Grailville

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For everything, there is a season,
And a time for every purpose under heaven.
A time to be born and a time to die,
A time to plant and a time to harvest,
A time to hurt and a time to heal,
A time to tear down and a time to build up,
A time to cry and a time to laugh,
A time to mourn and a time to dance,
A time to scatter stones and 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 mend,
A time to be silent and a time to speak,
A time to love and a time to hate,
A time for war and a time for peace.

God has made everything in harmony with the divine.
Yet, although the Almighty has imbued eternity into our souls,
We are unable to grasp the totality of God's work from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11 *** Inclusive Language Version

There was a time – in the Ordovician period of geology about 450 million years ago -- when this land we know and love as Grailville was the ocean floor of shallow warm seas and the invertebrate bivalves now fossilized in the limestone bedrock under this land represented the highest form of life on earth.

There was a time – about 12 thousand years ago -- when these hills formed the farthest south reach of the last of the great glacial periods.

There was a time – about 2000 years ago -- when Adena peoples lived in this area and built Serpent Mound. And following them, there was a time about 800 hundred years ago when the Hopewell peoples built the earthworks we call Fort Ancient and many burial mounds.

There was a time -- in the mid 1700s -- when the Shawnee and Miami people called these lands home, paddled the Little Miami River like a thoroughfare – and their great leader Tecumseh was born about 40 miles north of here. Tecumseh led his people and formed an alliance among many tribal peoples to resist the American invaders coming over the Appalachian Mountains. He died fighting on the side of the British at the battle of Thames River in Ontario during the war of 1812.

There was a time when the American colonists had won their war with the British and began their explorations -- or invasions, depending on your perspective – of the Ohio River Valley. And Colonel Thomas Paxton – born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, an officer in the war of Revolution, who floated down the Ohio River with his family on a flatboat -- became the first permanent white settler in 1795 in what is now Loveland, Ohio.

There was a time when Quaker farmers in this area -- whose descendants became our neighbors and friends -- and whose house you can still see from the Loveland Trail -- hid runaway slaves in their home and barn as a station on the Underground Railroad.

There was a time in 1863 when the Confederate cavalry under General John Hunt Morgan, known as Morgan's Raiders, rode through the area on a raiding expedition – perhaps on these very hills – and one of Thomas Paxton's descendants called out the militia to protect the town.

There was a time in the 1890s when a Mr. Connaut built a beautiful Victorian house on the outskirts of Loveland and ran his property as a horse farm. He even had a small race track. Later, it was owned by Mr. Stearns of the Stearns & Foster Mattress Company and sold in the 1920s to Thomas Woods, a Cincinnati insurance magnate, whose wife refused to live so far away from town. Mr. Woods arranged to have tenant farmers work the land.

There was a time when Lydwine van Kersbergen – a Dutch woman fairly new in our country – was looking for a place to train young women. She drove by on the road and pointed out the Connaut-Stearns-Woods house and property, saying "that's the kind of place we're looking for". And, although it was not for sale, Mr. Woods accepted the Grail's offer in March-April 1944 -- so that this land and these buildings became Grailville.

There was a time for the Year School.

There was a time for SAG.

There was a time – a summer in the 60s – when we gave permission for Robert Wilson to install an art work in one of our fields and an energetic crew built the poles.

There was a time when Grail women had the idea to turn a beef barn into some kind of chapel. Gertrude Morris – who led our service last night in that Oratory – was in the group of women who pitched manure out of the stalls for the last time before the renovation. And she thought to herself, "Nobody is ever going to pray in here!"

There was a time for CEMA and SQAG and the Women's Task Force.

There was a time for each of us – for some this week – when we came to Grailville for the first time and our hearts were inspired and challenged and warmed and broken open and healed – and changed.

There was a time – more than one – when women from all over the world gathered at Grailville to meet and learn, to pray and work, to challenge and celebrate one another.

There was a time when the beauty and simplicity of Grailville began to draw people to our conference and hospitality center.

There was a time for The Women's Resource Center and a time when labyrinths were built at Grailville.

There was a time for New Women, New Earth, Organic Garden Interns, Community Supported Agriculture and the GROW project.

There was a time -- in the 1990s -- when an Ancient Healing Ritual was written and performed at Grailville. In it, we heard the words:

> Be Still…
> Be Free…
> Breathe out what has been…
> Breathe in what may be…