



## Grace UMC – Sherman: Building Re-opening Plan

Due to the continued spread and threat of the coronavirus, Grace UMC will take a cautious approach to re-opening the church building for worship and other activities. Given that most church members are part of an at-risk population, our **priority** is the **safety** of our congregation and visitors.

*The Texas Department of State Health Services defines “at-risk population” as “People 65 years or older, and/or [people with medical issues](#), like heart disease, diabetes, cancer, or a weakened immune system.”*

Since we cannot predict the future path of the coronavirus, this plan is not a strict timetable. The Relaunch Team will continue to do research, monitor the local situation and health/government guidelines, observe best practices, and prayerfully consider what is best for the church and community. We will use the strictest guidelines from resources to determine when we can move to each stage in the following plan (see Appendix F for links to guidelines).

We ask everyone to be vigilant in following the guidelines our church leaders recommend. Everything will be designed to keep everyone as safe as possible. We may move back and forth between stages if a second or third wave of virus infections emerge. The church will communicate any changes.

We are currently in **Stage 0** and the **Prep Stage** for planning the re-opening of our church building.

### **Planning and Preparation:**

- Relaunch Team formed and begins research and planning process (5/4/20)
- Establish stages of re-opening and criteria for moving to each stage
- Research guidelines from CDC, state and local governments, health departments, insurance company, and the North Texas Annual Conference
- Survey the congregation for opinions, attitudes, ideas and concerns
- Reconfigure Celebration Center for safer seating and worship
- Determine safe practices for worship (number of attendees, sanitization, safety precautions and procedures)
- Determine number and types of volunteers needed and how to train
- Determine processes for communion, attendance tracking, greeting, taking the offering, and other processes that need adjustments or alternatives
- Determine the signage and supplies/equipment needed for re-opening
- Plan for effective communication and ongoing engagement with the congregation
- Create this plan and vision for the future

**Stage 0: Covid-19 cases still increasing in Grayson County**

- Online worship only (10:00 Sunday; available to watch afterward on demand)
  - Online meetings, classes, and gatherings only (some exceptions for small groups meeting outside and with proper precautions; see Appendix A for safe meeting guidelines)
  - Church office – limited hours and access
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**Stage 1** can commence once all re-opening preparation is complete and Stage 1 requirements are met. Our priority is to keep everyone safe and healthy. Initially, the worship experience will be ‘no contact’ as much as possible. We are trying to use only designated areas of our church building for our initial stages of re-opening. This will help limit the cleaning and sanitizing needed in between uses of our church building. At-risk people are encouraged to continue worship online.

An online registration process will be available to submit information for which in-person worship service you wish to attend. Each person attending (adult, youth, children) will be asked to register. This will ensure sufficient available seating and help us track who attended each service in the church building. **Note:** Phone calls will be made to people who do not have electronic capability to register online.

**Stage 1 Requirements:**

- 2 weeks of clearly declining Covid-19 new cases in the county
- Widespread availability of testing & contact tracing
- Adequate supply of PPE and cleaning supplies and enough volunteers (see Appendix B)

**Stage 1 Practices**

- Pastor and Relaunch Team will make a video to provide instructions/details and show demonstration of what service experience will look like.
- Depending on interest, plan for one service at 10:00 (also livestreamed).
- Limited in-person worship – max. 50 people in the Celebration Center
- Limit worship time to 30 minutes; no singing; no touching
- Strict requirements for personal protection (e.g., face masks and social distancing) and sanitizing; temperature checks of attendees
- Online worship options continue
- Online meetings, classes, and gatherings only (some exceptions for small groups meeting outside and with proper precautions – Appendix A)
- Church office – limited hours and access; no nursery or Sunday School
- Signs will be posted to direct safe practices (see Appendix D)

**Stage 2** of the gradual re-opening can commence once our Church Council/Leadership Team have evaluated all Stage 2 requirements and Covid-19 guidelines provided by state and county health departments, CDC guidelines, North Texas Conference UMC Bishop, and any other resources deemed pertinent. At-risk people are encouraged to worship online.

**Stage 2 Requirements:**

- 4 weeks of clearly declining Covid-19 new cases in the county
- Widespread availability of testing & contact tracing
- Adequate supply of PPE and cleaning supplies and enough volunteers (see Appendix B)

**Stage 2 Practices**

- Limited in-person worship – max. 70 people in the Celebration Center
  - Limit worship time to 45 minutes; no singing; no touching
  - Strict requirements for personal protection and sanitizing; temperature check
  - Online worship options continue
  - Online meetings, classes, and gatherings encouraged (some small groups can meet with proper precautions – Appendix A)
  - Church office – limited hours and access; no nursery or Sunday School
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**Stage 3** of the gradual re-opening can commence once our Church Council/Leadership Team have evaluated all Stage 3 requirements and Covid-19 guidelines provided by state and county health departments, CDC guidelines, North Texas Conference UMC Bishop, and any other resources deemed pertinent. At-risk people can attend when they feel it is safe.

**Stage 3 Requirements:**

- 8 weeks of clearly declining Covid-19 new cases in the county
- Widespread availability of testing & contact tracing
- Adequate supply of PPE and cleaning supplies

**Stage 3 Practices**

- Limited in-person worship – max. 100 people in the Celebration Center
- Limit worship time to 1 hour; possible limited singing, less spacing (3 feet)
- Reasonable precautions for personal protection and sanitizing (e.g., limited physical touch)
- Online worship options continue
- Online meetings, classes, and gatherings encouraged (some small groups can meet with proper precautions – Appendix A)
- Possible classes, nursery, coffee fellowship and events with precautions
- Church office – functioning as needed

**Stage 4** of the gradual re-opening can commence once our Church Council/Leadership Team have evaluated all Stage 4 Requirements and Covid-19 guidelines provided by state and county health departments, CDC guidelines, North Texas Conference UMC Bishop, and any other resources deemed pertinent.

**Stage 4 Requirements:**

- COVID-19 vaccine is widely available and/or COVID-19 is no longer considered a threat by authorities

**Stage 4 Practices**

- In-person worship with minimal restrictions to be determined
- Reasonable precautions for personal protection and sanitizing still available
- Online worship options continue
- Regular group meetings inside the church, with online options continuing
- Church office regular hours; nursery open; choir resumes

***\*Note: If the number of COVID-19 virus infections rises again during any of these stages, or if someone attending a service tests positive for COVID-19 (see Appendix E), our Church Council/Leadership Team will determine if we need to go back to having online worship only and will communicate this to our congregation.***

- This plan is subject to change as new information becomes available.
- Adapting church in the time of a pandemic requires additional costs, so financial resources will be critical in maintaining safety of the congregation and providing additional online capabilities.
- Throughout the stages, the church will need to monitor psychological impacts, staff concerns, pastoral care, and other possible issues and opportunities.
- Re-opening depends on having enough reliable volunteers to help enact safety practices.
- See following Appendices for additional details.

## **Appendix A: Guidelines for Safely Meeting in Small Groups**

This document is to help small groups safely gather as they are ready. The Grace Relaunch team encourages meeting online (e.g., Zoom) whenever possible, but sometimes it is important to see people in person. If you have a small group that wants to gather in person, please observe the following guidelines until new guidelines are issued. When it is not really safe or feasible to meet in the church building, we recommend meeting outdoors, possibly on the church lawn or parking lot or at a home with a large yard. If meeting on church property, please notify the church office ahead of time to schedule (so there are no conflicting group meetings).

### **Here are guidelines to maximize safety at gatherings (effective June 9, 2020):**

- Limit group size to 10-12, depending on available space for keeping distance.
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between people or family units.
- If available, take people's temperature with an infrared thermometer. Contact the church office if you need to borrow one. Temperature over 100.4 should not participate and should be directed to contact a doctor as a precaution.
- Bring your own chairs and minimize touching of common objects.
- Wear masks (contact the church if you need help getting masks).
- Cover any coughs or sneezes.
- Avoid touching your face, and wash hands after meeting.
- The coronavirus is more likely to spread in the following circumstances, so use caution accordingly:
  - People in enclosed environments
  - Participants in a high-risk group (older adults; pre-existing health conditions or immune deficiencies, especially diabetes or respiratory problems)
  - Staying in close proximity to others for prolonged time
  - High wind conditions
  - Loud talking or singing
- Do not attend if you are experiencing any possible COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., coughing, fever/chills, shortness of breath, body aches, sore throat, reduced sense of smell or taste).

***Please make sure all group attendees get a copy of these guidelines before meeting.*** Prayerfully consider how you can all have safe fellowship together. The Relaunch Team will continue to monitor local conditions and trends in hopes of returning to the church building soon. Safety is always the #1 priority. We will communicate any changes.

#DoNoHarm

For updated state information: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

**Appendix B: Plan for Necessary Church Volunteers for Re-opening**

<b>Volunteer title</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Purpose/Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Greeter	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stand at entrance to greet and remind of mask requirement and process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prop doors open.</li> <li>Point out signage.</li> <li>Greet and direct people.</li> </ul>
Usher	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist attendees to find and secure appropriate seating.</li> <li>Remind of need to wear face covering and maintain distance in worship center.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seat people in front first, then work toward the back.</li> <li>People in back will exit first.</li> </ul>
Bathroom monitor	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain one visitor at a time for each restroom before and after service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exception for parents accompanying kids.</li> </ul>
Temperature checker	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each checker will scan forehead from safe distance as people arrive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If temperature of 100.4 or above is recorded, a second scan will take place and then a member of the task force will assist the attendee by providing them with instructions for what to do next.</li> </ul>
COVID-19 task force member	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend to any issues or questions that come up regarding compliance with rules of attendance (masks, seating, distancing).</li> <li>Assist any attendee with handout in the event of a 100.4 temperature reading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If temperature of 100.4 or above is recorded, member of the task force will assist the attendee by providing them with a handout and instructions for what to do next.</li> </ul>
Hand Sanitizer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Squirt sanitizer into hands of attendees upon entering Celebration Center.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unless we have automated dispensers on each side of doors for faster administration</li> </ul>

Building preparation and cleaning	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wipe down all hard services prior to each worship (Sunday morning).</li> <li>• Wipe down all hard services post service (mid-week).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doors, doorknobs, tables, chairs, music stands, pulpit, piano, microphones</li> <li>• Coordinate with church custodian and office.</li> </ul>
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### Appendix C: Protective Supplies and Equipment

\*Most items are available from Quill.com in Fort Worth (fast delivery and a place we already order from).

#### Cleaning Supplies:

- Oxivir Tb All-Purpose Cleaner Disinfectant (\$30 per 32 oz bottle) – spray on surface; allow 1 minute to sit; wipe down with rag
- Rags (\$12.99 per 24-pack)
- Brighton Professional™ LTX-7™ Touch-Free Hand Soap Dispenser (\$35.99 each)
- PURELL Advanced Green Cert Gel Hand Sanitizer Refill for LTX-12 TF Dispenser (\$36.99 per 2-count)
- Hand sanitizer (\$55.59 per 12-count of 8 oz bottles)
- Hand sanitizer bulk refill (check at Sam’s Club)

#### Protective Equipment:

- Face masks – cloth (being made by church members); disposable ear-loop (\$31.99 per box of 50)
- Nitrile gloves (\$25 per 100-count) – get medium, large & XL if available
- Goggles for cleaning – will check on need
- Infrared thermometers (\$77 each; church has 2 already)
- No-touch hand sanitizer stations – something to consider
- Installed Air Knight air purification system with a TechPure germicidal UV light (\$1,064 – Webb’s) – investigating further

## Appendix D: Signage Needed

Signage needed for re-opening (size, lamination, etc. to be determined):

1. To maintain physical distancing
  - 3 signs: Signs at front door on building as you enter and in restrooms (only the front two restrooms will be open).
  - Use tape and possibly graphics from these signs from CDC on sidewalk and in building to show 6-foot rule.
2. To wear cloth face coverings
  - 2 Signs at front door
  - 4 additional postings throughout worship center and halls
  - 2 signs in restrooms – (1 per restroom)
3. About entrances and exits
  - Enter here; Exit here
  - Consider arrows on floor
4. About COVID-19 symptoms
  - Posted in restrooms
  - 2 additional signs in building
  - Handout to be given at temperature check station if someone is 100.4 or higher
5. How to wash and disinfect hands
  - 2 signs (one each in restrooms)
  - Additional sign at hand sanitizer station(s)
6. To maintain physical distancing in restrooms
  - 2 in hall
  - 2 in restrooms (1 per restroom)
7. General re-opening sign to be placed at 1417 near Grace UMC sign.
8. Banner at front entrance that summarizes all precautions.

Note: We can use the CDC print materials posted online for most of our required postings. From CDC page: [The CDC provides signage and templates to create your own: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc) We can also use these graphics for our online webpage.

Notes from CDC page: [The CDC provides signage and templates to create your own: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc)

Place mark(er)s on the ground outdoors in front of all entry and exit doors at 6-foot intervals to ensure distancing is maintained between individuals and co-sheltering household groups on entry and exit. Do the same for indoor traffic areas. This

includes pathways to restrooms if restrooms can be made available safely. Consider using a separate entrance and exit to avoid people entering and exiting the same doorway at the same time.

### **Appendix E: Guidelines and Protocols in Case of a Church COVID-19 Infection**

If someone has attended an in-person worship service or gathering at Grace UMC and then tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, they need to contact the church office (903-892-3681) to let them know. Include which in-person worship service you attended (date/time). Grace UMC will maintain a list of all people that attend each in-person worship service. The Breeze software will help with this. Congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 should not return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Grace UMC will notify local county health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and will provide a list of people that attended that in-person worship service and were possibly exposed. The church will communicate with church staff and congregants about potential exposure, while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws. The church will assist with contact tracing as required.

In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, it is strongly suggested to properly clean and disinfect the area and the building where the individual was present before resuming activities.

The church will use the following principles for interactions with all persons exposed to Covid-19 at Grace UMC:

- Ensure and protect confidentiality. Demonstrate ethical and professional conduct.
- Create a judgment-free zone. Be open-minded (everyone has a unique story).
- Be attentive and respectful. Be aware of your own bias (cultural humility).
- Establish open dialogue and pause often to listen. Ask open-ended questions.
- Use reflective listening techniques and culturally appropriate language.
- Employ critical thinking and problem solving.
- Adapt to address concerns/information that naturally arise during conversation.
- Identify areas of need and link to appropriate resources.
- Don't overstep or overpromise.

#### **Possible COVID-19 Symptoms:**

Fever/chills; shortness of breath; cough/sore throat; diarrhea/GI; head or muscle aches; vomiting; abdominal pain; nasal congestion; loss of sense of taste or smell; fatigue/malaise; bluish lips; persistent pain; new confusion

#### **Grayson County Health Department**

July 1, 2020

Emergency disease reporting (24/7): 903-821-5027  
Sherman: M-F 8-5 (closed 12-1); 903-893-0131 Ext: 1235 or 1237

## Appendix F: Resources

CDC Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html>

Texas Health & Human Services Coronavirus Site: <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

Open Texas Health Protocols: <https://open.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/OpenTexas-Checklist-Churches-Places-of-Worship.pdf>

UMC North Texas Conference Resources: <https://ntcumc.org/coronavirus-resources>

UMC Minnesota Conference Resources: <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/newsdetail/returning-to-in-person-worship-13651907>

Wisconsin Council of Churches Resources: <https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>

Wisconsin Council of Churches Plan: <https://files.constantcontact.com/609026de701/f6ee6132-df4d-4b93-86a8-18316c295566.pdf>

Virginia Church Reopening Handbook: <http://doc.vaumc.org/News2020/HandbookforLocalChurches.pdf>

Blog – COVID-19 Risks: <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>

Blog – Risks for Churches: <https://www.kevinathompson.com/go-wal-mart-not-church/>

Blog – On Reopening Churches: <https://careynieuwhof.com/when-your-church-reopens-what-will-be-left-and-who-will-still-come-some-thoughts/>

Blog – On Reopening Churches: <https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/why-reopening-a-church-is-different/>

Blog – Why not rushing back: <https://mailchi.mp/fprespa/pandemic-response-may-2020>

Singing in Church:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFI3GsVzj6Q>

<https://www.drheathernelson.com/singingandcovid19>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNzGkflAkZQ>

<https://www.middleclassartist.com/post/nats-panel-of-experts-lays-out-sobering-future-for-singers-no-vaccine-no-safe-public-singing>

<https://www.prcli.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Returning-to-Church-Church-Music-final.pdf>

## **Appendix G: Communication Plan**

Grace UMC will need extra communication with the congregation and the community throughout the re-opening stages. Here are some communication methods and ideas to consider. The Church Council will continue to develop more specific communication needs and responses.

### **Communication Methods**

- E-mail to members and constituents (from church office or pastor)
  - a. Weekly newsletter
  - b. Frequent reminders and links for online or in-person opportunities for worship, study or fellowship
- Texts to members and constituents (from church office or pastor)
  - c. Frequent reminders and links for online or in-person opportunities for Worship, study or fellowship
  - d. Links to video announcements
- Facebook
  - e. Weekly posts and reminders about online worship opportunities
  - f. Frequent posts (scripture, inspiration, notice of events or church announcements)
  - g. Respond to people posting or asking questions (in real-time during Sunday services)
  - h. Create Facebook event pages as appropriate
- Church Web Site
  - i. Create a COVID-19 information page with the church re-opening plan and other relevant resources and links
  - j. Make a visible link to Sunday online worship services
  - k. Maintain links to see past services
- Phone Calling
  - l. Pastor call people who need help/prayers or who have become disconnected
  - m. Lay members (organized by Church Council) call people periodically for brief check-ins

## **Appendix H: Handout in Case of High Temperature at Church**

As part of the church reopening criteria we are taking each person's temperature before entering the building. Based on CDC guidelines, the temperature limit for any individual to enter the building is less than 100.4 degrees.

The purpose of our process is to keep everyone safe as possible and to limit possible exposure to the COVID-19 virus. If you have registered a temperature of 100.4 or greater, you may not enter the building. Please note that an elevated temperature is only one symptom of COVID-19; the others are listed on the attached handout. Though not everyone with an elevated temperature is infected with the COVID-19 virus, we suggest notifying a healthcare provider to be sure. If you test positive for COVID-19, please contact the church office immediately:

Grace United Methodist Church  
2800 Canyon Creek Dr. Sherman, TX 75092  
903-892-3681

Based on the temperature finding today, you may wonder, "when can I return to church?" The CDC and the Grayson County Health Department (GCHD) guideline indicate a waiting period of 14 days from the date you no longer have symptoms. We are loving each other during this time by limiting exposure to each other.

*The GCHD reminds people that if that they have traveled to an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19 or have had contact with someone who has COVID-19 and have developed fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath within 14 days of that travel, they should call their healthcare provider. To prevent potential spread, they should alert their provider before arriving to the provider's office or emergency department.*

*It is important to practice social distancing and follow the Grayson County Health Department's Isolation or Quarantine Orders. The Grayson County Health Department (GDHD) 24/7 number for doctors to report positive cases to on a 24/7 basis is 903-821-5027. By law, all testing must be reported to (GCHD).*

Matthew 22: 37-39 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself."

Grace UMC is here to help. If we can be in prayer with you during this time, please contact the church. If you are interested in Stephen Ministry, please leave a message for Sue Ann Spencer through the church and she will contact you to encourage and discuss resources available.

Healthy Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>