

Reflection— Rev. Karen Oehl

Tree of Life

On each side of the river is the tree of life, which produces twelve crops of fruit, bearing its fruit each month. The tree's leaves are for the healing of the nations. Revelation 22:2

Trees. In each home that I have lived in, I recall the trees.

My childhood home in Penn Hills, a suburb of Pittsburgh, had trees that were my friends. The pine in which the mourning dove cooed, the weeping willows shading the front, the apple tree that I spent hours in. I remember a swing in a tree in Clarion, the elms (poor elms) along the street in Shaker Heights, a tulip tree in Wooster, the maples in Marshallville. The oak in front of the parsonage here in Mt. Vernon I have named Gilead, because there is a balm in simply looking at a beautiful tree.

Trees give life in many ways, including literally with fruit. Think of the foods of the Middle East that get mentioned in the Bible and are still important today: dates, almonds, figs, olives. How wondrous to imagine a monthly crop from a tree: life-giving, life-sustaining. Enough and more than enough.

The tree of life in the new Jerusalem does more, however. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Lord, may it be so, soon and very soon.

May we be healed from hate: between nations, races, peoples. In John's vision, nations and kings and peoples all come together in the city whose main street is a river and trees of life. We can begin that healing now following the model of Christ.

May we be healed from violence: lives taken, peoples broken without reason or recourse. Such vileness simply cannot enter God's city. It does not belong in this world or the next. Stand against it.

May we be healed from hopelessness: lost hope in institutions, promised solutions, in each other and what we can do together. There is a light that is real, and pure and unending in the Lamb. Watch for it breaking through in acts of radical kindness and generosity.

This is a beautiful time of year to pay attention to the trees as they are filled with blossoms and seeds and new leaves and new life. Let them be a balm for you, wherever your heart and soul need healing.

