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# Kokanee Concerns

We are reminded in the Gospels and in the Baptismal Covenant that we are called to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbour as ourselves. We are reminded also to strive for justice and peace, respecting the dignity of every human being, and strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, respecting, sustaining, and renewing the life of the earth. *Kokanee Concerns* is a weekly publication from the Anglican Parish of Kokanee that identifies items of concern in both the local community and the wider world, for which we can advocate, act upon, pray, and learn on a weekly basis. Consider the local community, the wider world, and your place in both as you reflect upon the topics each week. This week, please consider these thoughts in relation to our responsibilities as peacemakers and as carers of creation and of the community around us. How do we act as agents of Peace? How do we care for Neighbour?

Peace,

*David+*

## Concern in our Neighbourhood . . .

Jesus said, ' . . you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me.' (Mark 14:7 NRSV). This passage from Mark's Gospel in relation to the anointing at Bethany has always been a little troublesome for me, for I recognize that human societies have never been absent of the poor, yet, I also believe that in relating with one another, the presence of Jesus is revealed.

Here we are, nearing the end of Advent, and looking forward with wonder and expectation to the gift of the Incarnation. We are anticipating all the celebration related to the birth of Jesus, and the wonder and celebration that that entails.

We have so many personal and communal rituals in relation to Christmas, and this week, as I attended the meeting of the Nelson Committee on Homelessness, I was reminded that some of the rituals that take place include the drastic increase in donations to food banks, homelessness programs, and to churches and non-profits serving the vulnerable sector. In the meeting I remarked that sometimes the donations that come forward are out of a sense of thanks and graciousness, while other donations are a combination of the guilt of individuals/organizations, or of making donations that will affect one's tax income at the end of each year. Perhaps those thoughts are a little callous, yet I have seen some of these situations from time to time.

Nevertheless, even amid the advances in technology and science in the two millennia since Jesus offered that wisdom, the poor have not diminished. There is, and to date, there always has been a portion of the population that are more vulnerable, more precariously housed, more precariously living within communities, cultures, nations, and society as a whole. As I understand that passage, and in the context of the faith I now live, I hold that care for the poor/vulnerable is in our mandate as followers of Jesus: in caring for those in need, we encounter the Holy One.

Before I accepted the Archbishop's invitation to be Incumbent of Kokanee Parish, I did a little research in relation to homelessness and the community response to vulnerable peoples in the area. In my previous work with Homelessness as a volunteer through End Homelessness St. John's, and through my work with Home Again Furniture Bank ([www.homeagainfb.ca](http://www.homeagainfb.ca)) I had access to the Homelessness Hub. Here there is a [community profile for Nelson](#), as well as a [community plan](#) for the area/region. This was heartwarming to read, as it indicated to me that the wider community is working together with compassion and care to bring real change to people's lives.

This week, in my meeting with the Nelson Committee on Homelessness, I was given the information concerning the latest (November 2023) stats for the area. In Nelson, 44 persons identify as homeless (unhoused), five of which are new to the area, and one of which has returned to homelessness after being housed for some time. Three persons who were homeless have left the region. This indicates to me that there is still much work to be done to address the concerns of the most vulnerable in our midst. A [report](#) from last year in the Nelson Star indicated that Nelson had the second highest rate of homelessness in the BC Interior region. This is of great concern, for homelessness levels also point to greater challenges such as mental health crises, addictions challenges, suicide interventions, employment and crime challenges as well.

There is no doubt that society is not perfect, and so many have challenges living. There is no doubt that individuals will not always have the necessary supports and resources to live full, peaceful, meaningful lives with dignity and respect. Yet I believe it is my calling and task as a follower of Jesus to continue to help in all the ways that I can. Specifically, working within the neighbourhood and region with others to bring the necessary change that will offer dignity and respect to every segment of society.

So what do we do?

Read these reports. Chat with friends and family, and members of the faith community about how this makes you feel, and what we might be able to do to help. Let this information inform your prayer life, and your decisions about how to engage locally in community. Talk to your municipal leaders, your provincial representative, and to your federal representatives about this injustice. Take time to visit the Hub, ANKORS, Nelson Cares and other Non-profit agencies in the city that are working to end homelessness in the region. We will all make a difference, even if it is slow, hard work.

We are called to keep trying, to keep walking with Jesus to bring about justice and peace within the world in which we live, and through the community with hold with others.

Links:

<https://www.nelsonstar.com/news/nelson-has-2nd-highest-rate-of-homelessness-in-b-c-interior-report-4907116>

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/community-profile/nelson>

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Finalized%20Community%20Plan%20-%20Nelson.pdf>

*Submitted by David Burrows*

## Concern in the World . . .

There is a new children's book by Matthew Fox called *In the Beginning There Was Joy*. Subtitled 'A Cosmic Celebration for Children of All Ages', it recalls that any act of creation is in and of itself born of love, and therefore joy. That the beauty, integrity, minutiae, and grandeur of all there is, is an expression of loving joyfulness.

Sometimes though, that seems at best a stretch to imagine and at worst a downright lie. As humans, we have the capacity to 'forget' our primary operating system of innate blessedness; our deepest capacity for imagination, joy, and love. We learn to operate instead out of a secondary system of fear, meant to temporarily safe us in moments of peril,

but not to become the mainframe of our lives. And so we end up hurting and causing harm, most often to those closest to us, those we actually want to love the most.

Men especially I think, have it the toughest in a way. Over generations and thousands of years, the Masculine Spirit has been denatured into a misogynistic spectre of its original blessing. A mere ghost of true masculinity that is caring, protective, and creative. One that wants to be involved for the betterment of creation, not work to exhaustion in an effort to destroy what is beneficial and beautiful.

What happens when our operating system of love, compassion and self-worth become jammed and distorted? Often it leads to behaviours that otherwise would be anathema to that person.

We lash out verbally perhaps, use emotional crippling, and sometimes physically attack those we take it out on. It can be easy to see how the more vulnerable among us in age, gender, stature, are most often the targets (but not always).

In an effort to call attention to what feels like increasing abusive situations in our world, The Canadian Women's Foundation was launched to help women and children in abusive situations to better communicate and signal the need for help. Begun in 1986 when two friends wondered, "What would it take to bring about gender justice and equality in Canada? What would it take to stop family violence and violence against women? What would it take to move women out of poverty? What would it take for women and girls to fully embrace their power?"

"Well, since that conversation it has grown into an internationally recognized organization. There is one single thing we can do this very minute to help with this ongoing need. Log onto the CWF website and learn the hand signal that can alert you to the need of another, or that you can use to silently signal your need for help. It is simple and apparently effective when used well. There are a few very simple quick online courses available here that can increase our awareness of situations and help us respond well.

A sample few are: What is the Signal for Help; Help Someone Who is Experiencing Abuse; How Can I Respond in a Supportive Way;

How Do I Respond at Work?

A few simple tools to help the world move toward a future of increased safety for all. To help bring about a world more in tune with our innate goodness at the heart of Creation. As Mirabai Starr, author of *God of Love and Wild Mercy*, says of Matt Fox's new book, "[He] offers a resounding affirmation of what our souls have always suspected: we are made for joy."

As another offering to all the men (and women!) in our lives, Fox's 2008 book *The Hidden Spirituality of Men; Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*.

*Submitted by Sue Basek*