

20th March 2020

Dear Friends,

First, I would like to share a Bible passage with you from 1 Corinthians 13:

The Gift of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,^[a] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly,^[b] but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (NRSV)

How strange it seems not to be planning a full worship service, and instead to be writing a letter to you all. I am sure that we will all be coping with our latest way of living in different ways, maybe calling rather than seeing loved ones, changing our routines and habits to keep one another and ourselves safe.

Sunday of course is Mothering Sunday, meals and celebrations that may have been planned won't go ahead, some mothers and grandmothers won't see their children/ grandchildren, it may feel like a strange day.

For others of course Mothering Sunday has always been a strange day, and reminds us of what we never had, or might have lost.

In all of this we are reminded of our human need for connectedness, a connectedness that has in some ways been utterly transformed as we practice self-isolation and social distancing. Yet we are still connected, our love for one another may look different now as we stand apart if we meet, or make phone calls rather than paying visits, and yet that love remains, as we are reminded in the words of 1 Corinthians 13, Faith hope and love remain, and the greatest of these is love. Jesus reminds us that we must love God, and then our neighbour as ourselves, and we are also reminded that we love because God loved us first.

So, in this challenging time let's hold on to that, God's love has not diminished and does not change, we are all held in it and by it, and will continue to be held in and by it.

Jesus also reminds us, that because we are all interconnected and can be confident in that love, then we can bring anything to God in prayer. So, I wonder what you would want to bring today?

Prayers for your loved ones who you may, or may not see?

Prayers for our community, for the workers from the cafes. Pubs and restaurants that are now closed?

Prayers for our government, national and local, for wisdom and strength?

Prayers for those we know who are in hospital?

Prayers for this strange world that we find ourselves in, where everyone everywhere is affected by this strange virus?

Take a moment then to offer to God your prayers and your concerns, as you do you might like to listen to, or read the words of Be still;

Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy One is here
Come bow before Him now
With reverence and fear
In Him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy One is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire
With splendour He is crowned
How awesome is the sight

Our radiant King of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister His grace
No work too hard for Him
In faith receive from Him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place

Now be still, and listen to what God might be saying to you, how is the Holy Spirit stirring you? Do you sense Jesus alongside you offering to bear your burdens and carry your load?

So, we remember that we are loved, we are held in love, and hold one another in love.



Reverend S.A. Coleman