

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

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Asking for Help*

A little boy was trying very hard to lift a heavy stone. His father said to him, “Are you using all your strength?” “Yes, I am,” the boy exclaimed impatiently. “No,” the father replied, “You are not. You haven’t asked me to help.”

Being spiritually strong doesn’t mean that we have to go it alone, without assistance from others, or that we can’t benefit from the lifting up we receive from those who are ready and willing to help... In difficult times, remind yourself that no matter the situation, God is ever-present. It may also help to remain centered by identifying situations that increase your anxiety, stress or worry, and to the greatest extent possible, avoid or limit your exposure to them...

In every decision you are called to make, in every challenge you face, your power of strength carries you through, radiating from God's presence within you.

—Rev. Margo Ford



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Receiving Just What is Needed*

Tulips turn to reach for the light and, cuplike, they receive the sun and the rain — just what is needed. God's loving presence is with us.



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Music for the Soul*

My mother is now in a memory care facility. My dad is in independent living there, and comes over every day to see her and have lunch. When I visit, it's often a quiet place. I think people with dementia are aware of what's going on, but they often aren't sure how to communicate back to the world. My perspective changed one day when I visited during a music event in the chapel.

My mom, and others, were up and away from their walkers and wheelchairs, singing, dancing, swaying and smiling. How could this be? I had a feeling that if people who were barely verbal or immobile a few minutes before could transform into this joyful bunch, anything would be possible.

Research on music therapy has shown it creates sensory stimulation in people with Alzheimer's and other dementia, and can be a nonmedical treatment option for anxiety and stress. The arts, whether it is music, dance, poetry, painting or theater, stir the greatest emotion in us for the longest periods of our lives. If we open ourselves to the sound and beauty, this is how we will always connect with each other. Music is a universal language, it is something that even as we grow older and change, does not leave us entirely.

—Shannon Henry Kleiber



Stock photo

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Resurrection*

Adoration

You are held by nails dripping life's essence
from hands and feet that lived
as none other, radiating compassion
toward those seeking freedom, hope;
and those seeking to destroy.

This is the place where everything changes
in crosses bearing separation, scorn,
sin worn by innocence--divine human son
born and bearing with creatures who know
not what they do.

You whose love bridges suffering,
sorrow, weakness, fear,
hatred of self--for this is how
we destroy one another;

your gift to us is without condition.

You share yourself without obligation
through total freedom of expectation yet
an incarnation of hope at this time
so ripe for repentance, releasing each being
from our horror's guilt, in forgiveness
of *our* seemingly inbred vengeance.

And so you hang in agony's grasp
suffering *our* misery, petty lust for what
does not satisfy, *our* vengeance and death.

We don't understand who you are;
we refuse to understand our willing compliance
with death's demand while
your resurrected self dwells oppressed
in each of us. We have only to allow
this new thing to occur, vulnerability in release
of crossed arms held tight in pride's shadow
we ourselves have fastened to cover adoration's glow.

We must learn to let go to embrace
Love's essence in Christ's eternal presence
here and now, nurture cleansing flow
of life's river winding through struggle,
rapids of brokenness, tunnels darkened by doubt,

bends of perceived control in current division,
drifting into eddies of nurtured resentment; energy spent
in rising panic to catch our breath time and again.
What might happen by perhaps allowing rest
in any of the gentle pools of grace passed unnoticed
through malaise of culture's press?
Deeply resurrected breath flows in joy
with life's essential current through its difficulty
toward completion of this experience
in growing apart from sin through adoration
of the Christ within.

— Kristin Aardema Faigh



Stock photo

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Peace and Quiet*

“Growth in grieving; hope in hurting; trying in tiring” was the heading for the Contemporary Religious Art exhibition, *Quiet Isn't Always Peace*. The purpose of the art was to reflect the tension between hope and what we actually see and understand.

An enforced solitude wears on the soul, while a measure of peace and quiet can be a wonderful thing. Changes in our life may have caused uneasy paradoxes, like the lilt of birdsong amidst the white noise of traffic. That calm may belie our reality - a lack of social contact, especially with those we care most about, can be an unwelcome sort of quiet.

Quiet isn't always peace, is a phrase in the Inaugural Poem delivered by Amanda Gorman. Quiet isn't always peace, yet sometimes it is. I wish you times of peaceful quiet in this Eastertide.

—St Louis Contemporary Religious Art Museum



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Worries*

Have you thought about how our human worries are not shared by the natural world? The birds and flowers are calmly living their days. They are showing us Spring in beautiful and stunning array. Yet we humans suffer with our concerns and worries which overload a large part of our wakeful hours.

Caregiving is redemptive work. You learn to let go of your pride, focus on what's most important and call on the source of strength that never fails. As one of my scripture cards reminds me, "We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18).
—Shelly Beach



Photo by Arianna Aerie

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Take Note*

What better time is there than this moment to take note of the beauty around us? We get so caught up in our lives and daily routines we easily forget that we can choose our focus. Judy is a wonderful amateur photographer. She shares her photos for all to enjoy, while expressing her own delight in the sights she has documented. Take some time to look closely into this photo. What details do you notice? What may be just beyond the frame of this photo? What are you learning here for your day?



Photo by Judy Evridge

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Verdant spring*

We are all part of this beautifully abundant and verdant world God has given us. Apple blossoms in spring remind us of that. The tree that is covered with flowers seems to have a blossom on every branch, even several all along its twigs. Then as the petals fall and fruit begins to form, we see such an over-abundance of fruit. God has given the trees an ample supply of fruits – more than any one human or animal could possibly consume. What over-abundance there must also be in our lives – our forming fruits! What are the fruits of your “tree” that you can name? When have your gifts or fruits become ripe? And how will you know when new fruits are ripe for sharing? God in His abundance is working with you still.



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Perspective*

One morning a friendly robin came to sit again and watch the world from our stair rail. But it certainly doesn't sit there all day. It flies off and comes back often. What perspectives might we imagine from a bird's view? What is your bird's-eye view of this time that you are in? How can you learn from changing your view regularly during the day?

What perspective(s) are you focused on these days? Is this perspective helping you cope? Do you want to keep that perspective or change to another? What perspective is most uplifting and empowering to you?

Take hope in a bird's eye view.



Photo by Judy Evridge

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God is Near*

I Am There

Do you need Me?

I am there.

You cannot see Me, yet I am the light you see by.

You cannot hear Me, yet I speak through your voice.

You cannot feel Me, yet I am the power at work in your hands.

I am at work, though you do not understand My ways.

I am at work, though you do not recognize My works.

I am not strange visions, I am not mysteries.

Only in absolute stillness, beyond self, can you know Me as I am,
and then but as a feeling and a faith.

Yet I am there. Yet I hear. Yet I answer.

When you need Me. I am there.

Even if you deny Me, I am there.

Even when you feel most alone, I am there.

Even in your fear, I am there.

Even in your pain, I am there.

I am there when you pray and when you do not pray.

I am in you, and you are in Me.

Only in your mind can you feel separate from Me,
for only in your mind are the mists of “yours” and “mine.”

Yet only with your mind can you know Me and experience Me.

Empty your heart of empty fears.

When you get yourself out of the way, I am there.

You can of yourself do nothing, but I can do all.

And I am in all.

Though you may not see the good, good is there, for I am there.

I am there because I have to be, because I am.

Only in Me does the world have meaning; only out of Me does

the world take form; only because of Me does the world go forward.

I am the law on which the movement of the stars and the growth of living cells are founded.

I am the love that is the law's fulfilling.

I am assurance. I am peace. I am oneness.

I am the law that you can live by.

I am the love that you can cling to. I am your assurance.

I am your peace. I am one with you. I am.

Though you fail to find Me, I do not fail you.

Though your faith in Me is unsure,

My faith in you never wavers,

because I know you, because I love you.

Beloved, I am there.

— James Dillet Freeman

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Enjoying life*

As we progress through these spring days, nature continues to grow and change. Colors and amazement abound. Consider what you like to do, are able of doing, and what you are in the mood for today. How will you enjoy this day?

Outside:

- Take a walk
- Water plants
- Feed the birds
- Sit on the porch

Inside:

Read from a favorite book
Listen to your favorite music
Complete a puzzle
Look at a family photo album

May you find colorful moments to enjoy this day.



Photo by Cliff Aerie

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Blessings*

Even though we cannot see clearly how it's going to turn out, we are still called to let the future into our imagination. We will never be able to build what we have not first cherished in our hearts.

—Joanna Macy

What hidden blessings wait to be recognized, and perhaps will inspire us to take positive action? What blessings do you identify now that you didn't recognize even two months ago? What yearning do you feel right now, developing deep within? How will you choose to *BE* in this present moment?

Investing in self-care, spending more time in nature, connecting in creative ways with family, friends and neighbors are restorative behaviors to nurture, by contemplatively re-evaluating our values, prioritizing what is genuinely important to act on, and by dreaming new visions—no matter our age. Every step we take in creating a constructive path forward helps us to reorient our compass for a personal and collective life-giving “North,” as we discover how to be a powerful presence that facilitates healing in our world.

—Sage-ing International



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Finding Hope*

Hope gives us strength. It bolsters our resilience. It pushes us on when we don't think we can do any more. There is no single means for finding hope. You may draw deeply on your faith, as well as on grit, and inspiring encouragement.

Through our temperaments and upbringing, each of us is typically inclined toward regarding the world through the lens of a brooding pessimist or a beaming optimist. These tendencies only become more pronounced under the duress of a crisis. But research by psychologist Martin Seligman shows that optimists are happier and less prone to anguish and depression, even when danger is realistically present.

Since optimism is better for us, take steps to enhance your cautiously optimistic thinking. For starters, bring your attention more fully to some of the unforeseen benefits... —Barry Jacobs



Photo by Cliff Aerie

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Cultivating Resilience*

Building resilience is a crucial key to all of life, really, but especially life as a caregiver and as an older adult. Community plays a very important part in building resilience.

Recently, I've taken on more of a caring role with my mother, and I now understand the difficulties even better. When a caregiving situation continues for weeks, months, or even years, it's challenging.

I've become very aware that I don't feel strong enough to handle the physical and especially the emotional demands of caregiving. I'd like to say I've always stayed positive and full of faith, but in reality, I've sometimes found it hard to keep going. I realized that I needed to learn to rely more fully on God to help me cope. But in the rush of everyday life, it's easy to forget, so I've been exploring ways to bring them to mind when I'm busy or feeling overwhelmed. I've taken intentional steps to encourage myself and to keep communication lines with God open.

—Elizabeth Manneh



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