



As I sit outside this morning to write this message, I am amazed at the beauty of a sunny spring day. The lilacs are in full bloom, birds are loudly singing (including a new family of bluebirds), the trees are leafing out and I've begun to harvest asparagus I planted 30 years ago.

All of this reminds me of God's goodness and His promise in Genesis that spring will follow winter. Spring is considered one of the most beautiful times of the year. It brings about feelings of renewal, rebirth, of hope, and of newness. Certainly in our faith it holds great symbolism with the Resurrection of Christ and Easter. Jesus promised us that one day He will make everything new (Rev.21:5). In the meantime, He gives us glimpses of the coming attractions through spring.

Just as spring is a time of growth in nature, so too it is in our spiritual lives. The news on Monday from Governor Baker to begin the process to reopen the state is welcomed and hopeful news. Places of worship have been included in the first phase of the plan. I am very happy to announce that beginning this Sunday, May 24, Grace Church will be resuming our public services! However, that does not mean that everything is back to normal; unfortunately, that cannot safely occur. Instead we need to accept a "new normal," at least for the near future.

I have been speaking with various church leaders and reading numerous church reopening plans and procedures. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) compiled a publication titled "Guidance for Communities of Faith". Although the CDC document is not legally binding, nor has it officially been released, I have put together a procedural plan which we will implement at Grace Church.

We are at a huge advantage with our outdoor worship space in the garden. It both eases the burden of interior compliance requirements, and provides for the safety of us

gathering. Despite that, there will be numerous changes. These may change at any time if necessary.

All of our Sunday morning services will take place outdoors. In the event of rain, we will not be moving indoors. We will continue to livestream the services and ask that you respectfully adhere to this. We will be reevaluating and monitoring the situation, keeping abreast of all public health advisories.

Bagels and coffee will not be served, nor will any other food or beverages. (sorry Bernie) We will not have a choir or congregational singing. No music books, prayer cards or bulletins will be used. Obviously, there will be no exchange of peace with one another. Communion will be distributed in form of the host only. The collection basket will not be passed, but will be placed on a table for you to leave your offerings at the appropriate time.

Seating will be spaced out throughout the garden area; families and households are encouraged to sit together. Masks, although not required outdoors, will be encouraged. The interior of the church will not be open for socializing or congregating. Bathrooms are to be used only if absolutely an emergency. Anyone who feels ill, or compromised, please consider the well being of others.

The folding chairs will be sanitized before and after every service, as well as the benches and gate door handles. Most importantly, please use common sense and caution. Although many restrictions are being lifted, we're not over this yet. It has been, and continues to be, a frightful and difficult time.

May we continue to pray and seek God, who is able and willing to deliver us from all evil and bring healing and restoration to our land.

Please contact me if you're able to help with setup and cleanup.

Now may our good Lord bless you and keep you in His perfect peace, which passes all human understanding.

Fr. Peter

"God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord"

1 Corinthians 1:9