

GELC Facility Usage Guidelines

Introduction

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (GELC) is a place of worship that is blessed to have an active ministry to children, youth, adults, and senior adults. It has a significant outreach into the community through the Stepping Stones Nursery School/Daycare and other social services. At this time, we would like to welcome you, your family, friends and your organization as part of our busy family whose primary purpose is to carry on its ministry. We know that you will respect the sanctity of our worship, education and fellowship spaces.

The programs and people are the top priority when it comes to facility use. Facility use activities fall under the jurisdiction of the Church Council. The Church Administrator manages facility use. No commitment for facility use is finalized until the *Room Use Agreement* has been completed and executed by the Church Administrator.

GELC has several long-standing relationships with several community organizations for ongoing use. Availability for such ongoing usage for local organizations and individuals is limited but can be considered for one-time or short-term usage. When possible, we attempt to make our facility available for such groups. Our priority is to programs and membership needs of the church. Priority is then given to nonprofit groups that are supported by the church.

GELC does not “rent” out space; however, use of the building, grounds, facilities and equipment does result in an expense to the church. This policy details fees that will be used to defray the expense.

Approval of the use of the grounds and facilities does not constitute or imply endorsement of a group, their mission, or their positions. Groups approved to use facilities must not advertise the event in such a way as to imply endorsement by the congregation. No activities or advocacy may take place within our facilities or grounds that conflict with the bylaws and the practices of this congregation and the denomination.

Included in this guide are the following:

- Steps to Facility Use Scheduling
- Fees for Facility Usage
- Rules and Regulations of the Church Council
- *Room Use Agreement* Form
- *Release and Indemnity Agreement* Form

Availability of the Facility

- Church related activities shall be given priority in facility usage.
- The size of the group shall not exceed maximum occupancy that has been established by the Hatfield Fire Marshall for the various areas.

Usage Areas Defined:

- The secured Stepping Stones space is only available evenings and weekends. If only part of it is needed, the specific classroom number or numbers should be noted.
- The Fellowship Hall may be used with or without the kitchen, if the kitchen is planned to be used it should be noted on the room usage form. The kitchen cannot be used without the Fellowship Hall.

- If the Fellowship Hall is requested during the hours that Stepping Stones is in session, the Meeting room must not be used by another group, since it is required for access to the Fellowship Hall.
- In the event of a Stepping Stones special event, Fellowship Hall will be requested through the established procedure outlined in this policy. This will secure the space for that date. If Fellowship Hall is unoccupied and no event is scheduled, Stepping Stones will be able to utilize the facility, returning it to its original condition before the end of the school day. Students will be napping in their classrooms and not in the Fellowship Hall.
- The Worship Space and Nursery includes use of the narthex area.
- One or more of the above areas may be requested on the Room Use Agreement.

Starting and Ending Times

- The secured Stepping Stones Classroom area is only available Monday-Friday 6:30 pm through 9:00 pm
- All areas are available on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. through 9:00 p.m.
- The Fellowship Hall & Kitchen as well as the Worship Space & Nursery will be available from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm for scheduling on weekdays
- The facility must be completely cleared no later than 9:30 p.m. to allow for a prompt closing. Exceptions to these times must be approved in advance and will be subject to a custodial surcharge.

Steps to Facility Use Scheduling

- Fill out a *Room Use Agreement* at least one month in advance. One is included in this guide, or you may obtain one from the church office or at our website: www.gracelutheranhatfield.com under the Contact Us tab.
- Attach any additional information you feel might be useful in helping us determine if we can accommodate your group.
- Return the *Room Use Agreement* to the Church Administrator who will evaluate your request and notify you if it is approved or not approved within seven (7) days. They can be reached by email at graceassistant40@gmail.com.

Fees for Facility Usage

For groups not affiliated in some way with GELC there will be a security deposit of \$300 due with the Room Use Request/Agreement which will be returned upon final usage and a successful inspection. If the event is cancelled the deposit will also be returned.

Impact fees are charged at the discretion of the Church Administrator considering factors such as setup requirements, number of participants, use of any special equipment, food and drink, etc. Based on these factors, impact fees may be more than these guideline amounts. Fees are to be paid 7 days in advance with the Church administrator. In the event the event should be cancelled, fees will be returned.

Rules and Regulations of the Church Council

All persons and/or groups using our facilities are expected to exercise reasonable care and judgment in such use to prevent defacement, damage, or breakage. The persons signing the application for use shall be responsible for paying costs incurred by the church in cleaning, repairing, or replacing any part of the building or its furnishings and equipment which in the judgment of the church administrator has been carelessly or irresponsibly subjected to more than normal wear and tear by the persons or group involved if it is in excess of the security deposit.

Insurance

All groups not part of GELC should provide the Church Administrator a hold harmless agreement and a certificate of insurance that demonstrates a minimum of \$500,000 in general liability coverage naming Grace as an additional insured on the organizations' liability policy upon approval of use.

Room Setups

All rooms have been designated with a standard room setup. A diagram of this standard for the room will be posted in the room. Any setup changes requested by the group are subject to approval by the Church Administrator and are considered in the calculation of Impact Fees noted above.

All room diagrams should be posted in the applicable room, kept current and provided to the Church Administrator and the local police department.

Clean-up of used space:

Users are expected to leave the facilities in good clean condition and returned to the original room setup. Trash should be placed in the receptacles provided. Floors should be clean; a mop and vacuum will be provided. Depending on the condition of the facility found after use some or all the security deposit may be kept. If the cost to return the facility to a good condition exceeds the security deposit an additional deposit may be requested, or the group may no longer be allowed to use the facility. This decision will be made by church council.

Kitchen Usage

Use of kitchen facilities is subject to prior approval by the Church Administrator.

Supplies

- The cleaning supplies are in the janitor closet off of the kitchen
- First Aid boxes are in each classroom, the kitchen and in the office work room. The classroom boxes will be placed above the sinks. First aid boxes are checked every quarter for supplies and expiration dates.

Emergency Exits

Emergency exits are labeled over the doors. Nothing should be placed in front of these doors or along the path to the doors so that they can be used in case of emergency.

During a power outage the building will have limited time on the emergency lights, limited time on the fire alarm system, and there will be no building ventilation. The phone and network services will also drop after 30 minutes. Arrangements should be made to evacuate the building if the power outage lasts longer than 30 minutes.

Master Calendar

A master calendar will exist and can be accessed by contacting the church administration.

Organ and Piano Use

Permission to use the organ or piano must be granted by the Minister of Music. If the user wishes to have instruments tuned, they will be tuned at the user's expense by a craftsman approved by the Minister of Music. Pianos cannot be moved except by permission from the Minister of Music, the Pastor or the chairperson of the Music and Worship Committee and may require the assistance of professional movers. If professional movers are required, the requesting group must pay for the moving and for tuning the piano after moving. If usage of the piano or organ is desired by Stepping Stones, they will make the request to the Minister of Music.

If permission is requested to use other musical instruments not owned by Grace, the group will need to seek permission from the owners directly.

Sanctuary Sound System

The Sanctuary sound reinforcement or recording systems are available upon request. Group-provided sound, recording, or video equipment may not be attached to this sound system through cables or connectors without prior approval.

Smoking Policy

All members of all groups using our facilities shall always abide by a “no smoking” rule in all parts of the building and on the grounds. Violation of this rule is sufficient grounds to immediately withdraw any group’s use of the facilities and/or to deny use in the future.

Alcohol Policy

Any group is prohibited from serving alcohol at an event without permission from the Church Council or their designee. This permission should be obtained before booking GELC facilities. A request for permission to serve alcohol at an event should include the following information:

- a. The specific alcoholic beverages being served (wine, beer, mixed drinks).
- b. The specific date and time of the event and location that it will take place.
- c. In addition, groups, not affiliated with GELC must purchase liability insurance for the event which includes liquor liability coverage.

The consumption of alcohol before weddings or other worship services, in the building or on the grounds is strictly prohibited. The only alcohol allowed during the worship service will be communion wine. Any guest or member of the wedding party who appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be dismissed from the property immediately. If the bride or groom appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the Pastor must postpone the marriage service, in accordance with the laws of Pennsylvania.

The consumption or use of marijuana, or narcotics shall not be permitted at any time on church property, including the playground and parking lots. Violation of this rule is sufficient grounds to immediately withdraw any group’s use of the facilities and/or to deny use in the future.

Final Decisions

In case of doubt or uncertainty by any outside person or group about the application or interpretation of these regulations, or in our customary practices not specifically mentioned here, the Church Administrator or their delegated representative shall decide the matter and all individuals and groups shall abide by the provided directions or forfeit immediately the use of any part of the facility.

Supervision of Children and Youth

This church has adopted a policy to comply with state child protection laws. All users of the facility are expected to follow all current state and federal laws related to child protection.

Due to state requirements, any volunteers or church personnel that access the Stepping Stones secured area, when they are in session, on a regular basis must follow all current state and federal laws and obtain the necessary clearances. If a volunteer or church personnel needs to access the Stepping Stones secured area, on a one-time basis, when they are in session, they will have to be escorted to and from their location.

Nursery Use

The nursery facility is available by arrangement prior to the event by contacting the Church Administrator.

Food and Drink

There is no food or drink allowed in the Sanctuary except water bottles. All other food and drink require approval in advance as noted in the Room Use Agreement.

Stepping Stones students will be eating their lunch in their classrooms. As required by state law, all their students' lunches are required to be refrigerated. A refrigerator will be designated for their usage.

Postings

Posting of papers whether church, Stepping Stones or community related should only be done on cork boards or strips provided for that purpose. The paper should be removed one week after the event has taken place. Other postings should contain the date posted.

Decorations

Decorations may be attached to the walls and doors with masking tape only. No decorating by outside groups is permitted in the hallways. All such decorations including tape must be removed immediately and completely following the event.

Seasonal decorations are permitted in the Stepping Stones area as long as they do not clutter, impede movement or access to other portions of the building.

Emergency Scheduling Conflicts

The church reserves the right to pre-empt any facility use for its own in cases of emergencies, such as funerals. Notice will be provided as early as possible.

Recycling

Residents of Hatfield Borough are required to recycle clear glass, aluminum cans and newspapers. Glass and aluminum cans are to be placed in a recycling container and papers in a paper bag. Everyone that uses the facility is responsible for complying with this policy.

Storage

There is no excess storage available for organizations other than church groups and, as such, all organizations using the facility will be responsible for storing props and accessories offsite. Exceptions must be approved by the Church Administrator.

Stepping Stones will have a designated closet that will be the teachers' resource room. They will share that space with Grace's Sunday School classes. Seasonal items will be stored in the basement.

Bicycles and Skateboards

No bicycles or skateboards are allowed inside the church facility. Bicycle racks are provided.

All Stepping Stones' bicycles and playground equipment will be kept in the shed.

Parking

Parking on the church campus is available only during the time that a group has contracted to use the facility. Parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Any damage to vehicles is at the owner's expense; the church is not responsible for theft or damage to personal property.

Our church works to maintain a safe and secure environment within the facility; however, no systems are foolproof. We ask that all users pay close attention to personal property and valuables, not leaving them unattended. The church is not responsible for theft or damage to personal property.

Document maintenance

Maintenance and Updates to this document can be made at any time with approval by the following:

- Church Council President
- Pastor
- Stepping Stones Director
- Property Maintenance Chairperson

The policy shall be reviewed annually for any changes, additions or corrections by the above individuals. A revised version will be placed on the GELC Website within one month of any revisions. Groups currently impacted by the changes will be notified of them by the Church Administrator.

April 1, 2026