

Living the Questions: Theme Packet

Each month, our church gathers around a common theme and practice to guide our reflection in worship, education, justice and small groups. This packet provides questions and excerpts to guide personal or group writing or discussion, and serves as the guide for our monthly Sharing Circles. For more information contact Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer revluke@wbuuc.org or Victoria Safford vsafford@wbuuc.org.

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Waiting: the practice of Living in Time

December 2013

Questions

- *What are you waiting for? The future? The next moment?*
- *Every stage of life seems to require/offer a different kind (skill set) of waiting . . .
What kind of waiting is required of you – at this time in your life?*
- *Waiting has a poor reputation. We like fast, instant, efficient.
Is waiting truly passive? Or is it active?*
- *How is waiting our teacher? What fruits does waiting bear? Patience? Restoration?
Hope?*
- *What are you waiting for? What is worth waiting for?*
- *How does waiting enhance your ability to be present in your own life?*
- *What time is it? For you – right now?*
 - It is time (to) _____
 - It is time (for) _____

Quotes

We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.
Joseph Campbell

The sea does not reward those who are too anxious, too greedy, or too impatient. One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach - waiting for a gift from the sea.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

We say we waste time, but that is impossible. We waste ourselves. **Alice Bloch**

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up.

Anne Lamott

When our hearts begin to open, we are able to feel it, like opening the window shade and letting in the sunshine that's been there all along, waiting patiently to be allowed inside. **Dean Ornish**

Readings

Essay: *Waiting As a Way of Life* by Lance Morrow, Time Mag., 1984

Waiting is a kind of suspended animation. Time solidifies: a dead weight. The mind reddens a little with anger and then blanks off into a sort of abstraction and fitfully wanders, but presently it comes up red and writhing again, straining to get loose. Waiting casts one's life into a little dungeon of time. It is a way of being controlled, of being rendered immobile and helpless. One can read a book or sing (odd looks from the others) or chat with strangers if the wait is long enough to begin forming a bond of shared experience, as at a snowed-in airport. But people tend to do their waiting stolidly. When the sound system went dead during the campaign debate in 1976, Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter stood in mute suspension for 27 minutes, looking lost.

Americans have ample miseries of waiting, of course—waits sometimes connected with affluence and leisure. The lines to get a passport in Manhattan last week stretched around the block in Rockefeller Center. Travelers waited four and five hours just to get into bureaucracy's front door. A Washington Post editorial writer reported a few days ago that the passengers on her 747, diverted to Hartford, Conn., on the return flight from Rome as a result of bad weather in New York City, were forced to sit on a runway for seven hours because no customs inspectors were on hand to process them.

The great American waits are often democratic enough, like traffic jams. Some of the great waits have been collective, tribal—waiting for the release of the American hostages in Iran, for example. But waiting often makes class distinctions. One of the more depressing things about being poor in America is the endless waiting it entails: waiting for medical care at clinics or in emergency rooms, waiting in welfare or unemployment lines.

Cold Tangerines: Celebrating the Extraordinary Nature of Everyday Life
by Shauna Niequist

Believe that this way of living, this focus on the present, the daily, the tangible, this intense concentration not on the news headlines but on the flowers growing in your own garden, the children growing in your own home, this way of living has the potential to open up the heavens, to yield a glittering handful of diamonds where a second ago there was coal. This way of living and noticing and building and crafting can crack through the movie sets and soundtracks that

keep us waiting for our own life stories to begin, and set us free to observe the lives we have been creating all along without ever realizing it. I don't want to wait anymore. I choose to believe that there is nothing more sacred or profound than this day. I choose to believe that there may be a thousand big moments embedded in this day, waiting to be discovered like tiny shards of gold. The big moments are the daily, tiny moments of courage and forgiveness and hope that we grab on to and extend to one another. That's the drama of life, swirling all around us, and generally I don't even see it, because I'm too busy waiting to become whatever it is I think I am about to become. The big moments are in every hour, every conversation, every meal, every meeting. . . . I believe that if we cultivate a true attention, a deep ability to see what has been there all along, we will find worlds within us and between us, dreams and stories and memories spilling over. The nuances and shades and secrets and intimations of love and friendship and marriage and parenting are action-packed and multicolored, if you know where to look.

from **The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways To Bring Out the Best In Our Children and Ourselves** by Linda Popov

Receptive silence gives others the space to speak fully, to tell you the whole story without interruption. When the person you are listening to begins to disclose, to talk of what she is feeling, give her your silence, your most receptive, respectful, compassionate, and detached silence. Concentrate fully, peacefully, in a spirit of trust in the other's process. Deep listening cannot occur in the presence of an agenda. Your purpose is to support, not to rescue or distract or advise. If you see your child, or anyone to whom you are listening, as a capable, spiritual champion learning her lessons, you will enjoy being a companion to her as she does her spiritual work. A First Nations woman in northern Canada gave spiritual companionship a nickname. "I can't remember those words you call it," she said, "but it sure works with me and my kids. I call it 'walk along.'"

How long should you remain silent? A young Maltese priest said, "when you think you have been silent long enough, be silent a little more." It is sometimes in the silence after someone has shared for a while that the truth dawns from within their awareness.

Poems

There is a Zone whose even Years
No Solstice interrupt -
Whose Sun constructs perpetual Noon
Whose perfect Seasons wait -
Whose Summer set in Summer, till
The Centuries of June
And Centuries of August cease
And Consciousness - is Noon.
Emily Dickinson

I Am Waiting by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for my case to come up
and I am waiting
for a rebirth of wonder
and I am waiting for someone
to really discover America
and wail
and I am waiting
for the discovery
of a new symbolic western frontier
and I am waiting
for the American Eagle
to really spread its wings
and straighten up and fly right
and I am waiting
for the Age of Anxiety
to drop dead
and I am waiting
for the war to be fought
which will make the world safe
for anarchy
and I am waiting
for the final withering away
of all governments
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the Second Coming
and I am waiting
for a religious revival
to sweep thru the state of Arizona
and I am waiting
for the Grapes of Wrath to be stored
and I am waiting
for them to prove
that God is really American
and I am waiting
to see God on television
piped onto church altars
if only they can find
the right channel
to tune in on
and I am waiting
for the Last Supper to be served again
with a strange new appetizer
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for my number to be called

and I am waiting
for the Salvation Army to take over
and I am waiting
for the meek to be blessed
and inherit the earth
without taxes
and I am waiting
for forests and animals
to reclaim the earth as theirs
and I am waiting
for a way to be devised
to destroy all nationalisms
without killing anybody
and I am waiting
for linnets and planets to fall like rain
and I am waiting for lovers and weepers
to lie down together again
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the Great Divide to be
crossed
and I am anxiously waiting
for the secret of eternal life to be
discovered
by an obscure general practitioner
and I am waiting
for the storms of life
to be over
and I am waiting
to set sail for happiness
and I am waiting
for a reconstructed Mayflower
to reach America
with its picture story and tv rights
sold in advance to the natives
and I am waiting
for the lost music to sound again
in the Lost Continent
in a new rebirth of wonder
I am waiting for the day
that maketh all things clear
and I am awaiting retribution
for what America did
to Tom Sawyer
and I am waiting
for Alice in Wonderland
to retransmit to me

her total dream of innocence
and I am waiting
for Childe Roland to come
to the final darkest tower
and I am waiting
for Aphrodite
to grow live arms
at a final disarmament conference
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting
to get some intimations
of immortality
by recollecting my early childhood
and I am waiting
for the green mornings to come again

youth's dumb green fields come back again
and I am waiting
for some strains of unpremeditated art
to shake my typewriter
and I am waiting to write
the great indelible poem
and I am waiting
for the last long careless rapture
and I am perpetually waiting
for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian Urn
to catch each other up at last
and embrace
and I am awaiting
perpetually and forever
a renaissance of wonder

Music

***Waitin', waitin',
I've been waitin'
Waitin', waitin', all my life.
That light keeps on
hiding from me.
But it someday just might
bless my sight.
Waitin', waitin'...***

Music: William Bolcom; Lyrics: Arnold Weinstein

From *Book of Ecclesiastes*, rearranged by Pete Seeger for *Turn, Turn, Turn*

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, a time to reap that which 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 cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

I swear it's not too late.