

Chapel Talks

By Susan Markham-Starr

March 1999 “Leisure”

September 1999 “Spiritual Places”

March 2002 “Listening to the Still Small Voice”

April 2003 “Meaning of Prayer”

March 2004 “God’s Calling: Our Vocation”

March 2005 “Exploring Hope”

April 2006 “Exploring Peace”

April 2007 “The Practice of the Presence of God”

November 2009 “Vocation: The Things I Love To Do””

March 28, 1999 "Leisure"

As you will find out, I have taken Roger's directive to talk about "the book that has been my greatest spiritual influence" rather loosely. My "book," at last count, is actually four books, three newspaper clippings, two e-mails and a road map - but this speech will end with a passage from the book that I currently find influential and hopefully can live up to.

The path to this pulpit has taken one year and three weeks. It began on March 7, 1998, while I was on sabbatical leave in Waterloo, when I sent Roger an e-mail that read as follows:

From: Self <Single-user mode>
To: roger.prentice@acadiu.ca
Subject: (Fwd) How To Pick A Church For Sunday
Date sent: Sat, 7 Mar 1998 21:46:41 -0500

Roger - I just wrote this to a friend who is a faithful church goer (Anglican) and with whom I had a number of interesting chats about religion and my current search when I visited with her last month.....

And by the way, that friend from Calgary, has made her way to Manning Chapel for tonight's service.

----- Forwarded Message Follows -----

So here I am on Saturday evening and I have gone through the process of deciding that I will think about going off to church tomorrow - You ask, how does a lapsed United (not necessarily a lapsed Christian) decide on which church to attend when the only resources that she has are the Saturday local paper and a map?

1. Remember what sort of church you grew up in and felt comfortable in...no guarantee that you will still feel comfortable there - but it is a start - answer, an older church in the city centre.
2. Look at the church section of the Saturday paper - except it is now called the "Faith" section and churches are not referred to as churches - they are "worship centres" - when did that happen? Find the list for "the United Church" which has the heading "Formed by the Union, 1925, of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canada and by the Union in 1968 with the Canadian Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church" - OK, I recall learning about the 1925 union - but how did I miss the 1968 part - does being in 2nd year university in 1968 explain this ignorance?
3. Match church addresses with the CAA map of the city - churches are

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conveniently marked on the map with a blue dot with a cross on top.
- find ones in the older part of the city.

4. Search for one whose congregation matches that with which I grew up - and which of course has aged. Find ones that not only have the accessibility symbol in their listing in the paper, but also have the symbol that indicates that there are plug ins for hearing aids - these are churches like St. Andrews - but will those who need to plug in their hearing aids really do it, or will they just whisper in a loud whisper to their neighbour "what did he say?????" - just like my Grandmother did.

5. Try to figure out which one will have a good organ - this is an important part of the experience, although I'm sure that many would suggest that I am not looking for religion, rather I am looking for music - hey, one step at a time in this process of thinking about returning to the fold of organized religion. There are hints - look for the churches with listings not just for Rev....., and a Christian Development Coordinator (gives also gives a hint that there might be a broad based program) but also for a "music minister" and when you find one that also lists "Noon Hour Concert" on Tuesday at 12:15 pm, you are probably at the one that will be tomorrow's choice - and perhaps for a few Sundays this month.

6. Now about the sermon - [at the one that seemed to be my choice] there is no topic listed and the listing indicates that tomorrow not only is there a guest preacher, but there is a congregational meeting at 11:45 am - does this mean that this is a congregation in the midst of change?

7. So tomorrow morning I will try to dress appropriately - in the one professional image ensemble that I brought with me for the month and go off to church. Hey - wearing pants to church is not something that one did in my youth. The service starts at 10:30 - what happened to church starting at 11:00 am like it used to?

8. So.....off I will go to think about faith and service and love and prayer and things that have not been part of my "thought repertoire" for a while, if ever - although I believe that they have been part of my "actions and deeds repertoire" as I carry out my daily life in teaching and service to the university and community.

I don't mean this to sound flippant or insincere, just not deadly serious...other parts of life are serious....and this really was my thought process this evening. We'll see how this goes...

You have my permission to share this with anyone who might appreciate this

search - and if they ask why I am going through this process, tell them "I'm not sure - but it feels right".

Good night.....S.

So.....off I went on Sunday - I had been right - it was a congregation in transition and did not feel comfortable.

Then on Monday, came the reply from Roger:

From: "REV. ROGER PRENTICE" <roger.prentice@acadiu.ca>
To: smarkham@healthy.uwaterloo.ca
Date sent: Mon, 9 Mar 1998 09:03:03 +0000
Subject: Re: (Fwd) How To Pick A Church For Sunday

Dear Sue,

This is right on! If you were in Halifax, I would suggest to you that First Baptist Halifax could be your choice. It is one with good music (classical, for the most part), good sermons, and dignified. They are very much like a classical United church. But the 'super market faith' for these days seems to press churches into selling themselves to whoever will listen (with their hearing aids).

Last night the Rev'd. Patricia Gow spoke here, and was excellent. She talked about the idea of faith as a 'growth industry' and that sometimes when we have our greatest doubts, we are the closest to God. Interesting, and rings true, at least to me.

Would you consider speaking in the chapel - maybe about this topic - next year?

Hope that all is going well with you. Blessings!

At this point, I was backtracking very, very fast - for one who was just getting used to thinking about the idea of going to church, the thought of speaking in chapel was terrifying. So, how did the journey lead to tonight?

It lead through some serendipitous experiences through the academic work of several of my colleagues, both faculty and students, and through articles in the media. I began to perk up my ears and bifocals when the issue of "spirituality" was mentioned. From Paul Heintzman's predissertation writings about "Leisure and Spirituality" came the idea that spirituality "may be a person's attempt to understand his/her 'place' in the universe." From a textbook that Ann Dodge uses to assist in one of her classes about wellness came a very good definition of spiritual wellness as being:

the willingness to seek meaning and purpose in human existence, to question everything, and to appreciate the intangibles that cannot be explained or

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understood readily. A spiritually well person seeks harmony between that which lies within the individual and the forces that come from outside the individual.

One of the Chapel Assistants, Randall Gates, spoke in chapel about how pleased he had been when Ann's class gave him the opportunity to speak about the importance of spiritual matters in his life. I almost turned the pulpit over to him again for this speech.

Maclean's magazine made its contribution as one of its "Essays on the Millennium" was titled "Searching for Purpose" and proclaimed that "spiritualism is on the rise as baby boomers seek meaning and direction in their lives". The *Globe and Mail's* headlines over the past year have included "Give them Jesus, but hold the theology - religion meets popular culture - even though increasing numbers of people are looking for their spiritual roots, they don't want the kind of church they left behind" and "Soul surfaces in the office canyons - spirituality - a movement's afoot to find a place for the 'S-word' in corporate life."

And textbook that I use in the Recreation Management Senior Seminar, titled *Leisure and Leisure Services in the 21st Century*, addressed the issue "Desire for the Spiritual" and noted that:

The desire for the spiritual will be an increasingly important factor shaping everyday live during the next few decades, although the ways in which such desire takes shape are uncertain. The necessity of believing in something, having faith, seems a critical need of humans which is reasserting itself in a postmodern era...

The search for spiritual meaning has huge implication for leisure and its use. Leisure has always been an arena for spiritual expression, whether in the gathering of kindred spirits at holidays, belief in some leisure activity or athletic team, or simply being in the natural environment. As the search for the spiritual intensifies, leisure activity may be based less around consumption and more around affirmation - affirming that life is good.

The students who presented and took part in the discussion of this issue did such a fine job that at one point I considered having them do this speech, as they had a fine understanding of the ideas that I am still struggling with.

So....given the business that I am in, leisure and recreation, there are some reasonable links to this pulpit, even though my background has been somewhat "leisure challenged". A few weeks ago, I listened to Tom Regan's chapel speech when he spoke of the Latin motto of his school that translated to "teach me goodness, discipline and knowledge" and noted that it had been an important guiding principle in his life. I realized that the Latin motto of my high school may have unknowingly guided my approach to life. The motto was *labor omnia vincit* which translates as "work conquers all" - an interesting motto for a professor of leisure and recreation and who spends much of her teaching time talking about the benefits of leisure.

The notion of the benefits of leisure is not a new one, and there are some interesting links to organized religion and the Christian Church. In another one of those serendipitous events of the last year, a librarian at Kings College passed along to me a copy of the 1924 report titled

Leisure - Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5-12, 1924. When you look at the list of commission members, you can find individuals whose activities are at the roots of the recreation profession - the head of a settlement house, the founder of a social club who was also a member of the local playing fields committee, the secretary of a boys and girls club, to name just a few. The committee's 14 recommendations are headed by this statement:

The Church should teach more plainly not only the dignity and opportunity of work, but the dignity and opportunity of leisure, claiming it not simply as "recreation" for purposes of efficiency, but as necessary to the balance of a truly human life equally to be used to the glory of God.

This involves a real responsibility on Christians to secure adequate leisure for all workers, and also to take part in developing opportunities for healthy and happy leisure occupations.

Among those 14 recommendations are the following:

- I. That the Christian Church should more insistently demand:
 - (a) Housing Reform and the provision of open spaces and playing fields
- II. That the Christian Church should initiate or at least give support and encouragement to:
 - (d) The development of Guest Houses and Co-operative Movements in holidays, such as the Co-operative Holidays Association and Workers' Travel Association.
- III. That Church members should:
 - (b) As individuals and through their organizations make a more positive contribution towards freeing the Christian Sunday from negative rules...,while at the same time doing more to help people use it for worship and for the refreshment of the spirit as well as mind and body

Recreation professionals are still seeking housing reform, affordable travel opportunities and places for refreshment of the spirit.

Then the Report has a section headed "Wanted" which indicates, that in order to carry out these recommendations, they need:

- I. Benefactors who will give and where necessary endow:
 - (a) Libraries
 - (b) General Institutes or Clubs
 - (c) Camping grounds, open spaces and playing-field
 - (d) Community Houses for the drama, music and cinema

Today's recreation professional is still looking for such benefactors - now called public private partnerships.

They also wanted:

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II. Community Leaders...who will chose, stimulate, and train leaders and organizers from among the people themselves.

This bears a strong resemblance to the courses at Acadia that we call “inclusive community development” and “the recreation professional as facilitator” - concepts that continue to be an integral part of the tools of the recreation profession.

So...where has this led me in the search for the book that has been influential? It has led me to think about faith matters, and spirituality, and the role of leisure historically - but what about today and in this chapel? All this has hopefully set the scene for THE BOOK, which isn't a book at all, but a poem by William H. Davies, written about 1911, that was brought to my attention last year by Macha MacKay. One of my most influential experiences while I was on sabbatical leave was sitting and reading this poem on bright sunny afternoon in Waterloo. It is called “Leisure” and I think that it sums up some of the benefits of leisure. It is currently what has been my greatest spiritual influence. So here is the poem....

What is this life, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can,
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

So...as you sit here this evening in Chapel, may I ask you to consider...what is this life, if full of care, we have no time to enjoy life affirming activities; to be part of our community; to enjoy our own spiritual expressions - perhaps in church - perhaps in the natural environment. So, please take time to practice faith and service and love and prayer in your own fashion; take time to be at peace; take time to experience leisure .

Thank you, Roger, for this opportunity.

September 26, 1999 “My Favourite Spiritual Place

Thank you Roger. In various places (including his letter to me in August) Roger has mused that there is a spiritual revival happening across the road - across the road being at the War Memorial Gymnasium building and the Acadia Arena Complex in whose offices one can find me, Gary Ness, Paul Heintzman and Kevin Dickie, as well as several members of tonight's congregation. I keep meaning to remind him of the “Muscular Christianity” movement of the mid 19th century that is described in the words of my colleague from the University of Alberta, Gerry Redmond as:

a glib phrase invented during the 1850s to describe sentiments which were most successfully espoused in the novels of Charles Kingsley ... and Thomas Hughes (*Tom Brown's School Days*, 1857). Briefly the essential elements of this timely gospel were that sports (especially team sports) contributed significantly towards the development of moral character, fostered a desirable patriotism, and that such participation and its ensuing virtues were transferable to other situations and/or to later life, i.e., from the playground-or-playing field to the battlefield. Indeed, many have seen muscular Christianity as a major factor in the growth of the British Empire, and even the Western world.

We may have strayed away (perhaps a long way) from the original philosophies of Muscular Christianity but some of its tenets still guide some of the foundations of recreation and kinesiology.

When Roger encountered me at the university post office one day last June, I all too readily agreed to participate in the Chapel program this term. As he was chatting with me and I was deciding that speaking about “spiritual place” was reasonably suited to my approach to the world, I was planning this talk in my mind. We agreed that it would be a good idea to do the talk earlier in the term so that I would not stew over it for months.

“Place” is a concept that I have been dealing with for at least the last 30+ years, and it is a concept that I strayed into rather unwittingly. In a sermon that Roger gave at the Covenanter Church last July he spoke of people having a vocation - a calling. I speak of straying into something unwittingly - he speaks of a vocation - perhaps we are speaking of the same thing. Anyhow, I can trace this “whatever” to the spring of 1966 when I was finishing high school in Yorkton, Saskatchewan at the Yorkton Collegiate Institute - the place with the motto *labour omnia vincit* “work conquers all” - which I now find to be a very interesting motto for someone whose current business is teaching about leisure. Back in that era, students were required to write “departmental exams” - provincial examinations, the results of which were the basis for acceptance to university. One of the ways in which students prepared for these exams was to review exams from past years and we were able to purchase packages of previous exams from the Department of Education - I can still recall these exams on 8 ½ by 14 inch pages on beige paper and packed in brown, legal size envelopes. So there was 17 year old Susan Markham; the student who had done really well in anything dealing with numbers - algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics - the one who was planning on going to university to become a math teacher - getting thoroughly sidetracked by the exams for subjects that she had not had access to

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in her high school - geology and geography. I wrote all the exams that I was supposed to write - did fine - went to the University of Saskatchewan - took first year geology - encountered calculus - did OK in geology - got 18% in calculus - and decided that things about "place" were really interesting to me. Was that 18% in calculus a message? More a "shouted send off" than a "calling." Thus I went along the path into geology - physical geography - cartography - urban geography - urban and regional planning - park planning - recreation planning - recreation and leisure - various degrees - various work places and now Acadia.

One of the most influential experiences on that path was seeing a film by one of the early environmentalists - Ian McHarg - it was called "Multiple and Subdue the Earth" and took its name from an interpretation of Genesis 1:28

...and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth

That film, as we found out in various Acadia Advantage supported web searches on last week, was produced in 1969 for the fledgling PBS network - and Ian McHarg is now referred to as "the father of Earth Day." Thirty years later, we are still celebrating Earth Day and the essential message of that film is still relevant - that we cannot multiply and subdue the earth - rather that we must manage the natural resources that we have.

What I find interesting - and what links these ideas to this talk - is that the places that came to my mind when I was asked to speak about "my favourite spiritual place" were almost all places where resources were still natural - rather than human-made intrusions upon the landscape.

And what is a "spiritual place"? Part of the exploration that I shared with the congregation in my chapel talk last spring was my ongoing effort to figure out what that work - "spiritual" - means. At that point I quoted from Paul Heintzman's writings about "Leisure and Spirituality" which noted that spirituality "may be a person's attempt to understand his/her 'place' in the universe." From a textbook that Ann Dodge used in one of her classes about wellness came a very good definition of spiritual wellness as being:

the willingness to seek meaning and purpose in human existence, to question everything, and to appreciate the intangibles that cannot be explained or understood readily. A spiritually well person seeks harmony between that which lies within the individual and the forces that come from outside the individual.

I think that my descriptions of spiritual places are ones where I am "appreciating the intangibles that cannot be explained" - the intangibles are often peace - calm - quiet - wonderment - amazement.

I have several places that I would like to relate to you as spiritual places. The first place is the Rocky Mountains west of Calgary. Canadians recognized the need to preserve this place 114 years ago when the Rocky Mountain National Park - now known as Banff National Park - was established. Although public baths, railway tourism, commerce and resource use were part of the reasons for the establishment of this park; this park has become one of our national symbols. I do

not believe that it is coincidental that Canada's national parks are under the jurisdiction of the federal Department of Canadian Heritage - which is charged with "the preservation and promotion of Canada's cultural heritage" - including our significant natural and cultural treasures, our national parks.

I find the mountains to be awe-inspiring - not just when I am in the midst of them, but when I am viewing them from afar. One of my favourite places to view the Rocky Mountains is from Nose Hill Park in Calgary. The first range of the Rockies is about 40 miles away, but the mountains are very clearly visible and dance on the horizon.

I am certainly not the first to be over awed by mountains. Part of my on-going research deals with the role of women in various recreation and park settings. As part of that research a young colleague sent me a copy of a new Canadian magazine called *Mountain Heritage* and in the first issue of that magazine there was an article about the mythology of the mystical powers of the mountains and the goddesses who dwelt there. The author noted that:

Throughout history, mountains all over the world have held mystical properties. In ancient societies mountains were considered the dwellings of the Gods. Gods and Goddesses passed down their laws to mere mortals on the mountaintops. . . .

What is it about mountains that makes us mere mortals revere them? Perhaps we fear their lofty peaks; perhaps we are in awe of their beauty. Did ancient peoples try to conquer that fear and awe by giving mountains nurturing qualities: likening their sloping valleys and snow-covered peaks to the female form? There are historical archetypes to suggest they did:

Then the author went on to list several examples including that:

In Tibet, Mount Everest is known by a female name, as one of the oldest deities, *Chomo-Lung-Ma*, Goddess Mother of the Universe.

Before Zeus took over Olympus, his grandmother *Gaea Olympia* ran the show. The mother of all gods: The Universal Mother, Oldest of Deities: the Deep-Breasted One.

As I was struggling with the writing of a speech about women in the parks, I received an email from a friend in Calgary. The email read "just checked, the goddesses are out there dancing and enjoying the morning among the shiny, snowy peaks [of the Rocky Mountains]. They're okay, so you can be too."

What I think that is important to say in this chapel about those mountains is that they are a source of strength and energy to me - and that is one of the hallmarks of a spiritual place.

The second place that I call a spiritual place is the seashore. I'm sure that this is an experience that has been shared by most of you here tonight, so I am not relaying anything new to you - but if I asked you "what is it that makes it a spiritual place?" you might mention waves and sights and sounds and smells. And you might talk about your feelings at the seashore.

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I believe that those feelings are amazingly captured in a song by Rose Vaughan in her song "Stone and Sand." Here are some of the lyrics:

Stone and sand and sea and sky
Rest my heart and please my eye
I will go and not ask why
Stone and sand and sea and sky

Early morning rise and walk
Listen to the sea stone talk
Wild geese fly above me high
Stone and sand and sea and sky

Soon the wind is holding me
Clears my mind so easily
Open, open to the song
Wind and sea have played so long

I am strengthened by the sea
Something broken mends in me
Hold me till the day I die
Stone and sand and sea and sky

Stone and sand and sea and sky
I am free to laugh and cry
I feel the spirit lift me high
Stone and sand and sea and sky

Every time I hear that song I am transported to the sea. And given strength by the words. So perhaps the "spiritual place" can be something other than a physical location - but rather a place that is carried in our minds as a vision or is carried inside a song - like the Rose Vaughan song.

The final spiritual place or places that I will talk about tonight, are places where music is played - but not just any music. I love organ music. I have been known to arrange my schedule so that I could jet off to the Calgary International Organ Festival. One of my colleagues and I have been known to grumble when the postlude at chapel ends, because we want to hear more - and have threatened to shout "encore". I have been known to stay after morning chapel so that I can hear Clarence practice. But when someone asks why I feel this way about organ music - I am hard pressed to articulate "why?" Is it the amazing technology of air and valves and pipes? Is it the bone shaking power of the loud parts? Is it the intricate, ornate passages - the fiddley bits as they are called by a member of my household? Is it that organs are very often located in amazing places? Places like this chapel. Places that are oases of peace and calm amidst the stress of daily life. Is it the organ or the place? Both the organ and the place give strength - they are spiritual places.

There is a thread that flows through my spiritual places - they are all places that have calming features, but that are invigorating and strength giving - they are places where I can be

alone or with others - they are places whose memories I can carry with me and that can sustain me when I am elsewhere.

Roger - have you ever thought that the chapel talks are meant as a challenge to the speaker to explore themselves - to clarify what they are about - and that the good of the talk happens during the writing of the talk. Thank you for that opportunity; and for the opportunity to share it with others. And thank you for encouraging me to enjoy this spiritual place.

March 2002

March 17, 2002 “Listening to the Still Small Voice”

Thank you Roger for yet another opportunity to speak in chapel. These experiences continue to be one of the joyful challenges in my life. No one every said that joy had to be stress free.

As some of you know, the journey to tonight in this pulpit has been going on for several years. Actually, some of you have been present at the two earlier stops along the journey. I will mention them later. This year's version began last May while I was on sabbatical leave 5000 km away from Wolfville. I emailed Roger to tell him that, via computer I had been able to listen to "The Chaplain's Tale" the interview that he did with Steven Freygood last year for CBC. Here is how the correspondence unfolded.

Monday, May 7

Dear Susan,

It is nice that you were able to listen to the documentary. It has been amazing to me that so many heard it in the first place, and so many have responded.

You will be pleased to know that the Sunday night themes for 2001-02 will be:

September to November - 'The turning point for me in faith.'

January to March - 'Listening to the still, small voice'

Do either of these interest you? It would be a delight to have the prodigal daughter speak on one or t'other!

+ Roger

Friday, May 11

Roger - tell me more about the Jan-Mar topic - I could be interested.....I don't think that I am up to the Sept-Nov topic - I'm still working on it.

Have fun this weekend.....Susan

later on Friday, May 11

Dear Susan,

Yes, I think I would take the 2nd topic, too! It is 'listening to the still small voice' - the idea that God does not usually speak 'through earthquake and fire' (i.e. dramatically) but through the simple, everyday events. We usually miss them in our daily routine, but sometimes we 'hear' a quiet 'voice' somewhere which helps us to 'see' something that is vluable in our life. Must run right now, but I hope this gives you an idea Blessings!

+ Rog

still later on Friday, May 11

Roger - this sounds good - it could include mentors, friends, students, colleagues.....S

Sunday, May 13

Dear Susan!

Yes, often the 'still small voice' comes through other voices in our lives - and sometimes we do not 'hear' them until long after. We might recall something a parent or teacher said long ago and a new meaning dawns on us. I remember a High School French teacher saying often, 'Make the best of a bad bargain,' which really never meant much until a great deal later, and now it has seem me through many a situation.

Interesting.

Two convocations this morning. The Baccalureate Service went very, very well yesterday, as did the afternoon convocation. I am getting a little tired of banquets, though! You would be very happy in the chapel at this moment - Clarence is brewing up a storm, practicing Vidor's Tocatta. It really is marvellous. Blessings,

+ Roger

Monday, May 14

Subject line "From the Prodigal Daughter"

I think that I could speak to the 'Listening to the still, small voice' theme.

And then ten months passed.....

So.....there I sat with a blank page on yesterday's snowy Saturday morning.....the first words that I wrote were "I can't say what I mean, but I'm not sure that I know what I mean." I had yet again listened to "The Chaplain's Tale," via the CBC Halifax website and Real Audio and the Acadia Advantage ThinkPad - which I just misspelled as ThunkPad. I had picked up John Spong's book *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, subtitled *A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile*, and sub-subtitled *A New Reformation of the Church's Faith and Practices* and read a bit - this was supposed to make it onto my reading for last fall. Mention yesterday's *Globe and Mail* article in the focus - ideas - frontiers - faith section about the former Anglican bishop of Edinburgh, Richard Holloway "The blaspheming bishop" - and the Spong connection.

What has the still small voice of God said to me? Thank heavens I didn't have to speak to the topic in the fall "the turning point for me in faith" - is there faith? has there been a turning point? Actually, my emails with Roger did include the phrase "tell me more about the January to

March 2002

March topic - I could be interested.....I don't think that I am up to the September to November topic - I'm still working on it." These are the thoughts that race around in my head - the Acadia Advantage was of no help to me.

I think that it's best to talk a bit about the journey. I continue to be in awe of those who are farther along on their journey than I am in mine - whose faith is strong enough to sustain them through the struggles of life and who manage to act with much more Christian charity than I am able to summon up when external forces disrupt my comfortable life.

Four years and one week ago, in March of 1998 while I was on sabbatical and based at the University of Waterloo, I embarked upon the quest to determine if there was a place for me in organized religion or if there was a place for organized religion in me. It started with an email to a friend in Calgary who not only is a faithful churchgoer (Anglican), but has a strong faith, and with whom I have had a number of interesting chats about religion. On a whim, I sent Roger a copy of the email. Here is what it said:

So here I am on Saturday evening and I have gone through the process of deciding that I will think about going off to church tomorrow - You ask, how does a lapsed United (not necessarily a lapsed Christian) decide on which church to attend when the only resources that she has are the Saturday local paper and a map?

1. Remember what sort of church you grew up in and felt comfortable in...no guarantee that you will still feel comfortable there - but it is a start - answer, an older church in the city centre.
2. Look at the church section of the Saturday paper - except it is now called the "Faith" section and churches are not referred to as churches - they are "worship centres" - when did that happen? Find the list for "the United Church" which has the heading "Formed by the Union, 1925, of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canada and by the Union in 1968 with the Canadian Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church" - OK, I recall learning about the 1925 union - but how did I miss the 1968 part - does being in 2nd year university in 1968 explain this ignorance?
3. Match church addresses with the CAA map of the city - churches are conveniently marked on the map with a blue dot with a cross on top. - find ones in the older part of the city.
4. Search for one whose congregation matches that with which I grew up - and which of course has aged. Find ones that not only have the accessibility symbol in their listing in the paper, but also have the symbol that indicates that there are plug ins for hearing aids - these are churches like St. Andrews - but will those who need to plug in their hearing aids really do it, or will they just whisper in a loud whisper to their neighbour "what did he say?????" - just like my Grandmother did.

5. Try to figure out which one will have a good organ - this is an important part of the experience, although I'm sure that many would suggest that I am not looking for religion, rather I am looking for music - hey, one step at a time in this process of thinking about returning to the fold of organized religion. There are hints - look for the churches with listings not just for Rev....., and a Christian Development Coordinator (gives also gives a hint that there might be a broad based program) but also for a "music minister" and when you find one that also lists "Noon Hour Concert" on Tuesday at 12:15 pm, you are probably at the one that will be tomorrow's choice - and perhaps for a few Sundays this month.

7. So tomorrow morning I will try to dress appropriately - in the one professional image ensemble that I brought with me for the month and go off to church. Hey - wearing pants to church is not something that one did in my youth. The service starts at 10:30 - what happened to church starting at 11:00 am like it used to?

8. So....off I will go to think about faith and service and love and prayer and things that have not been part of my "thought repertoire" for a while, if ever - although I believe that they have been part of my "actions and deeds repertoire" as I carry out my daily life in teaching and service to the university and community.

I don't mean this to sound flippant or insincere, just not deadly serious...other parts of life are serious....and this really was my thought process this evening. We'll see how this goes...

You have my permission to share this with anyone who might appreciate this search - and if they ask why I am going through this process, tell them "I'm not sure - but it feels right".

Good night.....S.

And so....off I went and reported back on that church and another that I attended in Waterloo. Soon thereafter came a message from Roger "would you consider speaking in the chapel?" At this point, I was backtracking very, very fast - for one who was just getting used to thinking about the idea of going to church, the thought of speaking in chapel was terrifying. But, I did - the topic was "the book that has been my greatest spiritual influence" and I turned up in this pulpit in March of 1999 with four books, three newspaper clippings, two emails, a road map and a poem. The poem, interestingly enough, is the one that Elaine Hendricks read two weeks ago "what is this life if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare...."

And the journey continued..... But, I am asking and I'm sure you are as well,.. where is the still small voice?

One of its voices was neither still nor small. People speak of having a vocation - a calling. I tend to stray into things rather unwittingly. If the career path that I started on in my first year of university - September 1966 - had played itself out, I would be a high school math teacher with about 32 years of experience and probably getting ready for a Freedom 55

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retirement in a year or so. But, back in 1966, there was 17 year old Susan Markham; the student who had done really well in anything dealing with numbers - algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics - going off went to the University of Saskatchewan taking a truly liberal education - English, French, Latin, geology and calculus. Most of the grades were unremarkable - except for calculus where I got a remarkable grade - remarkable in its truest sense, in the words of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, "worth notice, striking, conspicuous." I got 18% in calculus. Was that 18% in calculus a message? It felt more like a "shouted send off" than a "calling." It was definitely not a still, small voice.

But what I remember most about the experience of that dismal failure in calculus was the voice of a young faculty member in Biology who lived in the residence as a don. In her calm way Dr. Rever was somehow able to convince me that failing the first year in what was supposed to be my major - my career - was not the end of the world. That other opportunities were staring me in the face. And thus I went off along my winding career path into geology - geography - physical geography - cartography - urban geography - planning - urban and regional planning - park planning - recreation planning - recreation and leisure - various degrees - various work places and now Acadia.

And if God speaks to us in a still small voice, how has that voice been communicated to me? As I look back, after many calamitous events with their various shouted send offs, was there the calm voice of a friend or colleague to assist? After my final masters research paper was not up to the standards of my harried and often invisible supervisor, there was a charitable roommate who drove me to the airport to catch a plane from St. Louis to Saskatoon so I could go to a job interview for my dream job as a park planner. A couple of jobs later, when my first excursion into university teaching was less than spectacular - another one of those remarkable experiences - there were the friends who faithfully watched the job ads and found one for me that led me to Alberta. The friend who in the middle of my PhD program used to provide me with hours of sanity saving conversation, pasta making and dog training. Then there was the friend who thought that I might have something in common with a nice man who also had a wheaten terrier - his wheaten terrier got along with my wheaten terrier - his dog got along with my cats - and we got along with each other, so one thing led to another and a moving company loaded the belongings of two households in Edmonton into one moving van and unloaded them into one house on University Avenue in Wolfville. And, a few years ago, the friend who, in response to my email about my losing things (including my passport) and going in circles, asked the pointed question "do you know anything about stress and burnout?" which is what got the whole discussion about life and faith and still small voices started.

What is the common element in each of these people and the still small voices? They cared. They cared enough to do something that meant a lot and that showed me some options that I had not considered. They took time to care. They were not too busy to care. Whenever we get to the part of the chapel service where we recite the University prayer, I am reminded of that by the line "may we be a community of scholars....caring for one another..." The mission of this and any university is noted in the prayer where we ask that we "continue to promote the search for truth and knowledge and be an inspiration to others who follow" but I believe that the "caring for one another" is what makes us human and humane and capable of transmitting "the still small voice."

Let us end this talk with the University Prayer. We will say it again later, but let's say it now and focus on how we all, as individuals and as a community, can help carry out its intent.

The University Prayer

**Lord God of all wisdom,
we pray for Acadia University,
that she may be faithful
to the purposes of our Founders,
continue to promote the search
for truth and knowledge,
and be an inspiration to others who follow.
May we be a community of scholars
sharing this ambition,
caring for one another,
and loyal to the truth
revealed to us as thy disciples.
Amen.**

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March 30, 2003 “Meaning of Prayer”

Thank you Roger for yet another opportunity to speak in chapel. These experiences continue to be one of the joyful challenges in my life. Last year in this pulpit I said that “no one ever said that joy had to be stress free” - I echo that sentiment this year. This is my fourth chapel talk and I am convinced that they are getting harder. The first one was about “the book that has been my greatest spiritual influence” and I brought four books, three newspaper clippings, two e-mails and a road map. The second was “my favourite spiritual place” and I had several: the Rocky Mountains; the seashore; and places where music, particularly organ music, is played - including this chapel. The third was “listening to the still small voice” and I talked about the actions of several friends who cared and helped me along the way in my rather winding circuitous personal and professional life. So...,here we are tonight, the topic is “the meaning of prayer,” and there is a great temptation to say “I haven’t a clue!.” But, I do have one book, two newspaper clippings, six book reviews and two government pronouncements.

When Roger contacted me about this last June, I waffled in committing to do this talk. Now....many of you know about the Chaplain’s annual campaign to entice speakers into the pulpit. Some of us have been known to give him a wide berth on the campus and in town during May and June - but he finds us. After thinking about the topic and chatting via email with a friend whose comment was “Hmmm. Could be an interesting topic to explore. Many kinds of prayer offered in a multitude of ways” my email to the Chaplain said “Let’s chat - I think that I could do ‘Prayer’ - in my own odd fashion, of course.” So then I started scribbling notes, and here they are:

- What is prayer?
- Why do we do it?
- What does it do for us?
- Is prayer selfish, self-serving, or inclusive?
- Is it part of caring and sharing?

Then the chapel leaflet went to press with my name beside March 30th and now it’s March 30th

If we were part of one of my classes in Recreation Management, I would have these questions on a PowerPoint slide; you would all get in groups; I would ask you to discuss these questions in your group; you would do that; you would appoint a recorder/reporter; and that person would report back after 15 minutes; and we would work on a summary of the assembled groups’ opinions. Do I see looks of horror around the chapel? You came to listen and to think, but not to talk? The Recreation students in the back rows are wondering if I really mean this and if I will assign them the role of facilitating each group. It’s OK - don’t panic - I will continue. But I think that each of us should answer those questions on our own, because I will only have my current answer, not yours.

When I started this talk last Saturday, I got all my notes and resources together; made lists; made an outline with three categories of prayer and noted this in an email to that same friend who thought that the topic was “an interesting [one] to explore.” The rather rapid reply was “Sounds like you’re taking refuge in an academic approach to your topic at this point. :-)” - to which I replied “aaahhhh.....well.....yes!” When in doubt or unsure of what to do, academics consult resources, make lists, create categories, and make outlines - all of which

sounds very organized and rigorous, but which are absolutely the best writing avoidance strategies known to humankind. I even made notes while marking exams in December - the best marking avoidance strategy that I know.

My way to thinking about the “meaning of prayer” is to think about three categories of prayer: personal prayer; social prayer; and institutional prayer. And like all such typologies, the boundaries of the categories are really fuzzy.

Personal Prayer

When the Chaplain says “let us pray” what do you do? I have been known to panic. What or who do I pray for? I have often prayed “let me get it right” - but what is “it”? Do I pray for myself? Is that selfish? Do I pray for others? But who? Family? Friends? Colleagues? Community members? The world? Peace? What is reasonable? Does “reasonable” need to come into prayer? How do I move from rote, mechanical prayer - just saying the words - into meaningful prayer?

As a child I had the following prayer in a cross stitched panel hanging above the head of my bed. It is still there in what is now the guest room in my mother’s house, although I don’t think that it still has the angel doll on it.

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

I started thinking about that prayer as I scribbled notes for this talk - particularly thinking about what a child might wonder about “Lord,” about “soul” and about “dying before waking” - a rather scary thought from what I remember of my childhood. I did a web search to see what could find about that prayer and got totally sidetracked I when found that there is another version of this prayer on the website of a Canadian woman who specializes in songs for children (<http://kiddiddles.com>). The new version is as follows:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
Guard me while I sleep tonight,
And wake me safe at dawn’s first light.
God bless Mommy; Daddy, too,
And help me to always be true to you.
Amen.

It’s less scary - a bit softer - some would say it’s a bit wishy-washy - I sort of like it.

But why do we pray? When do we pray? Do we pray when we need or want something? Do we pray for hope? With those questions, may I share with you the prayer of the suffering student that my mother sent me recently - and think of the words of the first version of the child’s prayer.

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Now I lay me down to study
I pray thee Lord I won't go nutty
If I should fail to learn this junk
I pray thee Lord I will not flunk.
But if I do, don't shed a tear
Just put a rose behind my ear.
Tell the teacher I did my best
Then pile my books upon my chest.
If I should die before I wake
That's one less test I'll have to take.

I thought several times about including that prayer - is it too glib to use as part of a chapel talk? I finally decided that it might say something to some of the students here - and isn't that the point of this exercise? At least it might give folks a chuckle and something to remember when stressing over final exams in two weeks.

Prayers are not just about words, they are about tone and emotion. Are our prayers calm, collected, rational statements? Or are they as some of mine have been somewhat angry, almost shouted statements, railing against real or perceived injustices, inequities, or unfairness? And if God is really worth believing in, why do rotten things happen to good people? And why do good, wonderful, kind, generous people die long before their time? And so one...so prayer is not always peaceful.

Why do we pray? In its last Sunday paper of 2002, the *Sunday Herald* had the header "Were Humans Born To Pray?" and the headline on page C2 was "Hard-wired for God - How does faith fit into our psyche? Are humans by nature predisposed toward a belief in a higher being?" The article goes on to review writings in neuropsychiatry, neuropsychology, neurology, and neurotheology which is "the study of the relationship between brain function and spiritual experience." The evidence presented may be viewed in some circles as quackery or new age flakiness, but it was an interesting article that concludes with the comment that "human beings are always going to have this sense of connection to God, defining God broadly, whether we create it ourselves or whether there really is a God."

The author of that newspaper article might believe that we are "born to pray," but how do we go about praying? One of the oddest, strangest, most amusing, and perhaps most appalling discoveries that I made while gathering material for this talk was that there is a book out there called *Christian Prayer for Dummies*. The book offers:

- advice and examples that help you to find your own prayer style
- explanations in plain English
- icons and other navigational aids
- tear-out cheat sheet [I have difficulty with this one!]

[Read the titles of the parts] Not only is there a book, but there is a accompanying website <http://www.digitalwalk.net/prayerdummy>. I still don't know how I feel about the idea that the books for *Dummies* publishers have chosen to address Christian Prayer - is it a worthwhile community service? or is it crass commercialism at its worst? Why do I find *Christian Prayer for Dummies* somewhat offensive, when I have no problem whatsoever with *Opera for*

Dummies, *Canadian Gardening for Dummies*, and *Golf for Dummies* - all of which you will find on our bookshelves at home. Some of my golfing buddies might suggest that prayer might help my golf!!

Rather than *Christian Prayer for Dummies*, I have a favourite book that, for most of its life, sits open in my office. It is Jim Perkins *Devotional Diary - short prayers for busy people*. [read the Introduction] It is accompanied by reproductions of Alex Colville's paintings *Labours of the Months*. It was given to me at the beginning of 1999 by Joan Allen Peters and has the inscription "hope this is a bright and good year for you." That in itself is a prayer. The prayer for today is one that sums up my continuing questions about what I pray for.
[read March 30]

How I wish I could always act justly,
Speak true words, and perform right acts!
But my motives are mixed,
My words are a blend of truth and falsehood,
And my acts are self-serving as well as good.
Grant your blessings, I pray,
That I may have a pure heart

Social Prayer

I am still struggling with what to call this category - so for now it is "social prayer." Last week John Sumarah talked about "corporate prayer" as we pray together, often in an organized group. My category of "social prayer" is somewhat larger than that. It includes a number of areas such as:

- public displays of prayer
- prayer in the sporting arena
- statements of collective goodwill

One of the courses that I teach is "History of Physical Activity and Sport" - and in that course there is a theme "Religion and Physical Activity and Sport." One of the topics that many sport historians talk about is the muscular Christianity movement of the mid 19th century that is described in the words of my colleague from the University of Alberta, Gerry Redmond as:

a glib phrase invented during the 1850s to describe sentiments which were most successfully espoused in the novels of Charles Kingsley ... and Thomas Hughes (*Tom Brown's School Days*, 1857). Briefly the essential elements of this timely gospel were that sports (especially team sports) contributed significantly towards the development of moral character, fostered a desirable patriotism, and that such participation and its ensuing virtues were transferable to other situations and/or to later life, i.e., from the playground-or-playing field to the battlefield. Indeed, many have seen muscular Christianity as a major factor in the growth of the British Empire, and even the Western world.

As I worked on updating that part of my course, I discovered a number of contemporary notions that fit very nicely with this talk about the meaning of prayer. And that fit with public

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displays of prayer and beliefs, often in sporting settings.

- From ChristianityToday.com comes “Muscular Christianity: Sports stars, Graham put grit in the gospel” noting the testimonials of various athletes at a Billy Graham crusade
- From poppolitics.com “Playing with God: The history of athletes thanking the ‘big man upstairs’
- From the online *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* [based at the University of Saskatchewan] are the reviews of three new books:
 - *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sports*;
 - *The Faith of 50 Million: Baseball, Religion and American Culture*; &
 - *With God on Their Side: Sport in the Service of Religion*.
- From the *American Historical Review* a review of *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*

That latter review begins with the statement

When professional football players gather for prayer in the middle of the field at the conclusion of a game, or a basketball star sports a WWJD bracelet, it is difficult to imagine that organized sports were anathema to American Protestants during the antebellum period. But as Clifford Putney's fascinating study demonstrates, Protestants in the postbellum period quickly overcame their early inhibitions and soon embraced manliness as a crucial way of nurturing godliness, equipping Protestant men to meet the challenges of modernity, and, perhaps most important, saving the church from the devastating effects of effeminacy.

I then had to go to another website to find out what WWJD means - “what would Jesus do?”

I find it interesting that so much of the literature deals with the role of prayer, public testimonials and sports for young men - what about young women?? As I'm sure that you have gathered, I am not very comfortable with “social prayer” - the public display of one's religion and religious fervour does not match my approach. I begin to cringe when I hear and see such displays. Why is that? Is it a remnant of my United Church upbringing in Saskatchewan where you just calmly and quietly tried to do decent things without drawing attention to yourself? Is it because I am not convinced that public displays are matched with private actions? Is it because I can't believe that people can be that good, when I know that I surely am not - that I am much more likely to have the mixed motives, false words, and self-serving acts notes in the prayer earlier.

So...where does that take me in this talk? To “statements of collective goodwill” which is close to my final category of “institutional prayer.”

We all engage in these statements of goodwill;

- when we wish that someone has a good day, week, month, term, year
- when we say grace
- when Roger waves across University Avenue and opens his arms wide
- when he sends blessings in his emails
- [and when he is lining up speakers for 2003-2004]

One of the most meaningful statements of collective goodwill that I have experienced in the past few months happened in November when the three faculty members on the search committee for the next President of Acadia University met with members of the Faculty of Theology. Part of our mandate was that “in the early stages of the search, members are expected to solicit within their sectors the views of their constituents so that the Committee is more widely informed as they undertake the search and make recommendations.” So we three decided that one of the ways in which we could do this was to try to meet with members of all four faculties. Our meeting at the Divinity College was opened with a prayer asking that wisdom be brought to our deliberations. Oh my... did we ever need wisdom at various times along the way. And I often thought of that moment, when I believe that not only was the prayer to a higher being, but also for the assembled group to help with the process and the decision.

Institutional Prayer

The notion of institutional prayer hits the headlines periodically. Some of you may have noted the kerfuffle two years ago when a member of the Nova Scotia Legislature objected to the Lord’s Prayer being used when they open the daily sessions of the Legislature. What I found interesting in the reports of the issue, was not so much the issue itself, but the reports of the various invocations that are used at the beginnings of meetings of decision makers at various levels of government. Halifax Regional Municipality uses an invocation that asks God for help so councillors “will work for the good of [their] community.” The Parliamentary Prayer of the House of Commons asks God to

Guide [them] in [their] deliberations as Members of Parliament, and strengthen [them] in [their] awareness of [their] duties and responsibilities as members. Grant [them] wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to preserve the blessings of this country for the benefit of all and to make good laws and wise decisions.

The Acadia University Prayer prays for Acadia University and asks that we be a community of scholars promoting the search for truth and knowledge, being an inspiration to others who follow, caring for one another.

Do you remember what I said a few minutes ago that I have often prayed “let me get it right” - but what is “it”. Well...perhaps the “it” is the essence of the university prayer - do good work, assist students, care for others - in the words of HRM “work for the good of our community.” And I know that prayers are often quiet, but I always want to shout loudly the part about being a community and caring for one another.

Let us end this talk with the University Prayer. I know that we will say it again later, but let’s say it now and focus on how we all, as individuals and as a community, can help carry out

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its intent - because we are Acadia University!

Lord God of all wisdom, we pray for Acadia University, that she may be faithful to the purposes of our Founders, continue to promote the search for truth and knowledge, and be an inspiration to others who follow. May we be a community of scholars sharing this ambition, caring for one another, and loyal to the truth revealed to us as Thy disciples. Amen.

March 21, 2004 “God’s Calling: Our Vocation”

Thank you Roger for yet another opportunity to speak in chapel.

As I got ready for this chapel talk, I noted that this is the fifth one that I have given - and that four of them have been in March, during Lent. Now...some people give things up for Lent - I seem to take things on. This has become my annual (mostly) joyful challenge. I must, however, note that I very much appreciate those who give things up for Lent - in particular, students who give up chocolate for Lent. My one very fond memory of the strike and the picket line was that of the student who went to Tim Horton’s for a snack, bought a chocolate donut, walked down the street with it in a bag, was reminded that she had given up chocolate for Lent, and was quickly steered in my direction by a chapel assistant who said “take it to Susan...she NEEDS chocolate” (or something like that). I was ever so grateful for that student’s lenten discipline - and for the chapel assistant.

The path to this pulpit continues to amaze me. This phase of the journey began six years ago while I was on a sabbatical leave and, armed with a newspaper and a map, I began the search for a church to attend on Sunday and began asking the question “is there a place for me in organized religion?” or perhaps “is there a place in me for organized religion?” My faith, if I have one, is certainly in a developmental stage. I continue to be in awe of those whose faith is strong enough to sustain them through the struggles of life and who manage to act with much more Christian charity than I am able to summon up when my comfortable life is disrupted or challenged. On that March Saturday evening, six years ago, I stated in an email to a friend:

So....off I will go to think about faith and service and love and prayer and things that have not been part of my "thought repertoire" for a while, if ever - although I believe that they have been part of my "actions and deeds repertoire" as I carry out my daily life in teaching and service to the university and community.

Those previous four chapel talks have addressed a variety of topics. The first one was about “the book that has been my greatest spiritual influence” and I brought four books, three newspaper clippings, two e-mails and a road map. The second was “my favourite spiritual place” and I had several: the Rocky Mountains, the seashore, and places where music, particularly organ music, is played - including this chapel. The third was “listening to the still small voice” and I talked about the actions of several friends who cared and helped me along the way in my rather winding circuitous personal and professional life. The fourth topic was “the meaning of prayer,” and I came with one book, two newspaper clippings, six book reviews and two government pronouncements to talk about personal prayer, social prayer, and institutional prayer.

So...here I am talking about vocation and calling on this Sunday - which is both Johann Sebastian Bach’s 319th birthday and first full day of Spring (we hope)! When Roger asked me to talk on this topic, the first thoughts that entered my mind were that I had talked about a similar idea two years ago in chapel when my topic was “listening to the still small voice” - could I expand upon that thought? My comments of that talk went as follows as I spoke of the voices being neither still nor small. I will reprise them with slight updates as they relate to the notion of calling and vocations.

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People speak of having a vocation - a calling. I tend to stray into things rather unwittingly. If the career path that I started on in my first year of university - September 1966 - had played itself out, I would be a high school math teacher with about 34 years of experience and getting ready for a Freedom 55 retirement. But, back in 1966, there was 17 year old Susan Markham; the student who had done really well in anything dealing with numbers - algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics (the closet quantoid) - going off went to the University of Saskatchewan and taking a truly liberal education - English, French, Latin, geology and calculus. Most of the grades were unremarkable - except for calculus where I got a remarkable grade - remarkable in its truest sense, in the words of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, "worth notice, striking, conspicuous." I got 18% in calculus. Was that 18% in calculus a message, a calling? It felt more like a "shouted send off" or a kick in the backside than a "calling."

But what I remember most about the experience of that dismal failure in calculus was the voice of a young faculty member who lived in the residence as a don. In her calm, humane way she was somehow able to convince me that failing the first year in what was supposed to be my major - my career - was not the end of the world. And to convince me that other opportunities were staring me in the face. Thus I went off along my wandering winding career path into geology - geography - physical geography - cartography - urban geography - planning - urban and regional planning - park planning - recreation planning - recreation and leisure - various degrees - various work places and now Acadia. One of the side benefits of that truly liberal education - and five years of Latin classes - is that with just a bit of study and prodding, I could probably assail you all with the latin verb "vocare"(to call) in many tenses and persons - but I won't!

Do we each have a calling or do we wander along, straying unwittingly into situations and rolling with the punches or in the words of the organizational theorists "respond to the influences of the external environment"? The hymn that we just sang, "Jerusalem," speaks to the vocation of some of my predecessors in my current field "recreation...parks...leisure." Let's look again at the words that Blake wrote in 1804:

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills
Bring me my bow of burning gold
Bring me my arrows of desire
Bring me my spear - O clouds unfold
Bring me my Chariot of Fire

I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
'Til we have built Jerusalem

In England's green and pleasant land

My predecessors were the social reformers of the early- mid nineteenth century who saw the crowded, polluted urban centres with their own versions of “dark Satanic mills” as being a threat both to the physical, mental and moral health of people and to England’s green and pleasant land. One of my favourite social reformers of the time was John Arthur Roebuck whose life has Canadian roots, but who came into his own as a parliamentarian in England. He described a journey through the industrial cities in 1841:

Suddenly we came to an immense cutting in the hill ... I beheld a sight I shall not quickly forget. Ashton, Stockport and half a dozen manufacturing towns were in sight ... chimneys were thrusting themselves into the sky, puffing out huge volumes of black smoke, and for miles the same horrible view met you - smoke, smoke, smoke; trees, roads, the very ground, horses, beasts, and men were black and miserable.

His vision of a city with proper planning was one where, in the words of a colleague:

By providing the town dweller with the means of an alternative form of recreation to the public house and gin palace, could improve his mind, increase the sum total of happiness, and so make him a better citizen.

Some of Roebuck's thoughts about planning and parks have been summarized as follows:

Both the human body and the human spirit stood in vital need of recreation. Nature, to Roebuck, was not solely an antidote for the physical diseases to which urban man was so horrifyingly exposed: it was also an antidote to social diseases of all kinds: crime, drunkenness, prostitution, pauperism, social disorganization, and violence all could lose their force in the city of Roebuck's vision. It was therefore a moral obligation of government to ensure that ample amounts of open space, of many different kinds, should be freely available in all parts of the city and beyond.

How do we turn the reformers’ visions into moral obligations of government and then into vocations for some of us? And perhaps I have the order backwards - perhaps vocations - callings - become the moral obligations of governments. But that process happens slowly....very slowly.

In 1860, two decades after Roebuck reported on those English cities, some of those reform sentiments were being expressed in Halifax. Although the “dark satanic mills” environment of industrial England was certainly not present, the social welfare motive, similar to Roebuck’s comments were being mentioned by a Dr. Cogswell when he was advocating improvements to the Halifax Common:

It is desirable after the example of so many wise and good in this country to hold out inducements to the public to seek recreation out of doors instead of wasting their means and health in drinking shops and like resorts.

Lest we think that all recreation and park promoters were altruistic in their motives, may I also add another motive for park development - the visual and financial improvement of cities:

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In every city where there is a park and pleasure grounds for promenading, it also makes an attraction for strangers and frequently induces gentlemen of skill and capital to come and settle ... to establish manufactories and ... build handsome residences ... give employment ... and their capital will circulate throughout the whole community and be likewise the means of increasing the population.

Attractive cities - with parks - attract wealth. In my dissertation I asked the question of whether parks were created for a city's health or for its wealth. And I should continue to ask that question.

What role did the church play in advocating for leisure, recreation and parks causes? The notion of the benefits of leisure is not a new one, and there are some interesting links to organized religion and the Christian Church. In one of those serendipitous events that just happen, a librarian at Kings College passed along to me a withdrawn copy of the Church of England's 1924 report titled *Leisure - Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5-12, 1924*. When you look at the list of commission members, you can find individuals whose activities are at the roots of the recreation profession - the head of a settlement house, the founder of a social club who was also a member of the local playing fields committee, the secretary of a boys and girls club, to name just a few - all people with a calling. The committee's 14 recommendations are headed by this statement:

The Church should teach more plainly not only the dignity and opportunity of work, but the dignity and opportunity of leisure, claiming it not simply as "recreation" for purposes of efficiency, but as necessary to the balance of a truly human life equally to be used to the glory of God.

This involves a real responsibility on Christians to secure adequate leisure for all workers, and also to take part in developing opportunities for healthy and happy leisure occupations.

Among those 14 recommendations are the following:

I. That the Christian Church should more insistently demand:

(a) Housing Reform and the provision of open spaces and playing fields

II. That the Christian Church should initiate or at least give support and encouragement to:

(d) The development of Guest Houses and Co-operative Movements in holidays, such as the Co-operative Holidays Association and Workers' Travel Association.

III. That Church members should:

(b) As individuals and through their organizations make a more positive contribution towards freeing the Christian Sunday from negative rules..., while at the same time doing more to help people use it for worship and for the refreshment of the spirit as well as mind and body.

Recreation professionals are still seeking housing reform, affordable travel opportunities and times and places for refreshment of the spirit. And I will not (at least now) use this pulpit to talk about my views on Sunday shopping!!!!

Then the Report has a section headed “Wanted” which indicates, that in order to carry out these recommendations, they need:

- I. Benefactors who will give and where necessary endow:
 - (a) Libraries
 - (b) General Institutes or Clubs
 - (c) Camping grounds, open spaces and playing-field
 - (d) Community Houses for the drama, music and cinema

Today’s recreation professional is still looking for such benefactors - now called public private partnerships.

They also wanted:

- II. Community Leaders...who will chose, stimulate, and train leaders and organizers from among the people themselves.

This bears a strong resemblance to courses and labs at Acadia that we call “inclusive community development” and “facilitation” - concepts that continue to be an integral part of the tools of the recreation profession.

Where does “Jerusalem” fit into this scene? “Jerusalem” has had a role in several other things related to vocation and social causes. The music played a large role in the background of “Chariots of Fire,” the 1981 movie with one character based (loosely) on the Olympic experiences of Eric Liddell, a true muscular Christian who grew up in a missionary family and after university served as a missionary in China. The hymn is also associated with Women’s Institutes and is played vigorously at the beginning of W.I. meetings both in real life and in the account of the activities of the Rylstone W.I. as portrayed recently in Calendar Girls. Before the Women’s Institutes used the hymn, the National Union of Suffrage Societies used it in their 1918 celebration to mark the time when some women (female householders over age 30) got the vote. The notion of vocation and of doing good deeds - and certainly in the case of Eric Liddell, of God’s calling - is inherent in the sentiments of “Jerusalem” as we are called to do something that will make people’s lives better.

Do university professors have a vocation - a calling? This sounds like a reprise of a message that I posted on AUFA-OPEN in the weeks before the strike. It asked, among other things:

- Are professors professionals?
- Do professionals have responsibilities to students?
- Should professionals go on strike?

In hindsight, this was probably not the most politically astute thing that I did in the recent labour issue - but then I don’t think that I did anything that was politically astute during the whole eight

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month siege. It counts as one of the low points of my academic career. But those questions could lead to a discussion about the vocation - the calling - that we have as professors. As it was they led to some “interesting” public and private commentary - not all complementary.

What is our vocation? To teach. To do scholarly and creative activity. To serve the university and community. Is my vocation what I called my "actions and deeds repertoire" six years ago when I spoke of carrying out my daily life in teaching and service to the university and community? Yet another question.

On my wall is a framed card that I received several years ago from a student on whose masters thesis committee I sat. It reads:

TEACHERS: True teachers use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own. (Nikos Kazantzakis)

We are told on numerous web sites that Kazantzakis was a Greek philosopher and writer (1885-1957) whose writings include *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. One of those web sites also includes this Chinese proverb "Teachers open the door...You enter by yourself." I like these structural notions of bridges and doors. As a teacher I try to provide the structure in which learning can take place -that may be because of my past as a geographer and a planner. The operative word is “try”- there are some successes - there are some pratfalls!

And what are the lessons that I have learned??

- be yourself
- be prepared
- try to make a difference
- teaching is hard work
- teaching is not something that you have to slog through so that you can get to the good stuff - your research program
- teaching is our reason for being professors
- teaching is an approach to the world
- every day is still a challenge as I get ready to enter the classroom
- I should probably paste the University Prayer on the lid of my laptop computer

The Acadia University Prayer prays for Acadia University and asks that we be a community of scholars promoting the search for truth and knowledge, being an inspiration to others who follow, caring for one another. The essence of the university prayer - do good work, assist students, care for others - is probably a good set of guiding principles of professors' vocations. I know that prayers are often quiet, but I always want to shout loudly the part about being a community and caring for one another when we say it.

Let us end this talk with the University Prayer. I know that we will say it again later, but let's say it now and focus on how we all, as individuals and as a community, can help carry out its intent as our vocation - because we are Acadia University!

Lord God of all wisdom, we pray for Acadia University, that she may be faithful to the

purposes of our Founders, continue to promote the search for truth and knowledge, and be an inspiration to others who follow. May we be a community of scholars sharing this ambition, caring for one another, and loyal to the truth revealed to us as Thy disciples. Amen.

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March 20, 2005 “Exploring Hope”

Thank you Roger for yet another opportunity to speak in chapel.

As I got ready for this chapel talk, I noted that this is the sixth one that I have given – and that this time I have finally succumbed to reality and printed the text from which I am reading in a large font so that I can see it. Back to the five other chapel talks - four of them have been in March, during Lent. I recognize that Lent is a “time for prayer and penance” and that some people “give up certain foods as a form of self-discipline.” Lest you think that I penned those words, I can thank the BBC website devoted to “Christian Holy Days” for much of what I now know about Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, the Feast of the Ascension, and Pentecost. In my version of self-discipline, I do not give something up (certainly not chocolate!!), I take on the challenge of speaking in Chapel and this is not a form of penance. I find it interesting that much of what I now know about Lent is what I learned when a student in my History and Philosophy of Leisure course asked why Lent has 40 days – and I replied, “does Lent have 40 days?” and proceeded to try and count on my fingers how long it was from Ash Wednesday to Easter. When you google the words “Lent” and “40 days” you find all sorts of interesting things that were new to me, including the idea that eastern and western churches count the 40 days differently, and start Lent on different days; and that “lent is the old English word meaning *to lengthen*; and of course that Lent is observed in the Spring when the days begin to lengthen. All this investigation came about because that same history and philosophy of leisure course has as one of its topics “leisure in traditional societies” referring to pre industrial revolution times when the cycle of the church events and festivals had much more sway over people’s lives than it appears to do in contemporary life.

When Roger called me last May, he offered me the choice of “exploring faith” in the Fall term or “**exploring hope**” in the Spring on March 20th. My immediate response was to choose “hope” because: how could you be a **university** teacher if you did not have hope? I think that University is about hope – the hope of parents that the students will do well and be successful; the hope of students that it is all worthwhile – or at least we hope that’s what they hope; the hope of professors that we are making a difference in peoples’ lives. So here we are, it’s March 20th, Palm Sunday, the first day of Spring, the day before the performance of Missa Gaia – and we are full of hope. The 100 daffodils bulbs that I planted last November are starting to poke through the soil in our front yard – three are up, hopefully the other 97 are hot on their heels. The winter that we lived on Vancouver Island, I bought daffodils at the grocery store every weekend to brighten our log cabin in the rainforest. And thanks to SuperStore I was able to repeat that this weekend with the daffodils that are in the Narthex. The Canadian Cancer Society’s annual spring fund raising campaign, selling daffodils, often calls them Flowers of Hope. This is a plug from the pulpit to remind you all to order your daffodils this week so that they will be ready for you next week and in so doing assist a worthy cause. On a related note, it is quite interesting how many organizations use the phrase “seeds of hope” in their promotions – but the flowers are here, seeds take a while and right now we need something immediate – right now.

But should I have chosen the topic “**exploring faith**”? After all, that is what I have doing in Chapel for the past seven years. The path to this pulpit continues to amaze me – and I say that every year. This phase of the journey began seven years ago while I was on a sabbatical leave in

Waterloo and, armed with a newspaper and a map, I began the search for a church to attend on Sunday and began asking the question “is there a place for me in organized religion?” or perhaps “is there a place in me for organized religion?” As I reread those phrases yesterday, it dawned on me that I was mixing organized religion and faith – but that may be the topic of another talk! My faith, if I have one, is certainly in a developmental stage. I continue to be in awe of those whose faith is strong enough to sustain them through the struggles of life and who manage to act with much more Christian charity than I am able to summon up when my comfortable life is disrupted or challenged – or when a student arrives very late on a Friday afternoon with a paper that is also late, as happened on Friday at 4:45 pm. The man from Security was locking the building and I was getting ready to leave when the student arrived. As I was telling the student that the paper was late, on the inside I was screaming “what part of 4pm do you not understand????” So much for charity!!!

But, back to that March Saturday evening, seven years ago, when I stated in an email to a friend:

So.....off I will go to think about faith and service and love and prayer and things that have not been part of my "thought repertoire" for a while, if ever - although I believe that they have been part of my "actions and deeds repertoire" as I carry out my daily life in teaching and service to the university and community.

The regular attendees at Chapel have heard me wander through talks about influential books, spiritual places, still small voices, prayers, and vocations, as I proceeded along that journey in an interesting, winding fashion. I was often accompanied by various props – books, newspapers, e-mails, road maps, and government documents. For tonight talk I have tried to go it alone with no props – let’s see if that is possible.

This talk will certainly be more about individual or societal perspectives on hope than it will be about theological interpretations about hope. It may not be theologically sound, but **it’s mine!** As many members of the Acadia community do when faced with the need to reflect upon a **word**, I turned to the tools provided by the Acadia Advantage – in this case the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* – OED.com. Here are some of the results:

- Expectation of something desired; desire combined with expectation
- Feeling of trust or confidence
- Expectation (without implication of desire...); prospect

I think that **Acadia University** was founded on hope – a desire to accomplish something worthwhile and an expectation that they could. Hope that the institution would, in the words of the 1838 Charter, “be open and free to all and every Person and Persons whomsoever, without regard to religious persuasion;” hope that the founders could find the resources to keep the place going; hope that Acadia would be faithful to the purposes of the founders; hope that she would continue to promote the search for truth and knowledge; hope that we would be a community of scholars; hope that we would care for each other. Those last four hopes are taken straight from the University prayer that we will repeat later – sometime prayers are about hope – and perhaps hope needs prayer.

Hope is about the **future**. Or should that be phrased – the future is about hope? My first graduate degree was in Urban and Regional Planning and, in theory, planners are in the business

of dealing with the future. Four weeks ago when The Chaplain was preaching the sermon “Exploring Hope: The Abraham Model,” I started scribbling notes to myself based on what he was saying and where my mind was taking those words. Yesterday I tried to decipher those illegible notes – here are some of the thoughts and questions that I posed:

- Planners do not use the word “hope”
- They use the word “aspirations”
- They use models and projections
- They talk about visioning and having a vision (or two or three or more)
- They have goals and objectives
- They rely on others
- Are they agents of hope?
- What keeps them going?
- And out the blue came this idea that I scribbled down: do agnostics and atheists hope? Where did that come from and where could it take us??

Planners **attempt** to give the illusion of being rational and systematic – where does hope fit into that way of operating. Now we are treading on thin ice in my faith and hope explorations – back to the safe shore we must go.

Thirty years ago I visited India – Delhi, Hyderabad, Bombay, Ajanta, Ellora, Jaipur – very much the mainstream tourist places, mostly seen through the impatient eyes of a 26 year old western white female. But the place that had the most lingering impact on me was Mani Bhavan, the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. The building is the former home of a friend of Gandhi and the place where he apparently would stay when visiting in Delhi. Without going into a lengthy description of Gandhi’s beliefs and work, may I say that what impressed me most were the ideas about “simplicity,” “self sufficiency” and “dignity” that were described in the displays. Those ideas and the images of spinning wheels and references to local community development through spinning and weaving hit me over and over again, as did Gandhi’s 1921 idea that the flag of India would have a spinning wheel on it representing self sufficiency. How does this link to hope? Well, now we get to one of my basic beliefs – we must do more than hope – we must move into **reality** and get engaged in action – in non-pulpit language, we must get off our butts and do something.

This brings us very nicely to David Duke’s talk of several weeks ago where he spoke of preparedness. As he recounted his spectacular 1986 academic crash and burn experience in second year biology, I was thinking of my own similar **first year** experience of 20 years earlier. In those years at the University of Saskatchewan you checked your marks by going and looking on the grade sheets posted on bulletin boards in Convocation Hall. If your student number was not on the class grade sheet, you had not passed – and there was no entry for student number 661243 on the grade sheet for Math 157 “Calculus” – no grade for me, the student who had excelled in things numerical, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics in high school. So off I trotted, shaking in my sneakers, to see the professor somewhere on an upper floor of the Arts Building, I knocked at her door, said hello, and stated that my name was not on the list. Her curt reply was “that’s correct – you failed” and off I slunk! It was years later when I saw a complete transcript of my marks (not just the grades) that I found out that my mark for the full year course was 18%. When I recounted this to a friend last week with the additional information that I had

attended all classes and had passed the midterms and the Christmas exam, we agreed that I had probably gotten 0% on the final exam. So what is the message in this? The good news is that I did not become a high school math teacher as I had set off to be – I found a field that was more suited to my interests and talents – I became a geographer, a planner, a recreation and parks planner, a historic researcher, and eventually a professor. Hope sometimes needs a **reality check** – those desires and expectations need to be grounded in reality. What you think you want or think you wish may not be possible.

It is almost Spring – the season of hope. Last week on her morning request program on CBC Radio Two, Shelley Soames remarked that we are seeing the “bare branches of hope waiting for Spring” (or something like that). Tomorrow evening at about 6:30 the sun will set over the peak of the house of our across the street neighbour (directly west of us) and I will know that Spring has come – no matter what the temperature line on The Weather Network on the television says. And as soon as I see that event, I will put on my orange sneakers and run out the door to Convocation Hall to help with the performance of Missa Gaia, subtitled Mass of the Earth and billed as “a multi-media Spring celebration of music.” David Buley will direct the Acadia Chorus, John Scott will play the organ, and a whole bunch of other talented musicians and dancers will perform – and I will be the happiest little stage manager that ever was as I am surrounded by the sights and sounds of one of my favourite pieces of music. The sections of Missa Gaia contain many statements of hope with titles like “for the beauty of the earth,” “the promise of a fisherman,” “the blue green hills of earth,” and most importantly and poignantly “let us go forth in peace.” It will be wonderful. And by the way, tonight I have fulfilled one of Roger’s fervent hopes or wishes – I am not wearing the orange sneakers to speak in Chapel.

And now to return to the notion of seeds of hope. **Gardeners** hope – they hope that the seeds that they plant will come up and provide us with fruit or vegetables or flowers. I dabble at gardening – I get gardening magazines, I drool over Vessey’s seed catalogues and over the Lee Valley garden toy (oops) tool catalogues; and I occasionally get my hands dirty. I plan, I plant and I hope. But here is another lesson about hope – your planning and nature’s planning don’t always yield the same result. If you wander into the Acadia Art Gallery in the next few days, you can see a picture of a bright yellow sunflower in a bright yellow frame. That was one of my rogue sunflowers of the summer of 2004. I called them my rogue sunflowers because I didn’t plant them – at least in 2004. They are the result of the sunflower crop of 2003 and some kindly birds who scattered some seeds around the side of the driveway – so despite the rotten drainage and the crummy start to the growing season last year, and despite, or perhaps because of, no attention from me, the sunflower crop was magnificent, including one plant that was almost eight feet tall. Hope... desire... expectation... none of those produced that splendid sunflower for the Art Gallery – something else did – was it Mother Earth?

Golfers hope. Perhaps for the sake of all golfers present, I will not explore the disconnect between hopes, desires, expectations and reality on the golf course. But Spring is coming!! And that along gives hope to golfers.

My last point about hope is the hope that powered those who subscribed to the social gospel like my hero Tommy Douglas. And I’m so glad that the rest of Canada has caught up to me in recognizing him. The CBC website describes his notion of the “social gospel,” as “a vision of religion-in-action that he would carry through his life.” His ideas brought us universal medical

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care to the people of Saskatchewan and then to all of Canada. Along the way, powerful lobbies tried to undo his ideas – I recall the Doctors’ Strike that took place when the Saskatchewan Medical Care Act took effect on July 1, 1962. The doctors’ claimed that they were defending individual rights – or at least their interpretation of those rights. When we sing “who would true valour see” in a few moments, I will have a mental image of Tommy Douglas sitting with me. Of course the fact that he was a Baptist minister in small town Saskatchewan and a staunch socialist may influence my views. He put religion into action - he put hope into action.

And that’s all for “exploring hope” for tonight. May I leave you with this summary: we all hope; hope is about the future; hope should be grounded in reality; hope sometimes needs help; hope must be put into action. We’ll chat more in the Narthex with the daffodils

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April 2, 2006 “Searching for Peace”


Thank you Roger, for yet another opportunity to speak in chapel. This is my annual Lenten ritual. This is the seventh opportunity to speak – and it seems to me to be the most difficult. The previous topics: books, places, still small voices, prayers, callings, hope were all topics, which although difficult, were ones that I could put some boundaries around and believe that I could produce a package of experiences and words. “Searching for Peace” is just that...a search. So what I have for you is not a tidy package; it is a series of ideas, vignettes, and ramblings that began very soon after Roger found me innocently having lunch with my colleagues at Rosie’s one day last June. When I get to the end we may find that there are some ribbons of thought that have trailed through the talk...and maybe not. You will hear the word “symbol” on several occasions. You will hear more questions than answers.

I am a child of the peace – or at least a time of relative peace. I was born in the first crop of baby boomers that resulted from the return of soldiers from World War Two, and the resultant marriages and children that followed. How often do we speak of peace against the backdrop of war? Is this a way to define peace – compared to what it is not?

I grew up in a “Wartime House” – those 1 ½ storey bungalows that populate certain sections of every town and city in the country – those 300,000 houses that were built by the Wartime Housing Limited to create affordable housing for the returning veterans and their young families. They were also called Victory Homes. In some communities I have heard them referred to as Peace Time Houses. To call them modest housing could be an understatement – but with renovations many of them are still in use – my mother is still living in the one that she and my father moved into when I was about 3 weeks old – that would be 57+ years ago.. But what is my point – war time, victory, peace time – it was supposed to be a time of peace. It was a time for us baby boomers to grow up in relatively peaceful settings, in relative abundance, surrounded by a developing social safety net that included education – new schools built just for us; health – the beginning of Medicare, recreation, parks, and library services created or expanded because of the vast numbers of us. And most of us did grow up peacefully – blissfully unaware that there was a world outside of middle class Canada where there was not peace.

Some of the baby boomers discovered the idea of peace in the 1960’s. Some of them became peaceniks. Thanks to *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition.2000* – we are told that a peacenik is “a political activist who publicly opposes war, a particular war, or the proliferation of weapons; a pacifist. But *Wikipedia*, that font of every student’s wisdom tells us the following:

Originating in the U.S. it is applied to advocates of U.S. withdrawal from the [Vietnam War](#), to [pacifists](#) in general, and later to advocates of Western rapprochement with the [Soviet Union](#) during the [Cold War](#), for instance through [arms control](#). The [Russian](#) -nik makes reference to [beatnik](#), implying the individual is impractical in outlook, but particularly the Soviet satellite [Sputnik](#), implying the individual is a communist or sympathetic to that cause.

The peace symbol became a fashion ornament as baby boomers wore the  symbol around their necks while using their fingers to indicate their support for peace [V-sign] –

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mind you the same symbol was use to proclaim V for Victory in war.

Peace was a rallying point for many 1960's baby boomers in the United States as that country became embroiled in the war in Vietnam. Peace became part of popular music when first Pete Seeger and then The Byrds took *Ecclesiastes* 3: 1-8 and turned it into a 1965 pop song "Turn, Turn, Turn." The song starts with its chorus:

To every thing, turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn,
And a time to every purpose under heaven

It then proceeds through most of *Ecclesiastes* 3:1-8:

A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep
A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones
A time to gather stones together
A time of love, a time of hate
A time of war, a time of peace
A time you may embrace
A time to refrain from embracing
A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew

It ends with:

A time to love, a time to hate
A time for peace,

And adds Pete Seeger's lament:

I swear it's not too late

You heard most of those verses earlier as part of the Old Testament Lesson. I requested that this be used – Roger replied with the following:

Dearest Susie,
...I would suggest going on to verse 15 of *Ecclesiastes* 3 - it explains the first 8 verses so that they do not just become a platitude.
Rog

So, that leads to my next question...are our proclamations of support for peace just platitudes?

I grew up going to Remembrance Day services on November 11th. I am wearing my “Year of the Veteran” pin tonight. My father was a World War Two veteran and a staunch member of the Legion. He marched in almost every Remembrance Day service in his life as a veteran. He was buried on Remembrance Day in 2000 with full Legion honours – so he got to that service as well!

On November 11th we commemorate the beginning of the peace at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. There was so much hope for the future after that war – the Great War. So...what went wrong??? We followed with other “Great Wars”: World War Two, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the various conflicts in the Middle East, the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. – some of them we euphemistically call “conflicts” or “engagements” – they are wars. We put up memorials to war and we call for peace. My office is in the War Memorial Gymnasium. Each day as I come to and from work, go to and from classes, meetings, and occasionally chapel, I pass two cenotaphs dedicated to Acadia University youth who did not return from war.

Last November 9th the Acadia University Chorus presented a program called “Remembering and Recalling.” The Chorus performed Fauré’s 1893 *Requiem*. David Buley’s notes for the program note the following:

There is a marked sense in this work of the peaceful aspect of death. We hope that our performances this evening can evoke and inspire that spirit of peace, while we recall and remember those who in various ways have toiled, sacrificed and provided the avenues of peace that must ever be sought.

Other powerful pieces that evening were two poems by David Krieger titled “War is too easy” and “Today is not a good day for war.” To which we should all ask “what day is???”

The trail from Rosie’s to this pulpit has taken some interesting twists and turns in the last nine months. Many of those twists and turns have involved my madly scribbling notes about peace – on paper napkins, on scraps of paper in darkened auditoriums or arenas, on yellow Post-it notes, on Chapel bulletins. Most of the time they were observations about the incongruities of our 21st century lives and the way that we speak about peace. Here are some of them:

- On July 6th I attended the Nova Scotia International Tattoo where there was a tribute to the four RCMP officers who were killed near Mayerthorpe, Alberta. The phrase “blessed are the peace makers...” was invoked. And we all thought about peace for a moment.
- The next morning, as we watched the CBC news on July 7th we learned about the four bombs that went off in the London Subway system and all hell broke loose - so much for peace!
- Then through most of the fall the speakers talked about “Exploring Prayer” and I avoided thinking about “Searching for Peace.”
- But on November 6th – I wrote many of the ideas for this talk on Remembrance Sunday as I reacted to the Act of Remembrance, the Scripture, and the prayers. My notes indicate that I “wrote these notes while Ginny read a bloodthirsty scripture passage.” I then wrote

notes about the incongruity of sending peacekeepers and peacemakers to war zones; and the phrase “peace tower.” The Parliament of Canada website tells us that “the Peace Tower was originally intended as a monument to the service and sacrifice of Canadians during the First World War. Over the years, it has come to symbolise Canada's general commitment to peace amongst nations.” It is a treasured symbol of Canada – and emblematic of the role that Canada has taken on – that of peacekeeper and now of peacemaker.

- November 9th was the “Remembrance and Recalling” performance and I wrote more notes
- November 11th was Remembrance Day and I sat way up in the far reaches of University Hall and wrote more notes.
- On January 14th, Bill Graham, the then Minister of Defence spoke in the midst of the election campaign about “bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan” – I keep wondering if this is possible given the long history of entrenched cultural practices and the power of the warlords.
- On January 22nd when John Churchill spoke in Chapel I wrote notes that referred to Amos Pewter’s Christmas ornaments – the 1987 one with a dove carrying an olive branch that is named “Peace” and the 1991 with a stylized dove that is labelled “Harmony” – we continue to think of peace in terms of symbols. But do we have peace in our own communities?
- On January 29th at the Ecumenical Service Regina Coupar spoke of her meditations inspired by the Book of Psalms. Thoughts of peace were a recurring theme.
- On February 5th as Roger Forsman was speaking, I was listening and writing notes about the Quakers and peace, and the Saturday vigils in front of the Post Office. Many of us think about peace, but do we have the courage to publicly protest for our beliefs...and then there was J.S. Woodworth, the founding president of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the C.C.F. – now the N.D.P. Woodworth’s uncompromising pacifism was certainly not popular in the late 1930’s. The role of a “dove” in a House of Commons (including his fellow C.C.F.ers) filled with “hawks” would certainly test the resolve of this prairie preacher. It was tough to be a pacifist in a country that was gearing up for war. That led to my question “we tried to be ready for war, are we able to be ready for peace?”
- On February 26th David Duke talked about places of peace and places of belonging – this Chapel being one. I kept thinking of a 1911 poem by William Davies called “Leisure” that I read in my first chapel talk seven years ago. It is still relevant:

What is this life, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can,
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Some of you may recall that 1998 chapel talk. We were each supposed to talk about the book that was our my greatest spiritual influence. I came with four books, three newspaper clippings, two e-mails and a road map.

Josef Pieper, one of the greatest philosophers of leisure, spoke of leisure as contemplation. To contemplate we need peace.

- On March 5th Nancy Burbidge spoke and we sang hymn 427 :”F or the healing of the nations.” My notes say “use this hymn.” You will note that we are reprising that hymn this evening.
- On March 12th Ryan Conrad spoke and my notes include references to the chapel talk in 2002 where we were charged with talking about “the still small voice.” It seems that the common theme of that 2002 talk was about people who cared and I noted that whenever we get to the part of the chapel service where we recite the University prayer, I am reminded of that caring by the line “may we be a community of scholars....caring for one another...” The mission of this and any university is noted in the prayer where we ask that we “continue to promote the search for truth and knowledge and be an inspiration to others who follow” but I believe that the “caring for one another” is what makes us human and humane and capable of transmitting “the still small voice.” So, if “caring for one another” contributes to peace, there just may be some hope for it in this chapel.
- On March 22nd I reviewed a video about Canada’s stunning railway hotels that are part of our tourism heritage in Canada. This was all for my course on the history of recreation and parks in Canada. Lo and behold, in the midst of it there were clips of John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s “bed-in for peace” stages at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal in May 1969. Yet another symbolic staging of “peace” – and smack dab in the middle of one of my courses – and a bit odd.
- On March 23rd three members of the Christian Peacemakers were rescued after being held hostage for 118 days in Iraq. There was much rejoicing. Some view them as heroes. Some

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view them as naïve. Why did they go there? Can they make a difference? Is peace a realistic ambition? Can you use the words “peace” and “realistic” in the same breath?

- On March 26th Janet Kirk spoke of her journey in search of peace and also noted how special this place is to many of us as a place for caring, contemplation and peace.
- Throughout the nine months I kept hearing the words “peace” and “democracy” bandied about on the political agenda. Apparently they are supposed to go together!! Apparently “war” is needed for peace!!

At the end of this, what have I presented to you? A few thoughts...a bunch of questions ...more questions than thoughts. In the academic world, the asking of such questions may be perceived as a wonderful pedagogical tool – the Socratic method – the Socratic dialogue. Or...it can be perceived as the tool of someone who is still searching for the answers, still searching for peace, still hoping that we get past the symbols, still searching to discover what peace is, still asking if it is attainable, still not sure – an aging baby boomer, still hoping, like Pete Seeger, that it’s not too late.

April 1, 2007 “The Practice of the Presence of God: Spiritual Development and Faith”

Thank you Roger, for yet another opportunity to speak in Chapel. This seems to be my annual Lenten ritual. And of course the fact that it is April 1st, April Fools Day, has not been lost on many of my friends who went out of their way to note the significance of the date. I will not give you a talk about the role of fools in society. I commend Roger for his continued bravery or is it foolhardiness when he invites me – he never knows what he is going to get when I ascend the stairs to the pulpit.

This is my eighth opportunity to speak – and yet again this one seems to me to be the most difficult. Every year I say this – and every year I mean it. The previous topics: books, places, still small voices, prayers, callings, hope, peace were all topics, which were also difficult, but were ones about which I could produce a package of experiences and words. Herein are the difficulties that I will now describe.

- The first difficulty: “The Practice of the Presence of God” – God and I are not on a first name, daily conversational relationship. Others may be, but I don’t think that I am.
- “Spiritual Development” – as with many of us, the key word here is “development” – more about that later.
- “and Faith” – What faith? In what?

The source of the difficulties

“The Practice of the Presence of God” Now...how many of you have ever done the “Myers-Briggs Personality Type Inventory”? If you haven’t, it is a test that results in a descriptor of one’s relative tendencies to act based on four continua: extraversion-introversion; sensing-intuition; thinking-feeling; judgment-perception. I score rather dramatically as an ESTJ – extraverted, sensing, thinking, judging. In the words of the author of personalitypage.com, ESTJs act thusly:

- As an ESTJ, your primary mode of living is focused externally, where you deal with things rationally and logically. Your secondary mode is internal, where you take things in via your five senses in a literal, concrete fashion.
- ESTJs live in a world of facts and concrete needs.
- ESTJs are take-charge people. They have such a clear vision of the way that things should be, that they naturally step into leadership roles. They are self-confident and aggressive. They are extremely talented at devising systems and plans for action, and at being able to see what steps need to be taken to complete a specific task.
- The ESTJ needs to watch out for the tendency to be too rigid, and to become overly detail-oriented.
- The ESTJ puts forth a lot of effort in almost everything that they do.¹

So...how does someone who acts in a rational, logical, literal, concrete, fact driven, system creating, planning approach deal with the notion of God? Interestingly enough, I was trained as a planner and worked as a system planner in other parts of my career. But back to the notion of God...one of the other contributions from interpreters of Myers-Briggs is the somewhat

¹ BSM Consulting , *Portrait of an ESTJ* (accessed 25 March 2007); available from <http://www.personalitypage.com/ESTJ.html>

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humorous, but eerily accurate list of “Prayers by Myers-Briggs Types” – the prayer by an ESTJ would be “God, help me try not to RUN everything. But if you need some help, just ask.”² That would be an ESTJ who felt that she was in conversation with God and could talk about “The Practice of the Presence of God.” The “running” part even raised its head this week as I kept bombarding Virginia and Elizabeth with bright (or not) ideas about the psalm, various hymns, and pictures for the bulletin.

“Spiritual Development” The journey to this pulpit has taken over nine years. It started while I was on a sabbatical leave and, on a Saturday evening in Waterloo, armed with a newspaper and a map, I began the search for a church to attend on Sunday and began asking the question “is there a place for me in organized religion?” or perhaps “is there a place in me for organized religion?” Somewhere along the way, I became aware that “spiritual development” or “spirituality” may have little to do with “organized religion.” However, many who are part of organized religion may believe that gives them a special relationship with God. I don’t believe that is the case. Some of you have now probably identified some of the dilemmas that I have experienced over the past months as I chaired the search and selection committee for the next University Chaplain. On a daily basis, I was dealing with the notion of organized religion as we searched for someone who is, by the very nature of their beliefs and vocation, part of organized religion – an ordained minister of a Christian denomination, who could work “ecumenically in a multi-faith culturally diverse community.” People who were intimately involved with the part of the world that I’m still not convinced that I am part of.

“Faith” – I have used the following phrases in previous chapel talks, but they are still relevant. My faith, if I have one, is certainly in a developmental stage. I continue to be in awe of those whose faith is strong enough to sustain them through the struggles of life and who manage to act with much more Christian charity than I am able to summon up when my comfortable life is disrupted or challenged. On that Saturday evening, nine years ago, I stated in an email to a friend:

So.....off I will go to think about faith and service and love and prayer and things that have not been part of my "thought repertoire" for a while, if ever - although I believe that they have been part of my "actions and deeds repertoire" as I carry out my daily life in teaching and service to the university and community. [aside – as an ESTJ]

End of the difficulties.....onward to possibilities

Creativity

I continue to be in awe of those with creative talents and of their creations. We used Psalm 150 this evening because of the reference to musical instruments. The idea came to me last fall when I read the text of Alaina Boyd’s chapel talk on October 18th wherein she referred to God being the conductor and the rest of us being the performers. The Psalm says:

Praise God with trumpet sound
Praise God with lute and harp
Praise God with tambourine and dance
Praise God with strings and pipe
Praise God with crashing cymbals

² Earle C. Page, “Prayers by MBTI Types” in *Looking At Type* (accessed 3 March 2007); available from

Praise God with loud crashing cymbals
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord.

As I started thinking about this talk five months ago, I had the thought of just sitting down at this point and having Elizabeth play the organ for 10 minutes as evidence of the creativity of a composer (perhaps Hildegard von Bingen), as evidence of the creativity of the organ makers at Casavant Frères, of the designers of the Chapel, of the craftsmen who created this building (the plasterers, the woodworkers), of the bell makers, of the window designers and artisans, and of Elizabeth herself. These are all wonderful examples of that intangible spark of creativity. Now, Elizabeth had her own thoughts about this, including the one about dance, and suggested that I could do a liturgical dance in the Chapel – that idea was squashed practically before the words passed her lips. There is a limit to being an extravert – and can you imagine Roger’s reaction??

Creativity is exhibited in so many ways in our Chapel community. I had the truly amazing opportunity to accompany the Manning Memorial Chapel Choir on last year’s tour of Scotland and England. I was the awestruck groupie as they sang in Iona Abbey, St. Columba Cathedral, St. Giles Cathedral, Dunfermline Abbey, Bath Abbey, Christ Church Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral, and the Church of the Holy Innocents. The sound produced by the choir was such that I said on numerous occasions that “I can die now and be happy.”

The choir sound was special for many reasons: it wasn’t just them, wonderful as they were – it was also the places – particularly the places that are part of everyday worship for ordinary people, and that have been for centuries, such as Iona Abbey. One of the truly spine-tingling moments was when several of us went over to Salisbury Cathedral after dark to take pictures of the Cathedral illuminated by floodlights – as we arrived on the site, we were met with, not just the stunning visual images, but also with the sound of the organist practicing inside the Cathedral and flooding the Cathedral Close with sound. The next day we were treated to the sights of the inside of the Cathedral including the glorious stained glass windows and the new water sculpture *Sibirica Minor II* which is used as a baptismal font. The creator of the piece, William Pye says that

the sculpture captures two states of water in one piece, contrasting its still reflective quality with the more animated overflowing spouts at each of the four corners... The design was conceived with the cathedral in mind, its cruciform shape marking the intersection at the North Crossing within the nave.”³

The image that stays in my mind, and would even if I had not captured it with my digital camera, is of the reflection of one of the windows in the mirror-like water surface of the font. This of course always brings me back to the question – if people have been creating places and organs and songs and sculpture to glorify God for centuries, why am I having such a problem with the notion of the Practice of the Presence of God? Aren’t each of these examples sufficient evidence of the presence of God?

³ “New Water Sculpture For Cathedra,” *Salisbury Cathedra*, 30 March 2005 (accessed 25 March 2007) available from <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/news.archive.php?id=168>

Susan, Literature, Mathematics and God

As I start into this section, I want to take you back four decades to Yorkton Saskatchewan in the 1960's when most families had some sort of religious affiliation and when the children of most of those families went to Sunday School or some denominational variation on that, and the girls often sang in the junior choir and were members of the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) if they were in a Protestant denomination. So.... imagine if you can, fifteen year old Susan Markham, the budding Sunday School teacher, the choir member, the CGIT member, the Grade Ten student.

One of the pieces of literature that we studied in Grade Ten English was Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. You may recall the story – a 21st century summary of it is “A white youth in India, becomes friends with an old ascetic priest, the lama. The boy juggles Imperialist life with his spiritual bond to the lama, who searches for redemption from the Wheel of Life.”⁴ Modern interpretations tend to focus on the Imperialist theme. I was struck by the various religions that we explored during the study of the story and the various gods that were noted. I have a recollection of announcing as a statement, not as a question “what is the big deal about Christianity, we just have a multipurpose god.” So, you see the issue of the Practice of the Presence of God has been an issue for a long time.

The mathematics side of high school academic life came easy to me. When I finished high school, I went off to university to study mathematics with the goal being to be a high school math teacher. If the career path that I started on in my first year of university - September 1966 - had played itself out, I would be a high school math teacher with well over 30 years of experience and probably fully engaged in a Freedom 55 retirement. But, back in 1966, there was 18 year old Susan Markham; the student who had done really well in anything dealing with numbers - algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics - going off went to the University of Saskatchewan taking a truly liberal education - English, French, Latin, geology and calculus. Most of the grades were unremarkable - except for calculus where I got a remarkable grade - remarkable in its truest sense, in the words of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, “worth notice, striking, conspicuous.” I got a very conspicuous 18% in calculus. My call to that career went flying out the door. But I still maintained my interest in things numeric. I have chosen to do historical research, but if push came to shove, I can still do statistics – I am a self described “closet quantoid.” That is why the work of a Stephen Unwin, physicist now turned risk analyst, who works in probability and who decided to analyze the probability of God appeals to me. Here is a description of his book *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation That Proves the Ultimate Truth*:

...Unwin begins with a 50-50 truth probability of what he terms Proposition G. He updates that truth probability in light of six evidentiary areas: the recognition of goodness; the existence of moral evil; the existence of natural evil; intra-natural miracles (for instance, a friend recovers from an illness after you have prayed for him to get well); extra-natural miracles (such as bringing someone dead back to life); and religious experiences.

A numerical value is assigned to each of these areas, by means of what Unwin calls a Divine Indicator Scale: 10 indicates the evidence is much more likely to be produced - 10

⁴ “Kim” *The Literature Network* (accessed 25 March 2007) available from <http://www.online-literature.com/kipling/kim/>

times more - if God exists; 2 means it's twice more likely if God exists; 1 means the evidence is God-neutral; 1/2 (0.5) means the evidence is moderately more likely if God does not exist; and 1/10 (0.1) means the evidence is much more likely if God does not exist.⁵

Unwin concludes that there is a 2 to 1 probability of God's existence. Now I'm sure that some of you sitting here are considering this to be dreadfully glib, foolish, and irreligious, perhaps even verging on blasphemous. But what evidence do we have??? How do we interpret it? Do we rely on faith?? It was interesting to read the review of the book in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* which concludes:

Unwin's calculations leave plenty of room for the role of faith (which John Henry Newman shrewdly said meant "being capable of bearing doubt"). And it is interesting that the decisive factor in his computations derives from religious experience. Once again, it seems the best argument for the reality of the divine is the Psalmist's: "Oh, taste and see how good the Lord is."⁶

I first heard of this book while listening to the CBC Radio program "Tapestry" one Sunday afternoon two years ago while running in the treadmill in the exercise room of the gym. The mathematical probability notion fits an ESTJ who wants evidence and would like to deal with things rationally and logically, and it fits the "closet quantoid."

Spiritual Development

In leisure studies where I now spend my teaching and scholarly days – having neither become a math teacher nor retired at age 55. We deal with the concept of spirituality as part of leisure and spiritual health as part of one's health. One textbook definition of this is:

For many people, the difficult-to-describe element that gives zest to life and hope for the future is the spiritual dimension...Spiritual health reflects our values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world and all living things. It refers to the belief in some unifying force that gives life purpose or meaning or to a sense of belonging to a scheme of existence greater than the merely personal. For some people this unifying force is nature; for others, it is a feeling of connection to other people coupled with a recognition of the eternal nature of the human race; for still others, the unifying force is a god or other spiritual symbol.⁷

That textbook goes on to note that:

Spiritual health takes time and experience to acquire. The longer you live, the more you experience. The more you ponder the meaning of your experiences, the greater your chances of experiencing spiritual health. In its purest sense, spirituality addresses four main themes:

- Interconnectedness [the connect to self, others, and larger purpose]
- Practice of mindfulness [be fully present in the moment]
- Spirituality as part of daily life [including faith, hope and love]

⁵ Frank Wilson "Hedge bets on God, go directly to heaven" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 November 2003, (accessed 25 March 2007) available from [http://www.stephenunwin.com/media/Philadelphia%20Inquirer\(US\).pdf](http://www.stephenunwin.com/media/Philadelphia%20Inquirer(US).pdf)

⁶ Frank Wilson "Hedge bets on God, go directly to heaven" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 November 2003, (accessed 25 March 2007) available from [http://www.stephenunwin.com/media/Philadelphia%20Inquirer\(US\).pdf](http://www.stephenunwin.com/media/Philadelphia%20Inquirer(US).pdf)

⁷ Rebecca J. Donatelle and others, *Health: The Basics*, 4th Canadian edition. (Toronto: Pearson Benjamin Cummings, 2007), 33-34.

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- Living in harmony with our community.⁸

Given what I do in my regular day job and my recent role as chair of the Chaplaincy Search committee I found some of that same textbook's reported findings in a survey of students about spirituality interesting.

A recent [2004] study of spirituality among post-secondary students from 46 diverse universities and colleges indicated that spirituality played a role in student health, grades, and other aspects of student life. The study found a correlation between spirituality and health achievement, with more spiritually oriented students having better health, better grades, more involvement in charitable organizations or volunteerism, and more interest in helping others.⁹

The textbook then goes on to describe “a spiritual resurgence” noting that:

an increase in spiritual awareness does not necessarily equate to an increase in beliefs in God or other religious figures. Many people find spiritual fulfillment in music, poetry, literature, art, nature and intimate relationships. For some, spirituality means a quest for self and selflessness.¹⁰

Well, how does this set of ideas about spirituality play out at Acadia and what role does the Manning Memorial Chapel play? One of the pillars of Acadia's Strategic Plan is that we will “continue Acadia's historical strength in and commitment to offering support for the spiritual growth and development of students, as a vital element of the education of the whole person, through a vibrant, enriching selection of activities”¹¹

The job ad for the position of University Chaplain directed that “the Chaplain will continue Acadia's historic strength in and commitment to offering support for the spiritual growth and development of students as a vital element of the education of the whole person.”

What do students feel about this spirituality and religion? One of the courses that I teach is a fourth year “Special Topics” course and this year the special topic is “the History of Fitness, Health and Wellness.” When I polled the students in that class on Wednesday about the ideas of spiritual health and spirituality, and how it may relate to religion, here are the questions and the results.

- What do you think “spiritual health” is? and What do you think “spirituality” is? Many of the students had previously used a version of the aforementioned textbook and gave answers similar to the textbook
- Do you think that there is a link between “spirituality” and “religion”? YES or NO Expand on this. 10 said Yes, none said No and one said Yes and No
- What do you know about the position of University Chaplain and/or the Manning Memorial Chapel? 4 students knew nothing about the Chaplain or the Chapel; but 7 knew

⁸ Rebecca J. Donatelle and others, *Health: The Basics*, 4th Canadian edition. (Toronto: Pearson Benjamin Cummings, 2007), 34.

⁹ Rebecca J. Donatelle and others, *Health: The Basics*, 4th Canadian edition. (Toronto: Pearson Benjamin Cummings, 2007), 34.

¹⁰ Rebecca J. Donatelle and others, *Health: The Basics*, 4th Canadian edition. (Toronto: Pearson Benjamin Cummings, 2007), 34.

¹¹ <http://acadiau.ca/president/assets/docs/AcadiaStrategicPlanwithExecutiveSummary.pdf>

something with a variety of accurate and inaccurate knowledge – and several knew of the Chaplains’ role in counseling students and helping them deal with life events.

- Have you ever been in the Manning Memorial Chapel? YES or NO If YES, for what event(s)/purpose? 8 had never been in the building; 3 had – one for a wedding and two for Kristen Pipe’s memorial. That matches nicely some of the literature’s comments about life events and spiritual growth.

What do those results tell us – they tell us that Acadia students are rather typical; that they know about spiritual health; that they are sort of aware of what goes on here; and that we have some work to do!

Ten years ago, one of my American colleagues, Geoff Godbey, wrote *Leisure and Leisure Services in the 21st Century*. In the book he identified 49 issues that must be addressed by the field - #21 is “Desire for the Spiritual.”

The desire for the spiritual will be an increasingly important factor shaping everyday life during the next few decades, although the ways in which such desire takes shape are uncertain. The necessity of believing in something, having faith, seems a critical need of humans which is reasserting itself in a postmodern era. [aside – I usually run screaming from anything that mentions the word “postmodern”]

The development of spiritual life will become more central to leisure expression... Spiritual skills which would help one use leisure well require disciplined habits acquired slowly – order must be imposed on inner processes. Three of four hours of teenagers use of leisure does not do this. [and this was before today’s video games, msn, icq, facebook, etc., etc.] That is, the majority of free time among teenagers is used for purposes such as watching television or listening to music [now on an Ipod] rather than playing it. Such activity does not have rules or provide challenges against which the teenager can develop skill or discipline [or engage in creativity] [comment about the role of this place – this sanctuary - in helping us bring order to the chaos of life]

The search for spiritual meaning has huge implication for leisure and its use. Leisure has always been an arena for spiritual expression, whether in the gathering of kindred spirits at holidays, belief in some leisure activity or athletic team, or simply being in the natural environment. As the search for the spiritual intensifies, leisure activity may be based less around consumption and more around affirmation – affirming that life is good. The ritual which is part of many leisure experiences may become even more central to the activity.¹²

And in Conclusion

What have I done with my 20 minutes in the pulpit? I have talked about my difficulties with the topic “the practice of the presence of God” – difficulties that emerge from personality and from experiences. I have shared with you some experiences in places that are dedicated to glorifying God. I have fallen back on my interest in things numeric, hoping that there might be an answer there about the presence of God. I have reflected on my current “day job” looking at matters related to leisure, health, fitness and wellness for an answer to the presence of God.

¹² Geoff Godbey, *Leisure and Leisure Services in the 21st Century* (State College, PA: Venture Publishing 1997), 87-88

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And what have I concluded? I'm still searching. I'm still wondering. I'm still hoping? I am still practicing. And in case God is present and is listening, I will continue to pray "God, help me try not to RUN everything. But if you need some help, just ask."

Thank you.

November 2009 ““Vocation: The Things I Love To Do”

Thank you Virginia, for yet another opportunity to speak in Chapel. I always commend the Chaplains for their continued bravery or foolhardiness when they invite me – they never know what they will get when I ascend the stairs to the pulpit.

This is my ninth opportunity to speak. The previous topics were books, places, still small voices, prayers, callings, hope, peace, spiritual development and faith. Actually that last one was formally titled “the practice of the presence of God” and some of you may recall that I started the talk by saying “God and I are not on a first name, daily conversational relationship. Others may be, but I don’t think that I am” – and you may also recall that the Chapel was filled that night as we celebrated Roger’s retirement – not only was it filled, many of the pews were occupied by members of the clergy and in front of all of them, I was declaring my ongoing difficulties with spiritual development and faith.

These were all wonderful, challenging, scary topics. This year’s topic lets me engage in a bit of self indulgence and share some of the things that I appreciate and that are linked to the notion of **vocation**. For many of us, our vocation – our calling – is linked to our work – our paid employment. I would like to expand this to a variety of other settings such as our community work and our leisure. Tonight’s fourth reading and hymns help with this mission.

- The hymn “Who Would True Valour Be” links to **Muriel Duckworth**, a staunch “pacifist, feminist, social and community activist”¹³
- The hymn “**And did those feet in ancient times**” links to industrialization, city planning, Eric Liddell, and the Women’s Institutes.
- The lesson from **Ecclesiastes**, the Preacher, links to the notion of time and a discussion that we had in my History and Philosophy of Leisure course.

Muriel Duckworth

Little did I know when I, as a young recreation planner for the City of Halifax, was taken to task for the lack of public input into recreation planning in Halifax that I was being given guidance by a woman that I would come to admire so much – and that it would take well over 30 years for me to start putting some of the pieces of her life together. I should also add that for a planner, I have become inordinately acquainted with the notion of happenstance – of having wonderful things just happen. And again, little did I know that when Lee Brannen called three weeks ago requesting some help showing a dvd via computer and data projector to the monthly meeting of the Wolfville CFUW group that I would find inspiration for this chapel talk. That evening’s speaker was Peggy Hope-Simpson who introduced us to the life of Muriel Duckworth through the 1999 video *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active Pacifist*.¹⁴

Muriel Duckworth lived to be almost 101. She died this summer on August 22nd.¹⁵ She was a feminist, a pacifist, a social and community activist. She was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Voice of Women and president of the national peace organization Voice of Women.

¹³ M.D. Kerans, *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active Pacifist* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996), p. 13 as cited on Wikipedia “Muriel Duckworth”

¹⁴ *Muriel Duckworth: Practising Peace*, prod. P. Kipping. Perversity Productions, 1999, video recording.

¹⁵ Wikipedia “Muriel Duckworth”

She was the first woman in Halifax to run for a seat in the Nova Scotia legislature (1974). She led community organizing efforts seeking improvements in education, housing, social assistance and municipal planning. She was a founding member of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.¹⁶ She was a passionate advocate for many social causes. She had a calling – a **vocation**.

What were the roots of this calling? Her biographer, Marion Kerans states that Muriel's participation in the Student Christian Movement (SCM) at McGill University was a life-changing experience. "Looking back over the years," she told her biographer, "I've felt always that the experience of the SCM was the most important thing that happened to me, probably the most important aspect of my college life, more important than any of the courses that I took." The SCM conducted small study groups in which students were encouraged to discuss their beliefs freely and come to their own conclusions about how to interpret the Gospels. Her later study at the Union Theological Seminary in New York introduced her to the academic study of the Social Gospel movement and field work at a community church in Hell's Kitchen on New York's West Side. Here, she met 16-and-17-year-old working-class girls twice a week in a recreation group and in a Sunday School class. She also visited their homes gaining first-hand knowledge of the conditions experienced by working-class immigrants who lived in cramped, windowless flats beside "booming and clattering" elevated trains.¹⁷

Her husband's job with the YMCA brought them to Halifax in 1947. She worked in adult education for the Nova Scotia Department of Education until 1962. I think that is when her true calling came to fruition and she began her intense volunteer work promoting women's issues, peace, education, housing, social assistance and municipal planning. I wish I had know all this 35 years ago!

But where does "Who Would True Valour Be" [hymn 621] come into this. Many parts of the video shown at the CFUW meeting were filmed at Muriel's family's summer cottage in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. She speaks of the energy of place and how each summer she needed to go there to replenish her energy, to get refreshed, to recreate, to re-create. Several scenes show Muriel leading her family in various rousing renditions of "Who Would True Valour Be."¹⁸ So that is why we will sing that hymn this evening. And to commemorate Muriel Duckworth's calling – her **vocation**.

And did those feet in ancient times

The hymn that we just sang [hymn 353], "Jerusalem," speaks to the **vocation** of some of my predecessors in my current field "recreation...parks...leisure." The words that Blake wrote in 1804 talk about "these dark Satanic mills" [read selections – not all]

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen

¹⁶ Wikipedia "Muriel Duckworth"

¹⁷ Wikipedia "Muriel Duckworth"

¹⁸ *Practising Peace*.

And did the Countenance Divine
 Shine forth upon our clouded hills
 And was Jerusalem builded here
 Among these dark Satanic mills
 Bring me my bow of burning gold
 Bring me my arrows of desire
 Bring me my spear - O clouds unfold
 Bring me my Chariot of Fire

I will not cease from mental fight
 Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
 'Til we have built Jerusalem
 In England's green and pleasant land¹⁹

My predecessors were the social reformers of the early- mid nineteenth century who saw the crowded, polluted urban centres with their own versions of “dark Satanic mills” as being a threat both to the physical, mental and moral health of people and to England’s green and pleasant land. One of my favourite social reformers of the time was John Arthur Roebuck whose life has Canadian roots, but who came into his own as a parliamentarian in England. His vision of a city with proper planning was one where, in the words of a colleague:

By providing the town dweller with the means of an alternative form of recreation to the public house and gin palace, you could improve his mind, increase the sum total of happiness, and so make him a better citizen.²⁰

Some of Roebuck's thoughts about planning and parks have been summarized as follows:

Both the human body and the human spirit stood in vital need of recreation. Nature, to Roebuck, was not solely an antidote for the physical diseases to which urban man was so horrifyingly exposed: it was also an antidote to social diseases of all kinds: crime, drunkenness, prostitution, pauperism, social disorganization, and violence all could lose their force in the city of Roebuck's vision. It was therefore a moral obligation of government to ensure that ample amounts of open space, of many different kinds, should be freely available in all parts of the city and beyond.²¹

How do we turn the reformers’ visions into moral obligations of government and then into **vocations** for some of us? And perhaps I have the order backwards - perhaps **vocations** - callings - become the moral obligations of governments. This is probably how Muriel Duckworth wanted it. But that process happens slowly....very slowly.

What role did the church play in advocating for leisure, recreation and parks causes? The notion of the benefits of leisure is not a new one, and there are some interesting links to organized religion and the Christian Church. I came across a copy of the Church of England’s 1924 report titled *Leisure - Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5-12, 1924*. When you look at the list of commission members, you can find individuals whose activities are at the roots of the recreation

¹⁹ Wikipedia “And Didi Those Feet in Ancient Time”

²⁰ P.J. Smith, "John Arthur Roebuck: A Canadian Influence on the Development of Planning Thought in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Plan Canada* 19 (September-December 1979): p. 204.

²¹ Smith, p. 205

profession - the head of a settlement house, the founder of a social club who was also a member of the local playing fields committee, the secretary of a boys and girls club, to name just a few - all people with a calling. The committee's 14 recommendations are headed by this statement:

The Church should teach more plainly not only the dignity and opportunity of work, but the dignity and opportunity of leisure, claiming it not simply as "recreation" for purposes of efficiency, but as necessary to the balance of a truly human life equally to be used to the glory of God.

This involves a real responsibility on Christians to secure adequate leisure for all workers, and also to take part in developing opportunities for healthy and happy leisure occupations.²²

Among those recommendations are the following:

I. That the Christian Church should more insistently demand:

(a) Housing Reform and the provision of open spaces and playing fields

II. That the Christian Church should initiate or at least give support and encouragement to:

(d) The development of Guest Houses and Co-operative Movements in holidays...

III. That Church members should:

(b) As individuals and through their organizations make a more positive contribution towards freeing the Christian Sunday from negative rules..., while at the same time doing more to help people use it for worship and for the refreshment of the spirit as well as mind and body.²³

Recreation professionals are still seeking housing reform, affordable travel opportunities and times and places for refreshment of the spirit.

Then the Report has a section headed "Wanted" which indicates, that in order to carry out these recommendations, they need:

I. Benefactors who will give and where necessary endow:

(a) Libraries

(b) General Institutes or Clubs

(c) Camping grounds, open spaces and playing-field

(d) Community Houses for the drama, music and cinema²⁴

Today's recreation professionals are still looking for such benefactors - now called public-private partnerships.

They also wanted:

II. Community Leaders...who will chose, stimulate, and train leaders and organizers from among the people themselves.²⁵

This bears a strong resemblance to courses in Recreation Management and Community Development at Acadia that include what we call "inclusive community development" and "facilitation" - concepts that continue to be an integral part of the recreation profession.

²² C.O.P.E.C. *Leisure - Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5-12, 1924*, p. 109.

²³ C.O.P.E.C., pp. 109-111

²⁴ C.O.P.E.C., p. 111

²⁵ C.O.P.E.C., p. 111

Where does “Jerusalem” fit into this scene? It has had a role in several other things related to **vocation** and social causes. The music played a large role in the background of *Chariots of Fire*, the 1981 movie with one character based (loosely) on the Olympic experiences of Eric Liddell, a true muscular Christian who grew up in a missionary family and after university served as a missionary in China. I show parts of this film in my History of Physical Activity and Sport course and read the words of the hymn to the students. This morning as I was driving to Halifax to run in a 5 km Arthritis Society fundraising event, I played the sound track to *Chariots of Fire* at full blast in my car. The hymn is also associated with Women’s Institutes and is played vigorously at the beginning of W.I. meetings both in real life and in the account of the activities of the Rylstone W.I. as portrayed in the movie *Calendar Girls*. Before the Women’s Institutes used the hymn, the National Union of Suffrage Societies used it in their 1918 celebration to mark the time when some women (female householders over age 30) got the vote. The notion of **vocation** and of doing good deeds is inherent in the sentiments of “Jerusalem” as we are called to do something that will make people’s lives better.

Ecclesiastes

How does Ecclesiastes, the Preacher come into all of this? [read selections – not all]

- 1) To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
- 2) A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
- 3) A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- 4) A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 5) A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6) A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- 7) A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 8) A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.²⁶

It links to the notion of time and a discussion that we had in my History and Philosophy of Leisure course about time as a commodity and how we view and use time. It also links to Pete Seeger and a protest song that he wrote in 1959 and which was subsequently recorded by others including The Limelighters, Judy Collins and The Byrds, an American folk-rock band in 1965. YouTube is full of recordings of this version.

But I set a task for the students in that class – add some more lines to Ecclesiastes that reflect the **vocation** of leisure and recreation. Here are some of their contributions: [read selections – not all]

²⁶ Ecclesiastes, 3: 1-8

November 2009

Nicole Hill

No time to rest, no time to play
Just time for work, and time to pay

Kelton Thomason

A time to cry and wonder what has happened
A time to search for what's important, a time for me

Jenna Harper

A time for leisure and a time to be educated
A time for nature, and time to save our world

Matt Carter

A time to work, a time to spend
A time to test, a time with minimal rest

Holly Harris

Time for contemplation, time for relaxation
Time to hide, time to share

James Burke

Work is long, time is lost
If time is valued, what's the cost

Jennifer Ford

A time to get help from others
A time to care for yourself

Leila Eid

There is a time to work and a time for play
A time to earn and a time to relax

Candace Sharp

A time for joy, a time for pain
A time for work and little gain

In conclusion

So what is it that I love to do— what is my calling – my vocation? I love to experience things – I love being around students – I am curious - I love doing research – I love learning about history and particularly the people who have made a difference – I love talking about these people – I love to talk – I love old folk-rock music - I love to try to integrate seemingly disparate things like Ecclesiastes, hymns, people and leisure – and I have managed to do the things that I love with my **vocation** of being a university professor.