

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

“Have this mind among you”.... This past week I had a walking holiday planned in our Prince Albert National Park. Before time away in the Fall I make a copious list of things I want to get done before leaving. I make lists for church, holiday and home. Let me begin in the back yard.

- Uproot tomato and eggplant and pepper plants
- Talk to neighbours
- Green bins to the curb
- Harvest beets and carrots
- Talk to neighbours
- The garlic and onions have dried, bring them in
- Hang the wash
- Redirect the rain barrels
- Stop moping and get the work done.
- Talk to neighbours

This is for the home category. Or at least a part of it.

Question: Does my list of home stuff reflect “having the mind of Christ within me?”. It might. The quality to which I attend to these details can reflect my grounding in the mind of Christ. Brother Lawrence was a 14th century monk who crafted a remarkable spiritual life. His was not concerned with doing great things for Christ, but in all things large and small to reflect the mind of Christ. His role within the monastery was the kitchen help—scrubbing pots and chopping vegetables. And yet he became a highly sought after spiritual director. He is quoted as saying:

“The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament.”

“According to Brother Lawrence, wherever we might find ourselves, whatever the task at hand, we should perform our duties with a consciousness of God’s loving presence. With such an awareness all our activities [are] hallowed”.¹

Hans Denck, early Anabaptist of the more spiritualist tradition is quoted as saying: “the medium is Christ whom no one can truly know unless he follows him in [their] life, and no one may follow him unless he has first known him.”² In many ways this quote echoes the sentiments of Brother Lawrence. Having the mind of Christ depends on the attitudes we bring to the tasks of the backyard, to the office,

¹ Robert Ellsberg, *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for our time*, pp. 24-25

² Hans Denck quoted in C. Arnold Snyders’s *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995), p. 164.

to the apartment complex, and so forth. This mindset is shaped in the humility we bring to being present to Christ and our neighbours. We live into our Christian discipleship, in part, out of the manner in which we are communing with Christ. Anne Lamott once wrote the following: “I do not know much about God and prayer, but I have come to believe...that there’s something to be said about keeping prayer simple: Help. Thanks. Wow.”³ Over time we learn even more deeply to live into our Christian invitation to be in Christ and be a mediator of Christ.

My second illustration for this morning comes from the tangled web of international migration amidst a world of drought, flood and state sponsored violence. Samuel Wells is vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields located in London. The setting of this description is an evening service of dedication and rededication.

Then one of my clergy colleagues decided she wanted her baby baptized at the same service. Fine. Then a new member of our congregation said he wanted to be baptized too. This was another matter. He is from the Middle East. Turns out it’s tough to be gay in the Middle East. We have to be careful with a lot of our congregation’s members who’ve fled to this country: careful they don’t appear on the livestream video, careful we don’t use their names in public. It’s our moment of encounter with the early church and the catacombs.

Our catechumen gave a testimony at the start of the service. He spoke of coming to the United Kingdom. Of finding himself in a maze of deception, denial, and despair greater than that which led him to leave his country of birth. But also of meeting his partner. And then of joining a gardening group, where he met a Japanese woman who said, “I go to St. Martin’s,” and issued an invitation. He came. It was Palm Sunday. He saw the dramatic portrayal of Christ’s Passion—a man surrounded by love and then betrayed, handed over to hostile authorities, stripped, beaten, ostracized, exposed to the elements, and stretched out in agony. Never giving in to hate or recrimination yet knowing utter abandonment.

Seeing this, he had a flash of realization: “This is me. This story is my story. This man is the person I want to follow the rest of my days.” He joined the journey through Holy Week and at Easter discovered this is not the end of the story—of God’s or of his. Standing in line to receive his citizenship ten weeks later, he knew there was a kind of belonging deeper and more significant than becoming British. It was belonging to the body of Christ—the body of that one whose body he’d seen on Palm Sunday beaten, bruised, buried. The congregation clapped, like a 12-step group applauding when one

³Anne Lamott, *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* (New York: Riverhead Books; a member of Penguin Group, 2012), p. 1.

member has the courage to say, “I’m an addict.” The applause was of solidarity but also awe.

It was hard not to see the waters of baptism representing not just the Red Sea and the Jordan River but the dangerous waters of the English Channel by which so many asylum seekers have reached the UK—just as those baptismal waters evoked the Ohio River for so many Black Americans in centuries past. Yet beside this catechumen was a baby girl, longed for by her parents and the community around them, the visible epitome of what it means to be precious, honored, and loved. The wonder was that both were children of God and both were loved as if they were the only one.⁴

We don’t always know the mind of Christ. What do we do then? This story details several significant ways to grow into the mind of Christ. The church has been entrusted with sacraments, songs, and other traditions which tether us to the Christ we seek to know and follow. There is power greater than us in the dramas we enact. Sacraments of the church (blessing a couple at the time of their wedding, a birth, baptism, funerals for example) also have the capacity to mediate grace, compassion and direction. And the songs we sing.

It is widely held that this section of Philippians 2 contains one of the oldest liturgical songs of the early church. This tells us several things. First, that the early church had songs and were singing them. Secondly, they relied on these songs to undergird their lives of discipleship. It was not easy to be a Christian in the 1st century-- lots of nasty stuff like imprisonment, economic persecution, sometimes martyrdom. How does a person keep the faith in such a violent and uncertain world? One sings a song about the Christ who empties himself taking the form of a servant. One sings a song about the Christ who humbles himself to death on a cross. One sings a song about God who lifts the shattered servant from death into life. It raises the question of which songs do we sing?

A third topic. This weekend some of the country has recognized a day for Truth and Reconciliation. It would be remiss of me to not mention something about the mind of Christ in relation to the on-going tasks of Truth & Reconciliation.

Ever since Cowess first nation discovered 700+ unmarked graves at the site of a residential school, I have been taken with words offered by then chief Cadmus Delorme. In Delorme’s actions and words, I have sensed in him deep wisdom, compassion, and desire for reconciliation between the settler and indigenous communities. It makes me think of dwelling and acting out of the mind of Christ. I do not know if Delorme has Christian leanings, but the mind, wisdom, and

⁴ Samuel Wells, “Choosing Solidarity with God” in *The Christian Century* (September, 2023), pp 29-30.

teachings of Christ often appear in varied cultures and traditions. I offer a few quotes from him in the last three years in interviews he has offered.

“While residential schools may have ended in Canada, their legacy and generational trauma has not. That's why it is important for Canadians to accept the truth of what happened. Only then can reconciliation begin, he said.

"We as a country, we inherited this. Nobody today created residential schools, [the] Indian Act, [the] Sixties Scoop. So we don't have to feel bad, but we have to show action," Delorme said.

"We have to show our residential school survivors in this country that we are still watching. That as Canadians, we know the truth now and we need to learn more and we need to truly implement reconciliation."⁵

And from a Global News report: “When asked about the legacy he wants to leave one day, the chief acknowledged how his own children’s futures, and the work he’s doing now, are intertwined.

“I would like to leave my kids knowing that their father is making a difference, so when they get to my age they can continue the progress,” Delorme said.

“And to this country: we inherited this and let’s not shy away ... let’s put our shield down. Have uncomfortable conversations and put action plans to those uncomfortable conversations so that our children don’t have to focus on this. They can focus on real progress.”⁶

I will conclude with a recap of a spirituality which nourishes us in knowing the mind the Christ and living it out.

Get to know your neighbours and be present to them. Whatever the tasks of the backyard entail, being Christlike to our neighbours is vital. This includes people new to our country, people who have lived in this country longer than most of us or our family systems, and people new to our block.

Reconciliation is hard work whatever the venue. Take time to share with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Take time for participating in a community which routinely speaks of the grace we all need for the challenging times in which we live. Take time to enact the rituals and practices of the church which have sustained Christ’s people for generations. Take time to sing the ancient songs which have nourished Christ’s people who have rested in the reconciliation of Christ and the ministry of reconciliation to which are invited to participate. May it be so for us, our church, our community, and world. Amen.

Patrick Preheim, co-pastor Nutana Park Mennonite Church

⁵ [A year of pain and healing since 751 unmarked graves announced at Cowessess First Nation | CBC News](#)

⁶ [Cowessess First Nation chief leads through reckoning to reach healing | Globalnews.ca](#)