

This may sound a bit obvious, but I just figured out recently that you all are really missing each other in a significant way. Now the obvious thing is that we cannot shake hands and be close, we cannot worship together or sing hymns together. But my recent realization is more about what we had than what we do not have right now. Pre pandemic we checked up on each other at least one time a week. We would see each other walk into worship, smile at one another, shake hands and the like. We miss those things. But something much deeper was going on than the surface exchange of “how are you today?” “Fine, and you?” Something deeper than the causal greetings was happening and now I see it clearly and miss it dearly. I am deeply concerned about its absence. I think I will call it awareness. The unspoken information we use to receive by social interaction spoke volumes to us about one another – for instance, if you walked into worship last year with a limp – we would inquire, “hey, what’s up with your leg?” and you might respond, “I recently had my knee replaced.” There is a lot of information in that exchange – and now we just don’t even see you limping. How will we know about one another unless we find a way to share what is truly going on in our lives. When we gathered for worship, we picked up thousands of subtle and silent clues about one another and those have just been shut down. This is a very sad loss. And it does not help that we are all in the same boat – because in a way we are all in the same body of water, but in different boats – and it is hard to pick up all the body language and expression and nuanced discussion we had on Sundays from such distance. Yes, there are deeply theological dialogues to be engaged while we are not present with one another. The church un-gathered is not optimal – some would even argue that the church must gather to be the church. I know that scripture is adamant – “Do not forsake the gathering of yourselves together.” (Heb 10:25) Why does the writer of the epistle of Hebrews say that? Simple, because we encourage one another. We may all be going through the same pandemic, but the separation is depriving us of our life together. Now I will move from lament – from “I MISS YOU PEOPLE!” to a plan.

Call – write- email – send messages by carrier pigeon – can you text- get busy texting – Do you have a plane? Then sky write. My friends, brothers and sisters in Christ – let us make August the month we melt the internet with our conversation – Let us make August the month we all become zoomers – face timers – letter writers – phone callers and connectors. Even as I write this our deacons are conspiring to make person to person contact the highest priority of our church. And that is the right thing to do- Hey, you still get a sermon – one you can pause or if you are wicked, fast forward – you still get to sing – only in your living room – we are sharing communion and providing for much of what we identify as “what Christians do,” but we are not “reading” each other. We are not able to simply walk into the same room and think – “oh, that one looks happy,” and “this one looks tired.” The only way to capture our human connection while we wait this out is to capture our human connection while we wait this out.

Would you do that for me? Would you do that for you? Would you do that for your church family? Please. Make August the month you call, write, email, zoom, text another person at least one time every single day of the week including Sunday. Let us be the best it is possible to be at touching one another at a distance. And if you will do that, you will find all this getting a bit easier to bear.

Grace and pandemic Peace,

Pastor Craig