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March 22, 2023.

Editor's note: We were looking for some spring inspiration for this week's Letter of Hope and found this very fitting letter online. Peggy Spencer is an active member of her parish church, St. John the Baptist, in Fern Tree Gully near Melbourne, Australia. Though not a "professional" writer, Peggy has always loved writing. Please consider sharing your hopes for spring in a Letter of Hope by submitting it to us at Hyatt.le.rc@gmail.com. R&L

SPRING – A SEASON FOR HOPE AND NEW BEGINNINGS

“Every Christian has a very personal responsibility to grow in their faith. Yet at times it seems to stand still. That is when God touches us like the earth in springtime, bringing new growth and warmth.” (Ed Price)

Spring is the natural time of rebirth, renewal and hope – physically and spiritually. It is a time to let go and deal with any regrets. It is also seen more generally as the start of better times. At this time of year, we begin to feel less sluggish, and become more open to inviting changes – both big and small – into our lives.

The symbolism of springtime is one most people can appreciate. In all cultural traditions, the world over, it is a time of rebirth and new beginnings. Whether it is the antics of the numerous fertility gods of rural communities or the Green Man in pagan cultures, springtime itself has never been a season to go unmarked.

Surely spring must be the most anticipated and exciting and blessed season of the year. The cold weather, the bleakness of the bare trees and gardens, are passing away to be replaced with new life and beauty. The summer's burning rays and scorching days have yet to arrive.

Spring is an 'experience in immortality', observed Henry David Thoreau. He believed you could measure the state of your health by your response to spring. He said that if the prospect of an early morning walk in the sunshine and warbling of a bluebird did not thrill you, you should check your pulse.

It is also believed that a spiritual spring time is a time of rapid and exciting growth. That it is a time when there is a freshness in our souls that is invigorating. Our spiritual senses are alive; there is a spiritual fragrance that awakens us to the glory of God, the wonder of his love and grace, and his willingness to love and forgive.

Unfortunately, it is not like that for everyone. Many people, young and old, hope their winter blues will lift the moment there's a hint of spring in the air. When this doesn't happen, there is a sense of anti-climax, and frequently a spiral downwards. The transition from one season to the next, particularly from winter to spring, often proves difficult spiritually and emotionally.

However, these spiritual seasons, so similar to those of nature's seasons are both necessary for our health and growth if we are to get on with life.

Anne Bradstreet sums up this philosophy beautifully when she says, 'If we had not winter, the spring would not be so pleasant. If we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be welcome. Winter is the perennial backdrop for the glorious arrival of spring. It is the time of rebirth, not only for human creation but for all animals of land, sea and sky.'

Our lives reflect a similar pattern of ups and downs, gains and losses, new life or the death of a loved one, confusion and fear. We may not be aware of the exact times, but we are familiar with the general pattern. It is the extremes of each season that can disrupt or catch us completely off-guard.

We have to go through these cycles in order to blossom when spring comes. Maybe, though, if we are patient enough and pray enough, our lives will come full circle just as the seasons do. Worrying less and trusting more makes it easier to enjoy each moment of the life that has been so lovingly given to us by our God.

Despite the world still suffering from wars, economic crises, poverty, illness, homelessness, personal tragedies, terrorism, and now the current aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic – the list is endless – hope will spring eternal and every spring is a timely reminder of that. After a long and mostly bitter winter, the welcome arrival of spring unlocks this hope.

The leaves are faithfully sprouting, flowers are popping up everywhere, daylight time is lengthening, and the birds are singing as they prepare their nests for the arrival of their offspring.

Surely, there is truth in what writer Bern Williams believes: 'The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day he created spring!'

Peggy Spencer

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

