



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

February 9, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

You could probably figure out from previous daily encouragements that I love nature and appreciate learning new things about our world.

As I read today's Our Daily Bread message, I had to check the Internet about the cockeyed squid it talks about. For those of you who - just like me - doesn't have this creature's image automatically in mind, I insert a photo here. One more amazing animal here on Earth!



Source: en.wikipedia

This living being has the ability to both look down and around for prey animals, and to look up "to see ambient sunlight".

And I believe this is a skill what we all are encouraged to develop. To perceive what is around us, and part of our daily lives; but also, to be aware of another reality, which is hidden from our physical eyes. To know that there is a "*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*", who is "*perfect in power, in love and purity*". (VU # 315).

When we become capable of noticing the Holy One, then we will be able to fulfill the renowned words of Micah: "**And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**" (Micah 6:8)

We can recognize that this requirement implies both looking 'down and around' and 'looking up' to God. We have to see the world around us in order to "**act justly and to love mercy**". But we can't "**walk humbly with ... God**" without developing our capability to observe the presence of the Almighty with us in our everyday life.

Jesus, who knew both realities very well, gave us an example how we can achieve this. As our past Sunday's Scriptures reminded us, one major step for us is to keep a continuous relationship with the Holy One through everyday prayer. This is how Jesus regained his strength and received support for his mission. And this is how we can remain in his love, as we attempt to "**walk humbly with ... God**".

It's a life-long process to develop our 'eyes' of faith. We are not born with this ability. As it takes time for the cockeyed squid develop his bigger eye to gaze at the sunlight in the depth of the ocean, it takes time and effort for us to see beyond our physical surroundings. The more we persevere in growing our faith, the more we recognize and appreciate the Holy presence with us "*in life, in death, and life beyond death*" (A New Creed), and become able to say along with David: "**You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely.**" (Psalm 59:17)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Looking Up

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

Colossians 3:2

### READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

The cockeyed squid lives in the ocean's "twilight zone" where sunlight barely filters through the deep waters. The squid's nickname is a reference to its two extremely different eyes: the left eye develops over time to become considerably larger than the right—almost twice as big. Scientists studying the mollusk have deduced that the squid uses its right eye, the smaller one, to look down into the darker depths. The larger, left eye, gazes upward, toward the sunlight.

The squid is an unlikely depiction of what it means to live in our present world and also in the future certainty we await as people who "have been raised with Christ" (Colossians 3:1). In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he insists we ought to "set [our] minds on things above" because our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (vv. 2-3).

As earth-dwellers awaiting our lives in heaven, we keep an eye trained on what's happening around us in our present reality. But just as the squid's left eye develops over time into one that's larger and more sensitive to what's happening overhead, we too can grow in our awareness of the ways God works in the spiritual realm. We may not have yet fully grasped what it means to be alive in Jesus, but as we look "up," our eyes will begin to see it more and more. – By **Kirsten Holmberg**

#### REFLECT & PRAY

**Loving God, help me to set my mind and heart on those things that are of You!  
Amen.**

How can you develop your "upward" vision? How can you set your mind on heavenly things?

#### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Paul had meaningful ties with the Colossian assembly, although it was a church he hadn't planted. One significant connection was the apostle's longstanding friendship with Philemon—a leader in the Colossian church that met in his home (see Philemon 1:1-2). Throughout the brief letter of Philemon, Paul leverages his friendship with Philemon on behalf of his relationship with Onesimus, a Colossian believer and runaway slave from Philemon's household (Colossians 4:9; Philemon 1:8-16). Perhaps these relationships allowed Paul to write to the Colossians with surprising familiarity, as we see in Colossians 2:2: "My goal is that [you] may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that [you] may . . . know the mystery of God, namely, Christ." – By **Bill Crowder**

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