

Dear Friend of the Cathedral,

Welcome to the first edition of the “Creative Cathedral” newsletter. Thank you to the people who generously shared what they have been doing during this time of isolation.

Some of you have been working in new and creative ways. Mary Sue writes that she is suddenly a novice in her profession of 35 years!

“I have taught students” she says “at various levels in a variety of classrooms and more recently at home, for many years. Now I find myself having the jitters of a beginning teacher! I had been really missing those bright young faces coming to my door each day. Then came requests from a few harried parents to bravely dive into online lessons! To say it is a whole new approach to teaching is an understatement. But I decided I would take the opportunity to be a learner alongside my students. I am able to follow their online assignments and teachers’ guidelines by logging in to their Google classroom or a similar one for younger students. I prepare my support accordingly and then we meet on FaceTime and work together. At the moment, the preparation is very time-consuming, but I do have plenty of time these days! It’s such a pleasure to see some of their smiling faces once again and to notice aspects of their personalities from a different perspective. I miss the spontaneity and fun of on-the-spot in-person lessons, not to mention the ease of using my own books and materials in my library. I’m also used to giving out snacks when someone is lagging a bit. But, yesterday I couldn’t do a thing when a young student looked up with big eyes and said “Oh no, I’m down to 5% on my iPad!”

If isolation is stressful, then there is for some of us the joy of baking.

Jonathan made hot cross buns.



Erica baked an Easter cake shaped like a rabbit



Another person who has been working very hard in a very different way is our music director, Jonathan White. I asked him to explain how he has been putting together the music for our on line services. His answer blew me away:



Many of us are finding the need to acquire new skills for us to be able to continue life as normally as possible. It’s possible we never thought we’d need these skills, and in some cases perhaps we never wanted them either, but in my case I’ve had to figure out and learn quite quickly how to keep the musical life of the cathedral going. You might be surprised to know that all the music you have seen has essentially been made with a combination of my iPhone, laptop computer, this new microphone, and occasionally using the microphone system that is in place for our evensong broadcasts. The process of creating the videos

can be long and tedious – it can take a couple of hours in total just to produce one three-verse hymn. I work the process by having one recording made in the Cathedral nave for sound purposes, and a second video recording made in the organ loft. These can later be synchronised by a programme on my computer so that the sound and image line up (mostly accurately) and I have discovered that by making some clear loud sounds at the beginning of each recording helps the computer find the overlap points. Once recorded, I trim the clips to the correct length, see if the sound needs any editing such as cleaning up background noise, static, etc., and then I have to record the vocal line separately as a voiceover. I had experimented with trying to film me singing so you didn’t always just see my limbs flailing at the console all the time, but I think many people have enjoyed the visual spectacle a little, and it’s probably preferable to the rather odd facial expressions I probably pull while singing. The final step is including the subtitles, which involves stopping and starting the recording multiple times for each line to ensure that the words appear and disappear at the same time.

Choir member Yevgeniya Amis has been recording herself singing six Gregorian chants, one for each day of the Holy Week, and there is a "bonus" where my cat jumped as I was singing Ubi Caritas (transforming it into Ubi CATitas, I guess. I took a picture of my table, with candles, Easter eggs and... a laptop computer from which I was reading the ancient square notes. It was quite eclectic :)

You can listen to the lovely music on You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNufNewtlp-5F8F9bcBdAiUrGcHZdw-Fp>



If you’re looking for music performed by Cathedral musicians you could look for the Cygnus Trio’s album Amalgam that Ben, Jonathan and Erica Stuchbery released in December 2018. It is still for sale, hard copies for pick-up in NDG for \$15, or digital copies on their website for \$10 (<https://thecygnustrio.com/music>). All three of them are in various states of job security at the moment so a little extra income would be most welcome!



Many Cathedral parishioners are brilliant writers. I hope you have been able to follow the daily reflections on a variety of themes posted on the Cathedral website under the heading **Daily Bread**. It’s possible to go back and read or re-read all the offerings which I have found a great source of inspiration and comfort.

Brenda Linn has spent much of her quarantine time writing a beautiful newsletter about the activities of the Ecological and Social Justice Action Group which includes related events and links to external sources. I hope it will be posted on the web site soon.

I asked some of our poets to share a recent piece. Jeffrey Mackie and Alex Griffin both responded and I'm adding a few lines of my own. I'm keeping Alex's poem for the conclusion of this letter. Here's what Jeffrey Mackie wrote:

Poetry

'Jeffrey no one writes poetry anymore"
It would have been so much better
If you had said:
"Jeffrey nobody builds bombs anymore"

The planes flying overhead
Are dropping poems

Those large guns are blasting poetry
Towards those who receive them
And blast their own back

In underground bunkers and submarines
They are setting coordinates
Figuring out how to best deliver poems
For maximum effect

The young man will
Strap poems to himself
And walk into a crowd to deliver them

There are sharpshooter haikus
And megaton epics
In the UN and all the capitals
They are signing treaties
To aid the proliferation of poetry

There are conventional poetries
Marching in conventional lines
And guerilla groups
Messing with language

There are poetries
Rising out of trenches on Christmas Eve
To share a drink and a game of soccer

There are nations
Increasing their poetry budgets
Diplomats circling the globe
Collecting visa stamps of verse

And you, yes you
Poetry wants you!

The Still Centre of a Turning World by Ann Elbourne

Peering at the sun through wind-tossed clouds,
On top of the world I stand scarf-swaddled and alone.
I have climbed a high and secret grassy mound,
An escarpment, overlooking highways once busy,
And I was at peace.
That was yesterday.
Today there were people on the hill
And my still centre shattered
In fear of contact.



Some people are finding comfort in painting. Diana Bouchard sent a photograph of a painting of Donner Lake she finished last week. She says she is intensely mining the photos she took last fall during a conference in Reno, Nevada. The name of the lake commemorates the Donner Party who were snowbound in the Sierras during the winter of 1846 and resorted to cannibalism. However, that does not detract from the beauty of the lake under oncoming rain clouds.



Some people have turned their crafting skills to helping other people. We all know that Janet King is an avid knitter. She has been working on a number of special projects including two which she donates through the Lainage des Moutons wool shop in Pointe-Claire : Pair of "knitted knockers" - used by women in their bras after a mastectomy. See their website at knittedknockers.ca and Butterflies requested by the West Island Palliative Care hospice.

John Matheson has been making masks after he learned how Czechia (Czech Republic) had members of the public make 10,000,000 masks in 3 days as a national volunteer effort. Transmission of the disease has virtually ground to a halt there. If I am asymptomatic but a carrier, a mask will reduce the probability I will spread the disease. He reports that “several of us have started making masks. It looks like they are having fun with it, as I certainly am! think it is the answer to our prayers. Many of us can sew. The product is non-perishable so it can be left to sterilize before it is passed on. And there’d be no problem sending them by mail...”



Natasha Henderson is well known for her delightful paintings of birds and cats. She is sharing a detail of an unfinished oil on wood cat portrait commissioned for someone not connected to the cathedral. The title will be “Red”. She says she has had a longer time to work on it than originally anticipated! You can see lots of other paintings by Natasha on her website natashahenderson.com

I hope you have enjoyed these contributions to “Creative Cathedral, Part 1” Please send me your contributions for “Creative Cathedral, Part 2”. Thank you very much to this week’s contributors.

Mary Sue speaks for us all when she writes

“I would like to add my sincere thanks, thoughts and prayers for everyone at the Cathedral who is reaching out to support others in these stressful times.”

I will leave you with good advice from Alex Griffin.

Instructions by Alex Griffin

*Care for your grief as you would a sick child.
Speak tenderly to her
Nourish her with good food
Tuck her into bed with a hug and “I love you”.
She needs to rest. And so do you.*

May the Lord bless us and keep us
Ann Elbourne
April 17, 2020

