

**MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, 3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27612**  
**NEWS & EVENTS – MAY 2021**

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*"I think the history of the handshake may be coming to an end..."* I heard this declaration about one year ago while attending a bid opening in my *tentmaking* job as a contractor. The phenomenon known as the COVID 19 virus has brought great change to the way we relate to one another and conduct ourselves. Business as usual often seems quite unusual. Government agencies that solicit bids for construction services are still in the COVID 19 mode that began in 2020. Often the contractors are given specific instructions for the hand delivery of construction bids. In most cases, there is a time window for delivery of the bid and an internet link to watch the bid opening later. One can watch *virtually* but cannot attend in person. Virtual meetings are kind of like being there...but not quite. We're not really in someone else's presence...we are just sharing images of one another. And the experience of personal experience and connection seems a bit hollow and artificial.

Sure enough, the near disappearance of the handshake has prophetically come to pass. I miss the reality of relationship. When you've lived for several decades with this worldwide custom, the sudden and abrupt change can be a little troubling. Sometimes I'm troubled about change. Sometimes change arrives riding trouble. Here's a declaration to consider...Great change is upon humanity. And great trouble is surely coming.

I understand the concern about spreading germs through the physical aspect of the handshake and can see the value of frequent hand washing. But I lament the loss of the physical touch. Humans who are bound in the physical world are designed to touch one another, reminding us of who we are and where we are. It is believed that the handshake was originated in ancient cultures when two people were greeting one another. To demonstrate their intentions as peaceful, one person would offer an open hand to another, signifying they had no weapon in their hand with evil intent. The other would grasp the hand in agreement reciprocating a peaceful greeting. In this world full of turmoil and trouble peace is often a rare condition. I miss the handshake. It offers a contrast to a fearful response in a fallen world.

Evil has an agenda. It is destructive in its nature because it was first found in the heart of a spiritual rebel. Lucifer, once the most exalted of creatures in God's creation, believed that he could displace the Most High God. He believed that he was worthy of worship. He incited insurrection of the spirit realm that spilled over into the earthly and physical arena. His value system as he rules the world system is the advancement of death and destruction and despair...diametrically opposed to God's agenda. The agenda of restoration and rescue from this world's systems has always been the plan of the Most High God. The execution of Jesus the Christ was all part of that plan...before the beginning of man. Consider these occasions that the Resurrected Lord Jesus appeared to fearful and doubtful disciples. He offered them a look at his empty, yet crucified hands that held the promise of restoration.

*36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. **Luke 24:36-40***

*24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

*26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." **John 20:24-27***

Today there is much to be fearful and doubtful about. This is assured...Jesus is coming...so be believing!

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam