

The Agnosticism of Love and Theology



“For we see in a mirror dimly.” This should be the motto for every theologian and lover. When it comes down to it, given the complexity of human experience and the grandeur of the universe, we don’t know much.

Whenever I teach theology, I remind my students that we live in a universe with 125 billion galaxies, each of which has millions, if not billions, of solar systems like our own. There are more suns than we can imagine, and a black hole some 17 billion times the size of our sun. We can’t claim to know much about

God in such a marvelous and wonderful universe, and frankly that is good news.

Given the wonders of life, we are confronted by two interdependent and contrasting realities:

- If God is omnipresent, then everything can be an avenue to divine knowledge. All things speak of God. Every place is the center of revelation if God is omnipresent. This gives us permission to take seriously our own experience, the sacraments and practices of our religious traditions, and our holy scriptures. It allows us to assert that Jesus reveals God’s moral nature, even if divine creativity is beyond our understanding.
- If God is infinite beyond imagination, then nothing can fully describe God. Our dogmas are finite, imperfect, and subject to constant revision. There is no room for dogmatism and unbending orthodoxy nor any kind of liturgical, ecclesiastical, or scriptural fundamentalism. As Paul says, “we know in part.” Every theologian, pope, and spiritual leader should have the words “I could be wrong” affixed to each pronouncement, sermon, and text. God is not a Christian, nor is God a Hindu or Muslim.

Augustine once stated that if you think you know it, it isn’t God. A living God reveals much but is also simply beyond our ability to fathom; God is on the go and so are we. The deconstruction of dogmatism and unbending principles is good news: to affirm this would be a first step in stopping religious and political violence and persecution. Yes, God is here. Yes, we are chosen by God. But, God is over there as well, and others are chosen, and our deepest truths only scratch the truths of reality. Deconstructionism is always balanced by construction – the creation of images of God that can flexibly guide our spiritual pathways.

Now I am a theologian, and a process theologian at that! And, that means, I make a lot of claims about the world and God’s ways with creation. I affirm that God’s power is contextual, relational, and persuasive; that creation has neither beginning nor end; that humans experience freedom and creativity; that the universe is evolving and revelation is universal; that the world is relational and value-laden apart from human experience; that God is not all-determining and that power is shared rather than coercive. Still, process theology itself is in process, emerging, evolving, and revising itself. This is the best model for theology: humility, the type of humility we see in Jeremiah’s protest of his youth and inexperience. We are all inexperienced in the ways of God. To use the language of Martin Buber, to think we know God fully is to make God an “object,” and “It,” and not the “Thou” from whom all blessings flow.

This same agnosticism is true of love. When someone says they have you figured out, run for the hills! You are no longer a living, breathing reality, but an object to be analyzed and controlled. While I appreciate the need for the DSM identifications in psychiatry and psychology, I recognize that no one can be reduced to a diagnosis or Myers-Briggs Personality Type (like introvert or extrovert). Even when the diagnosis is accurate, we are more than any word can describe. When someone has us pegged or we claim to understand another fully, we have made them an “It” and not a “Thou,” an object and not a holy other.

The reality of otherness is the greatest inspiration in the adventure of love. Moreover, we are “others” to ourselves: we see in a mirror dimly even when it comes to our own self-awareness. We are also more than we can imagine. Despite Paul’s affirmation, I am not sure that we will ever know in “full,” even in heaven. If heaven is to be meaningful, it must involve surprises and adventures as well. Adventure always implies agnosticism and the lure of previously unknown and uncharted frontiers.

Today’s scripture calls us to live humbly relationally and theologically. A holy agnosticism can be fun and it is never boring as we are lured from familiarities toward the ever-widening horizon of God’s love.- Bruce Epperley

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/livingaholyadventure/2013/01/the-adventurous-lectionary-the-fourth-sunday-after-epiphany/>

This Week at Inca



Refugee Sponsorship –

If you would like to support the Diocese of Niagara 140th Anniversary Campaign, envelopes are available on the greeter's table. Also, below is a template of a letter you may wish to use to solicit support from people around you- friends, family, colleagues

Dear Friends and Family,

As you know, the global refugee crisis is at historical proportions. My church, Church of the Incarnation, is stepping up and has made an application to sponsor a refugee family and then assist them in getting re-settled somewhere here in southern Ontario. We need to fund raise approximately \$25,000 to privately sponsor a family or 4-5 people and to date, without much effort we have raised about \$21,000. This application is not associated with the 25,000 refugees that the Federal Government has committed to bringing in. We expect our application to take about 12 to 16 months. We will certainly keep you informed as we move through this process

If you have ever wondered how you personally can help a refugee family that is in need of a home, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to my church, Church of the Incarnation. Every little bit helps! I will be collecting cheques made out to "Church of the Incarnation" between now and February 14, 2016. Please write, "Refugee Fund" in the notes section of your cheque.

Please contact me if you need any more information.

Thank you for your consideration and support.



Lenten Activity at INCA:

Mardi Gras Sunday, February 7, 10 Service

Enjoy an Agape Meal (Friendship Meal) instead of a traditional communion celebration. Please dress in your finest purples, golds and greens and bring your Mardi Gras masks and beads

Pancake Tuesday Dinner – February 9, 5:30pm

Please join us for a great family dinner! Suggested donation: \$5/adult, \$4/child, maximum \$15/family. **Needed:** set up and clean up help, servers, extra grills and chefs. No experience with a spatula necessary. Please help Leslie Hickey know how many will be attending and how you can help, by filling in the sign-up sheet.

Ash Wednesday, February 10, 7:30pm service

If you have any palms from previous years you would like to donate, please give them to Michael by Sunday, February 7 to give us time to burn them. We welcome our friends from St. Aidan's



Vestry Meeting

Sunday February 7, 2016

Reports must be sent to Margot at office@incarnationchurch.ca asap please!

NEW ENVELOPES – we're implementing a new weekly donation envelope system. Those currently using envelopes will be contacted in the next few weeks about making the switch. If you're ready for a new set, contact Margot at office@incarnationchurch.ca. Have you considered pre-authorized payments? A safe convenient way to ensure the church has consistent funding. See office for more details if you'd like to sign up.



For Social Justice and
the Environment

Oakville Book Reading Club for the Environment and Social Justice,

Thursdays, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, runs until February 11

We meet in the Chapel it's not too late to join the discussion! Contact Mervyn Russell for more information mervicia@gmail.com

First book: This Changes Everything, by Naomi Klein



Choir Practice –

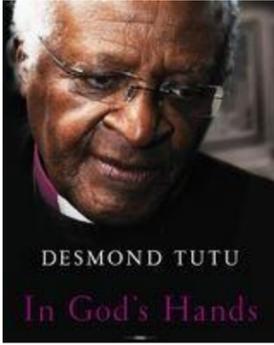
The choir rehearses every Wednesday at 7:30. Share your voice, all welcome.



Wing and a Prayer – Thursday, February 24, 2016!

We meet at 6:30pm at Monaghan's. Cost: \$25 per person including food and drink. RSVP Rob Moniuk (Robert@Moniuk.ca).

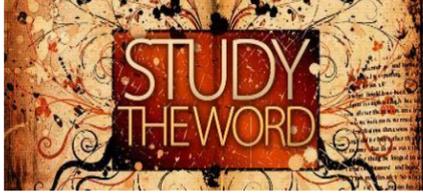
Everyone is welcome!



In God's Hands by Desmond Tutu – book study

Tuesday February 16, 11-12:30, for 6 weeks

Archbishop Tutu has produced a meditation on the infinite love of God and the infinite value of the human individual. Not only are we in God's hands, he says, our names are engraved on his palms. Led by Karen Pitt and Michael.



Lenten Bible Study –begins Thursday February 18th

Four weeks, 1:30-3:00pm in the chapel. The focus will be the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus, chapters 18 and 19 of St. John's Gospel. Anyone and everyone is invited. No previous knowledge of the bible is required. Contact Mervyn Russell for more information mervicia@gmail.com



Contemplative Fire – Sunday, February 21, 8:00pm.

Are you looking for time to reflect, meditate and recharge your spiritual life? Each meeting begins with a communal sharing of food followed by quiet and intentional reflection in the gathering area. The response to this has been very encouraging. We continue to see new faces at each meeting and look forward to growing this community.

For more information, please speak to Michael. All are welcome.

LOVE LIVES



Love Lives: A Refugee Sponsorship Concert

Saturday, February 27, 7:p.m., Church of the Incarnation

The love lives of several great composers will be celebrated in song featuring solo performances by Charlene Pauls, soprano and Norine Burgess, mezzo-soprano, with special guest Mervyn Russell and the Oakville Children's Choir. Tickets are \$30 available at the door. Cash bar.



Go for the Gold – Syrian Refugee fundraising initiative

March 10, 12 and 19, 2-4pm each day in the Worship area

Gather up your broken and unwanted gold items, coins, paper money and donate them to our refugee sponsorship fund. Once they have been resold, you'll receive a tax receipt for the appraised value. More details to come.



Youth Group Events- for info contact Phil Carver at

incayouthprogram@gmail.com

Mark Jan 31st in your calendar; we are heading to the movies at Film.ca to see Star Wars. We will leave after church and then parents can pick up after the movie on Speers Rd.



Dare We Mention "Christmas Market" in January?

Before storing your decorations for another year, please consider donating excess Christmas ornaments for our next market. We are looking for items in good, sellable condition for a "Christmas" table. We are also looking for Christmas jewellery and small jewellery boxes. Please leave your donations in the box in the office.

Community News



**Anglican Diocese
of Niagara**

Bishop's Diploma Course on Ethics, Winter 2016

Please see bulletin board for more details

HARRRP 5th Annual Dancing on Sunshine Gala, February 26, 2016

Liuna Station Hamilton, for information call: 905-544-0050



**Valentine Open Mic Night ♡!
Saturday, February 13th, 7-10pm**

Resiliency 4 Recovery is hosting an Open Mic Karaoke Night at Incarnation. Tickets are \$10 and half the proceeds will be donated to our refugee efforts.



february 20, 2016

**St. Mathew's House – The Coldest Night of the Year Walk,
Saturday, February 20,**

St. Matthew's House is hosting the national walk for the homeless and hungry in downtown Hamilton. This year St. Matthew's House is partnering with Mission Services of Hamilton. Donations collected for the walk will support both organizations equally. At St. Matthew's House, the proceeds will be used to support the work done at their two food banks. Contact Genevieve Wong 905-523-5546 x 227 or gwong@stmatthewshouse.ca.



**Halton Green Screens at FILM.CA cinemas
7pm, second Thursday of the month**

Feb 11 – *Blackfish* - the story of a killer whale who killed several people while in custody
Mar 10 – *Bottled Life* - the truth about Nestle's business with water

This & That



Volunteers Urgently Needed as Coffee Hour hosts

Other positions include: altar prep, greeters, hosts and coffee preparation. Youth can gain some volunteer high school hours. Training will be provided. Contact Claudine Boulert, at boulert@rogers.com for more information, or call 905-825-2851.



Changes to Order of Service or Bulletin News - Any changes need to be sent to the office by Tuesday, noon. office@incarnationchurch.ca

Nametags let people know who you are and make it helpful for people to put names to faces, especially for newcomers



Receiving Communion

All people at Incarnation are invited to receive the bread and wine at communion. The bread is received from the priest who stands between the servers who offer wine from the common cup; choose whatever side is free. You may choose to receive from an individual wine cups available to the left of the altar. Take one, consume the wine and replace the empty cup in the same spot. We hope this provides an inclusive approach to communion whereALL are welcome.

VOLUNTEER!	January 31	February 7
Bread Making	P. Henley	C. Surphlis
Altar Prep	B. Hanna-Morrison	A. Moniuk
Coffee	Hutchinson-Henley	MacDougall
Coffee	Lockhart	Maclauchlan
Host	S. Sinclair	L. Bird
Reader 1	M. Stevens	B. Abrams
Gospel	A. MacNaughton	J. Smith
Prayers	J. Bowden	V. Klayth
Server 1	A. Turner-Sommer	J. Stevens
Server 2	W. Burk	P. Moffat
Wine Cups	C. Boulert	Z. Boulert
Counting	W. MacDougall	D. Bold