

First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

Sunday, March 22, 2020 | Online Liturgy for Contemporary Worship

God's Story for all God's Children

Wondering questions:

1. *If your complaints and cries for help reached up to heaven and God heard them, what would he hear?*
2. *What would you think, what would you do, if you saw something strange like a bush on fire but not burning up and someone called your name from the fire?*
3. *Can you trust the God who always was, who is, and who always will be, to provide for you, care for you and lead you out of a time of trouble? Will you trust him?*
4. *What will you do today, tomorrow, the next day, to live your trust in God?*

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Guide for Self-Care for the week beginning Sunday March 22

In this time of physical distancing and social connecting, wherever you are, know that you are in God's time. And know that you must take care of yourself for this duration.

Self-care is essential to stay physically and spiritually healthy. My grandmother used to stress Paul's words in Romans 12, that we are to "offer ourselves as a living sacrifice," not an exhausted one! Self-care is not selfish. Neither is it self-absorption. It is stewardship of the gift God gave you of your body, mind, and spirit. Self-care is a method of spiritual formation, and I invite you to practice it. Incorporate this spiritual practice in your life while we are going through this strange time.

My prayer for you comes from John 14:1-4 (NIV) where Jesus comforts his disciples. I pray this is a comfort to you as well:

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going."

During times of stress or boredom, it is easy to overeat or eat sparingly; to stay up too late or sleep too long; or to give in to addictions or give up on exercise. God knows our every habit, compulsion, and desire. We need boundaries, and we need rest. Self-care can be a spiritual act of worship. Respecting our bodies and their limitations is a way that God communicates his love, counsel, and will to us. Presbyterian minister, Eugene Peterson puts Psalm 139:14 like this: "I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation!"

The spiritual practice of Self-care includes:

- Thanking God for the way that he has made you.
- Encouraging rather than neglecting yourself.
- Recognizing and practicing your spiritual gifts.
- Exercising and eating sensibly.
- Choosing healthy rather than unhealthy relationships.

Self-care honors God by nurturing and protecting the limits and desires of your body, mind, and spirit. When practicing the spiritual formation of Self-care, you can expect the following:

- Being comfortable in your own skin.
- Living within limits without burnout.
- Valuing yourself as Jesus values you.
- Practicing self-awareness rather than self-absorption.
- Having a deep awareness of God's love for you.

I invite you to make a list of the things that you like about yourself and thank God for making you. Then, examine your body life, and consider what practices and patterns you can change to better care for your body, mind, and spirit. Seek ways to cooperate with God in an effort to honor your body as his temple. Keep a record of how much you sleep, or what you eat, and then ask God how long he wants you to sleep or what he wants you to eat. Then, cultivate ways to nurture and care for yourself: exercise, clean sheets, bathing or showering, for example. Spend time with your hobbies that bring you life. Focus on how Jesus wants you to care for yourself right now. And when you come down hard on yourself, remember that you can begin again. Confess harsh self-treatment to God, and ask him for the grace to receive who you are.

As we practice Self-care, we intentionally receive ourselves as God's own beloved. Receiving this steadfast love into our bodies, minds, and spirits, grants us the ability to love and forgive ourselves and others. Amen.