



**Carstairs-Bancroft United Church**  
March 30, 2021  
**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**  
**By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Our Lenten journey is getting to its close with the remembrance and celebrations of this Holy Week. What I get from these events and the stories we reminisce about is a reminder that no matter how small or fragile we feel, we are a part of a bigger picture.

In all those political happenings that led Jesus to the cross there stood the Almighty God. It wasn't just a "c'est la vie" situation. It was God's plan to reconcile with us and to show us **"how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ"** and to make us able **"to know this love that surpasses knowledge"** (Ephesians 3:19; NIV)

The still ongoing pandemic has taught us a painful lesson: it revealed our vulnerability to 'not knowing'. We still do not know about all the characteristics of this novel virus, or when we will be able to plan to come together and enjoy a coffee or a good meal. We don't know when our choir can start practicing and enjoy the shared singing, not to mention the greater uncertainties of the global economy.

The good news is that among these, and any other worries we may be sure of something: the love of Christ. The events of Good Friday showed us how far He was ready to go assure us about our worth. It is comforting to learn that we are so loved that **"... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!"** (Philippians 2:8; NIV).

And it doesn't end with receiving this assurance. By understanding, accepting and appreciating God's love showed by Jesus, we become part of a wider network that relies on God's grace and providence. And through this experience we are called to be the people who can serve as messengers of the good news: **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16; NIV)

The New Creed says: *"We are not alone"* – even during the social distancing of the pandemic, or whenever we feel lonely due to different reasons. The Holy One calls us into communion with the One who defeats even death, and then with one another. We can witness to the strengthening Presence who is there for us in all circumstances. *"God is with us"*, says the New Creed. Experiencing it helps us to build up resilience in life's challenges, and to motivate us to build each other up, instead of tearing down.

By seeing this connection and the bigger picture, we'll be able to say along with the Psalm writers: **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. ... The Lord Almighty is with us ..."** (Psalm 46:1-3; 7 NIV)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Something Much Bigger

*We are co-workers in God's service.*

1 Corinthians 3:9

### READ 1 Corinthians 3:5–9

More than two hundred volunteers assisted October Books, a bookstore in Southampton, England, move its inventory to an address down the street. Helpers lined the sidewalk and passed books down a “human conveyor belt.” Having witnessed the volunteers in action, a store employee said, “It was . . . a really moving experience to see people [helping]. . . . They wanted to be part of something bigger.”

We can also be part of something much bigger than ourselves. God uses us to reach the world with the message of His love. Because someone shared the message with us, we can turn to another person and pass it on. Paul compared this—the building of God's kingdom—to growing a garden. Some of us plant seeds while some of us water the seeds. We are, as Paul said, “co-workers in God's service” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Each job is important, yet all are done in the power of God's Spirit. By His Spirit, God enables people to thrive spiritually when they hear that He loves them and sent His Son to die in their place so that they can be free from their sin (John 3:16).

God does much of His work on earth through “volunteers” like you and me. Although we're part of a community that's much bigger than any contribution we may make, we can help it grow by working together to share His love with the world. – By **Jennifer Benson Schuld**

#### REFLECT & PRAY

**Dear God, thank You for including me in Your plan to tell everyone about Your love. Help me to represent You well with my words and actions. Amen.**

Do you see yourself as a part of God's plan or as someone who works alone in your service for Him? How does this affect the way in which you serve Him and others?

#### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

First Corinthians 3:9 says we're “co-workers in God's service.” Later in this book, Paul develops further the idea that believers are complementary co-workers. We may have “different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them” (12:4). Whatever our gifts, God is the gift-giver. And these different gifts lead to “different kinds of service,” which are offered to “the same Lord” (v. 5). Whatever services we may perform, they all serve the same God. Through the variety of “different kinds of working . . . in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work” (v. 6). We're all working for the same team, and we're all powered by the same leader of that team—God Himself. In this sense, we're not only each other's co-workers, we're God's co-workers too (3:9).

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