

The Highway

A supplement of the Anglican Journal for the Anglican Diocese of Kootenay



A collage of two images: *Waterlilies* 1906 Artist: Claude Monet, 1840-1926, Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki. [<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56687>] and “*Consider the Lilies icon*” by Kelly Latimore [<https://kellylatimoreicons.com/about-2/>]

THANKSGIVING

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. Matthew 6:25-33

OCTOBER 2024

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Printed and mailed by

Webnews Printing Inc. North York ON.

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The Highway

ONLINE EDITION:

<https://thehighway.anglicannews.ca/>

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We acknowledge that the land on which we gather in the Diocese of Kootenay is the traditional unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples, the Ktunaxa and Kinbasket Peoples, the Secwepemc (Shuswap) Peoples, and the Sinixt (Arrow Lakes) Peoples. We seek a new relationship with the first peoples here; one based on honour and respect, and we thank them for their hospitality. We pray that we may live more deeply into the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



By The Most Reverend
LYNNE MCNAUGHTON

Dr Lynne McNaughton is the Bishop of the Diocese of Kootenay and Metropolitan Archbishop for the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and the Yukon

Radical Gratitude

One of the most important books I have read is Mary Jo Leddy’s “Radical Gratitude.” Leddy is a Canadian Theologian, professor at the University of Toronto, founder of Romero House, a Toronto Refugee ministry, and a Member of the Order of Canada.

Her book is one I delve into whenever the topic of Thanksgiving comes up. It is a powerful examination of the deep “perpetual dissatisfaction” in our materialistic culture, where there is never enough ...to the point where we begin to believe within ourselves that we ourselves are “not enough.”

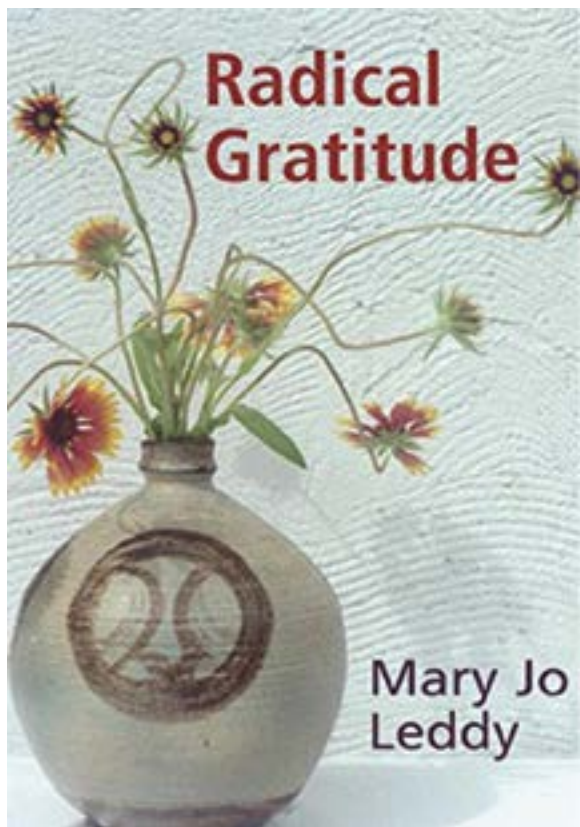
“In the culture of money, we tend to have a ledger view of life. We add up the pluses and minuses and try to account for our lives. In the process, we miss the amazing fact that we have a life to add up. We take being alive for granted and move on to a cost-benefit analysis. Lost in the process is the incalculable mystery of simply being alive. The liberation of gratitude begins when we stop taking life for granted. We will be liberated from the captivity of craving for

more only by an attitude of radical gratitude.” (p. 41)

She invites us to live in an economy of grace, of abundance, not in our culture’s economy of scarcity and fear. Leddy’s theology of grace shines through the book: that life is a gift, and that “God’s love is offered, for all, forever, and for free.” Receiving this gift of life with astonishment and wonder pours forth in generosity and hope-filled response to our world. Gratitude is not an inner focused spirituality for personal peace but a communal, world-changing practice. This is a hope-filled, honest and compelling book.

How do you practice gratitude? Daily, moment by moment. Not just at a season of Thanksgiving but every morning, every encounter, every breath! Scripture invites us to give thanks in all circumstances (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

I know my own practice of a nightly gratitude journal has led me to give thanks not only for the obvious things like safe shelter, food, loved ones, and



community, but also for hard things, for challenges, for things that frustrate and baffle me. This wakes me up to see God's grace everywhere!

Meister Eckhart, the 14th Century German mystic said, "Just to be is a blessing, just to live is holy." Mystics are those who live with perpetual gratitude, awake to the moment. Living "mindfulness" keeps us in a state of gratitude.

Gerald and I sing grace together, as singing helps us to slow down, listen, and pay attention, not just rattle it off mindlessly. I am delighted to discover that the new hymn book "Sing a New Creation" has our favourite grace, John Bell's "God bless to us our bread" # 174.

*"God bless to us our bread.
Give bread to all those who are hungry
And hunger for justice to those who are fed.
God Bless to us our Bread."*

(There is a YouTube video of John Bell leading it at Sorrento Centre)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjm-R8HMLA-I>

What Grace do you sing? Yes, even if you live alone! Where in your day do you have a prac-

tice of giving thanks?

A couple of quotes I treasure from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel: (1907-1972)

"Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. ...get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed."

"Awe enables us to see in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple, to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal."

The surest way to suppress our ability to understand the meaning of God and the importance of worship is to take things for granted. Indifference to the sublime wonder of being is the root of sin. Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious person's attitude toward history and nature.

Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Hebrew Scripture scholar, invites us to live in "Abiding Astonishment."

God's generosity to us is unceasing and overflowing, abundant and free. May this season of thanksgiving erupt into a life-long daily practice of radical gratitude in your live. "God's love is offered, for all, forever, and for free."

In Gratitude for each of you!

Yours in Christ,

+ Lynne McLaughlin

The Gift and Practice of Faith



By Andrew Stephens-Rennie

Canon Andrew Stephens-Rennie is
Director of Missional Renewal for the
Diocese of Kootenay

I don't know when you'll be reading this. I'm imagining a Tuesday evening with a cup of tea. Or possibly a Sunday morning before heading off to church. You might be reading this online or perhaps in newsprint. And yet, however this article reaches you, I want to share with you my sense of what I believe this moment in the life of our beloved church demands of us. There are at least three things: Fidelity, Imagination, and Bravery. This is the first of three articles exploring this path.

Fidelity

The first should come as no surprise. In fact, we should expect it. Fidelity, faithfulness, and faith are precisely what St Paul calls us to in his first letter to the Corinthians alongside the calls to hope and to love. Many of our English translations tend to collapse notions of fidelity and faithfulness into the word *faith*. And yet, somewhere along the way we

have—accidentally or otherwise—collapsed the multivalent meaning of this powerful word to intellectual assent or belief.

Belief is one vital part of faith, even if it is not the whole. Faith, faithfulness, fidelity, is what happens when belief is lived out loud. This is what happens when our belief in the saving work of Christ, a salvation that is ongoing and dynamic, once and for all time, is embodied in our personal and common life. Faith in what God has accomplished (and is accomplishing) through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension, is an invitation to participate in such a god-bearing life. Fidelity is what our love for Christ looks like in the quiet moments when no one is looking, and in the ways we live in relationship to one another and to God's good creation. That is to say, our fidelity to Christ is always personal but never private.

Over a lifetime, faithfulness to God transforms every aspect of our being. We experience ups and downs, to be sure. There are moments, as in a labyrinth, when we feel closer to or further from God. As winding as the path may seem, our faith is born out on each step of the journey.

Our journeys of faith all start somewhere. Perhaps yours started at summer camp; maybe under the caring tutelage of a Sunday school teacher. For some of us, it was at the dining table as we read the scriptures out loud with our parents. Perhaps there was something beautiful about the way we took our days to God as we prayed with our parents, and later by ourselves, before bed. Our journeys of faith all start somewhere, all rooted in this overwhelming sense that the ancient stories of the God of Ruth and Rahab, of Tamar and Tziporah, still matter, still take place, today.

As I reflect on the various stories of faith folks have shared with me over the years, I've found myself wondering, how many of us belonged before we believed? How many of us experienced faith through the experiences of developing faithfulness long before we believed anything in particular? How many of us learned the practices of faith through—well—practice? Are there any of us who showed up to church fully baked? How many of us reached a certain point in the journey of faith and said “there is nothing more you can teach me,” or “there is nothing more to do,” only to hear that the love of Jesus call us to go where he would go?

Faith is a gift we receive. From others. From God. And, like our names, faith is a gift we live into. Faith is a gift we receive, not just as a label, but as an inheritance to be embodied in the world—a way of showing up—that says something about who we are, and what we are to be called.

And so this Thanksgiving, I find myself giving thanks. For the gift of faith. For teachers along the way. For those who sat with me in the midst of struggle and confusion, not trying to solve everything, but patiently waiting, patiently caring, patiently praying me through the storm. And, as I look to the church as it is and anticipate the church that is emerging, I feel honored (as I hope you do) to be a “God bearer” in this time. Even as the church is changing, we are called to be those who carry the flame of faith.

As we live our lives, as we come alongside others, as we bear witness to what God is doing in our lives, and the life of the world, we have the chance (and God's own invitation) to keep that flame alive. How does this happen? By hiding it under a bushel? No. By sharing the flame—its light and warmth—a light that constantly points us to the One in whom we have faith. This One, of course, is the very same Jesus who embodies God's faith through boundless grace (giving us what we don't deserve) and mercy (sparing us from what we do deserve), and to whom we are called to respond, letting our little light shine.

“Thankful Hearts ..with Hungry Hearts”



By David Tiessen

The Very Reverend David Tiessen is the Dean of the Cathedral Church of St Michael and All Angels, Kelowna, Diocese of Kootenay

7th Century Syrian Monk St John Climacus said that, “Hunger is the stuff of prayer.”

October brings us to another Thanksgiving Day – and in our churches the celebration of Harvest Thanksgiving, in which we give thanks for the “fruit that comes forth from the earth” – often happily represented by a variety of gourds arrayed around the Altar (who doesn’t enjoy contemplating a fine gourd!?!?) – and often with an invitation to contribute gifts of food for those who hunger.

The Altar itself is dressed in white for Harvest Thanksgiving – the colour pointing to the Resurrection Hope rooted in Jesus Christ as “the firstfruits from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20). In this context, the resurrection points to the prayerful anticipation of abundance for all – the Great Feast for all peoples (Isaiah 25:6).

We are invited to give thanks while knowing also that “Hunger is the stuff of prayer.”

Food Banks Canada “Hunger Report” from 2023 highlighted that in March of last year alone there were 1.9 million visits to food banks across Canada, which represents substantial

increases over previous years — see: <https://foodbankscanada.ca/hungercount/> — and connects to wider challenges touching on basic income levels and what counts as a living wage, housing affordability, and fair trade quality in the local economy rather than just ‘cheap food’. So many and varied, challenging issues – all front and centre now in our provincial election set for October 19.

You will perhaps have encountered Fritz Eichenberg’s woodcut depicting “The Christ of the Breadlines.” It is a striking image of Christ as simply present in the midst of hunger and poverty, standing with – waiting with – those in need, all the while radiating a gentle halo of light.

On Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday we do two things at the same time: We give thanks to God for the abundance of the earth, for work that is fruitful, for that which sustains us; and at the very same time we pray that God’s Kingdom will come in its fullness, that hunger and want will cease, that no one will go hungry. Of course, “to pray is to work” — “Ora et labora,” as St. Benedict put it. And “to work is to pray.” Hunger is the stuff of prayer because hunger is to desire something more – the fruit of the earth is beautiful, but it must also be used to fill bellies that desire food! It challenges us to acts of service and generosity, and invites us to evaluate the systems and structures we have built and maintain, and ask how the light of Christ might be cultivated within them for the sake of fruitful work and the dignity of being able to put bread on the table.

Jesus keeps inviting us to prayer: “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” At Thanksgiving, that prayer might best be heard as a prayer of hunger. It leads us in Jesus’ name to will and to work with thankful hearts and with hungry hearts.



The Hymn Legacy of Herbert O’Driscoll



By Norene Morrow

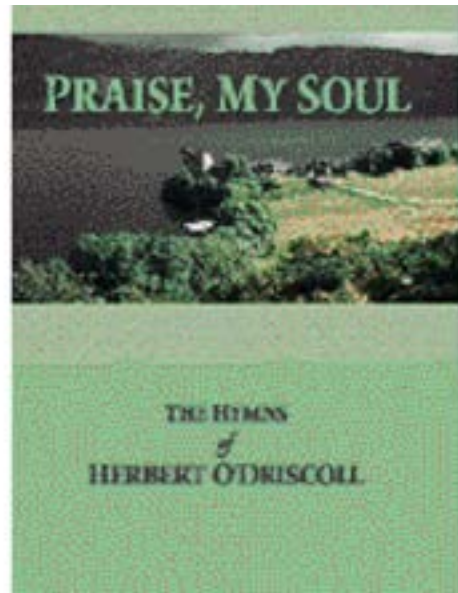
The current music director at St. George Anglican Church in West Kelowna.

Over this past summer, the world lost one of its most highly regarded preachers in the Anglican Church. The Reverend Canon Herbert O’Driscoll died at 95 on July 25. In addition to his preaching, he will be remembered as a great storyteller, author of numerous books on bible interpretation, and spirituality and he was a prolific hymn writer. Herbert O’Driscoll was a kind, warmhearted, and engaging person. I am sure everyone who crossed his path felt blessed to have known him. I am one such person. My connection to him was initially through my late husband, the Very Reverend Allan Reed, and over the years I had the opportunity to work with Herb in my capacity as a musician. Some years ago when he came to Kelowna he gifted me his book, “Praise My Soul: The Hymns of Herbert O’Driscoll,” so when I heard the news of his death I was suddenly reminded of it and could not let an opportunity to honour him pass by without writing about this legacy.

Many of you will be familiar with a few of Herb’s hymns from singing them in church, but only 6 can be found in Common Praise. Among them is “The Love of Jesus Calls Us,” “Come and Journey with a Saviour” and “Let My People Seek

their Freedom.” Unfortunately, these are just a handful of the 43 that are in his book, and I am sure he wrote many more that were never published. I must clarify that Herb wrote hymn texts only. He was a poet not a composer, so my assumption is that the hymns chosen for Common Praise were those set to tunes that were appealing and easy to sing for the average churchgoer, among other criteria.

Now, what about the rest of those hymns? Through reading aloud and playing all 43 of them I discovered why his writing has and will endure the test of time. Firstly, Herb included notes on each, giving the singer/reader insight into what he was thinking at the time. Secondly, there were specific characteristics in his writing that began to pop up for me; such as evocative and vibrant imagery. Many of his hymns also ask questions rather than tell us what we should do. He has brought stories from the past into the present in a way that makes them are relatable to today’s church and he sometimes approaches familiar subjects from an unexpected perspective. I am sure there is much more I could say if I had time to do a really deep dive, but for this article I will highlight three hymns that spoke to me.



Herbert O'Driscoll and his Hymn Book "Praise My Soul"

"O My Saviour in the Manger" – This hymn is immediately attractive because it is set to the familiar Welsh folk tune "Suo Gan." Herb was inspired by the story of C. S. Lewis and his wife as she was dying. When Lewis expressed his dread of losing her, she replied that pain was part of their present pleasure in being together. Both are interwoven. Herb translated her thought as he wrote this hymn, juxtaposing simple images related to the birth Jesus and his future crucifixion.

"Three Tall Trees Stood on a Windy Hill" – This hymn was derived from a very old folk story about three trees that were cut down to become a manger, a fishing boat, a cross, and ending with a resurrection verse. Two tunes are offered for this hymn. One is very bright and child-like, but I prefer the minor key setting by Alfred V. Fedak. It gives more meaning and depth to the words.

"Who are We Who Stand and Sing" – Both the words and music are very strong and easily learned. It makes a statement about who we are as Christians and how we must continue to be aware of what we stand for in our ever changing culture.

If you want to find out more details or order this wonderful collection of hymns it is still available through Selah Publishing for \$15.00 US at <https://www.selahpub.com/Congregational-Song/HymnCollections/125-445-PraiseMySoul.html>



Season of Creation

Servant's Heart

From the Desk of a Deacon



By Michael Shapcott

The Rev'd Michael Shapcott is an ordained Deacon in the Diocese of Kootenay, serving as Executive Director of the Sorrento Centre and in the shared ministry at St Mary's Anglican / United in Sorrento.

As late summer turns to early fall, the Season of Creation is a reminder that we are called not simply to be good stewards with all our relations across Mother Earth, but also to be in a deep and loving relationship with all of the created world: creatures of all shapes and sizes, the land, the water, the sky, plants and other living things.

The great covenant that God created with Noah is more than just a pact between humans and the divine. Genesis 9:17 speaks of a covenant between God and all life on earth.

The great covenant that God created with Noah is more than just a pact between humans and the divine. Genesis 9:17 speaks of a covenant between God and all life on earth.

Extreme weather events triggered by human-induced climate change (including heat waves, fires, floods, and landslides in our part of British Columbia) are a sign that humans are

betraying our end of the covenant.

The Season of Creation is a reminder that despoiling and degrading our world is a violation of a holy pact. Not only is it bad for our physical bodies, but it also leads to spiritual degradation.

So, what does it mean to fall back in love with Mother Nature – to embrace our role in a loving and covenantal relationship with all of creation? At the Sorrento Centre, we create the opportunities for people to move from environmental negligence (or worse) to a deep and abiding relationship with Mother Nature.

At our natural farm, just down the highway from the main campus, the rich harvest of produce continues to nourish our guests, as well as our neighbours. This year, in addition to our own fields, we launched a community garden so that our neighbours can grow their own food.

On our main campus, our chapel sits among the trees – with a beautiful vista of the Shuswap and the hills and mountains to the north. When we gather to worship, we are reminded of our feathered and furry-tailed siblings (birds and squirrels) as well as the plants and trees. Mushrooms springing out of the floor of the forest remind us of the abundance of God’s creation.

Our waterfront, a place of joy and frolicking year-round, is also a place of discovery as children from the nearby elementary school pause to peer deeply into water-life and plant-life.

Our formal gardens include rose bushes and other beauties, a visible reminder of the words of the mystic Julian of Norwich, who calls us to be holy gardeners,

nourishing the soil and the plants and offering their beauty and abundance to God as our true worship

Falling back in love with Mother Nature goes beyond our individual calling to dig our hands deep into the soil. We are called to be advocates for environmental justice – in religious terms, to raise our voices to seek justice for those (including our siblings throughout the natural world) who are victims of human-induced climate change.

At the Sorrento Centre, where we seek to give expression to the ministry of the deacon, we encourage our guests, neighbours and staff to seek reconciliation for humans who have become alienated from the world around us. This journey of reconciliation requires action as well as intention.



“Abundance”: A photograph of the Sorrento Centre farm taken by Michael Shapcott

“Brother Sun & Sister Moon”



By John Lavender

John Lavender is the editor of
The Highway.

“**B**rother Sun and Sister Moon” is from a canticle hymn written by St Francis of Assisi, which expresses the idea that one might experience God through nature. Theologically controversial, this idea appeals to people of the Celtic Christian persuasion and provides, for secular people, a connecting point to the sacred.

St Francis has always played a big part in our family’s life. For our family, St Francis represented the spiritual innocence that we wanted our children to appreciate.

During the 70s, many young people were looking for a spirituality that did not represent the status quo or materialism: that there must be a simple and kind way to live and worship. At that time, our generation saw Francis as a rebel. Of course, every generation challenges the previous one. It is a part of finding our own way in life.

Francis was against war after his experience in the battle of Collestrada. He was captured and imprisoned. The conditions in prison were miserable, crowded, and brutal. However, Francis tried to overcome the brutality and lift the spirits of his fellow prisoners. Nevertheless, when he returned home, he was suffering from post-traumatic syndrome disorder (PTSD).



Thanksgiving altar from the film, “Brother Sun and Sister Moon,” directed by Franco Zeffirelli.

In the film “Brother Sun and Sister Moon,” directed by Franco Zeffirelli, Francis is depicted as a middle-class dreamer who started a commune with like-minded young men disenchanted by the war and attracted to leading a simple life. St Clare was his female counterpart.

The popular image of St Francis of Assisi is one of friendliness to nature; especially, animals. Francis also inspired many discontented youths to choose poverty and piety over war.

Today, thanks to St Francis, our church numbers swell once a year on the Sunday before Thanksgiving (in Canada), when the “Blessing of the Animals” takes place. People who rarely darken the doors of a church turn up with their pets (mainly dogs) but also the occasional cat, horse, and hamster arrive for a blessing. This is a time like Christmas and Easter when some secular people might go to church.

The film “Brother Sun and Sister Moon” also has a cult following. Whenever it comes to our local Arts Cinema, you will find the same people attending: a collective ritual for a certain segment of society.

Touching secular society in this way will not necessarily start a wave of new people returning to church but “reverence for the sacred” fulfills a longing in people that we should encourage. Francis did!

Mindfulness!



Fireweed.

It's a trendy concept now in the Health and Wellness world. Mindfulness means focusing your attention on what is around you, paying attention to a particular thing, and letting your thoughts and worries go. It is not a new idea—It has been a part of contemplative practice for centuries. Contemplatives are taught to focus on a mantra or sacred word, repeating it silently to ourselves as we let other thoughts and worries go. We can also focus on a candle flame, an icon, a flower, or whatever can keep our attention as we try to still our chattering “monkey mind.” It sounds simple, but is hard to do—that’s why it’s called “practice.”

A couple of weeks ago I was sitting in the sunshine by a lake cradled by mountains. My attention was caught by the lovely pink fireweed flowers in front of me, swaying gently in the breeze. Now fireweed is an amazing plant. It is a perennial wildflower that is known for colonizing open spaces with little competition, such as the site of a forest fire. It quickly spreads, and soon the burned-over soil is covered with a mass of spectacular pink flowers. In Britain, where it is known as “willowherb” or “bombweed”, it is used to colonize bomb craters. It provides a blanket of vegetation to enable other plants to grow, and to encourage animals to return.

First Nations peoples valued fireweed for its many uses: its young shoots and leaves can be eaten, or boiled and made into tea. The flowers can be made



By Martha Fish

The Rev Martha Fish is a member of the Spiritual Development Committee

into jelly. It is high in vitamins C and A, iron and potassium. It is the territorial floral emblem of the Yukon, featured on their flag.

So fireweed is anything but a humble weed—it is an amazing symbol of the wonderful regenerative powers of nature, of God’s creation. We have all been horrified at the destruction caused by forest fires throughout our province, and indeed throughout the country, this summer. Yet destruction is not the end of the story. Its seeds buried in the soil can withstand fire, and with a bit of rain will germinate, grow and propagate quickly, covering the ugly burned ash-covered area with green shoots and then beautiful pink flowers.

To me, this is a symbol of how God’s love can regenerate even blasted lives. When disaster such as fire strikes, it may seem that everything is lost, and it is easy to give in to despair. But neighbours rally around, communities work together to provide aid and assistance, and with God’s help, people are able to rebuild.

So as I sat in the sunshine staring at the fireweed, I was able to put my worries and scattered thoughts aside. I was able to focus on the lovely pink flowers, and to focus on how they epitomized the regenerative power and glory of God. I was able to feel the love that God shows through creation.

Thanks be to God!

Around & About the Diocese

Mountaintop Service & Picnic

Kootenay Summits Parish

By Martha Fish

On Sunday, August 18, the combined congregations of St John the Evangelist Fruitvale, Christ Church Creston, St Paul's Salmo, and St. Andrew's Trail held a Eucharist service on top of Kootenay Pass. It was a beautiful, sunny, and blessedly smoke-free day. 45 people attended, including folks from Creston United Church to give it an ecumenical flavour. The service was ably led by Rev. Douglas Lewis and LLM's Brenda Panio and Rick Hammond, with music by Kathleen Russell on guitar, it was a

true celebration of God's creation. It was also a celebration for people from different communities to get to know each other better through fellowship. Bishop Lynne sent greetings, regretting she could not join us. Following the service, there was a sumptuous meal of chili, hot dogs, salads, and cakes. This is the third year that Fruitvale and Creston have met together in this setting, and the success of this year's event means we plan to continue it into the future. ■



Eucharist service on top of Kootenay Pass.

Around & About the Diocese

Earth Sunday

Holy Trinity, Grand Forks



*Planet Earth Sunday, with Rev. Simon Shenstone leading the service at Holy Trinity Grand Forks. The message: "We humans have come forth from the substance of this fragile planet. We are of it and one with it."
Photograph by Juno Shenstone.*

Lori's Story

National Indigenous Sunday, St David's, Castlegar

By Leslie Killough

For National Indigenous Sunday, our Lay Reader and Warden Lorraine Deans asked our dear friend and long-time parishioner Lori Collier to tell us her story of growing up as an Indigenous person in Castlegar. In her clear ringing voice, Lori told us her story so well that most of us were moved to tears.

Lori was born in Prince Rupert to a native woman, who suffered from severe alcoholism as a consequence of being a residential school survivor. The mother already had six children in a dysfunctional family and Lori was placed in a series of foster homes shortly after birth.

By the time Lori was two she had been in nine different foster homes, which left her with a real sense of insecurity and fear. When she was fostered by the Colliers, her mom, Norma, helped her put her coat on and poor Lori thought she was being moved again. She was so happy when they returned home from a simple trip to the grocery store that she ran singing all through the house.

As Lori approached school age, the ministry wanted to send her to Jericho School in Vancouver, as she had such poor eyesight and was almost blind. By this time the Colliers had become very fond of her. When she was 4, her Dad, Bert, got a job in Castlegar, and the Colliers applied to adopt her so she would always be a very important part of their family.

In those days, Castlegar was very much a white community. Elementary school was hard for Lori as the kids called her "Brownie," "Blackie," and even "Nigger." This was very hurtful, but Lori dealt with it by building an imaginary shield around herself, as she did not want to become bitter.

As the time approached for high school, it was decided that Lori should go to Silver Birch School, as she had some learning difficulties. This was a happy



*Lori giving her talk at St David's church, Castlegar.
Photograph by Marnie Petit.*

choice and Lori made many friends there. Several years later when Lori was enrolled in a program at Selkirk College this prompted her to write a beautiful essay about friendship, which is included here, as we can all learn a lot from Lori's wise philosophy.

Lori grew into a young woman with an amazing attitude to life and a good speaking and singing voice, so that she often reads in church and leads the singing when we have services at the retirement home. She has had contact with her birth family as her brother Patrick from the Lower Mainland reached out to her and the Colliers facilitated a trip for Lori to meet them. Sadly her birth mother died on skid row from severe alcohol poisoning in her early fifties.

Lori continues to be a very valued member of St David's and of the Collier family as can be seen from the letter that her adoptive mom, Norma, wrote to her in 2017.

We were very moved by our friend Lori Collier's talk to us on National Indigenous Sunday and I was asked to put together an article.

My Special Gift of Friendship

By Lori Collier

Community Living, Spring 1999

I have a special gift that I would truly love to share with others.

That special gift I have is the gift of friendship. Everyone enjoys the friendship of being friends to certain people (good friends or family friends). This also applies to people who are labelled “Mentally Challenged” for they too need friends.

I am mildly handicapped and while attending classes in the regular school system I have truly experienced the pain of loneliness: what it’s like not to have any friends. I had no school friends until, in 1974, I attended a special school for special needs students and while attending that school, I had friends!

Not only were these other students handicapped, they were the happiest bunch of people I had ever met.

These students were people (first) and their disability was second.

These students were very friendly towards me and I in return gave that gift of friendship back for accepting me as I was: Lori.

So now I enjoy being with others who are disabled and need that touch of friendship and happiness that I’m able to give to them.

I feel nourished when befriending one that is less fortunate than I. So if you want a friend, be a friend and share that gift of friendship.

“The love in one’s heart wasn’t put there to stay. Love isn’t love till you give it away.”

Letter to my Daughter

Lori, my sweet daughter:

I had a beautiful dream last night, all about you!

How much you have added to my life by being my beloved daughter. You have enriched my life beyond measure.

Your sweet presence, your gentleness, your acceptance of situations as they are, and making the best of them.

You are a dearly loved gift to me and I thank God for you. The situations that led you to our family were decided by God, you needed us and we needed you, I especially needed you Lori. You have taught me so much about love, acceptance, about what is really important and what is just a decoration and sometimes emptiness.

Thank you for being such an important part of my life.

I am your mother and I love you, Mom. ■



The Collier Family outside the church with Father Wilding in 1964. Lori is being held by her father Bert and her siblings are Susan, Michael, John, Deirdre and Mom, Norma.

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