GREATER MILWAUKEE SYNOD

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME & CALL



RITE OF BAPTISM

-PADRAIG O'TUAMA



If you pass, know that you will have no say about what happens.

Some of our people will hate you as they hate themselves.
You must create a life
without giving them all your life's attention.

Some people will delight in destroying you.
Some will strike you. Some will choose
others as their favorites.

Some have been waiting for you for generations;
circling, like hunters, round your little heart.
Of course they don't know you.

This truth will set you free,
eventually. But only after you've forgotten this.

You haven't learnt to fly yet, have you?

Somebody will love you.
Somebody will hurt you, too, but you know that already.

We offer you little in the way of certainty;
just that the country you live in will not always be that country.

There is a lot you'll need to suffer.
Remember: help is a howl and an imperative.
Nothing to be ashamed of.

One way or another, shame
can teach you what nothing else can teach you.

One way or another.

Your body is an event
and you'll spend decades unpacking what's happened.

Here are some things we cannot guarantee you:
guarantees, or history's purity.

Here is what we can:
A platform on which your past can make or break
depending on how power is conceived.

There is no such thing as the past.
Just stories of the past poorly re-enacted.

And nobody knows where the past begins—
in the beginning it was all a dream, not a story.

Remember: you must believe
some of this.



SAINT JUNIPER-MAY 14

Juniper was a companion of St. Francis of Assisi, but may have been even more extreme than him when it came to eccentricities. Juniper was known as a "fool for Christ," and, like your aunt with an unending purse in church, was known for continually giving away all of his possessions and living in such a publicly exuberant way that he was constantly in trouble with authorities.

Eventually his monastic superiors ordered him to no longer give away his outer robe to beggars, which he had a habit of doing. Moments after the directive, he encountered a beggar and is supposed to have said, "I have been told not to give you my clothing, but if you decide to take it off of my back, I will not put up a fight."

Juniper is a winsome saint who reminds the church, and all of us, that everything we have is always on loan, and in living that way we learn to better enjoy not only what we have, but also the moment we give it away.

SAINT TONI MORRISON
-AUGUST 5

Today I would lobby hard that the church remember a voice who spoke for so many in America: Toni Morrison, Author and Activist.

Born Chloe Ardelia Wofford in Lorain, Ohio in 1931, She learned the horrors of racism at an early age when, as her parents couldn't afford the rent, the landlord of their home lit it on fire while they were still inside. This trauma, along with the generational trauma in her family, would help inform her life's work.

At the age of 12 Chloe was baptize in the Catholic church and took the saint name Anthony as her baptismal name. This got shortened to Toni, and that's how we know her today. She was inspired by Austen and Tolstoy in her writing, but also by the legends and ghost stories of her family lore. An imaginative young Toni started to tell tales and weave wonderful stories together early on.

Toni attended Howard University, and then went on to teach English in Texas as a newly married woman and mom. The marriage did not last, but in 1965 Morrison's career took a big jump as she became the first black senior editor at Random House in New York City. From there she used her position to elevate black authors. At the age of 39 Morrison joined the ranks of those she edited, publishing her first book _The Bluest Eye_. The year was 1970, and this first book would go on to become required reading for so many of us.

Morrison would go on to publish many more books and plays, and in 1987 published her most celebrated work, _Beloved_, a story about an enslaved Black woman, Margaret Garner.

To call it a masterpiece is to undersell it.

Toni would turn _Beloved_ into a trilogy, finishing the series ten years after the first publication. The first book in the series would go on to become a movie, and Morrison's place amongst great American authors would be secured, and from 1989 until her retirement in 2006 Morrison held a chair at Princeton University in Humanities. In 2017 Princeton dedicated Morrison Hall in her honor.

As a political activist, Morrison was not known for staying quiet in the face of racism and abuse. At the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown, Toni spoke loudly and clearly for justice and told of a system that still targeted black and brown bodies.

Toni Morrison died on this day in 2019 at the age of 88 from complications of Pneumonia. She lives on, though, in the stories, plays, and inspired minds she leaves behind.

Toni Morrison is a reminder for me, and should be for everyone, that telling truthful stories, even if they're fiction, can shape a nation.

It has before

-historical bits from public sources

-image painted by Nannette Harris





SAINT TERESA OF AVILA
-OCTOBER 15

St. Teresa was born in 1515 into an old Spanish family of note, and had nine brothers and sisters all told. Her mother died when she was fifteen, and Teresa was sent off to school at a convent where she read the letters of St. Jerome (whose saint day was not too long ago!). Inspired by his writing, St. Teresa decided to take vows and become a nun.

Her father, though, had other ideas, and forbade her from pursuing a life in the church. So, Teresa did what every teen does: she ran away from home and joined the Carmelites in Avila.

Soon after joining the convent, however, young Teresa fell deathly ill and lapsed into a deep coma which, after she recovered from it, left her paralyzed from the waist down for three years.

It was then that she began to receive her visions, though she was quite lax with her spiritual practices. It didn't seem to matter, though, because she began to physically feel the presence of the Divine quite acutely, eventually prompting her to recommit to her vows and take the name, "Teresa of Jesus."

In 1560 she decided she needed to reform the monastery, as she felt it had become too austere. Facing great opposition she found a way to have a new monastery built, and dedicated it to St. Joseph.

In a page that could have been ripped from today's headlines, lawsuits ensued. Her nuns were shamed and called names, and their numbers remained quite small. St. Teresa, in her wisdom, actually limited the number of nuns she would take to 21 in sum total, believing a smaller cohort had more chance to create community.

Eventually the Pope blessed the order, now called the Discalced Carmelites (because they wore sandals and not shoes), and St. Teresa set about starting other reformed monastic communities, calling them from pretention and austerity to a more humble way of being. Throughout Spain St. Teresa established seventeen other communities. They were always small, intentionally poor, and extremely disciplined.

St. Teresa of Avila eventually fell ill and died in 1582, having struggled her whole life to call the church to greater humility.

St. Teresa is a reminder for me, and should be for the whole church, that sometimes small pockets of apocalyptic (that is, reforming) people can change the world and be remembered in the annals of history. No one recalls the large convents of her day, booming with money, golden candlesticks (or, as we might say today, screens and technology), but we all recall this slight visionary who struggled and led a handful of folks.

I mean, that story kind of sounds like Jesus, right? Let those with ears to hear, hear.

-historical notes from Pfatteicher's _New Book of Festivals & Commemorations_-icon written by Theophillia

SAINT FREDDY OF THE MERCURY SEPTEMBER 5



Today I would lobby hard that we remember St. Freddie of the Mercury, Reformer and Musician.

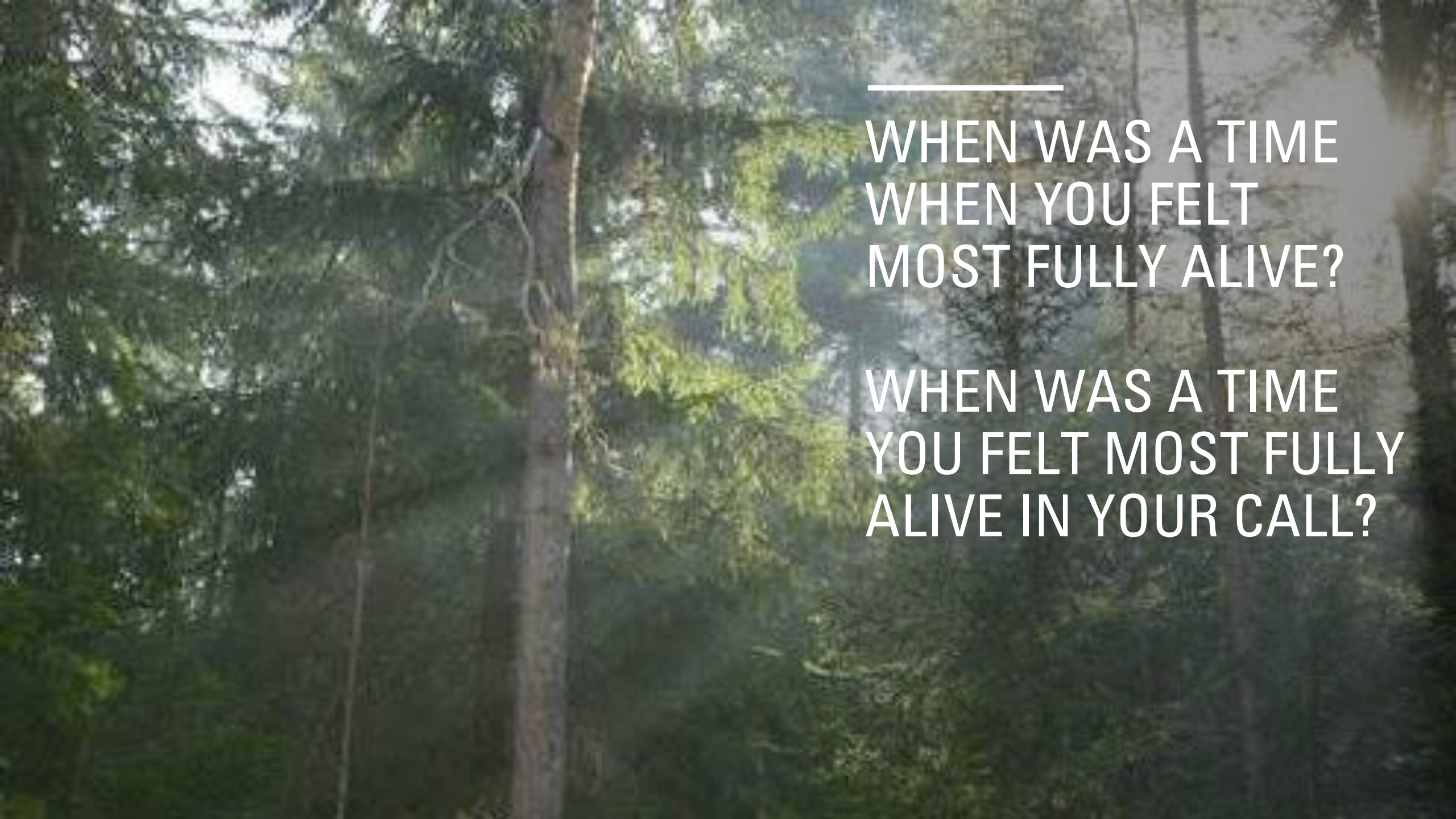
Freddie (birth name Furrohk), was born in Zanzibar (modern day Tanzania) to Parsi-Indian parents. During the Zanzibar Revolution, Furrohk's family fled and settled in Middlesex, England.

In 1970 he formed the rock band Queen and became the unlikeliest of frontmen. With an amazing four-octave range, which is almost unheard of, Freddie's stage persona was as lively as his personal life, despite his intense shyness when not on stage. He interacted with his audience. He craved the spotlight while performing, but had few people he considered true friends. And despite having a serious overbite, never sought dental intervention for fear it would ruin his voice.

Mercury wrote 10 of Queen's 17 greatest hits. His ambiguous and fluid sexuality caused many tabloids to stir with rumors. In a day when anything but heterosexuality was seen as deviant, he kept people guessing. He was diagnosed with AIDs in 1987, and confirmed he had the disease the day before his death in 1991. He was 45 years old. His birthday, September 5th, is still revered by rock enthusiasts and activists alike.

Mercury is a reminder to the world that the underdog in life should never be underestimated nor counted out. He challenged contemporary tropes relating to masculinity and what it means to be a rock star, and with a unique voice changed the way we think about both.

He was born to sing, and he did what he was born to do…may we all be so fortunate.


WHEN WAS A TIME
WHEN YOU FELT
MOST FULLY ALIVE?
WHEN WAS A TIME
YOU FELT MOST FULLY
ALIVE IN YOUR CALL?



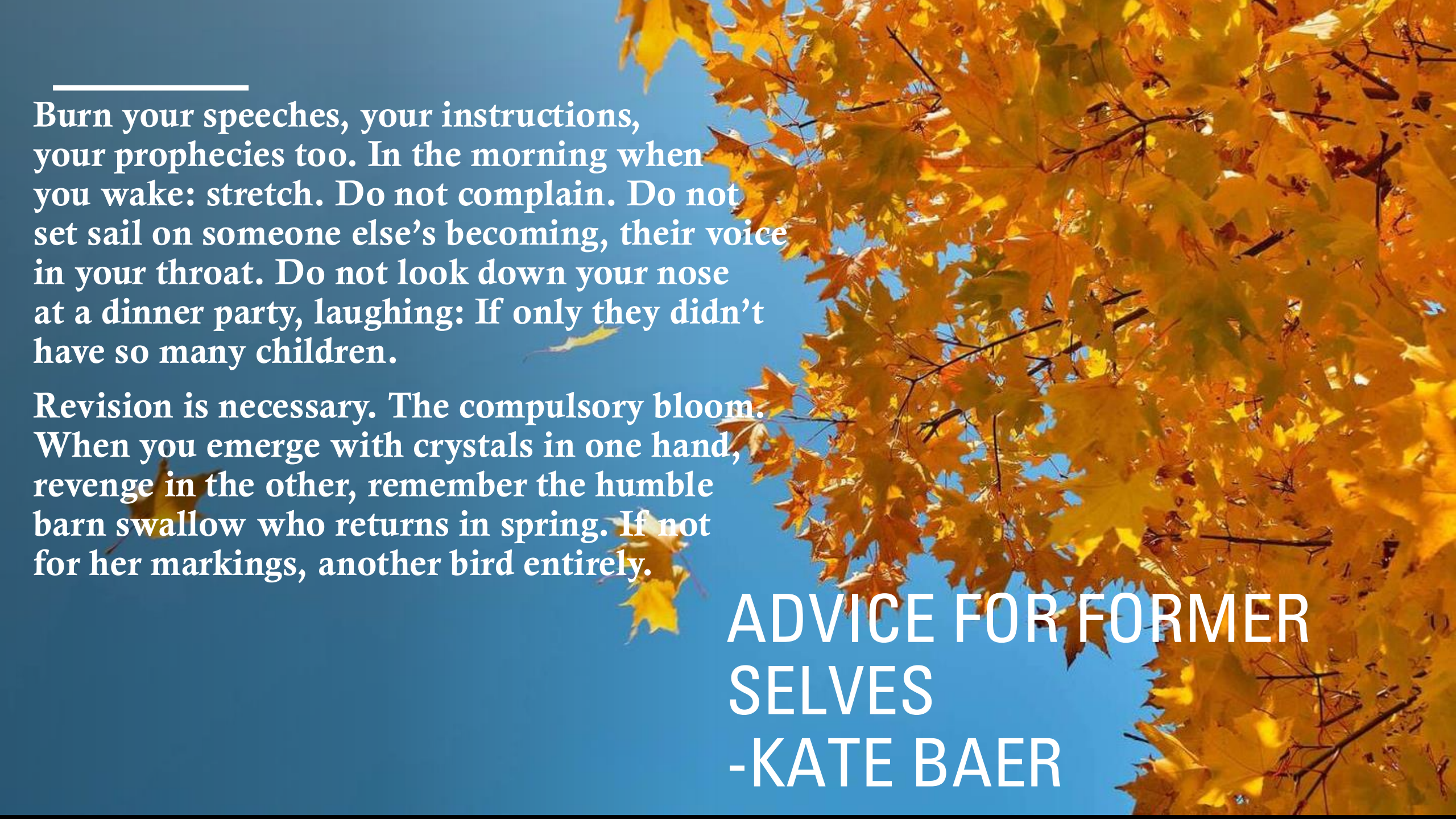
HOW DID YOUR CALL SOUND TO YOU?

i prayed for a map,
for a straight,
clear road,

for someone to tell me
which way to go.

what i received
was not a map,
but a small light
just enough for the next step.

—theblueprint



Burn your speeches, your instructions,
your prophecies too. In the morning when
you wake: stretch. Do not complain. Do not
set sail on someone else's becoming, their voice
in your throat. Do not look down your nose
at a dinner party, laughing: If only they didn't
have so many children.

Revision is necessary. The compulsory bloom.
When you emerge with crystals in one hand,
revenge in the other, remember the humble
barn swallow who returns in spring. If not
for her markings, another bird entirely.

ADVICE FOR FORMER SELVES

-KATE BAER



SCRIPTURE AND STEWARDSHIP

- The book of Jonah
- What calls did Jonah have on his life?
- What words would you use to describe Jonah's outlook?
- What words would you use to describe Jonah's ministry?
- What is Jonah's main downfall?

SCRIPTURE AND STEWARDSHIP

- The Disciple Peter
- What calls did Peter have on his life?
- What were the pivot points for Peter's ministry?
- What words would you use to describe Peter's ministry?
- What is Jonah's main downfall?




CALL TOWARD?
CALL AWAY?

MEANING MAKING AND STEWARDSHIP

- We've been through a "Life Quake" (Bruce Fieler)
- We're as normal as we'll ever be
- Meaning making is different
- _The Song of Significance_ shows significance has become paramount
- How do we connect significance with our life, both professional and communal?



PROBLEM OF STEWARDING TIME

- **It is not renewable:** of all of our resources, time is the most obscure, most abstract, and yet most counted…and once it is gone, it is gone
- **The world monetizes it:** we are being killed in the torture-chamber of "productive time"
- **Faith communities talk a big game:** we "believe in Kairos" but bow to Chronos
- **The pandemic has made us hyper aware of time:** regrets from omission outweigh regrets of commission
- **Being overwhelmed has become an excuse:** it is real, it happens, it is a reason, but it is not the end-game
- **Distractions abound…for us all…**

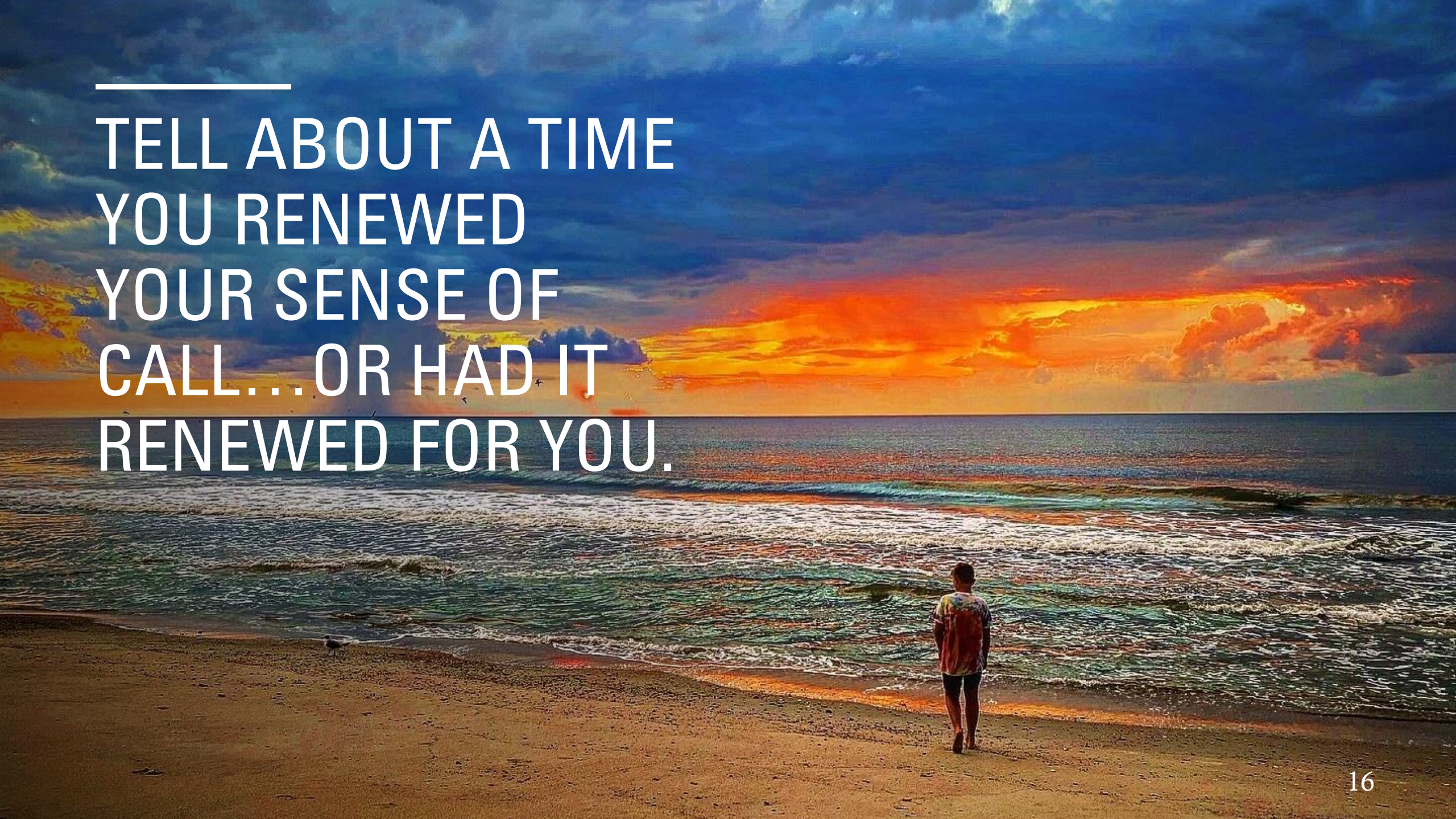
EARLY CAPITALISM

they are perfecting the pillow
with which
you are being suffocated

now it sings to you
and shows you pictures

Joe Wenderoth




TELL ABOUT A TIME YOU RENEWED YOUR SENSE OF CALL…OR HAD IT RENEWED FOR YOU.

SOME THOUGHT ON TIME



brightwanderer

I think a lot about how we as a culture have turned “forever” into the only acceptable definition of success.

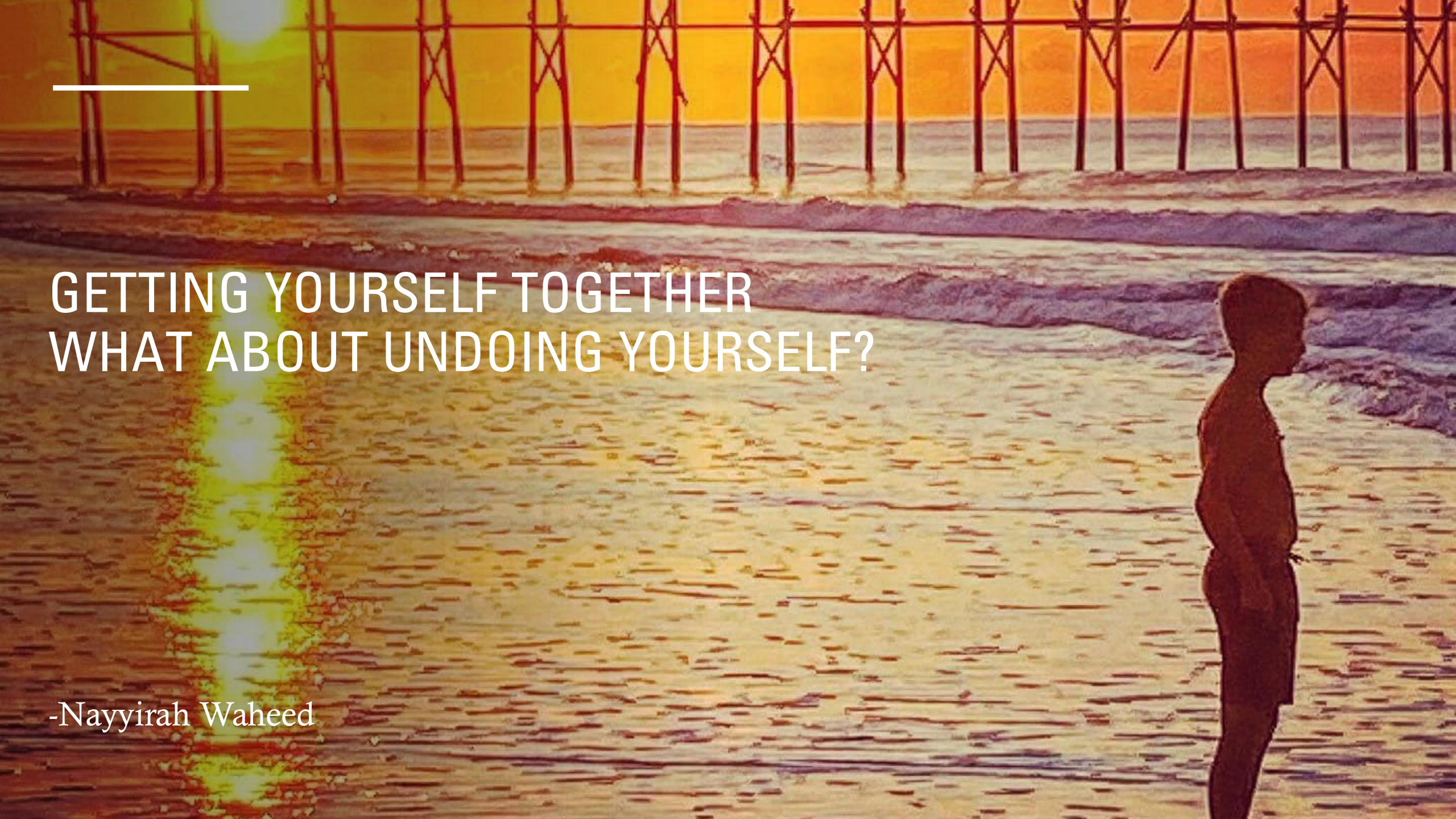
Like… if you open a coffee shop and run it for a while and it makes you happy but then stuff gets too expensive and stressful and you want to do something else so you close it, it’s a “failed” business. If you write a book or two, then decide that you don’t actually want to keep doing that, you’re a “failed” writer. If you marry someone, and that marriage is good for a while, and then stops working and you get divorced, it’s a “failed” marriage.

The only acceptable “win condition” is “you keep doing that thing forever”. A friendship that lasts for a few years but then its time is done and you move on is considered less valuable or not a “real” friendship. A hobby that you do for a while and then are done with is a “phase” - or, alternatively, a “pity” that you don’t do that thing any more. A fandom is “dying” because people have had a lot of fun with it but are now moving on to other things.

I just think that something can be good, and also end, and that thing was still good. And it’s okay to be sad that it ended, too. But the idea that anything that ends is automatically *less than* this hypothetical eternal state of success… I don’t think that’s doing us any good at all.

SOME THOUGHT ON TIME




GETTING YOURSELF TOGETHER
WHAT ABOUT UNDOING YOURSELF?
-Nayyirah Waheed

KNOWING YOUR VALUES AS WELL AS YOUR VALUE

What are three things you'd identify as a core value?

What are a few ways you see that lived out in you?

How do your core values direct your life and calling?

CASSIE HOLMES, PHD

*_HAPPIER HOUR: HOW TO BEAT DISTRACTION, EXPAND YOUR TIME, AND FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS MOST_*

American time-use survey:

-happiness goes down on both sides of the spectrum

-too little discretionary time is dissatisfying

-too much available time is also dissatisfying

We are driven to be productive. Having too much time or spending time in ways that are not worthwhile, dissatisfaction sets in…we just need to figure out how we want to spend our time

WHAT LIFE DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

As we stand here today to remember Nicole, I want to be clear that this funeral is going against her wishes. In her final days, she said, "I know you'll throw me a fancy schmancy funeral, but I hate being the center of attention. Just get me in the ground…oh, and make sure everyone is well fed…maybe little tins of homemade granola as party favors?"

That was Nicole. She enjoyed living a life under the radar where she found fulfillment in small moments of joy and by surrounding herself with people she loved. She was a hands-on, loving mother but always careful not to smother her children.

When her eldest son said, "I don't want to go to college," she simply shrugged and said, "Fine by me…I have a small sum of money I saved for your college fund. Come back to me with a plan for being happy and self-sufficient, and it's yours to spend however you like." And, as you know, both of her children are happy, self-sufficient, and thriving.

Nicole was a loving wife and sparked quite the frenzy with an essay in her book Ideas, Reconsidered *in which she pioneered the idea of the five-day-a-week marriage, explaining how everyone benefits from two days a week of separation. With their savings, she and her husband bought a small condo they alternated enjoying to themselves. It seems to have worked for them, happily married for 45 years!*

We will miss Nicole, but her legacy lives on in her children, Ideas, Reconsidered*, and the beautiful fruit and vegetable garden she tended so diligently. In her memory, I hope you try to change your mind about something you have always taken for granted as "the way things are done." Oh, and don't forget your tin of homemade granola.*

WHAT LIFE DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

My father didn't always give me the things I wanted…instead, he always gave me what I needed…and while that wasn't easy when specific "things" felt important to me—looking back now, it taught me some of the most valuable lessons in life. The "things" that are really worth having, aspiring toward, and wanting are not bought with money but instead love, hard work, and dedication.

My father was an incredibly dedicated husband, dad, and friend—who constantly praised all of his children on their work—not the result that came from their work.

Also, something that was a bit annoying at an early age—but something that got me through the toughest times in my life—I kept hearing my father's voice saying: "You're working so hard, you will overcome this—this challenge is here for a reason." And so, I worked and I overcame—and I constantly thought of my dad as I was doing both.

My father tucked me into bed every night he was in town—and every night he whispered "special words"—as we called them—into my ears. They were different for each of my siblings—so I can only speak to what they were to me. They were always about how special, caring, thoughtful, courageous, inquisitive, and perseverant a girl I was.

Though we won't be able to spend tomorrow together—I want to pass this same devotion and love and encouragement on to my kids. And so, not a night goes by that I don't whisper special words into their ears and tell them how special and caring and wonderful they are—how much we love them—how proud we are of them, and how proud they should be of themselves.

Daddy, I love you—and I want you to know how proud we all are of the father, husband, and friend that you were. You brought so much joy and happiness and dedication to each and every thing you did. You brought passion and understanding and commitment and a way of thinking that made everyone around you that much smarter…wiser…and kinder. I love you.

BRAVE SPACE

- **Are you in the space to talk about how you would love to be remembered?**



THE FACTS OF LIFE
BY PADRAIG O'TUAMA

That you were born
and you will die.

That you will sometimes love enough
and sometimes not.

That you will lie
if only to yourself.

That you will get tired.

That you will learn most from the situations
you did not choose.

That there will be some things that move you
more than you can say.

That you will live
that you must be loved.

That you will avoid questions most urgently
in need of
your attention.

That you began as the fusion of a sperm and
an egg
of two people who once were strangers
and may well still be.

That life isn't fair.

That life is sometimes good
and sometimes even better than good.

That life is often not so good.

That life is real
and if you can survive it, well,
survive it well
with love
and art
and meaning given
where meaning's scarce.

That you will learn to live with regret.
That you will learn to live with respect.

That the structures that constrict you
may not be permanently constricting.

That you will probably be okay.

That you must accept change
before you die
but you will die anyway.

So you might as well live
and you might as well love.
You might as well love.
You might as well love.





SCRIPTURE AND STEWARDSHIP

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
- Qoheleth's reflection is interesting when read through the lens of stewardship.
- Which couplet stands out to you?
- Which couplet causes you the most discomfort?
- What words come to mind when reading?

WHEN HAVE YOU FELT A NEW CALL UPON YOUR LIFE?

WHAT DID IT SOUND LIKE?



PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- **“Visits”**
- **Burnout**

- Many pastors die on the gurney of home visits
- Know and watch for the signs. It’s ok to be honest.

- **Third Space**

- Family. Work. Friends. These three can’t overlap too much, or else you never have a third space to be yourself.

- **Balcony Time**
- **Faith Practices**

- Calendar in deep work so that you can tackle tough tasks
- What are you delving into to sustain yourself?

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- **Sabbath and Significance**
  - Offering our time is generosity but also an act of defiance
- **Funeral Planning Party**
  - Provide an opportunity for your community to hold sister death with hope not fear
- **Preach on Stewardship in all ways**
  - Use the word. Every text has stewardship in there somewhere.
- **Use your core values, personally and communally**
  - Knowing who you are gives you the ability to say no
- **Attention**
  - What you pay attention to grows

Instructions for a Good Day

wake up.
that's the first victory.

make coffee strong enough
to insult your problems.

open the curtains,
even if the world
has done nothing
to deserve your attention.

eat something.
answer one message.
ignore three others.

take a walk
without trying to become
a better person.

buy yourself something small
and unnecessary.

laugh when you can.
swear when you must.

and when the day
tries to become a tragedy,

refuse.

- Justin Hatchett

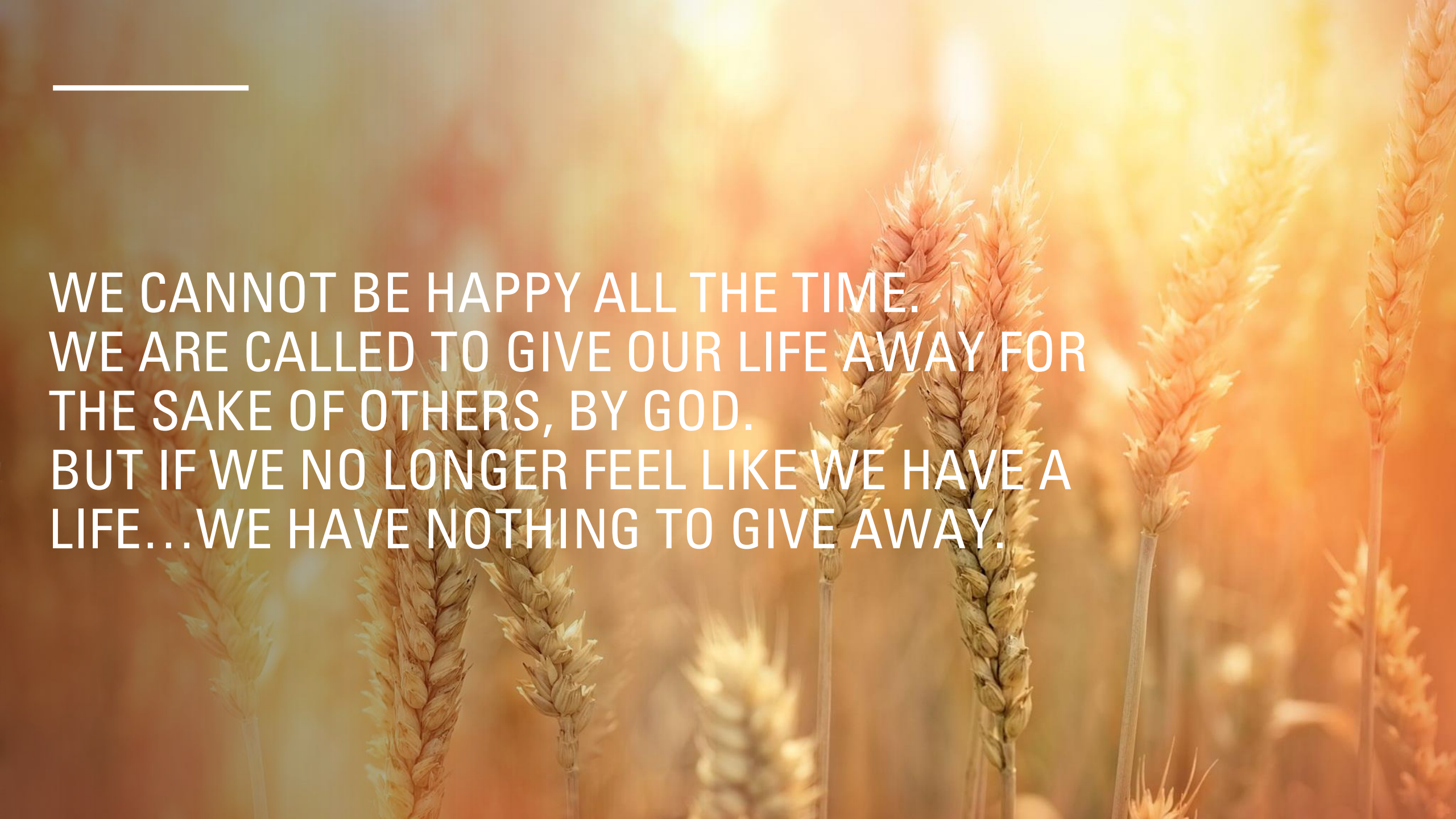




God has called us to do great things in big and small ways. A life of stewardship always starts with that truth: our work is not our own, and we're not called to do it alone.

What will you do with your one wild and precious life?

-Saint Mary of the Olivers


WE CANNOT BE HAPPY ALL THE TIME.
WE ARE CALLED TO GIVE OUR LIFE AWAY FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS, BY GOD.
BUT IF WE NO LONGER FEEL LIKE WE HAVE A LIFE…WE HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE AWAY.



WHAT ARE YOU WALKING AWAY WITH HERE?



WHAT DO YOU WISH THERE WAS MORE OF?



WHAT IS MISSING ALTOGETHER?

AHA!? TAKE AWAY? NOTE?

THE JOURNEY

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and
began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice—
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to
do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.

It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do—
determined to save
the only life you could save.

-Mary Oliver