

Reflections and prayers for a Covid time

## **1. Coming in on a wing and a prayer**

These are brief reflections and prayers to get us through this time of trial.

The title is an old WW 2 song, about a bomber crew coming home from danger. And although it feels as if we are flying into danger, yet it is still a homecoming we seek; a place of safety, even if it has to be temporary.

It's the temporariness of everything that overwhelms those of us who felt the ground was solid beneath our feet. Now everything is changing, on the move, nothing will ever be the same again.

Which, if we can get our head around that, is not a bad place to be. All the old tent pegs are pulled and life becomes a camping trip to places we've never been before.

**God of the journey**

**The way ahead is unknown**

**And we are very afraid**

**Help us to know that wherever we go**

**You have been there before us**

**And you wait out there ahead of us**

**Ready to call us and hold us**

**ever closer to you**

## **2. Save us, but who's us?**

The Lord's Prayer takes on a different warp and woof in these times. You just can't say it as before. Take the line, Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. Save us in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a public health system that's functioning a government that is coherent. But what about those parts of the world where health care hardly functions, or is privatised only for the privileged; and where governments are too fragmented to pass a budget or frame a national strategy that includes the most vulnerable. The scale of the trial facing those countries is unimaginable.

As for the evil we want to be delivered from. Some would say it's more about the planet readjusting in response to the way we've abused and overloaded it, and ignored the warning signs that virologists have been pointing to for years.

In these dark days the Lord's Prayer can only be prayed globally, for all peoples of every faith and most especially of none.

What's more, it can only be prayed humbly and hesitantly as people who come with empty hands and wait for them to be filled.

What awaits us as the people of the oikumene, God's whole inhabited earth, is beyond our knowing. This is a prayer that has to be prayed together. It ends with a request for deliverance, but begins with an assertion of confidence that God's kingdom will come and God's will for all of us will be done. And that's enough to be going on with.

**God of the universe  
You hold the whole world in your hands  
And though we have to isolate ourselves from each other now  
We cannot isolate ourselves from you  
So bind us together we pray, in the confidence  
That your love will never let us go**

### **3. There is still a centre**

If you've been around for a while you will probably have already experienced the bottom dropping out of *your* world. The death of a loved one, the loss of something you loved, job redundancy, life threatening illness, marriage breakup, the list goes on. But few of us post war people have faced the bottom dropping out of the *whole* world; where you wake up one morning to see all the old certainties about economy, global trade and travel, sports and entertainment, social interaction disappear, with no guarantees of them returning, ever, and certainly not in their old forms. We have to find ways of dealing with that shock together, even though we aren't allowed to have contact with each other, outside our social or family bubble. Until we can and talk again, physically rather than digitally, there are some reassurances to hold on to. In the midst of all that uncertainty, the sun rises each morning as beautifully as ever, the waves break on the beach (if you're lucky enough to have access), the autumn days are crisper and the autumn leaves lovelier than ever. That utter dependability and eternal simplicity of the natural world surrounds us and waits for us to savour and enjoy. And if you take the time each day to let all of that wash over you, the wider chaos is a little more bearable.

**God of simple things, you meet us in  
All around us that is still  
Beautiful, reliable, constant  
And even where the bottom falls out  
The centre still holds**

### **4. Looking for a new normal**

In the early days of this crisis, we glibly talked of getting back to normal, once the last infection had been isolated and the last cluster tracked. Now there is no going back? And why would we want to? Whatever awaits us will have to be radically different from the way we lived before.

An economy dependent on tourism and dairying, unlimited air travel and ever cheaper consumerism, global greenhouse gas emissions that we'd failed to regulate, all of which massively damaging the environment. A society failing to house its people and feed its children.

When we come out of this tunnel, and we will, it has to open us out into a better place, where justice, kindness, compassion rules. Not only because those qualities are good, but because they are necessary for our survival and our flourishing as human beings.

**God of what is yet to be  
You hold our future in your hands  
In the midst of our affliction,  
Help us to dream of a new heaven and a new earth  
And prepare a better place in this land  
For all the people who call Aotearoa home.**

## **5. Living well uncontrollably**

In the good old days of Level One and below, we believed we were in control of our lives. You could safely predict your income and investments, plan ahead for holidays, manage your health, look forward to what's coming up at the movies.

Sure, there were surprises and setbacks. Nobody expected the drought to go on for so long. But for older people especially, the sense of control was something to savour.

Until now.

We had become very adept at keeping control. Tracking, measuring, predicting, managing everything from interest rates to educational achievement, the life expectancy of our friends and our appliances.

That skill is redundant now. If you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans, especially if you're an economist or a politician.

The new skill in the Covid era is living out of control, surviving a time when predictions and forecasts are exercises in fond reassurance at best.

The skill now lies in living gracefully with that uncontrollability. Being a non anxious presence. Trusting that in the wider scheme of things, all will be well and all manner of thing shall be well, as our tradition of Christian mysticism affirms. Believing that, and acting as though it was really true, might be our greatest skill, and the best gift we can give to our friends and children.

**God of all serenity, the calm in the eye of our storm  
Keep us from eating the bread of anxiety  
Help us to trust your presence and to follow your leading  
Knowing that when the signposts end and the road runs out  
Your mercy will endure, your love will not cease.**