

PLUM Pastoral Message

July 2022

“It seems that when we experience the possibility of annihilation, our brains simply can’t take it in and process it as they do everyday events. A space gets created, but it isn’t blank. That space holds horrendous things that affect people’s entire bodies, the way they move and exist in the world. The issue becomes how to bring this blank space into verbal expression and public awareness.”

Serene Jones, *Trauma & Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (pg. xi)

Dear Partner in Ministry,

Why would I start with a quote like this for a pastoral article? Because it seems so much of what we have heard and seen over the last several months has been a series of events that have been jarring to us as a people, a nation, and a world. We have watched countries torn apart by war and natural disasters. We have seen mass shootings at schools and grocery stores. We have commemorated Juneteenth and Emmanuel Nine, both historical reminders of the unkindness of our nation. We have heard testimonies about the January 6th attack on the Capitol, and we have received the Supreme Court’s ruling that overturned *Roe vs. Wade*. Our brain, at least mine is and I suspect yours too, is struggling to take it all in. When will it stop! Jones argues that it is in these moments when we experience trauma (the quote’s description) that we need to find spaces to verbally express and bring to public awareness the emotional effect of these events on our being, our body, our mental health, and our emotions! It is in these moments that it is even more critical to stop and notice the grace-filled spaces all around us. The places where God is present and working even when our senses are bombarded with jarring moments.

At our synod assembly in June, The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church was the opening speaker. He spoke on the topic *I Love to Tell the Story*, the theme of our synod assembly. In his talk, he reminded us that the only way to deal with the divide, and disunity so prevalent in our culture today, is to remember the story of Jesus. It is a story of love! A story that we must all share with each other. We do so by taking the time to listen to each other and respect each other. I believe when we truly listen to each other, without judgment or desire to convince the other to think like us, we begin the process of healing. We create the space to release the trauma and change those blank spaces from hurt, mistrust, and harmful actions. It is then we can strive to be the beloved community that God intended.

Sibling in Christ, we have been experiencing those moments in our congregations. We continue to be the witness of God's love with baptisms, spaghetti dinners, flea markets, and Vacation Bible School. At the June 23 PLUM picnic in the park we sat around telling and listening to stories. We have more picnics planned for July and August. We have the installation for Pastor Alex in July and planned fellowship time throughout the summer to welcome him into our family. And still, I suspect that some of us are also struggling. Please do not do so alone. Your pastoral team and your PLUM family are here to listen.

"Loving God, Refresh us by your loving Spirit.

*Lead us into peace and understanding with you and others. Help us experience the miracle of many voices becoming one in you. **Amen.**"*

(adapted from Centering Prayers by Peter Traben Hass, pg. 135)

Pastor Brenda

On behalf of the PLUM Pastoral Team