

West River United Church Lent 4 March 22, 2020

Prelude: 747 The Lord's My Shepherd.wav

Welcome*

Good morning everyone, and welcome to our church service. We welcome you and are glad that you can join us.

Let us prepare our hearts and mind for worship.

Lighting the Christ Candle: **

Show me your way, O God, my Shepherd. Open a right path and let me hear your call to follow. Show me your way, O Christ, my Healer. Open my eyes to the needs of my world.

Call to Worship

The Lord is our Shepherd.

God leads us beside still waters.

Christ restores our souls.

The Spirit leads us in right paths.

Even though we walk through the darkest valleys,

We fear no evil for God is with us.

Come, let us worship God.

PRAYER OF APPROACH AND THE LORD'S PRAYER **

When things in life frighten us, help us to feel your presence, loving God.

When there seems to be no hope, remind us you are with us always. Amen.

Together we pray the words that Jesus taught us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into

temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

A Prayer For Understanding

In the stories of our faith your voice comes to us, Bless our listening. Bless our sharing. May we with open hearts listen.

Scripture - Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. God makes me to lie down in green pastures; God leads me beside the still waters. God restores my soul; God leads me in the paths of righteousness For God's name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD. Forever.

Meditation Rev. Barbara Cairns- Don't Be Afraid- My Love is Stronger!

In today's scripture we hear from David the psalmist who reminds us not to be afraid. The most persistent biblical commandment is "Fear not."

This crucial command is repeated about 100 times in scripture. In the hymn *Don't be afraid* from *More Voices United* we are told that God's love is stronger. We are told "Don't be afraid, my love is stronger, my love is stronger than your fear". These are words to embrace and to hold onto in this time where fear and anxiety and uncertainty are pressing in on all sides.

First and foremost I must make it clear that we must be careful in the midst of Covid-19 and take the warnings seriously, and that we follow all the protocol from the Chief Health officers office. That we take the proper precautions on hand washing, self isolating if you have traveled outside of Canada, and to practice social distancing. With that said, however, I think that we must not become so afraid that we are not able to act with compassion and that we live in fear.

Perhaps another word to help us in this time of uncertainty is the word "courage". Let us not be afraid and let us with courage have hope.

The root meaning of the English word “courage” is the Latin “cor” and the French “coeur” -- “heart,” which may explain English translations that vary between “take heart” and “take courage. It is courage that we need in the midst of these times.

There are many ways we can be connected to one another even if we can't touch each other.

We can still find ways to have meaningful interactions. We can pick up the phone. We can send cards and letters in the mail, for those of us who are fit and hardy we can drop off a bag of supplies to our neighbours who might need help. It is important in this time that we figure out how to help our neighbours and help our children to cope with the unsettling fear around them.

One way that we can do that at West River is to let us know how you can help. We have set up a phone tree that will be used to check in with folks to see how they are doing. Our first task will be to reach those folks who are not connected online. If you know of a person in this situation, please let us know. If you are a person who wants to be a part of this ministry, please let us know.

Our scripture reminds us that we are not alone, and we need that message of hope during social distancing and quarantine.

Let us hold onto this promise of not walking alone that God is with us, and while we are holding onto that let us remember to also take steps to be well, to not let anxiety build, and to take steps to reduce our stress and anxiety.

Go for walks, sit in a sunny window, listen to nice music, bake cookies, turn off the 24-hour news threads about pandemics. Reach out to the many online resources to help you if you are feeling overly anxious. And remember: don't be afraid. My love is stronger, my love is stronger than your fear. Don't be afraid. God has promised to be always near.

Anthem: don't be afraid song:

Prayers of the People- Moderator Rev. Richard Bott

In this time of COVID-19, we pray: When we aren't sure, God, help us be calm; when information comes from all sides, correct and not, help us to discern; when fear makes it hard to breathe, and anxiety seems to be the order of the day, slow us down, God; help us to reach out with our hearts, when we can't touch with our hands; help us to be socially connected, when we have to be socially distant; help us to love as perfectly as we can, knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear." For the doctors, we pray, for the nurses, we pray, for the technicians and the janitors and the aides and the caregivers, we pray, for the researchers and theorists, the epidemiologists and investigators, for those who are sick, and those who are grieving, we pray, for all who are affected, all around the world... we pray for safety, for health, for wholeness. May we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and house those without homes; may we walk with those who feel they are alone, and may we do all that we can to heal the sick— in spite of the epidemic, in spite of the fear. Help us, O God, that we might help each other. In the love of the Creator, in the name of the Healer, in the life of the Holy Spirit that is in all and with all, we pray. May it be so.

Blessing: ***

Let's go into the world as people of gratitude.

Let's go into the world as people of hope.

Let's go into the world as people of joyfulness.

Let's go into the world ready to share Christ's love!

And let us go knowing this: we are never, ever alone.

The peace of Christ holds us, the love of the Creator enfolds us, and the wings of the Holy Spirit carry us, today and always. Amen

****Whole People of God, 2019, Lent4, ** The Abingdon Preaching Annual 2020,***

****** Called to Be the Church, 2019 , Loving Our Neighbours***