



First Baptist Church

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Whatever You Do, Do All to the Glory of God

Letter from Pastor – April 2024

I am not really a fan of a lot of the modern musicals. While I fell in love with Hamilton by Lin Manuel Miranda (2015) and listened to several songs from Six (Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss, 2017) that I have enjoyed, overall, I would prefer to listen to Wicked (Stephen Schwartz, 1995) or Aida (Elton John and Tim Rice, 1998). Or even better, see a show composed by Sondheim or Andrew Lloyd Webber!

Knowing this information, it may not surprise you to learn that I was not eagerly anticipating our church's recent trip to see Come from Away at the Midland Center of the Arts; at least, not because of the show. I was excited to spend non-Sunday hours with members of the Church and to learn a bit more about the situation that our speaker for April 21 (Tom Ammerman) would be speaking about (the landing of his plane in Gander, Canada on 9/11). I just didn't have high hopes for the production which I had heard NOTHING about.

Let me tell you, I am SO glad I made the decision to go. The show was AMAZING! Production quality, music, and acting were all incredible. But, in truth, that isn't what set the experience apart. For me, what made seeing Come from Away memorable was how it provided me with a resource through which I could find some healing.

Chances are, if you are reading this, you lived through 9/11. Perhaps you watched live as the second tower in New York was hit by a plane. Maybe you saw one or both towers fall. As one character in the musical said, "Eventually, we HAD to turn off the television." But that didn't stop the fear of the unknown. For hours, days, and weeks our nation was on high alert; waiting for what would come next. Eventually those feelings died down and we found a new normal.

Every year since then, I have been aware of deep feelings on 9/11. Sometimes they rise to the surface as fear. Other times it is anger. Still others it is anxiety. Clearly, I have not really processed all that went on that day in September those many years ago.

Enter Come from Away. Through the music, story, laughs, and tears of that show I finally felt some relief from the emotions I have held for twenty-three years. Who knew a musical could be a vessel for healing?

As I have processed my own experience of seeing the musical, I have thought a lot about our experiences as Christians of trauma. We are told to "Turn Our Eyes Upon Jesus" and "worry about nothing" (Matthew 6:34). But some experiences need to be turned over AND worked through. If we need help (through counseling or medication) or time, that is OK!

Consider for a moment Jesus' interaction with Thomas at the end of the book of John. Thomas needed time and evidence. He needed to process what had happened his way, and Jesus gave him what he needed. While the author of John uses this moment to affirm OUR faith in Jesus, which does not require proof, he does not condemn Thomas but instead meets him right where he is.

Being made unique means that each of us deals with life differently. For some "dealing" happens in a moment and for others it can take years. Both are FAITHFUL responses to living. Both individuals rely on our Lord to guide them through.

These last few years have been hard for a lot of us. Whether our issues have been personal, family, national, or international (COVID) many of us have experienced pain and (yes, even) trauma. Take heart my brothers and sisters, there is NO WRONG WAY to deal with these emotions. Have grace with yourself and one another.

~Rev. Lara Freeburg