



## REGION 1 HAMMER & DANCE

July 1, 2020

**United for Ministry in the Days of COVID-19.**

The Social Service Agencies  
and Synods of Region 1.

**Dave Brauer-Rieke**, Consultant

Region 1 Lutheran Disaster Preparedness & Response  
971-255-9331 [dave@climateimagination.com](mailto:dave@climateimagination.com)



*"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. . ."*



This Saturday is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, the day citizens of the United State celebrate independence from British rule.

On July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was signed, but it was not until 1787 – eleven years later - that the words, "We the People ..." were first heard with the adoption of the U.S. Constitution.

The two primary disasters we wrestle with today, that of a rampaging coronavirus and white supremacy, are testing the veracity of the very principles upon which the United States was founded. Where do individual rights intersect our commitment to the common good?

First Amendment rights to free speech, and the right to assemble, are being tested both with the armed suppression of public demonstrations, and public health restrictions on gatherings which affect faith community practices. Individuals claiming their rights to free choice refuse to wear masks in public, gathering for political rallies or worship in the full knowledge that this amplifies the spread of disease. Who are we and what is ultimately important?

Dave Brauer-Rieke

## An Open Letter

This issue of the *Hammer and Dance* is an open letter to those who might wish to read it. I have been working as an ELCA Region 1 consultant with Lutheran Disaster Response for 3 ½ months now, starting March 23, 2020. Nothing has been normal for any of us during this time. The disasters before us, at least in the Pacific Northwest, are mostly unlike anything we have experienced before. So, I share with you these thoughts as we celebrate our national birth this 4<sup>th</sup> of July.



*Dore Braun-Ruber*



### On Vulnerabilities and Revelations

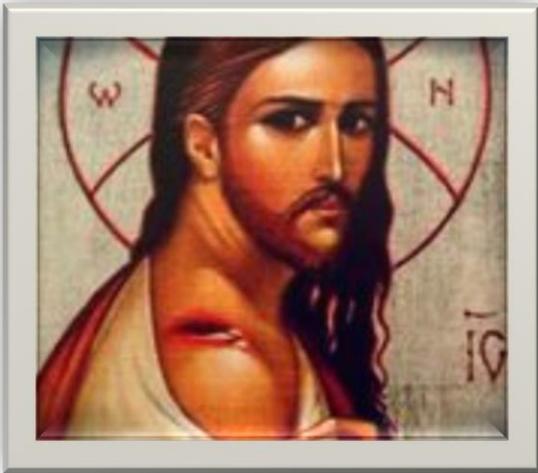
*"Although there is a popular view of disasters as "acts of God" ... a disaster is now generally understood as an event or process that overwhelms the capacity of a vulnerable social group, economic activity, or infrastructure to resist and recover."*

**[Jones, Eric C. and Murphy, Arthur D. (Eds.) 2009, pg. 13, *The Political Economy of Hazards and Disasters*, AltaMira Press]**

If there are no homes or businesses in the path of a hurricane it is just weather. It is only when natural hazards significantly impact the lives of people, and generally in large numbers, that we say we have a disaster on our hands. For example, the fall flu season is not a disaster, even though people get sick and some die. But the coronavirus is a disaster, not just because lots of people are dying, and not just because of its overwhelming impact on the global economy, but because we can't stop it (yet.) We find that we are vulnerable, and vulnerability is disturbing.

The fatal shootings of George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks have revealed the vulnerability of BIPOC in a world of white supremacy. This is also deeply disturbing. What was once hidden to society at large – privileged society anyway – is now in full view. That's what 'revelation' means. What was "hidden," but true, is now made obvious. For some this is blessing. Others receive the truth as a curse. Revelation often does that. It divides us.

Were a major Cascadia Subduction Zone event to happen today we would ask, "How could this be?" "Why did this happen?" "How come we didn't know?" But, of course, we do know. We just aren't preparing. Vulnerabilities are an appropriate focus for Christian ministry. Jesus never hid his vulnerability. He simply lived a life that incarnated trust. ☪



## On Response and Integrity

*"I adore Thee, O Jesus most sorrowful;  
I praise and glorify Thee, and give Thee thanks  
for this most sacred and painful wound  
beseeching Thee by that exceeding pain,  
and by the crushing burden of Thy heavy Cross  
to be merciful to me, a sinner,  
to forgive me all my mortal and venial sins,  
and to lead me on towards Heaven  
along the Way of the Cross. Amen."*

[A Prayer to the Shoulder Wound of Christ.](#)

The Christian life begins with woundedness and not rights. The heroes of the faith are not those who built the institution, but those who sat at the foot of the cross and endured in full light a public display of Christ's vulnerability. "Rights" are not something through which the Christian finds their identity. Protecting the rights of others may be a significant ministry of the Church, but we start where we cannot breathe.

The world has suffered enough disasters that we know a lot about human vulnerability. In the face of the coronavirus, flooding, climate change and white supremacy some wish to turn away. We may wrap our rights around us insisting that our privilege has been earned. We may grieve with those less fortunate; we may say "Yes!" to charity; "Absolutely!" to thoughts and prayers, but is this enough? Does it make us too vulnerable to embrace pain?

Nowhere in the Constitution of the United States is the 'way of the cross' mentioned – nor should it be. The Constitution is that document which protects our right to walk the way of the cross, or not, as we choose. So, what's our choice? If we claim Christ, and if Christ claimed his vulnerabilities, and if vulnerabilities humbly embraced are central to the Gospel, then we must pray, *"forgive me ... and lead me on towards Heaven along the Way of the Cross."*

There is no integrity to a claim that we will respond to disasters tomorrow if we do not respond to vulnerabilities today. We cannot wrap ourselves in privilege so that our shoulder will not bleed. Either the mark of the cross is there, or it is not.

Responding to disaster is human. People will do this. Preparation is a response to vulnerability. Some will do that, too. However, responding to revelation is a spiritual gift.

*"Blessed are your eyes for they see,"* says Jesus, *"and your ears for they hear."* (Mt. 13:16) Where this is true the vulnerable are lifted up – and where the vulnerable are lifted up there are no disasters, just weather. ✪

## On Adaptation and Adaptive Leadership

Which of these two rabbits do you think is more vulnerable to the hungry hawk? Which has adapted and which has not?



We as Church in Region 1 of the ELCA have been talking about *Adaptive Leadership* for several years. The Oregon Synod has dedicated several weekly Rostered Leader sessions to this topic and I, as an Oregon Synod pastor, have learned a lot. Without a doubt we as Church today face numerous adaptive challenges. Disaster preparedness and response, however, is not one of them.

There is no mystery about the challenges before us when it comes to disaster preparedness. We know exactly what we face and what the questions are. There are no halting questions about the solutions we need, or the process of preparation, or what works and what doesn't. We need to build relationships. We need to educate. We need to put up two weeks of food and water or decide on a meeting point for our family should the cell towers go down. These are what we call "technical" challenges in the language of Adaptive Leadership. We address them or we don't, but what needs to be done is clear.

"Adaptation," on the other hand, is what one does when their home has been flooded. Adaptation is required when climate change fuels trends in wildfires and state budgets can no longer pay for fire crews. Adaptation is what a congregation does when they can no longer worship face to face. You find another way. The resilient land on their feet. The vulnerable, however, are often beyond their capacity to adapt any more.

Disaster preparation is designed to build systemic capacity and resiliency. A resilient system can adapt. An isolated, stained system may not be able to. The Church is never called to maintain a status quo which perpetuates vulnerabilities. Rather, the way of the Cross insists that we enter our own – and other's – vulnerabilities and navigate life from there. It is not necessarily an easy path. However, our Gospel proclamation is that it is ultimately the only path.

Is vulnerability a moral issue for people of good conscience? "Yes." Is vulnerability a practical issue for disaster preparation? "Yes." Is vulnerability a spiritual issue for people of faith? "Yes." This 4<sup>th</sup> of July I choose to think of my country as people who wanted to be sure that "Yes!" is always a choice. 🇺🇸