



*A Time of Change*

The leaves have changed colors, our clocks have changed. The weather has changed necessitating a change in our efforts to prepare for winter. Change can be an unsettling and frightening experience for many of us, so we often resist and try to avoid it.

However, when unwanted change is thrust upon us, conflicting and vulnerable emotions surface. We are thrown off track, out of control and focus. Our ground of security is pulled out from under us. We have all experienced some of these feelings during this Covid period.

Most of us have been nudged into social distancing and isolation during these pandemic months. The slower pace, without so many distractions, has been beneficial for many, difficult and painful for others. But I think we can all agree it has been a very trying and uncertain time.

Could this be how Mary and Joseph felt on their long journey over rough terrain to Bethlehem, where they had no choice but to settle down for the night in a stable? Jesus was laid in a makeshift manger, a feeding trough for the animals.

How can we prepare and move into Advent this year? Will the slower pace we have experienced pave the way? Will our own suffering and that of others open our hearts? Will the invitation to participate once again in the rebirth of God within us be enough?

*A Change of Season ~ A Change of Heart*

What a majestic sight to behold  
Leaves that die after turning gold  
So that new life may unfold.

Fall's display offers a profound opportunity for transformation. As I admire the brilliant colors as they change to yellow, gold, orange, and auburn, I contemplate my own openness to change. As I watch the last leaves reluctantly let go, I ponder all that I cling to that are obstacles to my spiritual growth. As I observe the trees bared of adornment, I pray to be stripped of all needless array, that I may live more simply and humbly. And, as I walk among the dead leaves swirling in the fall breeze, I search inside for what needs to die so that new life may unfold in me.

*~ Barb Kollenkark*

"The pandemic feels like a tremendous opportunity for us all to move into our hearts and live from there, a truly evolutionary moment needing prayers from all of us."

*~ Rachel Henry, Oceano, California*

*Christmas may be different for many of us this year ~ fewer festivities, simpler gifts, a more subdued spirit. May we reflect on how this pandemic has affected us and others and realize what is really important and meaningful in our lives. May we move into our hearts and live from there so that we may notice and reach out to those who are suffering and those in need. The time for this is now.*

*May Advent give you hope and Christmas bring you joy.*

## Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer has helped me through these long months of the pandemic. Even though I often feel like I am starting over, even though I have been overwhelmed with the amount of self-knowledge that has surfaced, I continue to be drawn to this silent prayer of presence.

*What is Centering Prayer?* Centering Prayer is a simple method of sitting quietly once or twice per day with the loving intention to “consent to God’s presence and action within.” Centering Prayer fosters a receptive stance, opens inner space, and helps silence the noise on one level while healing and transformation occur on a much deeper level. The prayer enables one to just be present to God beyond thoughts, words, and images.

Through the process of Centering Prayer, repressed feelings and experiences hidden in the unconscious surface in order to be healed.

Prayer is one of the most profound and powerful methods we possess to effect change within our hearts and society at large. The fruits of prayer spill over into one’s daily life.

Recently, Rick listened to a talk show about how meditation affects one’s life. He seriously thought about it and very profoundly said to me, “I don’t meditate, but *your* meditation has definitely affected me; *your* meditation has changed the direction of my life. Look! I built a retreat center!”

~ Barbara Kollenkark



## A Time to Mourn, A Time to Embrace

In Pete Seeger’s famous song from Ecclesiastes, he wrote, “To everything there is a season...a time to be born, a time to die, a time to laugh, and a time to weep. This past year has definitely brought us a time to mourn. The loss of control and growing uncertainty over so many aspects of our lives, jobs, economy, health, and future weigh heavy on us all.



Last March, as the number of Covid cases began to rise, life suddenly slowed down and forced many of us into the quiet of our own homes and personal lives. For me, this time coincided with the year anniversary of losing my beloved husband, a year that was anything but slow. Life doesn’t stop when you lose someone. Somehow, beyond your comprehension, time keeps on ticking. There are college trips to take, graduation to celebrate, kids to love, a new job to try out, a house to fix up and sell, and new roles to learn. It’s not that the grief isn’t there; it hits you hard from time to time like a powerful wave of pain that you feel and let wash over you before you pick yourself back up and move on to the next thing you need to do.

Being forced to slow down these past months was both a challenge and a gift. All of a sudden, the only thing in abundance was time...a time for really long walks, time to listen to podcasts about life and loss, time to really think about others, and time to really feel life moment to moment. As a result, loneliness and sadness led to a deeper understanding of my own grief and deep longing for someone I no longer have by my side, but also brought a sense of peace and comfort in my own company. Boredom led to too much idle time feeling sorry for myself or sitting in front of the TV, but also brought puzzles, painting, and the learning of new and undiscovered skills and confidence. Difficult changes led to saying good-bye to a cherished home and living with uncertainty about the future, but also brought a new beginning and a deep sense of gratitude for what I had and what I continue to be blessed with.

2020 has been a year of hardship for many. As we head into a new season, I hope and pray that Seeger’s words are true. Let’s prepare ourselves now for, “A time to build up, a time of peace, a time to love, a time to embrace.” May the new season bring everyone this hope.

~ Jen Song

Minneapolis, Minnesota

## *God Must Think We're Ready*

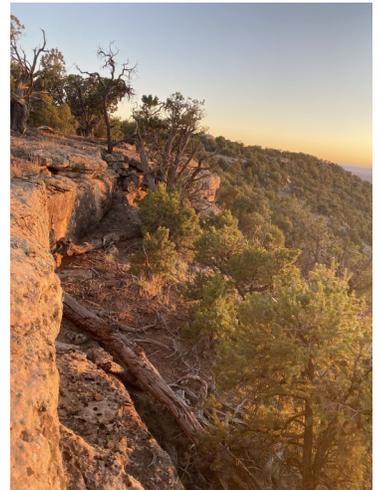
“It was a hot one yesterday, got a good melt in the high country, so today the flows are up, way up.” This was the opening to our safety talk given by the young and seasoned river rat, our rafting guide on the Green through Cataract Canyon. On a day like today the sharp and deep cut into ancient geologic rock combined with the volume of 3 major rivers joining within a hundred miles creates a stretch of thundering rapids that can only elicit awe and a healthy terror. When we signed up for the late spring trip, it seemed like the exciting thing to do. Now changing conditions make it dangerous.

Something attracted us to Centering Prayer. And it was divinely inspired, “...with an irresistible kindness he nudged your desire awake” (*Cloud of Unknowing*). It opened a door to a new way of seeing and a promise to a new way of being! We read the guidelines and did the prayer. We consented...it seemed like the exciting thing to do.

That is our agreement to the journey and the process of self-knowledge, to the unloading of the unconscious. And we managed the riffles of the upstream waters. We've accepted the kids' constant interruptions during a zoom meeting with the boss, we've “breathed through” the driver on the phone just ahead of us. We've learned how to make a cup of tea when the operating system stalls to update in the middle of an online bill payment. But then conditions changed.

Our world has intensified. Just when we thought we could handle it (well, in actuality we were still working on the small stuff) the external world turned up the heat. Confinement and income loss, the concern over family health and mental health, grief over loss, the fierce and fragile polarization of the land of milk and honey are not what we expected. Inconvenience, anger, resentment, sadness frustration...did I consent to this too?

The obstacles to our peace and ultimate union are esteem and affection, security and survival, and power. God must think we are ready because the external world now challenges each of these centers. But, as promised, the conditions in our inner world have changed too. Our Centering Prayer practice and the growing awareness we've attained have prepared us. Through our intention we have grace.



Our practice taught us to pause putting space and a concerned detachment around even the most inflammatory events. And there we find we can listen, we need not defend, we can hold the pain and the love at the same time, learning that compassion for ourselves is a loving act. We are able to extend kindness amid chaos. Being right is replaced by watching in love. We allow the emotion, like a visitor to come and then go. We can pause long enough to decide, “Would I rather win or radiate the love of Christ on earth?”

Our river guide concluded, “You're going to get tossed around. You'll get soaked, and blinded by the waves, so whatever you do, don't let go!” And so in the worst of times, distraught and deflated, we are reminded to never, never give up!

~ Christine Bender, New Berlin, Wisconsin

**“Let nothing perturb you, nothing frighten you. All things pass.  
God does not change.” ~ Teresa of Avila**

***Peacewhisper is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and your donation is tax deductible.***

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## *The Dome Bay Window Changes*

It was early April 2019 when we first saw the damage. One of the small round vinyl windows in the dome was totally sunbaked, nearly gone, but worse, was the hole at the top of the 22' wide bay window. We contacted the manufacturer who had all the original dome info, received a quote, ordered and paid for the replacement.

When ready to install the replacement, we found it too small. Fortunately, the damaged bay window had yet to be cut out. We were told our dome had shrunk. What! The fact was that the vinyl used to make the bay window had shrunk. Replacement #2 was shipped and this time the measurements showed the new replacement would fit, so we cut out the damaged window. When it was set in place, we realized that they had added material at the center to gain the extra width. That only made it bulge and not lie flat against the frame, but did nothing for the overall width.

#3 arrived near the end of October, but it was now too cold to install, so we would wait until the following spring. Meanwhile, the temperature had dropped into single digits and with the 40+ mph winds the bulge in #2 flapped against the dome frame and cracked. We duct taped the hole, attached 24 different nylon lines around the perimeter of the bay to the dome frame and hoped it would last through the winter.

The new year came with Covid-19, so it was the first week of July before we were able to install #3 with the help of our daughter and two teenage granddaughters. This window had ties at all the hubs of the frame and Velcro wraps for the struts in between, each reinforced with a clear vinyl disc, all clean and very professional. But it was again too small.

After discussing the attributes of #3 with the manufacturer, it was decided to add extra material that could be trimmed after installation and grommets around the perimeter to help pull the window into position and tighten it.



When we unrolled #4 (I think I may have even laughed), we found it had no ties, no Velcro wraps, no clear reinforcing discs. It was naked except for the grommets.

#5 arrived in full dress with ties and Velcro and discs and grommets. We let it acclimate inside the dome for a few days. On October 7, it was lifted into place and over the next few days it was tensioned, glued, and trimmed. It had been 18 months since we first saw the damage, but now the dome was again weather tight. ~ Rick Kollenkark

### *New Website*

Peacewhisper's new website was designed and implemented by our daughter, Angie. She had no experience, but she certainly had determination. We think it has both a professional look and a personal touch. You will find a schedule of retreats and sponsorship opportunities at [peacewhisper.org](http://peacewhisper.org).

You may now choose to receive your newsletter via email or in paper form. Please call, email, or specify on the donation form how you would like to receive the newsletter in the future.

As you plan your year-end giving, please consider supporting the mission of Peacewhisper with a tax deductible contribution. We are so grateful for your continued support and prayers.

### *Mission Statement*

*The mission of Peacewhisper is to enhance spiritual growth and inner peace  
in an environment of simplicity and unique natural beauty  
through contemplative prayer and practice.*