

Coronavirus Updates

Thursday April 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

Governor Northam recently [extended](#) the coronavirus shutdown in Virginia to June 10. Out of respect for our government authorities, and to safeguard public health, we will continue streaming our services, and will not hold large group gatherings, until this order has expired. Please continue to participate in online worship, take advantage of small group opportunities via Zoom, and generally exercise your creativity to stay connected to each other during this season of diminished contact.

Let's remain confident that our love in Christ will prove stronger than the challenges of separation. Paul expressed this to the far-distant Thessalonian church when he said,

"But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you - for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord." (*1 Thess. 3:6-8*)

Yours in Christ,
The Elders

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Dear church family,

We trust the Lord is sustaining you through the many challenges of the coronavirus response. This note comes to update you on how Grace Church is adapting to the ongoing shutdown. We want you to know our plans and assumptions so that you can also plan accordingly.

Church services and activities. We will generally follow the guidance of state and federal officials regarding the shutdown, while monitoring the situation in order to resume normal activities as soon as possible consistent with safeguarding public health.

- We are adopting the working assumption that only streaming worship services (no on-site services) will be held through the end of April. This includes Good Friday and Easter (April 10,12). We will reassess toward the end of April. This arrangement may need to continue into May. Morning services will stream at 11 am and evening services at 6 pm. The Good Friday service will stream at 7:30 pm.
- All other activities, except small group meetings, are cancelled through the end of May.
- We encourage small groups (e.g. fellowship groups, leadership teams) to meet via Zoom if practical. Kathy Hoisington will assist in setting up Zoom meetings. Small groups may meet in

person at the discretion of the group leader if they number [ten or fewer](#) and follow [CDC health recommendations](#).

Worship resources for streaming services. While the shutdown lasts, we will email Sunday worship resources to the congregation on the Thursday prior. You will receive a double-sided page for each service with the order of service on the front and at-home worship resources on the back. Since the streaming service is truncated compared to our normal service, we encourage you to use the at-home resources to guide additional singing, prayer, and discussion.

New community prayer groups. We are setting up new prayer groups to meet weekly via Zoom while the shutdown lasts. An elder will lead the group in a 1½ hour format that includes reading Scripture, sharing prayer requests, and praying for one another. Contact Kathy Hoisington if you would like to be part of such a group.

Church administrative assistant. Our longtime administrative assistant Elizabeth Griswold is retiring as of today (March 19)! We have benefitted so much from her wise and diligent work. Since we have not yet hired a replacement, Kathy Hoisington will fill in for Elizabeth in the short term. You may continue to use Elizabeth's email for items related to church administration; the messages will be forwarded to Kathy.

Giving. Worshipping via streaming services does not allow us to take an offering. And yet, tithes and offerings remain an important aspect of our worship as well as a practical necessity. You may continue to give while the shutdown continues by mailing checks to the church office or donating [online](#).

Getting care. If you need spiritual care during this time, please contact your family elder or one of the pastors. For financial or physical needs, please contact our deacon president David Glenance.

May the Lord bless each of us with stamina as well as growth during these times of widespread change and adjustment. Christ's grace is sufficient; his power is made perfect in weakness.

Yours in him,

The elders

Friday, March 13, 2020

Dear Friends,

The onset of the coronavirus has made it necessary for Grace Church and many other organizations to decide on a response. Based on [guidance](#) from the administration of President Trump and also at the [urging](#) of Governor Northam, we will scale back our large group gatherings in the near future. This includes not holding regular, on-site Sunday activities at least on March 15, and not holding any other kind of large group gathering at all from now into the beginning of April. We do plan to stream a service consisting of a sermon and prayer on Sunday morning and evening, however. (See details in the next paragraph.) We take these steps out of respect for the leadership of our government officials and in order to safeguard the

health of our members and visitors. More generally, we want to make sure that we do our part to prevent the coronavirus from spreading to the point that it overwhelms health care facilities and puts many lives at risk.

We will stream scaled-back morning and evening services this coming Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Go to the [website](#) and click on the box at the top that says Service Streaming. We encourage you, in addition to streaming the service, to sing together and also to pray for your family's needs and the needs of our community, country, and world during this time of sickness and disruption. The bulletins that would have been used for this Sunday's services are attached to this email; you can refer to the hymns in the bulletins for ideas about what to sing.

We will make a decision about whether to resume normal Sunday services on March 22 (and succeeding Sundays) by the Thursday prior and email the decision to the congregation as well as posting it on the church website.

Upcoming ministries and activities that are **cancelled** include the following:

- Game night (tonight, Friday, March 13)
- Men's breakfast (Saturday, March 14)
- Sunday School and Membership Class (Sunday, March 15)
- Hymn sing (Sunday, March 15)
- Session retreat (Friday-Saturday, March 19-20)
- Iliff Nursing Home ministry (Sunday, March 22)
- Youth lunch (Sunday, March 22)
- Baby shower for Rob and Amanda Sallade (Friday, March 27)
- Fellowship lunch (Sunday, March 29)
- PRISM ministry visit (Sunday, March 29)
- Women's retreat (Friday-Saturday, April 3-4)

Selected small groups or ministry teams **may meet, or not**, at the discretion of the group leaders. Group leaders should make sure that any meeting follows the [CDC guidelines](#) for hygiene. Serving food and drink is not recommended. Alternatively, groups may choose to meet by the videoconference service Zoom; email Kathy Hoisington (khoisington@gracevienna.org) for help setting up a Zoom link. Groups that may meet, or not, at the discretion of group leaders, include the following:

- Bible studies

- Fellowship groups
- Young adult fellowship
- Trustees
- Deacons
- Elders
- Other ministry teams or committees

Finally, please keep your eyes open for spiritual opportunities during this unusual season. We will need to respond to not only the health hazards of the coronavirus but also to its wide-ranging social and economic consequences that will bring hardship into the lives of many. Be alert to ways you can give spiritual, logistical, or financial support to others. Also, in the face of the temptation to grow fearful, remember Psalm 56:3: “When I am afraid, I will trust in you.” God is good and Christ remains on his throne! Let this confidence reign in your hearts and let it be visible to others as well.

In Christ,

The elders of Grace