



Monday Musing: June 8th, 2026.
Pausing...

Many times, while walking in the forests, Karen and I will just stop, pause our talking, our thinking with our walking, and just notice. We intentionally notice. We notice the height of the trees, the ruggedness of the bark, the wonderful greens in the leaves and we breathe. We notice the fragrances of the woods, the ground, the wild flowers, and we breathe. We notice the sounds of the wind swaying the upper branches of the trees, and the birds singing, and the water rippling, and we breathe. Sometimes we literally wrap our arms around a tree to sense the tree breathing and its heart beating, and we discover it is doing so with our breath and our heart. Stopping and pausing allows us to notice so many things, and it invites us to notice ourselves too.

Many times, while taking our pauses, we find our thoughts roam to our own lives beyond the trees. We later talk about what is happening in our lives, what isn't happening, where we feel sadness and worry, and where we feel joy and contentedness. We've also shared how happiness isn't a state but an occasional real experience that flows to us like waves onto the sand. That's also what I learned while interviewing seniors for my doctoral work – contentedness in life is key while enjoying the periodic waves of happiness. Living purposively is to know contentedness in life.

Lately we have been talking about what gives our lives meaning and purpose, even what will be our legacy, that is, how we will be remembered. It doesn't just apply to us, to individuals. Knowing your meaning and purpose also applies to those groups to which we belong including our faith homes. For me, it is my church home and family.

Years ago, I spent time, like a big pause, in which I took a journey into me: who I was, why, where I was going, and what was my purpose, what moved me and gave my life meaning. It was a tough summer taking this big pause. But it was the most important pause of my life. It took me to where I am now.

Faith homes, or churches, are like individuals. A church has a past, a present, and hopes for the future. A church lives out of a particular story, or narrative, that can serve them well or not. Often a church doesn't realize the story out of which they are living! A church, and church life, serves those within, but what gives your life meaning and purpose together that you live for those beyond your doors? Why are you, as a church, here? What are you doing? What gives you, the whole church, your sense of meaning and purpose?

Years ago, a good friend and colleague said to me, “If a church really wants to know their purpose, their mission, all they need to do is stand outside their front door, look to the north, the south, the east and west, and notice what is needed to better the lives of those around them.” So, what are the needs your church can address to better the community around it? What is the meaning and purpose you live together?

James Hollis is a Jungian psychoanalyst. I have been reading his books for years. Just recently I read “The Eden Project.” In it he says this, “All of life is relational ... Sociologists make a clear distinction between society and community. A society is a group of persons organized to serve a set of purposes, some short term, some long term [but] A community forms when the members of a society have had a common transcendent experience, one that lifts each person out of his or her isolation to participate in the transformation.” He summarizes with a cautionary tale, that when a community loses its common purpose, they devolve into a society of individuals only. He says this is evidenced today in mainstream cultures where crime, addictions, and sociopathies are testimony to the dissolution of community.

For our own culture, or our faith home, that’s now the question. Are we a community or a society? And in our own lives, does that which gives us meaning and purpose in our lives, serve us alone, or beyond us too, because after all, all of life is relational.

Prayer

Holy One, made in your relational image,
May we find and know what gives our lives meaning and purpose,
May we live that meaning and purpose freely, courageously, truthfully, wholly,
With love and compassion, and with every breath we take. Amen.

Scripture This Week

Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7	A son is promised to Abram and Sarai.
Psalms 116	I called upon God in the face of death.
Romans 5:1-8	Justified by faith.
Mattew 9:35-10:23	Jesus and the disciples preach and heal.

TR Question (theological reflection)

The more concretely you can name your meaning and purpose, the more intentionally you live it. With your faith and beliefs, what is your meaning and purpose in life?

May you pause to know rest and peace, and may you breathe,
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