

(Shared with permission) I got a text from a parishioner this morning saying, “I took a sick day. I’m feeling the heaviness start to lift some already. What a relief. Thanks for being a role model on pausing and caring for one’s whole health.” This person is processing a recent death in her world and it is hard.

Does pausing to process emotions, ideas, challenges, or experiences feel foreign? We are in a fast-paced, busy culture that is rewarded by being faster and busier much of the time. If we move fast we don’t have to spend time sitting in the discomfort of emotions. If we move fast and are busy we can appear productive and successful according to the universal standards of productivity and success. So, we move fast.

Ruth Foster-Koth once told me a story about when she returned from the Peace Corps. She was advised to be ready to hit the ground running. She recalled the feeling of stepping off the plane and into the Miami airport...and the sudden rush and rushing of everyone and everything around her.

Not too long ago, I listened to people who are retired, but not tired, discuss the enjoyment of time. They spoke of the comfort in themselves and the offering to others the non-rushed space. They spoke of the beauty of finding where they want to use their gifts and their newly allotted time.

As many of you know, I gave myself a concussion by accident a few weeks ago. I was putting skis into the back of my car, stepped up on a snowbank to reach better, and as I shoved the skis forward I smacked my head hard against the liftgate of the car. I had a big indent and cut, and then it puffed out into a big goose egg. I foolishly drove home and went to dinner with friends that night, only realizing the next day that I didn’t really remember a whole lot about the previous day and perhaps I should go see the doctor. Healing from the concussion became my Lenten practice. It was a challenge to not get frustrated, but it was an important practice that has re-centered me. That first week I had to prioritize heavily. I did the most important things and only the most important, which was the immediate pastoral care. The rest was taken care of by others. Because that is what it means to be the priesthood of all believers and to shepherd one another. The emails could wait. Zoom could be launched by multiple people. Pastor Pam was already scheduled to preach. Thankfully, I was pre-planned and prepped for Lent, so the bigger things were mostly done. We have a strong staff who work well together. We have a congregation that lives into the strength of shared, collaborative leadership.

What struck me is how similar the concussion was to grief brain. Emotionally, that was hard because it felt like regression, even though cognitively I knew it was not. The concussion vs grief brain is an anecdote. Hard life experiences are like physical injuries that require the same importance of care, compassion, and healing. When we are dealing with hard experiences in our lives, it is vital to take the time and space--Sabbath--to rest, process, and heal in many ways. Slowing down, taking the time to sit in the discomfort of emotions and feelings, to speak

with God and let God speak to you, is a faith practice. It is part of your spiritual health. It is a gift to yourself and to other people around you.

Yes, it may feel counter-cultural. But, as Christians, we come back to the theological understanding that we are IN the world but not OF the world. We are God's beloved children, and that means functioning in the world while living with the guidance and healing that God provides through the Holy Spirit.

With deep peace,
Pastor Shannyn