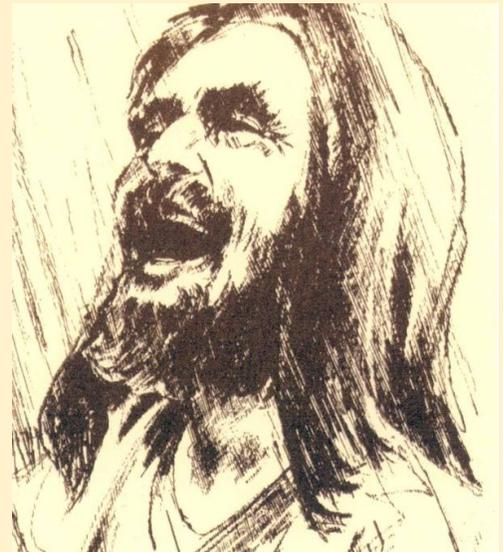


First and Center
Pastor's Blog
November 6, 2019

I am part of a group of seven colleagues (clergy and lay) who have been working together for a number of years on producing a couple of small group study guides published by Lumunos Foundation. The guides are great, but after just having spent two days with these colleagues on our semi-annual work retreat, something much more valuable has come out of this, once again, for me.



Laughter.

This is a group of people with whom I am utterly comfortable, whom I would trust with anything, who respect one another's gifts, who take time to share one another's burdens whenever we meet or talk on a Zoom call. For all of us, this group is more than a writing cohort; it is a group for strength and support on our journeys. One thing we all remark on every time we are together is how often we laugh with one another. I probably laugh with these people more often than I laugh anywhere else in my life. The laughter comes from an ability to be vulnerable with each other. The laughter comes because we rejoice that God has brought us together. The laughter comes because we genuinely like each other.

Laughter is healing; indeed, there is scientific info to support that contention, but I don't need that, and you probably don't either. You know how it feels to laugh from your heart and soul with someone else. Not at them. With them. Laughing at people merely feeds our worst impulses and hurts both us and our victims. I am talking about laughing ***with***.

Do you have friends or family with whom you laugh regularly? I hope so. I have come to believe that we don't laugh enough at church. We don't have to be serious all the time; there is no rule. In fact, again and again Paul tells churches they should be rejoicing, because they are so loved. It's utterly ridiculous that God still loves humankind, don't you think? It makes me laugh at how wonderful that is. Let's work on building relationships of trust, respect and wonder with each other, relationships that help us laugh together.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Minister

Image: *The Laughing Christ* by Willis Wheatley