



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
July 20, 2021
DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: unsplash.com

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

We are not alike, and one could say “Thank God!”. We are different because we were born into a specific era that has shaped us by its challenges, circumstances, possibilities, or the lack of opportunities. Many of you are aware of my attendance in the intergenerational courses last week. My understanding of the different generations was deepened by the structured and vast information we received.

But even if the “Generation Theory” has relevance in general as we try to grasp what makes the diverse generations tick, the full picture is colourful to a greater degree. Members of the ‘Silent Generation’ or the ‘Baby Boomers’, or any other ‘Gen-s’ are not exactly identical. Our families, our friends, the community we live in, or the work we do – just to mention some of these components - have influence on us and on our development.

And above and beyond all these unique circumstances and connections there is yet another factor to what we feel right or comfortable with: it is the culture we were brought up with. Whether we like it or not, it is a part of our identity, and plants in us likes, dislikes, or biases. Sometimes, we are conscious of these elements of character, sometimes it lies deep down in our unconsciousness. When we are able or equipped to reveal these hidden motivations and traits, then we can impact our personal growth to a greater extent.

Just as life is in a constant move from childhood to adulthood and elderliness, so should our understanding of God and the world grow towards maturity. I could hear it several times, that our Christian communities are to shape us, and deepen our apprehension and awareness of the colorful diversity of God’s creation. A part of it is to let the Almighty to mould us by people placed into our lives and congregations. I found Apostle Paul’s advice useful as we meet values and philosophies: **“Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22)

I believe we become able to be shaped by God’s Spirit through this creation and our interactions when we give time for ourselves for the “*not rushing prayer*” that the Our Daily Bread meditation talks about below. James’ words came into my mind: **“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”** (James 1:19-20)

May God grant us true and fulfilling maturity as we are ready to listen to God’s Word, God’s Spirit, and take time to be still to process what is good as we encounter others.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Not Rushing Prayer

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

READ Psalm 46

Alice Kaholusuna recounts a story of how the Hawaiian people would sit outside their temples for a lengthy amount of time preparing themselves before entering in. Even after entering, they would creep to the altar to offer their prayers. Afterward, they would sit outside again for a long time to “breathe life” into their prayers. When missionaries came to the island, the Hawaiians sometimes considered their prayers odd. The missionaries would stand up, utter a few sentences, call them “prayer,” say amen, and be done with it. The Hawaiians described these prayers as “without breath.”

Alice’s story speaks of how God’s people may not always take the opportunity to “be still, and know” (Psalm 46:10). Make no mistake—God hears our prayers, whether they’re quick or slow. But often the pace of our lives mimics the pace of our hearts, and we need to allow ample time for God to speak into not only our lives but the lives of those around us. How many life-giving moments have we missed by rushing, saying amen, and being done with it?

We’re often impatient with everything from slow people to the slow lane in traffic. Yet, I believe God in His kindness says, “Be still. Breathe in and out. Go slow, and remember that I am God, your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” To do so is to know that God is God. To do so is to trust. To do so is to live. – By **John Blase**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, thank You for being my ever-present help in good times and bad. Give me the grace to be still and know that You’re God. Amen.

Recall a time when you slowed down and listened to God in your prayer time. How did that feel? What actions can you put into place to still yourself in God’s presence and know Him?

Read *Praying with Confidence* at DiscoverySeries.org/Q0712.

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Psalm 46 has been a source of encouragement to many over the years—including reformer Martin Luther. In fact, he based the classic hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” on this psalm. During times of struggle, “when terribly discouraged, he would turn to his co-worker, Philipp Melanchthon, and say, ‘Come, Philipp, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm’ ” (Ligonier Ministries, *Luther and the Psalms: His Solace and Strength*).

This mighty fortress describes the God of strength who’s our refuge and the God who calls us to find our rest in Him. In the New Testament, Jesus personalized that rest when He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). In the midst of the cares and despairs of life, we can stop, be still, and find refuge in God. – By **Bill Crowder**

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