**COVID-19, reflections sent prayer email on April 21, 2020**

**A verse for today:**

John 20:19

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace, be with you!”

**Items for Prayer:**

**Reflections**: Barb Sanders

In the context of fear the resurrected Jesus shows up and speaks peace to the disciples (John 20:19). As we live with a pandemic, we too are in living in a context of fear and uncertainty. In times of fear, the following blessing has been meaningful to many people:

God go before you to lead you, God go behind you to protect you, God go beneath you to support you, God go beside you to befriend you. Do not be afraid. May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you. Do not be afraid.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen. \*

Below is a litany prayer that I developed with the words of this blessing and words of Scripture. The OT Scripture verses that are part of this blessing prayer litany are from a context when God’s people were in an anxious time; when they were in the wilderness and very aware of their dependence on God’s guidance and provision. As we encounter COVID-19 uncertainties, we find ourselves in a wilderness time when our familiar routines and activities are taken from us. In these places of disruption, fear and uncertainty God speaks peace into our need for assurance of God’s faithful presence with us.

Reader: May the Triune God of grace be with us.

***All: May God go before us to lead us.***

Reader: “By day the LORD went ahead of the people of Israel in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.” (Exodus 13: 21, 22)

***All: May God go behind us to protect us.***

Reader: Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel.” (Exodus 14:19, 20)

***All: May God go beneath us to support us.***

Reader: “The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

***All: May God go beside us to befriend us.***

Reader: God says, “My Presence will go with you.” (Exodus 33:14)

***All: God says to us, through Jesus, “Peace be with you! I am with you always.”*** (John 20: 19,21; Matthew 28:20)

 Reader: Do not be afraid. May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you.

***All: Do not be afraid. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.***

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Someone has said that to sing is to prayer twice. Through the words and music of this song, may God’s Spirit of peace settle upon our whole being; soul and body. This blessing in song and a story of this blessing can be found at:

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/neal-plantinga-on-his-god-go-before-you-blessing/index.html?utm_source=CICW+Mailing+Lists&utm_campaign=9fe6d0f70c-EMAI>

\*Neal Plantinga