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MUSINGS - PATRICK PREHEIM

RELIGION IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY (PART 1)

Inside

Musings	1
From the Board	2
Church Family News	3
Garry's Indigenous Journey	4
Patty's Picks	5
Y Walk: Year in Review	6
Dedication & Transfer	8
Venture Club Update	9
Bumbling Error Helps ...	10

On December 9, 2013, I attended a forum Bishop Don Bolan convened to explore the following topic—Faith in the Public Sphere: Discerning a constructive place for religion in a healthy pluralistic society. The evening theme seemed to resonate with a number of our visionary intentions, so braving the cold I made my way to the downtown library.

The place was packed; standing room only for the late comers. Eight individuals from a variety of faith traditions (including Philosophy professor George Williamson representing the Centre for Inquiry Saskatchewan which promotes secularism, separation of church and state, science, reason and free inquiry) were given seven minutes to address the question. As each spoke I found myself formulating my Mennonite response had I been asked to share.

And then Heather Fenyes, the former president of the Congregation Agudas Israel, spoke. Her reflections and my hastily assembled thoughts tracked a nearly identical path. A few of Ms Fenyes' words bear repeating:

“We Jews call prayer Avodah she-valev. This is defined as the “work inside your heart.” Jewish prayer is composed of praise, thanksgiving and petition. It is by definition more than worship alone, because the word “avodah” means “work.” For me, this active “prayer” happens whenever we engage in social justice or, in what we call in Hebrew, tikkun olam: the act of repairing our world. When we come together to do good, as Martin Buber says, G-d is in the room. Therefore, when we are trying to find the role of prayer and religious symbol outside our places of worship, I would like to suggest that first we need to create a distinction between the kind of prayer that happens within our communities and the kind of “pray of action” that I think belongs outside in the public sphere. By “praying through our deeds” we are creating the largest possible tent of inclusion.”
(Her full text can be found at the following address: www.cija.ca/community/partners/active-prayer-engaging-in-social-justice)

I found her carefully chosen words right on the mark. In a future editorial I will return to this topic and tease out my thoughts about the attitude we take as we pray through our deeds. And the attitude with which we approach service will shape the language we use to describe ourselves in a pluralistic society. All good grist for the mill, but for another day.

FROM THE BOARD

By Trish St. Onge

Happy New Year! 2014 will be another year of opportunity to grow and learn together.

It has been one year since the NPMC Board of Directors met to imagine possibilities for the future. This was a productive effort allowing us to articulate and begin to put into practice eight visionary intentions. Each deacon has worked hard to creatively integrate their planning and activities into the broader value of working together and to strive to be what the congregation and community need us to be.

This year we hope to continue to put these visionary intentions into practice. We will be taking an evening in January to reflect on the previous year and to plan for

the coming year. This evening will not only provide an opportunity to discuss and strategize our ideas, but to put into practice what we envision. Intentions create the foundation for us, but action generates change. The following quote is one I use to remind myself of this – “the smallest good deed is better than the grandest good intention.” Thinking about things is not enough.

As always I welcome any comments – positive or not from you the congregation. Although the board comes together to plan, it is the congregation that brings life to the effort.

Our congregation is blessed in many ways – thank you all for your investment in church life. We have much to be grateful for.

VISIONARY INTENTIONS

1. Caring, Respectful and Inviting Culture
2. Passionate Christ-Centered Commitment to Our Anabaptist Values
3. Vibrant Intergenerational Congregational Life
4. Nurturing and Joyful Worship
5. Relevant and Meaningful Programs for Congregation and Local Community
6. Community Service and Engagement
7. Openness to and Understanding of the Diversifying Community
8. Generous and Willing Sharing of Gifts



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Submit photographs, articles, funeral tributes, recipes or other items to the editor: **Lori Weiler-Thiessen** – 933.0285 or loriwt60@gmail.com. **Items for the next issue are due March 4.**

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

JOYS

Welcoming into our congregation

- Marie Little
- Matt Wien
- Emma, Matt and Tom Love
- Simon Leis

Lydia & Peter Schroeder's granddaughter Ella Grace

Diane & Peter Hooge and family on the birth of Ethan Jacob

Two great Granddaughters, Taryn and Katharina, and a great grandson Aron for Magdalena Andres

Great Grand parents Erna and Elmer Neufeld on the birth of twins Mattaeo and Alyssa

Great Grandfather Jac Nickel on the arrival of twins Oliver and Dyson

All those who serve on Committees of the church and who give time and talents to the many outreaches of our church

Marg and Wally Krause's son Brian feeling well again

The beauty of our sanctuary during the Advent and Christmas seasons

Hillary Fast qualified to compete in the Olympic Trials in speed skating over the holidays in Calgary. She achieved two personal best times and looks forward to the rest of the season.

Dave and Marlene Froese experienced a miracle in Dave's health which has improved. They are very grateful for a wonderful church community and the support that was given.

Alan Reese had open heart surgery in December. He is making progress in his recovery and thanks the congregation for their prayers.

Valerie Epp would like to thank all those who visited, called and sent cards while she was in hospital and recovering at home.

SORROWS

The family of Walter Thiessen

The family of Dennis Hagen

The family of Dell Pugh

The family of Ronald Klassen

The family of John Elias (Sr)

Mabel and Walter Wall on the many losses they have experienced

The family of Murray Arnold

The family of Anna Enns

The family of Albert Martens

The family of David Dick

PRAYERS

Evelyn Schellenberg has returned home and asks that we continue to remember her and John in our prayers.

Our ongoing prayer support is very much appreciated my Wally and Anita Nickel. Wally enjoys company but please call Anita beforehand before visiting. Her number is 306- 374-1266.



GARRY'S INDIGENOUS JOURNEY - PART 2

By Garry Koop

George Armstrong Custer, commander of the United States Cavalry, was a very arrogant man. He was given orders to lead 700 men, 150 heavy wagons and many pack mules. He had political ambitions to become the President of the United States. He thought that he would improve his chances by coming known as an Indian fighter. Due to the very poor scouting reports, he came up to an Indian village that was on the banks of the Big Horn River. He was told that there were about 700 people in this village including women and children. He divided his troops into three groups and prepared to attack from three sides of the village. What he didn't know was that there were about 1500-2000 warriors coming from behind to attack his troops. Before he could attack the village, the Indians attacked from behind. The ensuing battle lasted for two and one-half hours, His troops were overrun with 557 of his soldiers lost. The attacking Indians lost 150 warriors. These figures are estimated on the internet and are different on each web site.

There had been five or six such battles in the area of the Mid Northwest, the area known as "Sioux country" (an area south of Canada, east of the Rocky Mountains, north of Texas and west of the Mississippi).

The Indians of the area were very restless for four reasons.

1. The lack of food as buffalo were being massacred at a very high rate due to buffalo hunters
2. The Gold Rush in California, which caused many, many wagon trains to cross their land without permission
3. The breaking of all treaties again and again with settler towns encroaching further west into their land
4. And finally a railroad track that was built by eastern entrepreneurs because of the gold rush (I have read

that herds of buffalo did not cross a railroad bed, further causing disruption to seasonal migration.)

Now what does this attack have anything to do with the Dakota people of Whitecap just south of Saskatoon?

After the attack, the people of the Northern Cheyenne, Dakota and Lakota tribes fled to Saskatchewan over the Canadian border. The leaders like Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and Chief Whitecap Senior stayed in Canada for a few years until all returned to the United States except the Dakota people.

What most people don't know is that the Dakota were presented a medal by the British government for their efforts during the War of 1812. This war was won by the British mainly due to the Indian involvement. Sir Isaac Brock, Commanders of the British forces and Chief Tecumseh, leader of all the Indian Nations fought against the Americans. These men became fast friends – both were six feet, six inches tall, which made them giants in their day. Both were killed in this conflict.

One of the most interesting facts I learned in my research was that in the middle of the War of 1812, the British Navy sailed into the Harbour of Washington DCmarched up the middle of Main Street to the "White House"burnt it to the ground, stayed a week and then left. This caused the most devastating and disheartening times of this War.

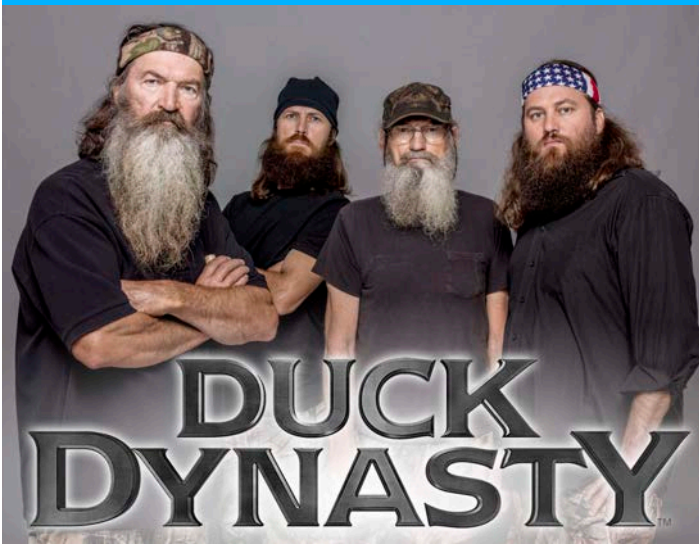
For their efforts, the Dakota people were given a medal from the British government and they were able to stay in Canada. The medal at Whitecap has been lost..

My next submission will relate to how the Whitecap Dakota reservation came about.

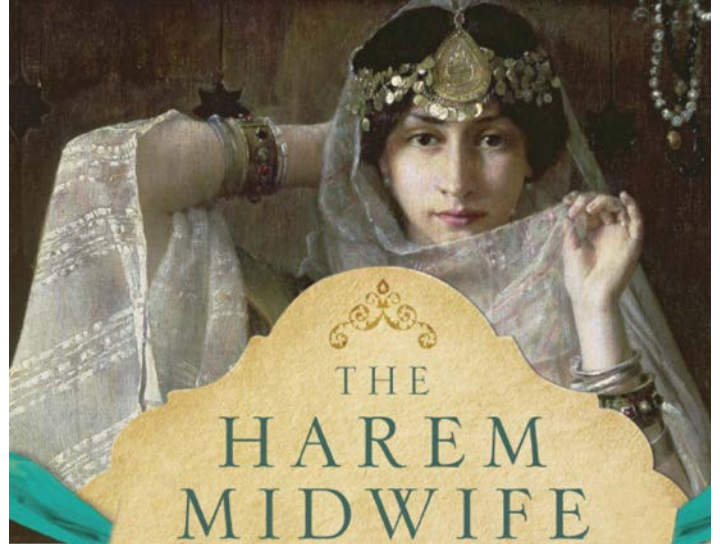


PATTY'S PICKS

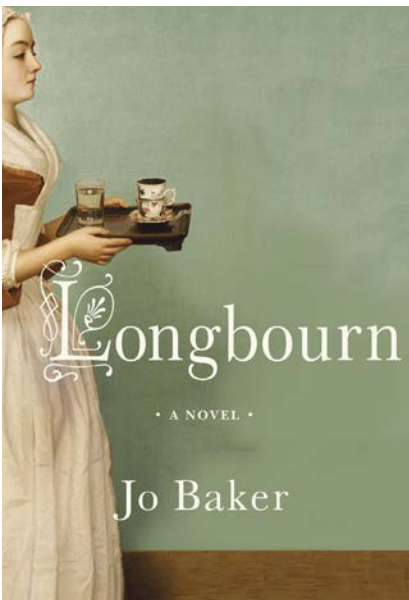
By Patty Friesen



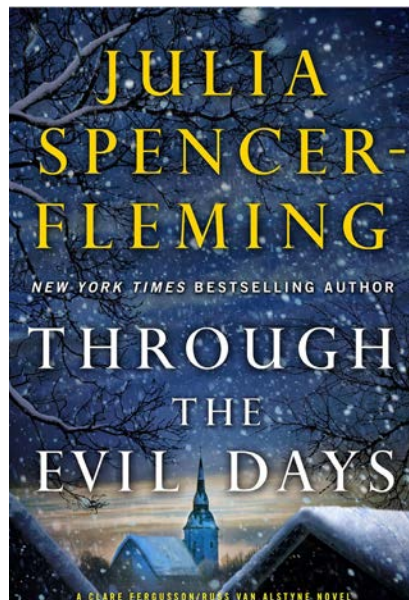
Duck Dynasty (DVD) is funny and touching as each episode ends with a family prayer around the table.



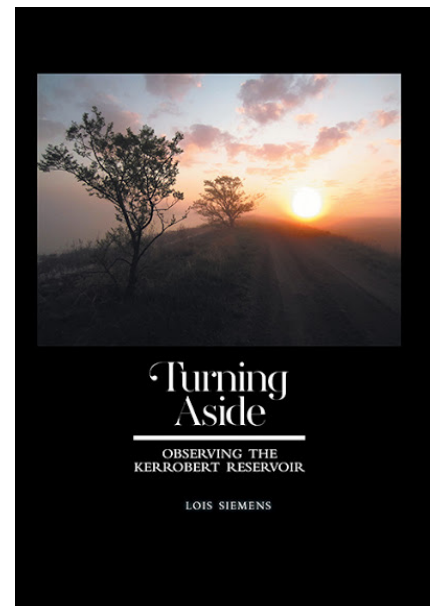
The Harem Midwife by Roberta Rich was as engaging as her first *Midwife of Venice*.



Longbourn by Jo Baker is a potent mix of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Downton Abbey*.



Through the Evil Days is Julia Spencer-Fleming's engaging new novel in the Russ and Clare series.



Turning Aside by Lois Siemens is a delightful photographic journey through the seasons of the Kerrobert Reservoir.

Y WALK: A YEAR IN REVIEW

By Sarah Unrau

Since September, the Youth Program has been marching forward with a full schedule. Here is what we have been up to!

My intention was to incorporate as many of the Visionary Goals into our program as possible. We have explored how the youth can contribute to Nurturing and Joyful Worship, Generous and Willing Sharing of Gifts, Relevant and Meaningful Programs for Congregation & Local Community. By participating in volunteer opportunities such as gift wrapping at Midtown Plaza for Ronald McDonald House, babysitting for young families and creating videos for the congregation the youth have connected to these goals. Our youth have also had opportunities to participate in the Jr. High Retreat, the Sr. Youth backyard movie night, harvesting the church's garden, the annual Halloween party, the SMYO youth extravaganza, the annual Christmas party and the Youth Overnighter. These activities have kept us busy and engaged!

In addition to the events listed above, the Youth take time to meet together every Tuesday for meaningful conversation. With the aid of a curriculum called Shocking and Scandalous Stories from the Bible we have been delving into some of the stranger plots in the Bible. Stories of Cain and Abel, Korah and the rebellion against Moses, Saul and the Witch of Endor, David and Bathsheba, Ahab and Jezebel, Esther and Xerxes have been our topics of conversation. We try to figure out why these recounts of murder, cheating, lying, stealing, oppression, jealousy, witch craft and destruction are featured in our Bible. It has been interesting to see the Biblical history played out through kings and leaders who are struggling to justly uphold their positions of power - some of whom have been appointed by God - only to get caught up in temptations of their positions.

I look forward to what the new year brings and the ways in which we will continue to embrace the Visionary Goals set before us as a youth group.



Overnighter Photo by Sarah Unrau



Babysitting Photo by Sarah Unrau



Fall Festival Photo by Sarah Unrau



Bible Skit Rehearsal Photo by Sarah Unrau

BABY DEDICATION & MEMBERSHIP TRANSFER

October 13, 2013. Photos by Howard Giles



Marie



Matt



Marie, Ben and Simon



Anita, Marie, Patrick and Matt before the start of the service.



Tammy Forrester officially welcoming everyone

VENTURE CLUB UPDATE

By Arnie Neufeld

There are 26 energetic kids involved in Venture Club this year. We have continued on with our general theme from last year "Enough for All." At the start of each session we have been singing, then focus on building self-esteem and practicing virtues.

On November 25th we ended the first term by going to Elmwood Lodge where we shared cookies and sang Christmas carols with the residents.

Our annual bake sale/fundraiser raised \$781, and Rebecca was the proud winner of the advent calendar (generously donated by Val Epp). We are grateful for the support from the congregation!

We look forward to the winter session of Venture Club!



Singing at Elmwood Lodge

BUMBLING ERROR HELPS BREAK BARRIERS

By Jim Taylor



Forty years ago, I was a young journalist, sent to the landlocked and desperately poor nation of Malawi, in Central Africa, to help the churches there tell their story to the world.

The country's churches -- including the Roman Catholics and Pentecostals -- had set aside their doctrinal differences to work together through an organization called the Christian Service Committee (CSC). Part of their goal was simply to avoid duplicating efforts -- to ensure that the Presbyterians and Lutherans and Catholics didn't all solicit funds from the same overseas donor with conflicting claims.

I arrived in Malawi to discover that the man who had arranged for my visit wasn't there. His assistant decided that if I was going to write about CSC projects, I should see them first hand. He put me into the back of a Nissan station wagon, along with a Malawian staff driver, photographer, and guide, plus a tent, four sleeping bags, and a picnic basket.

For two weeks, we travelled through the country. I got to see how donor organizations in England, Germany, and Canada helped to build medical clinics, provide clean drinking water, plant trees, equip schools, train farmers, and teach nutrition. At night, we found accommodation wherever we could -- in guest houses, nunneries, schools, or medical clinics. Several times, we simply set up our tent beside a dusty back road, on the shores of a lake, or in a school playground.

Two weeks in close proximity like that can make or break relationships. In this case, fortunately, we became friends.

One afternoon, we swirled down a winding dirt road into an idyllic valley. A neat whitewashed farmhouse stood beyond a manicured green lawn, tucked under the shoulder of a rocky ridge. Multi-coloured bougainvillea climbed the walls; blue jacaranda blossoms echoed the sky above.

The missionary was a white Afrikaner, sent to Malawi by the Dutch Reformed Church, the most powerful bulwark of apartheid in South Africa. Proudly he showed me the modern farming methods he was teaching local villagers.

And at the end of the tour, he asked me, generously, "Would you like to have dinner with us?" I accepted with pleasure. And then, realizing this might be an imposition on his family's food resources, I asked, "Will you have enough for all of us?"

There was a startled silence. My three black friends exchanged looks, but I didn't understand why. The Boer man swallowed. But having extended the invitation, he couldn't withdraw it. "Oh, yes," he said, grandly. "We have plenty."

It was an excellent dinner. The host and his wife inquired about the project I was working on. My three friends participated in the conversation, speaking knowledgeably about the places and projects they had shown me. But I noticed that the host's children never ate a single mouthful. They just stared at the three black men sitting at their dinner table.

We drove off as the evening light faded to mauve. Once out of sight of the farmhouse, my black friends burst into gales of laughter. "What's so funny?" I demanded. "You!" they chorused. "The servants told us that was the first time any black man ever sat at that table! And you just blundered into it, as if it was the most normal request in the world!"

Submitted by Jack Driedger

Jim Taylor is a writer and blogger who lives in BC.

This excerpt is from the December 8, 2013 blog, Jim Taylor's Weblog, Musings of Jim Taylor. The complete piece can be viewed at <http://edges.canadahomepage.net/?s=bumbling>.