



August 18, 2020

Grace Family,

This brief letter is an update regarding our congregation's operations as we continue to follow the *Granting Grace to One Another* plan for returning to in-person ministry. At its meeting on Sunday, Council voted to continue operating in Stage One until Council meets again in September. Council will revisit the question at that time, continuing to discern the most faithful response in light of the pandemic.

I want to highlight just a few key factors in the decision that was made. First, while the number of new cases is going down, the percentage of positive tests in our state remains considerably higher than the national average. Additionally, recommendations from SC DHEC and the CDC noted that trends for consecutive days of decreasing results are indications of progress only when the number of tests administered each day is increasing. (Testing in our state is currently *decreasing*.) Finally, know that Council seriously reviewed and considered the responses from the recent survey, which reflected that most of the respondents are looking at the same data as Council, and making similar conclusions.

Regarding that survey, I want to say a heartfelt **Thank you** to all those who took the time to share your thoughts. The results have been summarized and are included in this week's Grace Notes, so we invite you to take the time to review them for yourself.

Importantly, we continue the commitment that a time of physically-distanced ministry will not mean a lack of ministry. Some ministry teams have already been finding creative ways to safely return to their work. Others are expanding their reach with new programs and opportunities for connection. We are exploring new ways to expand our connection with those who cannot easily take part in digital gatherings. We continue worshipping online, and making improvements regarding the accessibility and overall quality of our services - we have heard that some people relied on the emails on Sunday morning in order to worship, so those will be returning. We will also continue to make improvements in sound and appearance with each week. And finally, we will soon begin tackling those Missional Goals for 2020, using small, safe teams to make progress on those things we still believe God is calling us to accomplish.

This is a difficult time, to be sure. Yet the Church has made it through worse before, and we will make it through this pandemic. We are adapting and we will rise to this occasion, as the Holy Spirit rises in us.

Peace in Christ,

Pastor Gregg Hoffman
Senior Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church