

Sunday Wonderings and Other Things – August 30, 2024

“I will live my life with courage and conviction in this time and in this place and put all my trust in God.” Sonja Corbitt

Pam shared this beautiful reflective quote with me this week. It arrived at a time when I needed these words, this reminder that it is to God I can turn when all about me seems less reliable. God is the source of my strength.

I had hoped to send out a few reflective thoughts last Sunday. That didn't happen. Life disrupted my good intentions. My living situation was disrupted. What felt secure was no more. I found my way to the welcome of friends who responded with open arms, open home and a cup of tea. Disruption has shifted to reorientation. I needed to accept my hubris of independence and know that I could not walk this experience on my own, I needed help. I need the loved ones of the community around me.

These last few weeks our lectionary readings have been from John, the Bread of Life series. A reminder that in Christ and with Christ we are nurtured and fed with that which offers true life. Our spirits are joined in hope and faith with the one in whom we can trust. Nourished by Christ we are called to care for each other, to share the bread of life that we've been given. Sometimes substance arrives as an email.

My prayer for you this week is, that each of you will be given the Bread of Life that you need you. A word, a hug, a phone call. A taste of the goodness that is each of ours to share in the name of the one who calls you beloved. May you continue to be the amazing gift of hospitality to all you encounter, carrying the goodness of who we are as children of a most loving God.

Remember too to eat your vegetables, drink water and get plenty of rest. Be kind and gentle with you.

Peace and grace to all.

Other Things

Sunday Gatherings: I've been thinking about the request to gather on Sundays. We have the experience of doing this and doing it well. Our years in Covid taught us a way of being a gathered community, even when we could not be gathered together in one place. Beginning on September 8th you are invited to join an online worship/prayer service followed by a time of fellowship. Leadership for the service will be shared between various leaders of the Anglican and United Church. In our time of desolation, our communities of faith reach out to hold and comfort us. We are reminded we are not alone. We live and are held by God. More information to come, including the Zoom link to join. This is an offering of worship among many others, come and drink at the fountain as you wish and are able.

Sharing our Stories: I have been deeply touched by the stories posted on the Anglican Facebook page. Thank you, Nancy, for sharing the stories of the people of your church. I am wondering if there

are those among us from Jasper United Church who would like to do likewise. If you submit your story with the images of your choice, I will be happy to post them if you are unable to post directly.

John Longhurst, religious writer for the Winnipeg Free Press has been following along on Facebook too, deeply touched by the stories of loss and hope. He shared, “It’s **a special and almost sacred experience—the faces behind the statistics**”. It’s made him wonder if some folks would be willing to share their stories with him. He’s curious to know how faith helps one cope in the presence of loss and grief and to write about it for others to know. Telling the experience of disaster survivors—what it was like to evacuate, what it was like when they got the news about their homes being lost to the fire, what their faith means to them at a time like this, and what they would like other Canadians to know about their experience.

I have spoken with John, and I know him to be a gentle reporter, sensitive to the needs of this time and our sacred experience. If you would like to meet with John, please feel free to reach out to him. His email address is john.longhurst@outlook.com

Meeting of the Board/ Meeting of the Trustees: In the last few weeks both the Board and the Trustees have gathered. The Board met on August 13th in person at Mill Woods United Church and via Zoom for those who were not located in Edmonton. Mill Woods offered us not only a space to gather but in the hospitality of coffee and scones to nourish. We are so grateful for their warm welcome. We gathered to speak of our journeys and to share the story and the updates of our beloved church. The Trustees met via Zoom on August 29th, with three members gathered in Jasper and I in Edmonton. Under the polity of the UCC the Trustees hold the property in trust for the whole of the congregation. In practical terms, it is the responsibility of the Trustees to attend to the matters of the insurance of the property. Like many of Jasper, we have begun the process of our claim and await direction from our insurer on the next steps. As matters proceed, the Trustees will report to the Board and then through the Board to the whole congregation.

Conversation on Thrift Store: Early days but there are conversations with Rev. Roy Nickel from the Baptist Church to explore possibilities for a future time. At present time the pressing need will be a donation center as folks without homes begin to return to Jasper. I am hopeful we can be part of that offering in whatever ways are possible for us. Together we are all doing what we can to help in the recovery.

Peace and grace to all,

Respectively Rev. Linda McLaren