



**Carstairs-Bancroft United Church**  
June 16, 2021  
**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**  
**By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

The last decades, but especially these past fifteen months have forced us to re-evaluate the question: why are we Christians? What would you answer if you were asked about it?

Being a ‘preacher’s kid’, it wasn’t quite optional for me. I have been attending the Christian church from birth. I was told the story that when I was a toddler, and my father was one of the assistant ministers of a huge city’s church, they used to hold weekday morning worship services in the late sixties, early seventies.

Because my mom worked full time, when it was his turn to preach, before he could drop me off at daycare, he took me with him to sit through the worship service. One day, he seated me in the pew, and told me to stay there until he finished the service. But as the worship went by, he noticed that I was climbing up on the stairs of the pulpit. (In Hungary the pulpits are built high in the middle of the church, so the ministers and priest have to take those stairs to preach.) He had to hold me still with his knees for the rest of the worship, because I wanted to peak through the edge of the pulpit.

Despite of my Christian upbringing, as I grew older, I had to make my own decision whether to pursue the Christian path, or to join my peers, most of whom were rather atheists by my twenties. And I have to admit, I am still on the journey to understand better the mysteries of Christian faith. What I understood though - and I would not like to live without - is the ever-present divine support that comes from being loved and guided by the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer God. As Thomas said it, Christ is *my* God, and I would like to grow in loving the Holy One back; to become a better follower of Jesus, who came to show us how.

And in my understanding, this is what we all do together when we belong to a Christian community of faith. And my role as a minister is to support you and walk with you on this voyage. As one of our hymns formulates it: “*We are learners; we are teachers; we are pilgrims on the way.*” (VU # 578)

These times have brought a lot of changes, but I believe there is something that hasn’t changed. It is God’s love towards us and that we have been created in the image of the Almighty. It comes with the ability to grasp eternity beyond the temporary, and to live in right relationship on this globe with others and with whole creation.

Our goal is to understand and then follow the compassionate and just ways of the Holy One. To accept the love we have received and love back in return; and to live by the inheritance granted to us through Christ **“that can never perish, spoil or fade.”** (1 Peter 1:4)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## Unseen Wonder

*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him.*

1 Peter 1:8

### READ 1 Peter 1:3–9

In the twilight of her years, Mrs. Goodrich's thoughts came in and out of focus along with memories of a challenging and grace-filled life. Sitting by a window overlooking the waters of Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay, she reached for her notepad. In words she soon wouldn't recognize as her own she wrote: "Here I am in my favorite chair, with my feet on the sill, and my heart in the air. The sun-struck waves on the water below, in constant motion—to where I don't know. But thank You—dear Father above—for Your innumerable gifts and Your undying love! It always amazes me—How can it be? That I'm so in love with One I can't see."

The apostle Peter acknowledged such wonder. He had seen Jesus with his own eyes, but those who would read his letter had not. "Though you have not seen him . . . you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8). We love Jesus not because we're commanded to, but because with the help of the Spirit (v. 11) we begin to see how much He loves us.

It's more than hearing that He cares for people like us. It's experiencing for ourselves the promise of Christ to make the wonder of His unseen presence and Spirit real to us at every stage of life. – By **Mart DeHaan**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Our Father in heaven, please help me to see the miracle of Your love and presence in Your Son and to believe in Your Spirit. Amen.**

Read 1 Peter 1:3–9 again. In what ways do these words show you how our God makes the inexpressible real to us? How open are you to the Spirit of Jesus, who lives in and among us?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The Greek word for hope in the New Testament (*elpis*) is used in much the same way as the Old Testament words for *hope*—to emphasize *waiting in expectation* for God's promised future (see Psalm 39:7). But the New Testament emphasizes Jesus as the ultimate source for hope and the ultimate demonstration of God's goodness and faithfulness. In 1 Peter 1, the author describes believers' "living hope" as rooted securely in the future accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection (v. 3). It's this hope that helps believers survive times of great hardship in expectation of the final "salvation" (v. 5) that will "be revealed in the last time." Here, "salvation" refers to the final and complete deliverance from evil and death that will be accomplished at Jesus' final return. – By **Monica La Rose**

*Used with permission*