

SGM August 2018 - Harvest

Opening Words

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, a time to reap that which is
planted. *From Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

Check-in *Share briefly what's been on your mind lately. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Thoughts to Ponder

It is like the seed put in the soil -- the more one sows, the greater the harvest.
Orien Swett Marden

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.
Robert Louis Stevenson

If winter is slumber and spring is birth, and summer is life, then autumn rounds out to be reflection. It's a time of year when the leaves are down and the harvest is in and the perennials are gone. Mother Earth just closed up the drapes on another year and it's time to reflect on what's come before. *Mitchell Burgess*

The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and incredible as the tints of morning or evening. *Henry David Thoreau*

Readings

One of the blessings of growing older is the discovery that many of the things I once believed to be my shortcomings have turned out in the long run to be my strengths, and other things of which I was unduly proud have revealed themselves in the end to be among my shortcomings. What a blessing it is to outlive your self-judgments and harvest your failures.

From Harvesting Our Failures, Kitchen Table Wisdom, by Rachel Naomi Remen

The plow has savaged this sweet field
Misshapen clods of earth kicked up
Rocks and twisted roots exposed to view
Last year's growth demolished by the blade.
I have plowed my life this way
Turned over a whole history
Looking for the roots of what went wrong

Until my face is ravaged, furrowed, scarred.
Enough. The job is done.
Whatever's been uprooted, let it be
Seedbed for the growing that's to come.
I plowed to unearth last year's reasons—
The farmer plows to plant a greening season.
From Harrowing by Parker J. Palmer

Spiritual Exercises

1. This ritual gives us an opportunity to consciously find the seeds that we need to plant for a nourishing, supportive year. Think about the various parts of your life in four categories: Composting, Ripening, Perfectly Ripe, and Seeding Next Year's Harvest. How would you categorize them? (*Derived from Harvest Ritual-Feast Your Life, by Nick Meime, spiritualityhealth.com/blog/celebrant-institute/harvest-ritual-feast-your-life*)

- **Composting:** This is the place to put your life’s metaphorical weeds, pruned branches, and rotten fruit. Too many weeds crowd out the healthy plants in any garden—this is also true in life. The relationships or goals placed in this basket need to be deliberately released, to make room for other things to grow.
- **Ripening:** Items in this basket need tending to, in order for ripening to occur. What can and will you do to make this happen?
- **Perfectly Ripe:** The “produce” in this basket warrants your thanks and gratitude!
- **Seeding Next Year’s Harvest:** Looking ahead, what are the goals and relationships that need to be planted and/or tended for a rich harvest next year?

2. Nature has different faces evident in late summer and throughout the fall. Take a photo of an outdoor place that you love. Take another photo of the same area every two weeks for 3-4 more times. How do you receive the images? A harvested field often manifests darkness and emptiness -- yet planting a field provides life-giving sustenance, and replenishes the soil so it can give rise to new life in the next season.

Sitting in Silence *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Questions for Contemplation

What part of tending your “garden” has been conscious, and creative—in alignment with your purpose? What seeds have you planted that are bearing fruit? Which “plants” need to be weeded, or branches pruned to yield a good harvest? What “produce” does not serve because it will not ripen, or is now past its prime?

Sharing/Deep Listening *Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection *This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or relate additional thoughts that have occurred to you as others shared.*

Singing: Gather the Spirit #347, Singing the Living Tradition

Gather the spirit, harvest the power. Our separate fires will kindle one flame.
Witness the mystery of this hour. Our trials in this light appear all the same.

Chorus: Gather in peace, gather in thanks. Gather in sympathy now and then.
Gather in hope, compassion and strength. Gather to celebrate, once again.

Gather the Spirit of heart and mind. Seeds for the sowing are laid in store.
Nurtured in love, and conscience refined, with body and spirit united once more.

Chorus

Gather the spirit growing in all, drawn by the moon and fed by the sun.
Winter to spring, and summer to fall, the chorus of life resounding as one.

Chorus

Extinguishing the Chalice

Do not measure success by today’s harvest. Measure success by the seeds you plant today. *Robert Louis Stevenson*