



OCTOBER 2021

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

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HUMOUR

red deer lake
united church

friends,

I hope this finds you well.

I just got back from taking our boys (Walter and Lewis) to the park and I gotta say, with all the leaves changing colour and beginning to fall to the ground, it is gorgeous out there. That's one of the reasons why fall is my favourite time of year. Another is that it always feels like a season of new beginnings.

Regardless of whether we're starting a new grade in school, coming out of vacation and into new routines, or just feeling that seasonal shift, it's this time where we can remember some truths of our faith: with every ending there is a new beginning and there is always grace. I love how those are just baked into our universe. I love how creation itself reminds us of that each and every year. I know it's a lesson I always need. Maybe it's something you need to hear too.

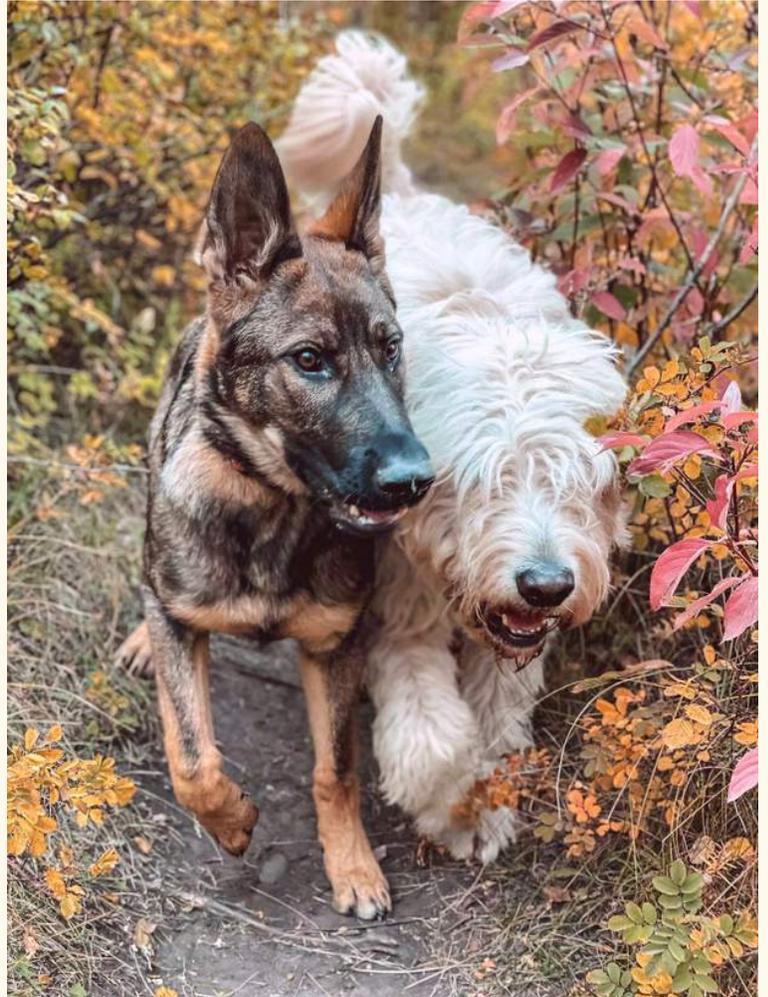
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There is lots happening here with our faith community. We are connecting with people in person, online, and through things like this magazine; praying that we can all do what it takes to get through this pandemic; working towards justice, truth, and reconciliation; and dreaming about how we can all, regardless of how we connect, continue to be the church together. I do want you to hold on to that—that even though you aren't physically with us, you are still with us. You're still a part of us. You still matter to us. I do hope that Church @ Home, the people who bring it to you, and the treats and gifts they bring help you feel that love and connection.

May this month's package bring you a sense of that and may it help you continue to grow in your faith. We miss you. We love you. Grace and peace be with you,

n.



Lewis and Walter enjoying the fall weather

Greetings Dear Friends!

Here we are once again coming into your home and I hope your heart!

We hope you have been able to celebrate Thanksgiving with friends or loved ones. There is much to be thankful for and we are so thankful for each one of you in our church family.

Since last month's magazine, some of us have met in person (or online) for worship and it is a joy to be able to see you. We love it that you are personally connecting by whatever means possible, such as the "good old telephone," during these continued pandemic times. We each need to do whatever we can to stay safe and well and care for one other . . . that is what counts most of all. Know we are thinking of you and love to hear from you. Please continue to let us know how we can support you or others during these times.

Thanks once again to the very many dedicated people continuing to create these care packages for you. If you would like to pass on items in the package, please do so . . . pass our love forward!

We wish to thank Charlee MacLean for creating the very beautiful fall fridge magnets for September's packages. Larry Stilwell continues to create his beautiful tea cards for you each and every month, thank you Larry!

This month we extend our gratitude to Bob Boyko, who has once again creatively painted stones for you, this time in honour of Remembrance Day. We remember and honour all those who have served in conflicts and war as we pray for peace in our world. Bob likewise created stones in special commemoration of Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30. These are placed in the front of the sanctuary, and he has also gifted them to some Indigenous communities. We pray for peace, healing, and justice for all our Indigenous peoples.

Wishing you Blessings of
Thanksgiving, Love and Peace,

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Thank you to Bob Boyko for providing these wonderfully painted peace stones to mark Remembrance Day. They have been included in the October care packages.

Bob has created and gifted over 3000 stones to people and locations all over Calgary, including RDLUC, since the pandemic began. As part of a team effort, Cheryl, his wife, helps to gather suitable stones for him to paint. You might find one of these stone creations hidden away in secret locations in parks and trees throughout the city.

Poppy photo by Charlee MacLean



WHAT WE'RE ACTUALLY EXEMPTED FROM

REV. NICK COATES

So last weekend Dawn and I were out doing some errands in our neighbourhood and we decided to go out for lunch at a bar along 17th Ave. As we waited for our food, we noticed that the whole area had gotten busier—like WAY busier than it usually is—even for a beautiful Saturday afternoon.

And as we noticed it getting busier, we also noticed that everyone outside seemed to be moving in the same direction, and that they were not only on the sidewalks but also on the street, and that they were all yelling and chanting, and we noticed how the air had changed, like there was this whole other kind of energy that was in the room, and all of a sudden we realized, “Oh my God, we're in the middle of an anti-vax march.”

And as we watched the people keep coming and coming and coming, there must have been a thousand of them, we realized we couldn't get out of there anytime soon because the whole block was surrounded by people, so we did what you do whenever you're stuck in the middle of a protest:

we ordered a drink and we watched.

And as we watched, I was paying attention to all the signs and things being shouted and I kept seeing things that looked like this:



and this . . .



And we'd hear people yelling stuff like, "I won't let you cover up my divine image!!" and this may be my personal favourite, "We follow Jesus, not Jason!"

Now we can critique these all we want. I mean, none of them are particularly clever. But what really caught my attention is what's underneath them. And what's underneath these signs and chants and underneath the motive for a lot of the anti-mask movement is this idea of religious exemption.

Religious exemption is this idea that argues people are free to not do something because it restricts or compromises their religious beliefs and freedoms. In this case, people feel they are exempted from things like being vaccinated or wearing a mask or following the restrictions because it limits or goes against their religious freedom.

This is what was going on with that church near Edmonton that kept having worship services even though they weren't legally allowed to and the pastor ended up in jail. We heard some more about it this weekend when Andrew Wiggins wanted the NBA to allow him to not be vaccinated because he felt it went against his religion.

Now I'm not bringing this up because I want to get into a debate about religious freedoms.

I'm bringing this up because I gotta tell ya, as I took all of that in last weekend, as someone who would count themselves as religious, as someone who tries to live out their faith and spirituality,

and as someone who talks about how to do that for a living, whose job it is to think about what that looks like on a daily basis, I couldn't help but ask:

What if these folks are on to something? What if they've got a point? As followers of Jesus, what do we have the right not to do?

As I took it all in, I couldn't help but ask: What does our faith actually exempt us from?

So today, because all of that still is very much in the air, and because we're all here learning to live out our spirituality, we're gonna ask that question and see just what it is we're actually exempted from doing, just what it is we don't have to do as religious people, and then we'll end with some questions to take home with us.

So the first exemption . . .

We find this one in one of the letters in the Bible written by a guy named Paul. Paul was one of the very first writers to talk about how if you say you're a Christian, if you want to live the way God wants you to, here's what it means.

And in that letter Paul tells us that, and get this, according to our faith, according to the teachings of Jesus:

we are exempted from putting ourselves first.

No, seriously. This is what Paul wrote:

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

Another translation puts it this way (it's always good to read a couple different translations):

"Don't let selfishness and prideful agendas take over. Embrace true humility, and lift your heads to extend love to others. Get beyond yourselves and protecting your own interests; be sincere, and secure your neighbours' interests first."

According to our religion, we have the religious freedom to put others before ourselves.

We're allowed to protest any laws or systems that prioritize us over others. We have an exemption from pride and ego and the things that make us only think about our own interests.

In a world and culture that can be so selfish and that is becoming more and more tribalistic, our spirituality gives us an out. It says you don't have to get in on that, you don't have to live that way, you don't have to participate in that, you don't need to perpetuate the things that put you above your neighbours.

But Paul doesn't stop there. He keeps on going. Here's another one. He writes in Galatians:

"It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom."

As he said, it's pretty clear:

As people of faith, we're exempted from being irresponsible and arrogant.

We're exempted from not paying attention to the consequences of our actions and policies. We're exempted from privilege. We have the right to make it not just about ourselves.

I think Paul would echo the words of MLK here when he said: "We're only free til we're all free."

We see here the reminder that freedom is not a personal issue, it's a public issue. It's a collective and communal thing, not an individual thing. It's something that we either all have or none of us have.

That means when there are unjust systems and laws and policies, when people are being oppressed and hurt, we're exempted from making it someone else's issue and we're exempted from complicity, not paying attention, and not looking beyond our own realities and truths.

Let's do one more, but for this one let's see what Jesus has to say.

In his Sermon on the Mount, which is really this massive sermon he gave which outlines what he's all about, he said this:

"This is what you need to do to follow me: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the lonely, care for the sick, and protect the most vulnerable. Whatever you do to them, to the very least of these, you will do to me."

If you asked Jesus, we're exempted from not caring for the most vulnerable.

We're exempted from not caring for those who are the most at risk in our world: the voiceless, the marginalized, the powerless, the oppressed, and the forgotten.

If we take Jesus seriously here, it's actually our religious right to make sure that everyone and anyone are cared for and protected—physically, mentally, emotionally, physically. It's our religion to make sure they are seen, heard, valued, and protected, even if that makes us have a bit less and makes our own lives more uncomfortable.

And notice here it's not caring about, it's caring for. What we're exempted from here is the inaction. We're exempted from not caring for those who get pushed around, dismissed, overlooked, and oppressed.

Now we could keep going but maybe that's enough to sense a theme here, right? It should be enough to make us want to say to all those people claiming religious exemption to masks and restrictions:

What bible are you guys reading? Which Jesus are you following?! What kind of God do you have?

‘Cause the Jesus we follow, the Bible we read, the God we experience, the religion we practice, we're seeing a completely different kind of religious exemption.

I mean, the whole point of our spirituality, the whole movement of it, the whole goal of it, the defining feature of it, is this call to extravagant and indiscriminate love;

it's this call to move towards one another, to see one another as our responsibility, to insist that everyone, especially the lowest of the low, is taken care of; it's to live together in peace, cooperation, and love, and to create a world where everyone has enough and everyone has a place.

To say "yes" to that, to be religious, is to move deeper and deeper into love, into love of God, love of others, and of self.

And the thing about that?

It doesn't lead to protesting the vaccines and mask mandates. It doesn't lead to putting the most vulnerable in life-threatening situations. It doesn't lead to the collapse of our healthcare system.

It leads to the exact opposite:

It leads to advocating for the best safety protocols we can have. It leads to getting the vaccine if you can. It leads to supporting health care. It leads to making sure our kids and elders are protected. It leads to holding our leaders accountable. It leads to putting our own wants and needs and feelings aside for the sake of others.

If we're exempted from anything because of our faith, it's anything that divides, hurts, oppresses, belittles, and dehumanizes—from anything that isn't loving and just. If we're exempted from anything, it's not doing something when people are being hurt and threatened.

So if that's what we're actually exempted from AND if people are being hurt and threatened right now, we have to ask: what are we going to do about it?

Why aren't we out on the streets?

Why aren't we marching?

Where are our signs?

Where's our anger and frustration?

Why aren't we protesting?

If we're not doing that, and this is the question that's been with me all week, are we even living out our faith?



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

REV. NICK COATES

Let's begin by naming something.

It's a question I think we're all asking right now. It's the question that we always ask when we come up to those intersections of life and need to make a decision, or those moments just after everything breaks and before everything is put back together, or those moments when we know we can't stay wherever it is we are but what's up ahead isn't quite clear yet. It's the question we ask whenever chaos undoes everything.

Anyone know these kinds of moments? Anyone ever experience those things?

Yeah, we all have. And that means we've all asked this question. I know I've asked it. It's the question Dawn and I asked when our dog died. It's the question I asked when I couldn't buy into that God was this all-powerful, all-knowing being anymore. It's the question we ask whenever we finish bingeing an entire TV show.

And that question is: Where do we go from here?

Anyone know that question? Yeah, I think it's safe to say that we have asked it. And OF COURSE it's the one we're asking right now.

We're almost two years into a pandemic that's impacted virtually every aspect of our society, not to mention our relationships, our kids, our jobs, how we do church, and core pieces of ourselves.

We're seeing parts of our humanity we can't unsee and we don't really know what to do with.

We're rumbling with huge spiritual questions about our fundamental values and how we exist better than we have before.

So much has faded, died, been questioned, left behind, and changed but there's no sense of when it'll all clear up so we can see the horizon.

And when we navigate all of that, the question we keep coming back to is: Where do we go from here? On every level of our being, where do we go from here?

Which is a super telling question, isn't it? The questions we ask always tell us a lot.

The fact that we're asking it shows that we know we can't stay here. We know this is temporary. It's just an in-between. We're on a really bad layover in a really bad airport. We know we need to go somewhere but the question is, "Where?"

And I also suspect that we know that the answer isn't back to what was. As much as we'd love it and as comforting and familiar as it'd be, we know going back to normal isn't an option: too much has changed. It wouldn't work. While it'd be familiar, it wouldn't be life-giving. While it'd be a relief, it wouldn't feel right.

So no wonder we're asking where we go from here. Not only do we not know where to go but we also know there's no map for wherever it is we will go! No wonder it's such an anxious and scary question.

But here's the thing about that question:

Even though we're all asking it, it's the wrong question.

And it's not a bad question. There's no such thing as a bad question. It's just not the time for it. It's too early to rumble with that one. The question we need to be asking right now is a little different.

It's not where do we go from here? **It's where do we begin?**

It feels different, doesn't it? It's what we call a grounding question or a guiding question or even an energizing question. It's one of those questions we need to ask when everything falls apart and when we find ourselves in between what was and what could be. It's the question we need to ask when we don't have a map.

And in our tradition, there's only one answer to that question. If you look at the wisdom, it always says the same thing about where we should begin:

The heart. We begin with our hearts.

Now I know I just lost a bunch of you. I know a lot of you are thinking:

"We don't begin there! Faith can wait. We need a plan! We need to know exactly where we're going! We need a blueprint! We need actionable FRDPs and synergistic tangibles that lead to sustainable Hyper Local ROIs!!"

Right?! And I know, even after this amazing, wonderful, and inspiring sermon, some of you will be all, "We need a plan!! Where are we going?!!"

And I hear ya. I get it. I really do get it. But no. No, we don't. Not yet. That question comes later.

For now, we begin here. We have to begin in our hearts.

And we need to begin here because in our tradition, and in most spiritual traditions really, the heart isn't just this thing that pumps our blood, it's the centre of our being:

it's the place we live out of, a place of deep knowing and deep feeling, a place where we discover truth, wisdom, and meaning. It's that place where the Spirit lives and moves.

To be someone who lives out of their heart, to be what Brene Brown calls wholehearted, that's what Jesus said is to be truly alive, that's what he meant when he'd talk about to be saved:

It's to be someone who is grounded in their heart, to be connected to that mystery underneath it all, to that thing we call God. It's to live out of the deepest and truest part of ourselves. It's to see things not only as they really are but also how they could really be.

This is why people like Richard Rohr would say faith is "more about waking up than cleaning up."

It's when we wake up, when we begin here, it's when we become wholehearted people, that something begins to happen:

we move beyond all the things that force us to live on the edges of ourselves—our ego, our pride, our need to control, our wants and needs, our fears and anxieties, our resentments, our false narratives and scripts—

and move into our centres, into courage, into conviction, into trust, into integrity and worth and value, into this deep sense of knowing we're not alone, and into the space where we can listen to the one thing that will show us where we need to go from here:

god

spirit

life

love

universe

source

whatever you want to call it

Our hearts are where we can listen to the one thing that will show us where we need to go from here, where it is we'll find our life, where it is we'll be part of what God is doing in the world.

And at the end of the day, when it's all said and done, isn't that what we want to do? Isn't that the goal? Isn't that why we're here?

It's to learn to be truly, wholly, and fully human. It's to live out of here knowing that that's where life begins and that's where everything begins to hum with reverence.

So here's what I'd like us to do. Here's what I want to invite us into:

As we try to make sense of what's going on around us and figure out where to go from here, both as people and as the church, let's change our question. Let's stop worrying for a bit about strategy and plans and outcomes and let's begin here.

let's start with our hearts.

Let's do the work to begin here knowing that once we do, the where and the how will follow.

Now that's not to say it makes any of this any easier—it'll actually make it harder.

Going inward is never easy. It takes a lot of sweat to move beyond the edges.

Following after the Spirit is always tough, but it is where we find life, it is where we find out where we need to go and how we'll get there. It's where we find the answer to our question.

It all begins here.

It all begins and it all ends with our hearts.



LIVING IN THE TENSION

REV. NICK COATES

God be with you.

So if you are just joining us, or church and all the things we do together is new to you, one of the things we do pretty much every week is read a part of the Bible and explore it together.

Now we don't do this because this thing is literally the word of God—it's not. And we don't do it because we think this is the only way God speaks to us—it's not. And we don't do it because we think this is the manual for a good life and all the answers to all our questions are in here—it's not and it doesn't.

The reason we read these things, the reason really why we call these stories "holy," is that something sacred happens when we read them. We've read them for thousands of years and they've always helped us understand what it means to be human and alive in the world.

That's why we come back to these things each week.

And the cool thing is, and maybe you've experienced this yourself, is that something new happens every time you come back to a story . . . you see something you never noticed before

or, because you're a different person than the last time you read it, what you heard before changes ever so slightly or maybe completely. But either way, a whole new world opens up and we get abducted by wonder or get caught up in new questions or discover some new truths.

That's why we do this. We're trying to make all of that happen.

And when it comes to that story we just heard, there are all kinds of places we could go, and we've been to a bunch of 'em already . . .

we've talked about healings and miracles and what to do with the stories about being possessed by demons and spirits,

and the place I want to pull ya all into today is this line we so often miss because we get so caught up in the more shocking and scandalous parts of the story, and

it's that line right smack in the middle of the story, almost this throwaway line, when Jesus tells the dad that he needs to believe for his kid to get healed, and the dad says to him:

"I believe. Help my unbelief!"

And I love this line because which is it? Do you believe or don't you believe? Do you have belief or do you have unbelief? 'Cause you can't have both! Which is how we see it, right? Belief and unbelief are a dichotomy.

It's a dualism. It's gotta be one or the other. You either have it or you don't. It's why this line sticks out to me. It doesn't make any sense.

And it's here we need to remember a little spirituality hack: if you're reading something considered sacred, if you're encountering a bit of wisdom and it doesn't make any sense, instead of dismissing it, see it as something to pay attention to. If it feels weird, strange, and especially if it feels offensive, that's our queue to pull over.

And if we pull over here and pay attention we can hear some wisdom this story is offering to those of us trying to be the spiritual beings we are:

When it comes to belief and unbelief, it's never one or the other: it's always both.

It's both. They exist together. You're always going to have both. That's the tension we live in. We live somewhere between belief and unbelief.

Which I gotta say, that's kinda comforting, right? That's kinda liberating to hear, isn't it?

Faith and Spirituality isn't a static thing, it's not something you simply arrive at and stay put within.

The truth is there'll be times of belief and times of unbelief, there'll be seasons of faith and seasons of doubt; sometimes you'll be here and other times you'll be here and other times you'll be somewhere in the middle.

The truth is you'll always experience both, sometimes—maybe most of the time—at the very same time.

Maybe you need to hear that. Maybe that frees you up from some shame you've experienced. Maybe there's some liberation for you in that truth.

And now when we talk about belief in church, we're not so much talking about whether you believe x, y, and z. We're not so much talking about assenting to intellectual concepts like God exists or Jesus is Divine or whatever. That's entering more into "truth" territory than anything else.

Belief is different than that. It's something that happens less in our heads and more in our hearts. When we talk about belief, we're talking more disposition than position.

We're talking about being open to something bigger than ourselves, to a reality underneath and behind this one, to a level of existence we're not always aware of, to a way of being that is different from anything else. When we talk about belief, we're talking about the practice of saying "yes" to things we can't always see or know.

Anyone know what I'm talking about?

This is what Alan Watts was getting at when he wrote, "To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim, you don't grab hold of the water because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead, you relax and float."

Dallas Willard would put it this way: "We believe something when we act as if it were true."

That's belief. To believe is to be open, to dare, to hope, to risk, to see, to bend, to trust, to resist, to be willing, and to be moved.

When our relationships go sideways and we lean into our hope that despite it all we can reconcile—that's belief.

When we see humanity resort to violence and hate and we refuse to join in—that's belief.

When we allow ourselves to try new things and be curious—that's belief.

When we resist the things that pull us out of our truths and worth—that's belief.

This is what Jesus talks about when he talks about belief. It's the daring and radical disposition and practice of saying yes to things we can't always see or know.

So if that's one end of the tension, the other end gets filled in, doesn't it?

When we talk about unbelief, we're talking about saying no. We're talking about closing down, being fearful or unwilling. We're talking scarcity, playing it safe, staying comfortable, and being complicit and apathetic.

Chad Meyers would put it this way:

"Unbelief is the despair, dictated by the dominant powers, that nothing can really change, a despair that renders revolutionary vision and practice impotent."

That's unbelief.

It's when we give into resignation.

It's when we lose our imagination for something bigger and different than what we see.

It's when we hear the nasty things people say about us and think, "Maybe they are right."

We know unbelief, don't we? Of course we do. We've all been there. We've all found ourselves on that side of the tension because when it comes to a life of faith and spirituality, it's never one or the other, it's always both. This is the tension that we all, just like that dad did, live in.

This is why he says to Jesus, "I believe. Help me in my unbelief." He knows he's leaning too far over. He knows he's letting unbelief win. He's beginning to give up. His hope is beginning to get shut down.

We see this with the disciples too. The reason they couldn't heal the kid is they didn't believe they could. And I mean, if that's the case, OF COURSE they couldn't do it.

We all know how powerful our own mindsets, attitudes, and perspectives are. We know how quickly our "no" can stop things in their tracks. We know we can't do anything if we're convinced we can't.

Right?

And again, this is why this story is sacred. This is why this story is our story. We've all been here. We've all been that guy and those disciples. We've all been people caught up in unbelief.

We know the power of being closed and saying no.

Whether it's with our faith, our relationships, our parenting, our dreams, our self worth, our work, or whatever, we know how crippling and overwhelming unbelief is.

And this story is sacred not just because it takes the shame away from unbelief and names it as a universal experience, but also because Jesus gives us a way out of it, a way to swing back towards belief:

prayer.

He says prayer is how you get out of unbelief and live well within that tension.

Now I should tell ya upfront, I've got a complicated relationship with prayer.

I grew up thinking prayer was just a song we sang to God at supper or that prayer was a kind of insurance policy because every night at bedtime I told God that, "If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." (Which is such a wonderful thought to give a kid at bedtime, right? "Hey kid, you may die in your sleep so make sure you say this prayer!")

Then later on prayer was this thing we did when we needed stuff. It was when we all bowed our heads and closed our eyes and asked God to help. Which was a legit, beautiful way to lament and get out what's inside us, but what ended up happening was I learned that God wasn't the kind of God I was told about in church because I'd pray for stuff and well . . . nothing would happen. People still died. Struggles persisted. The world still burned. And then the next week at church we'd go right back to asking God for new stuff even though we were still waiting on answers from last week.

But then, as my theology about who and what God evolved, as I experienced a God who isn't up there pulling the strings, but that's down here sustaining and encouraging, prayer became something else altogether:

Prayer became less about talking to God up there, and more about connecting with God down here.

Prayer became less about the things I want to happen to others, and more about what needs to happen to me.

It became this way to empty out everything that was in me so I could see what was left, true, and real.

It became less about my words and more about my breath.

It became less a way to ask for peace, and more a way I'd find peace.

Over the past 15 years, my prayers have changed so much since I was a kid singing Johnny Appleseed at the supper table.

And we see yet another dimension to prayer here in this story. We see Jesus saying it's the way to deal with our unbelief and live well within the tension. It's the thing we can do to remain open, willing, and saying "yes."

As Chad Meyers puts it,

"Prayer is the intensely personal struggle within each person, and amongst us collectively, to resist the despair and distractions that cause us to practice unbelief, to abandon or avoid the way of Jesus."

Prayer is what we do to stay in that tension. It's what we do when despair and defeat feel so overwhelming. It's what we do to remember our truths and our values. It's what we do to help us relax and float in the water. It's whatever you need to do to struggle well and choose to believe.

Which again, is just so liberating, isn't it?

Prayer doesn't look just one way. It doesn't have to be how you were taught it looks. It's anything, *anything*, we do to struggle well and practice our belief.

Maybe you go for a run when things get tough and that helps you quiet the noise around you—prayer.

Maybe you pump up the music and sing when things get wild—prayer.

Maybe you do yoga—prayer.

Maybe you just get quiet and still—prayer.

Maybe you talk things out with your partner—prayer.

Maybe you bake or paint—prayer.

It's whatever you do to help you remember to be open, to dare, to risk, to play, to dream, to imagine. It's all the things we do to stay in that tension and believe.

Yeah, that's prayer.

Now I don't know about you, but we need some prayer right now because there is SO much, TOO much pulling us towards unbelief these days. There's a lot of despair and resignation going around. It's hard not to feel defeated right now. I think a lot of us, and I'm talking about myself here too, find ourselves moving towards unbelief.

But here's where we make a choice.

We can stay there and let that shape us and guide us,

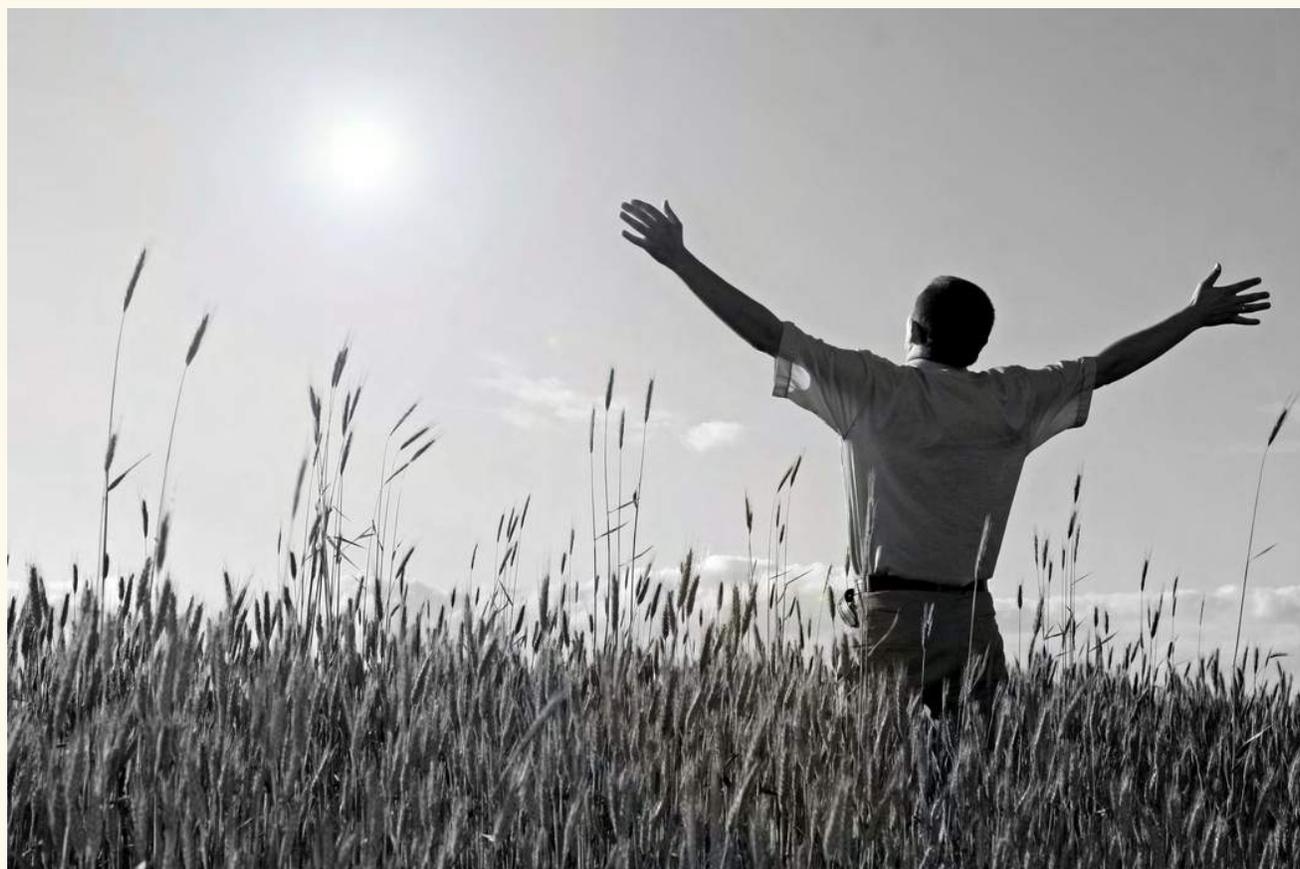
or

we can do the thing Jesus teaches us to do to swing back towards the middle and say yes, it can be different, it doesn't need to be this way, I won't give up.

So with this bit of wisdom guiding us . . .

How can you pray this week? What can you do to resist despair and resignation?

What do you need to do to nurture your belief and struggle well within the tension?



THE SPIRITUAL DISEASE OF CYNICISM

REV. NICK COATES

God be with you.

There's a truth at the very heart of our faith and spirituality:

That despite it all,
to be here and to be human is glorious;
that to be human is a wonderful thing,
and that this world is a marvelous place.

As a community of faith, what we do is try to find ways to live that truth out and learn how to experience that goodness and wonder. And part of that is learning not only about the things that lead us *into* that life and world, but also about the things that pull us *out* of it. We've been calling those things "spiritual diseases"—these things which pull us away and even stop us from creating and sustaining that life and world.

And today we'll talk about one of those diseases, maybe one of the most powerful and lethal, and one that I know we are all rumbling with these days as we struggle through the pandemic, see our shared humanity slip away, and rumble with despair:

Cynicism.

Today we talk about the spiritual disease of cynicism.

And to do that we'll talk about my mom's cell phone and mountains.

//

So the big news in my family back home is that my mom got a cell phone. This is a big deal. She knows how to work the computer and as far as she's concerned, that's enough. Which explains why she didn't go out to buy a new phone but instead is using one she found somewhere in the house. That's an important detail. It's nothing fancy or smart. It's just an old flip phone. That's another important detail. Despite it being just a basic old phone, she still couldn't figure it out. When she visited my brother she was telling him all of this, saying how it'd ring, how she'd press a button on the side, how it'd stop ringing, how she'd hold it up to her ear,

and how nothing would happen. Wanting to see just what was up, he called the phone and watched as mom picked up her *flip* phone, pressed the volume button on the side, held it up to her ear, *unopened*, and said, “See?! It doesn’t work!”

Faith—get ready for a killer segway here—is a lot like my mom’s cell phone.

One of the fundamental dispositions of our faith and spirituality is openness.

It needs to be open for it to work.

Which is why the Franciscan teacher Richard Rohr says stuff like: “Faith is more how to believe than what to believe.” Faith is less “believing that . . .” and more the very act of believing—it’s that disposition, orientation, and posture of openness to Something Bigger Than Ourselves.

And we say that because the God we believe in, this Spirit, Source, Energy, whatever word you want to use for that Ultimate Reality, that Something Bigger Than Ourselves, is a God who is with us and for us, which is to say, is a God we can *experience*: it’s a God that, as mysterious as it is, actually does speak to us, actually does guide us, actually is present, and actually is something we can be connected to and caught up in.

And we can see this in the stories of our tradition. We see it in these stories of how God speaks in the silence and the noise, or how God appears in and speaks through strangers. We can see it in how the Psalmists proclaim, ‘Taste and see how God is good!’ We see it in how the ancient rabbis would talk about how God is like our breath, this enlivening and animating Force we can actually *experience*.

That’s why openness is essential. That’s why the fundamental disposition of our faith and spirituality is one of being open.

And that openness isn’t just towards God, it’s an openness that permeates every level of our being, that shapes not just how we see and experience the Divine, but also how we see and experience ourselves, others, and the world around us.

It’s an openness towards ourselves and the willingness to believe that we can grow, forgive, change, and do amazing things. It’s an openness towards others and the willingness to believe that they can grow, forgive, change, and do amazing things. It’s this openness towards the world and the willingness to believe that all of this is going somewhere—that tomorrow doesn’t have to be like today.

To have faith, to be on this journey of becoming more and more human, is to move, step by step, towards being open to saying 'yes' to a life and world beyond what we experience.

And maybe we need to remember that disposition and posture of openness because all too often the only sane response to what's going on in us and around us, to all the brokenness, violence, division, despair, and pain, is cynicism.

Anyone know what I'm talking about?

Cynicism is a fundamental disposition of mistrust. Whether it's out of woundedness or arrogance or something else altogether, it's a self-imposed blindness; this posture that shuts ourselves down and closes ourselves off.

And just like how a posture of openness shapes how we see ourselves, each other, and the world around us, so does cynicism:

it closes us off to the idea that there's something Bigger Than Ourselves out there; it closes us off to the idea that we can grow, forgive, change and do amazing things;

it closes us off to the idea that other people can do the same;

and it closes us off to the idea that this world is going somewhere, that it is possible to have a tomorrow that's different from today.

To be a cynic is to give in to the destructive resignation of saying 'no' to anything other than what we already know and already see.

And really, who could blame us for being cynical?

We've all been burned. We've all been abandoned. We've all felt betrayed by our leaders, our government, and the media.

Who wouldn't be cynical?! If you're like me, it's a disposition and posture that seems not only logical but pretty smart.

//

But here's the thing:

There's this story in the Bible . . . Jesus and his disciples are out doing their thing and they're teaching people how to be human and alive in this world and helping people reconnect with God, themselves, and each other.

And we're told how a man comes to Jesus carrying his son who's suffering from seizures, and he's telling Jesus how he's terrified his son will fall in a fire or drown, how he already went to the disciples but they weren't able to heal him, and so he asks Jesus to heal his son so he can live safely and fully.

So Jesus, having compassion on the man and the boy, picks up the son and heals him. After everyone leaves, the disciples come up to Jesus and ask why they couldn't heal the boy themselves, and Jesus says:

'Because you didn't have enough faith. If you had faith, even if it was just the size of a poppy seed, you'd be able to take that mountain out there and throw it into the sea.'

I think this is, among many things, a story about faith—about a faith that is open. It's about how the father had a faith that was open to the idea that his son didn't have to live like that; and it's about how the disciples, despite the fact they couldn't do it, were open to the idea they had a power within them.

And while those would be awesome things to explore and play around with, I think Jesus is making a far bigger point here, one that transcends and includes those, and it has to do with that mountain he's talking about.

This story we're talking about takes place on a mountainside, we think either Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon, it doesn't really matter, what does matter is what you could see from it; off in the distance you could see a very particular mountain, the one Jesus is pointing to, a mountain that everybody in his day would know and recognize, a mountain that was hugely significant in their world and lives:

the mountain of King Herod.

King Herod was the king of the area. He was appointed by the Roman Empire and his job was to keep the peace, which was Roman code for killing anyone who said or did anything remotely rebellious in order to sustain the empire's control.

And wanting to do just that, wanting to show off his power and glorify himself and the Roman Empire, Herod literally built a mountain. He called it, and this may be the best part, 'Herodium.'

It's this wild place. It had a 650-seat theatre and a pool you could ride boats—boats!—around in. It had seven-storey tall towers all around it. It was 758 meters high; it was the highest peak in the area; you could literally see it from the other

hills and mountains in the area, just like the one that Jesus and his friends were standing on.

While we may marvel at it, for the people at the time, that mountain had a very different sense of awe: for them it was a very ominous and powerful symbol of their lived reality and world: of a life and world under the boot of empire, this empire that kept peace through violence, that offered fake news and alternative facts to support its narrative, that wounded and divided, and that oppressed people by making them cynical, by making them live under the shadow of that mountain, convincing them that the way of Rome was the way of the world, so don't even hope for or trust in anything else, *for this is the way your life and world will be*. And it's this mountain that Jesus specifically points to and says that, if we have enough faith, *we could throw it into the sea*.

//

One of the reasons we turn back to these ancient Bible stories again and again is not because they just happened, but because they happen. And just like then, we too live under the shadows of a mountain, don't we?

Whatever it is we live under—capitalism, materialism, corruption, greed, nationalism, debt, addiction, false narratives, resentment—these are the things that have oppressed us and beaten us down, that have taken away our hope, closed us up, and made us cynical, which occupy our horizons, blocking the view of anything new and different; these things which say to us: *this is the way your life and world will be*.

Anyone know what we're talking about?

I'm sure we all do.

We know the kind of life and world of living underneath the shadows of our mountains; we all know the cynicism that comes from that, this cynicism that makes us say 'no' to the possibility that it could be different.

//

But here's the good news this story is offering us: **we don't need to live like that.**

Jesus here is reminding us a subversive and powerful truth, one that cynicism can eclipse and close us off to:

that mountain can be thrown into the sea.

As painful and haunting as those things are, they do not last. They do not have the final word, because there is Something Bigger than those things, a Truth that is deeper than those things, a life and a world beyond those things.

And that Something, that truth, that life and world is God's, a life and world Jesus called 'the Kingdom,' this life and world out of the shadows and into the light, a life and world where we can be who we truly are and live as we are truly meant to live.

The only trick?

We need the faith to be open to it, believing it, embracing it, and living as though that mountain can be thrown into the sea and a new life and world can be had.

This is why faith is such an audacious, imaginative, ludicrous, and ridiculous thing, which is to say why it's so radical and revolutionary; it's a way of life beyond cynicism and giving in to what is, and a way of life that says 'yes' to the impossible:

a way of life that says 'yes' to the idea that God is moving, that we can grow and become something more than we are, that people can change and forgiveness can happen, and that the world can get better.

So,
my friends,
may we have a faith that is open,
a faith that allows us to see beyond the mountains,
and may we have the courageous faith to say 'yes' to the life and world God is opening up for us.

Amen



HAPPY 95TH BIRTHDAY MIRIAM HATELY

Miriam and her late husband Jim are much loved and were very active members of our RDLUC family for many years. The church was only the small chapel when Miriam and Jim started attending in the early 1990s. Jim was involved in the building of the new church and sanctuary from the beginning. Miriam frequently led prayer times and prayer services in the chapel. Miriam's family gathered recently for a celebration of Jim's life and to mark Miriam's 95th birthday. All of their children and their spouses are in the photo.





BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Meet **David Robert Clarke**. Born on August 19, 2021 at 9.6 lbs, he is a lovely boy and full of smiles. Kelly and Patrick are looking forward to everyone meeting him. At their feet is Bella their three-year-old border collie who is David's protector and great friend.

David is the grandson of Al and Wendy Johnson.
Congratulations!

WITTICISMS, STORIES, AND GEMS OF WISDOM THAT GUIDE OUR LIVES: PART 2

BY GARRY MCKINNON

In the September Church @ Home, I introduced some thoughts on how what I described as witticisms, stories, and gems of wisdom have over the years taken on special meaning for us and provided a useful framework as we strive to live each day to the fullest. Some examples I shared include: “saving for a rainy day; a stitch in time saves nine; this too shall pass; and yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery and today is like a special gift and that is why it is called the present.” I invited readers of this submission to take some time to reflect on their own favourites which shape who they are and what they do. So now I continue my journey with you with more stories and gems of wisdom and some thoughts on how we can truly make a difference in this world through our impact on others.



I frequently remind myself of what I call the “starfish story.” A man was walking along the beach of an ocean bay and off in the distance, closer to the water, he saw a woman walking along bending down over and over again and throwing something into the ocean. He just had to know what was happening so he got closer and saw that there were thousands of starfish that had been washed up on the beach and, unfortunately, they were likely to die if they couldn’t get back into the water. He saw that the woman was rescuing the starfish by throwing them one at a time back into the safety of the ocean. He was impressed with what she was doing, but it seemed like a hopeless task and he said to her, “With all the starfish washed up on the shore, do you really think you’re making any difference?” She bent down and picked up another starfish and threw it into the water and said to the man, “I made a difference to that one.” This story reinforces for me the reality that each of us can make a difference in this world and even though it may not seem to be significant, it really is. As we strive to live each day to the fullest, we should seek out opportunities in our own way to make a difference.

This reminds me of another bit of advice from my memory bank which describes the opportunities we have as parents, teachers, friends etc. to leave a legacy through our children as captured in the phrase, “There are two lasting gifts we can give our children, one is roots and the other is wings.” It is so important that we give our young people a solid foundation to build on through our interactions with them and through the lessons in life we pass on to them—these are their roots. On the other hand, we have to respect their free agency and to give our children the freedom and space to learn, grow and explore as they “try out their wings.”

As a teacher I was impacted by the work of a well-known psychologist, Carl Rogers, and his observation that “it’s all about relationships, relationships, relationships,” and what he described as striving to build relationships of “unconditional positive regard” with everyone we encounter. I was also intrigued by the reflections of philosopher Martin Buber who observed, “There are two kinds of relationships; there are relationships which are one-sided and not mutually beneficial which I describe as, I-it relationships and there are authentic, engaging, meaningful relationships which I describe as I-Thou relationships.” He noted that unfortunately too many relationships we experience in our everyday lives can best be described as I-it and we need to make a special effort to engage in I-Thou relationships with others. Have you ever been in a situation where you were talking to someone but you have the feeling that they really are not listening and they really do not care about what you have to say or have you yourself been guilty of not genuinely connecting with someone because you are preoccupied with your own thoughts? These descriptors go beyond interactions between people. For example, unfortunately there are many instances in which our relationships with nature and our environment could best be described as an I-It relationship in which there is a disregard for the negative impact we are having on our environment. On the other hand, there is the wonder and gratification of embracing our environment and the world in which we live and connecting meaningfully and genuinely with others through I-Thou relationships.



Finally, I must say there are many gems of wisdom and guidelines for living our lives to the fullest in the bible through such things as the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and biblical verses and stories which have a special meaning for us. If I were to be so bold as to describe what I would consider to be the ultimate lesson I have learned from the bible, I would make reference to the example of Jesus and Scripture verses such as John 13:34 where he shares, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." There are many other references in the Bible to this focus in the life of Jesus on what I would describe as "striving to do the loving thing in all that we do in our lives." It actually pulls together the gems of wisdom I have shared including being positive and proactive and building relationships of unconditional positive regard (I-Thou relationships) as we strive to do the loving thing. It is a very clear, simple message, but it is not always easy to follow in the trials and tribulations of our daily lives. I believe if doing the loving thing is the foundation for living our lives, even though it might seem quite daunting, we can make a difference, just like the woman did with the starfish, and we can live our lives to the fullest in keeping with our Christian beliefs.



After sharing these witticisms, stories, and gems of wisdom that have impacted my life, I don't want to "rain on the parade" but I feel the need to emphasize that "talk is cheap" and the "rubber hits the road" through our actions; what we do and not what we say. To be authentic we need to "walk the talk and not just talk the walk" or as they say "practice what we preach." Actually, I don't even like using the term preach because that is not what this is all about. I believe "everyone has a story to tell" and together we are on a journey that will have challenges and obstacles along the way as well as meaningful, fulfilling experiences. We have certainly encountered some significant challenges and obstacles during this past year and several months as we have dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been challenging to connect with family and friends and people in our lives as we have isolated ourselves, worn masks, and maintained social distancing guidelines. We have missed those opportunities to shake hands, hug each other and meaningfully connect. Over this period of time, it has been difficult to acknowledge and grieve the loss of friends and members of our church community and to be there for each other. Now, we can look forward to having more opportunities to connect and support each other as we continue our journey together. This pandemic has forced us to reflect and be introspective about our values and beliefs. I personally have found that it is good to take time to make meaning of those guiding principles which impact who we are and what we do and it is good to know that as we continue our journeys together as a church community we are all in this together.

I hope you are embracing your own set of witticisms, stories, and gems of wisdom as well as the lesson from Jesus of doing the loving thing as we deal with the very real and significant challenges and opportunities in our lives and strive each day to live our lives to the fullest!



WALKING WITH GRIEF

“If Only . . .”

Paul Coelho has written: “I could have’ . . . What does this phrase mean? At any given moment in our lives, there are certain things that could have happened, but didn’t. The magic moments go unrecognized, and then suddenly, the hand of destiny changes everything.”

If only. We have so many “if onlys” now. If only she hadn’t . . . If only I would have . . . If only there had been . . . Our regrets and unfulfilled wishes may torment us. It’s normal to think about what could have been. With the benefit of hindsight, our minds and hearts can’t help but see how things could have been otherwise.

When we talk through our feelings of regret aloud, in the company of a caring listener, we come to understand the limits of our own culpability. Rarely are we actually at fault. Neither we nor the person who died nor others involved are perfect. As Maya Angelou said, “I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.”

What’s more, in telling the story of our regrets we grow to understand that much of what happens in life is beyond our control. Our “if onlys” represent our wish to control. When we surrender to the truth that no human can control life, our “if onlys” begin to lose their power.

I have “if onlys.” Whenever they’re weighing on my heart and mind, I’ll speak them aloud to someone who can listen without dismissing them.

-Excerpt from *Grief One Day At A Time* by Alan Wolfelt
submitted by Jackie Walters

HONOURING OUR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Canada has recently commemorated Truth And Reconciliation Day on September 30. We hold in our hearts the grief and sorrow for all those children who experienced horrendous abuse and died in residential schools settings, along with the injustices experienced amongst our Indigenous peoples.

Chief Dan George said, " A child does not question the wrongs of grownups. He(she) suffers them."

We pray for healing, justice and reconciliation. Our thanks to Ann Brown and Anne Welsh Baskett for their contributions as we hold the space for remembering, honouring, listening and learning.

In peace, Vi

MY HEART SOARS

The beauty of the trees,
the softness of the air,
the fragrance of the grass,
speaks to me.

The summit of the mountain,
the thunder of the sky,
the rhythm of the sea,
speaks to me.

The strength of the fire,
the taste of salmon,
the trail of the sun,
and the life that never goes away,
they speak to me.

And my heart soars.

- Chief Dan George (1899-1981)
submitted by Anne Welsh Baskett

Chief Dan George was a gifted actor, writer,
and chief of the Salish Band in Burrard Inlet, BC.



THE TEACHINGS OF THE MEDICINE WHEEL

SUBMITTED BY ANN BROWN

The teachings of the Medicine Wheel are diametrically opposed to the teachings of modern Western culture. They cannot be learned from a book or taught in a course. Learning these teachings requires more than an intellectual effort. It requires a willingness to put aside preconceived ideas and open oneself to new ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling.

To follow the path of the Medicine Wheel is to embark upon an experiential journey. You must experience the lessons it has to offer. You must absorb the feelings and emotions of each lesson. We must be open to change and be willing to become a new person by incorporating new perspectives into your being.

The path of the Medicine Wheel is not quickly mastered. Like any spiritual practice, it takes time and patience. The path of the Medicine Wheel is a lifelong journey of self-discovery and attunement.

The major teachings of the Medicine Wheel come from its shape and the placement of the “stone elements” within the wheel itself. The four major teachings of the Medicine Wheel are unity, balance, growth/movement, and attunement.

The UNITY teaching comes from the shape of the wheel itself. The circle is a symbol of oneness, completion, and eternity. A circle is continuous. When you walk the circle there is nothing that separates you from anyone else on the circle. All are equal. A circle is a whole unto itself. The circle has no beginning, middle, or end and as such also symbolizes eternity.

In ritual, a circle symbolizes a sacred space that facilitates communication with the spirit world. A circle is purified and consecrated. The space within the circle is safe and protected. While in the circle, as one's consciousness is expanded, spiritual growth is achieved.

The teaching of BALANCE comes from the placement of elemental powers around the Medicine Wheel. No one dominates the other; they exist in perfect balance. From the teachings of balance comes the knowledge of HARMONY, the ability to accept things as they come and to “live and let live” as you move with the ebbs and flows of life.

As we walk the Medicine Wheel, we learn that the world around us is in a constant state of flux. All of nature moves in a cyclic pattern of growth and development. To grow and be open to all life has to offer, new knowledge, new teachings, and new ways of living. To cease to move is to become stagnant. Stagnant means a loss of connection with the web of life and eventually leads to isolation and death. Only through growth and change do we survive.

As you pass through the various positions on the wheel, you learn different directions, seasons, elements, moons, plants, and animals. You experience their strengths and weaknesses. You become open to new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing, and new ways of living in the world. As you open yourself to a world of unlimited possibilities, you open yourself to the fullness of life.

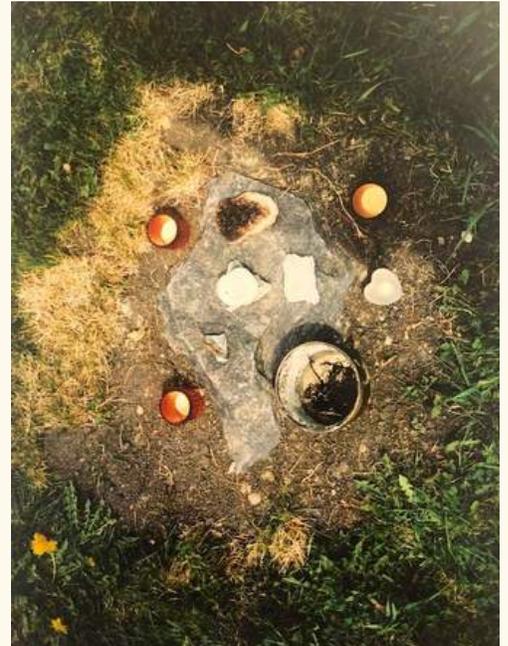
ATTUNEMENT comes from the three teachings that precede it and occurs on several levels of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. As you learn the lessons of the Medicine Wheel, you discover your own potential as a vital physical being who is connected to all other living things on the planet. You learn to release long-buried negative emotions that inhibit growth and change. You expand the boundaries of your intellect as you realize the only limits are those you impose on yourself. You come to understand that you are a valued part of creation, beloved by the Creator, and brought into being for one purpose, to realize your full potential as a child of the Creative Spirit.

Additional teachings come from the “constituents” within the wheel itself. A Medicine Wheel is laid out in alignment with the cardinal points: North, South, East, and West. Each direction also correlates to seasonal moons and their associated spirit animals. As we walk the Medicine Wheel, we learn from the sacred directions and their correspondences. We also learn lessons from the moons and the spirit animals that walk the wheel with us.

MEDICINE WHEELS CAN BE FOUND IN:

MAJORVILLE MEDICINE WHEEL, VULCAN COUNTY
SIKISKAITSITAPI MEDICINE WHEEL, NOSE HILL, CALGARY

"A WHEEL WAS SHOWN TO ME, WONDERFUL TO BEHOLD. DIVINITY . . . IS LIKE A WHEEL, A CIRCLE, A WHOLE, THAT CAN NEITHER BE UNDERSTOOD, NOR DIVIDED, NOR BEGUN NOR ENDED . . . NO ONE HAS THE POWER TO DIVIDE THIS CIRCLE, TO SURPASS IT, OR LIMIT IT." - **HILDEGARD OF BINGEN**



In October 2003 my heart was awakened to The Medicine Wheel. At that time, I was worshipping in a Women's Spiritual Group that gathered monthly and each of us took turns providing worship, whatever form that took.

For October, I chose the worship of building a personal Medicine Wheel in my backyard. Our building actions became a ceremonial act.

The sacred teachings of the Medicine Wheel have helped me to learn more about the natural world in which I live, and as I learn more about that world, I discover more about myself.

As I learn more about my relationship to that world, I better understand my relationships with others. I learn about the power of that world, I learn how to draw upon that power to help me live a more balanced and harmonious life.

By walking the path of the Medicine Wheel, I open myself to spiritual growth of the highest order. As I walk this path I discover the threads of my past, my present, and my future.

These threads reveal from whence I came, where I now walk, and whither I am going.

Blessings of Faith, Love Ann

FOOTHILLS EXCURSIONS:

THE SPIRIT HILLS

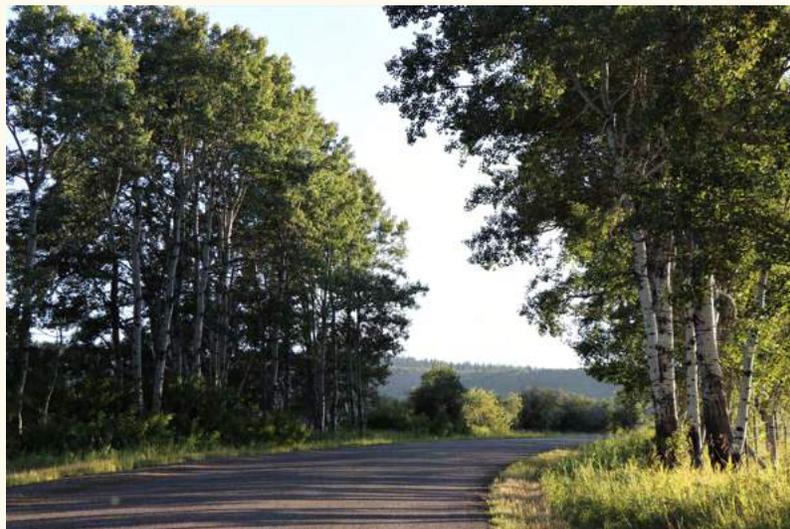
BY KATHERINE MATIKO

For my third Foothills adventure, I have decided to explore the Spirit Hills southwest of Millarville.

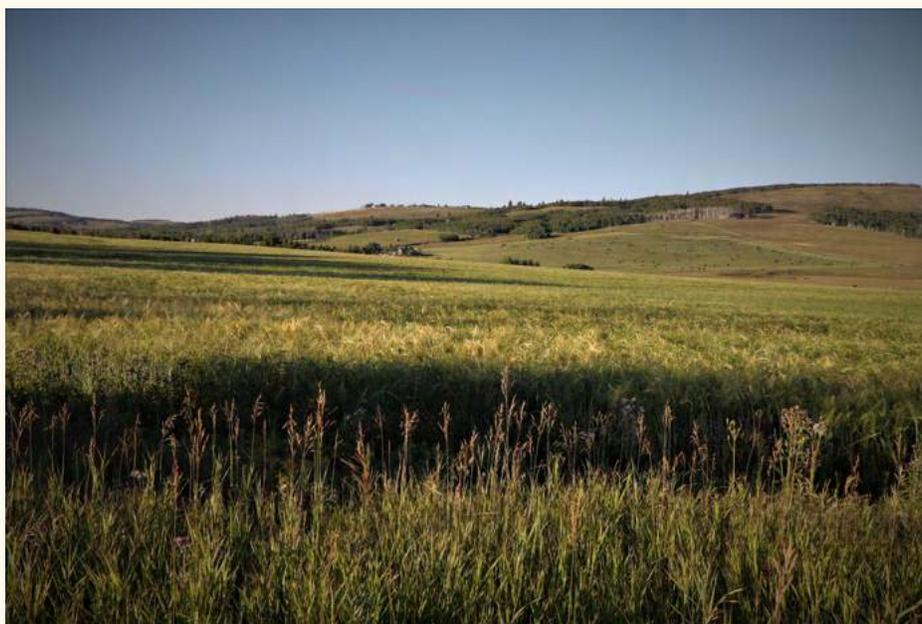
I always make a pit stop at Millarville General Store before embarking on these excursions. The store becomes more inviting each time I visit, with beautiful flowers, interesting antiques and beckoning benches. I resist the temptation to sit on the porch and watch the world go by—it's time to start exploring!



I head south on Highway 22, turning right at the sign for Spirit Hills Honey Winery. I know the winery is closed this evening, but I'm here for the scenery. The long and winding road up to the winery is simply stunning.



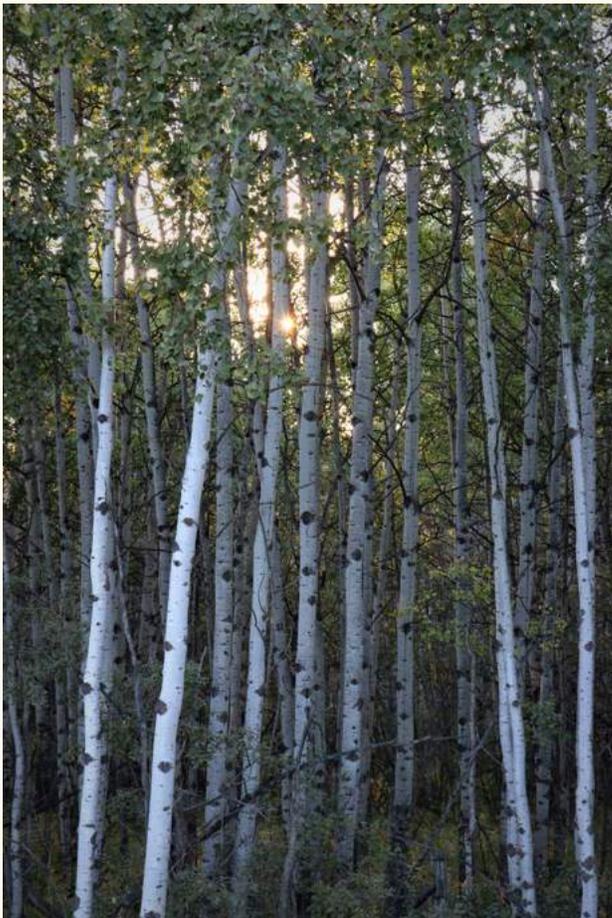
In the late-summer evening light, I am rewarded with vistas at every turn. I stop often for forays into ditches and pastures. (It's not surprising I conduct my excursions alone. Not many companions would tolerate the start-and-stop nature of my travels through the countryside.)



According to the Spirit Hills Honey Winery website, “The Spirit Hills are located along a trail that used to connect the Stoney and the Blood First Nations. The Kary family were among the first settlers in our region in the late 1800s. They built the dam that created Rat Lake, a muskrat fur farm, at the foot of the Spirit Hills. For decades, every fall and spring First Nations travelers stopped at their farm. They shared meals and had a good relationship. But when nightfall came, they always rode off into the Spirit Hills.”



Like many photographers and artists before me, I am drawn to stands of quaking aspen found throughout the foothills. I am awestruck by the fact that each tree is an identical sibling to the tree beside it. These elegant trees are testaments to survival in harsh landscapes across North America. While individual trees may die, the root systems which sustain these forest families live on for thousands of years.



When I make my way to the winery, I find it closed as expected. This remarkable winery is surely one-of-a-kind and well worth a tour during operating hours. It was established by the Bonjean family who moved to the Spirit Hills in the 1990s to live entirely from what they could grow on their homestead. Their aim was to “tread as lightly as possible on this planet.”

In time, they created a winery with nary a grape in sight. The wine is made from the honey and wildflowers that the Bonjeans harvest throughout the foothills, using a process designed to bring the freshness and flavour of the Rocky Mountains to connoisseurs around the world.



I continue my journey past the winery, enjoying the sights, sounds and sweet smells of a rural countryside as it settles down for the night.



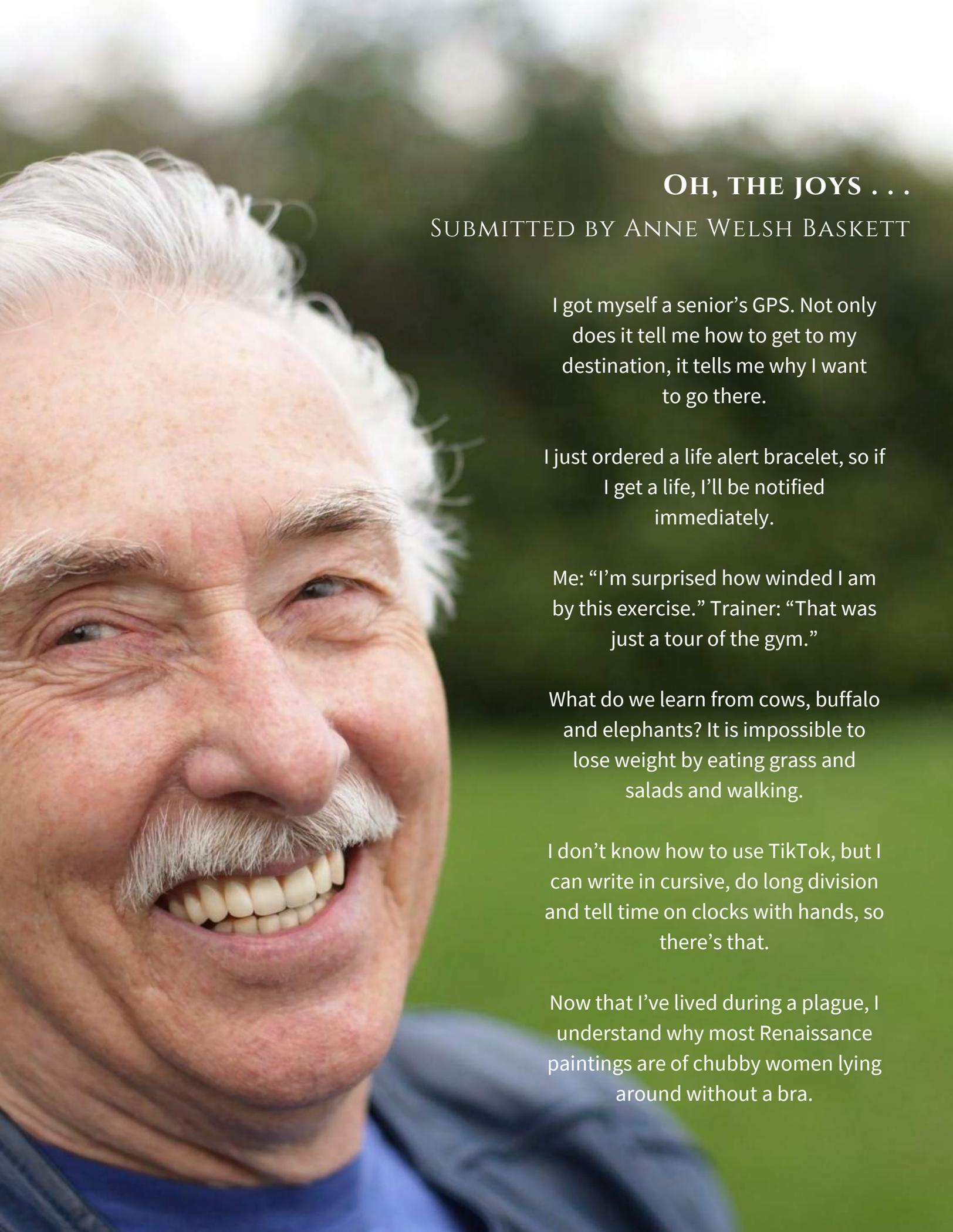
The sun is beginning to set, so I drive higher into the hills for a vantage point. Again, I am rewarded. And again, awestruck as light floods the foothills, then fades until only mountain shadows remain.



Millarville General Store is closed at this hour, but I'll be back tomorrow to pick up a bottle of Spirit Hills wine and raise a glass to this splendid land. *May we tread lightly upon it.*

Until next time,
Katherine





OH, THE JOYS . . .

SUBMITTED BY ANNE WELSH BASKETT

I got myself a senior's GPS. Not only does it tell me how to get to my destination, it tells me why I want to go there.

I just ordered a life alert bracelet, so if I get a life, I'll be notified immediately.

Me: "I'm surprised how winded I am by this exercise." Trainer: "That was just a tour of the gym."

What do we learn from cows, buffalo and elephants? It is impossible to lose weight by eating grass and salads and walking.

I don't know how to use TikTok, but I can write in cursive, do long division and tell time on clocks with hands, so there's that.

Now that I've lived during a plague, I understand why most Renaissance paintings are of chubby women lying around without a bra.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Thank you to Charlee MacLean for creating these beautiful fridge magnets, which were included in September's care packages.

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 send your submission to info@reddeerlakeuc.com or call us at

(403) 256-3181.

The next submission deadline is November 1, 2021.

This will be our Advent issue.

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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