

Between the Aisles

A Robertson-Wesley United Church Quarterly

SUMMER

HONESTY
IS THE BEST
POETRY.

GREGORY ALAN ELLIOTT

Welcome

It's that time of year again... Summer!!! Things seem to slow down a little, maybe you get to head out of town for a while for a vacation, but hopefully a little bit of relaxation is upon us and we can take a bit of time to enjoy the (possibly) nice weather and all the great summer activities Edmonton has to offer.

In this issue of *Between the Aisles*, we've decided to take a look at the idea of "Holy Honesty." Since the start of the year, Reverends Karen and Leigh have given several members of the congregation the opportunity to tell their story and what brought them to Robertson-Wesley United Church. I don't know about you, but I've found the different means and routes that brought fellow members here to be fascinating, and it's made me think about my own relationship with the church. I decided to include a piece on that which you will find later in the issue (Note... I make what I think to be some somewhat controversial statements in it... Before you come at me with cries of "Heretic" and pitchforks, hear me out, okay ☺). We also have some statements about honesty and the church sprinkled throughout, as well as one of the "Moments of Holy Honesty" that was presented a few months ago and questions for you to ponder .

We also have a great piece about ways we can help the planet through recycling of plastic, an interview about the recent "Disability 101" workshop that was held at the church, a note from the Board about some recent decisions, an examination about the Psalms (which will be a focus during service in June) as well as some other announcements and articles. Hopefully you will enjoy going over them. If you have any comments, please feel free to email us at rwucnews@gmail.com.

Have a great summer!
Marilee J. Stephens (editor)



Moments of Holy Honesty -Questions to think about:

Questions we ask people to ponder:

How did you find yourselves at Robertson-Wesley and how did you know it was "home"?

What surprised/surprises you about our church life here at R-W?

What is your favorite image of God at this time in your life?

What relationships are important to you (at church or in your spiritual journey) at this time?

How does this month's theme (acceptance, elders, diversity) resonate with you?

Why do you feel called to serve at R-W in the way you do (for example: on the Board, at Community Dinner, attending the Arts Studio)?

A Moment of Holy Honesty

– Yuwei Bei

(This was originally presented in Worship– March 2019)

Our story with Robertson-Wesley Church is also a story about how we accepted ourselves: to fight with fear and to be bold. Today let me share it with you.

In the summer of 2016, my third year in Edmonton, I reached a point where I can no longer hold the struggle deep in my heart. From outside view, I was more than just fine: I graduated with a Master's degree and will continue to do my PhD in that lab; I had a little stipend to not only cover my own living but also cover a long-distance trip each year; I lost a bit weight so that I look fine (you know what I mean). If I brought my degree and papers back to my original country, I probably could find a job.

However, things were not so shiny from inside. I was so tired of that lab and its high pressure culture and I did not have many friends in Edmonton since most of my time I was sitting in the lab. The most "horrible" thing is that I found myself attracted to my female roommate, who just had a new boyfriend and they were video chatting aloud every night.

I thought it was a right time to make some changes. I did two things that were kind of bold at that time, even though they look simple today. Firstly, I made the effort to move out of that apartment (which meant extra months of rent that my roommate requested, and of course, some hard conversations). Secondly, I decided to join a Chinese bible study group at my university, because in my head, for a long time, Christianity meant "acceptance and love." I wanted to meet some new people, to hear the Bible to warm my heart and possibly cure my problem of falling for women that I thought was because of loneliness.

Soon after joining that Bible study group, I felt like I found light. I loved the Bible and Jesus so much that I wanted to be baptized immediately. Through a friend in the Bible study group, I found a church that is willing to baptize me immediately. It was at my baptism service that I saw a person, a Christian and a member of that church, who I felt a strong emotion towards. That was Windy, who is now my spouse.

This time, I did not think it was my "mistake." I had not intended to do anything and we met in God's church, in

reading the Bible during my Baptism ceremony! Windy and I, we both felt that God wanted us to stop shaping ourselves into other roles. God wants us to reveal our nature and shine.

At that time, we prayed a lot and asked many questions to God. I prayed that I can have wisdom and boldness to accept myself, to distinguish right and wrong, to believe that God still loves me with some characteristic that I was born with, and based on the love God gives me, to have the courage to love others. At that time, Windy and I received different forms of negative "warning" messages from our surroundings. Thanks to the love and encouragement from Windy, we pulled together under that pressure. We obtained our own vehicle, moved in together and restarted our lives together.

In a short period of time, we lost almost all our friends and felt we could not go to that church anymore. However, through days after days of prayer, we became so sure that God not only loves us, but also wanted us to do good things for people. We cannot stop going to church every Sunday. We quickly learned the word "affirming" church and Googled it and listed the churches we wanted to try. We ranked each by its level of beautifulness in our eyes: Robertson-Wesley Church ranked No.1.

One Sunday in the March of 2017, we decided to give it a try. We attended the Sunday service and we saw two wonderful female ministers giving out powerful messages of God that fulfilled our feminism hearts. After the service, we walked to the front like two tourists to have a closer look at the beautiful altar, then we saw Rev. Karen smiling to us, we felt so welcomed.

When we got home, we decided to stop browsing and chose this one. The next Sunday, we inquired with Rev. Leigh about the membership class and received her enthusiastic instruction and kind encouragement. And thus we embarked on our journey with Robertson-Wesley church. Several months later, we found out that the first Sunday we attended service was actually Rev. Leigh's first sermon. The Sunday we asked about membership class was the first day Rev. Leigh dealt with membership class in our church. What a beautiful coincidence! One year after we joined Robertson-Wesley, we got married here.

We can see that we will continue to grow in R-W and R-W will always nourish us. That is my story sharing today and thank you all for listening!

GROWING EDGES IN THE REALM OF DIFFERING ABILITIES!

Robertson-Wesley United recently hosted a workshop on Disabilities 101 with several guest speakers who advocate and are part of the community that have differing abilities. This was an opportunity to listen and reflect on where we have come as a society and a church in making things more accessible. Rev. Karen Bridges asked Brooke Leifso, who helped to facilitate this workshop, the following questions:

Language is important. How has the language around disabilities evolved over the past century?

As with any marginalized population, language and labels change periodically. The pattern is that a word is used, stigma is placed upon the label, and as a result the marginalized community or institutions change the term to something more nuanced, scientific, or empowering. Changing terms, however, does not displace or change the societal stigma, so the patterns can continue. A general idea is that any word that was commonplace 25 years ago that you would also describe as something bad (like the r-word) is no longer used. One exception to this is the word "Crip." Similar to the word "Queer," it has been re-appropriated by the community to create an umbrella of people experiencing disability that are politicized: called to make the world more accessible.

Currently, the language that is generally acceptable is "people-first language" and very specific to what we see, to not making assumptions. For example, a person who uses tools, or a tool user when describing someone using a walker, person with a physical disability, person who lives with depression, etc. Also verbs are at the discretion of the person experiencing. "Dealing with" MS, "surviving" depression, etc. is making a judgement that having a diagnosis is awful for the individual. This is not always true. People can have joyful experiences with their disabilities. I live with my disability; I'm not surviving it because it doesn't go away.

Something that is shifting for the positive, in my opinion, is that folks with disabilities are deciding how they disclose their disabilities. Growing up, there was a pressure to disclose my diagnosis and medical journey so people would stop staring and treat me like an equal. In the disability community now, we are advocating for not needing to confess our diagnoses for others' curiosities. This is

similar to not asking someone who is racialized where they're from. Some people like using 'special needs', or 'different abilities'. These are acceptable too, but I always ask the intention around them. While they sound nicer, they can act as euphemistic terms if followed up with patronizing policies or institutions that don't change despite the embedded idea of adaptation found in these words. Language is tricky and very person specific! It's good to ask individuals, including able-bodied, neurotypical people, their own ideas and politics around how they want their bodies and lived experiences described.

What are a few of the major issues or challenges facing people with differing abilities?

The workshop spoke about the biggest barrier people with differing abilities face is a lack of access to resources and adaptation. Roxanne told the people gathered that her medical supplies are rationed and she is expected to reuse and justify needing more supplies. She also shared with us how difficult it is to find accessible housing and work places. Many people I've worked with also complain about DATS, the Disabled Adults Transit Service. Users are given a 2-hour window for service, meaning peoples' lives are governed by the unreliable system that can literally leave them out in the cold.

From working within the disability community and being a member of it, I would say the biggest barrier or challenge is a lack of access to income and reliable, accessible jobs. For example, many jobs are up flights of stairs, require heavy lifting, balancing, or regular long hours with limited sick pay. There have been studies that people with different abilities do not need tasks limited, but rather adaptation such as different hours, work from home options or an office with an elevator and lowered desks.

As a community of faith how are we doing with ensuring people of all abilities can participate in the life of the church?

The workshop asked participants to assess how accessible Robertson-Wesley was both as a building and as a church. The church has put resources into having an elevator and putting in ramps with smooth flooring,

and is presently working on making the kitchen more accessible with wider doors and a lower counter top. There were suggestions of live broadcasting worship, allowing in snacks and drinks (Note: This is actually allowed as long as people clean up after themselves). Hearing assist and large print bulletins and hymn books are available for worship. Worship already allows people to come and go as needed, to move and make sound as needed. Robertson-Wesley is already doing so much! There was a suggestion of captioning sermons and adding ASL interpretations to worship and other large events. In other communities bringing in accessibility tools, the other element is outreaching to communities to let them know worship is available for all.

What are some questions that we should ponder over the coming years?

Robertson-Wesley United Church has an amazing community that deeply values being welcoming and inclusive. A growing edge might be: how to give people who are typically marginalized, positions of power/responsibility? The church has typically been a place to seek charity, but in the charity model there is a power dynamic that can keep people in unequal positions. This creates division and power dynamics that limit community building and social justice. A focus on Allyship would be a great next step.

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA Intercultural Ministries Survey Results

Recently, the United Church of Canada undertook a survey that investigated intercultural ministries, as per the church's commitment to becoming an intercultural church. Online surveys were completed by 704 people (both congregants and ministers) between January and March, 2019. The results were put up on the United Church of Canada's web-site in early May and can be accessed at www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/ways-becoming-intercultural-church in the downloads section.

Survey respondents were majority female (66%) and somewhat older (72% were in the 50-79 year age ranges, while only 19% were under the age of 50). Most of the respondents also had both parents born in Canada (68%), and only 37% identified as being part of a margin-

alized group (based on race/gender identity/ability).

What I found interesting when looking over the results was that while the vast majority of respondents (96%) supported the commitment of the church for intercultural engagement (76% strongly support, 20% somewhat support), there were still areas where work needs to be done for everyone to feel truly welcome in the church.

There were still large segments of the respondents that either somewhat or strongly agree that there is discrimination within the faith community with regards to: systemic or hidden racism (52% strongly or somewhat agree); intolerance to different theologies (44%); classism (42%); sexism (39%); gender-based discrimination (37%), homophobia (34%), etc. Some of the factors respondents thought contributed to this were concepts like reluctance to change/traditionalism/narrow-mindedness (21%), or homogeneity/dominant culture in the faith communities (16%).

But there was also a lot of positive results in the survey's compilation, showing that while there is still work to be done, many respondents think that there are several factors contributing to more inclusivity. These include such concepts as: inclusivity/open-mindedness (23%), diversity within community (18%), committed leadership (11%) and taking part in affirming ministries programs (9%), as well as other factors. There were still respondents in marginalized groups that stated they didn't feel their voices were necessarily heard, due to being different (18%), or that they don't feel safe expressing their views (15%). However, most respondents to the survey (89%) indicated that "If we strive in the church to be intercultural, this will help to deepen our understanding and experiences of God and one another." That is a very positive message to take away from the survey.

Work is still needed, but with time (hopefully less time than more) it appears that the UCC's commitment to truly being intercultural can be reached.

Submitted by Marilee J. Stephens

*Psalm 51:5 You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.*

Northern Spirit Regional Council Update

Northern Spirit Regional Council was welcomed to the traditional lands of the peoples of Treaty 8 by Elder Barbara Goodswimmer, May 23 - 26, 2019 for its inaugural meeting. Approximately 210 delegates, children, youth and guests made the trip to Valleyview, AB and shared in the worship, work, learning and conversations.

“Journeying on with All our Relations” was this year’s theme, with focus on Genesis 11:31 - 12:9. Rev. Dr. Sandra Beardsall invited us back into church history to explore the marks of the church: Kerygma (teaching), Liturgia (worship), Diakonia (service), Martyria (witness) and Koinonia (communion). Sandra’s presentation and our discussions connected these marks to “A New Creed” and with today’s challenges of being church in ecumenical and interfaith relationships. Worship and music offered us a variety of perspectives, languages and upheld the vision of becoming an Intercultural church that is welcoming, relational, adaptive, justice-seeking, intentional and missional. We also had the option to participate in a smudging ceremony at the beginning of Friday and Saturday.

Children and youth were both active in our conversations together and had time on their own. We welcomed guests from the wider church family and received reports from a variety of groups and institutions that contribute to the well-being of our mission and ministry. We were introduced to Rev. Hati Mvundura, from the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, and formally welcomed Hati during worship on Sunday.

Table Group time invited us to reflect on: our connections to the land, and the lands where we live; Genesis 11:31 - 12:9 - who are the relations, named and un-named who accompanied Abram and Sarai? And



Photo by: Trisha-Lee Wasmund
Inaugural gathering of the Northern Spirit Regional Council
Felicia Drever, on behalf of the UCW, presenting a Bible to our newest admission into the Order of Ministry of the United Church of Canada.

who accompany us?

How will we support one another on the journey?

What needs to happen for everyone born to find a place at the table? Within our Communities of Faith and within our Regional Council?

We also had time in table groups to talk about the Purpose of a Regional Council (The Manual C.2.4) and possibilities for networks and clusters. This feedback was recorded and will be provided to the NSRC Executive as they begin their work in June.

Convener, Leigh Sinclair and Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy kept us on track throughout the gathering. Listen - Discuss - Decide was the decision-making model which we used. We listened to some of the reports, and information about the Regional Council structure that is taking shape. Both the structure and policies that have been developed so far will be lived into this year and evaluated at the next full gathering of NSRC. We heard presentations on seven proposals: Being Good Relations Circle, Intercultural Ministry, Interfaith representation and Funding for this Representation, Becoming an Affirming Regional Council, Towards a Sustainable Campus Ministry, and Responsibilities of the Regional Council. In our table groups, we had time to discuss each proposal, determining its priority, asking questions, offering suggestions for improvement. This feedback was gathered, summarized and presented in motions on Saturday, by the Facilitation Team.

During our Celebration of Ministry Banquet we heard stories from the ministries of retirees. On Sunday we gathered in the circle to worship, and to receive a teaching from Elder Charles Wood of Saddle Lake Cree Nation. The youth offered us an interpretation of our scripture passage and R.W. Hoekstra and friends offered us a teaching and honour song. We covenanted with one another as Northern Spirit Regional Council. We installed the NSRC Executive of Marilyn Carroll, Nam Ok Yoo, Peter Chynoweth, Alistair MacKay, Mary Annan, R.W. Hoekstra, Shauna Scott (Treasurer), Heather MacKenzie (Chair Elect), Britt Aehart (Convener 2020), Ruth Lumax (Chairperson).

Thanks to everyone who attended, who worked behind the scenes or on the platform, the NSRC Planning Team and the amazing Local Arrangements team and folks of Valleyview United for helping us begin in a good way!

by Ruth Lumax, Chairperson of the NSRC

News from the Board

Leslie Verdin has stepped forward and is an acting Regional Representative and will be voted in at the next congregational meeting. She joins R-Ws' other regional representatives Felicia, Trisha-Lee and Tamara.

The Board has responded to feedback from 2018 Fundraising leaders and moved the fund raising calendar to a financial year. On June 23, 2019 a meeting will be held after church to ask planners of fundraisers to coordinate for 2020.

Some standing committees have a representative who reports their work to the Board. Exciting news we have heard so far:

- The Property Committee is all ready to re-new our kitchen and have received approval of their grant requests.
- The Financial Committee has completed a review of policies, procedures and our investment strategies in the midst of changes to CRA regulations and the markets. They now are working on updating things.
- The Ministry and Personnel Committee continue to liaison with our staff to provide both support and supervision.
- That our four representatives to the Northern Spirit Regional Council travelled to Valleyview on our behalf for its inaugural meeting.

Submitted by John Fleming and the Board

Robertson-Wesley United Church is a community walking in the Spirit of Christ: the spirit of wisdom where people are encouraged to learn together and to seek their own spiritual answers.

At Robertson-Wesley we endeavour to be a place of learning and growing, where we are supported in our personal faith journeys and encouraged to think critically about how Christ takes form in the midst of the world.

Source: Robertson-Wesley's Anthem.

The Lawn Swing

By Shirley Campbell-Pearse
Copyright © 1991

The lawn swing
was a magic place,
Where words of appreciation
For nature and God's goodness were spoken.

Family troubles were settled there;
Baby teeth pulled, hurts tended to;
Homework problems solved;
Stars and planets gazed at.

Songs were gleefully sung in harmony;
Sisters and friends giggled
While telling secrets of boyfriends,
And "grown-up" adventures



After supper Mother would come,
Wiping hands on her apron,
To join Dad and children
As the swing creaked under the load.

The rocking back and forth
Soothed day-weary bodies,
Calmed frazzled nerves,
Reminding us of being rocked in loving arms.

Though we all enjoyed this place
Its jurisdiction was my Father's.
His memory is never complete
Without thoughts of that magic swing.

He AND the swing were
Comfortable, strong, soothing,
Always available, ready and willing to hold us
And loved dearly by all of us.

Reflections on Moments of Holy Honesty

Since January, the congregation has been privileged to hear from several members as to how they came to be attending services at Robertson-Wesley (RW) and how that has impacted their faith journey. I have sat up in the choir loft and been amazed and occasionally taken aback by their routes to get here. Some were not accepted in other places and have found an acceptance here. Also, the depth of their faith has been interesting to me, as it has made me think about my own reasons for attending RW services. In reflecting on this, I've realized that when it comes to church, I've always associated it (with varying amounts of weight) to the 3 "F's".

The first of the 3 "F's" is for Family. In service on Sunday, May 12th, Rev. Karen talked quite a bit about the church family. This was timely, given where my thoughts had been as I pondered the Moments of Holy Honesty. I grew up on a farm, in a rural community back in South-western Ontario. And my "church family" was quite literally my *family* (literally more than half the congregation was related to me by blood and another 1/3rd by marriage). As a result, I'm not sure I've really considered "going to church" purely on a religious basis. In fact, the whole religion aspect was probably low in priority for me when attending church (that's kind of *my* holy honesty). Church was much more about seeing family and socializing with them than taking in the word of God. And as it was very based on family, the church was always a "safe space" for me. As a rural kid in the 1970's and 1980's, until you get your driver's license, the only real areas for socialization are school and church. And while I loved the learning part of school, I didn't have the greatest time with regards to the socialization part (lots of teasing as a kid), so not so comfortable there. But at church, I didn't have to worry about that.

I'm a United –Presbyterian hybrid. My family farm was located between two hamlets that had (at least when I was a kid) a general store, a defunct one-room school, and a church associated with them. I was baptized at Anderson United Church, in the hamlet of Anderson (which I always associated with my Dad's side of the family). It closed when I was about 2 years old, and we

then started going to Motherwell-Avonbank Presbyterian Church, associated with the hamlet of Motherwell (where more of my mother's family was/is based around) where I was confirmed. But it was these churches (and as a result, my family) and their approach to the Christian life that has helped shape my thinking about Christianity.

The 2nd "F" that I associate with church is Food. I don't know if it's a rural thing or not, but Church and Food are highly tied together in my mind. Now, I fully admit, it might be because while I might not remember any specific individual church service from my childhood, I do remember all the times we got together to eat (which we did a fair amount). There was the annual Christmas dinner in the lower hall, followed by a Christmas concert put on by the Sunday school classes in the sanctuary. There was the annual Church Bazaar (which consisted of a supper, followed by a guest speaker, and then a combination bake sale, rummage sale and kid's fun zone... It was a bit crazy). And of course, the big Church fundraiser for the year, which was the Chicken BBQ. Even when there was maybe 50 or so regular congregants in the church, we would sell 500-600 tickets to the BBQ (and I would see a lot of extended family members that I might not see on a regular basis – see how I tied the first "F" back there). You would get a quarter or half a chicken, a variety of salads and casseroles, homemade pickles, cheeses, etc. and then head over to one of the big long tables to sit and visit. For dessert, there was always slices of a variety of home-made pies of any variety you could think of, and something I've never seen before or since and have no idea where they got them, but individual-sized cylinders of vanilla ice cream, that was wrapped in brown paper that you had to peel off to get at (yes, I don't remember any sermons from my childhood, but I remember the ice cream...). Needless to say, lots of food associated with church (and I haven't gotten into the other various church activities where food came into it).

Interesting to note, though, we did not do a structured fellowship after church the way we do at R-W. There was a lot of socializing, but no coffee or whatnot. We had a "sister church" because my family church had 1 minister for two congregations. So every Sunday morn-

ing, we would have service first with our minister and then he/she would have to jump in their car and drive over to Avonton Presbyterian for their service. I used to get a bit antsy when R-W church services went for more than an hour as a result (it's just conditioned into me). But I do really appreciate the coffee and food afterwards (thank you, fellowship committee).

Well... Now I've come to the last "F" I associate with church, and probably the one you thought I would go with first, which is Faith. The church of my youth, though being rural, was fairly liberal in its teachings. And as I said earlier, it's very much shaped my approach to Christianity and religion in general. I was not raised to read the Bible with a "literal" approach, but to try to interpret what the message of the bible was trying to tell us.

In my opinion, whether Jesus is the Son of God or not is really not the big thing I take away from the Bible and the various aspects of church. Hear me out... I'm not saying I don't think he's the Son of God, but what I personally think is more important to take away from the Bible is what he tried to teach us about how to treat each other and live good lives. And sometimes, I think, certain strands of Christianity lose sight of that. I remember having this discussion with my Uncle Vernon about this. Now Uncle Vernon has been a farmer for all of his life, and as a result, has what I would call a very realistic/pragmatic view of life (farmers, especially cash-croppers, have to, because they know that it doesn't matter how hard you work, or the hours of the day you put in, one bad rainstorm at the wrong time of year, or one long stretch of really dry weather at another, and your bean/wheat/corn crop will be ruined). Anyway, my Uncle Vernon said to me that the Bible, at least to him, was a really good guide book to being a good person and leading a good moral life. The rules/lessons/parables and such laid out for us a way to treat each other with respect and compassion. And that is, at least to me, what the really important message that Jesus tried to give to us and what we should be concentrating on. I have found, occasionally, people who seem to worry more about **who** Jesus was, as opposed to **what** he tried to impart to us. And in my opinion, that is really missing the point and meaning of his life.

I recently came across a discussion that used a term I haven't seen before (though I admit, I might be really late to the discussion). That term is "Christianism". Christianity is defined as "the religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, or its beliefs and practices." Christianity, per Wikipedia, means particular doctrines of Christianity made into a political system for the pursuit of worldly power. I know Rev. Karen has a fondness for Star Wars, and as a result, I would like to use the metaphor that Christianity is the "dark side", as least in my perspective, of Christianity. I don't think this using religion to justify pursuit of worldly power is only found in Christianity, or that Christians that maybe fall in this realm of Christianity are not devout in their beliefs. But I do think a number of them do take the Bible too literally, and as a result, to use the old adage, "miss the forest for the trees". Again, this is only my personal belief, but if you are using the Bible as your rationale to exclude people, to degrade people, to look down on people, because they don't meet your own personal standards, then you have totally missed the point of what Jesus was trying to teach.

So having outlined my own personal 3 "F's" with regards to church, why have I been attending R-W the last several years? Well, I admit, I first came to sing in the choir. In case you haven't noticed, I like to sing... Maybe not all that well, but it makes me happy. My mother was our organist and choir director at my family church for a time, I've spent way more services in the choir loft than in the pews. And frankly, the choir, outside of being fantastic musicians, are a great bunch of people on a whole. So I have always felt welcome there – it has become one of my "safe spaces."

While that is one part of the reason why I have stayed, the other is that R-W on a whole has the atmosphere and inclusivity which at least seems to have also fallen in line with my own personal belief system when it comes to faith. You are the ones that prove to me on a daily basis that living the message of Christ, and not just giving it lip service while using it as a reason to demean or exclude other people, is what is really important in this life. Honestly, you are now my family, who feeds me with food and faith!

Submitted by Marilee J. Stephens

YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE PLANET

We've heard lots of about the evils of plastic drinking straws. However, all single use plastic items should be eliminated as much as possible. UCW members in Lethbridge started by making and handing shoppers free cloth bags to use for groceries or other products. Did you know it takes a plastic grocery bag 560 to 1,000 years to break down?

We can certainly use recyclable bags but here are 36 other suggestions for getting plastics (covering the size of Texas) from the ocean.

Let's start today to make a better planet.
Submitted by Lorna Berlinguette



Photo: Marco Verch. Used under Creative Commons 2.0.
www.flickr.com/photos/160866001@N07/30170653787

37 ways to shrink your use of Plastic

1. Give up buying beverages in plastic bottles.
2. Stop using disposable cups..." Lug a mug" to meetings and events.
3. Ditch single use straws, lids, stirrers
4. If local coffee shops etc. do not recycle, take the cutlery and other plastics home to recycle.
5. Repurpose plastics you already have at home.
6. Skip the freezer section at the supermarket. Too much packaging.
7. Choose loose produce at the supermarket so you buy only what you need.
8. Fill up on grains, cereals, nuts etc. at bulk bins using your own containers.
9. Shop locally... strive for less packaging.
10. Return plastic containers to farmers markets.
11. Say "NO" to single use check out plastic bags
12. Grow your own food
13. Buy detergent in cardboard boxes. Use soap nuts. Make your own detergent from washing soda, borax and bar soap.
14. Clean your home with vinegar, baking soda, lemon juice or other natural products.
15. Ask for "no plastic please" on your dry cleaning.
16. Line garbage bins with newspaper, paper bags compostable trash bags. Try to compost.
17. Use glass jars for condiments.
18. Use fabric dishcloths rather than synthetics or plastics.
19. For parties use real silverware, glasses, and plates.
20. Insist on real cork in wine bottles
21. For leftovers, cover with a real plate rather than plastic wrap. Use mason jars instead of ziplock bags or Tupperware
22. Use aluminium foil or beeswax coated food wrap.
23. Reuse bread bags for cleaning up after the dog etc.
24. Swear off single use coffee pods.
25. Wear natural organic textiles instead of synthetics
26. Use soap, lotion, shampoo that comes in solid bar form rather than liquids.
27. Avoid cosmetics with microbeads.
28. Use hair and skin care products that come in glass or metal containers.
29. Use paper tape rather than scotch tape when mailing parcels.
30. Use cloth diapers.
31. Unload old electronics in a responsible manner.
32. For difficult to recycle plastics like toothbrushes, cigarette butts, food wraps, beauty products check out TerraCycle
33. Use matches or invest in a refillable lighter instead of disposable lighters
34. Shave with razors that have replaceable blades or use an electric razor
35. Be mindful of plastics in children's and pets' toys, wood or cloth is better.
36. Give up chewing gum.
37. Learn to correctly recycle plastics and be aware as you buy. #1,2,5 are the most recyclable. #3,4,6 are moderately recyclable. #7 is nearly impossible to recycle.

Holy: dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred.

Honest: free of deceit and untruthfulness; sincere.

Psalms

What is the importance of the psalms within the Bible and in Christian scripture? Who or what were they intended for? Why were they written? What forms do they take? Interesting questions to explore while examining the psalms more closely.

The psalms are situated in the third section of the Hebrew Bible, in the Old Testament. The title “psalm” comes from the Hebrew word “Tehillim” meaning “songs of praise” or the Greek “psalmoi” or “psalmos” meaning “instrumental music” or “the words accompanying the music”. Interesting to think that perhaps the music came first and the words were somewhat secondary! The authorship of most of the psalm texts has been ascribed to King David, although modern scholarship shows that they have likely come from several sources.

The psalms are really interesting for their internal divisions and for their categorization. The Book of Psalms can be divided up into five sections – each having its own “doxology” – a short benediction or words of praise. They could be divided up into Psalms 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150. In terms of categories, all the psalms fit into just ten genres: hymns of praise, enthronement psalms, songs of Zion, psalms of lament, songs of trust, sacred history psalms, royal psalms, songs of thanksgiving, wisdom psalms, and liturgies.

Scholars know that the psalms were written originally for singing, and more than a third of the psalms are addressed to the “Director of Music”, so it’s rather appropriate that we sing them, or a part of them, still today. We will focus on the psalms in the June worship services. You will hear read versions with refrains, sung versions, and even instrumental versions. Since the ancient music is lost, the psalms have been a source of inspiration for composers world-wide!

The Psalms are important in Jewish and Christian worship. In the synagogue several psalms are used for daily worship, for Festival days, and for Sabbath worship there is often a Psalm of the Day. Similarly, Christians have organized the psalms into cycles for daily reading/worship or incorporated the psalms into various lectionaries used Sunday by Sunday over a period of three to

four years. In the Orthodox church, the psalms are used in both corporate and personal prayers. Similarly, in the Catholic faith, the psalms have held an important place in the daily and Sunday liturgy. Interestingly, the psalms are also important to Rastafarians and to Muslims. The Quran mentions God giving David the psalms, and a few of the psalms are mentioned several times.

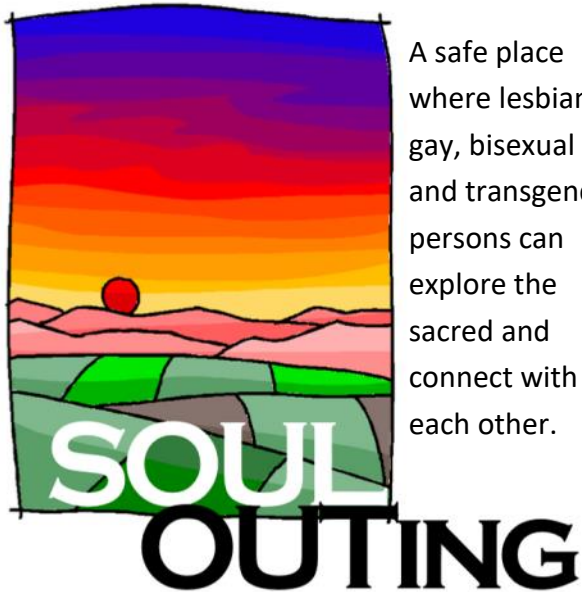
Many psalms have been turned into metrical poetry and set to hymn tunes. This was especially popular from the time of the Reformation. The Reformed traditions accomplished this in many ways. The Calvinists primarily only sang psalms, not hymns, so the metrical psalter was of central importance. The first Genevan Psalter was published in 1539. Various English Psalters, including The Scottish Psalter, came into existence right around the same time, around 1549. In the Anglican church, the Coverdale psalter of the 16th century still lies at the heart of daily worship in many Cathedrals. The Anglicans also use a form of choral singing, called Anglican Chant, where the choir, in their four parts, together in harmony recite the psalm to various simply harmonized melodies. In the Catholic tradition, although psalms have been chanted or sung in various ways, the most common method today is the “responsorial” psalm, which is led by a cantor and a response sung by the congregation.

The psalms have continued to inspire musicians. Bach, Brahms, Stravinsky, Bernstein, Dvorak, and Reich have set psalms to music, and many contemporary popular composers have done the same. As a collection, they have such breadth and depth that it is no wonder that clergy, musicians and worshippers have drawn strength and inspiration from them over the centuries.

Intrigued to know more about the psalms? Keep your ears and eyes open for a short course in the next program year, facilitated by Rev. Leigh and Tammy-Jo!

Submitted by Tammy-Jo Mortensen

Sirach 27:8-9 If you try to be honest, you can be, and it will improve your character as handsome clothing improves your appearance. Birds roost with their own kind, so honesty comes home to those who practice it.



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Deadline for the Fall Edition submissions:

August 11, 2019.

Release date: September 8, 2019.

Psalm 25:21 May my goodness and honesty preserve me, because I trust in you.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BROADVIEW

Broadview, the new title of the United Church Observer—the oldest magazine in Canada, has an exciting focus and layout that you won't want to miss. The first issue includes: 'Parenting and Climate Change'; 'No Vacancy', revealing how small faith-based organizations help refugees navigate Toronto's housing crisis; and a photo documentary of 'Rohingya Girls' living in a refugee camp. It's a mind-expanding dip into world issues.

Submitted by Lorna Berlinguette



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