

Rev Rita Message April 18 2021

Do you remember the Staples 'Easy' button commercials where you just hit that red button and your office supply problems were solved in an instant?

These days, I want to hit the button that says "Resume Life". Conversations with family and friends are often about pre-Covid activities.... going to the Jubilee to take in a musical.... jostling for popcorn and drinks at the movie theater... crowding around the dining room table so no one has to eat at the 'little table'. To quote singer Mary Hopkins: "Those Were the Days My Friend." And then there are the chats about what we shall do in a post-pandemic future.... more of everything.... more road trips...more celebrations.... more hugs!

In the midst of variants, vaccines, and virtual church, I believe that God continues to invites us to notice that God is providing signs and wonders all around us every day. In other words, each day, we have many opportunities to hit the 'Awe and Wonder' button and notice the big and small movements of God in our lives.

The Bible is full of expressions of awe and wonder both of God and God's creation.

We see it in Moses awe and wonder at the great creator of the universe as expressed in Deuteronomy 10: 14, 17 (NIV)

" Look, the highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God.... For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God, who shows no partiality and cannot be bribed."

We see it in David's exclamation of praise of creation in Psalm 65:8

"The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy."

And we also see it in Jesus' enthusiasm for creation and his *encouragement to his followers* to go out and look closely at the birds and think about the wild flowers and God's care for us and all creation in Luke 12:27-28:

²⁷ Look how the wild flowers grow! They don't work hard to make their clothes. But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth^[c] wasn't as well clothed as one of these flowers. ²⁸ God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. Won't he do even more for you? You have such little faith!

In her wonderful book *The Gift of Wonder: Creative Practices for Delighting in God*, Christine Sine writes: “I believe that we need wonder to grasp the reality that we rarely acknowledged – we are immersed in the presence of God. It is all around us, deep within us, always embracing us and available to us at every moment.”

When was the last time you experienced a sense of wonder at the world around you or sat in awe of God’s greatness? Perhaps it is time to hit the ‘awe and wonder’ button. It is easier than hitting the Staples easy button for paper and printer ink.

Here are 5 ways that Christine Sines practices to experience awe and wonder in her life.

1. **Get out into nature.** Take a walk in your local park or forest, sit by a lake or river, and watch the sunset, listen to birdsong or a waterfall.
2. **Take notice of the small beautiful things around you.** Pick up a leaf and examine its delicate structure. Examine the petals of a flower, or the details of an ant.
3. **Seek out what gives you goosebumps.** Awe can be triggered by an unexpected smile, a mural on a wall, a roadside sign. Think about what gives you a sense of awe and look for those triggers around you.
4. **See the world differently.** Walk with a child and marvel at their perceptions and curiosity. Look through a camera or a phone. Close your eyes and rejoice in the beauty of touch and smell.
5. **Slow down and take notice.** Look at the clouds. Listen to your favourite piece of music. Read through your favourite poem several times. Gaze at a piece of artwork. Just sit and do nothing at all. And then reflect upon your experience. Perhaps you might write your experience down or share it with a friend.

Ninety-four-year-old Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh is a global spiritual leader, poet, and peace activist. He is renowned for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness as a way to know what we must do and what not to do to help ourselves and others no matter the circumstances. In his book, *Call Me by My True Names*, he writes about the gift of awe and wonder in his life with these words:

*I join my hands in thanks
for the many wonders of life;
for having twenty-four brand-new hours before me.*

When we open our eyes to notice this awe-inspiring wondrous world in which we live and the awe-inspiring and wonderful people we share it with, we will discover that the transformation of despair into hope, fear into courage, hatred into love, and indifference into

compassion is possible even when our world is turned upside down and inside out as it has been these past several months.

So much of what we have been experiencing has been awe-depriving and wonder-destroying. So I want to encourage you to get out and give yourself a good dose of awe and wonder this week.

Thanks be to God! Amen.