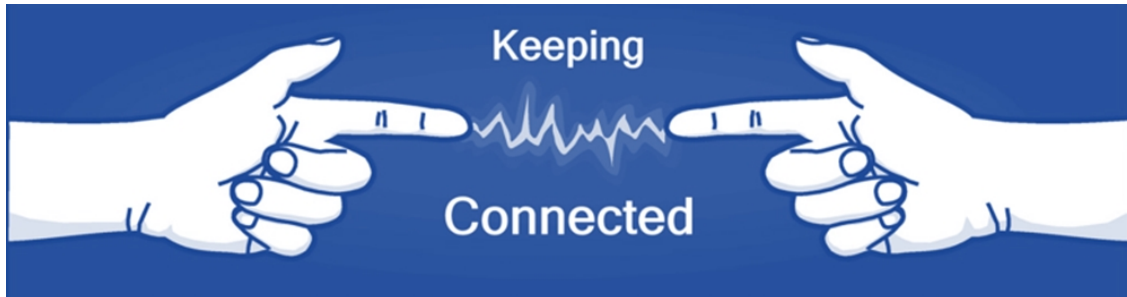


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**For September 20 2020**

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**A Message from Rev. Jonathon**

**God's Constant Presence**

In our Old Testament / Hebrew Bible reading this week, the people of Israel were in a place of great danger and challenge. With God's help, and under Moses's leadership, they had left Egypt after four hundred years living as slaves to Pharaoh.



Now they found themselves in a new and unfamiliar place - the desert. It was a land devoid of all that was familiar to them. The civilization that they had lived in along the Nile river was gone. There were no buildings, no landmarks, no food, and no water. Like their ancestor Abraham, all they had was a vague promise that they would be going to a new and better place, to a land as yet unseen.

People were obviously concerned with the very urgent and practical questions of day-to-day survival. Are we lost? Where are we going? When we will get there? What will we eat? Will we survive the journey? I imagine that this uncertainty was leading to feelings of fear and maybe even panic on the part of the people. The Bible says that they people "grumbled" or complained about their uncomfortable circumstances, about Moses's leadership, and ultimately about God's plan. This is not surprising, since psychologists have identified that complaining can be a natural response to uncertainty and fear.

There is no question that the people were facing difficult circumstances. But what they failed to realize is that they were not alone in this place. They were not alone in the desert because God's presence was with them, quite literally guiding them by a physical manifestation of cloud and fire. And God was with them spiritually, available to them whenever they prayed. The people had also failed to remember how God had just recently miraculously delivered them from the Egyptian army and allowed them to cross the Red Sea.

In addition to the physical challenges that the people were facing, they were also facing spiritual challenges. The desert was a place where their faith in God would be stretched to the limits. It was ultimately a time when the people learned to trust in God's promise and provision, no matter how difficult the circumstances.

Through hardship and difficulty, they learned more about themselves and about God, and their faith actually grew. Far from being a desolate place between Egypt and the Promised Land, the desert was actually a spiritual proving ground and a place of growth, no matter how uncomfortable it was. And the time that the people spent there was actually essential to their spiritual growth, both as individuals and as the People of God.

One of the most important lessons that we can learn from this story is that we should never allow life's challenges and difficult circumstances to cause us to lose sight of the reality of God's presence with us. Although the storms of life may rage around us, God's presence is still there, and his peace is still available. Although our circumstances change, God's presence is constant. Although our faith may waver, His faithfulness endures. Let us give thanks that God is with us and let us draw strength from that to get through life's challenges.

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## In-Person Worship at St. Paul's – What's it Like?

**George and Mary Nightingale** attended the 9:30 a.m. services on September 6 and September 13.

George says "Many thanks to all who worked hard to make the service on Sunday both possible and memorable. The format developed was exactly what I needed. It was contemplative with the beautiful, traditional words adding to the serenity. It gave a message of comfort and reassurance. The sermon, as well, was very apt, giving us a basis for trust and hope that God is with us in these times."

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**REMINDER : When you call the office to pre-register for Sunday service, please leave your name and PHONE NUMBER.**

If you have trouble leaving a message, please email the office with your registration request. Thanks!

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## **An Aid to Contemplation**

*Submitted by Claire Marson*

*This is a long poem but worth taking a couple of minutes of quiet contemplation to read.*

As I began to love myself I found that anguish and emotional suffering are only warning signs that I was living against my own truth. Today, I know, this is **AUTHENTICITY**.

As I began to love myself I understood how much it can offend somebody. As I try to force my desires on this person, even though I knew the time was not right and the person was not ready for it, and even though this person was me. Today I call it **RESPECT**.

As I began to love myself I stopped craving for a different life, and I could see that everything that surrounded me was inviting me to grow. Today I call it **MATURITY**.

As I began to love myself I understood that at any circumstance, I am in the right place at the right time, and everything happens at the exactly right moment. So I could be calm. Today I call it **SELF-CONFIDENCE**.

As I began to love myself I quit steeling my own time, and I stopped designing huge projects for the future. Today, I only do what brings me joy and happiness, things I love to do and that make my heart cheer, and I do them in my own way and in my own rhythm. Today I call it **SIMPLICITY**.

As I began to love myself I freed myself of anything that is no good for my health – food, people, things, situations, and everything that drew me down and away from myself. At first I called this attitude a healthy egoism. Today I know it is **LOVE OF ONESELF**.

As I began to love myself I quit trying to always be right, and ever since

I was wrong less of the time. Today I discovered that is  
**MODESTY.**

As I began to love myself I refused to go on living in the past and  
worry  
about the future. Now, I only live for the moment, where  
EVERYTHING  
is happening. Today I live each day, day by day, and I call it  
**FULFILLMENT.**

As I began to love myself I recognized that my mind can disturb  
me  
and it can make me sick. But As I connected it to my heart, my  
mind became a valuable ally. Today I call this connection  
**WISDOM OF THE HEART.**

We no longer need to fear arguments, confrontations or any kind  
of problems with ourselves or others.  
Even stars collide, and out of their crashing new worlds are born.  
Today I know that this **LIFE.**

*Author ~ The origin of this poem is uncertain. It is believed to  
have been written by Charlie Chaplin on his 70th birthday,  
however some give credit to Kim & Alison McMilen, for a poem  
titled, "When I Loved Myself Enough" which is very similar but  
much longer.*

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## Suggested Reading

*From Deane Zeeman*

**By Brian Maclaren. Dear White Christian Pro-Life Friends:**

<https://brianmaclaren.net/dear-white-christian-pro-life-friends-1-4-compiled/>

*This is quite a long read, but so sincere and caring that I feel prompted to share it.*

He writes to Evangelical and Catholic believers who vote Republican because they believe in the sanctity of human life from conception.

He takes a look back at the origins of the pro-life movement, from the perspective that he was once a sincere pro-lifer himself, and shows how conservative political forces have co-opted it and mashed it together with a set of policies that no Christian would normally accept.

And he challenges them to really consider what this bag of repressive policies looks like and whether they can honestly say that in the name of pro-life they can accept the rest of it.

He's very clear that any conservative Christian who reads this is reading something they will find personally challenging and he's quite gentle but tough in his presentation.

To me, this is a right way to confront those who don't have the same opinion as ourselves and at the same time it's a logical, reasoned plea to think again.

Really worth a read when you've got a chance.

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## READINGS FOR THIS SUNDAY

### Pentecost 16

Click on a reading to see the text from the  
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) on the Bible Gateway

- First reading: [Exodus 16:2-15](#)
- Psalm: [Psalm 145:1-8](#)
- Second reading: [Philippians 1:21-30](#)
- Gospel: [Matthew 20:1-16](#)



**Your prayers are requested for everyone affected by the wildfires on the West Coast – fire fighters, homeowners, people suffering from the resulting air pollution, and decision-makers tasked with implementing short-term solutions and designing long-term responses to the climate crisis.**

**In the World.** Pray for the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan. Pray for everyone involved with SchoolBox – in Nicaragua and in indigenous communities in Canada.

**In Canada.** Pray for the Provincial Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon.

**In our Diocese.** Pray for the Rt. Rev. Shane Parker, our bishop and Michael Bird, our assisting bishop; and for Christ Church, Aylmer - The Reverend Jeannie Loughrey; for the

Diocesan Director of Stewardship Development, Jane Scanlon; for volunteer university and college campus chaplains; for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

**In Our Community.** We ask God's blessing on local faith communities and on their ministries and, we pray for the people and leaders of this town of Almonte and the surrounding communities that the Lord will help us contribute to its well-being. We pray for volunteers, workers and clients of our local satellite Food Bank, the Almonte Food Cupboard, providing food security support to local area people

**In Our Parish.** We pray for Jonathon, our priest, for ourselves and for each other. For comfort and healing for Lucy Poaps, Anne Wheatley, and Sally Gentry. We pray God's comfort for the friends and families of our members recently deceased: Bessie Exley (mother of Barbara Humphreys); Carmen James; and, Ella McPhail We ask for God's blessing on our members Steve Sibbald, Myra Smith, Sarah Spinks, Tony and Theresa St. Dennis, and Katharyn Elizabeth (Betty) Stock. We remember our neighbors, especially Assad, Alsit, Lana and Elias.

