

### **Message from Robin+**

Ordained rabbi, family therapist, author, and leadership consultant, Edwin H. Friedman once said, "A major criterion for judging the anxiety level of any society is the loss of its capacity to be playful." I don't know about you, but it seems to me that this pandemic struggle has caused us to lose our capacity to be playful. How are we supposed to play in a pandemic when there are so many things we are unable to do right now?

I was thinking about this quote when I read Sunday's scripture from Paul's letter to the Romans. (Romans 8:12-25) In one part of that passage Paul says, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ-- if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."

We are children of God! We need not be slaves to fear because we are God's children and heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Even in the suffering and fear we have a greater promise from God. The God who loves us all deeply and wants what is best for us, even more than we can comprehend, wants us to be safe in a pandemic but has also give us the Spirit, that we might live into our calling despite our fear and bear witness to God's love.

I've found the cares and concerns of the world weighing heavily on me. I've been grumpy and out of sorts, I've felt overwhelmed and isolated and afraid. When I connected my feelings with the quote from Edwin Friedman and Paul's words to the Romans, I realized that I was missing the joy of play. As children of God we need to have a sense of playfulness about life because life is hard sometimes. Play can help us be resilient and more able to recover from setbacks and disappointments.

We know that children need to play; it's how they learn, and it keeps them healthy. I have been working through my sabbath days out of my own fears and anxieties in this pandemic and for a good while it was working for me! But last week I hit a wall and by God's grace and the gift of dear friends I was able to have a day of rest and play. We went to the beach and practiced safe distancing, driving down in separate cars, couples sitting 10 feet apart under our own umbrellas. We shared what was going on in our lives, swam in the ocean, and ate lunch from our separate coolers. On the way home we stopped for dinner at a place with lots of picnic tables outside under the trees. It was perfect day because it was spent with friends, there was play in the ocean, some napping on the beach, and lots of laughter.

We are children of God who need healthy food, naps, and play time. When we feel that the cares of the world are caving in on us, we can listen to God's word, pray, and play. Whether it's a day on the beach, a hike in the woods, or a walk in the neighborhood it can be restorative. If it can be done with good friends safely it can be life-giving. What is your capacity for play today? As a child of God, how will you reconnect with all that is good and holy within you?