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The following is a message from WellSprings congregation. Yeah. It's been too long. And hello. To. Everyone tuning in on our YouTube channel. It's definitely. A. Silver lining of this pandemic. That we now have the ability to invite you in when we meet in person. The last time I. Stood up here to preach was February. 16th of 2020. Seems like a lifetime ago. The title. Of my sermon that. Day. Was Embracing. Vulnerability. I had no. Idea how vulnerable we were about to. Become. In that sermon, I. Talked about how I had recently left my career of almost 30 years. And was in the middle. Of. Building a new child care center. I had spent almost a year in this. Place. Of transition. My daughters. Were. Grown. I didn't have a full time job preparing. For my new. Career. Did take some time and energy, but I had more free time than I had had in a long time. I thought this was the perfect opportunity to get. My act. Together. But I had a wise therapist. Who encouraged me. To blow up the rules of what I. Was and. Wasn't allowed to do. With my life. With my time off. She encouraged me to rest. Relax. Spend time watching TV on the couch, if that's what I wanted to do. It turns out I was a little bit ahead of the curve. I had this. Vacation, planned a. Cruise. And I. Expected that life was finally. Going to start getting. Busier after vacation. Because I was going to open the center in about six months. The last day of my cruise was March 8th, 2020. For reference, that. Was the day of the last service we had here in Belle Hall for almost a. Year and a half. So he stayed in the house. I watched. Even. More TV. I canceled meetings. Construction on the new school. Stopped for a while. And when it. Started again, there.

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Were new challenges brought on by the pandemic. Other people were. Staying home to. Working from home, quitting their jobs altogether. During the pandemic, so many people. Made big life changes, especially career changes. That journalists and social. Scientists have called it the great. Resignation. I myself finally opened for business at the end of August. I've had a different perspective. Than some of you on the great resignation. While it took a long. Time to fill up the rooms in my center. We now have a wait list in every room. But the great. Resignation has taken a. Toll. On the childcare. Industry. It's harder and harder to. Find. Staff. Hourly pay rates are. Climbing like the industry has never seen before. And I'm not going to lie. It's a challenge for me. On the one hand, the. Activist. In me. Is thrilled for the staff. Mostly women, all women at my center. Who. Have never been paid what. They deserve. In this industry. There has definitely been a reckoning. And also. I have bills to pay. And there are only so many levers I can pull. I'm asking myself some hard questions these days. What will it take to attract. The talent we need? I need to make. Money. To stay in business. But how much. Profit. Is enough? How much is too much? How much can I raise my. Rates without. Overburdening burdening parents? I hear people say the hourly rates they are asking for are ridiculous. Nope. I'm the first one to. Admit they really aren't. People who work full. Time taking care of our youngest children. Deserve a living wage. They have a special skill set that. Has been grossly undervalued in our economy. So I don't have the answers. It's hard. Sometimes. Gut wrenchingly. Hard. But what's also true is that I feel. Alive in a. Way I. Just didn't before I entered this profession. I have a sense that these are important questions that I am wrestling with.

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That this is important work that I'm doing. The title of. Our current message. Series is The. Great Integration. What does it look like to integrate all. Of that change into. Our life and our society? Honestly. It's another question I don't have the answer to. This changes to. Fresh. It's still. Happening not just in my. Little. Business, but in. All our lives. What I can reflect on. In this time with you. Is how integration has worked in some other changes in our lives. In 2019, I was not new to taking career risks. I mentioned in my message the last time I was on the stage. That I. Originally took. Steps to. Leave my profession in 2010. I worked. Part time and went to school to get my master's. Degree in psychology. Let me say that again. I worked. Part time and went to school to get my master's. Degree in psychology. That sounds kind of simple. It was anything but simple. When I first mentioned to my husband, Steve, that I wanted to quit my job and go back to school. He wasn't exactly on board. Our family relied on my income. And he had concerns. I didn't waver, though. Honestly, I wore him down. He wasn't. Exactly excited. More like reluctantly supportive. And it was. Enough. But it was also hard. I wanted a cheerleader. And instead I. Felt challenged at every turn. It was easy to doubt myself. It was easy to get defensive. In the. Midst of this brave, scary risk I was. Taking. It was also the hardest period of our marriage. Rest assured, I do have Steve's. Permission. To share this with all of you. And if you've noticed that he's not in the room, I promise it's a coincidence. He's a volunteer firefighter. And is in an officer training class right now and has promised that he's going to watch. This later. So. Hi, Steve. In hindsight. I'm glad we went through. That scary period.

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In 2010. It really did increase our ability to communicate. And I truly believe our. Marriage is stronger than ever now. And it wasn't just Steve. I had other family. Members who thought I was crazy. And I had to have multiple conversations with my. Boss as my work schedule had to. Keep changing to accommodate my classes and then my internship. On the one hand, I. Had this. Pinch me. I'm dreaming kind of feeling. I couldn't believe. It was actually. Happening. I was asking for and getting. What I wanted. But I was also really worried about the fallout. Would my. Marriage survive? What if I was making a mistake? How would we make this work financially? And then when. I did go back. To my insurance. Career. I wondered. If I gave. Up too soon. Or was a career. In counseling just wrong for me? So I took this big risk. And it didn't pan out. Right. Maybe. I did have moments of wondering. Whether I did the right. Thing. When I abandoned my counseling. Career. And went back full time to my insurance career. But you know, I don't ever remember feeling any. Regret about the risk I took. When I cut. Back. To pursue my. Degree. I learned so much about myself and what I'm capable of. It reminds me of the Robert. Frost poem, The Road Not Taken. Especially the last line. Two roads diverged in a wood. And I. I took the one less traveled by. And that. Has made all the. Difference. Taking the well-worn road. Kept me in a career. For 30 years. That I honestly knew from year one wasn't a good fit. I recently read the book Run Towards the Danger by Sarah Polley. Sarah was a child actor. In Canada in the nineties. In 2015, she. Suffered a debilitating. Concussion and spent three and a. Half. Years in a. Fog, losing hope that she would ever truly feel like herself again.

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She got lots of advice. Including from doctors. And it was all contradictory. She writes. The advice. Combined. Is. Lie in a dark room. Don't lie in a dark room. Less screen time. No screen time. Go outside. Take it easy. Do nothing for three weeks. Don't do nothing. For three weeks. Go for a walk, stay in. Bed and nap as much as you can. Take a break. From anything and everything when you get symptoms. She wondered if she would ever get better. So she. Started looking for. Alternatives. She improved for a while, but then regressed to. Debilitating headaches and. Fog. Finally she heard. About a clinic in Pittsburgh. And she was warned by the experts in her. Life that the doctor at this. Clinic was an expensive snake. Oil. Salesman. But she was desperate. And ready. To try. Anything. The doctor. At the clinic made the. Case that her particular type. Of concussion. Affected the part of. Her brain that controls emotional functioning. It was. Creating a communication loop with her. Anxiety that was keeping her stuck. He suggested that she. Had been accommodating the concussion in hundreds. Of ways. And her. Job was to. Strip them away so that her brain could re acclimate. Where others had told her to. Relax in a quiet, dark room when she started to feel symptoms. This doctor suggested that. Avoiding symptoms. Was. Feeding her. Anxiety. And advised. Her to. Run into the discomfort instead. Of away from it. He encouraged her to suffer through. The uncomfortable symptoms. To push. How much her brain could. Tolerate. He said, if you remember. Only one thing from this meeting, remember. This. Run towards the. Danger. She followed this radical advice. And after three and a. Half years. Of nothing seeming to work for long. She was back to. Herself within six. Weeks. Run towards the danger became a. Metaphor for her life.

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She started to greet and welcome. The things she. Had previously avoided. The book she wrote is a. Collection of. Essays about her life. A lot of it about the. Trauma of growing up as. A child actor after the loss of her mother at the age of 11. Telling the story she had avoided, helped her. To integrate them into. Her adult life. And they became lighter. And easier. To carry. Take the road less traveled. Run towards the danger. Good advice for Sarah Polley. Good advice for me to. Running towards those. Uncomfortable conversations with my husband and with my. Boss helped. Helped me. Helped us to emerge. Stronger. And I find myself now running. Towards those hard. Decisions. About what to pay my staff. What to charge my families. It makes me think of a conversation I had with my oldest daughter, Miranda. I expected her, like. Most people I know, to spend. Her senior year of college applying for jobs where she could use her degree. She didn't. She couldn't. She had two summer internships. That convinced her. That a desk job. Was not what she wanted in life. To be sure, the. Voices in my. Head were telling. Me that she was making a mistake. But then. She told me that she had watched me complain. Over the years about how unhappy I was and how trapped I felt. And she wanted something different for herself. How could I argue with that? So she took a job at the. Climbing gym and, you know. She was really good at it. I watched. Her gain confidence in her. Ability. To interact. With people. In that role. And then a year. After she graduated, she decided. That she did want more a higher paying job in. Her field. With. Benefits. She found a job where she. Could balance the. Desk work with field work. And she's doing well. She recently started. A master's program, and she still climbs several times a week.

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I'm glad she didn't take the road I expected her to take. I think she's better off for it. And I'm. Glad she paid. Attention to. The parts of that road. That weren't working for. Her. She changed. Her mind. She found a way to make it work. And when my youngest daughter, Stephanie. Was 14 years. Old and in the eighth. Grade. She approached me about. Applying to private. Schools for high school. Instead. Of staying in the local school district. This was. When I. Had just made that. Decision to start working part time. So. Yeah, we couldn't afford to send her. To private school. But something in me could not just say, no. You. Can't. Pursue your dream. Because I'm pursuing mine. So I encouraged her to look for scholarships. And looking. For scholarships, led her to branch out. And. Look for private boarding schools that weren't local. So long story. Short, my. Little girl spent her high school years, 4 hours away at a boarding. School in upstate New York. Talk about the road less traveled. And people used to say to me. But aren't you. Going to miss. Her? I hated that question. Of course I missed her. It was so hard for me to let her go. And you know what? It was hard for her to. I often think life would have been. Easier for her if she had just stayed home with us. And in. Truth, we would have welcomed her with. Open arms. If she decided it was too. Hard and she wanted to come home. But she didn't. She pushed through. She ran towards the danger. I can't speak for her, but I don't regret. Sending. Her off for high school. She had always been a good student. But being a boarding. School really. Honed her. Work ethic. And paved. The way. For academic success on a. Higher scale. She's in med school now. And I'm still so amazed by how hard she works.

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I think we all have stories like these. I don't. Think my family is. Unique. Stories of. Times when we. Did hard. Things and made. It through. So what does. That mean for us. Now, two years. Into the pandemic? It still feels like we. Are in uncharted. Territory. Some of us are on the road less traveled. Through, no real decision of our own. Others have made decisions. Sometimes hard decisions, to make bold, big. Changes. As part of this great. Resignation. For most of us. It isn't easy. We don't really have a. Roadmap for how or when this will end. For how our society will emerge. For how we ourselves will emerge. I think we'd do well. To remember when things. Do get hard. To rest. And then to run towards the danger. Let's not be afraid to wrestle with the hard questions. We can do. This. We are. Doing this. Amen. And may you live in blessing. Will you pray with me? Spirit of life. We are tired. Of navigating all the changes in our world and in our. Lives. May we find rest. And may we find strength to carry on and face these challenges. As we continue to strive. To make the world whole. Amen. If you enjoyed this message and would like to support the mission of WellSprings, go to our web site WellSprings uua org. That's WellSprings the letters u u dot org.

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