

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

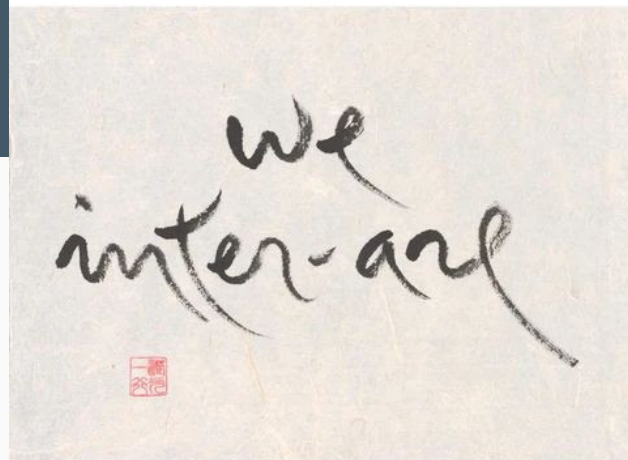
## Our Sacred Connection

BY JER

Last month, I was able to spend some time at Emerald Isle, North Carolina. I arrived the week before the state's public schools let out for the summer, so the beach was less crowded than my previous vacations, which afforded me a lot of silence.

On a somewhat gloomy Wednesday, I sat and contemplated the enormity of the ocean. In my mind, I recited one of my favorite Buddhist mantras. As I began to relax, I felt my body slowly merge into the sand. I contemplated my oneness with the sand, which also touches the water. I then thought about how the water eventually becomes clouds and therefore touches the sky. In that moment, I became hyper aware that I was touching the sand, which was touching the water, which was touching the sky. I lost myself; the distinction between "Jer" and nature faded. I soon thought of a poem by one of my spiritual teachers, Thich Nhat Hanh, a beloved Zen master and peace advocate who died in 2022. In the poem "Interbeing," the narrator speaks about being connected to the sun, a river, and clouds. He ruminates on the interconnectedness of all things. Perhaps for the first time, I completely understood this Oneness. I have always worked to see all of nature, people included, as being interconnected. Thich Nhat Hanh would say that we "inter-are." During this moment on the beach, I *felt* it.

I left Emerald Isle with a new understanding of Oneness. It is one thing to know a spiritual concept, even to hold it as your truth. It is another thing, however, to experience it fully. Buddhism talks of several poisons—ignorance, attachment, aversion. Perhaps ignorance, at its core, is really about not understanding the nature of our interbeing. In this politically divisive time, one in which books and even words are banned, instead of working to alienate or erase others, we should work to awaken to our Oneness. I challenge you, dear reader, to think of how you can enrich your life by embracing those you have seen as "other." May you and I and all beings awaken to our sacred connection.



*Image of Thich Nhat Hanh's Calligraphy*

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by Chaplain Bryant

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# Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

## *Congratulations to*

- **Dan Harrison and Ruth Dueñez Harrison** (pastors of Church of the Covenant) on the birth of their first grandson. Daniel "Danny" Jeremiah Harrison Jr. was born on July 7, 2023 in Rochester, Minnesota. Danny weighs 7.4 pounds and is 19.7 inches.



## *Our sympathies are extended to:*

- **Ka Lee Gustafson** (Nursing) and her family on the death of her mother, Nancy Farris.
- The family, friends, and colleagues of **Scott Robert** (Career & Professionalism Center), who died on June 23, 2023. Link to full obituary in email.



The Chaplain's Corner is a newsletter published by the Spiritual Life Center (SLC) at the University of Lynchburg. We share campus concerns (only with permission), updates, spiritual life events, and activities. Current and previous issues are on the SLC page of the University website - go to Link in signature ([www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life](http://www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life)) and click on "Newsletter."

# Upcoming Interfaith Holidays

July 18

First of Muharram  
(Ra's al-Sanat Al Hijrivah)  
(Islam)

July 24

Pioneer Day (Latter-day Saints)

July 26

Tisha B'Av (Judaism)

July 27

Ashurah (Islam)

July 31

Lammas/Lughnasa  
(Wicca/Paganism)

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(Link is in email).