

We're back! Or, at least we will be starting June 14<sup>th</sup>. The reality is that we've never gone away. But, like you, we are excited to be back at both our Alamogordo and Tularosa campuses for Sunday morning worship. We are also excited that our online worship on Facebook and YouTube will continue. So, while you may not be ready to join us in-person on the 14<sup>th</sup> as that might be the best decision for you and your family at this time, you'll still be able to worship with us online, and we sure hope you do! Below are all the details you need to know about how we're keeping our in-person sanctuary worship experience safe and healthy for everyone.

#### SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES & LOCATIONS

8 AM – Alamogordo Campus (*no live streaming*)

9:30 AM – Alamogordo Campus & Online Campus (live streaming on Facebook & YouTube)

11 AM – Tularosa Campus (*no live streaming*)

All other church activities (including Sunday morning Sunday School classes and fellowship hours) remain suspended until further notice. A cleaning crew will clean and sanitize bathrooms and high contact areas between all worship services.

#### SELF SCREENING

We expect everyone who plans to join us for any sanctuary worship to check for the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Repeated shaking w/chills
- Loss of taste or smell

If you believe you may have *any* of the above symptoms, please do not come to either our Alamogordo or Tularosa campuses for worship, but rather worship with us online at 9:30 AM. In this event, we strongly encourage you to contact your health care provider to discuss your symptoms. We trust that all vulnerable persons (older adults and those with serious underlying health conditions) are using their best judgement before they begin to worship with us in-person.

#### ARRIVING AT CHURCH & WALKING INTO THE SANCTUARY

When you arrive at our campuses, parking will remain as it always was. However, as only the East sanctuary doors (Cuba Ave) of our Alamogordo campus, and the sanctuary doors at the top of the stairs at Tularosa will be unlocked, we ask that those who are able to park farther away and walk to these entrances do so to allow the closer spaces for those who are not as able to walk as far.

Again, only the East sanctuary doors (Cuba Ave) at Alamogordo will be unlocked and propped open, and only the sanctuary doors at the top of the exterior steps of our Tularosa campus will be unlocked and propped open. *All other doors* into the buildings will be locked. Please do not attempt to enter our buildings through any other doors than the ones mentioned even if you have a key to those doors. As you approach the approved entrances, a gloved/masked greeter will welcome you to our campuses. You will notice hand sanitizing stations immediately as you enter our building so that everyone can sanitize their hands as they enter our campuses. Anything that may be handed to you as you enter our sanctuaries (printed handouts, communion elements, etc.) will be handed to you by a gloved/masked volunteer. Printed handouts and/or orders of worship will not be as prevalent as they were before to reduce the risk of exposure. Also, you will notice a clear entrance flow of traffic as you enter the sanctuaries; we ask that you follow these traffic paths as you find a place to sit.

Please do not congregate in the parking lot, in the narthex/foyer areas, or in the sanctuary. Simply enter the doors, sanitize your hands, be sure to pick up any worship elements that our gloved/masked greeters may be handing out, and find a place to sit.

#### WHAT ABOUT MASKS?

As masks are required in all public spaces by the State of New Mexico, we're encouraging all who worship at our physical campuses to wear a mask when they join us for Sunday worship unless otherwise advised by a healthcare provider. No one will be turned away for not wearing a mask, and we will continue to be a church that welcomes all. For those who want a new, hand-made, individually packaged facemask, plenty will be available in the narthex/foyer areas. If you take one of these masks, we ask that you keep it, use it throughout the week, and be sure to bring it with you each week to worship. All working staff and worship volunteers will be wearing a mask unless they are seated in the chancel (front) areas of our sanctuaries.

#### SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE PEWS/SEATING AREAS

We encourage all worshiping units to practice social distancing of at least 6 ft. during your entire time on campus. A unit refers to an individual, couple, or family who have already been exposed to one another. As you enter the sanctuaries, you will notice that every other pew will be closed off. Please do not attempt to sit in a pew that is clearly marked as closed. Every open pew will have 6 ft. blocks marked on it. We ask that units (individuals, couples, families) sit a full 6 ft. block away from any other unit in that pew.

*Letter continues on back/next page.*

Due to the possibility of limited seating, overflow seating will be available at both campuses. Overflow seating will be available in the cleaned/sanitized Fellowship Hall for the 9:30 AM Alamogordo Service only, and the online stream from the sanctuary will be displayed on a projector screen. For the 11 AM Tularosa campus service, overflow seating will be offered in the cleaned/sanitized Fellowship Hall in the basement utilizing a closed-circuit speaker system. Six-foot social distanced seating will be provided and practiced in these overflow spaces. Overflow seating *will not* be available at our 8 AM Alamogordo service. Should we have too many people at that service, individuals may need to come back for our 9:30 AM Alamogordo or 11 AM Tularosa services, or worship online.

#### COMMUNION

When Communion is practiced on our physical campuses (each Sunday in Alamogordo & 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month in Tularosa), you will find masked/gloved persons handing out individually packaged communion wafers and juice to each worshiper who wishes to have one. You will hold onto these elements for the entire service leading up to the time of Communion. Then, remaining in your pew/seat, we will participate together as we open our packages and partake in communion as one body. Masked and gloved ushers will be standing by to assist individuals who may need help opening their packages. Trash receptacles will be accessible as you exit the sanctuary at the end of services to dispose of your emptied packages.

#### CONGREGATIONAL SINGING AND CHOIRS

For us to return to our sanctuaries in a way that is safe for everyone, we are discontinuing all vocal choirs/ensembles as well as congregational singing. We are doing this because studies are showing that the lung energy used in singing greatly increases the spread of COVID-19 among groups of people. While this may be one of the most challenging changes we're putting into place, we believe that our personal presence with one another is more important than even our most beloved songs and hymns. Christians have been conscious and wise about health and safety for 2,000 years of worship, and we will continue to operate out of that wisdom at Grace UMC during this time. Creative ways of participatory worship, including vocal solos and instrumental specials, spoken prayers, call and response psalms and hymns, etc. will be used, and we're excited about how God will teach us all new things as we discover a new way to worship together.

#### ATTENDANCE & OFFERING

Before each service, a gloved/masked volunteer has placed new offering envelopes and pens in each pew. We're asking every unit to fill out and turn in one of these envelopes *even if* they are not using it for their financial offering. During the service, grab one envelope per unit (individual, couple, or family), fill it out with the names of your party on the front, insert your financial offering if you have one, and place it in the offering collection boxes in the narthex/foyers areas as you exit the sanctuary at the end of worship. We encourage you to use your own pen if you have one. If you need to use one of the provided pens in your pew, please *do not* put the pen back in the pew but keep it with you and bring it back for your personal use next week.

#### EXITING THE SANCTUARY

Just as you entered along a clear traffic path, you will exit along a clear traffic path. At the end of the service, ushers will guide people along these exit paths pew by pew. Please wait in your seat and enjoy the postlude music until it is time for your pew to exit the sanctuary. Remember, as you are exiting, be sure to look for the trash receptacles for your empty communion packages and look for the collection boxes for your attendance/offering envelopes. Pastor Kelly *will not* be standing at the exits of our sanctuaries to say goodbye to each of you for the foreseeable future. We ask that you do not congregate in the sanctuary, narthex/foyer areas, or in the parking lot as you leave campus

#### CHILDREN AND NURSERY

Children are always welcome in both of our physical sanctuaries; however, we will not be providing any nursery ministry at this time, nor will children be able to come to the front of the sanctuaries for the children's moment/sermon.

#### RESTROOMS

Should you need to use one of our cleaned and sanitized restrooms, feel free to do so, but please do not venture into any other area of our buildings. The sanctuaries and restrooms should be the only building areas that are used on Sundays.

In closing, our ability to continue to worship together in our sanctuaries *greatly relies* on your ability as a congregation to follow these guidelines, each of which are required of us by the CDC or the State of New Mexico for us to welcome you back into our sanctuaries. We trust that Holy Spirit wisdom will rest on each of us as we return to in-person worship, and we pray that no matter where we worship—online, Tularosa, or Alamogordo—that God would fill us even more with His Spirit, and that we will make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world like never before!

With peace in Christ,  
Pastor Kelly and the Grace UMC Leadership Team