



The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener

ON EAGLE'S WINGS

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How Do You Vote for Saints?

Elaine Duncanson

How do you decide which one is better? Is it the qualities they possess, or the personal cost of their service, or the lasting effect of their work? Or is it something else? Maybe the story or the presentation sways your decision. Are you attracted to one you have known about for a long time or do you prefer the novelty of the unknown?

There are those who 'stepped out of line' like Marcella of Rome, Nicholas of Myra, or Rudolph of Gubbio who all came from wealthy families and could have lived a life of comfort and leisure. Then there was Marina the monk who entered a monastery with her father and kept her secret until she died.

Some did very big things like founding a religious order – Ignatius of Loyola, Dominic, Marguerite d'Youville, and my favourite, Hannah Grier Coome. Jesuit schools are well known and we have heard about the Order of Preachers. How well do we know the Grey Nuns who started as a small group caring for the poor? They faced derision and a set-up for failure but now continue to serve the poor and needy. Many people in Toronto area have benefited from St. John's Rehab hospital which is the modern extension of Hannah's nursing order.

Some did a series of small things. Tabitha made clothes for the poor and today many churches have a 'Dorcas group' to follow her example and provide school supplies or work in food banks according to the local need. Martha of Bethany was a 'kitchen lady' who prepared food for Jesus and the other guests while her sister Mary slipped out to listen to the discussion.

Some contributed to the arts. Hrotsvitha was a poet who wrote 'sacred comedies' and brought theatre back into the Christian life. Ephrem of Nisibis wrote hymns to teach people and promote Nicene orthodoxy. Phillips Brooks wrote "O Little Town of Bethlehem" for his Sunday School. Paula of Rome assisted Jerome in the translation that became the Vulgate Bible. The women in her convents served as scribes to make copies.

Some were scholars like Tikhon of Zadonsk who wrote books for clergy, opened a school and encouraged education for everyone. Agatha Lin Zhao was released from a betrothal to take religious vows. She taught traditional Chinese culture and the Christian faith until the authorities arrested and beheaded her.

Some had a brief claim to fame. Dismas made a last minute confession, Nicodemus used his wealth to give Jesus a fine burial but otherwise kept a low profile, Photini gave Jesus a drink of water, Anaias plucked up his courage and visited Saul of Tarsus so he could regain his sight.

With such a wealth of stories to choose from, how does one decide? That first Sunday when I came home with my Sainly Scorecard, I looked at ones I knew already. Then a few others caught my eye. Before the day was out, I had read all the stories and decided the pairs right down to the Faithful Four. How can you choose between Tabitha and Gobnait and then Hannah and Nicholas?

Bob came by and said I was doing it wrong. I should start out with who was going to win and work backwards. Apparently there is an American basketball thing that goes that way. I thankfully saw the last of basketball when I left high school. If I had known who deserved the Golden Halo, I would not have gone through the whole process of reading, deciding, checking, and comparing. It is not fair to delete someone I have not heard about or someone whose story does not grab me in the first sentence.

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The next issue of On Eagle's
Wings will be available on
April 28th.

Nurses Notes

Elsie Millerd, Parish Nurse

Being Healthy Together: A Healing Community

“When I is replaced by **we**, illness becomes **wellness**.”

This statement was the centerpiece of a display for mental health ministry at Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver where we worshipped earlier this month. We found this a profound statement and it got me starting to think about what implications it has for the health ministry in our parish.

How often do we try to handle our stresses and illnesses on our own? Suffering in silence seems admirable in our society. We may not want to burden anyone with our concerns. Or, we do not want others to know that we have problems, that our life is not perfect. Maybe if we do not tell anyone about our concern it will disappear, not be a reality. Yet, it is my experience that holding in concerns about illness magnifies the problem. Fear and anxiety builds creating more stress which can lead to more symptoms. This cycle may be especially so for mental health concerns which still create feelings of stigma. At these times we especially need the support of good neighbours.

What happens if we do bring our concern to a trusted friend, family member or health care provider? We may find that just talking about the problem is a relief. We have someone with whom to share the burden. Somehow it already can feel more manageable. The person may be able to help us think about it more clearly and even help find resources that can lead to healing.

Scripture teaches us to rely on one another rather than journeying alone: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help” (*Ecclesiastes 4: 9&10*). This passage goes on to say “A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (*vs. 12*). As we bring Christ into the equation, we gain that strength. Asking someone we trust to pray with us creates this threesome. In this relationship one can find peace as well as the strength and guidance that one needs. At St. John’s we have the opportunity for prayer with the whole congregation and with the prayer team during the 10 am service on Sundays.

Together may we find many ways to bring about wellness in our congregation and in our community. Being a listening presence for each other helps us to understand how we can care for and support one another. As we share with each other, we learn that we are not alone in facing our problems. We find that others walk similar journeys. Sometimes they have wisdom to share and other times they will just stand with us in our struggles. In loving our neighbours we will find ourselves standing firm with them. Together we can advocate for a just and healthy environment for all, taking into consideration not only our own needs but also those of others.

The words of the song “One Voice” sum up very well the healing power of “we.”

This is the sound of one voice
One spirit, one voice
The sound of one who makes a choice
This is the sound of one voice.

This is the sound of voices three
Singing together in harmony
Surrendering to the mystery
This is the sound of voices three.

This is the sound of one voice
One people, one voice
A song for every one of us
This is the sound of one voice
This is the sound of one voice

This is the sound of voices two
The sound of me singing with you
Helping each other to make it through
This is the sound of voices two.

This is the sound of all of us
Singing with love and the will to trust
Leave the rest behind it will turn to
dust
This is the sound of all of us.

Songwriter: RUTH MOODY
One Voice lyrics © Ruth Moody Music

Coming Events

Fall Prevention Sessions

Calvary Memorial United Church

91 Gruhn Street, Kitchener (near Grand River Hospital)

Every Monday and Wednesday morning starting at 9:30 am

6 weeks from April 1st to May 15th

Work with a registered kinesiologist to learn helpful tips on building balance and strength, eating well and overall healthy living.

Drop-in, no registration required. Please bring running shoes and water.

For more information contact Jessica Kuntz at 519-772-8787 (Community Support Connections).

Women's Wellness: All Things Pelvic

Tuesday, April 2nd at 7 pm to 9 pm

Benton Street Baptist Church

90 Benton Street, Kitchener

Discussion of issues of pelvic weakness with Renee Quiring, a pelvic health physiotherapist.

My Irish Mother

Margaret Hendley

My Irish mother created a magical childhood for my older sister Judy and myself, full of laughter and great wonder at the simplest things in nature. When Judy set off for her first day of school, Mom and I became a team. I was her Molly-O, joyous recipient of all her tales, companion for all her adventures.

One gray day in late March we togged ourselves out in rubber boots and wooly hats and set out "To go find Spring." We pushed aside the snow that still filled the meadows behind our Connecticut hillside home to sniff the fragrant earth and gently touch the first tips of green shoots sprouting from the frosty ground. In the autumn she took me into the nearby woods to search out bittersweet to bring home and where we also saw toadstools, which we never picked, as they were "Where the Fairy Folk lived". And always were the stories she liked to tell and the lullabies she would sing to Judy and me every night as we drifted off to sleep.

Eventually I had to go to school and the lovely long days shared with my mother ended. But the magical bubble of the world she created really shattered when faced with the tragedy of the crib-death of my dear little three month old baby brother Stephen, born when I was eight and Judy eleven. Three days after Christmas, while napping in his carriage, he stopped breathing. Only I was home with Mom at the time and saw Stephen's blue face and stiff body when my agonized mother screamed for my help. Days later, when I tried to question why this happened, my mother pointed up to the winter sky and told me that God needed Stephen to help polish the stars. I simply couldn't accept this fantasy. Too young to distinguish between hypocrisy and my mother's tremulous attempt to explain the stark reality I had witnessed, I rejected her whole fey approach to life.

I also decided to stop saying my prayers. I had overheard a neighbour comment on how sad it was that my parents lost their only son. Using my eight year old logic I thought that perhaps God had made a mistake and intended to bring the mere second daughter, (me), to help Him in heaven, not the beloved and long hoped for baby boy. I concluded that I wasn't going to take any chances and remind God of my existence by "talking to Him." I still, of course, attended church with my mother and sister, but when the liturgical responses were called for, I would mumble quietly a playground jumping rope rhyme. And so I grew up, divorcing myself from half of my heritage and modelling myself more and more on my bookish, well-organized, hard-working and non-church going Yankee father.

I married Brian a year after college and moved with my husband to Ontario. We visited my parents annually to show off the three grandchildren, our twin sons Nathan and Matthew and their younger sister, Alicia. When I turned forty my father died in his

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Is that what this thing is all about really? To learn more about the heroes and heroines of church history? To explore other traditions, to think about the challenges that others have faced in living the Christian life? So many made sacrifices such as Damien who willingly worked among the lepers until he died of the disease.

These are just the people chosen for our list this year. Winners of previous lists are very interesting too – George Herbert, C. S. Lewis, and Florence Nightingale, for instance. It makes one think about the people we see every day, the ones who quietly do the right thing, help others as they see the need, tell the truth in a difficult situation, speak up to solve a problem or prevent injustice. How many of them are unknown saints? The voting is challenging enough without adding more names to the list, at least for this year.

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sleep. Shortly after that my mother, still living in Connecticut, but now with Judy and her family, was diagnosed with cancer of the sinuses. One year after her surgery, resulting in the loss of one eye and some brain damage, she was deemed by her physicians well enough to travel and, with my teenage niece Kate, flew to join us for the summer, allowing Judy and her family to have a well deserved carefree summer. Since I had a full-time job, I arranged for appropriate home care for Mom while also managing work and a household bustling now with four young teenagers.

While living in my sister’s spacious home, Mom had her own lovely apartment, complete with large living room, bedroom with a bath ensuite and even a little porch. Our home, although comfortable, couldn’t provide such luxury, although Mom, of course, had her own bedroom. But she seemed to enjoy being part of the group, even when we were visited for a few weeks that summer by friends from England who came with their two teenage daughters, and which, for one memorable weekend, overlapped with a visit from one of Brian’s U.S. cousins and her family, which included three more teenagers. (When phoned about this possible visit, I did ask them to bring sleeping bags for the kids.). My organizing talents went into full gear to keep everyone, (including by now nine teenagers!) well fed and entertained as well as assuring that I found the time to give Mom the help she needed with such basics as bathing and dressing as well as accompanying her on a daily walk. Although Mom couldn’t always keep track of who was who outside of our immediate family, it was obvious that she enjoyed interacting with everyone, particularly the young folk who abounded.

That summer with us was Mom's last hurrah. A few short weeks after we drove her and Kate home, it was discovered that cancer had invaded other parts of her body and in January she was placed in a hospice. My daughter Alicia and I flew down to see her and, with Judy and Kate, visited the hospice daily. Mom seemed in little pain and faded in and out of recognition of the world around her.

Finally, it was the last visit before we had to fly home. I knew this would be goodbye as I reached out to her bed where she lay dozing to touch her still beautiful curly hair. And then, without planning, or organizing, or analyzing, I began to sing. I sang one of the old lullabies that she used to put Judy and me to sleep so long ago. Kate and Alicia joined in, their lovely young voices blending with my wavering one. My mother awoke and smiled and began to sing too. Whether she was with us as a child, a mother, or a grandmother, mattered little. We were without roles, just united in a harmony of memory and love.

Until, finally, Alicia and I had to leave to catch our plane. Two weeks later the telephone call came informing us that Mom had died peacefully, with Judy by her side. The five of us flew down for the funeral and I sat and observed friends and relatives do the final honours. After the service, I stood dry-eyed at my mother's grave, burying my grief as I had my love, and tried to comfort my weeping sister.

I returned home in a week to take up life again. And through the long days and even longer nights of grieving that followed, although I found scant solace in prayer, I was comforted and sustained by the thought that I had sung a lullaby to my Irish mother as she drifted off to sleep.