**Soulspace: Comfort**

**Coming together for comfort**

Welcome to Soulspace. You are here among friends. There are no VIPs or special guests. Jesus opens the door to everyone, whether they are joyful or sad, healthy or in pain, have received life’s riches or experienced a loss, are hopeful or in despair. Whatever our mood, God enfolds us in God’s arms of love. We are here to receive God’s comfort and to comfort of each other.

A poet in the Bible wrote: “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” [Psalm 34:18] Take a moment to notice how you feel. Do you feel sadness, loss, anger, pain, or any other emotion? Look around the group, and know you are here in a safe and caring space. Remember: God is near to the brokenhearted and the crushed in spirit.

In front of you are some materials you can use to write or draw. If you’d like to, take a card/piece of paper and a pen and write a word or draw a picture that expresses how you feel. It may just be something simple. We’re not going to talk about what we write or draw. Instead, in a moment we’ll place them in a basket by the candle we’re going to light.

*Light a candle. Allow time for people to write or draw something and put it around the candle.*

As we think about how we’re feeling, the words of St Paul, one of the founders of the Christian church, may be helpful:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” [1 Corinthians 1: 3-4]

**Finding comfort**

Now we’re going to listen to Psalm 23, a reading from the Bible that has been helpful to people when they need comfort. I’m going to read it through twice and as I do I invite you to wonder, “What is this reading saying to me?”

*Psalm 23 (to be read slowly):*

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

*Silence*

I wonder what words, images, or ideas spoke to you as you listened to Psalm 23?

**Bringing comfort to the world**

If God exists and is here with us, what feelings would you like to share with God? It’s OK to be angry. God can handle our anger and any other emotion we’re experiencing. What situation or person would you like to ask God to bring comfort to? We’ll have a few moments of quiet while you think about this, and then an opportunity to share your thoughts if you would like to.

*Silence*

I invite you to share the names of the people and places you wish God to bring comfort to.

*At the end: “Amen” means so be it in Hebrew. Let us now say Amen together.* ***Amen***

**Conclusion**

Let us pray together the serenity prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr.

**God, grant me the serenity**

**To accept the things I cannot change;**

**Courage to change the things I can;**

**And wisdom to know the difference.**

**Living one day at a time;**

**Enjoying one moment at a time;**

**Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;**

**Taking, as God did, this broken world**

**As it is, not as I would have it;**

**Trusting that God will make things right**

**If I surrender to God’s will;**

**So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,**

**And supremely happy with God forever in the next.** ***Amen***

Let us conclude our time together with a short blessing:

May God bless and keep you;

may God’s face shine on you and be gracious to you;

may God turn God’s face toward you and give you peace.

*These materials are drawn from Soulspace, compiled by the Rev. Dr. Michael Moynagh: cofe.io/soulspace.*

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