

See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are! Because the world didn't recognize him, it doesn't recognize us. Dear friends, now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves even as he is pure. Every person who practices sin commits an act of rebellion, and sin is rebellion. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and there is no sin in him. Every person who remains in relationship to him does not sin. Any person who sins has not seen him or known him.

Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The person who practices righteousness is righteous, in the same way that Jesus is righteous.

Now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is.

“Are you ready for your sabbatical?”

That question has been asked of me no less than 10 times in as many days. Sometimes the answer is yes. Sometimes the answer is no. I am never entirely sure what to say.

On one hand, I have been dreaming about this sabbatical since I sat in an Indianapolis airport 2 years ago listening to a friend tell me about this incredible program from the Lilly foundation that would fund the “sabbatical of my dreams.” Between that, the pandemic and pastoring a wonderful but deeply purple congregation in the midst increased racial animosity, violence, and division, I can definitely say I am ready for a time to stop, re-group, and commune with God, nature, my soul, my friends and my family in more intentional and lasting ways than I have in a long time. I am ready to reflect on the last 10 years of ministry as a priest and dream about the next decade. I'm ready to dive into the 16 books on my nightstand and remember what it's like to get lost in the beauty of a story and words. I have turned on the out-of-the office notice on my email and voicemail. I have purchased all my hiking gear. And I've put my newspaper deliver on hold.

So, yeah, you could say I'm ready.

On the other hand, I haven't brought up my suitcases from storage. Piles of months-old editions of *The Washington Post* are scattered underneath my coffee table, sofa, and recliner that I either need to read or toss in the recycling bin. My refrigerator, which is rarely stocked to the brim, has food that I need to give away so that it doesn't spoil.

I didn't finish all the phone calls to parishioners I had intended on making. I didn't get to create the scavenger hunt I had planned on creating today.

I haven't slept well in over a week thinking about what needs to be done, thinking about this moment of saying goodbye, thinking about what in the world will I do Monday morning without emails to check, lists to make, people to call, sermons to write,

And webinars and diocesan meetings to attend...actually, scratch that—I won't miss the meetings.

Whenever I think about the unknowns, the changes, the questions, the loss of routine, not celebrating the Eucharist, not praying by your bedside, not listening to your stories, not cheering you on at your baseball and lacrosse games, my stomach flips and flops, and I am not convinced that I am ready.

But, here I am. Ready or not. Indeed, my apparent unreadiness is actually an indicator that now more than ever it is time for me to step back, let go, and behold what God is doing in the world about me.

The same is true for you, too.
Ready or not, Here you are.
Here we are.

Now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is.

It's time for you—online and in-person—to stop, take stock on what brings you joy, what wears you down, what nourishes you, what keeps you from taking risks, what are you building, where we you going, who you are becoming.

Whether you are ready for what the rest of the spring and summer hold, whether or not you are ready to welcome an amazing priest in Rev. Linda Calkins who will walk alongside you as you journey through life or not, *you* are at the threshold of another chapter—

a chapter that has yet to be written, yet to unfold, yet to be decided. And I hope and pray that you have and will have eyes and hearts that are open, attentive, and willing to embrace the Spirit's movement in you and in this place.

Now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is.

There *is* so much that we do not know—when we'll be in the building for worship, when we'll all be vaccinated, when grief will ease its relentless hold, when we'll be united with those we live, when our marriage not feel so fragile, when we'll not have so much pain coursing through these flesh and bones, when we'll take our final breath. But, this fact remains: though it hasn't yet appeared what we will be, we *will* become like God—whole, pure, healed, and one with God. God is infused in this world and this community, and in you. You are not alone.

Now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is.

You are called to become more and more of the person that God in Christ has created you to be—the image of the indivisible, loving, merciful, and radically expansive God. And it is not in my purview or your purview or anyone's purview—no matter who they are and no matter the gifts and skills and education and experience they have—to know what exactly that shall be. But it's up to us to say yes and to awaken each day to the chance to become more and more of our truest selves, beloved.

So, here is what I hope and need you to do over these next several months.

1. Show up. Yes, your presence in worship matters—and not simply here on Sundays. For it's not something we observe, it's what we do. It reminds us who we are at our core. God's faves called to love and serve ALL the other favorites of God—which is everyone.
2. Make space to listen and grow. To that end, I invite you to do one of the following:
 1. Have a conversation(s) with three people whom you do not already know. More than a simple "hi" and "have a nice day," engage.
 1. Ask these questions: What do you love? What have you lost? Where does it hurt? What do you dream?¹ And when you talk to them, just listen. You can ask follow-up questions. But don't compare your story to theirs. Just take in the whole image of God in them and bless them as you depart.

¹ Questions from The Episcopal Church's *From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference*. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/from-many-one/>

2. And the thought of talking to someone you don't know freaks you out, sign up to join one of the Sacred Ground groups. Sacred Ground is an opportunity to more fully engage in our American story and begin to repair the breach across racial and cultural lines.
3. Do something you have never done before—as a faith community and individually. Think outside the box. Get rid of the phrase—at least for four months— “but that’s how we’ve always we done it” or “but that’s what I know.” To follow Christ is to let go of what we think we know and to be open to the Spirit’s movement that we might love more expansively and boldly. Friends, We are not meant to stay the same. Fully inhabit your body—no matter how strong or tender it may be, and as you do so give thanks for the God who does not shun or flesh or desires, but who planted them in us. We are embodied creatures and we serve and embodied God.

Trust that I will be doing the same thing, too. For no eye has seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who abandon themselves to a Love that defies words.

Now we are God’s children, and it hasn’t yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we’ll see him as he is.

And now,
May God, who comes to us in the things of this world,
bless your eyes and be in your seeing.
May Christ, who looks upon you with deepest love,
bless your eyes and widen your gaze.
May the Spirit, who perceives what is and what may yet be,
bless your eyes
and sharpen your vision.
May the Sacred Three bless your eyes and cause you to see. ²

And know this: All shall be well, and all shall be well. And all manner of thing shall be well.

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² Jan L. Richardson, *In the Sanctuary of Women: A Companion for Reflection and Prayer* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2010). Posted on the painted prayerbook. <http://paintedprayerbook.com/2011/01/15/epiphany-2-what-are-you-looking-for/>