

Believing in Christmas

By Constance Scrafield

I really love the Nativity scene. I draw it; describe it in my poetry; when Colin and I made pictures out of wood, where I created the figures and he assembled the pictures, there were lots of versions of the Nativity.

Up until recently, I was caring for my own equines and to go to the barn on Christmas Day was wonderful. The past sang to me and my mind felt the time of the birth of a very special baby boy.

It was so strong, it was all but visible. There was a softness to the air where the sounds of the animals moving, breathing, eating took on new notes. Being in a barn was rich with 'almost' memories, if not of the day itself a couple of thousand years ago, certainly the many Christmases in my own life of dreaming about it.

Taking a pause while doing the chores, I listened to the music memories of Christmas that are as much a part of our lexicon as our first language.

Church is not really a part of my life anymore. Sunday school, as a child; a brief flirtation with it since returning to Canada. Patricia went to Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School. We have both studied the philosophers and much about religions and cultures around the world. Yet, in churches of any denomination, there was always, for me, the feeling that too much of importance was being missed, as though the whole reason for 'church' had somehow been lost.

It certainly seems that people are leaving churches in large numbers and there could be lots of reasons for this that have not been admitted. This is a time of disenchantment, which is generally hated, as the most popular entertainment attests: fantasy films and television series; period movies and series; all kinds of escapism wherein magic plays a strong role and attractiveness.

People declare, while detesting it, how right the current world philosophies are with their cynicism and pseudo-science; our crazy preoccupation with money 'wow' and our insane obsession with violence, not to mention our insanely obsessive and creepy involvement with each other online.

I admire the changes some churches are making to become involved with the wider congregation, one might say: those in need, following the example of the Good Friends Fellowship Church, which uses the old cinema on Broadway and has fed people for free, offering comfort and 'fellowship' as the name implies, since it opened.

Now, many churches are taking up this mantle, opening the doors for clothing sales, meals, soup kitchen on Mondays (that I know of 'this one is in Tottenham): \$3 for soup and a bun, to collect funds for the local women's shelter.

Further than all this comes the offered giving over the sanctuary for concerts of quality; opening offices for counselling; reaching out to the everybody of society, which can be those with money, as well as those without. All well and good, very much the path that Jesus set out, caring for one another (and the planet but we are still struggling with that, in spite of terrifying scientific warnings 'still building pipelines).

Yet and yet. In a haste to modernize, they seem to be making the same mistake the whole world is making: minimizing magic; denying miracles.

As humans, our natural need looks to a higher being, self, an extra terrestrial parent, as it were, on whom to lean and appeal, to whom to humble ourselves and clean our psyches and, most importantly, be truly understood and, even, forgiven.

It is essential, this unseen but felt being in our existence 'this is an entity quite outside our human fellows who will ever bring their agendas to every exchange 'no dodging that!

The purity of communicating on any level with an outside force that, indeed, does influence our lives, motivation and emotional well being, cannot be compared to any other kind of thinking. The problem is always semantics. What to call it; how to explain what is going in the rapport that we have with it. The pigeon holes of giving it names and wrapping our imagined rules around it 'those are the problems, not the existence of the entity itself.

So much of our mythology, if you like, is impossible to confirm or deny. A miracle birth? Other happenings have been as strange. The Son of God? A problem of semantics. The struggle to raise it up or tear it down is unnecessary.

What really matters is how it feels. We were out carolling on a couple of residential streets in Toronto late last week and people came to their doors, full of smiles and good will.

Christmases 'all the celebrations of light at this time of year 'feel good. We live in very sour times.

Don't be afraid to believe in miracles 'it's Christmas.