

Friday News from South West

February 3, 2023

The Dance



After worship on Sundays, Sabbath for me is a time of reflection. It is a time to read, or nap if need be. It is a time to intentionally prepare a Sunday meal and to enjoy the quiet of the evening.

One of the joys of living in the country is the lack of artificial light; in fact, when darkness falls you have to provide your own source of illumination. In turning on the porch light last evening, as if caught in the glare of oncoming headlights I found myself mesmerized by the still falling snow. The flakes appeared to be caught up in a dance. Slow, graceful pirouettes which, with each little gust of wind, would evolve into a group jeté. Then, suddenly, the stage would clear and a new ensemble of snowflake dancers would crowd into the spotlight. "Wow" thought I. A dance of life unfolding before me; times of slow falling, times of spinning (sometimes out of control), times of leaping with joy, times of emptiness and waiting, times of settling onto the earth below.

Serendipitously this morning, on opening my daily meditation from Richard Rohr, the following appeared. It is just too good not to share it. It is about life in two parts.....it is about the dance we live as we move from act one into act two. I hope you enjoy his thoughts as much as I did today.....with the snow still softly falling onto the cedars outside my office window.

In his talk Loving the Two Halves of Life, Richard describes the questions we focus on in the first half of life:

I first read the phrase "first half of life" in the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1971) years ago. It made sense to me then, but I probably was too young at that point to recognize how true it would eventually become. In short—and this is my layperson's interpretation of Carl Jung—he would say that the first half of life is the task that we think is our primary task. The second half of life is really the task within the task that a lot of people never get to because they're so preoccupied with the first task, which is all about making money, getting an education, raising children, and paying a mortgage. It's about tradition, law, structure, authority, and identity. It's about why I'm significant, why I'm important, why I matter, why I'm good.

Most of us are so invested in these first-half-of-life tasks by the age of forty that we can't imagine there's anything more to life. But if we stay there, it remains all about me. How can I be important? How can I be safe? How can I be significant? How can I make money? How can I look good? And how can I die a happy death and go to heaven? Religion itself becomes an evacuation plan for the next life, as my friend and colleague Brian McLaren says, because we don't see much happening of depth or significance in this world. It largely remains a matter of survival.

I'm sad to say, after fifty-five years as a priest, I think a lot of Christians have never moved beyond survival questions, security questions, even securing their future in eternity. First-half-of-life religion is an insurance plan to ensure that future. In this stage, any sense of being a part of a cosmos, of being part of a historical sweep, that God is doing something bigger and better and larger than simply saving individual souls (and my own soul in particular) is largely of no interest to us. I don't think I'm exaggerating. That's all the first half of life can do.

*It's clear that if someone wants to be elected to a political office in the United States or any country, all they need to do is assure people of safety. Bill Plotkin, who's been such a wonderful influence on so many people in recent decades, speaks of the first half of life as our **survival dance**, and the second half of life as our **sacred dance**. [1] Most people never get beyond their survival dance. It's just identity questions, boundary questions, superiority questions, and security questions. We would call them ego questions, but they're not questions of the soul.*

The soul moves beyond questions of security and importance because it has discovered that it is absolutely important.

In closing, I am reminded of a favourite hymn, played at my mom's funeral.

Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he

God is the perfect dance partner if we learn to listen and follow God's lead. So, may your heart be always filled with music and your feet never stray from the beat.

In peace
Pastor Beryl, DLM

[1] Bill Plotkin, *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2003), 84–85.

“Shining for Jesus”

Addie Aylestock was First Black Canadian Woman Minister in Canada

As Canadians, it sometimes seems like we know more about American history than our own. When it comes to Black History Month, I try to make a point of learning about Black *Canadians*. As we head into February, it seems appropriate to share the story of this important figure in church, as well as Canadian history. The following is excerpted from a post on the [Tyndale University website](#) from last April when Mabel Adeline Aylestock was posthumously honored with a Distinguished Service Award.
- Amy

Addie Aylestock was born in Glen Allan, Ontario in 1909. She was a descendent of immigrant farmers, many of whom were freed or escaped slaves from the United States that had settled in a community called Queen's Bush – an expansive area stretching from Waterloo County to Lake Huron.

Aylestock moved to Toronto on her own in her late teens. The Great Depression was about to begin, and as the first born of eight siblings and the daughter of parents of modest means, the city offered the only hope of new opportunities.

The Aylestock family were members of the British Methodist Episcopal (BME) church, a Protestant church in Canada with roots in the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. Young “Addie” Aylestock was particularly devout. She had felt a call to ministry early in her life, and was convinced that she would one day become a minister, something that seemed unlikely for most women at the time. Once in Toronto, she worked in domestic service for a number of years, cooking and cleaning for wealthy families since there were few avenues of employment for Black women.



During this period, Rev. Aylestock joined a BME congregation in the downtown core on Chestnut Street. Founded in 1856, the church served as a spiritual and political centre for the city’s growing Black community and a place where African Americans fleeing slavery had found refuge a century before.

While serving in the church, a growing desire to become a missionary led her to enroll at Toronto Bible College (TBC), now Tyndale University. In the 1945 TBC yearbook, Rev. Aylestock was described as “shining for Jesus,” serving on the TBC Missionary Committee, and determined to go to Liberia to serve after graduating. God had other plans for her. She continued to serve faithfully in the BME church in Toronto and was encouraged to become a deaconess, the highest leadership role available to women in the BME at the time.

In that role, she was posted to Africville, a Black community on the outskirts of Halifax, Nova Scotia. This community was first established in 1848 when Black settlers purchased land in the area. Although the city of Halifax collected taxes in Africville, even into the mid-20th century, living conditions were difficult with little to no city amenities such as sewage, clean water, or the disposal of garbage. Despite these difficult conditions, the Africville community was strong and vibrant and it persevered and thrived, much like Rev. Aylestock.

Following her time in Africville, Rev. Aylestock was transferred to Montreal, Quebec, and then back to Toronto. Throughout this time, she had assumed the responsibilities equal to those of a minister in the BME church, yet was unable to be ordained because she was a woman. This finally changed when the BME reconsidered its regulations around ordination in the 1950s in response to the leadership role already evident in Rev. Aylestock’s ministry. Following a resolution, Rev. Aylestock was ordained as a pastor, becoming the first woman minister of the BME and first ordained Black Canadian woman minister in Canada.



Over the next 20+ years, Rev. Aylestock served various congregations, pouring into the communities she served so diligently. From 1958 to 1982, she also served as general secretary of the BME Conference. Rev. Aylestock passed away in 1998 at the age of 88.

Despite the many obstacles faced in her life, including racism, poverty, and gender bias, Rev. Aylestock remained true to God’s call. Rev. Aylestock dedicated her life to serving the Church and paved the way for generations of Black Canadian women in ministry. May her life and legacy continue to encourage future trail-blazers and spiritual leaders.

Announcements

Our service moves back to 11:30 this week after last week's joint service with Summerlea.

There will be communion. Combined coffee time is at 11:00.

LENT begins Wednesday, February 22nd.

EASTER falls on April 9th and 10th this year.

We are through the darkest days of winter!!

Please note: the new office phone number is 514 538-0624

Our Prayer List

Bridget McCarthy

Phyllis Luther

Shirley Mitchell

Patrick O'Leary

Natalie Lalonde

Doris Smith

Maurice Tringle

Gilles Gauthier

Helen Cameron

May Cook

Donna Cobb

Keith Wood

Violet L'Esperance

Roberta Roberts

Sylvia Vallee-Girouard

If you would like your name added to the prayer list, or if you are requesting on behalf of a family member, call the office or contact Pastor Beryl directly.



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