



Wednesday March 18, 2020

All Grace Church parish updates and info relating to the **COVID19** Event can be found on the Grace Church website:

www.graceoldsaybrook.org

(click on the “**COVID19**” drop-down menu-button at the top of screen)

On our website you will find updated service info, prayers, donation suggestions & other resources.

Those without internet may feel free to call the church office or Pastor Charlie at the contact numbers listed at the end of this letter

Dear Grace Church Family,

I am sorry to inform you all that I have made the difficult **decision to cancel ALL services and events at Grace Church for at least the next 3 weeks**, including Sunday worship services, the Wednesday Healing Service (and community meal in Parish Hall canceled by SSKP), as well as any other events that were scheduled. As we approach Easter we will again reassess. In addition, all other groups that meet at Grace have their meetings canceled inside the church. With the hourly changing social-distancing constraints, the gatherings for worship services have become untenable. As you are certainly aware, things are evolving quickly and in a much more precautionary manner. As I noted in my email this past Saturday, it breaks my heart to have to make this decision, but it appears to be the direction we must now go. I still believe that we have much work to do as God's Church, and to that end, I will be offering a variety of other forms of worship in the next few weeks. Through at least Sunday April 5 (Palm Sunday), here is the plan for worship options at this point:

WORSHIP OPTIONS THROUGH SUNDAY APRIL 5th

- On **Sundays**, I will be present outside the church, by myself, doing **morning prayer** at **8am** and **10am**, walking the property and sitting on front benches. I will do this to

maintain some integrity with our normal service schedule, as well as to be a visible presence of prayer on Main Street to let the people in the community know that God's work and mission has not stopped; in fact, in some ways, it has only increased.

- At 9am on Sundays, I will work with a small team of people to video record a service. This **service will be live-streamed** through Zoom (internet service) and then onto our Facebook page as well as put up on YouTube and onto our own website (www.graceoldsaybrook.org). All info on how to access and join in there services will be on our website within the next week. We will also have recordings of the sermon which will be available to be heard on our website or sent to you at home, as usual. You can contact Kate McKinney to order those at **gracechurchdigital@gmail.com**
- Though the doors to the church will remain locked, if you would like to use the sanctuary for private prayer or to pray with me, please let me know. All my contact info is below. We, of course, will be very careful about this possibility, using all precautions necessary, and I will evaluate the safety on a case-by-case basis.
- Private home and hospital visits are also possible, but again with precautionary steps in mind, and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. I will also be brainstorming other creative ways to possibly get Holy Communion and prayer to individuals and families. Keep an eye out on our website for more info.

As we move forward in our lives together in the next few weeks, I ask that you keep a few other things in mind. Pray, and keep praying! In addition, I have a team of volunteers who will be in touch with parishioners for a variety of needs or emergencies. The church has some resources to help in a variety of cases, and access to some other resources. As with worship services, through at least Sunday April 5, here are some other things to be aware of and looking out for in the time to come:

RESOURCE NEEDS AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE THROUGH APRIL 5

- Grace Church does have a few older parishioners who may need extra assistance and attention in the coming weeks for food, prayer, health concerns and general love. I will be making calls to all those in the high-risk categories in the coming days to touch base with them and see how they are doing. But, please make use of your parish directory to call and keep in contact with some of our most vulnerable in the weeks to come as well. Another option would be to send greeting cards with love and encouragement to people in the parish, especially the most vulnerable and isolated. Loneliness will be a result of all this social distancing. If you need phone numbers or a directory to call or write someone, please let me know.
- If you or someone you know from Grace Church needs resources in the coming weeks, please contact me at any time with my contact info below. You can call the office, my cell, text or email me. Resources that may be needed may include (but not

be limited to) prayer, food, rides to doctors or grocery stores, or anywhere else.

- Grace Church also has the ability to house a few people as well, in *extreme emergencies*. We also may have access to limited financial resources, also in *extreme emergencies*. Let me be clear...as long as Grace Church is here, no one in our family will run out of food, or not have a roof over their heads.
- I have contacts at multiple agencies for other emergency needs. Of course, if you are sick, please consult your doctor. But I can be in contact with food pantries, social services, police and fire department as well as others, if anyone is in need.
- If you know someone in our family and community who is officially diagnosed with COVID19, please let me know ASAP. This will enable us to assist in any possible response as well as allow me and our prayer team to offer specific prayers and attention.
- Remember the high-risk groups for the COVID19 virus are people over 60 and those with suppressed immune systems. Though all people are at risk of catching and spreading it. So, health officials are recommending “social distancing” of 6-8 feet when you are visiting or speaking with someone, as well as only meeting in groups of less than 10 when/if necessary. At this point, grocery stores are open, and many bars/restaurants are open for pick-up/delivery. And don't forget... Keep your hands washed and sanitized often. If you get/are sick, call your doctor for more info.

For those of you who were able to attend or hear our last service this past Sunday, I leave you now with that message I preached about HOPE! Paul writes this in *Romans 5:1-11*:

‘Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.’”

By our faith in Jesus Christ, God pours His love into us to strengthen us and give us hope! Our hope is meant to be a light in our lives, especially in times of darkness. And as Jesus teaches us, we are not meant to hide our light under a bushel but set it out for all to see. My brothers and sisters, in the coming weeks...you and I, and the body of Christ (the Church) are called again to be the light of the world. We are called to be filled with the love and hope of God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, to stand on faith, not fear. We are called to remain calm and centered in God's Word and promises to us in life over death. We are called to seek and serve the lost, the lonely and the "least of these." We at Grace Church will work our hardest and safest, to protect and love and take care of one another, no matter what happens.

I will be in and out of my office, and in and out of prayer every single day, through the difficult days to come. Do not hesitate to reach out to me for anything. Keep in touch, keep in prayer, and most especially, keep the faith and hope of Jesus Christ burning in your hearts.

Grace and peace and love to all of you in Jesus Christ our Lord,

The Rev. Charlie Hamill

Rector, Grace Episcopal Church, Old Saybrook

RECTOR CONTACT INFO

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GENERAL GRACE CHURCH CONTACT INFO

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860-388-0895 (office phone) / www.graceoldsaybrook.org (our website)

For updated parish info click on "COVID19" on website

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