

“Breathe In Creativity”

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First Baptist Birmingham
Facebook Live Streaming
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Psalm 32:6-11

Welcome to all of you who are participating in this online worship service from near or far.

If you are new to Facebook Live, there is a comments section usually to the right side of the screen. If you are on your phone, it might be below the video.

Throughout the service and after, feel free to write comments, reflections, resources, and prayer requests in that section. From last week we learned that after the service people frequented the video and comments to connect with what was happening in the church.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. We are continuing to hold Sunday worship services online and making adjustments as we go. Currently, we don't have quite the technology or the copyright to use music for online broadcast. We do however have a fancy new Blue Yeti microphone that can also be used for creating podcasts or other online content in the future. We have leadership from the church

doing research and listening to seasoned online veterans to work our way over the learning curve. Be patient with us.

2. After this online worship experience, I want to invite all of you into a community connection time video chat through the Zoom link in this video description. If you don't have video capabilities, you can join by phone at 312-626-6799. In that forum, you'll be able to see one another and share about how you are doing, and perhaps offer some thoughts on this service.

3. Next Sunday, we are planning to use the Zoom call in phone number instead of the conference call line. We expect this will be more reliable.

4. We also have a new 2-week online class beginning this coming Wednesday at 7 pm titled “Finding Purpose In The Wilderness” taught by Joan Trusty. All of you can join in using the link in the comments section, or call in to listen at 1-646-558-8656.

5. If you would like to connect using video through your computer, but you have never done that before. Please give either me or Bill Olsen a call and we can walk you through it. We want you to be able to participate.

Let us begin our time of worship together by taking a couple of deep breaths, for it is one breath at a time that we will get through this season.

CALL TO WORSHIP

A poem written for this time by
Pastor Steve Garnaas-Holmes

*Our social distancing is an illusion.
We are one. There is no distance.
No gap. Isolated in your
apartment, you belong.*

*You breathe and it fills my lungs.
You weep and my heart is broken.
We are one body in many places.*

*In this time of separation we open
our hearts, we allow ourselves to
flow out from our bodies in Spirit to
one another, to the strangers*

*who are part of us. Like the Italians
singing from their balconies with
neighbors, we are all notes of the
same song.*

*Love flows where germs cannot.
Meditate on our amazing unity.
Extend your spirit to include all it
includes: the whole world.*

*Breathe in this breath (so
threatened!), a gift. Breathe out
this breath (so released!), a gift. Let
compassion for all beings flow with
it,*

*in and out, refreshing your whole
body, the Body of Christ, the whole
human family, the whole Creation.
Let love be our body.*

*Let your love take flesh. Make
calls. Write letters. And when you
come back out don't stop being
one another's body. It's your life.*

We are now in a forced life pause. Many of us are off work or school. Some of us are without a paycheck. Even though connected, we are separated by physical space. We didn't ask for it. We didn't want it. We have resisted it. We fight it. And no matter what we do, we can't change it. It is the reality inside which we are now living.

I want to invite you to take different approach — **to choose it.**

Let tell you what I mean. I'm not saying that we like what is now forced upon us, or to think of it as a wholly good thing. Instead, choosing it is in part accepting it as what is true at the moment.

Once we accept it, we can both see more completely the impact the situation has on us, and also face it squarely. We are not shying away. We are not crying in a corner. We are not telling

ourselves it is something different than what it is.

Once we do this, we can find the silver lining. We can take some constructive action. We can find the opportunity in the middle of it.

So, I invite you to choose the CoVid-19 coronavirus pandemic, all the bad and ugly dimensions of it. It is not easy to be here, but choose it. Then, let us together find the opportunities from where we now stand.

As I said, part of choosing it is acknowledging how the CoVid-19 pandemic is currently impacting us. Let's look inside. For many, the coronavirus is creating a heightened level of inner anxiety, and that anxiety can get in the way of us thinking clearly and being able to choose.

When we become anxious, we have chemical changes inside our brains and our bodies that leads to the fight, flight, or freeze response. In this mode, we no longer have the same control over our higher mental processes in the frontal cortex of our brains. In this state, it simply isn't possible to process the situation rationally or pause to reflect or think through what is happening. Our bodies are primed for survival.

In the wild, when an antelope is being chased by a lion it has all sorts of adrenalin running through its veins. But when the lion wears out and decides to lay down to rest, the antelope shakes it off becomes immediately calm and might stand ten feet away from the lion while it looks around and begins eating some grass.

For human beings, we are not being chased by a lion, and perhaps are doing everything that we can to be safe, but we sometimes find ourselves perpetually in a state of anxiety with adrenalin rushing through our veins.

This will take it's toll on us physically and mentally. We are left irritable with those around us and unable to sleep well. You can imagine how this is playing out in homes throughout the world where we are now spending much more time with our families perhaps than ever before.

I want to give you a tool to lower your anxiety and stress. It is a simple breathing exercise.

BREATHING EXERCISE

Sitting or laying on your back, close your eyes and place one hand on your belly, just under your ribs and the other over your heart. Take a deep breath through your

nose and feel the air slowly expand your belly. Breathe out fully through your mouth and feel your belly softly empty. As you do this, notice how your body feels. Do you feel your heartbeat? Is your breath smooth? Are there any areas of restriction in your torso? Notice how different areas of your body are relaxing? Simply notice without judging what you feel.

As you breathe, bring your attention to different areas of your body beginning at your head and neck, your shoulders, arms, back and all the way down to your feet. No judgement. Take five to 10 full deep breaths while simply noticing your body with each breath.

Doing this will not only increase your sense of relaxation and ease your anxiety, it will bring you back into the present moment, perhaps a gift at this time when we can easily become fearful about the future.

PRAYER

- For those who have contracted the CoVid-19 coronavirus.
- For families of those who have the virus.
- For our health care workers.
- For the scientists and researchers who are seeking a way to contain and eradicate the virus.
- For those at the margins of society and lower-wage earners

because they are being affected economically more than others.

- For people in the travel, hospitality, and service industries in particular whose jobs have essentially stopped.
- For small business owners who are responsible for the financial well being of many people in this country.
- We pray for compassion to replace fear, and generosity to replace anxiety in a society where we recognize how dependent we are on one another.
- God we trust that your presence will be with us through this season of time, comforting us and giving us strength. We depend on you God, Amen!

Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Please pray using the words familiar to you:

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into a time of trial but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen!

Hear now an encouraging word from the Psalms for a people many

generations ago who were also facing difficult times. Their lives were disrupted and they were filled with fear and concern about their future, much like us.

READING PSALM 32:6-11

Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.

You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Part of the strength God gives us at a time like this is from one another as we face these times as one body in Christ.

Rebecca Solnit, is an American writer on topics like politics, art, the environment, among others. She spoke four years ago clearly about how crisis draws people together in the present moment to a deeper level of humanity. Consider that this is true even now with social distancing. Listen to her words.

There's a way a disaster throws people into the present and gives them this supersaturated immediacy that also includes a deep sense of connection. It's as though, in some violent gift, you've been given a kind of spiritual awakening where you're close to mortality in a way that makes you feel more alive. You're deeply in the present and can let go of past and future and your personal narrative, in some ways. You have shared an experience with everyone around you, and you often find very direct but also metaphysical senses of connection to the people you suddenly have something in common with.

How many of you can identify with what Rebecca said and see the evidence of solidarity around you?

We notice this when we see Republicans and Democrats in Congress, who don't agree on much, come together and agree on aid packages to help American people.

We see it in the way that organizations have offered free services to those in need.

We see it in how people have offered to pick up supplies and food to make like work for those who are more vulnerable. We have done this as a congregation, and those in my own neighborhood has as well.

It is also alive in the creativity of MN CovidSitters, a group of University of Minnesota students who are providing childcare and running errands for healthcare workers who are on call around the clock.

In Seattle, there is the Musang Community Kitchen, a Filipino restaurant that is providing meals to students and people who have lost their job in this pandemic.

In the music world we have artists like Yo-Yo Ma and John Legend offering online performances to comfort people in their anxiety.

At the same time, neighbors in Italy and all over are joining their voices together safely from their balconies and front porches to strike a note of solidarity while maintaining safe social distance.

Situations like these demonstrate the best of humanity. The hope of this moment is found in these acts.

People are now getting creative to both develop and cultivate human connection at a foundational level.

The creative spirit we notice, reminds us that we are made in God's image. And it is in God's image that we will survive and thrive not only as a community but as humanity.

As we pay attention to this creative spirit God planted inside of us, we begin to take new actions and make new plans that we have never done before: an online worship service, an online community gathering through Zoom, an online class. What's next?

Inside this new normal routine, my daughter Qwynn has been taking the opportunity to FaceTime (video chat) with her cousin in the Grand Rapids area. Together they are creating and doing a daily exercise routine. How cool!

There are all kinds of online classes that we can take to keep our hearts and minds engaged. Do some online searches and post what interests you in the comment section of this video. Maybe

someone else might want to take it with you.

Some of you find your heart rate slow and your heart sing when you engage in artistic expression. This is a great time to shift our attention this direction. Maybe it's creative writing, playing an instrument, singing, or sculpture, or painting.

Maybe the form of art that makes your heart sing is creating new solutions for broken work flow systems in the business world. This might be the perfect time for you to focus some energy on creating the next best creative business solution.

Just yesterday I signed up for the Virtual Hot Chocolate Run. This comes out of the creativity of road race organizers. Instead of risking by bringing together a crowd for a race, they are asking people to run on their own and report the results. Everyone gets mailed some chocolate, a medal and a running jacket. How creative!

Art and creativity takes many forms for all of us and is a wonderful place to turn our attention in these days. It is very probable that a number of people will engage in a new creative project during this "down time" that will become their main income source and to which

they will dedicate their life energy once this crisis is over.

May we all choose this season and breath in some creativity that offers hope in a time of crisis.

PRAYER

Dear God, may you meet us in this place where we are. May you help us to be calm and thoughtful, and connected with our breath and our physical bodies. May you light the fire of creativity inside of us individually and as a community that can fuel us in the coming days. Amen!

Now, I invite you to join me in the Zoom community connection session as soon as we end this Facebook Live video. The link is in the comment section.

Grace and peace my friends.