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The Air We Breathe

"My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1

Dear Ones,

A poem! Why not? Poetry can tell us things, teach us things, that prose cannot.

For some reason, an image has been coming repeatedly to my mind, from the great Victorian English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. In his poem, *The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe* he reminds us that we are surrounded by air, wound in it, wrapped up in it, at home in it:

WILD air, world-mothering air,
Nestling me everywhere,
That each eyelash or hair
Girdles; goes home betwixt
The fleeciast, frailest-flixed
Snowflake; that's fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life... ¹

Hopkins is difficult to understand – so if that little snippet doesn't make any sense to you, just roll your eyes and laugh!

He uses the image of the air, and how it presses up against us, like water, even going inside us and through us, to speak of the intimately close presence of mercy and compassion (which he associates with Mary, but which we Protestants more often associate with God).

Of course, I am thinking of air, and of breath these days! From our Prime Minister's quaint gaff about "breathing moistly," to wearing a mask when shopping, to wondering how far cough droplets disperse... we are all thinking a lot about air.

And I am grateful to Hopkins, the poet, who has forever associated air and breath with God, in my mind. Maybe it is just the balance we need, to all the fear around us right now. Stop. Pause. Breathe. Notice the air caressing your skin, your eyelashes, every part of you. That is how close God is to you – and closer. Within you and without.

So, take a deep breathe – and give thanks.

"We are not alone! We live in God's world. Thanks be to God." (*The New Creed*, The United Church of Canada)

¹ <https://www.bartleby.com/122/37.html>

Grace to you, and peace,

Kate

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*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

