

2022 Christmas Banquet Year in Review

Today's reading comes from the 58th chapter of the Deuterocanonical book of Nutana Park Mennonite Church. This, then, is the 58th year since the deportation of the Nutana-ites from their 1st Mennonite homeland.

It came upon a midnight dreary as I pondered weak and weary, studying many a book of forgotten lore. Suddenly there was a rapping as if someone gently tapping, tapping upon my office door; a passing parishioner, I thought, and nothing more. Or might this be Gabriel, Michael, or Rapheal of biblical store? Or Messie, Mbappe or Ronaldo of World Cup scores. Eerily it dawned on me, a vision of Edgar Allan's Poetic Raven it to be. And the weeping and gnashing of teeth could be heard from Ruth Street as far as the Avenue Coy home beat.

Levite, you will write a piece for the feast, to entertain the gluttonous masses draining their glasses. You did not recognize the Raven of the Nutana Sanhedrin, so you will not utter or mutter until there is textual flutter. Your banquet rations will be slashed and perhaps a reduction in your cash. Presented to me were a tablet and p.c., and I began to type with all my might before that pesky Raven took flight. Of my plight I quickly did write that such an assignment caused a great fright, yet I committed to recount a tale or a few from the calendar year 2022.

And with that background, I turn to the sacrificial offering which has been extorted from me. Much happened in Nutanaland in this 58th year since the deportation. In 2022 the citizens of Nutanaland emerged from their holes and hovels as creatures crawl from their quarters of hibernation. They were like those who had been dreaming. They were groggy. Their eyes were dark from deprivation of sanctuary light. Excessive time livestreaming worship while reclining had slanted their gait. Their posture was off—too much time Zooming and not enough time singing. They limped, squinted, and hunched themselves back to the Temple. The lame and maimed navigated the streets to their Zion. Those who had sowed in tears a few years earlier were now reaping with shouts of joy (Psalm 126) as they returned. Yet, they were like sheep without shepherds.

So El-Shaddi raised up the descendants of the Anakim and Rephaim. They are from the lineage of Koops, Fasts, Retzlaffs, Harders, Nickels, Neufeldts, Thiessens and Guenthers of all sorts, and other noble clans chronicled in the annals of old. The offspring of these giants gathered to re-invigorate community life through the hatching of plans and the laying of eggs. They would beat on rocks until water issued forth. They would keep passing the manna hat until 12 baskets were filled. They would construct houses of ginger. They would raise the dead; or at least resurrect a vestige of the old Venture Club. They would lead choirs. They would lead crafts. They would, by sheer force of will, erect a Castle to ward off ill feelings of the pandemic.

The long-awaited Castle appeared one September weekend, and it filled the mouths of children, parents, grand-parents, pastors and other parishoners with laughter. Young prophet Eli, at the tender age of two, had a vision of Temple pews being removed to make the Bouncy Castel a permanent fixture in the sanctuary. It would be the new holy of holies, so the young prophet speculated. Children would come from far and wide to bounce within the castle as pastors, singers and scripture readers vocalized long. Alas, the vision of the 4th temple with a Bouncy Castle came to not. But still the people streamed to the Bouncy Castle less Temple. They came for worship. They came for Peace Club. They came for funerals. They came for community. They came for consolation. They came for studies of this sort or that. They were like those coming home carrying their sheaves. And these sheaves of the first fruit offerings were essential.

For it came to pass in 2022 that the ravaging flock known as Flynn returned to Nutanaland. These raptors of flat roof repairs, these torch and tar magpies of misery, this gaggle of gable mending gulls descended once again upon the Holy Hill to polish off work on the gutters. Once more they came like crows at the kill. They came and did not leave until they believed they had picked the bones dry in Nutanaland; it was a valley of dry bones. The vultures demanded payment in full. In the halls of discernment, it was pondered if the bones of Nutanaland could live once more. Treasurer, Chair and Vice Chair all rent their clothes in grief. They covered themselves in sack cloth and rolled in ashes. Then they arose and went to Amity Trust to acquire a hefty loan as tribute to the avian marauders. Still, there is yet a debt to be paid to those called Amity. Oh LORD, may our debts be forgiven even as we forgive those who trespass through our parking lot.

Within this church year there have also been transitions. Queen Elizabeth, our head of kingdoms far and wide, died; long live the King. In spring the Temple dishwasher gave up the ghost, and we miss its passing still—the dishwasher is dead; long live dish pan-hands. Our interim youth worker Zach served capably and departed with dignity. The interim youth worker is gone; long live youth and children's ministry. Luke Bushman came to be governor of the youth and children's realm of church work. May the Force be strong with this one called Luke; may he live long and prosper.

The writ has fallen on this offering; soon it will be finished. The Raven who knocked upon my office door that dreary and weary night was very clear. Speak less than more; wax more off than on. Make not the pulpit your festival of booths lasting seven days. Forget not that the pious souls are already obligated to hear your drivels far too often. In such ways the Raven cawed at me. Therefore, this brings us to the conclusion of the year in review from the 58th chapter of the Deuterocanonical book of Nutana Park Mennonite Church. Let it be so recorded.

Patrick Preheim, co-pastor Nutana Park Mennonite Church