

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**MARK 4**

*Please join me in Prayer, seeking the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and ears to understand this reading from Scripture.*

*God existed before time began, God remains after all time ends, and God constantly walks with us on the journey of faith in this present moment. We turn to the written Word to find comfort in times of trouble and uneasiness. We come to trust in the One who is the same today, tomorrow and forever. Lord of all, look with patience on us and our anxious lives. Show us how to search for spiritual strength in the midst of life and help us to believe and trust Jesus our Lord, Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE**

**PSALM 46**

**GOD'S DEFENSE**

To the leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamoth. A Song.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

**Selah**

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

**Selah**

Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

**Selah**

Liturgist: *"This is the Word of the Lord.                      Thanks be to God."*

**SERMON**

**"GOD OUR STRENGTH"**

## **“God our Strength”**

Unprecedented! Once in a generation! This describes the current pandemic, the worst since 1918 H1N1 flu spread throughout the world. I don't expect any of you were alive in 1918, and if you were you were too young to remember the impact of the pandemic on the collective lives of Americans and the world economy. Besides the pandemic, the world was engaged in a war that encompassed all the major national powers.

In just a week, we went from watching reports on the news of Covid-19, to changing the way we live our lives in response to the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Gov. Evers, President Trump and our Presbytery Staff. A week ago, groups of 250 could not meet and 50 or less were encouraged to not meet. We were to keep 3 feet between people. Now, the recommendation is that groups of less than 10 and a distance of 6 feet.

First, Schools were to be closed until a week after Spring Break. Now they are suspended indefinitely. Restaurants can only be open for take out and drive through. Bank lobbies are closed, so we do online banking or drive up windows. It's a little disconcerting, but this is the time we are living in a very interconnected society. We have a global economy and until recently freedom to move about the entire world.

## **“God our Strength”**

While this is new to us, I'd like you to think about a time when your situation seemed a little out of control. I have a couple of examples

My first recollection of being in leadership when I found myself in the very present trouble. 1988, as I led a youth trip to West Macomb, IL for a UMC Youth Conference. I was a youth leader in my twenties and a substitute chaperone at the last minute. On our return home, Carbon Monoxide seeped into the bus sending 10 from our group to the hospital in West Unity, OH.

1999, I was in Denver, CO when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold went on a shooting spree at Columbine. I listened on the radio as they called for pastors and counselors to come help students cope with the stress of the situation. At the time, I was not trained as a Police Chaplain and Critical Incident Stress Management, CISM. I kept driving with the rationale that the students would need ongoing support and I was just on vacation. I went skiing and prayed.

I also think of times in Scripture when God's people face the great unknown: Noah and the Ark, Moses before Pharaoh, the Israelites in the wilderness, Gideon and the fleece, King David and the Golden age of the Hebrew people, the Babylonian captivity, Jesus traveling ministry, and his death, resurrection and ascension.

## **“God our Strength”**

2000 years, in human hands and the Christian Church has survived all the challenges of witnessing to God’s activity in the world.

The Psalms are full of prayers, of God’s people trusting in the Lord of Host in all things. The sons of Korah were Levites who sang God’s praise. The Psalmist believes God will defend the faithful in times of trouble. The Hebrew people trusted God and relied on the hope of a different future than the present challenges. We can trust that God will be with us in all things at all times.

In this very present time of trouble, we need to find strength in our faith. It’s in times like this that we lean on the loving arms of Jesus and other believers. While we keep social distance, we can connect electronically, through the grand Graham Bell invention the telephone, and the various social media sites.

God is our Strength. We will get through this. We will be stronger for working through this challenging time. We will be better connected using the technology available. We will possess a shared experience that challenged our resolve. We will find resiliency in Jesus, who healed the diseases and witnessed to God’s power to overcome all things. The Spirit of God will sustain us now and forever.

TGBTG Amen.