

The New Normal for our Teens

BY CONSTANCE MITHELMAN,
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES



All of our lives have been disrupted this spring amidst two pandemics ravaging our country- COVID-19 and racism. All of us had to create a “new normal” and we continue to recreate one nearly every day. Although this has been a difficult, emotional spring for all of us, I want to lift up our youth and what they “lost,” but also what they gained through the tumult of the past few months.

In mid-March, when we started hearing more and more about COVID-19, many of the first rumors that went around amongst the youth were that they’d be out of school for a few days or maybe a few weeks. None of them were all that worried or concerned. An extra-long spring break? I’ll take it! Upon learning that this was going to be a much lengthier quarantine process, fear, anger and sadness set in; what about Lacrosse season? What about AP tests? What about Prom? What about graduation? What about saying goodbye to my teachers and my friends? These are supposed to be the best few months of their lives thus far and they were robbed of them—a completely valid feeling.

As the weeks stretched onward and the future remained uncertain, there was a shift as the news of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd emerged. Our youth got angry. They used that anger to energize them as they went out to protest, as they used their social media accounts to educate themselves and their peers, and as they raised awareness of the injustices happening every single day to our Black and Brown sisters and brothers in Christ. They refuse(d) to be silent. These senseless murders and the pulling-back-of-the-curtain on systemic racism in nearly every arena of our society, was a disruption to a broken status quo. The realization set in that “getting back to normal” cannot happen, because our old “normal” wasn’t working. Our old “normal” was corrupt; it was broken. Why would we ever want to go back to that?

Every part of our lives have been disrupted, but this “disruption” enables us to use it as an opportunity to create something new, to create something better, to create something that works for all people.

As we continue to learn about communities we hope to serve (and miss serving during a Summer Service Trip this year), [here is an excellent article](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52941984) from the BBC about the numerous particular challenges Navajo Nation is facing in light of COVID-19: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52941984>.

