

# Reflections

January 2023

## Inside this issue:

Life's Valentines	2
Hillview Helping Out	4
All About White Cross	5
Hillview in 2023	6

## Special points of interest:

- Engagement rings - Page 2
- Calvin Philosophy - Page 3
- Peanuts insights - Page 4
- The importance of four inch cloth - Page 5
- Operation Secret Sisters - Page 6

## Jean Valjean and Destiny

Ah, the march of time. We begin a new year, another year. To quote Jean Valjean, "One day more; another day, another destiny." Destiny. There's a fun word. As soon as I hear it I want to break out my inner Paul Anka: and robustly attempt to sing "You are my destiny....". The question arises - what is destiny and what are the theological implications?

In Hebrew, the term for destiny most commonly refers to casting lots to determine the will of God. Whatever or however the lot fell was deemed to be one's destiny or the will of God. This practice or method is seen in the allotment of land in Palestine, discerning that Jonah

was the reason for the problems experienced on the voyage to Tarshish, and indeed it was even used in finding the replacement disciple for Judas Iscariot. And, of course, destiny is the focus of one of the most famous debates in Christianity over the last 500 years: predestination. In the Greek it's *proordizo*. It means "to pre-determine, decide beforehand, or in the New Testament, of God decreeing from eternity, to foreordain, appoint beforehand." (1)

We like to make plans and resolutions, we love to imagine we are in control. At the same time, we are pleased to declare that God has a

(Continued on page 3)

By Pastor Norm



Jean Valjean is protagonist of Victor Hugo's 1862 novel *Les Misérables*. The story depicts the character's struggle to lead a normal life and redeem himself after serving a 19-year-long prison sentence for stealing bread to feed his sister's starving children and attempting to escape from prison. Source: Wikipedia

## The Power of Rings

When people get engaged, it's tradition for the bride-to-be to wear a diamond ring on her left ring finger, and Krista and I are traditionalists at heart. The jewelry is special, but the ring that I put on Krista's finger has extra special meaning to us.

After my wife, Becky died of a series of strokes on June

27th, 2021, I put her engagement ring, wedding ring and our anniversary band onto my desk with her glasses and hair clips. They were a constant, physical reminder of my wife, the love that we shared and the life we'd built together. My own ring I continued to wear for quite some time, whether out of habit, grief, denial, some sense of connection or perhaps a combination of all of

the above. However, God gives us a huge capacity to love, and in time I found Krista at Hillview. Perhaps the reader is familiar with our story about the church Christmas banquet and how we'd been invited for various lunches together by many of the Hillview crew. If not, you should ask us about it. As we dated and fell in love, we were both pretty up front about how our view of a suc-

By Neil Carlberg

## The Power of Rings

(Continued from page 1)

Successful relationship would involve being married, and we weren't afraid to talk about that kind of commitment, even early on. In the back of my head, I

**"... but both Krista and I felt that it would be weird to ..."**

knew I had these diamond rings, but both Krista and I felt that it would be weird to give those rings to her. They weren't a family heirloom, they were my rings that represented my first marriage.

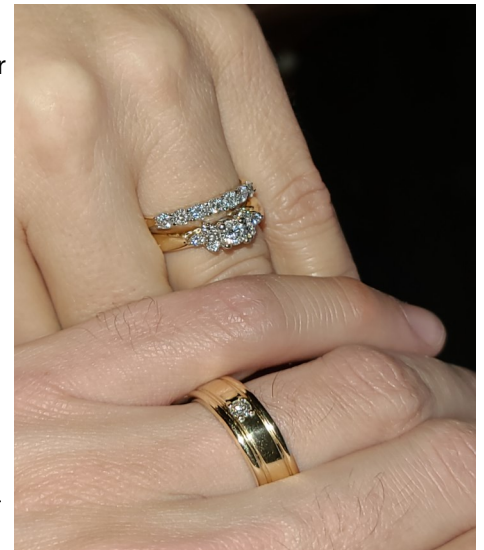
Krista has always been very appreciative of Becky. She's often told me that she's so happy to be benefiting from all the hard work that Becky did to turn me into the man that I am today. Indeed, it was Becky's example that made me seek out God in the first place and why I ended up at Hillview. Sometimes, when God calls us to Him, he uses the voices of our loved ones. So perhaps it wasn't surprising that it was Krista that first came upon the idea of taking Becky's rings, as well as mine, and using the gold and diamonds from them to make three brand new rings representing our love and commitment, but still honouring Becky's impact on my life. I immediately fell in love with the symbolism of it, of using the symbol of my first marriage to make something new to symbolize my second mar-

riage, these rings are all about love. With some advice from Becky's mother, who had owned a jewelry store, we were able to find a company who would do the work of recasting the gold into a new form and setting the diamonds into the new rings. Becky's parents are a huge part of my life, and their advice and blessing in this matter was very important to us. And they were so supportive, having been praying for me to find renewed love and happiness. God is good.

The connection between the past and the future is important to me. I'm a man who reads all kinds of history, and keeping a piece of my history on my finger, and on that of my beautiful bride, is very special to me.

I hope that all of us remember the great things in our lives as we move forward.

*Neil is on the Audio/Visual Committee, a keen soundman and is the very important go-to person for any historical information required at the men's Bible study. ed*



## Life's Valentines

*Meryl Dunsmore's secret admirer has sent her a Valentine each year since 1928, when the Toronto woman was 16.*

*For 50 years, Mrs. Dunsmore has received the cards, each with a brief declaration of love, but no name. Through the Depression, two marriages, a world war and six changes of address, the cards have kept coming, airmailed from such exotic places as Thailand, Barcelona, Johannesburg, Tokyo, Germany and the Caribbean. The messages of love have come in a dozen different languages.*

*Mrs. Dunsmore has no idea who is sending them. Her husband, who is equally mystified, says he's just as thrilled as she is.*

*Love is always a balm and always welcome. It can ease wounds, heal slights, resolve arguments. But it isn't always easy. It means opening ourselves to others-- each day there are opportunities.*

*Are we willing to love?*

*"Let all we do be done in love." (1 Corinthians 16:14)*

Source: Catoir, John "What a Day This can Be!" 1965

## Jean Valjean and Destiny

(Continued from page 1)

plan and the power to make His plan come together. And don't we love seeing a plan come together? So how do we reconcile the notion that we control our destiny and that God, sovereign and true, has all things sorted? Whose will wins? The answer should be obvious, but there are factors which make the water murky. John Wesley suggested that theology is the product of four factors: Scripture, experience, tradition, and reason. Experience and reason inform us that we are capable and comfortable making decisions that affect our future. Tradition is subjective. Scripture isn't. Scripture tells us that **"even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he pre-**

**destined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," (Eph. 1.4-5 ESV).** There's no getting around that; not without twisting the Word of God.

So do we make plans for 2023 or passively wait for God to make things happen? What is the solution to this theological divide? I suggest the solution is prayer. Prayer for wisdom to discern what it is that God would have us do to bring glory to His name. Prayer for willing hearts and willing hands to do that which God has called us to do. And prayer for hearts that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for hearts filled with compassion and love, for hearts that desire that all might come to experience the light and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sharing the Gospel needs to be among any church's highest priorities because all humanity shares a common destiny: **"... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** (Phil. 2.10-11 ESV). There's no "if" in those verses. The only question is "when?" That's our destiny.... period.

Footnote 1 - <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4309/esv/mgmt/0-1/>



**"So do we make plans for 2023 or passively wait for God to make things ..."**



## Hillview Helping Out

By Rick deLeeuw



What a privilege it is to be able to make a difference by spreading a little joy to some families. During the past few years we have partnered with the Hillview School to assist families who needed a little help. You cannot imagine the excitement when we received news that the Woodvale Community League wanted to participate in our White Christmas ministry. White Christmas is the moniker given to a program initiated by Hillview Baptist Church to provide tangible and direct assistance to people living in the surrounding Community. It was primarily designed to provide food. Since 2020 Woodvale Community League joined

with us and with their financial contribution we were able to help even more families.

Since the onset of the pandemic, instead of handing out the traditional food hampers we have provided Walmart gift cards. This change was necessary because Alberta Health Services had implemented restrictions on food handling and how hampers were to be distributed. This is our second year in distributing gift cards, and we are pleased to say this change has met with favorable responses. Families could decide on their purchases, focusing on dietary needs or any other health concerns.

decisions in choosing as to whether to pay their monthly bills or put food on the table. With escalating food prices, and job insecurity the need will always exist. However, it is with grateful hearts that we are so thankful to everyone who have contributed so generously throughout the year towards our White Christmas Ministry. Without the continued financial support this ministry would not be possible.

We are both excited and challenged as we are seeing God at work in opening doors and providing opportunities to help our neighbours. A prime example is our involvement with the Edmonton Food Bank and our Coffee Fellowship ministry that occurs on the church parking lot every Monday morning (if the weather cooperates). Our goal is to build relationships. It allows neighbors to meet their neighbors, and also provides an opportunity to inform people of what services are available within their own community.

As we welcome in the New Year our goal is working together with our partners in making our neighborhood safe and creating a healthy environment for raising children. Please pray for unity within our community and our many volunteers.

**We are unique, “We are a church on a hill” let the light shine!**

**“Every year we are becoming more and more aware ...**



Every year we are becoming more and more aware at the steady growth of families that are in such desperate need and are reaching out for some kind of help. It is heart wrenching when we hear stories about families struggling to make

## All About White Cross

You have probably seen announcements about White Cross in the bulletin and some ask what it is. While our "wiser" generation in the church is probably familiar with this ministry, I want to highlight it here for the younger generation so we can all be involved and pray intelligently for this understated, but vital ministry.

### ◆ Brief History

White Cross grew out of the work of the Red Cross. In 1919 the American Baptist women inaugurated the White Cross program as primarily a humanitarian ministry. Three years later the North American Baptist (NAB) Conference, through the Ladies Mission Societies, joined this effort. After World War II, the NAB White Cross program was involved in several North American ventures as well as in providing medical supplies for the medical clinics in Cameroon. The focus on the medical work in Cameroon expanded significantly and is now one of the major activities of White Cross. Currently, White Cross partners with the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), As of 2016 the Health Services arm of the CBC is operating six mission hospitals and almost 80 health centers and rural clinics. In the past couple of years, more than a million patients have been served annually.

### ◆ Items Collected

A variety of items are collected by churches, including medical equipment and supplies, dental equipment, hospital linens, used eyeglasses, and sunglasses. These are used in the health centres of the Cameroon Baptist Convention. Bibles, books and devotional materials are also distributed to patients in the hospitals. Bedroom and bathroom linens are collected for the guest houses on the mission compounds. Baby layettes are sewn for each baby born in the hospitals. Used sheets are cut into four inch squares and are useful for many things in the medical centres. Used sheets are also cut into three inch strip bandages. Financial donations are received to help with shipping costs.

### ◆ Volunteers

The materials are gathered by local churches and shipped to Taylor Seminary here in Edmonton. A team of volunteers sort and repack the contributions into boxes. The boxes are carefully weighed, strapped, and labeled, ready for shipping to their final destination. When there are enough items, a shipping container is rented and loaded full of these donations. Some of the people from Hillview who have helped are Al & Liz Zuch, Lyla Living, Russ & Donald Nelson, and Marcy Hufnagel. The most recent container

loaded in Edmonton is currently on its way to Cameroon, Africa.

### ◆ Current Projects

At the moment, the hospitals in Cameroon are in dire need of four inch fabric squares. Some of us have been meeting over the past couple of months to cut squares. We have received many donations of sheets that are waiting to be cut. In the new year we will also begin cutting the strips for rolled bandages. We need volunteers to help. The used sheets are sorted and checked, sometimes washed, then cut into strips and then squares. We use cutting wheels and mats for the cutting. Barb Hubscher has been cutting hundreds of squares and Gloria Swain counts and ties them into bundles.

### ◆ Can I help?

Yes, you can! All is needed is a helping hand, and as a reward you get to enjoy some warm fellowship with other women for an hour or two.

By: Marcy Hufnagel



Baby layette with jacket, diaper and blanket



4 inch cloth squares in bundles

**The next White Cross get-together will be on January 10 at 9:30 in the church's lower level. All are welcome. For more information please contact Marcy at 597-987-2004 or [hufnagelmm@gmail.com](mailto:hufnagelmm@gmail.com)**

## Hillview Baptist Church

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***Miranda Snook, co-leader of the evening women's Bible study, is organizing a Secret Sisters activity for the women of Hillview Baptist Church. This is a fun way to increase connections and encouragement amongst the ladies in the church. The program will run from February until May, at which time we will gather together for a final "reveal."***

***For more information and to get a sign-up form:***

- ◆ ***please come to our Ladies' Fellowship night on January 4th,***
- ◆ ***or talk/text to Miranda (780-299-9511).***

***Return your form to Miranda by Sunday, January 22nd. Even if you do NOT attend the women's Bible study, you can participate and we really want you to. The more the merrier and this is the time of the year when merry is good.***

## Hillview in 2023

Happy New Year to each and all! It's now 2023 and is perhaps a good time to articulate some (as they say in industry) "Big Hairy Audacious Goals" for this calendar year.

As many are aware, we have two new initiatives in the works for increasing our engagement in the community. One is a French language pre-school that will begin to operate Monday-Friday out of our main floor nursery space. Another is a raised bed community garden that will be set up on our west grassy area in the spring. There is growing conviction in the church that as Christians, we ought to "seek the pros-

perity of the city" to which God has sent us. By integrating ourselves into the fabric of the community, we make opportunities to bless others. Then, "they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven." Please pray that via these initiatives and others, God may be honoured and that we would all be "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give a reason for the hope that [we] have."

Internally, we are also eyeing the last phase of sanctuary renovations. The wood-veneer paneling on the platform wall is worn and torn in various locations, and there has been

an intention to increase the size of the opening around the baptismal. Starting in January, we will begin to discuss a plan for seeing this project to a close.

Additionally, we will be doing a periodic review of the constitution to see if there are any sections that need revision or rewording. As the church grows and develops, new situations arise which are not always practically interpreted from founding documents. It is therefore an important responsibility to maintain the clarity and currency of our constitution. Any proposed amendments will be presented at this year's AGM. Please

**By Jonathan Snook**

pray for foresight and discernment as we engage in this process.

Finally, we hope to continue exploring ways for discipleship to occur within the church. It is Christ's commission that we should make disciples of all nations. God willing, may we engage in greater faith, greater learning, greater service and greater fellowship this year!

*Jonathan Snook is the Church Moderator, which means he not all powerful, just chairs Leadership and church meetings. he is somewhat like a CEO or mayor. He is also on two worship teams and a husband to Miranda and father of two delightful children. Obviously a very busy guy. ed*