



June 27, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Grace,

After many months of worshipping at home due to the Covid-19 virus, we know you are all eager to return to our church campus, to activities, and to worship. Likewise, the staff and volunteers at Grace also look forward to the day we can welcome you back safely. During these past few months, when we could not meet on campus, our church and its ministries continued, as we bravely and creatively adapted to our new reality and continued the work of the church in new and innovative ways. I could not be more proud of our staff, leaders, volunteers, and members; you are the church! We thank you for your understanding, and we ask for your continued patience as we make plans to faithfully, prayerfully, and safely relaunch ministry at our church.

Last month, the Relaunch Guide Team was established to help determine the next steps and guide our way forward at Grace. The guide team consists of members of the church who have backgrounds in healthcare, administration, communications, and safety. The team is receiving regular updates and input from the leaders in our denomination, state and federal officials, and governmental agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and the Florida Department of Health. They are prayerfully evaluating safety measures and exploring procedures to help keep the most vulnerable members of our church safe. As we work through this process, we will continue to offer online opportunities for worship, connection, and care.

The plan, as presented by the Relaunch Guide Team, is intended to be careful and cautious as we consider the specific needs and risks of our congregation and our community. We seek to respect other churches in our area that may make different decisions which result in different plans. Our goal is to be faithful to God and to you, our church and community. In all our work, we are prayerfully seeking to balance the needs and desires of individuals while also ensuring the health and safety of all. Love, care, safety, and concern for the wellbeing of every person and their families (especially those who are more vulnerable) will continue to be at the forefront of our minds as we work together to safely resume ministry.

The ministries of Grace United Methodist Church are rooted in the church's **vision** of being an intergenerational community of faith where God's grace is changing lives and making a difference in the world. Our **mission** is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Both our vision and mission are grounded in Jesus' Great Command to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31). This means that we strive to love God, love ourselves, and love our neighbors in all we do.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, lived by three simple rules: "Do No Harm, Do Good, and Stay in Love with God." As our guide team determines the measures needed to help us come back on campus, we will continue to keep these rules at the forefront, especially "Do No Harm." Not only does Wesley's view of "Do No Harm" guide us to mind the Golden Rule (given to us by Jesus in Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31) as we live with our neighbors and friends, he calls us to also find common ground with our viewpoints and intentions.

With all of this in mind, our guide team has developed a framework to slowly and safely begin to bring small groups, ministries, and eventually in-person worship back to our campus. On Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, members of the Church Council approved Step 1 of a 3-step relaunch plan entitled **Faithful, Prayerful, and Safe: Returning to Life & Ministry Together in a Time of Pandemic** (Step 1 attached). On the following Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, an email was sent by Bishop Ken Carter and the Cabinet of the Florida Annual Conference regarding the rising Covid-19 cases in Florida. In this letter, Bishop Carter states, "Churches should consider delaying plans to return to in-person worship." He says, "This is not a time to relax any of our previously stated health guidelines," and he reminds us, "the safest approach is to continue online worship."

Our leaders understand that the Relaunch Plan needs to be both practical and adaptable in order to meet the needs of our congregation and community in these ever-changing times. Our Guide Team is committed to making changes as necessary and will continue to work with the Church Council to determine next steps. We will continue to offer online worship services and other opportunities for spiritual growth. The focus of our pastor, staff, leaders, and volunteers will continue to be to love our neighbor and "Do No Harm" as we prayerfully and carefully move step by step toward the future and our new reality.

*Blessings,*

*Relaunch Guide Team*

*Tom Davis, Administration (Chairperson)*

*Dr. Will Cogburn, Public Health*

*Debbie Gailbreath, Facility Safety*

*Tari Waite, Communications*

*Beverly McFarland, Church Administrator*

*Vicki Mackey, Children & Family Ministry*

*Rev. Robin Hager, Pastor*

June 23, 2020

**Faithful, Prayerful, and Safe:  
Returning to Life & Ministry Together in a Time of Pandemic**

Steps Already Taken:

June 1- Preschool Staff Returned  
June 8- Preschool Students Returned  
June 22- Church Office Staff Returned  
June 23- Church Council Approved Step 1 Protocol

**The CDC and Florida state guidelines continue: Those who are 65 and over and those with underlying health conditions should stay safe at home.**

**Step 1 Requirements for All Church Gatherings (effective July 1, 2020)**

**Small Groups** (limit 10 persons)

- Facility will reopen for groups of 10 or less, including the leader(s).
- No office volunteers, limited ministry, and mission volunteers (by appointment).

**Sign-In-** Everyone must sign the register upon entering and exiting the building.

**Limited Entry-** Use only the main entrance doors located under the portico.

**Masks-** Masks or face coverings are required and must be worn at all times.

**Sanitize-** Sanitize hands and spaces before and after use. (Sanitizer dispensers and cleaning kits are available throughout our facilities.)

**Social Distancing-** Maintain a 6-foot physical distance from others.

**Time Limits-** Gatherings are limited to 2 hours.

**No Food or Drink-** Please refrain from bringing food or drink into the buildings.

In-person worship will not be available during Step 1. However, online worship will continue to be offered. Families and close friends may choose to gather safely in small groups outdoors or in their homes to share online worship.

If you have questions, would like to schedule a room or make an appointment, please call the church office (941-488-1374).

Thank you,

Relaunch Guide Team