

Stephanie Paulsell:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Stephanie Paulsell:

And welcome to morning prayers. Would you stand for the responsive song, which is number 40 on page 20 of the black Appleton Chapel Psalter? I waited patiently for you, oh God. You stooped to me and heard my cry.

Congregation:

You lifted me out of the desperate pit, out of the mire and clay. You set my feet upon a high cliff and made my footing sure.

Stephanie Paulsell:

You put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Congregation:

Many shall see and stand in awe and put their trust in you.

Stephanie Paulsell:

In sacrifice and offering, you take no pleasure. You have given me ears to hear you.

Congregation:

Burnt offerings and sin offering you will not require, so I said, behold, my God.

Stephanie Paulsell:

In the roll of the book, it is written concerning me, I love to do your will, oh my God. Your law is deep in my heart.

Congregation:

I proclaim righteousness in the great congregation. Behold, I do not restrain my lips, and that, oh God, you know.

Stephanie Paulsell:

Your righteousness have I not hidden in my heart? I have spoken of your faithfulness and your deliverance. I have not concealed your love and faithfulness from the great congregation.

Congregation:

You are the holy one. Do not withhold your compassion from me. Let your love and your faithfulness keep me safe forevermore.

Choir:

(singing)

Patty Bellinger:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Patty Bellinger:

I'd like to share a quote that holds a lot of meaning for me from the book, "When Things Fall Apart, Hard Advice for Difficult Times" by Pema Chodron. Most of you know, Pema is a Buddhist nun who leads the Gampo Abbey in rural Nova Scotia and has done so many other things as well as that. Things Falling Apart is a kind of testing, and also kind of feeling. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things really don't get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen. Room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.

Patty Bellinger:

So reading that I reflect on the fact that we live in interesting times. Rich, challenging, activated times. We are surrounded by uncertainty, swept up in anxiety, dwell in profound ambiguity. Some of us suffer, some of us thrive. Most of us hope for a better tomorrow. Yet we have good reason to fear for the tomorrows that await our children, our grandchildren, and all the generations to come. Novel coronavirus, electoral uncertainty, me too, homelessness, climate change, hopelessness, all the isms that try us.

Patty Bellinger:

Last Friday, a young friend of mine was married in a small, sweet ceremony. As she and her beloved, a Chinese American physician headed off for weekend honeymoon, a stranger accosted them at the bus station, South Station and verbally assaulted her new husband on the basis of his ethnicity, denouncing his presence as a health threat.

Patty Bellinger:

Things come together and then they fall apart. As the wave of this new illness was washed up on our shores and the impact is felt here, as it has been felt in other communities around the world, I've noticed that each of us confronts this challenge differently, often in accordance with our individual personalities, our risk tolerance, our sense of self. Some are rocked, some are stoic. All of our hands are increasingly dry from vigorous washing and sanitizing.

Patty Bellinger:

In today's Boston Globe, Beth Title's column, How the Coronavirus is Making Us Lose Our Minds, is trending near the top of the most popular articles in the Globe. Beth writes, at this point in the Coronavirus outbreak, we need two metrics. The risk of contracting the disease, which in Massachusetts is currently low, per state officials and the risk of contracting anxiety about the disease.

Patty Bellinger:

I urge all of us to respect each other's emotions. Those of us who feel strong, must support those of us who feel more anxious and troubled. Let us come together in love and solidarity, rejecting the fear that drives us towards bigotry and hate. My hope today is that we allow room for healing, that we create the space to hold each other. My prayer is that we rise to this and our many challenges with care and respect. I pray that we listen, we reassure, we hold up those who feel weak, we comfort those who fear for loved ones they cannot travel to see. My prayer is that we rise up as one, in community.

Stephanie Paulsell:

Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell:

Would you join me in the Lord's Prayer which is printed on the opposite of your Order of Worship. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell:

I invite you to stand as you are able for our final hymn, number 212.

Congregation:

(Song)

Stephanie Paulsell:

Patty, we thank you so much for that compassionate word to remind us to attend to all the ways we're feeling in these rich, complicated, and activated times. What a great description of our moment. Friends, may the love of God unite us, may the movement of God in the world and in the spaces between us enliven in our senses and lead us into life. Amen.