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# SAD and CAD

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By Gary E. Mueller

Bishop of the Arkansas Annual Conference



I will always remember Wednesday, March 11, 2020. That was the day it became clear COVID-19 was becoming so dangerous I needed to immediately cancel all in-person events for the Arkansas Annual Conference. It was the beginning of a journey that has caused unspeakable pain and around the world and turned your life upside down. No wonder you

were never so happy to see the calendar flip to a new year than you were last week when the giant ball dropped and it was suddenly 2021!

I have been amazed, but not surprised, by your response the last 11 months. You have demonstrated courage, creativity and compassion. You have been resilient and innovative in finding ways to offer worship, Bible study and missional outreach in brand new ways, often learning more about how to use technology than you ever imagined possible. You have responded with deep integrity in the face of pressure to act as if the pandemic is not real and deadly. It has been difficult. You have been stellar.

All of this, however, has taken its toll. You are exhausted with a weariness that penetrates to the core of your soul. You are concerned about the future of your congregation, and whether people will return once you begin a full offering of in-person activities. There are days you are not sure how you can move from the survival mode in which you find yourself to moving full speed ahead with our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world.

The way so many of you are feeling right now reminds me of something I became acquainted with several years ago: Seasonal Affective Disorder, with its very appropriate acronym of SAD. It is the result of a drop in the serotonin level caused by reduced exposure to sunlight in the winter. SAD can trigger depression or at least a case of the blues. Thankfully though, the cure for SAD is pretty simple. Spend some time in the sun.

Recently, it has occurred to me that the pandemic in which we're mired has actually spawned a brand new affective disorder: COVID Affective Disorder, with its acronym of CAD. While this disorder has not yet been officially recognized, it is real; the result of COVID's prolonged disruption, deep pain, grief, forced isolation, and theft of individuals' ability to do many of the things that bring you meaning and hope. CAD can lead to severe depression, loss of energy, cynicism, anger, and hopelessness. Thank God, however, it does have a cure. Spend some time in the Light of the World, Jesus Christ.

You don't need to embark on a great journey to find the Light of the World. Jesus is already waiting for you. In fact, he's doing everything possible to make it easy to join him. The Light he offers is a powerful unconditional, invitational and transformational love that will never dim regardless of what happens because of COVID. When you double down on dwelling in his Light – even if you know your faith is far from being fully mature – you will discover that Jesus will restore the purpose, joy, compassion, passion for God's justice and hope that COVID Affective Disorder has depleted. Don't wait any longer. Start spending some time in the Light of the World today!