

Delighting in Change

Written by Vivian Bikulege

Tuesday, 22 January 2019 14:56 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 January 2019 07:41



I've been thinking a lot about transformation. My own. It is my chosen word of the new year. Past attempts at forming myself around a single word or focus have included balance, clarity, and inspiration. I'm not sure I have ever been successful, but I strove for what I needed at the time. This year, something inside of me wants to see great change, and I wonder if it won't be the small changes that will end up making the biggest differences.

I tried to Google the definition of transformation but didn't have a good Internet connection. I went in search of a dictionary stashed away on my bookshelf. Found one. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* published in 1977. An inscription on the inside cover read: Water Management Division, June 19, 1979. I joined the group in 1983 in Savannah, Georgia. In its essence, my life has been circular.

The definition read:

transformation1: an act, process, or instance of transforming or being transformed

transform1a: to change in composition or structure b: to change the outward form or appearance of c: to change in character or condition

Reads a bit like a list of New Year's resolutions. Process, composition, structure, outward form and appearance, character, and conditions. Each is a component of self that I am seeking to change or become.

I am not a focused person. I move from task to task, whim to demand, and only finish those things that could result in negative legal consequences or having my lights turned off. I don't have a life process and retirement has freed me from the structure that put me on planes, writing monthly reports, and tied my identity to performance reviews. The composition of who I am is already transforming. I have time to look on the inside, but my outward appearance has transformed into a woman of my age. The sixties. I need to fall in love with her but instead, I battle to shore up her muscles and maintain her limbs. I feel better, but acceptance will be the greater part of true physical transformation.

Webster's "1c" - to change in character or condition - is the crux of my yearning. I still want to clean out my garage after improving key conditions inside my house last year, and I vow to do it, but it's the change in my character intriguing me with possibilities.

I began this year in a three-day silent retreat in Atlanta. Silence. Not easy for me. I had to clear my throat now and again to check if I still existed. It was an amazing experience. The focus of the retreat centered around themes of awareness, generosity, and joy. It was augmented with art and jazz, and it was spiritual – all in the confines of trees, rain, and fog. Plus, I didn't have to cook for myself. Eating in silence with forty other people proves interesting, (Where do your eyes rest as you are chewing?) but there is a rhythm that starts to take shape, and no one tells you what to do, literally.

The thing is, to transform, to change character, you have to know yourself, and most folks understand that this quest is a lifetime's journey. And as we strive to live the lives we are called to (Figure that out!), we never fully understand ourselves because we are constantly changing. Without change, change of any kind, we are dead.

I recognize I've already stepped into a pile of thoughtful change. I am trying to discern how to best use my time. I am learning how to live in a one-dog family versus two. (Yes, Toby is gone. Transforming a broken heart, *again*, involves tears, and time, and silence.) My husband will venture off to Germany on a three-month contract leaving me with me . . . and Trooper. I will swim with manatees and kayak among mangrove trees in the week ahead. A new year of awe and wonder.

Transformation is what you want it to be. It could be a new hair color. Maybe it's just the

Delighting in Change

Written by Vivian Bikulege

Tuesday, 22 January 2019 14:56 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 January 2019 07:41

regrowth of hair after chemotherapy. Change can be purging old files or calculating a new budget as we begin a year of shutdowns and jagged-edged stock markets. Maybe you'll go back to church this year. Maybe you'll go to India. Maybe you will actually stick to the goal of drinking more water and less coffee, ingest a little less sugar, and take a daily walk. Maybe you'll get more sleep. Maybe you will win that job you've dreamed of or welcome a new baby. Maybe you will floss once or even twice a day.

I just want to write a little more, read, test my sense of adventure, challenge this aging body, and grow in spirit. In the retreat, compassion and mercy took a front seat to pathways for changing the framework of who I am in this world, and there were great lessons in spiritual freedom and gratitude. But as I look back and forward, my favorite retreat takeaways and aspirations are owning my desires and dreams, praying about them, and understanding that with desire comes surrender. The surprise in those silent days was learning that I can aspire toward delight – delight in myself, others, and the natural world around me.

Transformation through surprise and delight. I think I have all the ingredients I need.