

Dear Friends of Grace,

I hope you are doing well, staying healthy, and finding encouragement during this season of transitions. Since February 2020, the leadership of Grace Church and St Luke's UMC (Kokomo) have been praying and asking the question - "Are we better together or should we just keep doing our own thing?"

As our leadership and staffs have met, prayed through, and experimented with what collaborative actions and behaviors look and feel like, we are convinced that God is calling us to continue exploring how we can be better together, especially adapting to these post-pandemic times. While we are not sure "where this will end up," we do believe that combining our efforts and resources in this time, we can do more together for God's Kingdom work, than by ourselves.

Both churches have hired the services of Dr Sam Rainer of Church Answers to serve as a coach for our pastors in navigating this season of exploration of what collaborative ministry can be, and what a cooperative parish may look like. The world, as we have known it, has changed significantly since March 2020. We quickly understood that "normal" as we have known it is no longer an option, at least in the short time, if ever.

There have been a lot of adaptations due to covid since then. This situation has helped us rethink the ways we can "do church." One way we are rethinking church is centered around our ability to expand beyond one worship service. Our Leadership Team and Ministry Teams have encouraged us to think "simple but with excellence."

There are many components the staff has to put together to have a service that most people do not see or notice. The church area must be sanitized. The area must be laid out for social distancing. There must be sufficient volunteers for greeting, ushering, and child care to name a few. For those reasons we have not been able to have our regular 8:15 and 11:11 services at Grace Church. Our sister church St. Luke's UMC (Kokomo) has had the same issues. While we have not been able to have our Prayer and Communion Service (8:15am) or our contemporary worship service (11:11am), St. Luke's has not been able to have their additional traditional service.

Both churches have been exploring ways to expand and add services- traditional at St. Luke's and contemporary at Grace. The staff members at both churches decided that at this time it is not possible to physically add services. However, we came up with the idea of sharing resources and for the next 8 weeks there will be an opportunity to see a traditional service or contemporary service. The answer to our worship desires is to offer traditional worship at Grace at 9:00 and a more contemporary worship at St. Luke's at 10:30. Both pastors will be at both services and members who wish to be in the choir and bells can participate in those areas at Grace. Grace will also have members at St. Luke's supporting the Praise band and the contemporary worship. This will begin this Sunday, February 21.

Please make special note around the time changes for worship. Both faith communities are making sacrifices in shifting their worship start times by a half an hour. Traditional worship at Grace Church will now start at 9am and the contemporary service at St. Luke's starts at 10:30am. Please keep in mind that these options may not be what you really would like but it is what we are able to provide in this time of "re-thinking church." I look forward to seeing you at Grace Church beginning at 9am and/or St. Luke's Church beginning at 10:30am. Both services will be live streamed on their respected Facebook and YouTube channels if you are not yet ready for in person worship. If you have questions on how to connect, please call the church office.

Be encouraged in the journey!

Pastor Brian