

Drawn In – Part 5: Reintegrating

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Scripture: I Corinthians 12:12-19, Reading: "The Cause of Suffering"

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I. Interconnectness

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:12-19

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? (1 Corinthians 12:12–19 NRSV)

We have discussed dreaming, hovering, risking, and listening, as parts of a process to discern how we, as a community, are being called to participate with God in the world. Today we are going to be discussing the idea of *reintegrating*.

Troy Bronsink, the author of the book, *Drawn In*, suggests that reintegrating is that point in the process where we begin to test out some of the dreams and visions we have discovered through the previous four parts of the process. Our ideas and thoughts are terrific, even just as concepts inside our heads and hearts, but the real joy of being in community is to share those thoughts and ideas with others, allowing them to participate with you.

Troy says, "Newly created things are defined by their relationship to the environment. ...Nothing exists in isolation. It is always the relationship of things that are being determined as they are created." As we talked about previously, we do not live in a vacuum. All of us are interconnected and rely on one another to help bring each of us most fully alive. Margaret Wheatley, who was just with us over the weekend, describes this interconnectedness this way:

"everything we observe is not a separate "thing" but a participant in a vast web of relationships. Living systems and the Universe are best understood as dense layers of networked relationships. Even a single cell is a complex network, far beyond the imaginings of scientists until a few years ago. Nothing living lives alone."

¹Wheatley, Margaret J.. *Who Do We Choose To Be?: Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity* (p. 212). Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Scientists have observed this same relational tendency in their study of particles. Many tests have been done showing that particles only ever exist in relationship to another. One experiment separated electrons to see if their behavior in relationship to one another would persist, and it did. Even after putting a vast amount of space between the two, the paired electrons continued to mimic the behavior of the other. If one of the electrons changed, the other changed as well, faster than the speed of light. Scientists call this relational behavior *entanglement* and have identified it both macro and micro systems throughout creation.

Following the lead of the created world in which we are a part, and, recognizing this interconnectedness, we too should come together to be in conversation about all the things we discover as we are alert and aware in the world. So, I am inviting you all to spend a few minutes sharing ideas with one another about our identity here at the Tri-Faith Commons, and how this identity informs our dreams and behaviors.

Please gather in groups of three or four. Feel free to get up and move around as needed to accommodate a good space for discussion. We will have approximately 7 minutes to discuss one or more of the following ideas:

1. What new thoughts or ideas have you discovered since being in partnership with our Jewish and Muslim faith partners at the Tri-Faith?
2. What new experiences have you shared with people from the faith partner conversations? Have you attended a picnic, a panel discussion, a neighbor to neighbor group, or other shared programming within the Tri-Faith, and if so what was your experience in that participation?

II. "The Joy of Interbeing"

Reading: "The Cause of Suffering" by Margaret Wheatley

Many years ago,
the Dalai Lama asked a group of professionals
(including friends who told me this story)
"What is the cause of suffering?"

Everybody had an answer:
Poverty. Injustice. War. Alienation. Racism.
After listening to their answers,
He abruptly interrupted them.

No, he said,
The cause of suffering
Is when good people
Begin their work together
And then fail to notice
What is arising between them.

Margaret Wheatley would tell us that in the midst of the worst conditions, our most noble human qualities are right there, offering us the capacity to turn to one another to help, to strengthen, to love, and to console. This group of people who arise to lead with integrity, compassion and care would be those people she calls “Warriors for the Human Spirit.” Warriors are those “leaders who recognize the harm being done to people and planet through the dominant practices that control, ignore, abuse, and oppress the human spirit. ...leaders who put service over self, stand steadfast in crises and failures, and who display unshakable faith that people can be generous, creative, and kind.”

I believe that we at the Tri-Faith are becoming just such people. We are practicing putting *people* at the center of what we do, rather than our religious doctrines. We are caring for one another and standing for one another in the midst of a culture that would otherwise deny who we are, and ignore the diversity we represent. We are speaking and learning together, building relationships that open new possibilities for our behavior with one another.

In our five years of being the Christian presence of the Tri-Faith Initiative we have learned a lot about each other and have created many new friendships among the faith traditions. Our clergy can no longer plan for ministry in their congregations without thinking of the impact of the other faith communities of the Tri-Faith, or of how any communal decisions we make will affect the other two communities. For myself, I find myself checking in on my new friends from the Temple or the Mosque when I hear that someone in their family is ill or hurt in some way, and many of my event reminders include the emails of friends from the other two faith communities as well as those from our own congregation.

All of us are interconnected, and I believe all of us are rising to be those who have been set apart to be Warriors for the Human Spirit. Many of us have already begun to bear witness to this through our behaviors. I know I have already experienced this Spirit in my own engagement with others, and in how I address those seek us out. Where have you experienced this transformative energy around you? I’d like to have you gather together again in groups of three or four to discuss this next set of questions:

1. What have you seen or experienced that has given you faith in the Human Spirit?
2. When have you acted as a “Warrior for the Human Spirit,” concentrating on those things that put people at the center of your efforts?

We are children of God, loved beyond our wildest imaginations. I’m so looking forward to where this identity will lead us. And I am confident that whatever path we find ourselves on, we will be moving forward together, sharing both the joys and the struggles, facing our futures head on, with faith that whatever may come, we can find our way through it together.

Let us go out into the world in confidence with some final words from Margaret Wheatley: “Whatever the problem, Community is the answer.”

Amen.