

Dear friends in Christ,

I want to share something with you — not as a formal announcement, but as a word from the heart of your pastor.

Over the years, I have lived with the realities of mental health challenges, including a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. There have been difficult seasons — times of deep struggle, times when life felt heavier than I could carry on my own.

I share this not to draw attention to myself, but because I suspect I am not alone.

*Many of us know something of anxiety, depression, grief, loneliness, or quiet discouragement. These burdens are often carried privately, even in the midst of a faithful life.*

What I have learned, over time, is this: peace often does not come all at once. More often, it comes through a steady, grace-filled commitment to *stay*.

To *stay* connected — to God, to one another, to the rhythms of worship and prayer.

To *stay* in conversation — with trusted counselors, friends, and companions along the way.

To *stay* engaged — even when energy is low or hope feels distant.

And sometimes, simply, to *stay* present to the gift of another day.

In the story of the Road to Emmaus, the two disciples are not triumphant or certain. They are weary and confused, walking away from what they had hoped would be. And yet, it is there — on the road, in their uncertainty — that the risen Christ comes alongside them.

That is often how Christ meets us still.

Not only in times of strength, but in moments of quiet persistence.

Not only in acts of certainty, but in the discipline of continuing on.

*If you are in a season of struggle, I want you to know two things: you are not alone, and you do not need to carry your burden in silence.*

Your church is a place where you may seek support.

Your pastor is always willing to listen.

And the grace of God is present — even when it is not easily felt.

May we continue to care for one another gently, honestly, and without judgment.

And may we remember always: sometimes faithfulness looks like nothing more — and nothing less — than choosing to stay.

*In pace Domini Christi,*

*Bob Peiffer*