

March 26, 2020

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.”” -- Psalm 91:1-2

My dear Tougaloo College Community, may the peace of God be with you.

As we endure a historical time of uncertainty, you are close in my thoughts and prayers each day. As I drive to the campus, I lift up each building’s inhabitants and each area of service. While I may only know your face, I trust that God knows every name. Throughout the day, I lift up prayers of peace and healing. I especially pray for our students as you navigate through an unimaginable semester. You are not alone!

Because we are a small, close-knit community, we may more readily and easily feel one other’s stress, everything from fear to frustration to heightened anxiety as we move from one level of confusion and uncertainty to another. This situation is not normal, but these are normal emotions and reactions given the unpredictability of what we are going through. As events are cancelled and venues closed, and our normal places of comfort and security are limited or even cut off to us, we are left with room for myriad reactions. And because information and direction are limited and our leaders even seem to be unsure, it is easy to feel that we are losing control. If we just knew when it would end, that might help. Or not.

Yet, I am thankful at times like this that our faith and our community offer us hope and help. When we look around us at the staples in our lives—family, friends, neighbors, even institutions—we find comfort and strength to endure. Despite what is not happening and who is not available, of not being able to go where we want to or being limited on when we can go, there is something we can do. We can hold on to what we do know and we practice self-control and choose our responses and how we endure. We have choices. We are not helpless. God is with us. God is our refuge and fortress. We are not alone.

I encourage us to take some time each day to be still, whether in our room, an office, our car, or some other appropriate space, and intentionally quiet the anxious storms that threaten our peace. Let’s take time to know the One who keeps us and holds us in his hand. (Consider the times we were being kept and did not know it.) Stay there for a minute. As we focus on our breathing and center ourselves (feet flat on the floor, hands in our laps, phones off/muted for a few minutes), we can find the quiet center and become non-anxious and lend ourselves to God’s peace. We do not have to be stormy just because we are in a storm. We are not alone.

What else can we do? We can help take care of each other physically. Use the CDC guidelines and take precautions for handwashing, social distancing (10 or less in a space), fist- or elbow-bump greetings, and exercise patience as we encounter each other. Be intentional and discerning in reaching out to others to check in, especially to the vulnerable and isolated among us. Use phone calls, text messages, and even cards in the mail to encourage and strengthen others. This can help so much. Let us slow down and do what is most needful and most kind. If I can assist you with additional helps, a prayer, or a brief conversation, please call me or e-mail me and set up a time or share a prayer request. Let’s trust God that we will get through this. We are not alone.

Remember that you are being covered in prayer daily. Part of that prayer is that you will know that you are not alone. We are in this together and that is how we will come out—together. We are not alone.

Peace and blessings to you,

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