

FROM THE PASTOR: How's your spiritual health and wellbeing?

Each week during this pandemic, Bishop Mike and Pastor Liz have invited congregational leaders to an open space for conversation, via ZOOM. It's a time to gather thoughts, ideas, suggestions ... to share joys and struggles. The leading question, several weeks ago was "What are your spiritual needs at this time? How is your spiritual well being?" Not exactly a simple question, and yet worthy of some pondering.

Pastor Sally, Salem Lutheran in Stillwater, OK, shared how she attended a seminar years ago. The premise was that we are all wired differently for different spiritual pathways. These pathways connect us with God and allow us to experience God's grace and presence. People usually find that two or three are particularly true for them. Here are the seven pathways the presenter mentioned:

1. **Worship/Music/Art** - One connects with God deeply while in a worship setting, while singing, creating art.
2. **Prayer** - One looks forward to quiet, contemplative time for prayer, perhaps using yoga or meditation to connect with God.
3. **Personal Interaction** - One senses God's presence when listening deeply to people's stories, hopes and concerns, especially when talking about faith.
4. **Creation** - One needs only to step outside to know the presence of God. Taking a walk, planting a garden is a spiritual experience for you.
5. **Service** - One senses God's presence and purpose when helping someone else, especially someone in need.
6. **Advocacy** - When fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves, speaking up for justice, marching for change, in these moments, one experiences a yoke with Jesus and a call to this work.
7. **Intellectual** - One senses God's presence when studying, reading scripture, thinking about God. What is helpful about this concept is that when you hear someone say how close they feel to God in church or on the trails or while working at the food pantry, but you do not have that same experience, know that is not one of your pathways. Or perhaps, your pathway is not as deep in this area. We are all different; we have different pathways. And, once we've discerned our particular pathways, we can make time for them/nurture them ... because this is where one is most spiritually connected to God. The problem, today, in the midst of a pandemic is that not all our spiritual pathways are available to us or available in the same way. Worship has been different for too long. Our musicians have not gathered, singing will not be a reality for a long time, coffee via ZOOM is not the same, much less bible study or United in Prayer. Individual prayer and Creation have remained the same, and yet if these are not on your list of three, there's been a struggle. So the question .. what are your favored pathways, and how are you nurturing them? You might want to call a friend (number 3) and talk about it.

And, may God bless you until we see each other again. A thousand blessings, *Pastor Karen*

P.S. Return to in person worship announced:

Thinking about number 1, Worship, we resume the option of in person worship in September. And yet, worship will be different with no congregational singing, limited/distanced contact, a revised liturgy, no in door gathering/coffee... there will be other changes. For those who mark #1 as a Spiritual pathway, we can't wait, even with the noted changes. On that note, a list of *Guidelines for in-person worship during COVID* was mailed or emailed to you along with the liturgy during August. If you did not receive it, please contact Roz and she will resend it. United will continue with the same on-line option we've had since March, adding the in-person option. (The same worship service will be provided in both options.) As I say each Sunday, "It's good to be together. It's good to be the people of God. It's always good to worship."