

As we enter into this winter season, I know we are all aware of the uptick in **COVID19** cases, not only across the country, but especially across Connecticut. I am constantly monitoring the state/Governor updates, as well as the local “color” statuses.

Currently, **Old Saybrook** is in “**orange**” status (down from “red” status a few weeks ago), and the state of **CT** is in **Phase 2**, which means that **25% capacity** is suggested in churches. Our church holds somewhere between 225-250 people, which means 25% capacity is **up to 60ish people**. At this point, we are averaging 10-20 people during Sunday services, with a low of 9 and high of 26. This puts us closer to 10%, which is way below the capacity suggestions. So, I feel comfortable in those numbers, allowing us to continue to worship in a safe and distanced manner. In addition, I still believe, as I have from the beginning, that with our other protocols, that though there will always be a risk, we are as safe as we can be through this...with open windows and exhaust fans, sanitizer, masks, social distance peace and a very safe format for Holy Communion. And, as long as everyone follows the symptoms and risk guidelines for themselves as well, I think we are doing good work. That means if you have been (or even think you have been) in contact with someone who tested positive or has flu-like symptoms, or have flu-like symptoms yourself, you should NOT be coming to church. If you are over 65 and/or have any underlying health conditions, you should think seriously about if coming to church is the right option for you. And finally in extra caution, if you are planning to gather with larger groups for Thanksgiving, from near or far, and can't be certain about possible COV!D spread, please consider not coming to church the Sundays after Thanksgiving, and instead viewing the services online.

Of course, I want to make sure we are all as safe as possible while continuing to share the sacramental presence of Christ at Grace and out into the community, and I believe we are doing this still as safely as we

can. And so, it is my intention (with the support of the Vestry) for the time being to keep in-person services going on **Sundays at 8am and 10am, and Saturday at 4pm.** We will also continue to **livestream the 10am service** onto Facebook and YouTube, so if you are unable or uncomfortable coming to church, the online version will always be available.

I know that it has been a long 8 months and looks to be a long winter. To that end, I want to encourage all of you to continue to reach out to each other in as many safe ways as possible: phone calls, texts, emails, or maybe even meeting somewhere with safe distance possibilities. In addition, please remember that I am available for conversations as well, or safe distance/masked visits. I am also open to any creative/safe ideas to get people together this winter! One idea we are looking to implement is to have fire side gatherings outside in the church backyard. More info on this will be forthcoming.

It is my continuing belief and prayer that this time in our lives can still be a time to not only keep walking with Christ in new and powerful ways, but in some aspects, this is a time to really dig deep into a more intentional discipleship. As we continue to have to live apart in many ways, with the uncertain fears and worries ever swirling around us, this is a time to know the Lord IS truly with us, and to seek to follow Him all the more. You all remain in my prayers, and if there is anything you need, whether it be spiritual or material, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or the Grace Church staff, or our Vestry.

May God bless you and keep you, may His face shine down upon you and be gracious to you; may He lift up His countenance and give you His peace, now and always.

In Christ

Charlie

Rector, Grace Church, Old Saybrook