



# Taste and

# See...

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## Running on Empty \_\_\_\_\_

***Rev. Canon Gene Packwood***

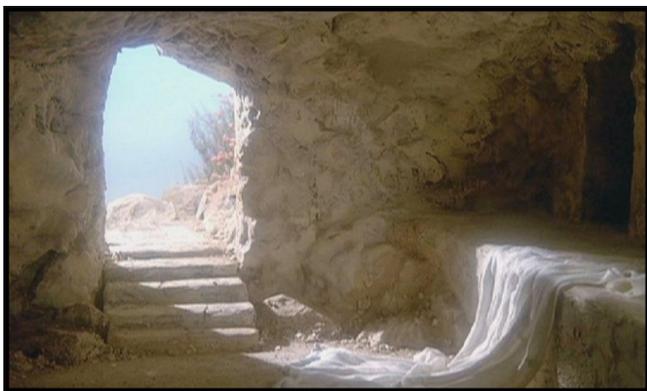
Jesus wasn't in the tomb when Mary Magdalene went there, early on that first day of the week, while it was still dark. She thought someone had taken his body. She ran to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple. It must have been very disturbing, especially after what they'd all just been through in the previous week from hell. The tomb was empty.

In 2006, the Archbishop of Uganda, the Most Rev. Henry Luke Orombi, began his Easter Message like this:

*When we are told the water tank for the Archbishop's Palace is empty (which it often is!), we say, "That is not good." When my wife, Mama Phoebe, discovers that the food store is empty, we say, "That is not good." When my driver tells me that the fuel tank in my vehicle is empty, I say, "That is not good."*

*If you are like me, most of our associations with the word*

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*‘empty’ are negative. We think, “empty is bad, and full is good.”*

*Yet, Easter challenges that assumption, because it is an empty cross and an empty tomb that are central to our faith. The resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ sets him apart from all other human beings throughout history, and especially all other religious teachers. Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Mohammed is dead. Jesus and Jesus alone has returned from the grave, never to die again. Jesus is alive today! Empty is good!*

Empty didn’t appear to be good to Mary that first Easter morning. She must have felt as if she was “running on empty” in a bad way as she ran to tell the others that Jesus was gone, and the tomb was empty. Jesus wasn’t there (he was, but they couldn’t see him yet). Jesus is here for us now (except we can’t see him, either).

And then, when Mary did see him, she didn’t recognize him (John 20:14). Amazing. She must have known him so well – every line on his face, every mannerism. He even spoke to her to ask her why she was crying, and who she was looking for (John 20:15) – as if he didn’t know. She thought he was the gardener. She still didn’t recognize him.

Until he said her name.

And, suddenly, empty was good. Wonder of wonders. Because the tomb was empty, Jesus could

fill the dark, empty void in Mary’s grieving heart with the goodness of his presence. And then she knew the empty tomb was a good thing; a very good thing, indeed.

“I have seen the Lord!” was the next thing she said to the disciples. Her heart was full. Empty, she had discovered, was good.

The tomb was empty because Jesus had conquered sin and death. The empty tomb means the world is FULL of the resurrection power of God Almighty. The tomb was EMPTY because Jesus is FULLY and wonderfully raised from the dead.

Jesus is here now. The tomb is still empty, so his church doesn’t have to be – even in these COVID times of distancing and restrictions. The church can always be full. Jesus fills it by his Holy Spirit. He just does, because he is God, which means he is omnipresent; he is everywhere at the same time. Not only that, he is omniscient; he knows everything – past, present and future. Jesus is also omnipotent, or all-powerful. Those three attributes mean that Jesus can be fully present to everyone, everywhere, all the time. Even when things appear to be empty.

He is here with me, and there with you. Like Mary, I might not recognize him. He might look like a gardener, or one of you, or like bread and wine, or like a church full of flawed people like

you and me, or a church that’s empty – like that tomb. “Now you are the body of Christ,” wrote Paul to the Christians in Corinth, “and individually members of it” (1Cor. 12:27). So are you. You and I, together or apart, are all the body of Christ, the Church, and individually members of it.

His church is the best place in the world to look for Jesus, and to listen for when he might say your name, as he did for Mary. It is the best place in the world to bring our empty bits for him to fill with his Holy Spirit. It is the place to bring our empty, lonely, grieving hearts, like Mary’s, to be filled with the goodness of his presence.

Alleluia! The tomb is empty. Empty is good. In Jesus, God the Father has made empty good enough to run on. Running on empty is good, because of Jesus.

*Gene Packwood blogs at GENERALities [www.kiwirev.blogspot.ca](http://www.kiwirev.blogspot.ca) and can be found on Facebook and Twitter (@kiwirev).*

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*Taste and See...*

## From the Editor

*Alison Stortz*

Last year at this time, we were on the verge of taking action to “flatten the curve,” and wondering how it would affect our Easter celebrations. Now, here we are facing a second Easter of restrictions on church gatherings and planning physically-distanced celebrations. Can it even be called a “celebration” when you can’t worship together in church? YES! Of course it can! Over the past year, I have discovered that the Holy Spirit is as fully present in a Zoom room as He is in a chapel.

Our church buildings may be empty, but His Church – you, me, all of us, wherever we are – is as full of His presence as it has ever been, and ever will be, thanks be to God.

Things are not as we would like them to be. Loneliness and stress are real challenges in our world. But Jesus says, “take heart, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33), and so in Him we can find a new perspective on our circumstances, KNOW that our problems are His problems, and we are never really alone.

In this issue, we invite you to consider ways of re-framing your circumstances through the power of the Holy Spirit: see how He is present in this chapter of your story, spend time in prayer, and consider the opportunities for spiritual growth afforded by this crisis, not just in Lent, but always. Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Alison* ☺

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# Ways to Grow in God: (Re)writing your Story \_\_\_\_\_

*Laurie-Ann Copple*

My name is Laurie-Ann, and I'm a missionary. During my mission travels, I have ministered with people in Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Canada and the USA. I've also ministered in African countries like Kenya, Namibia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, South Africa and Botswana. But at this time, my husband Tony and I live in the beautiful Western Cape of South Africa.

One of the deepest ways to grow in God is through writing your own story. In a way, writing an autobiography could be part of this process, since it's important to look back and remember what God has done in your life. Too often we forget the goodness we have received, and instead complain about the present. We are not unlike the Israelites, who forgot about the miracles that happened in Egypt, and their Red Sea crossing. They complained about many things, and when Moses was away with God, they instead turned to a newly-made idol and worshipped it. How quickly we forget! Writing helps you remember the lessons of the past as you go forward into the future.

One way to start (re)writing your story is to journal - as a love letter to God. It's a good way to pour out your concerns, and your prayer requests in a tangible way. When you look back, that's when you can best see how things come into place, and how your prayers were answered. Re-reading your

journals helps you gain a new perspective on past struggles, and how you came through them. Even though there are some areas that I'm still struggling with, he is still there, helping transform me.

Writing your dreams, goals and aspirations in a journal helps you to look forward as you pause and reflect on your past challenges. You are reminded of God's faithfulness. However, you do also need to learn to say goodbye to any yet-unfulfilled hopes from earlier seasons, so they don't hold you back.

I made my Cursillo in March 2001. I was showered with love by the community, but I was grieving certain losses from my single life in Toronto, and still hadn't fully transitioned into my married life in Ottawa. I shared my feelings with Rev. Andrea Thomas, and she told me I needed to say goodbye to those things. Andrea was right. I wrote down the things that I was missing from my single time in Toronto. Let's call this the "goodbye list." Items ranged from the convenience of driving my own car, to University of Toronto's library, to friends, to Tony's wish not to have children at our ages. Some were small losses, others big. I shared the list with my priest in Ottawa, Rev. John Bridges. We had a funeral for the goodbyes and, as part of the process, burned the list in an incense burner. It was like the burning list of goodbyes and failed

hopes were an offering to the Lord. I finally felt free. A "goodbye list" is another form of writing as release.

Psalming is writing songs or poems to God, similar to the style of the Psalms in the Bible. These include complaints and praise to God, and they ultimately end with a commitment to trust God. When you write psalms, they become a promise to God that you can lean on. And, you'll find that Holy Spirit will answer the cries of your psalms. Tony has written music to psalms written by Ottawa prison inmates. Some of these songs have become favourites with the men we see in Worcester's Brandvlei prison, who may in turn write psalms of their own.

If you see your life as a developing story, rather than one chapter on continuous repeat, you can see there is a rhythm in it. If your current page features a thunderstorm, and you feel that the wind and rain are lasting forever, they are NOT. It just seems that way. Are you going to be defined by only one chapter, or even one page? No! There is sun in the future forecast, and there are rainbows.

All stories have their crises, nail-biting intense parts, suffering, joys, sunshine and rainstorms. Some include romantic moments, beautiful sunsets, loving families, and joys of friendship. You can even

*(Continued on page 5)*

choose the genre of your life. You might think that you have a sad, dramatic story, but you may have moments of comedy. And then there are the moments of overcoming. You just need to see from a different perspective.

Pastor Surprise “Surpresa” Sithole is a very special Iris leader, and one of the teachers at the Harvest school that Tony and I attended on our journey to becoming Iris missionaries in South Africa. His book, Voice in the Night, is his story. I stayed up all night reading; I just couldn’t put it down.

Surpresa has a nail-biting story – he survived many war-time incidents in Mozambique, as well as the murder of his witchdoctor family by rival witchdoctors. Holy Spirit spoke to him that night and commanded him to leave the house. When he obeyed, it saved his life. He and his best friend were led through a forest to a home on the edge of Malawi, where they came to faith. And that was just the beginning of his life of miracles, that included the gift of being given at least 12 languages supernaturally – one of them being English! He turns all of his experience to joy in the telling. He is not one to forget what God has done for him.

So what is Surpresa’s secret? He’s a man who worships all the

time. He prays, and has a thankful attitude. He doesn’t let what is happening around him sway or scare him. He is a master of what I call the “re-frame.” Re-framing is to look at a situation from a completely different perspective, to see the good in a situation, or something that you can learn from that situation. It can even show the way out from under that seemingly-perpetual raincloud!



This is the storyteller’s version of a promise given in 1 Corinthians 10:13. God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. You need to look beyond your circumstances to the big picture. It’s being given God’s perspective, and to see almost prophetically, like eagles. This perspective is above the storms of life. This is another secret of Surpresa’s – having God’s perspective on life. This gives him constant joy.

Tony and I were fortunate to at-

tend two teaching sessions with Surpresa. We asked him to pray over us for languages, and hoped for Afrikaans. But sometimes you need to just work at it, right? We are thankful for encouraging tutors who re-frame our frustration by reminding us of the strides we have made in our learning process.

Surpresa’s master re-frame is never to forget your identity as a child of God. He knows who he is. Some people don’t like the fact that Surpresa is always smiling or laughing, but he told us that he is always enjoying God and is worshipping him. His story is full of joy, since his perspective is always purposed by God. Just as praise changes the atmosphere when you sing, so seeing through

God’s perspective changes the atmosphere of your life. You begin to see God’s little touches woven through your own life.

Of course, most of us are unfinished masterpieces, but we can in time become beautiful. The Japanese have perfected an art form called *kintsugi*, which repairs broken pieces of pottery, such as a cup, with gold. The resulting cup is even more beautiful than the original, before it was broken. The painful history of the cup is not hidden, but visibly incorporated into the new cup. When

(Continued on page 6)

you are thinking about your life, think of joys, not just sorrows. You celebrate one, and overcome the second. But there are beautiful gems in those sorrows. Your life wouldn't be complete without them.

Think of all the characters in the Bible. Except for Jesus, every one of them was far from perfect. All of them sinned. Some initially said no to God's call, like Moses and Jonah. Some were fearful, like Gideon; however, the angel called Gideon a "mighty man of God." Why? Because that's how God was re-framing him. He does the same with us. Is there a character in the Bible whose story resonates with you? Learn from their story. How did they begin? What did God do in their hearts? God wants to do that in you, too.

You can be a super-hero in him, just like the biblical characters. Each of these people were great **BECAUSE** of the Lord. We can point to him and give him the glory. He's the one who has given us gifts and talents, intelligence and creativity. And he's especially the one who takes our weaknesses

and pours his glory through, like a waterfall.

It's important to invite Jesus into any painful memories you may have from your childhood. When you do, he can begin to heal your heart from the inside out. One such memory surfaced when I was on a mission trip in northern Kenya. I had a fear of public speaking, which sounds funny now for someone like me, who speaks all the time. But at that time, I was terrified of giving presentations. No matter how familiar I was with the topic, I would read my talk.

During that mission, as I struggled with fear while preparing a talk, a gentle pastor from Nairobi named Tom prayed with me and I was given a sense of where this fear came from. I had a picture in my mind's eye of me as a frightened little girl. I was being scolded by an older man, who was mean. He had attempted to molest me and told me, "Don't tell. Don't ever tell. Don't speak." While I had long forgiven this man, I still had been held by his curse over me to not tell of the abuse, or to speak.

took time and confidence. The following day, I shared about my emotional and spiritual healing with the audience. Many people came for prayer, some in tears. God used my story and his healing to bring healing to others. God showed his glory, like the gold in the Japanese cup. And my story was transformed from that of a fearful mute to one of an overcoming speaker.

You too can overcome your own struggles and painful memories, just as I did, and am continuing to do. Just open the door and let him in.

Jesus, I thank you for the journey that you've taken me on. We are still re-writing my story. You're continuing to take threads from my past to re-weave me into a beautiful tapestry. I ask that you do the same for my friends who are reading. Knock gently on their hearts and guide them on their journey. Bring your healing and give them new eyes to see from a higher perspective. Give them joy where there has been sorrow, hope where there has been despair. And fill them with your peace as they look to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Laurie-Ann and Tony Copple are Iris Missionaries living in Worcester, South Africa. More of her writings can be found on her websites: [www.waystogrowingod.org](http://www.waystogrowingod.org) and [www.coppleswesterncape.ca](http://www.coppleswesterncape.ca).*



Thankfully, I shared this impression and memory with Tom and we prayed. We brought Jesus into the memory. The man was again forgiven, and the power of his curse was broken. I was free to speak, although it

# Holy Spirit in the Prayer Books, Part 17

Rev. Canon Gene Packwood

By the time you read this, many of you will have gathered together in worship again – albeit in a new COVID-19 filtered configuration for safe liturgy at a distance. The second wave may have closed things down again. But wherever you are when you worship, together or apart, no matter how restricted or free, The One you worship in Spirit and in Truth will always be fully present.

At home or away, the Prayer Books put true and evocative words of worship in our mouths in all sorts of ways, and especially in these words:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

(*The Book of Alternative Services [BAS]*, p47 etc)

or

GLORY be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

(*The Book of Common Prayer [BCP]*, p6 etc)

and

GLORY to God,  
whose power, working in us,  
can do infinitely more  
than we can ask or imagine.  
Glory to God from generation to  
generation,  
in the Church and in Christ Je-  
sus,  
for ever and ever. Amen.  
(*BAS*, p214)



The *BCP* also follows with this in Morning and Evening Prayer (p6 & p21):

*Minister.* Praise ye the Lord;  
*People.* The Lord's Name  
be praised.

These are all good Trinitarian declarative statements of worship – just as I wrote in an earlier column – a sort of worship “capsule” that can be used anywhere, no matter whether you’re alone or with someone else, even when you don’t happen to have a band or organ handy. They’re like a mini hymn or worship song, only

without music. They occur many times in both Prayer Books.

Worship also in truth. For example, to pray the creed (which appears for the first of ten occurrences in the *BCP* on p10 and of several in the *BAS* on p52), is to do just that. We prayerfully declare our belief in Biblical truth concerning the Living God includ-

ing our belief in the Holy Spirit and that Jesus was miraculously conceived by Him as the power of the Most High overshadowed her (Lk. 1:35).

The next references to the Holy Spirit in

the *BAS* come in two of the Dismissals from Morning and Evening Prayer, on pages 55 and 71.

First, “The Grace”: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.

What is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? The Greek word is *koinonía*, which includes ideas like having communion and participating with or sharing in something, all of which resonates with how Jesus describes the Holy

(Continued on page 8)

Spirit in John’s Gospel – the Helper who will be with us forever, the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:13-14) – who always shares Jesus with us.

Then, this: May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not only Helper and Teacher, He is also raw divine power personified. From the second verse of the whole Bible, where the Spirit of God swept and hovered over all of creation, to the miracle power of signs and wonders and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, Risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven – this is The One with whom we have fellowship, and who prays and works through us for Jesus’ sake.

The Prayer Books remind us, and have us praying and reciting His

wonders, over and over again, COVID or not.

The danger, of course, is to let such words, prayers and recitations become routine, to let repetitions leach the heart and weight of glory out of them.

Or perhaps you are simply worn down by the fear, frustration or fatigue in these pandemic days.

In either case, the words are very much worth repeating, even as one would The Jesus Prayer, just as the Desert Fathers taught, over and over again, so as to get our hearts praying without ceasing.

Decide to make the words meaningful. Apply yourself. Don’t let them be empty words. Worship in Spirit.

If we were to pray them repeatedly, from the heart, glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit with all our might, will the Father not pour out his Holy Spirit on you and me and the Church, for a time such as this?

*Gene Packwood blogs at GENERALities [www.kiwirev.blogspot.ca](http://www.kiwirev.blogspot.ca) and can be found on Facebook and Twitter (@kiwirev).*

## Subscribe to the ARM email list via our website

Thank you, our dear readers, for your support of Anglican Renewal Ministries! We couldn’t continue without your ongoing prayers and financial support.

Since COVID-19 has curtailed in-person activities, our online presence is more important than ever. We encourage you to check out our website and Facebook page, particularly during Lent, as we offer a series of short videos, “Leaning into Lent.”

We are creating a list of folk who want to hear occasionally via email about ARM Canada’s doings. If you would like to subscribe to our email list, please sign up on the ARM website (look for this image in the sidebar).

If you don’t subscribe, you won’t receive email messages from us. We will still send our quarterly magazine, “Taste and See..,” to everyone who

would normally receive it.

God bless you!



## From the ARM Chair

**Rev. Canon Gene Packwood**

This will be the first reference to *Leaning into Lent*, ARM Canada's new video series, in these pages. The idea came to us between this and the last issue of "Taste and See..."

*Leaning into Lent* is a series of six brief videos in which ARM Board members reflect on the six ways by which we are charged to observe a Holy Lent. They are:

- Self-examination
- Penitence (or repentance)
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Almsgiving (or self-denial)
- Reading and meditating on the Word of God



By the time you get this issue, we'll already be up to Fasting or Almsgiving. You can see the earlier episodes on the ARM website, and on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/AnglicanRenewalMinistries>). Please check them out, like us, and share our posts with your friends. We pray these videos will help you to lean more closely into your Lent this year.

Why leaning? "To those leaning on the sustaining infinite," wrote Mary Baker Eddy, "today is big with blessings." Observing a Holy Lent makes every day big with blessings, whether we're aware of

them or not. The blessings are not necessarily (or even) on, or for, you or me.

Holy Lent Leaning prayer (informed, of course, by Holy Lent self examination, penitence, fasting, almsgiving, and reading and meditating on the Word of God) stimulates the activity of the good and bountiful Holy Spirit in the lives of those for whom we pray. Lent-ward leaning on the

sustaining infinite places us, and all those for whom we pray, solidly in blessings' way.

Thirty years ago I read something Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon wrote in their book, *Resident Aliens*, which has stayed with me ever since: in their effort to be relevant to the surrounding culture many Christians have leaned so far over that they've fallen in.

The fact is, I need to be aware of which way I'm leaning, and why. Is my leaning bringing me closer to Jesus, or taking me further away? Doing an honest Lent helps me to know.

This lit up for me rather uncomfortably a few Lents ago: "...judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me" (Ps. 7:8). Well, that's me hooped for a start, I thought. If I am to be judged for my own righteousness and according to my own integrity or innocence, I am lost. It's Jesus' righteousness, integrity and innocence that saves me. I must lean on him.

That's what Holy Lents are for. To make sure I'm leaning in the right direction. I either lean into Jesus and am saved, or I lean away and fall over.

The Reading and Meditating on the Word of God part of Holy Lent observation is particularly helpful for keeping us upright and heading in the right direction. It also a joy:

Your words were found, and I ate them,  
and your words became to me a joy  
and the delight of my heart,  
for I am called by your name,  
O Lord, God of hosts.

(Jeremiah 15:16)

Leaning into a Holy Lent keeps us facing into delight.

*Gene+*

# Lighting an Arctic Fire

*Rev. Canon Gene Packwood and Rt. Rev. David Parsons*

I received the following note in my mailbox shortly after the last issue of *Taste and See...* was published:

Today, "Taste and See..." arrived. I read about Arctic Fire in Gene's article and more about the missionary work of the people in the Arctic in Bishop David Parson's article. I was very excited to read what has been happening.

I recall when I was 16 years old, a missionary came to St. Mary's church in Regina. She was a Bishop's helper from the Arctic. She said, "no one wants to go to the Arctic; missionaries always want to go to Africa or China. If you become a missionary, think about the Arctic." At that time I promised, "Lord, if I have an opportunity I will go to the Arctic."

In July 1993, my husband Lloyd and I went to Baffin Island with a combined ARM/SOMA team for an 8-day visit to Iqaluit and Pangnirtung. We joined up in Ottawa with the ARM group. There were 4 of us. It was a dream come true. I had waited 40 years to go on a mission trip to the Arctic! It was exciting and rewarding. Even then the church was sending an Arctic team to Ottawa the following month for a church confer-

ence. On return we were able to share our experience with a few Regina churches, an ACW group, and World Day of Prayer group.

I hope we can bring a team to Regina soon. Although I am now 83 and not as active physically, I would still want to host people in my home and help financially and do whatever I am able.

I sincerely hope Arctic Fire can light a fire here!

Love in Jesus,  
*Lois Martin*

We sincerely hope so, too!  
Thank you, Lois!

Bishop of the Arctic, David Parsons, is a visual teacher and note taker. He doodled the following **ARCTIC FIRE PRAYER POINTS** as a reference for himself during a recent telephone conversation. When he shared it with me I thought, not only are these the pertinent Arctic Fire prayer points as we wait for the COVID-19 all-clear, but the style in which he captured them is exactly appropriate. We believe The LORD has such simple, authentic, grassroots doings in mind for Arctic Fire. So please cut this out, put it in your Bible or wherever you will see it often, and pray with us as follows:

The image contains handwritten notes in black ink on a white background. The notes are organized into sections with yellow highlights for the questions: 'Who', 'What', 'Where', 'When', and 'Format'. The 'Who' section discusses being led to specific people and being courageous in sharing Jesus' stories. The 'What' section mentions God's inspiration and the importance of being straightforward. The 'Where' section asks for the first location to go. The 'When' section lists seasons and the provision of funds. The 'Format' section lists four steps: Food, Music, Stay, and Food Snacks Prayer. To the right of the notes is a circular logo for ARM (Anglican Renewal Ministries Canada) featuring a stylized flame or fire in red, orange, and yellow colors.

**Who** → that we would be led as to who specifically should go & that they would be courageous bold clear and true in sharing stories of Jesus

**What**  
That God would inspire what story to share  
No Hype → just straight forward facts  
That God would work in the hearts of those who come

**Where** should we 1st go?

**When** spring summer fall  
\$ that God Provide the → \$

**Format**  
① Food ② [Musical Notation] ③ Stay ④ Food Snacks Prayer



# COVID-19 Christian Correctives

Very Rev. Dr. Donald P. Richmond

I am told that the Chinese character for crisis is also the character for opportunity. Whether this is accurate or not, crisis often does provide us with opportunities. COVID-19 has resulted in a great many crises in this country and throughout the world. Social, psychological, emotional and spiritual problems abound, and COVID-19 has only exacerbated the many problems we were already facing.

But, along with these many crises, we are also being afforded opportunities to reflect on our priorities and reorient ourselves according to the principles that God has provided for us. If nothing else, these past months have inadvertently provided us with a poignant pause, a pause in which “solitude, silence and prayer” (Henri Nouwen) can be gratefully embraced and not just grudgingly endured.

In the classic devotional *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis writes: “[O]ccasions [of adversity] do not make a man frail, but show what he is.”

Our year of adversity has impacted almost everyone, and has consistently revealed how very frail and needy we really are. This revelation of reality is a good thing, or at least has that capacity. It is a good thing to know that we need God, Church, Sacraments, and each other. We are created from community, for community and to community, and the past year has assisted us in understand-

ing how very necessary these components of community are to our hope, health and well-being.

Knowing these things and growing in them, however, are two entirely different things. We may know that we are needy, that we are dependent upon God’s many graces, but growing through them is a different matter. How do we make adversity an advantage?

*Arm yourself for battle!* Being alone for protracted periods of time is not how we are designed. When we are alone for too long, we begin to experience some measure of psychological, emotional and spiritual trauma. We need to be prepared for this experience, most especially if there is nothing that we can do about it. St. Paul tells us that we should put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18). Are we doing this? Do we get out of bed each day, knowing that our isolation will often lead to spiritual warfare, and equip ourselves as God has commanded? While intended to address spiritual “principalities and powers,” donning the armor of God also has tremendous psycho-emotive stabilizing abilities.

*Bathe yourself in the Bible.* We are often wrong-minded about many things. Isolation and illness can make this worse. The corrective for our wrong-mindedness is to “hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest” (*Book of Common Prayer*) God’s written Word.

The renewal of the mind, to which St. Paul calls all Christians (Rom. 12:2), is empowered by the Holy Spirit. If we have more time, we must use it wisely by being in God’s Word.

*Craft a personal “rule” of life.* One of the most important books in the history of Christianity is the *Rule of Benedict*. It has, quite literally, shaped the western Church. In it, Benedict communicates a little rule by which people can live effective Christ-like lives. Issues such as when to get up, when and how to pray, what to read, what to eat, how to dress, how to relate to others, etc, are discussed. While we live in an entirely different time and context, living our lives according to a “rule” is important, helpful and healthy. An ordered life helps head, heart, hands and homes function more effectively and efficiently. Think about developing a life motto (mine is, “For life and Godliness”) and a model for living a Christian life.

*Discover Discipleship.* A disciple, a follower of Jesus, has disciplines by which to live his or her life. Being a Christian is not just having Jesus as a part of our life, but it elevates Christ as the CENTER of our life. Christ is the purpose. As COVID-19 places personal restrictions around our lives, let us use these restrictions to our advantage. Find ways by which Jesus

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can be brought more into the center of your life. Make Christ your priority. Prioritize prayer. Live a disciplined life, not a dissolute, unrooted life without stated scriptural purpose.

**Embody faith, embrace others.** It is hard to be alone. We feel it, and some people feel it more intensely than others. One of the disciplines of the Christian life is engaging with others. “Go into all the world,” while about evangelism, is also about how we embody God to other people. How are we communicating God? Take time during your day to write a note of encouragement to another Christian. Call them on the phone and ask how they are doing. Say a pray for them. Ask about their needs. Even if we must “physically distance,” we need not be socially or spiritually distant.

**Focus on faith, not fate.** In spite of everything that’s happening, God is sovereign. Jesus is Lord. The Holy Spirit still moves upon the turbid “waters” of our broken and battered world, and upon each of us who claims Christ. Faith is not “wishful thinking,” it is trusting in God and in what God has said, has done, and will do. Faith is the substance of real and reliable hope and help!

**Grow in grace, not gripes.** One of the ‘alone’ statements of the Reformation is, “by grace alone.” This is a profound theological statement of pronounced practical application. Within its historic

context it referred to how salvation was brought to us. It was, and remains, God’s work. COVID-19 has hopefully helped us appreciate how very important grace – unmerited favor – is to each one of us. We need grace to endure isolation, hardship, disappointment, loss, failure and so much more. Sometimes, suffering and struggle are the only means by which we can grow in grace.

**Hope in God.** This is a hard lesson. The Psalmist writes that his hope is in God *alone*. We must learn this lesson, too. Hope is not about having life turn out as we would like, but trusting in the God who “works all things according to his purpose.” God is our hope, our help, our deliverer, our shield, and our healing. COVID-19 has stripped away many things, and may continue to do so, but it cannot remove our hope in God, who “is always good and deserving of all our love.”

**Invest yourself in building God’s kingdom.** The Great Commandment calls us to love God and love our neighbor. We often focus upon loving God, but forget about our neighbor. COVID-19 has showed us how important our neighbor really is, especially our Christian neighbor. Increase your prayer list and prayer time. Don’t just call your neighbor, as important as that may be, but call upon God on behalf of your neighbor. Plead, labor, and advocate for your neighbor. Storm heaven for your neighbor. Engage in spiritual warfare for your neighbor. We may be physically restricted, but

prayer knows no restrictions.

**Just do it!** It is easy, when times are tough, to lose ground. It is easy to let things go, let things slip. If you have a pattern of life that is pleasing to God, encouraging to you, and helpful to others, CONTINUE. Work what you have to God’s greater glory. COVID restrictions may change the pattern of life, but do not allow yourself to become spiritually lazy.

**Kultivate Kindness.** Stress often leads to short fuses and increased expectations. What a gift it is when, in the midst of hardship, someone is kind! A kind word or action, however small, can go a long way to better another person’s life. Have a mind to be kind because, as St. Paul says, “love is kind.” And, to be sure, it is often an extension of patience!

**Learn and live Love.** While learning to live in solitude and silence, which are always useful disciplines to cultivate, learning to live *lovingly* should be our primary goal. If we emerge from our enforced isolation being experts in living 1 Corinthians 13, we will have done well. Memorize it. Make it your own. Love never ends, and always abides. Love is always a legacy.

**Meditate.** Again referencing St. Paul, Christians are called to meditate on “whatever is true, noble, right, pure and lovely” (Phil. 4:8). During times of struggle and suffering it is easy to think about the bad things, and there are plenty of them. But Paul turns his head and heart elsewhere, and

*(Continued on page 13)*

## CORRECTIVES, continued

urges us to do the same. If you lift up your eyes to God, your hearts will also be lifted.

*Notify others of need.* It is okay for us to tell others what we need. Sometimes isolation and illness exaggerate that need. If you are having a crisis, let your pastor, deacon, elders, or other trusted authority know. Seek and secure help.

*Open up.* Solitude and silence are opportunities for us to come clean with ourselves and with God. Let the solitude and the silence reach deep down into those scary places, and expose them to God. Opening up to a pastor or trustworthy professional can also help us get an objective perspective on our subjective feelings and experiences. You may be alone, but God has given the Church so that you need not remain alone.

*Pattern your prayer.* Flexible prayer is good. "Arrow prayers" are good. But *patterned*, disciplined prayer is better. Purchase a Prayer Book (such as the *Book of Common Prayer*) and begin to build a disciplined prayer life. Deeper and sustained prayers break down barriers of longstanding isolation. If you pray well, you will learn to live well. Prayer changes things, but it also changes us! If we are "in Christ," and alive by the Holy Spirit, we are never alone. Practice patterns of praise!

*Quit complaining. Quit your vices.* Citing again Thomas a

Kempis, we read: "If we were to uproot one sin per year, we would soon be perfect men." Although this is an exaggeration, as we will in this life always be sinners and saints (although laboring toward the latter), the intention is important. As Christians we should strive to put away all "works of darkness," and engage ourselves in cultivating every Christian virtue.

*Remove obstacles.* More often than not, we are far too busy - so busy that, at times, we do not see what needs to be seen or done. If our goal is growth in God, living love, the forced isolation we are facing, reframed as solitude, can help us slow down and see obstacles more clearly. When we see obstacles, we can remove obstacles. But we must be clear: our journey inward (toward self) is always rooted within our journey upward (toward God) and outward (toward others). Christians are not seeking achievement (what we can do) but *receive*-ment (what God has done).

*Serve others.* Find ways, in the midst of our current crisis, to reach out toward others. Ask what you can do to help... and then do it. Moreover, do it cheerfully (2Cor. 9:7). Need cheering up? Singing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs elevates us psychologically and spiritually.

*Take Time* to know God, and yourself, better. One ancient Christian hermit said that if we stay in our "cell," in the prayer closet in which we are challenged to live, and if we properly use this

solitude, it will teach us everything we need to know. Therefore, be-friend your isolation.

*Understand that these times will not be easy.* Reconcile yourself to struggle, and KNOW that you are not alone. God with us! God for us!

*Victory is yours in God by Christ through the Holy Spirit.* Often, sustained growth is secured in solitude and silence. As such, they are not enemies, but friends.

*Watch and pray.* We do have spiritual enemies. Be on guard. Be alert. Be ready.

*And finally...*

*Zoom opportunities.* We may not be technologically savvy, and may not like computers, but it is important to take advantage of the opportunities afforded us. *Y?* Because it can be *X*remely helpful to learn something new.

COVID-19 has created a crisis that has not been seen in many generations. It truly is a crisis of epic proportions. But God can make opportunity from crisis. What a difference "But God" makes! In Christ, crisis is opportunity.

*Donald P. Richmond, DD, a widely published author and illustrator, is a priest-oblate with the Order of Saint Benedict.*

## For the Common Good: Exploring I Corinthians, Part 15

Rev. Canon Gene Packwood

The Gifts of the Spirit have been described in chapter 12 and the style and environment in which they are to be exercised and shared has been set out in chapter 13. Chapter 14 takes us to the next level.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-25

St. Paul's first words — "Pursue love" — sets our goal as Spirit-filled Christians. This is the John 3:16 kind of love. It is God-dependent and informed, intelligent, purposeful and completely focused on the good of the other. We are to chase this 1-Corinthians-13-love down. How? A good way to start would be to heed St. Paul's instructions and "earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" (1Cor.14:1).

Notice the set of "earnestly desire" brackets he has put in place around chapter 13. Earnestly desire the *higher* gifts in the last

verse of chapter 12, then the *spiritual* gifts in the first verse of chapter 14. In other words, he is encouraging us to seriously, ardently, intently and resolutely desire the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are to *want* them. All of them. Especially prophecy (1Cor.14:1). They are good, enjoyable, useful, and they build up the church.

Then St. Paul launches into a discussion of prophecy and tongues — perhaps the two most contentious Gifts of the Spirit — and how they are to be used: "Now I want you all to speak in tongues," wrote St. Paul, "but even more to prophesy." (1Cor.14:5) Prophecy is especially important to Paul. It is to be earnestly desired *especially* because, when you or I prophesy, we speak to people for their up-building or strengthening, encouragement and consolation, or comfort, which in turn "builds up the church" (1Cor.14:4).

If ever there was a time when the Church needed building up, it is now. So, we need to pay close attention to what he is saying about prophecy here and, with The LORD's help, to put it into practice.

Rather than give you questions for reflection this time, therefore, I'm going to suggest a wee exercise whereby you can help build up the church by strengthening, encouraging and comforting your family, friends and fellow parishioners. You can do it even in pandemic lockdown.

First, some ground rules. Most of you will be new to this, so step out in faith and PURSUE LOVE, just as St. Paul wrote. Decide not to do negative: no judgment, correction or condemnation. Remember, this is to build UP and bless.

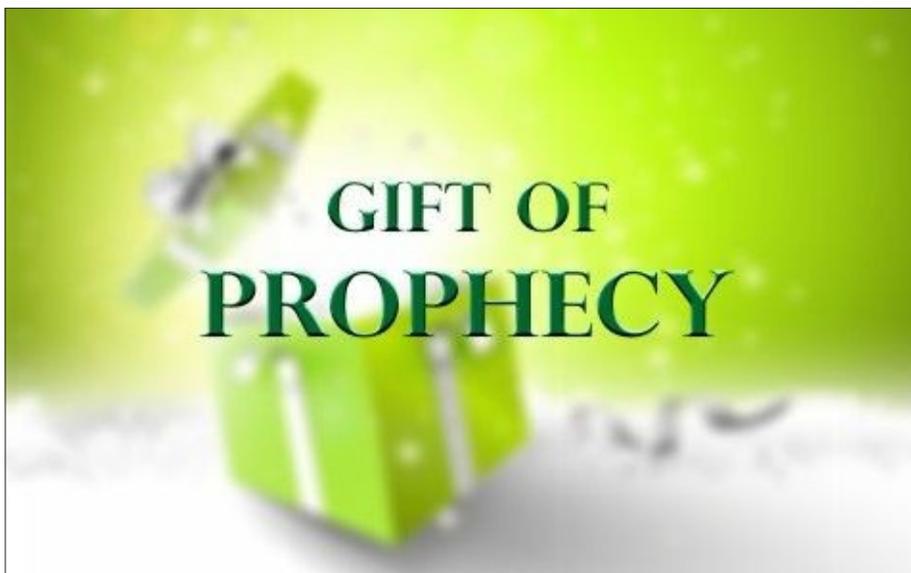
When you're comfortable and ready, with Bible handy:

Pray.

Give Glory to God.

Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit and to release the gift of prophecy in you. Ask God to point out who He wishes to speak to through you. If you're back in church, or in some other group, look around you prayerfully and ask God to light someone up. If you're alone, ask God to bring someone to mind. When He draws your attention to someone,

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## I CORINTHIANS, continued

ask God to bless that person through what he reveals to you. Ask God to reveal Himself to that person – to draw him or her closer.

Pray that if there is anything not of God, it will simply and harmlessly fall to ground, causing no confusion or harm.

Ask God how He wants to strengthen, build up, encourage and/or comfort (1Cor.14:3) the person to whom He has drawn your attention. I was also taught to ask God what He likes about the person. And then I'll often use the words Eli taught Samuel, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening" (1Sam.3:9).

Listen. If you need help to focus, repeat 1 Samuel 3:9 quietly.

Here are some ways the Holy Spirit speaks prophetically: He may light a Bible verse up for you, and/or bring thoughts, impressions, pictures, or a vision to your mind. Some people see a word or a phrase as though it were projected on a screen in their mind, or even hear an audible voice.

In faith, write down what comes to you.

Then, either verbally, or in a note or on a card, say or write something like, "As I was praying for you, I believe The LORD, who loves you, may be saying something like this..." and share what you heard or saw in your mind.

Notice we're not saying, "Thus sayeth The LORD!" definitively. That is reserved for more mature, experienced folk who have received a special anointing and have a proven track record.

Remember that we can and do often get it wrong, but as long as we're doing our best to strengthen, encourage and comfort, we will do no harm. Even if we're off the mark and don't hear accurately from The LORD, the people for whom we pray will still get a blessing from us at the very least.

So, be careful, wise, very loving and gentle – but step out and enjoy it, too! God is good.

Let us know how you get on. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to email or call me. You'll find my contact information in the list of ARM Board members elsewhere in this magazine.

Next time we'll explore the gift of tongues.

*Gene Packwood blogs at GENERALities [www.kiwirev.blogspot.ca](http://www.kiwirev.blogspot.ca) and can be found on Facebook and Twitter (@kiwirev).*

Look for more of this series in upcoming issues of *Taste and See...*

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\* Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province

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## Our Mission:

*To offer times of refreshing so God's people may be empowered by the Holy Spirit through teaching, equipping and fellowship in the love of Jesus. (Acts 3:19-21)*

## Our Vision:

*Rediscovering the Holy Spirit's refreshing presence in our lives and in the church.*

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**ARM** Canada believes that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord and the only way to the Father; it accepts the authority of Holy Scripture and affirms that the Holy Spirit empowers authentic worship and ministry. ARM Canada seeks to contribute towards spiritual renewal among Christians both personally and corporately, and to be of service to the Anglican Church.

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