



VOL. 2 ISSUE 2 · SUMMER

THE OASIS

Seasonal Journal of Southminster Presbyterian Church

Summer - A Season of Waiting

BY MATT GEARKE

Normally summer is a season of respite, renewal & fun. If you're a child, summer is also a time of transition as you leave one grade & prepare to enter the next. Summer 2020 isn't a normal summer though. Summer 2020 seems more like a season of waiting: Waiting for the pandemic to be over, waiting for the church to re-open, waiting for schools to re-open, waiting to reconnect with family & friends, waiting for life to get back to normal. Summer 2020 is like, when you were a child, the day before Christmas. We are antsy, expectant, & exasperated. "When will Christmas come and this pandemic finally be over!" Waiting can be excruciating difficult.

As people of faith though, we shouldn't be strangers to waiting. Throughout scripture, whether they were waiting for God to hear their cries for help (Exodus 2:24), to renew their strength so they could mount up with wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31), or for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4), waiting was part of life for the people of God. And it's part of life for the church too. Our waiting doesn't have to be passive though. Biblically, waiting is an active exercise full of hope and expectation. Frederick Buechner once said, "To have faith is to remember and wait, and to wait in hope is to have what we hope for already begin to come true in us through our hoping." The implication of hopeful waiting is that God is already out ahead of us preparing the way. Summer 2020 may not be the summer we would have chosen, given the choice, but it is a great time to consider what we've gained because of the pandemic, what we've lost because of the pandemic, and what God wants us to do about it. That's what it means to wait with hope and that's what this season of waiting is all about.

This issue:

Summer - A Season of
Waiting
PAGE 01

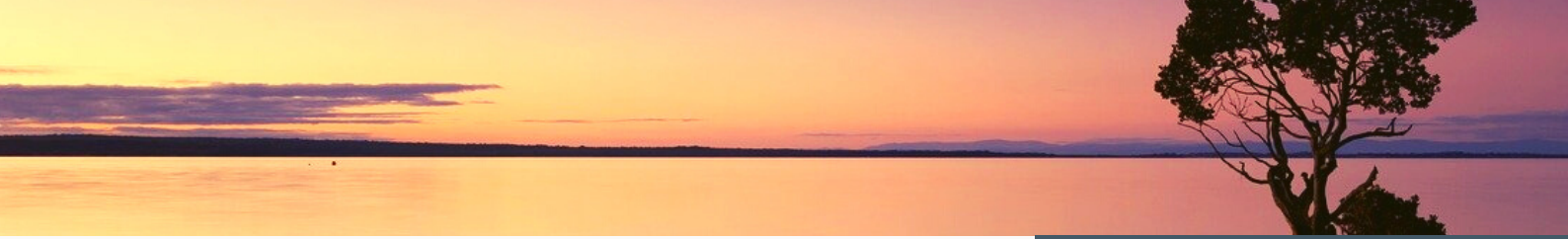
Transformation: Liminal
Space
PAGE 02

Summer Reading
Suggestions
PAGE 02

Between the Known &
Unknown
PAGE 03

Walking Through the
Forest
PAGE 03

Be Still
PAGE 04

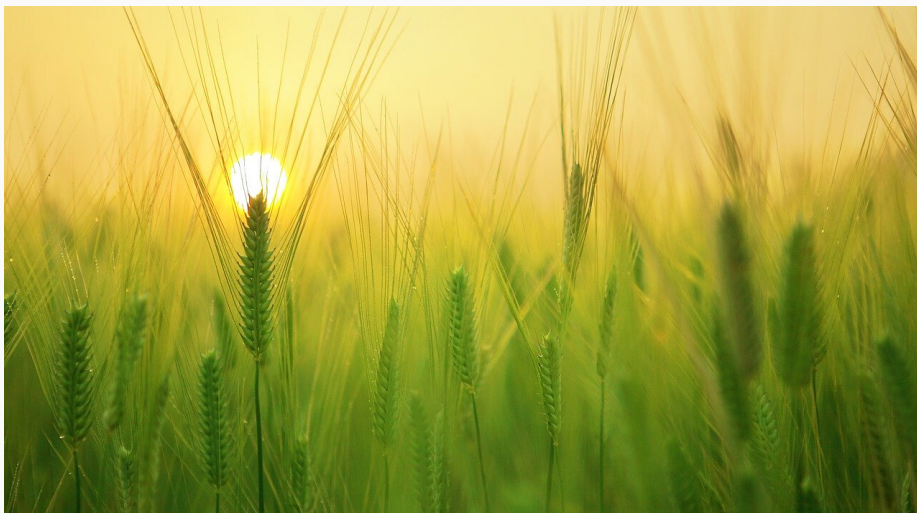


Transformation: Liminal Space

'We keep praying that our illusions will fall away. God erodes them from many sides, hoping they will fall. But we often remain trapped in what we call normalcy—"the way things are." Life then revolves around problem-solving, fixing, explaining, and taking sides with winners and losers. It can be a pretty circular and even nonsensical existence.

To get out of this unending cycle, we have to allow ourselves to be drawn into sacred space, into liminality. All transformation takes place here. We have to allow ourselves to be drawn out of "business as usual" and remain patiently on the "threshold" (limen, in Latin) where we are betwixt and between the familiar and the completely unknown. There alone is our old world left behind, while we are not yet sure of the new existence. That's a good space where genuine newness can begin. Get there often and stay as long as you can by whatever means possible. It's the realm where God can best get at us because our false certitudes are finally out of the way. This is the sacred space where the old world is able to fall apart, and a bigger world is revealed. If we don't encounter liminal space in our lives, we start idealizing normalcy. The threshold is God's waiting room. Here we are taught openness and patience as we come to expect an appointment with the divine Doctor. A good therapist and a good minister will always open up larger vistas for you, which are by definition risky, instead of just "rearranging the deck chairs" on a sinking Titanic.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* (The Crossroad Publishing Company: 1999), 155-156.



Summer Reading Suggestions

Sharon Batula - "The Perfection in the Morning"

Annie Dillard - "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek"

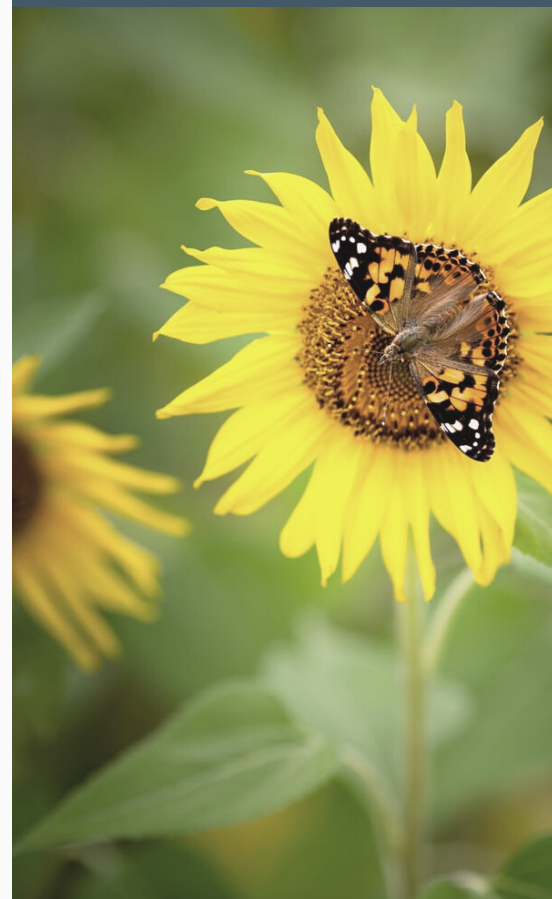
Sue Monk Kidd - "When the Heart Waits"

Richard Rohr - "Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer"

Henry David Thoreau - "Walden"

...be patient toward all
that is unsolved in your
heart and to try to love
the questions
themselves like locked
rooms and like books
that are written in a very
foreign tongue.
Do not now seek the
answers, which cannot be
given you because you
would not be able to live
them. And the point is, to
live everything.

RAINER MARIA RILKE





Between the Known & Unknown

Do we know that within each one of us is the unspeakably beautiful beat of the Sacred? Do we know that we can honor that Sacredness in one another and in everything that has being? And do we know that this combination—growing in awareness that we are bearers of Presence, along with a faithful commitment to honor that Presence in one another and in the earth—holds the key to transformation in our world? . . .

Eco-theologian Thomas Berry says the universe is so amazing in its interrelatedness that it must have been dreamt into being. He also says our situation today as an earth community is so desperate—we are so far from knowing how to save ourselves from the ecological degradations we are a part of—that we must dream the way forward. We must summon, from the unconscious, ways of seeing that we know nothing of yet, visions that emerge from deeper within us than our conscious rational minds. Similarly, the rebirthing of our true depths will involve a reconnection with the unconscious. It will demand a fresh releasing within us of the world of dreams, myths, and the imagination. Whether as individuals or collectively as nations and religious traditions, new beginnings will be born among us when we open to the well of what we do not yet know or what we have forgotten deep within.

Into this liminal realm, between the known and the unknown, we are invited to enter if we are to learn more of the way forward in our lives as individuals and as communities and nations. This is why, in so much Celtic storytelling and legends, lovers meet and worlds conjoin in the twilight. It is the coming together of masculine and the feminine. It is the convergence of the unseen world of those who have gone before us and this present dimension of space and time in which the seen and the physical dominate. It may be a time of encountering messengers from the invisible realms of the universe that are linked inextricably to our realm, but at the same time transcend us in our struggle with unknown forces of darkness within and without. This is also why, in so much Eastern spiritual practice [as well as many in monastic communities in the Christian tradition], the early hours of dawn are viewed as the time of meditation, when night and day are commingling in ways that more readily allow us to move from the known to the unknown and from the nameable to the ineffable.

John Philip Newell, *The Rebirthing of God: Christianity's Struggle for New Beginnings* (Skylight Paths Publishing: 2014), xvii, 89, 91.

Walking Through The Forest

BY SUE THOMSON

At first I used to see only trees.
Tree trunks
and green,

green,

green.

But then one day
I stopped and really looked!
That is when I truly realized
how much I had been missing!

The trunks of these trees had different
textures

Both smooth and coarse
with vertical lines and swirls.

And there are so many different shades
of green

sometimes with a sudden splash of
color...

Reds, Oranges, Yellows, Pinks and
Purples.

Hidden treasures
just waiting to be found.

And then I hear the gentle breeze
rippling through the tree tops.,
reminding me that God is near!





Be Still

BY LIZ NICKERSON

One of my favorite images for God, is that of a radio tower. God is broadcasting to us 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but if we don't tune in we will never hear God. In this time of social isolation, God has been speaking to me and I know God has also been speaking to you. Have you been tuned in? Have you heard God? God often does not speak to us in the ways or at the times we expect.

When it became clear that the church office would be closed and we would primarily be working from home, i realized that all of my favorite devotionals were in in my church office. I only had one devotional at home. I had received it in 2015 at the Women of Faith conference and although I enjoyed the conference I had thumbed through the devotional but was not very excited to read it, so it had just sat on my shelf.



Oh well, I thought this is all I have here, so I guess I will start reading it each day. When I did I could not believe how the words seemed to be exactly what I needed to hear. This devotional which had sat for 5 years on my shelf the only one I had at my house, because I usually read these when I am at work in my office, was actually the perfect one for my life right now.

Over the past three months, each time I have had a particularly difficult issue I am grappling with, I find that when I pick it up the devotion for that day speaks to my situation exactly. It is like God is speaking directly to me through it. I begin to read and then I feel a sense of awe. God is sending me little reminders that he is with me and I know God is sending you reminders as well.

To hear God we have to carve out time to be still, to read God's word and to reflect on what is happening in our lives and then when we look at the events around us we will see God caring for us through little things that happen each week. I read the devotion which has a Scripture passage and brief reflection and then a write my thoughts about it and am able to see God active in my life and I write a kind of prayer of thanks on the blank pages between each entry.

This devotion reminds me and each of you that, "you are seen, you are known, you are loved and you are free, in Christ!" Thank you God for that great gift! Help each of us to find time to Be Still and know that you are God and that you are here with us, sustaining us! Amen

Psalms 46:10

"Be still
and
know that
I am
God."

