

Dive Right In, The Water is Fine

How many of us can dive from a dock into a lake or into a pool? I know a lot of us can dive into a plate of fries or a bag of chips, but do you remember learning to dive? How about going out onto a diving board. Some boards are close to the water while others are up a bit, until you get to the height of a platform diving area. I couldn't even climb up there and look, let alone jump off or even begin to think about twisting, flipping, or a non-splash landing.

Much like our children and grandchildren, when I was younger, I was a bit more fearless. However, I didn't learn to dive until I was 12 or 13 years old. As we didn't have a pool I was fortunate enough to spend some time in the neighbor's pool two doors up from our house. One afternoon, a number of us were there as well as some guests of the Stracuzzi family who owned the pool. When one of them, Ellen, realized I could not dive, she took it upon herself to teach me right then and there. I was scared half to death but that day I learned how to dive. No longer would I be the one to start on the diving board only to come

off it and hope no one had seen me abandon my attempt. But the high dive or a platform dive? No, thank you!

I think about the young man in today's Gospel story. He felt pretty sure of himself: he could swim and he could maybe even dive. But, when Jesus asked him to make the big leap and go in from the high platform dive area, he, like most of us, balked and simply turned away. He couldn't make the big commitment to sell everything and give the money to the poor. How many of us would have responded in the same way?

This minister would have responded like that. Give away everything that I have worked so hard for: my home, my possessions, my car, my cell? Yikes! Can it be done? Yes! I did it once before—actually, twice. But, in hindsight, it wasn't so radical. It allowed me to make a fresh start. For some folks, that would be awful, but think about the people who have lost everything due to a fire or some other calamity. What about the people who lost everything to Hurricanes Helene and Milton? While they can try to have the mindset that it will be a “fresh start” they will have to grieve for what was lost.

For those of us who have yet to reach the “high dive platform” of following today’s Gospel message, we can do what we can to work our way up there. I think that there are progressive steps that we can take. Remember when you dove in from the side of the pool? Then you progressed to the low diving board, and then maybe the high diving board? Well, here is another way to consider this? How many of us have paid attention to the relief efforts of the hurricanes? How many of us have paid attention to our own churches when they ask for food items or clothing items to be given to those in need? Our friends at Southwick Community Episcopal Church, even in the midst of trying to unpack, have put out a call for things to go south on a trailer filled with relief items. Some folks here have been more than generous with their time, talent, and treasure. Have any of us gone without some luxury item but put the money aside to be given to those in need? That is another way that we can begin to climb up to the high dive platform.

Here at First Congregational Church of Westfield/Southwick Congregational, we have worked hard for what we have. We are also beginning to find ways to share what we have with those who are in

need. Sometimes, we need to take a risk and at least climb up to the next level to take a look to acknowledge that yes, it is frightening, before we simply say, “We can’t do it.” “We shouldn’t do it.” “This is too scary for us.”

My siblings in Christ, it is the perfect time for all of us to spend quality time in prayer and discernment. How are we being called to answer Jesus’ call to “Come, follow me.” Let this be our prayer this week. Amen!