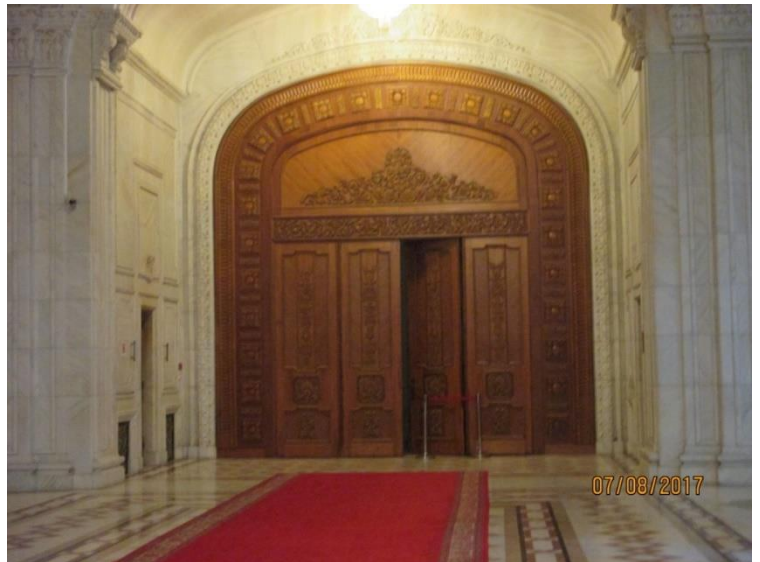


Called For Such a Time As This

By Cathy Wille, Supportive Ministries

During this pandemic many of us feel like we are standing on a threshold, the point in a doorway where we pass from room to room, where we no longer are in the room from which we have come and are not yet in the room we are moving toward. We are entering the church season that celebrates Advent in anticipation of Christmas – a time of waiting. The Advent poem by Jan Richardson, “Blessing The Advent Door” may be appropriate for this season of COVID. There are many similarities between Advent time and this pandemic time. Are we not on the threshold in this pandemic waiting for the next door to open? This time on the threshold, this in-between time, this liminal season that prepares us for Christmas includes practices of introspection and contemplation. Is it possible that during this time of pandemic we are being invited to a time of introspection and contemplation as we wait to move into the next room, the next phase, the next season?



Those of us who are “doers” will say, “introspection and contemplation are not among our spiritual practices.” This probably would explain the frustration we “doers” have been experiencing during this time. Many of the things we have done in the past are not possible to do and stay safe. With “Stay at Home” and quarantines we have been forced to find new ways to “do” things. But after the house has been totally cleaned, purged of items that go to Goodwill and the yard is ready for the next season, it is no surprise that “doers” feel helpless during this liminal space in which we find ourselves.

In the biblical story of Esther, we hear about a young Hebrew woman who felt helpless during the time of need for her people. She did not choose her situation. A foreign king had chosen her to be among his many wives. She did not choose him. She found herself in a place in which she never had been before. Besides this, her Hebrew people were being threatened by a foreign army. She and her uncle were concerned and wondered if there was something she could do to save her people. She and her uncle had tried several things, but because of their status in life, they were rendered powerless to do anything. As the story progresses we find out that, even under the threat of being put to death, Esther risked a new behavior and her life. If she went forward with her new idea, she would not be the beneficiary, but her actions could save her people. As she contemplated her decision, she and her uncle came to the realization that she “was called for such a time as this.” (Esther 4:14) She did step forward, risked her life, and was able to save the Hebrews.

Have we been called for a time such as this? That thought is both frightening, but also exciting. The virus has robbed us of life as we knew it and it has happened by no choice of our own. We are aware that, going forward, the future will not be the same. The time can be disorienting and feeling like we have no control and we are grieving what we have lost. But it also is a time we can set aside our doing, our past busyness, and engage in wonder. As we wander through this unknown wilderness, what we do know is that, indeed, WE have been called for such a time as this. We have the opportunity to take the risk and try new behaviors. Richardson in her poem says,

“but here
at this door of
beginning
the blessings cannot
be said without you”

For us “doers” this season may be set aside for us to risk new behaviors and spend time in introspection, contemplation and give ourselves the space to wonder as we wander about what it is that is on the other side of the door.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does it mean for you “to be called for such a time as this?”
2. What would it be like for you to spend time in introspection and contemplation during this time of waiting?
3. What would it be like for your congregation to spend time in introspection and contemplation during this Advent time?
4. What new gifts, insights perspectives, commitments are you discovering that may suggest you have “been called for such a time as this?”