

**Meditation:**

Letting it in, letting it flow  
Peace within me  
Letting it in, letting it flow  
Peace surrounding me  
Letting it go where it will go  
Peace from me  
By Thy grace let there be peace  
By thy grace, let the power and stillness  
of Your presence show the way  
Being a witness to Your presence every day

**Message:**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace...

Just over four years ago, on August 8, 2021, this reading was the cornerstone when I offered my first talk here as a guest speaker: ***A Time for Every Purpose Under Heaven***. Roger had reached out with his life-changing reply to my “I’m back!” Facebook post: “Welcome back to Albany! Did you know we’re looking for a new minister?” I was waiting for grandbabies to be born in August and September. I had left teaching and ministry at a high school on Boston’s North Shore where the weight of the 5% of institutional awfulness by leadership had finally outweighed the 95% of life-giving work I was doing.

And after sharing my talk, feeling the connection with the faces in this room—some familiar, but most new to me—I had just started wondering if this is where God was calling me! It was an intense time of transition in my own life, and as a nation and global community we were still in many ways reeling from the intensity of that pivotal year: 2020.

Four years later I now know, yes, this beautiful community and were calling each other onto a path of partnership! I know that Keeley Brigid, that September baby was born 5 days after I gave that talk, coming 6.5 weeks early on the day before MY birthday, beating out her cousin Elias Martin by 10 days to be the first grandchild.

I know the celebratory rhythm of life as marked in my family in the past few weeks: wedding anniversaries, birthday parties for 4 year olds, for my 85 year old mama and 60 year old brother. I witness the poignant rhythm of life as young adults head off to college, shifting the family dynamics at home while stepping onto their own paths.

From ***The Circle of Life: the Heart’s Journey Through the Seasons*** by Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr

The mood of autumn is the ebb and flow of life. Autumn stands as an epiphany to the truth that all things are passing and even in the passing there is beauty... as bright colors of fall fade away and the leaves make their

final descent, rich brown and charcoal colors take center stage. This is a decaying season, but... Compost and mulch are food for the soil...

The same truth can be celebrated in our personal lives. When we are able to let go of a relationship [or situation] that is not healthy, the heart is given more room to grow...

In the ebb and flow of life's rhythms, I find it much easier to celebrate the vibrant fall colors of celebration, than to appreciate the compost of all that falls away, decaying into food for soil and soul! But here I am! Here *we* are. As I shared in that first talk— and I as I am called to recognize over and over again— the seed of what is unfolding is ALWAYS fed by “that which is.”

That ancient wisdom of Ecclesiastes, attributed to Solomon, reminds me that the *rhythm* is built in. I suffer *more* when I fight it! Even the pleasure of celebrating birthdays holds poignancy at realizing the passage of time. The planting of seeds contains the harvest. The harvest contains the fallow time of winter's cold. The mourning and weeping of grief contains the laughter of dancing in joy.

And that wisdom of Solomon is both ancient and ongoing! The sacred voice of wisdom, of God, still speaks to us, in us and AS us.

We are living in a time when our country's civic life is so far from civil, that it is often overwhelming. Our global community is the same:

a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;..  
time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace...

These lines are not, I think, calling us to forge a time for hate or war or silence! But they recognize that in our human history, we are part of that forging— those

times find us, over and over again. This week as I read the news of each new heartbreak– and there are so, so many ways for our hearts to break– I could feel rage bubbling up at “them.” At “those people.” Feeling my righteous indignation and wrath and yes– feeling the holy heartbreak and grief and anger– seeing all of that clearly is part of the decaying, composting process.

Yet it is all too easy to let myself off the hook as a “good person” who would never participate in such atrocities. Without slowing down, without finding time in stillness, to listen to that voice of God deep within me, even my acts of service and presence as a “good person” can be part of breaking down, not building up!

What is this time of upheaval calling forth? Can we see in the midst of so much change, much of it frightening, that we also still, always walk with the Holy Mystery, birthing the world of peace, of loving-kindness, of compassion? Seeing “that which is” in all the complexity of life, and still holding our vision of “that which longs to be” is saying yes, moment by moment, choice by choice to enter the flow of life.

So in this moment in the flow of life, where and how are *you* hearing the call of God whispering? How are *we communally* hearing that call? Are we able to see both the beauty of leaves changing colors, and the rich, brown smelly compost of those leaves decaying? Can we hold our own rhythms gently, surrendering to the ebb and flow of our aging, our health, our relationships? Can we rest in the mystery of the unknown, while still trusting that wherever we are, God is? Can we nurture gratitude for all that is– the blessings that came WELL disguised as much as the sweet, comforting blessings?

***For everything there is a season, and a time and purpose for every matter under heaven.*** Let us know and live that truth– that the Holy One’s purpose is still birthed in us and as us. We flow in the rhythm of life with love and grace in every moment. And so it is. Amen.