

Anniversary Sunday 2020

Well a year ago, who would have thought that we would be celebrating the 43rd anniversary of this congregation on Zoom!! Today is about just that ... who would have expected this ...

Today's Scripture is about things coming into our lives at a certain time, a certain season, and mostly not when we expect it, but in God's own time ... a time to laugh and a time to cry, a time for war and a time for peace, a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted, a time to gather stones, and a time to throw stones away, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing ... and on and on ... various times in our lives ... mostly not of our choosing or planning ... they come, unexpected. It seems, and this is not of our own choosing, that now is a time not for gathering in the sanctuary for worship, but rather a time for worshiping from the comfort of our own homes with the aid of technology ... unexpected to say the least.

Have you ever changed jobs when you least expected it? How about a move, to a new town or a new home, when you had not really planned for it? So many different times and seasons in our lives ... not of our own choosing and planning.

Heather and the boys and I were planning to leave New Zealand after spending a year there in ministry in 1992. Heather's mum phoned from Pakenham and said that someone had called her to say their minister was leaving and they would like me to consider being their new minister in Kanata. Our plans were to return to our life in Nova Scotia where we were living and working and thoroughly enjoying life. But when we arrived back in Ottawa, we decided to get some more information about this church that was looking for a minister. The rest is history. A new season, a new time in our lives ... one ending, one about to begin. Completely unplanned and unexpected!

This week Jennifer circulated a reflection by Eric Rhoads, an artist I follow online. I am going to highlight just a couple of points from his recent reflection.

Rhoads' meditation is about unexpected blessings that comes with God's timing and His desire for our lives.

A young boy goes door to door with flyers about God's love, and without knowing it, ends up saving the life of an old woman. For everything there is a season.

An unexpected purchase leads to a group of employees getting paid, rather than losing their jobs. For everything there is a season.

Rhoads goes on to say that in his life, he now recognizes hundreds of examples, when the right people have shown up, at precisely the right time, completely out of the blue, to pull him out of loneliness, depression, or to help him to make a good decision. For everything there is a season. God's unexpected blessings.

Have you ever heard a minister preach a sermon and you said to yourself ... 'how did they know I needed to hear that today ... they were speaking directly to me?' I can remember a few times when that happened to me in my younger days.

One day, many years ago in my ministry, for some unknown reason, a certain parishioner was on my mind. I decided to listen to that inner voice, to follow that nudge. I took some applesauce I had made over to her home. It took longer than I had anticipated for her to come to the door, but for once I was patient and she finally arrived. We talked very briefly. She did not invite me in. She was not her usual warm, bubbly self. Weeks later she made an appointment to see me ... she said she wanted to return the Tupperware I had delivered the applesauce in. What she really wanted was to tell me that, as I was walking to her front door to deliver the applesauce, she was planning to commit suicide. In the years since then, we have referenced that visit and the

applesauce a number of times, with great thanksgiving. Unexpected blessings. For everything there is a season.

Has this happened to you? Have you had moments where you connected at the perfect time, with the perfect person, with the perfect message?

We all know how much the landscape of Kanata has changed in the last 5 or 10 years!! Imagine what the area looked like in 1977 when the Trinity congregation was first formed under the leadership of Rev. Ralph Kendall! Kanata was farm country!! The first service was held in an elementary school on Palm Sunday with 150 people in attendance! The second Sunday was Easter Sunday with 40 present. Since the school that was rented also was rented to a yoga studio that wanted the heat kept quite low, the congregation moved to Roger St. Denis school. They stayed until 1980 when the church was built at 110 McCurdy. It had a membership of around 100, a full Sunday School and two Youth Groups! A different time. A different season.

In 1983, Ralph was called to work in our national church office in Toronto. In 1984, a young and very energetic Rev. John Bannerman was called to Trinity. Like Ralph, John left Trinity for the national church office. Heather, Eben, Logan, Hannah and I arrived here early in 1993. There have been many chapters in this ministry ... from one service to two to one and to a brand new church. From 2 youth groups to one, to two, to none. Youth leaders come and then they go. We panic ... who will lead this important ministry. And someone unexpected always comes along.

Choir directors come and go. Each time we wonder how in the world we will survive. But then someone unexpected comes along.

Small group ministries flourish. Leadership and membership is enthusiastic. And then it fades. Eventually, at unexpected times, it rises from the ashes again.

At times the church is very strong in Mission work. At other times it is the music program that flourishes. Sometimes a congregation's

finances are strong. Sometimes in a desperate situation. Sometimes adequate. Different times. Different seasons.

Since 1993, I have conducted over 153 Burials, 123 Baptisms, and over 42 + _____ Weddings. Someone new will come along to carry on.

The development of a congregation is, in some ways, like the development of a human being ... from birth, through infancy, learning to walk on its own, into childhood, the teenage years, to young adulthood, and then eventually to ever greater maturity. Times and seasons. Trinity has matured through some of those stages.

As you prepare to move into the next chapter of your ministry, I have a number of questions for you to reflect upon.

On this, the 43rd Anniversary of a church that has had a colourful, healthy ministry for 43 years, what time, and what season, are you about to enter? No one really knows, but you do need to continue to trust, to have faith, and to be open to God's leading. Where is God calling this congregation? How might God be trying to get this

congregation's attention? What is God's will for Trinity? Are you open to a nudge from His Spirit? Do you have faith that the right leadership will come along at the right time? How much do you need to manage and control that and how much do you just need to be open to God's leading?

At this time in the life of this congregation, it would be good to take stock. Where have we been? What is the context of this congregation ... it is different from a downtown church, or a rural church or an inner city church. It has a certain theological flavour and a certain culture. It has a certain formality and a certain casualness to it. What degree of autonomy do the leaders want in this congregation and what kind of ministerial leadership are you looking for? What gifts and strengths should your new minister have? Are there particular experiences that your new minister should come with? Is the gender, age, race, or sexual orientation of your new minister important to you?

In this next chapter, will you seek to have greater collaboration with community groups that are impacting this community for good? Will our music program blossom and grow significantly toward its potential?

We heard from Joel Sherbino in our Speaker Series how their church kitchen was overhauled and a Raw Carrot Soup making ministry was started, employing a number of mostly unemployable people to work there. Will someone find a way to incorporate this magnificent kitchen we have into some significant ministry? A new time. A new season.

Unexpected opportunities!

And how about on the personal front ... what might your next chapter look like ... your new season?

When it comes to you and God ... where have you been? Where are you now? And where do you want to go? What might you do to get there?

For every matter under heaven there is a season ... a time to dance,
speak, plant, be still, be quiet, pluck up, cry, make war, laugh, make
peace ...

What does the forecast look like for you? What are you willing to do
about it?

Amen