

Column

There is a season for everything, so the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us, including “A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted (3:2). We are in the growing season now, and with an abundance of rain – almost too much -- everything is green and verdant.

Every year or so I add a bag of sand to my raised garden where I grow tomatoes and peppers. This ensures that water percolates. In years where there is a super abundance of rain, this practice seems to help the plants stay healthy and produce. I also add some form of calcium to the soil. This mineral helps the leaves on the bottom of tomato plants stay green and not to turn yellow and wither. An old-timer I know recommends sprinkling powdered milk around each plant.

Yes, each season has its purpose and is a part of God’s gracious plan and work. The hymnwriter Cecil Frances Alexander gives us words which are true and need to be sung with gusto: “The cold wind

in the winter, the pleasant summer sun, the ripe fruits in the garden: He made them every one.”

As there are seasons in the natural world, so are there seasons in the church, at least in those bodies that follow the traditional church calendar. In the first half of the year, which begins with Advent four weeks before Christmas, a tapestry emblazoned with major events in salvation history is held up. Christ’s birth, death, resurrection and ascension are revisited and re-affirmed. These high points are followed 50 days after Easter with a festival marking the coming of the Holy Spirit with new power into the life of Jesus’ people. Finally, a week later and as a grand finale, the splendor of the Almighty’s self-revelation of Himself as Father, Son and Holy Ghost is celebrated on Trinity Sunday.

These high and heady moments in salvation history are followed by a calmer season, one corresponding to what we find in the natural order, a season of growth and fruitfulness. In the Anglican tradition it is called Trinity-tide or “Sundays after Trinity”. In other traditions these Sundays are reckoned after Pentecost or the period is called

“ordinary time.” Regardless, this 20-plus-week season is aimed at growth: growth in grace, growth in knowledge, growth in understanding, growth in holiness, and growth in service. For this reason, in many churches altar and pulpit hangings are dark green in this season.

The church year is an effective way of teaching the faith, yet the aforementioned growth does not just happen. As fertilizer and cultivation fosters fruitfulness in garden plants, so do such things as regular attendance at services of public worship, focus on the appointed scripture readings at these services (asking not only what they mean but how they might translate into life) and taking on Gospel projects.

“Go green” might be a good slogan for Trinity-tide. Popularly this little catch phrase means attempting to be wise stewards of creation, for example, looking for ways to cut down on carbon emissions. There is nothing wrong with that, but it might also serve as a reminder to followers of Jesus to focus on those things that promote growth in the Christian life. Why not aim at both?

*O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us;
and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an
hearty desire to pray, may, by thy mighty aid, be
defended and comforted in all dangers and
adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
(Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity, Book of
Common Prayer)

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