

May 27, 2020

Trinity Musings #16: Rev Brian Goodings (self-isolating but with garden dirt under my fingernails in my office at Trinity United Church: Collingwood)

Full disclosure...I'd rather sit through an entire season of my own recorded sermons than go to a gym to lift weights. And that's saying something.

I may well be in the minority in my dislike for working out in a gym but it is soooo boring. If gravity has a great fondness for something, I prefer to just leave it where it is.

Admittedly, I do love to play games like hockey and I have a deep passion for cross country skiing and paddling. At the end of the day, none of these accomplish anything useful either. Spending energy without purpose or product, other than for one's "soul" benefit, is a rather peculiar pursuit in our time.

During this Covid-pause the gyms are closed and there was a feature article in the Toronto Star describing the crisis this has created. The story focused on one apartment dweller in Toronto who made his own weights by filling juice cans with cement. He has also started using his couch and chairs as part of his workout routine and he discovered there is other heavy stuff in his apartment too. Who knew?

A few pages later, in the same newspaper, there was an article warning about a major shortage of asparagus and other crops because farmers can't find workers locally and migrant workers are having a hard time getting into Canada.

We are a culture that doesn't hold physical workers in high esteem. As a result, so called unskilled labours, are not paid all that well. The thinking is that anyone could do physical work. Farmers who employ professional migrant labourers will tell you otherwise. It really is an acquired and rare skill to be able to work hard and efficiently, day after day.

I would venture to say that a skinny 12 year old Mennonite kid from Chesley is stronger than most fairly-fit adults who go to gyms or play

games. There's gym-strength and then there's worker-strength. I've known more than a few farmers and carpenters who do not have bulging muscles but they are REALLY strong. They have sinewy bodies but they have wire-cable strength. I don't think you can buy that kind of fitness.

This Covid-crisis has exposed yet another weakness (pun intended) in our culture. Among other things we have discovered, we can't manufacture our own Personal Protective Equipment and we can't really feed ourselves. We have become dependent on cheap imported products and labour and have suddenly realized how helpless we are when the borders are closed. There are Mean-Donalds (not to be confused with Mic Donalds) all over the world.

We are responding with some panic and even as I write, people, who never gardened before, are planting their own crops. Sales of shovels and rakes and medications for back pain have risen sharply. (As an aside...I would highly recommend you buy mason jars now and not wait for the fall. They are going to be the next Big Thing- remember the toilet paper panic?)

My friend, has a sticker on their truck that says "If you ate today, thank a farmer." It takes hard work to grow food and we haven't really appreciated it or been willing to pay a fair price for it.

In order to strengthen our culture and self-sufficiency, we need to support it with dollars and sense. People who work in the fields and grow the crops that feed us should be paid a decent wage so they can actually live here.

Dependency on what we now know is a fickle global economy is changing and over the next few years we are going to become much more localized in all our production practices.

As the Bible says, we really do reap what we sow and what could be more important than securing our own food supply?

Maybe the fitness industry will capitalize on the situation and start outdoor programs that feature raking and weeding. These would be at least as challenging as any gym-exercise and there would be something beyond muscles produced by the effort. I think you should

join so I can eat. You should probably also lift weights too. Yours and mine.