



June 22, 2022

A Note from Pastor April

**Dear Friends,**

“You don’t give dignity, you affirm it.”  
~ John Perkins

Extended stays in the hospital aren’t usually something we look forward to. In addition to the medical procedure or illness that may have brought us there, there is the round-the-clock noise, constant interruptions to check on us followed by lots of waiting, and my least favorite garment, the hospital gown.

**If I were to think of an article of clothing that makes it especially hard to maintain human dignity, it would be the hospital gown.** The coverage over the body is minimal, unflattering, and seriously lacking in the back. I can’t help but feel exposed and utterly vulnerable... two things that I try to avoid.

It’s in this flimsy article of clothing that I am then expected to discuss the most intimate of personal details about my body, often with people I have never met. The whole experience is humbling to say the least.



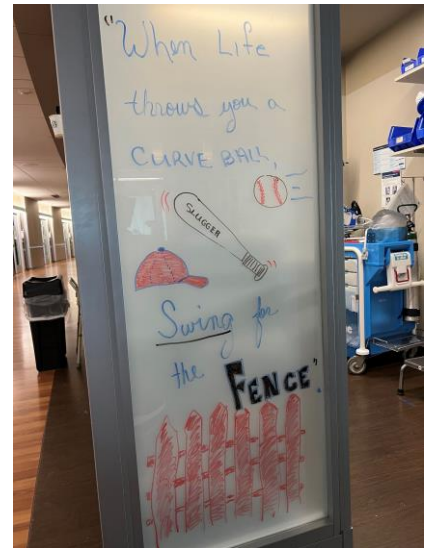
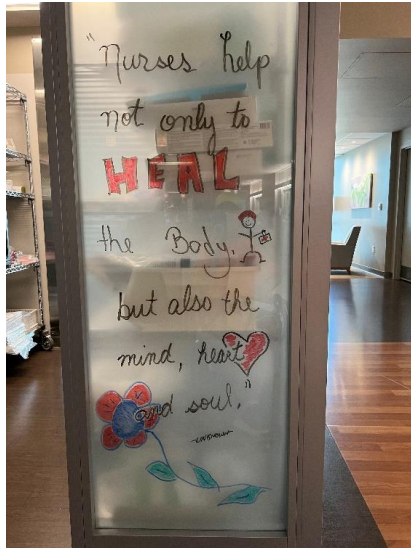
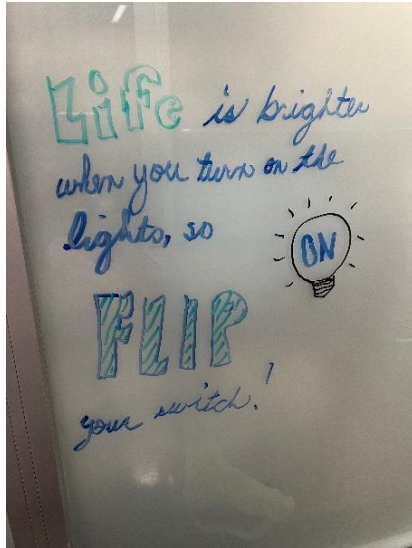
**So, it might seem surprising that the place where I recently learned something profound about human dignity was when I was sitting with someone wearing a hospital gown.**

By the time I was able to visit, Chris Rodgers had been in the hospital for nearly two weeks. She was notably frustrated by how long things were taking, but very little of our conversation that day focused on these disappointments. Instead, she was eager to tell me about her experiences with the staff at the hospital.

Chris had been taking notice of the staff and how hard they were all working. She could sense that some of them were exhausted

and tired. She also could tell how thoughtful they were about their work and how little encouragement they often received.

So, in her hospital gown, Chris began writing messages on the walls of the windows. In her room, in the hallway, in the lobby by the elevator during her walks, she would take her dry erase markers and sprinkle messages of love, encouragement, and hope.



Messages of dignity.

As Chris was sharing, **I was struck by the ways in which these messages were bringing dignity and healing not only to the staff, but also to Chris herself.**

There she was in her hospital gown... finding ways to embody love, beauty, and DIGNITY.



As we have been saying throughout this journey through the Great Story, one of the foundational values in these stories is **the innate goodness of all creation**. God continues to move and behave in ways that affirm this goodness, and God expects that we will honor and treat one another with dignity.

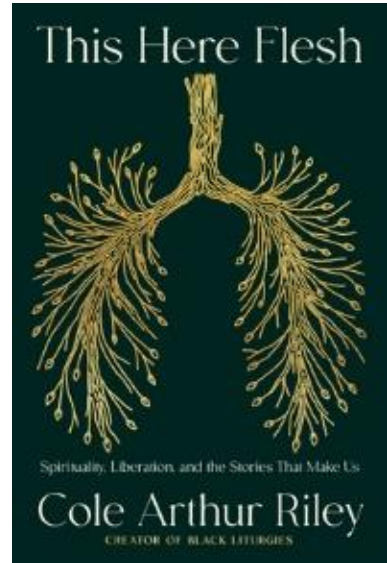
As John Perkins says (above), our job is to affirm what's already true about each one of us.

This week in worship we explore the verse that is at the heart of Christian teaching, and (it may surprise you to know) is at the heart of the book of Leviticus:

## **“And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18)**

Love is not a sentiment or an idea. It is intimately tied up with our actions. It matters how we treat one another and how we treat ourselves.

In her new book, *This Here Flesh*, Cole Arthur Riley speaks about the work that we are to do on behalf of others and ourselves to embody this love and to help one another see the dignity that belongs to each of us as a birthright.



**“Sometimes you can’t talk someone into believing their dignity. You do what you can to make a person feel unashamed of themselves, and you hope in time they’ll believe in their beauty all on their own.”**

I thought of Chris last week when I headed in for a brief doctor’s visit that required the ever-lovely hospital gown. I put it on differently this time. Less worried about being vulnerable and exposed, I thought about the good gift of my body that had allowed me to show up that day and offer it love and care. And then I thought...

**How would this experience be different if I took a moment to affirm my dignity while sitting here in this hospital gown?**

I’ll leave you with one more beautiful quote from Cole’s book...

**“How can anyone who is made to bear likeness to the maker of the cosmos be anything less than glory? This is inherent dignity.”**

Even in a hospital gown.

With love and dignity,

April



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