and therefore stays away from others. “Isolation” refers to someone who is definitely infected with the virus and therefore stays away from others, even at home.

Protocol Decision-making

The Executive Pastor will continue to work with legal and medical experts in the determination of guidelines and protocols. He will also work with other individual staff members who are immediately impacted by any new changes in the protocols as Illinois authorities publish new metrics and guidelines. This team includes the Office Manager and Facility Director, as well as other staff members who are specifically impacted by state mandates. When large changes in the overall protocols may be needed, the Executive Pastor works with the Session in final decision-making.

The Executive Pastor will update all staff, Session members, and Diaconate members upon new changes in protocols, followed by congregational updates that impact congregational attendance and involvement.

Office and Facility Protocols

1. The church office will remain open for employees to fulfill their regular responsibilities and ministries. Employees will seek to keep their regular practice of supporting office hours.
2. Employees should use hand-washing procedures and cleansing of areas.
3. Employees should wear face coverings in all common areas of the office and church building. Common areas are: walkways around the circle of workstations in the office, as well as the walkway to the offices on the western side of the building; staff kitchen; restroom in the office; open space around the receptionist's desk; and workroom; atrium; hallways of entry and exit; public restrooms. Proper use of face coverings involves covering the nose and mouth.

4. Face coverings should be worn when it is impossible to be 6 feet away from others. Exceptions are when working alone or if physical accommodations are appropriate, such as at office doorways, meeting rooms, etc.
5. Use of shared workspace is discouraged to maximum extent possible.
6. Anyone who knows of a volunteer who has had contact with other volunteers or staff and has been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19 must notify the Executive Pastor who will then verify the exposure or confirm the positive testing. Once verified, those who have had direct contact with or exposed to the infected individual will be notified immediately. Identification of the exposed or infected individual needs to be kept confidential due to privacy issues.

Employee Protocols

1. Employees must not be in the church office if they exhibit symptoms (even if mild) and should get tested as soon as possible. The employee may work from home with pay for one's regular work hours during that time. Symptoms published by CDC are fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If symptoms appear during quarantine, they report the test results to the Executive Pastor. These test results will remain confidential.
2. Anyone who has been exposed to infected individuals or tested positive for coronavirus must notify the Executive Pastor. By "exposed to infected individuals," we refer to exposure within less than six feet from someone who has the virus for 15 consistent minutes or more. Those individuals who have had direct contact with, or been exposed to an infected individual, should notify the Pastor immediately. Identification of the exposed or infected individual will be kept confidential due to privacy issues.
3. Anyone who knows of another staff person who has had contact with staff and has been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19 must notify the Executive Pastor who will then verify the exposure or confirm the positive testing. Once verified, those who have had direct contact with or exposed to the infected individual will be notified immediately. Identification of the exposed or infected individual needs to be kept confidential due to privacy issues.
4. When it has been confirmed an employee has been exposed to coronavirus, they should work from home for 14 days to see if they become sick. The church office will make accommodations for the employee to work from home. The Illinois Department of Public Health states that since it can take 2-14 days to show symptoms, a person's last day of quarantine is 14 days from his/her last close contact with the person with COVID-19. If that person seeks testing, a negative test result does not mean that he/she cannot become positive later. A test is valid only for the day on which it was reported. The employee must therefore stay in quarantine for the entire 14- day period. He cannot "test out" of the period because of the negative result.
5. If a staff member has a family member who exhibits one or more COVID symptoms, the staff member will not come to the office and immediately get tested with their family. The staff member may return to the office upon receiving a negative test result.

6. For employees who test positive and do not show symptoms, they need to remain isolated for a minimum of 10 days from the date of the positive test and have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to the office. Employees may work while quarantining from home or another approved location, having made arrangements with the Executive Pastor.
7. For employees who test positive and are symptomatic, the employee should remain isolated for a minimum of 14 days after the onset of the symptoms.
8. For employees who test positive and show severe symptoms (by “severe,” we refer to symptoms that needed some level of hospitalization), the employee should remain isolated for a minimum of 20 days after the onset of the symptoms and have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to the office. The employee should work with the Executive Pastor about returning to the office. This protocol follows the HCP guidelines for people in care services who work with other people.
9. While waiting for your test results, stay in quarantine to prevent further exposure to others.
10. Employees should use hand-washing procedures and cleansing of areas.

Employee Travel Protocols

1. Employees should follow IDPH travel guidance. Employees should inform the Executive Pastor if they have travelled or plan to travel.
2. Employees should be cautious about traveling to areas that are experiencing high rates of activity or areas where there aren't protective measures. If you do travel, take precautions and monitor systems upon return. If you travel overseas, isolate for 14 days to see if any symptoms occur.

Vehicle Usage

1. The church bus and van may be used for transportation of small groups of according to the guidelines for usage of the vehicles. Vehicles available and capacity are as follows:
 - Buses: 2012 F550 – 10-12 passenger maximum
2007 E450 --10-12 passenger maximum
2000 GMC “Big bus”- @ 20 passenger maximum
 - Van: Chrysler Town and Country – 4-5 maximum
2. Hand sanitizer should be available in each vehicle.
3. Face coverings are required in the vehicle. It is recommended that windows can be down for all or part of the ride, if weather conditions permit.
4. If possible, stagger seats from side to side in each row of the vehicle. Be creative in how you organize seating so that you achieve appropriate social distancing with the best usage of the vehicle
5. One person may sit in each row on both sides of the vehicle. Individuals may return to the same seat as the group returns to the church.

6. Group leaders should wipe touchpoints with disinfectant wipes after usage of the vehicle.
7. Protocol regarding carpooling/driving to events TBD

Facility Protocols

Face Coverings

1. Individuals shall wear face coverings in all common areas of the office and church building. Common areas are: sanctuary, church atrium, walkways around the circle of workstations in the office, as well as the walkway to the offices on the western side of the building; staff kitchen; restrooms; open space around the receptionist's desk and Welcome Desk in the atrium; atrium; hallways of entry and exit; public restrooms.
2. Proper use of face coverings involves covering both the nose and mouth.
3. At a later time when the facility is open to groups, upon entering a room for meetings of 10 individuals or less, individuals may remove their face coverings if they are assured of proper social distancing between individuals. If masks are removed, individuals should then replace their face covering upon egress from the room as they prepare to move into common areas of the building.
4. If a room does not provide space for appropriate social distancing, face coverings should be worn in rooms when it is impossible to socially distance from others. Social distance is considered as 6 feet from another individual who is not from your household. Exceptions are when working alone or if physical accommodations are appropriate, such as at office doorways, meeting rooms, working in a larger space by yourself, etc.

Facility Usage

1. Display signage at entries with face covering requirements, social distancing requirements, requirements about feeling sick, etc. Display visual markers for walkways. Display room usage guidelines at each room for groups.
2. Cleansers will be provided at used entries and restrooms.
3. When the facility is open, the north entry will be open Monday through Friday, for office hours, and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. through 12:30 p.m. Please note: we will open the main doors (#1) and southwestern doors (#5) for entry and exit on Sunday mornings, as well.
4. When Grace has in-person worship, ushers will seat people in the worship center at all indoor worship services with 10-foot distancing between individuals or families. This requires four empty seats between family units or individuals, in every third row. Individuals are required to wear masks for entry, egress, singing, interaction, and sermon. Individuals may briefly socialize with proper social distancing within the sanctuary, but will be encouraged to quickly egress to their car or next destination, without gathering in the atrium.
5. Communion and baptism will be provided according to the best health practices, such as pre-packaged communion elements and careful health practices for individuals who will be baptized.
6. We will cleanse the worship center between the worship services.

7. When the facility is open in January or later, groups of 10 or less may meet together in appropriate rooms on Mondays through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. through 9:45 p.m. Although groups may still be in the building in the evenings, the doors at the north canopy will be locked at 7:30 p.m. (and 5 p.m. on Sundays). Ministry leaders are responsible to secure the building after those closing times. The building will be closed on Saturdays.
8. Rooms may be reserved by calling the church office or by the regular process of room requests through our CCB forms. Groups should follow protocols of social distancing within rooms, as stated in this document above. Major touchpoints in rooms should be disinfected by the group upon leaving the room, in compliance with CDC protocols.
9. At a later time when the facility is open to groups, rooms may be used by different groups at the same time and on the same floor as long as interaction between groups do not occur. Groups should use assigned entries and restrooms for each room, as assigned upon reservation. Group leaders should allow their group to enter at the assigned door (or delegate an individual from the group to do so) without propping and leaving doors open.
10. Rooms will be disinfected and cleaned after use between groups, with 45 minutes before another group uses the room.
11. We will not schedule groups on Saturdays so that cleansing may be followed before Sunday activities. Exceptions are weddings and funerals of 10 or less that are approved according to facility reservation procedures and determination whether the facility is open.
12. Pastors and Ministry Directors will determine their activities at appropriate times and in accordance with protocols in this document. They will also determine activities by whether the church facility is open. (The availability of rooms in the facility for groups of 10 or less does not require that children's and student ministries schedule opportunities as in pre-COVID seasons.)

Food Preparation

1. We will continue to provide water bottles at worship services. Open concessions are not yet permitted in the building.
2. Staff leaders may store pre-packaged food items in the church kitchen for upcoming ministry meetings, but the kitchen will not be used to prepare and cook foods for groups. Ministry leaders will disinfect all touchpoints.
3. Staff leaders may access the ice machine, but must use hand sanitizer and disinfect touchpoints.
4. Groups may bring packaged food items for consumption to their meetings, as long as on-site preparation of coffee and food is not required. The use of the church grill outside is cautioned. Items must be arranged so that individuals do not share utensils and food items. Any utensils used should be cleansed and disinfected immediately after usage. Social distancing and face coverings are required between individuals as they get their food items. Social distancing is still required while eating in the church building.

5. Groups who wish to include food items at their meeting should state their intentions when reserving a room at the church. This allows custodial and facility employees to plan for adequate cleansing after the meeting.
6. If a meal is catered by a professional food service/restaurant according to state mandates for food preparation, one or two individuals should serve the food to all individuals.

Outdoor Guidelines

1. Outdoor activities on church grounds are available for groups with proper social distancing between individuals. Illinois' Tier 3 recommends that outdoor groups be limited.
2. Multiple groups are permitted to be on the church grounds at the same time as long as facilities allow for social distancing and there is a 30-foot distancing between groups.
3. When possible, clean and disinfect common outdoor areas that are used for high-traffic areas after use.
5. The church playground is open, but Grace will post notice that the playground is not cleansed on a regular basis.

Usage of the Gym

1. The gym will not be open until January when the COVID Protocol Team reviews new rates, metrics, and mitigations. We hope to open the gym in January, but we will review that decision then.

Room Reservations

Please note the church facility is not open for groups at this time.

At a later time when the facility is open to groups, please request all rooms or vehicles by calling the church office or through CCB so that the appropriate calendaring and custodial disinfection can take place. The following rooms are available when the facility is open:

Lower Level Room 015, available for groups of 25 or less—enter through the North Canopy doorway #5, down the northwest stairs, and use the restrooms on the lower level

Lower Level Room 004, available for groups of 25 or less—enter through the main doors #1, down the east stairs and use the restrooms on the lower level

Lower Level Room 010, available for groups of 12 in a circle— enter through the North Canopy doorway #5, down the northwest stairs, and use the restrooms on the lower level

Lower Level Room 009, available for groups of 12 in a circle— enter through the North Canopy doorway #5, down the northwest stairs, and use the restrooms on the lower level

Gym East, available for groups of 25 or less—enter through the Main doors #1 and use the restrooms in the Main Atrium

Gym West, available for sports of groups of 25 or less—enter through the North Canopy #5 or the gym doors from the outside patio, and use the restrooms in the Banner Hallway

Special Education Room, available for groups of 12 or less—enter through the entrance doors for the Special Ed Room, and use restrooms in the Special Ed foyer by the room

Junior High Room and/or **Senior High Room**, available for groups of 25 or less in each room—enter through the door # 4, and use the restrooms in the Banner Hallway

Chapel, available for groups of 25 or less—enter through the southeast doors # 2 and use the restrooms in the Chapel Hallway

Front Porch, available for groups of 24 or less—enter through the North Canopy doors #5, and use the restrooms in the Main Atrium

Worship Center, available for groups of 25 or less during the weekdays and Saturday(Ministry leaders are responsible for all cleaning on Saturdays- except for weddings)—enter through the main doors #1 and use the restrooms in the Main Atrium

Balcony, available mainly on Sunday mornings, but we can reevaluate the needs in future weeks

Upper Level Room 207, available for groups of 25 or less—enter through the main doors #1, up the east stairway, and use the restrooms in the Children’s foyer by the room.

Conference Room 256, available for groups of 6-8, enter North Canopy #5, use main staircase, use UL restrooms.

Prepared and Updated by: Paul Utnage, Executive Pastor, and COVID Protocol Team, December 2, 2020