

April 29, 2020

From Pastor Rich to the Members and Friends of Grace,

Well who could have thought that this virus, this COVID-19, would keep us away from worshipping together in our church home? *“Pastor, when are we going to get back together? Where is our faith!”* Or is it, *“Pastor, are we going to be that church that selfishly ignores Knox County’s recommendations, comes back together and sparks a new wave of infections!”*

Believe me I hear both reactions and I believe in the validity of both. There have been times in the Bible and church history where true believers could not publicly gather together to worship God. Faith did not disappear in people as they hid in catacombs or established secret house churches. But there have also been times when people braved meeting together come what may.

We are not under persecution and our government is not attacking our faith. Still, I am frustrated at the current situation. Part of me says this is overkill, that the government is infringing on our rights and we are destroying our economy. Another part of me says this is a serious and novel virus that could indeed kill millions. And we are our brother’s keeper. We are to exercise love for our community.

I think we can all say some good has come from this testing. I, for one have been learning some new things and rediscovering some old things that I have needed. In my calling of many of you, I have marveled at your creativity. You are gardening, fixing up your home, drawing close to family, walking, reading and learning new skills. Patience is a virtue, long neglected by many of us, but we are learning the value of it now.

With prayer and guidance, I have decided that we will not meet in our church buildings for the month of May. The recommendations from our County Government ask us not to sing, or have communion, or have more than 100 people at one time. It also says we must all wear masks and not be close to each

other. In addition we are supposed to wipe down the church in between services and not fellowship together or do extra activities. This is not worship for me. So we will look to the month of June and what they are calling Phase 2, to finally come together. Naturally we will take precautions and understand if people still prefer to use our online resources.

In the mean time we will continue with our online services and Zoom Bible Studies. We will also have drive- by Communion. On May 10, from 2-4 pm we invite you to drive to Grace and receive Communion from your cars.

I am most appreciative to the spirit of our congregation. It is encouraging to hear of the love for our church and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been given much and the Lord Jesus expects much from us. Let us be a shining light of devotion and love for our God and our community by serving our Lord and Savior in all we do.