

Returning to Familiar Rhythms

Grand Blanc United Methodist Church

August 2021

As the CDC continues to provide updated recommendations regarding COVID-19, and as benchmark statistics in Genesee County continue to remain at lower risk levels, Pastor Brian and the GBUMC Ad Council are ready to take significant steps toward resuming many of our regular ministry opportunities. As we move into more familiar rhythms of the church's life, please remember these two important things:

(1) For a time, there will be those who may still have reservations about returning to in-person and/or indoor gatherings. While those who have been vaccinated against the Novel Coronavirus are at significantly lower risk of succumbing to and transmitting COVID-19, everyone is assessing their risk level differently and in an appropriate way for themselves and their families. Furthermore, a significant number of our neighbors and congregants are not yet able to be vaccinated, namely children under the age of 12. It is important that we, as a congregation, remain understanding, compassionate toward, and sympathetic of one another in this season of re-establishing a new rhythm of our daily lives.

(2) While conditions in our area have improved immensely, we will continue to monitor the same COVID-19 benchmarks in our area and heed the collective advice and wisdom of those in the scientific-medical community (*i.e. the CDC*). While we hope and pray that we will not need to re-establish previous precautions against COVID-19, our first priority – to love and care for the wellbeing of our neighbors and you, our congregation – will remain.

Masks & Social Distancing

- We will no longer be asking those who are *fully vaccinated against COVID-19* to wear a mask, indoors or outdoors. Following the CDC guidelines, we *will* continue to ask those who are unvaccinated against COVID-19 (including children over the age of 2) to continue to properly wear a mask.
- We will no longer ask individuals *who are fully vaccinated* to social distance. Those who are *unvaccinated* will continue to be asked to social distance, particularly in classrooms and spaces where children under the age of 12 (unvaccinated) will be gathering.

Please be assured that masks will always be allowed and encouraged in the church for those who prefer to wear one for health purposes, regardless of vaccination status.

Worship

- Beginning September 2021, we will return to the typical worship schedule of 9:00am and 11:00am, with both services being held in our sanctuary. The 9:00am service will continue to be streamed LIVE for those who will choose that option. In large part, the worship styles and practices will resume, as well, along with some of Pastor Brian's new elements.
- As you join us for worship, please be reminded that the worship attendance may not initially return to its familiar levels as we continue in this uncertain season. It is worth noting that the evolution of our

virtual option, though not ideal for all, has been helpful for some. We will continue to monitor our attendance there, too.

Small Groups

- Small groups will continue to be able to meet in classrooms and gathering spaces, following masking and distancing guidelines for those who are *unvaccinated*. Hopefully, small groups can also consider providing continued virtual means for individuals to participate. It is also entirely appropriate for small groups, teams, and committees to continue meeting virtually if and when they choose to. It is reasonable to assume that we have discovered a helpful tool in the form of virtual meeting rooms!

For parents and families, please know that ministries designed specifically for children and older youth will continue to be mindful that everyone has different levels of comfort with indoor/in-person gatherings. Where possible and prudent, creative ways (*i.e. outdoor, virtual, etc.*) for engaging *all* children in meaningful discipleship will continue to be a focus and commitment of this church.

Fellowship and Food

- Fellowship/Coffee Hour on Sundays, meals, luncheons, and hall rentals will be able to resume. One change you will notice is that all food, including potluck items, will be served cafeteria style rather than Buffet or Family Style.

Office Hours

- Effective Tuesday, September 7, the office will resume its regular office hours of Monday-Friday, 9:00am-4:00pm.

Other Considerations:

In an effort to demonstrate solidarity with *all* our brothers and sisters in Christ, let us make sure that we continue to create a hospitable and safe environment for all our neighbors, of all ages. This is a time for radical hospitality and kindness!

Even as we approach a greater percentage of vaccinated persons, and continue to experience low-risk conditions, it is important to note that a positive COVID-19 case in the church is entirely possible. We ask that you continue to be mindful of your own health, and remain home should you not be feeling your best. Should we become aware of a positive COVID-19 case, the congregation will be notified in a way that maintains the anonymity of the individual, but still cares for the wellbeing of all. All ministries and programs will continue as planned unless we are instructed otherwise.

We will continue to maintain safe and effective cleaning methods to help maintain as much of a low-risk environment as possible, for everyone. Please help to do your part by washing your hands and covering sneezes and coughs.

Finally, remember that despite all that we have faced and the challenges we have yet to face, we move forward in trust and with thanksgiving for the One who sustains us through the power of God's almighty grace. *This* is God's will for us!