

SEPTEMBER 2021

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves

INSIDE:

MESSAGES FROM
REV NICK & VI

SERMONS

SUBMISSIONS FROM
OUR COMMUNITY

WALKING WITH GRIEF

FOOTHILLS
EXCURSIONS

HUMOUR

I have some great news to share with you:

we're coming home.

As of Sunday, September 19 we are beginning to transition in-person services, programs, and events back into our life and rhythm. We're calling it Homecoming.

As excited as we are, we're going to take it slow. Not only do we want to do our best to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible, we also want to leave room for what we are going to be returning to as a faith community.

While there is so much we are excited to phase back in and return to, this is also an opportunity for us to refocus on our values, see what new things we could be doing together, and listen for where the Spirit is calling us to go. The last thing we want to do is jump back into old habits and routines, or jump ahead into

red deer lake
united church

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something that doesn't feel quite right. I am excited to see what God is calling us to do and where we'll be putting our love and energy!

I want to invite you all to join us as we come back into our church building. We miss you and we're excited to see everyone again!

I do want to say this though: While we do want to see you and will be doing our best to practice some health restrictions to keep everyone safe and at ease, we do understand if you don't feel ready to come back. The pandemic isn't over and we know there will always be a risk in returning to in-person church. If you do choose to stay home, please know this: **you are still a beloved and valued member of our community. There's no shame**

and judgment at all. You'll be able to stay in touch through magazines like this and through our online services each week.

But for now, another Church @ Home for you. May this be a source of connection with God, each other, and yourselves, and may you know that you are loved, enough, and welcome, wanted, and accepted.

grace and peace,

n.



Fall Greetings, Dear Friends!

Yes, we are now officially in Fall, a time of beautiful colours, harvest and upcoming Thanksgiving!

I hope you are doing well. By the time this magazine is printed we will have been able to worship in-person together once again. It is an exciting prospect! Yet I know many of you are still, quite rightly, cautious about remaining well and healthy, whilst at the same time, looking after the well-being of others, as we are called to do.

I do look forward to seeing your faces once again. I know some of you in our church family have had to contend with further lockdowns in your specific living situations. This is very challenging for you and your loved ones. Our love and prayers continue to be with you and to those of you who are facing illness or have lost loved ones and are grieving over this time.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this month's care packages and magazine. We could not embark on this journey together without your dedication, commitment, and support. Many of you look forward to receiving and enjoy reading the articles. Please continue to keep them coming, in addition to your ideas and suggestions.

Our gratitude to Jen Hung for her generous gift of cookies in August. Jen has also written about her cookie experience and the love contained within the process of creating and sharing them. I know our volunteers and teams share their heartfelt love in all they are and the little (or larger) things they do. It is important not to underestimate how meaningful our thoughts, actions and words of kindness are to others. A smile or the gift of a cookie can transform a person's day.

Jen's experience has reminded me of St. Therese of Lisieux, a young French Carmelite nun whose love of nature and doing small things with love earned her the title *The Little Flower*. She never performed great works, yet within 30 years of her death, public demand was so great, she was canonised. She lived and wrote about the "little way," about doing small deeds with great love. Her message and life speak powerfully about the unconditional love and presence of God in all we do.

May you each be blessed with great love and kindness,

Vi





PIGEONS ARE HOLY, TOO

REV. NICK COATES

Let's start with something I learned on Twitter this week.

Did you know that a dove and a pigeon are the same thing?

There's no difference taxonomically. Despite having *very* different reputations, they are exactly the same bird.

Now I know most of you aren't probably nerding out on this as much as I did. It's not really the best way to start a sermon. But here's why this was a big deal to me and why I want to start with this.

That bit of info caused one of those moments.

You know those moments, right?

Where one little bit of information collides with this other bit of information and suddenly they become this whole new thing? This whole new thing that kind of rearranges the air. That causes something to shift. That helps you see something you never did before?

That happened to me when I learned that when you talk about doves you're also talking about pigeons.

And what I saw was this truth about God and about what it means to be human. And it did ALL of that by taking me into this story in the Bible.

Now technically it's stories because you can find this same story in three different places: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Which tells us it's an important story. There's something in THIS story that each of the story-tellers saw as sacred and true and worth being passed along.

It's the story of Jesus' baptism. It stays pretty much the same in each one: Jesus walks into the river to get baptized and then something miraculous, beautiful, and wondrous happens:

we're told the skies open up,
a divine voice speaks,
and a dove descends from the heavens and hovers above him.

Now this is where everything began to happen for me because, well, I couldn't help but ask:

What would happen if instead of imagining a dove descending, we imagined a pigeon?

Seriously. Roll with me here. Let's practice what our Jewish siblings call midrash. It's the spiritual practice of playing with scripture, of trusting it's meant to be held loosely, of seeing it as more open than closed because we know the Spirit can speak through it.

And if we do that, it changes things, doesn't it? I mean, Prince didn't sing a song about pigeons for a reason. While doves and pigeons may be the same bird, their symbolism is about as different as you can get.

Doves are seen as pure and clean. They are symbols of love, grace, beauty, and the divine.

Pigeons are seen to be dirty and gross. They are symbols of disease, the unwanted, and filth.

And yet . . . they are the same bird.

So I have to wonder, what happens if it was a pigeon at Jesus' baptism? What would we hear in this story that we miss when we only imagine a dove?

And for me what I hear is something about God and something about being human.

Now what I heard may be a reminder to you or maybe this is something brand new. But either way, as we do with all the things we explore here, our job is to sit with it and let it go to work, drawing us into our own moment where some sacred collision happens and everything opens up.

So first, something I heard about God:

In the story of Jesus' baptism, the thing we're told is that the dove represents the Holy Spirit—that energising and animating presence of God in the world. Which is a pretty standard thing in the Bible, our hymns, and our sacred art. Doves = God. But if we reimagined this story with a pigeon representing the Holy Spirit, what would happen? What would that teach us about God that we don't usually see?

You can have your own answer to that, but here's where it took me:

It took me into this idea that's in the Bible that says, "If you want to know where God *really* is, if you want to know where God's favourite places to be are, if you're looking for the places that are almost naturally sacred, go wherever the pigeons are. **God is always where the pigeons are.**"

One of the things we tend to do is split up our world into the sacred and the mundane, into the places where God is and the places where God isn't. And because we've forever said God is something like a dove, those sacred places, the places where we say God is, they tend to be the clean places, the tidy places, the well-lit places, the nice spaces, the impressive spaces, the beautiful spaces. That's where God is found.

Right? Yeah, we all do that. That's become a natural way of thinking about the Divine. But here's the implication of that: it suggests God isn't in the other places. It suggests that God couldn't possibly be there so we split the world up and act accordingly, letting that idea shape how we live and order the world.

And while that's not inherently wrong because God is everywhere, here's where this reimagining has something challenging to say:

if God is like a pigeon then God isn't found in the nice gardens and parks, and with the privileged and the well off; suddenly God isn't identified with the impressive, beautiful, clean, and bright; suddenly where we find God is flipped upside down.

What we're hearing is that God's in the alleys.

God's in the hockey rink parking lot.

God's on the street corner.

God's by the dumpster.

What we hear is that the Divine is found in all the places we so often reject, avoid, see as dirty and unwanted. God is found in all the places we say, "No, God couldn't possibly be there!"

And here's why this is important:

As people who are looking to connect with the Divine,
as people who are trying to be spiritual,
as people who know life is found IN God,

we can't always wait for God to come to us.

Sometimes we need to go to where God is.

And here's why that's important:

that means that in order to be those kinds of people we have to go into places we'd rather avoid;

we need to learn to see places we were taught were bad and sinful, as good and holy;

we need to begin to see the places we'd rather do away with as worth keeping and protecting;

we need to begin to see the world in a new way because the places that everyone said were gross, dirty, and bad are actually the holiest and most sacred places of all;

and we need to let those encounters shape who we are and how we order the world.

I think this is why Jesus was always hanging out where he did. It's why he was always hanging out in alleyways, the hole-in-the-wall bars, and in the worst neighbourhoods.

It wasn't because he was trying to bring God there. What he was trying to do was bring us there.

He was trying to show us where God lives. He was showing us where to go if we want to connect with the Divine and find the life we're looking for. He was saying, "God's where the pigeons are."

Which should make us ask some pretty big questions. And these are the kinds of questions we need to sit with and not answer right away. These are ones we can take some time answering because they need it:

What should we actually be consecrating instead of tearing down?

What communities should we be FOR instead of AGAINST?

How can we expand our notion of who and what is holy?

How does that challenge us to get out of our homes and sanctuaries and into the places where God loves to be?

How does that impact how we live and order our world?

Challenging BUT good questions to spend some time with.

But those aren't the only ones this story makes us ask.

We can also take that exact same takeaway about our exterior world, and apply it to our interior world. We can apply it to what's going on inside of us.

Cause that's the thing, right? What's true out there, is true in here. If God is in the places out THERE we want to avoid and are scared to go into, if God loves to be in the places out THERE we want to get rid of, that goes for in here too.

That goes for all the memories we work so hard to not think about. It goes for all the trauma our bodies carry. It goes for the parts of us we don't like and try so hard to get rid of. It goes for those parts of us that are locked up and buried deep. It goes for all the shame-filled parts of our lives and stories.

Anyone know what I'm talking about? I think we all have them. How can we not?

And while much of our popular wisdom and so many of our coping mechanisms would tell us that the thing to do with those places is just to leave 'em alone, to not poke the bear, to just ignore them and pretend they don't exist, what we're hearing today tells us something else altogether:

it tells us to go into them and embrace them.

It tells us to go into those places because God is already there—not to judge and condemn, not to mock and ridicule, but to do what God does:

to love, to heal, to redeem, to encourage, to hold, and to make new.

It tells us the way to healing and wholeness, the way to being fully and wholly you, isn't by locking those things away and pretending they don't exist, isn't by living in fear and shame,

but by going into them because they too are holy and God is already there. It tells us to go into them because that's where we find the life we're looking for.

Life-changing, isn't it? Challenging but so life-changing.

And again, it forces us to ask some questions:

What parts of you are locked away?

How is shame and fear at work within you?

How can you begin to trust that those parts of you are holy?

How can you go into them and trust God is there working?

So wherever those questions take you, wherever they lead, may you know that's the work God calls us to do, and may you struggle well.



EAT THIS AND TAKE A NAP

REV. NICK COATES

Today we're taking some time to explore an ancient and sacred story and ask, as you do with these kinds of stories, what it says to us today. We want to ask what it tells us about how to be human and alive in the world, and about how we can live a life connected with God, each other, and ourselves.

The story we're talking about is this one from the Bible (surprise!). It's a story from the Hebrew scriptures you can find for yourself in 1 Kings Chapter 19. You can set this aside and read it for yourself if you'd like but here's the gist of it:

Elijah, a prophet, has not only just shamed a bunch of other prophets by proving his God was better and more powerful than their god, but he also, because shaming and humiliating them wasn't enough, killed them too. But upon hearing that people were hunting him down for revenge, he ran away as far away as he could get. Fearful for his life he ran and ran and ran and ran. We can picture him taking on fake identities, hiding out in strange places, cutting off ties with friends and family, and always looking over his shoulder. After God knows how long of running and hiding, we're told he collapses under a tree and cries out to God saying, "God. I'm done. I can't run anymore. It's over. Take me now!" It's then we're told that an angel appears. The angel prepares a meal for him, and says, "Eat this and have a nap." Elijah does. He then wakes up, and feels refreshed and no longer done and wanting to die.

Now out of all the places this story could take us, out of all the bits of wisdom it could offer, the way I see it answering those questions we have is by offering a blueprint for what to do when things fall apart and we look up at the sky and pray, "God, take me now."

Which we've all said in one way or another, right?

We all know that feeling. We know what it feels like when everything falls apart. We know what it's like to be on the outs and on the run. We know what it's like when things add up and it's just too much. We know how it feels when we just can't go on anymore, when it feels like there's no hope and future, and when it feels like the ground beneath us is crumbling. We've all done that thing when we look up to God and say, "It'd solve a lot of my problems if you just took me now."

Right? Yeah. We've all been there. We've all said that in one way or another. We know this story. We've lived it.

And what I hear in this story is a bit of subversively and unexpectedly simple wisdom that can, in those moments, lower the temperature, ease the anxiety, breathe a bit easier, and help us not give up.

And that bit of wisdom goes like this:

When it all falls apart, the thing we should do is take a nap and eat something.

Now we can spiritualize that all we want and turn it into some sort of metaphor but I think that's as literal as it can get.

When it all comes undone, when things get hard and heavy, when we just can't do it any more, when we don't know how to move forward, the wisdom of our tradition says:

"Take a nap and eat something."

Or to put it another way:

When it all falls apart, the thing we need to do is stop and be kind to ourselves.

I love this so much because it reminds me why we need these stories. It shows why, regardless of how religious or unreligious one may be, they are worth reading:

They're worth reading because they offer a wisdom that almost always pushes back against these lessons, norms, and values that shape how we live and order our world.

And the thing this story pushes back against is this message we get that says whenever things get tough and we're struggling, hurting, exhausted, and done, the thing we need to do is get tough! Power through! Fight back! Keep going! Press on! Hustle! Press on!

Anyone know that message? We all do. We've all felt the pressure to keep going beyond our limitations and capacities. That message has shaped SO much of our world.

But what we get here in this story is something else entirely. What we get here is a different message for when things get tough and we're feeling done.

Instead of the angel saying, "You're strong! You got this! Push through!," what's the angel say?

"Stop. Eat. Rest."

Stop. Eat. Rest.

So good, right? I love it. I love it 'cause I need it. Anyone else? Anyone else feeling that sense of 'Ooooh, it's speaking to me!?' I'm with ya.

Here's the liberating truth wrapped up in this message:

God allows us to be tired and done.

Read that again.

God allows us to be tired and done. As in there's no shame in it. As in it's okay to stop, eat, and rest. As in it's *holy* to stop, eat, and rest.

What this story tells us is that, when we are tired and done, the thing we need to do isn't push through, man up, hustle, and press on, but eat something and take a nap. Which is to say to rest. To stop moving. To take a break and be kind to yourself.

Which is to say something pretty sacred and radical:

that you are worthy of that rest.

that you are worthy of that act of kindness.

that we don't need to earn love and have anything to prove.

that it's there, in and through the rest, we find what we need to keep going.

There's a power to saying no. There's a power to choosing that act of kindness.

There's a revolutionary power in choosing to rest.

This is what we saw with Simone Biles during the Summer Olympics. This is what made her so inspirational. When her jump fell apart in mid-air, instead of pushing through, choosing to please others, and answer the call to keep going, she said, 'No.' She chose to rest when it all fell apart.

So to all of you who have parts of your lives and world falling apart, to you who feel tired and done, who are looking up to God saying, "Take me now!"

How can you say no and choose to be kind to yourself? What does a nap and something to eat look like for you?



WHAT TO DO WITH OUR POWER

REV. NICK COATES

God be with you.

There is a story in the Bible. It's from the Gospel according to Mark and it takes place in what's called "a meeting place." Think of it as a make-shift synagogue—a place like the local hockey rink or community hall where people from the area could gather to worship on the Sabbath.

And on this particular Sabbath, Jesus has come into town to teach. Now we're not told what he's preaching about but we can assume it's something to do with what he always talks about: God's Kingdom, that term Jesus used to talk about this world, right here and right now, repaired and restored, and brought back to wholeness—a world where everyone has a place and everyone has enough.

And so Jesus is talking about that world and what it means to be a part of it, inviting people into this spirituality of his, and he is, as we like to imagine, bringing the house down. He's re-arranging the air, he's dropping the mic every other sentence, people are busy taking notes and live-tweeting as their minds are blown and hearts expanded, and they're being challenged and inspired by these fresh new words and ideas that seem more holy and more reverent than anything they've ever heard before.

And then . . . and then the thing happens that every preacher will say, 'I'm glad something like this has never happened to me!' but secretly wishes something like this did happen to them:

Right in the middle of a sentence in the middle of a sermon this man in the crowd stands up and interrupts Jesus, yelling: "What business do you have here with us, Jesus of Nazareth? I know what you're up to! You're the Holy One of God, and you've come to destroy us!"

(For the record, I'd LOVE it if that ever happened . . . I just have no idea what I'd do).

Now we're told, depending on what translation you're using, that the man is either "deeply disturbed," has an "unclean spirit," or was "possessed by an evil spirit."

Now let's pull over here for a second.

We need to pull over because we're not used to processing these stories of possessions and evil spirits. So to help us out, there are two things I want to offer us to help us hold these foreign, strange and weird parts of the Bible.

First:

Let's acknowledge that this is a primitive text. That's not an insult. It's just a fact. The Bible as we know it is over 2000 years old. It's as far removed from us and our understanding of the world as people in the year 4000 are from us. Take a sec to reflect on that. That's a GIGANTIC chunk of time. So of course it's going to be strange, foreign, and mysterious, and that is okay. It simply is how it is. So while it's essential to know the context of these stories, we also can't know, won't know, and don't have to know exactly what references like this mean.

Second:

Even though we can't, don't, and won't know for sure, we are allowed to play with it. Scripture is meant to be played with. That's actually a pretty healthy way to hold the thing. It leaves room for the Spirit to speak and do its thing of coming alive for us today. So if we were to play with this part of the story, we could go a few different ways:

Does the disturbed man have some mental health problems that allow us to read this healing not as a spiritualization of mental health, thereby implying it can be prayed away, but as the reconciliation and restoration of that marginalized and misunderstood man back into community? Sure, that'll preach.

Is Mark talking about the voices within us, those false narratives and labels, those things that try to control us and possess our life? Sure, that'd work too.

Is this just a reflection of their ancient, more primitive cosmology or understanding of the world? That'd preach too.

In any case, whenever we come up with something hard and weird in these stories, our job isn't to get rid of that tension, but to live within it. Our job is to embrace the grace of mystery and play with it, letting the Spirit offer some wisdom to us in our own time and place.

Are you with me?

Ok, so back to the main road. So take it however it's speaking to you right now, but in any case,

we're told that Jesus replies to the man, "Quiet! Get out of him!" and that the affliction makes the guy convulse around for a while until it finally leaves him, flying out the window.

Now let's pull over again because this whole thing is kind of strange, isn't it? But here's the even stranger part: the strange part of this story isn't the healing of that man.

The strange part of this story is that when the man was healed, when he was freed from whatever it was that was within him, we're told that the people were "incredulous."

Incredulous! Why incredulous? Why not shocked, amazed, struck with wonder, or at the very least wtf?! Why would the crowds, after seeing Jesus do his first miracle, be incredulous? Why would they be upset at what just happened?

Well, to get that, we need to enter into the world of first century exorcism.

Exorcism, the term we use today to describe the act of healing people from whatever it is that possesses them, was, in the first century, a cottage industry—it was an established and recognized practice. There were literally hundreds of people walking around offering these kinds of healings. Every neighbourhood would have a guy who has a practice next to the 7-Eleven. Some would attribute this power to a god, while others would attribute the power to themselves, most of them using all kinds of strange incantations, magic sticks, or ointments, but all of them would be available to be hired to do whatever you needed them to do.

Sick? Not feeling like yourself? Can't tell if it's indigestion or a demon? Your neighbour would know a guy, he'd come over, you pay him, and boom, he'd do his thing.

So why's this important? **The healing in this story isn't particularly noteworthy.** While powerful and exciting, it was a relatively normal thing to happen. This is important because it wasn't the healing that made the people incredulous. What made them incredulous, what really upset them and sent them into confusion, was that Jesus did something they didn't expect and that no other exorcist had ever done before:

He did the healing for free.

What makes this story so special and important, what made all those people incredulous, wasn't that Jesus healed the man, **it was that he used his power for free.**

When I was in undergrad we had this old priest who taught some of our evening classes. His name was Father Dolan. He was quite popular not really because he was a good professor (which he was) but because if there was a hockey game on that night, he'd end class early enough for him to go watch it. But he had this thing he'd always say and he said it enough that everyone could quote him on it:

“How you do one thing is how you do everything.”

I think he stole it from the writer Dallas Willard who said something similar: “What you do reveals who you are.”

While it's definitely a poetic generalization and needs a whole whack of nuance, there is a truth and wisdom within it:

What we do and how we do it reveals something about who we are.

How we spend our days and how we do things shows our heart, that place our souls reside, that engine of our intentions and motivations that drives all we do.

And here's where these things come together and why this act of Jesus is so important:

It helps us see who Jesus is. Which is to say, it helps us see who God is. Which is to say, it helps us see what it means to be human.

What's happening in this story isn't simply Jesus bucking the norm and upsetting the local exorcist union. Mark is trying to get at something much deeper and bigger than that. He's trying to give us a glimpse into the very essence and nature of God.

What we see isn't a God who only acts upon payment, who only offers His power when it benefits Him, or who requires a transaction to receive grace and love.

We see none of that.

What we see is a God who chooses to freely use Her power for the benefit of others and the world, a God whose fundamental disposition towards us and the world is one of benevolence and justice, a God who can see through the things that occupy us,

a God who can push that all aside, say, ‘Ah, there you are,’ and call us back into wholeness and community.

That's some beautiful and liberating stuff, isn't it? That's some world- and life-changing good news!

At work within our lives and world isn't a God who is angry, but a God who uses Her power freely to bring us and our world back together.

Now that should do a few things for us:

it reminds us we can bring our whole selves to God knowing and trusting She sees and names us as worthy of life, belonging, love, respect, and wholeness

and

it reminds us the universe is bent towards wholeness and justice.

And maybe even most importantly: **it reminds us all that we too have power.**

Power is the ability to influence the people and world around you. It's the ability to build up and give life, to tear down and take life, to humanize and create or to dehumanize and destroy. It's not something only the wealthy, elite, and famous have, but something each of us has. We find it in our words, actions, our presence, our choices, in how we spend our money, energy, and time, and in all the things we do and say. Regardless of who we are, we all have a power that can shape and influence the people and world around us.

We know this, don't we?

Any of us who've received a rude and passive-aggressive email knows this. Any of us who have been cut by the words of a loved one knows this. Any of us who have been the victims of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour knows this. Any of us who have been reliant on the generosity of others knows this.

We all have power.

And the challenge in this story is that we see how that power is supposed to be used:

freely, generously, and for the benefit of others and the community.

As people whose hearts are to be shaped like God's, as people who are in the process of having our humanity defined by Jesus, as people who choose to get in on what God is doing in this world, we are called to use that power not for our own benefit, not for a cost, and not in a way that tears down and belittles, but freely, generously, and for the benefit of others and the community. We use it in a way that brings others and the world closer towards wholeness and justice.

So we end with a question:

How do you use your power and what do you want it to say about you?

What kind of heart do you want people to see?
What does what you do and how you do it say about who you are?

How do you use your power and what do you want it to say about you?





HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY ED POFFENROTH ON AUGUST 23, 2021

Ed has had a long and memorable association with RDLUC. He travelled to the church on horseback and attended Sunday School when he was a young boy, over 90 years ago. At that time the church was located on the north side of the highway. He was on the RDLUC Board and involved in the process to relocate the church to where it now stands. He and his late wife Mary are fondly remembered by many and the Poffenroth family is one of several “old-time” families who helped shape the church into what it is today. Ed’s daughter Carol remains an active member of the church.

If you wish to congratulate Ed, please send cards to:
Ed Poffenroth c/o Red Deer Lake United Church
96187 Spruce Meadows Green SW, Foothills, Alberta T1S 2R9



The Okotoks Dawgs baseball team's relocation to Okotoks and the building of the beautiful Seaman Stadium Complex was initially triggered by an email from Ed Poffenroth to Dawgs founder John Ircandia. The Dawgs recently celebrated Ed's 100th birthday as the home team defeated the Edmonton Prospects with Ed and family in attendance.

Okotokian Celebrates 100th Birthday

A lot has happened in the past century, and one Okotokian has seen it all. Ed Poffenroth turns 100 years old on Monday, Aug. 23, and is celebrating with friends, family, and others in the community.

He grew up west of DeWinton and moved to Okotoks in 2005.

After 100 years of experience, Poffenroth says his best advice for younger generations is to plan for their future.

"Decide now how you want to live your senior years. Plan so you can have a half-decent retirement when you get to be a senior."

He was influential in bringing the Dawgs baseball team to Okotoks when his grandson Ryan wanted to be on the team but they no longer had a place to play in Calgary.

He used to work in agriculture and has seen a lot of different things over the past century.

... continued

"The changes have been tremendous. When we were little, the horse did everything. We worked the field with the horses. We rode to school with the horses. We played with the horses, and the horse was part of our life. But now it's all mechanical."

When he was a child, women were not yet allowed to vote. There was no running water, no disposable diapers, and definitely no iPads.

"Just think of the changes from then until now. Look at that darn iPad thing. And then having a telephone line with ten people on it? What a change. (I've) seen so much."

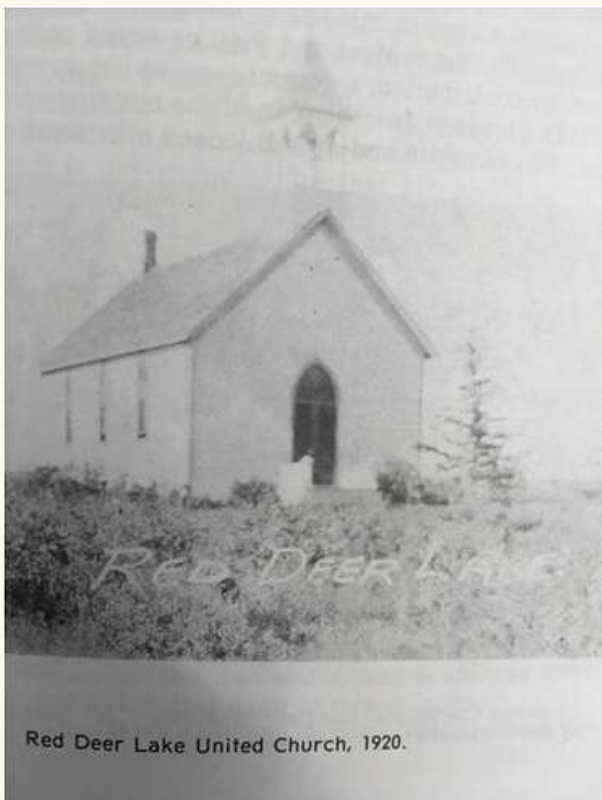
Celebrating a century of memories made and lessons learned, Poffenroth has some golden nuggets of wisdom to share.

"You can remember what happened yesterday, but you can't change it, so you should always try to move on when you've had a rough go, or whatever. You should always try to just move on, change course. Forget about that one. Let's try another one."

He also advises to not let a difference of opinion become a point of contention.

"We all have different thoughts, and we all have different opinions. And there's lots of times it doesn't matter whether it's your opinion or my opinion, one is as good as the other. But we shouldn't be getting all upset because you have a different opinion than I have."

by Jessica Dezall, Okotoks Online (excerpt)



Red Deer Lake United Church as Ed remembers it in the 1920s.

WITTICISMS, STORIES, AND GEMS OF WISDOM THAT GUIDE OUR LIVES

BY GARRY MCKINNON

Have you ever thought about some of the expressions that could be described as witticisms or gems of wisdom that guide our actions and influence our lives? Let me give you some examples.

Growing up as a Saskatchewan boy, I would often hear the expression, “A penny saved is a penny earned.” Well, we don’t have a lot of pennies around anymore. In fact, it seems the tap of our credit card is taking over the use of currency even for such things as buying a cup of coffee. Although the phrase is somewhat outdated, there is still merit in focusing on taking care of what is important in our lives. This advice fits well with another phrase, “Saving for a rainy day.” We can interpret this phrase more broadly as meaning that it is good to be prepared for uncertainty. We may think that everything is going well and then we are faced with some unforeseen challenges and, in keeping with these words of advice, we need to have a reserve of emotional strength to work our way through challenges and difficulties that are impacting our lives.

Some of the expressions which come to mind relate to things that we have never done ourselves, but they still make a point. As a student in elementary school, I used to do some spool knitting (if you know what that is). I never was into sewing in a big way, however, I do know, “A stitch in time saves nine.” This phrase has meaning beyond the practice of sewing pieces of fabric together. For example, if something is troubling us, we should try to deal with it before it becomes an overwhelming problem. It is good to be proactive and to avoid what could be stressful and upsetting situations in our lives by doing something about them before they do become overwhelming.



Remember as well “an ounce of prevention is good medicine” and if things aren’t going well for us, we can take comfort in knowing that “beneath every cloud, there is a silver lining.” When I am feeling overwhelmed with a situation, the ultimate comfort is knowing, “This too shall pass.” In fact, I have always found this little gem to be on the mark. Have you ever had the feeling that everything is so good that nothing can go wrong and then it seems everything falls apart and you remember, “This too shall pass”? On the other hand, thankfully it is also true when you are feeling very discouraged and everything seems hopeless, you can take comfort in knowing, “This too shall pass.”

No doubt, these few examples of what I would describe as witticisms are causing you to think of others that are meaningful to you. There are as well examples of what I describe as “gems of wisdom” that I continue to draw on in my daily life.

From the world of movies, I think of the story of Forrest Gump and the observation made by actor Tom Hanks, “Life is like a box of chocolates.” I really like chocolate and appreciate the message of embracing all that life has to offer even though there are bound to be some surprises just as there are when we take a chocolate out of an assorted box: we don’t know what it has to offer until we bite into it. As a chocolate lover, I would say the uncertainty is well worth taking the risk and this little gem of wisdom encourages us to seize the opportunity to explore all that life has to offer.



I frequently make reference to another gem of advice, “As you ramble on through life my friend, whatever be your goal, keep your eye on the doughnut and not on the hole.” To me, it highlights the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and making the best of any situation we encounter. You can build further on these wise words by making meaning of the observation that, “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery and today is like a special gift and that is why it is called the present.” It highlights the value of not being preoccupied with what has happened in the past because we no longer have any control over it and not becoming overly consumed with what might happen in the future because it is in many ways beyond our control. We should live in the here and now and focus on living each day to the fullest. This thought is reinforced with another gem of wisdom, “Time is like a river. You cannot touch the same water twice because the flow that has passed will never pass again. Enjoy every moment of your life.”

For this edition of Church @ Home, I will leave you with these examples of witticisms, gems of wisdom, and stories that I draw on as I strive to live each day to the fullest. I will now give you some time to think about your own examples which deep down in your soul impact who you are and what you do. In the next edition, I will share some thoughts on how we can truly make a difference in this world through our impact on others.



WALKING WITH GRIEF

The Legacy

You can shed tears that they have gone,
or you can smile that they have lived.

You can close your eyes
and pray that they'll come back,
or you can open your eyes
and see all they've left.

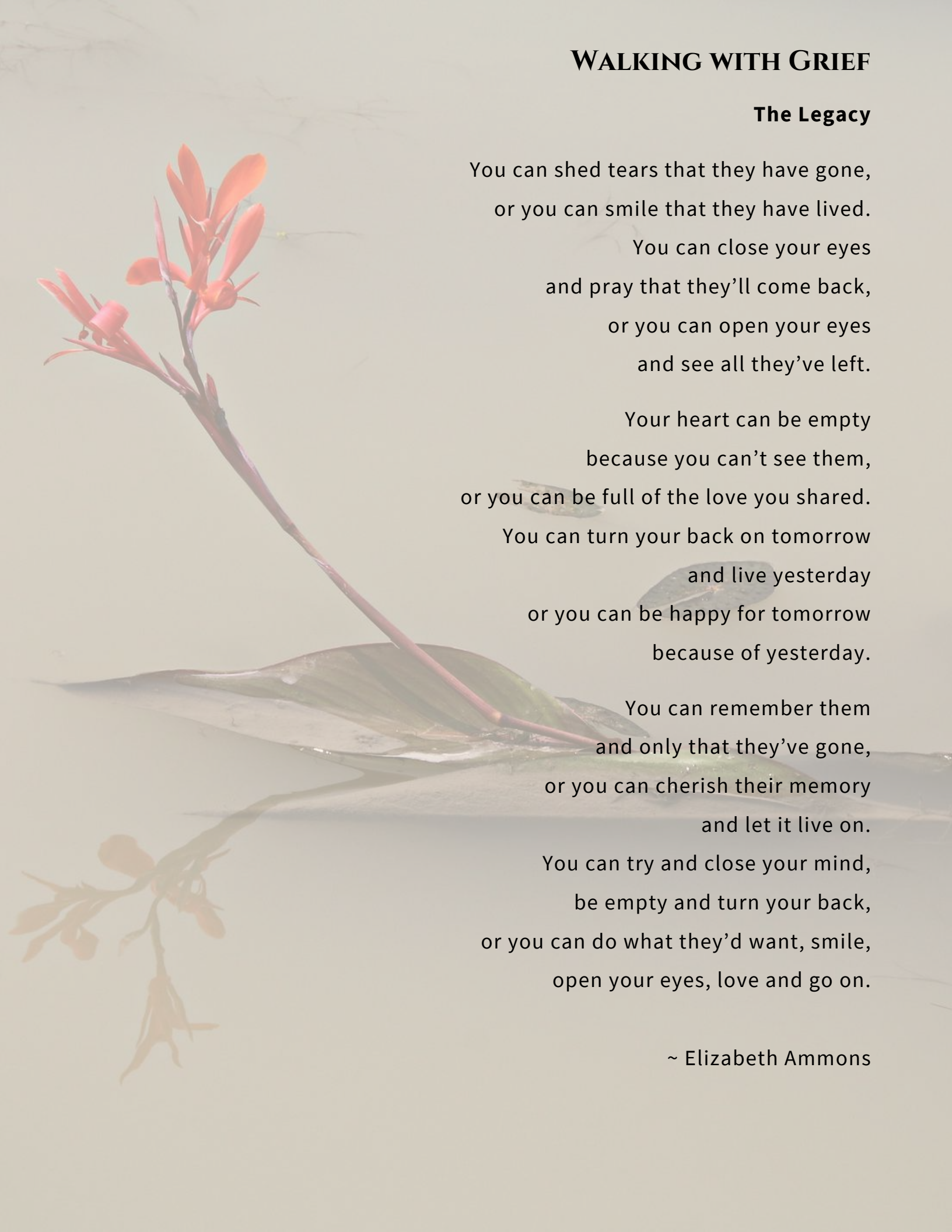
Your heart can be empty
because you can't see them,
or you can be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow
and live yesterday
or you can be happy for tomorrow
because of yesterday.

You can remember them
and only that they've gone,
or you can cherish their memory
and let it live on.

You can try and close your mind,
be empty and turn your back,
or you can do what they'd want, smile,
open your eyes, love and go on.

~ Elizabeth Ammons



WALKING WITH GRIEF

Angels in Grief

Eileen Freeman has written: “The angels are always near to those who are grieving, to whisper to them that their loved ones are safe in the hand of God.”

The archangel Azriel is a figure in various religions and cultures.

... Essentially, he is portrayed as an angel who accompanies people who have died to heaven then returns to earth to comfort those left behind.

... How lovely it is to think that our loved ones, as they lay dying, were taken by the hand and shepherded to heaven. And how comforting it is to think that we can turn to an unseen but present angel whenever we need help in our grief.

Believing in angels is a form of trusting that all will be well.

As our intermediaries, angels connect the here with the hereafter.

They embody our faith.

They are couriers of hope.

What’s not to like?

Whether or not I believe in angels, I can choose (in my grief) to believe that all will be well.

~ Excerpt from *Grief One Day at A Time* by Alan Wolfelt



HOW FAR THE LOVE FROM ONE COOKIE CAN GO

BY JEN KIT LIN HUNG

A few months ago, I received one big, very pretty flower-shaped cookie from my church family at RDLUC. I decided not to consume it, so that I would have it for a long time! One day, I was feeling overwhelmed by mental exhaustion and I thought of that cookie. I took it out, then made a cup of tea; slowly I ate it, bit by bit. It was so magical! It started to balance my Yin and Yang energy to the extent that slowly my calmness was regained and I felt refreshed. I wanted to keep half of the cookie, but I couldn't resist the temptation. After I had finished the whole cookie, my body, mind, and spirit were renewed.



During the pandemic, my friend Angela Wong in Vancouver started baking homemade cookies. I thought of the magic that the flower cookie from RDLUC had brought me. I communicated with Angela about the possibility of making and delivering 200 cookies to Calgary. We worked on the designs and the time of arrival for the church's monthly care packages. In order to avoid the expensive shipping cost, we waited until the COVID restrictions were lifted by the end of July so that her relatives could drive the cookies to Calgary. This project was a few months in the making, with Angela wholeheartedly putting love into her happy oven.

There have been countless touching moments around these cookies . . . when I delivered them to my mom's Senior's Home, to my lovely friends, to my friend who has just finished another round of chemo, to my friend who's battling stage four lung cancer, to my therapists and to my favourite restaurants. Seeing their faces with so much joy and thankfulness, I was in grateful tears. It's just a cookie, but it could bring people closer together, and a relay of joy and love from one soul to another.

I would like to share with you Angela's words, after I sent her pictures of people holding her cookies.

"I have put my heart into making the cookies, so know that whoever receives them will feel this happiness. You're like my angel, helping me with my mission and extending my vision to over a hundred in Calgary that I would not be able to reach; so I am happy you are in my life supporting me in this. You're like a year-round Santa Claus for others' happiness and smiles."

For what I have given and for what I have received, I thought of angels: one cookie represents one angel, angels are around us, everywhere, to reach to those in need of healing and caring LIGHT; IT touches people's hearts.

The Dove cookie brings peace, the Sunshine cookie brings smiles!! My gratitude to RDLUC for giving me the opportunity to spread the Light of peace and joy, near and afar.

Note from Vi: We wish to thank Jen and Angela for their generous donation of cookies for our August care packages and for our hard-working volunteers. We hope you have enjoyed them!



"THIS PROJECT WAS A FEW MONTHS IN THE MAKING,
WITH ANGELA WHOLEHEARTEDLY PUTTING LOVE
INTO HER HAPPY OVEN."

GIVE ME THE GRACE

Give me the grace
to care
without neglecting my needs,

the humility
to assist
without rescuing,

the kindness
to be clear
without being cold,

the mercy
to be angry
without rejecting,

the prudence
to disclose
without disrespecting
my privacy,

the humour
to admit human failings
without experiencing
shame,

the compassion
to give freely, fully,
without selfish ambition
or pride.

From *Heaven at my Door*
by Juanita Ryan

*submitted by Ann Brown,
with love and blessings of grace*



FOOTHILLS EXCURSIONS: CHURCHES OF MILLARVILLE

BY KATHERINE MATIKO

Off to my next adventure – camera in hand – in the spectacular foothills of Alberta. As usual, the Millarville General Store is my starting-off point. Have you been to the store recently? With beautiful antiques and photos as well as a new plaque acknowledging the origins of the store, owner Tim Babey has created a tribute to the history of the Millarville area.



With history in mind, I decide to check out a couple of the historic churches near Millarville, beginning with Christ Church Anglican located a few kilometres east of the Millarville General Store on Highway 549. (It's about 54 kilometres west of Calgary.)

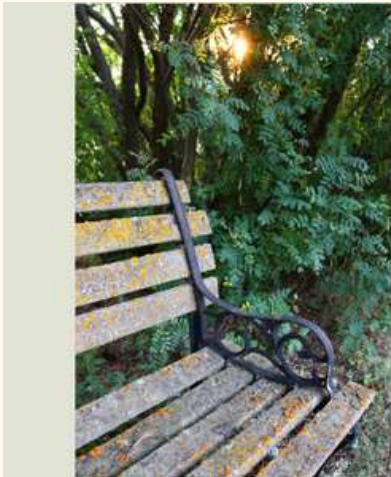
The church was built in 1896 with its logs pointing to the sky, a rather unusual construction technique for the time. Perhaps its founders had heaven in mind when they built it; the little church and surrounding cemetery and grounds are a little piece of heaven on earth, even today.



The bell tower silently watches over a peaceful scene, well worth a stop if you are driving by – or perhaps you need to make it a destination to bathe your soul in the magical light of an Alberta evening.



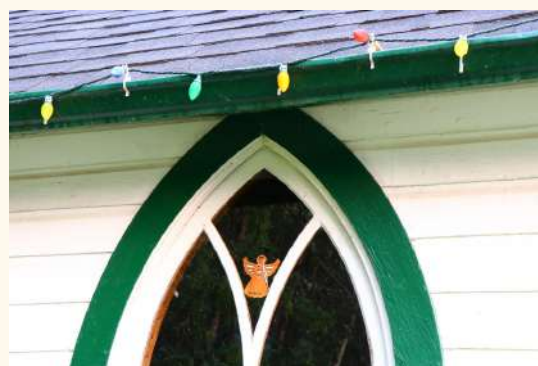
I love cemeteries. They are somber yet hopeful. They tell stories of undying love. Although the memories of this cemetery aren't my own, I am touched by the tributes to those who lived long lives and the monuments to others who died far too soon.



Sit in this sacred space and rest for a while. If you are lucky, the sun will set on a day well spent.



Next, I made my way to Christ Church's sister church, St. James Anglican Church in the hamlet of Priddis, about 20 kilometres north of Millarville General Store. Nestled between a paved road and an upsweeping wooded hill, this church was built in 1904. Like Christ Church, St. James is supported by an active congregation and hosts regular Sunday services.



This charming county church brings to mind the tiny church I attended on the Saskatchewan prairie as a child.

The church's face glows with a welcoming light from the setting sun.



As I head back to Millarville General Store to tell tales of my adventure – and find out from Tim, a long-time Millarville-area resident, where to explore next – I feel thankful for the church volunteers who lovingly maintain these elegant buildings.

In doing so, they are keeping century-old memories alive.

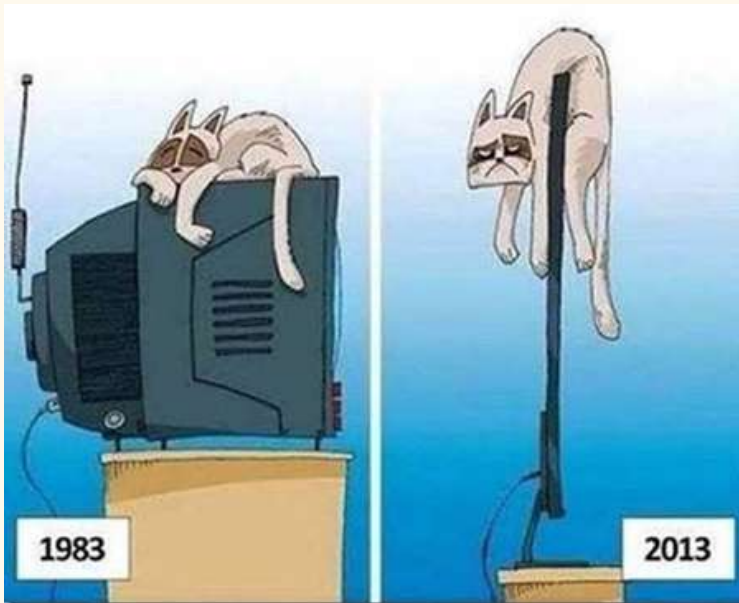
Until next time,
Katherine



LIVING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

SUBMITTED BY ANNE WELSH-BASKETT





PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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 October 1, 2021.



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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