

November 4, 2020

Trinity Musings #31: from Rev Brian Goodings trinityminister@bmts.com  
Serving Trinity United Church: Collingwood

Did you know that the light from the North Star, also known as Polaris, takes 300 years to reach our eyes? That means the light I saw last night from the star, as I sat in my hot tub, started its journey through the universe in the earth-year 1700.

I find that kind of information pretty cool to think about. Given how frenetic and fast paced our lives can be, it calms me down to think of big-picture slower stuff like that. Fossils have a calming influence on me too.

A friend of mine once told me that when life gets too crazy on earth, he goes to his extremely cool observatory to watch storms on Jupiter through his giant telescopes.

Having a glass of red wine and listening to classical music while looking at the wonders and beauty of the universe, is better for our souls than listening to the constant din and racket of our media.

I did watch a few minutes of the election-frenzy on a television news channel last night, but I quickly felt more confused than I did before I turned it on. No matter whether it's Fox, CNN, CTV or CBC, extremely confident experts bombard us with their interpretation and conjecture and all of them sound utterly convincing.

Turn the channel, and you get another litter of Experts with diametrically opposed certainties. Add to that, coloured maps and information banners running quickly and constantly across the bottom of the screen. Talk about overstimulation.

No wonder we drink and drug so much.

Who knows what is "true" and what is the correct direction for any of us anymore?

One writer (Annie Dillard or Rebecca Solnit?) wryly suggested that we really should only publish newspapers every forty years.

That would allow us to have deeper understandings and perspectives on what is happening and what events might mean or had become in time. The second to second news cycle we have right now is driving lots of people nutty. People I know have their television(s) on all day and are bombarded with dire news and forecasts from the minute they wake up until they go to bed. (Full disclosure...I listen to CBC radio all the time too and that can be just as annoying.)

Some even leave the screens on overnight, because they need flickering light and the drone of the newscaster's voice, to keep them company. Nobody "signs off" on the air anymore and there's always a breaking story to entice us to keep watching.

Kinda feels rude to shut the program off when the broadcasters are mid-sentence...and they are always in mid-sentence.

Most of it is really much ado about nothing. If you look at a newscast or read a newspaper from even a month ago, most of the lead stories have either fizzled out entirely or become something quite different.

Some, of course, become much more significant in time (Watergate for example) but the vast majority of news can create unwarranted anxiety and unnecessary worry.

A Roman Catholic priest once told me that, for better or for worse, the church should think in centuries.

Without making a lot of wisecracks about that suggestion (I can think of lots to say about the ponderous and glacial pace of change in churches - nimbleness is not our strong suit) there is deeper wisdom to consider in his proposal.

Do we really need to go faster and faster...what are we trying to catch up with or overtake? Is feeling frazzled and jangled all the time really a necessary or a good choice?

What most of us need, especially right now, is a lodestar like Polaris. It stays pretty much in the same place, all the time, while everything else around it swirls and shifts.

I'm not going to suggest what might help you...for me it's my faith...for others it might be yoga or meditation...for others it is walking in the woods...for some it is watching storms on Jupiter.

The one thing I do suggest is that you find something that reminds you that, in spite of the news of the day, the universe is still a pretty amazing place and a lot bigger than our time.

I believe there are beams of light and beams of hope coming our way but sometimes they take a very long time to get here. Keep your chin and your spirit up so you don't miss them...and maybe turn off the TV.