

Go And... Care

December 19, 2024 Minutes

Number of Participants: 9 participants at 7:00 pm

Opening Entertainment: What is your favorite or least favorite part of the Christmas holiday season?

Favorite

- Christmas lights
- Presents
- Christmas tree and ornaments with special meaning
- Cookie Baking

Least:

- Chaos starts earlier every year
- Christmas Music: because it starts too early, makes it less fun

Welcome and Prayer: Rev. Danielle McCleary

- Opening prayer came from Enfleshed (enfleshed.com)
- Check out their liturgy and free liturgy library

Visio Divina: Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund

Using Ruth 1:8-18,22 alongside the image "[Binding Braids by Rev. Nicolette Penaranda](#)"

- What stands out to you in this image?
 - All the overlapping images
 - "Do not press me to leave you" and the image of the hands being one of solidarity
 - Connection of the two braids
 - Connections of so many things: water/ocean/waves/lake, earth/forest/grass, sky/cosmos - things that connect us
 - The women and their story and how they connect
 - One woman is upside down: their whole lives were turned upside down and that is what brought them together
 - Mother God figure blessing the hands right in the middle
 - Hands: practical and yet ornate - praying together through different generations, interests, strengths
 - Prayer changes things: we don't do it as an obligation, it is a real action
 - Ruth couldn't fix anything for Naomi but she could journey with her and accompany her on the journey
- How does it make you feel?
 - Held
 - Connected
 - Conflicted
 - Part of something bigger
 - The struggle that unites us
 - Resilience
 - A little anxious
 - I will not let go of you
 - Committed
- Many of the themes in Trauma Informed Care are present in the story of Ruth and Naomi.

- This is also a story that comes from Jesus' lineage - these women are his great grandmothers and they teach the lesson that we don't go alone. God is always with us.

For copyright issues we cannot share the image but you can find it through A Sanctified Art or on social media from churches who have paid for the licensing to use it.

- <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=873271208298193&set=pb.100068459655282.-2207520000>

Introduction of our guest Rev. Carla Christopher: Rev. Maristela Freiberg

- Pastor Carla is the assistant to the Bishop for Justice Ministries at Lower Susquehanna and Delaware-Maryland Synods and pastor at Heidelberg UCC Church in York, PA
- She also does a lot of work with the ELCA Vital Congregations and United Lutheran Seminary, among many other organizations

Trauma Informed Care: Rev. Carla Christopher,

- You can do all the organizing and information you want but if people aren't in a space where they can absorb the information and going home to places they can safely process, then nothing you do will fully work
- The church is in a position to do what no other school, nonprofit, city program can do - and that is
 - Practice accompaniment: being with people through time and life journeys
 - Offer support across different regions and aspects of our lives
 - The church can be there in ways other spaces cannot
- Congregations should
 - Model healthy communication
 - Reinforce and encourage
 - A place for healing
 - Practicing accompaniment
 - When we do this, we do something no one else can
- Churches offer a relationship with God, the ultimate transforming savior. That is a relationship that transforms forever and ever no matter the circumstance or hardship
- [6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma Informed Approach](#)
 - What happens in spaces that can change folks minds, bodies, and capacity to learn to absorb and be present
 1. Safety
 2. Trustworthiness and transparency
 3. Peer support
 4. Collaboration and mutuality
 5. Empowerment voice and choice
 6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues
 - Being mindful of the trauma people bring into a space helps you better serve them.

- Pastor Carla shared the ways requiring worship in order for folks to access feeding ministry can be a barrier to them utilizing the services even if they need it.
 - Be transparent about who you are and people will be willing to trust you!
 - When barriers and trauma triggers were removed, people were more willing to engage and bring friends
 - Trauma Informed Care can lead to more resources, relationships, collaborations, and partnerships in support of those who need services most
 - Pivots from providing food to providing a space where people feel loved, safe, and able to engage - making it a trauma informed experience, changes the way ministry functions and the impact, reach, and missional focus
 - Became a real ministry instead of just checking a box to do ministry
- Christmas has become a challenging space with so many things we feel we are obligated to do that we don't always feel the genuine connection with Christ
 - We are so busy doing all the things instead of focusing on the how and why of the season
 - Trauma Informed Care invites us into the why and how of the season to invite us to reconnect with why we are doing all the things
- Blue Christmas Worship Service
 - A beautiful example of Trauma Informed Care in congregations to be mindful that not everyone has a merry christmas
 - Name the grief and trauma folks might be experiencing and inviting people to lean into these feelings in safe ways that reconnect them to God
 - Sensory triggers, societal pressure to be joyful, empty chairs around the table, disruption in normal routines, increased feelings of loneliness
 - Opportunities to talk to chaplains, reflecting and writing gratitude moments, narrowing down the mess in your head to a few simple questions and invitations
 - These simple things help someone focus in trauma informed ways that allows them to engage and feel seen
- What is something in your congregation that you can use a Trauma Informed lens to make that ministry a little more trauma informed and help people feel safer?
 - How much of church behavior is not welcome to visitors or outsiders?
 - Treating people like a human being goes a long way. It is so simple but makes a real impact.
 - Invite all people, of all ages and backgrounds, to help tell the Christmas story and the incredible, radical, inclusive love of God
- We do not need to have a degree in therapeutic counseling to be able to have these conversations and do ministry in a trauma informed way
 - It is a tool we can use to invite folks into a conversation and explore how we can do ministry in ways that heal, support, and show love to and reach a hurt or traumatized mind and body
- We can train to be good allies and ancestors by not being afraid to start
 - Start by developing awareness and go from there

If you would like to contact Pastor Carla:

- Please, please feel free to reach out if you would like more resources, ideas, or just a thought partner around trauma-informed care adaptations and education with your congregations!
- Email: cchristopher@lss-elca.org

Closing Rev. Maristela Freiberg

- Resources and Practical Skills: we will be sending out resources with the minutes for you to use during this and any season

Wishing you a blessed and peaceful Christmas season full of comfort and joy in whatever way that looks like for you this year.

See you next month for Go and Start Anew on January 16th at 7:00 pm

Go And Planning Team:

- Rev. Maristela Freiberg, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to Bishop
- Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund, Messiah Oakland
- Rev. Danielle McCleary, St. Matthew Secaucus
- Lois Parrett, Abiding Presence Ewing, and NJ Synod Staff
- Rev. Judy Anderson, St. Thomas Brick
- Rev. Dianne Lewis, Trinity Jersey City
- Rev. Menzi Nkambule, St. Matthew Jersey City
- Rev. Joe Graumann, St. Stephen Woodbury
- Rev. Sarah Fryman, Grace Bayonne
- Lynn Perry, Grace Mendham