

ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

HUMANITY: INTRINSICALLY ARTISTIC

by

Ilona Marilyn Noble

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## Abstract

This paper was written to celebrate the human propensity for creating art in its broadest sense, of living life in artistic ways. The definition of ‘art’ for this paper did not refer to that which is produced on a full-time basis or to provide a living. Instead it meant that everyday people approach daily life with creative ideas for enriching their physical surroundings, and the people around them. Since prehistoric times it is evident that humans have felt moved to represent daily life in two- and three-dimensional forms. The artistic inclination appears early in a child’s development and deserves recognition and encouragement. Becoming alert and sensitive to the people in one’s surroundings yielded overwhelming evidence of creativity and artistic endeavour. Living ‘artfully’ is not limited by age, gender, or circumstances. A large portion of the paper specifically highlighted the innate musical sense people have. Many examples are cited which indicate that most people possess musicality, whether tonal, rhythmic or harmonic. Several original compositions formed the last section of the paper. It was fascinating that simply becoming more aware unlocked the writer’s appreciation of the rich abundance of creativity in everyday life.

## Acknowledgements

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The people in my two home towns provide much of the material for observations in this paper, and I appreciate the rich evidence thus gleaned.

Above all, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to engage in such a wonderful experience as the courses, and the Victoria Conference, to which they are closely linked.

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## Humanity: Intrinsically Artistic

### Preface

When I enrolled in this degree program, it was with the intent of "majoring" in Worship Arts because of the work I do in the local church. I am involved in music ministry, planning special programs, and presiding over the total worship service two or three times a year. In the church which I regularly attend, the choir has presented many cantatas and dramatic presentations, particularly at Christmas and Easter. Using costumes, props and drama brings the subject matter to life, and hopefully makes it more meaningful to the congregation.

When the designation, *worship arts*, was no longer part of the Master of Theological Studies Program, I took a variety of elective courses, particularly two in art. One was *An Introduction to Art Therapy*, and the other was *Metaphor in the Arts and Spirituality*. The deeply meaningful experiences in these two courses coupled with the academic results were largely responsible for the idea that everyone is artistic. I became more sensitive to the creativity of the people around me, from the very young to the elderly.

Continued inspiration came from attending an annual event in Victoria, B.C. called *Epiphany Explorations*. As I work in music ministry, it has been interesting to learn from and engage in music with some of the most eminent musicians and composers of the United and Anglican hymnbooks, who shared their inspiration, theology, and practicality. It was in Victoria, too, that I encountered a wide spectrum of worship incentives, styles and different spiritual practices. For example, Muslim chanting and

praying with Raheel Raza, and using music and art as aides to prayer and contemplation. I feel strongly that God not only led me to embark on this course of studies, but took me to Victoria to fill in the gaps and enrich my learning.

It was particularly exciting and rewarding to hear and see speakers whose books I had to read for my courses: John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, and Sally McFague. Over the course of seven years I have heard well over one hundred resource people speak about a variety of theological and spiritual topics. Part Five of this paper is a collection of original poems and songs which represent a journey, from my geographical home, along a route of several hundred kilometers to an inspirational destination, and the return trip with new ideas and enthusiasm. However, the journey is not just physical, but contemplative and spiritual.

After attending seven of these events I feel more confident that through my experiences at St. Stephen's College and *Epiphany Explorations* I can serve God in my church even better. Although I usually conceive of my spiritual development as a journey, when I consider the two-fold experiences of my college courses and the event in Victoria, the metaphor of a weaving or tapestry also seems appropriate. The inspiration and nurturing from both blend, enrich, and color each other.

.When I reflect that the three highest marks I have received in post-secondary education were in art courses to do with art (both analytical and experiential), it occurred to me that *everyone* has the potential to be artistic or creative. Though the final section of the paper consists of poetry and music from the deepest places of my emotions, spiritual history, and recent experiences, I have not used any previous course material in this

paper. I wrote many poems and songs while attending collegiums and courses, shared them with my classes, and frequently used them in term papers. The songs and poems included here are those which fit the concept of a journey.

My methodology is to write the poem or text first, then set it to music, which comes very naturally. It is as if the words 'sing themselves'. I have dabbled in photography and painting, but it is through music that I am best able to express myself and communicate with others.

Based on my observations of people around me (including a local Hutterite colony), I feel very strongly that *everybody* is artistic in some way. More specifically, I believe our brains contain a strong *musical* sense, though it varies in type and degree from person to person.

Embarking on this degree path has been rewarding and exhilarating, and I felt there was more scope for me to share what means so much to me in and Integrative Study rather than a thesis.

## Introduction

Upon reflecting about my life, and observing people around me, I have come to the conclusion that everyone has what I shall refer to as *artistic awareness*, and has the ability to exercise artistry in some way. It is basically an integral element of being human, being spiritual, and being fulfilled. And interesting phenomenon that I have noted about writing my papers is that, in large part, they are open-ended. When I have decided on a topic, inevitably my consciousness about it becomes heightened. I become attuned to evidence to support my ideas, from the people with whom I interact, the places I go, the reading I come across, sometimes quite randomly, and the things I do.

As I write this I'm finding it is almost a journal of what I notice about creativity around me. As I come cross a new insight, or see something which pertains, I try to put it in the context of humanity being intrinsically artistic.

I must make special mention of a book loaned to me by a former colleague, which exactly supports the contention of this paper. It is *Living Artfully (create the life you imagine)* by Sandra Magsamen. In it she alludes to all sorts of creative ways of conducting our everyday lives: by what we do within our immediate surroundings, what and how we communicate with one another, and how we relate to our loved ones. Magsamen feels that many people craving happiness and emotional well-being really need to identify what uplifts and enriches them. They also need to recognize imagination, and feel free to express it. "Life is a work of art and we are its artists."<sup>i</sup> The book is a kind of recipe book, map, and instruction book all in one, to show us how we can enlarge our concept of creative living. It was published in 2006, yet makes no mention of technology,

which I find heartening and refreshing. So much in the book echoes what I talk about and truly shows that *everyone* is creative, usually in ways of which they are not aware.

In her book *Silver Boxes*, Florence Littauer echoes the ideas in Magsamen's *Living Artfully* by showing how creativity can be used for encouraging others who are sad, discouraged, or lacking in confidence with words, gestures, tokens and actions. The idea of silver boxes is symbolic of that encouragement, but can consist of real tiny foil covered boxes with tiny bows on top (provided the recipient understands the concept) as tangible reminders of optimism. Littauer has presented the idea in lectures, classes and retreats, and includes feedback from these in the book. She suggests that people need to discover their own *unique* ways of expressing kindness and encouragement to others. One letter she received was from a ten-year-old girl who undertook to teach others in her neighborhood to develop their artistic talent by creating and giving their own "silver boxes" out of origami. Whether it is via one-to-one conversation, hosting a friendly get together, or sharing emotion, every person has the potential to communicate caring and compassion with individuality and integrity. The book also encourages readers to try new things, to trust their inclinations, and pursue their dreams: "We all do have something way inside that we'd like to say. We are all born with some amount of creativity."<sup>ii</sup>

Another letter quoted in the book was written by a young mother to *her* mother expressing thanks for the example of tasty cooking, home decorating, and singing to her children that she learned in the simple home in which she grew up. Another note shares how a distressed child's "messy" artwork was gently transformed by a mother into colorful pictures with lots of clouds and flowers, to the child's delight and satisfaction.

A friend recently told me how she and her sister began exchanging a sort of diary about their childhood. It went back and forth at birthdays and other special times, and each sister would write how she felt about things that happened to her, and how she valued the other. They found it so rewarding that they are going to include their mother in their circle of memories. What a lovely gift for all of them to treasure! This is exactly the kind of thing Magsamen and Littauer are advocating as artful living.

"Few of us will ever make our living as writers, actors, musicians, artists or dramatists, but we should never wipe out the possibility. We should encourage ourselves and others to pursue their dreams."<sup>iii</sup>

I know people who did not achieve a high level of skill or polish, who, nevertheless explored and experimented with all sorts of creativity. My mother's main success in crafts was through her knitting, crocheting and embroidery (especially petit-point). But she also took a home course of piano lessons, did copper and leather tooling, made paper-tole pictures, and was an avid gardener. Although my father never patented anything, he made all kinds of manual and mechanical tools, designed grain augers, and other work-saving farm implements.

I believe, through my observations and reading, that human beings, of all the members of the animal kingdom, are uniquely able, not only to appreciate 'beauty', but to recognize the mind's potential to concretize abstract ideas, and most importantly, to represent or recreate them. As the Jansons write in *The Story of Painting*: "People are not the only animals who have imaginations, but we are the only ones who can tell each other

about it. If we tell each other in words we have made a story out of it, and if we take a pencil and draw it, we have made a picture."<sup>iv</sup>

An elephant may enjoy splashing paint on a canvas, but that does not mean it has knowingly created something pleasing to behold, or that a dog who 'sings' along with certain sounds is aware of making music. I believe that other animals have brains developed enough to problem-solve, play, and to use tools and telepathic sense of love, loyalty and death (to which numerous stories of dogs and horses can attest). However I *do* believe that only human beings can appreciate something for its intrinsic value, can symbolize emotions, or create something from deep within their psyches which satisfies the need of self expression. Most importantly, people are the only beings who can relate to the spiritual component of life, and could recognize a deity as the bestower of all art, to the observer and the artist.

Creativity begins with an idea. Sometimes the ideas come from feelings, or when we 'see' something in a new way. For example we may see pictures in the clouds on a summer day, or in the abstract swashes of color in ceramic tile. An example of the former occurred when I was 13 years old. I had an overwhelmingly spiritual experience of Jesus as a result of reading the Lloyd C. Douglas book *The Robe*. When I finished reading it, I was moved to tears, and looked into the western sky to see a cloud image of a shepherd with a crook. To me that was the Good Shepherd, and I fell asleep that night marveling at Christ's sacrifice for those before, and those yet unborn. To me, the experience was sent by God, and was not merely a trick of my imagination. Pat B. Allen in *Art is a Way of Knowing* says, "Our imagination is the most important faculty we possess...imagination is

the deepest voice of the soul."v Doing something creative is a way to delve into the imagination, become more flexible, and see more possibilities.

Comparable to cloud formations, recognizable shapes were found in the 'swirly' tone-on-tone patterns in the ceramic tiles in our bathroom. For instance, both my children 'saw' a monkey face in the tiles! I only learned of it when they were both grown, and I had to go and find it for myself. I was prompted to spend some time looking for other images.

We are able to verbalize these images, which is the principle behind the famous Rorschach inkblot test. This is what I refer to as *artistic awareness*. It may not be the most accurate term, but it is what I mean by using our imaginations to appreciate and/or create something. It is a way of living our everyday lives; we may not become artists in the sense that we are well-known for our output, are galleried, or are paid for our art, but we see the possibilities for creativity in the world in which we live and move.

An interesting point brought up by the Jansons is that the creative persons sometimes do not realize what they are creating until it is done. In other words the *process* can yield a different outcome from that which was the original intent. I found this to be true in the hands-on art courses I took. I would be making something in keeping with an idea I had, when it evolved into something else; it took on a life of its own. Inevitably, the product was more expressive or powerful than my original intent. This occurrence is what, in my spiritual life, I attribute to God working through me. It has also happened during my writing/musical endeavours. I have an idea, but during the process, the means to the goal changes direction, yielding a more satisfying product.

Sharing that creation may or may not necessarily be part of the process: self-expression does not *depend* upon others' reception or acceptance of the product. But, when shared, there is usually some kind of reaction in the observer, whether positive or negative. Some art may seem quite repulsive, but even at that it evokes a response.

For the purpose of this paper, art does not necessarily mean *skill* in the dictionary sense, but the appreciation and representation of life around us, or evoking emotion through arousing our senses, and achieving a spiritual satisfaction within us. I firmly believe in my title: that everyone is intrinsically artistic, even though it may be left undiscovered or undeveloped. Even if people do not feel compelled to *express* their creativity, they can have an emotional response to their environment: tears, laughter, horror, surprise, awe, etc. And yet, many things people do in daily life reflect artistic awareness. The root of *create* is a Latin word meaning to grow. Everyone grows, and so should our imagination, experiences, goals and dreams.

Florence Littauer, in her book *Personality Plus* postulates four distinct personality types: Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, and Melancholic. In her opinion the Melancholy type is the most likely to be overtly creative, often in multiple ways. According to her descriptors, the Melancholy persons appreciate the beauty of the world, have the innate talent to create something very original and have an eye for detail. They can exhibit talent as musicians, artists, philosophers, poets and writers, and are more likely to appreciate similar giftedness in others. They are moved by those who excel in various artistic pursuits, react emotionally, are attuned to natural wonders, and spend an inordinate amount of time *listening to music*. I do not believe that Littauer is saying that

people in the Melancholic grouping are the only ones who are intrinsically artistic, but that they are most likely to be. If one reads the biographies of many great artists (da Vinci, van Gogh, and Glenn Gould, to name a few) the Melancholy temperament is very evident. Some of the characteristics are: being deeply emotional, contemplative, genius prone, sensitive to others, perfectionist, and detail conscious. We usually refer to it as eccentricity! Perhaps to devote oneself to the creation of art, it is necessary to have these traits to achieve success.

While visiting our minister at her home I saw half a dozen beautiful pencil sketches on her dining room wall. They were winter scenes of the life of a trapper. The artist started to do this work at about forty years of age, had a workshop (later destroyed by fire) then just as abruptly stopped. He used to tell people that he 'saw' the picture in his mind, and committed it to paper. One of three well-known painters in our small town operated the same way, not always from real life, or photographs, but from this inner vision.

## Part One: A Brief Overview of the History of Art

The creative drive has been a part of being human since prehistory. The earliest communication among human beings that we can attest to is artistic. Prehistoric peoples used drawings and paintings in protected places to leave messages about their environment (good hunting, danger, etc). Two-and-three-dimensional art both appeared up to 30,000 years ago.

It seems logical to me that the type of art produced was dependent on many things: the materials at hand, environmental conditions, and experimentation. In a wooded area whittling and carving is probably; where clay and mud are found forming and shaping could take place; where some rocks was recognized as harder than others chipping and sculpting could happen; if berry juice could stain skin it might be used in intentional ways, etc. In a prehistoric culture, as in any other, there were people with different duties, skills, talents and personalities. When survival needs were met, there was time to explore, experiment and create, be it games, music or objects. If one can shape a bowl, why not decorate it? <sup>1</sup>

Where caves or overhangs provided natural shelter from the elements, incised and painted images survived. We cannot know when coloration was added to drawing, however the wonderfully preserved cave paintings in France show both. A beautifully colored dapples horse dating back about 20,000 years ago is visible in a cave at Pech-Marle, France. The subjects were simple: humans and animals in the basic connection of

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<sup>1</sup> These are my own conclusions, from reading and observing people.

survival. Background was rarely shown. Ochre, oxides, chalk and charcoal were used, and the cave walls allowed for large freedom-of-movement illustrations.

Figures in the cave painting in France were usually shown from the side view, yet show amazing symmetry and movement. I wonder if the need to communicate through images stirred in some of the illustrators and artisans a sense of observation, detail, and experimentation which singled them out as superior to their peers, resulting in their designation as an 'artist'.

The convention of showing figures in profile flowered in about 1500 B.C.E. in frescoes in Egyptian temples and tombs, yet they were able to portray life in great detail.

In Mesoamerica (roughly today's Mexico), early ceramics in the Tequahan Valley date from 2000 B.C.E. The culture yielded all kinds of three-dimensional items, some decorated with inlay, and some color application: dishes, statues, columns, and figurines.

In some parts of Africa, incised art dating from 5000 B.C. has survived. In Micronesia incised *pottery* fragments date from between 1000 and 2000 B.C. In every timeline going back to 2000 B.C. E. three-dimensional objects were the earliest creations to show heightened skill and sophistication.\*<sup>2</sup>

The drum is considered to be the 'first' instrument other than the human voice. Primitive peoples found that striking something made far-carrying sound. As they experimented with materials, the striker and the struck became more sophisticated, e.g. skin stretched across a hollow log made a different sound from the hollow wood itself.

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<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is based on the *Milestones in Culture* timelines in National Geographic's *Peoples and Places of the Past* (National Geographic Society, 1983), 44, 66, 86, 116, 158, 274, 318, 336 and 380.

Aside from being useful to communicate over long distances, drumming could be used for entertainment, and ritual.

Retired Park Warden Sid Marty wrote about hearing a guitar at a campfire, and how it can evoke an image of our human ancestors:

"...a solitary hunter hidden at the forest edge, idly plucking his fingers across a taut bowstring as he waits for a meal to walk out on the meadow. As he listens to the liquid 'plonk' of the deer sinew echoing in the clearing, perhaps an idea forms between sound and sensation. He was the first artist: one of a long line of those creators who are always seeking a road that leads through death and beyond, seeking the medium that will carry their spirits into the future. It is a human voice that speaks through those strings, transformed by vibrations of rosewood and catgut." <sup>vi</sup>

Artistic creation has long been tied to the idea of the spiritual or religious expression. Even today, in parts of Africa, South America, the Arctic, and Polynesia art is used as magic and in ritual to invoke or appease spirits and gods. And if we look back to prehistory this is borne out by the relics. In his book *The Artist*, Edmund Feldman includes a chapter describing what he calls shaman art. As early as the Stone Age (the earliest age of human culture when stone tools were first utilized) there were carvings, and later, drawings produced, to which anthropologists attribute ritual significance. The persons whom they think used these objects were "occasionally a woman, but most often a man, who is a combined sorcerer, healer, priest, psychiatrist, magician, artist....he does not specialize. But this person whom we shall call a *shaman* is truly an artist, and from the surviving evidence, a very good one." <sup>vii</sup> From Feldman's list of attributes we can see

that ordinary persons, not just those with a special function, or those we label 'artists' have the potential to be expressive and creative.

A book called *Visions of the Goddess* explores the goddess figure from very ancient times throughout history. Perhaps Feldman is being slightly chauvinistic in his contention that the majority of the shamans mentioned above were male! The goddess most closely equated with the very earth itself, and the womb of creation held the earliest implications of Beauty and Creativity. Sophia, the Virgin of Light is considered to be the ancient Wisdom, or the Word before creation mentioned in the beginning of John's Gospel.

"Many (ancient cultures) portray the unknowable or God as the light of the world, which is often personified in a feminine figure, seen as the manifestation of Nature....The Shekinah (of the Hebrews) is the emanation of Yahweh, or God.....she is the activating energy that allows Yahweh to use His wisdom and creativity."<sup>viii</sup>

She is alternately known as Beauty, Trustworthiness, and the Essence of Purity. The phrase 'walk on uneven ground', or going for a walk in Nature, is like the Navajo equivalent of 'walking in Beauty'. It reconnects us organically to the very foundation of creation. The word *saunter* comes from the French, meaning saint-terre or holy ground.

About 30,000 B.C.E., in deep caves and grottoes, which were probably places of ritual, we find vivid depictions of animal and human forms. Many of these, and early three dimensional figurines are female, and celebrate and honour the Great Earth Mother. The undeniable connection between the human appreciation of beauty and its representation have been made. From the cave painting in Lescaux, France to the petro

glyphs in Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, people have demonstrated that they are awed, inspired, and compelled to *depict* life.

In the Americas, artistic output grew substantially as people became settled in agricultural communities. The earliest forms portrayed were deities connected with growing and harvesting crops. In a recent *United Church Observer* article, evidence is cited which suggests that art, particularly in architecture, was *not* dependent on static, communal living. On a mountainous ridge at Gobelke Tepe (which means pot-bellied hill) in Turkey is a series of huge circular structures consisting of incised pillars joined by stacked stone walls. What is missing at this site is evidence of settlement; water reservoirs, fire pits, foundations of dwellings, etc. Archeologists believe that the huge construction was a monumental sanctuary, or pilgrimage site for nomadic hunter-gatherers to visit for ritual purposes. Animal bones litter the site, and the pillars are decorated with wild animals and symbols reminiscent of stone-age cave paintings.

I think that the naive, simple forms in the work of children are very similar to the initial experimentation with materials of a prehistoric group or tribal craftsman. In both cases, observation, experimentation, and skill lead to increasing skill and embellishment.

## Part Two: Child Art As the Beginning of a Person's Journey

Feldman devotes a whole chapter to Child Art which constitutes an integral part of a culture's creative output, and begins the personal artistic journey. It begins at a very early age, and is worth nurturing both at home and at school.

Because drawing or scribbling is such a spontaneous activity for all children (whether done on paper or in the dust or snow), it is logical to connect the exploration of art to biological human development.

Child art became a subject of serious consideration in the early twentieth century. In chapter 3 of *The Artist* Feldman discusses child art as "becoming recognized as an independent mode of expression, governed by its own laws, and capable of being admired for its own qualities."<sup>ix</sup>

Around 1906, Picasso's borrowings from African, Polynesian, and prehistoric Mediterranean art inspired an awakened interest in children's art because it was similar in its naiveté and simplicity. It was considered exotic art and because it was aesthetically fascinating and strongly expressive, people began to look at it as an independent genre. Child art was considered spontaneous, and natural, not having had rules and strictures applied to it. The child is subject to the same motivations, imagination and need to express, as an adult.\*<sup>3</sup>

Having taught in the primary grade for over thirty years, I have seen a great deal of child art, and have been able to see the development of a child's artistic facility. Most

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<sup>3</sup> This is from Chapter 3, Feldman, Edmund, *The Artist* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982).

children enjoy, or *can* enjoy art if they are allowed to follow their own interests, and express them in their own ways. I heard of a little girl in Grade Four who had to redo a piece of art because it was not 'right'. The child was devastated, and rightfully so. I think that teachers who have to have art sessions in their classes should be taught to stimulate creativity, and not to impose rigid criteria about line, shape and color. Notice I didn't say 'teach' art, because I don't believe it needs to be taught: it is already within us.

Some children love to 'draw' people (especially their families), others prefer cartoon characters, trucks and other big machines, fantasy figures (especially princesses) or scenes. Many times, when asked about their favorite thing in school, children will rank art right up at the top, with recess!

Some children do not go far in the drawing of the human figure. At the same age, one can draw nothing but stick persons, while another adds the right color for eyes and hair, and even typical clothing. But the first child may draw unbelievably accurate and detailed John Deere tractors. I recall a boy whose family owned the John Deere dealership in town, who could only visualize arithmetic operations in terms of tractors!

Three of my most treasured art mementos are a splatter-painted mountain ash leaf sprig, a beautifully drawn, colored and haloed bunch of flowers, and a duck on a pond whose body interrupted the delicate reeds behind it. I have returned those pieces to the children's mothers, who were thrilled to have them. By the way, the first two pieces were by sisters who were in my class in different years, the duck by a little boy who had been diagnosed with A.D.D., and all of the students were only in Grade Two. A note of caution

though: just asking children to 'color' pre-drawn material rarely yields enjoyment, satisfaction or an eye-pleasing product, especially in the case of boys.

As a grandmother of four, ranging in age from 12 down to 3, I have continuing opportunities to watch art in process. My Granddaughter (the 12-year-old) loves to draw and color people, and flora and fauna from Nature, while the 6- and 7-year old boys would rather play with *Lego*, play-dough, or finger paint: something with texture and solidity. The inventions created with *Lego* are fascinating, and do not depend on the kits and booklets that come with them. We have also made castles out of cardboard, egg cartons and other papier-mâché cartons. Any grandparents worth their salt need to have a lot of media and material handy, so that the children can play, explore and create. That includes lots of different coloring apparatus (from crayons to food coloring), play-dough and finger-paint (best if home-made), different kinds of paper and cardboard, old greeting cards, and lots of bits and pieces which can be glued on for trim (I like to recycle as much as possible). I find *Lego* a wonderful tool, even for the 3 year old. I used it in my mid-week church group, to have the children create 'helping places' in our town. The medium led to very detailed building, contents, and users. *Lego* is such a useful medium that a neighboring School Division has a *Lego* option for Grades 5-6.

I applaud the move to include *Lego* in the classroom, but art education must be accorded much more importance generally. Over the years that I was teaching, curricula was in a constant state of flux, and probably always will be. For a time there was a strong emphasis on concentrating on the 'basics' (the old threes Rs: reading, 'riting' and 'rithmetic), and the work 'frill' cropped up as a term which minimized the importance of other disciplines. At this time, I knew a Grade Five teacher who said he couldn't even do

music within his own classroom! I really find that hard to believe, but that was the pressure he felt. Within my own classroom, as long as I fulfilled the departmental requirements for all the subject, I engaged in art and music any way I could. In the latter part of my career, even before the increased need for physical activity became a school priority, I would use music every day, to move and exercise, using different muscle groups, fine motor skills and large movements. This merely illustrates, again how crucial right-brain activity is to our mental health and development.

It was during this curriculum shift that provincial arts organizations began to press for citizens to come out and advocate for Fine Arts in the schools, by contacting the relevant government departments. As a friend and I were traveling to a provincial *Showcase* (an event which highlights individual artists and groups who can be booked for schools and community programs), we shared school memories. If you look in my attic, and those of many others, I suspect you will find little in the way of old scribbles, notebooks and textbooks. What you *will* find in mine are all the art projects I ever did in school, from Grade One to the end of high school. Incidentally, these are also the kinds of things I saved for each of my children, and of course my grandchildren. When we look back on our early years, the artistic activities we engaged in are more dear to our hearts than our notebooks, the odd essay or particularly successful quizzes or exams.

My most vivid memories of the little country school I attended for the first two years center around music. The year before I started, we attended the Christmas concert, at which the teacher, her husband, and the pupils presented Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Also, a little girl with a winsome lisp recited a poem. The next year the teacher had written a little song out on the blackboard. Unhappily, I do not remember the song itself,

but I do remember going to the piano and picking it out on the keys. I told a classmate, "I think that's how it goes", and the teacher said that I was correct. How pleased I was!.I was able to play 'by ear' from a very early age. I remember that she had me work on a vocal piece called *The Little Raindrop Soldiers*, and we all entered the music festival with our rhythm band. All the girls wore little navy skirts with pleated ribbon around the bottom, and I still have mine as part of my doll-clothes trunk. My daughter, and my granddaughter used it for 'big dolly'. To recall a song from the fifties, memories are really made of these things.

Children also enjoy role-playing and acting out situations. To vary Bible study in my mid-week children's group, I have them do dialogues or reading plays about the subject, to experience the story and remember it. These girls range in age from six to ten, and it was interesting to see them enact the Temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. I gave out the scripts, with *no* instructions at all, just practice time. When they presented them, the older girls spontaneously arranged their surroundings into a set, picked up some props, changed their voices into the character', and used appropriate gestures (while holding a script in one hand). They never accidentally read italicized stage instructions as dialogue. Sometimes I think there is a bit of 'ham' in all of us!

I have been privileged to be the music director for our local Junior/Senior school musical for the last twenty-five years, and I have taken up the habit of writing a note to the leads (especially the gradaunds) on the final night. I have stressed, repeatedly, the fact that they can engage in this type of activity till the end of their able lives. If they are talented and if they have enjoyed it, I encourage them to join singing or drama groups of bands when they move to a new community or go to college. Long after their careers or

jobs are finished, arts activities can be accessed for enrichment, skill-building, fellowship, and enjoyment. I once was part of a cast for *Fiddler on the Roof*, which included an elderly lady in her mid-seventies. Not only that, but she was also a lead in another production in the same town!

A friend who is a docent in Surrey, B.C. had a wonderful quote by Picasso taped to her notebook, and even though I do not know the specific context, I just quote it: "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist, once we grow up." This quote also appears in Magsamen's book of page 49. This is significant because Picasso was so instrumental in having child art noticed from an aesthetic perspective, and not just a tool for psychological examination. Unfortunately, as we go through school, we may find ourselves in schools where the administration is not supportive and/or encounter many teachers of art and music who are so concerned with product that children are stifled as far as exploration, media and process, and creativity are concerned. Yes, skill building is important, but should not be the sole aim of the arts. I think it is impossible to apply objective criteria to art, because artistic expression is individual, expressive, emotionally charged, and highly personal. 'Marks' should be given on the basis of participation, involvement and creativity.

Recently, our local school trustee invited me to attend a 'think tank' to consider the future of our school system. Table groups included teachers from around our school division (including a private school), aides, administrators, parents, retired teachers, and business people. We were to consider questions in terms of a kindergartner's graduation from high school in thirteen years. The final discussion of the day was to list three priorities per table on blue cards, which were then posted. They were to be instruction-

related suggestions that the school division could actually act upon. Technology was an item which prompted a lot of discussion, but oddly enough was only carded twice out of eighteen. We then clustered them according to commonality. The largest cluster turned out to relate to community/citizenship, with descriptors like empathy, compassion, selflessness, etc.

One curricular aspect which was noticeably missing was fine arts, although two of us tried to bring it up. Both of us were chagrined that it was ignored, not only because we felt it was important, but because arts could easily be integrated in the educational system.

I mentioned that the school musical we put on every year provided a vehicle for students to explore potential different from academics, athletics or band. Because there are no drama classes in the school, the productions are totally extra-curricular, so students who stay with it are truly committed. As directors, we see it as character-building, and an opportunity to discover hidden talents. Over the years, there have been members of the cast whose behavior was challenging. They had the chance to grow in responsibility, helpfulness, and co-operation. Many students who had never done so before, found they were capable of singing, acting (both comedically and dramatically), and dancing, and doing them well. Over the years, students have also been involved in set design, decoration, and costume design. Their self-esteem and self-confidence were enhanced, and the teachers and community saw them in a new, positive light. I have noticed how many of these young people are multi-talented. Two outstanding examples are a young girl who is just out of junior high who is an accomplished pianist and dancer, band member, and sings and acts well too. The other is a boy in high school who is a superb

dancer (winning many awards), band member and an excellent singer and actor. Many celebrities are multi-talented: Joni Mitchell and Tony Bennet are accomplished painter as well as musician; Toller Cranston is a painter who changed the art of male figure-skating; Michelangelo was a poet, painter, sculptor and architect; and Henry the VIII was a poet, musician, dancer and philosopher.

Education should foster all those things, and when you think of the quote by Picasso, the implication is that all children deserve the opportunity to explore and develop their artistic potential.

### Part Three: The Evidence of Creativity Around Us

In my preface, I alluded to everyday life as an ongoing opportunity to be artistic. In this part of the paper, I want to share evidence that people in general have artistic inclinations.

I am an avid T.V. watcher and am as much a connoisseur of ads as well as programs. Advertising is definitely an art form, as it uses imagination and creativity to tap into people's interests and emotions. How an ad is constructed, how it shows off the product, and the use of color, texture and light all play a part. Whether the ad is promoting a vehicle, a beauty product or a foreign foster-parent agency, the set-up and the camera-work are designed to get our attention. Some fall short of impressing us, some may actually repel us or appear ridiculous, but nevertheless they are there in front of us.

One current ad which brings creativity down to the every-day is one for a meat-packing company. It juxtaposes cooking activities with someone creating what we usually consider a 'work of art'. In a split-screen format, a man playing a cello is paired with someone sharpening a large meat knife; a man trimming fat off a pork chop is paired with an architect making a blueprint; a man shaving a slab of meat is paired with a sculptor shaping his creation; a painter is paired with someone brushing sauce onto a rack of ribs.

This brings me to the point of discussing homemaking, for example, as one of the most artistic occupations, because it allows for creativity in so many different areas. From very early times, as the keeper of the home, maker of clothing, preparer of food, and

mother of the family, the woman has generally had the burden of bringing beauty, stability, and calm into her immediate surroundings.

As a homemaker with a lot of 'stuff' such as antique dishes, gifts from students over the years, and linens inherited from my family, I decided to cycle the décor in my rooms, depending on the holiday or season. The walls do not change color, but all accessories do, from curtains to area rugs to pictures to towel to accents and ornaments. This enables me to use fancy china and glassware, fabric remnants and heirloom cushion covers that would otherwise remain in a trunk or a high cupboard somewhere.

The picture themes on the walls of my main bathroom also change, from clusters of antique mountain views, to floral, to seascapes and sailing ships, depending on the season. It is rewarding when someone comments on my pretty bathroom! One of the nicest compliments came from then 6-year-old grandson last spring, when he came tearing out of the bathroom to tell his mummy, "You should see Mummo's bathroom. It looks like spring in there!"

My mother was an inveterate re-user, from bits of tinfoil to Nabob gilt coffee bags which she used as gift bags or cut into large gilt snowflakes for decoration, to old tablecloths, which became napkins or dish towels, and so on. I learned from the best. It is an art in itself; to look at something and think about how it could be recycled, or used in a different way. For years I have decorated my walls at Christmastime with Christmas cards. For six weeks or so the regular artwork is stowed away. The cards are clustered in colors, to match the rest of my holiday décor. Not only do they add the ambience, but I have a chance to display the wonderful cards my husband has given me annually (for 51

years), and I have thus preserved heart-warming mementos of family and friends long passed. I often think that I must abandon my card idea, but when it comes time to decorate, I feel compelled to continue, I have done some weeding, though, and tried to freshen up the presentation. Each room (living room, family room, dining room, kitchen, spare bedroom, hallways and entryway) is themed in a separate color.

My daughter's mother-in-law tries to have some form of a Christmas tree in every room in her home. This gave me the idea to cover Styrofoam cones to showcase on a piece of furniture where my 3-year-old grandson would not bother them. The tinfoil that my mother had twisted into little horseshoe shapes were glued on one, with beads from old broken necklaces, or fancy buttons in the center of each shape. On another cone, I glued a huge collection of like seashells, large one at the bottom graduating to small one at the top, in which I pressed a tiny starfish. A garland of Hawaiian seed beads was draped around it. A third small cone received some old, fine tinsel wrapped around it, with a crystal at the top. I tried to recycle things I had in a creative way, and I had a lot of satisfaction doing it.

Another idea which appeals to me is glassware on my deep windowsills. I have collections of vases and other dishes in clear, red, blue, green, and amber, and I use them as part of my decorating, especially where light is most effective. I have a three-cornered shelf which hold my angle collection, and my living-room tree is mostly decorated with angels and blue lights. The family-room tree is the 'kid' tree and the decorations can be touched and enjoyed by the grandchildren. As you may have gathered, Christmastime is my favorite time of year to indulge my creativity.

In a book I picked up about the 'aesthetic movement' in home decorating, the author talks about the artful home as being not only beautiful, but feeding thy soul, and so should be encouraged and actively demonstrated. I believe human beings crave beauty and harmony, and respond to them because they induce inner calm, serenity, and love. Our senses are tuned to *react* to the things we see, hear, touch, and smell. In keeping with the idea of having art in my home, all the artwork on my living-room walls (except at Christmas) is original: by my husband, a friend who does miniature watercolors, a former band teacher who was also a painter, my cousin who was a galleried painter in the Vancouver area, my daughter who does pencil sketching, a well-known local artist, and a Finnish painter who lived in our area years ago. The last fellow constructed the large dinosaur affectionately referred to as 'Dinny' and the original fossil houses at the Calgary Zoo.

When I think back to my childhood home, and the pictures that graced its walls, it seems that there were no prints of great art, except for two. One was called *The Helping Hand* by Emile Renouf, and the other one was of a group of hunters sitting around a table, and one is handing a servant girl a brace of pheasants to be taken to the kitchen. The hunters are dressed in doublets and plumed hats. I believe I have seen this elsewhere, by one of the masters, perhaps in the Dutch or Flemish genre. Aside from these the other pictures on the walls were calendar prints, as were mountain scenes, pictures of cats and dogs (which we were very fond of), and even Ann Hathaway's cottage. I still have some of these (except for the hunters) in my antique house, and I am going to put notes on the back of them for posterity for my children and grandchildren.

The same wall art held true for my grandmother's house in town, and I have three of the pictures from her living-room; cows coming home along a country road, a garden with blue delphiniums and yellow daisies, and a pastel study of a lake, mountains, and a castle called *The Enchanted Castle*. These might not constitute great art, but they fed my soul because I'll always remember them in their original site, and I'm so grateful to have saved them and hung them. Even as a child I responded to, and craved the sight of pictures around me. They transported me to a world of history, fantasy, and make-believe.

Some years later I was prompted to take an art history class at university, and I was thrilled to explore the work of the great Renaissance masters. I was drawn to the work of Caravaggio and his handling of realism and chiaroscuro, one of my favorites being a still life of fruit in a basket. When a local veterinary drug company came out with two magnificent calendars of great art, I found the Caravaggio, and framed it for my kitchen. I had the fabulous opportunity to take an art history course in Italy (also through the University of Alberta). It concentrated on Renaissance and Baroque art, mainly in Rome, but the professor who went with us was a Medievalist. Therefore we took a wonderful field trip north, to Sienna, Ravenna, Assisi, etc. and also were able to visit Venice, *and* Florence. The highlight for me was Michelangelo's *David* in the Uffizi Gallery, although I found the whole experience to be one of the highlights of my life. My husband and I have since traveled to Italy, where I have shared many of my course experiences. The year after I took the classes in Italy, the University of Alberta decided it was not advisable to let students have this kind of opportunity. I suppose it came down to economics, nevertheless, many students who could have benefited from such studies

could not access the same type of experience. Seeing the great Italian art and architecture first hand in no way compared to sitting in a Canadian classroom looking at slides!

### Decoration

To get back to local artistry and its beneficial effects on the people in those surroundings, I find local gathering places and businesses take time to decorate for pleasure, celebration and beauty. The local drugstore has a whole wall facing the sidewalk devoted to groups and events in town. In June it honors graduates of the high school, but right now it is a gallery of *Danceway 21* which is our notable dance program along Highway 21. What a treat to stop and try to find our grandchildren or church youth in the myriad of pictures. As a member of our Senior Citizen's Drop-in Center, I always notice the decorations around the room. Two women in particular (one a former teacher) see that seasons and holidays are marked by corresponding touches. At Christmastime, one woman has depicted all the verses of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Instead of a real tree (to which some people may be allergic) or a bulky, fake evergreen, a corner was draped with green mesh in the shape of a tree, and ornaments were hung on it. This took up far less space, and didn't crowd the seating. For Easter, there were mini felt hanging with bright spring colors. However, the decorations are generic, and do not deal with the religious symbols. On Palm Sunday, we went to a local restaurant for brunch, and noticed the windows were decorated with clear adhesive symbols of the Easter story. Yes, the deals were commercial, but it was the idea that someone wanted to take the time to do it that added a very special touch.

*Haute Couture*, and gourmet cooking emphasize beauty and presentation, but the mother who makes her family's clothes, or the person who cooks the family meal is in exactly the same position as the designer or the chef.

Setting a pretty table, making a centerpiece, putting food on the plate in a particular way, using garnishes, varying the colors of the vegetables...all require artistic awareness. The number of magazines which devote several pages to food preparation is staggering. Aside from regular food features, advertising of food products often includes recipes and pictures. And every one of the pictures is staged; arranged artistically on attractive china, often on table set with matched linens, cutlery and glassware. Any housewife or spouse can do the same thing, as I don't believe any cook wants to present the family with unappetizing-looking food.

As far as fashion is concerned, I believe most of us have an innate sense of what suits us, or what does not. Some people are conservative, while others are more colorful and ebullient. It is tempting to find fault with what someone is wearing, but really that is being judgmental and demeaning. Ultimately, people do not have to dress to please anyone but themselves, but in our culture, looking good is a strong priority. I have known women to wear colors and jewelry which make them feel upbeat and happy, although the choices may seem overdone, or may not enhance hair or skin tones. Then I think about who came up with guidelines such as color-keying, cosmetic matching, draping, etc.; other human beings. But women all over the world, whether we deem them primitive, third-world or advanced, do dress themselves artistically and creatively, using the materials in their environment. They adorn themselves with beads, feathers, dyes, and fancy hairdos. Self-image is not confined to one gender over another; all persons want to

look attractive. In the mists of time, it is part of the mating ritual, just as members of the animal kingdom have physical attributes which make them more attractive to the opposite sex.

Recently, we had a presentation at church about the efforts of the *Foodgrains Bank* in Zimbabwe, and the lady who spoke had brought along some crafts made by the African women. The most amazing were necklaces made out of recycled paper. There were several different sizes and shapes of 'beads', and the uniformity of each set on a string was astounding. The beads were colored and shellacked before stringing, and I do not know the process, but the art and skill were of a very high level. Seeing these reminded me of a recent hobby of mine: that of making what I call 'junk' jewelry. I have made many pendants out of stones my husband polished in lapidary years ago, and even presented some to special friends. For myself, I have created removable pendants out of several earrings (the mates of which went missing), and even a large chrome key chain fob from a company. It is about two inches long, and the reverse side where the promotional information was, I painted it out in black acrylic. So when worn one way it is bright silver, and the other way it is black with a silver edging. Another single crystal earring became a sine glass ring. I just cannot throw anything out if there is any way it can be repurposed.

I just recently heard a story which supports my contention that creative instincts sometimes may lie hidden. It is about a woman who was in a terrible car crash a few years ago, and was not expected to be fully mobile again. Before her accident, she had not done crafty things, but as part of her rehabilitation she began making cards. She has fully recovered, and is now making beautiful jewelry out of copper wire and natural

stones. Another retired friend has taken some courses and now makes her own silver jewelry.

There is an organization in a local town called Rehoboth Christian Ministries. It is a facility for severely learning impaired adults. I share three examples: a girl who was one of the earliest prematurely-born in Alberta, at the time, and the others a Down Syndrome boy and girl. The girls paint lovely floral designs, one making and selling card prints of her work, and the boy makes beautiful jewelry out of buttons and odds and ends. As a matter of fact there are eight members who make this jewelry for sale in their local thrift shop; further examples that the artistic impulse rests in all of us.

### Dress

I have a serious concern when it comes to women's clothing. When it comes to children, I think there should be some consideration (mainly by parents) as to the appropriateness of what they wear. When an 11 or 12-year old girl dresses like a 16-year old, it can send the completely wrong message to peers and adults alike. I realize that the fashion industry caters to younger and younger children, but it is unfortunate that the pressure to dress in the latest 'fashions' may override the child's own inclinations and tastes. Here I must say that my 12-year old granddaughter dresses in a way that would please any grandma. Now having pierced ears, she has the added opportunity to exercise her own taste in colors and accessories. She is also a beader, and makes a lot of her own jewelry. She dresses modestly, and does not seem to be influenced by current fads, and the advertising that 'hooks' so many girls her age.

A person who sews and can design her own clothing, or sews for others certainly has a lot more scope than someone who must buy ready-made. By making choices as to the type, color and weight of fabrics, special stitching and trim, and other unique touches the result will be individualized and attractive. There is a Mennonite girl who is a waitress in our favorite local restaurant, who wears fairly long dresses, and has long braided hair. Her dresses, though all of the same basic pattern, show originality in fabric, neckline shape, decorative accents, and contrasting trims. She makes her own clothes, and though they are long, they are quite form-fitting! She also wears bright, color co-ordinated watches and pretty, bare sandals.

I recently saw a superb amateur performance of *Guys and Dolls* in one of my home towns, involving some local thespians for the very first time. Some of the costumes were designed by one person, some were borrowed, and there were four other seamstresses listed. Without going into the plot of the musical, there are women performers in the *Hot Box* theater for whom specially co-ordinated costumes had to be made for two different numbers, with the lead singer in a fancier outfit. This was achieved for seven women, right down to 'mink' stoles. Five women's uniforms, and two men's uniforms had to be created for the members of the inner city *Save-a-Soul Mission*. To me, the pièce de résistance was the clever way the guys (gamblers) were dressed. The seven main guys were in colored suits; aqua, yellow, coral, royal blue, bright red, light green, and cream, with contrasting shirts and solid-color ties. A matching hatband adorned the fedora. It made it easy to tell the characters apart, and was visually stunning. I heard that some of the costumes came from another drama group who had done this

musical earlier, but I am not sure which ones. Be that as it may, the principle is still valid: the concept and design were by amateurs, and not some commercial costume company.

I have often written the article about my old school's musical production for the local paper. In the write-up, I have always complimented our costume crew on the fabulous job they do, with a very small budget, and enormous creativity. They have modified, enhanced, and sewn from scratch British uniforms, pirates' elegant lace and velvet coats, sparkly 'flapper' dresses, the elegant Chinese emperor's gown and delightful dragon in Disney's *Mulan*. They have authentically replicated the visual concept of shows about Robin Hood, Oz, the southern Pacific, and *Beauty and the Beast* (right down to the beast's head). Costume designers and seamstresses are absolute artists.

#### Architecture

I mentioned architecture in connection with a certain T.V. ad. Aside from those trained in it, the average homeowner has the possibility of being a designer of sorts. I believe that, when it comes to remodeling, anyone who undertakes such a project has ultimate visual appeal in mind. Even when cost is an issue there are inventive ways to accomplish dramatic improvements. I live in a house which began as a simple ell-shaped shack (with poplar poles for studs, as we later found out). Over the years it underwent several changes: first the ell was filled in to make a square house upon which a 4-way cottage roof was erected. Several years later the roof was lifted and a second story was built on. Then came a closed-in verandah on the sunny south side, with windows all around, and an entrance porch on the north side. All in all the house has a lovely symmetry. We recently tampered once again by building a family room behind the porch,

to fill in a windy northwest corner. When one looks at it from the east side, or front it still has a harmony and unity. We have put on a blue metal roof, so the house is white and blue like the Finnish flag. It is the oldest Finn homestead still standing in our pioneer community. Down the road another family added substantially to their older gold-brick home. I have often marveled at the wonderful job they did to make the renovation such an intrinsic part of the original structure that it seems it was always as it is now.

As a microcosmic example of architecture let us consider stage/set building for dramas. We have seasons tickets to Rosebud Theatre, which ranks as one of Alberta's top tourist entertainment venues. The ability to create an era, a setting, a location has always intrigued us. The amazing thing is that with clever set design, very simple suggestive elements can completely carry the audience to where they need to be. Revolving stage parts, scrims, and curtains can expand and enrich the setting. An open stage with a board walk, bits of picket fencing, a curtain with a horse painted on it, and a double doorway in the background was the total set needed for a path, barn W.W. I battlefield, and a church.

The *Guys and Dolls* production was held in a curling rink, which certainly involves an enormous amount of work to build a stage from scratch, but the high ceiling allows for a lot of vertical scope. When the gamblers went down into the sewer for their crap game, it showed the manhole cover on stage. After a blackout, it showed the sewer from below, complete with dancing rats. A long ladder, the top portion of which had been covered with a black curtain, extended down to the stage level. Somehow the gamblers were brought up to the ladder, from which they were seen to climb down. Once again on top, the ladder was screened by the curtain, and two reversible flats.

In our school productions, we have a small stage at our disposal, so our sets are quite static, but we have used reversible flats, easily removable stage props, and built different levels which were spotlighted for different scenes. Two things which stand out for me were a south sea scene in which a large blue cloth was handled to symbolize a stormy ocean, and a similar technique used in *Mulan* to create the avalanche which covered the enemy. In other words, whether the production is professional or amateur, the quality need not be inferior, and the behind-the-scenes people are truly artistic in their vision, concepts, and creation.

### Gardening

Gardening and landscaping around our homes is also an artistic endeavour, and although there are 'professionals' in the field, that does not mean that ordinary householders lack the ability to do it themselves. In addition to what we undertake to do with a structure, the way we plant shelterbelts and other trees and shrubs and how we plan our flowerbeds and/or containers all utilize our artistic sense as well as that of practicality and utility. Over the years I have known many people, mostly women, who have consistently won admiration as well as awards for their yards, gardens and horticultural show entries. Where I live, which is considered to have been 'bald prairie', the process of turning a bare farmyard into a place of green protection and floral beauty cannot be stressed enough. One of our most talented gardeners is an Englishman, who came from a moist climate where flowers and shrubs thrive, and who missed the lush beauty of his homeland. When he is home in the summer, his yard is open to visitors.

## Nature

By the way, when it comes to *appreciating* beauty, I believe most people cannot help but respond to wild Nature. The wet spring of 2011 yielded patches of certain wildflowers in quantities unseen for decades. My favorite prairie flower is the shooting star, and our pasture had huge patches of them, where usually only a few plants show. A few years ago we discovered plants of yellow lady-slippers on Highway 27 west, and look forward to them every year. Imagine my shock and awe when my husband came in with two blooms he picked in our own driveway! I have heard that seeds (and obviously plant roots) can lie dormant for years until conditions prove optimum for growth. Of course buffalo beans love moisture too, and huge sections of pasture have been thickly covered with them.

We are interested bird spotters, and enjoy looking for new birds when we travel. For two years now we have Great Horned Owls (Alberta's bird) nesting at our farm. It has also been a thrill to spot a Western Tanager and a Baltimore Oriole in the trees around our home. We consider these and others 'special', and we are thrilled and awed when they appear.

All the sensory input we respond to forms the rich foundation for creative expression. The beauty around us inspires us to share it, in any way we can discover.

#### Part Four: The Pervasiveness of Music in Our Lives

For this portion I am going to consider words and music as important strands in the weaving of a person's life. I realize that a lot of writing is prose narrative, or in journalistic form. And although words have an inherent musicality, many people who are wonderful 'wordsmiths' have no musical sense, *per se*. I know many people who write beautiful, eloquent obituaries, thank-yous, and invitations in the local paper. Also, many amateur writers contribute to the same publications with articles about special events, celebrity appearances, concerts and programs, demonstrating color ,flair, and unique style. Without a doubt, these contributors are exercising artistic talent, and a love of language.

Philip Yancey, a Christian journalist, in his book *Reaching for the Invisible God*, discusses writing as an art. He often cites Dorothy Sayers, a British writer and lay theologian, as regarding God as a creative artist, rather than as an engineer, watchmaker, or immovable force. Sayers liken the idea of the Trinity to the three-stage writing process.

First there is the Idea, the Expression, and then the Recognition. Some of the writing I alluded to in the previous paragraph has a built-in purpose, but much more springs from an Idea (as the one for this paper). Everyone begins with an idea, or an imaginative spark, which can be developed in any number of ways. It can become a quilt, a piece of potter, a sculpture, a painting, a movie, a photograph, or a song. A writer can create an ode, a haiku, an epic poem, a sermon, a hymn, a novel, an epic choral work or an opera. These are the Expression of the Idea. Yancey, like Sayers, feels the aspects of

art being received and appreciated is crucial, because one of the reasons for creation is to communicate. This stage is the Recognition.

While looking for the tune to one of my songs, I came across a speech I had made a few years ago at a tea in honor of the volunteers who regularly serve in many capacities at our local care center. I am invited to these teas because I play the piano in a little concert at St. Mary's Lodge most Thursday afternoons for about half to three-quarters of an hour. I use themes, which makes it easy to gather music, especially at holiday times, even St. Patrick's Day and Robbie Burns Day, etc. On the first Thursday of the month, I also play 'upstairs' at the extended care wing.

The title of my speech was *Light the World With Poetry and Song*. This seems to me to be just another example of how all our living is interwoven, with vivid strands that are repeated in the pattern. Upon reading it over, I felt some of it is very relevant to this paper.

"How do people relate to poetry and song? Humming and singing around the house, recalling and singing one's favorite hymn or love song, or the teen music one grew up with. Poetry is very powerful, and in my mother's day they had to learn and memorize a lot of it. She could quote so much, it put me to shame. I love reading things, but my brain is not very retentive. I remember phrases, or lines that stand out, especially if they make word pictures. I can picture Horatius holding the bridge, the moon floating in and out of the clouds, a lonely sailor desperate for a drink of fresh water, and Jesus running after me, calling my name. Of course, I'm quoting Noyes, Macaulay, Coleridge, and Francis Thompson. The poem *High Flight* is another one that moves me deeply. Lines about emotions are not that memorable to me, except perhaps 'How do I love thee?'.....

Yet, when I write poetry, it is almost totally about emotions, or what to me are 'heart lines'. I may not follow conventional rules about scansion, meter, and rhyme patterns, and most of my poems become songs...I have been involved in church music for over 50 years, and most people in the position of organist/choir leader end up creating new things. I've written new tunes for old texts, new verses for existing hymns, and totally new hymns. I have particularly enjoyed setting several poems by a former minister's wife to music. She was pleased, saying that she never thought of them as songs. I found that they 'sang themselves' and it often took me only a few minutes to bring out a tune. The difference between poetry and prose is that poetry does not typically consist of complete sentences, but phrases and lines which are emotionally charged, powerful, beautiful and symbolic."

I then asked those in the audience to write in 'free-fall' about what they were thinking and feeling at that moment. These random thoughts were to be kept private and for their own reflection. I then shared my brief thoughts on volunteers, which had formed themselves into rhyme, although I had not deliberately set out to do so: it happens involuntarily! Another time I did write a song about volunteers to sing at a banquet honoring those who worked with Seniors' Outreach.

#### Volunteers

Givers, lovers, those who care,  
God gives us all the strength to share  
Our time, a word, a listening ear;  
A helping hand, a drive to shop,  
An errand run, with time to stop!  
Our light must shine, right now, right here!

First though, I wish to show how music is really one of the most basic elements of being human. In a book about spiritual practices called *On Our Way* the editors aver: "the whole world is filled to the brim with song - the howling cry of the wind, the boisterous boom of thunder, the soothing tap of rain, the crashing of ocean waves: the world is alive with song.....The creatures are singing too. Birds chirp and whales moan. Dogs bark and lions roar. God sang creation into being, and creation has been singing ever since"<sup>x</sup>

Music, because of its deep appeal to our emotions, is a common component of our most important celebrations; birthdays, marriages and funerals. In the June 2011 edition of the *United Church Observer* there is a touching story of a northern Ontario church, which in one event celebrated its one hundredth anniversary, and its closure as a United Church. It describes the music over the years as played on a small reed organ, and featuring an ecumenical band made up of United Church and Roman Catholic folks. When our church celebrated its centenary in 2008, our choir invited alumnae to participate (although few did), and sang among other anthems, a special Anniversary song which I had composed. I had previously written an anniversary song for the United Church seventy-fifth year, and one for the fortieth anniversary of the building of the new church in my other 'home town'. They are included in the Addenda.

Using human voice to express emotion and convey information is an ancient concept. Hawaiian storytellers sing and chant their ancestral stories, old Inuit hunters chanted their exploits to the sound of accompanying drums, musical notes formed the calls of people communicating over long distances, and mothers soothed their children with crooning lullabies, Because we are born with that wonderful instrument, it has been developed for use in so many ways and situations; ritual chants and responses, marching

songs, work songs (as I will mention in *Lifesong*), protest songs, and spontaneous chants at rallies and sporting events. It is fascinating to see thousands of people at a large concert take up the star's invitation to sing along. The band and star may even completely drop off, to let the audience carry on, and the energy generated by that is intoxicating.

Even persons who cannot 'carry a tune' may use their voices in everyday work. My mother could not really sing in tune, but she hummed to herself and sang words to songs she knew as she did her daily chores. A voice student I once had could not get up and sing, even at my recitals, but her mother said she sang a lot at home because it made her feel better. I, on the other hand, used my voice for public performance, but never at home, or from private emotion.

I have recently read Mitch Albom's book *Have a Little Faith* which is a true story of his personal relationships with the rabbi from the synagogue in which he grew up, and a reformed Christian pastor. In an odd twist of fate the rabbi asked Mitch to give the eulogy at his funeral, and so an end-of-life journey began. The born-again Christian pastor who ran a church and mission out of a crumbling inner-city building had, until twenty years ago, led a life of drugs, crime, and jail time. Both of these men were singers, using joyous, robust song in their services.

But beyond that, the rabbi sang all the time: when answering the door or telephone, as part of a conversation, and when asking or answering questions. It was simply a part of his big, 'beautiful faith' (a term he used frequently). At the end of Rabbi Lewis' life he was singing and humming as a nurse bathed him because it was the start of a brand new day! In the middle of that process he had a final massive stroke, and died a few days later. Mitch Albom did give the eulogy, based upon memories, knowledge and

impressions, enriched by eight years of regular visits. Near the end of the address, he said, "May God keep you; may He sing to you, and your to Him." <sup>xi</sup> But that was not the end of the service. The rabbi's grandson played a pre-recorded cassette tape made by the rabbi with his final message to his congregation. At the end of it he sang a simple tune, which translated, means "Good-bye friends, good-bye friends, good-bye, good-bye. See you again, see you again, good-bye" <sup>xii</sup>

The most striking comment occurs in Albom's epilogue: "In the beginning there was a question. In the end, the question gets answered. God sings, we hum along, and there are many melodies, but it's all one song - on same wonderful song."<sup>xiii</sup> What came to my mind upon reading that were the choruses to my *Lifesong*, especially the phrase 'never-ending song'.

The pastor Henry Covington had settled on the venue of the old inner-city church because it was abandoned, somewhat affordable, and readily accessible. Many of the parishioners were homeless, addicted, unemployed or all of the above, and Henry Covington could relate and minister to them all. But the building had a huge hole in the roof, under which strategically placed containers would be positioned when it rained. After Rabbi Lewis encouraged Albom to get involved in some charitable works, he had out of curiosity walked into the old church. He met some fascinating people with wonderful stories, and learned about Pastor Covington. He decided to attend one of Henry's services.

It was a rousing, noisy one built around Henry's rescue from his life of crime by Jesus. It was interposed with spontaneous bursts of gospel songs. By now you may have guessed, as I did, that Henry was a big black man with a voice to match! "There was no

line between prayer, hymn, word, song, preach, beseech, or call and respond. It was apparently all part of the package." <sup>xiv</sup> This whole book is really a book of song, with its interweaving of song and story, and why so much was included here.

Because music consists of many facets (rhythm, tempo, tone, and harmony) a person may be responsive, facile or adept in different ways. For example, I am poor in the area of rhythm, but function mainly in the areas of melody and harmony. I\* play 'by ear' quite well, but my style centers on melody and contrapuntal harmony. I never just chorded, which is a basic way of keeping a rhythm, and I certainly cannot do jazz or blues tempos in my left hand. Having to use Trax tapes of CDs for the school shows has helped my condition of being rhythmically challenged!

Children are fascinating to observe in regard to musical response. I have never seen a toddler who does not begin to move at the sound of music, and it is interesting that many of their spontaneous moves are similar to modern dance. I wonder if some of the modern non-touching partner dancing was somehow inspired by watching children, and the freedom and abandon with which they move. In fact the curriculum and instruction course I took many years ago for elementary physical education was built on basic movement, and rhythmic gymnastics. At a restaurant the other day our three-year-old grandson started moving to the music he heard, using his cap as a prop to enhance his body movements. Sometimes, when the grandchildren come over, I play the piano, one of them may shake a brown paper bag rattle, one plays the toy drum set, and one bangs along of a little toy piano. Our seven-year-old has a good sense of rhythm and comes along with the different tempos and time signatures I play in.

I have always provided many musical things to explore: different kind of metal bells from my bell collection, things to strike as on a drum, various things to strike with , and containers of varying sizes containing fine or coarse granular material to shake. For example, hot chocolate tines are super because you have the cardboard cylinder, a plastic lid, and a metal bottom: three different sound, whether filled with shakeables, or struck with an object. Strikers may be small rods, chopsticks, wooden spoons, real cutler, etc. In my rhythm instrument box at church I have several home-made triangles and strikers. We talk about whether the sound made is a thunk or a ringing tone, and how this determines how often to strike the instrument. I use the same ideas about exploring rhythm instruments, whether I'm playing with my grandchildren, or working with the children in my mid-week church groups. Another neat activity is to strike glass or cup rims with a spoon (however, one must be careful when doing it in a restaurant). The grandchildren naturally came across this because they always wanted to 'doctor' our coffees (pour in the cream, stir it up, and blow on it to cool it). They immediately noticed what sound the spoon made against the cup, hence further experimentation. Taking this idea to a more formal level, we acquire many glass containers, discuss the sizes and shapes, full them with many different levels of water, and play away.

After a drumming workshop session with a woman who brought along an Asian gong, I found that many things around my house made a wonderful ringing sound when struck. It was fun to try them out. One of the best was a pottery plant container, which sounded very much like that Asian gong, and I actually have two of them!

Another thing which is quite common for children to do is blow through tubes of various kinds. This activity can lead to experimentation about how band instruments are

played. Small children may just use the tubes rhythmically, but that is quite all right, the main idea being that they are making music and having fun doing it. Many toys end up being mediums for making music, whether dancing, playing, and singing with.

That brings me back to that instrument we carry around with us: the voice. Even in-utero, fetuses respond to music, particularly the mother's voice, and the idea of lullabies to soothe infants is as old as motherhood. Later, little girls sing to their dolls, and both boys and girls may pretend to be rock stars, with make-believe microphones. Of course many toys today capitalize on that principal, with technology to allow the children to record their voices. I was fascinated one day, to hear my six-year-old grandson singing his *Lego* play. It was like a tiny opera, as he was singing what he was making, and then what his characters were doing. Observing my grandchildren, and working with children and youth in different settings, I have noticed some intriguing phenomena.

For four or five years after I retired from classroom teaching I volunteered in music at a local Hutterite colony. The very first year I went, the elementary children had been practicing for a big wedding that would occur on the thirtieth of June. It was quite special for the children to prepare to sing at this celebration. The teacher, who sings in our church choir, had them working on *God Sees the Little Sparrow Fall*, using a tape for teaching purposes. When I went, I took my keyboard and we worked on the tune over and over again. The last day before they were to perform it we tried it without the instrument, as they cannot sing with accompaniment in performance. The whole group, without exception sang a very interesting tune *which had nothing to do with the original melody*. As far as we knew, they had no previous knowledge of this little hymn in any other form, so another tune was not in their hymnody. The important thing was the message in the

words, but I have never known of anything like that before. The phenomenon was that all fifteen or so children floated away on the same melody, and sang the whole hymn that way. They found their 'groove'.

Something akin to that happens in the annual musical show put on by our students. We learn the songs by listening to the CDs with voices. Occasionally, a phrase is heard and learned erroneously. It does not affect the song in any way because it is within the chord structure, but just a few notes off. I used to fuss about this, and try to correct it, but to no avail. It is very similar to what happened with the Hutterite children: they 'make the song their own', and in spades! Another interesting phenomenon is what non-singing males can do with a song. I have found over and over again that their brains are functioning in a musical was even though they may not be able to 'carry a tune'. As we have to cast all the students who are willing to participate, we often have a lead male who has to sing solos or at least solo lines, who is not able to pick out a melody. In some cases the reason for this is the *cambiata* voice, or the unfinished changing voice, therefore range becomes a problem. The boys' ranges hover between tenor and baritone. Because we work with 'canned music', the key cannot be altered. So I try all sorts of exercises, tricks, and alternative notes to enable the boy to master the song. In many cases, a few more months would help, but our productions are done in two to two and a half months, from auditions to performance (and really are quite spectacular). Some boys succeed in singing the melody quite well, but others do not; however, they sing a melody *within the given chordal structure*, in other words in a kind of harmony. I found it a breakthrough principle. and now feel less stress when those boys are on stage, nervously doing something new, because I know they can sing harmoniously at least.

At another workshop, with a hymn-writer who has been very important in the United Church, I learned another truism about group singing. If when singing a capella, a group cannot stay on key, try letting them sing in the key they 'settle' in, and the singers will most likely stay in that key. It does work, as I have found over and over again with different groups of singers.

These are the experiences that have led me to believe that almost everyone has an innate musical sense, and I believe the students actually use their abilities to the best advantage. Sometimes a group of singers alter a melody, or the rhythm because they 'fell' the music better than what the composer actually wrote down. I know hymn composers who have actually altered their printed music to match the way it has been sung over time. In other words, congregations do exactly the same thing as smaller groups. At one time, I used to try to play it the way it was written, by playing the melody only, very loudly, in hopes that the singers would correct it. Now I just 'go with the flow'. I realize as a composer that one must test every song, and that what seemed to work on paper initially does not really work when actually performed. I must admit though, that sometimes it is simply a matter of habituated mistakes which really become embedded in our musical memories. The most outstanding example of this is the way the chorus to the great hymn *How Great Thou Art* is sung, certainly not the way it appears in our hymn book!

When I was a teenager, I loved to listen to the radio, even very late at night, because even my little unit would then bring in American stations, and on Saturdays, I loved to listen to the top one hundred country songs on old CKXL, Calgary. I am far from a Western/Country fan, but there was a handful of songs I loved, and I would listen

to the countdown just to catch them. But when I was studying or doing homework I did it in a quiet environment. Today, many older students do all their schoolwork to the sound of music. And considering the typology of today's music, I would say that the students' brains have to be very highly developed, to achieve what is necessary in their studies. Perhaps this phenomena is an extension of the musical response which happens in the womb.

At a recent evening session on music therapy which I was privileged to attend, the registered music therapist quoted Daniel J. Levitin, who said in his book *This is Your Brain on Music*, "Throughout most of the world and for most of history, music-making was as natural an activity as breathing and walking, and everyone participated." As far as triggering the musical sense in our brains, certain classical pieces actually do have an effect on brain function and behaviour. We were given a handout about the effect of music on people with epilepsy. About ten years ago, early exploration into brain activity, found that it sounded musical when converted into audible patterns. This gave another kind of information, complimenting that revealed in the visual patterns found in electroencephalograms. From this it was extrapolated that Mozart, who exhibited a musical sense from a very early age, could perhaps effect changes in the brains of listeners. It was subsequently found that playing Mozart's Piano Sonata in D major (K.448) at regular intervals over a period of time produced fewer seizures in epileptic patients, and fewer wave spikes and irregularities.

Music is evocative and can generate memories; listening to one's favorite music for fifteen minutes or more can enhance feelings of well-being, reduce stress, and evoke pleasant memories, and even promote satisfying sleep. Perhaps music is the prime artistic

sense because we can lose the ability to use our hands and feet but our hearing and our voices can outlast many disabilities, still leaving us with the faculty to make music. Even someone who is comatose is able to hear, and twice I have taped special music for such a person to listen to. The doctor and nurses favored this ministry to two dying friends.

## Part Five: Inspiration For Poems and Compositions

The last portion of this paper will be a conclusion to my assertion: that everyone is intrinsically artistic, and also a segue into the poetry and music I have written, which represents the tapestry of my spiritual life and growth intertwined with my complete trust in God's guidance.

It is interesting that the last chapter of Littauer's *Silver Boxes* is about 'music boxes'. Florence's own mother-in-law had wanted to be an opera singer but never had the opportunity; a toddler who loved to 'sing' in church was shushed by her grandmother and never sang again; a young girl practiced hard to become one of her family's singing group until she overheard her mother and aunt denigrating her voice. Counteracting these stories are those of many who had received 'silver boxes' from family and teachers. Young people who were mediocre musicians or perhaps actually struggling, were encouraged by wise and caring teachers to reach their potential and even surpass it! On the final page of the book is a touching exhortation which is meaningful to this paper:

Do you know someone who has ---

A song waiting to be sung?

Some are waiting to be hung?

A piece waiting to be played?

A scene waiting to be staged?

A tale waiting to be told?

A book waiting to be sold?

A rhyme waiting to be read?

A speech waiting to be said?

If you do, don't let them die with the music still in them. <sup>xv</sup>

The following pieces reflect: my love for 'home', traveling, learning and returning. I will describe the motivation or inspiration for each poem or text, some with ideas about use in worship. Some selections are just poems, others are song text, with music. Most of the music is written with the melody line only, so musicians can arrange them as they wish.

About 30 years ago I attended a weekend at Walter Farquaharson's home church in Saltcoats, Saskatchewan. Ron and Kris Klusmeier were the music resource people at that event. I had been a Klusmeier fan from when they first started travelling across Canada, bringing new music to the United Church congregations. In fact, both my hometown churches are acknowledged in the big blue binder of music which came out in 1977.

During the weekend in Saltcoats, Ron held a hymn-writing session during which I shared a new melody for *The Lord's Prayer* which I had composed (see the Addenda). It was received favourable (in fact, Ron and Kris later used it in a workshop in Ontario). It was a wonderful, rewarding experience.

On the way home I was moved to write a song which I entitled *Lifesong* (Figure 1), which has literally proven to be my life song. The first verse and chorus support my contention that music is an essential part of who we are. The second verse and final chorus links music to God and asserts that as we live our lives we are praising or honouring Him. The third verse was based on the fact that labourers doing tedious, repetitive jobs frequently chanted or sang as they worked. As a teacher, I used many such songs in my elementary classes: sea chanteys, voyageur songs, etc.

It has turned out to be a very useful, multi-purpose song, I sang it at a colleague's retirement, taped it for a former music teacher who was terminally ill with cancer, and for a very ill retired minister, and used it to introduce a community singing group's show called *Workin' for a Living*. In each of these instances the person could relate to certain lines and recognize that they had been part of the 'never-ending song'. It was my personal gift to honour these people who had been so meaningful in my life. It is because this song is literally *my* life song that I felt it needed to be included in this collection.

As I read the words again I realize anew just how much it expresses my innermost feeling about music and life. The last line of the third verse reminded me of something an old friend told me when I was a teenager. As he gave me a hand-tooled wallet, he quoted an Eastern poet who said, "Work is love made visible". Our lives are so much what Sandra Magsamen articulated: a work of art. No matter what metaphor we use to describe it, it is so magnificent we can hardly apprehend it.

A significant thing happened at Naramata a few years ago, where I spent a week in a song-writing workshop with Jim Manley (of *Spirit of Gentleness* fame). We had to share a song from our week in the final program on Friday night. I had written a few things, or I should say I was in the process of doing so, but somehow I felt that *Lifesong* (Figure 1) was what I was meant to share, so I asked God for guidance. While lunching in Penticton, I looked across the street, and saw a Gospel book store with the name *Lifesong*! That was a pretty clear direction, and so I dedicated it to God, and all those musicians who had inspired me.

## The Pull of 'Home'

My husband and I enjoy traveling by road (he grew up driving in England and loves to get behind the wheel). We are not interested in the United States or Mexico, but seeing our own country. We have made the trip to the West Coast innumerable times, since our adult children were very young. The destination usually was Victoria, especially at Easter, where we could get an early taste of spring.

In every season there is so much to enjoy - it is never the same. The forests change and grow, the rivers and lakes vary in levels and clarity, waterfalls and rivulets appear and disappear. The air and the weather, the hours of daylight, and of course the road conditions are dependent on the time of year. We never tire of the drive, even though it takes anywhere from twelve to fourteen hours.

The ferry crossing to Vancouver Island is always enjoyable, whether it is cloudy or sunny. We watch for bald eagles in Active Pass, and may be fortunate enough to see seals or dolphins near the beaches of the smaller islands. We owned a sailboat for 10 years, which we put into a charter fleet at Sidney, and we try to spot the marinas we stayed at on our Gulf Islands boat trips.

We used to love Sidney Marina and area but now it is crowded with high-rise condos, and most of the old haunts we enjoyed are gone. However, Victoria itself is still attractive, although it too has changed. Several of our favourite restaurants and shops have gone out of business in favour of fast-food cafes, and coffee bars. On recent summer trips we have tracked down many of the heritage buildings which have been written about, and which are still in use.

Another favourite destination is the Alberta Rockies (only 3 hours directly west). We have been going to Banff National Park for over 50 years, and never tire of it. Yes, it too has changed drastically over the years, to accommodate the huge tourist traffic, but we have been part of the ongoing experience. We do our regular hikes around the town, look for wildlife, and identify the wildflowers as they bloom in the different seasons. We have attended Banff Center concerts and various historical programs which the Park staff develop every year, visit all the wonderful art galleries, explore the restaurants, and had the pleasure of high tea at the Banff Springs Hotel with Pierre Berton as a guest speaker.

We have a trailer, and make a point of staying at the Tunnel Mountain campground at least once a summer, hosting our grandchildren whenever possible. We have seen the face of Mt. Rundle in all weather, and in every season except mid-winter.

We do not find the town of Jasper as comfortable as Banff, but we have made the drive up the Icefields Parkway many times, and stopped at the wonderful sights along it. We have walked into Peyto Lake, Bow Lake, Tangle Falls, Sunwapta Falls, Athabasca Falls, Mt. Edith Cavell, driven to Maligne Lake, and have explored the Icefields. The grandeur of these mountain views are very special to me: they provide me with a sense of awe and beauty, invigorating and refreshing.

Because we make the trip to Victoria to *Epiphany Explorations* in January, our preferred route is via Jasper, and the Yellowhead Highway. The recent winters have proven to be too hazardous on the Trans-Canada Highway. We are thus becoming familiar with stops for motels and restaurants along the Jasper Route. One of the poems is about the sights along the way.

Another part of the country we are beginning to know better is the 'Maritimes', We have yet to get to Newfoundland, but plan to do so in the near future. My husband loves the twisty little side roads in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

For our 50th Anniversary in 2010, we added part of New Brunswick to our agenda, especially the 'Flowerpot Rocks', and St. John, Magnetic Hill, etc. Our favourite town in Nova Scotia is Wolfville, where we have spent time study the Fundy Tides, and the site of the Acadian expulsion at Grand Pre. P.E.I. is attractive because it is so small and intimate. I'm afraid we avoided Charlottetown altogether. In 2010 we made it from the western tip of the Island to the eastern point. Although the Northumberland Strait (along the south coast) is considered less polluted, we enjoy the Gulf of St. Lawrence, for sightseeing and wading in the surf. As an L.M. Montgomery devotee, I have loved visiting the sites associated with her life, and her books. Every so often I reread her books, just to get a dose of a simpler, gentler time in society, and to enjoy her loving descriptions of people and places in her home Island.

The foregoing descriptions of places we like to visit serve to illustrate my interest in my home too. Canada has so much to offer the traveller and we hope to see more of it in years to come. We also like to revisit places we love and feel comfortable in.

But the bottom line for me, is that I cannot live anywhere else than where I do: in south-central Alberta, on land that my family has occupied for four generations. We were talking about this on the Coquihalla Highway on one trip, and I was inspired to write *Gopher Girl* (Figure 2). It took about fifteen minutes! My husband rightly calls me a gopher.

This song may have limited use, yet it is a typical folk ballad. Someday I hope to do a 'Folk Songs of Canada' program with my community singing group, and I would include this song. It might even inspire some of the others in the group to create something original.

When I worked in Calgary during summer vacations between high school and university years, I would occasionally catch a ride home with someone from one of my hometowns. Without fail, as I neared home my heart would beat faster and I would experience "Wheeeee" of joy. I still get this thrill of anticipation when we get close to home, even from a brief camping or trailer trip. Except for two years abroad with the army after I was married, and subsequent trips to Europe, I have lived all of my life in the same area in which I grew up. I have spent a total of forty years in the house my dad built, and now live in my grandparents' homestead house about two and a half miles away.

Some people can live anywhere, but others pine for where they first lived. My mother grew up near Rocky Mountain House, and forever missed the 'bush', coming as she did to what she felt was the bald prairie. My husband was born on the east coast of England, and although he has now lived on that 'bald prairie' for fifty-four years, he still misses the sea. That is why we owned a sailboat on Vancouver Island for ten years.

But my birth heritage is what my mother and husband came to as adults. At one of my bridal showers the ladies made a scrapbook for me of items from newspapers and magazines. A poem about the prairie used the phrase 'the scrutiny of light', and I cannot think of a more evocative description. The song *Where I Live* (Figure 3) is my tribute to home.

As I go through my songs and poems, checking and refining them, I am aware of several recurring themes. I constantly refer to life as a journey; a journey of faith and struggle, yet one which is always hopeful if taken with the thought of God going with us. It reminds me of the beautiful image in the poem *Footprints* about being carried when the way is hard. I speak of the frequent draughts of renewal and refreshment from various sources, and the recognition of God's many blessings. This makes many of my songs paeans of gratitude and praise. I also find a lot of appreciation for Nature and landscape in my lyrics, as well as excitement for traveling to and from events.

The following poem is about going out to Victoria.

#### The Road Away

The road stretches out before us  
Leading toward that wellspring of refreshment.  
God's beauty is laid out for us to see:  
Layers of views, and time, and change.....  
There are white lace trees with the sun shining through,  
Remnants of fog, then a high blue sky,  
A coyote in the middle of an ice-covered lake,  
January ponds rimmed with open crystal water.  
An elk is hiding in border trees.  
Higher and higher, among the snow-covered hills  
The blue of the sky intensifies,  
The Robson massif is clear.  
Sunset lights the Blue River peaks.  
Farther west old weeping walls  
Are winter-stopped in blue ice-falls.  
The road curves to reveal a glacier  
Of fog over the whole Nicola Valley  
But I am too late to capture it!

The *Green Song for Earth Day* (Figure 4) was motivated by two things: Sally McFague's talk in Victoria, and the drive through B.C., especially on the Coquihalla Highway. In 2005, Ms. McFague, a noted feminist, spoke about the need to pay attention to how we interact with creation. She advocates examining carefully what we do, on and to this earth. Because Christian theology is mainly concerned with *why* we are here, we tend to ignore what *here* is. We are part of all creation and how we behave impinges on it; we are connected to it, and interact with it. The planet's potential to support humankind is finite (my words) and so we must discover the potential and limitations of it.

If we could regard the world as the body of God, we would be more likely to concentrate on the health of that body, loving it better. The unity of all *ones* make an ecological *whole*. This reminds me of a novel I have read recently, called *Ishmael*, in which a great ape has deep discussions with a man. In this book, the so-called developed cultures are labelled as *Takers* as opposed to *Leavers*. Because we regard ourselves as the epitome of creation, we think we can treat creation as we please, with impunity. The message is that *all* species are a necessary part of the natural world.

McFague calls it *distributive justice*: a level playing field for everything to flourish. The whole cannot flourish unless all the parts are thriving. We are at once the neediest and the most powerful of God's creation. A transcendent God is the source of all existence, physical and spiritual. Because God is incarnate in everything, we can regard Him as radically transcendent and radically immanent.

The second inspiration for the song was drawn from watching the landscape as we drove through B.C. The saddest views were the acres and acres of rusty, dead pine trees destroyed by the pine beetle. Efforts to control the infestation included burning or cutting

out dead sections to try and stop the spread of the insects. I realize that the situation involves two natural interactions, yet in the light of Sally McFague's address, I wonder in the ascendance of the pine beetle is somehow the result of human activity and interference with natural processes. *A Green Song for Earth Day* (Figure 4) would also work for a camping Sunday.

#### Further Inspiration from Victoria

The phrase 'race against time' has been used over and over again, not least, by the many heroic people who have addressed the diverse problems besetting humanity: climate change, HIV/AIDS, genocide and ethnic cleansing, legal injustices such as unfair detainment, prejudicial behaviours such as racial profiling, etc. Considering the burden of such issues the number of advocates who are willing to take up the causes, write, speak and inform about them is pitifully small. And many of those who do are belittled, criticized, and ridiculed by indifferent, dissenting, or hostile voices, particularly in some of the media. One has to access programs specifically produced by aid organizations, to hear and see what is happening at the grass-roots level. Mainstream media is more concerned with negative events because they titillate the audience and have a sensational impact.

A case in point happened recently at a church gathering. We heard about the *Oasis of Peace*, which is a village half way between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in which sixty families (about half Jewish and half Palestinian) live in mutual respect and amity. The audience was asked if any have been to Israel and at least one-third raised their hands.

When asked if they had ever hear of the *Oasis of Peace* nobody assented. When told they had to pass it on the way from the airport to Jerusalem they were quite chagrined. Even local tour leaders and guides do not refer to it. We only hear about the terrible things which are happening to the populace in the area, which is only a part of the whole story.

The deep passion with which people like Roméo Dallaire, Stephen Lewis, and Louise Arbour, and those who work for *Amnesty International*, NGOs and faith communities write and act is inspiring. Stephen Lewis called his book *Race Against Time*, and I could sadly empathize with him as he recounts the failure of G8 nations to live up to the Millenium goals they agreed to. 'Talk is cheap', and fits the situation perfectly: it is so easy to make statements, resolutions, and promises, but when many years later the decisions made are not acted upon it means nothing. Those who try to educate and inform are frustrated by a lack of collective will (including personnel and monetary support). Visiting the areas of need with empty hands merely causes disappointment, hopelessness and total distrust of high-level talk. Personally, I think bigotry plays a huge part in the attitude of European and European-descended nations. There seems to be a sense about much of the African continent in particular, as being over populated, backward, politically hopeless, ignorant, pagan, unproductive, and expendable.

Lewis' talk in Victoria was based on his book, and was beautifully articulated, impassioned plea for the nations which agreed to the Millenium Development Goals in 2000 to facilitate their implementation. The target date is 2015, and it is obvious that little will be accomplished by that time. The problems are too overwhelming.

These are the eight Millennium goals: cut the worst poverty and hunger in half, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce by two thirds the deaths of children under five, reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality rate, halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, develop a global partnership for development, and ensure environmental sustainability. The list is unbelievably ambitious.

As an example of how far short we are in 2011, I refer to a church presentation on subsistence farmers in Zimbabwe. The presenter is an agriculturalist from the University of Alberta who spent two weeks in Africa in January, as part of an evaluation team for the United Church. They were comparing 'conventional' farming methods with an experimental 'conservation' method for growing maize (which North Americans call corn) which is their basic staple crop.

According to a United Nation Index, Zimbabwe is one hundred and sixty ninth out of one hundred and sixty nine countries as far as the standard of living is concerned. Some of the indicators are an average annual income of \$176.00, a life expectancy of about forty seven years, and the state of the country is *worse* than it was in 1970!

HIV/AIDS affects fifteen per cent of the population, so most of the family members must try to find work; however, the labour pool is depleted by many people leaving for other countries where jobs might be easier to find.

The cost of necessities was becoming so exorbitant (doubling every few days) that bills in denominations of one hundred billion were being printed. This hyperinflation caused the monetary system to collapse, so the currency used now is either the American dollar, or the South African rand. Typically, the colonial system resulted in the white people in power taking the best land, leaving the poorest arid and semi-arid soils for the

natives. The improvements in farming mentioned before signify that a family can grow enough food to live on, although we would not consider a diet of maize porridge the best in nutrition. Crop rotation now includes lentils, which is an improvement. But the new methods being gradually introduced mean that most areas are still under-producing.

Women are the poorest segment of the population because men are traditionally in control of implements, farm power (animal or manual), and decision-making for their land. One example was of a wife who wanted to experiment with conservation farming on her husband's land, and he refused. When she succeeded on land belonging to her parents, the husband finally relented. This restriction of women is a large part of the food security problem. As crop production improves education improves, because farmers can barter maize for schooling, supplies, etc.

It is certainly true that politics plays a huge part in the country's condition. There was a slide of a fertilizer truck controlled by Mugabe, which would only be used by pro-Mugabe farmers. He belongs to the majority tribe, and the people from the minorities are routinely excluded, discriminated against or even killed. If votes are being sought, government aid might be extended to poorer parts of the country. Juxtapose the Millennium Development Goals on this one African country of twelve million people, and consider where we are four years from the target date.

HIV/AIDS has proven to be the most devastating problem for the African continent. It is a sexually transmitted disease, and therefore is much more difficult to control compared to other types of diseases. Often both parents have dies from this disease, leaving children of various ages behind. In some cases a grandmother takes on the responsibility for the children, with great hardship. In other cases the oldest child

becomes the caregiver, and may be as young as twelve or thirteen. The parent-child must try to feed, clothe and shelter the younger ones, some of whom are infants or toddlers. Whether due to hunger, disease, or natural disaster, children suffer the most. As you can see, my passions are aroused!

After Stephen Lewis' talk in Victoria, I was moved to compose the song about orphaned children. However, I feel a song should be multi-purposed, and have applications beyond specific usage. Our choir sang this as an anthem on the Sunday after the Haiti earthquake. It could be used after any similar disaster (as in Japan), or for a service in which the plight of children in distress is under discussion. Even in our own, supposedly wealthy land, many children are victims of poverty, hence they may lack proper shelter, food, health and dental care.

The trend, according to recent statistics, is that the incidence of AIDS is going down, and the newer and more effective medications are resulting in fewer deaths from HIV. Hopefully the education campaigns all over the world about at-risk behaviours and transmission have had an effect on the sexual mores of those most vulnerable. This is especially crucial as those grandmothers raising children die or simply become unable to carry the burden of taking care of infants and toddlers. In those households, children as young as age nine or ten have had to *try* to become the wage earners to keep families alive, in very poor economic circumstances. Therefore, though the song is based on the plight of a child, it symbolizes the problems facing all people in distress.

The song *A Child is Walking to Your Door* (Figure 5) comes from this address. I used it as the anthem after the earthquake in Haiti.

The two predominating forces that work against human rights and human needs are greed, and the jealous guarding of power. To put it in perspective, consider the pictures and video sent by the Virginia shooter to the media. Then imagine that kind of person as a dictator entrenched in a 20 plus-year regime. Today we have prime examples in Mubarak of Egypt and Ghadafi of Libya. They had, or have, unlimited authority with or without all the armed forces to call upon. As we see today, the dictator in Syria refuses to back down, unleashing his military forces against his own people. However, the will of tens of thousands of people proved that a difference can be made in Tunisia and Egypt. Even Moamar Ghadafi who fought back, winning temporarily, could not hold on to power. In the Middle East, and in many parts of Africa, repressive regimes have wreaked havoc with the well-being of the general populace and caused untold heartache and misery.

News which caused great elation in the United States was the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan. The Americans have succeeded in tracking him down, but I really fear that his legacy of terrorism will simply continue under new leadership. He may have been the patriarch of the movement, but I am sure the vision of extremism will not be lost or stopped. In fact, the retribution for his killing could be far worse than what the so-called free world has yet experienced. Violence just begets more violence, especially where ideologies are concerned.

In many situations military intervention by powerful nations' forces is based on greed: moneyed interests, or economic goals related to resources. The Middle East is a hot spot because of its huge oil deposits, therefore the 'first-world' nations must be concerned. However, if a few million Africans are killing each other.....that is simply an

internal problem! Roméo Dallaire makes this point plainly in his book *Shake Hands With the Devil*. Occasionally, intervention is called for when large segments of a populace are being victimized, by neglect, repression, or even attempted extermination. I don't believe there is a time in history, or a locale in the world that has not suffered in one way or another from these problems. The United Nations is the watchdog of such situations, and the Security Council is the body which may decide to intervene. Roméo Dallaire was put in the position of trying to establish some stability and protect the minority Tutsi tribe in Rwanda. The ruling Hutus wreaked appalling destruction in their attempted genocide, and even boasted the killing of ten Belgian peacekeepers in one day. Dallaire, in trying to follow the United Nations' guidelines and regulations, basically failed in his mission, causing him to break down. He will never be able to forget what he saw there. Lewis Mackenzie felt Dallaire should have disregarded United Nations directives...and who's to say? Nations that had promised to send troops reneged, and others insisted that their soldiers not leave the compound (they were just there for military practice). I think it is too simple to say what should have been done by people who were *not there*. After reading the book I felt such compassion for Dallaire that I revamped a song I had written for a former minister who also seemed to be put in a difficult position. With a slight change to the third line of the second verse, and a new third verse I tried to put it in a new perspective: *A Song for Roméo Dallaire* (Figure 6).

The lecture he gave in Victoria was not lamenting or critical, but mainly about the caring and helpful actions displayed by Canadian soldiers in that terrible time.

Joyce Rupp is another speaker I had not heard before, but after hearing her speak in Victoria, I chose to buy her book *Praying our Goodbyes*, which like a Blue Christmas

service encompasses all sorts of losses, not just death. Her lecture was on liberating the heart, and in her handout, she includes some scripture for reflection.

It coincides very well with the particular book cited above, as it emphasized the need to let go of our fears and abstractions so that we can welcome the security of living in and relying on God. The phrase 'let go and let God' springs to mind as the kernel of her message. She stresses that it is a process of self-examination, and 'decluttering'. It takes courage, because we may have to get rid of our negative self-talk, which prevents us from becoming all that we could, and achieving all our potential. She likens it to dying to self, and being rebirthed into new life in God. It seems similar to the evangelical/fundamentalist concept of being 'born again', but to me it has a more intentional, meditative element to it. I believe that is useful because we can 'track' our journey, and actually name the negative thoughts of which we want to rid ourselves. For instance, I told myself that I must try to let go of old resentments, old grudges, perceived slights, and come out of my ego. I used the word 'try' because this kind of process can be difficult! I must try to operate from forgiveness, love, and compassion. Ms. Rupp mentioned cages and freedoms. My cages are: the constraints of what I see as my duty, schedules, deadlines (my course papers?) obligations, looking after grandchildren at certain times, the mental stress of juggling too many things at once. My freedoms are loving nature (like the baby ducks which have just hatched on our pond), giving myself and enjoying my 'do-nothing' days, eating out, having coffee with friends, leisure reading, doing things with my husband, and just observing my grandchildren. The idea is to give love, but also accept the gift of love.

In examining the book *Praying Our Goodbyes* more closely, we find that she speaks about the pilgrim heart, and how we all have our own Exodus journey. Philip Yancey, in *Reaching for the Invisible God*, quotes Martin Luther King's exhortation to civil rights workers, "If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl, but by all means keep moving". Yancey cites that as good advice for Christian pilgrims too. And though we may walk into hurtful times, and the necessity of goodbyes, as Christian pilgrims we have a loving example and guide. We need not feel captive to our plodding advance, but know that we will overcome: as the old hymn, lean "on Everlasting arms". Ms. Rupp frequently refers to the journey, which unwittingly supports the underlying theme of so many of my song lyrics. The journey we are on in life is never completed as long as we are living *Pilgrim's Progress*. The pilgrim heart defines the journey, and the liberated heart defines the method of that journey. We can travel with a heavy, burdened heart, or with a liberated, God-centered heart.

The idea of depth is a recurring theme in her book, and is a way of explaining what we must do to get in touch with the Divine intent for our lives. She frequently uses phrases about deeper parts of being, a deeper and more meaningful life, living more deeply or looking inward and going deeper. In Psalm 27:5, the psalmist asks God to hide him deep in the dwelling of His heart. Rupp stresses that we cannot enter this deeper level unless we are willing to leave behind certain things that are impeding our progress. As with any journey, be it introspective or the act of daily living, we move from point to point. She also talks about 'creative suffering', by which she means that the trials and suffering which we endure can be used positively in our interactions with others. When we use our experiences to transform how we approach others, then we are showing God's

love. Surrender is necessary to initiate the journey, cultivating a mindset that welcomes the future with confidence.

At the end of the book, Ms. Rupp has a section on devotionals, especially prayers and thoughts about goodbyes. In many of them, she has included her own beautiful poems as reflection, and also has musical suggestions. Sometimes it is simply mood music to quiet the mind, other times the suggestion is a specific song, the lyrics or which enhance her meditation.

I paired the following two songs on one page before I began this preamble. To me it is another example of how God works to guide my efforts. In the *Centering Song* (Figure 8) I was simply expressing thoughts about how people from different churches in different parts of the country are brought together at *Epiphany Explorations*. Reading it over I see that recurring theme of pilgrimage and journey that Joyce Rupp speaks about. Of course, *The Liberated Heart* (Figure 7) was my original response to her address. The chorus is about the need to deepen our self-understanding about what we believe in and choose to trust in, although I also added other dimensions. It reminds me a bit of an old spiritual about God's love being so wide, so high, and so low...' that you can't get around it, over it, or under it.

A few years ago, at *Epiphany Explorations*, a local congregant shared a very special project in which Elders in the congregation were paired with a spiritual partner, to share stories and what I called elder-wisdom. This actually resulted in a book called *Stories United*. The elders were in their eighties and nineties, and their spiritual companions were in their sixties and seventies!

It was a wonderful way of preserving the lives of service and activity for the enrichment of future generations, especially with in that specific congregation. However, the idea is feasible in any congregation, and would be eminently suitable for a church's anniversary or special celebration.

The lady who conceived the project (Terry Dance-Bennink) spoke in session, as did one of her subjects, whom I happen to know. The elder grew up in an area near one of my home towns, and, as a matter of fact, her 102-year-old sister is one of my honorary 'aunties'. This made the session extra special for me.

The process was termed 'harvesting' elder-wisdom, and necessitated the companion reflecting on what he/she had learned from the interaction. The elders were thrilled to relive their lives, and to have someone genuinely interested in listening. Dance-Bennink has a wonderful quote at the end of her introduction, attributed to Meister Eckhart: "Every creature is a story about God".

The stories run the gamut of childhood memories, through marriages and careers, including hard times, tragedy, times of joy and celebration, and special activities. Of particular interest were stories from the Depression or 'Dirty Thirties', and the war years. Many of the elders had long careers in public service, as in teaching, nursing, counseling, and ministry. A number of pictures were also included.

The book was divided into sections, with three devoted to spiritual thoughts: *Accepting Loss and Death*, *Building a Faith Community*, and *The Many Faces of God*. I have a feeling that this project may have been an outgrowth of *Epiphany Explorations* itself, which was initially instituted as a response to two Victoria congregations having to amalgamate. Such an event causes upheaval, sadness, puzzlement, and even bitterness. It

requires an inordinate amount of understanding, willingness, and compromise, as well as a strong faith, and trust in God. The lead minister originally created this annual event to help the new, amalgamated congregation to heal, to have a new vision, and a common goal. The book project, as well as the event in January has resulted in a blended, vibrant, active new church community.

For our church's centenary, I tried a somewhat similar project with some residents of our local church congregation, only narrowed it down to their spiritual journey. I formulated a questionnaire with guidelines for the interview, but I let the conversation flow naturally. I know all the people well, so I could ask more specific and personal questions than were in the form. As the person talked, there were often revelations of person history and events that I had not been aware of, and it was very rewarding and exciting for me. The project was personally useful, in that I had a fruitful 'visit' with the interviewee, and was able to exercise pastoral care at the same time.

I then put my information into poetic form, which I then shared with the elder, to see if I had captured their story properly. If there were details I needed to correct or add, I was able to do so. In addition I used some artwork to accompany each story: my daughter's sketching of a family home or yard, or in one case, the lady's own painting of her childhood home. They were well received by the subjects, and provide a concrete memento of times and events which may dim, as these elders age, many with forms of dementia.

This song celebrates '*Elder-Wisdom*' (Figure 9).

A series of sessions at *Epiphany 2010* was presented by an American named Leonard Sweet. His topic concerned itself with the high-tech age, and how we must meet

it, and embrace it. If we want to connect with, and involve young people meaningfully, we must be able to do it in the 21st century mode. If we cannot understand, accept, and use all the technological instruments and methods they use, we will find it very difficult to engage them. While I agreed with some of his reasoning, I found myself rebelling against the idea of wholeheartedly abandoning the old-fashioned method of face-to-face interaction. Hence I was motivated to write this humorous poem, as a kind of over-reaction to his premises.

### Never Lose Sight

In this age of high-tech gadgets  
We are inundated with 'stuff'  
Will we ever quite recover....  
Have the strength to say "Enough"!

We are moving at warp speed  
To a society without touch,  
Except to push some buttons  
Which personally doesn't say much.

We are aiming for everything cashless,  
Face-to-faceless, paperless too;  
So much potential for abuse.....

It's called a post-Gutenberg world,  
Books were a solitary task.  
Now we communicate much more!  
But how? You may well ask!

Electronic, space-age rays and lights  
Bombard our brains all day.  
Screens encased in plastic boxes  
Determine everything we say.

As we evolve into the future,  
Our physique is going to change.  
Ears will diminish, thumbs will grow  
Beyond all present range.

We will gain so much, proponents say,  
Isn't it absolutely cool?  
Give me a warm hug any day  
And I'll be nobody's fool!

There are certain times when short, easy-to-learn songs are needed for a congregation to be able to sing quickly and comfortably. The following page consists of brief songs which could be used as calls to worship, either in general services, or at special times of the year. The first two are general, but the *Greeting Song* (Figure 11) could be used as the passing of the peace in a communion service. It was written as a sort of healing greeting after a rather conflicted and troubling time in our congregation.

*The Introit* (Figure 11) was directly inspired by the minister at *Epiphany Explorations*, who would often say the words of the chorus after a particularly thrilling or moving address, expecting us to respond with "Amen", of course. I used it as an opening for a worship time I led one summer. I wrote the music for the chorus in three-part harmony. The last chorus could be sung three times, building from melody, to two-part to the full three-part harmony. Members of the congregation could take whatever harmony

they choose. Similarly, the *Greeting Song* (Figure 11) can be used as a call to worship, or as an opening chorus.

Because the Victoria event occurs in late January, Lenten readings are often the topic of Herbert O'Driscoll's final session. *The Lenten Invocation* (Figure 12) was written for the beginning of Lent. There are some settings of the Kyrie in the newest hymnbook, but I felt the triplet lines were more meaningful to the people in our congregation than the traditional part of the Mass. A piece that we used before was the *Kyrieleis* by Ron Klusmeier, and I thought that this was an acceptable alternative.

In keeping with Lent/Easter, I wrote *The Moneychangers* (Figure 13) recalling the incident of Jesus overturning the moneychangers' tables in the Temple during 'Holy Week'. I frequently 'home cook' Easter programs in which we cover the time from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to His Resurrection a week later. This piece has been used in one of our cantatas. It would lend itself to a dramatic presentation of the story.

The song about *God's Blessing* (Figure 14) is just another praise song of what is in my heart. It could be used as an introit at the very beginning of a service, or to introduce Communion. It is simple enough to be learned quickly by the congregation, and can then be used as a chorus. I have this in mind with many of my short pieces, that they may be memorized and sung anytime.

# Figure 1 Lifesong

Verse

Chorus

The image displays the musical score for 'Figure 1 Lifesong'. It is written in 4/4 time and consists of five staves of music. The first two staves are labeled 'Verse' and the last three are labeled 'Chorus'. The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The piece concludes with a double bar line. There are first and second endings (marked '1,2') at the end of the chorus, and a triplet (marked '3') in the final measure of the chorus.

Figure 2

Gopher Girl

Chorus:               She travelled abroad many times  
                              She visited mountains and sea  
                              But she was not happy in other climes:  
                              A gopher girl was she.

Growing up under Alberta skies

Near a small prairie town

She lived and thrived where the grain grows high

Where the weather could soon bring you down.

                              Natural trees were not to be found

                              In the midst of the continent's plains

                              Wide-open spaces and blue skies abound

                              And you wait on the whim of the rains.

Coaxing flowers and gardens is tough

When working in black gumbo ground;

Like sticky glue when it's wet enough,

Cracked cement when no rain's around.

                              But roots go deep into prairie soil,

                              And down with mind and heart.

                              'Though living there is stressing toil

                              You cannot be sundered apart.

## Figure 2 Gopher Girl

The musical score for "Gopher Girl" is written in treble clef, 3/4 time, and the key of D major (one sharp). The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a quarter rest followed by a triplet of eighth notes (D4, E4, F4) and a quarter note (G4). The second staff continues with eighth and quarter notes, ending with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, F4, E4). The third staff features a triplet of eighth notes (D4, E4, F4) and a quarter note (G4). The fourth staff concludes with a triplet of eighth notes (D4, E4, F4), a quarter note (G4), and a final quarter note (D4) with a double bar line.

Figure 3

Where I Live

The world is a wonderful place to be,

The land that I live in is fine.

With freedom and opportunities:

The challenge for greatness is mine!

Refrain: I only know.....that happiness is.....where I live.

Alberta's horizons are wide and clear

And crystal clear waters are found.\*

The seasons in contrast and splendour unfold;

Such natural wonders abound.

Refrain:

The landscape change in so many ways

In ev'ry direction you go,

From the snow of the loftiest mountain peaks

To foothills and valleys below.

Final Refrain:

Drylands, and grasslands, and parkland, and prairie:

I love every hill, coulee, stream

I only know ....that happiness is.....where I live.

\* When I wrote this, there was far less pollution than today, but clear streams and rivers still do exist.

Figure 3 Where I Live

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Where I Live'. The score is written on eight staves, all using a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and dotted notes, along with rests and accidentals. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some longer note values in the lower staves. The piece concludes with a final note on the eighth staff.

Figure 4

A Green Song for Earth Day

O Great Spirit in the sky  
Look down on your creation.  
Do you ever wonder why  
It suffers desecration?  
What can we do?

O Great Spirit of the earth  
Once so full of great potential,  
We have mined it near to death  
With methods consequential.  
What could we do?

O Great Spirit of the air  
Once so pure and life-giving,  
Ev'ry breath is worse to bear,  
Our children undeserving.  
What would we do?

O Great Spirit of the waters  
Once pristine and crystal pure,  
For our sons and our daughters  
More unclean and unsure.....  
What should we do?

O Great Spirit of the sky  
Who made mountain, lake, and forest,  
And all things that walk and fly,  
Help us hold creation dearest.  
What must we do?  
What must we do?

## Figure 4 Green Song

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves in 4/4 time, key of D minor. The top staff contains a melody starting on D4, moving to E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, Bb6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, Bb7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, Bb8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, Bb9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, Bb10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, Bb11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, Bb12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, Bb13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, Bb14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, Bb15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, Bb16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, Bb17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, Bb18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, Bb19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, Bb20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, Bb21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, Bb22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, Bb23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, Bb24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, Bb25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, Bb26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, Bb27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, Bb28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, Bb29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, Bb30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, Bb31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, Bb32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, Bb33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, Bb34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, Bb35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, Bb36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, Bb37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, Bb38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, Bb39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, Bb40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, Bb41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, Bb42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, Bb43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, Bb44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, Bb45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, Bb46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, Bb47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, Bb48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, Bb49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, Bb50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, Bb51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, Bb52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, Bb53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, Bb54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, Bb55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, Bb56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, Bb57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, Bb58, C59, D59, 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Figure 5  
A Child is Walking To Your Door

A child is walking to your door;  
He is alone but he has to try.  
He is ragged, hungry, barefoot and poor.  
Will you make him walk on by?

A child is standing at your door:  
You cannot pretend to hide.  
She is deserving of so much more  
Since her mother and sister died.

A child is waiting at your door:  
A baby with a sickly, starving cry.  
You have heard him call to you before:  
Help him now or he may die.

Theses children knocking on our doors  
Are victims of hunger and disease.  
We can help to change what is in store  
With our lives of plenty and ease.

OR These children knocking at our doors  
Are hungry, destitute, cold and ill.  
Orphans, bread-winners and more...  
Can we let them suffer still?

Chorus: Bambalela  
Bambalela  
Bamblela, lela.

\*Roughly translated, bambalela  
means “never give up”.



Figure 6

-for Roméo Dallaire

As our understanding grows, we set goals for which to strive,  
Then begin the journey toward them, step by step, and day by day.  
We diligently labour, intertwining others' lives,  
And trust that God will be with us, all along the way.

Refrain:

For so much of what we do, we cannot touch or see,

We are what we are, we can only try our best.

The past is the past, the future's yet to be.

We trust in God to guide, forgive, and love us to the last.

Our life's work is done in many places, times and scenes,  
And sometimes we feel crushed by our overburdening cares.  
At times we learn what real commitment means,  
Helping to make the daily load easier to bear.

Refrain:

When in life duty calls and we have to obey  
And take on many tasks that are difficult and long,  
But in times like these, on our course we must stay  
Relying on the Higher Power to keep up true and strong.

\*I feel that with the original words and the revisions for this text, this song can be used in different ways, for different emphases. Once a text and melody have been written, it is easy to add new verses, or omit some to make it suitable for a new usage.

## Figure 6 For Romeo Dallarie

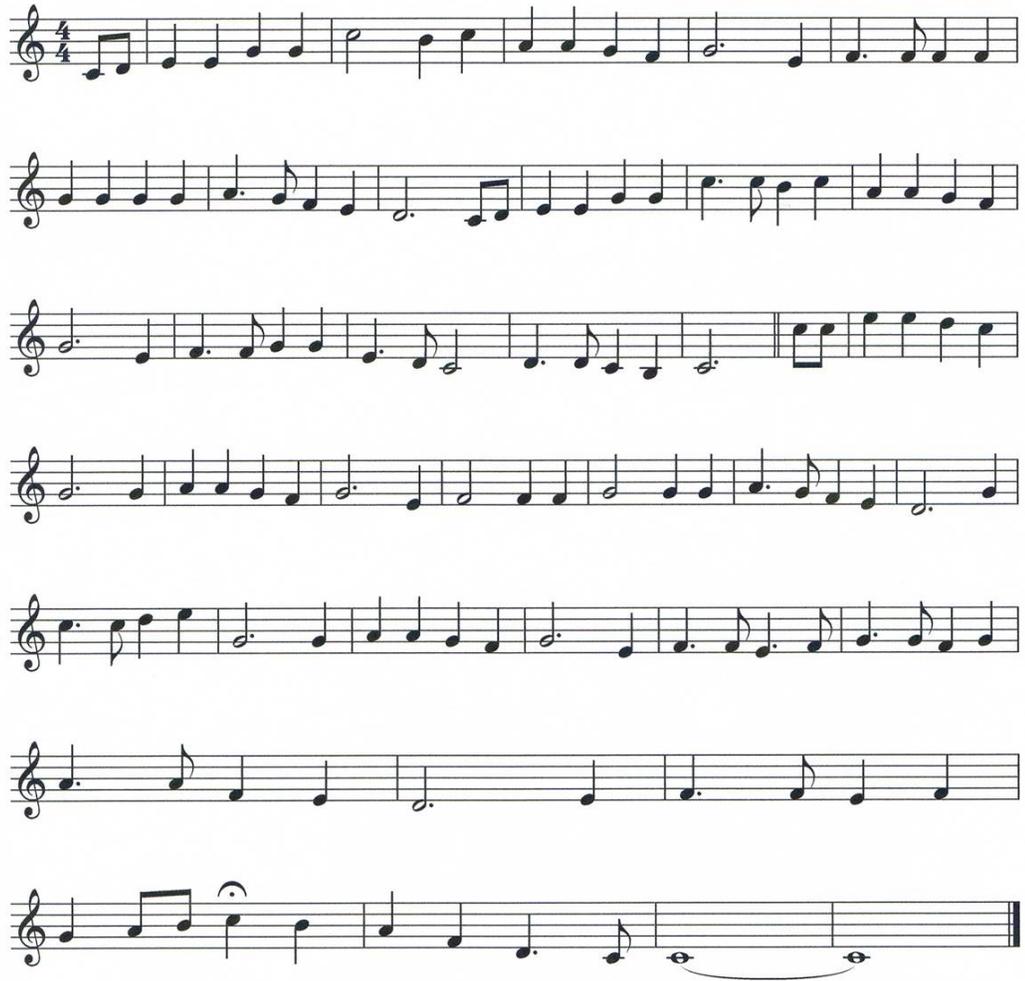


Figure 7

## The Liberated Heart

Refrain:       Going deeper, deeper, deeper into God,  
                  Flying higher, higher, higher into light,  
                  Spreading wider, wider, wider in the Spirit,  
                  Arms are open wide.

We are all the children of God.

We are drawn to God, all-welcoming,

We are learning, growing, blossoming

With a truly liberated heart.

When we ask what Jesus would do

And listen for His clear, strong voice,

We will know what path to take

And know we've made the right choice.

Figure 8

Centering Song

We enter this place of worship,  
We come with smile of greeting,  
We come to bind as God's people,  
In love and fellowship meeting.

Chorus:        So come and journey with us,  
                  Come along, come along.  
                  We're on our way with God as our God.

We come as pilgrims listening  
For God's voice to speak in stillness.  
And in humility and worship  
We seek our spiritual wellness.

(Chorus:)

With Jesus as our special Friend  
And our spiritual Guide,  
We pray, and praise our Maker,  
Set our worldly cares aside.

(Chorus:)

Diverse we are, and many,  
All colours, shapes, and tastes.  
But we need to feel connected  
In this varied human race.

(Chorus:)

\*The Centering song simply expresses my joy at being in a session at First/Met

## Figure 7 The Liberated Heart

Chorus:



Verse



The musical notation for Figure 7 consists of four staves. The first staff is labeled 'Chorus:' and contains a single line of music in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves are labeled 'Verse' and contain two lines of music. The fourth staff is a single line of music. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

## Figure 8 Centering Song



Chorus

The musical notation for Figure 8 consists of four staves. The first three staves are a single line of music in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps. The fourth staff is labeled 'Chorus' and contains two lines of music, with a double bar line at the end of the first line. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Figure 9

Elder-Wisdom

Refrain: Elder-wisdom, elder-wisdom  
Share it with us, loud and strong  
Elder-wisdom, elder-wisdom  
Tell us your story, sing your song.

No matter your age or where you've been,  
Things you've made, the job you did,  
Wonderful things you've heard and seen:  
A life to harvest for us all.

Refrain:  
Everyone deserves to be understood,  
To tell a story, to share the words;  
Show a life of faith, to have found life good,  
To age with dignity and grace.

Refrain:  
As you've traveled along life's road  
Meeting others along the way,  
Whether bearing a light or heavy load  
You've walked with the help of God above.

Refrain:



Figure 10

Greeting Song

Let us greet each other with a smile,  
Come, let us worship the Lord.  
We have gathered together for awhile,  
Let us ponder the Sacred Word.  
Reach out your hand, pass the Peace,  
And bless our devotions now.

Figure 11

Introit

O God, how good to be here  
In communion of heart and mind.  
O God, we feel you to be near  
Within your spirit now to find.

Chorus: Alleluia, Amen!

And the people say Amen!

You bring us from far afield  
United in common quest;  
For sacred time in which to yield  
Ourselves to what is True and Best.

Chorus:

Figure 12

Lenten Invocation

Let me be humble,

Let me remember

Allow me your vision to see.

Though I may stumble

Help me surrender

To your intention for me.

Kyrie, Mercy, Kyrie.

Figure 13

The Moneychangers

When Jesus came to the temple

He saw the moneychangers there.

He overturned the tables,

And said, "How do you dare?"

God's house is a house of worship

For pray'r and for praise

But you have desecrated

With your robbing, venal ways!

## Figure 10 Greeting Song



Figure 10 Greeting Song is a three-staff musical score in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes, with a final half note. The second and third staves continue the melody with similar rhythmic patterns, ending with a double bar line.

## Figure 11 Introit

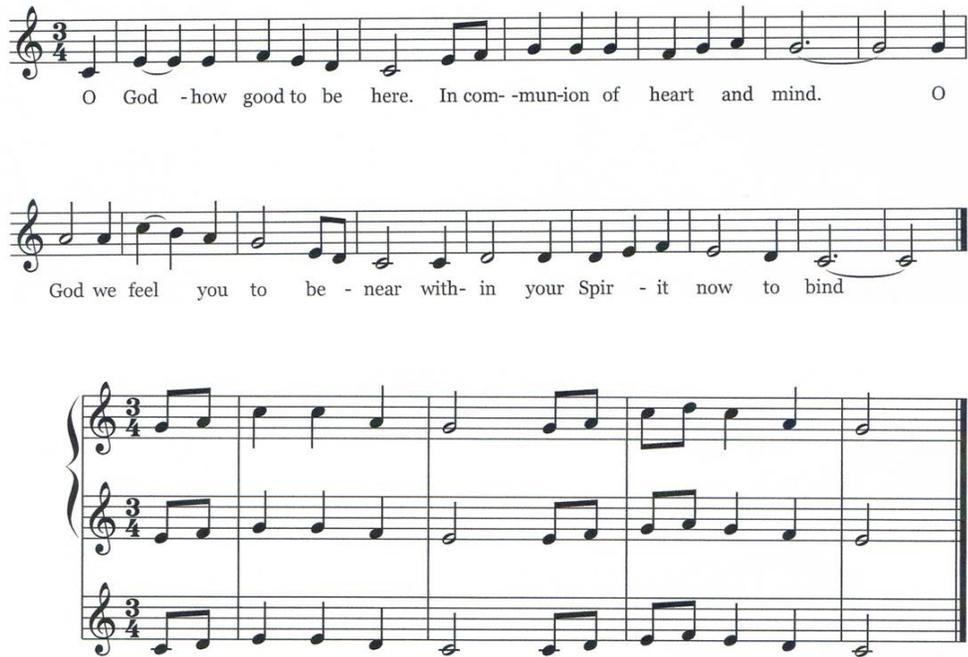


Figure 11 Introit is a three-staff musical score in 3/4 time. The first staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "O God -how good to be here. In com -mun-ion of heart and mind. O". The second staff continues the vocal line with lyrics: "God we feel you to be - near with- in your Spir - it now to bind". The third staff is a piano accompaniment consisting of three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs) with a consistent rhythmic accompaniment of quarter and eighth notes.

Figure 14  
God's Blessings

My heart is overflowing  
With the blessings that you give;  
For I trust the best is for me  
Every day I live.

Refrain:       And I will praise you with every breath I take,  
                  And I will serve you with every act I make,  
                  And I will love you 'till the end of time.

I cannot but express it  
In every way I may;  
My gratitude for living  
Every precious God-filled day.

Refrain:

I know that God is always  
Emmanuel is true.  
The Spirit that surrounds us  
Is there for me and you.

Refrain

Figure 15

Gloria

Refrain: Gloria

Christ is in our hearts this night. Bring Him praise.

Welcome now in joyous Light. Reverence raise.

Refrain:

Hope and Peace are born anew. Hearts uplift.

God has sent His best to you: receive this Gift.

Refrain:

## Figure 14 God's Blessings

Musical score for 'God's Blessings' in 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a double bar line and a repeat sign. The third and fourth staves complete the piece, ending with a double bar line.

## Figure 15 Gloria

Musical score for 'Gloria' in 3/4 time. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) showing a piano accompaniment with chords. The second and third staves show a vocal melody in a single treble clef. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Figure 16

Feast for the Soul

Feast for the soul, feast for the soul,

We have come together in a feast for the soul.

Under the tree of love, watched over from above,

We have come together in a feast for the soul.

Within these worship walls we come to listen and to learn:

Replenishing our minds with new thought.

May our hearts with inspiration and enthusiasm burn;

Take with gratitude what good teachers have brought.

At the end of the day with our minds and bodies fed

We will leave here with fresh points of view.

With the seasoning of salt for our daily bread

We will go and serve God the best we can do.

Figure 17

Prayer

Refrain:       How do you pray?  
                  How do you speak with your Maker?  
                  How do you say  
                  What is dearest to your heart  
                  (Alternately: Pleas from the depths of your soul)

Approach with all humility  
Come, approach with modesty.  
Your arms may be reaching out  
Your head may be bowed down,  
Whether prostrate or standing tall,  
The style doesn't matter at all

Refrain:

Come, with all sincerity, Believe with all certainty  
It does not matter where you stand  
Or the inner feelings you command  
Your thoughts and prayers are always heard.  
God's promise is in His Word.

Refrain:

Pray like Jesus in simplicity, Without pretence and in privacy  
From narrowness of self away; Focus on a fresh new day.  
From ego may you be released  
To partake the sacred feast.

## Figure 16 Feast for the Soul

Musical score for Figure 16, 'Feast for the Soul'. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody features eighth and sixteenth notes, with a repeat sign at the end. The second and third staves continue the melodic line with similar rhythmic patterns and some rests.

## Figure 17 Prayer

Musical score for Figure 17, 'Prayer'. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, and includes two triplet markings. The second staff is labeled 'alt' and features a long note with a fermata. The third and fourth staves continue the melodic line with various rhythmic values.

Figure 19

Leaving Song

We must go from this place  
Where we have met each other.  
From this church's warm embrace  
We must go forth.

Chorus: We can never be the same  
Renewed, refreshed, inspired  
From home-church we came  
To feel God's presence near.

We must go from these days	We have gathered on this night
When God has blessed us deeply,	When God has blessed us deeply,
Crying, laughing, singing praise,	In the presence of God's Light
Emotions running high.	To share worship, prayer, and praise.

Chorus:

We must be prepared to share,  
And hope to pass the beauty  
Of the special spirit here;  
To bring God's presence near.

Chorus

Figure 20  
A Song of Hope

God will see us through this valley,  
He'll be with us all the way.  
He will bring you consolation,  
Lead you to a brighter day.

God's peace flows like a river,  
Gently cradling you and me.  
Flowing everywhere forever,  
From our sorrow we'll be free.

Jesus' love comes to be with you;  
With the struggle you will deal  
Jesus comes to be beside you,  
Empathizing how you fee.

And so, surrounded by these blessings  
Your heart will be at peace.  
Grounded in the great I Am.  
Your soul will never cease.

## Figure 19 Leaving Song

Verse Chorus

The musical notation for Figure 19 is written on two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Verse' and the second staff is labeled 'Chorus'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The Verse consists of 12 measures, and the Chorus consists of 12 measures. The melody is primarily eighth and quarter notes, with some rests and a final double bar line at the end of the Chorus.

## Figure 20 Song of Hope

Verse Chorus

The musical notation for Figure 20 is written on three staves in 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Verse' and the second and third staves are labeled 'Chorus'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The Verse consists of 8 measures, and the Chorus consists of 16 measures. The melody is primarily eighth and quarter notes, with some rests and a final double bar line at the end of the Chorus.

Figure 21

Untitled

I have been to the mountains of my soul,  
I have flown to the heights where the eagles soar,  
I have crossed the waters where the sea-swells roll,  
I have stood where the rain winds roar.

Refrain:       And my feet are planted firm  
                  In the faith that makes me whole;  
                  Not on rock, not on sand, but on binding earth  
                  In the Promise that grows not old.

As we walk along life's changing road,  
At times the journey will be hard and sad;  
But God who sent Jesus to share our load  
Has in mind to make us glad.

Refrain:  
(For Maida)   As we celebrate the milestones of our lives  
                  May we humbly bow in gratefulness and praise,  
                  For, with the Spirit guiding us, we will survive  
                  To rejoice in all our days.

Refrain:       And our feet are planted firm  
                  In the faith that makes us whole.  
                  We are grounded firmly in God's love,  
                  And the Promise that grows not old.

For Transfiguration Sunday:

Jesus climbed to the mountain height

With disciples Peter, James and John

He was haloed in a blinding light,

Brighter than the dawn.

Refrain:       And His feet were planted firm  
                  On the holy ground He trod.  
                  And the ancient prophets reappeared  
                  As a promise-sign from God.

\*The verses and refrains can be chosen and rearranged to fit multiple uses.



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Endnotes

- <sup>i</sup> Magsamen, Sandra , *Living Artfully; create the life you imagine* (N.Y., London, Toronto, Sydney: Free Press 2006), 4.
- <sup>ii</sup> Littauer, Florence, *Silver Boxes: The Gift of Encouragement* (England: Word Pub., 1989), 45.
- <sup>iii</sup> Littauer, *Silver Boxes*, 129.
- <sup>iv</sup> Janson, H.W. & Dora Jane, *The Story of Painting: From Cave Painting to Modern Times* (N.Y.:Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1952), 8.
- <sup>v</sup> Allen, Pat B., *Art is a Way of Knowing* (Boston, London: Shambala, 1995), 3.
- <sup>vi</sup> Marty, Sid, *Men for the Mountains* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart-Bantam Ltd., 1978), 39.
- <sup>vii</sup> Feldman, Edmund B., *The Artist* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1982) 2 & 4.
- <sup>viii</sup> Miller, Sherrill, *Visions of the Goddess* (Toronto, London, N. Y.: Penguin Group, 1998), 92.
- <sup>ix</sup> Feldman, *The Artist*, 19.
- <sup>x</sup> Bass, Dorothy C. & Briehl, Susan R., ed., *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2010), 88.
- <sup>xi</sup> Albom , Mitch, *Have a Little Faith* (N.Y.:Hyperion, 2009), 249.
- <sup>xii</sup> Albom, *Have a Little Faith*, 247.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Albom, *Have a Little Faith*, 249.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Albom, *Have a Little Faith*, 137.
- <sup>xv</sup> Littauer, *Silver Boxes*, 148.

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Addenda

1. The Lord's Prayer
2. Texts to
  - a) a song for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Church
  - b) a song for the centenary of St. Paul's United Church in Trochu.
  - c) a song commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the new Know United Church in Three Hills.
3. Trochus' Centennial Song
4. Three Hills' Centennial Song
5. The questionnaire about a person's spiritual journey
6. Arts in our county
7. Proposal to centennial committee
8. Form of submittal
9. Overview of the project

# The Lord's Prayer

Tune: Ilona M Anderson Noble

Our Fa-ther who art in hea - ven, Hal-low-ed be Thy name, Thy king-dom  
come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heav' - n Give us this  
day our dai-ly bread; and for- give us our tres-pass-es as we for-give those who  
tres pass a-against us; Lead us not in-to temp- ta - tion, but de- liv - er us from e - vil; for  
Thine is the king-dom and the pow - er and the glor - y for - -ev - er  
more. A - - men. A - - men.

---

Hymn for 2000

A little country church with fields around,  
A small town church on the corner,  
A red brick church with majestic sound,  
A tow' ring gray stone in a city square,  
All these a United Church may be.

A wide open door, a friendly face,  
Greeters who smile and laugh with you,  
Worship and fellowship in a place  
Where conversations may range far and wide,  
All these a united church may be.

Our Lord's table is there for all  
Who profess our Saviour Christ.  
Generations welcome, great and small,  
To share in the feast of God's love.  
All these a uniting church should be.

Faith must be strong in word and deed,  
For right, we must take leaps and risks,  
To confront life's issues, others needs  
God must be our Guide and strength  
All these a uniting church must be.

Coda: for UCC 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary only)

This church of ours,  
Conceived so many years ago,  
Absorbing, gathering, blending  
Traditions that we all love and know.

---

Anniversary Hymn for St. Paul's United Church

In the beginning was the Word,  
And the Word came with us to dwell.  
Through centuries of time and history  
Heartfelt hymns of praise forever swell.

Chorus:       Our God who has created us,  
                  Our God who has delivered us,  
                  We come now to praise you  
                  In gratitude and joy.

“Where two or three are met as one,  
There with you I will be too.”  
God's people meet to listen and to pray  
For guidance to do what we should do.

Chorus:

“I am the Way, the Truth, the Life;  
No one comes to the Father but by me.”  
Jesus came to teach us how to live:  
To be all that God would have us be.

Chorus:

“Lo, I will always be with you,  
Even ‘till the world comes to an end.”  
We know on whom we can depend,  
In the course of our own hundred years. \*

\* As we carry on from day to day (for general use)

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For the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the New Building of  
Knox United Church in Three Hills

Memories

Chorus:       What does it mean to you...down through the years?  
                  What does it mean to you...laughter and tears?  
                  What does it mean to you...comfort and love?  
                  What does it mean to you...Gift from above?

Children sitting a little rows  
Or on a carpeted stair,  
Hearing the old, old story  
Retold with loving care

A little white church on the corner  
With from steps high and wide;  
A congregation together held  
Like a warm embrace inside.

Then a brand new building rose  
Larger, build to last.  
Faith of our fathers living still –  
To the builders' dream hold fast.

May God bless this special place,  
May Jesus' Presence be known;  
May the Spirit be with us all.  
We give Thee but Thine own....

---

Anniversary Song for Trochu

Anniversaries, birthdays, and tree rings  
Signal time is moving on.  
Along the continuum of history  
Is the founding of a town.

The vastness of sunlight and prairie  
Beckoned all those years ago  
To people seeking to build new homes  
Where families could thrive and grow.

From work diverse and countries far  
They came with talents and skills;  
Gath' ring to build churches and schools  
Working hard to do God's will.

The land was plentiful and fertile,  
Ideal for new beginnings.  
Pioneers persevered to be successful ---  
Over trials and hardships winning.

Anniversaries, birthdays, and tree rings  
Measure time year by year.  
The decades turned into a century,  
And that is why we're here.  
And that is why we're here.

---

Head for the Hills

In the early years of the twentieth century Near a winding stream  
Lay a scattered cluster of little buildings, The promise of a dream.

Many more enterprising people, Joined the pioneers,  
Bringing amenities that were needed, In the village year by year.

Settlers were drawn to the little village in the sheltered valley site.  
Thru' isolation, hardship and weather the future still looked bright.

The cozy village outgrew the flat when the railway line came down.  
So many building were relocated to form the present town.

Chorus: Head for the hills, To the little town on the prairie  
Named for the hills that rise just north of town.

The new town boasted a two-room school, expanded then to four  
Congregations gathered together to worship, their spirits to restore.

Families of faith envisioned a school dedicated to the Lord  
The birth of the Prairie Bible Institute was their heart's reward.

Chorus:

Music has always played a part in the culture of the town.  
The choirs, bands and music teachers made a glorious sound.

Woven thru' the town's bright tapestry, community was strong  
Many service clubs and volunteers helped everyone along.

Chorus:

---

Now we come to celebrate one hundred years of community

May God be with us in the future in harmony and unity.

Questions for someone talking about his/her spiritual journey.

1. What was church-going like in your family?
2. What denomination was it?
3. Were you baptized as an infant or an adult?
4. Did you go to Sunday School and church?
5. Were there boys and girls groups to belong to? Did you go?
6. Did you say grace at meals, and/or pray as a family at other times too?
7. Did you have your own special experience of the 'divine'? Or was it a gradually developing journey?
8. As you got older , got married, had children, etc., what did your faith mean to you?
9. Have there been times when your faith was tested? Challenged?
10. What does your faith mean to you, at this time?
11. Has your faith been more God-centered or Christ-centered? Has it always been this way?
12. Final comments:

Goals/objectives: To honour those with whom I meet, by listening, and recording their comments, to commit their spiritual journeys to memory through poetry and/or song, to gain further understanding of faith as seen through the eyes of special people in my life. It is also a way to enrich my theological 'data-base', and perhaps to clarify some of my own questions. It is important to recover these memories and to stimulate reflection about their faith, as all of them are *very elderly*.

\* Since I did this project, one lady has died, two others now have severe dementia, and another is failing fast.

---

An interesting event that was advertised in late summer was called *A Celebration of Arts and Culture From Coast to Coast to Coast* or *Art and Culture Days*. Every time the ad came on, I tried to note as many of the items as I could. It was an excellent illustration of what may be described by the term ‘art’, and included the following: origami, carving, quilting, film, animation, screenplays, video, poetry, song-writing, performing arts, hip-hop, and much more. I had a difficult time catching all the words, which flashed randomly across the screen.

In our local county, we celebrated local pictorial art by having displays in our town libraries. It was open to all ages, and the display was rotated around the country for about a month. A biography of the artist appeared beside the work so people could learn about these local artists. Now there is a ‘general store’ in a former retail building, in which space is being used as a rotating gallery.

Our town of Trochu celebrated a centenary in 2011, and celebratory events were spread out over the spring and summer. An event called *A Taste of Trochu* took place on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Caterers and restaurants from within the town hosted a giant tasting party. As I consider cooking and catering an art, it was a feast for the eye as well as the palate.

There were all kinds of entertainment during the evening: in the form of Filipino and aboriginal dancing and drumming, groups singing, and instrumental music. My

---

singers called *Pleasant Company* sang eleven songs: one from each decade beginning in 1911.

Each song was published in a year ending with 1. For 2011, I composed a song about our centennial. On the May date of incorporation my group sang the new 'Trochu Song'. I had composed a ballad about the founding of our town several years ago, and it went into a time capsule that was opened in May.

My proposal is a massive art & culture display of Trochu people's work, past and present. It could be held in stages, or in one giant celebration, e.g. for a week culminating in the Canada Day weekend. Here are the categories I came up with, encompassing the arts and crafts I have perceived over the years, and would cover many generations.

Fabric- work/sewing

Quilting, banner-making, embroidery, weaving, crocheting, knitting, dress-making.

3- Dimensional work

Pottery, carving, woodwork (furniture), metalwork, leather tooling, wheat weaving.

Picture work

Painting, paper tole, photography, sketching, drawing, copper tole pictures.

Heritage crafts

Flour-sack embroidery, Finn rugs, hooked rugs, braided rugs, etc., Tailor-swatch covers, Home-made household items from pioneer times.

---

Performing arts

Music, poetry, journalism, family history books, cookbooks, etc. (published or unpublished)

Miscellaneous

Glasswork, etching, cake decorating, card making, etc.

I feel this event fits best with Part Three of this paper, as it has most to do with the creativity of adults in their immediate environments, making things for the home, making something which is both relaxing and beautifying, exploring and experimenting, or celebrating heritage crafts.

---

Artisanscape Registration Form

1. One sample of art per person (e.g. if you are multi-talented, choose *one* painting, *one* piece of crochet, *one* photograph, etc.)
2. Use a recipe card for your name, the type of art or craft, phone number, and any explanatory comments.
3. Return forms to this location by June 27<sup>th</sup>.
4. Bring items to the old Trochu Curling rink on June 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> for set-up.
5. They may be retrieved on Saturday, July 2, after 5:00 o'clock.

Categories

1. 2-dimensional art: painting, sketching, photographs, tole pictures, stained glass, copper-tooling pictures, etc.
2. 3-dimensional work: pottery, wood-carving, small furniture pieces, models, sculpture, leather-tooling, wheat weaving, cake decorating, etc. Call
3. Heritage crafts: old-fashioned home-made rugs, flour-sack pieces, ethnic & antique handwork, etc.  
Call Iлона Noble for info. @ 403-442-2477
4. Fabric arts: weaving, dress-making, banners, embroidery, crocheting and knitting, etc. Call Donna Pride for info. @ 403-442-3972  
Quilting: call Shirley Adam for info. @ 403-443-2175
5. Print materials: journalism, books, published or unpublished. Cookbooks, card-making, family histories, etc. Call Brenda Dowell @ 403-346-0662  
Music: compositions, tapes, CDs, etc.

\*The phone numbers are informational only, but this form is your entry. However, if you know of people who will not see these forms, you may tell the contact person about them, to register.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Type of art or  
crafts \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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I must share the results of *Artisanscape*, and how exciting it was for me to see what people contributed. I spent a good part of three nights on site for security reasons, and on the night of July 1<sup>st</sup> I did a rough count of tables. There were about 100 items ranging from a very old hand-made wooden bucket to a beautiful leopard needlepoint picture which had come directly from being framed. The majority of the items were pictures or fabric crafts, but there were also porcelain angels, pottery, carvings, leather-tooling, wheat-weaving, and a beautiful stained-glass lamp. In the heritage section were examples of old rugs, embroidery on flour-sacking, an antimacassar made from tailor's swatches, seventy-year-old crocheting, and painting and carving done by an old Finnish artisan from early times, and home-made games and toys.

There were several examples of full-sized quilts as well as hangings. One large quilt was done by a former Trochu boy who regularly wins prized at the Calgary Stampede. Another fascinating picture was of wolves done in 'feather' tole by a local fellow. It was wonderful to see crafts by a variety of people of all ages (except children) and spanning several years of our history. A display of children's art had already been held at the school, and there was scope for more, later in the summer at the flower/baking/photography show. It was a fitting contribution to our centenary celebrations.

In the print/music section we had theses by some of our illustrious students (including a Rhodes Scholar) and two young women who are journalists in England. There were story and poetry books written by local people, heritage cookbooks, and newspaper articles. There were records, tapes and CDs by local artists playing in the background, some ten in all.

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Those who actually came through the display were impressed by the scope and variety of what they saw. The most rewarding comments I heard were along the lines of “I didn’t know he (she) did that!” As a celebration of the creativity of many of our people over the years, I believe it was a success.

It was unfortunate that a lot of folks who meant to put something in (and certainly *should* have) let the opportunity slip by. Those of us who set up needed to know what to expect ahead of time. To provide picture space, quilt racks, and table surfaces. It was necessary to know what was coming.