



St Paul's Journal

St. Paul's Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia **Lent 2007**

From the Rector

Lent: What's it all about?

The following reflection has appeared in a different form as a parish leaflet insert. It is offered here as a more permanent and expanded point of reference for all who might find it helpful.

Lent is not really meant as a season to give up chocolate, or to lose a few pounds, or to enter into various self-improvement projects. The point of Lent for Christians, as can be seen below, is to give up something good for a while to get through to God—to gain clarity about ourselves and about God without the distractions that we often turn God's gifts into. But that is not where it ends. We observe Lenten disciplines, disciplines entered into by Jesus Christ himself, as many have before us in

the sure and certain hope that change is possible. We believe that God's grace, so wonderfully revealed in the Lenten season, can awaken us to extend and receive forgiveness, to help feed the hungry, to offer hope to the crushed, to provide homes for the homeless, and of course to turn us and others to faith in Jesus Christ.

First: What is Lent?

Lent is a Christian season of preparation for Easter, based on Christ's forty days in the desert. He was tempted in every way that any of us has ever been. Lent begins with the prayer for Ash Wednesday: 'Almighty and Everlasting God, you despise nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent.' During Lent Christians are urged to focus on God's loving-kindness as the foundation for a season of honest self-examination, free of the fear of divine rejection—a season meant to lead us into a stronger and healthier form of human life, in solidarity with our fellow Christians and our fellow creatures.

Second: What happened on Ash Wednesday?

On Ash Wednesday, Christians around the world gathered in parish churches to begin the season of Lent together. As at St. Paul's, they shared in the Holy Eucharist, giving thanks for God's loving-kindness towards us. And as at St. Paul's Christians around the world were offered the 'sign of mortality' through the 'imposition of ashes' on their forehead—ashes being an ancient, biblical sign of the limits of human life and of our pronounced tendency to sinfulness. The ashes are made from the palms of our last celebration of Palm Sunday and so remind us that we have shared both in the worship and the betrayal of the one we call



Christ, the Saviour of the Lord.

Third: What is 'the imposition of ashes'?

This ancient rite was offered, as last year, at both our Ash Wednesday services of Holy Eucharist. Worshippers were invited to stand or kneel and receive ashes in the form of a cross made on their forehead, while they hear the Scriptural words, 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.' After all felt the 'sign' on their own forehead and saw it on others during the Eucharist, they were invited to remove it before heading back out into their evening routines and events.

Fourth: What are Lenten Disciplines?

Lenten disciplines refer to practices (such as fasting) that give up one of the good gifts of God (such as lunch) for a day or a season in order to think

about God, the giver of all good gifts (in prayer, for instance). Fasting is also an ancient, biblical (and successful!) discipline in combination with prayer. If you desire to fast and pray—say on the Wednesdays or Fridays of the weeks in Lent, it would be wise to fast only from sunrise to sundown that day, to drink plenty of fluids, and to contact your family physician if there is any concern about risks to your health. There are many other options for Lenten disciplines! The Rector is happy to be consulted about any of this, as are fellow parishioners who have entered into the spirit of the Lenten disciplines. Finally, a number of parish-based study groups and many fine Christian books describe these disciplines (among other relevant things) in ways that have been very helpful to a broad variety of Christians from an enormous range of Christian denominations and groups. ■



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Submissions to *St. Paul's Journal* are always welcome. Why not submit a spiritual reflection, a poem, or a book review?

Services of **HOLY WEEK** *at St. Paul's Church*

April 1, 10:00 a.m.	Palm/Passion Sunday	<i>Holy Eucharist</i>
April 1, 11:00 a.m.	Holy Wednesday	<i>Holy Eucharist</i>
April 5, 6:00 p.m.	Maundy Thursday	<i>Holy Eucharist and Foot Washing</i>
April 6, 12:00 p.m.	Good Friday	<i>Liturgy of the Cross</i>
April 7, 7:00 p.m.	Holy Saturday	<i>Vigil of the Resurrection</i>
April 8, 10:00 a.m.	Easter	<i>Holy Eucharist</i>



Joyful Memories

By Wendy Reynolds

There is a place on the Island that I like to think of in winter, especially on frigid February days that never seem to end. I reach into my memories and unwrap it, one detail at a time. It always begins with a ladybug, brilliant red and black, swaying on a long piece of sharp dune grass. As I look around, I notice dozens of them, each with their own grassy ride, and the turquoise of the sky adding to the colourful palate. Completing this picture is the fine, smooth, sandy earth itself, rising and falling in hilly

patterns, meeting the ocean and occasionally blown into the sea in a spray of tiny pebbles. It is the beach. It is *my* beach.

The scent of my beach is like no other. It is sharp and crisp, as the tidal pools and decaying swampland that leads up to it make their mark; and it smells green with the leaves of hundreds of cranberry bushes waiting for October to give up their bounty. And yet the base of its aroma is that salty tang so familiar and so longed for.

Summer days have been spent frolicking here, or napping as the sounds of the waves lull me to sleep. Nights under the stars have been enjoyed, watching the celestial

show with awe and worship, as foxes dart in and around the dunes looking for their dens. As a warm brush of air moves over my face, it is easy to imagine the gentle touch of God himself. This place of joy has become complete in the peace of heavenly communion.

Inevitably, my memory fades as the telephone or cry of a child brings me back to the present. It's February again...minus 10 with the wind-chill. I must wait until summer for my beach, but as I look out my window and see the large snowflakes zigzag their way to the ground I recognize someone else's joyful memory being created. Praise God. ■

Why Go?

"I have never been much of a social activist. I've never participated in anything like the FISH ministry. It doesn't come 'natural' to me. I am a Professional Engineer, concerned more with fabricating piping assemblies than feeding the homeless. . ."

By David Kalix

It's now Saturday night. It's been another typical busy Saturday. Lots of errands, some work on the car, even a few hours back at work. I am very important to the success of my company (so I tell myself), and I never get everything done during the week. I'm tired.

But, I signed up to volunteer at the FISH Coffeehouse. I wish I hadn't. I'm tired. I won't stay long, but I'll keep my commitment.

When I arrive, someone with a big BMW SUV has blocked the Parish House parking lot driveway! The nerve! Maybe I should get them

towed. There is a Moosehead game tonight, and there's no parking. On the street, I see two illegally parked cars with tickets, so I'd better not try that. I drive to the lot near the waterfront, and walk. Past the crowded bars and restaurants, filled with loud people, spending

lots of money, trying to impress their friends.

The atmosphere at the FISH is different. As soon as I walk in the door, I relax, and say 'Hello'. Many recognize me. These are not the "beautiful" people. You know, the ones seen on TV or in magazine ads, the ones going on fancy vacations, buying a certain special car, or using the latest skin care products. But, they are very happy to see me. They know me, and I know them.

I have never been much of a social activist. I've never participated in anything like the FISH ministry. It doesn't come "natural" to me. I am a Professional Engineer, concerned more with fabricating piping assemblies than feeding the homeless. I came from a middle class family with two parents and two sisters. My "average" blue-collar Dad was a highly skilled machinist and was never out of work. I was taught that if you worked hard in school, stayed out of "trouble", you could get a good job and live in a nice safe neighbourhood.

The FISH visitors don't fit this model. Everyone has a unique story, so it is hard to generalize. Let's just say they include the blind, the lame, those injured in accidents, those struggling with addictions,

those with low paying jobs, and those with some mental defects (as if spending millions on clothes and plastic surgery is normal). Many are on social assistance or disability. Some made bad choices during their life, and are still paying. Most don't go to church, but are very willing to discuss spiritual topics.

There are several things that have impressed me. The first is just how important the FISH is to the visitors that come. They are there faithfully EVERY week, despite the cold and long walks or bus trips. To socialize in a safe, comfortable, and accepting atmosphere is so important to them. To receive unconditional love from the volunteers is priceless. To know that someone cares about them enough to give up their Saturday night for them, just to play cards and talk. To pray with and for them, individually.

The second thing that impresses me is how important the FISH is to the volunteers. There are now at least five other churches with members participating in this ministry. I have never met such a loving and selfless group. Especially encouraging to me are the young college-age volunteers. At a time when many consider youth lazy

and selfish, their joy in service is impressive.

I close my night at the FISH praying together with the other volunteers. It was another good night. I'm glad I went.

It has been said that we may be the only Bible others may ever read; that by our actions we reflect what it is to be a Christian. And Jesus said, whatever you have done for the least of them, you have done for me. We sang today in church:

I the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry. Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.

If I go Lord, will you lead me? I will hold your people in my heart.

At least for now, He has sent me to the FISH Coffeehouse. Where, and to whom, has He sent you? ■



Two Trees

A poem by Kees Zwanenburg

I remember the mountainside of my youth.
Cool wet breezes and hot summer winds in which I stood for time uncounted.
This was the before time, before I was transformed from beauty.
I remember the axebite, the fall, the long journey to the city.
Stone gates, buildings blistering white in the sun, crowds jeering, chanting,
angry,
a man inside the crowd,
a kind face.

I remember the mountainside of my youth.
Dense forest, snow-capped, hot summers.
This was the before time, the time before I was taken.
I remember the saw's roar, the fall, the long journey to the city.
Empty parking lot, many trees wrapped in plastic netting, leaning, waiting.
People touching me, shaking, laughing, bells.
A deeper memory of others, a mountainside.

I remember the journey.
Garrison courtyard, white noonday heat, crowded with others.
Hands lifting, stripping me, reshaping,
rough hewn,
square, tall, a post.
Finally a notch cut,
pieces lopped off, bound to me by ropes.
Stacked with others,
transfigured, no longer us but instruments of man,
waiting.

I remember the journey.
Truck-bed, dog and child, laughing, holding me.
Father stealing glances through the open rear window, smiling, assuring,
"Everything's OK".
Snow covered road back through the familiar of my youth.
Farmhouse lightbright against darkening sky.
Leaning against the porch wall,
waiting,
anticipating,
an echo,
"this is my father's house".

I remember the journey.
The man's sweat streaked back, loud voices,
whip crack and stumble,
crushing him with my weight.
Helping hands lifting, a supporting arm from the crowd, bleeding,
hot sun blazing overtop the hill,
climbing slowly,
an agony of time,
the kind face.

I remember the morning.
 Opened door, light, smells of candied fruits, sugar,
 the warmth of family.
 Quiet expectant voices, a daybright room.
 Children dressing me with silver and light.
 Each twinkling strand placed just so.
 End of day, deepening shadows, parents sitting in quiet firelight,
 faces lit,
 gifts laid at my feet,
 smile,
 kiss,
 hands held up the stairs.
 The knowledge of mortality far in the future for *their* son.

I remember the morning.
 Hilltop.
 Armed soldiers,
 expectant crowds,
 revelers awaiting other's pain.
 The kind face, blood streaked and tired.
 Other faces defiant.
 Arms nailed to me,
 nails and blood penetrating me.
 The man hoisted up,
 spiked to the beam,
 hooked to the notch,
 feet nailed to me.
 Doubt and pain etched across his face.
 Soldiers laughing, not looking at us,
 talking overloud,
 fear in their voices.
 A mother's voice,
 quiet,
 heartbroken.

I remember the day.
 First light, the creak of stairs under stockinged feet.
 Mother's voice sleepfull, bright.
 A child anticipating,
 wide-eyed with wonder.
 Paper rustling, oohs, aahs, kisses, thank yous.
 The smell of food,
 guests arriving,
 fire-bright dancing,
 singing,
 days end.



I remember the day.
"Father, forgive them."
The last sigh,
 darkness,
 a bright spear,
 dead weight.

A shudder ran through all.
"Please Sir, I'll take the body if I may".
Weight tenderly removed,
left whole unlike the others,
wrapped in clean linen, carried in loving arms down the hill, out of sight.
Alone on the hill.
His blood drying,
 on me,
 reflecting sunlight,
 silver turning to rust.

I remember the night.
Stripped of my garlands,
no gifts at my feet,
 silver remnants like tears in my branches.
Laughter in a distant room.
The cold outside,
 stacked against the barn,
 snow covered,
 forgotten,
 tinsel tears reflecting the moon.

I remember the mountainside of my youth.
Cool wet breezes, dry summer winds in which I stood for time uncounted.

I remember well the time of my youth.
Dense forest, snow capped, hot summers in which I stood for time uncounted.

I remember others, the many, blood mingling our being.
Our end and their beginnings a sameness,
 inseparable.

I remember wholeness.
The past and the future are one.
Laughter and tears do not fade.
I will hear them always.

I remember forgiveness.
"He is not here."
He sees my beauty despite the blood.
"He is risen."
 Again. ■

MUSICAL NOTES ON THE LENTEN SEASON



A Musician's Lent

By *Andrew Killawee*

Growing up as a Christian in the Baptist tradition, I knew about Ash Wednesday and Lent as events in the church calendar only from what I saw on television and the occasional joke about "giving something up".

For the last six or seven years, I have tried to make these events an important part of my life, as winter turns to spring each year. In these last few years, I have found great comfort in such a lengthy ritual that begins with ashes and ends with the "emotional roller coaster" of Holy Week. Lent is a beautiful time where we can really allow the rituals of the Eucharist to stay with us when we walk out of the doors of the church. In our own way, through discipline and personal sacrifice we can honour our religious ancestors and feel as though we are part of the historic pages of scripture, whether it be on the ark,

on a pilgrimage with the Israelites, or standing with Christ through the temptations in the desert.

Musically, we mark this occasion with simpler, meditative music. We refrain from the more musically elaborate settings of the mass, and sing some of the slightly more contemplative hymns available to us. The beauty in the music comes not so much from soaring melodies and rich harmonies; rather it's tighter chords with simpler tunes. While they are perhaps not as enjoyable to sing, I believe they do carry an important role in the church year. ■

Packing Away Our 'Alleluias'

By *Maggie Duinker*

As Christians, we are called to mark the season of Lent in outward and inward ways as we prepare for Easter. Lent is a time of waiting, 40 days in total; the wait is longer than we experience in Advent.

Children are very conscious of waiting. As Paul reminded us in Advent, that is sometimes all we ask children to do. Waiting to grow, for teeth to fall out, for a birthday to come, for a parent to be free to take you somewhere; all of these realities make children better waiters than many adults. When we have power, we can make things happen on our own timetables and we can minimize the amount of time we spend waiting for others. But God calls us to practise waiting, and Lent is a good time to do this, to learn the meaning of time and perseverance.

Traditionally, Christians have chosen things to give up for Lent, to do without them for 40 days. In our weekly Eucharists, we pack away the Gloria and other pieces of music, which contain praiseful shouts like Alleluia. Within our families, there are also ways to accomplish this. Actually tying a favourite toy or game with a purple ribbon and tucking it safely away is an outward demonstration of an inward decision to do without and wait. Making

times of the day more quiet, or becoming more conscious of the noisy ways in which we live, can help us free up our ears to hear God's voice in our lives. And all of this needs to happen in an atmosphere where we don't worry about what we

have given up, but celebrate the waiting, knowing that as Christ promised, he will rise again and make our lives complete.

The music in our services for a time becomes more prayerful, more contemplative, and

as Holy Week progresses, turns into singing without the accompaniment of instruments. Let us allow this new mood to help us turn our ears and hearts to God. ■

Shadow and Light

By Patrick Hartling

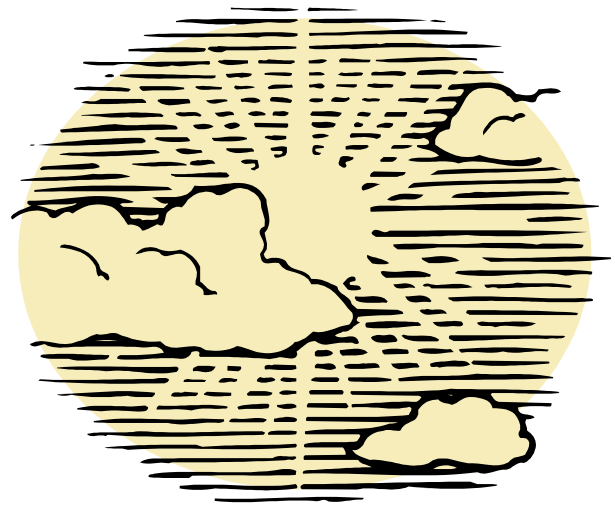
We are all but simple shadows,
Stumbling t'ward the light,
Huddled down in darkness,
In fear of cold and night,

Hampered by our feet of clay,
Held apart by hearts of stone,
Alone, within our wilderness,
Adrift and seeking home.

But the light, it *can* transform us,
Make us whole and new,
Seeking grace together,
Piercing through till dawn,

Let us pledge our beings,
And all our waking thoughts,
Reflecting light to others,
Thus ever moving on,

Living in communion, barriers denied,
Hearts and minds as one,
Forward, upward, to our best,
Seeking only freedom,
Through to light together;
Eternal peace and rest.



Running to Jesus' Feast

By Gretchen Gillis

On the last Sunday of January this year, something special happened at our 9 a.m. Eucharist that I would like to share with those who were not there to see it. Normally on the fourth Sunday of the month, the children return from Sunday School in time to join their parents for the Eucharist, but on that Sunday there was no sign of them. We proceeded as usual, expecting them any minute; but even after everyone had shared in the Eucharist and we were back in our pews, the children had not yet

returned to the church. Our Rector, Paul Friesen, remained at his place by the Lord's Table waiting for them.

Suddenly two youngsters ran up the centre aisle to the Table, then another came running and then a few more until a whole group of younger and older children were standing happily together in a semi-circle for their Eucharist, warmly welcomed by Paul's smile. It was the sweetest sight I have ever seen in a Sunday service at St. Paul's Church.

I turned to a woman beside me; we both had tears in our eyes; we had found it so moving to see all those children eager and happy to share in the Eucharist together.



A few days later, I was reading the account of Palm Sunday in Matthew's Gospel, which includes a description of children running and shouting through the Temple, 'Hosanna to David's Son!' I thought back to the children who had run to the front of our church to receive their Eucharist and a similarity struck me: it was as if they were running to meet Jesus. ■

A Note from the Parish Office

by Sophie Flute

As Lent is fast approaching, we are all focused on God's almighty and everlasting love, which coincides with my experiences here at St. Paul's Church. When I came into this position, I had no idea of the wonderful, loving and caring people I was about to meet. My time here so far has been filled with obstacles and surprises around every corner. I've had the wonderful opportunity to learn about Christ and the Anglican faith in more detail, which has been encouraging in making some hard times a lot easier for me. I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Sandra MacLennan on the Christmas Help Program, an experience I will never forget, seeing the looks of gratitude on the faces of those less fortunate as Bill Lord and I pulled up with the Christmas Treasures. With that experience it reminds me that not everyone is as lucky as I am to be in a life filled with warmth and joy.

On another note, I would like to send a message of thanks to each and every one of you. Thank you to everyone for welcoming me into your wonderful community, and helping me with patience and understanding through this learning process. I am so blessed to be surrounded by the wonders of God and all of you. In closing I would like to wish everyone a meaningful Lenten season. ■