**KEYNOTE 1- THURSDAY AFTERNOON**

My name is Rev. Emily Harkins, and I have the great honor of being the pastor and founding developer of a community of faith called The Dwelling in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

I'm a Lutheran pastor.
a partner to Nick.
a daughter to Billy and Mindy.
a dog mom to Waylon and June.
a graduate of Wartburg College.
and Wartburg Seminary.

I am a lover of words and stories, and someone who has become deeply convinced that God shows up in the chaos.

That God is most powerfully present in the places we often overlook - the alleyways and parking lots and dinner tables and yes, even in the most disrupted corners of our churches.

The Dwelling is not your typical congregation.

We are a fully federated Lutheran and Moravian ministry, built alongside and more importantly led by people who have lived through homelessness, addiction and recovery, generational trauma and poverty, incarceration, mental health challenges, and we've got a few accountants and cowboys, too.

Our people are brilliant, beautiful, and complex - not in spite of what they've endured but because of it.

**We are a church that doesn't pass the plate** because we refuse to create another source of shame in the church. So **Instead we pass the biscuits.**

We are a church that gathers around breakfast and lunch.

A church where you might be seated next to someone who slept on the sidewalk the night before
or someone who just got out of jail,
or someone celebrating a sobriety milestone or someone in active addiction,
or someone simply trying to belong somewhere.

We are a people who feast, who cry together, who mess up and who start again.

We host weekly worship with a full breakfast and lunch, offer access to showers and laundry, provide mail services, host storytelling workshops and public storytelling engagements. This summer along with our partner SPARK, we will welcome 300 some young people from around the country to live, learn, and serve with us through short-term service learning called Spark'Dwell, and we organize emergency winter shelter in the coldest months.

**We believe communion happens at the altar and at the block party**. We believe everyone deserves to be seen, known, and called by whatever name they choose. And while The Dwelling may look unconventional, it is, without a doubt, church.
**Not second-tier church.**
**Not experimental church.**
**Not innovative church.**
**Not missional church.**

Others might put those labels on us - but to us - We are **just the living, breathing, gathered body of Christ.**

Not because we are in need of service FROM the church, but because we understand our need for resurrection and that we are uniquely positioned to AMPLIFY the truth and promise of resurrection among us.

It is raw. It is real. It is holy ground. And I am grateful to be with you this weekend to learn and grow together, and to be able to share a small bit of the gift that is my community.

In our time together, we've been asked to center our learning and our curiosity around a theme drawn from Ecclesiastes 3:1 - "*There is a time for everything.*"

And that phrase… maybe you've heard it in a funeral liturgy, in a graduation speech, or if you're like me, maybe it's cross-stitched on your grandmother's kitchen wall.
But I wonder - have we let ourselves really *sit* with it?
Not just as poetry.
Not just a catchy tune.
Not just as comfort.

But as an invitation.
"There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens."
It's not just a line about balance.
I believe It's a call to awareness.

It invites us to stop resisting the season we're in.

To stop measuring ourselves against someone else's pace.
To stop believing that life with God is supposed to be linear, or tidy, or endlessly upward.

Instead, it offers us something so much more real - and honestly, so much more freeing:
If offers us a vision of life that is spacious. Cyclical. Paradoxical.
A vision of faith that makes room for the both/and:

- A time to mourn *and* a time to dance.
- A time to scatter *and* a time to gather.
- A time to let go *and* a time to hold close.

This passage doesn't just tidy things up - it actually just tells the truth. And what this world needs more of, is truth.

And I want to suggest to you that this isn't just a gentle affirmation of life's rhythms.
It is a deep spiritual truth about the nature of God, the shape of our lives, and the ever-changing journey of faith.

Because what this passage reveals - if we let it - is that God does not expect us to stay in one mode forever.
**That movement is not failure.**
**That change is not weakness.**
That being "in between" or pausing to catch your breath isn't being behind - it's actually just being *human.*

The truth is: something is shifting.
Not just in our pews or our programs, but in the whole spiritual landscape.

And the ones who will help us navigate this shift aren't necessarily the experts - they're the ones who are *willing to listen to the time.*
They are the ones to ask:
What is this season asking of us?
What is the Spirit saying here, now, in this moment we didn't plan for?
And what might be possible if we stopped trying to go back - and instead started trusting the God who is already out ahead of us?

As the church, we are at a threshold moment.
The pandemic didn't invent this moment - but it certainly revealed it. It peeled back the layers.
It showed us what was working and what wasn't. It revealed the loneliness, the inequities, the fragile scaffolding we've often built our lives and ministries around.
And now, here we are.
Some of us feel like we're still trying to find our footing.
Some of us are reimagining everything.

Some of us are grieving. Some are burnt out. Some are hopeful. Some are numb.

Meanwhile, the church broadly is asking deep questions:
Who are we now?
Who are we for?
What are we becoming?
What needs to die so that something new might live?

This is not just a time of transition - it is a time of discernment.
And in moments like these, Ecclesiastes doesn't just offer a calendar of change - it offers a theology of timing.

It reminds us that God is not static.
That God is not waiting for us to "figure it out" but is already moving in the now.

It tells us that even when it feels like the ground is shifting, we are not lost.
We are in a season. And seasons are *meant* to change.
So the question then becomes:
Can we be present to the time we're in?
Can we trust it, even if we don't understand it?
Can we live into it, rather than resist it?

And maybe, just maybe though that, we'll see that the church is not dying - it's just being refined.

**There is a time for everything.**
**And this - right here, right now - is our time.**

In our world, time is often treated like a rival.
It's something we chase, outrun, manage, fight against.

Something that slips through our fingers.
Something we never seem to have *enough* of.

We talk about "losing time," "killing time," "wasting time."
As if time were some cruel thief rather than a generous guide.

But Scripture paints us a different picture.
In Genesis, time is not a threat - it's a rhythm.
"There was evening, and there was morning - the first day."

The day *begins* with rest.
Not hustle.
Not productivity.
But deep and abiding rest.

Time, in the biblical imagination, is not just something we live in - it's something we live *with*.

It's not a stopwatch. It's a **companion** on the journey.
It marks the movement of God - not just the passage of minutes.

***Time doesn't rush us but it sure does hold us.***
This passage doesn't ask us to fix our season.
It asks us to trust it.

Because time with God?
It isn't linear. It's cyclical.
It's full of returnings, revisitations, and unfinished loops.

God is not measuring your worth by how fast you heal.
Or how productive your ministry is.
Or how quickly you bounce back from the hard stuff.

God is not in a hurry.
And that's hard for us - because *we* are.
We've been conditioned to believe urgency is a virtue.
That faster means better.
That forward is the only faithful direction.

But what if some of God's best work is slow?
What if holy things take time?
Healing takes time.
Unlearning takes time.
Becoming takes time.

**The oak tree doesn't apologize for the decades it spends reaching toward the sky.**
The seasons don't apologize for coming back around in unexpected ways.
So why do we?

Why are we so quick to assume we're behind?
Why do we expect sacred things to happen on a schedule?

That reminds me of a story from my community.

He wanted to be baptized so badly-he'd ask me every week:
"What time, Pastor Emily?"
And I'd always say the same thing: "Come at 10 for coffee and breakfast. Worship starts at 11. Just be there by 11, okay?"
But week after week after week, he kept showing up around 12:30. Not just late-like *late late*. And funny enough? Consistently so.
So that one Sunday, when worship began and he wasn't there, I wasn't surprised.
But we had everything ready anyway. The water. The candle. The certificate.
We were prepared.

And then-halfway through our teaching time-I saw him.

He strolled in with a huge grin, wearing a fresh white T-shirt-his version of a baptismal robe. Black-rimmed glasses with no lenses in them, just because he wanted to look fancy.

And he was ready.

He walked in like he belonged (because he *did*), looked at the whole room, and said: **"I'm here. We gonna do this thing?"** Yes, Absolute. Yes we are.

And just like that, Brother Absolute was baptized into this wild, beloved, unstoppable family of God.

His joy was electric. If he could've jumped into the baptismal bowl, he would have-and I promise you, the rest of us would've followed him right in.

It wasn't polished. It certainly wasn't prompt.
But it was holy.
It was real.
It was *right on time*.
And it taught me something that I don't ever want to forget. And why I share it with you today.

We should strive to become the kind of church that welcomes the late arrival.
That embraces the interruption.
That makes room for the one who shows up late but still shows up ready.

**Because grace doesn't wear a wristwatch.**
**And the Spirit doesn't need an agenda.**
And sometimes the most sacred moments come precisely *because* we allowed the slow, winding, unhurried time of God to unfold.

Time, in this passage, is not about *getting things done*.
It's about *noticing what's being done in us.*

There is no shame in being in winter when someone else is in spring.
There is no shame in the pause, the slowness, the still-becoming.

What if instead of resisting time, we began to *befriend* it?
To listen to it.
To work with it, not against it.
To see it as the language of God's unfolding grace.
Because **time is not your enemy.**
**It is your companion.**
**It is where God meets you.**

Not in the time you wish you were in.
Not in the time you were in before.
But in the time that is right *now*.

So may we always, *always*, be a church that makes space for the one who walks in at late-still soaking with joy, still dripping in hope, and still exactly where they're meant to be, even if they're late. *Here this invitation from* ***SELINE - Meet Me Where I Am***

Ecclesiastes gives us permission to hold two things at once. Right now most of us are walking around with complicated feelings about this moment in the life of the church.
We're grateful and we're tired.
We're hopeful and we're wary.
We're seeing new life - and we're carrying a lot of grief.

Here's the truth: Something is dying.
And something else is being born.
The church, in so many places, is standing in that liminal space between what was and what is becoming.

And **liminal spaces are always a little disorienting.**
That's why this passage doesn't rush us.
It gives us permission to name the grief.

There *is* a time to weep.

A time to lose. A time to tear.

Maybe your church has lost members, lost budget, lost confidence. Maybe you've lost some certainty, some energy, some hope.

That matters.

Grief is not a sign of weak faith.

It's a sign of deep love.

And love is never wasted.

But that's not the end of the story.

Because Ecclesiastes doesn't stay in mourning. It also speaks of dancing. Of embracing. Of building up.

The holy invitation of this text is to let ourselves feel the full range of reality - and still believe that God is in it all.

So maybe we are in the middle of a sacred transition.

Not a collapse - but a refining.

Let me be really honest with you:

I love the church.

Not just the idea of it.

Not just the good memories.

I love *the actual, messy, beautiful, aching church* - the one that sings off-key, that forgets announcements, that tries and fails and gets up again.

And because I love it, I want to tell the truth about it.

I'm not interested in preserving the church as an institution just for the sake of survival.

I'm interested in **resurrection.**

And here's the thing about resurrection:

**It's not resuscitation.**

It's not reanimation.

It's not putting things back the way they were.

**Resurrection is transformation.**

When Jesus rose, he wasn't just restored to his old life.
He was changed.
Scarred.
Even Unrecognizable at first.
Still himself - but also… *more*.

That's what I believe God is doing in the church right now.
**The church that is becoming will not look like the church that raised us.**
**It can't.**
Because the world is different.
Because the wounds are deeper.
Because the questions are more urgent.
Because the Spirit has moved - and is still moving.

And so the church must become different, too -
not to stay trendy,
not to chase relevance,
but to *stay faithful.*

The question is no longer: "How do we get back to what we had?"
The better, braver question is: "What is God doing now - and how do we join it?"

At The Dwelling, we've learned this over and over again.
Most of the people who show up on Sundays aren't coming for the programming.
They're not here to join a committee or sign a pledge card.
They don't care if we follow the lectionary.
We don't track members in the traditional sense.
Many of my people are unhoused.
Some are wrestling with addiction or grief.
Others have had deeply painful experiences with the church - betrayal, rejection, spiritual trauma.

And yet - they keep showing up.

Why?
Because **they're not looking for performance.**
**They're looking for *presence.***

They're not searching for polish.
They're searching for *peace*.

They want to know:
"Am I seen here?"
"Can I be known here?"
"Am I safe here?"
"Will someone remember my name, even if I forget theirs?"
"Can I get a plate and a blessing in the same breath?"
They're looking for belonging.
For blessing.
For bread.

They're looking for Jesus.

And friends - Jesus is showing up.
Not in fancy robes or perfect order of worship.
Not in strategic plans or slick social media.
But in the breaking of bread and the breaking open of hearts.

In vulnerability and honesty.
In imperfection and inclusion.
In sacred interruptions.

I've distributed and received communion on the sidewalk.
I've performed baptisms in a punch bowl.
I've watched people weep and sing and testify on folding chairs under the hot sun.

I've heard someone say, "This is the first place I've ever been prayed for by my chosen name."

And if that's not church - then we've misunderstood church.

The church that is becoming is not a return to glory days.
It is not a recovery project.
It is a living, breathing, courageous body of people who are willing to stay - even when it's awkward. Even when it's inconvenient. Even when it doesn't "look like church" to the world.
It is raw.
It is real.
It is rough around the edges.
It is full of grace.
And it is on fire with the Spirit.

**We don't know exactly *what* it's becoming.**
**We just know *it is.***
**And that's enough.**
Because we follow a God who does God's best work in the in-between between death and life,
between certainty and surrender,
between what we planned and what the Spirit reveals.

So let's stop asking whether the church can survive.

Let's ask: **What is God birthing here?**
**What does resurrection look like now?**

And let's be brave enough to midwife it - even if we don't have all the answers.
**DAVID HORN VIDEO**

Now let me say something important:
Becoming something new doesn't mean erasing what has been.

The church that was, the church that has been, got us here.

The saints, the songs, the sacraments.
The casseroles, the committees, the choir lofts.
The acolyte robes and Lenten suppers.
The bulletin inserts and Sunday school name tags.
That was - and still is - holy ground.

And for me, this is not theoretical.
This is personal.

When I was young, the church *loved me so well.*
That church gave me a sense of call before I had language for it.
That church saw something sacred in me before I knew how to see it in myself.
I used to stand in the narthex during worship and raise my hands, mimicking the pastor presiding at communion - like it was a game, but also, maybe, a prayer.

I would sneak with my friends into the sacristy to eat the leftover communion bread - sacred and mischievous,
the way childhood and holiness so often overlap.
I realize now that we weren't actually doing much sneaking and that the church ladies absolutely left the door open and the bread out for us.

That church took me to youth gatherings and service trips.
That church gave me mentors and role models.
That church said, "You belong here," again and again - even when I was awkward, or unsure, or asking hard questions.

**That church didn't just tolerate me.**
**It *invested* in me.**
Through high school.
Through college.
Through discernment and doubt.
Through seminary and first calls.

The church that was - the church that raised me - is the reason I am still in this at all.

So no - I don't want to throw that church away.
And I don't think we're supposed to.
We still *need* that church.

Young people still need a community that is stable, dependable, and deeply invested in their becoming.
We need congregations that bake banana bread and show up at school plays.
That remember your dog's name and pray for your test results.
That create space to grow into your calling - not just once, but over and over again.

There is a deep, aching need in this moment for churches that are rooted.
Churches that abide.

In fact - I would go so far as to say:
Those churches - **You are the linchpin.**

You - who've been showing up for decades.
You - who have been tending the altar, paying the bills, teaching the confirmation classes.
You - who are still here, asking the question: "What now?"

**You are not the past.**
**You are actually the *bridge*.**

We don't need less of the church you've been.
We need *more* of your abiding presence,
More of your generous memory,
More of your time-tested faith.

Because that presence - the deep, wide-rooted presence of congregations who have known loss and love and resilience and are STILL HERE - is what holds the whole ecosystem of the church together.

So yes, we are becoming.

But we are becoming *with you, because of you* - and perhaps even at your lead.

We honor the church that was.

We bless it.

And - we don't let nostalgia keep us from noticing what God is doing now.

What God is doing next.

Because **nostalgia is not the same as faithfulness.**

Sometimes we mistake our longing for the past as a longing for God.

But God is not just behind us. God is ahead of us.

God is calling us forward - into something new.

We cannot go back.

But we *can* carry the best of what was with us.

We can take: The courage of the saints

The generosity of those who built our sanctuaries

The tenacity of the people who refused to give up

And let that legacy fuel the future - *not freeze it.*

The church is not a museum.

It's a movement.

And movements keep going.

I want to speak directly to the rostered leaders in the room for a moment.

Some of you are exhausted.

Many of You are holding congregations that feel unsure.

You are trying to adapt faster than you've ever had to - and it still feels like it's not enough.

Hear this: You don't have to have it all figured out.

**Faithfulness doesn't mean having a five-year plan.**
**Faithfulness means showing up for the season that you're in.**

There is a time for everything - which means this time, *your* time, *this* strange, sacred, in-between season - is not a mistake.

This season has something to teach you.
It may be slower than you want.
It may require more release than control.
It may be wildly uncomfortable.
But it is still holy.

You don't have to drag your church back into the past.
You don't have to manufacture something flashy for the future.

You just have to stay rooted.
Stay tender.
Stay attentive.
Because God is already here.

And when you pay attention to the season you're in, you'll begin to see the seeds that are quietly, courageously taking root. That resurrection is happening all around you.

So here's the thing about time: you can't hold it alone.
You can try.
God knows we try.
We carry calendars and color-code the chaos and stack expectations on top of one another until our souls collapse under the pressure of "figuring it all out."

But **Scripture never once tells us to figure it out alone.**

Ecclesiastes doesn't just describe time in the abstract - it speaks to a *shared* rhythm of human life.

It assumes we are in this together.
A time to mourn?
That implies someone is near enough to notice your grief.
A time to dance?
That's not a solo performance. That's a communal joy.

I'll will never forget in the early days of the pandemic when everything felt tenuous and unknown and haphazard.
The Dwelling actually started in February of 2020.
I had barely even figured out what we were going to call this thing when the world erupted into complete chaos.

None of us were prepared.
None of us knew what we were doing.
But what I did know was that while the rest of the world was shutting down, sheltering in place, shuttering its buildings, if we wanted to be church with our vulnerable neighbors, going home wasn't an option.

So what did we do? We drew boxes.

In the parking lot of our building, because we couldn't be inside of it, we took orange spray paint and gridded out our lot with 8 foot boxes.
And then we stuck chairs in the middle of the boxes.
And then as our community, that had nowhere else to go, gathered, we told them to sit in their chairs and stay in their boxes.

I'm sure you'll be shocked to hear that this didn't work.

I remember frantically running around telling people to stop touching each other, stop sharing drinks, stop sharing cigarettes. Keep your distance. Stay separated. Just sit down!

And it was during all of this, that one of my favorite humans, John Henry, looked at me and said, "Pastor Emily - you just don't get it."
And I was like, "Um yes I do. I'm trying to keep you safe."

And he said, "No, you don't get it. **You're trying to keep us apart, but if we separate, we die.**"

The work of becoming - personally and communally - can't happen in isolation.
That's why the church, even when it looks wildly different from what it once was, still matters.

Because **we're not becoming in a vacuum**.
**We are becoming in the company of others.**

At The Dwelling, we talk about our life together as messy, holy, unfinished work. It's not tidy.
It's not always predictable.
And it's certainly not without its tension.
But it is real.
And it's where we learn what grace actually looks like.

Grace looks like someone holding your place in the meal line.
It looks like someone praying with you even when they've lost their own hope.
It looks like a shower trailer rolling up to the edge of someone's heartbreak and saying, "You still deserve the dignity of being clean."

In our context, community isn't built on shared theology or perfect liturgy.
It's built on showing up for each other when it's inconvenient.

It's built on radical hospitality, gritty compassion, and a sense of humor that holds us when nothing else can.

**The church that is becoming will not survive if it is built on spectacle. But it will thrive if it is built on solidarity.**

If we're going to talk honestly about time, then we can't just talk about church.
We have to talk about the world -
this world -
the one we're living in right now.
Because the church doesn't exist in a silo.
We are not sealed off from the ache of the earth
or the cries of the people.

We are embedded in it. Shaped by it. Called to respond to it.
And right now, the world is on fire - both literally and metaphorically.
We are living in the midst of deep, intersecting upheavals:
**Climate collapse**
**Widening wealth gaps**
**Rising authoritarianism**
**Burnout as a baseline**
**Loneliness as a public health crisis**

And in the midst of all that, the church -
our beloved, aching, holy church -
has lost some of its footing.

Some branches of the church in the broad sense has **doubled down on fear and exclusion**,
tightening the gates,
guarding the doors,
drawing the circles smaller and smaller in the name of purity and power.

Others have **retreated into comfort**, choosing safety over solidarity, nostalgia over neighborliness.
Hoping that if they just wait long enough, we might go back to the way things were.

Still others - and I would guess many of us here - are **fumbling toward something new** without a map.

We are trying.
We are listening.
We are learning to let go of what doesn't give life - and reach for something we can't fully see yet.
And while it feels impossible,
the invitation - the one God keeps whispering, even now - is not to give up.

It's not to check out, tune out, or sell out.
The invitation is to go deeper.

To root ourselves more fully in the Spirit.
To draw closer to the pain, the people, the promises of God.

To show up with tenderness and tenacity - again and again.
Because this is not just a time of unraveling.
It is a time of **holy reckoning** - and of extraordinary possibility.

This is a time for **Spiritual courage** -
Not the kind that shouts. The kind that stays.
The kind of courage that says:
"I will not pretend everything is fine."
"I will not harden my heart."
"I will not give up on hope - even if it breaks me open."

This is a time for **Proximity over performance** -
Courage that comes not from status or certainty, but from nearness:

- Near to pain.
- Near to joy.
- Near to the real, unvarnished lives of others.

Because that is where Jesus is - always.

This is a time for **Prophetic tenderness** -
The kind of leadership that doesn't need to dominate or dazzle.
But listens. Weeps. Speaks hard truths in love.
And refuses to look away from suffering.

This is a time for **Wild creativity**
Because we're going to have to invent new ways of being church.
New ways of gathering.
New ways of proclaiming good news that actually sounds like good news to the poor, the queer, the weary, the outcast, the chronically doubting.

This is a time for **Confession and repair**
Because some of what's breaking is not random.
It's the consequence of centuries of exclusion, harm, silence, and complicity.
And the only way forward is through truth-telling.
Through apology.
Through justice-seeking and healing practices that take root.

This is a time for **Feasts that include the forgotten** -
Because we worship a Christ who fed the multitudes, who shared his last meal with a betrayer, and who keeps setting tables we never thought we'd sit at.

**We need a church that knows how to feast with the wrong people, because that means we're with exactly the right crowd.**

A church that's not afraid to be messy, intergenerational, bilingual, barefoot, overcaffeinated, off-script, underfunded - and *full of love*.

Because if we really believe resurrection is real -
then we have to live like it.
Even in the midst of despair.
Even when empire looms large.
Even when the world says, "It's too late."
We live as if new life is *always* possible.
Even when it feels unlikely.

Because resurrection is not an idea. It's a **way of being.**
A refusal to let death have the final word.

A declaration that *God is still at work* - even here, even now.
In the midst of everything we're naming - the world's unraveling and the Spirit's invitation - sometimes what we need most is not another explanation, but a song.

A sound that reminds us who we are and what we're called to.
So I invite you now to receive this musical offering written and performed by members of our community. Let it be your prayer for just a moment.
Let it be your breath. I share with you, Grace by Xavierre Quick. ***GRACE***

I want to share a story with you.
Not to wrap this all up in a neat bow, but to ground us again in what is real.

Just recently, a member of our community - *James* - came forward during communion.
He usually chooses to be a faithful observer.
Engaged.
Watching each person come up while still holding his space away from the table.
But on this day, something was different and as he approached the table, His hands were shaking.
His eyes were glassy with tears.
I could tell He'd had a rough night.
He was raw.
He was not what many would call "ready" for the table.

And yet, there he was.
He came forward with nothing polished to offer. He came forward not because he felt holy, but because he needed something to hold him together.
And when he cupped his hands and received the bread, **he whispered, "I don't deserve this."** And without hesitation, I told him, **"Neither do I. But here we are."**

That's church.
That's time made sacred.
That's grace in real time.

It wasn't about being perfect. It wasn't about tradition for tradition's sake. It was healing. And honesty. And vulnerability. And presence - shared, tender, messy presence - and I am certain is where God lives.

As we finish this part of our time together, I want to leave you with this Wendell Berry's poem - it's words have been echoing in the background of everything we've explored. It says this:

> "No, no, there is no going back.
> Less and less you are that possibility you were.
> More and more you have become those lives and deaths
> that have belonged to you.
> You have become a sort of grave containing much that was and is no more in time, beloved then, now, and always." And so you have become a sort of tree,standing over a grave.
> Now more than ever you can be generous toward each day that comes, young, to disappear forever, and yet remain unaging in the mind.
> Every day, you have less reason not to give yourself away."

I think about that line: "*More and more you have become those lives and deaths that have belonged to you.*"

This is the work of the church. This is the work of becoming.
We carry what has been - the births and the deaths, the triumphs and the failures.
We are made up of it.

We are not separate from the time we've lived; we are shaped by it.
But we are not stuck.

What if we lived like that?
Generous toward each day.

Rooted in the past, reaching for the light, holding space for what is dying and what is rising.
This is what it means to be the church that is becoming.

**Not stuck in fear. Not lost in nostalgia. But standing in the tension with honesty, hope, and open hands.**

So here's my blessing for you - for your congregation, your leadership, your community, your calling:
May you have the courage to stay rooted in this moment.
May you trust the God who wastes nothing - not your grief, not your joy, not your waiting.
May you honor the church that was.
May you bless the church that is.
And **may you participate - fully, tenderly, and bravely - in the church that is becoming.**

There is a time for everything, beloved.
And this is your time.
Thanks be to God. Amen.