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Step by Step: Relaunching Ministry and Making Plans to Gather for In-person Worship

Church Council and staff are working together with the Relaunch Guide Team to finalize a step by step plan to relaunch ministry and worship here at GUMC. Step 1 of the plan has been approved and is outlined in the letter included in this mailing. We will make the rest of the plan available as soon as it is finalized, in the meantime here are a couple things I can share with you:

We are beginning with smaller groups first. We all want to gather as soon and as safely as possible, and we believe a step by step approach will help us to do that successfully.

The good news is, Step 1 begins July 1 as Grace opens for small groups! Groups of up to 10 persons are welcome to meet here at the church. If your small group, Sunday school class or bible study or book club would like to get together, you can call or email the church office to schedule your meeting and reserve a room. This is also a great time to start that new study or class you have been thinking of too.

As we take this small step, we are tracking state, county and local data daily, as well as the averages every week. With recent spikes in numbers we are slowly moving forward in faith. We would very much like to see a downward trend before setting a date to gathering in larger groups and worship move to Step 2.

We don't have a date to relaunch in-person worship quite yet. We realize there will continue to be a wide range of emotions and opinions about gathering in-person again. Some people may not want to gather in-person anytime soon. Others have been ready to gather in-person for several weeks. Therefore, we will need to extend much grace to one another throughout the process.

We are grateful for our staff and volunteers who are working to prepare our facilities for your return. When a date is set, we will share it with you through email, on our website, in worship announcements, etc. In the meantime, we invite you to continue to worship with us online.

Bible Reading Plan

Summer in the Scriptures with Bishop Ken Carter

July	1	Mark 3
	2	Mark 4
	3	Mark 5
	4	Mark 6
	5	Mark 7
	6	Mark 8
	7	Mark 9
	8	Mark 10
	9	Mark 11
	10	Mark 12
	11	Mark 13
	12	Mark 14
	13	Mark 15
	14	Mark 16
	15	Luke 1
	16	Luke 2
	17	Luke 3
	18	Luke 4
	19	Luke 5
	20	Luke 6
	21	Luke 7
	22	Luke 8
	23	Luke 9
	24	Luke 10
	25	Luke 11
	26	Luke 12
	27	Luke 13
	28	Luke 14
	29	Luke 15
	30	Luke 16
	31	Luke 17

Other churches around us are open, why aren't we?

Every church is unique and every church's leadership team must be attentive to their congregation's needs. Some churches that have been open for a few weeks are now deciding to suspend services again because of the recent spike in cases. Other churches never closed at all. We continue to hold onto the mandate of Jesus when he said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Because we love you, because we love one another, we will work together to make wise decisions about how and when our church will reopen for ministry and in-person worship.

When we do return to in-person worship, things will be different. New requirements will be in place to help us all remain as healthy as possible. We will practice social distancing. Our seating will be arranged so that those in the same household may sit together, but those outside the household will sit in seats that are socially distanced six feet apart. We will wear face masks, sanitize hands, avoid greeting one another with hugs and handshakes, and find alternative ways to express our love for God and each other. We will replace passing the plate for offering with "giving boxes," and redesign the way we receive Holy Communion.

Our team is prayerfully seeking an answer as to how we worship if we cannot sing. Studies indicate that when people sing in groups, they create a higher risk for transmitting the virus. The findings also showed wearing a face mask does not preclude the risk of spreading the virus when singing.

There is a lot to consider and plan for, and we hope you will support us as we work together to create a welcoming and healthy environment for everyone. You may not be worried about contracting the virus yourself, but by going through these steps we are also caring for and protecting our friends and church family members.

As you can see, there is a lot to work through and this is merely the tip of the iceberg on the many decisions that must be made as we move toward in-person worship during a pandemic. I continue to ask for your prayers and cooperation as we finalize our plan.

Blessings,

Pastor Robin and the Relaunch Guide Team