

Dear All,

As none of us knows how long it will be before we will be able to meet together in our church buildings for worship or for any of our other church activities I would like to try and get something out to you as our church family and friends to encourage you. Even if we can't be in a church building we are still a church and a family because we are God's people.

We may be shut in our homes, unable to do our usual everyday tasks, but we can all still pray, we can read God's word and there's nothing stopping us singing a hymn or a song!

So I would like to share with you a short passage of scripture, a reflection on it and finally a prayer for us all at this time and also some suggestions of other things you might like to pray about in this coming week.

God's word for God's people

Matthew 6:25-27

Do Not Worry

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

It was cold down at the nature reserve. The sky was steel grey, clouds torn by an almost gale-force wind. It ripped through the trees, scattering the leaves. The water was grey and ruffled. A great armada of Canada geese was in the water, together with dozens of other waterbirds. They all floated there, facing into the storm.

Their environment had suddenly become hostile, threatening. They didn't protest or run for cover. They didn't use up precious energy flying into it or fighting it. They faced into the wind, paddling quietly. They didn't try to make headway, but paddled just enough to keep their direction and position in the water.

Maybe we can learn from the birds. Jesus thought so. They tell us of God's concern, he said, and remind us that we achieve little by worrying.

When the going gets tough, the tough get going, says the cliché. I'm not sure that's always the best way. We're not all as aggressive as that suggests. Another way is just to face the storm and keep position. Not scream and shout, not protest and ask what have I done to deserve this, but just hold on to faith and wait for the wind to blow itself out. It will, because the creator of the wind is stronger than the wind.

It may take time, but it works, and I don't remember ever seeing a Canada goose with acute depression or anxiety!

Prayers

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and
distress.

Sustain and support the anxious
and fearful, and lift up all who are
brought low; that we may rejoice in
your comfort knowing that nothing
can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us to love our
neighbour, and to care for those in
need as if we were caring for you.
In this time of anxiety, give us
strength to comfort the fearful, to
tend the sick, and to assure the
isolated of our love, and your love.

We are not people of fear:
we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our
own safety:

we are people who protect our
neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed:
we are people of generosity.

We are your people God,
giving and loving, wherever we are,
whatever it costs, for as long as it
takes wherever you call us.

AMEN

Pray for:

Our doctors, nurses and health
professionals.

Those separated from their families.

We may not be able to meet but we
are able to talk. Pick up the phone
and have a chat with someone who
may be feeling isolated.