



06/21/2020

Dear Ascension Family!

Greetings from Olympia, Washington, where I am spending the summer, working as a chaplain intern at Providence St. Peter Hospital. I don't know about you, but since my last letter and visiting New York City for Meredith's ordination to the diaconate, it feels as though the world, in many ways, has turned upside down. And in all of what is going on, I know, without a shadow of a doubt, there is an ushering in of life and love and that God is present in it all.

I completed my first year of seminary as most colleges did, on Zoom. The move to Zoom was not as challenging for me as it was for some of my classmates and professors. Prior to seminary, I had worked from home for nine years and was accustomed to meeting on the phone/online. It is hard to believe I am done with the first year, and I can see how the next two years will pass in the blink of an eye. The picture on the left is the final day of my Biblical Studies New Testament class and the picture on the right is most of the books I read this semester (if you want the full book list for my first year, I sent it to Mother Liz.) Of the courses I completed during my first year, the two which had the most significant spiritual impact on me were Encuentro and Liturgy. Both of these courses have challenged me to delve deeper into what it means to participate in the life of God ritually and how this will manifest in my ministry.

The Encuentro course was a two-week immersive course to observe, participate in, and consider the church in mission along the Texas/Mexico border. This course, along with race conversations at the seminary, and the recent events that have highlighted the systemic racism and white supremacy embedded into so many institutions has challenged me and a number of students at the seminary to face our internal biases so that we can become better allies and advocates for black, indigenous, and people of color. Our first endeavor involves reading the book, *Me and White Supremacy*, by Layla Saad. This book includes questions at the end of each chapter that support the reader, as Layla says, "explore and unpack your relationship with white supremacy."

In my Liturgy course, I had the chance to contemplate and learn about the Christian mystery through ritual. I have always loved our liturgy. It is part of what brought me back to the Episcopal church as an adult. My final paper for the course discussed how the Liturgical calendar holds the tension of temporal and eternal time as Jesus Christ was able to hold the tension of being of the world (fully human) and the holy (fully divine). Writing the paper brought into focus that God gave humanity the gift of time so that humanity could take that gift and put it into something designed to honor and celebrate God – a calendar. It reinforced for me that everything is a gift from God to participate in the life of God.

For now, I will bring this letter to a close. You are in my daily prayers. I pray the re-opening of New York City goes well. Thank you for your prayers and support. If you would keep me in your prayers about where and how God is calling me to work with those who are oppressed and vulnerable, I would greatly appreciate it. If there is anything I can be praying for you about, you would like to hear more about, or just want to touch base, please reach out to me at any time at stacey.carpenter@ssw.edu or 206-963-8645. I look forward to the day when we will all be back together worshipping and celebrating God. In the meantime, I will see you on Zoom as I am available to attend Ascension's services.

With love and gratitude,

Stacey