

Members and Visitors of Grace Baptist Tabernacle,

In Romans 13:1-7, the Bible teaches the church how they must respond to those who are in authority over them (which would include governmental authority). Romans 13:1-2 says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic our government and health officials have asked all citizens of the United States, which includes all churches, to abide by certain procedures in order to help keep its citizens healthy and to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. No matter what you believe about the origins of this virus or the agenda of those in authority, we choose to obey God's Word and be submissive to those who have the authority over us.

The only exception to this is if those in authority infringe upon our right to preach the entire counsel of the Word of God or ask us to disobey God's Word. In that case, God's Word tells us in Acts 5:29 that "...We ought to obey God rather than men." With that being said, as we plan to reopen our building for in person gatherings, we plan to do our best to abide by the laws of the land and the guidelines that those in authority have asked us to follow.

We plan to reopen on Sunday, June 7, 2020. This date may change depending on whether there is a spike in hospitalizations and deaths due to the coronavirus. We encourage each person who is over the age of 65 years old or that has underlying health conditions to stay home; but you are free to use your own discretion to decide whether or not you will attend the services. No member of Grace will be forced or coerced to return to our in person services while COVID-19 is still considered a significant threat to our health and well-being. You must pray and make that decision as the Lord leads and as you take your health into account. June 7, 2020 begins phase 1 of our reopening. As the days go by, we will move to the next phases which will involve less restrictions pertaining to our typical operations during service times.

The Following are the procedures that Grace Baptist Tabernacle and its members/visitors will follow as we begin Phase 1 of the reopening of our building. Every procedure is in line with the social distancing guidelines given for churches from the Governor's office. If there are procedures that you do not want to abide by, please stay home and watch the services online or listen to them via Zoom until we move to the next phase of reopening.

1. There will only be one service per week in our building and that will be on Sunday at 11:00 AM

*There will be no Sunday School Service held in the building but that will be broadcast every Thursday from 6:30pm to 7:30pm (day and time subject to change) using the Free Conference Call platform (to be a part of the meeting dial 805-706-4003).

*The Sunday services will also be broadcasted on Sundays on Facebook and Zoom for those who choose not to come back during this time.

2. There will be no Wednesday evening services in the building. The Wednesday evening services will continue to be broadcasted via Facebook and Zoom.

3. There will be no handshaking, hugging, kissing, or any such physical contact.

4. The doors on the bottom level of the church will not be in use with the exception of the police officer.

5. When entering the church, we must abide by social distancing. Because of this there will be markers set up to help attendees stay 6 feet apart.
6. Members are encouraged to bring their own masks & gloves, but the church will have masks and gloves available. Masks are required for Phase 1. Gloves are optional.
7. Each attendee will have their temperature checked upon entering the building with a temporal thermometer. Gerald and Diani Jones will perform the temperature checks and ask anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher to return home.
8. Hand sanitizer will be located at both the front and back entrances of the church.
9. Our seating arrangement will follow the guidelines for Social Distancing .
*Every other pew will be blocked off, (including the front pew and the back 2 pews), and there must be 6 feet between each person (other than those who live in the same home).
10. There will be a one way traffic flow to prevent close contact when members must walk to and from their seat. The six foot rule will also apply upon entering the building and exiting the building. Markers will be set up indicating 6 feet of separation.
11. There can be no social gatherings in the foyer or the under covered rear porch entry.
12. Seating: Those who park in the bottom parking lot must sit on the right side of the sanctuary (when looking at the pulpit) of the church. Those who park in the top parking lot must sit on the left side of the sanctuary (when looking at the pulpit) of the church. This will aid in orderly dismissals that will be in line with social distancing.
13. There will be organized dismissals in order to maintain social distancing and avoid social gatherings.
14. There will not be a full choir. Due to social distancing and the six foot rule, there will only be soloists or small groups of people used to sing special selections.
15. Only two individuals can be seated on the platform surrounding the pulpit at the same time.
16. Hymn books and church bulletins will not be used. All lyrics for hymns and songs will be on the TV screens and all announcements will be on the TV screen or will come from the pulpit.
17. There will be no passing of offering plates. Offering plates will be set up in the front foyer and at the rear double door entry for you to drop off your tithes and offerings upon entering or exiting the building. Also, if you choose to, you can continue to give online, using the "Give Plus" app, or by mailing them to the church.
18. Only 2 individuals at a time will be permitted to use the bathrooms unless they are immediate family members. Signs will be placed on all main bathroom doors (men & women).
19. Both water fountains in the church will be shut off. If water is needed, one should ask the ushers who will inform Gerald or Diani Jones.
20. There will be no nursery during Phase 1.

21. The kitchen will be off limits to the congregation during Phase 1. There will be no making of coffee or snacks.
22. After commencing Sunday services, if an attendee tests positive for the Covid-19 virus, they must contact the pastor immediately. Pastor shall notify the Health Dept. for further instructions.
23. There will be extensive cleaning and disinfecting after each Sunday service. The church will also be cleaned throughout the week.
24. We will not use the building for any other ministry activities that involves a gathering of large crowds during Phase 1. It will only be used for the Sunday Morning Worship service.
25. The church bus will not be in use during Phase 1.
26. If you have had the coronavirus please inform Pastor Carter immediately.
27. A Waiver of Liability Relating: Coronavirus/COVID-19 document will be presented to all attendees. This is for the purpose of informing each individual about the possible risk involved in social gatherings, in this case the church, and for them to acknowledge that they understand the risks involved but voluntarily choosing to be a part of the church service.

All of what has been listed is in compliance with the governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiatives House of Worship Guidance which can be found by clicking the link below:

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governorsoffice-documents/House%20of%20Worship%20Guidance%20FBCI.pdf>

BE EARLY TO THE SUNDAY SERVICE: Finally, please do your best to be at church at least 10 to 15 minutes early as we begin phase 1 of meeting together in our building. There are two reasons you need be early. **1)** We will start at 11:00 AM but because of the social distancing procedures that we will be following, simply entering the building may take longer than usual and seating will be somewhat limited. **2)** In phase 1, the services will not last as long because some aspects of our normal service have been taken out. So, if you get to church 15 or 20 minutes late, it is possible that you will miss a large portion of the service and even some of the preaching. But let us stay positive and look to Jesus during this time as we adjust and make the best out of this situation. To God be the glory!

In Christ,
Pastor Jeffrey A. Carter