

June 2018

**BRITANNIA UNITED CHURCH**

**THE**  **Britannian**

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## **Editorial**

### **Winging it**

Preparing the newsletter takes a long time. The deadline (arranged months before) is announced a few weeks in advance. Some people send their material days if not weeks before the deadline. When the material is in, I work over the weekend to have the draft ready for the church secretary on Monday. Yet the editorial, the first thing most people read, is almost the last thing I do. That's because I wing it. I wait until the last minute and then improvise, taking my inspiration from an item in the newsletter or a chance remark in a conversation.

Britannia is good at improvising. In my 30+ years with the church, I have seen the committees, the staff, and the congregation, adapt, accept new ideas, and take on new challenges, even change where they sit on Sunday. Even Reverend Jim has gone off-script on occasion!

Britannia has, as always, challenges. Can you “wing it” in a new role, change how we do things, and improvise a creative solution?

Peter Bain  
Editor

## Minister's Letter

### Minister's Message: WHAT IS CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP?

The following is a quote from our United Church of Canada website. <http://www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca/what-is-stewardship>

***Christian stewardship is ... everything we think, say and do after we say "I believe"  
Christian Stewardship is how we invest God's 'stuff' for God's mission in God's world.***

*Stewardship is ...*

- *How we spend our time*
- *How we care for our body and make healthy choices*
- *Our priorities around money*
- *How we choose to employ our talents and gifts*
- *How we manage our relationships*
- *How we care for the environment*
- *How we practice our faith*

*We are called as individuals and as congregations and communities into God's mission. We participate by giving the gifts that God has entrusted to us. These gifts are everything that we have: our time, our talents and skills, and our treasure or physical resources. Christian stewardship includes all aspects of our lives. It is about our personal, work, and family life. It is about the good management of donations, including those made to our church. It is about our congregational and denominational life, which flows from our individual and collective desire to be part of God's mission for the world.*

At our last Council meeting, we received a report from the Stewards and Trustees about the financial situation in our church. Anyone who read the annual report, attended the annual general meeting, or has been paying attention to the financial reports that have been published throughout the year, will know that we have been operating with a deficit budget.

Simply put, this means that we know at the start of the fiscal year, that the money coming in will not cover the money going out. Like most churches today, our weekly offering does not cover our expenses. We make up the difference through church rentals, fundraising events and our ability to draw on our investments. The concern raised by our Stewards, Trustees, Treasurer, and Bookkeeper, is that we have become increasingly dependent on our investments. So far, we have been able to draw on the interest from the Manse and Smith funds, but if we continue to increase the amount we take from these funds each year, we will inevitably have to draw on the capital.

So where does the money go? It goes to learning: providing a path for people of all ages to move along their faith journeys through Sunday School, Bible Study, and worship celebrating God's love together through our weekly services and music. This is the face of our service to the public and the only thing that many people see and care about.

We also have all of the expenses of a regular household: heat, hydro, water, building maintenance, snow removal etc. Our church building is 58 years old and so we have had some major expenses over the past few years that were not factored into our projected budget.

That said, the largest expense is our paid staff. We have five paid staff members: Minister, Secretary, Church Musician, Caretaker, and Bookkeeper; four are part-time and one is full-time.

So what can we do? A suggestion was brought to our Council to have a stewardship visitation. This would entail training volunteers to visit every household, to present the information about our church expenses so that our members may make informed decisions about their offering. This suggestion will be looked at by the committee of Stewards as a possibility for the fall.

We also talked about Stewardship and membership and fundraising in all their fullness. We noted that most of our fundraising events are attended by our own members, who are already faithfully supporting our church. We will be discussing ways to increase attendance from outside the congregation, which will not only increase our profit, but possibly introduce new people to our church.

Increasing our membership will automatically increase our offering. It sounds easy: just get more people to attend and the finances will take care of themselves. The reality is that every church is struggling to attract new members, in a society where the traditional church is often considered to be irrelevant. We have a good thing here: we need to find creative ways to let people see what we have to offer.

One idea that came from the Council meeting was to take advantage of our 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary this fall to promote Stewardship within the congregation. The anniversary always falls close to All Saints Day, and this seems like a natural connection! It is a perfect time to honour those folks who devoted so much of their time, talent and resources to our church in the past. And it is also a wonderful opportunity to honour the saints of today who are working so hard to keep our church running smoothly, supporting our faith and worship, and reaching beyond these walls to be present in our community and our world.

We discussed several ideas: a special anniversary service, an evening pot-luck with entertainment, special fund-raising activities, a concert in support of the Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy (to show our presence in our community), and the circulation of a pamphlet in our neighbourhood to let people know who we are, and what we are doing. We even thought about how we could use the 145 theme to boost stewardship and to honour our saints.

We could ask people to consider increasing their weekly or monthly offering by a multiple of 145: 1.45, 14:50, 145.00...you get the idea. Perhaps a one-time donation in memory of a loved one, or a congregation member who has passed. We could even donate in honour of someone who is living, to celebrate their contribution to our church or our faith. Maybe we could have a congregational goal of 145 new initiatives for the coming year to spark new life in our work, our worship and our outreach.

I know the immediate concern for the people who look after our finances is that summer is coming and with it a decline in Sunday attendance and the offering. At this point, they are very concerned that there is not enough money in our accounts to pay the bills without dipping into our savings. Apparently our bills don't go on vacation when we do!

That said, this is a much bigger situation than paying our bills for the summer months. It is an opportunity to pull together and use our gifts to breathe new life into our ministry. In this season of Pentecost, this is the perfect time to start!

I know that one of the reasons we have seen a big change in our financial situation is because we have lost so many members of our congregation who dedicated their lives to this church. I know I am already thinking about how I can honour them in this anniversary year, but I also see new people coming into the church who are embracing our congregation. I see the contribution of Lauren to our music program and Melissa's contribution to the office and support of our committees, and I see great hope for the years to come.

This summer, I celebrate 18 years of ministry with Britannia United Church, and I still feel called to this journey we have shared. We have laughed together and cried together and worked and worshipped and played together for all of these years. There is so much we have done, and so much more we can do. In the words of the prophet Joel (2:28), we still have our visions and our dreams. So may God continue to bless the journey, so that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in us and through us, in Christ's name.

Amen



## **With Thoughts Of You**

I thought of you this morning when the wind blew softly by,  
When the sun shone down with laughter from a clear and endless sky.  
I thought of you this morning as I heard the robin sing,  
As I saw the grasses painted green, as I shook the hand of spring.

And as I worshipped God in song I thought of you once more,  
Of friendship strong between us that'll last for evermore.  
With loved ones all around me, my life was ecstasy  
And then again I thought of you and missed your company.

I thought of you this morning while visiting with friends  
And then I took a pleasant walk and thought of you again.  
They say that pleasant memories will never disappear  
And so I often think of you and the friendship I hold dear.

Jamie W.L. Hill

## **Murder Mystery Dinner**

**“16 GOING ON DEAD” by Todd Mitchell**

Our annual Murder Mystery starred Dori Jensen, Jennifer and Chuck Trewartha, Scott Hughes, Dave Corbishley, Debbie Roi and Jim Baldwin. It was written and directed by Todd Mitchell and Jim Baldwin was co-director.

The event ran May 4 and 5 at Britannia and one night at St. Paul's in Carp and raised \$3800 for Britannia United Church. St. Paul's raised \$2500 dollars as their food was all donated.

A special thank you goes out to Ole Jensen who arranged to have microphones for every cast member, ensuring that everyone in the audience could hear every word.

Verne Bruce says a big “thank you” for the kitchen crew that came and helped on both nights. Without the help of the kitchen crew it would not be possible to prepare the meal for the both nights. Two helpers drove all the way from Brockville to help us out, as they do each year. Again, thanks for the crew that works behind the scene to make this event as successful as it is and to the cast and writer for making it possible. Special thanks to Carmen, Jean, Louise, Rob, Dee, Mary, Heather, Anne, Belle, Marg, Marilyn, Mary Lou, Lila Jean, Ayden, Abby, Melissa. He also would like to acknowledge Norm and the two Don's who help with the set-up.

## **Soupindipity**

On June 2nd, the Soupindipity ladies are hosting their Spring Bake Sale at St. Paul's United Church Carp, 3760 Carp Road, Carp.

stpaulsunitedcarp@sympatico.ca  
613-839-2155.

## **Choir News**

As we head into the summer months, the choir takes a well-deserved break. We welcome members of the congregation to participate in musical offerings during July and August. Please get in touch with Lauren Saindon if you would like to participate!

## **Raising Voices to Raze the Tower**

Orleans United Church has been compelled to remove the tower at the front of the church due to age and deterioration, which have rendered it unsafe. To that end, we are holding a fundraising concert in our Sanctuary on Friday June 15 at 7:30 pm, featuring Bytown Beat (women) and Capital City (men) Choruses, and quartets. The concert will feature barbershop performances of a variety of well-known songs, from Broadway to Canadian folk, inspirational ballads to lively Country & Western. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for students, and free for children under 12. They are available in the church office, and all proceeds go towards tower removal.



*No matter how hard you push the envelope, it's still stationery*

## **Youth Activities – Spring 2018**

Our youth participated in two activities this spring. Kim, Hannah and Jake, with Lana, Deanna, Eileen, Charlotte and Violet, got together on Sunday April 29, to bake cupcakes and decorate them in mason jars. These jars were then decorated with colourful ribbons and labels, then distributed to all the households in the church on May 13 in celebration of Christian Family Day. With the baking and decorating, we worked up an appetite and enjoyed a pizza lunch.

For three years, Britannia and Woodroffe United Church youth groups have gotten together for a variety of activities. On May 25, Kitchissippi and Trinity United Church youth groups joined the two other groups for a movie and sundae evening. About fifteen youth were in attendance, with Bella, Alphin and Carmel attending from Britannia. We watched the movie Wonder, starring Julia Roberts, Owen Wilson and Jacob Tremblay. This film follows a boy with Treacher Collins syndrome trying to fit in with the other middle school students. His sister, Via, also feels left out with all of the parental attention given to her sick brother, while her friend, Miranda, has her own family issues. The youth learned that everyone has difficulties fitting in and that it is important to be kind and not judge and bully others based on their appearance.

In the fall, youth from Britannia, Woodroffe, Trinity, Kitchissippi, Riverside, Emmanuel, City View, First United, Glebe-St James and Bell's Corners United Churches will be coming together for a variety of activities. By pooling our resources, we will be able to offer a dynamic program to our youth. One activity that has garnered enthusiasm is a hip hop lesson! All youth aged 10 and up are invited to attend.

Helen Hutcheson



## **Member News**

Our sympathies go to daughter Elaine McCausland and other family of Annie Doris McCausland (née Hodges), who died peacefully in her sleep on November 24, 2017.

Our thoughts are also with the friends and families of:

- Joan Smith - February 4, 2018
- Henry Simser - March 19, 2018
- David Lyon - March 21, 2018
- Greta Simser - May 13, 2018

We celebrate the marriage of Gradon & Danielle Nicholls on May 20, 2018; the birth of Claire Whitehead born January 9th, 2018 to Graham and Nicole Whitehead; and the birth of Marnie Moss born January 24th, 2018 to Andrew and Caitlin Moss.

## Beautiful Flowers in the Spring

The Ottawa area provides a spectacular vista of flowers in the spring. In Gatineau Park, the wildflowers bloom in an extraordinary display of white and red trilliums, trout lilies, Dutch bonnets, bloodroot, violets of every shade, marsh marigolds and more. The tulips, narcissi, daffodils and flowering trees about the city explode with colours and scents that overwhelm the senses.

In our local Syrian refugee project there are many signs of a hopeful spring. Rim, our midwife in training in Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo, is glowing with the joy of delivering babies. Her hosts Asma in Toronto and Caterina and Mark in Kitchener-Waterloo have been rays of sunshine for her. They deserve many thanks, as does Rim's husband Abboud, for supporting his boys through the separation from their mother; and our donors who keep supporting this project with their friendship, efforts and contributions.

Abboud has finished his language training and is looking for work. We hope Rim will finish her training in July and Abboud will find work soon. Like flowers in spring, our refugees will reach their potential with the nurturing of our community. Thanks be to God for flowers and angels.

For more information, contact Project Coordinators Don Cullen and Marie-Therese O'Sullivan at 613-726-1863 or [britunitedref@gmail.com](mailto:britunitedref@gmail.com).

## Fiddle Service

An Extra Special Worship Service will be held at St. Paul's United Church Carp, 3760 Carp Road, Carp. on June 3rd as we welcome Fiddlers to our sanctuary. Please bring your friends and family to help welcome our guests. Toes will be tapping and hands will be clapping as we worship with music and song. Music will begin at 10:00. Service will start at 10:30.

[stpaulsunitedcarp@sympatico.ca](mailto:stpaulsunitedcarp@sympatico.ca)  
613-839-2155



*Man found dead in a barrel of falafel condiment. Was it a hummuscide?*

## **Sisters of Mercy**

**Leonard Cohen**

*Oh the sisters of mercy, they are not departed or gone.  
They were waiting for me when I thought that I just can't go on.  
And they brought me their comfort and later they brought me this song.  
Oh, I hope you run into them, you who've been travelling so long.  
Yes you who must leave everything that you cannot control.*

*It begins with your family, but soon it comes around to your soul.  
Well I've been where you're hanging, I think I can see how you're pinned:  
When you're not feeling holy, your loneliness says that you've sinned.  
Well they lay down beside me, I made my confession to them.  
They touched both my eyes and I touched the dew on their hem.*

*If your life is a leaf that the seasons tear off and condemn  
they will bind you with love that is graceful and green as a stem.  
When I left they were sleeping, I hope you run into them soon.  
Don't turn on the lights, you can read their address by the moon.  
And you won't make me jealous if I hear that they sweetened your night:  
We weren't lovers like that and besides it would still be all right,  
We weren't lovers like that and besides it would still be all right.*

## **Bible Study with Deb Suddard**

**Dig Deeper with Friends**

Sundays 7-9 PM at Britannia United Church.

*“Wonder at the things that are before you,  
making this the first step to further  
knowledge”*

## **Summer Services**

**Sunday Service Coverage for Rev. Jim's Holidays:**

- Sunday July 8th: Jamie Hill
- Sunday July 15th: Deborah Suddard
- Sunday July 22nd: Steve Zink
- Sunday July 29th: Dori Jensen

## **Britannia Church Picnic**

Join us for a fun day of food and fellowship. All are welcome! Sunday June 10<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 3 p.m. at the Trolley Station in Britannia Park, 102 Greenview, Ottawa. Rain location: at the church, 985 Pinecrest Road.

## **Garage Sale**

Thank you to everyone who helped make our garage sale the best yet. We raised nearly \$1800!

It was a pleasure working with everyone who donated merchandise, set up, took down and cleaned the sanctuary, helped customers, counted money, disposed of the surplus, and all the many other tasks that go into making the event a success. The leftover merchandise was donated to All Saints Lutheran for the Big Give sale.

Peter Bain

## **In a Mother's Womb**

In a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense" said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?"

The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded."

The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore."

The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover if there is life, then why has no one ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us."

The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists then where is She now?"

The second said, "She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her this world would not and could not exist."

Said the first: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist."

To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above."

## **Our Talented Church Member!**

When Wendy Gallant isn't reading the announcements on Sunday, she is writing novels! You can find her two books on Amazon: "No More Than Friends: A Pride and Prejudice Variation" and "When Everything Changes".

Congratulations Wendy!

## **Bach Organ Works**

Gabriel Tam-Poudrier, Music Director at St. Paul's United Church, will present a concert of organ works by Bach on Saturday, June 16th 2018 at 2:00 pm St. Paul's United Church, 3760 Carp Rd., Carp.

Refreshments will be served afterwards. Free will offering gratefully accepted

## **Britannia Woods Community House (BWCH).**

The Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses was established in 1998 and receives support from many organizations: Ottawa United Way, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ottawa Community Foundation, iSisters, OCH Foundation, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, and the Ottawa Catholic School Board. Community houses are a hub to connect residents to each other and to services they identify as important.

BWCH is one of 15 community houses located in social housing neighbourhoods in Ottawa and provides a variety of services.

A computer room is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m to 3 p.m. for people to access computers and printers. Here they may access staff and obtain information on employment, translated into French or Arabic if appropriate.

The food pantry in the basement of Britannia Woods Community House uses about 40 volunteers a week. On Mondays they help receive donations that Edie Kenney brings from Britannia United Church. They also receive two large shipping pallets of food from the Ottawa Food Bank. On Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings the Food Pantry uses volunteers to provide clients with food. On Wednesday two volunteers tidy up the food pantry and produce a shopping list of supplies needed before Friday. On Thursdays, a two-person team of shoppers shop for the needed supplies. The co-ordinator also submits the food order to the Ottawa Food Bank for the following week. On client service days, volunteers enter checked client data into a database that all food banks in Canada use. This keeps track of statistics and helps to determine how much food the Food Pantry receives, among other things.

Once a week activities include an Adult Circle, a Youth Drop-In in the Community House, and Youth Sports Drop-In organized in the school gym. Twice a week Grab & Go school lunches are provided for 90-120 registered students and clients have access to the Food Pantry. Three times a week the Keeping Youth Connected program for Grades 7-8 covers homework, arts, recreation and mentorship from 5-6.30 p.m. Four afternoons a week an after-school program is held in Dr. F.J. McDonald Catholic School from 3-6 p.m. for students grades 1-6. Students are given a healthy snack, helped with homework, and involved in recreation when homework is finished. Last year 60 students were enrolled. On average 25-30 students turned up. In the summer there is a gardening program and summer camps.

Two members of the Britannia Woods Community have been in the in Canada Top Flight Academy, a basketball preparatory school in Ottawa run out of Notre Dame High School. They graduate from high school this year and are heading to the US with scholarships to train further and prepare for National College Athletic Associate status. In May they travelled to China and played in a basketball tournament between the best Canadian and Chinese youth players. They have siblings who are in grade 8 and who have won MVP awards this year. You may have helped feed them! ,

A “Builder of the Year Award” is to be presented to BWCH by the Ottawa United Way, at a gala on 31 May, 2018, in recognition of the great work the Community House has been doing.

## Recovering the Self: A Sermon on Psalm 22:26

Rev. Steve Zink

“The poor shall eat and be satisfied....May your hearts live forever!” (Psalm 22:26)

Sometimes we ask things of people that are never going to happen. We ask something of someone that does not lie in their power to do. We ask the impossible. For example, we say to child in a miserable mood, “*Put on a happy face!*” Has that ever worked, even once? On Thursday it was pouring rain and someone said to me as a parting gesture “*stay dry!*” There is another example of a hopeless combination of words. When we are ill, well meaning people say to us, “*get well soon*”. They put it in the imperative mood, as though we can simply obey it like an easy command. In truth, I have no power to get well soon: if I had such a power I never would have got sick in the first place! Paul Tillich said this: “*We know that one cannot ask fruits from thorns, or grain from weeds, or water from a dry fountain, or love from a cold heart, or courage from a cowardly mind, or strength from a weak life*”. He sums it up in this way: “*Be what you are - that is the only thing one can ask of any being*”.

Be what you are!?! You might object: the great quarterback wasn't great the first day he played football, was he? The great guitarist wasn't great the first time he picked up the instrument, was he? The Olympic swimmer wasn't giving a gold medal performance the first time she dipped her toe in the water, was she? All of these people needed the direction and encouragement of coaches, parents, and peers to become what they previously were not to become great. But when you think about it, what great person doesn't already have the seed of greatness in them? When told to push hard, to achieve more, to reach for greatness, they were being told to bring out into full flower what they already latently possessed. They can grow their potential outwardly, extend it lavishly, yet they cannot bring forth what entirely lack altogether. We can only ask a person to be what they are. The acorn already contains the great oak. We can ask the acorn to become the oak, for that only means it is becoming itself. But we can never ask the acorn to become the willow.

Be what you are. Be who you are. Be yourself. But a problem arises - what happens when you are *unable* to be who you are?. Sometimes we *cannot* be what we are. Sometimes we lose ourselves. It sounds almost absurd - a fish that does not swim, a predator that does not hunt, a comedian that doesn't joke or laugh, a king with no power. But it is possible. In Biblical lore there is tale about a king named David. He was grieving the loss of a good person he knew. That person, Abner, was murdered. The death takes an exhausting toll on David. What is tragic in life has a power, a power to take the wind out of our sails, to squeeze the life out of our hearts. In the story David cries out, “*today I am powerless, even though anointed king*”. Think about that - a king without power! Whoever heard of a

powerless king? Isn't that an oxymoron? Is it really possible to *not* be what we are? This is the horrible power of the tragic.

Let me give you an example of a different “king” - Elvis Presley. I once saw a video of Elvis in one of his final performances. The tragic had at this point entered his life. His marriage was in ruins. He had become enslaved to drugs. His health was failing. As a result Elvis was no longer Elvis. His live performance was filled with fumbling. He barely moved. He slurred. He was very nervous and even confessed to being so in his words between songs. A few of the songs stopped midway because he forgot the words. He was a mess! What happened to this legend? The tragic elements had robbed him of himself. He could easily have uttered David's words in his own case: “*today I am powerless, even though I'm the king*”.

At various times I am sure we have all experienced this. Perhaps you are experiencing it now. A tragic element has come into your life. A dark, unwanted thing has anchored you to a bad place. As a consequence, you are not the person you used to be. You are not the person you could be. You are not the person you really are, but a muted and diminished echo. The tragic has stolen you from yourself. Perhaps someone you dearly loved has died and the grief has not subsided. Perhaps a destructive habit has swallowed your time and energy. Perhaps a missed opportunity or disappointment has eviscerated your confidence. Whatever it is, however it has come, you are held back. How can we find redemption?

In this Sunday of the lectionary readings there was a portion of text that spoke to me of a profound truth which, if grasped, has the power to help us rediscover ourselves. The text is Psalm 22 and it is particularly verse 26 I want to focus on. We see a promise and we see a transformation. Here is the promise - “*The poor shall eat and be satisfied*”. And here is the transformative effect in the present: “*May your hearts live forever!*” The idea is this - insofar as we hope, as we creatively imagine the possible, so we truly live in the here and now. The quality of our living is determined by the depth of our sense of the possible.

There was a writer in the early church named Paul. He repeatedly emphasized this point. He said that, “*in hope we are saved*” (Rom 8:24). On another occasion he critiqued our obsession with the past and said, “*No, a new creation is everything*” (Gal 6:15). In one letter he stated it in the form of confession, saying, “*this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead*” (Phil 3:13). Everything hinges on the forward look, the forward reaching and stretching, living into the possible.

Picture yourself standing in a cave. If you turn around to the past, that event that has its incarcerating effect in the present, which we will picture as facing the interior of the cave, everything narrows, becomes smaller, and ultimately comes to an abrupt stop. But if you turn around to the wide opening of the cave to the outer

world, it invites the endless possibilities of what can be. Just as a plant needs water and sun to grow, so we cannot grow into ourselves unless we orient ourselves toward the possible. That is our secret nourishment. The tragic calls out to us to look into that narrowed cone of the hopeless past. This will suffocate us. Nevertheless the interior of the cave has a tremendous power to pull our eyes away from imagination, possibility, and hope. We sometimes find ourselves feeling shackled to our situation.

I remember at my elementary school at the end of the year there was a “fun day”. One year they had hot air balloon rides on offer. That sounds exciting for kids but nerve-racking for parents and powder keg for lawsuits! But it wasn’t as risky or adventurous as it sounds. The balloon remained tethered to the earth. It lifted a bit, until the rope went taut. Then the balloon would descend back to its anchor point. Like a dog leashed to the house, it had a limited range of freedom. This is sometimes our experience. Our balloon is tethered tightly to the hard ground.

We *don’t* need to accept this anchoring to our distressing and depressing situation. Your thoughts can rove an infinity, far beyond your immediate life situation. While you may feel like the fox in the trap, your mind is not obligated to remain at the scene. Your mind, your spirit is like a raven flying near the entrapped fox. It *can* circle around above the fox. If it does this it willingly enters into the fox’s fate. But it need not do this. It is free to fly far away. And insofar as we move our thoughts beyond what may tether us, we recover ourselves and find new strength to Be. And it is this kind of thinking, making a brave new world for ourselves in our minds that will often cut the chain that tethers us.

One thing that holds us back from making a decisive break from the tragic or draining states of life is the erroneous belief that *we can’t move on unless the pain of our situation stops altogether*. This is a deception. The lost loved one will continue to be a knife in the heart. The colossal embarrassment will continue for the rest of your life to be a source of awkward humiliation. The great defeat will continue to echo its victory over you, by way of bitter reminders. The profound mistake will always eat away at you, a lasting, nagging regret. If we wait for even a trace of these things to entirely disappear before we move on we will wait forever and never flourish. The way forward is to absorb the tragic element. Own it. Be frank with it. Confront it. Realize that in some way it will be with you for the rest of your life, like a scar on your body. But if you let it be a mere *part* of your life it will no longer subsume your entire identity. It must not longer define you.

We can only recover ourselves, only find again the strength to be the individual we are uniquely equipped to be, insofar as we can creatively imagine the possible. I remember when I was first learning to drive, I would pull too much to the centre line or the line at the shoulder, or I would continue to drift from one to the other like a game of pingpong. My father told me to stop looking at the road immediately in front, to look instead at the road as it progressed into the distance.

By readjusting the eyes to the horizon, the car steadied and stayed on a truer course. Our life is the same - with our eye to the vanishing point of the future, our course is more sure and steady. Without hope, without a sense of the possible that floats above even the worst situations, our lives in the present contract and we lose ourselves.

In his book The Discovery of Being, Rollo May observed:

..if we can help the severely anxious or depressed patient to focus on some point in the future when he will be outside his anxiety or depression, the battle is half won. The essence of severe anxiety and depression is that it engulfs our whole selves.....But the class that the patient is teaching which makes him so anxious will be over, or the dreaded session with the boss will be passed - what will he feel then?. This focusing upon some point in time outside the depression or anxiety gives the patient a perspective, a view from on high so to speak; and this may well break the chains of the anxiety or depression. The patient may then relax, and some hope creeps in.

Friends, I don't know what you are going through today. I don't know your challenges. But I know enough about winding, rocky path of life to know your feet will easily find those situations that drain us of our courage to Be, take away our strength to be ourselves. Whatever it is. Whatever has swallowed your thoughts, whatever has weighed down your heart, it must not define you. It must not be allowed to dominate you. *You* are greater than it. May divine power help you lift your eyes. Think outside the box you have now inherited. Creatively imagine that point beyond this situation. Insofar as you can see it you become it. Such thinking will have the effect of transferring power from the situation back to the self. It will lower the troubled waters. Those waters won't be as formidable and unmanageable as you thought at first. It is like a submerged person standing on the bottom of a deep pool. As the water is drained the individual is progressively revealed and made more real, more free. The promise of the possible is the power of self flowering in the present. "*The poor shall eat and be satisfied....May your hearts live forever!*". Amen.



For flowers that bloom about our feet  
Father, we thank thee  
For tender grass so fresh and sweet  
Father, we thank thee  
For the song of a bird and hum of a  
bee  
For all things fair we hear or see  
Father in heaven the thank thee  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Keep on sowing, even when it seems  
nothing is taking root*