



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
January 13, 2022
DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Photo: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

(1 Peter 1:4-5)

Did You Know?

- The author of **1 Peter** identifies himself as the apostle Peter (1:1), and the contents and character of the letter support his authorship. From the beginning, 1 Peter was recognized as authoritative and as the work of the apostle Peter. The letter was explicitly ascribed to Peter by that group of church fathers whose testimonies appear in the attestation of so many of the genuine New Testament writings. These fathers were Irenaeus (c. AD 140-203), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), Tertullian (c. 155-122) and Origen (c. 185-253).

- The book can be satisfactorily dated in the early 60s. It cannot be placed earlier than AD 60 since it shows familiarity with Paul's Prison Letters.

- In 5:13 Peter indicates that he was “in Babylon” when he wrote 1 Peter. Although there are a number of theories what he is about, the long-held tradition that Peter was referring to Rome is still the most likely, and most widely held view today.

- Many theological themes are woven throughout the work, the central theme, and one that the author repeatedly returns to, is the exhortation to stand firm in the faith in the face of suffering and persecution.

(The NIV Study Bible; 1 John)

Personal Insight

I found the Our Daily Bread devotion below especially relevant as we celebrated the life of Les Aarsby today. It also reflects what apostle Paul formulated like this: **“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

At some points of our lives - whether we are younger or older - we face death of our loved ones, and we might be threatened by death through illness or accident. It can be terrifying to confront this utmost enemy of life and to deal with the pain and emptiness it leaves behind.

But as we were reminded this afternoon through the words of our New Creed: *“We are not alone”*. We have a Good Shepperd, who is able and willing to be with us even as we go through the **“valley of the shadow of death”** (Psalm 23). We are offered **“unfailing love”** and **“full redemption”** (Psalm 130:7). In fact, I wouldn't be able to officiate memorial services if I wouldn't believe full heartedly that we can trust the Almighty with this. We can have “Genuine Hope”, because the **“zeal of the Lord Almighty”** (Isaiah 9:7) has already accomplished this through Jesus the Christ.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Genuine Hope

He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

READ 1 Peter 1:3–9

In the early 1960s, the US was filled with anticipation of a bright future. Youthful President John F. Kennedy had introduced the New Frontier, the Peace Corps, and the task of reaching the moon. A thriving economy caused many people to expect the future to simply “let the good times roll.” Then the war in Vietnam escalated, national unrest unfolded, Kennedy was assassinated, and the accepted norms of that previously optimistic society were dismantled. Optimism simply wasn’t enough, and in its wake, disillusionment prevailed.

Then, in 1967, theologian Jürgen Moltmann’s *A Theology of Hope* pointed to a clearer vision. This path wasn’t the way of optimism but the way of hope. The two aren’t the same thing. Moltmann affirmed that optimism is based on the circumstances of the moment, but hope is rooted in God’s faithfulness—regardless of our situation.

What’s the source of this hope? Peter wrote, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Our faithful God has conquered death through His Son, Jesus! The reality of this greatest of all victories lifts us beyond mere optimism to a strong, robust hope—every day and in every circumstance. – By **Bill Crowder**

REFLECT & PRAY

God, this world is distressing and confusing, and many voices want to drive me to a perspective that feels void of hope. Help me to root my heart in the promise and power of the resurrection of Jesus, who holds the future. Amen.

Whether you’re an optimist or a pessimist, what situations cause concern in you? Why is hope better than either optimism or pessimism? Read [*Hope: Choosing Faith Instead of Fear*](#).

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In the original Greek, 1 Peter 1:3–12 is a single, run-on sentence. Bible scholar Scot McKnight notes in *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter* that despite the sentence’s length, “Peter’s grammar is wonderfully elegant” and his expression of the beauty of our salvation is profound. He goes on to explain that each of the elements in Peter’s singular declaration of praise builds from the previous thought: The expression of praise (vv. 3–5) leads into a declaration of joy despite suffering (vv. 6–7). That joy is focused on an anticipation of our final salvation (vv. 8–9), which is what the prophets all spoke of and looked forward to (vv. 10–12).

Peter’s blessing of God at the opening of this letter draws a circle around all of life. From beginning to end, everything points toward our salvation and the ultimate realization of God’s kingdom. - By **J.R. Hudberg**

Used with permission