I can’t think of a more reassuring message than what we here in Psalm 23 and the gospel passage for today. Right now we are called on to spend our days sheltering in place and breaking bread in our own homes; for some of us this is something we are not used to doing, it is so comforting to know that our shelter is found in God. It is comforting to know that even when we are troubled and suffering we know that we are not alone, that though we may be suffering this is not something deserved or a punishment but rather part of the human condition. Shelter however is a comfort isn’t it? Since we have had a stay at home order I have been doing daily prayer on a much more consistent basis and it is a great comfort to me to hear the words that I know so well. When I join in on the virtual abbey in the morning and at night the words remind me of who God is and that she is present every day, morning, noon and night. I think that that is why the daily offices are such a rich part of our tradition as a church. If we go by the normal frenetic pace of the culture and this countries’ focus on making more and more money we would never pause to pray. But daily prayer can help us refocus on what is important. The importance of relationship between human beings and God, our lives here in this world. The beauty of nature, art, music, literature all gifts God has bestowed upon humanity to enjoy and all things that can draw us closer to our Creator.

Sheltering in the beauty of our Creator and in our homes can be very comforting if we live in a safe place with safe people. We all know that this is not necessarily everyones’ experience. We are sometimes met with situations of danger, violence, grief, loss, illness, and even death. How we endure these times of suffering speaks to where we are on our journey as Christ followers. I can honestly say that I have changed considerably in how I experience anger, frustration, grief and suffering over my five decades of life. There is still much growth to be done but CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) has taught me to know what my reactions are to certain triggers, how mysterious and random disease is and how little control we have over much of our lives. The only thing we really can control is our reactions to what life throws at us, what we choose to make the priorities in our life: God or the world and to some extant at least when we are adults, who we have relationships with…

# As most of you already know after much discussion and the vote of the vestry the Farmers Market was suspended for this year. A truly heartbreaking decision. This decision was made because of the pandemic and the possibility that our volunteers, vendors and the community would be put at risk unduly if we were to hold the market. Also, there was no way that the market could be held the way that we usually do. There could not be a café or any food sold that was not produce from a vendor. Also there could not be entertainment so the community nature of the market would have been non- existent. The truth is we are living in uncertain times and we don’t even know when we will be able to partake in communion together as we normally do. There is much discussion about how we will continue to work with community organizations to feed the hungry and particularly to feed those in the Bean Blossom community. The fact is that ther needs of our community will continue to increase as we experience economic hardship. However, we must understand that anything that jeopardizes the life of anyone unnecessarily is not acceptable. Our image today in two of the readings is of God as our shepherd. It is an image that may not be of cultural relevance to all of us as we are not shepherds in the Middle East 2000 years ago. The shepherds of that time period would stay out in the fields with the sheep. He would make sure no harm came to them and that they had enough to eat. He was their caretaker of every aspect of their being. He provided what they needed. Every sheep was valuable because the family and community relied on its life for their wellbeing. You are all valuable and Children of God. We are people who have been given the ability to understand that if we don’t follow social distancing and make every effort to protect everyone then we are contributing to the virus spreading and the future losses that could come. Lauren gave me a book before this pandemic started which features holy troublemakers. The first person I read about was Bayard Rustin. A brilliant gay black man who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King to start a movement to end the oppression of African Americans in this country. He is the one who went to India to talk to Mahatma Gandhi to learn how to fight oppression and injustice through non-violent resistance. He convinced Dr. King to get rid of his armed security detail and taught King how to have a massive non-violent movement. Bayard told Dr. King that he could not promote a non-violent resistance movement and have armed guards in front of his home. He was an excellent example of a shephard or a man who taught the ways of Jesus. We too are called to not listen to false voices, to thieves and people who often get there news from news sources not based on scientific evidence and jeopardize our ability to protect our elderly, our sick and disabled and most vulnerable populations. The truth is this virus spares no one if it is severe. It is really important that we as a church model a community that cares deeply for our own people, for our vendors, for the outside community. Yes, the work of feeding and caring for the people of Bean Blossom must and will continue. We have to do our best to focus on the gate that leads us to the path of following Jesus. This path is the way, the truth and the light. Like Bayard we must find the most effective way for our efforts to be heard and felt by all so that we can effect change and justice in our own community. Luke reminds us that we do this as a community, we do it together. We work together as one body of Christ for a common purpose. It is a time of hard decisions and loss as we figure out how to love one another and keep one another safe. It is a time to be creative and work on new systems and ways of helping our neighbors. This poem speaks to the need for safe shelter:

# "Pandemic" a poem

**By Lynn Ungar**

* [**POETRY**](https://www.scienceandnonduality.com/search?category%5B%5D=20)

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.
And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another’s hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love--
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.