

Soul Ripples 2

By

Ty Ragan, Psy.D.

I have tried to recreate events, locales and conversations from my memories of them. In order to maintain their anonymity in some instances I have changed the names of individuals and places, I may have changed some identifying characteristics and details such as physical properties, occupations and places of residence.

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Cover picture from Ty Ragan family archives

All images within from Ty Ragan family archives.

Dedicated to
My best friend & soul mate,
Shawna,
And our two blessings that are and will light this
world on fire,
Leland & Justina

Hear, O Israel

Hear, O Israel,
the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all your strength.

This is the first and the great commandment.

The second is like it: Love your neighbour as
yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these

Forwards

Where friends share their thoughts

There have been so many epic journeys in the history of mankind, to new lands, to other planets. To the bottom of the ocean and the tops of mountains. All of these travels have been based on experimentation and testing, facts and outcomes. They all have one goal, to arrive somewhere to conquer and to own. And yet, the greatest journeys ever embarked upon are those of the human spirit into self. It still takes bravery beyond understanding, acceptance of risk and the hope that the learning will enhance the life being lived, but these travels go without the blessing of prior experimentation and testing, facts and outcomes. Rather the journey into understanding self is into the greatest unknown, often because it is still being written.

Spiritual understanding is a multi-faceted and complex concept that is incredibly simple in its make-up, but almost out of reach for us to grasp and understand. Unless you are Ty Ragan.

What I have seen over and over again in my 60 years, filled with love and loss, trauma and grief, blessings and agonies beyond belief, is

that some rare souls do not get caught up in all of the facets of this life being lived, but rather can maintain a simplicity lens that allows what is being seen to be pure, authentic and just. Ty is this soul. Over the years, through wars fought and challenges faced, he has remained friend, father, spouse, spiritual leader and an example to many. His ability to rise above comes from standing tall every day and knowing that all will be as it is meant to be, if he allows it.

And then it happened. His own brain betrayed him, and for the first time I saw Ty's stance wobble. Holding up his son, his dear Boi, hugging his daughter, standing with his partner were all blessings he was called to live, but when he had to face something within him that he could not only not control, but not stop, I saw Ty's face change to a face of frustration and pain and loss. When I visited him in hospital and heard him talk about work I heard loss. His care for others, for the most broken and vulnerable was taken away because he had to now just try to survive the unknown of each day for himself. Ty's indomitable spirit was under attack and the brain that had always guided and strengthened him now threatened his very being, and I even heard anger. I saw fear.

And of course, this is the journey we all live, what we can control and what we cannot, but in the end, Ty took his life back. He began to

celebrate every hour without a seizure. He invited us all in to join with him in shouting from the rooftops “Halleluiah” when a day went by without the horror of a seizure. And that is where the Ty that I have known and respected and loved for years came back. His ability to identify that the work he had loved and given his heart to had also harmed him. This work of caring for others comes with a price for each of us and only if we can identify it can we heal it and Ty has done just this. Facing this, honouring it, honouring himself and all that he has given, is where the healing began. His spiritual self was born again. “Treatment”, whatever it is, whatever it is for, is only touching our bodies. Ty wrapped himself in courage and took on the needed “treatment” for his soul and that is where true healing lies. By caring enough about himself to see he is worthy of this journey, he has exampled to all of us our own value.

And so I am braver. I am more authentic. I celebrate my spirituality. I am less afraid because Ty Ragan showed me how to do this. This is the man I am blessed to call friend.

Deb Runnalls, RSW
Friend & Mentor

I worked with Ty as he continued to try to work amid the mounting health issues that he had been suffering from. I remember how hard it was for him not to do the simple things that brought him happiness because of the seizures. The inability to write anything really hit him hard, but not as hard as the looks of concern that his children had on their faces as he started the process to heal. I have had the great honor in counting him among my close friends, and I have been able to help in even the smallest way to where he is now, compared to a year ago. There were times where the frustration of the all the specialist's appointments, and the inability to express his frustrations or concerns, as his seizures made sleep or any activity very difficult. I remember the humor he found in being referred to a specialist that he had worked with in professional setting as an advocate for a client, who happened to be a patient of the specialist. Despite the roadblocks he faced and the many seizures that he faced, Ty never lost hope that there would be a solution to be found. I remember celebrating the small victories, such as a reduction in the number of seizures. Even if it was still upwards of a dozen seizures a day, they fact that the number reduced was reason to celebrate over a cup of coffee. When the final diagnosis of Psychogenic Non- Epileptic seizures was given to him, there was a sense of relief. Though he was still 6 months away from the treatment, this was the turning point for him.

Slowly the frequency of the seizures decreased, and he began to write again. The joy this brought him continued to fuel his faith that this part of his life would have a positive ending. Today I see the mentor and friend that I knew over the many years of working together. I am happy he is now celebrating days of being seizure free instead of the decrease in the frequency. I look forward to seeing the reflection of his whole experience as he moves from days to months and years of being seizure free.

Scott Hofstetter, RSW
Friend and colleague

With Gratitude

The last 3 years has been a journey of healing and discovery. A point in time when my body and mind said enough was enough and I needed out. It was a time when the Jonah Effect took hold of many, and like the sailors in the ancient Hebrew Story, even though they may not have wanted to, they cast aside our relationships within their own fear.

In the midst though, one discovers their true loving family and friends. I would not have

made it through the journey without my beloved best friend and soul mate, Shawna, and our two blessings, Leland and Justina. My Dad, Wayne, and his wife (and longtime family friend) Sherry, who kept things normal from times on the farm, parades, exploring the history of Countess, AB, a Frankensteined computer to re-engage my passion of writing, oh and the delicious Grandma meals Sherry prepared for our freezer.

Friends who have become family: Paul Vargis, Scott Hofstetter, Benny Leung, Deb Runnalls and Deidre Wilson-Smith (my son's Godmother), as well as Deirdre Leighton (and UCM Alberta) who provided opportunities for community and belonging.

Lest we forget, the curve balls where the journey took us to healing. From taking a leap of faith to test the waters of structured learning in April 2019's Leadership Summit at Alberta Bible College. I am an alumni who has had a tenuous relationship, yet in those 3 days I found a peace of Spirit within, and regardless of what grows from there, Pastor Dave from the Vulcan Church of Christ, and many others met over those days encouraged me on my healing. My journey through the wilderness and that there is blessings waiting on the other side.

The homecoming to Centennial Presbyterian Church in the summer of 2018 was also a curve ball unexpected. A place where we let membership rest, but always felt restless...the simple offer of pastoral care of having coffee opened up a courageously safe space to re-engage my passions of teaching, sharing, and preaching through being the grief support coordinator/trainer, Men's Prayer Breakfast Coordinator, and Vision Team Member.

It is with deep thankfulness and gratitude for journeying with us into the new phase of life.

Surreal ER Convos from May 2016

Nurse: For your x-ray, take this card, walk down this hall looking up and follow the blue line to the room with the black box outside.

Me: Got it.

Nurse: Oh but look down every so often so as not to walk into anyone or thing.

Me: Is that really a problem?

Nurse: We do have to give the warning so what do you think?

Me: Gotcha.

Doctor: Do you smoke?

Me: No

Dr.: Drink?

Me: no.

Dr.: Street Drugs?

Me: No.

Dr: You know cocaine is a street drug?

Me: Yea I am aware of that.

Dr: so no to cocaine?

Me: Yep.

Soooo when one is presenting with what could be a heart attack, always remembers...your doctor will want to clarify if you understand what is and is not a street drug...hmmm....

Previous Soul Ripples

My family's story in *Soul Ripples* (Bookstand Publishing, 2019) was the story seeking to understand my family. The stories of faith, healing, mental and physical health challenges, community, love, belonging and making choices of one path over another. One does not need to have read the previous book to enjoy this one, but it will flesh out the journey to this point.

The broad strokes are simple. It started in 2013 with a hand tremor that a walk in clinic doctor suggested I drink more water. By May 2016 and October 2016 a series of mysterious strokes, and seizures led me to visit the Peter Loughheed Centre of the Calgary General Hospital's Emergency Room. After fighting with on-site staff that I was not a Fentanyl addict overdosing, testing showed that everything was normal. A few days of convalescence at home and I was back at work.

There was a progression of physical and emotional fatigue following the October 2016 visit, but always another person to help, another home to begin building with those in life recovery exiting homelessness. On July 1, 2017 I would suffer several events that would take my

family out of our usual Canada Day Celebrations in the Village of Rosemary, Alberta.

By my 39th Birthday of that year, August 15, I would begin daily visits to the Emergency Room for unexplained seizure activity, white frothy vomit, tremoring left arm, pain in my skull, fatigue, and horrific flashbacks to name but a few. My wife, Shawna, would capture a video of an episode the first night there that would cause a panic, but again nothing was found.

Within a week of visits, a nurse who was a former student of mine would advocate that I was not a frequent flyer who needed Naloxone, but there was something seriously wrong. I would be placed on Keppra and booked in for a referral to Neurology. I kept tracking the events, the symptoms, and my flashbacks...rush of emotions and mosaics of the events I had been a participant in over 20 years of trying to discover how to love my neighbour, and responding not to the code or commodity before me, but the person.

Early EEG's would show wildfire like Epileptic sparking activity, and I would be raised to the highest dose of Keppra possible, one that should

have left me not very functional. Yet I kept trucking along.

By October 4, 2017 I had finally crashed and burned at work. My last contact before the call in being an instance of workplace bullying, my boss the next morning we spoke as I had left a simple cracking voice mail message simply, “I can’t” as I cried after an overnight of multiple seizures and night terrors. I would first go on short term disability through Employment Insurance, before accessing the Long Term Disability as I was not improving.

The neurology unit at the Peter Lougheed did the best they could, but my case was complex. I was referred to the Epilepsy Centre at the Foothills Medical Centre. Where looking at my reports, and the question was raised what was happening. I was put in the queue to have an in-patient observation done which would finally happen in the first week of September 2018 at the South Health Campus.

A week of observation captured many types of my seizure events from full body, to eye rolling, to arm tremor, to head shaking while I was wired in to the EEG the whole time. I left the unit without any medications and began the journey of detoxing from the Keppra in my

system. Still having around 1-9 seizures a day (down from my time working when it was between 40-60 seizures a day).

In November I would get my results, after hearing that it was a huge discussion within Epileptologists about what was happening with my brain. To simply take the EEG's or to factor in my history to come to a firm diagnosis about what the next steps would be.

The next steps?

A diagnosis of Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES), probably caused by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder which led to a referral to the psychotherapy portion of the Epilepsy Centre, that is two PhD psychologists trained to work with PNES and Epilepsy whether occurring separately or co-occurring.

Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES):

Seizures that are not related to Epilepsy. All the same challenges and fears from fall to sudden death, yet not treatable by any anti-epileptic or anti-convulsion medications. Mine were triggered by PTSD. Treatment is psychotherapy.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)[\[11\]](#):
What used to be called Shell Shock.

- Moved into a mental health diagnosis.
- Questions still remained about why some treatments worked and others did not.
- Recently, studies have shown there is 3 main types:

1. Traumatic Brain Injury (formerly shell shock)-the physical damage to the brain
2. Mental health
3. Both combined

For a diagnosis these must be present for at least a month, 1 from each category:

- At least one re-experiencing symptom: flashbacks, frightening thoughts, bad dreams
- At least one avoidance symptom: staying away from places, objects or events that are reminders of traumatic events; avoiding thoughts or feelings related to events.
- At least two arousal and reactivity symptoms: angry outbursts, feeling tense or on edge, difficulty sleeping, easily startled.
- At least two cognition and mood symptoms: trouble remembering key features of event, negative thoughts about oneself or the world, distorted feelings of loss or guilt, loss of interest in enjoyable activities

Some factors that increase risk for PTSD include:

- Living through dangerous events and traumas
- Getting hurt

- Seeing another person hurt, or seeing a dead body
- Childhood trauma
- Feeling horror, helplessness, or extreme fear
- Having little or no social support after the event
- Dealing with extra stress after the event, such as loss of a loved one, pain and injury, or loss

[1] All generalities of mental health diagnosis are derived from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V (DSM-V)*.

On February 14, 2019 I began the journey of rewiring my brain. This is the story of discovery and healing. It is as the Hear O' Israel prayer states the Shema as phrased by Brother Jesus. My whole life had been centered on loving my neighbour, now it was time to authentically discover how to love myself.

Three Questions

Oh crap! It's gone. Damn it! Just a few of my thoughts that went through my throbbing head I had just bounced off the bottom of a balcony while emptying out a hoarding situation in an apartment building. My Superman shield marriage band my kids had gotten me had flown into a dumpster and was lost amongst many unmentionable waste items. It was like a piece of my soul had been shredded.

It would be a few days after this occurrence that I would have my second Emergency Room visit, this time with a mysterious 2 plus hour memory loss that has never returned. During this time as well I would lose my Celtic knot work pinky ring my wife gifted me with many years ago, this was within our bedroom or somewhere in the house but lost still the same.

2016 was not shaping up to be a friend for the out word symbols of my love for my wife.

How Many Times did you hit your head?

Now, I admit I entered this world of medical wonder 3 years after my Mum had transitioned to Paradise, but it still shocked me that there is someone out there in the world that knows how many times they have hit their head. Was there a

meeting at some point when I was out sick that noted the necessity of tracking this?

Each doctor and neurologist I dealt with asked the question as if the answer should be known. They did not appreciate my jovial “well I was a boy so it may be easier to count the days I have not smacked my head.” Truly, I do not know. I have had some minor concussions in my life, and maybe a few non-minors. I do not recollect ever losing consciousness, but then I would need others around me to note that.

I put this as one of the three major questions I faced because it created a level of frustration. My Dad and I pieced together my family’s health history as best we could, but still were left flummoxed by this query.

It is a query that would persist from May 2016 up until my intake into the week long observation In September 2017. Although the questions around that intake did finally get professionals to look closely at my work and life experience to begin to unpack that it may not simply be Epilepsy.

How are you still alive?

A small piece of dark humour for this question to arise in my 40th year of life, as during my childhood I had a recurring nightmare that I

would die before I turned 19 years old; now here was the question before me 21 years past my best before date if you will.

As my diagnosis finally sunk in that it was an atypical form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and a Conversion Disorder that manifested as Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES). Through all the studies, and the fact the medication at such a high dose was not helping... it became clear that I was a pure experience of PNES.

From November 2017 until February 2018 when I would begin treatment I would also experience two falls as a result of seizures as my body continued to attempt to protect myself. The first was on Sunday December 23, 2017 when I would fall off the ramp we have for my son's wheel chair and bounce my head off our front step breaking my glasses. The second would be on the last Saturday in January 2018 where I would take a multiple seizure and fall on top of my wife while getting ready for our church's Men's Prayer Breakfast (suffice it to say I did not attend that morning).

Both left my family shaken having experienced this, and even knowing that it was not Epilepsy and the dangers that come with that diagnosis,

that we are far too familiar with as it is one my son has. This PNES was just as dangerous. Yet that was not the full source of the question “How are you still alive?”

The full source, was sharing some of my experiences on the front lines and within management within ministry, politics and the homeless serving sector of Canada. Some of these experiences were covered in my previous book and writings, but they include and are not limited to: assaults, being shot at, death threats, interrupting suicide attempts, being stalked, being bit, dealing with infestations, being at ground zero of outbreaks, cycles of drug crisis (meth, crack, fentanyl), rescuing children from being trafficked to name but a few occurrences. Not to mention standing up to hate and having many threaten me with my stance of support of being pro-choice and for marriage equality.

The question of how I am still alive speaks to the 6 weeks I continued attempting to serve after my 40-60 seizures a day settled in as the norm. My body and mind telling me, STOP!

These instances left me with the lingering negative soundtrack of “you have not made a difference” and “you have failed” along much other iteration. As I would work through my first round of therapeutic treatment directed at

the PNES, it would be coming to a point of engagement where I could come back with the simple affirmation finally, “I did make a difference” to being more specific to the situation, to even stating “I did what was possible”.

Learned Helplessness

Continually encountering aversive or negative situations where one is left feeling alone, or abandoned. That is nothing will change the situation so there is no escape.

Did they believe you were Superman?

This is a question that came up, and was affirmed in my PNES therapy, while working through the safe memories that came to the surface. Safe flashbacks, it is such a unique statement to be making. My flashbacks would be kept behind a concrete wall in my brain. I had so numbed my emotional responses in life at this point that I would make a Vulcan proud. For the non-Trekkie, Vulcans are an alien species on Star Trek that made First Contact with humanity and set in motion the events that would lead to the United Federation of Planets. They were a species that have suppressed

emotions through the logical and rational teachings of their Prophet-Teacher Surak.

My flashbacks would be in the form of day or night terrors that I would not remember. In fact, my seizures were my body's defense mechanism against these persistent traumas. My body shut down completely. When I would see the flashbacks, it was almost a mosaic of stain glass flashes through my brain. This may sound weird, but I am the guy that has dreamed my whole life in 1930's Technicolor animation, so it works with my brain's wiring.

The concept of Superman came up as I would share about working on clearing buildings of Bed Bug infestations. These are insidious insects that there really is no way outside of dumb luck to not bring them back to your home. Yeah for dumb luck, but it created a constant state in my system of fight in the flight, fight or freeze response (the seizures would be the freeze). Other things throughout my career like sword affidavits to deal with criminal elements within shelters and buildings that put my full name and contact information out there. To the times of having to be the advocate for the community and the person when organizations attempted to "kill with kindness" by not knowing what to do with former staff/volunteers/donors who had become clients

as my moral compass dictated to work with the person before me regardless of the political or institutional backlash.

The other side of the coin being the lynch mobs that would form in circles of ministries I served in as I was not “Christian” in their definition. It created a storm when I would advocate for harm reduction, or trauma informed care, use of actual debriefing techniques for staff, volunteers and community that was not simply go to church and pray more. The idea that these were needed stipulated to some a weak faith, and that was enough for them to come after me. The other pieces being I am a child of a multi-cultural country, and as such I seek to create spaces of diversity and belonging.

As I would work through these challenges, constantly doing more with less, more and more responsibility I would take on. Ensuring the staff team as a whole (upper management, teammates, volunteers and students) were cared for and held together (more than once I was described as the glue that held things together). For me it was relationship, and seeing the person not their label or coding, those were things that stipulated supports for success. A way to create accessibility (removal of physical barriers) and inclusion (having a space) but it

was the relationship that created belonging. The messiness of life, where when they were gone they would be missed—613 deaths I was present for, 613 missing persons. That is not dealing with the times when we had to transition to higher level of care, or evict because no matter what happened the individual just did not want to have a home.

That does not even touch upon church ministry within the mainline church. The do more with less was the rallying cry. In fact, it was what was sought after within the United Church of Canada Calgary Presbytery. They did not want qualified individuals building youth ministries, for they cost too much. If they paid it was set at barely enough to cover the wages for the youth nights, never mind prep work or all the meetings they wanted you to attend. There was a trickle down of ill health and burn out for the one working to orchestrate was within their own struggles, even though their soul and heart were good they were in need of Sabbath, and that was impossible. It took its toll on the young leaders.

So too did a church mourning and grieving the loss of Christendom, and that the way things were done in the 1950's were never coming back. It created predatory congregations who were out to exert this pain on targets, and sadly those targets became the youth leaders, like me,

and the youth who had their own struggles looking for belonging.

It was within this concept as I worked through my PNEs healing that the concept of Learned Helplessness came through. Knowing that even though I had an assertive voice (sometimes it would go full aggressive; I am human and err as well).

Looking at what was safe to come through. The amount of times my job was threatened and I was written up for caring for others as I stepped outside imaginary lines of protocol it added more rips to the soul. I was hemorrhaging my compassion. Not necessarily for others, though I was becoming numb to feeling, but I had definitely ejected compassion for myself. That is I had broken the circle of Holy Love. I could say I loved the Holy Mystery and loved my neighbour, but by failing to love myself the other two were false statements.

Add into this the response of the City of Calgary to removing spaces where people can simply be. That is my routing of morning meditation, writing and coffee before work had no space, and the practice was interrupted. My day was no longer centered.

Yet...

The work of care continued.

Without care from the institution for staff,
without being able to slow down as always
needing to accomplish more with less whether it
was staff, volunteers, students, resources... the
list would go on and on.

Was I Superman?

Often throughout the past two and bit decades I
was asked to do that thing I do, pull of another
miracle.

Finally, my own brain and body needed to stop
the hemorrhaging of my soul. I needed to end
the learned helplessness. I needed out.

May 2016 after a mysterious mini-stroke, my
way out pathway would begin to be laid.

Sola Scriptura at 4-0

I had finally succumbed to my seizures in October 2017. A year would go by with me still on the highest dose Keppra, and sorting out what was happening. In this time loop I was still hovering on average 1-15 seizures a day. My neurology team would refer me to the Epilepsy Clinic to explore what was happening with the seizures and mental health, and I would be waitlisted for the slam dunk diagnostic. The slam sunk being wired up for a constant EEG while on video.

Before the slam dunk diagnostic though I would turn 40 years old, a huge milestone of getting over the hill in life and firmly a year since my year of constant seizures took hold. It was a low key affair, good friends would come out with my family for all you could eat fish and chips at Joey's only, and we would do dinner with my Dad and Sherry. It was what I could handle in regards to people interaction.

It was also the time when my wife and kids would bless me with a great gift. I have always loved the stories of the Holy Bible (Hebrew Bible and Christian Testament). With the seizures I had trouble with focusing my mind and eyes, so they had found me a single column

Bible so I could re-engage my faith stories. It was beautiful leather bound English Standard Version.

Sola Scriptura was the Latin phrase from the Reformation of Scripture Only. It basically was attempting to strip away the power of the Roman See of Christendom, and supposedly bring the faith back to the people. Though all it meant was Christendom got fractured between more nation state leaders as the monarchs all claimed rule by divine right, and there was bloody Reformation battles fought over church land and control.

Protestant Reformation

Began with theological challenges to the luxuriousness of the Empire of Roman Catholicism, and the abuse of indulgences (buying yourself or a loved one out of Purgatory or Hell).

It was supported, as Monarchs realized the power they could have if they were the Head of a Church by Divine right.

What else aided the Reformation?

Guttenberg's printing press being able to print Scripture in the language of citizens.

The Black Death (Bubonic Plague) which had ravaged through Europe claiming 1/3 of lives, and the clergy who were supposedly blessed and set apart by God, were also among the dead. It

allowed folks to question the divinity of those who claimed to speak for the Holy.

It also created a system where each nation state church declared their own understanding of Scripture that was acceptable. Christendom each got their labels- Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, etc. It created a Canonical Bible that could range from 66 to 84 books depending on which branch of the Christendom tree you were a part of. This then does not take into account the other extra texts like found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, or through Gnosticism.

In fact, as a teacher of the Sacred Texts, I would challenge students with the oldest ending of the canonical Gospel of Mark 16:1-8:

What is a Gospel of Mark?

It is a book in the New (Christian Testament) the smaller section near the back of the Holy Bible. It is part of what is called the Synoptic Gospels, as Matthew and Luke (two other books) borrowed from it. It is concise, and written with action verbs, which for the historical time period puts it as having been written for people living in Rome.

Who is Mark?

Mark was probably the scribe (think Dragon Software of the ancient era) for Jesus' closest student, Peter. As Peter was a fisherman it was highly probably he was illiterate despite his economic success. Tradition states that Mark also known as John Mark recorded Peter's tales of Jesus.

Mark having been a scribe, and that his parents owned the Upper Room, Jesus and his followers had the Last Supper in. Made famous in Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* movie would place Mark in a higher socio-economic bracket.

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were

alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

What’s up with the women?

Yes in the ancient world women were seen as property and had very little to no rights. In Jesus’ group they were equals with the men. They worked to provide income to allow for the preaching, teaching and healing ministry.

Many continue to debate whether or not Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. For me it is a non-question of faith, it is up to each individual to decide how much Jesus embraced his humanity and culture he was born in to. I for one love the idea of a married Messiah.

I use this passage to challenge my own faith formation, but those of others. It basically says here we are confronted with the Empty Tomb.

Enter into the story as the Women, the faithful. You have now left the Tomb, what do you do with the proclamation of building the Kingdom here and now?

That is simply put, how does your life and story create a Gospel here and now? The term Gospel is a political proclamation (yes even Caesar had a Gospel) which we have translated as Good News. It is part of the reason why I fell in love so much with other stories that share ethical and moral conundrums, challenging thoughts, or ways to shift perception.

It is also why I am currently writing my second book on this journey of healing. It is what I am doing confronted with the Empty Tomb. That is confronted with a condition that took me out of life, and now is looking at re-engaging life.

This was the path to the slam dunk of diagnostics.

It was a week of my life where I was in a small windowless room, family and friends would visit, due to my garlic allergy my hospital food was tasteless, and I lost about 10 lbs. due to the imperially small helpings given. I also swear that the watery coffee served was decaf.

Thankfully, friends and family would bring me real food, and my McCafe's! They tell you

going in there is Wi-Fi so to bring a computer or tablet, there is not, bring books and get ready for a re-acquaintance with cable television. It was at times lonely, but I was able to bring some focus, sleep, and as there was no major stimulus I had around a half dozen episodes that were caught. Keep in mind it is up to me to click the button I had one and at this point I had no knowledge of the seizures taking hold.

Shawna had gotten me some books from the Dollarama, and one was by Pope Francis on the Lord's Prayer which was a good read and centering during this time. The stay also had a rapid removal of Keppra from my system. It is sold as a safe way, what they do is half the dose, and then no dose. It is safe, because if need be they can re-up you quickly on medication. I would leave the observation unit with no medications, which was a blessing to come.

The day I left hospital I had a meeting at the church we were attending at the time, a United Church congregation. In conversation with Shawna, we had figured out just the church's designation had been a trigger for my condition. Over the summer through their Vacation Bible School program, we had become re-connected with Centennial Presbyterian and their new minister, Jin Woo, who through the simple act

of asking to do coffee with me had shown us a new path. We began the transfer over. Yet I still had a commitment to discuss the difference between accessibility, inclusion and belonging with the affirming committee of this United Church. It would also lead to being booked in to speak at the end of the month to the congregation, which was a challenge as the Keppra detox and a ramping up of symptoms was not helping me. It was the first time I have preached from a stool, with my notes and Bible on the altar. I stubbornly used an older Bible for this talk, as I did not want my new one; my family had blessed me with, tied to anything that was being released from the past.

That was what this act of speaking was, laying the truth of who we were down and then being able to walk away (okay limp) knowing that I had brought closure to a point in our drawn out faith journey. My Gospel was still being written as I found the Empty Tomb.

New wonders waited...

Freedom & Efficiency

At this point I am sure some are seeing the homeless serving sector or church ministry as a hand basket to Hell. I want to let you know that I made great friends, and did good work. Saw many blessings of life recovery unfold, and community building.

The challenge of the work is that there was a lack of culture of staff care. As first responders, which we were as each time the police or paramedics showed up they would state with amazement what we did. It was an outgrowth of 1990's financial populism. The shift of comprehension of social capital to bank statement budgeting.

What does that mean?

Simple, there used to be an acknowledgement that the investment in our neighbour was not a debit on monies, but rather a credit. This is why communities would invest and support one another, the flow of a helping hand. While I was within human services the concept of the bank statement budgeting took over (extrapolated in

the zero based budgeting that the money not spent was no longer there, and sometimes a bonus for those that reduced budgets this way).

In the early days of my career the Mustard Seed saw the need for staff to have more, and things such as ASSIST (Suicide Intervention training) and Non-Violence Crisis Intervention training were brought in. The challenge being this was in situation work, with a quick overview to debrief after, yet in hind sight no one knew what debrief at this time needed to look like.

Back to being debits. It was at the 2008 Alberta Council of Disability Services Conference where I was a co-presenter that a speaker put a framework to that which I already knew. With the loss of the concept of social capital, or rather, the person in front of me deserves a good quality of life because they are my neighbour; human services had been relegated to a debit on the bank statement of governance and society. The good outcomes, the intangibles of personal growth of the client were not track able, they were not able to be seen as a commodity. If the only financial outcome for the individual was to go on a form of government entitlement then they were a double debit.

We as a society had lost the language of credit for things such as community membership,

volunteerism, or at the very least, being a credit on the bank statement balance sheet for being a citizen.

This was the concept of economics that made for good sound bite politics around budgets, deficit and debt elimination, but did not deal with the reality of governance. That is Peace, Order and Good Governance for citizens, and that meant the majority of services in the new reality were debits, and thus cut table.

This is the reality that created the crisis of homelessness and affordable housing Alberta is still in. Sure, we may no longer have states of emergency declared each winter, but shelters run over capacity in this time of year or at capacity. We have lost the concept of relationship as a form of belonging, and growing home.

In the debit/credit track what also was lost was a value placed on wisdom and eldership within the sector. When I started I was amongst the youngest, with the median age being 39 years old (the age my PNES took me out of service). Today, we are huge debits on the bank balance sheet whether a non-profit would ever admit it. They enjoy the younger worker with less experience, easier to tap into the passion and

okay when they crash and burn because there is another young social justice ideologue in training waiting.

It saddens me, it is the concept the military has used within their recruiting and drafting regimes for centuries, why do you think the first wave of drafting is at 18 years old?

I also know in my journey I messed up. It is working with people no matter what label the system placed on them. To be more matter of fact, whether we held the power of the plate (food) or mat (shelter) or not, there were interactions that did not always go well. For those I may have inadvertently injured I am sorry, but there were those that felt injured that had to have a stand taken against them to protect the community.

Within the church ministry realm, I do look back fondly on the youth and children I worked with. I loved seeing the light bulbs go off as they discovered what they believed, and could explain why. There were good religious communities I had the privilege of being a member of on my own journey.

I also enjoyed my chaplaincy volunteering with dementia patients, it was great to see the impact of the hymns of their childhood take them back into the past, and happy memories. The moment

created by the music that would bring joy, joy they would share with my son, Leland, and daughter, Justina in those moments.

There was good. The problem is that there is this culture of undervaluing, and expecting literal miracles. Yes, I can put it on me as a guardian/protector personality type that I did it to myself. Yet, in the moments I pushed for debriefs for my team, or other staff members I would be the one that would be left out, or miss it as I was dealing with the situation. Knowing the levels of management, not wanting to be debriefed at the same moment as my team so they would have more freedom in speaking about the situation, it would be a policy that would end up with not a proper debriefing for me more often than not and being left to my own self be true to deal with whatever was there in my soul and heart, and eventually ingrained in my brain and body.

The other sad state of pushing for staff care, is how many times I was written up for it. Certain agencies had a stance no matter what happened to “get back to work”, and that did not truck with me. It always intrigued me however that I would be targeted for the official human resources reprimand, but other leaders I would partner with possibly in the moment would get a

pass. Within religious non-profits it came down to the concept it is our ministry to serve, God will give you what you need to endure the pain, pray more, read your Bible more, and have a home church. Sorry, like the home church is designed to deal with trauma and vicarious trauma?

Within non-religious settings the buzz word was self-care. It was done in the- if you end up burnt out, or with PTSD it is your own fault. Self-care, drink water, exercise, yoga, takes care of you. What was missing is the concept that self-care is about what fills you up. What also is missing is the concept that at any point your job can simply overwhelm. It may not be the present situation but accumulation overtime.

Many good people have left the human services world as a result of employers not wanting to deal with the ickiness of the human experience of serving humans. For me my body and brain found a freedom and efficiency in dealing with the accumulation.

Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures:
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What is it?

Simply put, it is an acronym that stands for Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures. It is 25% of the seizure cases that the Calgary Epilepsy Program sees. It can go un(mis)diagnosed (meaning you are being treated for Epilepsy) on average between 7-20 years. It is essentially what comes with Epilepsy without the Epileptic electrical brain activity. It is a convergence disorder, that 90% of the time is associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There is a freedom, and a fear in knowing what it is, the freedom is that you do not need the harsh anti-convulsion or anti-epileptic medications (unless it is co-occurring with Epilepsy), the fear is that treatment is a journey within your own self.

Lorna Myers Ph.D (2014) *Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures: A Guide* is an exploration of the basics. It aptly points out that in one point and time in history these were known as pseudo or hysterical seizures (and even demonic possession), which is a misnomer as they are not false but the physiology of the person experiencing them they are real. Though I must admit watching a serial killer documentary with the wife when the Cannibal stated that it was pseudo-seizures, did cause me to almost do a

spit take. I digress however.

I was a lucky one, it only took about 2ish years to diagnosis, and this was after finally getting the gold standard of testing, the observed EEG in hospital with audio and video. That was in September 2018, and in February 2019 I entered into the psycho-therapeutic treatment. It is two pronged, as there is also going to be in depth intervention for PTSD later. Myers does allude that PTSD treatment should come before PNES treatment. I wrestle with that, because if one cannot control or mitigate the dissociative and/or convergent episodes, how are they going to root out the memory ingrained pain to heal appropriately. To each their own, but this inversed path appears to be working.

Myers text for the laity (or patient) walks you through treatment options. That range from Talk to CBT to DBT to exposure therapy, each step of the way pointing out the need for this to be happening with an appropriately trained mental health practitioner in PNES. She points out the role a psychiatrist, psychologist (Ph.D.) and possibly, social worker would play in each role.

In a typical American based fashion she gives a nod to continue working with adjustments while working through the PNES treatment (if possible is a side note). What is needed though, in my opinion, is a grasp on something that

gives meaning. Myers notes if one cannot work (as in my case due to the PTSD being linked to the work) then to find meaning in life elsewhere...for me it has been my family, my writing, and a renewal in my reading, and a safe zone in our home church.

The walk will also take you through the role Anger, Depression and Anxiety play in exacerbating the PNES, but also that in the case of Anxiety there can be other psychogenic effects to your system as a whole. It was a good notation, as the wife and I had noticed an increase in frustration and anger over this time. In the complementary treatment section it explores the pros-cons on one's health of herbal and health supplements, touches on spiritual practice, yoga and Tai-Chi as being beneficial to centering, grounding, and releasing of stress tensions. Basics around healthy diet, good sleep hygiene, hydration as well in the healthy body section. Myers shares some online resources she has created as well.

It is a beginning point of a journey that encourages self-exploration. Not everything everyone will suggest will work for you. Part of the journey of understanding the triggers and precursors to events, working to interrupt and cessation the events, is discovering what works

for you.

It is introspective work. It goes deep, because like Gremlins and Saboteurs in life coaching, the episodes have a benefit to your system. For me it is about efficiency is a word that keeps coming through. I strove so hard to protect my friends and family from vicarious trauma of the work I did, it became so internalized that when something went awry, the efficient way for my body to expel the crud is through convulsion.

There is a fear of what lurks beneath, but also a fear that is created within me and my family as a result of the episodes. In a way, the efficiency my biological system created to protect me, has created a system that can traumatize, doing the direct counter of what I was seeking to avoid.

Even though it may feel on the journey like there was a freedom, it was a false freedom, for instead of integrating and processing the pain. As the glue that held teams together, that ensured everyone was taken care of, in the moments when other crisis would arise I would compartmentalize to come back later, something was missed within my own soul.

The true freedom is going to come by confronting the fear, to have a new release; a new lease on life. It is easy to jump ahead to what comes after, but in the jumping ahead excitement and endorphins can continue to mask the sorrow, can continue to suppress and compress the pain. It is being present in the journey, wrestling with the pain, integrating it into the pilgrimage of my whole self...

Sound Bites & Twitter Ideologues

In human services we have seen many types of ebb and flows of concept for community and personal care. There is always a “silver bullet” that if you just plug this system into your institutions (church, non-profit, government agency) it will solve all ills. This has created a drift where many times the person before you is not seen as a person, or the institution does not want you to see them as a person but rather as a label.

The label can be their diagnosis, or in church-member, adherent, new attendee, visitor, unchurched or seeker. Within constructs of housing it comes down to a coding system of “acuity”. What is missed in many instances is that not one type of healing or place fits all. Rather we have a tool kit, and that is what we use with the person before us, while building relationship, to journey with them to the next steps of life.

In certain Evangelical and/or fundamentalist sects of Christianity at this juncture they would proof text the above. I am not going to do that. I am going to lay my own journey out as a sign post of what happens when a system finally sees you as a person.

Proof Text

The practice of pulling out a sentence or two, or story of sacred text outside of historical, anthropological and textual context. It is used to win arguments by appealing to the ideal of *Sola Scriptura*, but it also allows for the weaponization of scripture as we have seen with the anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ2+, and anti-Feminist movements to name but a few.

Once I had finally achieved the referral into the neurology clinic at the Peter Lougheed Centre of the Calgary General Hospital (PLC), my case was looked at in its complexity. It took the risk of a nurse seeing me beyond symptoms that said one thing, and the Emergency Room Doctor to do the same. It then took the setting aside of ego by my neurologists at PLC to refer me to the Epilepsy Centre knowing what was happening with my mental health, trauma, neurology, and physiology were beyond what they could explore within their context and tool kit.

In some ways, this fits a sound bite out there currently. Trauma Informed Care and Harm Reduction. Why do these pop up? They are terms and practices that can be highly beneficial

for those who serve, and those we serve, or highly detrimental to each.

Unfortunately, even though there are many places that implement these concepts well, to often they have become the “silver bullet” to cure all, and the terms we toss out to show how great we are. Yet in practice (praxis to the Latin lovers) we fall flat. For we do not understand the complexity of the person before us, and more importantly, how that person interacts with the community they broke down in, and the community they seek to be a part of again.

Trauma Informed Care

Creating the courageous safe space for someone who has gone through Adverse Childhood Events, or other traumatic events to come to the point of desiring healing.

It allows us to understand that these past/current traumas shape behaviours, and attitudes. What is also needed to point out however is that it is not to excuse negative behaviours, rather allows in a safe way to create a space with low tolerances for negative behaviours, and high expectations. Changing the outward, while the interior person decides whether or not to seek out the long winding journey of healing.

Unfortunately Trauma Informed Care, becomes an excuse for negative behaviours. It also becomes on the employer side an excuse for vicarious trauma. See, the thing many don't understand is that trauma can be like a contagious cancer. The original individual who is hurting, then intentional or not can injure others and that ripple does not always start within the institutional construct for it ripples outwards into the staff's life and connections as well.

This is the other challenge. For many years the abstinence model was used for everything from sex to addiction. It was a growth from the Protestant Puritanism, and Roman Catholic Catechism. The concept that one can just white knuckle through what are essentially moral lapses in character and by doing this well be healthy.

The challenge is that addiction is a symptom. It is a symptom of a broken social network, and a broken soul. There is usually underlying traumas and abuses that the person is seeking to numb. Simply abstaining does not cure. Having said that however, for those that have found success and healing in 12 step groups and other abstinence based programs, it is usually due to the community of support, and a broader

network of connecting to a new healthier social supports. I do not hold abstinence based anything is wrong. It is part of the spectrum hence when I was an active youth pastor we would talk about human sexuality and sex on a spectrum. I would talk about the value you have for your own *Imageo Dei*.

Imageo Dei

Latin means Image Bearer or Image of God. It is the teaching from the ancient creation poem in the Hebrew Bible's first chapter of the book of Genesis. It states humanity is made in the image of God. So look around wherever you are reading this book, pretty awesome and diverse image eh?

Why then would I state that there was a silver bullet for addiction? What about those that abstinence did not work? Perhaps whatever the cause for the addiction symptom was needed more that simple healthy community.

This is where harm reduction comes into play. It is a simple concept really, and it is centered on the pacing of the person with professional supports.

Harm Reduction

Actively working to reduce usage of addictive substance for holistic health. The goal being eventual sobriety, and dealing with what causes the addiction.

There are many psychological and physiological concepts within Harm Reduction. It is working with things of the many styles of mindfulness, shifting and re-wiring thought patterns, addiction replacement, changing habits.

Sadly, where abstinence done wrong is nothing more than shaming an individual back into relapse or leaving Harm Reduction done wrong becomes Harm Acceptance where we simply create cycles of high usage. Yes, in Harm Reduction there needs to be work when one is not ready yet to change in simply keeping them healthy and alive, but one needs to ask where this should happen and how to work with them in those moments to create courageous space for steps into contemplation and action of reducing harm to themselves.

As the healing progresses though in the spectrum what needs to be addressed aside from the interior causes, is what is known as Circles of Support.

These are the folks that support you. There are professionals (paid to be in your life) and personal (friends, family, volunteers, etc.). It is a unique activity to mind map this out with you at the centre and see how balanced your life is. The goal is for personal to eventually outgrow professional as you progress through healing.

It would've been easy for neurology to continue adding to a cocktail of medications to try and control my seizures. Instead they looked at the whole person before them, and chose a step to see what could actually be done to address all aspects of what was happening to me.

That was another huge referral. It also speaks to me why I was able to get to the true diagnosis and healing journey within 2.5 years, as opposed to 20ish years. Sometimes, it is simply the person before you that needs to be seen and heard.

To practice seeing the other, I have learned to take a story from the Bible, and re-write it from the perspective of characters involved in it. Take special attention to characters views you never considered or those characters you did not like. Good one to start with is David & Bathsheba.

Homecoming

One of my spiritual directors with the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, Stuart Schlegel gifted me with his own spiritual anthropological memoir *Wisdom from a Rainforest: The Spiritual Journey of an Anthropologist* (2003). The story was of his time with the Teduray, and from that came this concept of bad gall bladder that I have used many times in my teaching.

The idea is that we are interconnected, and interdependent that each decision creates ripples. Within this tribal nation, an act of harm or dishonesty (i.e. adultery) was seen as the individual having a bad gall bladder. The acts impacted them, but the ripples out from it affected the community as a whole. Like a bad gall bladder, the one creating the ripples had to be removed until they were ready to reconcile and heal.

This speaks to my spiritual journey. Within the confines I also note my vocations as professor, writer, speaker, minister and within the homeless sector. It understands the importance of relationship, boundaries and reconciliation. It also understands that many will not understand when they choose to use you as the target to

vent their own anger. That is being the bad gall bladder, and not takes the steps to heal. This was the journey my family would go through in finding a spiritual place to belong.

We would traverse the spectrum of Christianity, those churches in the throes of the grieving cycle of the end of Christendom, but not wanting to let the new come in and let go of the old. It was found within metaphysical to Unitarian to conservative to progressive spiritual communities.

It did not matter if the religious centres still used their roots in the teaching of Brother Jesus, the leaders and ministers that refused healing; refused to deal with their own sludge showed that they were willing to target the least of these as a dodge of their own personal responsibility for holistic health. Whether it was kicking my son out of the Santa Clause service for being too boisterous, or telling my wife her and the kids were welcome at church, but I was no longer welcome for offering a bible study in our home that was the negative gambit (and there are many more stories of pain) to a religious social club that did not want to deal with bullying so scape goat our children.

We found grounding in Unity of Calgary, but distance is a challenge. There is something

about the local congregation one can walk to. Within my journey of seizures we had settled into a United Church congregation (and yes I know I should have seen the red flags but did not). It drove my PTSD and PNES like nothing else, and we were at a loss for 18 months as to why. Over the summer before being in observation we didn't make it to church as often due this or that, and many seizures dissipated. It was in discussion with Shawna while checking in for observation we looked back and noted the downturn was in conjunction with not attending.



¹

As well, something else had happened during this time.

Something that if someone had told me earlier I would have chuckled at, but over the summer of 2018 my daughter, Justina continued a family tradition. She was a part of the Vacation Bible School program at Centennial Presbyterian Church,

¹ Picture of Justina at Centennial's 2018 VBS celebration, the sheep was made during craft time.

same as I was as a child. It was free, which actually fit with my belief around church I was raised with that it should be the one place you can go and not have to worry about how much was in your wallet.

It is funny, not ha-ha, more odd how fixated in the waning days (or post-funeral?) of Christendom how fixated churches have become on the budget sheet? I am sure they always were concerns around money, but let's be honest between just us, if anything wants my money the question raised is what investment do I have in it?

To be more blunt what does being a part of this religious community give to my family's well-being than simply taking in a family movie at the theatre or a hockey game? Sadly, many churches fixate more on the stewardship campaign (the money in the offering plate) than how to aid in the spiritual formation of those who come through their doors.

We use many words to dodge the hard questions. We speak of being seeker friendly, or the unchurched and how due to that we cannot go "church". What is missing in these conversations is the admission of our own cultural fear of offense. It is because we do tend to be known by the lowest common extremist

denominator for any group we are a member of. Ask what a Christian is and likely the answer will be one who hates (fill in group here) or is fixated on the “Rapture”.

Rapture

A mainstream evangelical heresy proof texted through 1 Thessalonians 4 or 2 Thessalonians 2. These texts were misinterpreted and became ingrained in a movement that was codified with the Scofield Study Bible, and then in the 1990’s to 2000’s the Left Behind books series. The Book of Revelation was then twisted within this theological heresy to proof text it further.

I believe I have been to about three post Rapture parties after the date passed and everyone was still here. It is bad fantastical fiction, but what it does it allows for a breadth filled religion, not a depth. For the question of growth needs to be is it about numbers in the pews, or discipleship?

For my years in building ministries what I can tell you is simply that it can be both. As you work and journey with folks regardless of where they arrive at the community from. The journey is not simply indoctrination, rather it is wrestling with sacred texts, spirituality, how it applies to life, and coming out to answer the

question, “Why do I hold these beliefs?” Being unable to answer that question, my hunch, is why very few indoctrinated in Christendom hold to their faith while in post-secondary, or the first life loss. It is also that when one can answer this question they know that you do not always have to be happy and upbeat to be a believer. Rather you can have emotions and engage in life.

It did not make me popular as the pastor teaching confirmation with parents as I would not force a child to make a declaration or take the sacrament. What I would promise the person is that enter the 6 weeks, and at the end if you do not want to be a part of confirmation I will lay it out so your parents could understand.

Sacrament

An outward sign of belief where the mystery of the Holy enters into our lives.

These are such things as ordination; anointing of the sick; reconciliation; marriage; Communion; Baptism; Confirmation.

My life of ministry had broken down to discovery, questing, and relationships. It was the sign that had us settle back into Centennial, for the simple handing of a business card at the Vacation Bible School celebration and the minister saying to call him for coffee. The

simplest acts of pastoral care that which has been lost in the current church where we are concerned with numbers whether it is attendance in the pews, Sunday School, Youth Group, offering, etc. in chasing the spreadsheet of success we miss the mark on what church is.

The deepest question to be asked, what does it mean to be church?

It is in this context, that I would have opportunities while I waited for the first level of psychological treatment, and during to reconnect with some passions. Being a part of a Men's Breakfast and being able to teach on mental health and contemplative prayer in these gatherings.

As well as the challenge of being the Grief Support Co-ordinator and teaching about the grief cycle that comes in life with each change. How we can gather to understand what is happening within ourselves and our neighbour. These conversations also brought out discussion on self-care. At the core self-care is simple, it is not prescriptive and text book. Rather it understands ourselves, and truly what refuels us. The trick is to make sure we make time for those relationships and hobbies that fuel us back up.

In my journey, the PNES had set in because I was so numb I had lost enjoyment of that which renewed me. My mind and body so needed a way out to save my life, it had left me unable to fully engage with my family, friends and hobbies as I had before.

How do we be church?

Stay with the flow as we get back to February 14, 2019 and my first visit with the psychologist for my PNES. The journey was winding though that got me there. It started with exploration, and learning. Learning centered on what it meant to love my neighbour. The question posed in the gospel stories that led Jesus to repeat the Shema that opened this book, but then had social gospel ministers in Canada, such as J.S. Woodsworth, write books about who is my neighbour?

This was the question that I had centered my life on. It brought a lens to reading any holy scripture of any religion. It brought the heart to any spiritual practice in inter-faith or ecumenical settings as I learned and formed my spirit. As a student taking on the practices that made sense for my own journey, resonated and renewed, and letting that which did not fall away and be left behind.

From reading one would assume I hate the church. This is not true, I have a strong dislike for what the church trapped in the denial of the demise of Christendom has become. I yearn for the blessed community that one would read of

within the Canonical and Gnostic Gospels. The synergy of these types of writings is found in the newest gospel found in the Christian (New) Testament in the Holy Bible. It is the fourth book, called John, after the writer. There are two-fold reasons for this gospel resonating aside from it being a very metaphysical and philosophical text.

1. The Sacrament of Service. Within the recording near the end of the Last Supper story, communion the shared meal which many will call Communion or Eucharist is shared. The major highlight though that those that existed historically in the community John founded was this sacrament of service. It is the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. A practical thing with the dust and grime of the ancient Mediterranean world, but one not undertaken by the teacher. Jesus lived the commandment of love.
2. The character known only as the Beloved Disciple. I encourage anyone to get a Bible, go to the Gospel of John, cross out Beloved Disciple and replace it with your own name.

Now read this passage, it is when Jesus is being executed on the cross for giving hope to the hopeless, and belonging to the outcasts.

Jesus at this point had been betrayed but a close friend, denied by a close friend, his other friends had scattered. His mother and the women of his group followed him through kangaroo courts for a state and religious sanctioned lynching of the one that challenged the status quo (The Empire, much like our life supported Christendom and Religious Right today). Beaten, spat on, ridiculed, strip naked, and then crucified as a sign not to stand in non-violent resistance of love and hope.

This is when he speaks (John 19:25-27, English Standard Version):

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman,^[b] here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

The role of the eldest son was to care for the family, Jesus knew his time was up and was

ensuring that the beloved disciple would take care of his Mum, his family, his most precious gifts (and for me, his wife as well). Now put your own name in that passage and read it. That is the love, hope and belonging that should be the church.

We are here for one another. There is no other. We belong because we are. We know we belong because when we are not there we are missed. That is the greatest risk of belonging, that we will grieve the loss. It is why I believe we have lost the simple act of hospitality, community, welcome.

We have lost the ability to live the simple act of simply being with one another through good and bad, just simply doing life together. When I read John, I see a community that is what the church is meant to be in our new (ancient) reality. That is a church where the Sacrament of Service; Sacrament of Eucharist are what binds us.

For why would one bother with an early Sunday morning service, a youth night or a bible study if it was simply to put money in a collection plate or take up a seat? We bother because we belong. The challenge is finding the place we belong, and in that belonging can simply be church.

The space where we Love the Holy, because it flows through us so we can love our neighbour...and don't miss the last piece for it is easily forgotten in the modern "martyr" and "selfless" Christianity...

As yourself.

That's right. Love yourself. It is not selfish, it is expected because you too are an image bearer, and deserve care, compassion and kindness.

Odd-Spirit and Holy Duck

April 2017 my son went into the Alberta Children's Hospital for double foot reconstructions. Yes, it is as bloody painful and arduous as it sounds. It also illuminated the stark contrast between being church, and stewardship church in my mind. The United Church congregation we were at during this time for even though some things were done well, pastoral care and simply being was not among them.

They were an accessible building. Which is truly what accessibility is about, can we get into the building to participate in the events (we shall not discuss washrooms, or their annoyance of locked doors). They were inclusive in that there was space created for people to be a part of with the adults. The children's ministry was amazing not for the spiritual formation that happened, but rather the lady that ran it created a space of belonging for all children.



The larger worship had spots of including. It was what was known as an Affirming congregation. That means they were a member of Affirm United, the United Church's ministry of inclusion for the LGBTTTQ2+ community. My son was a

participant in the service due to his disability and when he slapped his rainbow colour "I won Nana". A simple prayer to his Nana who had passed years earlier when the United Church had forced our family out due to disdain for seeing someone with disabilities in their church.

² October 1, 2017 Leland declaring his win to Nana at Robert McClure United Church's Affirming Ministry service.



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It had also had our family light a candle at Advent, and be a part of the Christmas Pageant that centered on the homeless Holy Family in a Canadian context (and we shall not discuss the amount of triggers with my PTSD with that one).

But during the time when our family would ask for prayers for a friend of Leland's (my son) that had passed away or spoke about my struggles there was no "let's do coffee" or "do you need help with anything" it was very: there are techniques we can teach you to relax, or well you should contact this person to file a complaint.

Why?

³ Ty, Justina and Leland in the Robert McClure 2017 Christmas Pageant, Leland using an adaptive button to share his lines.

Like most churches within the theological spectrum that thrived under Christendom, they did not know how to be church. It is not a slight or a smear. They were seeking their own identity; the down side was the simplest things that show church is different and why it matters were missed.

It is why, when I was at the 2019 Leadership Summit at Alberta Bible College around the Holy Spirit that when a gent at my table labeled us the Odd Ducks it resonated. I had struggled with my time in Bible College and Seminary in my progressive journey. The thing is I learned quite a bit. It shaped me in my ability of public speaking, writing and making relatable those verboten topics.

Verboten topics:

Evolution, Science, social justice, spiritual formation, discipleship, inter-generational spiritual formation and education, being pro-choice, pro-equal marriage.

I must have done an okaleedokalee job with these topics as I received two honorary doctorates, one in Metaphysics and one in Divinity.

It was over these few days though that a sense of peace came into me with this part of my past. It is part of the healing process; having done the work up to this point in slowing my seizures had helped immensely. But it was more; it was about simply being church together. Wrestling with tough subjects, and openly discussing that which I had always been chastised in the past for talking about.

Also, as I had spent this time on Long Term Disability stating a sabbatical to the religious circles, there was a Holy Spirit humbling where I went for broke and by breakfast of day two was openly sharing my journey and struggles. I was expecting to be attacked, it is what I had come to know in religious circles, but my life and ministry up to that point was affirmed. What was even more affirmed was taking this time to heal, and then the Holy Spirit once more, folks started talking about contacting them after healing for they were church planters or pastors of this church that may have a place.

Humbling, serenity, peace, belonging in unexpected places but a blessing as it is funny, Alberta Bible College is what I chose to attend when I first got the call to ministry because it is the place I had seen on car rides out to my Nan and Granddad's house. Now I knew why I had been guided there.

The weekend was a great conversation as well, as it resonated with my heart on discussions around the sidelining and reclaiming of the Holy Spirit. Another piece that had been missing in my journey, not the Holy Spirit, but that I was heavily reliant on this Holy Breath that bonded creation together and was why I held a different soul point of view on how church would thrive and survive. The Stone-Campbell movement had come out of Presbyterianism in the 19th Century America, they are collectively known as the Restoration Movement. Google it if you are a church history geek like me, if not, just know that they were focused on that which could be verified through the text of the Holy Bible alone.

It led to a sidelining of the Holy Spirit to not being active in the day to day, here and now, officially, but only as an activity of a time a place with the earliest disciples and apostles of the Christian (New) Testament. Bible Deism is the official term, this idea that you can only know of the Holy Spirit through the Bible.

Anyways, the conference's speaker, C. Leonard Allen is an academic on the topic from an American University. He was the guide for our learning and discussion. It was the difference

between the official beliefs and praxis once more.

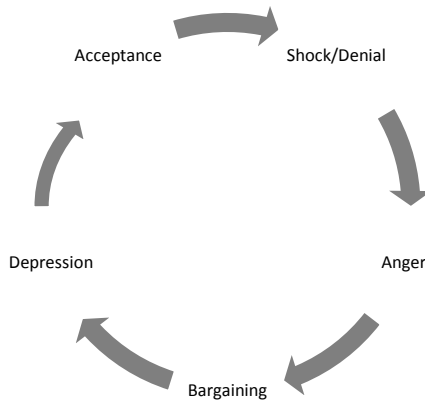
The tension I felt while having served in the mosaic of churchdom. Beliefs espoused, but praxis out of sync; a spiritual form of Cognitive Dissonance.

Cognitive Dissonance

The psychological theory of beliefs and practice of an individual being out of sync.

This cognitive dissonance is being corrected with the end of Christendom, and the renewal of authentic community. The renewed authenticity will also let those within the broader community begin to see church as a soul of a community, the hate that is being spewed as many of the old guard is trapped in the denial and anger stages of grief, will be silenced.

Kubler-Ross's 5 Stages of Grief:

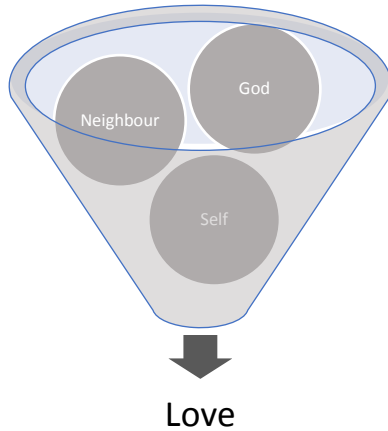


As you can see with the flow, one can move through any and all cycles. It is not a simple circle, but at any point once can cross-cross to other stages. While some are trapped within the denial, shock or anger; there are many that are attempting to bargain. These are the communities you will notice are seeking the silver bullet program that will fill the building and bring in the money. They are not asking the deep spiritual questions; rather they are fixated on the breadth of old Christendom.

There are then those that are in the last gasps of the life cycle of their congregation and are within a depression. Simply frozen not able to fathom what comes next.

At this point, I have to ask, what parallels between the “Body of Christ” healing journey, and your own life are you seeing? What shock/denial, anger, bargaining, and/or depression do you need to be healed from to accept where you are now?

See, acceptance may not be the end of the change cycle. What I thought you said we were exploring grief? Yes, but every change in life, minor or major takes us through the cycle of grief whether we are conscious to it or not. Coming into acceptance does not mean that is where we stay. For being in acceptance may mean we are now ready for the next steps of reconciliation and healing. Whether it is extending love of neighbour, or love of self, or the beautiful interdependent flow of the three fold love commandment:



It is also mooshed together. This is an expansion on the *Imago Dei* for it is truly Trinitarian. Trin-whatsiin? Trinitarian is a thesaurus word from source word Trinity that is not a word found in the Bible. Trinity as a concept is found within the text and experience of the Holy Mystery that is in, through and connecting everything. It is about God-Jesus-Spirit. Three persons/functions-one being, and trust me just look at creation this is possible. Two-Spirited or Trans individuals. The apple. Heck, even you, I am sure there is more than one function you have in your life. It is not that difficult to wrap you brain around, it is harder to wrap your heart around. See, God, is the mega, everything, immersive and pervasive source of all Love.

Jesus, showed us it is possible, lived and died to shake up the establishment, and then the cosmos give the biggest finger to the establishment possible with him coming back. It is all bound together by the Power of Love of the Holy Spirit. That is the bedrock of community.

Of course, there was dissonance within Christendom, when it was a subtle compulsion and pressures to be a part of a church for business or political means. The Holy Spirit was not necessary, it was not necessary to go deep, or to worry about discipleship, because well, there was a steady stream of folks through. However, where it has left us is with generations not engaging anymore because what you got from church you can get from a political party, volunteering, a book group, writer's group, or sports league. I know, Christendom church was not what I experienced in my Vacation Bible School, or simple teachings by my Mum and Nan. It was living your beliefs.

This is why I struggled against the church when I served in it. I was about being something different, and for many it was scary, because it meant their children, youth and young adults were coming home with faith questions that the parents had never wrestled with. The fear was, what do I do if the faith is real and not simply a duty? There was more of an acceptance that

their children would simply stop going, than actually engage.

Let that sink in. What does your heart say?

For I am simply an Odd Duck in this world, trying to live through the Spirit to build community; where I fell down was in the fact that I forgot the lynchpin of the first two pieces of love, it was there for God and Neighbour...

But I did not love myself by the time my brain and body took me out.

But I never lost hope, mostly because friends and family would not let me.



4

⁴ Photo by Rev. Jin Woo Kim at coffee time at Centennial, Leland is signing “eat”.

Hope in a Psychologists Office

“I failed; I did not make a difference.”

*-My personal sound track entering into therapy
on Feb. 14, 2019.*

One needs to be open for therapy to work. That is they need to be ready for it. As my diagnosis was rolled out finally in November 2018 following my stay in observation, there was release but also new stressors. What did this Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES) mean? Epilepsy being off the table was nice, but my base understanding was that PNES was all the concerns of Epilepsy though without the ability for medication to control. My wife, Shawna, had already spent two years stressing what ifs, and the fears that come with Epilepsy. Our son has constant Epileptic brain activity. We are quite aware of the brain's ability due to

these misfires to simply cease, and the sudden death that can come.

It did not help in the intervening between diagnosis and first meeting with psychotherapy that I took two major falls (the third would come later during the 2019 Alberta Provincial Election). My body was running on heightened fight or freeze scenarios, and it was not a freedom or efficiency for it exacerbated my wife's own anxieties and fears. This would become apparent as healing journeys continue and some stress would leave her body.

But before we get to that, there is an intervening period where now my body and mind were clear from the Keppra I wanted to try and get back further to normal. Throughout this journey I had used my writing and reading as a bench mark for if I was having good or bad days. Unfortunately my writing and reading were huge struggles as my brain was fogged and bounced around. It also did not help that the netbook I had been using for years was physically breaking down, and data wise as well which did not make writing easy on the occasions my brain was fogless for a spell.

The Power of Writing Story

There is a belief that something good must come out of anything bad or askew. It is something I

hold to, and my own healing would be a nice good thing, but there was more. I know the stigma in spiritual and religious circles around mental health, hell, we even had a family friend who purports to be a mental health expert that tried to feed my wife the line I must be faking the seizures for PTSD did not do that to a person. It was a good feeling to have confirmed what I had been pointing to throughout this journey, that yes it did.

It came to me, as I had started to do some online work for my Dad, and his wife's, museum project in Countess, AB. I would take on managing the Facebook page (and eventually the online paper Countess Chronicle).



5

⁵ The newspaper office on the historic main street of Countess, AB

This also led to an exploration of the area's history, which rekindled an interest I had in Canadian history. The challenge being my netbook, this is where the frankensteined computer comes in. A laptop whose screen had burst in a van in the cold with another monitor that led us needing to set up a table and work space for me in our home.

It was when this happened that my subconscious started processing a career that had no "space" for me. That is I very rarely had my own office, it was always shared or non-existent. That is, with everything I would encounter in the course of a day, there was no space that was mine to go and decompress or primal scream as the case may be.

Through rekindling an interest in history, and knowing my referral for PNES therapy was in the hopper my heart led me to finally tackle a project I had on the far back burner since 2003. That is exploring my Grandma Ragan's journals and turning her story into something that could help others. It was two fold, first I wanted to read the journals to understand the traumas of the past she had dutifully recorded because if I was entering into therapy for my million kilometer tune up, I might as well have it all on the table. The other being it gave me a chance to pause and reflect on my own journey. The

broader questions were to seek to understand my family as I knew and discovered to know them, but also as to where I was.⁶

The space and computer worked over time to aid in the renewing of my brain. It laid more groundwork of preparation for what was to come after my intake on February 14, 2019.

Further along the Diagnosis Train

In undergraduate social psychology one learns of the concept of bystander effect. It is quite simple, it is witnessing a deviant act yet not calling police or interjecting oneself as an interrupting factor. This can be criminal, or extrapolated into social justices issues. At the base level, this is what being a neighbour is about within the teaching from the Gospel of Luke 10:25-37 (English Standard Version):

Gospel of Luke:

It is a book in the Christian (New Testament); the third to be exact. It borrows from stories in Mark, and other lost sources to antiquity. Luke, by trade was a physician; he travelled with the most famous post-Resurrection Apostle, Paul for a bit until they tiffed. He set out with the

⁶ For more on this journey I direct you to my 2019 book, Soul Ripples (Bookstand Publishing).

Gospel of Luke, and its sequel, Acts of the Apostle, to lay out a history of the Jesus Movement.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a story in response to the question out of the Shema, who is my neighbour? The Samaritans were viewed as traitors in ancient Israel for they were Israelites that inter-married with those that took them into exile thousands of years previous.

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other

side.³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii^[a] and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Those expected to be holy and loving refused to offer aid for fear of "desecrating their holiness", well the one that everyone tossed aside, acted with mercy. Brother Jesus did not force the answer, he shared the story and then questioned the questioners, and even they could not say but had to admit the one that showed mercy. The one whose societal labels would have not allowed for this to happen with, or to be uplifted, yet he was the one that lived out the Love Commands. What was the response of Brother Jesus to this? Do likewise.

This is what my life of ministry up until I skidded out had been based upon. Seeking out, figuring out the answer of who is my neighbour, and how to do likewise. It led me to see the person before me, not the funding or coding, simply the person. It meant that I would do what needed to be done.

My body and brain conspired to offer me an out when the accumulation became too much. On February 14, 2019 I would begin the healing journey.

In the first session, I was officially diagnosed with Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures which was the manifestation of a Conversion Disorder.

Conversion Disorder

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V it is one or more symptoms of altered voluntary motor or sensory function. ... The symptom or deficit causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning or warrants medical evaluation.

The Conversion Disorder manifested as the PNES. This is what made and makes my Post Traumatic Stress Disorder atypical. Instead of high anxiety and depression with the other

symptoms, I would simply dissociate through the PNES.

Dissociation is disconnecting from the present; from surroundings can stop the trauma memories and lower fear, anxiety and shame. It can happen within the traumatic event, or when triggered later about the traumatic event.

With the diagnosis laid out on the table, the framework for the healing journey began to fill in. First steps, was learning what these meant for how I was currently experiencing life. The other piece was to get back to experiencing life. This step in the journey was about managing or ending the Conversion Disorder dissociation in the form of Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures.

The work was about slowly becoming aware of what triggered the episodes. The work of body scans, breathing, mindfulness, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy techniques that include thought converters. It was about not just unpacking and experiencing negative emotions, but experiencing the spectrum of emotions.

These would come later; the first step was awareness of the episodes. What I physically and emotionally was feeling and possibly

thinking before they set in or during so that I could interrupt or stop.

March 16, 2019 just over a month of doing the work I would stop my first seizure. We were driving to south Calgary area of Midnapore to drop my daughter off for a sleep over with her friend. It was the end of town my Great Uncle Red and Great Aunty Dolly lived in when they were alive. I felt the sharp head pain, and then my eye begin to twitch. I started to do meditative breathing and a body scan.

It came through I needed to release anger I was holding towards my Great Uncle for what I perceived his role in my family schism from childhood was.⁷ In the moment of emotions thoughts, what came about was peace. That sounds weird from almost full blown seizure to peace, but it was the work of understanding even if he had spoken what was true it would have just led to fewer relatives in my life at that moment.

There was also over time of using the body scans that I would reduce the physical pain I lived with from what would usually be a 10-15 on a ten point scale of pain, down to a 1-3. It was done by listening to my body, and tying it

⁷ For the full story on the schism and healing, I refer you to *Soul Ripples* (2019, Bookstand Publishing).

into the emotions that I was not allowing myself to feel. The hardest part of the body scan was the thought portion. My brain was still protecting me from the memories; it was through a concrete wall with some cracks and what I would visualize as green energy or flame sparking through.

Over the next three months, my brain would release what it would deem safe memories for me to process and heal from. The work with the thought converter would aid this work as well.

What is a thought converter you ask? It is a CBT practice of dissecting the thought, really boiling down through the experience to what the “hot thought” is. That is the trigger thought if you will, then working with that to come to a balanced outlook, and on either side of the work looking at what emotions are felt and rating them. It was and is useful, same as varied breathing techniques, body scans, and journaling in understanding who I am within my own skin.

It is a journey that brings up challenging emotions. With how emotionally numb I was upon entering into this step of healing, the onslaught on normalized emotions is physically exhausting. But it is a good exhaustion.

As the emotional work would set in, there would be three setbacks. The first two were the insurance provider of my long term disability from employer would change workers on me. The new worker would contact me, and then be late for phone appointments and disrespectfully schluff it off. Within one week after three weeks episode three I would spin out with three seizures per contact for a total of six.

Then on April 9, 2019 around 4 a.m. my body would react to a negative election experience. The evening of April 8 we had taken our children to the candidates' forum in our area, and they had experienced a hostile climate of threats and bullying from a candidate and party. I had spoken with the media about these events, and nothing I could do would burn off the negative and the pain. I love sharing my passions with my children, and when those passions produce harm, it leaves you feeling as a failure as a father. This was my third fall seizure.

Religion and politics have become subjects not discussed in polite company. It has created a world where we can demonize, and extremist populism on all fronts takes hold. It creates space where we cannot have collective vision. It is wrong, my life and ministry have these

intertwined as simply doing life for a better community and world.

It had become such a toxic landscape in my city and province in 2019 that my children were attacked and I had now suffered my third fall seizure. It truly was darkest before the dawn, eh?

Interlude:

What are we teaching our Children?

It is something I have pondered throughout my journey. Those younger, the next and now leaders; what are we constantly teaching them? Do we teach them their inherent worth? This is more than simply words spouted towards them; it is the actions of those around us, and what they see. It is not simply do as I say; rather it is they will do as we do. So how do we act? What is the current Meta narrative of our world?

In Calgary, AB 2019 a Nine-year old girl was bullied so badly in her Calgary Board of Education public school she took her own life. 2-0-1-9. The Board's response, we investigated nothing to see here. Bullocks. There is multiple stories that may not have ended with a taken child's life, but of the board, principals and teachers turning a blind eye. Nothing to see, don't rock the boat. It is the anti-thesis of the WE Day movement, World Youth Day and Challenge Days. We LET BULLIES WIN!! And when it is called out, our "managers" (we have a leadership/statesperson deficit) do everything to deflect, and cover up.

But why do our children act this way?

This is a time to quote former Premier Jim Prentice:

"Albertans (*and all world citizens-my add*) need to take a hard look in the mirror."

Why? We have created a world where anger and hate (white supremacist, Alt-Right, Fascists, and Extremists of all stripes) are courted by political parties to gain and hold power. When in the world of social media you are censored for hate speech, it is an infringement on your rights of freedom of speech. Nope, sorry, non-starter: hate is hate. I don't care if the bully has cloaked it in Conservative or Liberal rhetoric, in Sikh, Islam and Christian Theology, it is hate. It needs to be called out and shut down.

In 2019 Alberta on April 16, 2019 we showed our children bullies win and that truly, the ends justify the means. No, this isn't just heaping on the investigation of voter fraud (Both ongoing with Elections Alberta and the RCMP) with the UCP (United Conservative Party). The caught in picture and/or video of folks who would steal/vandalize opponents signs, the bullying of local citizens at candidate debates, and the attack/smear ads against those who were

running against. It is also pointing out that the Government seeking re-election of the New Democratic Party which should have been campaigning on their record and their ideas, launched pre-writ drop on the low road with their own attack ads (yes it was using candidates' own words and actions, but still negative); on the attack of Jason Kenney, which was a whistle to their own base as those that had issue with these character items of Kenney had already decided not to support him and the UCP based on that.

Both our Governing Party and the Loyal Opposition went low. The conglomerated media and social media allowed and cheered it on. Within the world of algorithms it is infinitely easy to never have to look critically at your own or another's point of view for your feeds will only ever bring you what you believe. When the other parties attempted to raise policies of vision, and debate they were shut out and belittled (much like the other two were doing with one another). Parties like the Greens, Alberta Liberals and Alberta Party that should have elected MLA's-- the fear and anger machine of entrenched ideology within this historic voter turnout (64% officially, highest turnout since 1982) delivered us the anger machine Legislature.

That is two parties, their roles reversed. Is this peace, order and good governance as our Constitution Act, 1982 promises? Or is it a province within the stages of grieving trapped in the denial and anger phases unwilling to let go of what was, and discover what is to come and live into it, support one another in rebuilding and renewing. A statesperson or leader with a vision would cast it-- unfortunately we got angry yelling middle managers quibbling over a budget line and seeing citizens only as a number, not as the person before them. Two parties, unwilling to admit that a province needs to heal; instead they stoke the anger and denial to hold to or win power. They become the bully.

Our children see that bullies win.

It is exacerbated more in the USA under President Trump, and yes I have been around the USA a bit and have seen the divided community. It is one of the things that I am intrigued by Marianne Williamson running for President. Anyone can win in 2020, but someone entering the race to change the tone of discourse is always a good thing. I did pick up her book from our local library, *Politics of Love* (2019) and once read will post a reflection.

But back to Canada... we also show that there is no need to respect one another, we can belittle. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, the Conservative Party of Canada, has shown this in Parliament's Question Period recently where they refuse to refer to our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as Prime Minister; instead it is Liberal Party Leader. Sorry gents and ladies, whether you like the outcome of 2015 or not, he is the office holder and as such deserves respect for that. If anyone had done this to PM Harper when he was in Question Period the media would be all over it. Instead the base swells with pride and cheers, wears shirts and waves signs calling for our Prime Minister to be hung for treason (which shows an understanding of Canadian Law at least, for treason and cattle rustling are the only two offences that can still carry the death penalty). But hyperbolic anger theatre is the norm. Denigrating the other from personhood to hate that leads to a guillotine being brought to an anti-populist Premier Ford rally in Ontario.

If this is free speech, I am glad in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms Canada has Freedom of Expression, and it is time the RCMP and local police started enforcing that differential. It is all used to create this atmosphere that you vote against something, not for something. You

choose lesser evils, and if you refuse the dichotomous narrative then you are an "idiot", and will not be able to stop the other.

Any wonder why voter turn outs are so low. Yes, 64% though historic is bloody low. Any wonder why we have an increase in bullying.

Extremism exists across spectrum and theologies. It is disgusting, and needs to be called out. Not covered up, not excused, or at worse accepted. It needs to be called out, and exorcised like a demon in the Exorcist movie-pea soup and all.

But we have glimmers of hope. Thankfully; in a recent Abacus poll on the upcoming Federal election, 4000 Canadians were interviewed. Yes, I realize I dislike polls and 4000 is a small sample size, but hey you work with what you got for hope. Of those questioned 40% were in support of the fifth place party in our House of Commons, the Green Party of Canada. Why is this sign of Hope? It shows that people are thinking beyond the usual dichotomy in the Canadian mind for Federal governance of Liberal-Conservative. It also shows that the usual protest vote of Bloc Quebecois or conscience vote of New Democrat is not resonating. Could the old parties be being

rejected? Could new ones get a kick of the tires and a spin for 4 years in October? Only if conviction is held to vote for what one believes in, not out of fear against stopping something. Nothing has ever been stopped or ended by undermining or selling out one's own inherent values.

On this too, I have to touch on the Prince Edward Island provincial election. True the projected Green government did not happen. But let's look at it. In the waning days of the election sadly, a candidate for the Greens and their son lost their lives in a canoeing accident. All the parties ceased campaigning for the remainder of the election. Class. Hope.

On election night, all the leaders were together from what I could see from the media feeds, and hugged after the results (yes older men). It is a minority government, with the Progressive Conservative Party being the government, but the Greens are the official opposition. Hope. Something has changed. Also the PC government not joining the anger train of the mainland populist movements speaking of listening to citizens. Hope.

Listening. Hearing. Acting on behalf of another.

Things that breed hope:

Seeing others, as neighbour, as a person.

And then reflecting, even in opposition life,
what matters most in the discourse? What is the
end that is truly supposed to be and do the ends
really justify any means possible?

The now and future leaders learn behaviours by
how their adults (parents, extended family,
neighbours, elders) behave, not by what we say.

What do your actions teach?

Are you creating ripples of hate or HOPE?

Soul Psalms

For those who are not familiar with the Hebrew Bible-Christian Testament, a Psalm is a song or poem. It is a collection of 150 that run the gambit of emotions and situations for people and the Nation of Israel on their faith journey with the Holy Mystery.

Soul Psalms are a poetic expression of my own journey of healing.

Part of the work with Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mindfulness practice of a body scan where you get in touch with your physical self, emotions and thoughts.

Out of those, as the tears of healing flow:

Soul Psalms.

The journey is the healing.

The destination is the new book of your life.

What follows are some of these psalms of healing.

Smell Cold

It has a smell,
many do not realize it
or feel it
whether dry or wet
cold has a smell.
Whether you are home,
or awaiting a mat in shelter
huddled under a bridge,
hoping someone will bring a blanket or a coffee
not to be rousted by the cops
There's a smell
as you numb soul pain,
melting dumpster fines
records and polish
liquor pours off to drink
numbing becomes hallucinations
Cold no longer in mind
but the body freeze burns
Overdoses
seize
fight
hug
love
outreach worker's loving hand
warm clothes
number called
safe standing room only in sanctuary
different smells of many seeking
LIFE

the smell of cold
left outside.

Opioid Eyes

In the road to recovery from Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures it is taking control of your thoughts, emotions, and body. It is learning what lies beneath. The PTSD work can be done before or after, it makes most sense for me after so I do not seize throughout. Thoughts lead to memories, memories lead to seizures. Unless the seizures have slowed and a 15 hour marathon sleep of dream forgiveness work takes hold.

The eyes
gateway to the soul
windows that reflect
joy or pain
hate or humiliation
or nothingness
Eyes that used to be curious
and mischievous fun
a sidekick that called me “bobo” when young
What happened?
What pain was missed?
That brought you into my world
Left me powerless
red tape and rules
why did I follow, and not help
Could I have helped?

Would it have healed?
Those mornings and days
seeing you
eyes vacant
staring through my soul
burning a hole
My left hand trembles
my voice cracks
between buildings as a bystander aided
mitigating their pain and fear
as your eyes
stared through me,
Saying,
“Who are you?”
Haunted too long for that which I could not
control
Wishing a better way
Knowing lost in the now is not lost forever
a path back you will find.
A better way to deal with the pain.
I am sorry,
I could not be the helper you needed.
But tonight, I simply, must release
and forgive myself...
as tears soak through...
for not being enough for many,
I loved.

A Daddy's Tears

A Psalm of Sorrow

In honour of all those beautiful angels that did not soar long enough.

Tonight you were sick,
you cuddled in as we watched hockey,
eyes watering, nose running into my clothes.
Times a Daddy knows just to hold until the cold
passes.

Other times the watery eyes are tears of pain
and loss.

Bullocks to the religious saying "it's God's
Plan" or

"God needed your friends more than you." or
other such hogwash.

A non-descript white envelope from a school
board that sees you and your buds

As nothing more than numbers. Incomplete.

Neuro-interruptus. Not P.C. so they hide behind
coding.

But you know.

Too many times, buds were there, then no more.

On your first day of Junior High you looked for
them,

Hope in your blue eyes they would be there.

Tonight tears heal.

As I recall holding you.

Your fists beating my chest.

Ugly cries and screams into my chest.

"Why Daddy does God take my buddies?"

There is no answer son.
Anyone that says there is... lies or worse...
Too young for so much pain.
Being your Dad,
you call me Superman.
All I can do is hug.
Thankfully tonight, just a cold.
Hopefully no tears of grief again
in your childhood.

Over 18 classmates have passed away on my young son in his schooling life from Pre-k through Grade 6 (majority was a near monthly white envelope in Grade 5-6) . Our government codes students, since these students are coded as "special needs" , them, their staff, and families (the community) were never given the proper and appropriate crisis and grief counselling the school board is supposed to supply, especially when the principle in the last few years of Grade School is not an ally, and did not want to cause the ripples advocacy takes.

As one continue to deep dive into their emotions, physiology, psychology and spirituality to remove the ingrained psychogenic, one must confront the heart break that were buried in the fight for simple kindness, equality and human dignity for the most precious among us.

Distressed Gratitude

A Psalm of understanding silence in grief

Silence

was the answer when the words were said.
two brothers entrenched on what they say as
truth.

A mother not wanting to say
but writing the story down throughout.
An uncle who becomes like a grandpa,
to fill the void.

What if you had spoken up,
Unhindered by family ties,
not wanting to speak ill of the dead
sharing your first-hand experience of the truth...
Would it have healed at the time,
or simply created bigger rifts...
Perhaps there was wisdom in the silence
to ensure some harmony
until the truth came out of the darkness
into the light.

Wolves in Sheep Skins

*A psalm of grieving upon a parish priest we
knew being arrested for abuse.*

Hadn't felt anything about it for awhile,
The Devil in Jesus boots,
until we rolled by the building

the new spring dust swirling like a dust devil in
the parking lot.
The Mass sung in my soul
The mystery of faith
to share it with my family, so young,
a blessing to be.
Trust given.
To hear of how it had been abused,
demons brought into the light
You didn't get us
but I cry for those you did
And the wounds sliced into soul tissue
still scabbing awaiting scars
Mystery unwound
Thankful for Earthly Angel Matriarchs
Dodged the devil
One more time...
A tear is shed
For those that you harmed.

NMF, NMP

A Psalm that I would dub "the 2 x 4 moment".

Spend a life advocating
Marching, chanting
doing, helping,
Only to be smacked in the face
figuratively and literally
by strangers, friends, and family

With a horrific 6 letter
NMF, NMP

Everyone knows what NIMBY means (not in my backyard). I have come to realize there is another acronym when it comes to advocating for folks. NMFNMP (Not My Family, Not My Problem) = no empathy for #Disabled #MentallyIll #Homeless #LGBTQ2 #SubstanceUsers Think about it #Ableg

8

A shift
a thwack
We say we are one humanity
yet we decry NIMBYism
Or cannot comprehend,
how one can give a damn
about something that does not hit their home
It is simple...
One answers the question,
Who is My Neighbour?
And sees the person's voice in need of
amplification.

Cancer Cross Exorcism

*A Psalm when Gremlins live and breathe as
Toxic Demons in your life. How they can move
from being rooted in, to not needing
forgiveness, simply, burning out like a cancer
cell via radiation. For in Lent, Jesus entered the
wilderness and was tempted, and walked out
knowing what was true...and in Holy Week 30*

⁸ A meme from a social media advocacy site.

*miserly pieces of silver was the price of a
life...showing true value was not monetary or
things, but the value of true family.*

A life coach would think it was a gremlin-
saboteur

The voice in the mind that provides protection
but keeps you trapped in a toxic or negative
situation.

Yet, it wasn't an inside voice.

Or a demonic other worldly presence,

But a living breathing person.

Family not about blood, or DNA

It is about those that pilgrimage with you
and root-bring out the best in you.

Three cackling hens trying to bring down
From attempts at breaking up

Throwing around cult words, but you're the one
that drank a kool-aid

Minions of darkness, coming at you at work, as
you try to help, spreading lies and rumours

Goal to destroy the one that would not play the
games

kow-tow to the drama and insufferablenss,
pettiness, and inhumanity

Attempts grooming access sold for a 1.5 milk
Timmy's

Spewing lies to anyone that would hear
when confronted, the default of your yes being
no, and no being yes

a commandment easily shattered

as with bank accounts that bear another's name
games you played with professionals, ducking
and weaving to avoid accountability
Can't handle seeing her child happy, content,
having discovered voice
Protects the other that verbally and emotionally
attacks children
Can't handle others having attention that should
be hers
The other whose jealousy tries from the other
trifecta angle
Walk away.
To use your religious rhetoric:
adulterer, coveter, liar,
that is a Pharisee, like the ones Brother Jesus
called nest of Vipers
The living epitome of those that systems were
designed to root out

Anger spews venom, wanting to attack the
youngest...
burn away the witch at the stake
Religious language
Holy bull shit, spewed to make her look "holy"
So holy, cannot figure out how to bless her
father's request
the "cult leader" and the children grant his
heart's desire of baptismal waters
Calls selfish when the elder abuser is called out
when they want him in a place of honour at the
patriach's burial.
Hypocrisy. Unrepentant emotional abuse.

Seeing a child as incomplete, only having full
value if he was but “a normal child”
Another, having an unhealthy codependence,
Value wrapped in money and looks.
Not love, hope, faith, joy and peace...
Unable to comprehend
That love binds...
Cancers eat themselves alive
or are radiated to death...
Do not forgive,
do not condone.
Simply release,
like soul sludge from the Chakras;
a demon exorcised
The worst thing for a narcissist dramatic
No longer matter,
Simple indifference as toxicity
symbolically bleeds out on the altar

Catechism

*Two simple ways to be poetic through the
powerfully simple List Poem (yes like a grocery
list can you see the theme)...and for those who
cannot count the beat the Canadian Haiku (2
words, three words, 1 word)...pilgrimage to the
heart of the sacred to rest*

Buddha Christ
Living Breath Love

Sacred
Tibetan Buddhism
Greek & Roman Mythology
Titans
Comic Books
Science Fiction
Fantasy
C.S. Lewis
Tolkien
Pentecostal
TSR
Druidism
Rodenberry
Nature Religions
Paganism
Lucas
Metaphysics
Reformed Judaism
Taoism
Aikido
Tai Chi
Sacred Hoops
Indigenous
Roman Catholic
RCIA
Laughing Yoga
Jesuit
Companions in Mission
Sikh
Hindu
Norse
Mennonite

Anglo-Catholic
Ignatious
Catholic Workers Movement
Yoga
Social Gospels
Rainbow of Baptists
Crystals
Methodists
Congregationalists
Christian & Missionary Alliance
Nazarene
Church of Christ
United
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Charismatic
Universalism
Unity
Christian Church
Ancient Aliens
Church of Christ, Scientist
Unitarian
SETI
Philosophy
Crypto-zoology
Archaeology
Buddhism varied
Primatology
Shinto
Wiccan
Samurai
Egyptian mythology

Celtic lore and myths
Zoroastrianism
Shamanic
Gnosticism
Chakras
Franciscan
Cult of Saints
Freud
Templar
Mandalas
Jung
Freemasons
Martin Buber
Erikson
Numerology
Sisters of Mercy
Fortune tellers
Munay-ki
Palmistry
Communism
Power of Positive Thinking
Dream work
Capitalism
Wayne Dyer
Anglican
Presbyterian
To Boldly Go
Galaxy Here
Call-box
silver chord
feel Minotaur breath
labyrinth

Recycle

When one reflects upon what could be a speed bump in the healing journey, or a rabbit trail back into the darkness that is security of the pain.

Recycle

such a nicer word than relapse

Going along in life

feeling good

Two weeks

Fatigue sure

head fog? Ayup

Weepiness? for sure

Flashbacks? Unfortunately

Yet the seizure was absent

Tonight

curve ball from left

innocuous e-mail

trigger cascade of memories

instead of tears

Mind protect

psychogenic

seize

disassociate

Begin again...

You will not win...

The word that rings in my mind rhymes with

“Duck” and ends with You!

Contributing Factors

To often the refrain for those in human services who ask for help staying emotionally, mentally, spiritually or physically healthy (or all of the Medicine Wheel) is that if you can't keep yourself healthy, it is not the employer's responsibility just get the f' a new job. It is a self-centered take based on the belief we are an independent species...

Interdependence is the truth.

No one has gotten anywhere by themselves.

We do not build our own cars, roads, farm our own food...for a start...

but also...it takes some biological necessities for us to even exist yet alone be birthed.

Why then...

Do we attack those whose hearts are trying to make the world better?

Tears as the lies continue to add to harm.

Just get a church.

Pray.

Have a strong faith.

Get a hobby.

Self-care is up to you.

You can't have coffee hear
your 20 minutes are up

Morning prep before work....

No public spaces,

library closed as early shift.

Public college kicks out anyone they deem “not
looking like they belong”

City Hall, the citizens building, has security

Other spaces spiked, removed seating
work is “mobile”

No space to decompress

to gather thoughts

to release and be healthy

Never mind normalizing of bullying train...

Yet it is up to us to stay healthy.

Us and us alone,

as we journey through the darkness

to aid someone in finding their...

hope...

Home...

If you crash

You are a simple cog,

that can be replaced by less experience,

Cheaper

on the bottom line...

How different would our world be...

If we embraced one another

supported

included...

walked healing...

Contributing Factors

being growth of health

community

and hope...

Not isolation

tearing down

trauma...

What do you contribute?

Anger or hope?

To make a better world...

Tears have flowed today, as seizures have waned for the day, flashbacks coming faster, easily triggered by subtleties. As one ponders, if a better world is awaiting...

15/10

Without realization or with intuition we hide trauma and pain within our body. It becomes a manageable pain then through Tylenol or Advil. It is also an acceptable pain, still emotional or mental pain even within the realm of professionals, insurance providers and employers is still looked upon as stigma, and get over it quickly...or worse... it is your fault because you did not take care of yourself...I did, yet here I scan-Body Scan Mindfulness- to re-attune.

Pain is a 10 point scale

Hidden hurt

in bodily aches

normal became 15

Not wanting to slip

into genetic addiction

stopped OTC pain medications

just learned to plow on through.

Re-attune to the inner you

Numbers tumble

hidden pain and sludge
with no name
released...
numbers tumble
down 10 points...
to simply
beautifully
wonderfully
5
of 10.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep Hygiene is the term used for how to get a restful and renewing night's sleep. It is supposed to be a simple checklist and how to guide, but as with any checklist for humans we are not automatons so discovering what aids you in making your bedroom the rightful sanctuary of sleep and sex.

Keep the bed sacred
only for sex and sleep you say
it will keep the demons away
and the Gremlins at bay
for a time
No t.v.
no caffeine,
no work,

no reading,
no food,
no radio
a fan for white noise if you must
I agree crumbs in bed suck
and a t.v. can cause a lack of rest
as found when mine finally shut down
Creating space to unplug from the world
screens and bings
apps and stats
is what is needed
but what if the white noise
triggers the demons
and unleashes the hounds of hell
that your Gremlins astride?
Then perhaps,
it is about knowing thine own soul
that the melodious radio
lulls you into the deep abide
of peace
and soul newness,
Cleaning the subconscious
so that the conscious
may thrive
and LIVE.

100 years to another strike?

100 years ago

The heart of our country rocked...

For equality

End of worker harassment, unsafe work, and ability of owner to rape female and child workers, end of child labour, living wages, vacations...

To be treated as ...

Humans...

A minister's head was cracked open, and a denomination had to face an ugly truth? Was it the employers' rights or the rights of the worker that mattered?

1919-2019 -Winnipeg General Strike— 100

Years On

Compassion Fatigue.

Burn out.

Pandemics,

Wars.

Extreme emergencies created by government policies

Lack of mental health care

Lack of addiction support

Rampant child and family poverty

Epidemics.

Crack...Meth...Opioids...Fill in Narcotics crisis here to numb the trauma pain

A system breaking under lack of capacity.

A wheel with spokes with no hub
Do more
With less
is the normal cry for human services
no matter the employer
some do better
some do worse
Many say...
The pain goes with the job...can't take it get
out.
Not our job to care for you, your job to care for
you...

Self-care- do yoga, exercise, drink water, pray,
have more faith...
But what about?
It is one size fits all...
you skid out you only have yourself to blame....
Here to help our world
make it better
like in the midst 100 years ago
Well Rev. if you weren't there
you would not be hurt,
and in a cell needing bail...
But no one asks,
what about my neighbour?
And what happens,
when you need to be loved as you have loved
your neighbour...
because your tank is blown out...

Assertive

A Psalm of journeying into the healing of empowerment in one's life. A slight emergence out of the darkness.

Empowered
A new heart is emerging
up through the shards of the old
rose bowl
sludge is burning away
not just being mopped up
to spill once more
Care and advocacy
beyond others
to encounter one's own soul
and holistic being
Light of possibility
Cracking the concrete
green embers
peeking through
the crackling darkness
solid stone
of the sarcophagus of pain
Release
Breathe
Wait
Like an old CD player on a favourite song
hit
Repeat.

Medicine 20/20

*A wonderment if medical staff were allowed to
be curious with patients...*

So long ago,
the anxiety waned
first tour done,
another to begin
mother with cancer
told no big deal, old news
take these pills
they'll calm you too.
Wonder if time had been spent
discussing what was past tense,
and how it affected one's present tense?
A trembling hand
a doctor not wanting to dig
off to drain blood one goes
back the doctor asks no question
no quarter need be given
the answer he states
unequivocally
is one must drink more water...
with hindsight 20/20
one ponders if simply ability
willing
to play at curious
may have scuttled
what was yet to
come undone.

Mum



9

You were our mum
but you were Mum to a whole lot more
any child that came through our door
you would care for.
A listening ear
a hug
Boxing up hand me down clothes
to mail inter-provincially
a pantry stash of food
always willing to help a friend
or a neighbour who just may be a new friend

⁹ My Mum, with a Doctor's buggy display at Countess, AB.

tea was always ready to put on
You fought fiercely for your kids
and grandkids
but held us to standards
of decent civility
humility
neighbourliness
nothing more devastating
than a look of
disappointment upon your face
you were a neat lady
crafty and bakey
simply believing in love, and God.
You taught me the basics
I grew from that rock
Always no more
than a phone call away
for aide
a chat
a laugh
advice...
In the dark days
after the long fight
where your soul never gave quarter
of hope's light
you were weak and weary
cancer teary
it was not cancer that claimed you
but cancer created PTSD
dimmed your light
one final night
I miss you
Your smile

laughter,
I hope as you look down from Heaven today
I am a son you can be
proud of.
From the Grand Tea Party
with Jesus and friends,
now the Nana to your grandson's friends gone to
soon
new light,
new laughter
new stories and adventures...
may the lives lived here
still honour what you taught to be true.

I miss you, Mum.

Lenten End

The Lenten Season officially comes to a close with what is known as the "scourging of the altar" concludes Lent. The betrayal is nigh, and the Good Friday awaits...but let us not skip ahead, but fall back to the week that was...and will be again.

Saturday before the Triumphal entry upon a burrow known as a an ass
A morning of flashbacks uncontrollably cracking through
beating my body like a desert hot wind against skin
cracking skin

letting the pain out
need to put it back in
Wonderful conversations
In workshops around
The Good Grief Journey in to the New
What it means to be church?
Hold the Holy Silence?
Grow circles of Support?
Live through change—as pieces of Grief, pastoral
care.
Holy Spirit things
Make it through
Lost to the wilderness...
Unable to resist
the pain renders through an already ravage
system

Palm Sunday

Some say a Triumphal Entry,
Brother Jesus coming with those cast away from
society on one side of the city
with dying reminders of the oppression of
religion and Empire along the streets.
While Empire celebrated and marched on the
other side,
flexing their muscle to bully and intimidate
Usually waving palms and singing Hosannas,
Folding crosses
and celebrating the Prince of Peace
Rolling through my own entries
Memories physically, emotionally and
spiritually crippling
scant moments of lucid awakensness

before once more returning to fitful sleeps of
thoughts creating
Waking nightmares
That have to be lived once more
what truly is one's own entry of triumph
to sing Hosanna?

Monday's Temple Toss

Human functions of worship
not used to include
but to exclude and bear burden
not to a sacred sanctuary but a money pit
a den of thieves
Jesus causes a stampede and throws tables
chasing away
those that desecrate Holy Love.
Me and Little man,
convalescing,
still trying to get Pandora's demons back into
her box
seeing what will remain to work through.
Nothing creates sacred sanctuary
like a boy and his dad
watching cartoons

Discourse Tuesday

Where Jesus whither's figs, talks with religious
types and the end of oppression...
Body won't let the demons reveal
it tremors with weakness,
still unsure if fully up,
after the recycle of harsh symptoms sans seizure
racked my body

Shrink shows tools
that are of use,
to unpack the thoughts
and bring them to better use
An election goes
the way of awry
and people are left with depression inside
eating fries and sipping coffee
even your friend admits you don't look healthy.
Why won't the demons either pop or go back in
the box?

The constant teariness is most obnox.

Spy Wednesday

Some would call it Holy,
but it is tied to the ending of ideals
and goodness...
of the oppressors plotting the End Game
for a rambling labourer turned rabbi of peace
and love
perhaps a bit on the nose,
but it is a time of sipping coffee and inverting
the game
plotting to build belonging
by shattering oppressive stereotypes
the demons are beginning to crawl back in
the one's the body lets me deal,
crumble to dust
with the tools given
to explode the thoughts....
Wilderness time closes...
as we prepare the table

Maundy Thursday

Short form of Latin *Mandatum novum do vobis
ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos* (A New
Commandment I give you)
The demons I cannot handle,
are locked away once more
for a healthier time to pick those scabs
A Day of rest
refresh
await the Holy Table to be set
and the water of the first sacrament to be poured
the words, A New Commandment I give you...
is the one to love.
Jesus showed
by humility of washing feet
to know and show love
The unfamiliarity
in the hot sanctuary
not what was expecting
yet the words around Gethsemane
and prayer
being awake and present
bringing it real
not just gospel story real,
but in everyday life
will we be willing to truly sit with
be present and awake with,
one another...
with ourselves?

Bible Deism

*Further reflections on a Leadership Summit
within the Stone-Campbell movement, and
understanding the Spirit within.*

Always pondered
Why I felt unmoved or
a round peg breaking into a triangle hole
Not understanding
the self-selection of religious groups
Spiritual not religious types perpetuate
their own exclusionary criterion
One risk taken
to attend a summit centered on being Shaken by
the Spirit
C. Leonard Allen speaks of grammar of the
Spirit
the piece of the Trinity forgotten not the right
word
rather locked away in *Sola Scriptura*
only active within old old stories
or new charismatics tied to literal
understandings
Missing the point or the mark
For it is within the Spirit,
that Church is family
that community is birthed
anew
In the Spirit
when people matter more than money
programs are secondary
to an open

welcoming table
for all...
The Spirit
living in and out of Love
I always wondered why
I felt on the outside of the religion
I loved so much...
and the answer was simpler,
than I ever believed...
I let the Spirit break through my present
and future
to shape my heart.

3 Questions

On the healing journey, it is like peeling an onion, never able to be constantly positive, and fresh eyes for one's own history...the journey continues.

It first started asking
how many times have you hit your head?
To morphing along the path,
once narrowed to healing,
to a simple query of...
“how are you still alive?”
Renewing feelings long shut out
becoming complete of heart
soul, mind, and body
in touch
and exploring

deep diving into the memories
the body deems safe to explore
covering horrors most will never speak of...
simple things in ministry, writing and helping
others
“Do the thing you do”
“Just one more miracle”
A miracle worker
some dubbed Cain, like an old television show
creating space
assertive advocate
speaking many times into the void
left to twist in the wind
no money for it
no cause for more staff
they do not fit our ideology-belief not allowed
want one more qualified
code for we want someone that will work for
pennies, and do what we say
not what those served strive for
removal of the advocates voice
heart and passion
learned to be helpless
assertiveness can become screaming
into the void
Finally,
the body and soul
say no more
and a life almost lost...
the long road back...
who is coming back?
What is left behind?

The question ringing in the soul,
Did they honestly think I was Superman?

Lies of the Heart & Soul

“I failed; I did not make a difference.”

-My personal sound track entering into therapy on Feb. 14, 2019.

On May 2, 2019 with my PNES therapist I was able to share the work of breaking this soundtrack. It was arduous over the months in therapy, as I asked friends something I never had before. What did they think of me? I began to look back at the thank you notes, and the honours that I had let fade into the background.

An exterior soundtrack began to emerge and take concrete form. It was that I did make a difference. I have a tendency to be overly responsible, and need to figure out where my rodeo ends and the next begins. It is the struggle of not wanting to be the bystander of the bystander effect. It knows what I can honestly give.

The work that brought me to this new reality, with a simple affirmation when the negative soundtrack of “I did”. If it is tied to a specific memory to be able to honestly say, “I did the best I could.” Working with people is messy. Spirituality is messy. Life is messy. When you enter into the hamster wheel of servant hood

coupled with learned helplessness you can feel and believe there is no way out. Your being, will find a way out for you. The trick is listening before the way out becomes terminal.

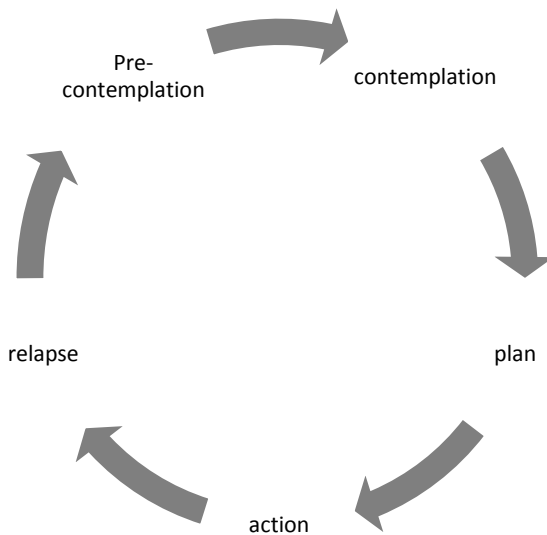
Throughout this jaunt of the journey, I had achieved peace in my soul with myself. I had gained a better understanding of the paths of the ancestors I stood upon. Though still haunted by the traumas of the past that the PNES had fully unleashed, now like an old XT Computer boot disc with dust on the film so it skips pieces. I am not fully rebooted.

Through writing and reading I am almost as good as I once was. Which to explain my multi-layered brain was strange and brilliant. It feels good to feel almost full functionality, as I entered into the PTSD clinic intake, I would say I was about roughly stabilized at 65% of my former self. My goal to show my mind was re-wired for emotion, and not conversion disorder was 45 days episode free.¹⁰ Intake day, was day 28 (4 weeks free), the longest I had gone since my 39th birthday.

¹⁰ 6 months episode free is usually when remission is verified.

It started with mulling (prayer if you will), then moved to getting the right supports around you, and finally, action (for those unfamiliar with mystic or monastic Christianity, our actions are worship—the healing journey is worship).

It truly was a spiritual equivalent to the Stages of Change, a model where we enter at pre-contemplation, but can enter/re-enter at any stage. Pre-Contemplation is when you are not able or ready to work a healing plan for change:



Contemplation is when you begin to think about change. Within the province I live, we are in a grief cycle over the loss of oil and gas as a

staple industry as the world changes. The change is a hope response to ending climate change that is the abuse of creation we were entrusted with by the Holy Mystery, when we entered adolescence as a creation and left the Garden of Eden as the ancient story tells us. We became aware of pain, menses, and hard work. We became aware of good and evil, that is morality and ethics. It was time to leave and go into the world, a world we were entrusted with as caretakers, and were blessed with.

Alberta, entered contemplation on Election Night 2015 when we elected the New Democratic Party as our government after 44 years of Progressive Conservative governance. From 2015-2019 there was work in the plan phase, laying out what needed to happen for a new reality, and action, that is starting to do the steps. Good things were accomplished for the citizens in spite of being in a recession, and a resource that was never going to bounce back to historic levels. Individuals who had lost jobs that were never going to return as the Oil Industry had streamlined, and computerized to a level that eliminated jobs. It meant the six figure camp jobs were vanishing, and this is where relapse truly set in. With the reality that change

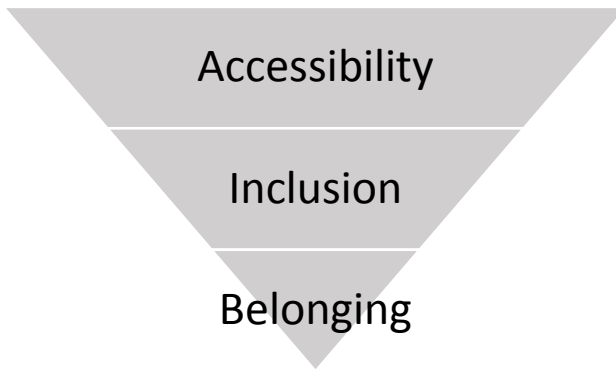
was here and there was a group that did not like it. Like with any change.

In the church- mainline, evangelical, North American charismatic-Pentecostal and even mega-church, it is the death of Christendom. The new realities that the church has to offer something different to attract, retain, and grow disciples. The plug and play programs, the removal of the mystery to appeal to those who are “unchurched” or “seeker” has not worked. It is a time of relapse for some, as they fall back into those plans for it is easier than to delve into the depths of healing work for a community. It is easier that teaching and spiritual formation.

Both examples are showing that relapses are part of change and grief. For some, it makes no difference, life spans of certain jobs or churches are finite. Yes, even the church that closed its doors after 120 years. That was its life cycle. It comes down to questions to be asked of legacy. What does Alberta want to be known for? What does the church want to be known for? Is it hate or anger or hope or love?

It is a gut check question one entering into healing or any journey of life needs to ask. What do I want to be known for? Or better yet, and yes this works for institutions and provinces as well, who am I?

It was a gut level question that arose early in my episodes. Could I go back to work? Yes, there was a lot of crap in the sector. But as we have noted there was good things I had been a part of. Seeing healing, recovery from addiction, baptisms, weddings, birthdays, life point celebrations, families reconciled, true healing...and individuals coming home that is truly finding a space for belonging.



It is the Belonging Pyramid. What came through while I was struggling with my own healing and being trapped in mystery? It sadly is how our world functions. As we are focused on funding cycles, and proving quantitative results¹¹ it leaves us to focus on accessibility, that is physically is our structure usable for most (by

¹¹ Data, hard numbers showing efficacy of a program.

building code), aesthetically welcoming. The majority is focused on this.

The next layer that is inclusion is what systems such as housing first, seeker sensitive are based on. The circle is drawn wide enough so that everyone has a space. What is missing is you may have a chair in the service, or a sparsely furnished apartment, but are you connected? Rooted? Or is it simply another place you go in the course of your day?

One of the most heart breaking moments working in shelters was the recidivism that is relapse back into homelessness. Talking to the gentlemen and ladies that returned from being housed the story was the same, they were lonely.

Battling loneliness brings us to the tip of the inverted pyramid and the hardest, messiest thing to achieve for a person and community:

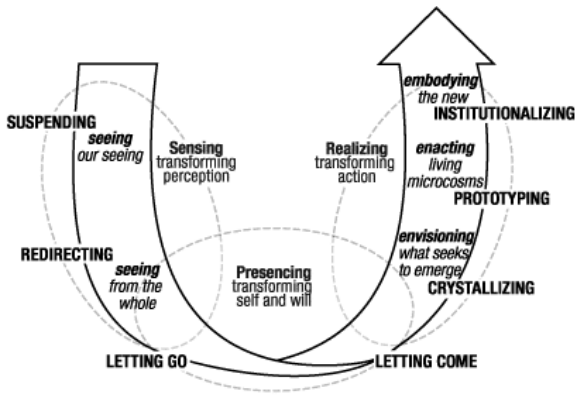
Belonging. It is the greatest risk of humanity. It is interdependence. It is being in mutuality. The risk is simple, you are rooted and a part of something, when you are gone you are missed. When someone else is gone that you know, you miss them. See those pesky emotions.

Belonging is the heart of the Gospel of Brother Jesus whether told by the Gnostics, A Course in Miracles, A Course of Love or the Christian

Testament Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We just miss it because we have industrialized religion, and as such, specialized it down to a singular altar call with an unbiblical prayer, to show that we are “saved”.

It is belonging as well that creates a new understanding in grieving, change and healing. It led me back to Senge, et al’s theory of change from their 2004 book, *Presence*. A resource introduced to me by my then Spiritual Director, John Griffiths at Spiritual Directions in Calgary (I also did some teaching there). It literally is the person, community or institution being present during change and given language to map and discuss where the whole and the individual are at.

The U Theory:



© Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers. *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. Cambridge, Mass.: Sol, Society for Organizational Learning, 2004. Page 225.

It is the journey of suspending what you know. Redirecting the direction of self (group); the hardest piece is letting go of what was. This is where many groups or individuals will cycle back, why? The unknown is scary; fear is a great motivator to remain frozen. It is the third “f” of the Flight or Fight response. This was the theory I worked through as I wrestled with “who am I?”

Crushed by feelings of failure and inadequacy for all I could remember is the trauma, the loss, the failure, not the good. Challenged as everyone’s focus was to get me triaged and patched up like a good soldier and back in the trenches, okay check that, the medical profession after I left the Emergency Room and began working with the specialists and my

family were focused on getting me healthy, back to a new normal.

In the new normal I could do what Nehemiah did in rebuilding the wall. Do the work in the trenches of healing for myself (love self); and when ready go to a higher plain to see the full picture.

Nehemiah

A book in the Old (Hebrew Bible) Testament of the Holy Bible. Part of the Holy Stories of the Jewish Faith. It is a leadership parable of rebuilding. Leaving a time of exile and captivity, Israel is rebuilding the protection walls of Jerusalem.

It is the crux of seeking outside help to build up my affirmations to challenge the negative soundtrack of my brain of failure. It was to get to a place of letting go.

So at the bottom of the “U” where I enter treatment for the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, I can be Presenting of what was and is in my therapy and healing.

This then allows for letting come what is to be, where one attempts or tries out new ways of being, until the new reality cements in. Think of this time as the time it takes to shift a habit or mindset. The letting come and change can happen sooner for an individual than a group. But it can also take longer, for it is within this time and space that the core descriptor of a person is challenged.

What does that mean? What are the first questions asked when you meet someone?

What do you do for work?

Here I was working on letting go, but letting go meant what for how I was seen in society.

Compartmentalization

End of shift rituals, whether in housing first, journalism, politics, shelter work or church that left the day of work at work, and made me able to enter into daily life with family and friends. The lie to self was that I had removed the burden.

In fact what it had created was a vast mind palace with many secret passageways, cellars, attics and sheds that hid much. It allowed two or three prongs of life to progress in a failed attempt to keep protecting my loved ones from the

insidious cancer of vicarious trauma. It worked, for a while. Sadly, one of the things that had to be let go in the PNES healing, was this mind palace. Now fully in ruins, and needing to be rebuilt as an interior castle that was open concept and of universal design for full emotional, spiritual, physical and mental integration.

The journey of rebuilding continues...

Presenting

It happened at the right time during my treatment. Something had been missing for years, had literally torn apart the house and bedroom looking for it. It was lost. Never to be seen again. Then it literally popped out of the worn shag carpet when I shifted my night stand to retrieve a Star Trek graphic novel that had slipped behind.

The Celtic Knot pinkie ring my wife had bought me. There it was, laying on my big toe. A tiny miracle, for those of a spiritual bent such as myself, whether it is Universe or Holy Spirit, letting me know like discovering the lost ring. The emergence of emotions, it was my own renewal and reformation. The ring newly found was the reminder my soul needed have how I had always defined myself. It was not the way society laid our worth based on occupation. It was as husband and Dad. Those that had stood with me, and cared for me at the lowest of the low and stayed through to this point to where the light was beginning to glimmer through the concrete walls holding back the pain.

This journey was leading me into the crossroads of discernment. I had known this for a while, but peace was sinking in. The work of the soul

psalms had provided self-forgiveness and release for those things I could never control, and now a new symbol.

It would be okay. It was time to understand that I had done more than enough, and take the pacing to heal. In the healing begin to discern, what next?

The Trap

This can be the trap of the healing journey. As the Conversion Disorder manifesting with psychogenic non-epileptic seizures waned and thoughts move into the new it becomes easy to short circuit healing.

How one may ask? When we launch new endeavours, the excitement and positive energy can overwrite any harm, traumas or struggles easily. That is we emotionally, mindfully and even subconsciously suppress as the birth of the new carries us through. Like overwriting earlier drafts of a book when you save the newest draft on your computer, so new ventures can overwrite the old. Yet, the code is still corrupted.

This is the work of presencing into what is next by letting go of the old. The letting go is of the harmful, and needs to be fully accomplished.

This was the bridge to cross entering into the treatment journey for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Not to let what I felt or could see as next, expedite the process. Rather, needing to live into the current process each step of the way.

Social Media

Our social media creates the algorithms of life and the key to knowledge as the grand Google releases to us that which matches what we like. Whether it is friends, groups or pages on Facebook or followers and follows on Twitter or other social media platforms, what we use our search engines for. It crafts the ability to seek out information to form critical opinions. In actual fact, the computer creates our own personal echo chambers.

Throughout the journey of life and growth of these platforms I had consciously chosen to create a balanced social media presence so that the echo chamber could be as mitigated as possible. The challenge is that as there became more ideological entrenchment enabled by non-critical computer usage has led to extremism growing from populism.

This creates for the user and subtle shift in becoming a part of the anger machine. In the presencing part of healing (and yes it can

overlap with the letting go and letting come phase in U Theory). My focus shifted to my social media presence. Consciously purging the e-letters that came into my e-mail account as it is amazing how quickly this clutter mounts with what essentially were ignored and delete.

The next step was my Twitter and Facebook where I followed the simple guidelines of did it provide good in my life. By shifting to more balance or centralist sources I still got the full scope of what was happening without the populist-extremist hyperbole for Twitter and Facebook pages/groups. Some friends were let go on Facebook as well.

Social media is a great resource. Facebook is fun, as it allows you to stay in touch with folks that in the past could only happen through postal mail or e-mail. The challenge is that it also creates a cycle where relationships that would have naturally come to an end due to leaving certain jobs or communities, can continue even if they had run their course.

It is the hard part of presencing, but the online cleaning is the same as the real life cleaning one need to do. What relationships are not beneficial? What relationships are harmful? It is these ones that we must then end. By working

through our online presence first, it creates a practice run for any real life relationship that must end or have stronger boundaries crafted around.

Oh and clear the browser history.

Breaking Concrete

Reverend Deirdre Leighton played a unique role in the healing journey. She's the minister of Universal Church of the Master Alberta. It is a spiritualist movement out of the United States of America. It is also a very open movement for belonging. Shawna and I had got to know her when we had heard of the evening service at Unity of Calgary by the church, and showed up to find no one there. A reaching out found that there was still a book group active.

Over the next few years as a group of sojourners we would explore the *Aquarian Gospel*, some of the *Qur'an* and *How to Pray without Talking to God* in this small group that would meet at our house. It would bring the fun of family, and chaos of interjections by kids (something that I always love when doing spiritual formation informally within small groups), for let's be honest kids need to see their elders talking and doing spiritual things for their own growth. It is not just a Sunday school thing.

It was through these nights that Deirdre became family. Part of our kids buddy list, in the role of a new Aunt. When Justina spoke her truth to the Calgary Board of Education about how to

Smudge, Deirdre made a special trip downtown to be a part of it. See spirituality, religion, it is not only about those moments of worship or learning, it is about doing life together. The doing life together also creates disciples.

Around August 2017 Northern Lights (Rev. Leighton's teaching with Dr. Jelusich for Integrative Chakra Therapy) had a free healing night at Family's Matter in Northeast Calgary that I went to. Deirdre and her students as they worked through removal of the energy sludge made a note to me afterwards. The visual that came through to those facilitating the healing was of breaking through concrete to let the light shine through in my soul.

As I prepared to enter into dealing with the memories that haunted my soul this image of breaking concrete to let the light through was appropriate. For it was within the body scans of my PNES work that there was green energy/flame trying to break through concrete walls of my thoughts. The thought being held back until my mind and body zoned it safe to let out.

New concrete to break to let the light shine through rings of the words of the old spiritual:

*This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine*

*Oh, this little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine*

*This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine*

*All around the neighbourhood
I'm going to let it shine
All around the neighbourhood
I'm going to let it shine
All around the neighbourhood*

*I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No!
I'm going to let it shine*

*Hide it under a bushel? No!
I'm going to let it shine
Hide it under a bushel? No!
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.*

*Don't let Satan (blow) it out!
I'm going to let it shine
Don't let Satan (blow) it out!
I'm going to let it shine
Don't let Satan (blow) it out!
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine*

Songs designed to teach Gospel stories to the faithful. Yet who is Satan? In the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament to some), he is the challenger. In the oldest writing of the Jewish scriptures, Job, he wagers God, to act as the one to sharpen the faithful's faith, or to see if it will fall away.

Through the writings of Milton and Dante we begin to shape the image of a fallen angel from a war in Heaven, and a King of Hell. A place of eternal torment, taking the image of Gethsemane from the Gospel of Matthew (which actually was the garbage dump, where the refuse of the city would be thrown, and the poor would seek shelter). In the early part of Brother Jesus' teaching career he entered the wilderness and was tempted/challenged by Satan. In fact, those short few verses in the Synoptic Gospels could be overlaid the challenges given Job.

Sadly, in the late 19th Century to now, we have created Satan (the Devil, Lucifer-an no not the fun one from Vertigo Comics and television) as this cloven hooved power house that has more control over our lives and actions than the Holy Spirit or the free will we were created with.

This in itself is a blasphemy to borrow a throwback word. The challenger, or the

adversary, is about us being confronted with the Shadow Self, moral-ethical decisions, bribes to sway our convictions, and our own gremlins-saboteurs.

Gremlin-Saboteur:

This is a term from Life Coaching. It is the voice within that protects, but also holds us back. It makes it so we freeze or fail, rather than spread our wings and fly.

So yes, it is about not hiding the light or letting the adversary or negative internal soundtrack blow it out. It is about the journey of authentic self.

Letting the Light Shine

May 8, 2019 I would begin my intake for the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Treatment. The intake would be completed on May 21, 2019 as we would begin to lay out goals and a plan moving forward. The light would begin being prepped to shine, but first we had to create a trauma hierarchy. Not the easiest to do, as the location of the clinic to get to and from, and wait for appointments was triggering central for me.

It was a time of simply sharing that which my system would allow come through in the moment, and the decision was made to simply start with the oldest in the next session.

When I write of the Sheldon Chumir Urgent Care Clinic being at triggering central, it is within the historic block radiuses of the boy and girls' child sex trade strolls in Calgary. Moving down through the Down Town core took me past the shelters I used to serve in, witnessing the pain that I was a light in the darkness of, folks I used to journey with. The safe usage site was on the main floor of the Chumir.

It gave plenty of time to practice mindfulness, distraction, emotion understanding and

inventory, and thought conversion. The hardest challenge being when you would attempt the deep breathing to slow your somatic roll, and end up with nostrils of the stench of Weed (skunk-like) and Crack (literally smells like someone lit feces on fire).

The upside, of the two part intake was figuring out where to go and what I wanted out of therapy. I wanted my life back. I wanted to be able to feel the spectrum of emotions well again, fully engage with my friends and family, and to figure out what comes next. It was under the catch all of putting the trauma at peace with my whole self. These were things I had experienced, and I no longer wanted them being the guiding force of my life.

This laid the ground work for the Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART) to be used in my healing. See, the work most people forget is they either go hyper spiritual (all I need is prayer and the Holy Spirit) or they go hyper scientific looking for a pharmacological answer, or only a psychological one. When in all aspects it must look at all of you.

The Body Scan reminds us the inter-connectedness of our Thoughts-Emotions-Physical pain. The Medicine Wheel reminds us

of the spiritual/soul aspect within all that. The connecting point is realizing that science (ala psychology for this) and spirituality are complementary. One will resonate with the why of your life, and why you want healing. The other is the how, the nuts and bolts of getting it done and maintaining it.

ART is done with a trained clinician, much in the way that Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy uses eye movement, so does ART in different ways. There is something about tapping into the conscious use of eye movements like when we are deep in dream state that brings the healing. No one is really clear of the whole how question, but there is enough there to know it works. As I told my new therapist in my goals, I was putting trust in her to lay the path out for us to work together to get through to the new.

ART would be that pathway, to re-enter the experiences and the emotions. The goal being release at the end of it.

What's Faith Gotta do with it?

The question of how my faith plays with my healing journey is present. For some, there is the misnomer that one only needs prayer and faith to be healed of anything. For others it is all simply science and medicine. It was in two different conversations with two different therapists that this topic was struck.

The first was with my PNEs treatment, as it arose with my spiritual background if I held to a medical solution for my prognosis. The answer was simple, yes. If I had believed it was demonic possession I would be speaking with an exorcist not neurologists and psychologists.

The other was in the early days of my PTSD treatment, when the therapist simply asked how my faith fit in with this situation. It is part of the journey of life.

“First you pray, then you act”.

-Pope Francis

It was where I start. As Pope Francis would say about prayer is my practice. First, centering in the Holy Mystery, taking those moments to listen to the soft, quiet voice that is the Holy

Spirit speak into my soul. Due to the seizures and insomnia, it had been a while since I had been able to hear that voice, yet I stayed the course knowing there was light on the other end of the tunnel (and no, not in a death way).

This is where my faith played. It wasn't about the how the healing was going to take place. It was knowing, that even in the moments I felt separation, or as I would journal be in the wilderness, that there was a time of emerging from it. The wilderness is imagery from the Hebrew Bible story of the Exodus, where Moses took the Hebrew Slaves out of ancient Egypt to wander the wilderness with their present God for 40 years, until entering the Promised Land. This imagery is then echoed in the Christian Testament in the story following Jesus' baptism where he enters the wilderness for 40 days while he is tempted and tested. The basis of both stories is what forms the season of Lent within the Christian Church year, which is 40 days of fasting (giving up or making room in life for more moments of the Still Small Voice) that leads to the Holy Week which precedes Easter.

This was the season of my life where I was entering into the healing for my PNES. The starting point was the Lenten Season, and that gave a grounding imagery for the journey ahead. 40 is not a literal number, whether days or

years, anthropologically speaking from ancient stories it basically means “a lot of”, which I was good with... this journey of healing would take in a lot of days, one day at a time.

It also tied into my journey of faith on the teaching that is the lynch pin of this book. My vocational life had been centered on the Greatest Commandments of Loving God and Neighbour; I had lost the ability to love self. This was the wilderness in discovery of what it meant to love myself, to be kind to me. Another grounding as I moved forward in treatment.

Little Brother

*Me and Jesus, got our own thing goin'
Me and Jesus, got it all worked out
Me and Jesus, got our own thing goin'
We don't need anybody to tell us what it's all
about¹²*

It is a strong question what does faith has to do with anything in my journey. The song lyric resonates with me, same as the words of the song about someone who travels life. A pilgrim singing of his journey with Jesus, overcoming much, and having no time for that fancy stylized

¹² From Tom T. Hall's Me and Jesus gospel song, I prefer Brad Paisley's recording

consumer driven religion on offer. Rather it is the guttural roots of the Love Commandments of belonging that keep him going.

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.¹³

This is what happens when I open my own Bible to my favourite epistle¹⁴, James. Now James is a controversial epistle, it made it through quite a few old folks trying to remove it from the Christian Testament. Most notably Martin Luther¹⁵ who called it the Epistle of Straw, why this disdain for the words of a scant few pages? Simple, it is an epistle that points out that love and action go hand in hand. That is one cannot have a faith in a vacuum, or actions in a vacuum, like us as human beings, they are intrinsically linked. It was an Epistle of Straw to Luther because it smacked of “earning

¹³ James 2:8, English Standard Version (ESV)

¹⁴ Epistle means letter.

¹⁵ Martin Luther led the Protestant Reformation in Germany. The Lutheran sect of Christendom came out of his understanding of religion in response to the Roman Catholic Empirism of indulgences and oppression, though the Reformation wouldn't have gotten far if the feudal lords and monarchs had not realized it was there time to seize land, money and power away from Rome.

salvation” rather than he understanding it is the disciple life conversion that Jesus taught.

Why would this guy named James get that?

James was the Bishop of the poorest church in early Christianity that is the one of Jerusalem. He was also, the little brother to Jesus of Nazareth. I can hear the gasps already. Depending on your church background that is scandalous and borders on a heretical statement for it means that Joseph and Mary¹⁶ had intercourse after Jesus’ birth. It challenges the doctrine of perpetual virginity for Mary, even though it is a Roman Catholic doctrine, many churches function as if it is reality.

How do they explain James then? A metaphoric brother, a cousin even, perhaps Joseph had a wife before Mary who had passed and left children. Yet it does provide a challenge when the canonical (accepted in the Christian Testament) stories of Jesus list his family as coming to stop (Mark 3:21) his work, and his brothers called him crazy, not step, not cousins, not Joseph’s kids. Full stop his family. So here was James’ looking at the upset, the struggle his Mum was going through because his father was

¹⁶ Jesus parents on earth.

dead, and challenges older brother to come home and do what society dictated he should. It did not go as James' wanted.

Yet, here we are post ascension into heaven of Jesus after the big “nope” from the cosmos of his lynching, and he is established as a solid leader within the early church. It speaks to the role of leadership Mary of Nazareth (Mumma Mary if you will) took in building upon the foundation Jesus laid, and grows from there. A movement that his family joined, and thrived in, a community care model that James kept reminding even the earliest church about¹⁷.

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,”⁴ have you not then made distinctions

¹⁷ If you are not a person to read the Bible but are interested by the teachings in James, I suggest you simply Google the Epistle of James.

*among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*¹⁸

I have never been confused for the wealthy man. Many times as my wife has reminded me if I was in a meeting with delegates, booked to speak, or teach or preach or even simply going in to work in a shelter I would be confused as a client and treated as such. It is a way to get an empathic look at systems theory. Many apologies are made about the confusion or mishap once revealed, the challenge being what does that say about how we treat people due to how we see their standing in society or within the scope of employment? The apology is only necessary if we are not greeting the person before us as a full person.

It is very rare one would hear my credentials, unless they were needed to open a door for help for family or a client, or to get the attention of a system not willing to listen. We have not become that much more enlightened than the ancient world James was writing about in that flash, dazzle and labels mean more, than our neighbour before us.

¹⁸ James 2:1-4, ESV

His epistle is hard to read for some who have faith, because they want their faith to be the label that separates them, makes them better than. Rather the faith is a call to healing, justice, and working for a better place of belonging for all. It is why it is such a scandalous letter.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.¹⁹

The Hear O'Israel was the call on my heart. The grand circle of the Love Commandments, where the Holy Mystery, Neighbour and self are connected in a flow of the Holy Love, James points out astutely the failure of the love of neighbour if you are comfortable while your neighbour is in lack. The challenge is the balance so you are not lost in the darkness constantly, but can come through to the other side. Faith or works by itself is dead. Just as Holy Love missing any of the pieces is dead on arrival as well.

¹⁹ James 2:14-17, ESV

James lays out the importance of having solid social relationships with our loved ones. Family (blood or chosen), those that we know or discover will be with us through the thick and thin of life. These are the pieces, same as trusting the professionals in our lives called into their vocation as well to aid us. For it all comes from the same source of Mystery.

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.²⁰

For those leading the Reformation, James was the awkward second cousin of the Christian Testament for it called out the elite they needed

²⁰ James 5:1-6, ESV

the backing of to break away from the Roman Church. For those in Rome it was the book you simply have on the shelf because it looks impressive, but never dust off for it would create dissent in the masses that would see the hypocrisy.

Yet here we are in 2019 and it is still within our scriptures. The words ringing as true today, as they did when James sent them out, Jesus' little brother wrote them to remind the early church of what it was his brother lived, died and rose from the dead for:

A BETTER WORLD.

When left with the question what does my faith have to do with my healing? It is about that better world. Finding the “me” that I am today, formed through the darkness, coming through the challenges, yet, finding my core, and asking the question what is next.

It is also holding me to be present in the moment for the healing, so it is a true healing and not a false jump so I wind up back here.

Faith and works, or pray and act. It is simple; one cannot be without the other. Just like ourselves in the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health are intertwined.

Cobwebs

A Soul Psalm for the next steps in the healing process of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and how our memory works.

Accelerated Resolution Therapy

Roll the dice

Spin the roulette wheel,

What is the most traumatic event?

Can't say?

We'll start with the earliest.

48 hours away.

A week to mull it over.

The energy crackles in the mind's eye

The heart sings a song of sorrow

As the spider web comes alive

No more musty cobwebs

On the interconnections

Of the past and present

To be scourged away

To open the soul

To the future.

3.5 hours of intake work determining triggers and traumas before entering into the treatment.

God is Dead

Maybe stealing a phrase from Nietzsche, but honestly reflecting on whether or not God is alive in our world? There was a trilogy of Christian movies playing on the title “God’s Not Dead”; which were decent run movies of apologetics though a bit after school special melodramatic with the panic of Christians “losing rights”. It is not about losing rights, it truly is about other groups, philosophies and religions gaining equality and equity in our society. Secularism allows science to explain the nuts and bolts for us, while our personal religions relate the why.

This entered my head as I awaited the Accelerated Resolution Therapy to start I wanted to push my brain a little. A YouTube channel to dust off my preaching skills and putting out feelers for pulpit supply in the summer for a few Sundays, all part of discernment of what is next for me in my journey and our family life.

The Universe’s humour however was evident. Deciding so I did not end up on a hobby horse soap box circuit of my own design stated I would use the Sunday Lectionary. Those unfamiliar with a Lectionary, it basically is designed that on Sundays in a three year cycle you will hear the whole Bible in Church, for

daily ones it is a two year cycle. The essence being the minister cannot avoid any texts. I chuckled when asked to take the pulpit for July 14, 2019 at Centennial Presbyterian Church for the lectionary brought me to The Good Samaritan parable:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[b]”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going

down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."²¹

How to love my neighbour, and who is my neighbour are the two bedrock questions of my ministerial journey, and returning to the pulpit of the church I did my Mum's funeral service in what a topic to be handed. The challenge now is what does it mean?

²¹ Luke 10:25-37, New International Version

It means quite a bit. But what hit me hard this time just reflecting on the synchronicity of the event is that at this time in history, God is dead. But the God that is dead is not the God of the Trinity. It is not the Holy Love that created everything. It is not the Holy divinity that made Jesus the Christ, and from whom the Holy Spirit flows through life today.

There is a God that is DEAD. It is a God that should be dead. The God of Christendom. The God that allows for exclusion, the God that empowers hatred and violence based on religion. The God that was crafted by terrorists and governments to perpetuate wars, misogyny, caste systems, and try to control people's free will of choice. The God that is dead is the one that has sparked such murder in the nominal church that was more comfortable with status quo power and control, much like the living breathing Sanhedrin of Jesus' day. The God that is dead is that God tied to Nationalism, and Empire.

The God that in Canada was used to mask the atrocities of Colonialism, Residential Schools, Labour, Sex trafficking, eugenics, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, forced institutionalizations and sterilizations, withholding of Human Rights, homophobia, and

177

the list can go on and on. It is the God that said any *Image Dei*²² was less than a full person.

It is the God that was used as a lens to look out and see through the eyes of fear and paranoia. That was used to pray and convert at the tip of a sword or barrel of a gun or forced compliance/attendance at church for socio-economic survival on a family.

That God is dead.

That was never the God that Jesus pointed people towards in the Christian Testament. It was never the God that the prophets of the Hebrew Bible pointed folks towards either. That was the God of Love and Justice. The God of Peace, Hope, Joy and Faith and... B-E-L-O-N-G-I-N-G as ALL is the *IMAGEO DEI*.

That is the core of the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus reminding us it is about love. Love of self, neighbour and God, a perpetuating cycle that all parts must fire for the divine to be alive...that is the Holy Spirit within, without, and through all. When that happens, all labels burn away and what is left is love and belonging, the story was scandalous because one of the excluded was the one that showed mercy. It was not scandalous; it was how

²² Latin for Image of God

creation is meant to be. That is the God that is alive.

Take a walk through a mall, or your community and look around. What a beautiful world. What a beautiful sight as each and every person is made in God's image. Drop the labels and embrace. For the anti-abortionist, I challenge you to take the walk with the person through the process of abortion, and just be there holding the space in love and silence with them. If you are in a church struggling with the "question"²³ as the Anglican Communion phrases it...go to Pride...Give out Dad and Mum hugs to those that have been excluded.

Find that which you think is "stealing your rights" or others try to create fear of for you. Find that, and experience the *Imago Dei*.

Love you Neighbour.

Love yourself by releasing the hatred burning your soul.

And it is the greatest act of love worship of God ever.

²³ The Question is about full inclusion of the LGBTTQ2+ community in the life and ministry of the Communion.

This Ol' House

This Ol' House is literally the house in the community of Rundle in Calgary, AB I came home from the hospital to as a baby. I purchased it when my folks moved full-time out to the land, Countess, AB during my Mum's battle with breast cancer and the PTSD that came with it for her. It is the only home I have ever known in my life. I am proud to have been able to raise my own family in it.

Yet, as life progresses sometimes one needs to reassess home. It is an interesting idea of what makes a home. This humble split level had been a hub of home for many on our block, and city. Whether it was just being neighborly, aiding others as a food bank, ensuring the family tradition of any child that enters becomes family or the years that my family ran our own home church...it was a home for many.

During the ART treatment, when discussing with my therapist where my calm place was it was no contest that the calm place was the living room of this ol' house. Calm? How is that possible, when most think of the calm place they go to it is a beach, peaceful, tranquil, forestry, yet I picked a hub that can have people

in it or not and still be calm for it is a space of belonging, the living out of my beliefs.

Within this ol' house too is the container. What is the container? That imagined mind projection of something sealable that you can place the overwhelming memories and feelings to have a place to place them to move on with your day.

For me, it is the old, probably falling apart from the inside blue steamer trunk my Nan (Mum's Mum) brought across from England with her when she was a war bride. It was a place to keep memories, and it was a good memory place. As you work through ART you realize it is about becoming the director of your own memories to work through them to create the tranquil feeling or positive emotions sensations so that you do not freeze or collapse. It was the story of my Nan taking a leap of faith on love to traverse the Atlantic by Steamer Ship, trusting that her husband, the love of her life, was authentic and would be in Halifax harbor for her.

That is why the container was chosen, it is the leap of faith in the treatment process to know that at the end, through love...there will be healing.

As I walk this ol' house at night, I know it no longer functions for us. As my son grows with his accessibility needs, heck, as I age with my bad knees, the idea of a house that functions through stairs is not usable. The time is coming to close a chapter on this physical structure rapidly, yet taking the heart message of love and belonging to the new home that awaits us on the other end of healing, and new beginnings.

Soul Archaeology

Some would say a healing journey is a kin to a cozy mystery. Sifting clues, and finding the solution. This may be true on the way to diagnosis in regards to the conditions, but when it comes to the healing one feels more like a paleontologist or an archaeologist. Like Dr. Grant in Jurassic Park or the intrepid Indiana Jones you need to sift the crap and the debris away to get to the core.

This has never been more evident in my own journey than with the lag between Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART) sessions, where I am left with the debilitating flashbacks that in some ways and some days lead me to succumb to the feeling of less than, failure, depression, anxiousness and anger. Yet as the tides recede what is left is the soul work-dream work-mindfulness of what lies in the flashback. See for me my flashbacks sometimes come as day or night mares (and I dream in 1930's Technicolor animation so yes it is a trip), hallucination of sound and-or image, but mostly it comes in flashes like a comic book double splash page. It is in this work I am the archaeologist beginning

with shoveling the big pains/traumas that are surface level raw. These are the items the hot thoughts, CBT, mindfulness, narrative-talk therapy and prayer work well with. These are also the beginning of my mind maps (spider-webs) as these memories trickle out more and more to the core trauma that ART will heal. See, our bodies only release that which we are able to deal with, and as we heal, it hurts more as we go deeper and deeper until the final release. I currently have sifted quite a bit of the clunky debris and sand away, and have moved down the levels into the pyramid corridor towards the burial chamber of pain.

But, as I journey through this, I look at the societal allegory this creates as well. As I have written of before, my province is in a grieving cycle. We do not have leadership equipped to name it. To act as the societal and communal archaeologists to create the space to clear away the debris, and move into the corridors, and the burial chamber. To be able to leverage that which we know, the truth of society and economics, coupled with the acknowledgement and action on the human impact, to make our world better. It would go a ways to create a healthier now, staunch the flow of lies if I may be so bold and blunt from those that only want to hear from their own ideology, and close off

hatreds that have been allowed to grow like weeds in the bright light of day once more.

It also allows for open, pragmatic conversation on the state of community. As I reflect on my own political journey as a religious man. It has been weird within the “progressive” circles how unwelcoming one can be made if they admit their beliefs start with a Higher Power/creator. Unwelcome is the nice term, there has been derogatory attacks, name calling, and hatchet jobs. Talking with others that would be seen as religiously liberal-progressive-pragmatic that have chosen to exist within the Conservative political ideology as I have not, I asked why. Simply because these movements allow for the extremist-fundamentalist form of religion to be given a clarion bullhorn of media so that it becomes the only view of a belief system. The answer? Space is allowed where these core beliefs are not belittled, and it creates superficial belonging. So, if they are allowed to be themselves EVEN though other parties are 70-99% more in line with their social justice and faith understandings of what we are to do on this earth.

So let that settle, as we clear debris at the macro societal level. Anger and hatred exists in all ideological camps. A whipping post has become

185

religion, yet within religious circles, the same political spectrum that exists in your neighbourhood exists within your local spiritual centre. Yet, at political active levels that is not usually seen, because either, like many, there is disengagement, OR false belonging because you cannot check a core belief or are weary of taking the slings and arrows for a million things you never did or believe.

Just like being an archaeologist of your own soul. Communities and groups need to do the same on their own soul. They need to authentically understand diversity, accessibility, inclusion and what belonging is. Key point- it does not mean a collection of automatons behind a leader that is the Galactic Empire. It actually is more like the United Federation of Planets...which gives me a good allegory for the archaeology work on the healing journey whether at the macro, micro or personal level, take two hours, and watch Star Trek V: The Final Frontier...

What are you going to do with your pain?

What are you going to do with your path?

Rotting Roots of Webs

With the Accelerated Resolution therapy, I reflect upon the words of Captain Kirk from

Star Trek V, about we need our pain. This is true, we learn through trials and tribulations, as much as our joy and jubilations. It is the events that have shaped us, but our memories should not hold us back. This is where the pre-work I had undertaken in preparation for the ART treatments worked. Why pre-work? Simple, there was such lag between sessions, and such pain being experienced in the flashbacks.

At this point preparing for the third treatment I said I wanted to begin exploring and treating the deaths²⁴ so I began the mapping as the flashbacks continued. Much how a mindful monastic or mystic would unpack visions or dreams, I set about unpacking the comic book splash pages of death and decay.

What happened as I mapped, was that the deaths, and my pain in response (grieving if you will) had been dealt with and put to rest as my addled brain and soul began to reset. Yet the digging continued downward now that the debris had been cleared.

In previous sessions this had been the fear of disclosure of who I was, and the session I

²⁴ As the readers of my site: tyragan.wordpress.com and my book *Soul Ripples (Bookstand, 2019)* are aware that number was at 613 and growing...

announced this at I had rebooted the healthy dealing with shootings (7 I had been a victim of, or near victim of including one by Calgary Police Service); bed bug infestations and hoarders²⁵. These were traumatic memories, flashbacks and hallucinations my body, mind and Spirit were using to protect me until I was ready. We are amazing organisms upon the healing journey.

Once cleared away I mapped out the death vault, and then spiraled into the intergenerational trauma of my family that was anchored in one man's ripples of violence my grandpa, Joe Ragan²⁶ had inflicted upon the family and whose memory continued this warped manipulation of control.

Like a nine square puzzle in a large square box, where you would slide the images to create a picture, the image fell together of a Father's Day BBQ he attempted to molest me. My Grandma, Mum and other matriarchs saved me, and would work for the remainder of the 4 years he would live to ensure we were never alone, knowing the monster that lurked beneath.

This was the core memory I thought.

²⁵ I refer you once more to my foundational memoir, *Soul Ripples*

²⁶ *ibid*

But there was more from the summer of being 8 years old.

Part of being a part of evangelical Christianity for higher education is the concept of testimony, that idea that there is a big moment when you accept Jesus Christ into your heart. It is a hard concept to wrap one's head around when you were baptized at 2 months old Anglican in a Roman Catholic School gymnasium, attended a Christian & Missionary Alliance Pre-School, a regular public school, and "church" up until age 10 years old was the local ecumenical Vacation Bible School (VBS).

It was great part of a week of fun in the summer of Bible stories, songs, plays, games, and crafts. My godmother was a lead at her church, and we went with her kids. It was a church I would return to several times in my journey, Centennial Presbyterian Church but I believe in the cul-de-sac there was a Lutheran and Evangelical Church a part of the fun as well.

The summer when I was 8 years old though in that one week, two things happened to me that my Grandpa Joe had not been able to accomplish. A participant forced kisses upon me until I flipped him, and it was I that got into

trouble for tossing him. The rationale was that it was just a kiss.

The second was an adult volunteer groped me in the bathroom. It left me shocked, and yes I suppressed much with the memory of what happened with my Grandpa, until the soul archaeology dug it out.

The challenge though, is exposure therapy.

See, it was a church that my daughter had been attending their VBS at, and was currently volunteering with. It was where my family was members, attendees and in ministry. I just had finished being a resource for the national church on a resource for welcoming newcomers so they would come back.

No, I did not see the abuser anymore.

Yet, we had gone through our own trial over a year, as propriety Christendom beset my family²⁷. This was about pew seating. Whether by accident or design there is but a few spaces in a church designed to be used for wheelchairs. My son uses one, and we had encountered snark, verbal abuse, physical in the pews, one such parishners had ground into me and I had

²⁷ For other stories of Christendom targeting the last “acceptable” group to be prejudiced against, persons with disabilities, I direct you dear reader to *Soul Ripples*.

not yet unpacked enough to understand the flashback it created. It took quite a bit to be heard for the Board to take action and get seating highlighted for those with mobility devices, and their families/caregivers.

A rather progressive-pragmatic answer finally arrived at, or in my own life, a Brother Jesus result. Unfortunately when it was finally settled, they followed the idea of messaging by putting a member face on it so folks who were disrupted by losing their “pews” would understand. Instead, the result as you know dealing with bullying, is that it painted a bulls eye on my son’s back and family for those that had not felt a need to stand up, now could vocalize what they saw as entitlement and disruption.

The first Sunday they were around, my son was sick and not in attendance. The question was not where my wife and son were, but “Oh guess you really don’t need that designated seating.”

What they failed to realize, is that persons with brain injuries and epilepsy are rather fragile. That is, that any jostle of the brain can cause unexplained death. My son had been jostled enough that his un-diagnosable vacant times had increased, he cried that his God buddy’s didn’t love him (my son, was a greeter at the

church)...and he was scared that he may not come back to us.

All because adults, a minority, could not think outside themselves to the value of another made in the Image of God.

I left that Sunday, before my daughter's week of volunteering at VBS began melancholic. Two days in the image of the almost molestation, broke through as a flashback of what happened at VBS when I was 8 years old. Now it was time to decide what and where this meant for me in ministry and my family.

Burn that Bunker Down

The third ART Treatment burnt down the solid concrete bunker that was holding the horrors at bay. It was an image I had used through my therapy to describe the dribs and drabs my body would allow out for healing. Solid concrete, with small cracks and crackling green flame behind it that could peek out as my body prepared to deal with the next wave of pain.

The challenge is that after the second treatment, the mind webbing down before brought me to an almost shooting death by the police after saving a suicidal individual. But the spider-webs out had dealt with connecting points of other moments of being threatened, assaulted, shot at, entering into the world of hoarders, vicarious trauma and bed bug infestations²⁸. This had alleviated flashback, anxiety, and depression pressures and fears upon my system for the two weeks between treatments. It was a freedom I had not enjoyed for many years.

The freedom though allowed me, like a soul archaeologist, to continue the fine work of

²⁸ For more on infestations and such, I direct you to *Soul Ripples*.

getting to core memories. The true horrific traumas that my body was attempting to protect me from upon this journey. Entering into my third treatment that I had innocuously stated to explore the deaths (613, but again dear reader, pick up the first volume) who collage and crushing grieving emotions began taking hold after the last treatment on my being.

The homework (prep work? soul work?) before this session I began mapping out the deaths. Trust me not a fun time. It left me weepy, my emotions raw. Basically struggling to ensure I was present, and still the me on the healing journey for my family for I was not going to be collapsing back into Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures despite the rawness of what was emerging.

As was written previously, the molestation memories came back at this point. BUT it was not first. See, my soul mapping started at first with the deaths- professional, friends, connected to family, my family, brought me down to when my Granddad died when I was 16 years old. The last words he spoke to me the night he passed was, “it’ll be alright” which triggered the shattering flashbacks of the summer of 8 years old, noted before.

The Vacation Bible School ones came back first, but then came down to Grandpa Joe. Thankfully the attempt stayed on top of the clothes when I had gone to get ice cream during a BBQ, and my Grandma and Mum saved me, and then built in safety precautions until he died when I was 12 years old which was a huge relief to me. I did not understand then, this was buried deep.

It came up in dreams from then until he was dead. These dreams were of adults in my life, at meal times, BBQs with everything feeling like a normal family time. Then the adults would pull off their faces, which were like Scooby Doo monster masks, to reveal a reptilian head beneath, much like the Gorn from the Original Star Trek episode, the Arena.

Note the symbolism?

Our subconscious protects and buries. It also attempts to work through. The crashing down of my neuro and physical systems unearthed this core memory which became the memory to be treated during my Accelerated Resolution Therapy and would produce a new emotion for me during this journey.

See it was through this process that the fear, anger, and hurt was replaced. There was healing. The image of the concrete bunker exploded and was consumed by the green flames. I literally felt electricity leave my body (as I had with two previous sessions, but this wasn't just extremities, it felt as from my heart).

The negative emotions moved slowly through processing to neutral. I walked through where each of my family was, but there was still reconciling this ass-hat who some still looked to fondly, and what he had tried to do—Joe. He was dead. One could say with my religious connotations I could take solace that he was in Hell. Except, that does not work with how I had come to believe, readers of volume one will note my short treatise on Purgatory. The final purging of all that keeps you from Heaven that meant Joe was with Jesus.

But not the monster on earth, a new creation.

It was this thought from my heart that tipped the balance of neutrality to positive ever so slightly. As the treatment continued, and I focused more on how the matriarchs of my family worked within the system to protect me, hope began to emerge.

From hope we moved to...joy.

Now the monster was dead. The ashes were consumed away. I drank deeply of joy.

The journey continued...as it was time to confront the other ripples in my life, but today joy was felt again. It is how faith, psychology and community work together to craft a new me.

Cracks to Shattered

Many will say
There is no place or
Time left to let blame rest
Yet many need to understand the ripples
Their actions,
Words,
Have upon those they are inflicted upon.
In-Laws
Should be outlaws,
Not seeing the harm
They inflict
For they believe their crap
Don't stink
Holier than thou
Of the non or believer holy rollers
Shattered souls
And lives
Finding respite
Relief,

Leave me
Under pressure
Confronted
Conflicted
Being stared through
With glasses over eyes
That has pain nulled,
Yet not healed or released
The seizures release falsely
Yet the cracks are there
As the pressures of life
And career mount
One glassy eyed stare
And the house of cards
The interior castle
The mind palace
Collapses
The colloquial straw upon the camel's back

Or the angelic breaking of the back from the
verse upon my Mummy's urn,

A sad sack turn of phrase to appease another's
guilt.

Yet...

In the end...

Treatment awaits...

To heal

Rebirth

Reboot

The soul,

That had been broken,

And the sources,

Will never know

Or more aptly

Give a damn.

A Four Letter Word...

There are many four letter words that have come out of my mouth during this journey, and have been applied to my life and the ripple effects with my family. My journey on healing from trauma was supported awesomely though by having family it allowed me the space to heal. Not only heal, but make the connections within my flashbacks to trace core memories of trauma that needed to be rooted out, and healed to create the ripple within my own person.

It did feel like energy and electricity bursting through my body and leaving during the sessions. It was amazing as the weeks between would pass and different emotions of the spectrum would be felt- both positive and negative.

Yet, the work I did between sessions I would not encourage someone without a healthy in home support network to do...for in the isolation it could very easily go from healing to suicidal, it was a trip into the darkness and trusting the light path to bring you out.

Yes I am a person of faith, and that faith whether out there or subtle have played a role in

my life. The same with this journey, and I am glad that in my life prayer and action go hand in hand, and the constant dialogue within myself and the Holy Mystery is there. It was amazing as I began healing to see the different opportunities that opened up for me and my family, the different places where we could connect for joy, love and healing. Where our faith would be rewarded, and where we could see communities around us come out of their own struggles into a new dynamic understanding of belonging as happened with our home church in Calgary in regards to the faith challenged laid down by my son to them.

This is the winding road. The ripples like upon a river or lake created by a skipping stone. The soul ripples that answered the question, what happens when the helper needs help?

They discover who their true family is (whether blood or chosen, there are many who journeyed with us, and blessed us communally and individually that I may or may not have mentioned in these two volumes, to you all I say thank you). You also discover your own true self anew.

It was this sense that brought me to the remission appointment at the Foothills Hospital with my PhD. Psychologist where the healing

began on February 14, 2019. Here I was entering the office once more on October 31, 2019...

Not knowing what may or may not come of the meeting, but one thing was certain.

Today was the day; I could firmly stand in my faith, in my healing.

It was the day where the four letter word that had carried my family through the darkness was fully lived and embraced. It was a beautiful four letters:

H-O-P-E-

My step into hope of the new dawn of my pilgrimage with Brother Jesus as I once more stepped into the office.

About the Author



Dr. Ty Ragan is a loving husband to Shawna, and loving Dad to Leland and Justina. He is a simple story teller trying to make his world just a little bit better, one simple act of kindness at a time.

The story continues at...

<http://tyragan.wordpress.com>