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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 . . .

It has been a little over three weeks since we've published an edition of *Kokanee Concerns*. In this new year, we have adjusted our regular pattern and rhythm of ministry in order to be present to immediate emerging concerns in the local area. This past month, much of the region was affected by an extreme weather event, leading to a dramatic drop in temperatures (-22 to -26C) which particularly affected the most vulnerable, the unhoused population. At short notice, we were called upon to provide space for sixteen individuals to sleep warmly and safely as we established the Winter Emergency Response program with ANKORS, the City of Nelson, and the Nelson Committee on Homelessness.

This has meant that we adjusted our space in order to accommodate our guests, plus the staff workers and volunteers. We adjusted some of our storage so that we could house the necessary items for use (cots, emergency medical supplies, blankets, sleeping bags). In many ways we integrated ourselves within the larger community, taking on our role as a host and a good neighbour in the best ways possible.

Later this past month, we found out that the Hub Centre will be closing at the end of March. This is due to a decrease in federal funding and increased rent for the location. This affects front-line workers and the 77+ clients that use the Hub every weekday. Now there is a further conversation occurring that is trying to sort out how we can continue to care for those who are vulnerable, and access the Hub's supports on a weekly basis.

This past week we hosted a thank-you to volunteers who assisted with the Winter Emergency Response program. Next week I am meeting with representatives of BC Housing as they review the space, knowing that we are still on call as an emergency winter bed location for Nelson up until March 31. I continue to prepare, and to pray for all those that are affected by extreme weather events, homelessness, and the challenges of living in precarity.

It is apparent to me that a wider conversation is needed to be had between the federal government, province, the city, aid agencies like ANKORS, Nelson Cares, and community partners like ourselves. As the climate crisis grows, there will be ever increasing needs for shelter, emergency response, and community plans to address shifting dynamics of weather, smoke, heat, flood, and other challenges.

As I walked to work again this morning, I was reminded of my place and privilege. Throughout the extreme weather event, I didn't get cold. I wasn't hungry, I always had a place, a community, a partner and family that loved and supported me. In my reflections as I walked this morning, I passed the public toilet on Baker and Hall, and noticed a sign which read, 'Closed due to extreme weather.' It was a further reminder of the harshness of life for those who are unhoused in our community.

How can we respond? How can we pray? What can we do?

Write to your federal minister and your provincial government. Speak with city councillors. Have conversations with neighbours and family. Include prayers for the unhoused and front line workers in your daily prayers, and in the prayers of the people. Challenge yourself to read and learn more about how to be compassionate in our daily lives with strangers, neighbours, unhoused or housed. Donate to the St. Saviour's Food Pantry, or volunteer. Take time to go down to the Hub and introduce yourself to Front Line workers, learn about the programs and supports that are needed. Advocate for positive change. This is how we live out our baptismal covenant. These are ways we can live the Way of Jesus in the here and now.

Submitted by David Burrows

Concern in the World . . .

As we continue in the season of Epiphany, we can think of the light of God within us and perhaps what that may, or may not, look like? It can be a fairly abstract concept, discerning what that 'light', the divine spark, within us looks like, feels like, is like. Is it even there?? Is it even a 'thing'?! And if it is something, and it is there, how do we know or recognize it? It can be the guiding light, if you will, of our personal beliefs; our ethos; the lens through which we perceive and judge as right, wrong, indifferent, all of what comes our way through all our senses. It is also how we may or may not walk our talk in community, and in the wider world.

Often it is easier to see something manifested in other people, and sometimes it's easier to see that the further away from 'self' that we get. We can see the divine spark in Jesus – no problem! We recognize it in and through Gandhi, King, Tutu, Parks, Mandela, Thunberg, and so many others. One of my guiding lights for many years now, mainly by way of her books, is Marianne Williamson. She presents and writes through a deep spiritual ethos of divine love that grounds and permeates all her writing and speaking.

As the daily news may be reminding us, the U.S. is in the process of nominating the next presidential candidates, and the Democratic National Convention is no exception. But it might surprise you to find out that Marianne Williamson is in the running as well! Against all odds her campaign is garnering the imagination and hearts of many as she outlines specifically the massive changes that are needed to turn the country around and move back into a truly democratic nation.

She calls for nothing less than a complete turnaround, quoting Martin Luther King (a lot), she writes, "King called for external changes in our circumstances as well as internal shifts in our souls. King's point is as relevant today as it was during the time of segregation.

We will be a violent society until we decide to be a nonviolent one. Until we end the violence in our thoughts, our hearts, and our speech, we will continue to deal with violence on our streets. We must deal not only with symptoms, but with the root causes of our problems. A fundamental change of heart is the medicine that will ultimately heal us."

Albert Einstein said we would not solve the problems of the world from the same level of thinking we were at when we created them. I see her vision as both refreshing and timely; it is motivating and inspiring people, providing Americans with the possibility of fundamental social and political change; a nation where all are equally valued, and everyone can thrive.

From all I have known about Williamson, she is walking her talk from the heart, grounded in the light of her belief in compassionate justice and equality, out there in the world, shining that light for others.

Submitted by Sue Basek