

12/10/21

Dear Friends of Grace,

While we all hoped we wouldn't have to ever send out a message like this again, we cannot ignore the reality that is the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the past week in Ohio we have seen 9,000 - 11,000 new cases of Covid a day, increased hospitalizations, and increased deaths. As I write this letter on December 17th, the 21-day average deaths from Covid-19 in Ohio is 74 - but we've had 434 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Cleveland Clinic has shared publicly this week that their ICUs were nearing capacity. We have heard as well that nearly all area hospitals are at or above full capacity. The Governor shared today that hospitalizations have not been this high since December 22, 2020 and most hospitals in the area are also operating with less staff than they were a year ago.

We all should be in prayer for our community and hospital staff.

The Firelands District Office has asked all churches to re-implement health safety measures. And, thankfully at Grace, we have never stopped in doing our due diligence. I want to thank all of you for your willingness to wear a mask, get vaccinated and boosted, to social distance, and to keep each other safe. **If you are not vaccinated and boosted, we urge you for your health and the health of others to do so as soon as possible.** We are relieved and grateful that, to our knowledge, no one in our community has gotten Covid due to being in worship at Grace. We want to keep it that way.

For the time being, our worship in the sanctuary will remain as is. We want to remind all members of Grace that masks are required at all times while in the building and to leave distance between household units at worship. We will also resume propping doors open during church to allow for air flow. It's also vital that all church members monitor themselves for symptoms before coming to church. Even if you think it's "just a cold," unless you have a negative Covid test, you should worship at home that day.

All our services are livestreamed, on Facebook, YouTube, and our website. If you need help in accessing those, please contact the church office.

As a further safety measure, **Coffee Fellowship will be suspended until further notice.** If people would like to gather and fellowship after the service without snacks and beverages, you are welcome to gather, masked, in the fellowship hall.

Meetings will also continue as hybrid (in-person and online) but we encourage virtual involvement over in-person when possible.

As Christmas quickly approaches, we pray and hope that everyone has a joyous, merry, and *safe* Christmas.

Sincerely,

Pastor Allison & The Safe Start Team