

I have to tell you about my experience yesterday afternoon. Early in March, on Facebook, I got a message from Michelle Peck, a woman from Penticton who used to teach piano to our children. I had hired Michelle to be the accompanist at Summerland United Church where I was Minister of Music and we just had a very special bond from the moment we met. In March, Michelle wrote to say, "You have been on my mind lately and I was wondering if you'd have time for a visit if I can plan to be in (North Vancouver) some weekend. I have been writing music lately and the voice that sends me the songs is saying to play them for you. I'm sorry if this sounds a little strange - but it is what it is."

Well it turns out this weekend was the weekend. So yesterday afternoon, with three little kids and a husband in tow, Michelle walked into the church to tell me her story and to play me her music. I have to say, I met Michelle when she was fresh out of university, with a degree in music education. A lovely, shy, gentle spirit Michelle seemed to be waiting for something. She laughed when she told me what she said about me to her kids - "Blair's the man who hired me to play for a church on the day I said I didn't believe in God."

Michelle will be forty this fall and has become a wise, gracious, deeply spiritual, piercingly beautiful middle-aged woman whose gift for receiving music from the one who inspires creativity, and turning it into something you'd hear from an academy award winning sound track, is unbelievable. Michelle told me she doesn't write music, she receives it.

She told me of her breast cancer diagnosis three years ago and the alternative therapies that have changed her life and lifestyle. She told me of her new found relationship to her garden. She told me of her tireless effort to make her marriage work, even though it was nothing like the romance novels predict. She positively glowed as she spoke of her three precious children. She told me of her relationship with new friends that have rocked her understanding of human connection and the innocence of pure love. She told me of the special bond she has with her father and how she knows things about his relationship with his father that she couldn't possibly know because grandpa died when she was three. And she told me of her relationship to "the voice" that calls out the very best in her, and commissions her to be fully alive in the world.

With every story, there was a piece of music. Not one note of manuscript, not even by memory. For those who have seen the movie August Rush, about a young boy who

composes music by hearing the whole symphony all at once, you'll get this. With each song she played for me, it was like Michelle was receiving it, and offering it for the first time, complete, no sense of having to get it right, not a wrong note, impeccable technique with her fingers, and richness in chord progressions that you might think you were listening to David Foster, the guy who arranges Josh Groban and Andrea Bocelli.

There was one piece that brought me to tears...weeping tears. A piece so imbued with blessing, and healing, and affirmation, I could not stop crying. When it ended she said to me; "you know that's my favourite and I didn't have a name for it for the longest time, but then it came to me, and it's one of the reasons I'm here. I want to call it Blair's Muse."

Except for the annual Christmas cards which stopped three years ago after her diagnosis, I had not seen or heard from Michelle Peck for 11 or 12 years. And at the end of that three hour encounter, I felt like not a moment had passed when I didn't know Michelle as intimately as I knew her then. It was like those 11 or 12 years did not exist between yesterday and the last time I saw her. It was a time of transcendence, when *kairos* time intersects *chronos* time – a time when God's time cuts through chronological time – and transformation happened. I am a different person today, the relationships I'm encountering now are different, the way I perceive myself in the world, all changed, because of that *kairos* time. I expect to unpack this for weeks to come...and Michelle is a lovely friend who has come back into my life.

(Did anyone notice what Matt was playing as the prelude this morning? He was playing Michelle by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. We did not talk about this this morning. He could have played anything...and yet he played Michelle. I knew I was supposed to talk about this, this morning.)

Transformation – it's a word we have difficulty wrapping our heads around because we don't know what it means, or looks like, or how it can be experienced in our own lives. It's as if transformation is something we're suppose to do, or be, or know, or whatever, because we're the church, and the church is supposed to be about transformation, but what the heck it means....heaven only knows. Our biggest question when we hear Paul's words "be transformed?" Transformed into what?

Last week we heard Paul say, "don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." And I have been suggesting all summer that transformation, new life, resurrection, will be found in our relationship to this moment – not in some story remembered or in some future imagined. We will find life in its vast

richness and blessing in the moment of right now, and in choosing how we want to experience this moment.

The passage that Stan read for us today, while it reads like a new set of ten commandments, is not particularly Christian. Paul is simply giving to the predominantly Jewish Christians in Rome, good advice about how to live as good people. Listen to them again:

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

Everything we do, we say, how we treat one another, is respectful...mutually respectful and loving. Outdo one another...mutuality. And it's about love.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Actions, each of them, practices that root us in mindfulness...and paying attention particularly to those who are most strange...in our world – the homeless, the refugee, the addicted.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

This is absolutely about spiritual gifts of everyone in partnership in the community. All gifts are needed for the community to act out its mission. No gift or skill is more important than another. No gift or skill is less important than another. It takes all of us.

If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;

Paul suggests that you'll make them feel guilty if you do it...and maybe he's just kidding. The point of all of this is that love conquers all. The question in any situation is what would love do now? Not a new question at all, but sometimes we forget to ask it.

Every single one of these suggestions, these commandments, presents us with a choice for any given moment. And more to the point I'm trying to make, when we're not sure what transformation looks like, when we do these things, we act as if transformation is

happening. We act as if God's time cuts through chronological time. Talk about not being conformed to this world.

Each time we love, we live in harmony, and feed our enemies, we are given the opportunity to act as if our lives are being transformed by the renewing of our minds. And in God's infinite time, infinite grace, infinite wisdom, our lives soon are.

It just happens when we stand in the way of grace and let her have her way with us. That's what Michelle said – I don't write the music, I simply receive it. May grace have her way with us even when we only have the capacity to act as if it does. Amen.