



News@Knox



July-August 2023

WELCOME NOTE FROM OUR MINISTER



When I was a kid, summer was always a time of relaxation and a slower pace of life. I looked forward to sleeping in later, not having much of a schedule and enjoying time with my parents and extended family. It was a time to recentre, re-energize and reconnect in lots of different ways. As an adult, I've found summers to have a different feel – gone are the two-month long stretches of unscheduled time. The pressures of family and work life and all of the daily minutiae are still present. It now takes some intentionality to recentre, re-energize and reconnect.

As we ease into summer, it seems we are not slowing down at Knox. Over the last seven months we have been ramping it up and it just seems to keep going! That forward momentum is great and something to celebrate, but I caution that we all need to take some intentional time to rest as well.

Even if we might not be able to leave our responsibilities behind for the whole summer, I am hopeful that we can all find ways to recharge. One of the things I've been enjoying is Padraig O'Tuama's podcast, "Poetry

Unbound." In his podcast he reads a selected poem, reflects on the poem's theme, and then reads the poem again – each episode is only about 15 minutes long. I've found it to be the perfect respite during the day as I take time to walk or just sit and listen. Perhaps you have a favourite podcast or a favourite book to read that helps you recharge.

Another way to connect and recharge is in our Reflection and Connection service on Wednesdays at 12:30. We will continue these throughout the summer and I invite you to come and be a part of this community and space. It is one hour of music, quiet reflection, conversation and thoughtful readings.

Where can you find some rest and renewal this summer? Maybe it's spending some time walking, hiking or gardening? Maybe it's connecting with an old friend. Perhaps it's some time away in a new place. Whatever it is, I hope you can find some space this summer for rest and renewal and feel God's renewing presence with you.

Peace,

Sheena

KNOX FAMILY NEWS

MEET KEITH MURRAY



Your Newsletter Team was able to sit down with the latest addition to the Knox family – our new intern, Keith Murray. Here's what we learned...

NT: Thank you for making time to speak to us today. We are so happy to have you join the Knox family for the next few months.

Keith: I'm excited to be here and looking forward to getting to know this lovely Downtown community better!

NT: Will you tell us a little about yourself and your journey, please? What would you like your new neighbours to know?

Keith: I'm Candidate for Ordained Ministry in the United Church of Canada and in my final year at Vancouver School of Theology. My time at Knox is part of my "field education". I'm excited to do it here in this really special and energized community in Calgary, working alongside Reverend Sheena. It really is a chance to learn from the best.

I grew up in Calgary. My parents still live here and after several years living in Vancouver, I've really loved being able to live closer to them.

As a child, I went with my parents to the Pentecostal Church, but as I entered my teens, as I began exploring my identity and sexual orientation, I found it wasn't a good fit. My spirituality took on a new path. I started attending open meditation sessions held by the nuns of the Downtown Buddhist Monastery. I became involved in Buddhist communities and other spiritual practices, often "othered" by dominant traditions in the west. I have a Buddhist Name: *Konchok Dawa Gelek*, which is Tibetan for "Virtue and Goodness of the Three Jewel's Moon". It is lovely to have this shared background with with our incredible facilities staff, Jampa!

I graduated with a BFA in Media Arts and Digital Technologies in 2004. After several years working in arts and culture, as an activist and change maker, I left Calgary for opportunities in Vancouver in Theatre creation. It was through my community art projects, that I began working with people finding themselves in vulnerable situations, in the Downtown East Side, and fell in love with the community. I worked as a mental health

support worker. I served at supervised usage sites, detox, palliative care facilities, and mental health housing. When the fentanyl crisis hit the Downtown East Side, I, like many other caring workers supporting peoples affected by trauma and addiction, end up burning out after triaging an unimaginable crisis for far too long.

I became a certified practitioner in holistic and spiritual support under Dr Beth Hedva. I founded the “Nothing Doing” group, creating a community practice around presence and compassionate care in East Vancouver. We would meet to offer each other support and community; to break bread and make a meals together; sing, move and share. Only in hindsight, after I returned to Calgary to heal from the PTSD I had developed working triage during the opioid epidemic did I realise this work was “ministry”.

Back home in Calgary, I began the important work of caring for myself again, after over expending myself in caring for others. Part of my healing, was returning to Church after 15+ years being an Easter and Christmas Christian. I discovered affirming communities for the first time, and not much later, I came across an advertisement for an “Affirming Coordinator” at Hillhurst Church. I looked at the role requirements and responsibilities and I said to myself “who else could do this role?” I applied and after a thorough vetting, was welcomed to bring my leadership to their vibrant community. It didn’t take long for me to realise, ministry was calling, and that it always has been. I began the pathway to ordained ministry. Also at Hillhurst, I, of course, met Sheena, and look back fondly on our time working together there. It has been a few years since I had the blessing to work with her. When I found out she was at Knox, I jumped at the chance to intern here!

NT: That’s such an interesting story! I don’t know of many ministers who have found their way to the UCC via Buddhism...

Keith: Not only Buddhism: I have also practiced yoga for many years. I even learnt to whirl from the dervishes of the Sufi community in Vancouver. I think as someone who has been othered by the Christian faith as a youth. When I left the church, I found a home in those ‘other’ traditions. I am so grateful for all the gifts I’ve found on the outside. What many traditions have in common is that they offer practices that help us do the work of love, the work of creation, of presence. Christianity became the official religion of Roman Empire very early in its history. It obviously gained importance and status in that process, but I think it lost many of the practical, mystical and spiritual practices in favour of creating a cohesion of belief through doctrine, establishment and hierarchy. The Established Church also lost the relational understanding of God in rejecting the Jewish religious tradition from which Christianity sprung.

A return to the practice of the faith is what I’m really interested in. I think much of the Protestant tradition has prioritized “getting it right”, which makes God’s salvation really transactional. Instead, I think, we need to learn not how to be “right”, but how to be in righteous relationships: with ourselves, with God, with each other, and with all of Creation. It’s a subtle but profoundly significant shift. When we practice being in right relationship, rather than being right, we can allow ourselves to be lifelong learners, and practice forgiveness, letting go, and being reborn in each moment.

Many Buddhists will, in fact, tell you that Buddhism is not a religion, but a practice, with practical tools for healing the mind, body, soul and community. Christianity, I believe, has lost much of those practices on its journey. But, we still have to discern: how do we follow the way of Jesus? What is the practice of discipleship?

Jesus wasn’t very prescriptive. He spoke in riddles! Other traditions, have preserved practices and techniques that helped me cultivate the call to Spirit; the courage to listen deeply; the practice of mindfulness to manage distraction and weather discomfort; the capacity to let love flow.

I believe it was Iyanla Vanzant who said: “Everything is done out of love, or the need for love’s presence”. At its core, Christianity is about “returning to love”. When I started working in the Church, many of my friends asked me, “what do you do?” I said, “I have the best job in the world! – I get to remind people every square nanometre of them is totally loved by the Universe. I get to help people find their paths back to themselves, to help remove barriers to Love’s Presence.”

I would say I am intrinsically interfaith. I have learned so much from practicing the Jewish Path of Blessing, the Buddhist Way of Mindfulness, and Indigenous ways of relating to all of Creation. At heart I am an animist.

Science speaks of the hard problem of consciousness: where does sentience emerge out of the evolutionary project of biology? But, what if consciousness—Spirit - is the ground of all Creation and pervades all things? “In the beginning I was there” Chokma/Sophia (Wisdom) says in the Proverbs, much like Prajnaparamita, in the Buddhist cosmology, is considered the womb of all creation. I believe that the Spirit is in everything. If you hear me talking to a tree or an animal, or even an “inanimate” object (in Western terms), that’s not all that unusual. Mari Kondo, who wrote “The Life-Changing Art of Tidying Up”, introduced the world in a subtle way to the animism of her Shinto faith (one of the Indigenous traditions of Japan), and the Western world thought she was nuts, when she said, “tap on your clothes to wake them up before putting them on.” But frankly, maybe we might not feel so lonely in this world, if we can look around and see the sacred in everything. God is in everything, in us, in the soil and in the air, in your underwear!

A friend and teacher, Episcopalian Priest Mathew Wright, shared about the three faces of the trinity as “God within, God beyond and God among,”. Different parts of the world, perhaps, have prioritized aspects of the great Is-ness. Our Christian faith has for many years emphasised the transcendent aspect of **God beyond**, God the “Father”, while Eastern traditions have cultivated practices for connecting to **God within**. The indigenous and animist traditions, have centred a relational **God among**, calling us into relation with each other and Creation.

NT: You have such an exciting perspective. How does Knox fit into that? What brings you to us?

Keith: The chance to work in an inner city community, in Downtown Calgary, with this wonderful congregation, passionate about the arts, social justice, reconcili-action, and making sacred connections through many of its creative facets, is very exciting for me. It felt like a great fit. Knox has always been known as a very welcoming and open community. I am keen to get to know the open-hearted people here and become part of this community. I want us to explore our curiosities together!

My vocational calling is at the nexus where spirituality, creativity, community and our call to social justice meet. Knox is in a process of re-creation. I love nothing more than nurturing the creative, alchemical process of community transformation and renewal. What does it mean to be a people of faith at that place, at this time, in this world? I am excited to offer my support on this journey of discernment and becoming, and to work with Knox as we define the “new”, post-covid reality.

NT: And how can we help you with that?

Keith: I believe that we are made in the image of the Creator, created to co-create. This doesn’t mean becoming manufacturing machines, but mindful communities in relation with God, each other, and all of Creation. We are called to re-create the world in the more beautiful image of God’s Kin-dom, our hearts know is possible. This is what Jesus called us to do.

Being human is to be constantly creating, whether it is a garden, a spreadsheet, a balanced budget, or an economic and ecological crisis. We are creating all the time, in our words and actions, consciously and often unconsciously. Perhaps, what it means to find a faithful practice in the Christian tradition, of following *the Way of Jesus*, is about just this: to more consciously choose what and how we are co-creating. By bringing consciousness to the ways our creations affect others, we remember we are co-creators with all beings on this Earth, and we must heal our relationships with all Creation, to recreate the world in a harmonious way.

That is what I hope I could support in my time with Knox, to acknowledge the sacred worth of all, and find ways for us to step back into the gifts of being a consciously creative community. My hope is that, together, we can cultivate the beautiful seeds of intention, of “making sacred Connections” and create something beautiful and sustainable for the community, and this world.

I want us to be able to learn together and to find comfort in each other, and to experiment, and get creative. If all of this sounds too big, or frightening, the best place to start is with simple **curiosity**. I would invite everyone to lean into your curiosity. Give some space for trying things out, maybe permission to be a bit uncomfortable from time to time. Ask, “what happens if we try this?” The creative process can be messy. We need to get all the colours out of the tubes and on to palette before we can put them on a canvas. There’s room for all of it. We’ll figure out this image of who we are and what we’re becoming together. I suspect, it

will be rather a beautiful thing....what we become, when we give ourselves permission to be curious and explore our creativity.

NT: And now that you have encouraged my curiosity, may I ask you about your tattoos? They are obviously unique and meaningful to you – are you willing to share some of their stories?

Keith: I have hearts on my hands and feet, that represent stigmata. I got them when I married myself in 2008 at the age of 25. I was in Las Vegas in half-man/half-woman drag, married by an Elvis impersonator. It was a protest when equal marriage wasn't passed yet in the US, but it was also a commitment to self-love and a permanent invitation for a conversation about love. [You can read more about it here.](#)

On my clavicle, I have a curly open bracket (one half of an empty set, a mathematic principal for infinite potential), which is also a whale tail as represented in Coastal Salish art. I'm a Pisces, and have always had an affinity for water, the ocean and whales. I got it when I moved to Vancouver and had it placed on my throat to remind me to use my voice. Artist, Gregory Colbert said: "Whales don't sing because they have an answer, they sing because they have a song."

On the insides of my upper arms I have, on the left, my own drawing of St Hildegard of Bingen, from one of her illuminated manuscripts, in which she is transcribing one of her visions. On the right, the Emperor archetype, from the Chilean filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky's reconstruction of the oldest known tarot card deck (Tarot de Marseille). It's a symbol of how to lead with vulnerability and sensitivity, through compassion, trust and empowering others. As an artist, writer and storyteller, I always have my "writer," and "director" with me to guide me in being a conscious co-creator.

On my left shoulder and upper arm, I have "Mr Death". It's from a painting by late artist ManWoman, who lived in Cranbrook, called "Welcome Home". I met him on my first day of art school when I was 17. He was the first artist I met who was bold enough to talk about spirituality in a very secular epoch of contemporary art history. He also talked about his mystical experiences openly; of realising the nature of his soul was both masculine and feminine. This really resonated with me. I got the tattoo when he was welcomed home. It is a reminder for me that death is part of life. Manwoman, created Mr. Death as a friendly face to remind us that it is not sorrow that awaits us, but a welcomer to the Great Love that our souls know as home. Mr. Death is a psychopomp, a bodhisattva, an angel. He's there to remind us there are always helpers; that friends guide us and walk with us, even through transitions that might frighten us. We are never alone. We need only reach out, and help is always there.

My right forearm has several tattoos integrated together. The first of is the moon cycle, which I got after studying under Demetra George, from whom I learned Hellenistic astrology. Her book "Mysteries of the Dark Moon: Embracing the healing power of the Dark Goddess" is brilliant. I'd love to discuss it with anyone who is interested. The Divine Feminine was always associated with the mysteries of the moon; the cycles of life, death and rebirth. On my wrist, you can see the Eye of God, containing a cross-section of the Flower of life pattern from the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah. Within it, is the mandorla, which is a symbol of Mary. If its almond lines were extended, you would see the classical symbol of Jesus, the fish. Together they represent the integrated principle of Trinity.

Twisting up my arm, born out of new moon and full moon, I have the two serpents of the Caduceus, the staff of Hermes. It is a symbol of medicine and healing. They move towards the heart of love on my hand, and they encircle the eye of God. If you look closely, the serpents have grown the four wings of the cherubim and become flying dragons, which are Eastern symbols of protection and blessing (Quanyin, the bodhisattva of compassion, is often depicted riding a dragon). They have four wings, symbolic of the four cardinal directions associated with the four winds and the four faces of the cherubim, correlative with the four elements of the indigenous medicine wheels of many First Peoples of Turtle Island.

On my heart I have some footprints which are for my Grandmother. She was the spiritual heart of our family, and we were very close. Her favourite poem was "Footprints in the Sand". I am sure many of you are familiar with that poem. It is beautiful.

On my right wrist, I have written “Nothing Doing”, which is an homage to one of my teachers, S. N. Goenka, who established centres all over the world for practicing Vipassanna—a technique for mindfulness taught by the historical Buddha, and preserved in Burma (now Myanmar). He would often tell stories, and say something like “you think it has anything to do with this? Nothing Doing!”

When you are on silent meditation retreats, you have a lot of time to be with your thoughts. I contemplated this joyous phrase like a mantra. I realised “Nothing Doing” synthesised Western and Eastern approaches: the spaciousness of “nothing”, or no-thing, often called “emptiness” in Buddhism, which is really a radical fullness of being, the “I-am”, the Is-ness, or sacred presence that is, however, “empty” of all our conceptions. And then the “doing” that has become so much of the Western mission, of our constantly active, extractive, exploitative capitalist world. I wondered: if we practice mindfulness, and pause, and bring some ‘nothing’ to our doing, what might change? Could we recalibrate our doing, so we’re not just chasing our insatiable desire for more, fuelling the unsustainable frenetic pace of perpetual progress at the expense of our existential survivability?

Vipassana, and Buddhist practice gives us tools for not being overwhelmed by our cravings and aversions. They teach us how not to just react, grasping after our desires, which can destructively lead to addiction. Instead, practicing mindfulness helps us tap into a deeper sense of self, where we can consciously choose how to respond. If we practice returning to the spaciousness, we can respond more compassionately; create more intentionally and draw our action from a place of stillness, where we are connected to the Source - the One who loved us into being. “Nothing Doing” is a both a mantra, and a giggle that reminds me not to be so serious and that sometimes doing nothing, just being still, is exactly what I need to be doing!

NT: Thank you so much for your time today. It was lovely to meet you and we are very excited to get to know you better over the summer. Welcome to the Knox family!

Before we go, just time for our (in)famous quickfire questionnaire...

NT Question	Answer
Cat person or Dog person?	Dog
Morning Lark or Night Owl?	Morning Lark (though this is new to me, I was a night owl for many years)
Coffee or Tea?	I love tea, but I need coffee
Summer or Winter?	Fall and Spring – I like the temperate weather and the possibilities of those times of transition
Sunrise or Sunset?	Sunset – growing up, watching the sunset with my family, including my grandmother, in Hawaii was a sacred ritual. It will always be an important time for me.
Chocolate or Vanilla?	Chocolate
Texting or Talking?	Talking. I do like writing letters, and sent text notes memes sometimes, but for the most part, I kick it old school! It can be so easy for us to lean too heavily on technology, and a lot can be lost in translation.
Cake or Pie?	Vanilla Cake, but any pie with rhubarb or Saskatoon berries
Jump from a plane or Climb a mountain?	Climb a mountain
Polka dots or Stripes?	Paisley. 😊

JOIN THE FAMILY – MEMBERSHIP

Reverend Sheena welcomes all adherents (and complete newbies) who want to explore membership of our Knox UCC family. Please contact her for a conversation if you are interested at strotterdennis@kxcalgary.com.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

STAMPEDE PARADE EVENT – The Stampede Parade passes in front of Knox and last year we raised almost a thousand dollars by selling seats and serving coffee and breakfast to the crowd. We need volunteers to support set up on Thursday July 6th and from 8:00 am on Parade Day (Friday July 7th) to greet and seat, host and cater, and with the clean up (around 11:30 am). Please sign up with Sue via the Church Office at sforsyth@kxcalgary.com and 403-269-8382. Thank you.

BREAKING NEWS! All tickets are already sold! We also have all the volunteers we were hoping for. A huge thanks to everyone for stepping forward to help us make this event a success! Thank you.

EXTRA OFFICE VOLUNTEERS TO COVER VACATION – Sue has well-deserved holiday planned between July 15th and August 2nd. Volunteers are needed to be in the office between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm, Monday to Friday during this time. The work will include answering calls, taking messages and dealing with walk-in visitors and queries. If you can help for one or more days during this period, please contact Sue at sforsyth@kxcalgary.com and 403-269-8382. Thank you.

JUNKY JEWELS FOR JESUS – One person's trash is another person's treasure. Thrifting, upcycling and reusing are important parts of our commitment to a better planet and better quality of life for ourselves and our neighbours. We are looking for donations for a "garage sale" to be held over the Summer. Please bring your pre-loved items of all kinds to the church office. Thank you.

Our planned sale dates are Saturday August 12th and Sunday August 13th. We need volunteers on both days and also on Friday August 11th to help with the setting up of tables and displaying all the treasures. Please sign up via the Church Office at sforsyth@kxcalgary.com and 403-269-8382 or let Murray know directly.

NEEDED: AFFIRMING MINISTRIES TEAM LEADER – We are looking for someone to lead our Affirming Ministries Team and help Knox continue to be an open and affirming place for everyone. If you are interested to learn more about this position, please contact Opportunity Knox (Betty Norman Bray or Dianne Trimming) through the Church Office at sforsyth@kxcalgary.com and 403-269-8382 for a confidential conversation.

HEALING TOUCH – Resurrecting our Healing Ministry: Knox Healing Ministry was active for over 20 years pre-covid. The team offered healing sessions to the congregation and others.

The Healing Hands ministry is an opportunity for self-care and meditation, as well as for exceptional service to others. The first step in restarting this important work is to identify a group who would like to receive training. If you are interested to learn more, please contact Elizabeth Campbell or Ricardo Moraes-Pinto through Sue at sforsyth@kxcalgary.com and 403-269-8382. We are looking for an initial group of 5 or 6 people who feel they may be called to this ministry. This core expression of interest would enable us to bring in an outside teacher to train and empower the group in helping themselves and others with this spiritual, energetic healing technique.

ONGOING NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEERS -

- Volunteer hosts, greeters, ushers enable our events and concerts and are always needed. Most rental agreements we host require that we supply ushers. As a result, we always need volunteers. We can't do it without you!
- Scripture & Land Acknowledgement readers for our Sunday services. No previous experience is needed. All readings are assigned and shared ahead of time.

Please support Knox in these important ways. You can go to the Knox website and sign up for the events and positions of your choosing at <https://www.kxcalgary.com/volunteer-signup>. Thank you.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS! WE KEEP MAKING NEW ASKS OF YOU AS WE SEEK TO SERVE OUR NEIGHBOURS AND EACH OTHER MORE FULLY. WE KEEP BEING SUPPORTED AND DELIGHTED BY THE GENEROSITY OF OUR CONGREGATION. YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY.

GOVERNANCE

UPDATE FROM THE KNOX COUNCIL

The Knox Council met for a brainstorming session, led by Keith Murray, on June 13th. It was a stimulating and creative new approach. We are planning another, to continue the work on determining the focus of resources and energy moving forward for Knox.



The Knox Council met on June 20th, 2023. Highlights from this meeting are as follows:

- Rev. Tom Melvin is now an Honorary Associate at Knox United Church, which allows him to perform wedding services at Knox.
- Council is excited to announce that Kay de La Ronde has been appointed as the Ex-Officio Liaison for Grants & Strategic Partnerships for the Knox Council.
- Janet Zatkan reported that the financial audit, which took place in June, has gone well. She has received the draft of the audited Financial Statements for December 31, 2022, which she is reviewing now.
- Janet presented the May 31st financial documents, which show increased revenue and decreased expenses from the same time last year. Much of the revenue increase is from grants. Although targeted givings are higher than last year, they are still 9% below the target for this time of year. This is a reminder of the work still needed, particularly in developing Knox's stewardship programming.
- Jo-Anne Willment and Janet Zatkan are working on a "Gifting" Programme within the development of a business plan. They expect to launch a new campaign in the fall.
- Murray and Chuck are working to provide signage at the 4th street entrance, and on securing the old signs near the front of the building. They are also investigating further security features for the 4th Street door.

For more details of the Council meetings, please contact the Knox office where the minutes are available.

The Knox Council wishes you all a very happy, and safe summer. We thank you for your continued participation, energy, enthusiasm, and support. We look forward to bringing you more updates on the work of the Knox council, in the September Knox Newsletter.

Submitted by the Knox Council: Rev. Tom Melvin, Rev. Bob Mutlow, Rev. Roslyn Campbell, Rev. Sheena Trotter-Dennis, Betty Norman Bray, Dennis Ruf, Janet Zatkan, Norman Fenton, Chuck Curry, Murray Songer, Jo-Anne Wilment, Frank Lam and Lisa McKay.

UPDATE FROM THE MINISTRY & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Ministry & Personnel Committee continues to meet monthly as a team. We also make sure that we check in for a chat with every staff member monthly, to make sure that things continue to go well for everyone.

We have decided to meet in August, mainly to finalise matters relating to job descriptions and contracts in preparation for the planned Autumn staff reviews. So, there will be a fuller update to share in the Fall. In the meantime, we wish you all a good summer!

Submitted by Norman Fenton

KNOX REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Dear friends,

You can keep up to date with Chinook Winds Regional news on their website at https://chinookwindsregion.ca/news-events/?category_name=news.

Reverend Sheena has also shared the link to the latest Regional email newsletter (thank you, Sheena!), which is here: <https://mailchi.mp/dc253a01add6/news-from-and-around-chinook-winds-region-5358958?e=e648d4d4c4>.

We would like to draw your attention to a couple of upcoming items especially aligned with Knox's values, which include:

- Watch a video with Rev. Tony Snow on the History of Indigenous People's day at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKjl7mPd7c0>
- 5th Citywide Interfaith Pride Gathering on 27th August, hosted at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Calgary and also online.



Submitted by Karen Harrison

KNOX COMMUNITY LIFE

PROPERTY TEAM UPDATE



Dear friends,

As we go into the summer, I am sorry to say that the Annex kitchen is showing its age. When the rain and wind hit the flashing from a certain direction, the result is a leak just above the sinks. We are temporarily addressing this with a bucket underneath, which I ask you not to move if you see it there. To properly fix the problem, we will need to get a specialist up onto the roof. We also “lost” the refrigerator this month. It was old and had done good service. I am delighted to tell you that it has already been replaced by the generous donation from a friend of Kay De La Ronde. We also received a second donation of a full-sized refrigerator for the café bar, which you may have seen at the back of the Sanctuary. Sincere thanks to both our benefactors.

In general, this seems like a good moment to mention that if you do have furniture, equipment or fixtures that you are planning to replace or remove at home, do reach out. We may not have a need, but it is surprising how often Knox, or one of our partners, can make good use of working second items. Thank you.

I am sure many of you noticed that the 6th Avenue walls are no longer sporting their historical brass plaques. The larger plaque was vandalised this month. Someone tried to tear it from the building. Fortunately, they did not succeed and the damage to the wall was minimal. However, Sue and Justin took a pro-active approach, removing both plaques to safety indoors. Over the summer, we will set up a display within the building for these valuable, heritage items and replace them on the outside with low-value replicas.

For the summer season, with the Sanctuary open to the public again, we have developed a postcard for the Knox building, which will shortly be available as a memento of a visit to Knox church. As you all know, we will be leveraging our excellent location and the garden by selling front-row tickets to the Stampede Parade and refreshments to the crowds. Last year, this was a successful fund-raiser and did a lot to raise our profile among people coming downtown for the fun. Many thanks in advance to the janitorial team and to the volunteers for the substantial set-up and take-down work required.

I want to wish you all a great summer and look forward to giving you a thorough update of our property management activities in the Fall.

Submitted by Murray Songer

COMMUNITY LIFE

JUNE 4TH – SUMMER BARBECUE IN CELEBRATION OF PRIDE MONTH

To celebrate the start of Pride Month and to enjoy community outside in the glorious weather, our Potluck Sunday in June was held in the Knox Garden. Chuck Curry led the cooking crew and shared some of his exceptional home-made sauerkraut. We enjoyed a summer feast of German sausages, sourced by Betty

Norman Bray and a tableful of potluck desserts. Thanks to Rod, Frank, Murray and everyone who worked so hard to get everything set up and prepared for us.

It was a glorious, sunny afternoon. The lilacs were in bloom. The tables were set, a riot of rainbow colour, and full of people, food and conversations. Many, many thanks to all who made it such a successful event!

It was such a good day, that we have issued a separate “June supplement – PRIDE POTLUCK” photospread, because we have so many photos to share. You can find this on the website.

SOME OF THE BEAUTIES OF KNOX – OUR LABYRINTH PAINTINGS

Anyone who has been inside our beautiful Knox building, for even a moment, knows that it holds many wonderful treasures. This article looks at 2 of Knox’s paintings, prompted by conversations and questions about them from the Wednesday “Connections & Reflections” gatherings.

To sit in the Labyrinth room, while the sunlight pours through the high windows onto the golden floor, with its graphic, flowing labyrinth pattern is as restorative and energising as the community and conversation during the gathering. The oak grain and striking Art Deco design of the 1920s organ in the far corner, glow in the sunlight. And, on the walls, two vibrant modern paintings add colour and emotional energy to the experience.



I claim no insight or special knowledge, so what follows are my own reflections. These modern paintings are not fully representational. They are painted as a series of planes, shapes and colours that create their scenes. Their style, perhaps, makes us work a little to see what is there and what it means. But, for me, as I am “forced” to look and puzzle, then... I see: the softness of the Madonna’s hand cradling the child; the expression of bliss on the infant Jesus’s face, as his cheek presses against his mother’s; the solemnity of the faces of those bringing down the Crucified Christ’s body from the cross; the utter devastation of Mary’s slumped form, even though her face is just a few planes – but who could draw that face, in that moment?

In looking, I also see how these paintings, modern though they undoubtedly are, are clearly part of the ancient tradition of religious painting.

The Madonna and Child is an ancient subject that dates back certainly to the thirteenth Century (the 1200s). Their slightly “off” proportions recall images (icons) made in the Orthodox tradition, where the ancient prohibition against “graven images” has created a deeply respectful, elongated, elegant style that seeks to inspire devotion without blasphemy. For this article, I did some searches on art history on the internet and was struck by the common energy between our work and the Madonnas of the great sixteenth century painter, Raphael. The donor confirmed that our Madonna & Child painting is the artist’s modern

interpretation of the “Tempi Madonna”, painted by Raphael in 1508 and now in the Alte Pinakothek Museum in Munich, Germany. Raphael’s passion for painting the Madonna was unabated during his lifetime. At least 17 paintings on the subject attributed to him are still on display around the world. In the Tempi Madonna painting, Raphael broke from the traditional format for this subject. Previous paintings, including his own, were quite formal, showing the Madonna holding the Christ Child as if presenting Him to the viewer (and the world). Raphael changed the composition and form to show the Tempi Madonna tenderly hugging her child, reflecting the love between parent and child in the world. The artist of our painting deliberately chose this as the source and inspiration for his modern rendering of the Madonna and Child. He chose to offer this beautifully tender composition in his own style, reflecting our modern world.

The same search revealed that our crucifixion painting shares its composition, and even its colour positioning with “The Descent from the Cross” painted in 1435 by the Flemish artist Rogier van der Weyden, which resides in the Prado Museum in Madrid. Again, the intent of the artist was precisely this. Our painting is a homage to this work by van der Weyden, which inspired the artist during a visit to the Prado Museum several years ago. He was deeply moved by the image and committed himself to painting a modern interpretation in his own style. Of particular interest is the positioning of Mary’s body in the painting, she has fainted and is falling in a pose that mirrors Christ’s dead body. Suffering with Christ, she is undergoing her *Compassio, or suffering*. This is one of the few paintings that remained in the artist’s private collection and was sold to our donors only in 2010. In both our paintings, Mary wears the Madonna’s traditional “royal” blue. Reflecting the incredible cost of lapis lazuli, brought overland to Europe from Afghanistan, royal, lapis blue was used for hundreds of years ONLY for the Mary, Queen of Heaven.



When discussing our Labyrinth paintings, we should also know that even the frames are special in their own right. The donors were living in Europe when the paintings were purchased. They commissioned a framer in Bonn, Germany to design and construct the frames. This framer specialized in building frames using methods from the 1500’s, and were also known for refurbishing painting frames for museums across Europe and German embassies. The frames are constructed using special wood from Africa and layered multiple times with a special clay to achieve a silky smoothness. They are then layered with gold leaf and finally finished with a special protective coating.

So, who is the artist? And how did these skilled modern “takes” on traditional themes come to be in our Knox “treasury”?

The artist of both our Madonna & Child and The Descent from the Cross is Rahim Najfar. He is known primarily as a landscape painter whose frequent subject is the Luberon region of his adopted country, France (the Luberon is a mountainous area – a “massif” in Provence approximately 70km north of Marseille, which has been a Regional Natural Park, similar to our National Parks, since 1977).

Born in Tehran in 1945, Rahim received a fine arts education in Iran at the Conservatory there, and subsequently in France at the University of Aix-en-Provence in Aix-Marseille, where he received his Doctorate in History and Civilisation in 1984. He has been professor of drawing and painting at the University of Tehran, at the University of Farabi, (the National University of Kazakhstan) and at the University of Contemporary Art in Aix-Marseille, France. He permanently established his home, gallery and studio (open to the public) in Bonnieux in 1998, where his recent work is on display. His work is also displayed in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the Kerman Museum of Contemporary Art and in Galleries in Sweden, Switzerland and Austria, as well as in a long list of exhibitions over the last forty years throughout Europe. Rahim comes from an artistically talented family. His brother Reza Najfar is an accomplished composer and flute player who lives in Austria. Since 1992, he is a professor for flute at the Tiroler Landeskonservatorium in Innsbruck and the Prayner Konservatorium in Vienna.

The exhibition description of his 2013 exhibition at Gallerie Breteuil in Marseille speaks of him as arriving in Provence in the 1970s as “a painter of the sacred legends of Iran”. Indeed, a quick google search shows that the Cambridge University Press has included him in several publications about Islamic painters. I think we can see something of this decades-long spirituality in our paintings at Knox. Islam recognizes Jesus as one of the great prophets and holds him in esteem.

Rahim paints in a style that is called “Fauvist”, some may refer to it as “Colourist”. Fauvism developed in early 20th Century Europe, where the artistic scene had been broken open in the previous decades by Impressionists like Monet, Renoir and Cezanne. The Impressionists were recognised by their use of colour to represent shadow and light and their tendency to avoid “neutral shades” for unblended, bright pigments, as well as their famous desire to paint “en plein air”, that is, “from life and outside”. This was made possible to that generation of artists by the development of tubes of oil paint and the railways – practical, technological developments that are often overlooked in the world of art!

Fauvism is defined by the strong use of colour, which takes precedence in the paintings over the representational or realistic values retained by Impressionism. The movement began in 1904 and lasted as a movement for a few years. However, its impact was profound and several of its leaders went on to become famous, including Henri Matisse, Maurice de Vlaminck and Andre Derain. The term “Fauvism” is, of course, French and was coined by the art critic Louis Vauxcelles following the 1905 Salon d’Autumne exhibition in Paris, which caused wide-spread outrage in polite society. The term implies “Wild Beasts” whose use of vibrant and unnatural colours and non-naturalistic representation “shocked” the public and critics alike.

The later “Expressionism” of Kandinsky, Rothko and Pollock shared many of these interests. This stream of painting takes the name “Expressionism”, because the artist’s intention in using an often-unnatural pallet, or distortion of shape or perspective, is to “express” (or evoke) emotion. Edvard Munch’s “The Scream” is probably the most famous Expressionist painting and completely illustrates this concept. Considering Rahim’s love of Provence, it is interesting to note that Vincent van Gogh, some of whose most famous works were made in Arles in the 1880s and 1890s, is often described as the first Expressionist painter.

The style of the Fauvist is often described as an extreme development of Van Gogh’s post-impressionism fused with the Pointillism of Seurat, the proto-cubism of Cezanne and the mythological/anthropological thematics of Gauguin.

Rahim is especially known for his love of bold colours. The Fauvist style was a natural fit for him. For those interested in hearing from the artist himself, please find attached a video link where he describes his passion for painting. It does contain some English subtitles, however Rahim speaks in French throughout the video.

<https://youtu.be/iKoRgt9i33c>

Almost all of the information above comes from the donors, who have generously contributed their time to help me with this article. However, I want to share with you an astonishing fact. When I was writing this article, I was looking online at images from art history. Without any foreknowledge or guidance, I stumbled upon the Raphael Madonnas and the van der Weyden “Descent” and immediately recognized their kinship with our own paintings. That I could intuit this through-line is a remarkable testament to his artistry.

So, how did these “Expressive”, “Fauvist” art works from an acclaimed Iranian born artist, now living in Southern France come to Knox?

Our two Rahim Najfar paintings were gifted to Knox by Clayton and Debbie (who, with typical modesty have asked for their last name to be withheld for privacy reasons). The paintings were part of their private collection since 2010, and were a treasured private source of reflection and contemplation. However, they felt the paintings deserved to be enjoyed by the broader public in honor of the artist. In 2020 they began researching a new home for the paintings and decided upon the Knox. They were drawn to the history of Knox, the inclusive philosophy of the Church and its commitment to Calgary’s diverse communities. The peaceful and contemplative nature of the Labyrinth presented itself as the perfect home, and they knew it would please the artist. The paintings were hung in the Labyrinth in December 2020, where they have hung ever since.

Clayton and Debbie’s extraordinary generosity and sensitivity to the Spirit, and to inclusiveness, remain with us in their exceptional gifts to our community. I am sorry that I am unable to thank them in person. I hope that through this article, they might come to learn that their kindness is still deeply appreciated by many who use the Labyrinth room for spiritual practice.

I hope that the next time you are at Knox, you will look into the Labyrinth and take a moment with these paintings: originals of light and colour; hand-crafted with talent and spirit; generously shared... Unique – like Knox itself.



Submitted by Karen Harrison (with grateful thanks to Clayton and Debbie, and to Murray Howland for his help with research). Pictures of Raphael’s Tempi Madonna and Rogier Van Der Weyden’s “The Descent from the Cross” sourced from Wikipedia.

CALGARY ALLIANCE FOR THE COMMON GOOD - SUMMER 2023 UPDATE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

The Annual Report is now out, in print and online. You can download it by going to the website: www.calgarycommongood.org Here is a synopsis of the work we did:

Campaigns:

- 1. Municipal Election:** Through “Coffee with a Candidate” sessions and hosting a Mayoral Forum, we obtained commitments to support Truth and Reconciliation, address mental health issues, support transit and set a net-zero climate target for the city along with a plan to get there.
- 2. Mental Health:** One of the gifts of the pandemic is that it has moved mental health from the shadows into our shared public consciousness. Of particular concern is the mental well-being of children. Our members wrote letters, signed petitions and met with government officials. The result was that, over the summer, the government announced \$197M million for school-based mental health supports and pediatric rehabilitation. Our team has also continued to provide mental health training and education, including psychological and mental health first-aid workshops and training around resilience and grief management.
- 3. Truth and Reconciliation:** After initial failures in convincing the Calgary Police Service to fund additional liaison officers, we kept meeting with CPS leadership. We are seeing movement on the issue now. CPS is creating an Indigenous Hub: they have brought in a contractor from Ts’suu T’ina, and we have been told that they are hiring two more Indigenous Liaison Officers. Because we have had good work from a strong team, we are moving in the right direction. We are also now working closely with the Indigenous Gathering Place team in Calgary, providing support under their direction, to work with city officials in the transfer of land from the City to create the gathering place. Finally, our education projects continue. We have hosted two “Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization” processes, with about 140 participants attending, as well as hosting a workshop on Implicit Bias.
- 4. Environment:** In conjunction with the Climate Hub, we have had several successes this year. We succeeded in a campaign to have ENMAX commit to setting a net-zero target by 2050. Now that the provincial and federal governments have followed through on their commitments to funding the Green Line, construction has begun. In the municipal election, we asked candidates to make a commitment for Calgary to set a net-zero emissions target, and to create a plan to get there. We met with city councilors as they began their work, and presented them with shortbread – because time is short to take action on climate change. There is a tremendous economic opportunity in this transition. How might this opportunity be shared justly?

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023 & STRATEGY TEAM MEETING

I attended this meeting on behalf of Knox United. Relevant items at the AGM included an election of Board officers, a recognition of new members and of old members who have dropped out, mainly, in the case of churches, for lack of funding. The Strategy Meeting took a number of decisions: to begin the Fall Year with a Foundations Training, tentatively for the third weekend in September.

Also, we are asked to work on having a Core team ready to participate in this training and to begin the process of deciding what we, as a congregation, would like/need to address at Knox to grow and interact with the neighbourhood around us. A small team will continue work during the month of July, mostly in establishing and maintaining relationships at City Hall and with the Industrial Areas Foundation and Vancouver and Edmonton Alliances.

Debi Andrus has resigned as Interim Chair of the Board of the Calgary Alliance – this was planned some time ago, as she has many other commitments.

EVENT

Stampede Breakfasts: The Calgary Alliance is providing a handy list of area Stampede breakfasts, mainly hosted by Alliance members and allies. Check it out at: <https://www.calgarycommongood.org/stampede>. Submitted by Susan Wood

POETRY CORNER

STEPPING OUT by Susan Wood

If we step out
one fine day
looking to a cup of coffee
looking to the coming back
looking to evening
in the morning
if we go out
in order to return,

if we step out
into our beginnings
into our endings
by the unexpected bus
by failed brakes
by a drunken fool
if we stumble and fall
into whatever path
was not intended,

if we step out
into this ordered world
and find the simple
chaos underneath
how very surprised
we will be
in going off the edge
of life
everlasting.



LINKS

Follow Knox on Social Media:

Check out our refreshed website at www.kxcalgary.com

Follow us on FaceBook at <https://www.facebook.com/KnoxYYC>

Follow us on Instagram at <https://instagram.com/knoxunitedcalgary>

Follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/KnoxYYC

For any further information on anything in this newsletter, please contact Sue in the Office at sforsyth@kxcalgary.com

Photo credit, as always, to Carey Barrett and Karen Harrison with thanks.

CALENDAR – JULY 2023

*NOTE: We are taking a summer break and there will be no potluck lunch after Communion on July 2nd or August 6th. We will recommence with our first Potluck lunch of the Fall on September 3rd.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 th 10:30 Sunday Worship	26 th	27 th Multi- Culturalism Day	28 th 12:30 Connections & Reflections	29 th	30 th	1 st Canada Day
2 nd 10:30 Sunday Worship (Communion Service)*	3 rd Canada Day Public Holiday	4 th	5 th 12:30 Connections & Reflections	6 th	7 th Calgary Stampede Starts 08:00 Watch the parade at Knox (Ticketed event)	8 th
9 th 9:30 Scratch summer choir rehearsal 10:30 Sunday Worship – Stampede Sunday 1	10 th	11 th	12 th 12:30 Connections & Reflections	13 th	14 th	15 th
16 th 9:30 Scratch summer choir rehearsal 10:30 Sunday Worship – Stampede Sunday 2	17 th	18 th	19 th 12:30 Connections & Reflections	20 th	21 st	22 nd
23 rd 9:30 Scratch summer choir rehearsal 10:30 Sunday Worship	24 th	25 th	26 th 12:30 Connections & Reflections	27 th	28 th	29 th
30 th 19:30 Scratch summer choir rehearsal 10:30 Sunday Worship	31 st	1 st	2 nd 12:30 Connections & Reflections	3 rd	4 th	5 th

AUGUST HIGHLIGHTS

Junky Jewels for Jesus – the Great Garage Sale

August 12th and 13th at Knox