



INLAND STREAM

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Desert Places

John VanDerWalker
Mission Center President



I used to think about going into the desert. For one thing it was a place I was familiar with, when I say the desert I mean the high plains of Southern Idaho, Northern Nevada and Eastern Oregon.

Now, my dream to go to the desert was to do it as a spiritual practice, to separate myself from family, friends and church, to be alone. My plan was not to be a nomad with no comforts or provisions, I planned to drive to a predetermined place where I could be found, on a slight hill so I could have views of the horizons east and west and a view of the Jarbidge country and the Sawtooths, and hopefully a little draw close by that I could explore. I would have my binoculars (you never leave home with out them, Ray taught me that), my wall tent, a cot and mattress, sleeping bag, cooking stove, cooler with simple food to prepare, camp kitchen, boots and suitable outdoors clothes, scripture, a couple (or more) good books, maybe some sticks and a simple carving kit, and water, don't forget the water; 10 gallons just in case. I would not be roughing it. All of this thought and preparation so that I could be isolated. Alone with God...and all my luxuries.

What a quaint and romantic idea.

Today marks 21 days of being home. Twenty-one days since I held on to MacKenzie, hugged Sara or Maddie or Keera or Kali. We were looking forward to Jennifer's visit for a grand birthday celebration next week. As much as I feel like I am missing out, I know that my situation is a minor inconvenience. I am not in some refugee camp on the Turkish border, or _____ (you pick the border). I am not being detained at an ICE facility for trying to make my life and the lives of my family better by immigrating to a strange place. I have a comfortable home, food in the pantry, electricity and heat. I see from my street side home office the neighbors out walking trying to keep from going stir crazy, and I talk to them when I get the opportunity, from a very safe distance. I am not dying in a hospital. I have it good.

But what is it that I can learn here? How is this isolation going to impact my witness, how I think about God? How I think about church? How I think about the Community of Christ?

I have experienced new things that are full of potential for ministry: internet virtual meetings and worship, podcasts (who knew?), and facetime. The power of a random phone call both made and received. The reminder that scheduled prayer and devotion can change how you see the world, even if you are seeing

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The Generosity of Love

Robin K. Linkhart

Nearly 40 years ago my husband and I moved to Longmont Colorado. Raised in the church we looked forward to meeting our new Community of Christ congregation—the little white church on the corner in the middle of a diverse high-needs neighborhood.

That's where I met Donnie. Part of a large family, Donnie also grew up in the church. He led a simple life working as a career custodian in the local school district. He was a gentle kind-hearted soul. Never married, Donnie lived happily with his two cats. Sunday mornings he arrived at church with a face full of smiles and cheerful greetings for all. And every Sunday without fail he humbly placed his offering envelope in the collection plate.

As I got to know Donnie better, I came to understand that the generosity he lived out in his faith community was part of a whole life of generosity. He touched the lives of everyone he knew with the gentle grace that was just a natural part of how Donnie followed the way of Jesus. The world would likely judge his gifts to be small. The reality is the consistent holy rhythms of his life generated a circle of giving that radiated love and grace touching countless lives. The portion he shared in the offering plate of his faith community became an active part of funding mission in his home-town and all across the globe. The tangible ways he shared in his everyday life with friends and neighbors did the same.

Donnie never gave the offertory statement at church or taught a class on generosity. But the way Donnie lived was a powerful response to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Donnie received God's gift of love and grace whole-heartedly and it overflowed into a life that served others no matter where he was or what he was doing.

Watching Donnie changed my life. Donnie deepened my understanding of who Jesus is and how love brings tangible evidence of hope and healing to our world.

During the current global pandemic we are seeing acts of generosity burst forth like sunny spring flowers.

In the midst of restaurant workers losing jobs, people risking their lives trying to help others, and students without school meals, local small restaurant owners are partnering with others and converting their restaurants into community kitchens to feed hospital workers, seniors, and anyone else in need. Neighbors are helping neighbors with groceries, medication, healthcare, outside chores, delivery services, networking, a listening ear, and more.

Community of Christ continues to share ministry and mission with the world as new online ministries emerge, inspiring stories of hope are shared, and members and friends continue to share in tangible ways everyday knowing that "in their welfare resides [our] welfare" (Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a).

Generosity is the heart of Community

Generosity is the heart of God.

Thank you for all the ways you generously share. What you give makes a difference in our world.

Today our everyday lives are impacted in profound ways as we face the challenges of a global pandemic. Our world is suffering all manner of disruption, pain, loss, fear, uncertainty, isolation, and death. It is the way of suffering love. It is also the place where transforming love is born. The kind of love that takes action, that sees need and responds through



hearts of generosity. A love that seeks to be fully present even in the face of isolation. A love that transcends physical separation and vibrantly lives through the uniting presence of the Holy Spirit.

Easter announces that love, not death, is the final answer. In the days ahead may we live as Easter people following in the way of the Christ. May we truly be the hands and feet of Jesus in our daily lives generously sharing through actions of tangible love. May the circle grow wider still as we seek to realize healing and wholeness in our world.

And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ's eternal community of oneness and peace. Trust in this promise. (Doctrine and Covenants 165:6c)

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

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it through a window or at a safe distance from others.

So, I am on my sojourn in the desert, alone, with all of you. In a few days from this writing we will celebrate Easter in a way that I have never experienced before. I have preached most of the Easters since the last century. I have always been in community on Easter, many of those years celebrating with the part of my family that had Easter as part of their name. My mouth will be shut this Easter and I will be facing the hard truth of Jesus' isolation on the cross, hanging there, dying alone. I will think of the disciples, abandoned by the dream of Jesus being the one, Mary watching the work of the cross being done on her son, alone in her terror.

I will remember my baptism and my confirmation and I will come to understand that I am not alone, I am part of a mysterious union of disciples, bound up by the Holy Spirit across time and space. A bond that transcends loneliness, fear, disease, and even death. I am not alone, I am only isolated in space, for in Spirit I am part of the ONE.

Events Canceled through June

During our Advisory Council meeting it was decided by unanimous consent that summer events through June would be canceled due to Covid 19 pandemic. We considered the financial situation that many of our church members have been exposed to, the fact that schools are currently not in session and may need to make up time during the summer months, and the fact that this pandemic may be far from over by June and that safety should be our foremost concern. The camps effected are:

- Cheney Kids Camp
- Red Cliffe Kids Camp
- Inland West Samish Reunion

As of right now Community of Christ closure policy ends May 1, it is in all likelihood going to be extended, All church facilities, congregational buildings, campgrounds, recreation facilities and historic sites are closed until May 1.

Mission Center Calendar

The dates below are subject to change or cancellation.

When further decisions have been made regarding summertime events they will be communicated to the Mission Center.

Dates	Event
July 10 - 15	Red Cliffe Reunion
July 15 – 25	Spectacular
July 29 - August 2	Echo Valley, MT Youth Camp
August 1 – August 6	Camp Cascade, ID Jr/Sr High Camp
August 7-11	Combined Reunion (Camp Perkins)
September 4 – 6	Women's Retreat Nazareth Retreat Center, Boise, ID
September 26 – 27	Mission Center Conference Salt Lake City, UT

NCC Mourns Passing of Rev. Dr. Dale Luffman, Committed Ecumenist

The National Council of Churches joins the family and friends of Rev. Dr. Dale Luffman in grieving his loss. Rev. Luffman died at his home in Redmond, Oregon, on the morning of Wednesday, March 25, 2020. He is survived by his wife Judy, three children and four grandchildren.



Dale was a minister in the Community of Christ and served the National Council of Churches as a committed member of the Governing Board and served on its Faith and Order Commission for many years. He retired after serving over 35 years as an appointee minister for Community of Christ, nearly 20 of which were served as a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. He also served as the Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the Community of Christ. Dale continued to teach seminars and workshops in theology and scripture and served as an adjunct faculty member of Graceland University, teaching courses in scripture and practical theology for the Community of Christ Seminary.

A native of Woodburn, Oregon, Dale received a bachelor of arts in elementary education from Mt. Angel College in Oregon. Dale also has a master of education in counseling from Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon; a master of theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey; and a doctor of ministry from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania.

Dale was also a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, The John Whitmer Historical Association, and the Academy of Homiletics.

“Dale’s life glorified God,” remarked Kathryn Lohre, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations & Theological Discernment, and former President of the National Council of Churches. “He was always a kind and encouraging presence, and I looked forward to the time we spent together. May God’s comforting presence be with his family and community and with all of us as we mourn his passing and celebrate his life with Christ.”

Rev. Dr. Roy Medley, General Secretary Emeritus of American Baptist Churches USA and former Chair of the NCC Governing Board said, “He was a beloved colleague, always full of good cheer and gentle, grace-filled wisdom. His commitment to the church ecumenical was inspirational and we were richer for his participation. May his family and all who loved him be filled with the comfort of Christ’s love for him through whom he has passed from life to life eternal.” Posted by the National Council of Churches, March 26, 2020, <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/>

Save the dates for 2020 Mission Center Conference

**September 26—27
Salt Lake City, UT Community of Christ**

**Guest Ministry: Scott Murphy
Counselor to the President of the Church**

Grieving

JoAnn Fisher

Mission Center Invitation Support Minister

When this issue of the Inland Stream was in the planning stages, the Covid-19 death toll predictions were being projected from 80,000 to 240,000 in the United States. That did not consider the people who would lose their lives worldwide.

It became obvious to me that if those projections were accurate, we would be losing people that we not only knew but deeply loved. I felt an overwhelming grief at that possibility. What could be said or done to help us prepare for such a thing?

How can we grieve when we are sheltering in place? How can we demonstrate solidarity, and gratitude for the lives that would be lost? How can we console and be consoled as we mourn?

While today, it appears the projections are so much better than we once thought, I think it is good to remember that we are all still grieving.

We are grieving our freedom, to move about and come together in times of great joy or sorrow. We are grieving for those who are missing out on rites of passage during this time...weddings, graduations, anniversaries, baptisms/confirmations, birthdays, etc.

We are each one grieving a time of uncertainty and insecurity. Many of us have lost jobs... Or we work at jobs that put us in harm's way.

I really don't know how we can prepare for such events as this. I wish that I had something wise and wonderful to say that would bring comfort and healing to those of you reading this.

But I do know this...We are Easter People. People who continue to be resurrected to new experiences, new hope, and deep love. We are people who need to celebrate relationships.

We are people who have hearts of compassion for the suffering...even when we are suffering ourselves.

Someday this pandemic will be a thing of the past. But we will have learned valuable lessons about who and what is essential. We will be proud of the Enduring Principles: Responsible Choices and Worth of All Persons that our church lived into during this time.

The days, weeks and months ahead call for courage and compassion!

I want to leave you a quote that has proved helpful for me. The author is unknown.

"Grief never ends... But it changes.

It's a passage, not a place to stay.

Grief is not a sign of weakness,

Nor a lack of faith....

It is the price of love."

Mission Prayer

God, where will your Spirit lead today?
Help me be fully awake and ready to
respond.

Grant me courage to risk
something new and
become a blessing of your love and
peace. Amen.



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Temple Story by Brittany Mangelson (as posted in Inland West Blog)



The story I have for you, is actually three short stories that connect my distant past, my present understanding and my future with this sacred building. The first time I saw the Temple was 2002. I was a young teenager on a church history tour. I was not a member of Community Christ, but my heritage and

history with faith shares roots in the sacred story of the restoration. Unfortunately, our itinerary for the tour did not include Community of Christ's Temple. We did, however, eat lunch on the lawn of the LDS visitor's center just across the street. I have a distinct memory of looking up at this building and being so curious about its soft, yet bold design. I was not seeking a new spiritual home at that point, but the architecture of this building stuck with me and I carried that curious image with me throughout the next decade.

The first time I was able to visit this sacred space was in 2016. By that point, I was a member of Community of Christ, an ordained priest, and was set to interview President Emeritus Wallace B Smith for Project Zion Podcast. My 5 year-old twin daughters and 2 year-old son were anxious after being in the car for the two day drive from Utah. My family pulled into the parking lot to set up for our important interview, and we weren't even in the building before we were stopped and shown Christian love and hospitality by someone who has since become a friend. Nita Harder was a stranger at the time who took a moment to pause and see a family struggling with three young kids. She stopped to welcome us, to tell a few jokes, and help my kids get in a much better mood. She gifted us peace before we even walked in the door.

The next few hours were a whirlwind experience. I had heard so much about this building and I

was afraid my enthusiasm was setting myself up for disappointment. Could it really be a place where all were welcome? Was it going to be as open, transparent, loving, and filled with grace as everyone said? As a young mother, I worried that my family would be seen as a burden, or that I would be pigeonholed into one identity and role because of my gender. Could I actually find empowerment and a voice of my own in this holy place?

The answer was YES!

From the moment we arrived, I was treated like family. We happen upon Apostle Linda Booth in the lobby who was thrilled to see us and paused her very busy morning to give us a tour of the Temple complex. My kids were able to meet a significant amount World Church leadership and I quickly realized that not only was I considered worthy and good enough to be in this space, but *they* were too. We left with chocolates from the UK, wishes and blessings that were given to us in Spanish and whichever language Bunda happened to be speaking at the time, and pens straight out of Scott Murphy's personal collection.

Christ's Mission and the ministries of the Temple came alive for me that morning. I was affirmed in a way I didn't think was possible. I was given a deepened understanding that the soft, bold architecture of this building is reflected in the Spirit of Joy, Hope, Love, and Peace that we experience here.

Since that first visit in 2016, I have had the privilege of coming back four additional times as part of Community of Christ's Seminary program. Each time, I have tried to carve out space to be alone and sit in the quiet peace I find here. I've never told this story before and to be honest, I wasn't planning on ever sharing it, but during one particularly chilly and gloomy day in the middle of deep study, I found myself looking out a window onto the lawn across the street that I had once picnicked on. I went into deep reflection on what has happened to me since I sat on that lawn. My journey into Community of Christ was difficult, but in that moment the feelings of grace and gratitude was overwhelming. This journey had been worth it. Here I was, again just a young mom, who was being not only welcomed in this

Mission Center Blog

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cofchrist-inlandwest.blogspot.com/

Temple, but empowered and educated here, too. I was being educated in the ways and teachings of Jesus. Those teachings of radical hospitality, of reconciliation and healing, and the reality that ALL are worthy and welcome to surrender to God's divine grace.

As I sat staring out the window, I knew I could not keep quiet about this. That's the beauty of this Temple! We have a message to share! We come into the Worshipper's Path and into this Sanctuary and we are changed and equipped for mission. We are charged to bring Christ's

message of peace to the entire world. My place in this puzzle of mission was made clear to me on that gloomy winter day. Because I am worthy enough to be here, I must invite others. The message is too important, too critical to remain within these walls.

This space has changed me. It has brought me a deeper connection to God, clarity, community, friendship, and most of all; *peace*. And that is the message I hope to carry out into the world.

How Do We Respond ?

Sandy Decker
Mission Center Financial Officer

We are in a period of time when our lives are consumed by the global pandemic upon us. It has affected us all in one way or another. You could be working from home right now; or you could be an essential worker who is putting your health and the health of your family on the line to be in service to others. Perhaps you have lost your job and wonder how you will be able to pay bills and feed your family. No matter how this has changed your life, we are all in this together.

“Our response to God’s gifts of love and grace is to serve others and let generosity become part of our nature.

From “Choose Generosity Discovering Whole-Life Stewardship”

This pandemic has also changed the life of our faith community. We are currently not meeting together in person so we have had to find other ways to connect. Perhaps you have participated in online worships or offered ministry through e-mail. Your congregation might reach out to each other through phone calls or even hard copy mailing, such as the one we are sending you here. Whatever the means I hope we are all staying connected.

One thing that hasn't changed is the on-going expenses of the church, both locally and world-wide. There are certainly those right now who just are not able to contribute to the church and that is understandable. But for those who are able it is important to remember to continue supporting the church.

The Enduring Principles of *Grace and Generosity* and *Blessings of Community* should resound through our hearts. Perhaps your way of responding needs to be other than financial at this time. Your way could be by making that phone call to someone, by sending a letter, by joining in online ministry or by staying home so you are helping to keep the virus from spreading.

All of these responses are valid and worthwhile. I would say they are all vital. But if you are able to financial support the church please continue to do so. You can contribute through e-tithing at <https://www.cofchrist.org/etithing>. If your congregation is not listed just select “My Home Congregation” and you can choose for the funds to go to either your local Congregational Ministry or to World Mission Tithes. If you would prefer you can send your contribution directly to your Congregational Financial Officer. Please contact them for where to send it.

Blessings to each of you as you respond to the grace and generosity of God and feel the blessings of your community. May your family and friends stay safe and healthy as we navigate this challenging time together.

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