

Phoenix Rising

This grief newsletter is sent to members and friends of Paradise Valley United Methodist Church following the loss of a loved one. PVUMC pastors are available to you if you need one-on-one support. Contact the church office for more information at 602-840-8360. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, contact the church office or e-mail ddoran@pvumc.org.

Debbie Doran, Editor

Embracing Change

A universal truth is that life is a series of new seasons. As summer ends and our "fall" begins, we smell a difference in the air, feel an uplifting of our spirits and a gladness in our hearts for this welcome change in weather. We are eager to embrace this new season of the year. However, we are not so eager to embrace change if we are grieving the loss of a loved one. We want to hide from the reality of this new way of living with the void inside us.

The book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* by William Bridges, describes the transition/change process in three stages: The Endings, The Neutral Zone and The New Beginning. The hardest part is the ending, letting go, that feeling of insecurity and not knowing what comes next. Letting go takes time and courage.

Following this stage, we are engulfed in the neutral zone. This is the "in between" period, sometimes viewed as a dip in the roller coaster ride and the hard climb to the top that follows. One question, "Do I continue on this untried path or return to what I know?" Eventually, we awaken to the possibility of a new beginning and say, "Do I stay in this limbo place, or do I plunge ahead?" Jesus encourages us to **embrace change**...to follow Him to a new beginning. One asks, "Do I trust Him enough to follow?"

My study of Christ's message has helped me reflect on the life changes I've experienced through the years: retirement from a career committed to teaching; grief and adjustments after the death of my father and then, the

death of my mother five years later; pursuit of my dream of writing; evaluation and resetting of goals as I approach the later years in life. Each change has brought me challenges and sadness, but also immense joy. I know that Christ has guided me to embrace the changes that have come my way, and I've felt loved and supported through each step.

God does not expect us to face this life alone. He created us to be in a community with others and to depend on His helping us through each challenge. Healing comes in unexpected ways and begins when we reach out...when we take the first step to embrace change.¹

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,
keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;
lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;
shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, ...²



Restorative Stillness



[The Lord] says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

My purse was heavy on my shoulder as I grabbed my keys and hurried toward the door. I wanted to pray, but I needed to get to work. I was tired of plunging into the world without spending time with God, relying on my own strength and wisdom throughout the day. Sure, I mumbled prayers while in traffic, but I longed for intentional time in God’s presence. I hesitated at the door, then turned around and entered my place of prayer. God met me there. It was a *selah* moment.

Selah is a Hebrew word that concludes several scripture verses. Though its precise meaning is unknown, some scholars believe *selah* indicates a pause during a musical rendition. Brief silences add to the beauty of music and intensify the listener’s experience.

We also need stillness in our lives. Time spent in God’s presence is restorative. There we discover the true meaning of Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” Incorporating moments of stillness with God into our lives can transform the chaotic noise of our days into wonderful symphonies.

Let Us Pray

Loving God, help us make time today to pause in your faithful presence. May we find refuge and strength as we acknowledge you as the source of our joy. Amen.³

If I Had Known

If I had known that day was going to be your last, I would have fought through the sobs to tell you one last time how much I loved being your wife and best friend in this earthly life. . . . I would have served coconut pie and played your favorite tunes from the 1950s while we danced barefoot in the kitchen one last time. As we felt those final moments slipping away, I would have tried my best to audibly voice a prayer of gratitude to God for helping us find each other those many years ago. Threading your fingers through mine, we would have just sat together, holding hands.⁴



Footnotes:

1. Paula Rugen
2. "Lift Every Voice and Sing" United Methodist Hymnal #519, verse 3; words by James Weldon Johnson (1921)
3. The Upper Room; Jeri Darby (Michigan, USA); July 31, 2024
4. *Feeling Your Way Through Grief: A Companion for Life After Loss* by Missy Buchanan, Upper Room Books, 2024; Today's Reflection; New Every Morning post