

# LOCKED-IN, LOOKING-OUT

By Ian Menzies

An interesting observation I have made during the coronavirus lockdown precautions is an exponential and much appreciated increase in neighbourliness. I often sit in the sun that floods my north-facing front garden, and many of the noticeably increased parade of passer-bys now pause to nod or stop for a chat over the fence (from well over the prescribed 'social distance', I hasten to add). A friend recently expressed to me her appreciation of the stilling of traffic, adding, "You can actually hear yourself think," while another is delighting in the autumnal colour explosion as the seasons continue their majestic cycle regardless. Teddies in windows, caring phone and video contacts, and the passing

on of hilarious anecdotes and memes all contribute to a sense of togetherness, the sharing of a common experience even while we are physically separated. And yet... thousands despair: their jobs, or worse, their health have gone. Stress levels have gone through the roof. What felt safe and secure and routine has proved to be illusory. A sense of surreal-ness pervades almost all activity. "What will the future hold?" and "What will we have lost?" worries some; "What can we learn, change and gain?" challenges others. "Where is God?" ponder a few. As I sit in the autumnal sun, locked-in and looking-out through my swirl of conflicting thoughts, a hymn (a prayer?) returns time and again:

## Reflection:

*O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be thou our guide while troubles last, and our eternal home.*

*Isaac Watts, 1674-1748*

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