

## **Carol's reflection – March 13**

What we did not know.

A couple of years ago, we did not know that the pandemic would last so long.

We did not know that we could come to see masks as commonplace.

We did not know that we might become hesitant to come to church, or go to a restaurant, or gather with thousands of friends or strangers in an arena.

We did not know, but now we do.

Just after the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day, in April 2020, the Very Rev. Dr. Bill Phipps recorded a reflection, "We Are as Much Alive as the Earth is Alive". He began by quoting Chief Dan George, giving him credit for the title of his talk. Chief Dan George said, "We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive."

And then Bill quoted the poet, Mary Oliver, "The only question is how to love this world."

As Bill explored these and other important words, he talked about the surprises of the pandemic – as he saw them in those early days.

We did not know that the earth would experience some benefit from the pandemic and the imposed time at home.

We did not know that the quality of air would improve with fewer planes flying.

We did not know that the oceans would thrive with less cruising.

We did not know that animals would return to places that were otherwise the domains of tourists.

Bill did not know what the future held. He did not know the human suffering and loss. We did not know such a thing was possible in our seemingly modern world.

We did not know, but we do now.

We did not know what the pandemic would bring.

We did not know what the future would hold.

We did not know then, and we do not know now.

Now, when we see news of the invasion of Ukraine. Now, when we see such destruction and terror in the lives of so many. We do not know what the future will hold.

Each day the newspapers and televisions and radio programs are filled with words suggesting how this might end. There are extremes of opinion – predictions of how we might get to peace. How we might not get to peace. Some dare to see this as having some kind of Biblical base – like these are the end times when we shall see the return

of the Christ.

That kind of thinking and that kind of language has been used every time there is conflict. The disciples thought that they were witnessing the end times. So did the Crusaders. So did the people living through every war that has plagued humanity.

We see the destruction of cities – of homes – of hospitals and schools and neighbourhoods. We see the suffering of people and we cannot help but weep.

Jesus looked ahead on the road and saw Jerusalem. A city whose Temple had become a marketplace. A city whose rulers were oppressing the people. A city where people were abused by those in power. A city that did not listen to the words of prophets to repent. A city that killed those prophets as their words were discarded. A city far from God's vision of peace. A city for which he lamented.

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not...*

And here we are, on the Sunday when we chose the word, REconcile. How do we REconcile what is happening in our world, with our faith. To REconcile is to come together. It is a part of our faith. It is a part of A New Creed.

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

We certainly see the need to REconcile in this world. We see the need to come together. We see the need to seek justice and resist evil. We see the need for this war, and all wars to end.

The Bishop of St. Asaph, a Ukranian Bishop in Wales, writes:

*What can we do in such a situation? We can ensure that we are well briefed and knowledgeable so that when we can or have to add to public comment and debate, we do so sensibly and in an informed way. We can offer practical support to Ukraine, by financial or charitable donations and activity. We can urge resolve upon our politicians and leaders that our nations support action to defend our values and to enable the defence of Ukraine. We can find ways to shelter the needy and those dispossessed by war...*

*As people of faith, we can reach out to fellow believers in Ukraine and Russia to make our voice heard, and to strengthen the hearts of those who work for peace...*

*What might we expect as answers to our prayer? Perhaps not miracles: Putin will still advance, and in the rest of the world we are not absolved of our responsibility to offer aid to Ukraine and practical action. However, I do believe that the Spirit can be at work to give courage, hope and resilience; working to turn the hearts of those set upon violence, subtly to change the dynamics of the situation. Ukraine has already defied the odds in this war, and developments may yet surprise us. That, in part, I believe, will be as a result of the Spirit at work, and not just the grim outworking of human effort.*

Perhaps through prayer we can REconcile.  
Perhaps through prayer and action we can come together.  
Perhaps we can #StandWithUkraine against this evil tyranny.  
Perhaps we can love and serve others.

There is much that we do not know, and yet there is much that we do know. We are people of faith. We are people of prayer. We are people called to seek justice and resist evil. Perhaps that is the answer to Mary Oliver's question – how do we love this world?

We are not alone, we live in God's World.

God is with us as we lament,  
As Jesus lamented,  
As Jesus lived,  
and as we live.  
Let there be peace on earth.  
Amen.

