



AUG
2022

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

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TEST YOUR GREY MATTER
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hey friends,

I hope you're all doing well and that you are making the most of the summer, especially now that we're getting some sunny and beautiful weather.

All is well here at the church! While we navigate vacations and different ways of being and doing church, we're still doing the work our faith calls us to do; love God, love one another, love ourselves, and make this world more like the one God made it to be.

. . . continued from page one

That, of course, isn't always easy, is it? That's what this magazine is for. It's a way to keep us connected to God, each other, and ourselves, and inspire and empower us to do that work of our faith. As always, you'll find things in here like sermons, art, letters, and prayers. Use it however you need and see this as a way we can love and support you.

If anything in here resonates with you and you'd like to talk more about it or if we can support you in any way, please let us know. Contact the church and I or someone else will be in touch.

grace & peace,

n.



Summer Greetings, Dear Friends!

It feels good to still be able to say it's still summer....we all know that these warm sunny days are marching onwards towards Fall, so it is important to savour, to be fully present to each and every summer day, isn't it!

I hope as you read this you are doing well. I know that, for some of you, changes and transitions are an ongoing occurrence in your lives. Know that you are not alone. We, your church family are here for you. Reach out to us if you would like to connect with us and let us know how we can help and support you.

There are many loving hearts and hands encircling you and creating this magazine and care packages. Our thanks to Bob Boyko for the "PEACE" Stones he created for the last care packages and to Larry Stilwell for ongoing his art cards. Fran Porter has offered to submit a monthly article focusing on a member of our congregation, starting this month with Rae Kells. Thank you, Fran and Rae for sharing your story with us which is an honour to read....and a big "Thank You" to everyone who makes the magazine and care packages possible. Please continue to share your suggestions and ideas, we love it!

Recently I had the joy of watching a Winnie-the-Pooh movie ...YES, I found it both joyful and deeply meaningful!

(Film: Pooh's Grand Adventure: The Search for Christopher Robin. Walt Disney Studios)

There is a simplicity to this children's story and its message, yet, as is usually the case, it is profound at the same time. It's a reminder that we will always carry our loved ones in our hearts and us in theirs, no matter where they are. As followers of Jesus, it also reminds us that we are always surrounded by HIS love...He too "will always be with you."



Blessings of Love and Peace,

Vi

... continued

"If ever there is a tomorrow when we're not together,
there is something you must always remember.

You are braver than you believe,
stronger than you seem,
and smarter than you think.

But the most important thing is,
even if we're apart,
I'll always be with you.

— Christopher Robin in Winnie-the-Pooh

by A.A. Milne





SERMON: PERSEVERING IN FAITH, HOLDING HORROR IN ONE HAND AND HOLY IN THE OTHER - REV. TRACY ROBERTSON

Let's begin today's message with prayer...let us pray.

*Justice-filled God who is voice for the voiceless;
give us open hands, open hearts,
and open minds to embrace this difficult scripture.
Hold us in your embrace as we struggle to understand it's meaning for us today.
May we be emboldened to hear about each other's hardships,
lift each other up,
and allow the silenced to be heard.
Amen*

You can imagine my delight when I was attending this year's Festival of Homiletics, which is, essentially, a summer camp for preachers, and the first speaker being the infamous Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, and his sermon is based on.... you guessed it....2 Samuel 13.

While I am not as charismatic as Rev. Moss, what he said inspired me so much that I needed to share his wise teachings and my response to them with you. And because the summer months can be a time to explore something new or different, preaching about the lesser known Tamar seemed appropriate, but this topic is a sensitive one, so please do reach out for support if you're at all triggered by what's shared today; you are not alone.

As you can probably guess, this text isn't in our lectionary; anywhere.



It's a hard story to read,
it's hard to hear,
and it seems to even be harder to accept as something through which the Spirit can bring hope and healing.
What happened to Tamar is one of those Bible stories that most ministers don't want to touch,
which is understandable; however,
it's also a story that deserves attention;
especially in the church.

But how can we find the holy in such a story of horror?
But that's all too often the reality for many who are abused and oppressed.

And as much as we turn to the bible to seek comfort and assurance that we are never alone in our struggles,
the reality is that each story we read is,
in fact,
a source of comfort not despite the struggles,
but because of them.

We learn ways in which to use the biblical stories of perseverance to help us persevere.

In fact, the stories are almost always about people who are struggling with one thing or another and yet find hope through the reassurance of God's unconditional love and grace.

Today's Tamar text brings to the forefront the very real moments when horror,
and what we believe is holy, come together.

This and other texts like it are what theologian, Phyllis Tickle calls 'texts of terror' and,
for the most part,
many of us avoid these bible stories,
or stories like this in our news feeds or from our family or friends because we are not taught how to hold horror in one hand and holy in the other.

And yet, horror is what many go through on a daily basis and our God of unconditional love and grace encourages us to hold the holy at the same time.

After Amnon raped his sister,
he displayed typical 'blame the victim' mentality and the text says:
"Amnon was filled with intense revulsion;
it was stronger than the love he had once felt for her".

We all know what this is, right?
It's his intense revulsion towards himself but there's no way the offender
will blame himself,
oh no!

His intense revulsion is directed towards his victim.

And it's the victim,
it's Tamar herself,
who still tries to make him save face.
Even though she was assaulted and then treated with intense revulsion,
she still cared for and loved her brother enough to try and work it out.

"To send me away is worse than everything you did to me."

But Amnon's shame prevented him from even listening to this option and he
sent Tamar away,
locking the door behind her as she was escorted out.

Tamar's other brother,
Absalom and their dad, King David,
knew and were furious about what happened,
but said nothing!

None of them spoke about what happened to her.
None of them consoled her.
Absalom even said, "...keep quiet about it; he is your brother.
Don't brood about it."

Tamar's trauma was,
as is so often the case even today,
swept under the proverbial rug.

"What will people think?"

"They have so much potential, why let this one incident threaten that?"

"What were you wearing?"

"What did you do to encourage this to happen?"

None of us are allowed to feel sorry for David!
The reality is that David brought this upon himself and his family long ago.
Remember his lust for Bathsheba?
He saw her and wanted her;
despite the fact that she was married.

We don't know if she consented to this encounter, after all,
David was King and would saying 'no' even be an option?

And to cover up the pregnancy that resulted,
David ended up having Bathsheba's husband killed on the front lines of a war.

Let's not mince words here, folks,
David taught Amnon everything.
David is the head of a dysfunctional family and instead of elevating him to be
a man after God's heart,
maybe he was a man chasing after God's heart.

David was the head of a political family with no moral compass.
A political family that models for its nation one of toxic entitlement and that
poison spreads to the civic arena and almost destroys Israel.

David knew about Tamar and didn't say anything –
he was more concerned about image than concerned about his own child.
None of the men said anything.

But before we think this story is only about trauma and lament, let's turn our focus to how Tamar responds to her situation.

She was dressed in a richly ornamented robe
- the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the ruler wore.

After the assault and locking out,
she put ashes on her head and tore her robe.

Essentially, she turned her robe into a sackcloth,
and that is significant because in biblical times,
wearing sackcloth and ashes was to publicly express or show sorrow or regret
for having done something wrong.

Of course, Tamar, did nothing wrong,
but because her own family wanted her to stay silent,
she, instead,
put ashes on her head and tears her robe.

Tamar is part of the royal family;
she is visible and privileged as being a part of a family that leads a nation,
a family believed to have been anointed by God.

All eyes are on the royal family and when they see her sackcloth and ashes,
she's being anything but silent.

Rev. Moss says, "We have done such violence to this powerful,
prophetic woman named Tamar –
not just with broken patriarchy, toxic masculinity, and subversive misogyny.

We've done ecclesiastical or Christian violence because our theology is still ill
equipped for dealing with the trauma that so many still endure.

I guarantee you that all who are wounded,
hear the message of holding horror in one hand and the holy in another with
deafening clarity.

The Tamar of today is the Tamar of domestic violence victims,
the Tamar of Indigenous nations,
the Tamar of refugees,
the Tamar of wealth hiding underneath the false security of a blanket of
privilege
– there is a story for everyone who knows Tamar.

They may speak different languages or dialects,
but they all hold horror in one hand and holy in the other.

Blues and gospel,
pain and possibility,
agony and affirmation,
triumph and tragedy.

Tamar and all her children (God's children)
– all those who endure oppression
– are calling us to hear their story.

And all God's children have a name,
and those names need to be spoken out loud.

"That's why it's important to work through tough scriptures like
the story of Tamar.
It helps us talk about the tough,
but very real, experiences we go through.

We talk about it to lessen its power over us;
to dispel stigma and stereotypes.

"Say her name, their names.
She is us, and we are they.
Tell the story".

The fullness of horror and holy are in scripture and with us here, today.
We must face both the horror and the holy if we are truly to have a
relationship with God.

Everyone wanted Tamar to be quiet – but she puts on sackcloth and ashes.

Sometimes you don't die
when you're supposed to
& now I have a choice -
repair a world or build
a new one inside my body
—Cameron Awkward-Rich

Tamar refused to be silenced;
wearing a torn robe and ashes spoke volumes.

She essentially went out to the streets with a protest sign telling her story in a very public way.

Tamar says since you won't speak,
I'll speak for myself and to my God,
likely the Hebrew "Elohim"
- the one who brought the world into existence.
Since no one will speak up for me,
I will tear my robe and put ashes on my head showing the world that I have nothing to be ashamed about because I know my God walks with me.

"Sometimes when others don't speak for you,
you need to reclaim your voice and speak for yourself."

In doing what Tamar did,
maybe there was a woman who saw her and said,
I can do that too.
Maybe there was a woman across town
– me too.

Maybe a woman in Palestine heard about Tamar and had the courage to say,
me too.
There might have been men, too, who were tired of being silenced
– me too.

Tamar's sackcloth and ashes encourages us all to not let anyone silence our voice.

God speaks through you,
just as God speaks through other people.

Don't be afraid to name that all is not right with the world.

That's how we work towards a 'yet-to-be-place' because,
let's face it,
God's dream of a new earth isn't here yet, is it?

Wear the sackcloth and ashes;
tell your story;
don't be afraid of speaking about the dysfunctional family.

Speak about horror and holy / pain and possibility because we all endure it;
we are not alone.

And Tamar reminds us that our loving God, Elohim,
is helping us not to be silenced any longer.

God speaks through us through the horror into the holy.

Rev. Moss says,
"Salvation and reclamation can not be achieved unless we're willing to accept
the sackcloth and ashes worn by those we love,
the churches and people we pastor,
and the nations we occupy.

"Let's not be afraid to acknowledge that the church, too,
is in danger of being a dysfunctional family;
when we put protocol over humanity,
tradition over truth.

Let's speak Tamar's name and the names of all the Tamar's who have,
and are, suffering today.

Let's tell their story.

For God's sake,
and for the sake of all humanity,
give them the mic.

This ancient story,
this hard story,
this story of horror needs to be told in order for all of God to be revealed.

The holy is held with the horror.
It always has been.

But through it all,
we are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.



Grace is Brave

"I can love you, but not want to be around you.

I can forgive you, but not trust you.

I can know you, but not want to be close to you.

I can be your family,
but not conform to your expectations.

I can understand you,
but not feel safe around you.

One does not require the other.

We can love from a distance.

We can forgive without reconnecting.

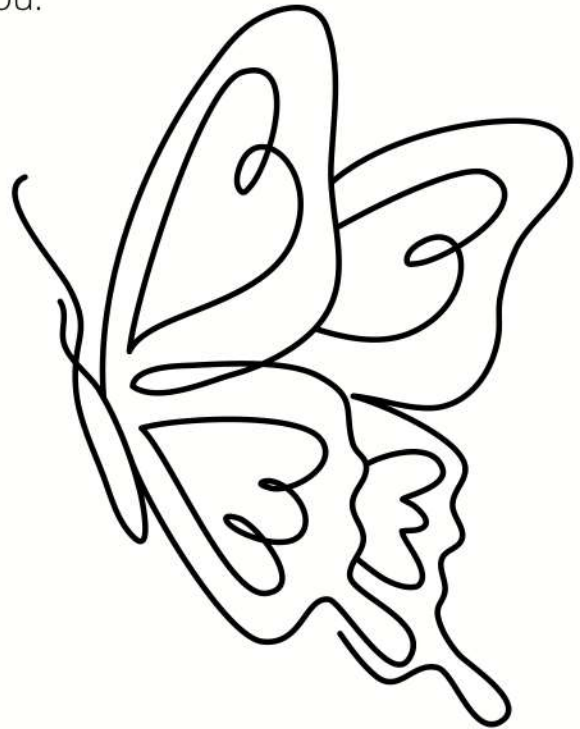
We can know without closeness.

We can be family without conformity.

We can have understanding without surrendering boundaries.

Forgiveness is not retrust, reconnection, reconciliation, or restoration. It is the emotional release of a person from the debt they owe you that they cannot or will not repay. It creates the possibility for relational healing, but not the certainty of it.

Grace is brave. Be brave."



by Chris Kratzer .

Our thanks to Jackie Walters for this submission

DO WHAT YOU CAN WITH WHAT YOU HAVE - A SERMON BY REV. NICK

Let's start with this ...

any music fans or fans of trivia in the room?
this is for you.

What do these 4 songs have in common?

Queen's We Will Rock You,
The Beatles' Revolution,
The Rolling Stone's You Can't Always Get What You Want,
and Elvis' Hound Dog.

They are all B sides.

They were all songs that were on the other, less important side of a record.
Which is weird right? Cause these are classic rock songs.
And yet ... they began as b sides.
They were meant to be deep cuts instead of big hits.

And it's these B side songs that have inspired what we're going to do this
summer for our Sunday Services.

This summer we're going to be doing a sermon series we're calling,
"Wait, That's In There?!: Exploring the Lesser Known Stories of the Bible."

We've partnered with a few other United Churches
and each week a preacher is going to bring to us a b side bible story,
a story buried deep down in there,
a story that, chances are, we've never heard of or paid attention to,
but yet a story that we think we need to hear,
a story that should be a big hit because it's got something to say,
it's got some wisdom to offer about what it means to be human
and how we can live a life that's full and deep.

And we've got some really good stories for you.
All of them are stories I don't think any of us have ever preached on before.
And so, the plan is to do this from here to September with a few breaks here
and there as we practice being the church in some other ways on Sundays,
but today

today we kick it off with a story of two women,
most of the stories we'll be looking at are stories about women,
and it's the story of Shifra and Puah.

So, the plan is we'll hear the story and then we'll hear the wisdom its got to
offer us, especially as we try to help God create that world where everyone
has enough and everyone has a place.

With me?
here for this?

And so to really hear Shifra and Puah's story,
to really get a sense of its weight and to hear it in the right context,
we need to go back to that guy with the colourful coat.

Know who I'm talking about?
Yeah, Joseph.

So, Joseph was a guy who,
through a series of wild and crazy circumstances,
ended up far away from his people and home working for the Pharaoh in
Egypt.

Now just as he was getting started a huge famine was sweeping across the
world but thanks to Joe,
Egypt was able to stockpile food and avoid the devastation,
and because of that,
Egypt was not only able to grow more and more and more powerful,
becoming an Empire,
becoming the dominate force in the world,

but also, people began to flood into Egypt,
all of them refugees fleeing from the food crisis,
all of them looking for a new place to live,
and that included Joseph's people,
the Israelites,
that group of people the Hebrew scriptures are about,
they came and they settled in Egypt.

Now fast forward a whole bunch of years,
we don't really know how many,
but by this time there's a new Pharaoh and this Pharaoh looked over the
Empire and saw all these non-Egyptians living there ...

he saw them eating all Egyptian food,
he saw them taking up all Egyptian jobs,
he saw them taking up all Egyptian space,
and he saw them growing in number and getting more powerful,

and even though none of that impacted him whatsoever,
and even though the empire was arguably better with all of those people in it,
he thought:

"Oh my God, we're going to be replaced.
We're going to be replaced by all these foreign people.
We gotta take it back.
Something must be done!"

If anyone ever says to you that these stories aren't relevant anymore,
that they are old and dusty and have no parallels,
just read them this one.

We only need to watch the news or listen to certain political candidates
to hear the same fear and rhetoric.

These stories are our stories.

And so,
in a move to control these shifting demographics that would later be copied
by all future Empires,

the Pharaoh began to stop this great replacement by oppressing groups like the Israelites by enslaving them, by forcing them all into a life of making bricks.

But despite that, the number of Israelites kept going up until one day the Pharaoh figured that mere oppression wasn't enough.

So again, adding another move into the How to Oppress People playbook, he went after the children. He decided to kill every single boy that was born.

And so, to carry out this plan, we're told that the Pharaoh goes to two women ... Shifra and Puah, the head midwives for the Israelites, and he commanded that they, along with all the other midwives, kill every single baby boy they help birth.

And now we can assume there's a big "or else" added onto that, right? Whenever there's that big a huge power differential the threat is always implied.

So, Shifra and Puah call together all the other midwives and tell them what's up but also that this is something they can't do, that this is one order they can't follow, but instead of simply saying "no" they decide to do the thing that makes these two women heroes in the Hebrew tradition, they decide to do the thing that makes this story one we need to hear today:

**they decide to quietly resist and defy the order by doing the exact opposite of what the Pharaoh asked:
they decided to keep doing what they do and let the babies live.**

But as time goes by, Pharaoh he notices that the Israelite population is still growing

which is weird because he made it illegal for the babies to live, so he goes to Shifra and Puah and says, "what the heck? why aren't they all gone yet?!"

And we're told how the two midwives wink at each other and shrug their shoulders, saying:

"Oh, you know those Israelite women, they just keep popping out babies before we can even get to them. They are a bunch of chayots"

Which in Egyptian means animal, but in Hebrew means hero.

And the Pharaoh,

replies,

"Yeah they are animals, this plan won't work! "

And we're told how God celebrated the courage and work of the midwives.

//

And that's the story of Shifra and Puah.

That's the b side story we get this week.

Who heard that for the first time?

It's powerful, eh?

And it's powerful for all kinds of reasons, least of which for what they did.

Cause sure, it was an act of civil disobedience,

sure, it was an act of mercy,

sure, it was an act of love and justice,

but it was also an act of treason.

It was an act of straight up defiance.

And going against the Empire like that?

Subverting the established systems of

power and authority??

That was something that you just didn't do,

especially,



ESPECIALLY,
as marginalised and oppressed people.

I mean, that's something right there.

It should make us ask some heavy questions.

It makes us ask how does our privilege shape our interactions with those systems of power and how does who we are so often dictate the consequences we face?

It makes us ask how do we support the Shifra's and Puah's of our day?

How do we hear and support those marginalised and oppressed people pushing back against corrupt and broken systems of power and authority?
Right?

Yeah, those are some good questions for us to ask.

But I'll let those just percolate on their own because today we're gonna look at something else the story offers us,

the wisdom it gives us about how we can help make the world a better place,
the wisdom it gives us about what we must do whenever we encounter evil,
oppression, and injustice:

we do what we can with what we have.

Cause that's what Shifra and Puah did, right?

When they encountered evil, oppressive, and unjust forces,

when they were asked to be a part of a legal system that would kill and hurt people,

they didn't go out and learn a new skill,

they didn't pass it onto someone else whose younger or more powerful,

they didn't run away and hide,

and they didn't do it under protest either ...

they did what they could with what they had to try to stop it from happening.

they did what they could with what they had.

And that's got something for us to chew on,
something I think is both liberating and energizing,
because when it comes to encountering evil, oppressive, and unjust forces,
when it comes to those destructive and powerful forces ...
when it comes to the things that pull us and others away from life,
who here feels helpless?
who feels powerless?
What about overwhelmed?

Yeah, me too.
Those are pretty common reactions.

Whether we're talking about the oppressive forces outside of us,
those things like racism,
gender inequality,
poverty,
war,
corrupt political systems,

or about the oppressive forces within us,
those things like shame,
resentment,
low self worth,
addiction,
hate,
or fear ...

when it comes to all the things that steal and rob us and others of life,
right after we all yell, "Something must be done!"
we immediately go: "but what could I possibly do?"

Are ya with me?
Yeah, of course we feel that.
Of course we ask that.
How could we not?

And it's to that question,
it's to us wondering what we could possibly do in the face of those oppressive
forces,
that our tradition would go,
"oh, there's this story in the Bible"
and we get the wisdom from Shifra and Puah,
we get the answer to what we could possibly do:

we do what we can with what we have.

Yeah, that's it.

That's the answer.

We do what we can with what we have.

At the very heart of our tradition is a liberating and energizing idea,
this idea at work in this story,
but also, in the stories of people like Claudette Colvin and Rosa Parks
the Tank Man from Tiennimen square,
in athletes like Tommie Smith, John Carols, and Colin Kappernick,
and in so many other people throughout history,
it's this idea that seems super counter-intuitive at first,
but yet has proved to be true time and time and time again,
this idea that says:

**change does not happen through one person taking huge action
but through many people taking small actions.**

**Whether it's the change in us or around us,
it's this idea that says that lasting change only truly happens through
one small contribution at a time.**

This is why Shifra and Puah need to be a classic story
is because they remind us all of something really liberating and energizing:

We all have power.

We all can do something.

We can do what we can when we can.

While we aren't responsible for stopping those evil and unjust problems on our own,
we are responsible for doing something about them,
each in our own way,
each with the power that we do have,
each of us doing what we can when we can,
because we know ... we trust ... that change does not happen through one massive act
but through many small contributions.

So let's end with this ...

Chris' story - elephants

So, what evil oppressive and unjust force are you facing right now?
What's making you go, "but what could I possibly do?"
What system are you being invited to be a part of?

So when you're overwhelmed and feeling powerless,
remember this,
you can do something ...
you do have power ...
you can make a difference ...

end it somehow.

amen.

**TOGETHER
WE CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**

PRAYER OF DIVERSITY

Creator God,
we marvel in awe at the
expansiveness of your creation.
Your margins of diversity are
boundless and for that,
we thank you.

Blessed are you,
God of ALL peoples,
for these wonderful differences.

Each of our beloved LGBTQ1A+ community,
of those of varying skin colours,
race, creed, disability
and of every difference imaginable
are beautifully and wonderfully made.

Let us remember that
ALL peoples
are made in your image.

Teach us to love people just as they are,
to embrace their identity fully,
as you have embraced and
love each one of us.

Amen



**SERMON: Jael Breaking Binaries: Unity in
Diversity Sermon
Judges 4-5 (Selected Verses)
By Robin Galey**

INTRO

What comes to mind when you hear the word Jael?

I've been thinking over this sermon for a while, and I keep thinking about, well, prison... Jael isn't exactly a common name, is it?

Nor a feminine sounding one.

Today, we associate the word Jael with metal bars, prison guards, and barbed wire... Interestingly,

one interpretation suggests the Jael in today's scripture reading may actually have more to do with freedom.

An idea I'll return to later.

First, let's review the story...

The prophet Deborah tells Barak that the Lord commands him to go fight their oppressor's army.

Their oppressor is Sisera,

leader of the army of Jabin, king of Kanaan.

Barak says to Deborah: "I will go if you go with me."

Deborah agrees to go with him,

but prophecies that the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.

While Barak's army slays Sisera's army, Sisera sneaks away on foot.

Jael, wife of Heber, a Kenite who pitched his tent next to a great tree,

encounters Sisera outside the tent,

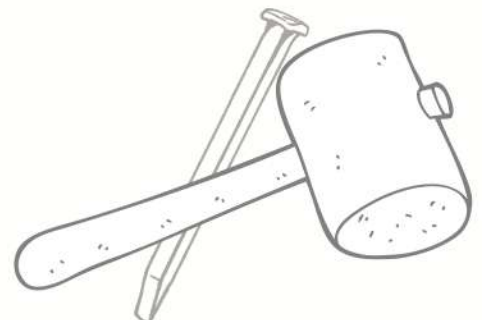
and offers acts of hospitality that lead him to feel safe.

Jael covers him with a blanket,

gives him milk to drink in the bowl of a noble person.

When he falls asleep,

she gets a hammer and puts **a nail** through his head, killing him.



RADICAL ACTION

Wow. Sounds rather: “Lord of the Rings”, don’t you think?
And, yes, in its most literal interpretation,
this is a violent story about a person murdering another person,
and the God I understand condones life-giving actions,
NOT violence and NOT murder.

But, in a slightly different interpretation,
this is a story about a radical action taken by a woman that rescues the Jewish
people from oppression.

I recently learned that the word “radical” has the same word origin as “radish”,
and it means “root.”

Roots are what ground a plant and nourish it from within the dark soil below
our sightlines.

As humans, our roots connect us to the past, and to our ancestors.

This, then, reminds us that RADICAL actions often come from the grassroots,
and herald positive changes.

In Jael’s case, the radical action of ending Sisera’s life created a positive
change, as God’s people were freed from the oppressive army, they had
suffered under for twenty years, bringing 40 years of peace.

While it’s challenging to read a violent biblical text, of course, compare this to
the violence we are exposed to on the internet today.

In fact, there is almost NO LIMIT to the sensational, frightening, and violent
content we and our young people can be exposed to on Netflix or YouTube.

Comparatively, this brief moment of “freeing” violence

—in that it freed a people from tyranny seems practically tame.

The fact that the story is told in matter-of-fact terms, with no sensationalizing
language or editorializing statements only adds to this.

In fact, Jael obeyed God, even though what was required was difficult.

Jael stood up against injustice and defended the Jewish people, even though
they were not Jael’s own people.

And, through it all, God’s grace was present. I want to reflect on four points
about the story of Jael, and that was the first. Now, on to point two.



NON-BINARY/UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The fact that Jael is a woman comes as a bit of a surprise in this text, don't you think?

It's not often either in biblical stories or in our current culture that we encounter a woman acting with such blatant violence towards another human being.

But...what if we drop the gendered language and think of Jael as non-binary?

It's one way other interpreters describe Jael: with a feminine side that helps Sisera to feel safe and comforted through acts of nurturing and hospitality—covering him with a blanket, offering him milk to drink—and a masculine side, hyper-aware that an oppressive murderer is in her tent and ensuring through a grisly act that he will do NO more harm to others.

Some interpreters suggest that Jael's non-binary identity has been overlooked by the dominant heteronormative discourse, which ignores the evidence of gender ambiguity in this text.

Ever look through a kaleidoscope?

On the level of gender, I have learned, we are each a blend of masculine and feminine characteristics, and each occupy a unique point in what might be described as a kaleidoscope of colours.

In fact, gender is better described as a SPECTRUM than as a binary, we have learned.

And, when we embrace our gender diversity explicitly and intentionally, it supports others who are struggling to become public about their unique identities.

And, just as a kaleidoscope only appears beautiful and intricate through many, many individual points of coloured light coming together to complete a complex pattern, so too we are each unique parts of the one greater, unified whole of life.

Interestingly, the words unique and unify and universe all contain the prefix "uni".

In fact,
there are 1878 words that do, according to my internet browser search,
and "uni" means, literally "having one only."
We are, each one of us, one unique being,
and one small part of a greater unified whole,
making up the universe of being.

The story of Jael teaches that we can be united with beings different from ourselves.

As Jael, wife of a Kenite, supports the Jewish people,
we can support people of other cultures,
as those around and among us are supporting thousands of refugees from Ukraine right now.

PRESENCE OF NATURE

So, on to point three.

As is SO OFTEN TRUE in scripture, nature is present in the story.
From the great tree under which Jael's husband pitched their tent,
to the animal skin Jael covered Sisera with,
to the animal milk that sent him to sleep,
it's clear that these people lived interdependently with the animals and trees around them.

In fact, Jael literally means "ibex", a mountain goat.

Symbolically, Jael's actions demonstrate the qualities of the mountain goat.
Jael navigates a difficult situation both delicately and tenaciously.

As I was reminded in my summer school class last week,
we grow closer to God, and are more able to see the sacred in everyday life,
when we get closer to the elements of nature,
elements which grow and nourish one another and us without question or condition,
just as our creator God is with us, supporting all of life
—without question or condition.

WHERE IS GOD AT WORK?

Final point.

If we consider Jael's story mythically, we might say:

God influenced a non-binary person in unseen ways to create a change that freed the Jewish people from a 20 year period of oppression, resulting in 40 years of peace.

In the words of the scripture itself, God is present through it all.

Judge Deborah's prophecies come from the Lord;

the Lord directs the time and place of Barak's battle;

the Lord delivers Sisera into the hands of Jael;

and Jael turns out to be the most ideal person to BOTH offer Sisera kindness and hospitality and end his destructive physical life.

God is present through it all.

Which points to the question: how is God working through our world today?

Each week, Tracy and I meet for theological reflection time,

and one of the questions we frequently ask each other is:

where did you see God at work this week?

As we talked about this recently,

I shared that I recognized God accompanying me in times when my essential needs are met against seemingly impossible odds.

When I manifest what I most need, as has often happened in my life, with ease and grace.

When synchronicities show me that, despite my greatest doubts, I am EXACTLY where I am supposed to be right now.

And so,

I invite you to consider this question yourself,

today, and in the days to come:

how is our creator God present and at work in your world today?

In your life, in the lives of those around you, and in the larger world,

what life-giving work does God call you to in support of others and in support of creation?

I am not suggesting that any of us should wield a hammer and a nail as Jael did.

NOT AT ALL.

The loving creator God I understand does not condone violence against any other living being.

But I am suggesting that,

if we intently listen for how God's voice is speaking into our lives,

if we open ourselves up to hear messages emerging from within us about how to help others,

we will surely find our lives infused with greater meaning,

and live out the light-filled,

grace-filled,

hope-filled and

helpful destiny for which we are each born.

God speaks through Deborah,

commands BaRaK,

delivers Sisera, and

enables Jael.

In all these actions, God is present.

Whether there is a war being waged in your mind,

disease present in your body,

a shadow causing grief to your spirit,

or simply peace in your heart,

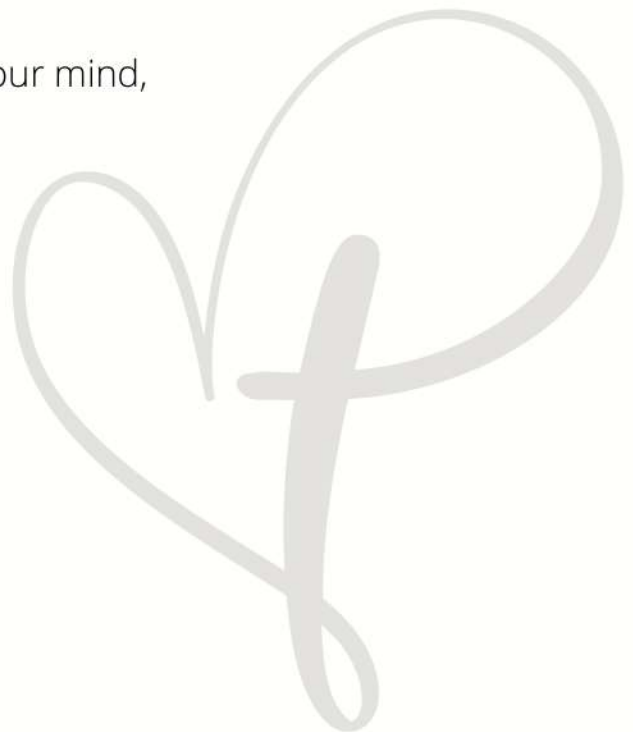
know this:

you never walk alone.

God is with us.

God is with YOU.

Thanks be to God.



TEST FOR YOUR GREY MATTER

1. Johnny's mother had three children. The first child was named April. The second child was named May. What was the third child's name?
2. There is a clerk at the butcher shop, he is five feet ten inches tall and he wears size 13 sneakers. What does he weigh?
3. Before Mt. Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?
4. How much dirt is there in a hole... that measures two feet by three feet by four feet?
5. What word in the English Language... is always spelled incorrectly?
6. Billy was born on December 28th, yet his birthday is always in the summer. How is this possible?
7. In California, you cannot take a picture of a man with a wooden leg. Why not?
8. What was the President's Name...in 1975?
9. If you were running a race, and you passed the person in 2nd place, what place would you be in now?
10. Which is correct to say, "The yolk of the egg are white" or "The yolk of the egg is white"?
11. If a farmer has 5 haystacks in one field and 4 haystacks in the other field, how many haystacks would he have if he combined them all in another field?



FEATURING OUR GREATEST STRENGTH—OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

This is the first of a series of monthly articles which will profile—with their permission, of course—one of the individuals, couples, or families that make our church the unique and special place it is. Who is ‘important’ enough to be featured here? Everyone! This month, we get to know Rae Kells.

“Some years ago now, we joined RDLUC for the simplest reason on earth,” says Rae. “We lived in Douglasdale, then bought an acreage near Spruce Meadows, and this church was right nearby.” Rae and retired RCMP husband Bob soon made many friends amongst those in their new church family. They loved the before-and-after-service coffeetime, the Wednesday morning Faith and Coffee discussion group, the annual community turkey dinners, and the On the Edge Concert series. They got involved. And, as they did, Rae gradually and modestly revealed about herself things that made our collective jaw drop.



For 27 years, Rae has judged world-class curling competitions, among them 21 national championships, 17 world championships and 4 Olympic games events. In November 2019, she was officially inducted into the Olympic curling Hall of Fame. But fascinating and noteworthy as these accomplishments are, they don't in any way compare to what has been the most important part of Rae's journey since joining this congregation.

FEATURING OUR GREATEST STRENGTH—OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

By her 2019 induction, she already knew that her life was going to change in a major way. Bob, her dear husband, diagnosed with leukemia several years earlier and in receipt of a stem-cell transplant from one of his brothers, had rejected the transplant and was facing the status of being 'on borrowed time'. Devastating yet unavoidable, this news was handled by both partners with a courage and dignity that Rae credits to strong support by both family and friends, including many from our church. "We had six years to prepare," she says. "So, we did what we had to do. We sold the acreage and moved back into town, into a one-storey-unit community. During the years of our marriage when we were stationed all over Canada due to Bob's career, I had already learned to be an independent sort. Bob oversaw RCMP activities in wide areas of the country, so we lived in many places including Ottawa, Edmonton, and Halifax. I learned to adapt to a life of being on the move and to managing by myself with both the kids and the household when Bob wasn't around. That independence now stands me in good stead."

The oldest transplant patient at the treatment centre and a role model to those in his treatment group as to how to cope with having a terminal illness, Bob was also a profound influence on Rae as she dealt with the prospect of upcoming widowhood. He organized his affairs so she would have a minimal amount to do once he was gone. "That's why I can't talk about myself and what my life has become without also talking about Bob," she says. "it's just not possible." Of course not!

Recently, Rae and her family commemorated the one-year anniversary of Bob's passing. His 2021 memorial service, conferred with full RCMP ceremonial honours, was very small due to COVID but shared through the wonders of technology with friends and church family members who wished to participate through viewing the moving celebration of his life. "And now I have to move on and forge my individual path," Rae concludes. "Bob would want that. Others have had to do it, and so do I. It's my own way of being true to his memory."

What a wonderful epitaph!

Our thanks to Fran Porter for this submission

YOUR SMILE FOR THE DAY

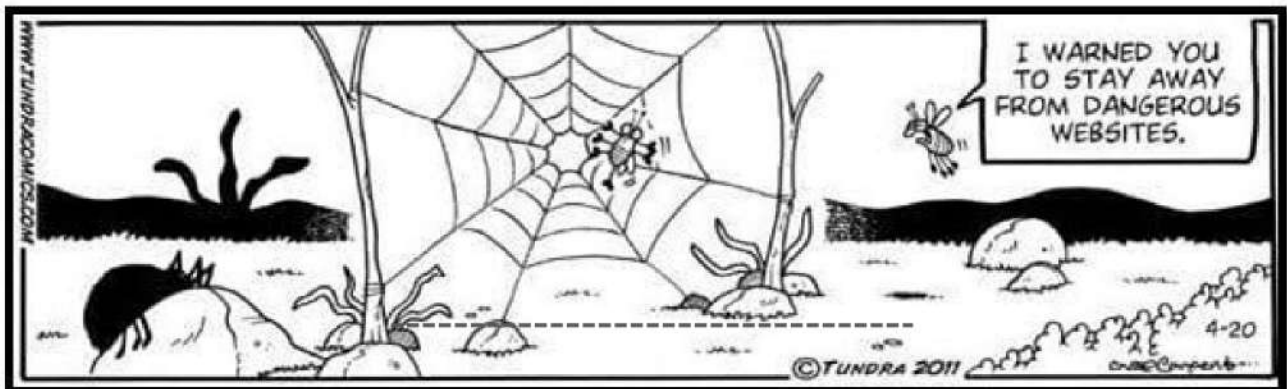
My husband can't activate our Amazon Echo, because he keeps forgetting its name, Alexa.

"Just think of the car Lexus and add an 'a' at either end," I suggested.

The next time he wanted to use our new toy, he looked a bit puzzled. Then he remembered what I'd said and confidently called out, "Acura!"

I bought a universal remote today.
I was disappointed to find out that
it does not, in fact, control the
universe. Not even remotely.

Astronomers got tired of
watching the moon go around
the earth for 24 hours.
So they decided to call it a day.

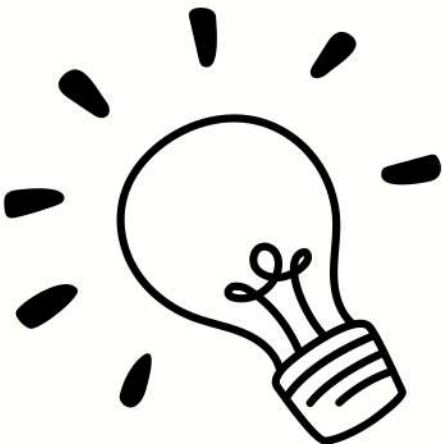


An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%. The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again."

The gentleman replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

TEST FOR YOUR GREY MATTER - ANSWERS

1. Johnny, of course.
2. Meat.
3. Mt. Everest; it just wasn't discovered yet.
[You're not very good at this are you?]
4. There is no dirt in a hole.
5. Incorrectly
6. Billy lives in the Southern Hemisphere.
7. You can't take pictures with a wooden leg. You need a camera to take pictures.
8. Same as is it now - Joe Biden
9. You would be in 2nd. Well, you passed the person in second place, not first.
10. Neither, the yolk of the egg is yellow [Duh]
11. One. If he combines all of his haystacks, they all become one big one.



WE ARE RED DEER LAKE UNITED CHURCH





We are an inclusive and affirming community of faith – people of all ages, perspectives, and stories, who gather to connect with God, each other, and ourselves, and find in Jesus a new way of being human and alive in the world.

**you're welcome, wanted,
and accepted. join us on
the journey.**

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9am - 3pm

Do you have a story to share? A memory? A poem? A photograph? We would love to publish it in the next issue of this magazine.

Please call us at **(403) 256-3181** or send your submission to **info@reddeerlakeuc.com**

**The next submission deadline is
Sep 06, 2022.**