

ONE IN CHRIST

We just experienced the strangest Easter in all my days. Never before—even in those early days when the church I grew up in acted like Easter was not happening—never before can I remember us sitting at home in our pj's or casual clothes on Easter Sunday morning. But, thanks to the virus restrictions, we slept late and moseyed around our house with no concern about “getting ready for church.”

My friend and sister in Christ, Rhonda Schuelke, spent the week before Easter at her lake house on Brownwood Lake. Easter morning she emailed me to tell me that she and six others (a legal cadre) would be sharing Easter worship together at the lake. That little band of worshipers, she told me, would include three couples, one each from Methodist, Catholic, and mainline Church of Christ fellowships, along with Rhonda. All of them bowing down together to the same risen Lord.

Rhonda assured me they would be keeping proper social distance according to the legal virus curbs. I doubted it, but I didn't tell her so. I didn't want to pour any cold water on that holy fire, because it thrilled me that we have come to a spiritual place where we can bow down alongside folks we used to avoid like another kind of plague. Despite our differences in rituals and ecclesiastical mechanics, now we can worship Jesus together.

“One in Christ,” I replied to Rhonda's email with rejoicing in my heart. “One in Christ because of Easter and because of the virus.”

Because of the virus, Easter sermons were available on dozens of sources—YouTube, Zoom, and half a dozen other modern-tech venues. I clicked one button on my TV remote and brought my friend and colleague Dr. Howie Batson, First Baptist's pastor, into our living room. After the marvelous Easter music of Dan Baker, after the technical blending of his virus-separated, online choir singing the “Hallelujah Chorus,” Howie preached a powerful Easter sermon on the angels' invitation for all of us “come and see” the empty tomb of Jesus.

What message could have been more appropriate for all believers on this Easter morning when the virus epidemic banished us from our churches and bolted their doors? Howie's sermon today was on target. Right now, when each day's virus news raises new alarms, we needed to hear the message of the Easter angels: “Fear not. Have great joy.”