

Season by Season

Meditations about aging

date: week, month

Ministries With Older Adults



Introductory Guide*

WELCOME! I am so glad you have opened this meditation series. It is a gift to you on your life journey, for reading, pondering and growing. The seasonal meditations are ordered for each week of the month, (i.e 4th week in Aug.) so that you can read anytime in any year. Each season in the series has an extra bonus meditation for you to take up at any time.

Each entry is formatted like this page: title and week of month, commentary from my thoughts, or another author (who is always credited); a photo upon which to focus, pray or return to each day in that week.; lastly there is an explanation (behind the asterisk) for ways to prepare and begin to meditate.



Photo by Cliff Aerie

The photos are contributed in large part by my wonderful husband, Cliff, for whom I am most grateful. Many other photos are those of my friend Judy Evridge who is also an extraordinary nature photographer.

*To prepare yourself for meditation choose a comfortable seated position. Light a candle nearby or set a CD to quiet calming tones. Read first to yourself or aloud, then focus your attention on the photo, pondering the words just read for a moment or two. Conclude your time with a word of gratitude and a prayer. Use the series in the way that works best for you, and be sure to share it with others.

I would love to hear from you.

Blessings,

Jan Aerie

aeriej@gmail.com

Season by Season

Meditations about aging

3rd week Sept.

Ministries With Older Adults



“Extra People in the House”*

Few podcasts address the effects of memory loss on families. One podcast hosted by the Ruth Parker Frost Center for Abundant Aging interviewed two families whose members suffer from long- or short-term memory loss. Susan, an author and poet suffers from short-term memory loss. She read her poem “Extra People in the House.”

In it she describes waking up in the morning certain that visitors are in her house: family members, friends or holiday celebrators. Her husband takes her from room to room to look in every nook and cranny to be reassured there are just the two of them this day.

How carefully and kindly Susan’s spouse leads her to the conclusion that no one is coming to visit that day. What fortitude and grace it takes to admit confusion and loss and then to carry on in spite of them.



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

4th week Sept.

Ministries With Older Adults



Change and Transformation*

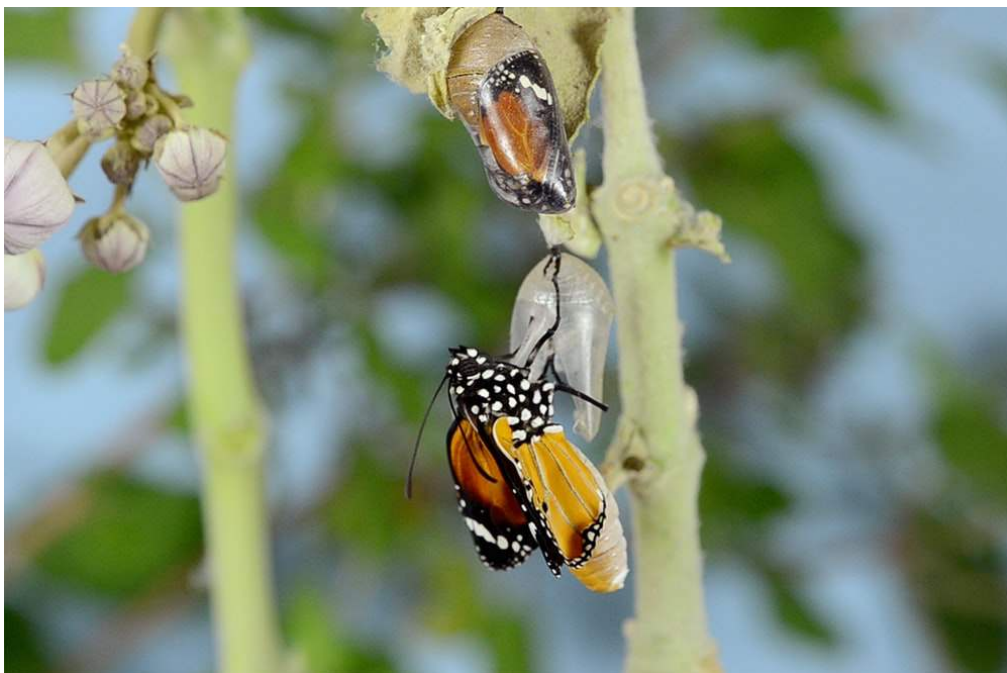
Life is a journey of the unknown. Certainly, change calls us to find its gifts:

Separation: the journey begins. When we experience upsetting news, we feel as if we are falling into an abyss. The human response is fear. Our shell cracks and our world falters. We are invited to enter the ritual process of transformation.

Dwelling at the threshold: surrendering to the unknown. Victor Turner said it is “the time between no longer and not yet.” We have died to who we were and are not yet reborn to who we might become. We are at the doorway, the threshold of new potential.

The return: transformation and rebirth. Our spiritual transformation entails dying to the false self with its fears, attachments, and need to control. In rebirth we can align with God and the larger whole.

–Joan Borysenko



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

1st week Oct.

Ministries With Older Adults



Breathe*

Learning to Breathe

Step outside the *regular* of things
to see something different.

Our days are filled with hearing
about history, seeing provided "evidence,"
being drawn toward "civilized" ways
of learning, stilted pre-conditioning toward
becoming unconscious consumers of waste.

Unconsciousness breeds fear, scarcity,
dualism, division, obfuscation, concept dependence...

Rather, step outside to see the miracle of things.

Pick each blackberry and say with love
its given name from the land on which it grows.

Pause to witness the berry's delicacy, its juiciness,
sun reflected rainbow colors in its aura.

Life's leaves whisper secrets unheard, except
through stillness and pause between
each conscious, present choice.

Banquet requires preparation, aplomb,
as virginal, eternal now requires attention;

I Am resides here.

–Kristin Aardema Faigh



Photo by Cliff Aerie

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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

2nd week Oct.

Ministries With Older Adults



A Family Affair*

One of the women in our caregivers' support group shared that she had been the sole caregiver for her mom for several years. Her mom had just passed away two months ago. Betsy shared snippets about her journey and the importance of her caregiver- and grief-support groups. One week she told about her sister's continuing criticism of Betsy's care of their mom. Over time, Betsy realized that this criticism was not hers to carry, nor was it healthy. Though she was struggling with this negativity while she was grieving, she eventually saw the importance of keeping positive messages in her own thoughts.

Family members can push our buttons without our even realizing it. Name some of yours, then strengthen yourself actively with positive affirmations.



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

3rd week Oct.

Ministries With Older Adults



Joy and Sorrow *

As you navigate this week, small things might catch your eye and give a lift to your day - like a flash of color, a work of art, or a loved one's smile. What a joy it is to see!

Joy, as in sorrow, has an emotional impact. When we grieve loss, change, and wishes unfulfilled, that grief also shapes and colors our days. The blog titled, "The Origami of Grief: Unfolding, Refolding, Enfolding," by Rev. Dr Leah Schade, reminds us, "[Grief] is constantly unfolding and refolding itself in different ways."

Share your joy and sorrow with others this week.



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

4th week Oct.

Ministries With Older Adults



Relying on God*

Specific verses in my daily Bible reading sometimes jump out at me. Verses that remind me how much God loves me or promises that He will strengthen and protect me - whatever the circumstances - are hugely encouraging.

When you are feeling full of doubt, remind yourself to rely not on your own understanding but to trust in God: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to Him and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*

When you are worrying, try to remember that God has already gone before you and has promised to be with you — no matter what. *Deuteronomy 31:8* tells us, *It is the Lord who goes before you; He will be with you and will never fail you or forsake you. So, do not fear or be dismayed.*

—Elizabeth Manneh



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

1st week Nov.

Ministries With Older Adults



A Work in Progress *

A road trip to visit dear friends we had not seen in two years, was canceled due to their news of the sudden death of our friend's brother. At times like this, it is good to reflect a little, to go back to some basics - to review why we do things the way we do, why we no longer do certain things that used to be important to us, how we choose to live and be, and what there is that gives us energy...

A sage (or elder) is a work in progress – a seeker and life-long learner. To “sage/to elder” is to age consciously– to make conscious choices and take responsible action. Sages are known not just for their actions but for **how** they act–with compassion, respect, integrity and joy. The qualities of a sage include: caring, deep listening, compassion, joyfulness, peacefulness, open communication, lifelong learning, respect, reverence for life, integrity, and service.
–Sage-ing International

This list sounds a lot like the Bible's fruits of the spirit for which we are called to strive. Which of these qualities do you excel in and which would you like to enhance? No one is perfect, but we all travel on our journey with faith and hope.



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

2nd week Nov.

Ministries With Older Adults



Learning*

This Much I Have Learned:

Within the sorrow there is grace.
When we come close
to the things that break us down,
we touch those things that also break us open.

This is the healing point:
when we have told the story,
we can leave the story behind.
What remains is hidden wholeness,
alive and unbroken...

--Wayne Muller in *How, Then, Shall We Live?*



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

3rd week Nov.

Ministries With Older Adults



Listen*

Psychiatrist Mark Goulston, has a personal mission of changing the world one conversation at a time. His pattern for conversations includes: learning to be a better listener; fully taking in what is being said, including body language; showing you care by empathizing with how the person feels; and asking a key question offering to serve: “How may I help you with that?”

He says this will feel odd at first because we are not used to these kinds of conversations, but with practice it can become more comfortable. He believes we can heal the world by caring for others. How will you practice listening today?



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

4th week Nov.

Ministries With Older Adults



Acceptance*

Fall can be a difficult time of year for some. I mourn many family members who died in the months of fall. It seems to be a time of letting go of so much of life. Yet, it used to be my most favorite time of year – the season of my birthday, the time of new beginnings with school re-opening. Between the two emotions, I have found an uneasy acceptance of both: celebrating the newness of life and letting go of what has been completed. Might we see each day of the year as a practice session for accepting the new and letting go of completion?



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

5th week Nov.

Ministries With Older Adults



Past, Present, Future*

We're so scared of looking back and saying, "I wasted that. I could've done that better. That is something I lost and I can never get back." I feel the pain of that. There are so many things we can't get back. But the solution, of course, is not this delusional forward momentum. I mean, futurism doesn't solve the problem of mortality. We get numbered days.

Inside our numbered days, we get really, often, impossible choices: this or that; this opportunity, those obligations. I just think that the solution is not then to pivot to this very facile "be present," in which that's the solution to the past and the future. I think the solution to the past and the future is that there is none. It's that we borrow from each of them to make really meaningful choices; we pull from the past in order to inform a richer future. We pull from the future to remind us that these things are yet undone. I think being an incurable optimist is fundamentally, a story about hope. That hope is a story about all of us that God puts in the future, ever before us and always with us and always behind us. But it moves in kind of a beautiful way where we will someday be wrapped up in a story about love.

—Kate Bowler



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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

5th week Nov.

Ministries With Older Adults



Shifting, Changes, New Beginnings*

The earlier sunsets cause us to realize fall is in the air. It is the beginning of a new year for many. So, it is a good time to get some of the details about our "house" in order. Notice transitions, seen visibly in nature and in our surroundings. Take a moment to ask what lessons you may learn from what you are experiencing. My favorite go-to book in fall and during a time of sadness and change, is Leo Buscaglia's classic, "The Fall of Freddie the Leaf." Perhaps you know it.

The season is shifting, so why not be proactive and feel good about getting your "house in order"?



Photo by Judy Evridge

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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

1st week Dec.

Ministries With Older Adults



Pausing*

Intentionally pausing allows us to make room for deeper wisdom to reveal itself. When we momentarily halt and take a mental snapshot of *reality*, it is like creating the precious, quiet calm we briefly experience between an inbreath and outbreath that leads us successfully into our next moment.

We can liken breath to the practice of taking a *purposeful pause*. When we are unsettled, or when people astonish or perplex us, pausing gives us space to tap into our inner wisdom, refocus and transition effectively to our next moments. They help ground us. They help us clear the way. When we intentionally rest to empty “mental noise,” if you will, and clear disruptive emotions, the rest prompts us to consciously release fears, doubts and confusion that may otherwise deeply affect us

–Sage-ing International



Photo by M. Loy Every

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Season by Season

Meditations about aging

2nd week Dec.

Ministries With Older Adults



Trees*

Advocacy of Trees

Imagine we are trees in lush forests moving, resting, dancing in chorus which permeates every cell and molecule.

Imagine roots that dive deep--grow thick through loamy earth, grounded, thriving, skins soft yet strong, curious yet not impatient.

Imagine our trunks becoming stronger with every sway, our branches reaching in all directions. Feel them vibrant with joy's energy as they, too, sway and lift, reach fingers to intertwine with neighboring arms.

Imagine basking in sunlight's rays...a deep drink of heaven's tears...

a rest of starlight in upturned palms. Embrace the chill of glowing dusk or morning's break of darkness fast.

Imagine breath's flow within trunk's active core,

flowing life like iron oxide memory in our veins of living tissue.

Energy's field too is grand and reaches unseen, grasping waves dancing

as Christ Light around, within, who also dances without resistance to winds blowing rough or sweet, to relax even in inconvenient times blowing storms whip through vision's sway.

Imagine we are stronger together, this we, this now, midst bodies' trials

and trauma, roots introducing themselves in deeper earth through nature's

nourishment and way. Our collective heart expands in love and support of one another,

and especially this beautiful body a storm has lashed severe.

Imagine this forest, lush in bodies joined with deep roots humming together a Christ song,

vibrating earth in lift of joyful chorus, this amazing embrace of unmitigated grace through gentle measures of light music, rooted, grounded, lifting notes in glorious, healing song--here we are, an advocacy of trees.

—Rev. Kristin Aardema Faigh



Stock photo

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