

Northern Light

*The Official Newsletter of
The Cariboo Presbyterian Church*

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The Grim Reaper of the Bird Feeder

By David Webber

“What on earth was that!” said my son Halden. He had his head sucked in like a turtle.

“I am not sure,” I said. I was in the act of desperately trying to collect my thoughts along with a particularly good bit of sharp cheese that was scattered all over the deck. I raised my head to peer over the railing of the sundeck just in time to watch the author of our dive-bombing pull off an unbelievable aerobatic maneuver. He veered right and then left before bashing a wee sparrow to the ground. Instantly swooping up, down and around in a helicopter like fashion, he grabbed the sparrow with his talons and proceeded to wherever he was holding his dinner party. We had just been had by the grim reaper of the bird feeder.

Moments before, the five of us were all sitting together enjoying our usual Friday family time before dinner. For the first time since winter we were on the sundeck overlooking the lake and enjoying a spring evening that was at least a month late. Because spring was so late, our two bird feeders on the deck were still providing full fly-in food service to hundreds of starving little dicky birds. They fluttered all around us, sometimes even landing on an arm of an Adirondack chair. It was a twittering happy moment. And then suddenly there had been a savage swirling swoosh from above the house that went right through the blissful basking bunch of birdies and us, scattering everyone in alliteration. It was an American kestrel, aka sparrow hawk (*Falco sparverius*).

After the little raptor finished his business, we bid him farewell with the appropriate threats and hand signals. And then we all seemed to fall silent. Our usual festive Friday happy time had somehow turned into a silent wake. We all seemed to turn our thoughts inward, partly in reflection and partly out of respect for the little sparrow, who had just been converted from dinner-guest to dinner.

Life is like that: so solid and so fragile, so joyous and so heartbreaking, so life-full and so lifeless. One moment it is an elated and celebratory dinner party on a deck or in some upper room, and the next moment it's a cross. The human condition seems to be one of being just one sparrow hawk away from suffering and calamity. But for me at least, there is something really odd in all of this.

The odd thing is, since coming to faith in Christ, in my experiences in life, often I have never felt more alive than when the kestrel knocks me on my keister. Many times, more often than I care to admit, those hard times somehow sensitize me to experience life to the fullest. They somehow remove the background noise of life and make each note crystal clear. They somehow inspire me to let go of my chokehold on life and to live more courageously. They somehow motivate me to live more fully in the moment. They somehow move me from my natural tendency to be 'a human doing' to becoming 'a human being.' And beyond all of this, or perhaps because of all of this, God seems more real and close and dear and experienced. I don't understand why this is so, I only experience it to be so. It never makes me desire hard times or to seek them out, but at the same time, it makes me somehow value them at a profound level (see Ps.119.71).

For me, the catalyst for this experience of discovering deep value in human suffering is my faith in Christ of the Cross. Before faith in Christ my response to the 'sparrow hawk' experiences in life was usually fear and flight, something quite different from what I have just described. And I think the reason now that my faith in Christ and His Cross makes all the difference is, not a false sense of victory in suffering, but rather a full sense of community in suffering. With faith, the Cross somehow places Christ and the people of the cross right in the middle of my experience of hard times. The Cross somehow places my hand in the nail scarred hand of an Almighty Creator God and in the fleshy palms of His people of faith. And like my ancestors, the People of God who discovered Him to be especially present in their community while doing hard time in the wilderness, I discover God, with all of His creative power, doing hard time with me and we. This brings infinite possibility to what God can create out of my suffering. This brings deep meaning to Jesus of the Cross and His words about sparrows and my value to God and the possibility of life liberated from fear (Mt.10.26-32).

Congratulations Are In Order

As Introduced at the AGM meeting in February of this year, and then confirmed by a unanimous vote at a special congregational meeting on March 9th, Charles McNeil's ministry in the Cariboo Presbyterian Church was increased from half time to full time. Congratulations to Charles and to us. Also, the ballot for the budget for 2008 came back approved with a unanimous vote of 72 (there were two spoiled ballots).

Mamma's Hands

(Dedicated to Marge D.)

by Ginny-Lou Alexander

Today, I really looked at my Mamma's hands
And for the first time I saw with different eyes –
Those hands, gnarled and twisted and blue;
The swollen knobs of her knuckles,
Hot, and causing her pain when touched
Or when she tries to do something

Like take the cap off her puffer,
Open a door or a jar of her homemade jam...

The once strong, slim, slender fingers
Now nothing but a distant memory.
But those hands cradled my own tiny head,
Caressed my little cheeks stained with tears,
Or shining with the fresh air of winter,
Or radiant with the joy of some small surprise.

Those hands, once strong yet gentle, now frail,
But still gentle, firmly guided me down right paths,
Corrected me when I had done wrong,
Waved to me as I was leaving the house for school,
And drew me close to her small body
For a hug any time for any reason.

Those hands once cooked my meals,
Did my laundry, created things to keep me warm.
Those hands once planted flower and vegetable gardens,
Held the hoe, rake or shovel as she worked,
And husked, shelled and preserved the produce.
Those hands always made our simple house a home.

Now those hands, such beautiful hands, lie
Clasped in her lap, weak, crippled, and sore;
And yet, they still do what they can...

Sign, Seal and Delivery

By Charles McNeil

To say I don't like flying is an understatement. It is sometimes one of those necessities of life. If or where you want or need to go some place in a hurry or over long distances then the plane is your best bet. However, I don't like it!

Whenever I get on a plane I say a wee prayer akin to: Lord I am yours. Wherever I am You are there. This is something akin to Psalm 136 but with the twist of being suspicious of flight. So when I am entering an aircraft its Lord be with me on the ground, in the air, living, plummeting, whatever ... be with me.

The flight I took from Vancouver to Toronto was effortless. There was a bit of turbulence but nothing to speak of or to cause me to go into fervent and unrelenting prayer. The sights out the window were beautiful and interesting. All in all this was a good flight. But a flight wrapped in prayer...

Toward the end of the flight as we were descending into Toronto I was again looking out the window. It was then I saw it: a rainbow! Now I'm sure rainbows are often seen as the sunshine reflects on the cloudbanks. However, I took it as a sign!

It was a sign that in the midst of my very small life and even smaller time of discomfort God was nevertheless looking after me. Not only was God looking after me and looking after things but God wanted me to know that He was on the ball! Hence the rainbow.

But the plot thickened. At one point the shadow of the plane came into the very centre of the rainbow. The plane's shadow stayed there for a few moments. It was one of those experiences that could easily be explained away. Happens all the time. One of those things when the conditions are just right. You saw what you wanted to see. There are all sorts of explanations.

However, for me in that moment it was a moment of sheer communion and grace. God used everyday occurrences and realities to say to me ... Charlie my promises are real and working. The Old and New Testament promises translate and transpose themselves onto new and different present realities. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of Charlie and yourself as well. God demonstrates that He not only hears and responds but wants us to know that He is hearing, responding, working ... whether we know it or not.

That rainbow was a rainbow of promise upon my trip, travels in Ontario, preaching, sharing, and even or especially upon the meeting of the General Assembly. God put His rainbow upon my cloud, upon my life, and upon my experience and is promising to share the wonders of His grace. Pretty neat sign, seal, and delivery!

Parenthood

(Submitted by Gordon Kellett)

I have laughed harder
And cried more often
I have worried more
And hurried more...
I've had less sleep but
Somehow I've had more Fun...

I've learned more and
Grown more. My heart
Has ached harder, and
I have loved to a capacity
Beyond my imagination
I've given more of myself
But I have derived much
More meaning of Life...

Cruise With Jesus: A Young Women's Discipleship Retreat.

Submitted by Dave Webber

May burst in upon us with cold winter like weather, so we went on a Mediterranean "Cruise With Jesus." This simulated cruise shipped out of St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Prince George on the weekend of May 2-4. Eleven of us Cariboosters, nine young women and two older types who were cruise directors, made several stops in Israel and ancient Greek cities in Turkey to learn what it meant to walk so close to Jesus that the dust from his sandals would get all over us. The meals were all Israeli and Greek and were fantastic, thanks to Shannon (recipes are included in this newsletter). The activities were certainly worthy of any Mediterranean cruise, thanks to Shannon again. The discipleship teaching, with the help of Ray Vanderlaan's DVD, In The Dust of the Rabbi, was stimulating and challenging. The weekend was preparatory for getting wet a little later in the summer by way of baptism or affirmation of baptism. The weekend was an important time for all who were involved.

Recipe Corner

(From the Young Women's Discipleship Retreat in May)

Latkes

Originating in Eastern Europe, latkes (potato pancakes) have been a staple of the Jewish diet for many years. Eaten especially during the festivals of Hanukah and Passover, these light and scrumptious treats continue to be a favorite on the Israeli menu.

Ingredients

3-4 medium potatoes
2-3 tbs. of flour (or Matzo meal on Passover)
1 egg
cooking oil
salt and pepper
1 small onion (optional)
apple sauce (optional)
sour cream (optional)

Preparation:

Grate potatoes. Mix in egg, flour, salt and pepper. Grated onion may be added for flavor. Form into patties and fry until brown on both sides (about 2 minutes for each side). Serve with applesauce or sour cream.

Curried Chicken

Source: Sarina Pushkarnah, Chef, Tandoori Restaurant

Ingredients:

1 Kilo Chicken
4-5 medium onions, chopped (2 cups)
4 medium tomatoes, chopped (2 cups)

2 Tbsp. Cilantro Leaves, chopped
6 Tbsp. Oil
1 Tbsp. Ginger Puree
1 Tbsp. Garlic Puree
2-3 Cups Water

Masala Spice Mixture:

4 Cinnamon Sticks
8 Green Cardamom Pods
6 Cloves
1 Tsp. Turmeric
1 Tsp. Cumin
1 Tsp. Red Chili Powder
1 Tsp. Garam Masala Powder
4 Bay Leaves
Pinch of Salt

Preparation:

Clean Chicken and remove the skin. Cut into 8-10 pieces. Heat oil in a deep skillet; add cinnamon, bay leaves, cardamom and cloves. Stir for a minute. Add the onion and sauté until golden. Add the ginger, garlic and sauté for another 2-3 minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes. Stir until the tomatoes soften. Add turmeric, cumin, red chili, garam masala, and salt. Stir well until the spices and the oil separate (if the mixture is not stirred well, the spices will float). Add the chicken pieces. Cook on high heat for 10 minutes. Add the cashew nuts, which will add a nice texture to the mixture. Continue cooking for 5 minutes. Depending on how thick you want the sauce to be, add water and continue cooking for another 10-15 minutes.

Serving Suggestions: Sprinkle with fresh coriander leaves. Serve over Basmati rice.

Light Kibbutz Chocolate Cake

Source: Yael Zisling Adar

Ingredients:

2 Cups Flour
1 3/4 Cups Sugar
3/4 Cups Cocoa
1 1/2 Tsp. Baking Soda
1 1/2 Tsp. Baking Powder
1 Tsp. Salt
2 Eggs
1 Cup Milk
1/2 Cup Canola Oil
2 Tsp. Vanilla Extract
1 Cup Boiling Water

Preparation:

In a mixer bowl mix all the ingredients except the boiling water. Mix well for a few

minutes. Add boiling water. Bake in an ungreased 9" x 13" pan (or 2 smaller pans) for about 25-30 minutes at 350 F.

Serving Suggestions: Serve with vanilla ice cream and chocolate syrup.

Falafel (Chick-pea Patties)

Falafel is sold on street corners in every city and town in Israel. Some call it the "Israeli hamburger." Its popularity can be attributed in no small part to the Yemenite Jews who have brought a particularly tasty version onto the culinary scene. Students living on a meager budget consume full-portion falafels in whole pitas on the sidewalks as their noon "dinner."

Ingredients

1 lb. canned chick-peas (drained)
1 large onion, chopped
2 tbs. finely chopped parsley
1 egg
1 tsp. salt
1/2 to 1 cup breadcrumbs or fine bulgur (crushed wheat)
1 tsp. ground coriander or cumin
1 tsp. dried hot peppers
1 tsp. garlic powder
vegetable oil (for frying)

Preparation:

Combine chickpeas with onion. Add parsley, lightly beaten egg and spices. Mix in blender. Add breadcrumbs until mixture forms a small ball without sticking to your hands. Form chickpea mixture into small balls about the size of a quarter (one inch in diameter). Flatten patties slightly and fry until golden brown on both sides. Drain falafel balls on paper towels. Serve individually with toothpicks as a hors d'oeuvre or as a sandwich filling with chopped tomato, cucumber, radish, lettuce, onion, hummus and/or tehina inside pita bread. Makes about 24 falafel balls.

Tehina

A typical dish of the Orient brought to Israel by Jewish refugees from the Arab countries. Tehina is a thick dip with sesame seeds as its base. It is often used as a topping for falafel and other dishes.

Ingredients

1 cup pure tahini (sesame paste)
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1/2 cup water
dash of hot pepper (red)
1 tsp. salt
1/2 bunch chopped parsley
juice from 2 lemons

pickles

3 tbs. olive oil

Preparation

Mix tahini, garlic, water, pepper, salt and lemon juice until you get smooth paste. Add water if tahini is too thick. Serve as a thin layer on a small plate, with a drop or two of olive oil, garnish with pickles. Sprinkle with parsley or mix the parsley with the dip.

Lamb with oil and oregano

Ingredients

Serves 6 persons

1,5 kg lamb (front part preferred)

1/4 teacup **olive oil**

Juice of two **lemons**

1 spoon **oregano** (if fresh then better!)

Salt

Pepper

METHOD

Wash the lamb, and dredge with salt, pepper and oregano. Place it into a baking pan and pour the olive oil and the lemon juice. Add 1 cup of water and bake in 180 - 200 C until it is well baked. At regular intervals pour the lamb's sauce on top of the lamb.

Friends Are God's Way Of Taking Care Of Us

Written by a Metro Denver Hospice Physician

I was driving home from a meeting this evening about five o'clock, stuck in traffic on Colorado Blvd., and the car started to choke and sputter and die – I barely managed to coast, into a gas station. I was glad that I would not be blocking traffic and would have a somewhat warm spot to wait for the tow truck. It wouldn't even turn over. Before I could make the call, I saw a woman walking out of the "quickie mart" building, and it looked like she slipped on some ice and fell into a gas pump, so I got out to see if she was okay.

When I got there, it looked more like she had been overcome by sobs than that she had fallen; she was a young woman who looked really haggard with dark circles under her eyes. She dropped something as I helped her up, and I picked it up to give it to her...it was a nickel. At that moment, everything came into focus for me: the crying woman, the ancient Suburban crammed full of stuff with three kids in the back (1 in a car seat) and the gas pump reading \$4.95.

I asked her if she was okay and if she needed help, and she just kept saying, "don't want my kids to see me crying." So we stood on the other side of the pump from her car. She said she was driving to California and that things were very hard for her right now. So I asked, "And you were praying?" That made her back a way from me a little, but I assured her I was not a crazy person and said, "He heard you, and He sent me."

I took out my card and swiped it through the card reader on the pump so she could fill up her car completely, and while it was fueling, I walked next door to

McDonald's and bought two big bags of food, some gift certificates for more, and a big cup of coffee. She gave the food to the kids in the car, who attacked it like wolves, and we stood by the pump eating fries and talking a little.

She told me her name, and that she lived in Kansas City, her boyfriend left two months ago and she had not been able to make ends meet. She knew she wouldn't have money to pay rent Jan. 1, and finally in desperation had finally called her parents, with whom she had not spoken to in about five years. They lived in California and said she could come live with them and try to get on her feet there.

So she packed up everything she owned in the car. She told the kids they were going to California for Christmas, but not that they were going to live there.

I gave her my gloves, a little hug and said a quick prayer with her for safety on the road. As I was walking over to my car, she said, "So, are you like an angel or something?"

This definitely made me cry. I said, "Sweetie, at this time of year angels are really busy, so sometimes God uses regular people."

It was so incredible to be a part of someone else's miracle. And of course, you guessed it, when I got in my car it started right away and got me home with no problem. I'll put it in the shop tomorrow to check, but I suspect the mechanic won't find anything wrong.

Psalms 55:22 "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Humor Corner

Noah and The New Ark

(Submitted by Jean Dancey, Oshawa, ON)

In the year 2008, the Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in Canada, and said, "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save two of every living thing, along with a few Good humans." He gave Noah the blueprints, saying, "You have six months to build the Ark before I will start the unending rain for forty days and forty nights."

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard, but no Ark.

"Noah," He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?"

"Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah. "But things have changed. I needed a Building permit. I've been arguing with the inspector about the need for a Sprinkler system. My neighbours claim that I've violated the neighbourhood zoning laws by building the Ark in my yard and exceeding the height limitations. We had to go to the Development Appeal Board for a decision."

"Then Transport Canada and the Departments of Highways and Hydro demanded a Bond be posted for the future costs of moving power, trolley and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I argued that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it."

“Getting the wood was another problem. There’s a ban on cutting local trees in order to save the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls. But no go!”

When I started gathering the animals, I got sued by animal rights group. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. As well, they argued the accommodation was too restrictive and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space.”

“Then Environment Canada ruled that I couldn’t build the Ark until they’d conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood.”

“I’m still trying to resolve a complaint with the Human Rights Commission on how many minorities I’m supposed to hire for my building crew. Also the trades Union say I can’t use my sons. They insist I have to hire only Union workers with Ark building experience.”

“To make matters worse, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency seized all my assets, claiming I’m trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species. So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least ten years for me to finish this Ark.”

Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, “You mean you’re not going to destroy the world?”

“No,” said the Lord. “The Government beat me to it.”

From Shannon Finley our Treasurer, May 2008

The exciting changes in ministry that Cariboo Presbyterian Church decided to take on this year are of course reflected in our anticipated budget, and it is a challenging one. I am gratified to report that we are reasonably on track at this point in the year to covering our costs. With summer vacations and all the lovely long weekend plans we enjoy at this time of year I encourage everyone to remember their church and its expenses are here week by week, even if you are not! The PAR (pre-authorized remittance) program is up and running and welcomes new users anytime. If you decide you want to participate in the program contact me and I can set it up for you.

As I write this I realize what an ‘urban’ thing this is to say from a place where the cattle ranchers and farmers are into their busiest time of year, the forestry industry is shedding jobs almost as fast as pine beetles can burrow and mining exploration is full speed ahead along with it’s controversy of jobs vs. environment. Vacation and lovely long weekends are not part of everyone’s reality, but the work of ministry and mission is ongoing here in the midst of all of human activity and budgets and financial statements reflect our hope to bring the gospel perspective to that activity.

There has been a wonderful response to the ‘Something Extra-Ordinary’ project this year and we are participating in mission in a global way – bicycles for ministers in Kenya, support for refugees in Montreal, and clean water in Pakistan, Malawi and Tanzania. As we are recipients of God’s grace here in the Cariboo, we in turn are agents of grace elsewhere. It is a privilege to be the one who opens the envelopes and sees your loving tithes translated from cash to action in Jesus’ name!