

Resources for Emotional & Spiritual Support

The Pastoral Response Team at General Convention

As the Liturgy on July 4th at General Convention may be spiritually and emotionally challenging for some participants whose lives have been impacted by sexual violence in the church, opportunities for confidential pastoral care will be available. Throughout the course of Convention, members of the Pastoral Response Team will be stationed at or nearby the designated chapel as well as at the close of daily liturgies for informal support and healing prayer. Members of the Pastoral Response Team will wear badges indicating their affiliation with the team.

The pastoral response team is comprised of laity and clergy who are licensed mental health clinicians and experienced chaplains as well as diocesan staff who have experience in working with individuals in the aftermath of sexual violence. The main objectives of the team are to provide a safe, confidential space in which distressed or concerned individuals can find support until they return to their home communities and to provide access to information related to Title IV processes. If you are at Convention and are unable to locate a member of the Pastoral Response Team, you may call 919-448-6202.

For Participants Using Live Streaming

If you are participating in the Liturgy on July 4 at 5:15 PM from General Convention and have an urgent need for emotional support, please consider using the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE or to chat online, go to www.rainn.org

Once You Return Home

Subsequent to participating in the Liturgy on July 4 at General Convention, you may begin considering pursuing the work of psychotherapy and/or spiritual direction. If so, you may find the following information helpful.

Psychotherapy and spiritual direction

Psychotherapy and spiritual direction are two processes/modalities through which people may pursue healing. While these modalities share similarities such as ongoing, scheduled visits which average 45-60 minutes, they are uniquely distinct. For instance, in psychotherapy, the frequency of visits tends to be weekly. In spiritual direction, visits tend to occur on a monthly basis. Maybe the most profound distinction between the two modalities is that psychotherapy strives to facilitate awareness about interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics and how these dynamics influence the quality of one's daily interactions at home, work, and play. A central psychotherapeutic question may be "how's your past showing up in the present and how are you managing that". In comparison, spiritual direction strives to facilitate an awareness of how God is present and active in one's interpersonal and intrapersonal experience, and particularly, how God manifests in the course of daily interactions. A central spiritual direction inquiry may be "where is God (or Christ or the Holy) in what you are experiencing or describing".

Some folks utilize psychotherapy and spiritual direction concurrently. Some folks may engage in one modality for a sustained time and then make an intentional move into the other modality. In choosing a psychotherapist, consider choosing those who are licensed by a state board (i.e., psychologists, clinical social workers, professional counselors). A good way to connect with competent therapists is to ask trusted others such as your primary care physician or a close friend or colleague whom they would recommend. Similarly, in choosing a spiritual director, consider asking trusted others whom they would recommend. Many spiritual directors have certification from nationally or regionally recognized training programs.

Two final, fundamental considerations.

One, some people enter psychotherapy as well as spiritual direction with the intention and expectation of *feeling better*. If feeling better happens, that's all well and good. However, if people truly want to pursue healing then *getting better* needs to be the core intention and expectation and this means having the willingness to learn how to sit with uncomfortable stuff. Two, in either modality, it's essential to be able to talk about talking with your therapist or spiritual director. In other words, it's important to have a mutual commitment to talking about what's working in the relationship, what's not, and what adjustments can be made to optimize the relationship.