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**By the Rev. Mary Norton**

In our faith tradition, it is common to have read aloud a series of scriptural readings each Sunday, including Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament and Gospels — and one or several of these passages serves as the basis of the day's preaching topic.

But it is also important, I think, to consider what's on people's minds today and how scripture can speak to these things.

So, recently, I checked out an ABC News report from summer 2015 that reflects a then-recent Gallup poll on what is on people's minds. The responses, in order from the most pressing to the least were: Availability and affordability of health care, economy, terrorist attack possibilities, Social Security, size and power of the federal government, the distribution of income and wealth in the U.S., hunger and homelessness, crime and violence, drug use, unemployment, quality of the environment, availability and affordability of energy, race relations and climate change. These are concerns in 2016 as well, and should not surprise us ... though I wish one of them were: How can I help my children grow up loving God?

Each of the items in this list is a concern because of the uncertainty about it — because of the possibility that, whatever it is, it might happen widely enough to impact each of us in some secondary way or even perhaps directly — that it might impact us personally.

Each is something about which we are uncertain. Each one can kick start our mental gears into a series of "what if" questions that may plague our minds and our sleep.

We don't like uncertainty.

Uncertainty is scary. It is the specter of things we don't want to have happen (though, less often considered, it is also the possibility of things we do want to happen). But all of life is uncertain. We have no idea what will happen in the next minute or hour or week. Life unfolds before us and only becomes certain after the unfolding. And there are times in life and history that seem particularly uncertain. This might be one of them.

In times like this, it might help us to consider what is certain. God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) lives and is at work in the world. He loves us. We are forgiven through Jesus Christ. And God created us to be with him through all eternity (obviously I can't say that each of us will be, but I believe that is his intention). These are certainties. And though they may be few, they are mightier than all the many big and little uncertainties in life.

It never ceases to amaze me that we do not know what is going to happen in the next minute hour or week, but we know even as we breathe that we are held tightly in the most powerful and permanent love in existence. When we know God, uncertainty cannot triumph over our lives because love always wins.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High abides under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall say to the Lord, "You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I trust." Psalm 91:1-2.