

Mini-Sabbath Reflection & Report

Connie Thomson

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River of Grace, Manassas

I returned yesterday from a refreshing and re-fueling mini-sabbath, thanks to the generosity of the Metro DC Synod of the ELCA. I took a trip to Capon Bridge, West Virginia, where I could spend some time in the mountains – which has always been the place my spirit is most fueled. It has been years since I've had an overnight get-away specifically for retreat without my kids, and while the first several hours were sort of disorienting in that way, I quickly (yet restfully!) found my stride. Some key reflections of my days away follow:



1. Be Attuned to the Road.

The roads of life all have their twists and turns, with unexpected glimpses along the way. My spirit is far more refreshed when I pay attention to the glimpses amid the twists and turns. There is beauty everywhere. This really struck me as I was walking down this road.

2. Scenery matters.

This was the view off my back deck, and I found so much rest even in the view. I am looking forward to designing my schedule with more time in nature, to breathe the different air and to be refreshed by the beauty around me.



3. Time and Space to Color.

I spent a LOT of time coloring in my journaling Bible. It was really nice to just sit in the quiet, choose colors, read scriptures, and watch and feel the words come to life as I sat with them longer.

4. Make Friends Along the Way

I enjoyed stopping along walks and visiting these folks, marveling at God's creation, and getting out of my own head for a while.



5. Beauty is Everywhere.

This lake is a Cacapon State Park. I have driven by the park entry for this State Park at least fifty times in my life, on my way to and from one place or another. During these days, I decided to stop. And I'm amazed that this gem was right within my grasp so often, but I never gave myself time to explore it. I'm looking forward to giving myself more time in nature, and more time "taking the long way" home.

6. Kindle the Fire.

Like many, I am mesmerized by fire: making them, watching them, tending them, cleaning up after them. And I am understanding that this opportunity is implicit in ministry ... to kindle and observe and tend and care for the fire within. Fifty years ago, Dr. Joseph Sittler said that the problem with clergy burn-out is that clergy don't do enough to kindle their fires. While I'm not in a season of burn-out, I am grateful for the reminder and image to continue tending my fire within, and to continue to be mesmerized by it all.



7.



Living Water.

And just like the sound of a crackling fire captivates and mesmerizes, the sound of flowing water is inviting and purifying. I loved sitting by this stream and reflecting on the name of our church, River of Grace. I thought of the adage about how we cannot step into the same river twice, because a river is always flowing, always moving, always changing. Ministry is called to move and change. It's to be dynamic. It's to have a foot on earth and a foot in heaven at the same time. It's to be attuned to the needs around us so that we might be the vessel for Christ's living water to come to those in need.

In summary:

As you can see, I tend to think in pictures. 😊

I'm so grateful to the synod for this wonderful opportunity to retreat, refresh, and to be re-set. We are standing on the day of the one-year anniversary of Life at a Distance. I am approaching the one year anniversary of my mom's death. I am continuing to navigate health issues with my dad. And I'm always deeply absorbed in what it means to parent five-year-olds. These days away taught me again that God is good, that life is beautiful, and that it is not only important and advised, but it is vital and commanded that I take time to dive more deeply not into my never-ending to-do list, but to honoring the space God has placed in and around all of those commitments.

This mini-sabbath has been a true gift, and I intend to look back at this little 'picture book' and remind myself again and again to rest and to do dance in a rhythm between a kindled fire and living water.



With gratitude and thanksgiving,
Connie Thomson