



The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener

ON EAGLE'S WINGS

June 20, 2021

Available online at StJohn316.com/OEW

What Church Means to Me

Nancy Chittick

In Joni Mitchell's song Big Yellow Taxi are the words "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone". These past 15 months have shown these words to be so true to me in relation to many parts of life including church. Strangely, being away from church has allowed me the time to understand what church fundamentally means to me. Like being able to slow down and appreciate nature's smallest treasures, I have been able to refresh my mind and spirit by remembering how I was shaped by the church in my youth and why I returned to the church after decades away from it.

I grew up attending the United Church every Sunday. Both my parents taught Sunday School and were active members during the week as well. As a child, Sunday mornings were a bit of a marathon. In those days, there were two church services/Sunday schools back to back. This was the time of the Sunday School population boom experienced by churches across the country. Our church had to rent out school gyms to accommodate the overflow of children. Each week I attended Sunday School for an hour then later had to sit through the church service so that my parents could attend the service. Like me, they had been involved with Sunday School in the first hour so wanted to attend church afterward. It made for a very long churchy morning!

As a child, church to me was a time of Bible stories, singing, crafts and making Sunday friends. It was fun! However, the church services afterward felt tedious and my active 5 year old self had trouble paying attention and not getting the giggles. I did like the singing and I can still hear my father's deep voice as he sang the hymns beside me. On reflection, this is when I started to form a moral compass, a sense of "do unto others...". Of course, I was taught about Jesus' life and teachings. I remember thinking how he seemed to be so loving and kind to everyone.

As a teen, I attended the same church but instead of Sunday School it was called "youth group". I attended with more reluctance than when I was a child. I knew my parents expected it so I mostly "went along to get along". It was at that time, like many teens, I began to question certain Biblical teachings. This questioning worried my mother more than father who was more of an abstract thinker than she was. Mom had a more literal interpretation of the Bible. While these different ways of seeing the Bible could lead to fairly passionate discussions, I became aware that maybe church teachings were more complicated than I thought.

As I matured, I began to see inconsistencies in the judgemental attitudes and behaviours of those who called themselves Christian. I found this quite disheartening. Verses from the Bible now seemed archaic and out of touch with modern values and norms. These inconsistencies were troubling for my young, idealistic self. Church became irrelevant to me.

It was the 1960s a time of much societal upheaval. I headed off to university and didn't return to church for 40 years and while I didn't miss it, I know now that the seeds of Christ's teachings were

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The next issue of On Eagle's Wings will be available on September 26, 2021.

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took a world religions course which I found very insightful. I was fascinated and maybe reassured how the world's major religions had so much in common!

I don't know exactly how or when the beckoning to return to church began but through a series of "coincidences" I found myself entering the front doors of St. John's one beautiful August morning. I had never once attended an Anglican service. Almost right away, all my apprehension disappeared. The people I met weren't "churchy" or self-righteous and the priests at that time -Neil Carver and Lorne Mitchell- spoke like normal people. They welcomed my questions and I felt free to express my doubts without feeling judged. So I stayed on. I gradually felt as though I'd found a second home and family.

Now as a senior (where did the time go!), I have a clearer sense of what church means to me. When I was a child, church provided me with a foundation upon which to form my values. Then and today, it has given me strength and inspiration as well as many challenges. Trying to follow Jesus' example is very difficult. I have been given strength when I've needed it. My strength comes from God and Christ's teachings and the sacrifices he made. Members of our congregation have also inspired me in ways they may never know. Many have continued to live their lives through different challenges and adversities. At my lowest moments, I have looked at Jesus on the cross and looked around at all those sharing the service on a Sunday morning and have been moved and inspired.

Our church members form a family of sorts. We are a very big family full of different personalities, strengths, interests and beliefs. During times of conflict, we have disagreements and will say or do things we may regret later but as with many actual families we take a deep breath then try to remember what unites us more than what divides us. We.Are.Family!

We are a group of Christians trying to follow Christ's teachings. I try to use this as my guiding light. I fail at this on a regular basis but I try to live my life with Jesus in mind. In church, I am a small part of a large group but I would like to think that I can make a contribution to advancing the social gospel in our community and beyond. While this can certainly be carried out without the involvement of a church, Christ's example acts as a reminder for me of what should be most important.

Hopefully, our church family will be back together sooner rather than later. It has been such a long 15 months. We will be so happy to be reunited yet will remember and mourn those beautiful souls we have lost. St. John's won't feel the same as it did but we will still be united as the St. John's family. We will continue on together in faith, in strength and in love for Christ's teachings and one another.

Psalm 46

Jennifer Uttley

During the past year as well as worshipping with Morning Prayer at St. John's, I have lately been joining daily Morning Prayer from the Deanery Garden at Canterbury Cathedral in England. The different locations in the garden provide a time not only for worship but also for reflection and peace. It is a great way to start my day. Each day includes a psalm for the day said in order for the month starting on the first morning of the month with one of psalm 1 through 5 as explained today by Dean Robert.

This morning is June 9th with the assigned psalm 46. It begins with the following (Church of England):

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea;

And closes with:

'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.'

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

I find these verses comforting and reassuring especially appropriate for the time we have been experiencing. No matter what are our troubles at home or within the church or our country we can be hopeful. "Be still..." reminds me to take this time and focus.

I chose this psalm because Dean Robert went on to note that on June 9th in 1549 the Cranmer Book of Common Prayer was made available in English and provided the rhythms for the day. While there were many revisions over the centuries this first BCP provided the foundation. I found the history interesting and connecting with our recent study of the psalms. I find that I am more aware of the psalms each morning because of that study.

Though the waters rage and swell, and though the mountains quake at the towering seas.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place of the dwelling of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her; therefore shall she not be removed; God shall help her at the break of day.

The nations are in uproar and the kingdoms are shaken, but God utters his voice and the earth shall melt away.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Come and behold the works of the Lord, what destruction he has wrought upon the earth.

He makes wars to cease in all the world; he shatters the bow and snaps the spear and burns the chariots in the fire.

'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.'

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Grieving for our children

This reflection first appeared as part of the Anglican Church of Canada's Update for June 16, 2021

Nii K'an Kwsdins (Jerry Adams, above) of Nisga'a Nation, and former Missioner for Indigenous Justice in the Diocese of New Westminster, provides a first-hand perspective of what reconciliation with Indigenous peoples looks like.

I am responding to Joelle Kidd's article on page 6 and 7 of the May 2021 Anglican Journal titled "Every step...uncover something else to do." ([LINKED HERE](#)) The article consisted of reflections on Reconciliation now that five years has passed since the TRC report, and it concluded that progress has been mixed. The recent discovery of the bodies of 215 children who were buried on the grounds of the Kamloops Residential School tears at the hearts of all of us who are working toward Reconciliation.

As an Indigenous man of the Nisga'a Nation, I have spent most of my career working to make changes toward Reconciliation. As a social worker; as someone pulling together urban Indigenous leaders in Vancouver; as a member of the Children's Commission of BC protecting the rights of our children; as a member of the Vancouver Police Board, and as a Social Justice worker for the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster I have worked trying to educate, guide, and connect the police, the churches, and other community agencies to our Indigenous community. It has been emotionally draining work, that at times was done in isolation and with little or no support. It has also been draining to try to live up to the expectation that Indigenous people will show the way forward. Supposedly we should know, but we do not always have all the answers.

I have lived through so many disappointments over the years that I have been doing this work. The recent discovery of the remains of the 215 little ones buried on the grounds of the Kamloops Residential School has brought more sadness to me. I keep wondering what else is out there for our people to give us more broken hearts. Don't ask me about Reconciliation but about the weight of pain we carry for our families – our parents, and our children.

Our people are angered and hurt by such horrific hidden secrets. The Elders are barely holding our youth back from being angry, and taking action that would not go in the good way that we have been working toward.

The loss of trust, and the fear of the churches, the government, and most institutions that service our people is back again, and trust has to be rebuilt.

We need to rebuild trust by accountability. The Canadian government said it was the churches that killed the children and they should be held accountable. Yet it was the federal government's Indian Act that forced our grandparents and our parents to ship our children off to Residential Schools.

History is not on the side of the governments and people of power who can make a difference. They have constantly promised changes, and funding that will make a substantial difference, and yet we Indigenous people are still waiting

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for the fulfillment of their promises of clean water, proper housing, proper medical care for our children and so many other promised changes. It is hard to believe in those words anymore. And the discovery of the hidden deaths of our children is one more betrayal. We cannot work in new and creative ways with people who are not truthful.

Reconciliation is about wanting to work with each other. We need people to stop and feel what is in our hearts, so that the significance of the loss of these 215 children does not disappear after the initial shock of the discovery of their bodies. We need you to be willing to listen to us as we guide ourselves through the next steps of trust and healing.

We need you to get to know us and get to know our protocols. If you are afraid to ask, just think of how afraid our children were as they entered the Residential Schools. And how afraid our mothers and our grandmothers were when they had to send away their babies.

Should I be angry at the betrayal of trust and the death of so many children in Residential Schools? Yes, I should. Should I be continuing my work as a teacher to build better relationships?

My heart is full of pain at the moment, but if I follow the teachings of my grandparents, my mom, and my Simigiat (the Chiefs of our Houses) and my Sigidimhaanak' (our Matriarchs) then I know from their example that I must continue. They went to church, they believed in God and they worshipped deeply, even as their children were sent away. That is what devotion is all about, and they worked for change to give us better lives.

We are greatly saddened by the deaths of our children, and by broken promises, but we are not defeated. We still have our languages, our protocols, and our culture. And although we grieve, the strength of our people is our family.

So walk with our people and listen not just to the words offered, but what our hearts are telling you. Then we can build a new reconciling relationship of empathy and trust and make changes together for a better Canada.

Offerings

Following are various ways that you can contribute your offerings to the Church.

1. Send weekly envelopes in the mail. You can send post-dated cheques to the office at 23 Water St. North Kitchener ON N2H 5A4
2. Drop off cash donations to the office through the mail slot in the office door. Write your name on the envelope!
3. Have an Errand Buddy pick up your donation.
4. Sign up for, or make changes to your DEFT by contacting the office (519-743-0228 or church@stjohn316.com).
5. Donate Online through Canada Helps by credit card. You can set up recurring, or one time donations. Canada Helps takes 3.75% but also provides the tax receipt directly to you and provides a donation report to us! [Here's the link: https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/48510](https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/48510)

If you would like someone to pick up your offering envelope please call the church office, 519-743-0228. An errand buddy would be happy to do that.

Psalm 19:14

Christine Purdon

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

Like many people I play fast-tempo music during cardio workouts, and my playlist includes Boney M.'s "Rivers of Babylon." This is a calypso version of a hit by a Jamaican Rastafarian group called The Melodians for whom the term "Babylon" refers to the oppressive state. The focus of the song is Psalm 137, but Psalm 19:14 is sung twice throughout.

I have spent a good deal of time with Psalm 19:14, on the Stairmaster and off. It strikes me that the words of our mouth are the products of the meditations of our heart, which are our innermost thoughts, our core ideas about the world, ourselves, and others.

How often do we reflect on our innermost thoughts? As I psychologist I know we do not question our deeply held ideas, nor the thoughts they evoke from situation to situation very often. There are good reasons for this. At any moment we have an array of thoughts moving through our stream of consciousness. As you read this you may be having thoughts about dinner, whether someone walked the dog, why you are reading a treatise on a psalm by a psychologist who has no background in theology, etc. The thoughts that capture our attention are those most relevant to our priorities. If we are loving dog owners, we are likely to have core ideas, or schema, for dogs that identify them as loyal and charming creatures who are dependent on us. Our schema for "dogs" prioritizes thoughts that signal a threat to our dog's well-being, displacing our other thoughts, and we experience it as credible and important. This feature of our attentional system helps us meet our priority goals (e.g., to protect our dog and keep her happy).

Our thoughts carry great authority, also for good reason. We need to respond quickly to the demands of our environment, and to do so we rely on mental shortcuts that allow us to predict what is going to happen so we can take swift action. If our dog is injured, we are likely to take her to a veterinarian. We expect that we will need to make an appointment, and to arrive on time for that appointment; we expect that the vet will listen to our concern and examine the dog, that the vet will determine what is wrong and will suggest treatment options, and that we will pay for the vet's time and the treatment.

Our knowledge, memories, and feelings about veterinarians comprise our schema for "veterinarian." This means we do not have to think through or learn what to expect each time we visit. If we have a positive schema for "veterinarian" we may have a thought such as "She is going to make my dog better". This thought is likely to be experienced as a fact; it would not occur to us to question it. We thus approach the veterinarian with hope and goodwill. If, however, our schema for "veterinarian" is negative we may have the thought "She is going to charge us for a lot of tests and not really help my dog" we may avoid taking our dog to the vet or we may respond to her with skepticism.

We have much more general schema as well, schema that are active much of the time, unlike our schema for "veterinarian" which is likely to be active only when our pet requires medical attention. Imagine the following scenario: We are walking downtown and pass a racialized woman sheltering on the street, an empty liquor bottle in her hand. She asks us for money. Do we stop and give it to her?

What was your *immediate* answer to that question? Our immediate answer and our decision whether to give money will be driven by our predictions about what is going to happen, which are in turn driven by quite general schema, such as our schema for people experiencing homelessness, people of this woman's particular racialized group, of women in

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general, of people who live with addiction, etc. If those schema are negative, our automatic thoughts might be “She will just spend it on more booze,” “My taxes already pay for social services for people like her,” “She will try to rob me if I approach,” “If I give her money I’m just rewarding her for not getting honest work,” “It is disgusting to see a woman that drunk, what a terrible example for her children!” “They [people of that racialized group] are lazy/drunks/cons,” or “There will always be the poor, giving a bit of money is a drop in the ocean, it won’t help.” These thoughts may evoke anger, fear, disgust, or helplessness.

These thoughts and the schema that drive them reflect important priorities (e.g., wanting to discourage panhandling, not wanting to feel conned or taken advantage of, wanting to set an example, not wanting to enable alcohol abuse, not wanting to fully confront societal issues that seem overwhelming), and, again, we experience them as facts. The words of our mouth may thus be “No,” “Leave me alone,” “Get sober and get a job,” or a disapproving silence, which speaks volumes. These thoughts may lead us to ignore the person completely, giving them a wide berth as we pass, or to toss them a paltry sum, or to give them money along with a lecture and an attempt to impose conditions on its use.

Our core schema can cause us to react rather than to act, to punish when we could be kind, to judge when we could understand, to blame when we could forgive, and to ignore when we could engage. But we have within us the capacity to identify and question our schema. We can reflect on the nature of our schema and what they are based on. To what extent are our schema informed by assumptions rather than knowledge? Have we trivialized, ignored, or discounted information that goes against our schema? These questions can help us identify core ideas that are outdated or poorly informed, and to update or modify them.

For me, this psalm tells us that if we pause between thought and action we have the opportunity to ask “Will the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be accepted within the sight of God?” and, if not, to make it so.

Renison Faces the Pandemic

Brian Hendley, Chair, Board of Governors, Renison University College

As we have struggled through this pandemic year, we’ve all had to adjust our day to day living. This has affected also the operations at Renison University College, (the Anglican College affiliated with the University of Waterloo). As Chair of the Board of Governors at Renison, I have witnessed the problems and the successes of the past year. Classes have been taught on-line, not in person. Virtual meetings are held on line. Cafeterias and residences have been closed and some staff have been laid off; others, like our own Marilyn Malton, have retired. Yet the bills had to be paid and education must carry on.

We can now begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel and we hope to come out of this with a greater appreciation of the contributions of Renison’s staff, faculty, and students. Enrolment is holding steady. We hope to partially re-open the residences in the fall. We’ve nominated two professors for excellence in teaching awards. Research remains at a highly productive rate and staff morale is good. Much of this is due to the strong and compassionate leadership of Renison’s President, Dr. Wendy Fletcher who firmly believes in the college’s motto: “One sky over all.” Now, more than ever, we must do our best to ready the next generation for the local and global issues they will face. We have left a legacy of our problems. We owe it to our students to provide the tools needed to remedy these concerns.

Psalm 23

Charles Stuart

Psalm 23:4: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

The 23rd Psalm is without doubt the best known of the psalms. It is widely quoted, immediately recognizable, and ubiquitous throughout the culture. To select it, or lines from it, in a discussion of psalms is to pick low-hanging fruit. So please excuse me as I head off down a familiar and well-trod path that leads through a shaded valley familiar to us all.

Timor mortis conturbat me.

When I was about ten years, I realized that I could recall having been much younger, which, I further realized, meant that we all move through time. One day I would be a teenager, then an adult, then an old man. My dad was old – not ancient like my grandfather, who would have been seventy, but well into his forties. He sometimes talked about his childhood and his youth, and I had seen photos of him as a chubby altar boy and then a trim, sharp-eyed naval cadet. It was clear that he had once been young. He often spoke to me of my ancestors, people he had known in his youth who were now long dead. Now I knew, everyone who was dead had once been alive, like me, and that everyone now alive would one day be dead, me included.

I could not sleep. I sought out my mother, who was up late reading, as was her custom. I shared with her my discovery that we will all die, no doubt with the faint hope of being disabused of this bleak realization. My mother's response was frank but gentle. Yes, everything that lives, dies, and death spares no one, including me, including her.

I do not recall if my mother, a lifelong Anglican, spoke to me of the life eternal or the immortal soul. Even if she had, these ideas would not, at that time, have quieted the agitation I felt over the reality of my own extinction.

My mother died at the age of seventy-one, of acute myelogenous leukemia. She died in our family home, the same house where we had had our conversation twenty-seven years earlier, surrounded by her husband and children. A profound aphasia had robbed her of her ability to communicate, but not her will to try. Her incapacity to communicate with words infuriated her, and her death was not peaceful. My father and my sisters and I took solace in reciting the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm. For some time still we could together walk the valley of the shadow of death, knowing that my mother would soon journey on alone.

My father died at the age of ninety-three, of natural causes, twenty-one years later. He, too, died in our family home, the same house where my mother and I had had our conversation, surrounded by his children. On his deathbed he was able to express his love and gratitude through words and gestures, which we passionately reciprocated. His death was peaceful. I recited the 23rd Psalm repeatedly during my father's last days and hours, and over his body after he had passed. For some time, we could walk together through the valley of the shadow of death, and the downhill slope seemed gentle.

There is solace in repeating words that have been recited by countless others in similar circumstances over hundreds of years, in the King James Version, or possibly thousands, in the Hebrew text. Death is universal, and so is grief, and practically universal are rites of mourning. Words, fragments of ink and paper, pixels on a screen, exhalations of breath, can sometimes be sturdy enough to support a grieving heart. Like the rod and the staff, they comforted me.

Then there is the reality of faith that these words encompass. The Lord *is* my shepherd. I need fear nothing as he *is* ever present, and his rod and staff *do* comfort me. And Jesus *is* the Good Shepherd.

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My parents were themselves shepherd to their small flock, although they wielded their rod and staff very differently. As for “the valley of the shadow of death,” there are no doubt many interpretations. When reciting the psalm over my parents in their final hours on Earth, I imagined the valley as symbolic of the transition from life to death.

At the same time, it seems illogical to read a first-person commentary on death (if that is what it is) in reference to someone else. Maybe life itself is the journey through the valley of the shadow of death, the shadow that is the recognition of life’s finitude. And maybe the uncertainty of the ultimate meaning of this psalm, and other texts in scripture, speaks also to the mysteries that the practise of worship and faith can never fully reveal. In my lived experience of the 23rd Psalm, oftentimes the poetry of the language and the profundity of the implied potential meanings has been enough.

Timor mortis no me conturbet.

Death is inevitable and universal. With time, and with the experience of the loss of loved ones, the fear of death lessens; the dread of my personal demise now seems selfish to me, as if I were the centre of Creation. As I move through my seventh decade, death seems, if not yet a friend and ally, at least someone with whom I have a polite, nodding acquaintance. The anguish caused by recognition of my own mortality has long been replaced by far greater concern with the well-being of my wife and children, my larger family, and my friends, and alarm over the climate crisis, the rise of political authoritarianism, and the erosion of confidence in science. Yet, when it is my time to take my last steps through the shadowed valley, I hope that I might be able to recite the 23rd Psalm, or that I may be surrounded by people dear to me who can together repeat these stirring, hopeful words of confident faith.



St John's Garden Contest

\$10 per entry

\$1 per vote

Contest opens July 5th

Closes August 9th

Winners announced August
15th

Psalm 104

Doug Woodley

My earliest recollections of hearing and then singing the psalms were of particular images and lines: "The valley of the shadow of death", "By the waters of Babylon I sat down and wept", "The sea is his and he made it", "Moab is my washpot" etc.. Then as I grew and began to read the Bible on my own, they began to strike me as rough and angry and I began to think of them, as I did much of the Old Testament, as barbaric and excessive in their urgent pleadings and ferocious passions. Of course, those were the years when my reading was almost entirely from the King James translation and, anyway, the New Testament had most of my attention. Later, in my early twenties, as I read other translations (Moffatt's, Phillips', the "Jerusalem") I began to enjoy these psalms for exactly those elements I'd found so distasteful as an adolescent. My life in those years was full of adversaries and my days were full of contention and I felt the need of salvation in the most essential ways. Those fierce images were sometimes immensely satisfying.

So the psalms have been different for me in different ages and to speak of one that has endured for me throughout the entirety of my life as my favourite wouldn't be telling the truth. Currently, and maybe for the last several decades, my orientation has not been towards salvation so much as to wonder and thanksgiving. The Psalms are full of these elements too, of course, and I have several favourites that I occasionally look up again and ponder but, since Maggie has asked me to choose the one that is (at least currently) my favourite; it's Psalm 104.

When first I noticed that I was often turning to Psalm 104 I was a little dismayed. I asked myself if I'd merely been taken in by its surface; the wonders and splendours of the Earth - so fashionable these days to glorify and advocate for what is generally called the natural world. But nevertheless I frequently found myself drawn to it, and I soon realized Psalm 104 is true poetry which means to me that it has multiple levels of meaning. I recalled that almost all the psalms, maybe even most of the books of the Bible, are never far from and often centred on very earthy things. The psalmist also loves these things, but much more than that, he also sees through them to whatever has brought them into being and this awareness he names "God". And they're connected and, of course, that includes me and everyone else. From there, well, I can and do go on and on and there's no foreseeable end to my thoughts and sense of a transcendent and loving Spirit.

At First Light

Vivian Snead

Celebrations for National Indigenous Peoples Day and the Summer Solstice will start at 6 a.m. on Monday, June 21st virtually on TheMuseumtv on YouTube. Join local Haudenosaunee community member, Kelly Fran Davis, for a virtual sunrise ceremony to acknowledge the new day.

