

February is known for two events...Valentines Day and Family Day



Valentines is all around the theme of love...love for your spouse, family members, friends, neighbors. The One who provided the perfect love was our Sovereign "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life".

When Jesus was on earth, he really messed up the religious people of his day by saying that all the laws of the Torah were being reduced to one Law—the Law of Christ...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 love your neighbour as yourself." Luke 10:27. He gave us an example of what that love looks like when he said "Love each other as I have loved you" John 15:12. "Everyone will know you are my disciples if you have love for one another", Jn 13:35. In the high priestly prayer He tells us to do this so you may be "one". Jn 17:21

How would you love your spouse, child, grandchild, neighbor, with a different view on pandemic issues --mask or no mask, vaccine or no vaccine, trucker protest, etc? He tells us to "love as I have loved you". We all know these verses and have preached on them. Now is the time to apply that to daily living as we see 'christian' families being divided, our churches being divided.

This is a time for our **POWER Team** members who have preached and experienced...

- ... the "gospel which is the **POWER** of God unto Salvation",
-have been "endued with **POWER** from on high"
-and who have committed ourselves to the second emphasis of the Alliance, belief in the centrality of Christ, that He is our Sanctifier, which is **POWER** for holy living and effective service......
- ...to let His love overflow from our lives, to those around us during this time and season we are in.

Family Day is one day to cut loose and 'let your light (love) shine before members of your family so that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father which is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16 NIV).

For some of you, this can be a sad day with this being the first Family Day without a beloved partner who served along side you for decades.



David expressed himself, "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your POWER to the next generation, your might to all who are to come." Ps. 71:1. May you have the opportunity this Family Day to express His love to family members, family of God, friends and neighbors.



An hour with my grandson led to a painting. By Louella Gould

Dear Friends.

My grandson Joshua and I were talking about grief several days ago (29 years old, he misses his grandpa -- my dear Bob). He told me something he heard and explained with his hands. It was about mourning. "Grama . . ."

Death creates two circles in the heart.

- * A dark circle. This is a mourning circle.
 - -- It won't ever go away or get smaller.
- * A coloured circle. This is a moving circle.
- -- It can shrink, envelope the grief, be unhealthy for you. Or,
- -- It can remain and grow larger; be healthy for you; teem with new purpose and growth; the grief circle seems smaller.



I was blessed with his passion for this.

Trying to paint this as an abstract, I made the moving circles varying colours (each person shows differing interests). This journey is worth it especially reflecting on its brilliant destination (Psalm 23:6).

Lovingly, Louella Gould

DOES YOUR CUP OVERFLOW IN THIS SEASON OF LIFE WITH GOD'S RADIANCE?

My grandmother always drank her coffee like this! I thought it was because it was too hot. Do you remember older generations drinking from their saucer? I came across this poem that made me feel there was symbolism to the coffee ritual.

Drinking from My Saucer by John Paul Moore

I've never made a fortune and it's probably too late now. But I don't worry about that much, I'm happy anyhow.

And as I go along life's way, I'm reaping better than I sowed. I'm drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.

I don't have a lot of riches, and sometimes the going's tough. But I've got loved ones around me, and that makes me rich enough.

I thank God for his blessings, and the mercies He's bestowed.

I'm drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.

I remember times when things went wrong, my faith wore somewhat thin. But all at once the dark clouds broke, and the sun peeped through again.

So God, help me not to gripe about the tough rows that I've hoed. I'm drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.

If God gives me strength and courage, when the way grows steep and rough. I'll not ask for other blessings, I'm already blessed enough.

And may I never be too busy, to help others bear their loads. Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.



How has this Pandemic season affected you? Has it squeezed out of you the fruit of the Spirit so that your life has displayed His likeness to others who may not have agreed with your perspective?



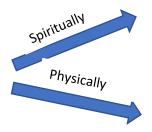
Our National Coordinator, Gerald Hogenbirk, shared this with CONNECTOR... "In times of drastic change, the learners inherit the future while the learned are perfectly equiped for a world that no longer exists."

Think on this for a while.

Going Down Physically but Growing up Spiritually

² Corinthians 4: 13-18 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though <u>outwardly</u> we are wasting away, yet <u>inwardly</u> we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.



Yes, 100% of us will hear that call one day. We are sure that most of us would love to stay healthy and have God call us home suddenly. Many of us will not have that privilege and we will experience the 'though outwardly we are wasting away".



One of these is David Belsey, a Midland Ontario guy, called to serve in the Alliance in the western provinces where he met and married Pamela Klemke. David gives us his continuing journey.

My musings about my recent Lung Transplant surgery David Belsey

The older we become, the more we realize that life is fragile and not to be taken for granted. I'm as

guilty as the next guy in assuming for the past 75 years or so that life would go on and on with no major glitches. I've never had a broken bone, or serious illness that has put me in the hospital for any length of time. And up until June 2021, I

life would go on and on with no major glitches, then things started to unravel.

expected that to continue as planned. Then things started to unravel. Well, sort of Fall 2012.

The Truth.... "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free". (John 8:32).

It would be nice if all truth was designed to provide a basis for our idyllic lives that we have mapped out before us. In fact, what we were about to hear (2012) was going to set us on a path that would change everything we thought about the future. We were sitting in the Respirology Clinic at the Hospital in Calgary and the specialist had just pronounced that she was fairly certain that I had IDIOPATHIC PULMONARY FIBROSIS.

It began in 2012 when after a workout at the YMCA I was walking home with a friend. We were going up the hill towards the library when I felt an under-arm tingling and shortness of breath. How can this be, with a young guy like me in retirement phase, working out every day, and keeping my heart, lungs and other body parts in shape. But there it was.

So, I first visited the Cardio specialist and he told me that it wouldn't be my heart that 'got' me, it would be my lungs.



A few months later we were returning from travels to visit family, and I caught some form of bronchitis while on the plane.

Two days in emergency and a myriad of tests later and they still weren't prepared to say for sure that I had had pneumonia or whatever. That's why we needed to spend a lot of valuable time in the Respirology clinic, trying to figure this out.

Now, late fall (2012), she was telling us what her findings meant. Pulmonary meant my problem was lung related.

Fibrosis suggested that there was scarring forming on the outer shell of both lungs which given time would stiffen to the point where they would no longer do their job. Idiopathic meant that it wasn't clear where this came from, where it was going, or how long it would take to get there.

There is 'no cure' she said.

How do you like that kind of truth eh?

The remission.... Or so it seemed. We settled into a kind of routine, ignoring the problem which seemed in remission, and living life normally. Oh yes, we checked in with the Doctor every 12 months, then every six, and did what are called Pulmonary Function tests,



took x-rays, and charted progress. It seemed that things were floating along sideways for a long time, and that it might not be as bad as they thought. Then the Dr suggested that I needed to start taking a drug that would maybe hold it in check, or slow it down somewhat. That's a good idea I thought, let's do that.

So, I started taking one very expensive pill in the morning and one in the evening at exactly 6am and 6pm, and things seemed to continue to slide sideways.

Shortly after that we woke up to the fact that our three daughters who used to live nearby in Calgary, had all moved away: One to the USA and two to Toronto. Who would look after us in our old age we

The Truth
The Remission
The Flare Up
The Assessment
The List
The Wait
The Call
The Lung
The Pain
The Discharge
The Recovery?

asked? So, we decided to do the unthinkable, something I said I would never do, move back to Ontario. Which we did October 15th (2018). This meant switching doctors, and prescription providers etc,. Somewhere in all of this our new Pulmonary specialist said I would need to start using oxygen. Huh? Wow!\$?! So OHIP delivered a stand alone, plug-in concentrator, and a portable battery driven one, so we could walk outside and use it for traveling.

The Flare Up... So, we decided to travel to visit Pam's aging relatives (90+ in Edmonton for a few days in fall 2021, not thinking for a minute that this would affect my condition in any way, **boy were we wrong**. Somewhere along the way I picked up some kind of lung bug, and by the time we returned, my breathing was quite laboured. A phone consult with the specialist landed me in emergency

at Toronto General, which lasted 9 days. They loaded me up with steroids (Prednisone) and antibiotics, and began poking me with all manner of instruments.

Some time previously, the specialist had said something about a transplant, and at the time she had arranged for another specialist to talk to us virtually. So, when things calmed down in hospital, she suggested that since I was already there, perhaps they should proceed to assess me for a possible lung transplant.

As aunt Myrtle would say, *Merciful Heavens*, what next.

The Transplant Assessment... They sure were thorough. A team of about nine Pulmonary Specialist doctors, some in training, descended and ran the kind of tests that assess whether my old body (carcass as a former college buddy would say) could handle such an operation, and whether I was strong enough to sustain the recovery. On October 25th they sent me home after a later evening visit from a lead member of 'The Team', who came to inform me that I am now unofficially 'On "The List'.

The List What that meant was that they assessed me as an eligible candidate and felt that at 76, I had a good chance of survival of a transplant operation. But to officially be on the list I would have a few more hoops to jump through. First, I would require a consult with the Anesthetist and most importantly, the Surgeon. With both of these doctors, I indicated that a single lung would be all I felt necessary since I wasn't planning on running any marathons or playing hockey with the Leafs. At the end of this second consult during which time I signed all the necessary documents for such a procedure, the surgeon (one of many) indicated that I was officially "On the List'. That was November 22. I said to him: "So now we wait six months to a year for something to be eligible and compatible." His response, "or next week".

The Wait So, we continued living as normal as possible planning on Christmas with the family in Haliburton, with turkey and all the trimmings. *Wrong again*. We were told by the Lung Transplant Team that all kinds of things might happen along the way. <u>First</u>, they might find a compatible lung and bring me in for surgery, but I could be bumped by someone in much more serious condition. In

fact, when I eventually did arrive for surgery the night before, several people waiting for liver, pancreas or kidneys asked if this was my first time. For one guy about my age, this was his third visit for a liver only to be turned away. So, we were

...prepared to wait......I was at peace about it all.

prepared to wait, and to be honest, I was at peace about it all. I would tell people that I was ready to go (operation, or heaven?) and I was prepared to be healed and anything in between. I am in God's hands. Second, it might take much longer to find something compatible with my blood type, (a fairly rare type) and I might die in the meantime. Third, being on the list didn't give me priority of any kind. You were never at the top of the list, or next in line. You just needed to be ready when the call came. Fourth, I might change my mind and not proceed. I won't lie to you. This whole process got me thinking about death, and whether today was the first day of the rest of my life (as the saying goes), or the last day. We even watched a video: "Death is but a dream"



The Call ... You might have noticed that the lung transplant team have some official terms they use. First, is 'the list'. You aren't a candidate for a Lung Transplant until you are on the 'list' and it is signed off on by the Transplant Team as well as the surgeon. Second, is 'the wait'. It could be six months to two years. Third, 'the call' itself. Importantly, when the call comes, don't even think of asking if I can wait until the next one comes along. You have two and a half hours to get there to be re- assessed and prepped for surgery. Fourth, we would know the call was official (from the Trillium Organ Donor Foundation) when they asked key questions like these: Name, birth date, how are you feeling right now, do you have any of these

symptoms, and the big one. Do you want to continue with this conversation

The call came **three weeks** after I was put on the list, at noon just after online church'. We had our coats and shoes on and I was filling up my liquid oxygen canister for a walk to the mall, when my cell beeped. I saw a name I didn't recognize on the screen and was about to let the call go, when I thought, 'it can't be this soon, must be a wrong number' **Wrong again.** She identified herself as being from the Trillium Organ Foundation and asked if this was me. Pam says I'm rarely caught without something to say. This was one of those times. I stuttered, I gulped, and said 'yes, it is me'. She said that they have a lung for me and did I want to continue this conversation? Trying to be calm, I said, 'yes'.

She immediately asked if I could be at the hospital by 1pm, just 60 minutes away. I said I thought we had two and a half hours. She said they are waiting for you now. Talk about pressure. I said 'would 1.30pm be ok'. She said, 'yes'. We grabbed my prepacked bag and headed for the car. The drive would normally take about 25 minutes to our daughter's, who we had asked to be prepared to drop us at the hospital when the time came. But this was Sunday eh? Less traffic, nobody in a rush to get anywhere. *Wrong again*, this is Toronto right? Things were backed up everywhere, and when we called our daughter from the car she thought we were kidding, but got real serious when she realized we weren't.

We arrived 10 minutes late, with four nurses waiting like attack agents. When we arrived they switched into high gear. Wow, an hour of poking testing, taking my blood, no coffee and donuts here.

Then they left us to wait. We asked when we might know if this was it, or would I be bumped, they had no idea. So, we chatted with my three other waiting roommates. Two for kidneys, one for liver, and me. They had all been here before and sent home, not me. So, I sent Pam home in early evening and told her I would let her know.

The Lung.... I slept fitfully, and early in the morning noticed one neighbour was gone, and another was laid back and smiling. I went to say hello, and saw he had his wife with him. Then I heard a creak in the hallway and looked out to see this big guy pushing a bed in our direction. I told the neighbour his ride had arrived. **Wrong Again**? The big guy leaned in and said my name. I stepped out and identified, and he told me I had too many clothes on. I said I needed to use the bathroom. He told me I had 30 seconds. Yikes. I texted the family group that I was going radio silent, and that I was 'going in right now.'

Merciful Heavens. I only remember the anesthetist saying that she would be with me for the duration, and don't remember anything for a day or so. Sorry no more details.

The Pain.... There really wasn't any until they asked me to cough. ICU for 3 days, then to the 'Step Down' section for one, then on the ward. On day 7 they began saying I was doing really well. I was getting up and walking around the ward, and having lab work done two or three times a day. I pretended to be a model patient in the hopes they would send me home for Christmas. And they did. After 10 nights including that initial prep night, they got me all dressed up in my Sunday best (no more open in the back gowns) and told me to call a cab. But of course, I had faithful family standing by waiting for just this moment. Bring on son-in-saw #1.

The Discharge ... As I was discharged, I was overwhelmed by how incredible our health care professionals are. I received the best care anywhere in North America, and was treated with dignity and self respect. My one visit with the surgeon who I found out was the best in North America, I thanked him for saving my life. Pam had alerted friends and family from all the places we had lived over our 52 years, and hundreds were praying for my welfare. Even some friends travelling in Scotland. Today I thank family, friends, medical professionals and especially the Lord Jesus, for His watch-care over us during this major occurrence in our lives.

The Recovery?.... Things are looking really good. They have me taking several prescriptions for anti-rejection, and anti-infection, and a lot of other supplemental stuff.

Every Friday I go to the TGH hospital downtown for blood work, lung function tests, physio, visiting pharmacy, and the doctor. I meet a new specialist of some kind almost every week. This regularity will go on for 3 months, then less for 3 more months, etc.

Fortunately, I can't drive. I have a chauffer for the first time in my life. Pam said the other day that we moved here to be close to two of our daughters and three grandsons, but that God had planned something different that we weren't aware of at the time. So many things seem to affirm her thought. That they did the transplant at my age is one of them. And how quickly they got to it after I was officially placed on the list. People with transplants like this live up to 20 years. Average is 7-8 years. Looking forward to many more years.

CONNECTOR. We do thank David for sharing with us the journey he has been and is on. No doubt, many aspects of this, you are able to identify with in your own journey. "Though outwardly we are wasting away yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." 2 Cor. 4:16. May this be true in each one of our lives as we look forward to our eternal home, yet desire to live here on earth displaying Christ in health and sickness.

Remember to Pray for the National Volunteer POWER Team leadership

National Coordinators -Gerald & Dorothy Hogenbirk

CP District -Ray & Vi Downey

WC District -TBA

CMW District -Earl & Barb Case
CC District -Wayne & Betty Kerr

EC District -Ron & June MacKinnon, Nancy McLean

SL District -Allan & Judy Hack



Hymns Written during Past Pandemics to Praise God with Today (This is a long article but inspirational for some)

- Julie Barrier Preach It Teach It 2021
- https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/hymns-written-during-past-pandemics-to-praise-god.html



Plagues and suffering have often produced the greatest hymns of hope, help, and joy! Read the lyrics of songwriters who rose above darkness, depression, and disease by singing praise. See what you can learn from these men and women of <u>faith</u> who praised and thanked God during disease. Perhaps you will be inspired to write your own song of praise!

Miriam, the sister of Moses, witnessed the ten terrible plagues of Egypt. God spared His people from disease and death. After the Jews' divine rescue, Miriam sang:

"I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and rider thrown into the sea! The Lord my God, my strength and song, has now become my victory." Exodus 15:20-21 KJV

Satan cannot steal our song! In <u>Job 2</u>, he begs God to inflict a deadly disease upon Job to make God's righteous servant curse God. Job sang, "*The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*" <u>Job 1:20</u> LB (By the way, one of my favorite praise choruses "Blessed be the name of the Lord" by Matt Redman, is taken directly from Job's words).

<u>King David</u>, in his arrogance, defied God by counting his soldiers. He commanded over 1.5 million troops. God demanded punishment (<u>1 Chronicles 21-22</u>). Because of the king's disobedience, 70,000 Jews died of the plague in three days. Even in his deep remorse, David knew to sing to God.

"I will praise you, Lord, for you have saved me from my enemies. You refuse to let them triumph over me. O Lord my God, I pleaded with you, and you gave me my health again. You brought me back from the brink of the grave, from death itself, and here I am alive! Oh, sing to him you saints of his; give thanks to his holy name. His anger lasts a moment; his favor lasts for life! Weeping may go on all night, but in the morning there is joy." Psalm 30:1-5 LB

We are not alone in our distress. Godly men and women throughout the ages praised God in the midst of disease and disaster. I was deeply moved when I learned of so many great hymns of praise that had been written by Christians during plagues throughout church history. My favorite is "**Now Thank We All Our God**," composed in 1636 by Lutheran pastor Martin Rinckart. Eilenberg, Germany, his tiny hometown, was ravaged by the Thirty Years War. The Swedish army set siege around the city wall. War refugees seeking safety overran the crowded town. Soon after, the Bubonic plague erupted there and almost 5,000 people perished within a year. Rinckart was the only pastor left alive to bury the dead. He often performed 40-50 funerals per day, including the burial of his own wife. In the midst of such pestilence and heartbreak, Rinckart wrote:

"Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices, Who wondrous things has done, in Whom this world rejoices. Who from our mother's arms has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love and still is ours today!"

"Come to Your Temple Here on Earth," composed by pastor Paul Gerhardt, was written around the same time as Rinckart. Europe was besieged with war and plague, yet these words of assurance came to this beloved pastor's heart:

"Arise and make an end of all our heartache and our pain; Your wandering flock at last recall and grant them joy again. To peace and wealth the land restore, wasted with fire or plague or sword; Come to Your ruined churches, Lord, and bid them bloom once more."

Isaac Watts wrote "**When We Are Raised from Deep Distress**" during the London cholera outbreak in 1666. Cholera outbreaks were prevalent in various parts of the British Empire, including parts of Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America. In 1854, 23,000 people died from cholera in Great Britain. Read Watt's inspiring lyrics inspired by <u>Psalms 89</u> and 90:

"Pains of the flesh seek to abuse our minds with slavish fears; Our days are past and we shall lose the remnant of our years. Jehovah speaks the healing word and no disease withstands; fevers and plagues obey the Lord and fly at His command!"

This great Congregational minister wrote 750 hymns! Watts always found a reason to praise God.

James Montgomery, born in 1771, Scottish-born hymn writer and poet wrote 400 hymns in the midst of controversial quarantines for yellow fever, cholera, and bubonic plague. "**Sing**" is one of his most famous:

"Sing Hallelujah, Glory to God alone...Bring your thank-offerings to the throne. The Lord put forth His hand, He touched us and we died. Vengeance went through the land, but mercy walked beside. He heard our prayers; He saw our tears and stayed the plague and quelled our fears."

What a statement of faith!

Dr. John Ryland was an English Baptist pastor and a close friend of John Newton, composer of "Amazing Grace." The deadly Cattle Plague, or Rinderpest, (similar to smallpox, but even

more deadly) ravaged Britain and many other parts of Europe. Ryland paraphrased <u>Psalms</u> 139 and 34 into lyrics for his hymn, "**Sovereign Ruler of the Skies**:"

"He that formed me in the womb shall guide me to the tomb. All my times shall ever be ordered by His wise decree....Plagues and deaths around me fly 'til He bids I cannot die. Not a single shaft can hit 'til the God of love thinks fit."

Swiss pastor Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was one of the most influential voices in the Protestant Reformation. Black plague broke out in Zurich and he raced to minister to the sick. Zwingli caught the dreaded disease and almost died. But the hymn he wrote gives us an inspiring glimpse of his faith. The first four verses of his hymn were penned when the disease struck. Verses five through eight were written as his health deteriorated. Verses nine through twelve were written after God healed him. What a great model for us as we fight sickness:

"Help me Lord, my strength and rock, Lo at the door I hear death's knock. Lift up your arm once pierced for me, that conquered death and rescued me. Yet if your voice in life's midday recalls my soul, then I obey."

During his illness:

"My pains increase, haste to console; for fear and woe seize body and soul. Death is at hand, my senses fail, my tongue is dumb, now Christ prevail. He (Satan) harms me not-I fear no loss. For here I lie beneath the cross."

After his recovery:

"My God! My Lord! Healed by your Hand, upon the earth once more I stand. Let sin no more rule over me-my mouth shall sing alone to Thee. Though now delay, my hour will come-involved perchance in deeper gloom. BUT LET IT COME, MY JOY WILL RISE. And bear my yoke straight to the skies."

What a great picture of how to handle suffering!

Do you have a song? You need one!

My dear friend has a debilitating condition caused by chronic disease. She suffers from crippling anxiety and fear. The doctors have tried behavioral therapy, psychiatric meds, and homeopathic remedies. Nothing has helped. Until one day I remembered that singing occupies both sides of the brain. When my friend suffers most, we sing hymns and praise songs. Relief comes. Jesus' peace washes over her.

"You did it! You turned my deepest pains into joyful dancing;

You stripped off my dark clothing and covered me with joyful light.

You have restored my honor. My heart is ready to explode, erupt in new songs! It's impossible to keep quiet!

Eternal One, my God, my Life-Giver, I will thank You forever! Psalm 30:11-12

Sources: christianitytoday.com – Black Death Inspires Zwingli's Plague Hymn

<u>desiringgod.org – Job Reverent in Suffering worship.calvin.edu – Hymns for a Pandemic – A Brief Historical Introduction connectwithskip.com</u>

To lighten your day.....







"Oh no, here comes another one of his 'back in my day' stories."

SASKATCHEWAN POEM *



It's winter in Saskatchewan And the gentle breezes blow Seventy miles an hour At thirty-five below. Oh, how I love Saskatchewan When the snow's up to your butt You take a breath of winter And your nose gets frozen shut. Yes, the weather here is wonderful So I guess I'll hang around I could never leave Saskatchewan 'Cause I'm frozen to the ground!







"THIS ISN'T WHAT I HAD IN MIND WHEN I SAID I WANTED TO BE IRON MAN!"



I brought your coffee and a list of new things about the world you're going to have to learn to accept.