



United Methodist Church of Vista

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From Rev. Dr. Leigh Ann Shaw



Pastor's Ponderings

We are in the Easter season, the season of resurrection. The image that sticks with me this year from Easter is Mary Magdalena turning away from the tomb of Jesus. We know he wasn't there anyway, but she didn't. I imagine Mary weeping, exhausted and overwhelmed, standing before the tomb, and turning away, back toward the living Jesus. She discovered the Lord again, as she turned away from the place of death. Mary is the disciple that embodies the call to turn away from the dead places in the world, and back toward the living response of God.

Easter is the call for us to do as Mary does. We are called to turn from death and toward life. With that image in mind, what tombs are holding us hostage? What tombs insulate you from life? Dogma, tradition and expectation can be tombs which protect us from new thinking and new relationships. Loneliness and despair seal us in tombs that we pray again and again for God to heal. Heartbreak and resentment entomb us and demand forgiveness to break open. Easter is the answer to all death. God is about life and breaking open these tombs that hold us. Easter is the celebration that God will get the final word and roll away the stones that barricade us from living.

The United Methodist Church is entombed in an argument about homosexuality. I wonder if you've heard about it? I suspect there isn't anyone in America who hasn't heard that traditional Christian religions in America are having a difficult time agreeing on what God is thinking about members of the LGBTQ community. Some Christians believe the Bible speaks against homosexuality and it is a sin which separates people from God. Some Christians believe God is love and all love is of God. Most people I've spoken with have their mind and heart made up about what the right answer is. I have to confess that my mind and heart are made up and have been for a long time.

Currently, the Judicial Council (which is the equivalent to the Supreme Court of the UMC) is studying/reviewing a case about the election and subsequent appointment of a self-avowed, married lesbian in the Western Jurisdiction of the UMC. If you want to review the issues of this case, which is pretty complicated, I encourage you to google Bishop Karen Oliveto and you will discover many articles and statements about her, our denomination and the challenge to her status. I hope you will pray for our church and the people involved. Any ruling, no matter what it is, will result in some people feeling angry about injustice and faithlessness. Any ruling will result, I believe, in a global change to the structure of our denomination that will impact the ministry we can and will do for decades to come. The tomb of polarization will be broken open one way or another. Because I believe God is involved in all that we do, I believe God can transform even this breach in relationship to a life-giving event.

No matter what happens, I believe that God always finds a way for life to break out. God always leads people toward hope, restoration, healing and new possibilities. What I absolutely know is that no matter what happens our UMC Vista will still be here, working together to reach out to the community. We have work to do in the name of Jesus! We are called to feed people, educate children, support our seniors, raise up strong faith leaders, celebrate God with all we do and say and bear witness to God's unfailing love for us all! Do pray and then, let's get to work again, being the body of Christ!

Blessed Easter friends!
Rev. Dr. Leigh Ann Shaw