

Between the Aisles

A Robertson-Wesley United Church Quarterly

SUMMER

Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!

Luke 14:15



Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the summer edition of *Between the Aisles*. Hopefully everyone is still hanging in there and doing well. With the onset of summer, we seem to be finally turning a corner and getting back to a... somewhat normal existence. With a bit of luck, in the next few months, we will have a chance to finally get to see more friends and family members in person.



James Triscott

In this issue, we get a chance to see some truly lovely photographs, provided by Jim Triscott, of the lovely environment around us every day. With the longer days and warmer weather, life really does seem to be coming out “in full bloom” so to speak, and Jim’s photos show us what is all around us, if we just take the time to look.

Also in this edition, Jim provides us with some definitions and facts about Covid-19 that we all need to keep in mind. Brian Webb shares with us a moving description of his spiritual journey, especially with respect to the Easter season, and we have a couple of moving poems, supplied by Jackie Gillis and Vicky Mah.

An update is provided as to the progress of looking for our new Music Director, and the Worship theme is outlined. A really interesting book (which I now fully intend to go out and find) is reviewed by Lois Field, and Lorna Berlinguette reminds us that we all should be checking out *Broadview*, the United Church of Canada’s magazine.

I want to thank all the church staff for all the hard work they have had to put in this past year (and a couple of months) to make sure that the Church has been able to provide the services for our congregation. It’s been an interesting journey to navigate and they have done a great job.

Before I go, I want to remind everyone that while things are looking up, we still have a ways to go before we are all truly safe, so remember to wear a mask when and where advised, keep socially distant, and above all, respect everyone around you. Have a good summer. Take care and stay safe.

Marilee J. Stephens,
Editor



James Triscott

BOOK REVIEW: MY FATHER'S PARADISE

By Ariel Sabah.

A multi generational story of a Kurdish family from northern Iraq, who came from a small town where three religions coexisted peacefully. Along the way we learn about the founding of the state of Israel and the family's almost forced emigration there. The father eventually studies in the U.S. and becomes a professor at a California university, where he is a much respected native speaker of Aramaic, the language of Jesus. His son Ariel, who was born in the US and works as a journalist, writes this memoir as retribution for the fact that he used to, as a teenager, ridicule his father for his strange ways, as all teenagers sometimes do. A well written and fascinating story.

Submitted by: Lois Field

How to Widen our Insights

Do I dare say *Broadview* is one of the best things that's happened to the United Church-in fact to all Canadian churches, to all readers. It's not reserved for us alone. It's sold in newsstands.

Broadview is a magazine that lives up to its name. It takes a broad view of life and expands our knowledge and our attitude. It challenges. It has the power of punch- both intellectually and emotionally. Its visuals knock you off the page.

In the June issue alone, articles included the trailblazing journey of a transgender priest; a woman who forgave her daughter's murderer; a justice issue on the Uyghurs, a Muslim minority being decimated in northern China; a letter from a hostage to an inmate and what Canada is doing (or not) for its citizens captured in other parts of the world; Gibson's Landing, now known internationally not for *The Beachcombers*, but for choosing to build *nature-built solutions* for the ecology into its city budget; and for the updated rescue of our beloved Naramata Centre.

It's the modern upsweep from the over 190-year-old *United Church Observer*; but it's for the 21st century. It's something we all must order.

Submitted by: Lorna Berlinguette



How to Begin Again:

you pull on your favourite oversized hoodie
and remember how to breathe.

“she’s gone” – you cry and grieve the girl that was
you let yourself feel.

then, you bake brownies and unroll the mat

“she was a warrior” –

and you are a Warrior II

you touch the pictures on the wall

everything you’ve built when you were broken

you consider tearing them down

but your People, smiling out to you

and the blue, plastered through with courage and truth

you stuff your clothes into a body bag

and see God through your tears

because They were with you always

I found Them in my uncle’s flowers

and in my church’s prayers

They helped me choose the Bread of Life

(and today, I’ll eat the good whole slice)

I thank the girl I was

and I begin again.

Written by: Vicky Mah

A Journey:

Seven years ago, through taking care of my aged mother, I began a journey back to the practice of my faith. I had stopped practicing it in late adolescence as I discovered my sexuality, realizing I was not welcome in the church. But, I never stopped praying to God, my Heavenly Father. I had faith but couldn't practice it in a public way as an equal member of a church community.

Four years ago this August, I met my spiritual advisor, which is what I call him even though our relationship started from the point of view as him being my spiritual director. He has been most instrumental in guiding me on the spiritual path I presently trod. Three years ago, I met Reverend Karen Bridges who has also impacted my journey in very positive ways.

Last year during the Season of Lent, through my spiritual advisor, I committed myself to working through a practice of daily prayer based on Bible readings, meditation and contemplation, and journaling. It was a very strong experience, and I was quite worked up as we entered Holy Week. On Good Friday, I got up and did my prayer reading. When I came to the third time I read the scripture, I feel I had an authentic transfer from meditation to contemplation in the Ignatius sense. I was there with my whole being. And, I was more than humbled as I experienced Mary, The Mother of Jesus, witness the torture and execution of her Son. I then experienced Rev. Karen's Good Friday service, where I became even more worked up. Finally, I listened to Pergolesi's Stabat Mater and a contemporary composition of it by Schnittke. I became hysterical. I was weeping and I couldn't stop. I felt as though I was on the edge of the abyss. I was afraid. I retreated to my bed and didn't get up until the next morning, still afraid by what I had been through. Easter Sunday though, gave me huge relief as I first experienced Rev. Leigh's Sunrise Service and then Rev. Karen's Church Service. It was the first time where I feel I truly experienced in a physical sense the LIGHT that is Jesus!

This season, I decided to go through the same practice of Lent with one addition...I read my journal from last year each day noting how I had changed, where I had been really neurotic[!] and where I had displayed a certain insight! I was very happy that I was able to join my Church Community at R-W for the Holy Week Services, 4 of the 5

offered to the congregation. Rev. Sally asked me to join she and Karen as a participant in the Last Supper Service. I was able to sit behind the pulpit with Rev. Karen, in the midst of the Bell Choir that played so beautifully. The ringing of the bells reverberated through my body. I felt them in my gut. When it came time for the cleansing, I held the hand sanitizer [a Covid restriction] and squeezed the liquid into Karen's hands and then she did the same for me. Performing this ritual helped me to embody the meaning of the ritual. I was thankful that Rev. Sally took us through a Seder as it reminded me that Jesus of Nazareth was an Orthodox Jew breaking bread with his friends at the time of Passover. As I like to do after a service, I walked home to meditate on what I had just experienced. I read the Gospels on this momentous event of Jesus' journey to where he was betrayed, charged, convicted, humiliated and tortured.

The next morning, I returned for the Good Friday Service, the ritual that through our collective faith, we meditate on the execution of Jesus, this most amazing man who embodies THE WORD MADE FLESH. I had done my morning prayer exercise, praying with scripture and then writing in my journal, developing answers to the same questions as the year before. The questions were the same, but my answers were not.

Once again the music at this service was instrumental in developing our collective meditation. I was most moved that included in the music was "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord"... Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. This beautiful spiritual always takes me to a place of embodiment. I feel it deep in my gut. The choir, a quartet of voices socially distanced on the balcony, filled the space, our space, my space, helping me to embody this horror filled day. I can still see Rev. Karen at the end of the service cover the table and the Bible on it with a black cloth of mourning. I continued my love affair with the Stabat Mater after I walked home, this year concentrating on Arvo Part's amazing composition from 1985. Yes I cried, but I was not hysterical. I was sad. I was moved by the beauty of the music as each work in its own way, meditated on the brutality of Jesus' mother witnessing her Son's torture and execution. On Saturday, I returned to R-W once more for the Holy Saturday Service. I feel that this day and the service that focuses it, personifies what it means to be alive in a liminal space, a personal space of neither here nor there, a space that cannot be easily defined, just as there is no such thing as a

shore line when the water continually goes in and out, eroding whatever semblance of a line there may have been. Brenda greeted me at the church door as usual, Rev. Karen was there, as was Erin to provide the music. But I was the only one who attended without a role to play in the church service. I sat in the front pew, and I responded during the service. The intimacy between us all was palpable.. as Karen led the service, Erin sang and I responded. I was in a most privileged position participating in the intimacy of that moment. Rev. Karen did much of the service on her knees in front of the table with one of her hands placed upon it. She embodied that space of liminality so simply and so powerfully. Her authentic gesture embraced me, and I joined with her in her mourning. My walk home that evening was rich as I found myself walking in the evening air, looking but not really seeing, simply being... without forcing my presence, contemplating the presence of My Lord in my life, emptying myself so that He might enter my heart. This is embodiment. It wasn't an out of body experience. It was a super body experience. After both of these services, silence was paramount to the embodiment I was experiencing.

In the morning, Easter Sunday, I read and meditated on the discovery of the rolling away of the rock covering the entrance to the tomb, of the angels who spoke to the women, of the miracle that has taken place...Jesus is risen. For the fourth day, I made my way to R-W. The service was glorious as it began with a series of Hallelujahs. Isn't that how heaven is described...as a never ending hallelujah! And, we all shouted it in response to Rev. Karen's cries of joy. Jesus Christ is risen. He is no longer Jesus of Nazareth, He is Jesus The Christ. Jesus, that young man from Nazareth who to this day challenges us to action, was referred to so beautifully by Rev. Sally when she spoke of Martin Luther King Jr., this man who through his words and his actions challenges us, challenges me to peacefully, take action. In this moment, I feel she fused together my faith with my secular life. On this Easter Sunday, there were more people in church than had been for many weeks and even many more participated in the service on line. But, for me, I was there. I was there fully, embodying my faith, and I liked it. The bells, the organ playing were magnificent as they contributed to the wild joy of celebration...Jesus Christ is risen.

I am most thankful for the concepts that Rev. Karen put forward to the congregation of Robertson-Wesley at the beginning of Lent and then Holy Week... liminality

and embodiment. Liminal, that space between one state and another, that place of being neither here nor there, neither this nor that. That place of potential transformation. Dare I say, that place between life and death. Embodiment, that place where I am made whole standing firmly but gently on the earth. That place where actions speak louder than words. That place where I unite each element of myself. Where I become a united whole. Centred. I now feel that these two concepts were key to my journey. They encouraged me to stay the course and to participate with commitment and love.

This is my journey. Shortly after Holy Week, I had a conversation with Rev. Karen where I realized that she had also been on a journey, and that we had witnessed each other's journeys. I learned that this is one of the things that is so important for me regarding 'going to church!'... that I join with other individuals in community in the worship of God, and in acknowledging each other's faith journey. Yes, in my prayer practice, I work in a particular way over and over to reach a certain place in my faith. What it is I don't know. And, I don't care. Why? Because, I am on my way. Because, I have faith! I have faith that through Jesus who is my light, I walk more lovingly on the Earth. Of course, it is a practice. I do it over and over again to do it right, until it becomes spontaneous, without hesitation. That's what practice is. Doing it over and over again. In my Bible prayer study I may sometimes work with the same scripture reading for days, even weeks and then repeat it again the next year. I've learned that the reading always stays the same, it is me who is different with each reading, and sometimes that is humiliatingly evident in my journal!

This faith journey is humbling. I love it. I love it as surely as I love the rituals I participate in at church, particularly when I receive communion, and I journey back to the Last Supper where I am challenged with the concept of Jesus breaking the bread and saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." and of taking the cup and saying, "This cup is the new testament of my blood, which is shed for you." [Luke 22]. The practice of it, doing it over and over again, makes it spontaneously fulfilling. That's why I believe all peoples the world over rely on ritual to keep their faith alive. Practice and ritual embody our faith and encourage us to move through that liminal space of being neither here nor there but centred in faith.

Submitted by: Brian Webb



The search for the next Music Director has started:

Music is a large part of the Robertson-Wesley United Church experience, and the music director an important part of the R-W Staff. A search committee has been working hard to find our next music director. The committee is comprised of Arleen Drysdale, Robert Klakowich, Marilee Stephens (chair), Heather Warkentin, and Margery Wright, with Brian Webb acting as the committee’s liaison with the R-W Board.



For the last couple of months, we have been busy putting together an advertisement, which has been placed in various electronic job posting boards related to church music and organists, as well as various other church-related message boards. We have also put together a job description, which are being sent out to anyone who expresses interest in the position. We have set up an email address for job applicants to send their resumes to (musicjobs@rwuc.org), and we have set a deadline for applications as May 31st, 2021.



Starting in June, we will start the process of going through the applications, checking references, and setting up interviews and auditions for potential applicants. We hope to be able to put a successful applicant forward to the board early in the summer.



We look forward to having a new Music Director start at Robertson-Wesley in the fall. Being able to meet together in person again, to share and appreciate the joy that music provides and supports in our spiritual journeys is something that I know I have been missing. Hopefully at the end of this rather dark time in our collective experience, we will be able to use music to unite us again in worship.

Submitted by: Marilee Stephens
(Chair: Robertson-Wesley United Church Music Director Search Committee)



James Triscott

Worship Theme: Theological Banquet

The Season of Pentecost

Come to the banquet all ye faithful people and feast on the fruits of diversity. It says in *A Song of Faith*, “The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy not only in what is familiar, but also in that which seems foreign... The wholeness of scripture testifies to the oneness and faithfulness of God. The multiplicity of scripture testifies to its depth: two testaments, four gospels, contrasting points of view held in tension – all a faithful witness to the One and Triune God, the Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.”

Janet Gear, a professor from the Vancouver School of Theology points out that in faith, “we tend to assume that we all speak the same language about God and what it means to be a church community, active in the world.” This is not true, which is why we sometimes feel at odds with others we worship and work with. She has created a resource, that we will explore as we enter the season of Pentecost, which she entitles “The Theological Banquet.” This resource provides language and a way of looking at ourselves and the faith community in which we live, and helps us identify how we live out our faith in the church, our lives and the world. “Its purposes are to affirm and articulate the lived faith of those in your community, to deepen an appreciation of theological differences within a community of faith, and to build capacity for theological interpretation of community life.”

We shall discover how we live our faith, and what God is doing and how. Be ready to pay attention, and notice, and learn from all the people at the banquet, for we cannot live without each other. We are all children of God.

Submitted by: Rev. Karen Bridges and Rev. Sally Boyle



COVID TALK MADE SIMPLE

Generally Speaking

COVID 19 is a highly contagious infectious disease, caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2), that had been transmitted from an animal to a human. It has then spread rapidly to the rest of the human population. It spreads exponentially via air or on material surfaces, and affects a person's respiratory system and subsequently to other related body systems; such as the blood, heart, kidney, and brain systems. It has 'flu' like symptoms which affect individuals to various degrees. Two of the most notable properties of COVID 19 is its extreme ability to spread to a population quickly; and that it is particularly deadly to seniors and those with immune compromised health. One hundred and thirty-seven million people have been infected to date, of which three million have died worldwide. This has occurred even with preventive measures such as masking, social distancing, extensive cleaning, shutting down of social gatherings and the start of travel restrictions.



Since late in 2020, COVID viruses have started to mutate, with a characteristic of spreading even faster.

Metaphorically, the COVID virus behaves as follows: the air born virus is drawn into the human

lungs, right into the lungs' alveoli themselves. The spikes on the COVID virus has proteins that can penetrate the alveoli cell membranes and copy itself in the alveolus lung tissue. Simply put, the COVID virus starts copying itself by living off the lung tissues of the human host. When the human host's immune system detects the COVID intruder, the immune system

sends white blood defence cells to destroy the COVID invader. Thus, inside the body, a war of dominance is taking place. There is a lot of tissue swelling, fluid and contaminant build-up occurring as the battle rages. If there are enough immune cells, the COVID intruder will eventually be destroyed, most often with medical intervention. Unfortunately, people with weaker immune systems, such as seniors or others with various medical conditions, can not produce enough immune cells, and the COVID virus damages the body's other systems until the human host weakens and dies. The 'battle' between COVID and immune cells can last a very short time, or a very long time, with the results of prolongation of health issues, sometimes for life - the Long Haulers.

COVID Long Haulers: People with long term consequences from the COVID 19 disease. They must have symptoms extending over 3 months. Unfortunately, some individuals have symptoms lasting much longer, possibly for life.

COVID Plus

COVID Plus is a term used to describe the measures that need to be used in addition to the vaccines to limit the spread of the corona virus. Measures such as wearing masks, social distancing (two meters), cleaning surfaces and limiting close contact with other individuals has been the norm since March 2020. With the advent of the vaccines many people have the misunderstanding that we will be able immediately shed our masks, disregard social distancing and go back to our per COVID behavior. Not so.

The vaccines will only reduce the 'chances' that an individual may contract COVID. The chance of catching COVID depends on the vaccine improving an individual's immune system. Therefore, getting a vaccine with eighty percent protection still means that a person stands a twenty percent chance of catching the COVID virus. Even for those unfortunate enough to have had COVID already, they can catch it again. If that isn't enough, a person can have COVID with or without the vaccine, and still be a carrier and thus infecting others! Therefore, until there is 'herd immunity' built up in our populations, the virus will not be terminated.

Herd Immunity

Herd Immunity means that with as many people as possible getting the vaccine, and continuing with the other preventive measures describe earlier; the opportunity for the COVID virus to infect others will be so limited that the virus will die off from lack of hosts to survive in. To date no one knows how long the precautions will be required; or even if the vaccinations will become an annual or only a one-time event. Assuming with the vaccines, masking, social distancing/isolation and cleaning, herd immunity becomes effective – then will we be able to go back to our former behavior? Yes – until the next zoonosis event occurs!

Future Prevention

Due to the environmental consequences of global human behavior: such as over population, infringing on the world's environment, extensive travel to far distant shores by boat and planes accelerating the spread of diseases; as well as international governmental inaction in regards to developing science to resist infectious diseases and establishing standards for control the spread of zoonosis infections worldwide - the current restrictive lifestyle we are experiencing may last much longer and occur more often.

The irony of the COVID-19 event is that it illustrates that the attitude of humans thinking we are so powerful and smart is incorrect – in reality humans are very fragile, vulnerable and unable to modify their global behavior; and the mighty virus just doesn't care.

Submitted by: Jim Triscott



James Triscott



James Triscott

Guilty

There won't be world peace
Because fighting amongst ourselves
will never cease

A blood stained history
Truth's shrouded in secrecy
It is an unsolved mystery

We are all in the same boat
Struggling to stay afloat
Humanity is sinking
What are we thinking?

When will we realize
That we're contributing towards the world's demise
We need to open our eyes

We are all the same
So there is no passing the blame
This right here is true
I am just as guilty as you

Written by: Jackie Gillis

Streaming Now

AFFIRMING COFFEE HOUR

NEW Day! Affirming Ministries invites you to bring your coffee and join Shylo for his online Affirming Coffee Hour! On Zoom every **Wednesday** from 11:00 am - Noon. This is a chance for connection of LGBTQIA2S+ folks and allies who want to learn more, ask questions, engage in thoughtful discussions, and socialize! Email: affirming.ministries@rwuc.org for the link!

SPIRITED ART STUDIO

The Spirited Art studio is a place for people to explore art and connect with each other in an informal creative environment. Tune in any time and try out different art-making processes, facilitated by Laura David Foster. Visit rwuc.org/spirited-arts-movement to register for the Zoom. **Mondays** from 7:00–8:30 pm and **Wednesdays** from 1:30-3:00 pm.

HYMN SING

Join Erin Craig at noon on the first and third Fridays of each month for Hymn Sing on rwuc.org/live or on Facebook. Tune in to listen to your favorite hymns and sing along in the comfort of your own home!

ADULT STUDY GROUP

You are invited to join Rev. Sally on **Wednesdays** from 10:30-12:00 pm in a discussion of a variety of biblical themes. The current study is entitled *Living The Questions*. It is a study which is both old and new again. It will, possibly, introduce participants to a new way of looking at the Bible and the stories that are the foundation of our faith. Contact the office to be added to the Zoom list. email: mail@rwuc.org

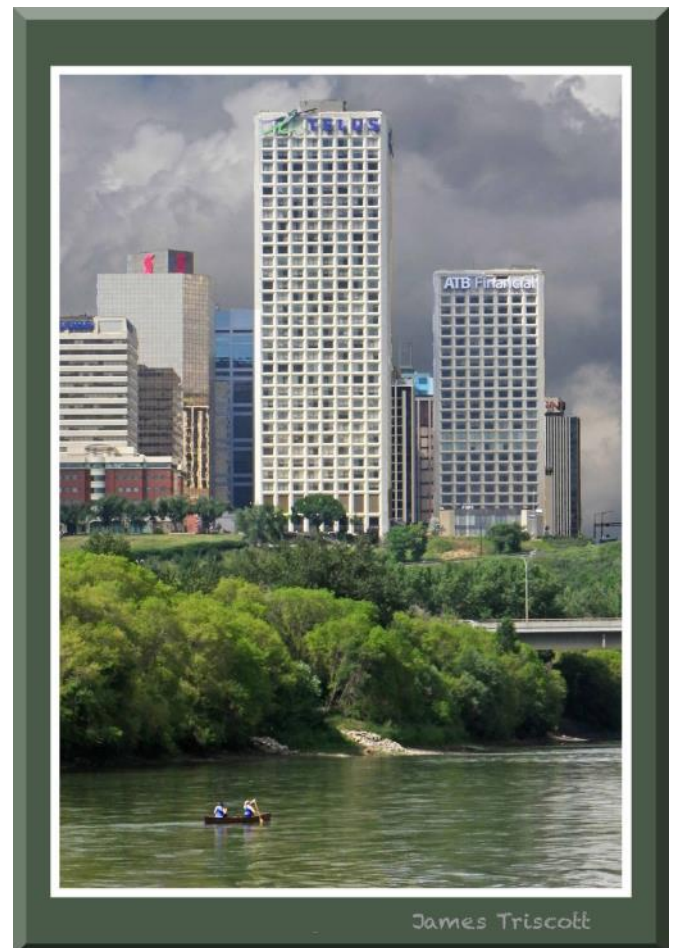
SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Join Rev. Karen Bridges by visiting rwuc.org/live or on Facebook. **Tuesdays** at 12:00 pm, to reflect on the scripture passages for the upcoming Sunday. We are using the practice of Lectio Divina which means we read through the scripture three times. You will be invited into some moments of silence, and if you are willing you are invited to share with the group. You don't need to be a Biblical Scholar. God speaks through the scriptures and it is always wonderful to hear the diversity of messages that are received. Come watch with a bible and a journal, or simply yourself! Tune in when you can.

WRITE FOR BTA

Do you write poetry? Have you read a life-changing book lately? Do you have a faith question you are exploring or a passion you want to share? Then why not submit something for inclusion in the church's quarterly newsletter *Between the Aisles?* For publication requirements, see www.rwuc.org/between-the-aisles.

Deadline for the
Fall Edition submissions:
August 22, 2021
Release date: **September 5, 2021.**



James Triscott

Worship during COVID update

Robertson-Wesley has returned to in person worship at the church, following current government restrictions of 15% capacity. We continue to follow the rules and protocols set out by the province. The health and wellness of our congregation is our top priority. Please note we will continue live streaming as well.



Environmental Stewardship Activities

Over the past few months, the Mission and Outreach Pod has explored Environmental Stewardship as an area of ministry. We have discovered that our community has a great passion for "living with respect in Creation"! This June, the Pod is excited to host a weekly series of activities to prompt reflection on the deep connections between our faith and the environment, as well as to learn practical ways to care for Creation. Join us immediately after worship on the church front lawn for the following socially distanced activities. Please note that plans are dependent on weather and COVID restrictions.

June 6th - Horticultural Walk and Talk: Join Tony Jansen on a brief walk around the church and Oliver neighborhood to learn about the horticultural features of the area, as well as to ponder what plants and trees might be telling us about our faith. If you wish, bring a drink/snack for a socially distanced picnic at Paul Kane Park afterwards.

June 13 - Group Walk Kick-Off: We will be starting a group walk practice this summer, with the goal of reflecting on Creation together. June 13th will be our kick-off, with a short walk around the Oliver neighborhood. Bring your walking shoes!

June 20 - Hybrid Car Presentation and Demonstration: Have you ever wanted to look under the hood of a hybrid car? Are you curious about fuel efficient vehicles? Come on out for information regarding hybrid cars and a hybrid car demonstration!

June 27 - Living with Birds: Join Lynn and Arnold Maki for a short walk and chat about local birds and the wisdom they share with us about life. Bring binoculars if you have them, but this is not necessary.

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