

The ZOOM meeting we had on-line made me nostalgic for the faces who contribute to the meaning of the sacred space we denote as the Nutana Park Mennonite Church building. Patty has been raving about a virtual tour she offered to Osler Mennonite, and following the ZOOM conversation my thoughts have been swayed to do something similar for our congregation. I tried, but technology failed me; or I am not astute enough to have made it work. So I will give a tour of the building through words.

Numerous authors write about the sacred nature of places. Is it a coincidence that a Lutheran cemetery is located on Stoney Knoll, a sacred site for the First Nations of what has become known as the Laird / Tiefengrund / Reserve 107 land? Is it any wonder many Christian ecclesial structures were placed on the sacred sites of those peoples who preceded them? Many of us have been denied access to the sacred space we call NPMC in the last weeks. Hear now a written tour with the nattering commentary of a lonely vicar. We begin in the east classroom; that is the classroom which sticks out into the parking lot.

This is often where the children have sung following their Sunday School. This is where the Alzheimer's support group, the care giver's support group, the men's bible study all once met only several months ago. Good things happened here. I miss the voices and the people and the ministry which happened here.

This is the Youth Pastor's office and the youth room. The spaces have largely been vacated since Sarah began her maternity leave. Zach Dueck continues the youth work, but does so largely on-line—a by-product of the times.

Now we are in the epicenter of the Nutana project-- Christie's office. Many sentiments have been offered in this space: sentiments of concern, of uncertainty, of encouragement—all received by listening ears. This is a sacred space.

Through that door is co-pastor Susanne Guenther-Loewen's office. It is the Holy of Holies. We mere mortals would be struck dead going in there without an invitation, so we will just show you the door and let you imagine the rest.

Moving through the photo-copy room, a place which produces much recycling, we arrive at the library. The library has been a social place for many and a learning centre. I am grateful for the breadth and quality of our library, those who maintain it, and those who utilize it. In fact, I was looking for a book in here the other day which our fancy card catalogue suggested was once present but has since been liberated. Our library is good enough to steal from! Isn't that great!

Now we see the social hall—the place of children's education, of potlucks, of coffee hours, of Forever in Motion, of brides and babies recognition, of games nights, of our lauded mail slot system, of our MCC Sale collection depot, of "hoot 'n ' nannies", of so many points of connection. The space is quiet these days. We

have turned the heat down to conserve costs and rarely turn on the lights. But the spiritual marks of previous worship rest here. One can not move through the space without sensing the presence of those wee ones and elders and parents who have filled it earlier with joy and caring concern.

We move through this door into the fireplace room. It has been the home to Women's Bible, to Adult Education, to the Bereavement Group, to AA, to Toast Masters, to Art in the lounge, to Sunday Night movies, to jam sessions, to groups and activities beyond my memory. It is a good place; a sacred space.

Down this hall you will be privy to the privies which permit the guests of this place to worship in comfort. Nothing more need be said.

Now we are in the narthex, the foyer, the entry point to NPMC on any given Sunday prior to March 2020. People are greeted here and reconnect, or make connections. It is where many youngsters tumble about during worship while their parents either sit or pace nervously. It is where the overflow sits at funerals. It is not our sanctuary, but not far off from our sanctuary.

Here we are-- in the sanctuary. One can not begin to name the weddings, funerals, meaningful words, sacramental music, powerful sermons which have been offered here. We will move through quietly. To say more might be to say too much.

This is my office. Before being my office, it was Anita's office. Before then I do not know. It is not the Holy of Holies, but it isn't the worst. I am grateful for this hole in the back corner for many reasons. It is a good place.

This room outside my office was once a children's classroom. Now it houses choir music and other sundry rubble for the worship hour. Through that door is the finance office which was once the Music Minister's office. It is a fine room, but the key code is beyond my pay grade so we will just keep moving.

Finally, we arrive at the kitchen and the end of our tour. What can one say about this kitchen or any other kitchen? Some of the best ministry of this church has emerged from this space: potluck meals, funeral lunches, snacks for this or that, and so on. I am not discounting what happens in the sanctuary or the classrooms or the offices, but only suggesting that mystical things happen around food. I am grateful to the deacons who have overseen this place and the volunteers who have staffed the shifts. It is all quiet now except for my periodic boiling of water for tea, and I miss the bustle and hustle. But so it is these days.

The memories, however, remain. The people remain in my mind's eye and my heart. They are seared into my being; maybe for you as well. The sacred goes with us once it is a part of us. Amen.

Patrick Preheim, co-pastor Nutana Park Mennonite Church