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May
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2020



Report From Your Board Chair

There has been so much happening in our world and our church community in the last month. With the Covid-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization on March 11, our world, our neighbourhoods and our lives have changed dramatically. It is my hope and wish that you have managed to remain safe and connected during this time. We have been doing our Sunday morning gatherings, our Board and committee meetings, and our coffee times remotely through Zoom technology. Many of our members had to quickly learn how to use this unfamiliar method of gathering and I salute you for climbing up the learning curve. Gretta and Scott have brought us the challenge and inspiration we needed each Sunday morning. This has enabled us to see, hear, share and interact during our times together. One enriching bonus has been to have our community expand to include participants from all across Canada, the US, Scotland, Burundi and South Africa to be with us. At our last Sunday gathering, we had 98 sites logged onto our time together.

Our property has been secured and vacant during the pandemic. Annie DiPede and Gary Megson, Property Chair, have checked inside regularly to make sure there are no problems arising. We are not sure when we might be able to meet again inside the church, but will continue to function as a community that loves to get together, to learn, grow and make a difference. The Zoom connection has enabled us to gather regularly. We have reached out to support La Maison in our community and have welcomed the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough (BGCES) to use our facility to assemble food hampers for distribution to families in need in our community.

I am delighted to share the terrific news with you about our progress in the sale of the church property. As you probably know, the BGCES made an unsolicited offer in late December to purchase our church in order to expand their programs in our community. The terms of the sale included allowing us to continue our Sunday gatherings indefinitely as well as permitting us space and time to continue our numerous committees, activity groups and other programs free of charge. Of course, we will have to request and negotiate for some of the times and be flexible in our scheduling. Several sub-groups have been working on the lease arrangements. The Board, the congregation and the Trustees had approved the sale of the church and on April 15 the committee of the Shining Waters Region gave their approval as well. This was a critical condition in completing the sale process. This approval has now been given on the condition that we establish a mutually agreeable lease with the BGCES. We are working on that agreement with advice from our lawyer, Heather Keachie, and our realtor, Cory DeVilliers. The final details should be confirmed within 2 weeks. The last 6 weeks has seen our team of Gretta, Annie and myself, with major assistance from Frank Dixon, meeting to prepare the necessary documents for the Shining Waters Region to demonstrate our plans for the future. Using our Vision Works statement, financial flow projections, and numerous other documents, we have a solid plan in terms of our ministry, mission in the community, our goal to be a performing arts centre and enhanced staffing and ministerial succession planning. A vital part of our future success is the continued generosity of our supporters in terms of attendance, volunteering, leadership and individual continued financial support. We are fortunate to have this amazing opportunity to continue our existence in a building we have grown so comfortable and familiar with. However, it is possible we might have to relocate eventually to the 100 Galloway Road facilities of BGCES. This relocation might be temporary or permanent while renovations or property development occur at our current site. The BGCES have guaranteed that we will have our traditional space or equivalent for our gatherings, events and functions. Nonetheless, we are fortunate to have this opportunity that brings us a suitable venue and long-term financial benefit.

In this abundant blessing – we share the joy!

Michael Lawrie, Board Chair

Precious Planet Recipe Corner

with Deb Ellis

I hope everyone is keeping well during these difficult times! It is more complicated to do groceries these days, so this recipe is a very flexible one that can be modified with whatever veggies you have on hand. You can use the tofu or just some chick peas. You can roast the veggies or just steam them (I steam our broccoli). You can eat the veggies raw or cooked. The main thing is the sauce! :) I have included two links for sauces; you decide the veggies/rice onto which you want to pour them!

Peanut Tofu Buddha Bowl

Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 15 minutes Total Time: 35 minutes Yield: 4 bowls Vegan and Gluten-Free.

Tofu Buddha Bowl - Options:

- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 2 cups spinach leaves
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 teaspoons olive oil or additional sesame oil, divided
- 1 cup chickpeas (drained and rinsed, if using canned)
- salt/pepper
- 16 oz extra firm tofu, pressed and drained
- * You can add whatever veggies or carbs you like (sweet potato, kale, red cabbage, green peas, mushrooms, quinoa. etc!)

Peanut sauce

- 1–2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
- 1/4 cup low sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 cup 100% pure maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons chili garlic sauce (omit if you don't like spice!)
- 1/4 cup creamy or crunchy peanut butter

Instructions

- ♥ Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Cube the tofu and place in a single layer on a non-stick baking sheet and cook for 25 minutes. If you aren't using a non-stick baking sheet, lightly spray with cooking spray. Remove from oven and place in a shallow bowl.
- ♥ Whisk together the ingredients for the sauce (sesame oil, soy sauce, maple syrup, chili garlic sauce, peanut butter) until creamy and smooth. Add 1/2 of the sauce to the tofu bowl and let marinate while you prepare the rest of the ingredients.
- ♥ Toss the broccoli with 1 teaspoon sesame or olive oil and a pinch of salt and pepper. Place in the oven and roast for 20 minutes until just tender.
- ♥ Heat remaining olive or sesame oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add tofu, in batches, along with the marinating sauce until crispy and golden browned, about 3-4 minutes.
- ♥ To assemble, divide the brown rice among 4 bowls, top each bowl with 1/4 cup shredded carrots, 1/2 cup spinach leaves, one 4th broccoli, 1/4 cup garbanzo beans and a few pieces of tofu. Drizzle with remaining peanut sauce.

Sauce Option #2

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup tahini paste
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (or lime juice)
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup (or any liquid sweetener)
- 1 tablespoon sesame (or olive) oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup water

Instructions

- ♥ Add tahini paste, lemon juice, maple syrup, sesame oil and salt in a cup of a food processor or blender and blend until smooth, gradually adding water.
- ♥ Use the sauce for Buddha bowls, salads, falafal, and more. Enjoy!

Notes: This tahini dressing can be stored in an airtight jar in the fridge for about 7 days. Depending on how thick your tahini paste is, you will need a different amount of water to adjust the consistency. Start with 1 tablespoon and keep adding water until you like the consistency.

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We have many more options for all ages. Please check out our website for our class schedule, rates and more information (647-352-4879): www.inthespirtityoga.com, email letsconnect@inthespirtityoga.com

First Nations Study Group

~ Update on Grassy Narrows ~

Thank you to everyone for your support and participation in the Amnesty International Write-a-thon for the Grassy Narrows First Nation in their struggle to obtain justice for the mercury contamination which was inflicted on their people 50 years ago.

Incredibly good news! The Federal Government has agreed to pay for the construction of a Mercury Care Home on site at Grassy Narrows First Nation. **This agreement also commits Ottawa to provide long-term funding for operations and maintenance, including federally-funded services** such as nursing, personal support workers, dietitians, palliative care, and mental health counselling programs.

Chief Rudy Turtle of Grassy Narrows First Nation and Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services, signed a framework agreement outlining the funding the government will be providing for the construction of the care facility. "We will see that the Mercury Care Home is built well, built quickly, and meets the care needs of our people." Turtle said.

Moving Forward with Windspeaker

Sadly, our group is unable to meet in person at this time. However, with extra time on our hands, we would like to introduce you to Windspeaker, a nation-wide Indigenous newspaper, and encourage you to read it. It is a top-notch newspaper and is available online at:

<https://www.windspeaker.com/drew-hayden-taylor>

It also features articles by Drew Hayden Taylor who is from Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario (which many of us have enjoyed visiting over the years). Mr. Taylor is one of Canada's leading playwrights and humourists and has been a writer for *The Beachcombers*, *Street Legal* and *North of 60*. One of his articles from Windspeaker follows. Enjoy!



Doin' time and making friends in the big house

by Drew Hayden Taylor

At about 3:30 on Saturday, March 26, I was released from prison. Really. It was great to smell the fresh air again and to see the horizon and not just those oppressive four walls. More importantly, it was great to know I was once again the master of my own destiny. True, some of my family had always suspected that someday I would end up in prison. How right they were. My crime...I am a writer. God, I had missed freedom.

Perhaps I should mention I had been 'locked up in the big house' for about three hours, give or take. And did I mention it was a women's prison? And I was there to do a reading from some of my books. Not nearly as melodramatic, but more accurate. As a writer, you never know where you'll end up. That includes the Edmonton Institute for Women. The title of the establishment sounds quite refined and bookish, doesn't it? And basically, the place looks like a large community college, surrounded by 10-foot fences topped with barbed wire.

I had been asked by the local library system if I would be interested in paying these women a visit. Evidently, the Native clientele of that establishment had a book club and had been reading my novel, *Motorcycles & Sweetgrass*, and I was at the top of their list for potential visiting authors. Who was I to say no to a "captive" audience? Authors such as myself crave new experiences and this would definitely be one. So off I went to the great province of Alberta, not knowing what to expect.

So I began my adventure by going through security. During some sort of chemical swab test to see if I was carrying any type of illicit contraband, I was surprised to discover my wallet tested positive for morphine. Not a good

beginning. Immediately I had visions of rubber gloves and cavity searches. Quickly, I tried to tell the security people that poppies don't grow well in the forests of central Ontario. I don't even like poppy seed bagels.

But the nonchalance of the woman behind the counter soon told me not to panic. She barely batted an eye. I found out later that false positives like this are quite common. It seems that practically every monetary bill in circulation has in some way come in contact with drugs, or with other bills that have been in contact with drugs. Evidently the money you have right now in your wallet probably has some sort of trace elements on it. So next, to be safe, she swabbed my cell phone. Luckily, my cell had led a more Mormon lifestyle and was drug free. Upon my return to the real world, I immediately sent my wallet into rehab.

After that auspicious beginning, the rest of the afternoon went surprisingly well. In the gym, where I held court underneath the volleyball net, the audience of about 24 ladies was attentive and intelligent. We all laughed, had a great conversation after the reading/lecture, and my impression of "caged women" changed substantially. Surprisingly, it's nothing like the movies. Even one of the guards became unexpectedly delighted when I mentioned I had written for "The Beachcombers." I was told he had, at some point, started a Beachcombers fan web site. All went well except when I tried to find a men's washroom in a women's prison. It's just something you never really think about.

But as always, it wasn't long before I soon put my own foot in my mouth. Asked for advice by a woman interested in becoming a writer, I told her my four rules for developing yourself as a good writer. The first one, possibly the most important, was and is to try to lead an interesting life. The more you've done in your life, the more you'll have to write about. They all looked at each other and smirked. Next, I mentioned the second part of the rule. And keep in mind, I usually give this speech to high school students. I told them (again, for high school students) that if they plan to spend all of their time in one place doing one thing (I often use the basement as an example, playing video games for instance), they're not going to have much to write about. So get out and see the world.

And this is where the real laughter started.

Looking back, they quite probably all had led interesting lives. Very interesting lives no doubt. And I had a hunch they were also quite probably going to be spending all their time in one place. Maybe playing video games, maybe not. And getting out and seeing the world would require a hack saw or helicopter.

Oh well, it did make them laugh.


submitted by Ruth Gill, First Nations Study Group



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Forget Jesus: We Need New Dreams

by gretta vosper

Each week, I lead my congregation – a home for those who have no use for religious language or story – in the work of inspiring one another to seek truth, live fully, care deeply, and make a difference. Actually, that's our "mission statement". My job is to trigger that inspiration, to bring people together so they can fall in love with being together. It is a privilege and a joy to be trusted this way by people you adore.

More recently, under social distancing orders, I've been leading these services from home via Zoom. The first week was weird. I spent more time looking for icons on the bottom strip of my screen than I did looking into the camera. The second week, I had help, and an outline (Gah! Why did I think I could do this without an outline!!). The tech people from church stepped in the next week and remotely took over with screen sharing of YouTube-sourced music, live music impossibly irritating over the platform (we're working on it). Last week, the first of two seasonal services, went pretty well; some of our older members were coached on with their phones (one of them turns 100 in June) and engaged throughout. And this week, Easter, once we got over a few mic hurdles, we flew.

The story we share is the story of Easter from underneath. Because Easter grew out of something and I don't believe it was a miraculous resurrection and an escape from a tomb. What I believe is that the Easter story was knit out of the very human story of having another chance. Another spring. Another start. Another reason to hope. Another nudge to walk away from whatever died on your watch and head toward something new, whatever that new might be. That's the story we tell this week at our church. The story we all know intimately. No rolling stones. No angelic messengers. Just our ravaged hearts and the chance to start over again.

This Easter Sunday is like no Easter Sunday we have ever known. As my husband and I drove in the afternoon to pick up some eggs from a friend's free-range no-kill farm, we watched wild turkeys cross the main street of our town. It's a four-lane highway. That, in itself, was weird. But the true weirdness is a world on lockdown; a world where almost everyone, in any sane community or country, is keeping their distance from everyone else.

I get to write this because I live in a stable home in a safe community, my sanity awaiting me in an orange Muskoka chair on my self-designed deck overlooking my double-wide backyard where not a second goes by that I don't hear some kind of bird singing. I get to write this because I am privileged to have been born in the country I was born, to parents privileged to have been born into the years of that great boom of prosperity, the tail-end of which I can just manage to grip with my fingers. I get to write this for all the reasons people, with an eerie joy, hash-tagged COVID-19 as #Boomercide. Until they remembered they had parents, that is. It didn't seem to get a lot of traction, at least not on my Twitter feed. But then, that's my Twitter feed, isn't it?

So this Sunday, when I took my Zoom people along the ancient story of dreams coalescing, realized, dashed, and reborn, part of the journey had to be through both the experience of COVID-19 and the reality that is our privilege. Part of the journey had to put words to the responsibility we bear, the distance between the lives we live and the realities of so many in our own communities and around the world: between our houses and condos, our apartments and grocery stores, and healthcare facilities, strained and broken as they are, and the broken social housing projects and refugee camps that will be decimated by COVID-19 if some other horror doesn't hit them first, lies a great gulf; between the exhilaration of seeing a couple of wild turkeys crossing the road, dolphins swimming long-abandoned shorelines, the scenic outline of the Himalayas, and the devastation flying in with the billions of locusts devouring East Africa. Between the safe and secure and the places safe and secure has never even been known.

As we social distance, remain home under quarantine, or risk our lives filling the essential services that continue to function, we might reflect on who we really are in the midst of this disaster. We are our wealth. We are comfort. We are fed. We are read. We are fresh clothing. We are clean sheets. We are stable shoes. We are home-sewn masks. We are virtual choirs. We are stress mats in our kitchens. We are the many outfits in our closets. We are air-conditioning. We are microwave ovens. We are lights on in the evening and long into the night. We are cell-plans and Netflix, Amazon, and online public libraries. This is who we are.

We are the "developed" world. The cost of that truth arrives in your heart with pride or shame or some alchemical product of the two. One extreme will challenge you to protect your privilege *at all costs*; the other will challenge you to share it. Those are really your only options because the third one – the product of the two of them – is an illusion. Just ask the next person you see asking for handouts in the rain on the off-ramp.

If we think of that ancient Easter story outside of its usual players, we might think of this period of isolation and fear in the same way as did its original lost and frightened cast. There is a story to be written and we can be its authors. But it must be the same kind of story: one in which our lives are *completely* changed because we find in ourselves the strength out of which a new way of knowing, of being, of living might emerge. Where dreams are resurrected from the dust into which we have trampled them by building and revering the systems of our world that serve such a narrow sliver of humanity and ravage the ecosystem that is our home.

There are dreams languishing in that dust. Some of them have been choked for generations. Others fell into it just now, or maybe yesterday. This may be our only opportunity to do as that ragged group of rebels did so long ago. We have this one day, this never-before global possibility, this period of *unsettlement* to dream again. We can pick those dreams up, add dreams of our own, and emerge from this tomb of global proportions to build a world we've never seen before.

Or die trying.

During this time of physical distancing, please join West Hill online via Zoom

Sunday Services/Perspectives 10:30 AM at <https://zoom.us/j/370030792>
Log in anytime after 10:00 AM for pre-service greetings and conversations



Morning coffee every Thursday from 10 to 11 at <https://zoom.us/j/561906918>



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