



Feb. 1, 2024

Dear Epworth family,

Thank you so much for all your prayers and love and support as I have taken vocal rest to help my voice heal! I am looking forward to February 11, when I can begin to speak once again. I have learned so much in trying to work without a voice and I look forward to sharing some of those insights with you.

Last week, I attended a meeting of the Northeast Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy. One of the topics involved the financial impact of the disaffiliation of conservative churches on the jurisdiction on the number of bishops assigned to the jurisdiction. We have slowly been reducing the number of bishops, in anticipation of the church growing smaller because of cultural changes. The impact of COVID and the disaffiliations have sped the process up significantly. So, we examined scenarios aligning different conferences together. In all the scenarios, our conference, Peninsula-Delaware, remained in affiliation with the Baltimore Washington Conference. From my perspective, this affiliation has been a gift, and I am excited about continuing the partnership with them.

Participating in that meeting without a voice challenged me and blessed me. Many of my colleagues patiently waited for me to write out my thoughts and read them aloud to the group. I found it humbling to have to rely on other people so very much, yet I was also so moved by their desire to include me. Sometimes I would begin to write, however, and the conversation had moved on in a different direction. So, I would scratch my words and go back to listening.

Through the process, I discovered in myself a willingness to yield. In fact, on my prayer retreat this week, yielding has become a theme. Without a voice and with writing being a slower means to "speak," I had to yield to the Spirit and trust that whatever I needed to say would be brought forward by myself later or by someone else. This slower process also gave me the opportunity to discern if what I had written contributed to the conversation or not. If I felt it was important enough to offer, I would ask someone to read it when the conversation paused. I want to continue to be this intentional when my voice returns, not necessarily by writing but by discerning with the Spirit the contribution of my words and trusting that what needs to be spoken aloud will find a path.

I invite you to join me in considering what yielding would look like in your life. How is the Spirit inviting you to trust more deeply? How can you slow down conversations to allow time for people to consider their words and contributions to the dialogue? What does it mean for you to use your voice for God's love in this world?

Thanks, again, for being patient as I heal. I am so very grateful to be a part of this beautiful community. I hope you experience that gift of community, as well.

Peace,

*Pastor Tiaki*

