

Devotion for Week of October 23, 2022

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Several of us women have just returned from the Triennial PW Synod Gathering at Epworth by the Sea. The theme this year, based upon our PW Bible Study of Celebrating Sabbath, was “Plug in and Recharge.” A number of speakers addressed the sense that plugging in to worship and prayer and time together as a Christian community is what helps us recharge. We were all so glad to finally be back together after a long, lonely time during COVID where our customary retreats and other PW get togethers were not held. All of us realized that we need each other a lot more than we thought.

During COVID, over 1.8 million women left the workplace, with \$800 billion in lost income. That is so staggering a thought that I cannot even digest it. Think of all the women who had to come home to care for children out of school who required supervision and help with online learning. Or women who had to come home to care for sick family members. Or women who had to come home because they got COVID themselves. I wonder when they will make up the lost employment and income. We already know our children are behind from missing in-person learning. Their socialization skills essentially stopped in place for almost 2 years.

33% of those who attended church before the pandemic have not come back. Think about that. One third of the Christian population in America who sat in the pews, participated in the life of the church, supported mission projects, and gave their pledges to support the church. Will we recover? Some say no – it has become too easy to just stay home and do something else, or watch a service on Zoom or Facebook or TV without having to actively participate – all in pajamas with a cup of coffee nearby. One of the speakers said that our biggest sin as Christians is that we give so little time to God. And COVID gave us an excuse to give even less.

But we’re suffering as a result of all this isolation. Suicide rates are going through the roof. Road rage has exploded. We have lost our ability to have empathy for others, and we have forgotten how to take care of ourselves emotionally. But selfcare is easier when we take time to let God take care of us. That is what the Sabbath is for. To stop everything else, and to spend time in worship – worship in community. Because when we’re together we can sing more joyfully our favorite hymns. We can listen to scripture and sermons and then talk about it with our friends around us. We can catch up on the news with each other and pray for healing for each other. After all, “It is the Christ in you who sees the Christ in me.”

Jeanne