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St. John's Episcopal Church
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The hemorrhaging woman: an icon of those who have no community of hope. She represents the Other – not you or me, of course, but “those people.” And yet she still has the courage to step up and touch the robes of Jesus.

Now I don't mean to beat a dead horse, but isn't the hemorrhaging woman emblematic of the thousands of people who wish healing? Is she not a metaphor for the sick who cannot afford healthcare because they're too lazy to work for it, the hungry who must choose between bread on the table and soap (remember that our SNAP program restricts poor people from buying soap – apparently poor people don't deserve to be clean...) (yeah, I know, that's why they're called *food* stamps even though a bottle of syrupy Pepsi qualifies...)? Is she not a metaphor for the woman who undertakes a treacherous journey through the blazing hot Mexican and Arizona desert with her child because they have been threatened by gangs? Is that woman – and her child – is that woman not seeking healing? Freedom from fear?

Some of you know that I am close to despair over the violence so prevalent in this country. The violence of denying asylum, a right supposedly guaranteed by international law. The violence of children being ripped from their parents. The violence of institutional racism. The violence toward women. The violence of *white* people responsible for mass shootings. And, honestly, the violence of the complicity of our representatives and chief executive who offer “thoughts and prayers” yet again and use Holy Scripture to justify blindly following all laws, no matter how inhumane they might be – no matter, in fact, whether they really exist.

Some of you know that I attended the Families Belong Together rally at Broadway and Main yesterday.

I tell you: It lessened my despair, it calmed my anger, it gave me hope. Just as gathering with you every Sunday gives me hope.

But from time to time I come really, really close to losing it.

On Friday I was driving to the Post Office on Main. As I passed The Bird I saw a big ol' pickup with a Confederate flag *painted* on the tailgate. I have to admit, my first impulse was to *ram* that pickup with my Trailblazer. How *dare* he?!? (I may be incorrect in applying the male gender to the owner, but it does seem like a guy thing...) So I passed by and went to the parking lot behind Isabella Bank to get a document notarized. But I was still mad. And so I drove back on Main to come here and took a photo of that stupid, insensitive, racist, *looser* symbol and posted it on FaceBook with my story.

After realizing that I couldn't afford a several thousand dollar repair bill to my Chevy and his Ford, and realizing that Harry would be really worried if I were arrested and thrown in jail for disorderly conduct and destruction of property and, of course, lacking civility, I considered going into The Bird to find the owner. I would say to him, “Look. Do you not realize that that flag symbolizes treason against the United States of America? Do you not realize that that flag symbolizes white supremacy and the slavery of black people? Do you not realize that that flag symbolizes the very losing side in a traitorous war? And it's a Michigan plate. *Michigan fought for the Union Army!* If you do realize all these things and still want to display that ugly, ugly

flag, that is your First Amendment right. But if these questions give you pause, I suggest you cover it up before somebody rams it.”

So I mentally got that off my chest. And it assuaged my anger somewhat. And I was reminded at the rally that I must turn my anger into action.

I need healing. You need healing. We all need healing in one way or another. One of us is ill. One is recovering from surgery. One is struggling financially. One is living in conflict. One is recovering from an addiction. One is just plain unhappy, one is afraid, one is living in despair. We all need healing.

I am so drawn to the story of the hemorrhaging woman. She had been bleeding for *twelve years*. She had visited doctor after doctor who presumably exploited her – took her money but provided no cure. She was an outsider, unclean. Yet she approached Jesus from behind and touched his clothing in a last desperate plea for help.

And Jesus – our Jesus, who cares mightily for the poor and the marginalized – our Jesus says with such gentleness, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

We must, we must return again and again to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must acknowledge our own complicity in broken systems and we must, as we do every Sunday, repent of our own brokenness, praying for forgiveness which, of course, is always, always granted.

Yes, we live in very difficult times. Yes, I have fear. Yes, I get angry and disgusted and sometimes simply bewildered. I need the healing touch of Jesus.

And with grace, I receive it.

Amen.