



June 26, 2024
A Note from Pastor Jon
Greatest Hits

Dear Friends,

I wrote this letter to you upon the conclusion of my journey through my Masters of Practical Theology. I wonder, do we still appreciate the Shared Moment?

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Originally sent January 13, 2021:

The journey has finally come to its completion. I mean, I'm still waiting for Methodist Theological School in Ohio to officially award my degree sometime in February, but for all intents and purposes, I have met the requirements for a Masters of Practical Theology with an emphasis in Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy. The journey has been long and exhausting but also rewarding. I am glad I did it, but I'm more glad that it's done.



Someone asked me **what the greatest lesson was that I learned in my program.** It was during my internship at Nationwide Children's Hospital that my educator shared with me a concept of ministry that opened my eyes to a new way of understanding and seeing both ministry and life. That concept is called the **Shared Moment.**

Those of us who have been a part of a faith community for any period of time have come to enjoy a time of a shared present and a shared life. **It is in this community that we often feel loved and supported during the times of our greatest joys and deepest sorrows.**

Our understanding of shared present and shared life has shaped us to the point that so many of us have struggled during this pandemic because we have fewer opportunities to have those shared moments and shared spaces as we did prior to March of 2020.



These days we don't regularly see one another face to face. We don't have those casual conversations before and after worship or in small groups or meetings. We don't have the opportunities to share the present moments, and we miss them. I think this is why so many of us have and continued to struggle with our

current reality of online worship and Zoom groups.

So, what I hope to offer you as you read these words is **to encourage you to be willing to be open to a new perspective** from which to view our current reality, and how this new perspective can help us not just in **being the church during a global pandemic but in cherishing each moment and encounter that God brings our way.**

Some folks asked me how I was able to handle the difficult trauma situations that I encountered during my internship. The honest answer is that for about two weeks I didn't. I was emotionally and spiritually wrecked. I struggled, wondering how those families were adjusting to life following such difficult experiences. I wished that I could call them and follow up just to see if there was something I could do to help them.

After about two weeks of struggling, I shared these struggles with my educator, who offered this new-to-me idea of the **shared moment**. In the life of the church, as a pastor, we walk together through these difficult days and we check in together and work together to grow through challenges as we share our lives together.

In a clinical setting, however, as the chaplain I might have only a few moments or as many as a few hours, and I may never again interact with these individuals or families again.



What is most important is coming to a place to learn to appreciate that moment in time. To understand that God has provided me with an opportunity to be present and to embrace that moment was hard. I struggled.

I struggled until I arrived at the place where I could surrender myself and that moment to God.

It is humbling when we come to realize that we can see and cherish each moment, each snapshot in life for what it is, as a holy and sacred space in our temporal

timeline of life.

From that moment of realization onward, I entered each encounter with the perspective that I would cherish that time, that I would make myself fully present, and when that

shared moment came to its conclusion, I would give God thanks that I had shared that space and that snapshot moment of time.

What if during this pandemic we began to take an intentional approach to appreciate whatever shared moments we encounter? Those moments may occur during an online worship experience, a Zoom class, phone call, walk in the park, porch drop, or even in our own homes and around our own tables or living spaces.

What if we don't push to rush things back to the way they used to be?

What if we simply thank God for these precious shared moments we have right now?

If we take advantage of this time in which we find ourselves, and we intentionally do the work to shift perspective, I will dare to say that when this time of pandemic life draws to a close, we might still appreciate our sacred and **shared moments** just a little more.

Be encouraged and be blessed!

Pastor Jon



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