

First and Center
Pastor's Blog
June 27, 2019



June is Pride Month (though Hartford doesn't celebrate till September, no clue why), and the other day I was walking past the front of our church building (the Meeting House) and two men were standing in front of the grassy area next to the building trying to talk to people about Jesus. They do this regularly.

I have no idea why I do this, but I stopped because they asked me if I was saved. I said I certainly am and I love Jesus. They asked what I knew about Jesus. I revealed my secret identity as the pastor of the church they were next to, a church which has a large rainbow banner on our fence inviting people to love everyone, as Jesus commanded.

Immediately the man shouted that I certainly didn't know Jesus because I was part of a church that welcomed "perverts." I knew at that point there was no plus side to engaging on that, so I simply said that I know God loves all of us, him included, and I wished him a blessed day. Then I walked away. He continued to shout something at me and I tuned him out.

I have the privilege, as a cis-gender straight person, of simply walking away. He wasn't talking about me and I wasn't hurt by that word. I realize that my friends and colleagues who have different sexual orientations or gender identities don't have that privilege. Then I remember a verse from the book of Hebrews I had recently read "Remember those who are being tortured as though you yourselves were being tortured." (13:3)

We need to enter into the pain of those tortured in our society by words and actions every day, understanding that not all torture is done in dark cells by government operatives or terrorists. Children in cages at the border. Black men and women living in fear of being stopped in their cars and shot for any reason or no reason at all. Muslim people, especially women whose clothing makes them a target, being harassed. Jews afraid their synagogues may be the next target. LGBTQ+ people facing harassment, rejection, and violence. Still.

Let us lament with our kindred on this earth who are being tortured daily. And let us not neglect to speak and act for and with them, as though we, too, were being similarly tortured.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Minister

