



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

February 23, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

I find it interesting that I was inspired to write both the last encouragement before my study leave and this first one when I am back on the same topic, which is *light*.

We notice how important light is for us when we find ourselves in darkness. During one evening we had a power outage and suddenly everything went dark. Except around a small lighted ball that operates from battery, the whole house was covered with the blanket of the dusky evening. How happy we were to see the little shining spots of that ball! With its help we could search for the other flashlights to find our way around the building.

Jesus reminded the people while He taught them on the Mount that they can be, and they called to be like that light in their environment. But how is that possible when we struggle with all the weaknesses and fallibility of our lives, and the challenges and circumstances we can't always control?

Just as that little lighted ball I mentioned needs batteries to twinkle its comforting and guiding light in the darkness, we also need an inner source of power to be able to gleam hope where there is hopelessness; peace where there is violence; care and love where there is greed or indifference. And this power for us is the grace and love of God showed us in Christ.

In him and with him we can become the light that God created us to be. With another figure of speech that Jesus used, we can become the vine branches that produces nurturing and good fruits: **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”** (John 15:5)

As we connect to and trust the true and unfailing light that the Almighty God placed into our lives in Jesus, we become able to shine his light wherever we are located. Because we are not inanimate objects like the light bulbs, we need to yearn for and work on this connection. The good news is when we do, the Holy One provides us the Spirit of Love, which enables us to shine.

Let me close this meditation with the lyrics of one of my favorite hymns (VU # 588; 1-3):

*Many are the lightbeams from the one light. Our one light is Jesus.
Many are the lightbeams from the one light; we are one in Christ.*

...

*Many are the gifts given, love is all one. Love's the gift of Jesus.
Many are the gifts given, love is all one; we are one in Christ.*

Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Turn on the Light

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

READ MATTHEW 5:14-16

As my husband and I prepared for a cross-country move, I wanted to ensure that we kept in touch with our grown sons. I found a unique gift, friendship lamps connected by wireless internet, which can be turned on remotely. When I gave the lamps to my sons, I explained that their lamps will turn on when I touch my lamp—to provide a shining reminder of my love and ongoing prayers. No matter how great the distance between us, a tap on their lamps would trigger a light in our home too. Though we knew nothing could replace our more personal moments of connection, we could be encouraged by knowing we're loved and prayed for every time we turned on those lights.

All God's children have the privilege of being light-sharers powered by the Holy Spirit. We're designed to live as radiant beacons of God's everlasting hope and unconditional love. When we're sharing the gospel and serving others in the name of Jesus, we become brilliant spotlights and living testimonies. Every good deed, kind smile, gentle word of encouragement, and heartfelt prayer produces a beaming reminder of God's faithfulness and His unconditional and life-transforming love (Matthew 5:14-16).

Wherever God leads us, and however we serve Him, we can be used by Him to help others shine His light. As God, by His Spirit, provides the true illumination, we can reflect the light and love of His presence. – By **Xochitl Dixon**

REFLECT & PRAY

Loving Father, please fuel me with Your perfect truth and love so I can shine a spotlight on You by loving You and others wherever I go. Amen.

How can you be a light for Christ, intentionally expressing His love to those in your sphere of influence this week? How can you shine a light on God's love as you serve people who don't know Him?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The New Testament uses various metaphors to describe the believer in Jesus. For example, it speaks of us as sheep (John 10:27); fruitful branches (15:5); ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20); soldiers, athletes, farmers (2 Timothy 2:3, 5-6); and living stones (1 Peter 2:5). In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus uses two everyday items—salt and a lamp—to illustrate the impact disciples of Christ ought to have on the people around them. Salt is a preservative, a flavor enhancer, and a thirst stimulant. As believers in Jesus, we're to bring the salt of preservation and joy to a bland, tasteless, and otherwise decaying world. A lamp gives light that enables people to see and gives direction. It must necessarily be placed in a conspicuous position for the light to be effective. We're to be the light of salvation to a world darkened by sin. – By **K. T. Sim**

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