

**GRASPING FOR MUCH-NEEDED GRACE:**  
**20 Days of Nonpartisan Prayer in a Polarized Political Season**  
**Vermont Conference (UCC) prayer initiative**  
Fall 2020

Day 2 (Friday, October 16)

“The River” by Rev. Leigh G. McCaffrey

**Scripture focus:** *There is a river whose streams gladden God’s city, the holy dwelling-place of the Most High. God is in its midst, it will not be toppled; by daybreak, God will come to its aid. Nations rage, kingdoms topple; at the sound of His thunder the earth dissolves. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. – Psalm 46*

Reflection: In times of change, it is easy to worry that the institutions in which we have invested so much time and love will topple. The image of our democracy teetering on the brink of collapse seems much more real this year. When I worry that the church or our civic institutions or some group in which I am invested will just collapse under the weight of conflict or crisis, I am reminded of the river.

I envision the river not as a calm, quiet backwater, but as a raging torrent tumbling over rocks and tree limbs. This river is powerful and a little dangerous, but it brings joy and energy to the city of God. Rivers bring nutrients to their banks. Beneath the surface, rivers harbor frogs and salamanders, fish and bugs. At the water’s edge, wading birds and mammals hunt and forage for food. The river is a busy place.

It is this very busyness that gives me hope. Within the change that seems like such a threat is the very seed of survival. All that movement, above and below the surface of the water, is creating whatever will be the “new normal”. If I can see the ferment of these times - the strident voices and hardened positions and polarization - as a rearrangement of reality, it seems less scary. All the “stuff” that is coming to the surface of our society will be part of the future we create together. The structures may topple, but the river keeps running and makes the city glad. *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Prayer: Holy One, help us to see not only the threats around me, but also the river of your love. Nourish us with your Word, gladden our hearts with the movement of your Spirit, and comfort us with your Presence. We pray this while trusting in the power of the Risen Christ, who is always with us. AMEN.

*Rev. Leigh McCaffrey is the pastor and teacher of the Barre Congregational Church.*