

# Flourishing in Transition: Flourishing is Your Choice

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## Welcome

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### Opening

- **Scripture:** 3 John 2. “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.”

I am honored to have you join me in this community where our goal is to explore how flourish despite transitions. These are unprecedented times. We have no idea of the outcome, but as people of faith, we know we can trust that God wants our good. When we trust God and believe that we are not alone, then we are more than conquerors.

There are four distinct sessions where we explore: 1) staying true to your purpose, 2) practicing self-care, 3) stillness or silence – keep praying, and 4) always begin again by keeping your vision fresh.

Each session offers actions for moments of reflection during the week. We are standing on sacred space. God has a word for you that will support your health and well-being. And help you flourish despite transitions.

I offer you my prayers for your safety and wellbeing. You may contact me by email: [hrdaviswellness@gmail.com](mailto:hrdaviswellness@gmail.com).

Blessings. Hilda

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### Week One: **Strength through Transitions: Holding Fast to Your Purpose**

#### - **Opening**

- Complete this sentence: *"I am anointed to . . . "*

- **Scripture:** Luke 4:18. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,

#### - **Reflection:**

- Flourishing in Transition (FIT), is a four-session workshop. The goal of FIT is to offer support and resources as you identify ways to grow and live more fully in spite of the inevitable life changes. Transitions are challenging, however, your purpose will help you keep going and give you strength. Jesus used the strength of his purpose to keep him moving towards Jerusalem in obedience to God. Jesus' purpose was announced in the Temple at the beginning of his ministry in this verse from Luke. Because his purpose came from God ("the Spirit of the Lord is upon me") and he chose to do the will of God, he was strengthened despite things that came up that needed his attention. You can also keep going despite challenges, detours, and the transitions in life that require your attention. Don't let go of your purpose because it will sustain you even when employment ends, relationships breakup or change or illness threatens. Your purpose is what God put in your heart. It makes you a one-of-a-kind person who is created by God. When you connect to and live in your purpose you will have the strength it takes to keep going regardless of changes in your life.

- Today, we will walk with Jesus and explore ways he stayed close to his purpose and God's will for him. Despite challenges such as death threats, attacks by religious leaders, and betrayal he moved forward, inspired by God's purpose for his life : to bring God's people the good news of love and hope; salvation and eternal life.
- Our time together is an opportunity for you to explore what it takes to be healthy and well while we are in the "messy middle" of transitions. There are four ways to flourish while in transition:

- Claim your purpose and identity for strength to keep going
- Create a plan for self-care
- Commit to prayer and stillness – even when God is silent
- Celebrate the opportunity to begin again with a new vision

### **Action**

- If you have five minutes:
  - Read Luke 4:18 daily everyday during the coming week to remind yourself of your purpose
- If you have more time:
  - Read Matthew 4:1-11. In this passage Jesus is tempted by Satan as he starts his ministry, but continues to withstand Satan's attacks by knowing his identity and purpose.
  - Answer this question: How does knowing your purpose keep you strong. If you're not sure of your purpose, think about what keeps you going during transitions in your life.

## FLOURISHING IN TRANSITION

### Key Scripture Verses

#### Week One – Purpose

Luke 4:18. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

#### Week Two – Self-Care

Mark 6:31. “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

#### Week Three – Stillness or Silence – Keep Praying

Mark 1:35. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Psalms 22:1,2. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.”

#### Week Four – Always We Begin Again (Vision Board)

Isaiah 43:19. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

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### Week Two: Practicing Self-Care to Serve Faithfully

#### - Opening

- Take time to list self-care areas that are going well and areas where you want to improve your self-care. Use the *Self-Care Plan* template at the end of this Lesson to address body-mind-spirit health. You may be doing well with exercise; yet want to improve the servings of fruit and vegetables you eat daily. Share in your group or write your self-care plan in your journal.

- **Scripture:** Mark 6:31. "Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"

#### - Reflection:

- Jesus was busy. Just to name a few of his activities: He taught his disciples and listened to people who stopped by for his advice, he cured diseases and healed the hearts of those cast aside, cast out demons, and then after preaching to thousands he made sure they had enough to eat; he also took care of family concerns and raised a good friend from the dead. His disciples were also busy: They busily tried to keep little children from bothering Jesus, they also healed and cast out demons in Jesus' name; not to mention they continued their day jobs to feed their families. It is a lot of work to follow Jesus. "Jesus answered them, "My Father is always working, and I too must work." John 5:17. But, Jesus also believed in rest and self-care. In this passage, Jesus tells (not asks) his disciples to get away from everything so they can rest and eat.
- Serving God is our response to God's everlasting love. But, service to God does not mean we don't care for ourselves. Even Jesus faced many challenges that might have caused him to lose focus. This Mark 6:31 passage takes place in the same Chapter where the death of his mentor, John the Baptist, and the feeding of thousands of people occur. These major life events may have happened in the same day. Have you ever had a series of ups and downs within a short period of time. It is exhausting and Jesus (the human part) had to be exhausted. What Jesus shows us is that we cannot continue to serve well if we don't care for ourselves well. Make your self-care a priority. Take time for reflection **and** renewal for spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Add your physical health to your "to-do" list. If you are not

well, you cannot serve well. Jesus knew this for sure and calls you into his presence for rest and renewal.

### Action

- If you have five minutes:
  - Read Mark 6:31 regularly to remind yourself to take time to rest and pay attention to what keeps you well.
- If you have more time:
  - Read Psalm 121 and notice the many ways God is holding you: “I lift up my eyes to the hills from where will my help come? 1) My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. 2) He will not let your foot be moved; 3) he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 4) The Lord is your keeper; 5) the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, 6) nor the moon by night. 7) The Lord will keep you from all evil; 8) he will keep your life. 9) The Lord will keep your going out and 10) your coming in from this time on and forevermore.
    - This passage is a powerful reminder of how much God loves you, offers you help, and wants you to feel safe and secure. Answer this question: The Psalmist lists 10 ways God cares for you. How many ways do you care for your body, mind, and spirit? Can you list ten in your journal?
  - Read 3 John 2. “Beloved friend, I pray that you are prospering in every way and that you continually enjoy good health, just as your soul is prospering”
    - Answer this question: What can you do daily or weekly to enrich your physical and emotional health in the same way you are building your spiritual health?

**YOUR SELF-CARE PLAN**

Turn to a blank page in your journal. Write at the top of the page in big letters: “SELF-CARE PLAN.” Now divide the page into three sections: Mind–Body–Spirit and under each heading write one (1) Goal that you want to work on. Under that item, write how you intend to accomplish your goal. Next, write who you will get to help you with that goal. Finally, write when you expect to start. Your page should look something like the following Chart. You can make it as detailed or as simple as you like.

MIND	BODY	SPIRIT
<p><b>What:</b> Repeat Daily Affirmations</p> <p><b>How:</b> Use affirmations from SACRED Women</p> <p><b>Who:</b> Friend will repeat with me by telephone</p> <p><b>When:</b> Begin Today</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Eat fresh produce</p> <p><b>How:</b> Buy pre-washed vegetables/ salads</p> <p><b>When:</b> Eat at least one serving daily</p> <p>*****</p> <p><b>What:</b> Easy Exercise –</p> <p><b>How:</b> Park at far end of parking lot</p> <p><b>Who:</b> Ask co-worker to hold me accountable</p> <p><b>When:</b> Three times a week; begin Monday</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Read one Chapter from Book of Psalms daily</p> <p><b>How:</b> Add reminder to calendar or on phone</p> <p><b>Who:</b> Ask prayer partner or friend to join in reading Psalms</p> <p><b>When:</b> Read in the morning before it gets busy</p>

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### Week Three: **Stillness or Silence – Keep Praying**

#### Opening

- Sit in silence for five minutes. Allow yourself to listen to the small whisper that is the voice of God.

**Scripture:** Mark 1:35. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

#### Reflection

- Listening is as important during times of prayer as speaking. Beginning a practice of prayer and stillness will help you quiet your mind and heart simply by its simplicity. You can build a ritual around prayer as Jesus did – getting up early and finding a place where he could be alone and to allow the silence to bring peace to his spirit. How can we forget that powerful scene in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus in great despair prays three times that he not have to be crucified – “let this cup be removed”; but ultimately, because he kept praying, his prayers gave him peace and strength, and he surrendered to the will of God. (Matthew 26:36-42)

When you pray and release the outcome to God you can stop striving, you can release fear and doubt, then you, like Jesus, will gain strength for whatever you face. Sometimes the strength to keep going won't come from outside yourself. Sometimes the calvary is just not coming or people will go to sleep on you (like the disciples did with Jesus – Matthew 26:45). But, by praying without ceasing, you release others from your own expectations, you let go of trying to make it all happen, of fixing everything and everybody, and feeling like a failure when it doesn't happen just the way you would like. By continuing to pray, you gain the personal strength to surrender. Yes, it takes strength to say, “Okay, God, not my will, but your will be done.” You just don't have the strength to fix everything. But, by surrendering to God, releasing your anxious actions, and listening; you and I can have peace.

It is in the sacred space of praying and listening for God's will that you will hear that 1) God is present and will never leave you (Deuteronomy 31:6), 2) God wants you to have the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4); though ultimately, you listen for God's will (1 Samuel 3:9). Your desires may change when you pray and listen (Luke 22:42), 3) God will give you unbelievable peace to help you get through change and



challenges (John 14:27), and 4) God loves you more than his own life. (John 3:16). Please take a moment and read these verses and discuss or write in your journal how God is speaking to you.

But sometimes, as much as we pray, God seems to be silent.

Let's also explore what it feels like when God seems to be silent.

"Many of these books focus on the intoxicating joys of the inward journey, but not enough has been written about the long dry seasons. What about those of us who . . . who after a period of dramatic awakening now feel as if we have hit a brick wall and our prayers have been met with silence?" Weems, Preface

- What are your thoughts on this quote from *Listening for God*?

**Scripture:** Psalm 22:1,2. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

## Reflection

- In the United Methodist Church there is a period in the liturgical calendar called, "Ordinary Time" it is after the season of Epiphany and lasts until the season of Pentecost. It is about 28 weeks – half the year. Ordinary Time means that there are no celebrations (like Christmas) or transformative events (Pentecost) during this time. It is the time that Jesus spent teaching, spending time with his disciples, and performing miracles – just ordinary! That means much of our worship, much of our church life is spent in ordinary times. In fact, most of our daily lives are pretty much ordinary. So, why do we believe we are not "Blessed and Highly Favored" when we are not quite up for doing a praise dance Sunday after Sunday? Also, even more distressing, (at least in my experience) is those times when not only do I not feel blessed and highly favored, but I don't even feel that God hears me.

Rev. Dr. Renita Weems' reflects in her book, *Listening for God. A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt*, "To admit that in the spiritual journey, highs are brief, sporadic, and rare and that the human heart experiences far longer periods of dullness, emptiness, and silence can be threatening" (p26).

As a minister, a Old Testament scholar, and a writer, she reveals that she preaches sometimes without a word from God. Although she continues in her calling: She prays with people, performs Holy Communion, and teaches in Divinity school interpreting the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament); she has discovered seasons when it

is hard to connect with the God who called her to serve. She admits it took many years to confess this because the church does not welcome anything less than total adoration and praise for God. In the silence she feels, she finds her private devotions fall short of sincerity and honesty. However, she found her way through the periods of silence and doubt when she finally cried her true feelings to God. It was then that she understood that for herself, God does not require constant praise and adoration, but a sincere desire to continue the relationship – even when there is silence.

### **Action**

- If you have five minutes:
  - Read Psalm 22:1,2 and verse 24b (“he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him”) as a reminder that even when we feel alone God hears us and is present.
- If you have more time:
  - Reflect on Renita Weems’ words:
    - “Even ministers on the journey lose their way. Even specialist in prayer at some point lose interest in prayer. We struggle. We have doubts. We grow afraid. We become bored. We are tempted to walk away. Sometimes we do. But some of us return, and walk away, and return again and again. Why? Because the point of a journey is the going, the movement, the traveling, not just the arriving.” *Listening for God*, Renita Weems,(p32).
  - Answer this question: Have you ever struggled with your faith? What did you do? How do you feel knowing that ministers and prayer warriors also struggle?
  - Read Romans 12:2 “Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God’s will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.” The Passion Translation
    - As you look at the world today, how does this scripture influence your thinking and behavior? Does it provide comfort? If not, what scripture gives you comfort? Write the scripture, speak the scripture, tell others. There are those who don’t hear God right now. Your words may help.

## Action

- If you have five minutes:
  - Read Mark1:35 daily during this week to remind yourself to make time during your day for silence and prayer.
- If you have more time:
  - Read “He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 46:19
    - Answer this question: How can you build in more time for silence and stillness in your day? Take five minutes daily to allow yourself to pause, listen for God, and appreciate the peace.
  - Read Isaiah 26:3. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” KJV Isaiah 26:3
    - Answer this question: How do you bring peace into your day, your week, your relationships? What actions can you take to bring more peace into your life?
  - Sit in five minutes of silence. What kinds of activities do you do when you experience what Thomas More calls *dark nights of the soul*. How Thomas Moore describes this experience is, “Society tends to view these “dark nights” in clinical terms as obstacles to be overcome as quickly as possible. But Moore shows how honoring these periods of fragility as periods of incubation and positive opportunities to delve the soul’s deepest needs can provide healing and a new understanding of life’s meaning. *Dark Nights of the Soul* presents these metaphoric dark nights not as the enemy, but as times of transition, occasions to restore yourself, and transforming rites of passage, revealing an uplifting and inspiring new outlook.
  - Moore suggests describing the “silence” the “dark night of the soul” in metaphors – like the Psalms. Use Psalms 23 to write your own psalm that describes what it feels like to live in that space of “silence.”

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### Week Four: **Always We Begin Again (Vision Board)**

#### Opening

- Take a few moments to think about this verse from Lamentations 3:22, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning”. Share your reflections on the grace of God’s mercy that begins again “new” every morning.
- **Scripture:** Isaiah 43:19. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

#### Reflection

- This phrase, “always we begin again” is one of the Rules of St. Benedict. (The Rules were written by Benedict in 516 AD for monks living in community. Their mottos were “peace” and “pray and work”.) It was mentioned in a devotional I read during Lent. The devotional, *Always We Begin Again* written by Leanna Tankersley, connected with me in a meaningful way. This quote from her book, “Beginning again is permission to be unaccomplished, to be a beginner, to be brand new. More than permission, [it’s] a sense that we are right where we should be and that the beginning space is actually a holy space, not just a layover on our way to something better” is particularly touching because it seems my life has been a series of endings – and beginning again. I have moved, changed jobs, lost and found relationships – always I begin again. It is restoring and healing to be reminded that not only is beginning again “right”, but it is also “holy space”.

Jesus holds out before us the grace and mercy to begin again every day. He shows us by his love and compassion for Peter, who denies Jesus three times, yet is still bestowed with the honor of beginning again by being named the “Rock” on whom Christ’s church is built. We see Jesus’ commitment to beginnings when we are witness to Lazarus being raised from the dead to begin again. Finally, we are the recipients of his huge love for us that was shown in his crucifixion and death. However, we know that the story doesn’t end there. Jesus’ journey doesn’t end at the tomb. We can rejoice because we know that the story begins again with the Resurrection. Just as our stories don’t end with endings, with disappointments, with Covid-19. Despite whatever it is that we have lost during this time or in earlier times; there is always the good news that God invites us to start over – to try

again. It is by starting over that we are able to receive the new thing that God promises to do in our lives every day. Great is God's faithfulness that supports our beginning again.

## Action

- If you have five minutes:
  - Read Isaiah 43:19 daily during this week to be a reminder of the "new thing" that God has for you each day. You read the news everyday, which can steal your joy if you let it. Take time to focus on what God is doing to "make a way in the wilderness" for you every day.
- If you have more time:
  - Read John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."
    - Answer this question: Illness, unemployment, broken relationships are just a few challenges that can feel like a thief destroying your peace and joy. How can you embrace the abundant life that Jesus gives you each day? What practices can you put into place that will give you more joy to experience the abundant life?
  - Read Isaiah 26:3. " I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for." Good News Translation
    - Answer this question: How does believing that God plans for you to have the future you hope want – to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32) – make a difference in how you live each day? Will your thoughts change? Your actions? What can you do to align your life with God's plan for you to flourish and prosper?
    - Create a vision board. "Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay." Habakkuk 2:2-3

## Create A Vision Board

### Your Vision Board

- Create a Vision Board that illustrates how you would like your *wellness* practices to influence how you live.
- Your Vision Board will align with your *wellness* plan.
- Your Vision Board is a visual reminder of God's plan for your life: to prosper you and to give you a future and hope.

Rev. Hilda R Davis, PhD, LPC

### Steps to Vision Board

- Create a list of goals or write your purpose and ways you will live in your purpose.
- Cut images from magazines, picture books, old calendars or cards that bring you joy and speak to your vision for your goals, dreams, and purpose
- Make a collage from the pictures. Arrange them in creative, ways. Place them all over your board. (You could also first cover your board with colorful paper and place your pictures on top of the paper).
- Add Scripture, affirmations, and motivational words that make you feel inspired. Words that bring you joy and inspire you to dream.
- Place your Vision Board where you can see it daily. Pray about, reflect on and be inspired by the vision God has given to you. Enjoy