



April 4, 2021

From the PSEC Racial Justice Initiative Team

We have again heard the horror of three deadly shootings, this time at Atlanta-area spas where eight people lost their lives. In the aftermath, many questions swirled around the situation, including the motive of the shooter and the treatment of the case by the Atlanta police.

The shooter, Robert Aaron Long, will face many charges as a result of his actions. However, the one most surprising to me was the verdict of his home church congregation that he was no longer welcome, he was no longer a member, he was expelled, he was too vile to be one of them.

These actions provoked many questions for us, as congregations and as individuals. Included in a short list are:

How would we react if Robert Aaron Long was one of ours? Would we be strong enough to keep our baptismal covenant with him and bold enough to extend our love to the families of the murdered?

Have we had tough conversations about racism, homophobia, and xenophobia? Have we cultivated a safe space for these types of discussions or is our space safe in the knowledge that we might never have these discussions?

Have we stated and re-stated that the Gospel message is one of love, and that violence is never the result of love.

Violence against Asian Americans increased nearly one hundred fifty percent in the past year. We have witnessed the boldness of hatred, that was once closeted, break into the open. It is long past time for congregations to have the hard talks, to examine and state their beliefs, to, paraphrasing MLK,..... *bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive; bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.*

We encourage you and your congregations to find ways to have these hard conversations and find ways to stand with and bear witness to the stories of those who are struggling for justice.

- Raymond Edwards, Micah 6:8

An Easter Like No Other....Again!

It has been a year and once again we celebrate an Easter Sunday so unlike the ones we cherish. Still surrounded by a pandemic and still separated from the faith communities that make Easter come alive. In that separation is deep grief for the loss and pain of these days and the unmet longing for our best resource to meet it—each other.

But when the disciples feared going outside after Jesus' execution, Jesus came to them in the glory and the mystery of resurrection and revealed what is happening all the time. Even now as you read this.

Reality is always moving toward death and resurrection. The coronavirus has awakened our death denying culture to the very real limitations of being human. Not just the death of the physical body, but all the moments when we have reached the end of our own resources and had to let go of how we wanted life to be.

These deaths are opportunities to practice a reliance on God's grace in the process of transformation. Too often we will look for someone to blame for having to change and there is a lot of blaming these days. None of it helps us to surrender to the moment or to the grace of God active in it. And it's the surest way to a death of the heart and soul on the way to the death of body.

But if you do choose to walk through the depths – the loss of our traditional Easter rituals among all the rest-- you will come out the other side, knowing you've been taken there by a Source larger than yourself. As it happens in this life, so too shall it happen in the life that is to come.

In the words of Theologian Fr. Richard Rohor, *"If we are to speak of miracles, the most miraculous thing of all is that God uses the very thing that would normally destroy you—the tragic, sorrowful, painful, or unjust—to transform and enlighten you. Now you are indestructible; there are no dead ends. Resurrection is not a one-time cosmic transaction, but the constant pattern of all growth and change."*

I pray that the Spirit of Jesus Christ finds you today behind the doors of coronavirus sequestration giving you the certain peace of a resurrection power that is yours in this life and in the life to come.

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!

Rev. William "Bill" Worley, PSE Conference Minister

