



Reverend Elaine's "Reflections" – October 2011

I love October and fall, the colours of red, orange and brown on the leaves, the sunshine rich and soft, the breeze with a hint of frost. Farmers are working hard to bring the harvest home to barn. The fields of soy have changed from verdant green through yellow to brown, dead looking and dry. It is when the soy plant appears to be dead that the harvest is collected. October is a season of fullness and mellowness. When the ripening has been completed, it is time to harvest that which has been planted.

Joyce Rupp's meditation for October resonated with me in so many ways that I must be careful not write a book. Her images of fullness and letting go, death and dying, rebirth and life are all the images that I live with each day in my ministry. I have also sat beside many people as they have made their journey from this life to the next and like the hospice nurse; I too see this time as a birthing. I used to work as a nurse and studied midwifery a long time ago. The image of being birthed into life eternal is one that I find very helpful at times of death and dying. The idea of being a midwife is comforting and again an image I use frequently since as I see family members and myself who sit with a dying one as midwives. I also believe that there will be midwives on the other side of the birth canal to "catch" this new life being born through the waters of death. For me, this is the completion of a circle. We are born into this life from the God who formed our inward parts, knit us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13), and in time when the cycle of life is complete we will be reborn through the waters of death into life eternal with our creating God. This understanding gives a sense of fullness and completion, even a harvesting. October has a feeling of fullness and completeness and it is a time that many of us enjoy, I remember as a child running through the leaves on the ground, kicking them in the air as I walked through them and played. I loved the sound they made as I waded through them.

I watch them fall from the trees in my yard, and I know that soon those trees, which are clothed in autumn splendour, will soon appear dead and bereft of life. Yet they have completed their life cycle for the season, they have produced their fruit of acorns or seeds and the leaves must let go to allow the trees to rest. When all the leaves have fallen the branches appear to be dead yet they hold the promise of new life in them. They must sit through the dark days of winter before the sun's warmth will cause the sap to rise in them and the cycle of living and dying and being reborn will begin once again. Our life is a circular journey, we begin with God and we will end with God. We will produce fruit and the leaves we let go will protect that growth from the harsh winter until the time is right for it to begin its own growth cycle.

I see in our lives a continual cycle of living; dying and resurrection; Good Friday; Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday; Egypt, the wilderness and the Promised Land. I must admit that I think most of our life is lived in the grey wilderness of Holy Saturday which is the time of waiting through the winter of hope, waiting for the sun to reappear and draw us into new life and fullness. We are continually moving through the season of spring summer autumn and winter. Our lives reflect the seasons as we age, the

springtime of youth, the maturity of our summer years and the harvest of our fall, finally the winter of our death, before being reborn into new life with God.

Indeed, autumn is a time to review our lives, to observe the fullness and completion of it, to let go of those things that have reached maturity to make space for new things in life, individually and in community. We are reminded in Ecclesiastes that for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up what was planted.

Rupp encourages us to embrace and consider the reality of life's changes, ponder what leaves of our life must let go, to enjoy the colours those leaves have produced, the protection they have given and to let them go, to walk through the leaves of our own life, enjoying the sound they make while pondering what lies hidden beneath waiting to be brought forth into newness and new life. She encourages us to allow openness for new growth, all the while preparing for that final harvest when one day we will be gathered into God's barn, welcomed home after a life completed in love, with the words "well done my good and faithful servant".