

EASTER 2021

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

INSIDE:

MESSAGES FROM
NICK AND VI

THE EASTER STORY

EASTER SERMONS

COMMUNION @ HOME

SUBMISSIONS FROM
OUR COMMUNITY

Christ is Risen!

I believe that.

Which maybe isn't too scandalous considering I've got 'Reverend' in front of my name (which is such a strange title, isn't it?) but regardless, it is something I believe. To be more truthful, it's something I trust. I trust in it the same way I trust that the airplane I'm in won't fall out of the sky, or the food I'm eating at a pub won't kill me, or that the sun will rise again, or that gravity is a thing that keeps me stuck to the earth, or that our neighbour will always be on their balcony at 7:45 each morning having a smoke and waving at people as they walk by. I don't merely believe in it, I trust in it.

And that's the thing about resurrection. It's something we trust more than we believe.

red deer lake
united church

... continued

. . . continued from Page One

We trust in it the same way we trust in everything else that provides meaning, security, and foundation to our lives and world. We don't just believe in it but we trust in it the same way we trust in every other truth that governs the Universe.

Yes, truth.

Easter's a truth more than anything else. It's the celebration of the everything-changing truth that Christ is alive, Love will win, the worst thing is never the last thing, and resurrection happens.

Like I said, everything-changing. It changes everything because it reminds us that this . . . this thing we're in right now . . . this season, this emotion, this suffering, this problem, this reality . . . It. Will. Not. Defeat. Us.

As we head into another Easter separated from our friends, family, and community, the task is to practice this trust. To practice this

truth. To know – to deeply know – that this will not defeat us and that we will rise up into something new.

This book will help us practice that trust, lean into the truth of Easter, and let it change everything: our hearts, our mindsets, our relationships, our attitudes, and our hopes so we can experience a new life and a new world.

As you go through it, know you do it with the rest of your church community and it is a way that we are connected to one another.

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Easter Greetings!

I hope you have had a meaningful Lenten journey and now you can soon experience the Easter joy of resurrection in your hearts and lives. It is an amazing testament to you that a year along in the pandemic you have demonstrated resilience, patience and courage and are still standing strong for one another as a community of faith. It brings to mind the saying, “Rising out of the ashes.” Despite the chaos and losses of the past year, there are signs of arising hope from what has gone before and we are each learning new ways of being present to one another. We are living resurrection.

Huge gratitude once again to all those who serve compassionately and lovingly on our amazing teams to create and deliver these Care Packages to you. We receive messages of gratitude each month from those people who receive . . . They tell us that the love and sense of connection they experience

whenever they open the packages, read the magazine and taste the food is very tangible to them. It is Christ’s love in action.

To all of you who are experiencing life losses, challenging times and transitions, know that we love and care for you, and we hold you in our hearts and prayers.

We miss you all and look forward to the hope of reuniting in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

Please keep in touch and let us know how you are doing.

With warmest love and blessings,

Vi



THE EASTER STORY ACCORDING TO MARK

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. They were saying to each other, "Who's going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. But he said to them, "Don't be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him. Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you." Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

(Yes, that is how it ends. Interesting isn't it?)



IT'S TOO EARLY – AN EASTER SERMON BY REV. NICK

Christ is Risen!

Can I make a confession?

I haven't been feeling too Eastery this year. Even though it's Sunday, my body, my mind, my soul is stuck in Good Friday. It just doesn't feel like Easter.

Anyone know what I'm talking about?

I'm sure I'm not alone. Whether it's on Easter or another day, we all know what it's like to live in the tension of what is and what should be.

I was talking to my spiritual director about that and he said the best cure for this is to do that thing we do when we're at the lake and we know the water is freezing cold: just jump right in.

So let's do that. Let's skip the slow wade in because we all know that's worse. Let's just jump right in.

But first . . . let's revisit this Good Friday feeling we're stuck in.

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So it is Good Friday and we're in Jerusalem. The crucifixion has just happened. The cross is not empty. Jesus is dead. Everyone who knew Jesus, who had found within him a life that hums with reverence, who saw in him something bigger than themselves and this world, they're all feeling defeated and desolate because the worst thing has happened:

True Love had been extinguished. Their leader, teacher, and friend was dead. God, it seems, had been defeated. Nobody expected this to happen. It wasn't supposed to end this way. The one who had brought them all together, who had called them from their boats, tax booths, and homes, who had convinced them that love was a better way to live, the one who had them believe the world was about to be totally reordered, had been taken violently and forcefully away from them. It wasn't supposed to end this way.

So not knowing what else to do or what to think, everyone went home, back to the what is and what was supposed to be, and they couldn't help but think along the way: "Maybe it *was* all just a pipe dream. Maybe the Way of Jesus isn't really a thing. Maybe the Way of Empire is really the way of the world. Maybe it's best to simply conform and move on."

It wasn't supposed to end this way.

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I wanted to revisit that because that's exactly what I'm feeling. I'm right smack in the middle of a reality where God seems absent. Things aren't great. Things seem to be getting worse. Like the disciples I catch myself thinking: "It's not supposed to be this way."

And so even though it's Sunday, even though it's Easter, it really really really doesn't feel like it.

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And so here we are on Sunday and it seems, if we look at the story, we're in good company. It begins with Mary and the disciples facing the fact that Jesus isn't only dead, but someone has stolen his body!

That's important. It's not like they woke up on Sunday and everything was awesome. They woke up feeling just like we're feeling.

It's kind of poetic really, because the thing is Easter and everything it celebrates wouldn't work any other way. It wouldn't really have the same depth and punch if we spoke about resurrection and restoration when brokenness and pain weren't a reality. It wouldn't be good news then. It'd lose some of its magic. It's fitting that right in the middle of all these Good Friday feels, we have the story of Easter.

It's fitting because if we had to pick a word to get at what Easter is really all about, it'd be my favourite theological word of all time.

'But.'

Easter is the 'but' to our reality of brokenness and pain. It's the 'but' to 'it isn't supposed to end this way.' It's the 'but' feeling of defeat and desolation.

Easter is where we find out that this story – our story – has a happy ending. Easter is God's grammatical statement to the world that it's too early to give in and lose hope.

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Once, a long long time ago, there was a man, and although he was the poorest man in the village, he owned the most beautiful white stallion.

It was so amazing the king had been offering him a small fortune for it. After one terribly harsh winter, during which the old man and his family almost starved, the people in the town came to visit him. "Old man," they said, "you can hardly afford to feed your family. Sell the horse to the king and you will be rich. If you do not, you are a fool."

The man replied: "It's too early to tell."

A few months later, the old man woke up to find that the white stallion had run away. Once again the townspeople came, and they said to the old man: “See. If you had sold the horse to the king, you would be rich. Now you have nothing! You are a fool!”

The old man replied: “It’s too early to tell.”

Two weeks later, the white stallion returned, and along with it came three other white stallions. “Old man,” the townspeople said, “we are the fools! Now you can sell the stallion to the king and you will still have three stallions left. You are smart.”

And the old man replied: “It’s too early to tell.”

The following week, the old man’s son, his only son, was training one of the horses when he was thrown off and had his legs crushed. The townspeople paid a visit to the old man and they said: “Old man, if you had just sold the stallion to the king, you’d be rich, and your son would not be crippled. You are a fool.”

The old man said: “It’s too early to tell.”

Well, the next month a war broke out with the neighbouring village. All of the young and able men in the village were sent into the battle and all were killed. The townspeople came and they cried to the old man: “We have lost our sons. You are the only one who has not. If you had sold your horse to the king, your son would be dead too. You are so wise!”

The old man said: “It’s too early to tell.”

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Let’s go back to that Easter story. After seeing the empty tomb and the neatly rolled up wrappings, we’re told that two disciples leave, now convinced the worst thing has happened. But Mary, for whatever reason, she sticks around. She’s having a good cry about it all when she looks up and sees some angels dressed in white.

Side bar . . .

What is it with angels and wearing white? Symbolism aside, I find it strange that white clothes would be the defining characteristic of angels. I mean, how did nobody exploit this? There seems to be way too many ways for someone to take advantage of this. Think of all the free food you could get . . . all the trouble you could cause . . . I mean, who's going to argue with an angel?!

Anyway.

So there they are, dressed in white, and the next thing we know Mary sees Jesus but he's dead, so obviously it can't be him, so she thinks he's the gardener, and thinking he may have seen who took Jesus' body, she asks him what he saw.

And this part is beautiful on a few levels . . .

When does Mary recognize that it is Jesus?

It's not at first sight and it's not even when he first speaks.

It's when he says her name.

Something special happens when someone who loves you says your name.

Especially in times of suffering and sorrow, there's a magic in hearing your name come off the lips of someone you love. There's this power within it to silence the noise we're caught up in. It doesn't just bring us back to reality, but it draws us into something new . . . a different reality, a deeper reality, one where everything changes because we know we're not alone.

As Jesus speaks her name, she remembers the many, many times she has heard it said before . . . and recognizing the intimacy, history, and love behind it, she realizes who it is she is speaking with, she believes that it is the Risen Christ, and suddenly everything changes:

No longer is she stuck in Good Friday, but she's now in Sunday. No longer is she overcome with brokenness and pain, but now she's overcome with hope and joy.

That's how resurrection works. Out of the depths of pain and sorrow, we get pulled into something new.

Which is beautiful! It's amazing. Our stories don't end with pain and brokenness!

But hold on to your hats because it gets so much bigger than that.

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Who does Mary mistake Jesus for?

The gardener.

What a weird detail to include. Why is John, the writer of this story, saying this?

This is where we nerd out a bit and get into what's called "principle of first mention." It's this idea that these Bible stories talk to each other, that through small details and references one story is doing a callback to another, reiterating the meaning and message of that original story.

I wonder if that's what John is doing here. Where else do we have a garden in the Bible?

Genesis.

Our creation story talks about how in the beginning God spoke into being everything that exists and on earth planted a garden and put humanity within it, saying, "Let's grow this together into a beautiful and amazing world full of love, peace, harmony and joy."

But, as the story goes, we messed that up and we took our shovels and watering cans and, instead of justice, we cultivated evil.

That's how our tradition explains the brokenness and injustice of the world.

It isn't just us who experience brokenness and pain, it's all of creation too.

It's not just ourselves who are stuck in Good Friday, it's the Universe as well.

And this is why this whole thing gets even bigger and better . . .

Where does this resurrection story take place?

In another garden.

Here, at the other end of the Bible, we find ourselves in another garden.

It's almost as if John is saying that God is starting a new creation all over again.

It's almost as if John is saying that through the resurrection God is creating a new world right in the middle of the old one, this new world that could spread out over this one, transforming it and reordering it into that world God always wanted us to have.

It's not just our lives that get pulled into something new . . . it's everything.

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Easter proclaims that the way of this world is NOT death and despair, that those things do not have the last word but that word belongs to God, and it is one of love, of harmony, and of restoration.

There's profound hope in this . . . such real and tangible hope, which is why I don't think we can be truly satisfied with ideas around the resurrection which are strictly metaphorical, and we can't toss the whole concept out because it offends our imaginations or intellects.

We need hope and that is exactly what we find within the resurrection.

Just like in that old man in that parable, Resurrection and Easter proclaims to a world crying out in defeat: 'It's too early to call it quits.' 'It's too early to give up.' 'It's too early because hope is here!'

The resurrection is our sign from God that new life is springing up from the ground, and that this new life can be experienced now in the midst of this despair through love.

So we have this cosmic Easter proclamation of hope, that God isn't finished with the world yet . . . and then later on in this story, we have an encounter which brings the meaning of Easter down to a much more personal level . . .

. . .

As the story goes on, we find the disciples, having heard the news of Jesus' resurrection, gathered together, locked in this little upstairs room . . . this sense of wonder churning in their souls . . . wondering, 'Could this be true?' . . . and then suddenly . . . Jesus entered . . . somehow . . . and says to them: 'Peace be with you.'

Now I don't know about you . . . but if I was raised from the dead and went to go visit my friends, 'Peace be with you' is the last thing I'd probably say to them . . .

So why does he choose this greeting?

Peace be with you . . .

We lose something in the translation. What Jesus is really saying when we translate it back is, 'May shalom be with you.'

Shalom, as we've talked about, is the word scholars used to describe the core essence of God's peace and presence, it is a harmony and communion with God and with each other. It is a calming, restorative, rejuvenating, inspiring peace and presence of God . . . the very same peace that the Spirit of God created when she swept down over the chaos.

As the resurrected Christ, the one who is starting creation over again, by saying 'Peace be with you,' Jesus is offering them something they hadn't been able to have before because sin and things they'd been carrying around had always gotten in the way . . .

he's offering them grace.

What Jesus is doing is bringing them into God's grace in such a new and profound way, offering them an identity, purpose and worth rooted in God's love, a state of freedom where they are no longer ruled by the baggage they carry and laments of hopelessness they sing, but by God's love and God's hope and God's peace.

And then he breathes on them . . . and this is crazy beautiful . . . just as God breathed life into Adam, the resurrected Christ breathes life into these disciples, passing on his Spirit, his life, rising up in them new life in this new creation . . .

Easter is the proclamation of new life in God's shalom, God's grace to all of us.

. . .

So what do we take away from all of this? How can all this good news about restoration and resurrection cure the Friday hangover?

My friend Peter would say, 'The resurrection is to spiritual life, as waking up is to daily life.'

Easter and the resurrection wakes us up, breathes new life into us, and opens our eyes to see the world around us in a new way, to see new life and hope springing up all around us, even in the darkest places.

Easter brings us into God's grace and we respond by boldly and joyfully leaving Good Friday behind and venturing forward with our shovels and watering cans as new creations in this new garden that God has risen up from the old dry ground.

We go as an Easter People with an Easter faith into the world – not back to what we once knew and what was once familiar – and we proclaim:

‘It's too early to admit defeat.’

‘It's too early to say God is finished with us.’

‘It's too early to lose hope.’

‘It's too early because Jesus is alive and God is making all things new!’

There is hope because Jesus is alive. The Word which started it all is speaking once again, creating new life in us and in this world.

He is Risen.

This world is rising. We are rising.

We are rising, those who go into this world having experienced the presence of the Risen Christ, and through our total orientation to extravagant acts of love, say to all those who lament,

‘It's not supposed to be like this’:

‘It's too early to tell. God is alive and there is hope!’

Amen



CHRIST IS RISEN (EVEN WHEN IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE IT)

– REV. NICK

Christ is risen!

I can't tell you how many times I wrote and deleted that line.

Every time I wrote it out I found myself smirking. Smirking!

Smirking is not how us ministers are supposed to react to one of the biggest, most foundational truths of our tradition,

this truth that says, **“Love is alive! It's here for you! This is God's world and They're not finished with it yet!”**

How beautiful and wonderful and amazing is that?! That's the best thing that could happen!

But there I was, smirking every time.

As I thought about it, I realized what my smirk was saying.

It was saying, “Yeah, but it doesn't really feel like it.”

With everything going on in the world, it feels more like the worst thing that could happen is happening.

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It's a phrase we use a lot, isn't it?

When death and devastation hit us,
when everything seems to fall apart,
our world,
our lives,
our relationships,

it certainly does feel like the worst possible thing is happening.

And if you've ever been in that place,
if the worst thing has ever happened to you,
you probably know the kind of life it creates:

It creates a life of despair, doesn't it?

Which is, literally, a life without hope.

Despair is a pretty homicidal thing.

Life, after all, is progressive and forward-moving.

It's about becoming and growing;

and not simply in the physical sense of getting older,

but in the spiritual sense too,

of moving deeper and deeper into a life that's whole, transformed, and connected with the Divine.

What despair does is stop life in its tracks by stealing our hope.

It kills us by keeping us rooted in the past,

carving out a little tomb for us to live in,

making us fearful to step out because we're convinced that the worst thing has happened,

and we know the worst thing is always the last thing so why even bother to try to move on!

Anyone feeling that?

I'm sure a lot of us are feeling that right now.

I'm there for sure.

I think that's why I smirked.

But then I read the Easter story.

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It all went down early on a Sunday morning.

Just over a day ago the world had said 'No' to Jesus in a way that is the epitome of brokenness.

Instead of saying 'yes' to lives and a world of love, justice, and peace,

it said 'yes' to lives and a world of fear, hate, greed, and division.

And Mary, one of Jesus' disciples, in the thick of despair was pacing around her kitchen trying to wrap her head and heart around the fact that the worst thing that could happen had happened:

Jesus was dead.

But hoping and praying maybe it's just a bad dream, she heads up to the garden where Jesus had been buried and she discovers she was wrong.

It was worse than she feared.

Jesus wasn't only dead, but someone had stolen his body.

And so she runs to tell the other disciples the terrible news and upon seeing the empty tomb they become overwhelmed with despair too, and they do what we all do when everything falls apart: they head home. Not to their houses, but back to the lives they used to live – back to the things they were doing before they met Jesus – all of them giving up on the hope and life that had been growing inside them.

But Mary, for whatever reason, went back to the tomb, not only weeping for Jesus' death

but also the death of the vision for new life he gave her,

the identity and purpose he gave her,

the new connection to God he gave her,

all of it gone.

As Mary wept a stranger comes up and asking her why she's crying,

and Mary lets it all out:

“Oh the worst thing has happened!” she says,

and tells him the news that Jesus has died and how she can't imagine life without him.

And maybe a smile creeps across the stranger's face,

a smile that looks vaguely familiar to her yet one she can't place,

until, that is, the stranger says her name,

'Mary.'

And hearing the love in his voice Mary realizes that the stranger in front of her is actually Jesus,
and suddenly she is overcome with joy,
suddenly death and despair loosen their grip on her,
and what's she do?

She leaps – *she leaps* – out of the tomb and into the new day and a new life.

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After reading that, I found myself writing out "*Christ is risen*" in a totally new way.
Instead of a smirk, I don't really know what it was.

Joy? Gratitude? Wonder? Awe?

Probably all of those things.

Whatever it was, it hummed with reverence.

‘Cause that’s the thing about Easter:

If Easter is meant for anyone, it’s people like us.

It’s for those of us who are in the midst of despair,

it’s for those of us who have had our hope stolen by worst things,

it’s for those of us who feel like we’re living in tombs.

What Easter says to us is:

the worst thing is never the last thing so you don’t need to live like that.

You don’t need to live like that.

You don't need to live like that.

You don't need to live like that.

Take a sec to hear that because this is beautiful and liberating stuff!

Easter isn’t just a thing we celebrate, it’s a truth, it’s a whole new way of seeing and being in the world.

Easter invites us into the truth that resurrection happens.

It invites us to see the light that is shining behind the darkness,

**to see the cracks forming in the walls,
to see the life emerging out of death,
to see the love overcoming the hate,
and seeing that,
in seeing that the worst thing is not the last thing,
to leap out of our tombs,
and be people who have the courage, the audacity, the boldness to proclaim:
'No. This is not how it ends. We don't have to live like this. Nobody should live
like this. Let's build a new world, one without tombs and fear, but of life, love,
and justice for all.'**

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"Christ is Risen" should feel reverent because it reminds us of that truth.
It's something we say because it changes everything.

So may we rise up,
may we experience resurrection,
and be joyful saying together:

Christ is Risen.

Amen.



AN EASTER COMMUNION FOR @ HOME

"Wait, doing communion on my own? Communion is meant to be done with people!"

That's true. But while this may feel like it's bending the rules a bit, let's remember this: we are in community. Just because we are apart, does not mean we aren't in community. It doesn't mean we aren't connected. One of the things we trust during this time of being apart is that the Spirit still unites us. Even now, especially now, we are still in community. This very page you're reading proves that. So communion at home while we're apart is a thing? Absolutely!

So go and gather what you need: something to eat and something to drink. It really doesn't matter what. Lay it out in front of you – you can be as casual or as formal as you'd like. Once you're ready, join everyone else with this communion liturgy:

God be with you

Also with you.

Christ is Risen

He is Risen Indeed.

As we get ready for this meal, we remember we're not alone: that we are in the presence of God and one another.

Jesus gave us this meal to remember who we are: people of resurrection.

People who do not let death and despair dictate our lives and our world because we know the truth of Easter: the worst thing is never the last thing and that love will win.



God, may this bread and wine help us
remember this truth and be people of
resurrection.

May it strengthen our tired and
exhausted bodies and enliven our
weary spirits.

The body of Christ broken for us . . .
<<go ahead and take a moment to eat
your bread>>

The cup of Christ poured out for us . . .
<<go ahead and take a moment to
drink>>

So now, reminded of who we are, may
we go from here and be a part of what
God is doing in the world – always
choosing to do the loving thing: to
ourselves, one another, and the world
around us.

My friends, may peace be
with you.

Amen



THE BIG THINGS IN ALBERTA

By Joyce Duncan

Recently AMA had an article in their newsletter about the Big Things in Alberta which caught my eye, thinking this would be a great way to spend some day trips in Alberta. The article covered things SE of Calgary, NE of Calgary, SE of Edmonton, NE of Edmonton, NW of Edmonton and the Grande Prairie Loop. In the years of living in Calgary, I have seen most of them around Calgary.

I had an opportunity to visit with my daughter, who lives alone in Edmonton and she had some time off. We decided to do the Jasper visit. We found **Jasper the Bear** who is about eight feet tall and we found him with two winter scarves around his neck.

The following is what I found on Google:

Jasper the Bear has been in the hearts and minds of children and adults alike in the community of Jasper and around the world since 1948. Outgoing, friendly and adventurous, Jasper was created by James Simpkins, an artist for the National Film Board.

The original cartoons were featured in Maclean's magazine. Jasper's purpose was to recognize the importance of protecting Canada's flora and fauna, a purpose that remains strong these many years later.



In 1962 the character was officially adopted by Jasper National Park and a statue was erected at the townsite. The Jasper Park Chamber of Commerce is the sole owner of the copyright known as 'Jasper the Bear.' Since 2003 the Jasper Park Chamber has been responsible for the well-being of its most beloved bear.

Jasper the Bear is located on the 400 block of Patricia Street in Jasper, about a three-minute walk from the VIA Rail station in the heart of town. The statue has been at its current location since 2004. The original Jasper the Bear statue was at the train station but was removed after it had been vandalized.

After visiting Jasper, we motored east to Sangudo on Hwy 43 and there we found the **Landmark Sundial**. There is a large sign with most of the following information, however, again I Googled it for the following:

This is a really great sundial! It captures the essence of one of the fastest disappearing symbols of the prairie provinces – the country grain elevator. What was once a common site in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta is now an endangered species.

The Sangudo Sundial-Elevator is one of the biggest sundials in existence with a height of 21 feet and a total weight of over 40 tons, including the marker rocks.

The design provides for a modern sculptured appearance of a country grain elevator with a shingled roof, permanency (100 year range), and simplicity and economy of



construction utilizing local volunteer craftsmen. The design is indeed unique and has been officially copyrighted by the Village of Sangudo.

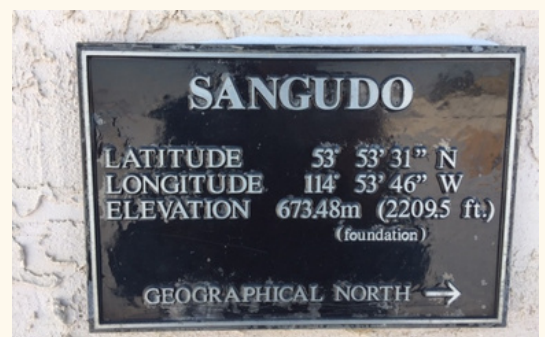
The design incorporates an additional feature which makes it particular to the Village of Sangudo. The angle of the upper roof slope is $54^{\circ}54'$, which corresponds with the north latitude of Sangudo, and as such, enables the structure to function as a simple sundial. The combination of structural design and the time it tells (Sangudo Solar Time) makes the "Sundial Elevator" a unique structure, world wide.

WHAT THE SUNDIAL WILL TELL YOU

- Local Solar Time estimate, Solar Noon
- Major Calendar Functions: Longest Day, Shortest Day, Equinoxes
- Geographical Information: Exact Latitude, Longitude, Elevation, True North direction

On the average, Sangudo Solar Time is about 40 minutes behind MST or 1 hour and 40 minutes behind MDT.

Reading the Sundial: Locate the shadow cast by either the west edge (A.M.) or east edge (P.M.) of the upper roof only. If the shadow falls well outside the range of the marker rocks, line the shadow with either the A.M. or P.M. sundial centers (base of the flag poles).



ALBERTA'S BIG THINGS

SE of Calgary

1. Black Diamond: The Big Black Diamond
2. Crowsnest Pass: Crows Guarding their Nest (entrance to Blairmore)
3. Lethbridge: The Enormous Wind Gauge
4. Taber: Corn Stalk
5. Bow Island: Pinto McBean the Pinto Bean, Oil Derrick, Sunflower
6. Medicine Hat: World's Largest Teepee
7. Vauxhall: Sammy and Samantha Potatoes
8. Milk River: Rex the Tyrannosaurus Rex

NE of Calgary

1. Irricana: Old Smoky the Horse
2. Beiseker: Squirt the Skunk
3. Rosedale: Miner
4. Drumheller: Dini the Tyrannosaurus Rex
5. Hanna: Three Grey Geese
6. Oyen: Centennial Clock Tower
7. Coronation: Crown (for fullest impact, visit in evening)
8. Torrington: Clem T. Gofur the Gopher

SE of Edmonton

- Red Deer: Francis the Pig
- Donalda: World's Largest Oil Lamp
- Hughenden: Brown-eyed Susan the Sunflower
- Wainwright: Bison
- Chauvin: Susie, The World's Largest Softball

- Lloydminster: Survey markers on border of Alberta and Saskatchewan
- Vegreville: Pysanka Egg
- Mundare: Kielbassa Sausage

NE of Edmonton

- Smoky Lake: Pumpkins
- Vilna: World's Largest Mushrooms
- Lac La Biche: David Thompson (on the shores of the lake)
- Bonnyville: Angus Shaw, 22 feet tall
- Glendon: Perogy
- St Paul: UFO Landing Site, built in 1967
- Andrew: Mallard Duck, 23 feet wingspan

NW of Edmonton

- Sangudo: Landmark Sundial, made with special stones from the region
- Edson: Eddie the Squirrel, 12 feet tall
- Jasper: Jasper the Bear
- Grande Cache: Rocky the Big Horn Ram, hidden in the trees
- Grande Prairie: Trumpeter Swan, since 1976
- Swan Hills: Bear and Swan
- Barrhead: Aaron the Blue Heron

Grande Prairie Loop

- Beaverlodge: World's Biggest Beaver, 18 feet long
- Brownvale: Bull and Bull Rider, built in 1986
- Manning: Moose
- Peace River: Twelve Foot Davis, a gold prospector
- Falher: Bee, honey capital of Canada



WATERED GARDENS

God of little buds just now wearing green sleeves,
God of lilac limbs all full with signs of flowering,
God of fields plowed and black with turned-over earth,
God of screeching baby bird mouths widely awaiting food.

God of openness, of life and resurrection,
Come into this Easter season and bless me.
Look around the tight, dead spaces of my heart
That still refuses to give You entrance

Bring Your gentle but firm love.
Begin to lift the layers of resistance
That hang on tightly deep inside me.

Open, one by one, those places in my life
Where I refuse to be overcome by surprise.
Open, one by one, those parts of my heart
Where I fight the entrance of real growth.
Open, one by one, those aspects of my spirit
Where my security struggles with the truth.



Keep me open to the different and the strange;
Help me to accept the unusual and also the ordinary;
Never allow me to tread on others' dreams
By shutting them out, closing them up,
By turning them off or pushing them away.

God of Resurrection, God of the living,
Untomb and uncover all that needs to live in me.
Take me to people, events, and situations
And stretch me into much greater openness.

Open me. Open me. Open me.
For it is only then that I will grow and change.
For it is then that I will be transformed.
For it is then that I will know how it is
To be in the moment of the rising of the dead.

by **Joyce Rupp**

submitted by Ann Brown

. . . you will be like a watered garden, like a flowing spring
whose waters never run dry.

Isaiah 58:11

HELLO AGAIN EVERYONE! IT'S SCUBA DAVE!

EPISODE 2: THE FIRST DIVE ON THE YONGALA

The day of the dive, January 14, 2007, I drove down the coast from Townsville to a little hamlet named Alva where I met up with the dive charter. They were set up in a garage in the hamlet and I was surprised to see the dive boat on a big trailer behind a large farm tractor. The boat was the largest Zodiac (inflatable rubber boat) I have ever seen. It had a rigid hull and deck with inflated pontoons and it was at least 40 feet long. We put all of our dive gear into the boat and followed it down to the beach across the huge sand dunes in an 18-passenger van. They pulled the boat trailer with the tractor because the sand was very fine and loose and at the beach; they had to back the trailer a long way into the surf to release the boat.

We headed north east in the dive boat for about 14 miles to find a large orange buoy marking the dive site. We tied off to the buoy which was tied to a large concrete anchor separate from the wreck to avoid damaging the fragile remains of the gravesite. The Divemasters gave us the pre-dive briefing and explained that we were to follow the rules that the Government had set for this dive site, which included no penetration of the wreck or picking of any artifacts. If not followed the authorities would revoke their dive permit.

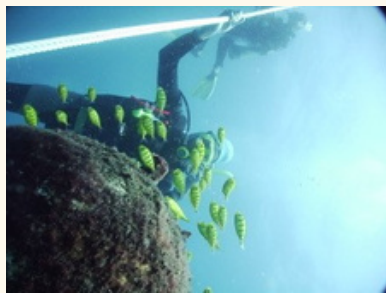
We entered the water for our first dive which was planned as the deepest dive to accommodate no decompression at the end of the second dive. We all gathered at the buoy in our buddy pairs and submerged following the anchor line to the bottom. My deepest point on the dive was 85 feet with the low tide and staying up off the bottom so as not to stir up the silt and reduce the visibility. The visibility was amazing at over 100 feet. We could clearly see the shipwreck from the anchor block, we could even make out some of the larger fish around the wreck. As we finned over towards the ship, we could see more

detail including the cargo cranes and the superstructure, which had collapsed over time exposing the deck which appeared to us as a wall given that the ship was lying on its starboard side. There were many places to enter the wreck if we were allowed to with all of the hatch covers missing.



There were thousands of fish swimming in and out of the wreck through every opening, however they didn't wander too far from the protection of the ship with larger predators like sharks and large groupers close by. The larger fish were a little more difficult to see but they were always there circling the wreck. After exploring along the deck from the stern towards the bow, we ascended around the bow and up across the port side which is now the top of the wreck. The visibility was much better with more light penetrating the shallower water. The most striking thing was the amount of coral growth on the hull. I looked to try to find some of the ship showing but it was completely covered with both hard and soft coral as well as sea fans. There were even more fish on the top of the wreck including the reptiles that I mentioned in the last episode. How did these air-breathing animals get so far out into the ocean and actually live here? The sea turtles seem to stay out on the wreck as it's their home. We saw them sleeping on the coral. The poisonous sea snakes were everywhere hiding in the coral waiting to ambush the small fish as they swam by.

Because of the depth that we were at and the time that we had spent there (45 minutes) we had to surface to let the nitrogen that had accumulated in our body tissues “air off.” So we finned directly across from the top of the wreck to the anchor line that guided us back to the surface. We all had a short three-minute decompression safety stop at 15 feet below the surface to help release some of the nitrogen.



Pilot fish

While we were hanging there in the water at a convenient submerged buoy made from Styrofoam, we watched a school of small yellow and black striped pilot fish fry (they were about the size of a dime) as they swam back and forth following the buoy as it moved back and forth in the ocean swell. It was like the buoy was their security blanket. I got everyone’s attention and pulled the buoy straight down. The little fish freaked out and continued to swim in a frenzy back and forth looking for the buoy. We all had a good laugh through our regulators, which is hard to do without choking on the salt water that gets into your mouth. But what happened to the fish reminded us that although we live in a three-dimensional world, when we are diving, we tend to only perceive two dimensions, and quite often our dive buddy is right behind and above us and we have difficulty finding them.

After our safety stop, we proceeded to the surface and climbed back aboard the dive boat for our surface interval to off gas the nitrogen to prevent decompression sickness (the bends), and to allow us to dive safely for the second time on the Yongala. Stay tuned for the next episode when I’ll tell you about the second dive and some of the bigger fish we saw.

Dave Churchill

SIMPLE WISDOM

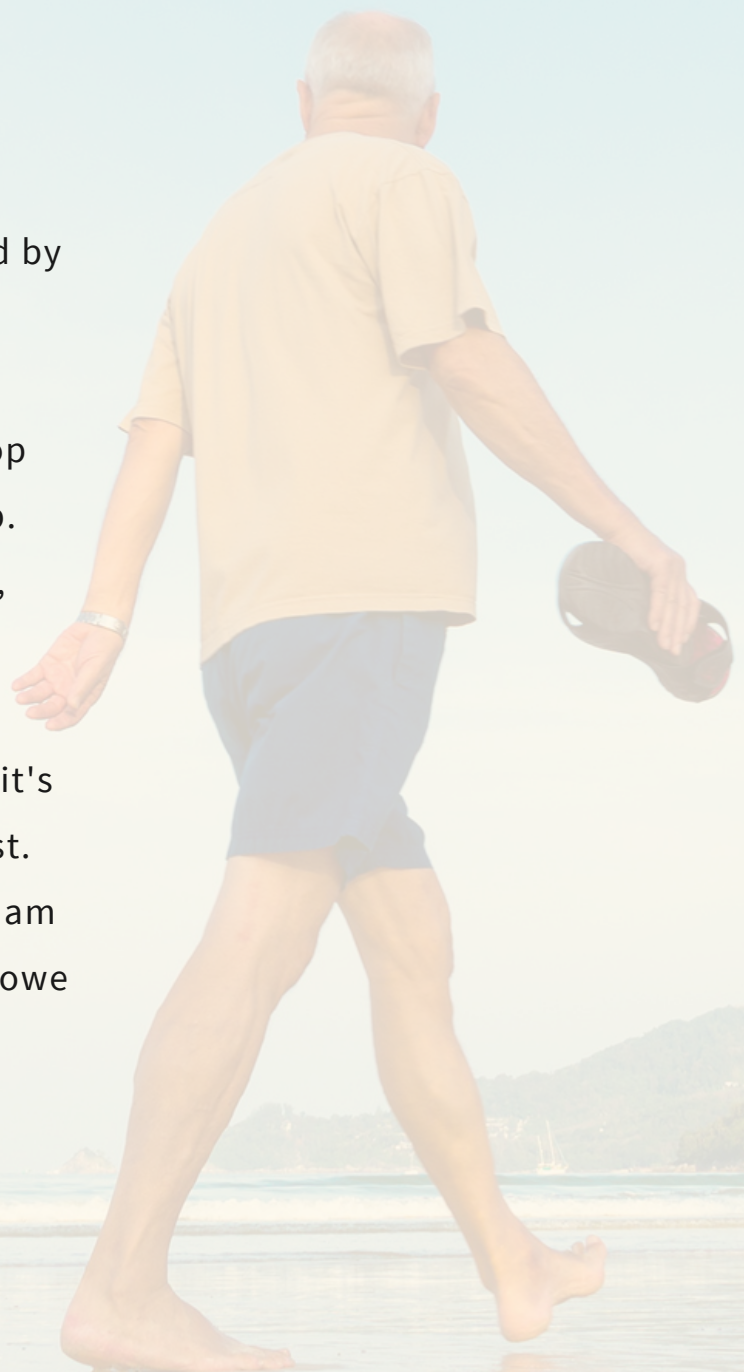
A Senior replied to the question: “How are you feeling?”

- After loving my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my children, and my friends, I have now started loving myself.
- I have realized that I am not Atlas. The world does not rest on my shoulders.
- I have stopped bargaining with vegetable and fruit vendors. A few pennies more is not going to break me, but it might help the poor fellow save for his daughter’s school fees.
- I leave my waitress a big tip. The extra money might bring a smile to her face. She is toiling much harder for a living than I am.
- I stopped wondering why I’ve been chosen to carry so much physical pain . . . while some might judge me as weaker because I require a cane or medication, I know that pain is not a comparison of strength.
- I have learned not to correct people even when I know they are wrong. The onus of making everyone perfect is not on me. Peace is more precious than perfection.



- I give compliments freely & generously. Compliments are a mood enhancer not only for the recipient but also for me. And a small tip for the recipient of a compliment: never, NEVER turn it down, just say Thank You.
- I have learned not to bother about a crease in my shirt. Personality speaks louder than appearances.
- I walk away from people who don't value me. They might not know my worth, but I do.
- I am learning not to be embarrassed by my emotions. It's my emotions that make me human.
- I have learned that it's better to drop the ego than to break a relationship. My ego will keep me aloof, whereas, with relationships, I will never be alone.
- I have learned to live each day as if it's the last. After all, it might be the last.
- I am doing what makes me happy. I am responsible for my happiness and I owe it to myself.

submitted by Wilma Clark



DID GOD SPEAK TO ME?

By Jen Kit Lin Hung

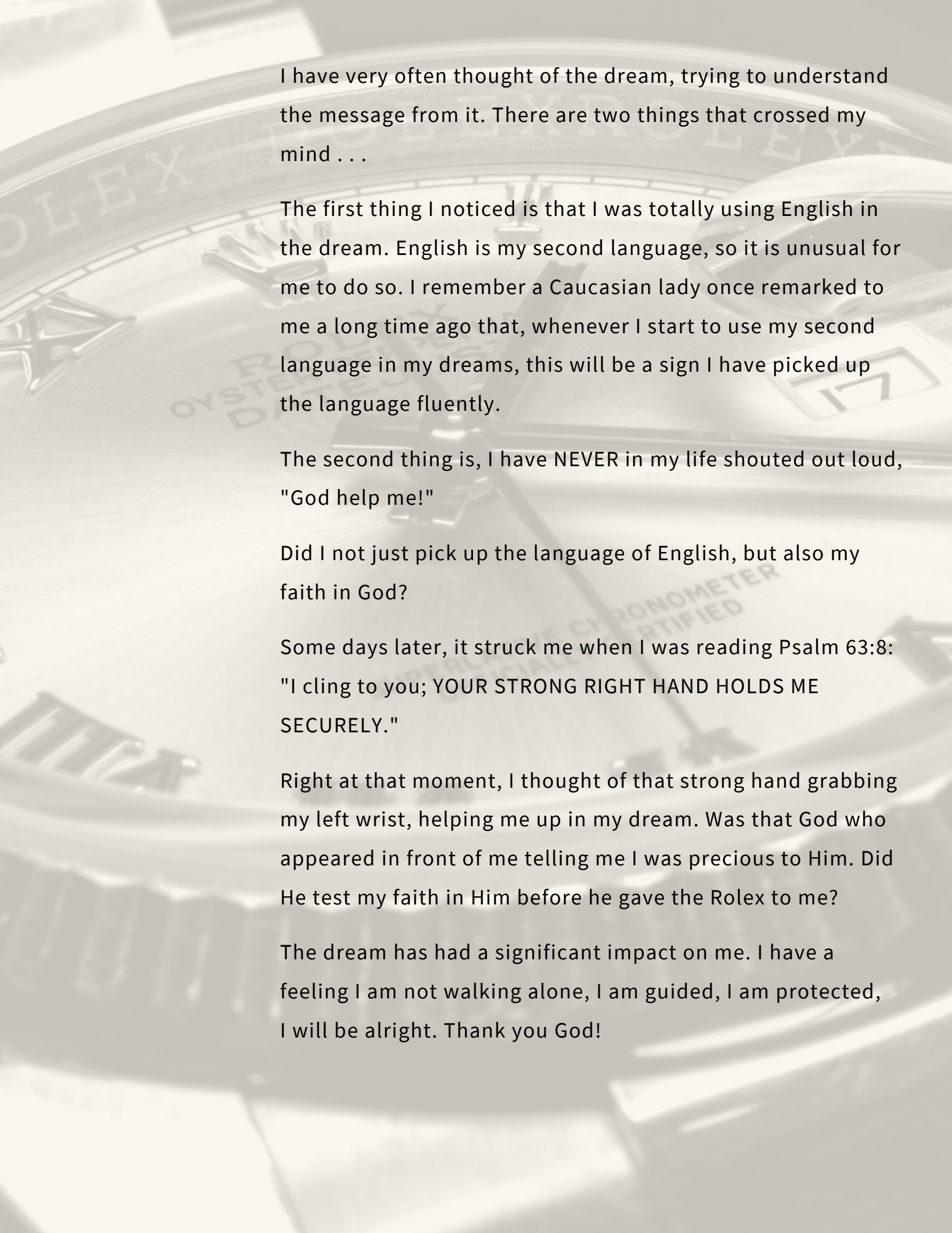
I woke up at dawn a few days before Christmas, then I had a dream after I fell back to sleep. I was walking with somebody on my right side. In the distance I saw a very big man holding a long stick with a knife at the end. He was walking towards me. He was getting closer and closer. Then, when he was right in front of me, he held up his weapon as if about to attack me!

I fell to the ground on my back, frozen in fright. I tightly closed my eyes and shouted as loudly as I could, "God help me!" Silence. Nothing happened.

Then I felt a hand grabbing my left wrist. I opened my eyes and saw the man pulling me up. He said to me in a deep voice, "I am giving you my Rolex watch."

Frankly, I have never desired to have a Rolex watch in my life. I said to him, "It's too big for my wrist." He then asked me to follow him to his shop to have it adjusted. I followed him into his shop where he adjusted it and put it on my wrist. Then I left.

When I was walking out of the shop, I took a look at the watch, puzzled as to why he would give me such an expensive watch. I also had no idea who this person was who was walking alongside me, on my right side. There was no sound from him/her, but I felt the presence.



I have very often thought of the dream, trying to understand the message from it. There are two things that crossed my mind . . .

The first thing I noticed is that I was totally using English in the dream. English is my second language, so it is unusual for me to do so. I remember a Caucasian lady once remarked to me a long time ago that, whenever I start to use my second language in my dreams, this will be a sign I have picked up the language fluently.

The second thing is, I have NEVER in my life shouted out loud, "God help me!"

Did I not just pick up the language of English, but also my faith in God?

Some days later, it struck me when I was reading Psalm 63:8: "I cling to you; YOUR STRONG RIGHT HAND HOLDS ME SECURELY."

Right at that moment, I thought of that strong hand grabbing my left wrist, helping me up in my dream. Was that God who appeared in front of me telling me I was precious to Him. Did He test my faith in Him before he gave the Rolex to me?

The dream has had a significant impact on me. I have a feeling I am not walking alone, I am guided, I am protected, I will be alright. Thank you God!

AN EASTER PRAYER

Jesus, You are risen!

You are with me.

Keep me ever mindful of how You are a part of my life
in a deep profound way.

Surprise me with a touch of Your love in places
where I never thought that I would find You.

Fill my heart with hope.

May the gift of Your presence transform every ordinary
moment of mine into a sacred place where You dwell.

Help me to see this gift through the eyes of faith.

Fill me with Your peace.

Amen



by **Joyce Rupp**

submitted by Ann Brown



OUT OF THE MOUTH OF . . .

A Sunday school teacher asked his class, "What was Jesus's mother's name?" One child answered, "Mary." The teacher then asked, "Who knows what Jesus's father's name was?" A little kid said, "Verge." Confused, the teacher asked, "Where did you get that?" The kid said, "Well, you know, they are always talking about Verge n' Mary."

A little boy was overheard praying: "Lord, if you can't make me a better boy, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time like I am."

After the christening of his baby brother in church, Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That minister said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you."

One particular four-year-old prayed, "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."



Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother, Joel, were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang, and talked out loud. Finally, his big sister had had enough. "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church." "Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked. Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two people standing by the door? They're hushers."

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'" Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

A father was at the beach with his children when his four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore where a seagull lay dead in the sand. "Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked. "He died and went to Heaven," the dad replied. The boy thought a moment and then said, "Did God throw him back down?"

A woman invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to her six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?" "I wouldn't know what to say," the girl replied. "Just say what you hear Mommy say," the woman answered. The daughter bowed her head and said, "Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

submitted by Cathy Thomsen

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

A memory? A poem?
A photograph? A pandemic story?
We would love to share it
in the next issue of this magazine.

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

The next submission deadline is April 6, 2021.



Please note that the church's
mailing address has changed.

Please direct mail to:

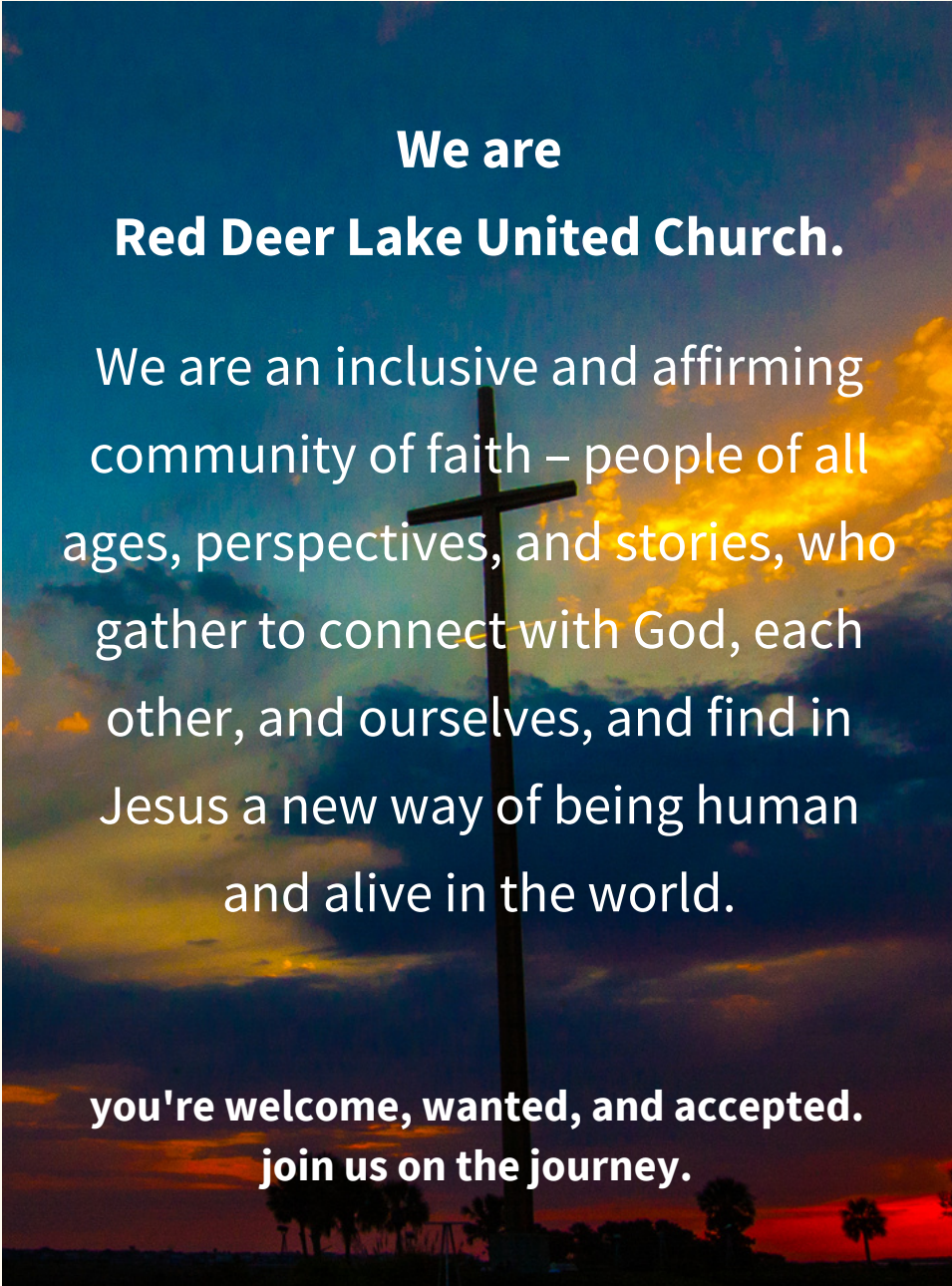
Red Deer Lake United Church
96187 Spruce Meadows Green SW
Foothills, Alberta T1S 2R9

Photo credit:
Marj Den Hoed

PERSONAL EASTER REFLECTIONS



Easter blessings from the Hospitality and Congregational Care teams!



**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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 red deer lake united church

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CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Monday 9am - noon
Tuesday 9am - noon
Wednesday 9am - noon
Thursday 9am - noon