

Speaker 1: In this prayer time, we want to take the theme

An Easter people alive in the Spirit

As an Easter people, we are those who are familiar with the themes of death and resurrection

Listen to the word of God:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

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 is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

These wise words speak so much of life's experience. There are times in life when there's much dying, much that is broken down, much losing, and other times when there is new life, many things are repaired, there are many gains.

God is leading us in this Diocese into a time of great change

In every change there are gains and there are losses

- We are losing many of our old and familiar ways of doing things
- We have lost many members from our churches
- We have lost many of our children and young people
- We have lost the influence we once had in the nation
- Some feel the loss of ancient liturgies
- Some are grieving the loss of a Vicar resident in the parish

In many ways therefore it is a time when we are knowing the experiences of weeping, mourning, tearing

In this experience, we draw near to our crucified Lord who lost his life that we might gain life

Any moving forward has to acknowledge the losses that the changes bring

so in a few moments of quiet, in the presence of Christ, let us open our hearts and minds to the ministry of the healing Holy Spirit

In a moment of silence, we acknowledge before him our sorrow at the losses we may have experienced....

To everything there is a season – a time to break down, a time to throw away stones, a time to lose, a time to weep, a time to mourn, a time to die.

Speaker 2: Yet we are an Easter people, for our Lord Jesus is risen from the dead

So with confidence we can look forward to the good news our risen Lord declares to us

in a few more moments of silence let us listen to God

To everything there is a season –

- a time to plant - as we become a Mission and Ministry Area, let us pray that new life might be planted in our community
- a time to heal – where there has been a history of hurts in our church or community, let us pray that God will use the churches in our Area to bring healing of old wounds.
- a time to build up – we have seen too much decline. Let us pray that God will build the kind of church he needs for his love to be freely shared in our communities.
- a time to laugh – let us pray that we will live as an Easter people, with Alleluias as our song
- a time to embrace – as we form a new partnership in the gospel with other churches, let us pray that God will bless these friendships in the work of the kingdom of God.
- a time to love – ‘Jesus said, I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13:34)

We have acknowledged that we are an Easter people, those willing to die and to rise with Christ

We are also a Pentecost people who believe and trust in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God

The whole point of Renewing Ministry is not to save the church. It is to see the church renewed in the power of the Spirit, so that the healing streams of the love of God can flow freely to our broken world

So let us join together in these closing responses

Spirit of God, you moved on the face of the waters and breathed life to our world

Breathe upon our churches that we may be messengers of your peace in a troubled world

Spirit of God, you were sent by the Father to Jesus, the beloved Son, in the waters of baptism

Come upon our churches, that those in Christ may live as the beloved and be messengers of your love in a hurting world

Spirit of God, you came from heaven as wind and as fire, releasing your gospel to every race, tribe and nation

Blow upon our churches and set them on fire that we may be faithful messengers of your gospel in a divided world

Lord, equip us to live and work as an Easter people alive in the Spirit

Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, who died a martyr's death in 1980 wrote

*We are the workers, not the master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own*

He died the same day that Robert Runcie was enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury, and in his enthronement address, Dr Runcie said his death was 'a sober reminder that life and death for the Gospel are still the way Christians are called to change the world'

We finish this time with a prayer Oscar Romero wrote,

**We praise and thank you, God of the journey,
and we entrust one another into your loving care,
knowing that you are always the faithful traveller and companion on the Way.**

Shelter and protect us from all harm and anxiety.

**Grant us the courage to meet the future,
and grace to let go into new life;**

Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

END