

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 9/15/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

This year, the Church Council of St. Andrew Lutheran Church is reading Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again by Rachel Held Evans. Rachel came out of a theologically conservative background but allowed her questions to lead her into a broader understanding of the Bible and of GOD. Here is a quote by Rachel that I recently came across:

“They said that if I questioned a 6,000-year-old earth, I would question whether other parts of Scripture should be read scientifically and historically.

They were right. I did.

They said that if I entertained the hope that those without access to the gospel might still be loved and saved by God, I would fall prey to the dangerous idea that God loves everyone, that there is nothing God won't do to reconcile all things to Himself.

They were right. I have.

They said that if I looked for Jesus beyond the party line, I could end up voting for liberals.

They were right. I do (sometimes).

They said that if I listened to my gay and lesbian neighbors, if I made room for them in my church and in my life, I could let grace get out of hand.

They were right. It has.

They told me that this slippery slope would lead me away from God, that it would bring a swift end to my faith journey, that I'd be lost forever.

But with that one, they were wrong.

Yes, the slippery slope brought doubts. Yes, the slippery slope brought change. Yes, the slippery slope brought danger and risk and unknowns. I am indeed more exposed to the elements out here, and at times it is hard to find my footing.

But when I decided I wanted to follow Jesus as myself, with both my head and heart intact, the slippery slope was the only place I could find him, the only place I could engage my faith honestly.

So down I went.

It was easier before, when the path was wide and straight.

But, truth be told, I was faking it. I was pretending that things that didn't make sense made sense, that things that didn't feel right felt right. To others, I appeared confident and in control, but faith felt as far away as a friend who has grown distant and cold.

Now, every day is a risk.

Now, I have no choice but to cling to faith and hope and love for dear life.

Now, I have to keep a very close eye on Jesus, as he leads me through deep valleys and precarious peaks.

But the view is better, and, for the first time in a long time, I am fully engaged in my faith.

I am alive.

I am dependent.

I am following Jesus as me—heart and head intact.

And they were right. All it took was a question or two to bring me here.”

- Rachel Held Evans  
(June 8, 1981 - May 4, 2019)

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey