



LENT
2023

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

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red deer lake
united church

friends!

This is a harder one to write because this is my last letter to you. If you haven't heard already, I'm moving on from RDL. It's time for a change. And as much a change and transition hurt, it's good and essential to do. Soon you'll have a new minister and I know they will love and support you, help you be the church, and take you into all kinds of new and wonderful places. I'm so proud of the work we we've done and am so grateful for the opportunity to be with you. It has been an honour and a joy to be the church with you. I'm so excited to see where you go.

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I didn't plan for it, but its ... fitting that this is happening as we head into Lent. Lent is a season of transition. Of transformation. Of change. Of dying and rising. Of leaving one home to find another. It's when we step into all of that because we know, we trust, that the worst thing isn't the last thing, that every ending is a new beginning, and that resurrection happens.

So, the first question really for us as we head into Lent is: "what transition and change am I needing to go through?" Which makes the second question of course: "can I trust that God is with me in it and that new and abundant life is on the other side?"

This magazine is meant to help you do that. It's full of some sermons, prayers, and writings to remind you of God's presence and grace and that you're not in this alone. As always, our hope and prayer is it'll do just that.

So again, thanks for showing me the grace and support over the last decade and may grace and peace be with you,

n.



Lenten Blessings, Dear Friends!

Here we are about to start our Lenten journey, a time to embrace self-reflection, of going inwards, opening up to new awareness, to movements inside, which lead to transitions, change and transformation.



This is truly a time of significant change for RDLUC as we say farewell to Rev Nick, our pastor for the past 10 years. Nick has led us through major life events and changes, both large and small. We are very grateful to him for his spiritual leadership and wish all good things for him in the future.

I too have decided that I will be retire sometime in the late spring. It will be tough for me to step away from this role which I have cherished so much in the role of congregational care counsellor amongst you these past years. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve you, my church family.



In the meantime, there is much work to be continued and undertaken. We are grateful for the interim leadership of Rev Grant Dawson. As you will see from this magazine, there has been a LOT happening at RDLUC over the Christmas season and we have included some photos of these events for you to catch up and enjoy.

The Christmas Pageant 2022 presenting: Martin the Cobbler



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RDLUC Christmas Fundraisers

Thank you to all of
you who took part
AND to our many
hard-working
volunteers who
made all this
happen



We could not do any of this without the dedication and hard work of so many of you. It is truly heart-warming to see teams of volunteers busily working away together and the church filled to capacity with joy, warmth and welcoming new and familiar, young and old into our midst. There is much to celebrate...

RDLUC has demonstrated it is a vibrant, caring and inclusive community.

Sadly, we have also said farewell to some of our senior members, whom we continue to miss and honour. We hold you and your loved ones in our hearts and prayers.

Please do reach out if these times are challenging or tender for you.



For the Easter magazine, we invite you to share with us some of your personal stories and recollections of Easter celebrations. Please send them to us or contact Vi as soon as possible if interested on doing so. We would love to hear from you!

May you each be blessed with wisdom, courage, peace, and grace this Lenten Season and journey well

Vi



BELOVED IS WHERE WE BEGIN

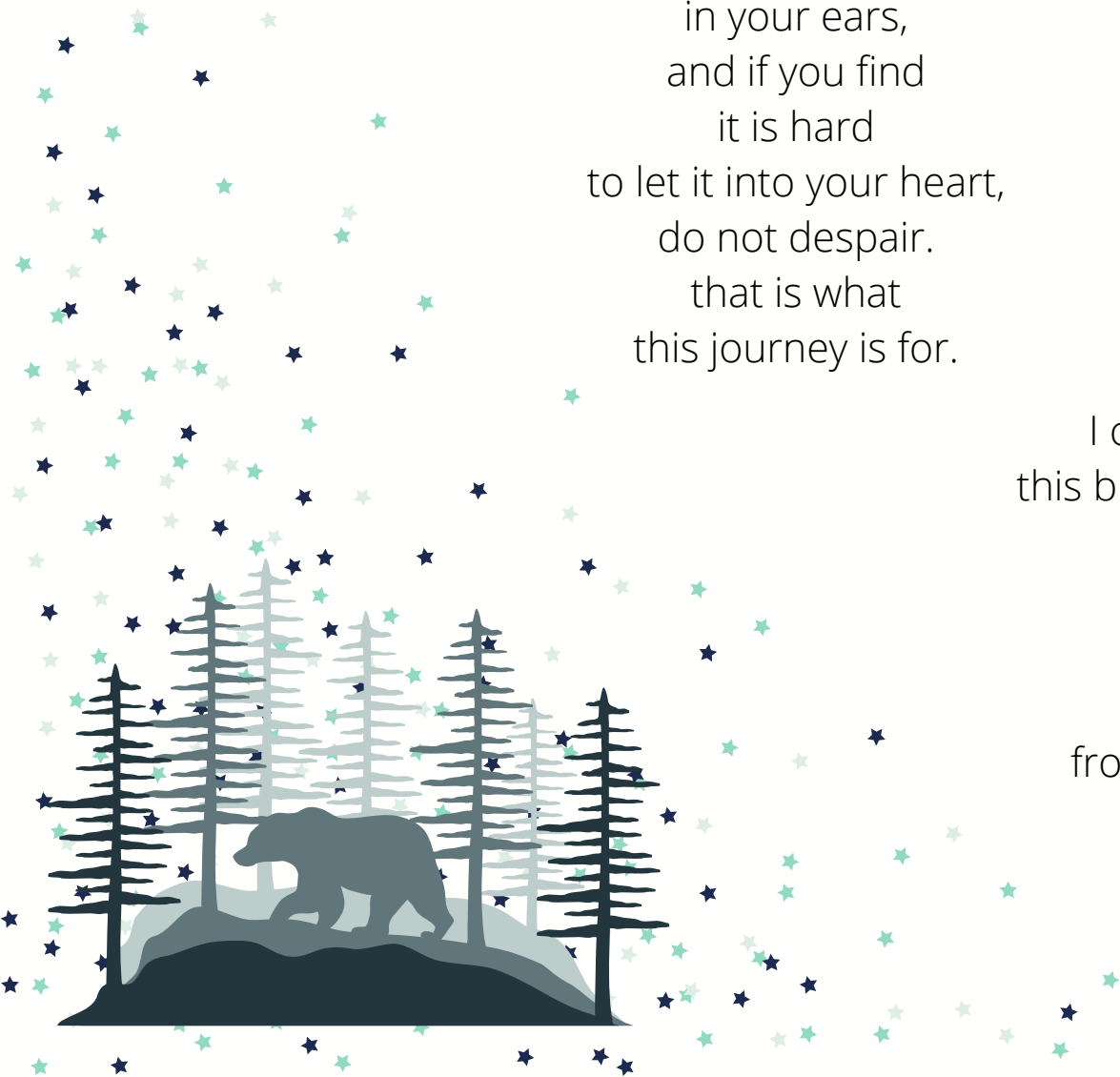
If you would enter
into the wilderness, do not begin
without a blessing.

Do not leave
without hearing
who you are:
Beloved,
named by the One
who has traveled this path
before you



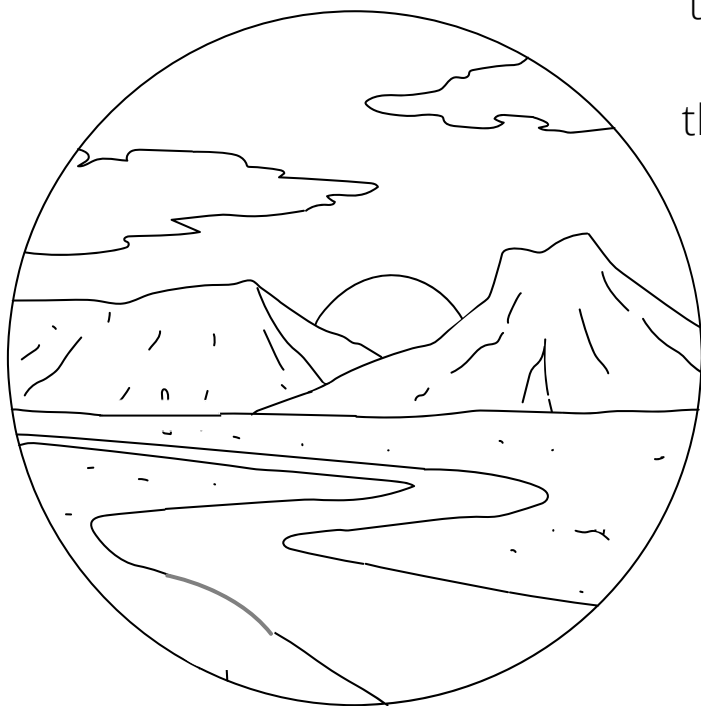
Do not go
without letting it echo
in your ears,
and if you find
it is hard
to let it into your heart,
do not despair.
that is what
this journey is for.

I cannot promise
this blessing will free you
from danger,
from fear,
from hunger
or thirst,
from the scorching
of sun
or the fall
of the night.



But I can tell you
that on this path
there will be help.

I can tell you
that on this way
there will be rest



I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces
that come to our aid
only on a road
such as this,
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their
curious insistence
whisper our name:

Beloved.
Beloved.
Beloved.

Footnote from Jan: As we cross with Christ into the landscape of Lent and into the mystery that lies ahead of us, may we know at least this about ourselves:
that our name, too, is Beloved.

Amen.

by Jan Richardson, "Circle of Grace"

KNOTS AND LENT - REV NICK

So, we've been exploring 'our knots' throughout Lent.

We've been exploring these aspects of our lives we struggle with, which get in the way of being the kinds of people we want to be, these parts of our lives which make us feel untied and disconnected from God; and we've been asking how our faith speaks to them and asking God to enter into our lives, to help us put these things down and reconnect us with the fullness of life we find in God's grace and love thereby becoming more human.

That is, after all, what Lent is about.

Lent is about spiritual renovations, about putting down things we don't want to carry and entering into grace to find renewal and life.

And this morning we'll keep going down that path.

A few minutes ago, we heard a story about Adam and Eve. And I'll go out on a limb and say most of have heard it before. In fact, most of us are probably too familiar with it. It's one of those stories that's almost impossible to hear without all the baggage its been given over the years and it's almost taken on a life of its own.

But that life it's taken on can often be quite different from what the words are actually saying.

So, as we've done before, we're going to do an ancient rabbinic practice called a targum;

we're going to remix, strip down, and re-tell this story in a way that will allow us to hear it in a new way thereby allowing us to hear something else we often miss within this story.

With me?

So!

Once, a long time ago,
not long after God made everything
God went to go see two of the very first humans: Adam and Eve.

It had been awhile since they all hung out and God wanted to see how they were and tell them a bit about what it meant to be human.

The conversation went pretty well,
but shortly after God learned a universal truth about all humans:
when you tell someone not to do something,
they will go ahead and do exactly that:

See, it wasn't long after the conversation that
the very first humans did the very thing God
asked them not to do.

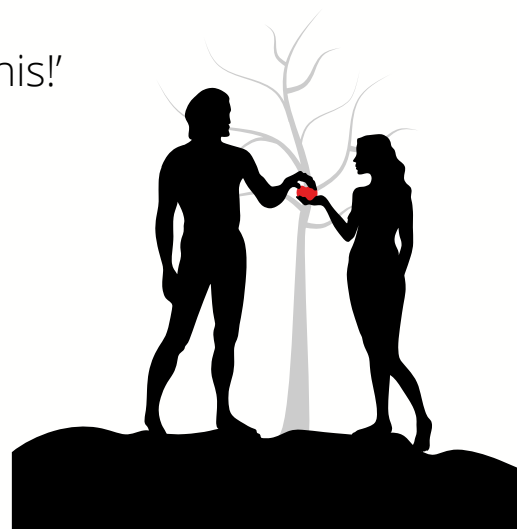
Adam and Eve just felt so terrible about disobeying their Maker.
It was so bad that Adam and Eve said to themselves:
'I broke the rules! I'm such a terrible human for doing this!'

'Oh, God's going to hate me. I'm not worth
very much if I can't follow basic rules!
Since we deserve being kicked out of Paradise,
well we don't deserve anything!'

And then,
not so much because it made them feel better
but because it distracted them from saying more
things about themselves, they started saying to each other:
'Ugh. This is your fault. You're a lousy human.'
'Me? You were right there beside me. You can't do anything right!'

It went on and on and on and they felt smaller and smaller.

It was then that they heard God walking towards them singing a song about



how happy he is to go and see his two favourite things
in the whole wide world
– which is saying a lot since he created everything in it –

and because they were terrified at being exposed for the terrible,
flawed, and unworthy people they just discovered they were,
Adam and Eve jumped in the bushes.

And not finding them in their usual spots God called out ‘
Where are you? Where are you?’ and not being able to take it
anymore Adam and Eve stepped out of the bushes,
covering themselves up with their arms,
almost as if they hoped God wouldn’t see them for what they were,
and seeing them, God asked ‘Where are you?’

But this time the tone was different from the first time.
God wasn’t asking about where they were literally,
he was asking spiritually.

God was asking about their hearts.

‘Where are you? What’s going on?’ ‘Why are you hiding from me?’
And Adam said to him:

‘We heard you coming and we hid because we were so afraid.’

Adam and Eve didn’t know it at the time but they had,
at that very moment,
experienced for the first time ever one of the most powerful human
emotions: shame.

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While it’s about many things, this is a story about shame.

It’s a powerful story too, isn’t it?

How many of us were nodding along with it going:

‘Yup. I know that feeling. I’ve been there. I know what it’s like to be ashamed.’

Anyone know what we're talking about?

As my friend the Rabbi once said:

we read these stories in the Bible not so much because they happened, but because they happen.

They are stories of human experiences and of how our faith speaks into those universal realities.

And shame ... it's a huge reality for all of us.

We shame ourselves. We shame each other.

Wherever it comes from we feel it sink to the bottom of our stomachs,
climb onto our backs,
latch onto our ankles,
rents out space in our heads ...

And we too, just like Adam and Eve, find ourselves covering up and hiding because we're scared, we'll be found out for who we really are.

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Shame, as the wonderful Dr Brene Brown would say,
"is the intensely painful feeling or experience
of believing we are inherently flawed
and therefore

unworthy of acceptance and belonging."

Shame is ultimately a question of self-worth.

Where guilt says, 'I messed up and I feel bad about breaking some of my values.'

Shame will say 'I messed up and I am a horrible person because of it.'

We experience shame when we or others take things in our lives

and let them use it to diminish who we are and what we're worth.

It's when we let our family histories convince us we don't deserve more than the addictions and problems of our ancestors.

It's when we let one mistake convince us we're horrible parents.

It's when we let the mistakes of others dictate our own worth ... that's my son.

It's when we make others feel they are no good and abnormal, and therefore unwanted because of their sexuality, their race, their age, or things they struggle with.

Maybe some of these stories sound familiar.

Maybe yours is different.

We've all got shame inside of us.

We've all helped others get it too.

We have all experienced this urge to hide and cover ourselves up,

because these things have convinced us that we are flawed, bad, good-for-nothing humans and we're terrified of being found out for who we really are.

And that's the danger of shame.

And while, even though it's a normal human response, we need to learn how to deal with it because it disconnects us from community, it weighs us down, and it messes with our sense of who we are and what we are worth.

It plagues us with thoughts that exhaust and defeat us.

This is important for us to talk about as the church because our faith offers up something that counters those voices in our heads and offers a way to put down the shame we carry and dole out.

So, what does our faith say to those of us dealing with shame?

...

There's another story in the Bible.

This one is from the New Testament.

So, Jesus is out doing his thing,

telling people about God's love and grace and how everyone is welcomed in to the world that God is making happen right here and now.

So he's walking down the road and people are dropping everything to come and check him out because just think they'll say to one another ... what if this is true? ... what if this guy is legit and maybe, just maybe, I am loved by God and welcomed in Heaven. Maybe I'm not a bad person, maybe those things I believe about myself aren't true ...

And Jesus walks toward them smiling,

he's the most approachable guy you could ever imagine.

Think Mr. Dress-Up, meets Mr. Rogers, meets Fred Penner, meets Lava Burton – but not Star

Trek Lavar, we're talking Reading Rainbow Lavar Burton.

If Jesus worked at Canadian Tire, he'd be the one guy who didn't hide when you needed help. He'd come to you.

But despite all that ... even though these people crowded around him, they covered themselves up and they hid behind smiles and masks because they were so scared Jesus would see them for who they are and if he knew that, he'd want nothing to do with them and they wouldn't get the Love they wanted.

But then ...

this woman appears behind Jesus.

If you saw her you'd know who she is.

She's got a reputation: she's that dirty woman.

In a society with a very strict purity code, she's about as dirty as you can get. Having suffered from a haemorrhage, she was always bleeding

and how she was ashamed of who she was and how she was ready for something new.

And Jesus listens to her.

and looks at her with this mixture of love, awe, and compassion

and says the words he says to anyone who steps out in faith and dares to be vulnerable by opening themselves up to him:

“Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you’re healed and whole.

Live well, live blessed! Be healed of your plague.”

Daughter.

Healed.

Whole.

Live.

Blessed.

These are words of identity, worth, of love.

These are words of grace.

This woman stepped out in faith and opened up to Jesus, letting out all those shameful things she believed about herself and in that act of vulnerability she was able to hear those graceful words from Jesus:

‘No. You are not those things.

You are a child of God. You are beautifully made and will always be beautiful.

You may have made mistakes, but those mistakes do. not. define you.

That is up to God and it’s a word of love.’

...

To you who struggles with a self worth beaten down by shame,

our faith offers us those same graceful words.

Daughter. Son.

Healed.

Whole.

Live.

Blessed.

You have a self-worth and identity that can't be taken away from you. It's inherent within you and it's given to you by God.

And, like Paul wrote, nothing can take it away, trump it, or destroy it.

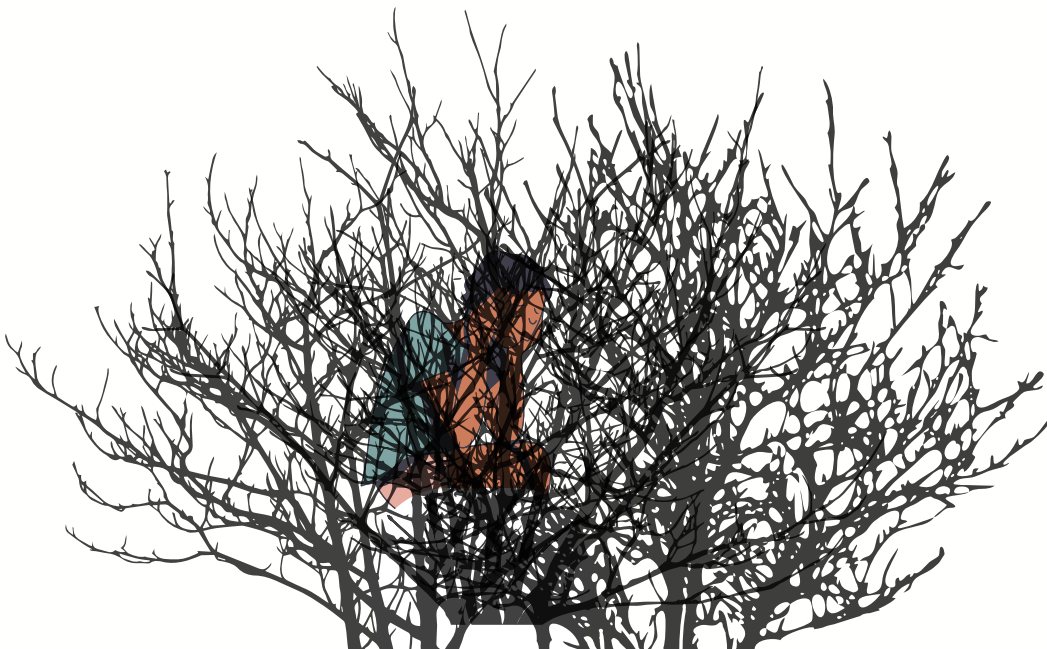
But the thing is, we need to open up and let God in for this to happen. We need to practice being vulnerable so we can hear these words.

God can't speak to us if we're closed up and hiding in the bushes.

So, may you come to be brave and step forward in faith and bare it all to Jesus and those around you so, you can hear a message of truth

and come to believe that you are a beautiful thing, worthy, loved, and accepted.

Amen.



BODY BLESSING FOR LENT

Spiritual Practice by Joyce Rupp

Note from Vi: This is a beautiful spiritual practice which I found in Joyce Rupp's book, Prayer Seeds. I have amended it for your personal use and for you to share with others whom you wish to bless. We often do not take the time to bless and express gratitude for our bodies, the temples of our spirit. You can touch each part of your body with reverence as you say this blessing, then pause to reflect. Enjoy

Forehead

May the Gospel teachings about non-judgement resound in my thoughts of others. May I seek to right injustice...

Ears

May I listen closely to how God invites me to grow spiritually during this Lenten season...

Eyes

May I slow down and look more intently in order to find God's movement in my life. May I recognise God's beauty in all faces and in the world...

Shoulders

May I carry my cross of difficulties with courage, trusting God's strength to uphold me...

Hands

May my service be so intertwined with God that this love overflows from my heart...

Heart

May I keep turning my heart toward God and allow this love to be reflected in the way I live my life...

Feet

May I welcome God's companionship and guidance as I travel the path of life...

I return with all my heart...

I remember the Holy One dwells within me...

I am at peace...

ASH WEDNESDAY: DREAMING IN THE DUST



Readings for Ash Wednesday: **Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17;
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

We are entering the season that begins with a smudge. That smudge is a testimony to what survives. It is a witness to what abides when everything seems lost. It is a sign that what we know and love may, for a time, be reduced to dust, but it does not disappear. We belong to the God who well knows what to do with dust, who sees the dust as a place to dream anew, who creates from it again and again.

—Jan Richardson, from *Ash Wednesday: What God Can Do with Dust*
The Painted Prayerbook, February 2018

LENT SERMON - REV NICK

So we have entered into the season of ... Lent!

We saw the star in the sky,
we encountered Jesus in the manger,
have climbed the mountain and witnessed the Transfiguration,
and now,
with all that in our hearts and minds,
we head towards Easter and resurrection.

In the rhyme and reason of that Christian calendar,
that cycle of seasons and holidays which are meant to draw us into a certain
pattern, rhythm and cadence of themes and practices which shape and form
us into particular kinds of humans,
Lent may be one of the most important.

And today we'll ask why that is and we'll explore a couple things to take into
the season,
the hope being this will help us embrace the season a bit more boldly.

//

Like a lot of church rituals and traditions,
the roots of Lent dig deep into a story we find in the Bible:
that story of Jesus,
fresh out of his baptism,
heading out into the wilderness for 40 days where he'd be tempted by the
Devil.

And it's one of those stories we could take a whole lot
of places and have a lot of fun with,
but to get at what this has to do with Lent,
we'll pull back a bit and ask two questions.

So, our first question:
Where does Jesus go after the baptism?



Some translations will say 'desert,' but the best word to use is 'into the wild' or 'wilderness.'

When you hear that word - wilderness - what do you think of?

What happens within you?

Maybe you're in the backcountry ...

Maybe you're transported into a Maurice Sendak story ...

But if we were all good first century Israelites our minds would go to 2 very specific places because we would know Matthew isn't talking about any wilderness.

He's going meta on us.

To the original audience 'wilderness' was a potent and loaded word.

It's the same word used to describe the experience of the Exodus ... that time in-between slavery and freedom.

It's the same word used in Genesis to describe what existed before God created ... this grand expanse of darkness and chaos yet to be brought into order and purpose.

These are the things our minds would go to when we would hear the word 'wilderness.'

What we talk about when we talk about wilderness is a place or time of turmoil, change, and unrest; it's a place or time of searching for that which brings coherence, meaning, connection, identity and purpose into our lives and world.

Are ya with me?

So when we hear this story,
this is the kind of wilderness we're talking about.
This is where Jesus goes after this baptism.

Which we get, don't we?

Think back to those times when you've been named, those moments when you've had your very identity, purpose, and substance affirmed, when the airs been rearranged, and everything's clicked.

Or even conversely, think back to those moments when everything's gone to shit, those moments when everything you thought you were, everything you thought you were about, everything that made you, was torn away.

Anyone know those moments?

**As affirming or as rehabilitating as they can be,
they lead us into wilderness.**

**They bring us into a time of searching, wondering, and ambiguity.
They bring us into these huge existential questions of: "well, what
does that mean for me? what does this mean for my life?
where does this take me from here?"**

Anyone know what I'm talking about?

Yah, wilderness is something we all know. We've all been there.

//

So leave that on your back burner for a second ... cause that leads us into the second question:

What's with the questions the devil asks Jesus?

Throughout the story the devil and Jesus have this back and forth where the Devil basically asks Jesus three things:

'What are you living on?'

'What brings you security?'

and

'Do you want fame and power?'

Put them all together and what question do you get?

You get:

'What does it mean to be Jesus?'

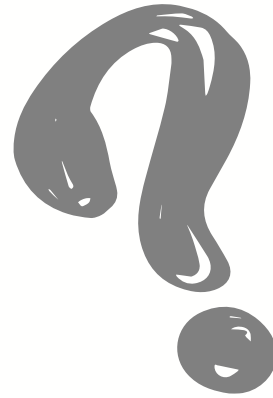
That's a big question, isn't it?

Who are you?

What does it mean to be you?

What do you stand for?

What are you about?



HUGE questions.

We can see that aspect of wilderness in these questions can't we?

They are big, heavy, soul-wrenching questions.

These are not easy questions.

Those of us who have asked them to know the unrest, dis-ease and discomfort they can bring.

Now while we're told Jesus does answer these questions, we're not told exactly how long he takes.

I prefer my Jesus a bit dirty. I like him more earthy than heavenly.

I want to see his humanity, so I see him taking a while to answer these. I see him taking them seriously, feeling the weight of each one.

But however you see it, he does eventually answer, saying to the Devil:

"'What do I live on?' I live on God, for we need more nourishment than simply food."

"'What brings me security?' I trust in God."

"'Do I want to fame and power?' No, I want humility and service."

And it's then,

upon offering those answers,

we're told how angels came and waited on him ... this beautiful sign of God's blessing, this divine declaration of 'Yes. That is who you are.

And having found his identity and purpose in this time of searching and wandering, he leaves the wilderness, and heads back into town, ready to own who he is and what he is about.

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It's this story that the women and men who helped build our tradition use to talk about Lent.

So keeping in mind that seasons are designed to shape and transform us ... why would this story be used for Lent?

Take a sec ... mull it over ... what is this story offering us?

I like to think that our friends in the early church saw in this story offering us a truth about what it means to be human and alive in this world.

That truth being that the wilderness of our world and our lives, those times of unrest, searching, wandering, those times where we ask, 'who am I?' are something not to be avoided, but something to be embraced.

The truth this story offers us is that wilderness, while a time of uncertainty, chaos, upheaval, and even of death itself, can be, at the very same time, a time of discovery, order, peace, and even resurrection.

Perhaps it's this tension and paradox of our faith that Tolkien was talking about when he wrote: 'not all who wander are lost.'

It's in the wandering - it's in wilderness - that we can actually come to find ourselves.

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want to bring this up because this can help us see why Lent is one of the most important and most challenging seasons we have.

If Lent's about anything, it's about embracing that paradox and boldly stepping into our wilderness to ask those huge questions of 'who am I?' 'Who am I becoming?' and 'Where am I going?'

Lent is this time of putting down and picking up, of getting lost and found, of reorienting and realignment, and of dying and rising, all of it rooted in grace and bent towards new life.

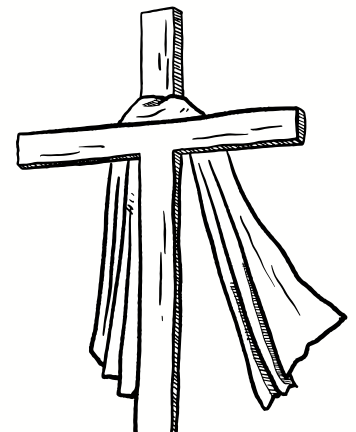
And if you think about it, it's actually quite beautiful and liberating that we have a faith which promotes time in the wilderness.

It reminds us that this faith and spirituality of ours isn't about being perfect or believing in the right things, but rather about the never ending and grace filled journey to becoming more and more human and alive in the world, more and more like the kind of people Jesus calls us to be: people connected with God, each other, and with ourselves, people caught up in Extravagant and Indiscriminate Love.

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So, what is Lent about? How do we hold it?

Lent is bigger than simply giving stuff up, but about venturing into vulnerability, about recreating, reorienting, and revisiting, about grappling with what it means to be you, the you which God created, the you which God loves. and the you which our world needs.



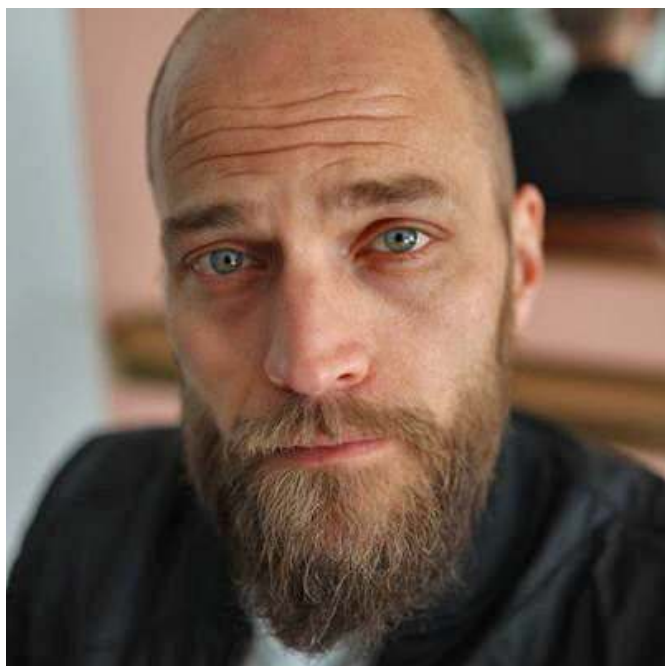
May we hold it intentionally and bravely, knowing new life is on the other side.

Amen

FEATURING OUR GREATEST STRENGTH — OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

This series of monthly articles 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 **Rev. Nick Coates**.

Nick has been our minister here for ten years, and he announced recently that he will be leaving us in February. He came to us as a seminary school graduate, so we were his first post. What a great experience it has been getting to know him! Yet sorry as we are to see him go, we recognize and respect that he feels he has come to a point where he needs to grow his career in new directions.



I posed two questions to Nick: ‘What have you derived from your journey alongside us?’ and ‘Where do you see your journey taking you after you leave us?’ For the most part, I’ll use his own eloquent words to convey his answers.

— OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

“What have I derived? So much! I’ve found my voice and my approach to preaching and ministry. I’ve learned I come most alive when talking about what it means to be human, and about exploring the intersections of theology, psychology, philosophy, and spirituality. It took a while, but I’ve broken free of being bound by what I was taught a sermon should be. That has been truly liberating. We’ve gone through many changes together: becoming affirming and integrating that value into all we do, expanding and shrinking, being stretched by uncomfortable questions, and realizing that even shutting our doors for two years because of a pandemic doesn’t stop us. I admit that the church, as an institution, is fraught with faults and problems. But this community has shown me again and again what a beautiful difference church can make to people’s lives. God and His grace are present in the world, and that’s why we need to keep ‘doing church’, whatever that looks like. I’m so proud to be part of a community of grace that embraces change and uses it to create a positive impact on people’s lives.

“Where do I see my journey taking me from here? Good question! I look forward to showing up at my new post as my truest and most authentic self, and to implementing there what I’ve learned from RDLUC. For the long term? Frankly, I’m not sure. I’m not someone who feels called to professional ministry forever. But I am someone who wants to serve and to help people explore their spirituality, however that looks. I’m also someone who will be forever grateful for this journey I’ve travelled with you. We have accomplished so much. Thank you for being the church with me. It was a joy.”

And thank you, Nick, for being the church with us. We fully appreciate your many talents and how you have put your skills to work in our behalf. As you go, you’ll be taking with you our abundant appreciation of all you do and are. Whatever your future holds, God bless you.

Our thanks to Fran Porter for writing this submission

THE LAST ONE - A SERMON BY REV. NICK

god be with you.

the last one ...

So I was stressing out over this the other week
I trying to figure out what I could say, what I had to say,
I was getting into my head,
my ego was all, "You need to make this the most amazing sermon ever!"
and I was all, "ahh! what do I even say?!"
and then Dawn,
as she always does,
said the thing I needed to hear:

just say thanks.

And she's right.

Gratitude is all that's needed today.

Cause here's the thing about gratitude.

**by naming all the things we're thankful for,
by celebrating the things that make life good,
by appreciating where we've been and how we got here**

what happens?
where's that take us?

it takes us into joy.
yeah, joy happens.

gratitude always leads to joy.

and I want to start with gratitude today because today,
this last one together, it should be joyful.

Gratitude

And I know that may feel a bit weird to hear because it's an ending and endings are hard,
we're feeling sad, bummed out,
maybe there's some grief in there,
maybe there's some fear and trepidation about what's next in there,
and you're thinking, 'joy?! I do not think that's joy I'm feeling.'

but the thing to remember is feeling all that doesn't mean joy can't happen.
The amazing thing about joy is there's room for joy in all of that.
Joy actually needs it to happen.
That's actually what makes joy so powerful:

its realizing ...

no, let's go deeper cause this is a heart thing,

its experiencing

that despite the sadness, struggle, despair,

or whatever heavier thing we may be feeling,

it's experiencing.

that despite it all,

maybe even because of it all,

we do have something to celebrate,

we do have beautiful and amazing things,

we do have something left,

and that we are gonna be okay even if we're not alright.

yeah, that's joy.

It's that liberating and radical affirmation that,
wherever we are however we are, it is good to be alive.
So today ...

To take us there ...

to spark some joy,

All I've got is gratitude.

All I've got is thank you, thank you, thank you.

Thank you for almost 10 years together.

Thank you for doing the really hard work of not just "doing," but being the church.

Thank you for not only helping me find my voice but affirming that I do have one.

Thank you for your courage to get curious, to ask big questions, and to do hard things.

Thank you for being willing to explore what Jesus is all about and see how it's just as much about loving what's in here, as it is about loving what's out there.

Thank you for the wisdom you gave me when I didn't know I didn't know something.

Thank you for showing me why, despite all the reasons I may want to burn it down sometimes, the church is still good, beautiful, and needed in the world.

Thank you for grace as I learned and grew, and for not only allowing me to be human but for allowing me to be me.

**Thank you for all of that and so much more.
It really was a joy to be the church with you
I am so proud,
SO, SO proud,
of where we've gone, how we've grown,
and of what we've done together,
and I am so freaking excited for what's next ...**

proud

and let's talk about that for a sec ...

can we look ahead to what's next?

cause I know stepping out into the unknown is hard and scary,

change and transition always is,

and I'm right there with you.

there's actually been a change in my plans

after A LOT of feeling it out,
I'm actually not going to be moving to another church,
It would have been great and wonderful, but in the end,
it wasn't the right move.
It's not what my heart is saying I need to do.
It wasn't where I needed to be.
instead ...I'm gonna take a break for awhile.
I'm going to do something else.
I'm gonna work with Dawn and well ... I don't really know what else.
So, when it comes to stepping out into what's next ... I'm right there with you.
Fear is telling me about all the different scenarios that might happen so I'm
freaking out a bit too.

So when it comes to us all doing that,
when it comes to this time of choosing to consciously step out into
uncertainty and mystery,
of not seeing where it is we'll land,
of not being able to know what's around the corner ...

let's name something we need to remember.
and then some things we need to hold onto:

So, before we even do anything,
let's remember this,

let's ground ourselves in this truth:

Stepping out into mystery and uncertainty?

THAT'S where we find life as it's meant to be.

As scary and as disruptive as it is,
that's where new and beautiful things begin to happen.
that's where we find ourselves and our life.
It's in letting go of everything that we find everything.
That's what Jesus means when he's all,
'it's in losing your life that you find it.'

The word "Scary" is written in a purple, cursive, handwritten style, slanted downwards from left to right.

And we know this, right?

We've experienced this already.

We know that in those moments when we've chosen risk,
when we've stepped out into the unknown,
when we haven't really had a sense of what's gonna happen,
we end up in a better place than we were before,
we end up with something richer, deeper, and fuller, don't we?

Yeah ... stepping out is where life begins.

So, knowing that ...

instead of resisting or going a different direction,
instead of reverting back to what's safe, familiar, and comfortable,
instead of trying to control it all ...

a few things to hold onto,

a few things to help us step out and let life happen:

first ...

let's choose courage.

which doesn't mean not feeling scared or having a little freak out,
it means doing the scary thing anyway.

it means leaning into the fear instead of running away from it.

it's trusting that following your heart is always worth

it no matter how scary it may be.

second ...

trust resurrection

don't forget what our tradition teaches:

death is not the end.

which is to say:

every ending is a new beginning.

it's actually through all the endings,

all the deaths, all the finales, all the changes,

that we grow, become, and create that life and world

that hum with reverence.

third ...

don't lose sight of why we're here,
of what church is really truly actually all about.

As great and lovely as all this is,
this isn't what its about,
its just a way to get to the heart of it all.

And the heart of it all?

the bass note of it all?

it's about connecting with God, each other, and ourselves,

it's about being an affirming community of belonging,

it's about being a source of justice in the world,

it's about experiencing love and grace and peace.

it's about learning and curiosity and asking big questions.

it's about transforming ourselves so we can help transform the world.

focus on that.

let that guide everything you do.

and finally ...

and remember God is with you and for you.

Remember that,

especially at times like this

of wilderness

thresholds

of change and death

that god,

that source of life,

that sacred energy,

that something bigger than ourselves,

is with us the most.

whenever you get scared and want to freak out,

take a breath and remember you're not alone.

do that and you'll be fine.
we'll be fine.
we'll be better than fine.
do that and we'll find ourselves,
more and more and more,
entering into something new and beautiful.

so again,
my friends,
thank you.
thank you.
thank you.

it is a joy.

and one last time,
May grace and peace be with you.

*Thank
You*

Farewell to Nick Luncheon



POEM FOR LENT

The cosmos dreams in me
while I wait in stillness,
ready to lean a little further
into the heart of the Holy.

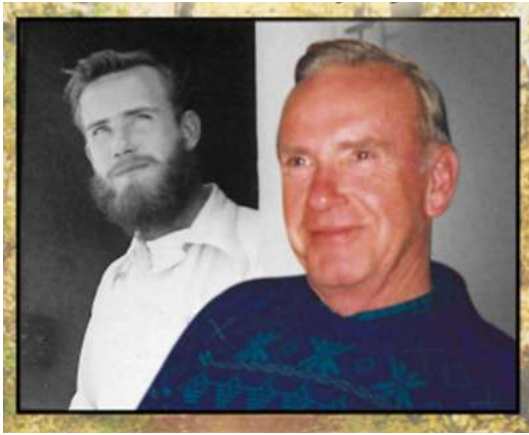
I, a little blip of life,
a wisp of unassuming love,
a quickly passing breeze,
come once more into Lent.

No need to sign me
with the black bleeding ash
of palms, fried and baked.
I know my humus place.

This Lent I will sail
on the graced wings of desire,
yearning to go deeper
to the place where
I am one in the One.
Oh, may I go there soon,
in the same breath
that takes me to the stars
when the cosmos dreams in me.

(From Prayer Seeds by Joyce Rupp)

RDLUC MEMORIES



Gerald James Oliver

15 October 1932 - 3 January 2023

*I've lived a life that's full
I travelled each and every highway
And more, much more
I did it, I did it my way.*

On January 3, 2023 Gerry passed away peacefully in his home, surrounded by family. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him and especially by his wife of 65 years, Lorraine. Gerry lived a full and varied life. He was born in the small Ontario Township of Adjala and he continued to live in the area with his parents and younger sister. He attended school in Palgrave and Orangeville before going on to graduate from University of Toronto in Engineering and a Masters in Business. Gerry met Lorraine whilst at school in Orangeville. They married in April of 1956 and started a family soon afterwards: John (deceased), and three daughters, Diane, Debra and Michelle. The family lived in Fonthill, Ontario, Buckingham, Quebec, Beaconsfield, Quebec and Scarborough, Ontario. Gerry and Lorraine moved to Calgary in 2000. Gerry thoroughly enjoyed the lifestyle in Calgary with his love of skiing, curling, golfing and fishing. He also had a passion for travel. He and Lorraine had many wonderful adventures all over the world.

They especially enjoyed their cruises with Holland America.

Gerry was proud grandfather to Dylan, Esther, Connor, Emily, Marc, Kira and Erin and great-grandfather to Mia. Gerry was a loyal and dedicated husband, father and grandfather. He was an active member of the Priddis Golf Club, Acadia Curling Club and the Senior Alpine Ski Club right up until his final years. It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Gerry today.



MEET SOME OF OUR TEAMS

Our Healing Team


The healing ministry at RDLUC is a practice of gentle touch that supports the healing of body, mind, and spirit, in part by reducing stress, pain, and promoting faster recovery from surgery or injury.

Rooted in the ancient Christian tradition of laying on of hands and encouraging the body's natural ability to heal, this service is offered free to everyone.

A session with the healing ministry is a gift to one's self – nurturing and restorative.

You are invited to relax, fully clothed on a massage table and our trained practitioners offer a session customized to your needs. The sessions are private and confidential, and take place in one of our peaceful healing rooms.

Sessions are approximately one hour long and appointments are arranged by calling the church office, 403-256-3181



Here we are shown working on the back area of the body. Afterwards everyone said they felt more relaxed, more centred and in tune with their bodies.

At the session's end we give thanks and say,
'Thanks be to God; it works; keep coming back!'

AMEN!

Congregational Care and Hospitality Teams during Our Care Package Assembly



YOUR SMILE FOR THE DAY



Enjoy those 20s, 30s and 40s because in your 50s that check engine light is going to come on.

Most people are at the age where they are using their phones to document the good times in their lives. I'm at the age where I use my phone to take pictures of labels that I can't read and use my phone to enlarge the print so that I can read it.

You know you're a grown up when you actually pick up the ice cube instead of kicking it under the fridge.



It amazes me how much EXERCISE and EXTRA FRIES sound alike.

Sorry, I haven't gotten anything done today... I've been stuck in the produce department trying to open this stupid plastic bag.

Never in the history of calming down has a woman calmed down by being told to calm down



Some call it multitasking. I call it doing something else while I try to remember what I was doing in the first place.



Only a dog could:
Go to a party,
Speak to no one,
Steal food,
Fall asleep and
Still be the most
Popular Guest!

Riddle

So there are 3 rooms to choose from. The first is filled with blazing fire. The second is full of deadly assassins with loaded gun. the third is full of hungry lions who haven't eaten for 3 months. Which room is safest?

answer on next page

A bartender notices that every evening, without fail, one of his patrons orders three beers.



After several weeks of noticing this pattern, the bartender asks the man why he always orders three beers.

The man says, "I have two brothers who have moved away to different countries. We promised each other that we would always order an extra two beers whenever we drank as a way of keeping up the family bond."

Several weeks later, noticing that the man only ordered two beers, the bartender says, "Please accept my condolences on the death of one of your brothers. You know, the two beers and all..."

The man replies, "You'll be happy to hear that my two brothers are alive and well. It's just that I, myself, have decided to give up drinking for Lent."



There's nothing scarier than that split second when you lose your balance in the shower and you think, "THEY ARE GOING TO FIND ME NAKED."

Some Practical Advice:

If all the toilets in your house are occupied and you are waiting for one to be free, switch off the wi-fi.



When I die, I want a crank on my casket that plays the jack-in-the-box song ... just to see who has the guts to turn it!!!

Riddle answer: The room with the lions as they are not alive as they went too long with out eating

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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CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Monday - Thursday
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
Feb 28, 2023.**