

10TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

**READ:
MATTHEW
14:22-33**

"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

REFLECT:

On Saturday morning I went to the supermarket with my mask on and my shopping list in hand to get some supplies in for the week.

It turns out that Saturday morning isn't a great time to go. The shop was really busy, and although the other shoppers had masks on, no-one seemed to be social-distancing or navigating the aisles in any particular order. I kept trying to wait for and give way to other shoppers, only to have people cut in front or reach across me for the things they needed. People seemed to be approaching from every direction and I began to feel like I was cornered, trapped, my panic rising.

I wonder if you identify with this feeling? It's strange and sad that the world 'outside' has come to feel like a threatening and uncertain place.

There seems to be a lot of fear in the air in our gospel story too. Terror grips the disciples at the bizarre sight of a figure walking across the water towards them. They believe it to be a ghost until Jesus calls out to reassure them "it's me! Don't be scared." Then Peter, after the initial bravado of stepping out onto the waves, loses his nerve as the wind picks up and the surface of the water shifts and gives beneath him.

This 'new normal' thing can feel a bit like stepping out of the boat to walk on the water. We're not totally convinced that it's safe. Fear rises up in waves that can catch us by surprise, as the even simplest and most familiar things (walking, shopping) have come to seem risky.

What can today's reading teach us? Perhaps that it's OK to ask for help, the way Peter calls out in his fear. That Jesus is right there, within reach. And that the presence of Jesus can bring peace, and calm, even to the wind and waves.

May the peace of Christ be with you today, and in the days ahead.

CONNECT:

There are many variations of this lovely Celtic blessing. I have found its words helpful in the middle of sleepless nights or as an offering to others who are feeling afraid or in turmoil:

*Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the gentle night to you.
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you;
of Christ, the light of the world.*

Amen.

PRAY:

- For all who are afraid, and all who are struggling with anxiety.
- For those in governments and giving advice to governments having to balance risk and make difficult decisions relating to public safety
- For all the lovely people who are sewing and distributing masks, running errands for their more vulnerable neighbours, and bringing comfort and company to those most isolated by the pandemic

RESOURCES:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:

www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

