

The First Church of Christ, Scientist

Christian Science Nursing Activities

July 2020

Dear Fellow Christian Science nurses,

Last Fall at the International Conference for Christian Science Nursing, we were uplifted by the inspiring and encouraging ideas shared about the theme: “Here I am, Lord; **Here I Stand, Lord; Here I Stay, Lord!**”

These words were sung beautifully for us by Kathy Glover and Kristen Palkoner, (from a song written by two Christian Science nurses, Char Beck and Kathy Glover, found on the CD “Inhabiting Eternity,” available through *The Christian Science Publishing Society*.)

If you’ve listened to the words of that song...you know the heartfelt message they contain, and how much they relate to the challenges we’ve been facing this year. What a beautiful preparation of thought we shared at our conference!

Let’s consider these ideas from the perspective of a Christian Science nurse:

Here I **Am**, Lord...willing and able, and responding to the need.

Here I **Stand**, Lord...on a firm foundation—the Rock, Christ.

Here I **Stay**, Lord! ...not wavering—established and strong in my understanding of God’s omnipotent and omnipresent love; knowing and demonstrating the nothingness of the mortal dream; committed to finishing the course with joy!

In response to God’s call:

“I have heard my people cry,

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky....

Who will bear my light to them...Whom shall I send?”

We answer:

“Here am I Lord....Is it me Lord? I have heard you calling in the night...

I will go Lord, if you lead me....I will hold your people in my heart...”

What is required to be at the bedside today? To stand? To stay?

Perseverance, strength, courage, and humility—all of these qualities are necessary for our work right now. Like thousands of nurses, we are being called to go the extra mile in how we support and provide care for our fellowman.

This particularly challenging experience that is facing *everyone* may seem daunting, and at the very least—a real imposition to our normal way of life. But it is actually a cry for help that is impelling each of us to reconnect with what first motivated us to become Christian Science nurses. The qualities and loving response that move us to be willing to help our fellow man, to grow in our understanding of man’s relationship with God, and to take a stand for health and well-being are limitless expressions that we all are capable of demonstrating—right now! We are *reflecting* God’s love!

None of us have experienced the kind of need that the world has at this time. And, although we are being spared from having the same experience as our medical counterparts—on the grueling battlegrounds of hospital wards—we are still required to respond appropriately to specific needs that come up in our work—as Christian Science nurses accepting cases in homes, working in facilities or visiting services.

What have you been learning in your moments of prayer and honest, deep conversations with God? What spiritual truths have sustained your “alertness to duty,” and your resolve in removing fear, facing the blatant claims of media-driven descriptions of contagion, illness, and death? Or, in maintaining obedience to community guidelines and requirements and ethical responsibilities?

How are we “cop(ing) with the claim¹”? All of it? Wearing masks, social distancing, and staying home? Are we tempted to get impatient? Are we tempted to feel tired and frustrated with these requirements? Are we tempted to complain? Are we tempted to feel uncomfortable?

In asking these questions of myself recently, I came across what Mrs. Eddy said in a sermon on the 4th of July, in the mid-1880’s². She was speaking about the resistance to her founding of the Christian Science church, but I thought it was very applicable today:

“But what of ourselves, and our times and obligations? Are we duly aware of our own great opportunities and responsibilities? Are we prepared to meet and improve them, to act up to the acme of divine energy wherewith we are armored?

Never was there a more solemn and imperious call than God makes to us all, right here, for fervent devotion and an absolute consecration to the greatest and holiest of all causes. The hour has come. The great battle of Armageddon is upon us....

What will you do about it? Will you be equally in earnest for the truth? Will you doff your lavender-kid zeal, and become real and consecrated warriors? Will you give yourselves wholly and irrevocably to the great work of establishing the truth, the gospel, and the Science which are necessary to the salvation of the world from error, sin, disease, and death? Answer at once and practically, and answer aright!”

These words from the Founder of Christian Science should ring in our hearts and stir us to action! The call is to each of us now, just as it was to her workers when she wrote it.

Just recently, I found this very interesting article in *The Christian Science Monitor*, (June 25, 2020)³, sharing ideas about a quality described as “beyond fortitude”—known in the Finnish language as “*sisu*”—that struck me as something we can certainly relate to! Although the writer does not identify its source as divine, she’s discovered that we all have the capability to go beyond normal human limitations. The author, Barbara Mackoff, a medical professional, wrote:

“I emailed a number of front-line nurses at Manhattan’s Lenox Hill Hospital, where I once worked, asking them to describe how they are able to maintain a constancy of care when they are running on empty.

Their stories are gallant examples of *sisu*: a Finnish word meaning the extraordinary courage and determination that surface only in response to particular adversity, suffering, and hardship. The word is 500 years old, but it was revived by the perseverance of Finnish soldiers who fought in the punishing cold of the 1939 Winter War. They defied a powerful Soviet army invasion and preserved Finland’s independence.

Since then, *sisu* has become a key element in Finnish culture, though it is a capacity we all share. At the core of *sisu* is the idea that, in each of us, there is more strength than meets the eye....I discovered the notion of *sisu* when I worked on a Fulbright grant at the Helsinki University hospital. There I encountered the work of Finnish psychologist Emilia Lahti, the world’s foremost authority on the phenomenon.

Ms. Lahti’s research details three key elements of *sisu*. Firstly, it enables us to move beyond our existing view of our mental and physical capacities. *Sisu* is also an action mindset that helps us to face up to fears, extend ourselves in moments of suffering, and take action in the most daunting circumstances. And finally, *sisu* is a second wind that allows us to draw upon a previously hidden, untapped source of strength....

I ask Emilia Lahti how she views the exceptional responses of front-line health care workers.

‘The *sisu* these nurses describe has appeared in a moment of extreme adversity,’ she responds. ‘It is invoked by an experience that calls them to stretch and expand.’ Ms. Lahti thinks of *sisu* as the next gear beyond fortitude. It begins where grit and perseverance end, a ‘friendly darkness of adversity’ that sparks our ‘ability to channel a moment and open the pathway to a latent existing strength that resides within us,’ she says.

The COVID-19 pandemic is such a moment, Ms. Lahti suggests. ‘We are witnessing a global expression of *sisu*. We see nurses and health care providers digging to reach layers of strength they did not know existed. They are stepping into their previously unrepresented strength.’...

More than 100 years ago, the American philosopher William James wondered ‘what keeps our lights burning and our hearts hoping during the dark night of the soul?’ When I listen to the stories of these valiant nurses, I hear eloquent answers. I can only express wonder and gratitude for the *sisu* that moves them to meet this unthinkable moment.”

After reading this article, it was very clear to me that everyone has the ability to go deeper—and because these qualities and strength come from a divine, unlimited source, from God to man, they are always available. Florence Nightingale found it, Clara Barton demonstrated it, and Mary Baker Eddy identified it as “...support which they derived from the divine law, rising above the human.”⁴

So....Let’s find our “*sisu*”! Let’s doff our “lavender-kid zeal”—and reach for our full potential as mature metaphysicians, not giving into fatigue or impatience or irritation, but daily, hourly, minute by minute—overcoming the attempt of mortal mind to prove that it has any power whatsoever that can attempt to challenge God’s omnipotent, omnipresent love for mankind, which is keeping all of us safe and well and about His business!

Take heart, dear Christian Science nurses! Keep on doing God’s work. The world has need of you!

With appreciation and love,

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The Mother Church

¹ Mary Baker Eddy, *First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany*, p. 227

² Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 177

³ Mackoff, Barbara. “Beyond fortitude: COVID-19 nurses tap a hidden strength—“*sisu*.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 25, 2020.

⁴ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 385: 5-18