

THE MORNING STAR

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My Journey with Jesus: A Symphony in Five Movements

BY JUDY PAULSEN

It began in my childhood home in northwest India. My father was a Canadian Anglican priest who, after serving as a padre during the horrors of the Second World War, went to minister to a leper colony and small Anglican parish in the foothills of the Himalayas. My mother was an Australian Methodist obstetrical nurse from Melbourne. They met in language school, and together they served in northwest India for 15 years before returning to the Diocese of Ottawa. Looking back, I realize I took the Christian practices and ethos of our home completely for granted. My mother read us Bible stories and played records that taught us Scripture through music. My father led us in prayers at meals, at bedtime, and when anyone was ill. We all went to church on Sundays.

After we moved “home” to Ottawa, it was my job to run my father’s breakfast sandwich across the rectory lawn to him, in between the first two of four Sunday services. I sang in the Junior Choir at one service, and worked in the nursery at the next. On Wednesdays I attended Junior Auxiliary (a sort of Anglican Brownies), and

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I was confirmed at age 12 (full disclosure—I thought of this as graduation from Sunday School and was quite excited about that). Over the years, though, I had no idea how much Scripture was being poured into me, and how prayer had become a natural part of my everyday life; much like the fish that doesn't recognize the water it swims in. Such was my early formation in Christ.

The second movement in my formation came during my teens, when a strange proposition was made to me; that God might want a response from me. This idea was presented by a couple of young Christians that the Diocese of Ottawa had hired to travel around and talk to the youth groups of the diocese. Brian and Cindy Allen were their names. Brian had long hair and a beard. Cindy wore beads and played the guitar. They lived in a Volkswagen camper van. (I'm not making this up. It was the early seventies.) And so it was that at a perfectly ordinary yet extraordinary youth group meeting I thanked God for making His presence known to me over the years and committed to living as a follower of Jesus. Although that commitment proved subsequently to be a little on the shaky side of things, I never forgot that night.

The third movement of my formation came as a result of ecumenical experiences that I seemed to fall into on a regular basis over the next three decades. Dating a Jesus-freak here, going on a teen missions trip there, attending a Roman Catholic Cursillo weekend here, enrolling kids in a Brethren Kids Club and a Christian Reformed school there. All the while attending very ordinary Anglican parishes, I was amazed by so much of it. The raucous yet oddly meditative singing of

Pentecostal choruses (who ever heard of singing the same bible verse ten times?), the reverence involved in a visit to The Blessed Sacrament (so glad I was in a group since I didn't have a clue what this entailed!), the speed with which seven-year-old Brethren kids recited the names of all 66 books of the Bible, and the determination of Dutch women putting together 300 apple pies for a school fundraiser. My view of the family of God was expanded beyond anything I had ever imagined.

The fourth movement began with a mystical experience. I'd be happy to tell you about it in person, but I find it hard to write about. In short, it entailed a call to ordained ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada; something that had never before crossed my mind. I had grown up in a rectory and had long ago determined I would never *marry* a priest. I had my career path all planned. I had completed a Master of Applied Science degree at McGill and was working in a job I loved. We had just built our dream home. I had three young children, for goodness' sake!

Yet, the necessary doors all flew open and I arrived at the imposing entryway of Wycliffe College. Scared. To. Death. What did I know about studying theology? I was a science major, for heaven's sake! But those were three wonderful years, in which I was further deeply formed as a follower of Jesus. I still remember the day when, while reading Barth, I realized how very small and limited my view of God had been. The majesty, power, mystery, and expansive grace of God literally exploded upon me. It was this theology that I leaned into and which sustained me during the subsequent 15 years of parish ministry.

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Finally, the fifth movement of my formation in Christ. Of course it's the stage of life I'm now in; serving as an Anglican priest, a Professor of Evangelism, and as Director of the Institute of Evangelism. I learn so much and am being so formed by the churches I work with, the students I teach, and the research I read or conduct. Most importantly though, I continue to be formed by the disciplines of prayer, the study of Scripture, and corporate worship. Lately I've been discovering how crucial these are, particularly in the storms of life. Although God can seem to have disappeared entirely, I've learned that He is strangely found in the very heart of the darkness. So here I am today, learning about trust.

It seems right and good to thank God from the depths of my being. For of course it's God who has formed me throughout each of these five movements. Sometimes I wonder why He loves me as much as He does; so much that He refuses to ever let me remain stuck. But then that's who He is and part of what He is up to. There is a symphony He is creating in and through all of our lives, at which I am amazed, and for which I am most joyfully grateful.

ABOUT

Judy Paulsen is Professor of Evangelism and Director of the Institute of Evangelism

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Events & Announcements

12TH ANNUAL AGAPÉ SERVICE FOR THE TST COMMUNITY

Wednesday, Oct 2, 1:30—3:00 p.m. at Knox College Chapel, 59 St. George Street, Toronto

This is an annual worship gathering to which all members of the Toronto School of Theology community are invited: students, faculty, and staff. This year, Knox College will host the event in the Knox College Chapel at 1:30 p.m. with reception and refreshments to follow. The theme of the service is “The Power of Love,” based on 1 Cor. 12:31-13:13, Psalm 133, and John 17:20-23.

THE STORY OF RADIO MIND: A MISSIONARY’S JOURNEY ON INDIGENOUS LAND

Wednesday, Oct 16, 3:00—4:30 p.m. at Wycliffe College, Reading Room

The Founders' Day Memorial lecture honours the vision and commitment of the original founders of Wycliffe College through an annual lecture whose subject matter relates in some way to the history of the College and its role in the Church. This year the lecture will feature Professor Pamela Klassen (Department for the Study of Religion U of T), who will speak about her new book, *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indigenous Land* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), which tells the story of Frederick Herbert DuVernet, 1860-1924, a Wycliffe graduate (Class of 1880).

It is a free, public event. Anyone is welcome to attend.

More Events & Announcements

FAITH AND ART—A PRELUDE TO NUIT BLANCHE

Saturday, Oct 5, 7:00—9:00 p.m. at Wycliffe College

Join Wycliffe College and Imago for an evening celebrating faith and art. Come hear Christian artists as they discuss the role of art as it intersects culture, faith and imagination. We hope people will be enriched by the discussion before heading out for Nuit Blanche.

Our panel speakers will be 1) Ian Cuson, Composer, Arts and Worship minister from Grace Church Toronto, 2) Maria Gabankova, visual artist and former instructor at OCAD, 3) James Tughan, visual artist, former Director of Flagship Gallery Hamilton, 4) Arthur Wachnik, actor, Director from Church on the Queensway. The night's discussion will be moderated by John Franklin, Executive Director of Imago, a national initiative in support of Christians in the arts in Canada. Hope to see you there!



FAITH AND ART

A Prelude to Nuit Blanche



LUNCH & LEARN: THESIS FAQs WITH TOM POWER

Thursday, Oct 10, 1:00—2:00 p.m. in the West Lecture Room, Wycliffe College

This session would be of benefit for anyone in their final year looking to complete a thesis/summative exercise in the MDiv or MTS programs.

Tom Power (Graduate Studies Coordinator, Adjunct Professor of Church History, Theological Librarian) will go over the process and answer any questions that you might have.

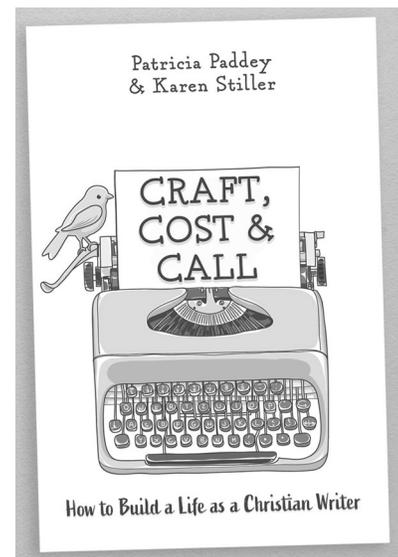
Bring your lunch and join us in the West Lecture Room!

You're invited to the *Craft, Cost & Call: How to Build a Life as a Christian Writer* book launch!

Saturday, Nov 23, 7:00—9:00 p.m. at Wycliffe College in the Reading Room.

Co-authored by Patricia Paddey, Director of Communications at Wycliffe, and Karen Stiller, Senior Editor of Faith Today Magazine, this inspiring and immensely readable book offers help to people of faith who want to write well and be published. For writers hoping to launch a career or simply yearning to grow in their craft, this guidebook provides a clear path forward filled with the hard-won wisdom of long-time and widely-published Christian writers. (*Learn more at: <https://www.craftcostcall.com>*)

This is your chance to meet the authors and hear from guest writers who will share about their own writing lives. Expect an inspiring evening that will shine the light on writing as a vocation, a passion, and just plain fun. There will be delicious pie. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/craft-cost-call-book-launch-tickets-73358789113>



WYCLIFFE MERCHANDISE

This week's discount: Wycliffe Water Bottles \$15 Purchase at Front Desk!