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***“To everything there is a season...
a time to mourn and a time to dance.”***

Ecclesiastes 3; 1, 4

It is hard to “dance” these days, and so much easier to “mourn.” The 9th anniversary of 9/11 reminded us of the pain and fear caused by the terrorist attacks against our nation. We have faced hurricane *Katrina*, the Gulf oil spill, two long wars and financial turmoil.

We are smoldering with flames of division - frustrated as we watch our leaders focus on ideology, partisan politics and re-election. It's tough to cling to hope as 24-hour news tells us how much material wealth we've lost and how terrible things are.

The result is a weary and less confident America, uncertain of what the future holds.

With high unemployment and one in seven Americans below the poverty level, our faith is shaken. [2010 Census Bureau]

The Apostle Paul calls us to “not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed,” to “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” [Romans 12:2 & 15:13]

A popular song by Sydney Carter depicts Jesus on the cross as the “*Lord of the Dance*” offering hope:

*I danced on a Friday when the
sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil
on your back;
They buried my body and they
thought I'd gone,
But I am the dance and I
still go on.*

God is an artist of hope and transformation, constantly re-newing creation. Consider the *change of seasons*. If we allow God to renew our hearts, he will re-create each of us and perhaps we can be a people less fixed on what we've lost, more thankful for what

we've been given and more determined to sustain our neighbors in need.



Photo: Getty Images

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair writes that “faith matters because it inspires people to act and to raise their sights beyond themselves.” [“Why Faith Matters,” Parade]

We know that Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you,” [John 15:12] but we humans have a hard time getting *beyond ourselves*, and moving even a little toward the kind of *unconditional love* Jesus was talking about.

G.K. Chesterton wrote that it is not that “Christianity has been tried and found wanting; rather, it has been found difficult and not tried.”

It is much easier to focus on *Old Testament law* and judge others harshly than it is to live by Jesus' *New Testament message of compassion, personal sacrifice, love and grace* as it fulfills the law. [Matthew 5:17]

“Sadly, religion can be distorted into violent extremism,” writes Tony Blair.

“*Having spiritual beliefs has never rendered a person incapable of doing wrong or evil. But far more often, faith can be a force for good.* We should not allow those who use religion as a divisive force to succeed,” whether they be of other faiths or Christian. “The idea of *unconditional love...is at the core of all our great faiths.* We need to get back to this guiding light.”

[“Why Faith Matters,” Parade]

Perhaps we need to “think back to that day — 9/11: We were not Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus or Athiests. We were not Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Tea Partiers or Greens. We were not Anglo-Americans, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans or Middle Eastern-Americans.... We were Americans coming together to show how great this country is.

The terrorists did not destroy this country that day, but we are doing a great job of destroying it ourselves.”

[Diane Horning, Alton IL, Letters, St. Louis Post Dispatch]

Isn't it time we step into a new season of God's re-creation? It's about moving forward in *hope* instead of despair.

*Dance, then, wherever you
may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance,
said he.
And I'll lead you all,
wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the
dance, said he.*

Let's turn down the polarizing noise of hatred and division, listen for the music and join the dance.

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