



Grace Family,

We would like to thank you for your prayers and encouragement as we have been discussing our response to Governor Newsom's announcement that Santa Barbara County was moved from Tier Two ("Red") to the more restrictive Tier One ("Purple"). We know the weight and responsibility placed upon us as elders and we take our calling seriously, as we should. After much prayer and discussion, these are our plans for Grace as we move forward with the new restrictions:

We believe, first of all, that we must obey the directions and spirit of the Scriptures, so we try to keep our political and personal views out of the discussion and instead let the Scriptures drive our decisions. We continue to believe that the most consistent and direct mandate in Scripture is to "be subject to the governing authorities" as Romans 13:1 says. But we are also aware of Hebrews 10:25, which instructs us to "not neglect meeting together." This past spring and summer, we felt that we could support both Scriptures by offering outdoor and limited indoor services as allowed by the authorities. The difficulty now is deciding if the new restrictions make us unable to meet together in a way expected by Scripture.

We conclude that with winter almost here and the new restrictions that allow only outdoor services, the circumstances have changed in that some of our congregation cannot both meet together and obey the state-mandated restrictions. This is a time when, like Peter in Acts 5:29, "we must obey God rather than men." The weather, combined with the restrictions, means that some folks cannot meet together without jeopardizing their health. We believe we must provide options that allow people to meet together as instructed by Scripture. That drives us to support maintaining an indoor service. At the same time we understand that many people are more comfortable with the outdoor services even in cooler weather. As a result, we will maintain two services on Sunday mornings:

At 9:00 AM we will provide a service inside the worship center where those whose individual conscience allows can meet together for worship. We will continue to encourage following existing rules for social distancing, etc. during this service. As in the recent past, this service will also be simulcast on YouTube.

At 11:00 AM we will have an outside service as required by the current restrictions. The slight change in start time will hopefully make it warmer and more comfortable than beginning earlier, as well as provide ample time for setup of sound and music equipment.

This arrangement of two distinct services will allow "the meeting together" ascribed in Hebrews 10:25 for a multitude of different scenarios. The indoor service will provide a worship opportunity to those who don't have access to the livestream service, cannot for health reasons endure the cold of the outside service, or for those whose understanding and conscience lead them to view meeting together as more pertinent in this situation. The outdoor service or livestream will provide a worship opportunity to those whose understanding and conscience lead them to a contrasting view as to which Biblical instruction is more pertinent in this situation, whose family life stage makes it difficult to attend inside, or for those who simply enjoy worshipping in the open air.

Thank you again for your prayers and encouragement. We know that there are varying beliefs about all that is happening in our world today, so let's pray that we would respond "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-2).

The Elders of Grace

Mike Jones, Carl Hathaway, Russ Lycan, Benji Magness, Rob Grindy, and Rob Wright