**Communication Update**

**Pastor Tim, Lead Pastor**

**September 22, 2019**

 Several months ago I informed you of the Elder’s decision to embark on the implementation of a Discipling-Equipping Model of Church ministry here at Grace Lititz. This model takes seriously Jesus’ mandate to “make disciples” and equip those disciples in order to see a multiplying movement of loyal Christ followers. Since that decision by our leadership in 2018 there has been an intense effort on the part of our staff and elder team to do the groundwork necessary to properly implement this model. Much like the foundation laying of a new home or building, this kind of work often occurs behind the scenes or underground and out of sight of passers by. But it is essential work if we don’t want our structure to be negatively impacted by the elements when a storm hits. It is the least interesting of all the parts of construction, but it is the most important. Everything rests on laying a good foundation. So what have we been doing during this foundation-laying phase that has lasted for the better part of this calendar year.

 First, we needed to understand the kind of ground upon which we are building. What previous ministry work could we keep, what needed to be restructured, and what needed to be discarded in order to prepare a smooth surface for our new model. We have identified many things in this process, the most important of which is the need to bring alignment of all of our various ministries under a common vision and core values system. To that end we brought in the Greater Culture Group Consulting firm to help us identify how to connect our values with our vision in a language that will connect with our flock and with our community. This process will be complete in November and a task force of Grace Church staff and laity are actively engaged in this endeavor.

 Second, we needed to prepare forms and molds on which we could build the foundation. To that need our staff wrote and developed five basic curriculum experiences to begin a discipleship-learning pathway. These courses took an immense amount of time to prepare and record since they are utilizing a cohort learning process built on a facilitation method of Socratic discussion. Our classes are learner based rather than teacher based; a style that the younger generations experience as normal in their educational experiences. These five core classes will form an entry into our model and become the basic foundational principles from which all other ministry is built. I will have more on the nature of these classes in my next update.

 Finally, with the classes written and recorded we wanted to test drive them in order to refine and perfect them before launching on a large scale. Therefore, with the help of Bob White and the former Horizons ABF we have developed a prototype test cohort, which is meeting weekly to review and evaluate every aspect of the pathways classes. The group began meeting on September 8 and will continue to meet throughout this church fiscal year. Once completed with the pilot program we will re-record and publish a final version of the materials that will be made available to any and all Grace attendees to experience. Whether you are a new attendee or have attended for a long time we encourage you to participate in the learning pathways once they launch. You will be blessed and encouraged in your Christian walk!

 Of course, since the learning methodology requires gifted facilitators, we have also been hard at work recruiting these leaders and identifying ways to train and equip them to facilitate our classes. I am happy to say that 12 gifted individuals have begun or will receive training in the near future to lead these learning experiences.

 Once tested and launched these pathways will only be the beginning of a process to fully equip and release God’s people at Grace into Kingdom work. Our cohort-based system should naturally lead into the formation of small groups, and outreach oriented service that will impact and bless our community here in the Lititz, Warwick and Manheim areas.

 Also, once phase one is launched efforts will be given to aligning all other ministries under a common vision, so that the great energy being expended by Grace family members can be sustained and multiplied. These will be exciting days as we come together around a common vision, core values, and methodologies for the glory of our Lord. Grace Church will continue to be a source of much blessing to its members, attendees, and neighbors as we move into our future journey.

 It is our goal as a leadership team to have all of these elements formed into a written and cohesive document for your review sometime in late January at a Grace Church family gathering. I believe you will be excited and blessed to see our new model of ministry being built above the foundation line and into the next phase of ministry expansion into the lives of people God has entrusted to our stewardship.

 Keep your calendar open for a late January potluck family celebration where we will officially launch our new model of ministry. Look for an additional update next month explaining more.

Because of His Grace,

Pastor Tim