

September 2, 2020

Trinity Musings #22: Rev Brian Goodings (sheltering@Trinity United Church)

Even though the-Covid hasn't yet actually infected many people in our area, we are all experiencing behavioural side effects of the much-feared beast. This includes vigorous and frequent hand washing; absorption of gobs of a variety of hand sanitizers (who really knows what that stuff is doing to us?); funky mask wearing; consumption of a variety of alcoholic drinks (we really do know what that stuff is doing to us); social distancing; grumbling and loneliness; some businesses closing and some thriving; some empty church buildings.

There is also a definite rise in "localism" tending towards racism.

Apparently the good folk of Toronto and the GTA actually did listen to the tourism ads we've been blasting their way for years and they showed up big time this summer.

More than a few locals kinda sorta and sometimes, not so quietly, wish they would soon go back from whence they came.

Although I have been preaching an inclusive and egalitarian world view for almost thirty years, I admit I've participated in some of these gossipy discussions myself. Some of the stuff that has been reported as happening this summer is rather shocking.

Like all gossip, it is not kind. A new word has even been created as punctuation to end the stories. After the story is told the teller often says... they were "frombrampton". One loaded and complicated word, that one. Not usually said in a nice way either.

The same indignation felt here is being felt in the Muskoka's and all over southern Ontario vacation country. It was not uncommon to see people like Goldie Hawn at the Rousseau general store but most of the other people you'd see in places like that, were of a golden hue too.

Not so much anymore. The world, she is a-changin'...

But instead of just lamenting and complaining (I'm good at that too) about the good old days, we really need to deal with the new-normal. The world, with people of varied hues and cultures, is moving here and coming to visit, to enjoy the water and trails too.

We need to very deliberately and carefully decide how best to manage expectations and create fair opportunities for everyone. We need more public spaces and...dare I say it...more regulations on how people use and behave in these spaces.

Public water access all over Ontario is in very short supply because of private ownership. I paddled my kayak from Midland to Thornbury and had a very hard time landing anywhere. It really is just one solid PRIVATE PROPERTY from here to Parry Sound.  
(Too Much Information perhaps but I had to carry a jar in the cockpit of my kayak...nuff said.)

As we have discovered this very hot summer, the places that are public are too few and too small to meet growing demand.

Some countries with a lot fewer lakes than we do have don't allow private ownership of lakefront property because it is in such short supply. Canadians really hadn't thought we needed to do this, until lately.

The old thinking has meant we squandered more than a few opportunities even in this area. For example, the "Easter Seals" property in Craighleith, with thousands of feet of waterfront beach was for sale for years, with no takers. This would have been a beautiful public park and a very rare opportunity, but for a variety of reasons (some pretty weak in my opinion), The Town of the Blue Mountains and Ontario Parks decided not to buy it.

It was finally purchased by a private developer (from Iran I believe) and is now being marketed as the Aquvil development. Looks like it's going to be a nice place to live but it's a tragic loss of an opportunity to have a great public beach area.

Nearby, Northwinds beach is crazy busy and almost always full. There is a full time municipal employee posted at the gate to keep people (some very hot, angry and abusive) from entering. The same is true for other public

beaches in our area. Like it or not, the conflicts we've seen this summer in public places are just going to get worse unless we agree on how to manage them.

I know it won't be a popular idea with locals but controlling access, with a limited number of visas, to locals as well as visitors, might be necessary. Locals do have a very strong sense of ownership but, unless the regulations are changed, "Public" really does mean everyone.

I was humming one of my favourite hymns the other day (yeah, here's the religious angle) titled "*Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore*".

It occurred to me that unless "Jesus" got there early in the day he probably wouldn't find a place on any lakeshore around here. Then I laughed when it also occurred to me that he probably would look like he was "frombrampton" too.

Kindness, grace and a very clear set of expectations for how to fairly share what never really was solely or originally ours would be a very good way forward. It is going to require cooperation and compromise from everyone. Local or not.

We could blame it all on Covid if that helps unite us...it's definitely not welcome here!