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Trinity Musings #26: Rev Brian Goodings (blamingsomeone@Trinity United Church: Collingwood)

The first thing we do after every mishap is to assign blame. Job one is not to mop up the milk or pick up the bicycle, but to blame someone or something for making it happen.

To some, this Covid pandemic is China's fault. Maybe they should have done more to nip it in the bud and they probably should have let the WHO (World Health Organization) know about the rising number of infections, but, a global pandemic was really inevitable and, statistically speaking, long overdue.

That we live in dense concentrations, travel widely and mix freely amongst strangers are perfect conditions for any viral or bacterial disease to spread.

Nature abhors a vacuum and contagions love close neighbours and big herds of animals. Just the way 'tis. Don't take it personally.

This Covid critter is a completely natural fact of nature and nobody's fault.

Never mind all that science baffle-gab, we still want to blame someone.

This is very necessary to support a world view that believes, everything happens for a cause or reason.

If we can't figure it out, it ends up in the "Act of God" file.

We are pretty enamoured with our own intellect and since we're not all the religious anymore, it's our job to figure it out. Not being able to do so, causes us a lot of anxiety.

Ever notice that the first thing people say after hearing someone has lung cancer is, "Did they smoke?" In other words... "Tell me they did something to deserve this so it makes sense."

Same with traffic accidents... "Were they drunk?" "Driving too quickly?" "Road wet?" etc.

I do it too. But sometimes...sometimes Covidesque stuff just happens.

Anxiety comes from losing our grip on the false belief that we were ever in control of reality. It's a rather peculiar aspect of much of our Western society.

We believe we should be able to figure life out. Psychiatry and psychologists have a number of tools to attempt to help us...blaming our mothers and fathers; regressive hypnosis; uncovering repressed sexualities; therapeutic screaming into the void; naked drumming in the woods; rebirthing rituals...and drugs! Lots of drugs. They seem to be the go-to-remedy nowadays.

We are an often mildly high/drunk bunch. We are also anxious.

Did you know that the diagnosed level of anxiety is four times higher in the United States and Canada than the poorest places in Mexico? Arguably, this makes no sense because the people in the slums of Mexico face real poverty and brutal violence and live significantly shorter lives than people further north.

Existential angst (aka anxiety) comes from having illusions of control over what will happen in our lives.

Poor people don't have as many of these illusions. Fairly or unfairly, much of what happens in their lives is beyond their control and they accept it and move on.

Richer people have a long history of rights and the belief they have a special place in creation.

Recently, I was reading a book written by Patricia Pearson and she tells the story about a formal court trial held in France in 1338.

The trial was called "The People Verses Locusts". The locusts were eating the crops and put on trial for stealing the grain. There were lawyers representing the locusts but, in the end, they (and other vermin) were convicted and ordered to evict the fields within six days of the ruling. They were also firmly told to do no further damage elsewhere.

It wasn't the only trial of its kind. In the following centuries, there were trials held against the destructive conduct of voles and moles and even slugs. They were all convicted and ordered to cease and desist and leave the premises (under safe passage) immediately.

The slugs especially, didn't seem to care, and moved less than six inches in a week. They were summarily excommunicated and damned to hell.

Not sure the slugs got the memo, but apparently these trials helped the people of the day by assuring them that "Someone in Authority" was in charge and it did serve to air grievances.

Maybe we should put Covid-19 on trial now? I could think of a few lawyers that would defend a virus. I hasten to add, only a few locally.

Would that help ease our anxiety?

Or maybe we need to accept that we are not special-creatures that exist above the biosphere. Maybe all living creatures are just a little lower than the angels.

Although we carefully and routinely document the tragedies and diseases that befall other species, we never suggest that "they" might be taking it personally. Blame doesn't really matter.

Hubris, not any God I know or nature herself, is the root cause of our human anxiety. Life has always been a risky business but is still grand in many ways.

S\_\_\_t happens. Alleluia anyway!