



## Put Your Hand In the Hand. . .

The current situation in the world is demonstrating just how connected and inter-dependent the world really is. The coronavirus COVID-19 is spreading from person to person and, with easy travel, from country to country. It is a reminder that, though many people still see themselves as self-sufficient islands, we are neither self-sufficient nor islands. What we do effects everyone just as their actions affect us, like it or not. It seems that circumstances like these put the negative side of our connectedness front and center. We can become more interested in the negative effect one person can have, “how many people can ‘get sick’ from one infected individual” or “how do I stay safe,” than in the positive; the strength of working together and asking “how much can each clearheaded individual do to stop the virus”? We face an interesting paradox. Do we respond with ‘self-sufficient island’ thinking, cut ourselves off from others, hoard supplies, and create a fortress mentality, or do we embrace the benefits of our interdependent connectedness by sharing knowledge and supplies, following medically sound common guidelines about the best practices to stop the pandemic, and by supporting each other as we work together to stop the spread of the virus?

For people of faith, the potential need for social distancing (avoiding physical contact & meeting together), may be among the hardest things to bear. God calls us into community. *No one* can follow Jesus alone! When physical actions that usually help hold us together (handshakes, hugs, sharing food, meeting for worship, study, & prayer, sitting with the sick, etc.) are also potential health risks, how do we keep the faith community strong, supportive, and welcoming? Maybe we will rediscover the telephone’s ability to keep us in touch. Other communication technologies tend to isolate people into individual screen centered worlds with words and picture but not the intimate give and take of face to face gatherings. Maybe we will find ways for those same technologies to help us maintain some level of contact if we cannot physically be together. The need to support each other in prayer is as strong as ever. Prayer *can* cross quarantine lines, miles, and oceans! The need to minister to the hurting, the lonely and the sick also remains. If this pandemic forces us to be physically apart for a time, help us hold tight to the hand of Jesus and start now to find creative ways to maintain meaningful contact and connections with each other as we savor the powerful anticipation expressed in the hymn, “*God be with us till we meet again*”.

### ***This week, in your prayer time remember:***

- **Remember Yemen**, the country with the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. The UN says: more than 80% of the population needs some form of assistance; 20 million face food insecurity; 14 million require urgent humanitarian intervention. As of December 2019, some 4 million were internally displaced people (IDPs) and another 1.2 million IDPs may have returned to their areas of origin. At the same time, Yemen is the only refuge for at least 276,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (the majority are from neighboring Ethiopia & Somalia) who cannot return home because of conditions there. Most continue to live in precarious situations (UN statistics).
- **Those facing the coronavirus** – the sick and those trying to stop it. The World Health Organization has now declared a pandemic which means the virus is spreading world-wide. (There are now cases in Ohio.)
- **Those dealing with the aftermath of storms & bad weather.**
- **Continue to remember Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, South Sudan, & other places where people are living with violence and suffering.**



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