

# **Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church**

## **Sun, Mar 22, 2020 – Lent 4 – Amidst Pandemic Anxieties**

### **Hope in the Midst of Horrors** (Ps 23 and Hebrews 10:23-24)



**Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.**  
(Hebrews 10:23-24)

#### **Fascinations to consider**

Nothing like this pandemic shutdown has happened on this continent in my lifetime – all of this sheltering in place and prudent distancing is a new world – not chosen – not comfortable – not controlled – the toll taken by this virus is horrific – the crisis emerging, medically, financially, and socially, seems terrifying – how, then, to respond? – for those of us who, in a variety of ways, trust in and are loyal to the forgiving and reconciling God we see most clearly in Jesus Christ and whose Spirit is working its wonders even now, the choice will have something to do with faith, hope, and love, with the greatest of those being love – that's the essence of a faithful presence, according to that beloved passage in 1 Corinthians 13 – that's the core of this urging from the preacher who wrote Hebrews, though the order is slightly changed

#### **Provocations to ponder**

It is good, in the midst of the horrors we have experienced and are anticipating, to keep things in perspective – especially in the perspective offered by our ancestors in the faith who were facing horrors of their own – Luke in his writings during the murderous early years of the Christian movement – Paul the same as the church violated all the social boundaries the powerful had erected – the author of Hebrews writing to clarify the mission of the church in troubled times – all were deeply formed by the faithfulness of God to the well-being of the creation – all were deeply convinced that God's faithfulness, experienced most directly in Jesus Christ, was the source of our hope – all were deeply committed to participating in the works of the Spirit for forgiveness and reconciliation throughout all of creation – and all three of these writers, as they lived in and for the early Christian community, came up with the same core formula for living = faith, hope, and love – or hope, faith, and love – or love God, love others, and love yourself – the fruits of hope in God's faithfulness always being love – that's how we respond in time of crisis – we sing God's love from every balcony and in every street

## **Compassion to practice**

There are many ways of singing our love song for each other – it is a love song that arises from a resilient hope that in turn arises from the steadfastness of God’s faithfulness – each and every one of you participating in our Zoom experiment this morning or watching this later are doing things to support others through this time of uncertainty and change – I hope this morning’s conversations with God, with each other, and with yourselves have strengthened your wisdom and courage for facing this hour – my encouragement to all of us is to keep finding ways to connect in compassion with people in your circles of inspiration and influence – let them know you care – send an email, post a personal message on your favourite social media platforms, give them a call, drop them a note – deepening our sense of being cared for is crucial to living through this pandemic and reformulating the ways we flourish together after it is passed – that is the provocative task to which we called as church, as a community formed and reformed by God’s faithfulness, hope, and love

## **My Notes**

## **My Prayers**

