



WILMOT UNITED CHURCH WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

For the Week of May 25, 2020



The Very Rev. Dr. Peter Short

Peter writes:

Silence.

I had an introduction to silence one afternoon in the stroke unit at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto. I was a student of theology doing a unit of clinical pastoral education. My supervisor had given me a list of names and room numbers. That's all I had - names and room numbers.

I found a room number, entered, and introduced myself as a student chaplain. There was no verbal response from the man lying in the bed. I saw tears running down his cheeks. I could see in his eyes that he was acknowledging my presence, but he couldn't speak. The stroke had taken his speech.

I don't remember what I said to him. I didn't know what to say. At that moment we were both speechless, each in his own way. The silence was total, a looming vacancy in the air. I do remember the last thing I said to him as I was leaving - fleeing. I said, "Have a nice day."

Have a nice day?!?

All I had was a name and a room number. I had no skills, no remedies, no answers, no news, no confidence, no prayer, nothing. That was 45 years ago and as you can tell, the man in tears is near me yet.

But this is how we learn, we who sooner or later find ourselves at the end of remedies, end of answers, end of the known world. We begin the learning of what we have to give when we have nothing to give. It's a hard lesson, a lesson in mystery, in unselfing and in trusting ourselves to the grace of God.

Ministers often learn this, if we ever learn it at all, in a supervised setting. But we all have to learn it somewhere. If not in a hospital room then in a police station or on a park bench - somewhere.

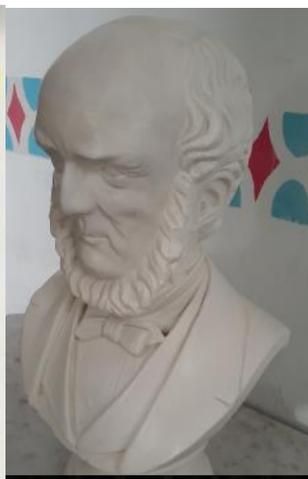
Silence.

I'm thinking about it because this is my last contribution to our newsletter until September (as a staff member on 3/4 time I have a quarter of the year off). Though I will be in "radio silence" I know now that silence is not empty. Rather, it is a form of presence. My silence will be peopled by memories, prayers and gratitude for the many ways in which I have been encouraged and supported in this ministry that Ellen and I share. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful community. It's such a privilege.

Until September,
Peter



Colton



Barb's family on Mother's Day



Peter, Justin & Sue



Barb & George



Emma, Alice & George



Cliff

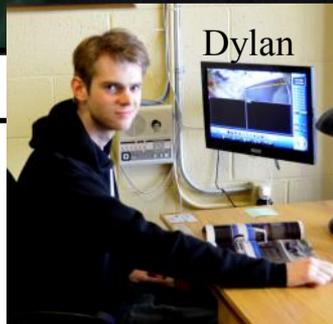


Mary



Sheree

Photo by Keith Minchin



Dylan



Rick



Reverend Ellen Beairsto

Ellen writes:

Sheree Fitch, well-known author and recent reader at Wilmot's Bedtime Stories, wrote: "As long as we have stories, we will never be alone." What a wonderful thought.

I often think back to when stories were passed down from generations to generations and then finally written down by scribes creating our "Bible." Years would have passed but the stories have lived on.

The Rev. Cliff Moase once told me that when he heard that a tree was to be cut down, he would head over to retrieve a piece from the fallen tree. With the skill of a craftsman, Cliff would turn this piece of wood into a beautiful bowl. Cliff would note where the wood had once been – the beginning of a fine story.

Mary Pratt, a well-known Canadian artist who grew up in Fredericton & Wilmot, wrote in the beginning of a book on her paintings: "As preparations for this book began, I was confronted with paintings, drawings and prints – all the work I'd done over a period of at least sixty-five years. Every image recalled its making – the place where it had its beginning, the people I was involved with at that time and my preoccupations while I worked."

I have been blessed over the years to hear the stories of people's lives as I sat around many kitchen tables. Behind every picture in this week's collage, there is a story. You, as the observer, may or may not know that exact story but it may well trigger memories & stories that belong to you. Treasure those stories, those memories.

Peter, enjoy your summer. Thank you for your support and your wisdom. We will all look forward to your return.

Peter Short and Ellen Beairsto share an interim ministry at Wilmot United Church as the congregation prepares to call a new ministry team.