

May 22, 2020

Dear Grace Family,

Last week, our council met to discuss a variety of topics, including our next steps as we walk through this COVID-19 crisis together. I was again so very impressed with how much time and effort each council member had invested in reading news releases and research in preparation for our conversation. At that meeting, our Council decided to ***extend our suspension of in-person activities at the church through June 15th***. The Council will meet again on June 15th for our regular meeting and will discuss further action as it is needed.

These are very difficult decisions. And, as has been the case each step of the way, the Council has been making decisions for our congregation that are later affirmed by our Governor and Bishop Tim. On Wednesday, Governor Cooper moved North Carolina into Phase 2 of reopening (<https://www.nc.gov/covid-19/staying-ahead-curve>). In Phase 2, indoor gatherings continue to be limited to 10 people and outdoor gatherings are limited to 25 people. This phase is scheduled to last 4-6 weeks.

It should be noted that religious organizations are exempt from these rules per the updated order from the Governor. However, as Bishop Tim has written, just because churches are allowed to gather, it does not mean that it is the right and faithful thing to do.

The Council is now looking for some feedback from everyone as to whether there is interest in pursuing a "drive-in" church option. The idea is that people would drive to church and remain in their cars for worship. Worship leaders would be visible and the sound would be transmitted so that it could be heard either over the internet or the car radio.

One positive aspect is that this would provide an opportunity for people to come to the church and sort of see one another from car to car. Another positive is that this could be a communion service, with people bringing their own communion elements. Please note that because of open container laws, we would need to ask everyone to only bring grape juice for the sacrament.

This service does present some challenges. We would need to figure out and invest in the technology to broadcast the worship service, both voices and music. There is some question about whether the quality of worship we could offer in the parking lot would exceed what we are currently able to provide online.

We are seeking the congregation's feedback on this option through an online poll. Please take a minute to click the link below and let us know what you think.

Regardless of what we decide to do about "drive-in" church, we are committed to continuing to provide our online worship on Sunday mornings at 10 AM on both YouTube and Facebook. And, we are going to continue with our monthly Wednesday evening Communion worship services. Please mark your calendar for the next Communion Worship service on June 24th.

I have been amazed at our resiliency as a congregation and our ability to find ways to continue to stay connected with each other and share God's love during this time. As always, if you have any questions or concerns please let me know.

In Grace,
Pastor Steve