

On the mind of parishioner Amanda Bell...

Following Adrian's sermon on Homecoming Sunday, the image of the potter and clay really stuck with me. How beautiful to live and breathe in the truth that we are God's artwork, each individually and specifically crafted, handled with care, labored over in love. It's grounding, comforting. Sometimes, though, it feels a bit too good to be true. Can I, with all my very human flaws and mistakes and uncertainties, really be a product of our great God? Can I really come to Him not just in my joy and hope and peace, but also in my anger and confusion and grief? Does He really want to work in and through ALL of me?

As I reflected this week, I was reminded of a reading I came across only a couple of weeks ago which speaks to this. It allowed me to take a deep breath – and I hope the same for you:

“There's an old potter's adage that says, ‘Clay has memory.’ Press your thumb into a pliable mound of earth, and it will hold the indentation long after the surface is smoothed over. Beneath the glaze, beneath the finished shape, the clay still remembers where it was pressed, where it was pulled, where it was wounded.

Isn't that how we are, too?

Our souls bear the imprints of moments long past. Words spoken in anger, love offered and withdrawn, joys that made us sing, betrayals that hollowed us out, all of it is pressed into us. We may smooth our faces and build sturdy lives, but underneath, there are grooves and impressions time has not erased.

Perhaps it feels like weakness to be so formed by what we've experienced. But what if it's also what makes us most beautiful? What if the memory held within us is not simply scar tissue but a testimony that we have lived, that we have been molded by both pain and grace?

Scripture echoes this in Psalm 56:8: ‘You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?’ Nothing we've carried has been lost on God. Each sorrow is known, each joy remembered.

When we come to God with our memories, we aren't offering Him pristine, unmarked clay. We bring Him all the fingerprints, all the fractures, all the lines that tell our story. And in His hands, they are not flaws to be erased, but lines of narrative He weaves into something more whole than we could imagine.

Today, dare to notice the places you still carry the past. Rather than despising them, let them remind you of your tenderness, your capacity to be shaped, your willingness to keep living. Clay that refuses to be moved becomes like stone. Your softness is not your failure: it is your glory that can be used for God's glory.” (Betsy Sunny)

A note from the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser...

Dear Friends,

To continue with the image of the potter and the clay, it is now more important than ever to make ourselves like putty in God's hands, ready to be molded with teachable spirits, open hearts, and charitable dispositions toward others. There are people in our nation hardening all around us, and I believe we all feel the danger of political extremism on the rise. It impacts all Americans.

At Thursday evening's service of Candlelight Communion, our Cantor Melissa Fogarty sang “America the Beautiful” (hymn 719), which felt particularly appropriate for the 24th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and in the wake of Charlie Kirk's death.

We also offered up the collect crafted by then Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold in observance of the first anniversary of 9/11. I encourage you to pray it now – in the spirit of healing across national borders and within our own.

God the compassionate one, whose loving care extends to all the world, we remember this day your children of many nations and many faiths whose lives were cut short by the fierce flames of anger and hatred. Console those who continue to suffer and grieve and give them comfort and hope as they look to the future. Out of what we have endured, give us the grace to examine our relationships with those who perceive us as the enemy, and show our leaders the way to use our power to serve the good of all for the healing of the nations. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord who, in reconciling love, was lifted up from the earth that he might draw all things to himself. Amen.

Adrian+

BIBLE STUDY

Sunday, September 21, 10:00 to 10:40 p.m. The Rev. Greg Morgan offers the second in a five-part Bible Study series: *From Creation to the Covenant with Abraham and the Binding of Isaac*. Bibles will be provided. We hope to see you there!

SANDWICH SUNDAY

Sunday, September 21, 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Every third Sunday of the month, parishioners are invited to the Parish Dining Room during Coffee Hour to help make sandwiches that we'll deliver to a nearby homeless drop-in center. Please join us!

OUR BELIEFS, OUR PRACTICES, OUR PARISH

Sunday, September 28, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Aimed primarily at helping newcomers and new members integrate into the parish, this three-part class is open to everyone who would like to know more about what our church believes and does. Join us in the Parish Dining Room for a discussion about Christian doctrine foundational to our faith.

Remaining sessions will take place at the same time on **October 5 and 12**.

HOW DO I JOIN?

There are three ways to become a member of Church of the Incarnation:

- You may be baptized at Incarnation. The "Our Beliefs, Our Practices, Our Parish" class serves as baptismal preparation for adults. If you are interested in baptism for yourself or your child, speak to the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser.
- If you have been baptized in another Christian denomination, you may be Confirmed or Received into the Episcopal Church at our yearly Bishop's visitation to Incarnation. The next visitation will be Confirmation Sunday, March 22. Our "Confirmation and Inquirers' Class" offered each Spring serves as preparation for Confirmation and Reception.
- If you have already been Confirmed or Received into the Episcopal Church by a Bishop, you may transfer your letter of membership from another Episcopal parish. (We'll take care of the paperwork!)

Speak to the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser to learn more about membership at Incarnation.