November 2026 | Issue 61

BRANCHES

A Mill Lake Church magazine

The Beatitudes & Mission of the Church

MUSIC Moment

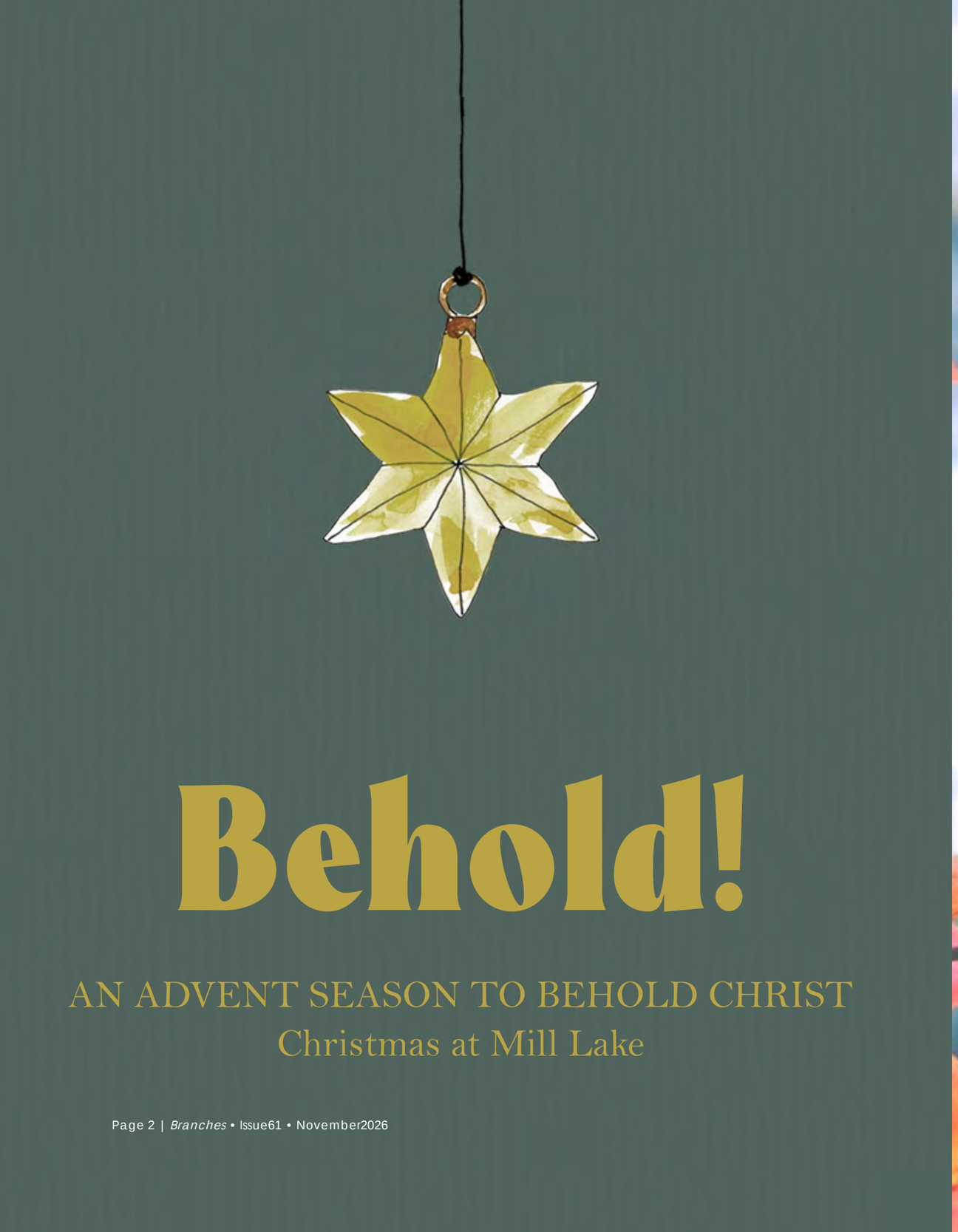
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By Big Daddy Weave

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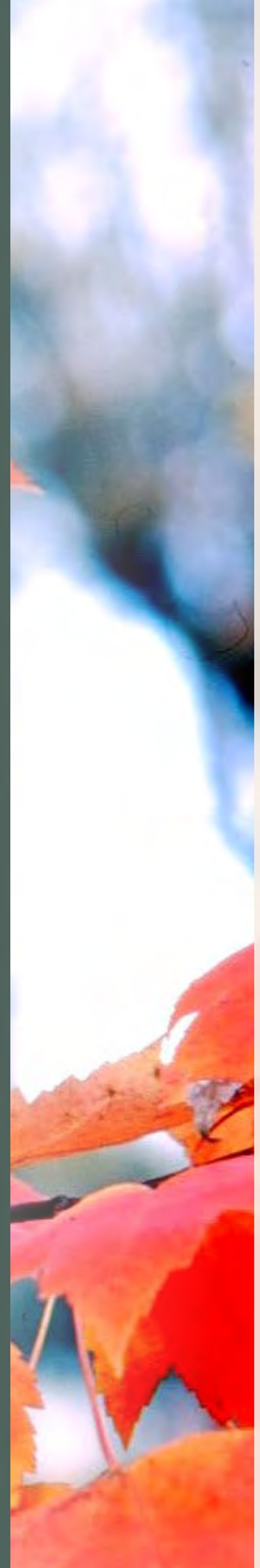
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18 Finding Rest and Renewal



Behold!

AN ADVENT SEASON TO BEHOLD CHRIST

Christmas at Mill Lake





EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends –

Fall has fully arrived. The weather is cooler. The leaves have changed and fallen. And our schedules have adjusted to school calendars and regular work routines. We've celebrated Thanksgiving, and now we look toward commemorating Remembrance Day on November 11, followed by Advent beginning on the 29th.

Setting aside a special day to remember the sacrifices made by Canadians holds different weight and varied meaning for each of us. For me, it's a deeply personal reminder. Without a father-in-law who fought in WW2, landing at Juno Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and returning home, my husband would never have been born, and we would never have met. Years later, my husband would go on to serve in the Canadian Navy.

Remembering is itself an act of gratitude. And Remembrance Day gives us that opportunity to pause, remember, and give thanks for those who willingly sacrificed so much for the sake of others. So—to all MLC-ers who served, we thank you for your service and dedication.

Only a couple of weeks after Remembrance Day, we enter Advent, a season that invites us to slow down, remember, and prepare once again for the coming of Christ as a baby who would grow up and ultimately give His life for us.

As you turn the pages of this month's *Branches,* you'll find that same call to follow Jesus. Pastor Randy closes our 2026 theme, The Blessed Life: Following Jesus Through the Beatitudes and focuses on how the Beatitudes affect the mission of the church. You'll also find other inspiring articles to challenge and encourage you.

Let us never forget those who sacrificed for our freedom. And let us never forget the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who made the gift of eternal life possible.

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Know you are loved,

Ann Griffiths

Editor





milllakechurch.ca

BRANCHES

Issue 61

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Submit articles, comments & ideas to
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Submit photos and media to
Leah Cobb at hello@milllakechurch.ca

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LET'S CONNECT!

ADULTS TOGETHER
Bible Study: Every Sunday, 9-9:45 a.m. at the church.

COMMUNITY GROUPS
Contact office@milllakechurch.ca.
Interested in joining a small group? Various groups meet throughout Abbotsford.

PRAYER
Afternoon Prayer: Every Thursday, 1 p.m. with the Prayer & Care team in the church lower lounge.
Evening Prayer: Meets monthly on Wednesdays, 7 p.m. This month: November 18.

YOUTH—GRADES 6-12
Contact Jeff Rusu at jeffrusu4@gmail.com.
Follow the Instagram youth page @MLCYouth.
Mondays, 7 p.m. in the church gym.

MEN
Contact Dwayne Mitchell at dwaynemit@gmail.com.
Breakfast Fellowship: Meets on the second Tuesday of every month. This month: November 10, 10 a.m. at Jo-Jo's.

WOMEN
Contact: Ann Griffiths at ann@anngriffiths.com
Morning Bible Study: Every Wednesday, 9:30–11:30 a.m. in the church lower auditorium.
Evening Bible Study: Every Monday, 6:30–8:30 p.m. in the church lower auditorium.
Movie Night: Friday, November 27, 7 p.m. at the church.

KIDS & TOTS
Every Sunday: During worship, newborn tots to age 5 are welcome in our nursery. Kindergarten to Grade 5 kids are dismissed part way through the service to go downstairs with their teachers. Sign in the lobby by the nursery for either program.
Family Sundays: On the 1st Sunday of each month, when our kids stay with us through the service, Grace Activity Totes are available in the lobby.

FELLOWSHIP
Potluck Lunch: Come together for lunch the first Sunday of each month following the Worship Service. All are welcome in the Lower Auditorium. Bring a salad. Main dishes, desserts, & beverages are provided. This month: November 1.
Greening of the Church: Monday, November 23, 1–4 p.m. Contact Carol Fischer at carol4coffee@outlook.com to help and join in the fun. All ages welcome.

The Blessed Life

Blessed To Be Sent

By Randy Lemke

What an incredible journey walking through the Beatitudes together as a church family these past ten months. Poverty of spirit. Mourning. Meekness. Hunger for righteousness. Mercy. Purity of heart. Peacemaking. Persecution. Each Beatitude turns the world's definition of a good life upside down.

In the final article of this series, we step back and look at Jesus' reasoning for starting His earthly ministry here. He didn't begin with eight disconnected virtues. He painted a portrait of a person in the kingdom of God and then told them exactly why it had come.

The Character of the Kingdom

When studying the Beatitudes separately, many people fail to realise that Jesus did not intend them to be isolated. Jesus wasn't describing eight different people. The Beatitudes collectively describe one kind of person. Someone who is poor in spirit will also mourn over sin, walk in meekness, hunger for righteousness, show mercy, keep a pure heart, make peace, and accept opposition when it comes. You don't pick your favourite Beatitude and specialize in it. Altogether, they form a single image. And that image, ultimately, is Jesus Himself.

That means we can safely conclude that Jesus never intended the Beatitudes to be only a private spirituality project. Jesus was describing what happens when His life gets planted in a group of ordinary people and grows. Not eight individuals pursuing eight virtues in isolation, but a community that increasingly looks like Him. That's the church. That's what we want God to grow at Mill Lake Church.

The Mission that Follows the Portrait

Right after the Beatitudes, Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus doesn't move on to a new topic. He moves from the portrait of a believer, the heart of those who receive the blessings of the kingdom, to the mission of what will become the church. "You are the salt of the earth," He says. "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13–14).

Salt was a preservative in the ancient world, keeping meat from rotting. Light simply cannot help being seen. No one needs to convince a lamp to shine; we just have to stop hiding it under a basket. Jesus is saying the kingdom community He just described in the Beatitudes should not remain confined within the walls of a building. It's meant to press into a decaying world and hold back the rot. It's meant to shine and not hide.

This is the heart of the whole Sermon on the Mount. Blessed people become sent people. You can't separate the character of verses 3–12 from the mission of verses 13–16. A community that is shaped by poverty of spirit, mercy, and peacemaking can't stay quiet. That kind of life gets noticed. It either draws people toward Jesus, or it makes them uncomfortable enough to push back, which is exactly what we talked about last month.

This is Mill Lake's Purpose

It gets personal for us as a church. Our purpose here at Mill Lake has never been complicated—we exist to make the hope of Jesus known. Not just known in terms of knowledge and information. We want to make Jesus known as someone real, someone people can see living in us. Someone whose light reflects in us.

The Beatitudes are the portrait of that. A world that is anxious will notice a people who are poor in spirit and unshaken. A world that is grieving will notice a people who mourn honestly without losing hope. A world running on outrage will notice a people who are meek and who make peace instead of picking fights. A world drowning in cynicism will notice a people who are merciful when they don't have to be.

Jesus reveals His kingdom by first describing a Beatitude-shaped character of those in His kingdom. If we want to make the hope of Jesus known in our neighbourhoods, our workplaces, our schools, we don't start with a grand strategy. We start by becoming kingdom people together, the kind of people Jesus describes in His Sermon on the Mount.



The Shape of Us

Practically, this shapes how we do life together as a church. It means our Bible studies, Community Groups, and gatherings aren't just information sessions; they're the place where poverty of spirit and mercy actually get practiced on each other. It means our hospitality isn't about performance but about meekness and mercy, maybe with a meal attached. It means when our city experiences conflict, division, and outrage, we're the ones who remain, still listening, still working for reconciliation, because peacemaking isn't optional for us. It means when faithfulness costs us a friendship, a reputation, or an opportunity, we don't hide that we belong to Jesus. We let it be visible, and we keep loving others anyway.

Salt only preserves something when it's rubbed into it. Light hidden under a basket helps no one. God never intended us to live out the Beatitudes alone in our own corner of life. We're meant to be a visible, connected kingdom community—the kind that gathers, serves, prays, and then goes back out into our life, changed enough that people ask why we have the hope we do. It's the reason Peter says, "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Continued on next page

Continued from last page

From the Mountain to the Mission
Here's what ties this entire series together. At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, He presents the Beatitudes. They describe the character that His kingdom's people would carry. But at the very end of His ministry, right before He ascends into heaven, Jesus speaks again, and this time it's not a description. It's a commission.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Put those two moments side by side, and you see the whole shape of what Jesus was doing in His ministry. He starts by forming and sets out to welcome a certain kind of people. People who are poor in spirit, who are merciful, those who are peacemakers, willing to suffer for what's right. He ends by sending those same people out, empowered by His own Spirit, as witnesses to the gospel. The character comes first. The mission follows. You cannot skip to Acts 1:8 without first being the people of Matthew 5. And you cannot stop at Matthew 5 without eventually being sent out.

This is the pattern for us at Mill Lake. God isn't just shaping our character for our own sake. He's forming a Beatitude people so He can send us as witnesses. And it starts right here in our own 'Jerusalem,' our own neighbourhoods and workplaces, and reaches further than we can imagine. The Spirit that empowered the first disciples after Jesus ascended is the same Spirit that now works in us, turning blessed people into sent people.

Where does this Leave Us?
Jesus didn't give a list of things for us to try harder at. He gave us an identity to grow into together, and a mission that our identity was always meant to fuel. We are people who have received mercy, and so we show it. We are people who have tasted the peace of God, and so we live in peace. We are people who know our reward is secure in heaven, and so we can afford to lose things here that the world can't take from us anyway. And we are people sent by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, to make His hope known, starting here and reaching to the ends of the earth.

That's what makes the hope of Jesus visible and not just a slogan on our Connect wall. Our desire is to be a church full of poor-in-spirit, meek, merciful, peace-making, Spirit-empowered people who keep reflecting the light of Christ even when it costs us something. And by God's grace and for His glory, this is who we are becoming, together, right here at Mill Lake Church.



***Pastor Randy** is Lead Pastor at Mill Lake Church, where he and his wife, Allana, and their five children have served for the past 24 years. Randy enjoys movies, books, music, and hanging out with his family. You may also want to ask him about his interest in fountain pens.*

MILL LAKE Tots

HELP WANTED!

It's a joy to serve the sweet little ones God has blessed our Mill Lake Church family with. If you're interested in serving with us in this area, please contact Allana Lemke. We could use your help.



MILL LAKE Kids

Kids (Kindergarten through grade 5) are invited downstairs during our worship service time to have their own special Bible lesson! We are always learning.

FAMILY SUNDAY

On November 1st, there is no class downstairs. Come worship with our church family!

Student activity packs available at the Connect desk. **Recite October memory verses** (Genesis 5:12, 7:12, 11:9) to Mrs. Allana to get your reward.

MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

Students, come find Mrs. Allana after the Family Day service on **December 6th** to recite the verses you memorized in November [Genesis 12:2, 15:6; Psalm 75:7; Proverbs 3:5]. K to Grade 2 memorize Romans 5:12 only; Grades 3 to 5 memorize all three verses.

OUR MLKIDS GOAL

To celebrate all the memorization [up to 15 verses] with a **MLKids Games Night & Pizza Party on Sunday, February 7th at 5 p.m. in the gym.**



NOVEMBER LEARNING:

4

"THE FATHER OF NATIONS"
Genesis 11-13
God promises to bless the nations through Abraham.

Genesis 12:2
"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

15

"LET'S MAKE A DEAL"
Genesis 15 + 17
God can always be trusted.

Genesis 15:6
"He [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

22

"THE JUDGE JUDGES JUSTLY"
Genesis 18-19
God is the Judge who judges justly.

Psalm 75:7
"It is God who executes judgement, putting one down and lifting up another"

29

"IT'S A BOY"
Genesis 21-22
God provided a son and a sacrifice for Abraham, the man of faith.

Proverbs 3:5
"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding"



By Johanna Campbell

PART TWO

HIS NAME IS UNFATHOMABLE

What's in a name? Last month we looked at God's name as Elohim, the first name mentioned in the Bible for God (Genesis 1:1). Elohim is the plural name for God, which includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the triune God who created the universe and everything in it. Elohim created us in His own image (Imago Dei) in true righteousness and holiness.

In Genesis 2:4 we read a more expansive name for God: LORD God. In Hebrew that would be *Yahweh Elohim*. The name *Yahweh* appears in our English Bibles as 'LORD' written in all capital letters to distinguish it from Lord or *Adonai,* meaning ruler or master. *Yahweh*, the relational name for God, is the one He used when speaking to Adam and Eve. When God spoke to Moses, He gave him the meaning of that name.

Remember the story of the burning bush? Moses led Jethro's flock of sheep to Mt. Horeb, the mountain of God. As he neared the mountain, he heard a voice from within a flaming bush. He approached the bush, but immediately God told him to stop. Moses had come too close to God's holiness, and God spoke to him saying, "Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). There the LORD revealed His name to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). There, the LORD commissioned Moses to go back to Egypt to lead His people out of their cruel bondage into a land flowing with milk and honey. All he needed to say to them was, "I AM has sent me to you." Yahweh revealed Himself in relationship to His people. There is power, love, and severity in the name of the LORD.

Yahweh explained the meaning of His name as Moses was on the holy mountain once again, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Exodus 34:6–7a). Yahweh revealed seven attributes of His character which Moses had to pass on to the Israelites (and to us). The psalmists sang of these seven attributes of the LORD (Psalms 86:15, 103:8 and 145:8¬–9): compassion, grace, patience, love, faithfulness, goodness and readiness to forgive. As far as the east is from the west, He removes our transgressions from us. There's a wideness in His mercy; there's a broadness in His grace. Who can fathom it?

Moses reminded *Yahweh* of these attributes when His anger burned against the Israelites because they refused to enter the land of Canaan when they heard the report from the ten spies. He pleaded with the LORD, "If you destroy this nation, you brought out of Egypt with a mighty arm, what will the Egyptians and the surrounding nations say about your great Name?" The LORD listened to Moses and forgave the Israelites for treating His Name with contempt. However, *Yahweh* does not leave the guilty unpunished. He condemned all those who were twenty years of age and older to wander in the desert for forty years. That generation died there; they never reached the promised land (Numbers 14).

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness, but His patience does have a limit. He forgives wickedness, rebellion, and sin if we come to Him in repentance and humility. He punishes the wicked who persist in their unbelief, pride, and disobedience.

Yahweh's name denotes God as a single, self-existing, spiritual being who is "eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, unchangeable, infinite, and almighty; completely wise, just and good, and the overflowing source of all good." Even those phrases cannot fully describe all God's attributes and character. All the books in the world by the most pious authors can't do it. God is unfathomable.

The Israelites did not dare to take *Yahweh*'s name upon their lips for fear of breaking the third commandment, taking His name in vain. Instead, they called *Yahweh Ha Shem*, *the Name*. We would do well to remember that in our day. How often do we call God 'LORD' without thinking of His holiness, attributes, and mighty power? How often do we use His name thoughtlessly, even in our prayers?

It is wise to remember *Yahweh*'s attributes each day. He is gracious and compassionate. He abounds in love. He showed His love for us by sending Jesus to die in our place. We can never fulfill the demands of God's law. We do not love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We do not love our neighbour as ourselves. We love conditionally. But Jesus gave us a new command: we are to love our neighbour as He loved us, with an undying, fervent, and selfless love. Who can do that? We can't. But *Yahweh* works His love in us by the power of His Holy Spirit. We love Him and our neighbour because He first loved us.

Jesus came as our mediator, the One greater than Moses, to save us from our sins. Jesus is Yahweh, the great I AM. He called Himself by that name often. It is mentioned seventeen times in the Gospel of John alone, the most famous being "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). Jesus is slow to anger and abounding in love. He forgives all those who call upon Him in faith. He has mercy, yet deals righteously. He is kind, but also severe. He is loving and angry at sin at the same time. All the attributes of the Godhead are found in Him. Jesus' name says it all. There is power in His name. Call upon Him in the day of trouble and He will answer you. He will forgive graciously. He will restore and rebuild. He faithfully keeps His promises. His love never fails. Make Him your all in all. Make His name known to those you meet. Make the hope of Jesus known.



Johanna Campbell, DTh is a member of Mill Lake's Prayer and Care Team and has served at Mill Lake Church in varied capacities for forty years. If you wish to discuss any issues about life and how you can live to God's glory, you may call her at 604 853-6963. Sometimes one call and a few sessions of biblical counsel can change the trajectory of your life.



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Q "WHAT DOES SPEAKING IN TONGUES MEAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?"

Got questions?

If you have questions about the Bible, the church, theology, or faith in general, please send them to our Editor at ann@milllakechurch.ca. Pastor Randy or one of our elders will give a biblical answer in *Branches*.

A

Few subjects have stirred as much heat in the modern church as speaking in tongues. Through the twentieth century, the Pentecostal and charismatic movements made it a defining mark of a Spirit-filled life, and congregations and denominations divided over it. Today, the temperature has cooled somewhat. Tongues are no longer the hot topic they once were, but Christians still hold sharply different views about what the gift is and why God gave it.

Some ground, thankfully, has been settled. Two extreme positions have been rejected by the great majority of believers: that a person must speak in tongues in order to be saved, and that anyone who speaks in tongues is under demonic influence. Scripture supports neither. Every believer receives the Spirit at conversion (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13), and Paul's question, "Do all speak with tongues?" expects the answer to be no (12:30).

To answer this question well, we need to let the New Testament define its own terms, beginning where the gift first appears.

Acts 2: Real Languages for Real Listeners

At Pentecost, the Spirit enabled the disciples to speak languages they had never learned (Acts 2:4). People traveling from across the empire were astonished, "we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). The gift was a miraculous ability to speak an unlearned language so that someone who knew it could hear the gospel. Babel's confusion was being reversed, and the mission to "the end of the earth" had begun (Acts 1:8). Nearly everyone agrees that the tongues of Acts 2 were real, understandable human languages.

The pattern continues through Acts. When the gospel reaches Gentiles in Cornelius's house, they speak in tongues and extol God, and the Jewish believers with Peter are amazed (Acts 10:44–46). In Ephesus, a group of John the Baptist's disciples receive the Spirit and likewise speak in tongues (Acts 19:6).

Each time the gospel crosses a new frontier, God gives an audible sign that these people belong to the same church and share the same Spirit. Luke gives no hint that these later tongues differ from Pentecost. Peter says the Spirit fell on the Gentiles "just as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15).

1 Corinthians 12–14: Same Gift or Different?

The disagreement begins in Corinth. Some see a related but different gift: a private prayer language, or unlearned speech that edifies believers. They point to 14:2, where "no one understands" the speaker, and "the tongues of angels" (13:1). It's easy to see how people reach this reading. Still, there are good reasons to think Paul means the same gift as in Acts:

1. The same word. Luke, Paul's travelling companion, and Paul both use glōssa, "language." Nothing in 1 Corinthians signals a new kind of speech.
2. Paul's own illustration is foreign languages. There are many languages in the world, he says, and none is without meaning; if I don't know the language, the speaker is a foreigner to me (14:10–11). He then quotes Isaiah's warning about "strange tongues" and "the lips of foreigners" and calls tongues a sign for unbelievers (14:21–22), just as at Pentecost.
3. Interpretation means translation. The word Paul uses for "interpret" normally means to translate. A tongue needs interpreting because it is a real language no one present knows. "No one understands him" (14:2) describes the Corinthian gathering, not the nature of the speech.
4. "Tongues of angels" is hyperbole. In the same breath, Paul imagines knowing all mysteries and surrendering his body to be burned (13:1–3). He is picturing the most impressive gifts imaginable to show that without love they are nothing.
5. Gifts are given for others. Each gift is for "the common good" (12:7). That is why Paul says that without an interpreter, the speaker should keep silent in church (14:28).

None of this requires us to question the sincerity of those who read Corinthians differently. But when Paul's language, his illustrations, and his instructions are taken together, they point in one direction. The gift in Corinth was the gift of Pentecost, now being misused by a proud and disorderly church.

What This Means for Us

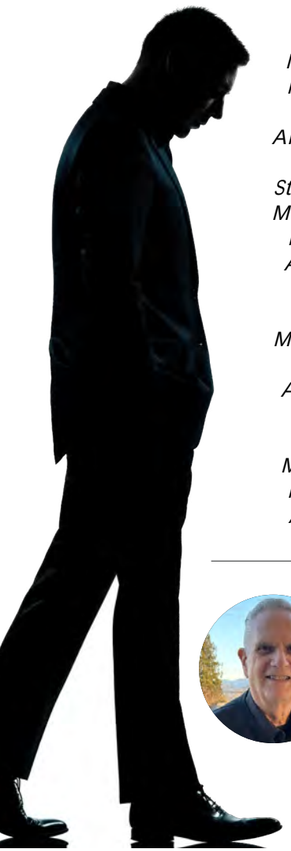
Whichever view a believer holds on 1 Corinthians, Paul's guardrails still stand. Not everyone has this gift (12:30), and no gift proves spiritual maturity. The Corinthians lacked no gift and were still immature (1:7; 3:1). Love outranks every gift (13:1). Five words that others can understand are worth more than ten thousand in a tongue (14:19). In public worship, a tongue must be interpreted, and everything must be done decently and in order (14:27–28, 40).

Let's remember most of all, the gift was never about the speaker. At Pentecost, the Spirit put "the mighty works of God" into the languages of the nations. That is still the Spirit's aim: Christ exalted, the church built up, and the gospel reaching every tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9). Whatever gifts God has given us, we use them the same way, to make Christ known and to serve His people.



Majesty

By Jim Griffiths



Majesty. Honor. Goodness.
Man strives for meaning —
Looks to see pure night
And feels the darkness inside.

Strength. Courage. Boldness.
Man searches for the ideal —
Feels the frozen white day
And senses the cold inside.

Passion. Love. Comfort.
Man longs for a difference —
Senses want all around
And knows the ache inside.

Peace. Faith. Hope.
Man yearns for better life —
Knows despair rules hearts
And trusts the quiet inside.

Jim Griffiths *served in the Canadian Navy and later earned his degree in abnormal Psychology. He spent decades serving in missions that reached underprivileged youth and those in trouble with the law, and taught wilderness survival to airline pilots. Before retirement, he worked as a By-law Enforcement Officer. Jim and his wife, Ann, have been active at MLC for 22 years.*

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Denise's thoughts on:

WINTER'S MAIDEN

By Morgan L. Busse



When looking at the plethora of books on my TBR pile, I often try to find something to review that is a bit more diverse than my go-to genres. With that in mind, let's talk about fantasy. Although it's not everyone's cup of tea, I love a well-written fantasy book and imagine some of you do too.

Recently, I lamented that good Christian fantasy titles are few and far between. I know there are the classics, but I wanted something new. It was then that a friend raved about *Winter's Maiden*, Book 1 of The Nordic Wars Trilogy. She said that "Morgan L Busse is the master of Christian fantasy for this generation." Since I was familiar with the author's name, I thought I'd at least try a few chapters. Well, let me tell you, she was NOT wrong. I had a difficult time putting the book down and, on a few nights, stayed awake later than my schedule allowed.



Technically, the Nordic Wars Trilogy is classed as young adult fiction, but regardless of age, it is a compelling read that grips you from the very first pages: the storylines, characters, and settings all have amazing depth. Morgan is certainly an expert at weaving gripping tales with elements of faith that stay with you even once you've closed the book.

We first meet Brighid in the wastelands of Nordica. A clanless infant left motherless, she's cared for by the midwife who raises her to adulthood. When she's thrust into the Nordic Wars, she soon becomes one of their fiercest fighters and joins the war against the south. The author expertly develops her unique gift and explores a world full of themes such as belonging (or lack thereof), forgiveness, prejudice, survival, family, and pain. The author explores each one in a raw and riveting way.

Kaeden enters a bit later in the story, but the mystery surrounding his gift and the life as he travels to see his friend and mentor Mathias is just as gripping. His story is worth waiting for. It's here we learn even more about the Eldaren, a race that God (the Word) created to aid humanity with specific powers, although some have become arrogant and use those gifts for evil rather than good.

If you like fantasy, I invite you to share in this compelling piece of literature that keeps God at the centre. It's certainly worth it. I'm sure you, like myself, will want to read all three books in the trilogy. I know I plan to start *Winter's Chill* (Book 2), curled up with a latte any day now.



Review by ***Denise Ramsay.***
Denise is an avid reader with a busy family life. She serves on our MLC Women's Leadership Team and works as Book Manager at House of James.

BOOK REVIEW

Meet Our Coffee Team!



L to R: James & Ark Westeijn, Larry Sawatzky, Abby Dyck, Christal Peters, Leanne Svendsen

In recent weeks, you may have noticed smiling faces greeting you as they served coffee on Sunday mornings.

Previously, you had to get your own coffee, tea, or hot chocolate from a self-serve station, while our team worked behind the scenes to prepare those drinks for you ahead of time.

But that has changed. Our coffee volunteers are now taking on a more front-facing role and personally serving your drinks.

The goal of this café-style service is to help encourage hospitality, connection, and community within our church family. Serving you your beverage allows our volunteers to partner with the Host Team to welcome and connect with anyone who walks through our doors on a Sunday morning.

For newcomers, being served coffee provides an additional friendly face to talk to and connect with. For regular attendees, it's an invitation to conversation and community-building.

So, whether you're looking for a warm drink or a friendly hello, we hope you'll come by and connect with us. We look forward to serving you.



DON'T MISS THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!





Finding Rest & Renewal



By April Yamasaki

How can I rest when I have so much to do? Between family and church, friends and neighbours, community and world concerns. Why rest when the needs are great, and the workers are so few? Why rest when I've been called to serve? Besides, I love my work.

Does that sound familiar?

Whether at home or in the workplace, in the church and in our community—in all of those spaces—many of us are busy. There's always one more person to care for, one more notification on the phone, one more thing on the to-do list. Yet for a healthy rhythm of life, we also need to take care of ourselves. We need both work and rest.

In creation, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3), but rest was not only for the end of the week. At the end of the first day, God paused and saw that the light was good (Genesis 1:4). After God created the earth and the oceans, God again paused, surveyed the work, and said that it was good (Genesis 1:10). God paused and saw that the plants and trees were good (Genesis 1:12). God paused and saw that the creation of living creatures was good (Genesis 1:21, 25). At the end of the sixth day, God again paused, looked over everything and said that it was good (Genesis 1:31).

In creation, God demonstrated rest for us: a time to pause and take stock, a time to delight in what we see around us and acknowledge the goodness of life.

After delivering the people of Israel from slavery, God included rest as one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11)—not as a burdensome rule, but as a gift. As slaves, the people had no days off, no vacation, just relentless work. They laboured long and hard. But as free people, they were free to rest.

And so are we.

1. We are free to rest because God invites us to rest.
2. We are free to rest because rest is a gift from God.
3. We rest because Jesus modeled rest and urged His disciples to rest. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).
4. We rest because rest is vital for health. We need rest for body, mind, soul, and spirit to flourish. Without rest, we become weary, stressed out, or burned out.
5. We rest as an act of compassion for ourselves, and in compassion we extend rest to others.
6. Rest reminds us that we are human and limited. God is God. We are not. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).
7. Rest is an act of trust in God. Everything in life does not depend on us. God is sovereign. We are not.
8. In rest, we bear witness that life is not defined by production and consumption, by overwork and consumer goods.
9. In rest, we bear witness to the eternal rest that God promises us. "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

One year, in the midst of preparing for Christmas, I felt especially busy—too busy to rest, or so I thought. I still needed to write my annual Christmas letter, send out cards, buy a few more gifts to mail away, find readers for our Christmas Eve worship, plan the Christmas Day service, figure out what I was going to bring to the Christmas Day potluck, get ready for our family Christmas on Boxing Day. My to-do list kept getting longer instead of shorter.

"But why—why take on all of those things?" asked a still, small voice underneath all of my hectic preparation. Why not simply let them go? I thought of Jesus' invitation: "Come to me . . . and I will give you rest." I imagined myself releasing my life to God—not only for the Christmas season, but for the coming year—letting go of the things I clutched so tightly and allowing more room for God's Spirit to work.

I started practicing that Christmas—releasing my life to God and receiving rest. Instead of taking on more and more, I let some things go—not because they were bad, but because they were simply too much. Some things were taken up by others; some things simply faded away. Those things that needed to be done were completed in good time. As I practiced releasing again and again, I discovered again and again that God remained faithful and granted me good rest and renewal, and good energy for the tasks that were mine to do.



April Yamasaki *is an author, editor, pastor, and spiritual formation mentor. After 25 years as Lead Pastor of a Mennonite church, April Yamasaki now serves as Resident Author with Valley CrossWay Church in Abbotsford, and is editor of Rejoice! daily devotional magazine. Learn more at AprilYamasaki.com.*



Behold.

Seeing God's Lavish Love in Unexpected Places

By Ann Griffiths

We often associate lavishness with luxury, abundance, extravagant celebrations, or someone who gives generously and goes above and beyond. We rarely associate it with humble circumstances.

Yet that's exactly how God revealed His lavish love for us: a lowly stable, a vulnerable baby, a young woman, an ordinary couple. Not the extraordinary, but the ordinary. Not necessarily what we'd expect, but something entirely unexpected.

Many expected a Messiah who would come as a warrior king. Instead, God sent His Son as a baby. Jesus wasn't the magnificent and powerful king the people expected. Yet through these humble beginnings, God revealed the depth of His love for the world.

Jesus may not have come in the way people dreamed or anticipated, but He came. And the first to hear the extraordinary news weren't religious leaders or powerful rulers. They were shepherds, ordinary people going about their everyday work. He chose them to be the first to hear the extraordinary news.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people" (Luke 2:10 NKJV).

A host of angels proclaimed Christ's coming and declared, "Glory to God in the highest."



What an unexpected announcement for an unexpected audience.

Sadly, we too can fail to see what God is doing because we look for Him in the extraordinary. We miss His presence in the ordinary, the humble, and even in the difficult. We expect Him to meet our needs in a certain way, and discover that His ways don't always match our expectations.

God's love isn't confined to the boundaries we set, or limited to our expectations. And it isn't simply a reward for doing everything right. He lavishes His love on us because of who He is.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1 NIV).

Maybe that's part of what it means to behold: to look, but look again. To see beyond what's right in front of us and recognize the extraordinary love of God. Sometimes we need to open our eyes to see what He is doing here and now. At other times, we need to look back and recognize where His love carried us, even when we couldn't see it ourselves.

My friend Donna and I loved to say, "Expect the Unexpected." We held our plans lightly, knowing God might lead us in directions we hadn't anticipated. Our job was to trust Him. Trust that He knew the way. Trust that He held us safely in His hands. And trust that what lay ahead never surprised Him. The journey sometimes became hard, but that didn't change God's lavish love for us.

God's love isn't lavish only when life is good. It remains lavish even when life becomes hard. And that love remains steadfast because God is love. He is also not stingy with His love or His grace. As Paul writes in Ephesians 1:7–8, God has "lavished upon us" the riches of His grace.

As we approach Advent, may we slow down, look again, and behold the lavish love and grace of God in places we might otherwise miss. What might we see if we learn to look for His love not only where we expect it but also where we least expect to find it?



__Ann Griffiths__ is an award-winning author, speaker, writing coach, and editor with a passion for making an eternal difference. She leads Mill Lake Women's Ministries, serves as Editor of Branches, and is active in the community. Ann and her husband, Jim, have been part of the Mill Lake Church family for 22 years.

MLC CELEBRATIONS

IN NOVEMBER

BIRTHDAYS

Carolyn Murdoch - Nov 6
Sharon Gitaro - Nov 9
David Muquisha - Nov 10
Nola Satterblom - Nov 11
Pat Stare - Nov 13
Allan Duperron - Nov 15
Mike Davies - Nov 18
Dick Sather - Nov 24
Joshua Hwang - Nov 26
Evelyn Losier - Nov 29
Elaine Sarrazin - Nov 29
Makaila Rusu - Nov 30

ANNIVERSARIES

Richard & Deb Fehr - Nov 22, 1981



WEDDINGS

Congratulations to James & Ark Westejin on their marriage, October 9, 2026. May God bless you for many years to come!



AWARDS

Congratulations to our *Branches* Editor, Ann Griffiths, on being awarded Best Devotional at the 2026 National Word Awards, for her latest book, *God, I'm Broken: Finding Hope and Comfort in Your Grief Journey.*

2026 BIBLE READING PLAN — MONTH ELEVEN

We trust you're learning and growing as you read through the Bible in 2026. This M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan will enable you to read through the OT once and NT twice in the year.

1. ☐ 2 Kgs 14; 2 Tim 4; Hos 7; Ps 120–122
2. ☐ 2 Kgs 15; Ti 1; Hos 8; Ps 123–125
3. ☐ 2 Kgs 16; Ti 2; Hos 9; Ps 126–128
4. ☐ 2 Kgs 17; Ti 3; Hos 10; Ps 129–131
5. ☐ 2 Kgs 18; Phlm 1; Hos 11; Ps 132–134
6. ☐ 2 Kgs 19; Heb 1; Hos 12; Ps 135–136
7. ☐ 2 Kgs 20; Heb 2; Hos 13; Ps 137–138
8. ☐ 2 Kgs 21; Heb 3; Hos 14; Ps 139
9. ☐ 2 Kgs 22; Heb 4; Jl 1; Ps 140–141
10. ☐ 2 Kgs 23; Heb 5; Jl 2; Ps 142
11. ☐ 2 Kgs 24; Heb 6; Jl 3; Ps 143
12. ☐ 2 Kgs 25; Heb 7; Am 1; Ps 144
13. ☐ 1 Chr 1–2; Heb 8; Am 2; Ps 145
14. ☐ 1 Chr 3–4; Heb 9; Am 3; Ps 146–147
15. ☐ 1 Chr 5–6; Heb 10; Am 4; Ps 148–150
16. ☐ 1 Chr 7–8; Heb 11; Am 5; Lk 1:1–38
17. ☐ 1 Chr 9–10; Heb 12; Am 6; Lk 1:39–80
18. ☐ 1 Chr 11–12; Heb 13; Am 7; Lk 2
19. ☐ 1 Chr 13–14; Jas 1; Am 8; Lk 3
20. ☐ 1 Chr 15; Jas 2; Am 9; Lk 4
21. ☐ 1 Chr 16; Jas 3; Ob 1; Lk 5
22. ☐ 1 Chr 17; Jas 4; Jon 1; Lk 6
23. ☐ 1 Chr 18; Jas 5; Jon 2; Lk 7
24. ☐ 1 Chr 19–20; 1 Pt 1; Jon 3; Lk 8
25. ☐ 1 Chr 21; 1 Pt 2; Jon 4; Lk 9
26. ☐ 1 Chr 22; 1 Pt 3; Mi 1; Lk 10
27. ☐ 1 Chr 23; 1 Pt 4; Mi 2; Lk 11
28. ☐ 1 Chr 24–25; 1 Pt 5; Mi 3; Lk 12
29. ☐ 1 Chr 26–27; 2 Pt 1; Mi 4; Lk 13
30. ☐ 1 Chr 28; 2 Pt 2; Mi 5; Lk 14

PASTOR RANDY'S RECOMMENDED READING

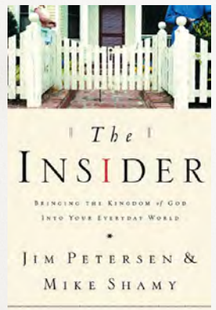
THE INSIDER: BRINGING THE KINGDOM OF GOD INTO YOUR EVERYDAY WORLD

By Jim Petersen & Mike Shamy

Evangelism is not just for the gifted few; it's for all of us. In The Insider, Navigator authors Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy give you the awareness and skills needed to communicate your faith and deepen your outreach to others.

The core idea is simple. You're already an insider. God placed you in your family, your workplace, your neighbourhood long before you became a believer, and that ordinary web of relationships is your mission field.

This book is practical, not theoretical. It names what actually stops us from evangelism—fear, busyness, feeling unqualified—and gives real, sustainable habits for having honest faith conversations without pressure or performance.



If you've ever wondered how to talk about your faith naturally, without feeling forced or fake, this book will meet you right where you are. I'd encourage every one of us to pick it up this month.

