

Turning

Let us pray. Loving Lord, we thank you for the strength of our faith and your grace that enables us to be instruments of your peace, that enables us to participate in transforming the world to your kingdom, to participate in turning dark to light, hate to love, sin to grace, and hope to fulfillment. In your holy and blessed name we pray, Amen.

When I was in seminary I struggled between two calls, being called to be a hospital chaplain or a parish minister. I thought my gifts were best suited to be a chaplain. I know many of you have experienced this, praying for someone, especially when they ask, holding their hand and knowing you are on holy ground. I thought that was for me. A retired pastor though told me that as a parish minister you are the hospital chaplain. I am sure Rev Lea can back me up on that. But what swayed me was knowing that as a chaplain my opportunities to participate in baptism would be few, not just the initial prayer of baptism, but of raising children of God in the faith. And any baptism would be under dire circumstances.

I love baptism. It is the most beautiful and meaningful, purposeful thing we do in church. And that was one of the things that got me through seminary.

On those sleepless nights of study, of writing endless papers, I would picture that bright beautiful day, that sunny morning when I got to participate in a baptism, when I got to hold a precious child of God in my arms and say, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' And that bright beautiful day came to pass. That dream came true. That hope was fulfilled.

I pray you each have a picture in your mind of that bright beautiful day when you will have peace, when your family, your children will have peace, when the world has peace. I pray you know your part in bringing that day about. We know that God's word will not return to him empty, but will return to him complete, fulfilled, its purpose accomplished. We know one day the hills will burst forth in song and the trees of the field will clap their hands in time. Jesus tells us that some of us will not taste death before that day comes. That gives us all a sense of urgency to do our part, to participate in the turning from dark to light, from hate to love, from sin to grace, from hope to fulfillment.

We worship for many reasons, to meet God, to grow closer to God and one another, to learn more about scripture, to help apply our faith to the world around us, to give thanks. But at its core, worship is a celebration, a celebration of creation, of the creator, of redemption, and of our part in that redemption, of our part in turning the world back to God.

As our choir – and our dear guest - perform the Canticle of the Turning, celebrate your part in the turning, both as individuals and as church.

Paul gives us a little definition of church in this passage. Did you notice it? Being of the same Spirit, the Spirit of God, strive together in one mind, the mind of Christ, for the faith of the gospel. Strive together in one mind for the faith of the good news of Jesus Christ. That's a nice definition of what we get to do for Jesus. You've heard it before. These are things we get to do for Jesus. Paul reminds us of that, saying it is a privilege to believe and to suffer for Christ. It is a privilege to do the things we get to do, to bless our community, to open the door to the

kingdom of heaven for ourselves and for others, to ignite the faith of ourselves and of others, to do our part for the sake of the good news.

So as you listen to the Cantic of the Turning, celebrate your part in the turning, celebrate how you are indeed an instrument of Christ's peace, and how you help bring about the bright beautiful day of the Lord. Amen.