**CARE: A 5- day Devotional and Gratitude diary**

We are delighted that Canadian member Susan Watson from Fredericton, New Brunswick, has written this beautiful devotional to share with and inspire members. Susan has been a member of her branch at Christ Church Cathedral for over 30 years. We have added in a space for gratitude so following your time of reflection on the Bible verse and devotional you can reflect on your day and what you want to thank God for.

When times feel hard it can be difficult to remember all that we must be thankful. Simply writing down three things every day that you can give thanks to God for can really help our own wellbeing whilst also remembering to sing praise to our Lord and Saviour for all that is good. Remember you can be grateful for the smallest thing such as – I am thankful for being able to Facetime my daughter this morning or I am grateful that I was able to book my online grocery shop - as well as the bigger things such as – Thank you God for the rolling out of a vaccine against COVID-19 or I’m grateful for my good health. There are no rules, you can say thank you for anything – God hears us all.

**Day One**

*"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

Luke 22:42 (NIV)

How many times since March 2020 have, we prayed something similar to this with respect to COVID? We have asked for God to put an end to this deadly virus and put the world back to normal, but like Jesus’ plea on the cross, God has not bent to our will. It is clear that it is HIS will that this continue, so we need to ask ourselves why? I have personally found this verse to be very comforting

**Gratitude**

Write three things today that you are thankful for you, and pray over them should you wish:

1.

2.

3.

**Day Two**

*Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:21-23 (NIV)

Many times, in the Bible God’s people have been made to wander in a wilderness or desert or wait patiently for Him to act. It has been remarkable to me how often this subject has come up in the past while in my own personal devotions. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years while God prepared them for the promised land. Desert times are intended to prepare us, to help us draw near to God and learn to depend on Him. Priscilla Shirer says that the Israelites emerged from this season with a greater reverence for God, a more comprehensive and confident ability to discern God’s leading and a better ability to believe Him before seeing proof. (One in a Million, Priscilla Shirer)

**Gratitude**

Write three things today that you are thankful for you, and pray over them should you wish:

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3.

**Day Three**

*As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?*

Psalm 18:30-31 (NIV)

Ruth Chou Simons states in her feature article in *Our Daily Bread* (Nov. 2020 Our Daily Bread) that there is so much beauty to behold in the desert; that it is lush with life that learns to survive on what He provides…it whispers of His enduring faithfulness… that Jesus alone is the author of our hope - our balm and sustainer… that God is undeniably sufficient in the face of the seemingly surmountable!

**Gratitude**

Write three things today that you are thankful for you, and pray over them should you wish:

1.

2.

3.

**Day Four**

*I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

*He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.*

*Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.*

Psalm 40:1-3 (NIV)

With the above in mind and all we have though about the past three days, can we find the beauty in the past 10 months+ of COVID?

Early on, a shortage of flour and sugar meant that a new generation was learning the art of baking and the satisfaction of the fragrance of warm bread and cookies and of doing this for themselves! There was a mad demand for puzzles and games as families sat together and played and talked. Many went outdoors for walks in the fresh air and found creative ways to play outside as families. Some went to work in their yards and gardens, growing flowers and vegetables that they had never tried before and reaping the benefits of their new knowledge and skills. Hobbies that had long been forgotten and home repairs long neglected became priorities to be fulfilled. Some found new skills and hobbies to fill their time. On the world scale, because of fewer emissions from road, sea and air travel, pollution is reduced in the air and oceans. The skies are bluer, and the oceans are clearer. There have been far fewer car accidents and crime rates have been substantially decreased.

The older generation have had to get on the technology bus to find new ways to “get together” virtually with their families. The learning curve was great, but I now can proudly say that I can conduct a “Zoom Meeting” and my Dad knows how to join one!! We all have a greater appreciation for this technology that allows us to conduct business, make purchases and connect with people from our own homes! We have also gained a greater appreciation for teachers as parents struggled with home schooling; trying to dig up those math skills and keeping the little ones focussed on their studies. We have most certainly come to recognise and greatly appreciate the skills and courage of essential and front-line workers, who have to keep going day-in and day-out at great expense to themselves and their families.

One of the primary things to come from this has been a building of real relationships. Families are closer now. We can see just how important they are when we have to be away from them. We see what lengths we will go to just to see each other through a window or a computer screen. Our family ties between generations have been strengthened.

Most importantly, many have strengthened their relationship with their Heavenly Father. We have taken this time to enrich our prayer life and to study God’s Word. We have been learning to depend on God and give Him thanks for each day. We have been finding contentment with His amazing provision!

**Gratitude**

Write three things today that you are thankful for you, and pray over them should you wish:

1.

2.

3.

**Day Five**

*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (NIV)

It is our hope and prayer that soon, COVID will be a thing of the past, but the impact it has had on our lives will always be a part of who God has made us to be. It is my prayer for us all that the positive aspects of this wilderness journey will be the defining characteristics that remain in our hearts for the future to come.

**Gratitude**

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1.

2.

3.