**Body vs. Spirit, or Body and Spirit?**

Although in some ways our society celebrates bodies, in the athletic achievements of bodies, for example, many of us struggle with issues of body image and tend to think of our spiritual selves as separate from our bodies. Today’s session invites us to ponder the role of the body in our faith and practice.

**A Reading for Reflection:**

From Nancy Eiseland, *The Disabled God*

The coming of Emmanuel was understood by the early church in terms of the death and resurrection. At the resurrection, the disciples understood the person Jesus for who he really was. Only through the lens of resurrection could they understand the meaning and significance of the life of Jesus on earth. In the resurrected Jesus Christ, they saw not the suffering servant for whom the last and most important word was tragedy and sin, but the disabled God who embodied both impaired hands and feet and pierced side and the imago Dei. Paradoxically, in the very act commonly understood as the transcendence of physical life, God is revealed as tangible, bearing the representation of the body reshaped by injustice and sin into fullness of the Godhead. Luke 24:36-39 relates an appearance of this resurrected Jesus … Here is the resurrected Jesus making good on the incarnational proclamation that God would be with us, embodied as we are, incorporating the fullness of human contingency and ordinary life into God. In presenting his impaired hands and feet to his startled friends, the resurrected Jesus is revealed as the disabled God. Jesus, the resurrected Savior, calls for his frightened companions to recognize in the marks of impairment their own connection with God, their own salvation. In so doing, this disabled God is also the revealer of the new humanity. The disabled God is not only the One from heaven but the revelation of true personhood, underscoring the reality that full personhood is fully compatible with the experience of disability.

… The symbol of Jesus Christ, the disabled God, has transformative power. … God is in the present social-symbolic order at the margins with people with disabilities and instigates transformation from the de-centered position … Our bodies participate in the imago Dei, not in spite of our impairments and contingencies, but through them.

Resurrection is not about the negation or erasure of our disabled bodies in hopes of perfect images, untouched buy physical disability; rather Christ’s resurrection offers hope that our nonconventional an sometimes difficult bodies participate fully in the imago Dei and that God whose nature is love and who is on other side of justice and solidarity is touched by our experience.”

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Our Episcopal liturgy is very much a “bodily” liturgy, with standing up and sitting down or kneeling, specific bodily actions over the bread and wine during the Eucharist, and walking forward as a community to share in the Eucharist. How have you experienced these bodily expressions? Are they important for your experience of worship?
2. What about *your* body is imperfect? Difficult?
3. What is your conception of the role of the body in spirituality and faith? The role of sexuality in spirituality and faith? Have these been consistent across your spiritual journey?
4. What is your imagining about resurrection and the place of our bodily selves in relation to resurrection, and how does this connect back to your answers to #3?

**A prayer-**

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully  
restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may  
share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our  
humanity, a feeling, aging body included—your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.