

In this era of isolation and lock down one of the gifts many have been sharing with each other is the gift of words. Notes written, telephone conversation, prayers offered, books read aloud, conversations on the river trail at an appropriate social distance, poetry forwarded. The words are serving as types of communion elements which are nourishing us. With that in mind I am offering a sample of some of the poetic words which have found their way to my computer. Read them, pray them, share them, add to them. May they continue their work of encouragement.

Patrick Preheim, co-pastor Nutana Park Mennonite Church

Great God,
you are an ever-present help in times of trouble,
and that's why we're praying now.
We are troubled and we're worried things
are going to get more troubling.
This virus is spreading around the world:
so many are seriously ill
or will be seriously ill,
so many health care systems are stretched
or will be stretched.
Be with front line medical workers,
give them courage to do their work
and keep them safe.
Be with public health officials
as they make decisions for the common good,
and politicians as they roll those decisions out.
Help us to be kind to one another,
because anxiety can make us snappy.
Help our communities to be resilient
and expansive as we reach out to help
all who are isolated and afraid.
In these times of shutdowns and slowdowns,
when travel is restricted or banned,
as routines are disrupted and we spend
less time together or more time together,
help us zero in on what is essential.
Thank you that love is also contagious
and stronger than any virus.
You will be with us,
and we will be with each other
in sickness and in health.
Amen.

- Pandemic Prayer by Carol Penner

and the whole world
walked inside and shut their doors
and said we will stop it all. everything.
to protect our weaker ones
our sicker ones, our older ones.
and nothing, nothing in the history of humankind
ever felt more like love than this.

- Posted on facebook by "cd"

And the people stayed home. And read books,
and listened, and rested, and exercised, and
made art, and played games, and learned new ways
of being, and were still. And listened more deeply.
Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.
Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed. And, in the absence of
people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless and
heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people
joined together again, they grieved their losses,
and made new choices, and dreamed new images,
and created new ways to live and heal the earth
fully, as they had been healed.

- Kitty O'Meara

To live content with small means; to seek elegances rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich; to listen to stars and birds, babies and sages, with open heart; to study hard; to think quietly; act frankly, talk gently, await occasions, hurry never; in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common, This is my symphony.

~ William Ellery Channing

I would look it up later, what the Farmer said, how researchers had asked seventy-seven adults to record three things each day for weeks—any and all stressful events experienced, any and all helpful acts (like opening a door for someone, helping a child with schoolwork), or loaning anything. And that was the full-stop epiphany of the research: “helping behaviors seemed to buffer the negative effects of stress.”

It was like finding your own pocket miracle. If your hand was willing, you could pull out a small miracle, a small gift—a note that made a soul stronger, a cup of something warm to soothe someone’s knotted places, a hand to help someone up, open arms just to embrace the overwhelmed and whisper grace. Carry pocket miracles into the world, and you’re guaranteed to find the miracle of less stress in your pocket.

I would read what the researchers said twice, three times and once more: “People overall did one or two acts of kindness per day, but what was most important was when they did more than one or two per day, we saw a benefit to their well-being.”

There it was: Give It Forward Today—give numerous small gifts forward today, and you get the miraculous gift of less stress. Abandon yourself to the givenness of God, and you abandon a bit of the fears and the stress.

Busy is a choice. Stress is a choice. Giving yourself to joy is a choice. Choose well. – Ann Voskamp, *The Broken Way*, p. 128