

Returning to Normal: What is that?

As we began talking about returning to in person ministry, I heard many people say, “I just want to get back to normal.” I wondered and sometimes asked out loud, “What is normal after all of this?”

I look around and everything I see, looks normal. The trees bloomed and turned green, causing my typical spring allergies. The weather is warm (and humid) again. The birds are nesting and singing in the morning. Our church building is still standing and still in need of maintenance. My office is still cluttered (a sign of a creative mind, I like to think) and my calendar is full.

So I wonder, is everything “normal?”

How can it be? Fifteen months ago, normal ceased. Families quarantined in their homes away from family and friends. Schools closed. Churches stopped worshipping in their sanctuaries. Basic necessities became scarce as people hoarded them in fear. Worst of all, hundreds of thousands of people died worldwide.

We all thought normal would return quickly and worked feverishly to be the church under the new circumstances. Some of us managed to get worship online and connect our congregations through the internet. Some of us were able to continue ministry to our communities through creative “drive through” collections and donations. We continued to pray for our congregation members and our world. We worked hard to be the church but it was not “normal” and normal did not return quickly.

Now, here we are, 15 months later, and we are thinking about how we can be “normal” again. But, again, what is “normal?”

How can we be what we used to be after all of this? Should we be what we used to be after all of this?

This year, 2021, presents a great opportunity for the church to reflect on its ministries and decide what normal things to keep and which ones to leave in the past.

The Association of Christian Educators (APCE) in partnership with the Presbyterian Mission Office of Christian Formation has developed a document entitled Post Pandemic Pondering and Planning: A Resource for Faith Re-Formation. It is a great tool designed to help church leaders consider what church and ministry can look like in a post covid world. Take a look at it and consider how it might help your congregation get to a new “normal.”

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