One of my favorite campfire songs is "my eyes are dim, I cannot see, I have not brought my specs with me..." (are you humming along all you old campers??) I was just at Epiphany Explorations - an annual conference in Victoria that brings together people from across this great United Church of ours. We listened to a whole wide variety of speakers, we visited with many colleagues and friends, we did some fine dining, and we got to admire the daffodils - yes, they were up already last week! Many of the speakers were encouraging us to dig out our specs and see the world a little more clearly - for some of us the world has appeared a little blurry in recent weeks. It makes a huge difference through which lense we are viewing the world. We heard from a black African American, now living in Toronto, who was leading a workshop that invited us to think about our own culture and how that affects how we read scripture. Our culture can be many different things - the culture of our economic status, our marital status, our ethnic roots, our sexual orientation, our gender and on and on. One of the scripture readings he has often avoided in life is the one about the Syrophoenician woman who comes to Jesus begging that he help her daughter - that her daughter is possessed by demons and needs the healing touch of Jesus. At first Jesus ignores her, but she is very persistent until finally he gives her the attention that she demands on behalf of her daughter. I immediately pictured the story we had heard on the news the night before of a mother in Haiti who heard the cries of her child under the rubble and stayed right there digging for 16 hours before anyone else came to help - the cries of our children will often give us strength we may not otherwise have. But for our presenter, this story reminded him of many years ago when he first came out as a gay man - he was terrified that his mother was going to think that he was possessed by demons and needed healing. It was good for him to talk to others and re-discover how to read that scripture through a different lense - a lense that has nothing to do with demons, and everything to do with a God who stretches out a hand of loving compassion to all who need it. Scripture readings can mean many things to many people - that's why it is so important for us to talk to each other about what we are hearing and how we are hearing it. I pray that I continue to have the strength to clear my eyes that I may truly see and hear what the Spirit is saying to me, to our faith community, and to this world that is so much in need of the tender touch of our Creator.