Spiritual and Literary Resources for Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Bill McGarvey wrote and performed the song below that is very moving and speaks to our times. It is deeply spiritual - Bill is a Catholic and a spiritual seeker who writes and sings often about faith in everyday life - and this song is full of images of empty streets, medical professionals, masks ... and hope.

https://youtu.be/iIecc-E7zfK

Meditation based on prayer by Rev. A. Powell Davies

As we breathe in, may the clamor of the world fall away, and peace come to our hearts. For we are full of the unrest of our time, and the quietness that once we knew has left us. So, may there be stillness, now: a calm restoring stillness at the center of our being. May we see the world as it is and ourselves as we are and come to understand the needs of others and ourselves. May we come to our true selves and may we remain connected to all that lies beyond us.

From “Spring” by Mary Wellemeyer

The winter is over, and all around
Nature renews herself in small and large ways:
Red-winged blackbirds call among cattails in the marsh.
Woodchucks leave their homes to search for mates.
Frost surrenders the ground to growing things,
And the buds of leaves on trees begin to swell.
[Let us] sit for a time in silence, receptive,
In the comfort of one another’s [virtual] presence
Letting spring begin to renew ourselves
in small and large ways,
That life may prevail.

Yes There is Fear  By Frans Stiene
March 14, 2020

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.
But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.
They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.
They say that a hotel in the west of Ireland
is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading flyers with her number
through the neighborhood
so that the elders may have someone to call on.
Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary.
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting
All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul.
Yes there is even death
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing
Spring is coming.
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
Communion Circle by Mark Belletini

The earth.
One planet.
Round, global,
so that when you trace its shape
with your finger,
you end up where you started. It’s one. It’s whole.
All the dotted lines we draw on our maps
of this globe are just that, dotted lines.
They smear easily
Oceans can be crossed.
Mountains can be crossed.
Even the dessert can be crossed.
The grain that grows on one side of the border
tastes just as good as the grain on the other side…
There is no superior land, no chosen site,
no divine destiny falling on any one nation
who draws those dotted lines just so.
There is only one earth we all share,
we, the living, with all else that lives
and does not live. Virus, granite, wave,
city, cornfield, prophet, beggar, child,
slum, tower, mine, robin, eel, grandfather,
rose, olive branch, bayonet, and this poem
and moment are all within the circle,
undivided by dotted lines or final certainties.

Everything,
everything, for good or ill,
is part of the shared whole:
sky, earth, song, words and now, this silence.

[Hold a moment of silence for 3 deep breaths]

Falling into the Sky (Based on a Poem by Zen Monk Muso Soseki ) By David Breeden

I dug and dug
Deeper into the earth
Looking for blue heaven

Choking always
On piles of dust rising

Then once

At midnight

I slipped

And fell into the sky

One Heart by Li-Young Lee

Look at the birds. Even flying
is born
out of nothing. The first sky
is inside you, open
at either end of day.
The work of wings
was always freedom, fastening
one heart to every falling thing.

This Is How We Are Called By Kimberly Beyer-Nelson

In the hours before the birds
stream airborne
with chiming voice,
a silent breath rests in the pines,
and upholds the surface of the lake
as if it were a fragile bubble
in the very hand of God.

And I think,
this is how we are called.

To cup our hands and hold
this peace,
even when the sirens begin,
even when sorrow cries out, old and gnarled,
even when words grow fangs and rend.
Cupped hands
  gently open,
  supporting peace
like the golden hollow of a singing bowl,
like the towering rim of mountains
cradling
this slumbering and mist-draped valley.

**Blessing By Jill Schwendeman**

Kind friend, take a slow and calming breath.
Know that you are enough, just as you are.
May you receive what you need.
May you be an oasis of serenity, strength, and compassion.

When difficult feelings batter you, meet them with a kind heart.
Know they are only part of the story.
Allow the hard stuff to visit a bit, and when it’s time,
invite it to flow like water downward toward the immense and cleansing sea.

Allow others to be strong or calm or hopeful when you cannot,
knowing when it is time again, your heart will clear.
When it’s time, you will take your turn, being serenity, strength, and compassion for others.

In all things, may you be kind.
May compassion, including self-compassion, guide your heart and mind and every action.

**Winds of Change by Maureen Killoran**

As we weather winds of change,
may we have wisdom to cherish moments of stillness.

As we recollect times
of challenge and of pain,
may we remember also
the graceful blessings of our lives.

As we look to future unknowns,
may we have the boldness
to trust that there is unimagined
Good
Yet to come.
Reflection by Rabbi Brian Immerman

We have all begun a long journey in the wilderness, our path obscured by a thick cloud of uncertainty, worry, and fear. More than ever we seek direction with no clear signposts to guide us. Throughout our lives we there were people who became signposts along our paths and who guided us along the way. Some still walk with us and others remained behind as we progressed. We moved, we married, we created new life.

Seemingly in an instant our paths have been covered in a cloud; back in the wilderness we are separated from time and space. Many of us find ourselves standing alone without a clear sense of direction.

Now is the time to reach out to those who were your signposts, your guides, your rocks during other periods of life. Whether it’s been a few days, weeks, months, years or decades - all of humanity is standing together. There are people who can help support you and you can support others.

Even though we might not know in what direction we are headed, or even how to get back to our path none of us need to walk alone.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil;  
my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 121

A song of ascents.  
I raise my eyes toward the mountains.  
From whence shall come my help?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
the maker of heaven and earth.  
He will not allow your foot to slip,  
or your guardian to sleep.  
Behold, the guardian of Israel
never slumbers nor sleeps.
The LORD is your guardian;
the LORD is your shade
at your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.
The LORD will guard you from all evil;
he will guard your soul.
The LORD will guard your coming and going
both now and forever.