

To My Grace Family –

I write this in the hope that all of you are making the best of this season of uncertainty and concern. I pray that the powerful message that our Pastors have delivered and reinforced in our online services has helped to provide you with a feeling of hope and direction.

I saw this quote in a recent sermon and thought it was a good summary: "Every hand we *don't* shake must become a phone call we *do* make." I believe that every measure of distance we put between ourselves and others must create opportunities for care and connection. Lots of things have been cancelled by this virus, but our ability to stay in touch and be there to help must not be one of them. I will be the first to say that I have not been as diligent as I want to be. I am not super comfortable on the phone and email feels impersonal, but each day brings a new opportunity and new resolve to do better; it's not too late.

Psalm 23 was read this past Sunday, a text that speaks to our walk through the valley, and reminds us how deep the well of despair can seem at times. Then, my recent daily Bible study reminded me that – "*Stars may be seen from the bottom of a deep well, when they cannot be discerned from the top of a mountain; so are the many things learned in adversity which the prosperous man dreams not of.*"

So my prayer for our Grace family is not that we will just survive and get by, but that we will thrive and grow together in new and creative ways as the Spirit moves us. Then perhaps we will look back at some point and remember this time because:

- Grace began a new & powerful outreach to stream our worship services to reach so many in our community and beyond
- You sat with your kids and did a puzzle or learned new board games
- You ate dinner as a family, maybe for the first time in a long time
- You made a phone call - or received one - and were blessed by conversation
- People not as comfortable with social media, learned how powerful a tool it is for connecting – and how real that connection can be
- You rediscovered the lost art of letter writing – and remembered how much fun it is to open your mailbox and see a letter from family or friend
- You finally found time to begin a Bible study or devotion time for yourself or with your family (or both!)

The list will go on and on, and we will remember that we do not just believe in the *idea* of God, but we see and experience His hand working in our lives every day, no matter what that day has in store.

I'd also ask that you please reach out through the church office, or to me directly if you need help with anything. An errand, a prescription, anything that you need and are not able to do for yourself. This is the time when we see the evidence of the power of the connections that unite this congregation - many of us know this from experience already, and we can all share in the ongoing holy blessing of this church family.

Take care, and please pray for each other.

John Grogan
Grace Council President