



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

*I thank my God every time I remember you... (Philippians 1:3).*

This year I am inviting you to reflect on portions of Paul's letter, *to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi (1:1b)*, as you gather for church council, adult study, youth group, coffee group and are engaged in learning, discernment and reflection together. Relying heavily on the writings of Fred Craddock and of David Lose, each article will include a brief reflection on a Scripture passage, questions for reflection and discussion, and a prayer. I encourage you, as we begin, to read Paul's letter in its entirety in one sitting; remembering as you read that this is a letter – of Paul – to a church.

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*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Philippians 4:4*

What does it mean to rejoice? Really? We may say that word all the time...at least in church. And we've read it here in Paul's letter numerous times already. But what does it mean, really?

In brief, rejoicing is simply to take joy in something, or to be more precise, to rejoice is to experience and express delight. Both of those verbs matter. It is one thing to experience delight, to be aware, that is, of something bringing you delight, joy, pleasure or contentment. That's important. But expressing it matters too.

It matters a great deal, actually, because expressing our delight helps us not only become more aware of it but also to share this experience with others. Expressing it, that is, often multiplies its benefit. So it's one thing to experience delight – which is great – and it's another to express delight – that's even better.

But notice that Paul doesn't only say rejoice, he says "rejoice in the Lord." What does he mean? Simply that in this relationship there is the potential to experience faith, hope, love, contentment, confidence, courage, and more. And as we notice these things – that prayer brings a sense of confidence and contentment, that singing a hymn raises our spirits, that reading Scripture may strengthen our faith and grant us courage to face the challenges ahead – we also discover ways to give them voice. And as we voice these things, they grow.

So delight in the gifts you receive from God's relationship with you...*and* express them. Give thanks for what is beautiful and hard and challenging and hopeful in your life and in your life of faith and see what happens.

Or, as Paul says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say it, Rejoice!*"

**Read and Reflect:** Philippians 4:4

**Discuss and Reflect:**

What in this reading leads you to say, "I wonder about...", or, "I noticed..."

Comment on the following: *rejoicing is simply to take joy in something, or to be more precise, to rejoice is to experience and express delight. Both of those verbs matter.*

Comment on the following: *Paul doesn't only say rejoice, he says "rejoice in the Lord." What does he mean?*

Share together the gifts you receive from God and from one another. Express them. Give thanks. Rejoice. **Pray together:** *Gracious God, help us not just to notice the blessings of this life and our life with you, but also to name them, give thanks for them, share them with others, and see them multiply. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen (Philippians 4:23).*

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*

In Christ Jesus –  
Shalom,  
+Larry

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop  
Synod of Alberta and the Territories  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

**CAMPUS MINISTRY DRIVE FOR 5 SUNDAY**

**Edmonton**  
Richard Reimer  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
and Jason Anderson  
NAIT

**Camrose**  
Craig Wentland  
AUGUSTANA CAMPUS, U of A

**Calgary**  
Margaret Propp  
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**Lethbridge**  
Erin Phillips  
UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE  
& LETHBRIDGE COLLEGE

**Medicine Hat**  
Lisa Waites  
MEDICINE HAT  
COLLEGE

**KEEP OUR CAMPUS MINISTRIES DRIVING!**  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH**

- All loose cash offerings on "Drive for Five" Sunday will be divided between our synod's five campus ministries, (unless designated for a specific campus ministry).  
- Donations payable to the "Synod of Alberta & the Territories", and designated to "Campus Ministry" will be receipted.

Drive for Five Sundays:

- September 13 - Hope, Forestburg
- September 20 - Trinity, Lougheed & Bethania, Sedgewick



### New Website

Be sure to check out our new "Shared Ministry" website. It's full of news, information and resources.

The web address is:

["www.fcsn.ca"](http://www.fcsn.ca)



Bishop Jane Alexander will be joining us for worship and luncheon at St. John's on Sunday, September 13.

Worship will begin at 11:15 AM

The Faith Country Chronicle is published monthly from September thru May by the partners in the Faith Country Shared Ministry:

Bethania Lutheran - Sedgewick  
Hope Lutheran - Forestburg  
St. John's Anglican - Sedgewick  
Trinity Lutheran - Lougheed

Web: [www.fcsn.ca](http://www.fcsn.ca)

Email: [pastor@fcsn.ca](mailto:pastor@fcsn.ca)



## "Religionless" Christianity

**We need a healthy spirit and a guiding ethic  
more than ever.**

**By Rev. Dr. Cameron Harder**

**Q: What are the significant lessons we can learn  
from Dietrich Bonhoeffer 70 years after his death?**

ANSWER: The term "organized religion" is about as palatable to Canadians as "big business," "big banks" or "industrial food." Each implies a basic human need co-opted to serve the interests of power and control.

That reputation is not entirely undeserved. The involvement of Canadian churches in residential school horrors and sexual scandals has certainly contributed, as has the violence of too many on the global stage who claim to be Christian, Hindu or Muslim.

In my own 2014 research, even ELCIC clergy and lay leaders were asking "Does following Jesus really require organized religion?" "Is it even good?"

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked the same question 70 years ago. About a year before he was hanged by the Nazis, he wrote from prison about his search for a "religionless Christianity."

Bonhoeffer says two things have brought traditional religion into disrepute. The first is religion's association with atrocious abuses of power.



The second is more subtle. Bonhoeffer says that the world as he knows it has "come of age." He means humans no longer require childish or superstitious explanations for their world. We understand a good deal about cause and effect, social and biological systems. We no longer

need God simply as a "gap-filler" to explain mysterious bits of life. We don't need a divine rescuer when we have fire halls and medical clinics. Such a God is "superfluous;" the need for traditional religion is waning.

The result, Bonhoeffer admits, is that "The foundations are being pulled out from under all that 'Christianity' has previously been for us." Does it make sense then to persist in being Christian in a "world come of age"?

Bonhoeffer insists that the human need for a healthy spirit and a guiding ethic is greater than ever. But he claims we won't find them by looking for a God above, mighty but far off, descending only in miraculous moments or on powerful people. Divine transcendence he says is to be found not up, but in, down, around.

The idea is not new. Psalm 139 insists that there is nowhere one can go that God is not. Luther claimed that "God is as present in your cabbage soup as in the sacrament."

Bonhoeffer insists we must look for the spirit of God at the centre of our lives, living deep in the land, dwelling in our neighbour. Such a God does not rest in heaven, coming down when called by priests, the pious or the desperate. An everywhere God is present in vegetable gardens and glaciers, in factories and play schools, disturbingly perhaps, also in the studios of pornographers, the workshops of suicidal bomb-makers and the offices of corrupt CEOs. Such a God is in every place, every time, before and within us, largely overlooked, but truly present in each moment and movement.

The honest path for a Christian, Bonhoeffer suggests, is not to retreat into our shrinking bit of sacred turf in a secularizing world. It is to recognize that all of the world, especially those parts we have come to call "secular," even forsaken, are in fact holy ground—the dwelling place of God.

Bonhoeffer's theological touchstone is always "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" The best vantage point for truly seeing God is at the foot of the cross where "the man for others" (as Bonhoeffer called Jesus) embraced the pain of the world. There we learn to see from "the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and reviled, in short from the perspective of the suffering." There we glimpse the passion—the suffering love—of God for a world come of age.

That cruciform perspective is never mainstream. It's usually resisted or ignored. But 70 years after his death Bonhoeffer continues to call us to follow Jesus out of the church into the place of our neighbour's (even our enemy's) pain.

Rev. Dr. Cam Harder is professor of systematic theology at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon.

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If you've been thinking about attending the Animate sessions, don't forget to tell Pastor Rick.

### The Old Fisherman

Our house was directly across the street from the clinic entrance of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. We lived downstairs and rented the upstairs rooms to out patients at the clinic.

One summer evening as I was fixing supper, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to see a truly awful looking man. "Why, he's hardly taller than my eight-year-old," I thought as I stared at the stooped shriveled body. But the appalling thing was his face — lopsided from swelling, red and raw.

Yet his voice was pleasant as he said, "Good evening. I've come to see if you've a room for just one night. I came for a treatment this morning from the eastern shore, and there's no bus 'til morning."

He told me he'd been hunting for a room since noon but with no success, no one seemed to have a room. "I guess it's my face...I know it looks terrible, but my doctor says with a few more treatments..."

For a moment I hesitated, but his next words convinced me: "I could sleep in this rocking chair on the porch. My bus leaves early in the morning." I told him we would find him a bed, but to rest on the porch. We went inside and finished getting supper. When we were ready, I asked the old man if he would join us. "No thank you. I have plenty." And he held up a brown paper bag.

When I had finished the dishes, I went out on the porch to talk with him a few minutes. It didn't take long time to see that this old man had an oversized heart crowded into that tiny body. He told me he fished for a living to support his daughter, her five children, and her husband, who was hopelessly crippled from a back injury.

He didn't tell it by way of complaint; in fact, every other sentence was prefaced with a thanks to God for a blessing. He was grateful that no pain accompanied his disease, which was apparently a form of skin cancer. He thanked God for giving him the strength to keep going. At bedtime, we put a camp cot in the children's room for him.

When I got up in the morning, the bed linens were neatly folded and the little man was out on the porch. He refused breakfast, but just before he left for his bus, haltingly, as if asking a great favor, he said, "Could I please come back and stay the next time I have a treatment? I won't put you out a bit. I can sleep fine in a chair." He paused a moment and then added, "Your children made me feel at home. Grownups are bothered by my face, but children don't seem to mind."

I told him he was welcome to come again. And on his next trip he arrived a little after seven in the morning. As a gift, he brought a big fish and a quart of the largest oysters I had ever seen. He said he had shucked them that morning before he left so that they'd be nice and fresh. I knew his bus left at 4:00 a.m. and I wondered what time he had to get up in order to do this for us.

In the years he came to stay overnight with us there was never a time that he did not bring us fish or oysters or vegetables from his garden. Other times we received packages in the mail, always by special delivery; fish and oysters packed in a box of fresh young spinach or kale, every leaf carefully washed. Knowing that he must walk three miles to mail these, and knowing how little money he had made the gifts doubly precious.

When I received these little remembrances, I often thought of a comment our next-door neighbor made after he left that first morning. "Did you keep that awful looking man last night? I turned him away! You can lose roomers by putting up such people!" Maybe we did lose roomers once or twice. But oh! If only they could have known him, perhaps their illness would have been easier to bear. I know our family always will be grateful to have known him; from him we learned what it was to accept the bad without complaint and the good with gratitude to God.

Recently I was visiting a friend who has a greenhouse. As she showed me her flowers, we came to the most beautiful one of all, a golden chrysanthemum, bursting with blooms. But to my great surprise, it was growing in an old dented, rusty bucket. I thought to myself, "If this were my plant, I'd put it in the loveliest container I had!"

My friend changed my mind. "I ran short of pots," she explained, "and knowing how beautiful this one would be, I thought it wouldn't mind starting out in this old pail. It's just for a little while, till I can put it out in the garden."

She must have wondered why I laughed so delightedly, but I was imagining just such a scene in heaven. "Here's an especially beautiful one," God might have said when he came to the soul of the sweet old fisherman. "He won't mind starting in this small body." All this happened long ago — and now, in God's garden, how tall this lovely soul must stand.

August 2015

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

## Faith Country Shared Ministry

September 2015

October 2015

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b> 7:00 PM Flagstaff Lodge Service	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> 9:30 AM Trinity Communion Service 11:15 AM Bethania Communion Service	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 7:00 PM Hope Council meets	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> Drive for Five Sunday at Hope 9:15 AM Hope Communion Service 11:15 AM St. John's Eucharist Service - Bishop Jane will be joining us this morning.	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 9:30 AM Sedgewick Area Worship Committee @ St. John's	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> Drive for Five Sunday at Trinity % Bethania 9:30 AM Trinity SOW 11:15 AM Bethania SOW 3:00 PM KHC Worship - Anglican	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 10:30 AM Galahad Pastoral Care 1:30 PM Hope Worship Committee	<b>23</b> 9:00 AM Anglican Clergy Day (Holy Trinity)	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> 9:15 AM Hope Communion Service 11:15 AM Morning Prayer (St. John's)	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 10:00 AM Battle River Deanery Meeting (TBA) 7:00 PM Flagstaff Lodge - Anglican	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

September 2015

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

## Faith Country Shared Ministry

October 2015

November 2015

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4 9:30 AM Trinity Communion Service 11:15 AM Bethania Communion Service	5	6 7:00 PM Flagstaff Lodge Service	7	8	9	10
11 9:15 AM Hope Communion Service 11:15 AM St. John's Eucharist Service	12	13	14 7:00 PM Hope Council meets	15	16	17 East Central Conference Convention St. Peter's, Millet
18 9:30 AM Trinity SOW 11:15 AM Bethania SOW	19	20	21	22 7:30 PM FCSM Council meets at Hope	23	24
25 9:15 AM Hope Communion Service 11:15 AM Morning Prayer (St. John's)	26	27 10:00 AM KHC Protestant Communion Service	28	29	30	31

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