



## Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

September 1, 2021

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



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

**Today's Inspiration in one sentence (or two 😊)**

**“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; ... I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.” (Psalm 63:1; 8)**

### **Did You Know?**

- We learned before that the Book of **Psalms** was put into its final form in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. However, the time of the writers of these prayers and songs vary from Moses to David, Solomon, Asaph and the Sons of Korah, just to mention some of the named authors. It covers a long period from 1440 BC to after 538 BC.
- The Psalms (or Psalter) is for the most part a book of prayer and praise. In it, faith speaks **to** God in prayer and **about** God in praise. But there are also psalms that are explicitly didactic (instructional) in form and purpose (teaching the way of godliness).
- Overall, this Book is a large collection of independent pieces of many kinds, serving different purposes and composed over the course of many centuries. The 150 psalms gathered in the Psalms are divided into five books by scholars: Book I: Ps 1-41; Book II: Ps. 42-72; Book III: Ps. 73-89; Book IV-V: Ps. 90-150 (The NIV Study Bible)

### **Personal Insight**

One of the main thoughts of yesterday's meditation was that we are encouraged to seek, and walk humbly with the Holy One. Well, today's inspiration carries on this theme through one of my favorite Psalms.

I agree with Cindy, the writer of the devotion below, that it is priceless if we have a friend who accepts us as we are, with the good and bad qualities we carry. Using her words: with our “*quirks, habits, and screw-ups*”. Whether we have a human friend or family member like that, the Scripture reminds us that the Holy One offers us a relationship in which we are accepted and loved unconditionally.

As David put it, God, who “**created [our] inmost being**” knows us through and through. And the Almighty loves us despite of our “*quirks, habits, and screw-ups*”, because God is aware of our true potential. Sin is our capability to ‘screw things up’, even with our best intentions. Have you ever felt the pain of wanting to do something good and realizing you did more harm instead? But in my understanding, it doesn't mean that we have to or should stay as we are. With the Holy Spirit's guidance there is a chance to reduce the number of experiences like that. When we commit to seeking God, we'll find David's words true: “**I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.**” (Psalm 63:8)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## God Knows Your Story

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

Psalm 139:23

### READ Psalm 139:1–6, 23–24

As I drove home after lunch with my best friend, I thanked God out loud for her. She knows me and loves me in spite of things I don't love about myself. She's one of a small circle of people who accept me as I am—my quirks, habits, and screw-ups. Still, there are parts of my story I resist sharing even with her and others that I love—times where I've clearly not been the hero, times I've been judgmental or unkind or unloving.

But God does know my whole story. He's the One I can freely talk to even if I'm reluctant to talk with others.

The familiar words of Psalm 139 describe the intimacy we enjoy with our Sovereign King. He knows us completely! (v. 1). He's "familiar with all [our] ways" (v. 3). He invites us to come to Him with our confusion, our anxious thoughts, and our struggles with temptation. When we're willing to yield completely to Him, He reaches out to restore and rewrite the parts of our story that make us sad because we've wandered from Him.

God knows us better than anyone else ever can, and still . . . He loves us! When we daily surrender ourselves to Him and seek to know Him more fully, He can change our story for His glory. He's the Author who's continuing to write it. – By **Cindy Hess Kasper**

### REFLECT & PRAY

**Precious Father, thank You for loving me as Your child despite the times I've disappointed You. Help me to yield all of myself to You in full assurance that You're faithfully walking beside me. Amen.**

What assurance do you have that God will always love you unconditionally? How can you make yielding to Him a daily practice?

### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Psalm 139 echoes three different types of psalms: praise, lament, and wisdom. However, one key theme throughout is indicated by verses at the beginning and end of the psalm: God searches us, and He knows us (vv. 1, 23). The word used for "search" is a term that could be used in a legal case when someone is cross-examined; in other words, it involves God's diligent probing. The word used for "know" means to know someone intimately and personally. It's a word that's sometimes used to refer to sexual relations. Used here, it shows that God knows the depths of our very being, which is pointed out by the psalmist who notes that God knit us together (v. 13). When the psalmist invites God to search his heart and "anxious thoughts" (v. 23), however, he's vulnerably asking Him to know him on an even deeper level. – By **Julie Schwab**

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