



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 15, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

I found appropriate to share this Our Daily Bread devotion with you as Sunday is approaching and many of us will gather for online worship in two days.

We are promised to have the Almighty's supporting and strengthening presence with us whether we have company during our days and nights, or whether we live alone. We are told that God hears our prayers even if we say them silently in our heads and hearts. Sometimes, like in these weeks and months, circumstances don't allow us to join in person to celebrate or to mourn. So, we gather as we are able, and we "sound the trumpets" of worship and petitions on ZOOM.

During these times of virtual gathering, we lift those of you into the loving hands of God who are not in the position to be with us on Sundays. We pray for a time when we can meet face-to-face, and can rejoice seeing one another; to sing and pray together in our dedicated space of worship.

In the meantime, we are reminded that God is always near, regardless of our circumstances. I always find hope in Joseph's story from the Old Testament. From being his dad's favorite boy, his life had been turned upside down in just one day. He was almost killed by his own brothers, then he was sold as a slave. He was unjustly accused, and imprisoned in an era, when proper food, TV access, library and fresh air walks were not included in the confinement conditions.

Even in this dire situation, we can read about him: **"But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden."** (Genesis 39:20-21) Scholars say that Joseph's captivity lasted for months or even for about two years. But he could get through this tough time with God's help and support.

During our trials and tough times, we are also encouraged to keep our faith and to recognize the providence that still surrounds us. Through our online gatherings we "sound the trumpets" for all of us in our church family, calling for worship, and declaring that **"... great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever."** (Psalm 117:2)

Whether you are able to join us online, or you worship by reading the message for Sunday, we *all* may know that **"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ... For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;"** (Psalm 103:8; 11) Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Sound the Trumpets

*At your times of rejoicing—your appointed festivals and New Moon feasts—you are to sound the trumpets.*

Numbers 10:10

### READ NUMBERS 10:8–10

“Taps” is a trumpet call played by the US military at the end of the day as well as at funerals. I was amazed when I read the unofficial lyrics and discovered that many of the verses end with the phrase “God is nigh” (God is near). Whether before the dark of each night settles in or while mourning the loss of a loved one, the lyrics offer soldiers the beautiful assurance that God is near.

In the Old Testament, trumpets were also a reminder to the Israelites that God was near. In the middle of celebrating the feasts and festivals that were part of the covenant agreement between God and the nation of Israel, the Jews were to “sound the trumpets” (Numbers 10:10). Blowing a trumpet was a reminder not only of God’s presence but also that He was available when they needed Him most—and He longed to help them.

Today, we still need reminders that God is near. And in our own style of worship, we too can call out to God in prayer and song. Perhaps our prayers can be thought of as trumpets asking God to help us. And the beautiful encouragement is that God always hears those calls (1 Peter 3:12). To each of our pleas, He responds with the assurance of His presence that strengthens and comforts us in the difficulties and sorrows of life.  
– By **Lisa M. Samra**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Heavenly Father, thank You that You respond to my call for help and assure me of Your powerful presence and love. Amen.**

When have your prayers felt like calls for help? How does the reminder that God listens to our prayers encourage you?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The description of the trumpets in Numbers 10:1-10 marks a significant transition for the Israelites. After spending eleven months camped at Sinai where they received direction and instruction from God, they were now to continue their journey to Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham for his descendants (Genesis 17:8). They were to use the trumpets to call “the community together and for having the camps set out” (Numbers 10:2).

Throughout Israel’s history, trumpets and other instruments, such as animal horns, were used for various reasons: to signal movement, in war, to call the Israelites to assemble, and to mark festivals. For example, trumpets were used when the Israelites moved the ark of the covenant (1 Chronicles 13:7-8; 15:24) and when they dedicated and purified the temple (2 Chronicles 5:12-13; 29:26). The ark and temple were where God dwelt and met with the Israelite priests, and where He communicated with His people. – By **Julie Schwab**

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