

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 5/27/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

So many shootings. And now another school. Nineteen beautiful young children's and two beloved and committed teachers' lives tragically ended. And for each life lost at least twenty more family and friends profoundly feel the loss. We are grieved, and we are angry, and we feel helpless and hopeless. What can be done? Especially when the events happen states away from us. But then there was the shooting just south of us in Laguna Woods just over a week ago. In a church. What are we to do? We know that some of these killings were racially motivated. Some were not. Some shooters were angry—teased and bullied. Some were fearful—believing reports that others who seem different than them were a threat. It is so great and so heartbreaking, and we feel powerless. Is there anything that any one of us can do that would matter—that would make a difference?

Wednesday in our midweek Bible study class I told this story: A large storm had washed tens of thousands of starfish up on the beach where they would not survive. A man who went down to the beach to see the effects of the storm saw a little boy pick up a starfish and throw it back into the ocean. After watching him repeat this action a number of times, the man went up to the little boy and asked, "Why are you doing this? There are so many of them and you are just one. Do you think this is really going to make a difference?"

The boy picked up another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the water. Then the boy replied to the man, "It made a difference to that one."

We may seem overwhelmed by the size of things happening in our country. We may feel like we can't do anything by ourselves. But we can make a difference. Here are some suggestions:

- Pray. Ask God to act—to bring about change for the good of our neighbors, our world, and for the Kingdom of God. Ask that God might give us opportunities to act or speak in ways that will also accomplish these things.
- Vote. I'm not an advocate of one issue voting, but perhaps there are times where we must look for candidates that support a specific cause about which we are feeling very passionate.
- Seek to build bridges.
  - Lovingly challenge those whose words or actions create division or build walls between individuals or cultures.
  - Offer assistance to anyone who looks to be in need of comfort or support.
  - Walk across the room to create a connection with one who appears different from those with whom you are familiar. Let them know that you are glad they are here, that you value the diversity of culture they bring, and that they also are loved of God.
- Write to those who have the power to legislate change asking for their help in making things better and safer.
- Partner with others who are advocating and working to make a difference in the way things are.
- Celebrate the changes that have occurred. It may not seem like it, but there are things that have happened in the past ten years that are helpful.

Most of all trust that in the midst of such tragedy, God is with us to comfort and support us, and to give us vision and direction for our work to create a better world. Know that God loves all of us and is also

deeply grieved when these things happen. Be confident that when the world seems out of control, God still provides the peace that passes all understanding through faith alone in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey