

CENTENNIAL HOTSPOT

Centennial Presbyterian Church

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Minister's Musings

The desert experience

Our current cultural moment with the COVID-19 pandemic is a desert moment for the world. It seems that everywhere we look, we're reminded of COVID-19 ... the "Coronavirus." It's difficult to think of anything else. Like it or not, this is our "new normal," at least for a little while. Maybe we feel we are lost in the desert, seemingly uncertain, fearful, not in control, or knowing what to expect next.

The desert is a common motif in all the great religions of the world. Their founders all spent time in the barren wasteland. Buddha journeyed to the arid wasteland of northern India. Mohammed climbed Mount Hira in the Arabian Desert. Before Moses led the people of Israel through their 40-year wilderness wanderings, he had to endure his own desert experience. Jesus also spent 40 days in the desert before he began his public ministry. But the desert is more than a geographic region. My teacher and mentor, James Houston says, It "...is also a symbol of the periods in our lives when we need to be tested and learn the ways of the Lord." God uses the desert to train, nurture, and call his people. The Bible and many spiritual writers have talked about the desert experience. The desert is one of the significant symbols of Christian life.

What happens in the desert? We can no longer use the busyness

of life to distract our attention. Snoopy once accurately described the inactivity of the desert experience when he said: "If you live in the desert, there's nothing more exciting to do than watch the sun go down." The simplicity of the surroundings removes the decorative trappings of personhood-status, prestige, power, and materialism. The desert experience is an encounter with one's false self, the persona (mask) that we create to face the world. The desert for each of us is where we put off our mask and confront our broken self. And it is where we meet God as our lover. It is as if the imprisonment of the desert is essential if we are to win new freedom overall circumstances. Trust and dependence upon God are deepened, as we become the Lord's well-diggers, to provide others with streams in the desert. This is echoed by the psalmist: As they pass through the Valley of Baca (ie. weeping) they make it a place of springs.'

In the desert, prayer becomes a richer reality, as we begin to experience a greater desire to know God. In the desert there is no other option. Nobody, including ourselves, can help us. So, we pray, "Oh God help me. I want to touch you. I want to see you." Patience and gentleness begin to mark our lives more convincingly. In the desert, we don't just go out and find some alternatives. We wait until God comes to our hearts. The acceptance of suffering is more obvious; it is no longer resentful but even joyous, as our spirits rise above the circumstances that constrain us. We can find a spirit of detachment that expresses self-emptying and purified desires, that is undiscouraged by the blows of life, the disappointments, and even the sense of helplessness over forces beyond our control. We too can say with Paul: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

For each of us, living the desert experience is a necessary preparation for walking more closely with God, and for being set free from false desires to love God more intimately. So, if it is accepted and used creatively, the spiritual experience of the desert can become the instrument of transformation. Our inner, as well as our outer lives, become expanded, deepened, and richly freed, to enjoy peace, love, and joy. Peace, because we no longer live with the stress of inner conflicts surrounding our desires and their frustrations. Love, because God becomes so much more real, and the buried images of our negative feelings about him have been gradually removed, one by one. Holy feelings of appreciation of God's character and intimate experiences of his presence give us gratitude for his patience and grace towards us. Love begins to flood our being, in all-round gratitude for our existence. Joy comes spontaneously, because we are uniquely recognized, and we come to realize gradually that the whole of our desert experience has been 'tailor-made' for us, after all. Then we can be grateful for the way of the Lord through the desert, in which we have been sustained, guarded, and guided. self-surrender and commitment to God is an on-going process, sometimes in desperation, at other times in more trustful commitment.



NOTES FROM THE LOFT



As we prepare hymns to share with you each week, Lauren is training to take over the recording and preparation end of the process. We have also been blessed with Bruce Watts joining us once a week for a recording session. Social distancing measures are in place to keep us all safe! Once "choir season" starts again in September, we will endeavour to prepare a hymn and an anthem wherever possible, bringing in some more elements of our regular service.

A few years ago we were listening to CBC radio on the way to church (a rare occurrence!) And on came the most haunting, beautiful sound. A female quartet, Anonymous 4 singing this beautiful rendition of Sweet Hour of Prayer. I hope you enjoy this beautiful rendition. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f7MamBp2NM&list=RD9f7MamBp2NM&start_radio=1

Carla Zacharias, Music Team Leader

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Virtual Coffee Hour

Meetings:

Worship Committee August 18, 4:00 pm

FISH Network August 19, 7:30 pm

Board Meeting, September 9

WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

We will be continuing with virtual worship for now, but are more actively considering what worship will look like once we are able to meet again physically. Please provide any input you have to the Committee. Things such as multiple services, church school considerations, music and others need to be decided. We value your input on all these and any other matters pertaining to physical worship.

Please continue to let us know your upcoming family celebrations so that we can acknowledge them in the announcements.

We continue with virtual coffee time at 11:00 am each Sunday. So far, there have been few participants. Detailed instructions on how to participate have been sent to you. We encourage you to watch the online worship at 10:30 so that we have a sense of community in that we are participating at the same time. Immediately following you are encouraged to join the Zoom virtual coffee time.

So far have not received any response from our call for additional volunteers for the audio/visual system, both in operation and in preparation. We will need at least five additional volunteers to make this work efficiently. If you are interested in operation of Powerpoint and/or audio or if there is a younger member of your household (that s not in Sunday School), please let us know at office@centennialchurch.ca or broad2well@shaw.ca. You will be provided with training in how to participate.

Jim Broadwell

Chairman, Worship Committee

PEWS NEWS

Please keep those members of our church family who are ill or in need in your prayers. Keep John and Jennifer Legge in your prayers as John goes through his treatments, Priscilla Towers as she continues to recuperate.

Birthdays to celebrate in August!

Shirley Mlttoo, Aug 3; Dennis Anderson, Aug 4; Carla Zacharias, Aug 6; Bruce Watts, Aug. 8; Renate Edie, Aug. 10; Ria Christian and Isabel McKinnon, Aug. 13; Jessica, Aug 23; Helen Pauls, Aug. 24; Desmond Oben, Aug 25.

PRAYER CALENDAR

With Rev. Kim on holidays, a formal prayer calendar will not be available for August. Please continue to pray for our congregation, our government, our city as we navigate the new social situations with regard to Covid-19 restrictions.

If you have any prayer concerns that arise, please contact the office and we can include these in our prayer chain. If you would like to be part of our prayer chain, please contact the office and have your name added to the list. Updates will be given via text or email as is suitable for you.

FROM THE SESSION:

As there was no Session meeting in July, there are no July notes from Session.

Doug Bonar
Clerk of Session

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

If it is decided that we are still unable to hold worship services at the Church this September, the Sunday School is planning to have taped lessons and crafts/activities available for each Sunday starting on September 13th. These lessons will be based on our planned curriculum and will continue until we are able to have in-person Sunday School classes.

Christian Education Committee

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Sometimes I tuck my knees into my chest and lean forward ... that's just how I roll.

Why don't ants ever get sick? Because they have tiny little anty bodies.

PASTORAL CARE TEAM

If you, or someone you know needs assistance in any way, please email the church office or the Pastoral Care Team, call the church (403-285-7144) or Carla Zacharias at home (403-285-9516) to request support.

If you need someone to pray with, our prayer team can help and give you a call. If you are sick and would like prayers of the congregation, let us know! We will only share the information you want shared. When we know there is need, we can step up and give help.

Challenge for August: pick one or two people from the directory you normally don't visit with and give them a call to say hi!

Carla Zacharias, Pastoral Care Team Leader centpastoralcareteam@gmail.com

FROM THE OFFICE

Just a quick reminder, please remember to write "**Envelope Secretary**" on your envelope when mailing in your offerings. Offering envelopes are counted the last Monday of each month.

While lots of work is being done remotely, phone and email messages are being checked several times a week, and mail is being picked up and sorted once a week.

If your team is planning to hold a zoom meeting, that can still go in a calendar for the newsletter and weekly service announcements. **Please forward your zoom meeting information for the announcements.** You can send them directly to Jim Broadwell at broad2well2shaw.ca or to the office at office@centennialchurch.ca if you have **upcoming birthdays and anniversaries** you would like us to celebrate as we do every Sunday, please send the dates to office@centennialchurch.ca or call Carla Zacharias and we will get them in for celebrating.

We will be sending out regular emails with service information each week. Go to our website, centennialchurch.ca and check out our newsletters, services, and other updates. The COVID19 tab is where you will find the church videos.

VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR!

Daniel Edie has set up the Virtual Coffee hour for the next two months so that we may all come together to see one another and visit. Tune into the church service at 10:30 and then afterwards, click on the link and meet up for coffee. Bring out your best and favourite coffee mugs, taunt everyone with your delicious snacks and catch up.

The information you need is:

11:00 am on **Jul 26, Aug 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, Sept. 6, 13, 20, & 27** (if the service goes long, or your coffee isn't quite ready, just jump on the call when you can!) <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83259579765?pwd=Ri9JTUorNFRKeWNUUlpUK2xUQWREQT09>

Meeting ID: 832 5957 9765 Passcode: 369315 One tap mobile +1 647 374 4685 .. 83259579765#

If you have any difficulties, please contact Jim Broadwell and he can talk you through it.

As newsletters are being emailed at this time, for those who do not have email addresses or have not provided one a physical copy of the newsletter will be mailed.

August Newsletter submission deadline is August 27.



The FISH Network – What is it?!

Our **FISH Network** mission is based on Ephesians 4:15-16:

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

The **FISH Network** (formerly the Vision Team) has four guiding principles/mandates:

Friendship:

- To encourage getting to know someone within the church community you don't know well
- To further the development of meaningful relationships

Inspiration

- To develop a stronger commitment to year-round stewardship (volunteering)
- To create an ongoing environment of fresh initiatives, have fun, be creative

Sharing

- To strengthen internal communications within and among committees, teams, and ministries

Hospitality

- To help people feel welcome, knowledgeable about, and included in our congregation
- To help coordinate activities involving hospitality and care ministries
- To provide a welcoming, accepting, comforting, supporting, caring environment for members, visitors, friends to enhance their worship experience

How is the **FISH Network** going to accomplish those guiding principles/mandates? By engaging you! We will all practice being “fishers of men” – and being the men who were fished! (Yes! You are a disciple.) Just as Jesus called his disciples, you are being called. See Mark 1:16–18 and Matthew 4:19. We will do this together!

One of our **FISH Network** initiatives is to strengthen our Friendship network. Please don't be surprised when you receive a phone call from our **FISH Network** -- Annie Edie, Carla Zacharias, Jean Tupper, Jin Woo Kim, Phyllis Russell, Simon DeVries – checking in to see how you are doing. Our intent is to enhance friendships at Centennial.

As time evolves, you may feel inspired. Imagine! Calling someone you may not know well and introducing yourself. We know what you are thinking – “How am I going to call someone if I don't know them or their number?” Please find our Centennial Presbyterian Church Annual Report is a great reference for congregational contact names and numbers.

If you want to learn more, please feel welcome to reach out to our **FISH Network**.

MISSION TEAM

Our family has felt the need to move out of their rental house. There were many things wrong with it and the landlord was not going to fix anything or put any money toward buying anything new. He said he was considering selling it anyway. The family has moved into a three bedroom townhouse in the neighborhood of the Peter Laughed hospital.

Ojulu's job with Amazon is going well and he is finding it less strenuous.

His brother in law still has not got an answer from the doctor as to whether he can go to work.

Okelo has talked with our second family in Africa. Like the rest of us they are just waiting for things to get better with the pandemic.

Blessings, Pat & Okelo

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Because of Covid-19 we've been having zoom meetings as our church has been closed, thus everything had come to almost a standstill. Hopefully though, we can begin again live soon, God willing. But in the meantime we are now looking at the third week of September for our next meeting. Sally has also mentioned that our next Zoom / In-person meeting after the Summer break should be Thursday September 17th, at 11:00 am as this time seems to work best for everyone.

I would also like to extend an invitation to all the ladies of our congregation to come and join us as there is "Strength in Numbers" Also because of Covid-19, we haven't gotten around to formally thanking our past Chair, Clara Fergusson, who worked so diligently over the years. So as soon as we are back this will be first on the agenda.

Phyllis Russell, Chairperson