



# THE PARK BENCH

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and most meaningful  
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because God has  
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of creation."*

FAITHFUL IMAGINATION PAGE 2

PHOTO BY DAN HEITMAN



# FAITHFUL IMAGINATION.

“The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits.”

G.K. CHESTERTON



by Lane Scruggs

We are intended to be embodied, emotional, and perhaps above all, imagining persons, not merely thinking things (what James K.A. Smith humorously refers to as “Bobble-Head” anthropology). What does it mean to be an imagining kind of person? In the 17th century, Pascal wrote: “The heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing.” In other words, we are more than facts and logic – we are wondering, creating, beauty-seeking beings who desire to enter deeper into mystery rather than seeking to explain it away.

Humans have the remarkable ability to not merely represent reality through artistic means, but to imagine a different reality and communicate it through creative means. The Greeks called this poesis – from which we get our English word poetic, meaning “to make,” or the formative production of something new being brought into being. Part of what it means to claim that we are created in the image of God is also to affirm the calling and role of imaging our Creator by becoming a sub-creator in imaginative ways.



MODEL BY MIKE GRANT

## THE SNOWFLAKE

Hard, icy, frigid

I floated down defiantly

Determined to chill the earth.

Warm, glowing, embracing

I saw Your smile,

And melted

Into one huge teardrop

That splashed to the ground

To be evaporated by Your love.

BY JULIE KERR

When we create, we image or reflect our Creator. When we imagine, the creature begins to look like its Creator. And there are so many implications for what this means and why this matters, but perhaps before all else is the inarticulate joy that resounds in the deepest parts of us when we find the creative expression that suits us. Does poetry make your heart dance; does rebuilding a '64 Chevy engine make you lose track of time; does the brushstroke on canvas enliven your soul; does the perfect lighting for the perfect photograph give you deep satisfaction; does the work of a master sculptor transport you to a different realm; does the voice of a trained soprano transcend your rational categories? The impulse to create is one of the deepest and most meaningful desires we possess, because God has stitched this part of Himself into the fabric of creation.

The Puritan Christians of the 16th-18th centuries in England and America often get badly stereotyped. What gets called “puritanical” is often unfairly named. However, what was true of the Puritans was their insistence that unadorned and plain spaces were the best for Christians, so nothing distracted them from pure thoughts of God. What a tragic misunderstanding of who we are and how God formed us as sub-creators. Consistently throughout Scripture, God has called his people



PHOTO BY DAN HEITMAN

**ODE TO MOTHER'S GAZE**

FROM THE STORY OF MOSES (EXODUS, HEBREWS 11:23)

Looking back along the wasteland road  
 Jochebed,\* bent by now but ever young to me;  
 Mother dear, satisfaction in your eyes, gratitude in mine.

A fine plan you hatched back then,  
 Courageously outwitting Pharaoh's dread.  
     Risky business,  
     me, in a basket in Nile reeds;  
 you, watching Pharaoh's daughter  
 claiming, naming me for herself.

Then you, a court slave, offering child care!  
 Gazing, nurturing, suckling your very own.  
     Also Prince of Egypt.

Your loving gaze,  
 swamping corruptions of the court;  
     bending character's arch  
 Until it rejected "son of Pharaoh's daughter"  
 ...just a son, mother's, and the Unseen One's;  
     shaping prophetic imagination  
 of a world without fear, infanticide, and slaver's lash,  
     of a life more permanent than pyramids  
 and better "than all the treasures of Egypt."

Looking back along the wasteland road  
 Bent by now but ever young to me  
     A faithful gaze.  
 Yours. And the Unseen One's.

to Faithful Imagination – living into a reality that is not yet apparent. I remember watching a master glass blower at work in his studio – completely immersed in the process of taking a colourless, formless glob of liquid glass and slowly shaping and molding (including inflating) that lump of nothingness until it emerged into a beautiful vase. You see, it's not only the artistic products that lead us to faithfully imagine a reality that does not exist, but also the process of creation itself that transports us beyond ourselves.

The process of artistic creativity and its products lead us not only into a realm of unrealized reality, but also reveal some of life's most resonant topics: meaning, faith, love, doubt, joy, wonder, purpose, awe, beauty, suffering, goodness, truth, pain, friendship, bodies, and eternity. What does Faithful Imagination look like when we approach these topics through the lens of creativity and art? In this issue, we've included a couple of poems as well as a few pictures from our very own congregation members. We hope you are blessed by their Faithful Imagination, we hope it inspires you to pursue and practice your own creative expressions, and we hope it whets your appetite for our Summer Sermon series exploring this deep and wide topic of Faithful Imagination!

\*Jochebed was Moses and Aaron's mother. She is mentioned only once in the Bible (Exodus 6:20), but plays a major role in the story of salvation, in some ways paralleling Mary's role in the New Testament.



by Amber-Lee Ram

## WHY I SERVE.

"All the time!" she exclaimed with wide eyes.

"God's with me even when I'm being bad?"

"Yes." I replied, "God loves you very much!"

She blushed. This is why I serve in children's ministry: to share God's love with our kids.

"May you have power with all God's people to understand Christ's love. May you know how wide and long and high and deep it is."

*Ephesians 3:18 (NIRV)*

I was blessed to grow up in a wonderful church community. I was particularly impacted by the adults who invested in my life by teaching Sunday School or helping with youth group, and by just being available to chat when I needed a different sounding board than my parents. I have such fond memories of church events and Sunday School. This is another reason why I serve in children's ministry: to invest in the lives of our children.

Several years ago, I dreaded my scheduled teaching day in the kids' program at church. I wanted to serve and fill the need; I knew that







serving was important for the church and for me; and it was natural for me to serve in children's ministry, as a trained teacher and as a parent with children in the program – but I didn't enjoy it. I did my best to "get through" the lesson (a lesson they never seemed to remember), and move them on to playtime, which simply felt like a way to manage them until their parents came to pick them up.

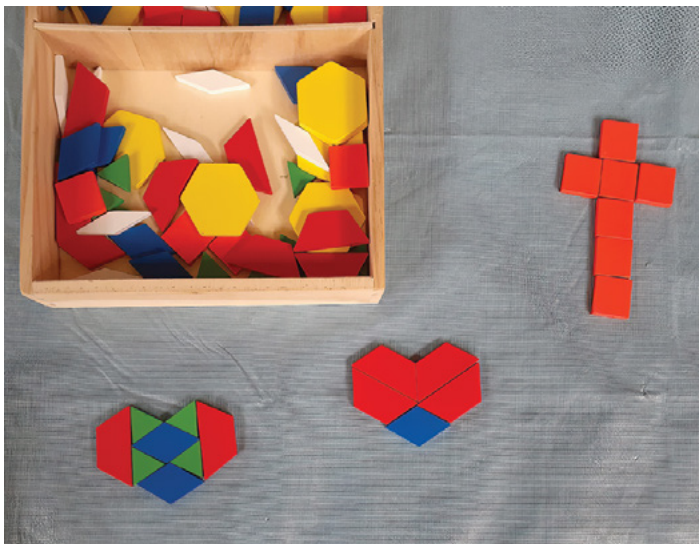
But, at some point, my perspective changed... I began to take more ownership over the lessons; to see my role not as a babysitter, but as a facilitator, and as a teacher of God's word and

God's love. I began to see my scheduled teaching day as an opportunity to create an environment where children could grow in community with one another and learn about God, His love, and the Bible, in the ways they learn best: through story and play.

*I have found that my preparation time, when I process what I most want the children to understand or hear, and how best to teach it, has been helpful to my own faith.*

When children play, they learn, and they connect with one another. When we set up play stations, they can further process what we have read and spoken about that day; they may act out a Bible story, build or create something from the story, or create an art project that reflects the lesson. And the beauty of it all is that I learn through these methods as well! I have found that my preparation time, when I process what I most want the children to understand or hear, and how best to teach it, has been helpful to my own faith; and then as I deliver the lesson, and see their little faces and hear their questions, I have the chance to see God's word through their eyes.

There are still plenty of challenges up in Kids' Park, as there are anywhere you try to contain a bunch of kids together in an enclosed space... but seeing a child beam with joy as they hear about how much God loves them, and getting to be one of the teachers who tells them that – that is not an obligation, that is a privilege.





# HATS OFF

We wanted to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude for your incredible acts of kindness and selflessness.

Words alone cannot adequately convey the immense impact you have had on our lives, but we felt compelled to write this simple note as a token of our appreciation.

Both of you have gone above and beyond to bring smiles to our faces.

From helping us transport those heavy couches to exerting strength comparable to that of youth, you have tirelessly delivered gifts from Oak Park to us without expecting anything in return. Even in the coldest of winters, when most people retreat indoors, you sought us out and offered your assistance. Your unwavering dedication, regardless of your age, is truly remarkable.

We want to acknowledge all that you have done for us and for countless others through your various acts of service. May the Lord bless you abundantly and reward you for your extraordinary efforts.

As you continue to age, may you do so gracefully, surrounded by love and happiness.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks from every member of our family.

Your presence in our lives is cherished and deeply valued.

With sincerest appreciation and love,

**OSSAI FAMILY**



For the last 12 years, Doris and Ken MacKinnon have devoted themselves to meeting the immediate needs of those in our city. Over the years they have collected, washed, sorted, and distributed over 150,000 pieces of clothing for families in need.

Along with that, they have volunteered hundreds of hours and kilometers driving around the city picking and dropping off household items for families, including beds, couches, and so much more. After many years of service, Doris and Ken have handed off this amazing ministry to Holly McCulloch who has taken the lead as of May 1st.

Thank you Doris and Ken for your faithful years of service!

# TO DORIS AND KEN!

On behalf of all the Newcomers and Refugees to Calgary, we wish to thank Doris & Ken for the assistance they have provided to all.

My wife Amanda and myself wish to say thank you for all of your hard work, very friendly attitude, dedication and service over the past year in helping us with mainly clothing for us to distribute, but also for locating, obtaining and showing us where to find beds, blankets and other furniture items for us to deliver to immigrants and newcomers to Calgary.

Many times there are large families with many children and they come here with nothing; they are very appreciative of the mattresses, dressers, bed frames, clothing and kitchenware that are donated to them, and they receive these gifts gladly.

We always let them know that this is only from God and that He is the ultimate provider for them.

Thank you again for all you do. May God richly and abundantly bless you.

**JAMES & AMANDA**



Having served with Ken & Doris on Thursdays we have seen their faithful service to this church, its members, and the surrounding community.

Doris with her dry British sense of humour and great organizational skills and Ken at her side picking up, fixing, and delivering all manner of goods that Doris has acquired for distribution.

Although they have handed over the clothing distribution to Holly, we are thankful they have chosen to continue volunteering with us.

I think a good way to sum up what has and is happening on Thursdays is something Saint Francis Assisi said, "Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly, you're doing the impossible."

**PHIL & CYNTHIA**



Thank you Doris for all your effort and kindness. It hasn't gone unnoticed. We are grateful for all your gifts. Specially the bicycle as it had allowed us to enjoy many adventures with the kids. Who by the way very much enjoy their tasty Nutella sandwiches.

Sincerely,

**JIMENEZ KOSUGI FAMILY**



Can't begin to say what a giving couple you are. You are giving of your time and energy. I have been on the receiving end of your generosity. You have given so much to the families at the maternity clinic in Africa. Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do. We value your friendship and humour.

**LYNN & BARRY**



Doris and Ken welcome us with a smile, which by itself survived us with a motivation to live. They make sure our basic needs are met so that we can ease a little bit in our chaotic circumstances. I appreciate them walking along with us consistently in our healing journey; strengthening us with kindness and hope. Their steadfastness to serve us is an unforgettable experience.

**ANONYMOUS**



Thank you won't be enough to show how blessed we are to have such selfless people like you! You both are angels in human form and am trusting God to reward you both on earth and in heaven!

**AFOLABI FAMILY**





# GOD'S PERFECT TIMING.

In God's timing, God will provide. This is what Oak Park Church of Christ in Calgary, AB is learning and rejoicing in.



by Elizabeth Millar  
Vision Ministries  
Canada storyteller

For a few years now, Oak Park Church of Christ had been wondering about expansion. They set up a long range planning team and considered how to steward resources and

to anticipate future needs of the church. A bigger sanctuary was the likely goal. However, it didn't seem to come together and Pastor Lane Scruggs noticed a lack of conviction and enthusiasm about the possibility.

Meanwhile, the question that caught the church's attention was centred around the mission of God: How can we be a church for this neighbourhood? So they grew a food bank from nothing. In fact, they just had their #1000th family receive 2 weeks of fresh groceries and a load of frozen food. They provided people with clothing. Started a weekly tutoring program. Made space for another church - Hope for Life Church - to meet in their building. Grew and extended their benevolence fund. Partnered with Calgary Housing and various social service agencies.

Over time, it became clear that it wasn't sanctuary space they needed. It was resource and meeting space. Space that could flex according to the current need.

They got plans drawn up, bids came in - and the cost was overwhelming. Impossible, actually. Where was \$2.8 million going to come from?

Oak Park Church put it out to their congregants who responded generously and sacrificially through a capital campaign. But it still wasn't enough. With the cost of construction materials and the size of the project, they were still short a million dollars.

The renovation project couldn't be phased because it was all integrated. To say it was disappointing would be an under-statement. In fact, Pastor Lane stood up in front of the congregation last May and said they would not be able to move ahead. It seemed like the end of the story.

However, that was only the middle of the story.

First, a friend of a friend and former foreman and construction guy was on the beach in Hawaii and felt compelled by the Spirit of God to help out with this renovation project. He called Pastor Lane and said - I'm in. He knew the architect and looked at the plans and confirmed that phasing was possible. He also knew how to cut some costs and do some things differently.

Then someone had heard about a government grant that might be able to help them. But as they looked closer, they quickly realized that this was only for community groups. However, the elders at Oak Park felt a holy nudge to submit an application anyways. They explained how and why they serve their community. A dozen or so social service agencies in their neighbourhood wrote letters of support - championing their renovation project. After hours of work and a pile of paper, they sent in their application.

And then they waited. And waited. By January, the leadership team at Oak Park was ready to let go of these renovation plans. They hadn't heard back from the grant fund and it seemed like this door was closing.

A few hours before the board meeting, Pastor Lane opened his inbox. A million dollars. He looked again. Their application was successful and they had been awarded the largest amount ever. He sat quietly for a bit - wondering if this was holy ground.

Can you imagine that leadership team meeting that night? I'm guessing there was a level of shock and some disbelief to work through. Followed by great rejoicing and a sense of humility - that God was doing something good in their church and community. God was inviting them into the good work that He was doing.

Motivated by love for their neighbour and the Great Commission and empowered by the Spirit, Oak Park Church of Christ shines the light of Jesus in their little corner in Calgary. To God be the glory!





# WHY YOU SHOULD SEND YOUR KIDS TO CAMP.



by Brad Anderson  
Pine Lake Christian  
Camp Director

Canoeing, archery, swimming in the lake, and campfires; for many, these experiences at summer camp form the foundation of years and years of great memories. I was fortunate enough to have spent the summers of my youth at Pine Lake Christian Camp, enjoying these activities.

In addition, there was raft building, searching for frogs, BMX races, building birdhouses, volleyball tournaments and many, many games of Capture the Flag.

As a former Youth Pastor and now Camp Director, I have often been asked, “why would I send my child to camp?” usually coupled with the question, “will they have fun?” First, our goal is to always have a summer program full of fun, memory-inducing activities. Many of the activities we provide are meant to give an opportunity for campers to try something they may not otherwise experience at home. I know this will sound strange, but the amount of fun a child has at camp is not our primary concern – we know they will have fun. I don’t know if I have ever heard a camper say they didn’t have fun at camp.

Lately, I have been thinking about how as a staff, we might measure the success of a week at camp.

I believe it comes down to two things: First, a successful camp would mean every camper leaves knowing there is a God who created them and loves them. 1 John 4:9 says, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.” Secondly, success is when every camper is welcomed into a community that loves them regardless of where they come from, whether they have ever been to Sunday School, or how many Bible verses they have memorized. 1 John 4:11 goes on to say, “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

As a camper, I can only recall one or two specific messages spoken at camp. However, what I remember, time and time again, was the intentionality, acceptance, forgiveness, wisdom, and love shown to me by speakers, cabin counsellors, camp managers and many other leaders. These experiences and the relationships formed not only gave me a foundation for my faith as a believer and follower of Jesus, but also caused me to grow and become aware of the gifts and abilities God has called me to use for his Kingdom.

In short, get your kids to camp! They will have a great time and will likely come back with all sorts of wild stories. More importantly, though, they will come to know a God who loves them and build a community of believers, young and old, around them, who will support and love them for years and years to come.

**If you would like to help sponsor a kid to attend Pine Lake Christian Camp this summer, please contact one of the pastors here at Oak Park.**



# YOUTH MISSION TRIP TO HONDURAS: Q&A



*by Ben and  
Chantal Joubert*

Our preparations for our trip to Honduras are going well. We have been hard at work learning how our mission trip can be most successful by working through some lessons together. Our fundraising has also been a success. Thank you to all those who have given their time, talents, and who have donated to our trip. We are immensely grateful for all the generosity we have received from Oak Park. Please keep us in your prayers as we continue to fundraise and prepare for our trip.

## Three questions we asked our team members:

1

Why do you want to go on this mission trip?

2

What are you most excited for on this trip?

3

What are you hoping to learn on this trip?





**ALEX GRAFFUNDER**

- 1 I think this trip is a great experience to learn to serve and help others.
- 2 I am excited to meet the people and be part of their community for the time we are there.
- 3 I want to learn from their culture and see the different ways they worship.

**WILL GRAFFUNDER**

- 1 I think this trip is a great life experience and I want to help people.
- 2 I am excited to travel to a new country and see what their culture is like and their outlook on life.
- 3 I want to see how God is working in other parts of the world that are outside of my own little bubble here at home.

**THEO GRAFFUNDER**

- 1 Service: I found this to be a good opportunity to serve in a different and more involved way to people who need it.
- 2 I'm excited to experience Honduras and meet the people there.
- 3 I'm not sure what to expect, but I'm sure I'll learn a lot from this new serving experience.

**GEORGE GRAFFUNDER**

- 1 I have two main reasons.

The first is that I think there is great benefit in the worldwide church being an encouragement to each other. Although the church in Honduras can do fine on its own, the fact that we can go down and participate with the local church there, provide some support to what they are currently doing, and come alongside local leaders to provide strength and encouragement, is

a very good thing. In addition, we can share greater awareness of the needs of the churches in Honduras with our local church here in Calgary.

The second reason is more from my perspective as a father. With my four boys going with me on the trip, I hope that they will see the church in a new way. How does it work in different locations and different cultures? I hope that they will see it in a much bigger way, and will catch the vision of it being from every tribe and nation. Church is much larger than what we might see here in Calgary, and I hope that they will get the sense of being part of a worldwide movement.

- 2 I am most excited about taking this trip with my boys, but also about meeting and working with the church leaders in San Pedro Sula!
- 3 I hope to be able to effectively serve and encourage the local leaders in Honduras, and to know how I am best able to serve the church.

**VAL LAUTISCHER**

- 1 To help the mission team in Honduras in tangible ways. This has been something I have had a deep longing to do since I was a child. I am so grateful to have this opportunity.
- 2 Being able to share God's love through service. "Being the hands and feet of Jesus."
- 3 I desire to learn about other cultures and how they keep their faith and joy all while growing in my personal relationship with Jesus. I also want to grow in my confidence that with God's strength and direction, I can do it – whatever "it" is.

**TIM GRAFFUNDER**

- 1 I want to go on this mission trip to serve alongside our brothers and sisters in Honduras and build bonds between churches of much different cultural backgrounds.
- 2 The part of this trip that most excites me is the chance to travel to where people live different from us but are united in our belief and our cause.
- 3 Since this is the second time I will be travelling to Honduras with Lifeline Christian Mission, I hope I will be better at personally connecting with more people. I want to more effectively learn the culture and needs of the community and interact with people rather than just following the group.

**TREYDEN BEINGESSNER**

- 1 I want to go to be able to help make a difference in a community, even if only small. Any positive impact I can have is worth the effort.
- 2 Being able to help around the community and to learn its culture.
- 3 I'm hoping to learn how much of an impact a small group like ours can make for those who need it. I also want to learn about the culture of the people as well.

**CHANTAL JOUBERT**

- 1 Support our youth in this awesome opportunity for them to serve, grow, and be on mission together!
- 2 For the stories of God working that we'll experience, tell and retell, and be transformed by forever afterwards.
- 3 More about Honduras and the people. How we can love, serve and pray for them, and grow in servant heartedness and love for the world.

# THANK YOU, OAK PARK.

My life has been a complicated one. For many years, I was homeless and addicted to drugs. I worked hard to turn my life around – I started a successful business and began a family with my ex-wife. Unfortunately, my addictions continued.

When my wife left and my kids were taken away, I was devastated. Everything that I had worked for, and my three boys who I loved so much – gone. I ended up back on the streets,

even though I fought not to; it was hard. Eventually I received help from agencies and was set up with a place to live and began to rebuild my life. But I longed to be reunited with my sons.

Getting clean was the first step in regaining custody of my kids. It was during the custody battle in 2018 when a friend invited me to visit Oak Park. I was hesitant to step into the building, because of my past experience with church. I never felt at

home in my previous church, as I often sensed I was being judged because of my past. So, I wasn't comfortable opening up, and I was scared to get hurt again.

But Oak Park was different.

I was first introduced to Martin Hosier (previous Associate Pastor), who put me at ease and made me feel safe and comfortable. He, along with so many others, showed me genuine hospitality and care that was unlike anything I had ever experienced. When you walk into the doors of Oak Park, you feel respected. People are not judging you; they're walking with you.

This church has helped me in so many ways.

Just one recent example: this past March, I ended up in the hospital. Before the hospital even had a bed for me, Lane was there checking in to see how I was doing. Doris and Ken MacKinnon housed, fed, and cared for my boys the entire week I was in the hospital, without question. This is part of what makes Oak Park such a special place – people are there for you when you need them.

The greatest gift to me is how my boys have been treated. They are so comfortable at Oak Park. They hop out of the truck before I even park because they love being here. They feel safe and secure, which was one of the reasons they got baptized here in 2021. Last summer the church helped sponsor the boys to attend Pine Lake Christian Camp, and they're already talking about how excited they are to go back.

This building is home to some of the most pleasant people in the city. No matter when I walk in, I get respect. You don't get that everywhere. When I'm struggling and I walk in the door, that burden is lifted. There is something about the people in this building.

I've had a difficult life. I never really believed in myself. Because of that, I lived with violence and struggled with addiction. But Oak Park has helped me believe in myself and has opened my eyes to faith. I'm a work in progress, but I'm growing. It feels nice to be accepted.

Oak Park, thank you.

*Anderson Family (Eugene, Lawrence, Francis, and Frank)*

