

Jeff's Jottings
November 6, 2020

In these days of pandemic, of contested elections and polarization, it is easy to think we have lost our way, our joy, our future. We haven't. We know the way (and the truth and the life). The challenge is finding the courage and resilience and focus to walk in the way of Jesus. Here's the way I named that this week, with thanks to a colleague, Kate Kooyman, for the framework.

Our God, our help in ages past,

From the very first, O God, you loved creation.
And from the very first, creation refused
that love and turned its back.
From the first, throughout our story:
In war and strife, despair and death,
In every pandemic.
Through governments just and unjust,
We have been captured by the distortions of our humanity.

Our hope for years to come.

This year, too.
This year of COVID and George Floyd and razor-thin elections.
This year of social distance, ventilators, and empty churches;
of robo-calls, cancelled plans, and heightened anxiety;
of layoffs, shortages, and voices that have been silenced.
We've lost friends to COVID.
We've seen a culture of racism, known intimately by some,
laid bare to the rest of us.
We've alienated families and split communities with yard signs.
We look around and ahead and we can only wonder,
whether fear must be the driving force of life.

Our shelter from the stormy blast,

It still catches our breath
to see our kids playing soccer in face masks,
learning math from a teacher on a computer screen,

giving airhugs to Nana through a window.
It flattens our spirit to worship alone,
with no song or coffee time and passing the peace.
We want our country not at odds with itself,
where our societal brokenness is notion full display,
when people you love don't have broken hearts.
What happened to respect?
What happened to justice?
Or was it never really ever there?
We are angry, hopeful, resilient, confused, tense,
tired of hiding from a virus we can't see
and the racism and contentious people we can.

And our eternal home.

But we know something else, too.
We know of hope,
the presence of the one who calms the storms.
We are a people of hope,
Not of our own doing, but of God's doing.
And so we pray to our God this day:
Keep us sound of heart,
that we might work graciously with our neighbors.
Open the eyes of our souls,
that we might commit ourselves anew to justice for all.
Inspire us with a spirit that is not only loving and good,
but transformative and just,
That we might live not simply for ourselves
but for our communities.
For in a world that seems so uncertain and unpredictable,
one thing does not change.
We can choose who we are,
and what we see,
because we have all first been chosen by God.
Choose hope.

Are these the right words for this moment? I don't know. I only know they are my words, today, in this moment. Words grounded in this reality: I choose to be led by hope, and be committed to justice.