



March 18, 2020

### *WISDOM AND COURAGE*

In recent years, the British slogan “keep calm and carry on” has regained popularity, showing up on coffee mugs and t-shirts and, well, everything. It is a slogan that speaks of resiliency and strength of character amid the trials of daily life. But it was not intended for regular life. “Keep calm and carry on” was introduced in 1939, at a time of existential threat and the approaching shadow of the second world war.

Six centuries before Christ, the prophet Jeremiah sent a message to the people of Judea who were living in exile in Babylon. At a time of great disruption and loss, Jeremiah counseled them to go about their lives in their new reality: “*build houses...plant gardens...seek the welfare of the city.*” (Jeremiah 29:5-7).

Like the British slogan, Jeremiah gives a message of courage. It is a message that says we are in this together; let’s take care of what needs to be done and watch out for one another.

Another preacher in difficult times was Reinhold Niebuhr. During the Great Depression, he closed his sermons with the words that are now called the serenity prayer. I invite you to return to this prayer now and in the days ahead. I know that I will.

There are things that we cannot change, and we need the help of God’s Spirit to find a measure of peace in our new reality. But that’s not all we need. God’s Spirit also leads us to find new ways to seek the welfare of those around us. Let us continue to ask God for the courage to carry on.

*God, give me grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
courage to change the things  
which should be changed,  
and the wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other. Amen.*

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster  
Senior Minister