

As I write this article, it is Wednesday, March 23. The reason I mention that is because it is the two-year anniversary of the first “shelter in place” order that was issued in the state of Washington (where we were living at the time). I remember that first day well, driving to my church office. It was a 20-minute commute, and the roadways were eerily quiet. I almost felt like a fugitive sneaking around; wondering if the police would stop and question me and then take me to pandemic jail. That never happened, of course, but the feeling remained for a long time as life changed in a big hurry. Masks became common apparel, and some became accessories to match with outfits. Hand sanitizer and toilet paper flew off the shelves, and panic ensued when neither could be found. YouTube worship services, Zoom and video calls became the way we stayed connected with people. Remote/virtual school started to challenge family schedules. Working from home became the norm. And as time went on, and the curve did not flatten, other changes began to happen. Political discourse became more feisty as lines were drawn in the sand. Mask vs no-mask groups squared off and did battle. Protests began as people resisted “emergency powers”. And then the Church got more involved and vocal, which led to more division. The world changed in drastic ways, some for better and some for worse.

Today, many would say that this pandemic is over and that the “all clear” needs to be officially sounded. But no matter where you fall on that issue, for many it is not “all clear”. I have a dear friend who has many health challenges and because of this virus, I have not seen her in-person for over 2 years. Hopefully that will change soon. Now, I do not want to get into a political discourse over this, but I bring this up for the very reason that I marked March 23 on my calendar. Whatever the reasons (I am not judging, and I hope you will not either), many have not returned to in-person worship and/or in-person social life. And whether you agree with how this pandemic has been managed there are real people involved and they need you. Sometimes I forget as I rarely see masks or hear about this virus every other second on the news. But my calendar reminded me today that there is much work and ministry to be done.

Instead of drawing lines in the sand, we need to wash those lines away and come together. We need to remember people and accept the fact that life will never be the same as it was in early 2020. And so, do not forget about those for whom it is not “all clear”. Reach out to them and offer your hand of friendship.

Let people know that they are not alone. Let's stand in the sand together without any lines drawn and share the love of Christ. This pandemic has divided too many people and caused too much damage. Let's not be willing parties to its destructive work. Let's speak life, in the name of Jesus. Amen.