

# The Parish VISITOR



*"Be Transformed...By the renewing of your minds." - Romans 12:2 - NIV*

Christ Presbyterian Church of Hollywood  
4011 Clinton St., Los Angeles, CA 90004-2298  
The REV. STEPHEN M. BAROLDY, Pastor

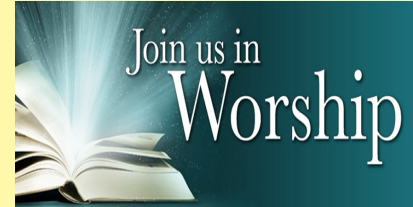
cpchollywood.org

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## GOD IN THE MIDST OF *Suffering*

*your pastor writes*  
By REV. STEPHEN M. BAROLDY



Join us in  
Worship

With the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, CPC remains closed to safeguard the health of its members and congregants. We continue to hold a virtual worship Service every Sunday at 11:00am, using Zoom. Service ends around 12:30pm.

The invitation for joining the service can be found at the events page on our website at [cpchollywood.org](http://cpchollywood.org).

You can send in your prayer requests PRIOR to the service via email to [sbaroldy@gmail.com](mailto:sbaroldy@gmail.com) or text at 323-202-5078.

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to all the readers of the *Parish Visitor!*

The Holy Spirit put this message in my heart after I had a two-month struggle with illness in my lungs. I could not preach and I could not pray out loud as I could not get enough air. I couldn't talk for more than a few seconds without beginning to cough.

Where was God as this was happening? God was right in the midst of it.

*God in the midst of Suffering, various scriptures, original given on January 10, 2021 at CPC*

**Introduction:** Happy New Year. It is good to be back with all of you. Simone and I look forward to being with you this New Year. We will get back to our Revelation series next week. For today, the Holy Spirit put a different message on my heart. The title of today's message is "God in the midst of Suffering."

This past year reminded us, in a multitude of ways, there is much suffering in this world. Millions have suffered from the Covid 19 virus. Loved ones have died from Covid and for other reasons. Loved ones and friends have been diagnosed with cancer, and other life threatening diseases. We all know family or friends who are experiencing mental, spiritual, or physical pain. Maybe all three.

Millions have suffered the pain of losing their jobs; the pain of homelessness; the pain of not being able to provide for their families. Millions are suffering the pain of loneliness as we are told to stay physically distant from one another. Even close family members are staying distant.

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**Christ Presbyterian  
Church of  
Hollywood  
is an intentional,  
healing community;  
proclaiming and  
demonstrating the  
wholeness of life  
offered in  
JESUS CHRIST.**

**“...If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:23, ESV)**



I could go on with these examples for a long time. The bottom line is this. Everyone experiences pain; everyone experiences suffering in life. And when this happens, we often ask, “Where is God when this suffering is happening?” Maybe you have asked that very question yourself.

The bible answers this question for us. The answer is this. God is in the midst of our suffering. God is not distant when we suffer. God is not uncaring when we suffer. God does not ignore our suffering.

Instead, God is with us in our suffering. Far from being distant and uncaring, God makes three promises to us in our suffering.

First, God promises his presence when we suffer. Second, God promises his peace when we suffer. And, third, God promises his power when we suffer.

God’s presence; God’s peace and God’s power. God is in the midst of our suffering. So, let’s look at the first promise.

**Jesus promises his presence in the midst of suffering:**

First, God promises his presence in our suffering.

We just celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ. One of Jesus’ names is Immanuel, God with us. Mat. 1:22-23 says, “All this [meaning the events surrounding the birth of Jesus] took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they

*shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).” (Matthew 1:22–23, ESV)*

The wonder of Christmas is not just that eternal God came to earth as one of us, as a person who is fully human as well as fully God. The wonder of Christmas is God came as one of us so he could experience our suffering. And, in his humanity, Jesus did suffer.

Jesus suffered severe thirst and hunger when the Spirit led him into the wilderness to confront the devil. Jesus fasted food and water for 40 days.

Jesus suffered intense grief when his good friend Lazarus died. On his way to the Cross, Jesus suffered the terrible pain of betrayal and abandonment. And, as he hung on the Cross, Jesus suffered extreme physical pain and crushing humiliation as he hung naked before the crowds.

Jesus came as one of us, not only to save us, but also so he could suffer with us; so he would know on a first hand basis what suffering was like for us.

And then Jesus willingly died on the Cross for us, in our place, for our sins. Jesus was raised from the dead three days later, and then, ascended back into heaven where he sits on the right hand of the Father.

Yet, before he went to the Cross, Jesus made a promise to his followers that he would not leave us as orphans. Jesus promised he would not abandon us.

In John 14:15-16, Jesus says, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever;”* (John 14:15-16, *ESV*) That Helper is the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:18, Jesus says, *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”* (John 14:18, *ESV*) And in John 14:23, Jesus says, *“... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* (John 14:23, *ESV*)

Jesus Christ did not abandon us. Jesus is still with us through the person of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Jesus died on the Cross, in our place, for our sins, that we might become holy vessels whom the Holy Spirit can indwell. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is still “Immanuel.” Jesus is still God with us.

Jesus promises his peace in the midst of our suffering. Again, these verses come from Jesus’ teaching on the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John, chapters 14 through 16.

For context, these teachings, in John, chapters, 14-16, are Jesus’ final teachings to his disciples before he is arrested and crucified. Jesus knows his death will be hard on his disciples. Jesus knows his disciples will suffer persecution from Rome and the Jewish leadership after he leaves them. Jesus knows his disciples will suffer in all the ways humans suffer in our broken world.

In John, chapters 14-16, Jesus speaks to these things. Now, does Jesus promise his disciples they will be protected from all harm? Does Jesus promise they will not suffer as all who are alive suffer? No! Jesus tells his disciples they will suffer. Yet, Jesus then promises his peace in the midst of their suffering.

***“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”*** (John 14:25-27, *ESV*)

So, we can experience his comforting presence in the midst of our suffering. Jesus has experienced our suffering and, therefore, can uniquely comfort us in our suffering.

And, another wonder is this. The greater our suffering, the stronger his presence. I know this from personal experience. It is in my deepest suffering, that I have known his strongest presence. And I have read the testimony of others who experienced the same thing.

Jesus promises his presence in the midst of our suffering. So, when you are suffering, cry out to him. Yes, ask for deliverance. Yet, at the same time, ask for his comforting presence to be with you while you wait for your deliverance.

Ask Jesus to make himself known to you in your suffering. Ask Jesus to let you experience in a tangible way he is with you and he cares. And then be attentive to how he answers.

**So, first, Jesus promises his presence in our suffering.**

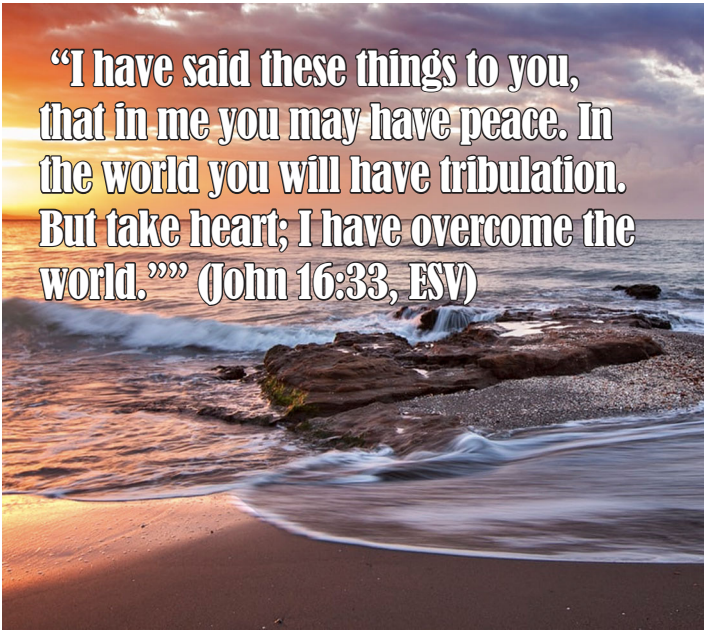
Jesus promises his peace in the midst of suffering. Next,

Let’s begin with John 14:25-27. Here Jesus teaches, *“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* (John 14:25-27, *ESV*)

After his death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus and the Father send the Holy Spirit so we will remember Jesus’ words when we are suffering. Jesus taught that he left us his peace. His peace!

This is not the peace of the world. This is not peace that comes from favorable worldly circumstances. This is the peace that Jesus himself has. This is supernatural peace that the sufferings of the world cannot touch. This is peace that calms our hearts. This is peace that banishes fear. This is peace that emanates from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

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**“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”” (John 16:33, ESV)**

Jesus promises his peace. This is an astounding promise! Jesus promises we can have his peace no matter what is causing us to suffer. We can have peace in the storm of suffering.

And just to reinforce this point. Jesus says this in John 16:33. *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”” (John 16:33, ESV)*

Again, Jesus knows we will suffer. He says, *“In the world you will have tribulation.”* Will have tribulation. Not might have tribulation. You will have tribulation; you will have distress; you will have affliction; you will have suffering

Jesus says, in the world, we will suffer. Yet, in him, we may have peace. It’s interesting Jesus says we “may” have peace. How may we have Jesus’ peace? By keeping our focus on him. By abiding in him. By asking the Holy Spirit to remind us of Jesus’ promises. By asking the Holy Spirit to give us the faith to believe Jesus’ promise of peace.

Jesus tells us to take heart because he has overcome the world with all its suffering. Jesus is victorious over the world. His victory is permanent. In him, we also have victory over the world, and with that victory, we may have his peace.

So, again, when you are suffering, ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of Jesus’ promise of peace. Ask the Holy Spirit to release Jesus’ supernatural peace into your heart, your mind, and your life. And again, pay attention to what happens after you ask. Jesus promises his peace in the midst of suffering.

**Jesus promises his power in the midst of suffering.**

Finally, Jesus promises his power in the midst of our suffering. This might be the most amazing promise of all.

For this final point, let’s go to 2Cor. 12:8-9. Here is the context. Paul tells us in the beginning of the chapter that he had been caught up in the Spirit and taken to the third heaven where he saw and heard things that he was not allowed to speak about.

To help keep him humble, Paul says he was given a thorn in the flesh. We do not know exactly what the thorn in the flesh was. Yet, whatever it was, it caused Paul great suffering.

With that context, let’s now read 2Cor. 12:8-9. Paul writes, *“Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Corinthians 12:8-9, ESV)*

Paul pleaded with the Lord three times to be delivered from his suffering. Yet, the Lord did not deliver him. Understand, this is the Apostle Paul, who had seen the resurrected Jesus Christ. This is Paul who had been taken into the third heaven. This is Paul who the Holy Spirit used to heal and deliver many suffering people.

Let me ask you this. Do you think Paul lacked faith for his deliverance? Do you think if he only had a little more faith, God would have delivered him? I don’t think so. Notice what the Lord said to Paul in verse 9. The Lord said, *“My grace is sufficient for you.”* Why? *“For my power is made perfect in weakness.”*

Suffering brings us to the end of ourselves. Suffering brings us to the end of our striving to make things right in our own power.



*... in our darkest hours,  
we have choice. We can  
turn towards ourselves, or  
we can turn towards God.*

God often waits for us to stop trying to deliver ourselves from suffering, and simply trust him. We cannot save ourselves and we cannot deliver ourselves. Only God can truly save and deliver. And God's power to save and deliver is made perfect, it is brought to completion, when we recognize and submit to the fact we can't do it on our own.

In essence, the Lord said to Paul, the grace manifest in my presence, and in my peace, and in my power, is sufficient. It is more than enough for Paul to persevere in his circumstances. And, it is more than enough for us to persevere in our circumstances.

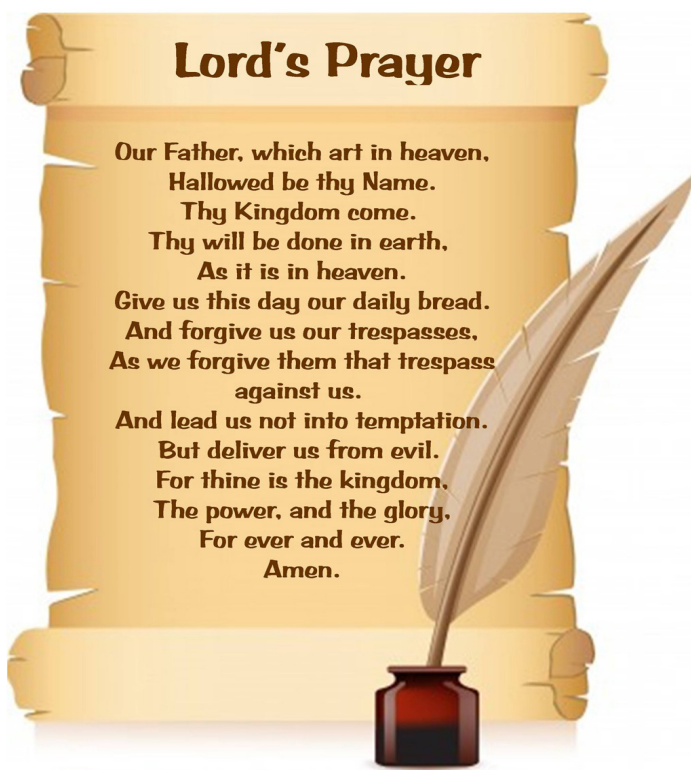
Suffering can be very dark. And, in our darkest hours, we have choice. We can turn towards ourselves, or we can turn towards God. We can turn towards hate and anger at our situation, or we can turn towards trust and love. We can turn bitter, or we can be a witness to God's faithfulness in the midst of our suffering.

You see, when we endure suffering by the grace of God, we become more aware and more compassionate of other people's suffering. We become a light in their darkness. We help them see the power of God made perfect in their weakness.

Where is God when we are suffering? God is in the midst of our suffering. Jesus Christ is in the midst through his presence, through his peace and through his power. Amen!

See you next month,

Pastor Steve



Join us in  
**Worship**  
SUNDAYS at 11:00 A.M.

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/384758031?pwd=ZnEySIBjL1VkuMhiTWRCREdmZVhJZz09>

Meeting ID: 384 758 031  
Password: 351955  
One tap mobile  
+16699006833,,384758031# US (San Jose)  
+13462487799,,384758031# US (Houston)

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### JANUARY 2021

	<u>JAN. 2021</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Receipts	\$ 8,187	\$ 8,187
Disbursements	\$ 11,818	\$ 11,818
Increase (Deficit)	(\$ 3,631)	(\$ 3,631)

### Gift & Offering

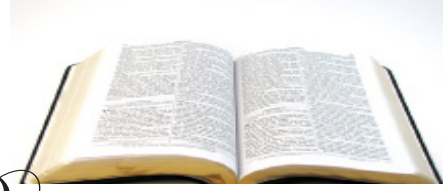
**O**ur campus may be temporarily shut, but CPC is doing all we can to serve our church, to connect people to one another, and to connect all of us to God through our online worship.

Now more than ever we need your help for us to continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and give hope to others.

Please consider sending a gift or donation to:

Christ Presbyterian Church  
of Hollywood  
4011 Clinton Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90004

# *In Our Thoughts & Prayers*



Let us remember to keep in our prayers the church family and friends who are in need of God's healing touch: overall healing for Kimi Fujitani, Charles Ingram, Janet Nozaki, Frank Morimoto, Stella Kenner, Karen Koranye, Lashman Johal, Pastor Steve, Martin; healing of knee and wrist of Maria Cardenas and prayers for Marley, Hunter, Cousin Dari, and Aunt Laley; overall healing for Ron Jung; healing and God's blessings for Harumi Mayeda; strength to care for her Mom for Irene Mayeda; overall healing for Joan Janecek; healing of legs of Sherri Esaki; healing of back and leg pain for Yuri Sangen; healing of left foot and diabetes for Denise Albriton; overall healing and healing of cancer in nostril of Brian Albriton; prayers for Pastor Steve, his wife Simone and their daughters Nicole and Noelle and David and Alice; revival for CPC and neighborhood, our elders, Faro de Luz Church, outreach to community, unsaved relatives and friends, and protection against major disaster.

*"Christ Presbyterian Church of Hollywood is an intentional healing community; proclaiming and demonstrating the wholeness of life offered by Jesus Christ."*

DATED MATERIAL

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