

KEYNOTES

September 2021



The Quarterly Newsletter of St. Peter's Church, Lithgow

Our New Church Entrance

When a tree blew down on our church on April 30, we were incredibly lucky: It did not hit the main nave—except for one small puncture in the roof, and one large branch came down to rest an uncomfortably



Lois Mander

Early July

close two feet from the entire west facade of stained glass windows. In addition, that same branch terminated with its end literally bent up against the window of the perpendicular wall of the sacristy. Not a single stained glass window was broken or even cracked. In my book that's Divine Providence!

What we were left with was still a project, however: The entry vestibule had been crushed, and the porch destroyed. The vestibule had been sinking slowly for decades, and there was never a proper foundation underneath it; instead, there was an occasional log holding up the structure. So when the tree came down, the entire vestibule was pulled away from the main church building and was pushed further down into the earth. In a bit of cosmic kismet, your senior warden—not even a month into her term—just happens to be an architect. (I can see Will Morlock smiling now at his timely escape!)

We drew up the plans, with the ultimate goal of as faithful a restoration as possible with modern codes. We planned the restoration so that many of

the original existing features could be re-used, and all new materials were chosen for their longevity and/or aesthetic qualities. The choice of decking was particularly critical, since over the years we have had constant problems with the deck rotting—even though the boards were mahogany. We specified Ipe wood from South America, a very dense material which has an outdoor life of 50 years—appropriate for a building we want to live forever! The current painted wood railings are temporary. The finished railings will be painted metal, designed to meet code constraints but designed to look as light and innocuous as possible.

Our church building, built in 1882, is not legally a “listed” historic structure, but we treat it as if it were. The most difficult part of our job was to find a contractor who could completely respect the church and who actually cared about and

understood the importance of every single craftsman detail. Our Lord did not create all contractors equal in this regard! In addition, we wanted the job done in a timely manner. We were lucky enough to be introduced to local Halton Construction, who had impressive restoration experience, and showed that



Anne Gillis

*The almost-finished product
(missing only the railings)*

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From the Vicar's Desk



How to think about UFOs

With everything else that's been going on, this extraordinary story may not have caught your attention. However, since the New York Times broke it in 2017, it refuses to go away.¹ In early July the Pentagon released a much anticipated, if inconclusive report. I'll leave it to you to read about and ponder the origins of these "recorded unusual movement patterns and flight characteristics" that potentially demonstrate "advanced, as-of-yet unknown technological capabilities...without discernible means of propulsion."²

Instead, I want to give you a theistic way of thinking about this topic in case it turns out to actually matter one day. If you ever meet an alien, there are only three ways to go about it: univocally, equivocally, or analogically.

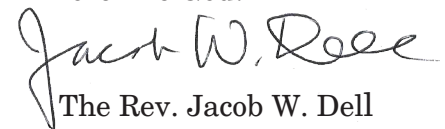
If you meet him univocally, then you know you're in the same universe as he is. Up is up, down is down, and concepts like flight, speed, and velocity mean motion through space, the rate of that motion, and the rate of change in position. You both speak with one and the same voice, univocally. He might try to take over your planet, though.

But if you meet an equivocal alien, he might try to run away. That's because flight can also mean the act of escaping. In an equivocal encounter, the same things can have equally different meanings. Perhaps that is why these UFOs perplex us. We think we are recording their "movement" and "flight" but maybe

that's not what they're doing at all. After all, we both have an equal say (equivocal) in what things mean. That also means that no communication or understanding between us will ever be possible.

If you meet an analogical alien, then both he and you will recognize that you share the same likeness with Someone else, even if that's all you share. That Someone is, of course, God. Since God speaks with one voice (univocally) in all times and in all places, and His word always and everywhere means what it says, there is hope you and the alien will be able to reason together, act together, and maybe even worship together. Of course, if you're the Christian in this encounter, it will be up to you to bring him to church.

Keep this rubric handy in case you ever see a UFO. Better yet, use it to think through how you think about God. If univocally, is it your voice or His that is speaking? If equivocally, how can you communicate with Him at all, or He with you? If analogically (which is the Christian way) what are you doing to think more like God?


The Rev. Jacob W. Dell

¹See: Ralph Blumenthal, "On the Trail of a Secret PENTAGON U.F.O. PROGRAM," The New York Times (The New York Times, December 18, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/18/insider/secret-pentagon-ufo-program.html>.

²See: Matt Stieb and Chas Danner, "Pentagon Releases UFO Report: Here's What We Know," *Intelligencer* (Intelligencer, July 5, 2021), <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/pentagon-ufo-report-what-we-know.html>.

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they would treat this small but detail-oriented rebuilding job with as much care and attention as a larger job. Jacob Angell project managed for his boss Kevin Halton, and did not disappoint. They were able to take the original vestibule apart, pour all new foundation piers, and rebuild using both existing key elements and by fabricating near perfect re-

productions of the destroyed material where necessary. They did an excellent job, and hopefully you'll be hard pressed to discern the old from the new.

We are lucky to have had Halton do the rebuilding, and thank you everyone for your patience navigating the awkward sacristy entrance as we got this job done.

Julie Turino, Sr. Warden

A Note on a Solar Future

I have been reading *The Uninhabitable Earth, Life After Warming*, by David Wallace-Wells, a journalist who made a study of the scientific literature on the likely effects of global warming. He comes up with a decisively pessimistic conclusion; h'e posits continuous calamity.

He gives us (the human race) a 50 percent survival rating. That's not very encouraging, even to an optimist. We are well along on the extinction graph: numerous species are gone and many are on steep declines. The optimists bank on our doing something in a timely manner. Timely means now. Not some fuzzy date in the future as posited by elected officials the world over. None of them want to take credit for putting their economies into a tail-spin. But now is necessary for us to maintain that 50 percent chance of surviving. Our fossil fuel consumption has to nose-dive and fall off the charts. That can happen if we consumers stop consuming petroleum in its many forms, but mainly as burning fuel.

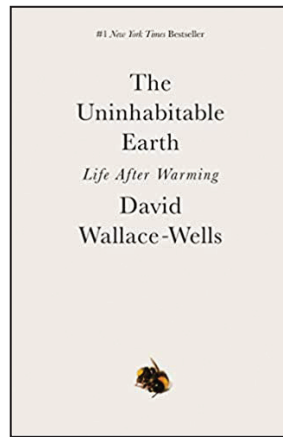
It's pretty easy. I don't like bragging, but we have taken the first few steps. Solar panels on our

barn roof produce more energy than we consume. Solar energy now powers one of our cars, and soon will power two. If cars are powered by solar energy, and our trucks and buses do, too, then we will make a huge difference. It's all possible and easy and not so expensive. The next step is to heat our buildings with solar, heat pumps or thermal. Again, these are now well within the range of possible. Several companies are making and marketing electric buses and trucks. They charge at night and run all day.

The roofs of our church and the adjoining buildings, if not in the shade, can host solar panels. We might consider using renewable sources for heating and cooling. And you might, too. If our parish all strove to go solar, we could make a real difference. Calamity might be avoided if we all pitched in. We should be acting on the principle that we are all actors and that we act to help others.

This edit is short. So is our time to act responsibly.

Stephen Kaye



Hymn-Sing & Barbecue - June 20



*Will Morlock
at the barbecue*



*Heidi Vanderlee serves
as page turner for Nancy,
while Jake Dell looks on.*

“The Consolation of M”

by The Rev. Jake Dell

[AUTHOR’S NOTE: Fathers and sons often have their disagreements. For as long as I can remember, my Dad and I argued about the nature of things. He followed the path of the English Romantics in poetry and prose, while I took up John Calvin and the Protestant Reformation. (He once found me up late at night, reading the Institutes of the Christian Religion under the covers.) Sometimes, these world views collided, and a good deal of heat and passion ensued.

My Dad has always written, first beatnik poetry chapbooks in Greenwich Village in the early 1960s, then in later years, his takes on philosophy, science, eastern mysticism, and poetry. Below is a review I wrote of his latest (and perhaps last) book. The argument between us remains, but the heat has cooled. In its place now is a mutual respect to complement the love that was always there.]

Home Alone in the Multiverse

William C. Dell (2019)

Kindle edition

Boethius had his philosophy, Dell has his M.

M is infinitely accumulating knowledge. Behind M is emptiness.

In *Home Alone in the Multiverse*, Dell returns to his favorite characters and tropes: Jack Rabbit and Grey Squirrel, bluebirds and baseball, The Lady, The Old Professor, Voice, rocks, margaritas, and quantum theory. Reading *Home Alone* you’d be forgiven for thinking that Dell has said all this before (or, as Voice might say, “You again?”) but therein is Dell’s point: he hasn’t, at least not *this* time or in *this* way. It’s never the same book twice, especially when Dell is the author.

Dell’s thesis is that we are all bubbles in the cosmic foam: singular universes (each and every one of us!) in the multiverse. Fascinated from early boyhood by all that might be possible, Dell describes this as “confronting the unimaginable.” Once as a young boy, drifting off to sleep, Dell found himself “surrounded in a dark, boundless field by bubbling pin pricks of light crackling through me.” *Home Alone* is a paean to the potential of all things, most especially to the potential of nothing.

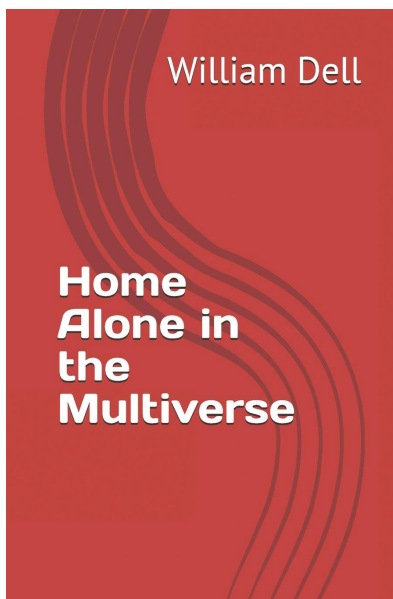
Potential goes by different names throughout the Dell oeuvre: The Open (pure potential), emptiness (anticipated potential), information (potential in motion), The Watcher (potential observed). In his later works, Dell consolidates them

into, and arranges them as, aspects of M, a category he borrows from String Theory.

Therein lies the fault, if one must find one, in Dell’s method. While insisting that each one of us makes all that there is (laws, symbols, trees, gods, grammar, and God) in our particular universe, Dell is forced to rely on other people’s categories. Hence his borrowing (appropriation?) of grammars belonging to String Theory, Vedic literature, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Why not invent his own categories? I suspect that’s what Dell has been doing, by introducing us to his bluebirds and margaritas (and now, in *Home Alone*, beer bottles). Dell knows he can only take us so far before he would have nothing to say, which, in the best possible way, he doesn’t! His book has somehow ended up in the reader’s universe

for the reader to make of it what he will. Dell doesn’t say how that will turn out. He can’t.

Dell’s philosophy is pre-Socratic, his cosmic foam is the flux of Heraclitus, his M the unchanging existence of Parmenides. Calvinists will rage against this worldview, even as Dell himself dispatches Calvin’s God (only to summon Him back). Dell opines, “I’ve read, or read about, more-or-less everything. Nothing original — just recurring intellectual propositions and theories from this planet.” But one has to wonder: has Dell adequately considered the proposition of divine



revelation, something truly not from this planet, or a nearby one, or even the multiverse? Surely Dell would have to admit that a message from Israel's God is possible, and being possible, then the multiverse, that relentless actualizer of potential, might — even must — receive it someday.

But that is to concede Dell his point. If the Calvinist desires a Calvinist universe, let him have one. Dell is content with his bluebirds. It's a big enough multiverse for everyone, and therein Dell finds his consolation. Information accumulates from nothing.

For Dell this is a wonderful adventure, perhaps on the order of a miracle.

Dell writes, "I am an old man — no time left to beat around the bush. Time to see things for what they are." In *Home Alone* the reader gets the sense that Dell is putting things in order, polishing some favorite gems for the last time. Latent in his writing is the hope that the information he has accumulated, the meaning of his life, can and will imprint on others, to make their universes better.

As his son I can tell you, it has.

Supply Ministry

Jake and Sasha Dell took a well earned holiday this summer and three of our brave parishioners filled in as "supply" preachers: T. Nolan, Cecelia Morris and David Parshall. On August 8 David preached on "wokeness" and John Reid was moved to write one of his delightful "ditties."

What Really Is Meant by "Woke"?

I thought at first it was your quiet joke,
To give us a sermon examining "woke."
Perhaps it was merely a word for "PC,"
But I heard that that was not to be,
And then I thought it just meant "awake,"
But that was not the path you would take.
Instead, it needed your erudition
To unpack the concept, and bring to fruition,
Some understanding that we might use
To have in our brains, if we should choose
To peel back wokeness in our midst.
In fact, I then could not resist,
When I went home, to sit and try
To find some ways I might apply
Some "anti-wokeness" to all our lives,
But muddle-headedness still thrives
In my small brain, so I confess
I failed in that most primal test.
However, what I took from your word,
I think the thing I really heard,
Was that in our lives, this thing above
All else was that we should put love:
Love for our fellow men, of course,
And that led by the strongest force,
Taught in church, and in Sunday School,
What's so hard to achieve — the Golden Rule.

A Letter from Nastia

- *I can't be waiting, I am eager to live.*
- *That's an excuse. You are eager to get something, and that is a different story.*
- *But I don't want to stand on the shore waiting for the ship to come. I want to swim towards it...*
- *... and drown half-way through.*
- *No! I'll make it... Life's too short to wait idly.*
- *Dear one, listen. Tight knots can't be undone in a rush, only one after another, patiently. If your dream can't stand the test of time - cheap is your dream.*

From "Tell Me About the Sea," by Elchin Safarli

This is where I closed the book and looked at the sunlight that was starting to tip-toe from behind the buildings. It was either the shade of gold in the air, the fall-signalling temperature, or the chair I sat in that reminded me of a very similar moment two years ago. Then, having recently arrived from Millbrook, I contemplated what this "gap" year at home might be. Little did I know that a pandemic would happen; that one year would turn into two as educators and students adapted to the unfathomable circumstance; that even when the possibility of returning to the classroom would be tangible, I would still be within the familiar walls and not on the plane to New York as I once hoped.

Indeed, friends, contrary to the scenario we envisioned, I will not be starting at Union in person this September. What follows is an explanation why. Letting you know what is going on, as it is, is important to me, so here we go.

Back in the middle of May, just when I was wrapping up finals and getting ready to file my paperwork to the U.S. consulate in Moscow (a visa procedure that would not have even required my going to the office) an announcement was made that any non-diplomatic non-immigrant visa services will no longer be offered in Russia. In the continued exchange of sanctions, the Russian government had prohibited the U.S. embassy from employing foreign nationals in any capacity, which led

to cessation of practically all visa operations in the country. Sad. Disturbing. Very untimely. There was a glimpse of hope after our presidents met in June, but it didn't actualize. "Well, this just means that I will need to file through one of the consulates in Europe," I said to myself, not realizing the complexity of conditions set in place by the pandemic. Besides the fact that American visas given out these days are almost exclusively of student and emergency kind, only the applicants that are residents of a country where the consulate is located can apply. That...crossed out the vast majority of my options. At this time just a few of the countries issue visas to non-residents. Among the ones I can go to just with my passport (no need to get a tourist visa) are Kazakhstan and Brazil. Brazil, obviously, is very far (but not an impossible option altogether), and the availability of time slots in Kazakhstan is very small (I am in line to get one). There are a couple of other options, but they are complicated, too.

As you can tell, there is a lot to figure out and a lot is up in the air still. Luckily, the main challenge lies in the logistics of getting an appointment somewhere that is not Russia and getting there, and not in my application per se. Through it all, I feel like I am untying the tight knot that this situation has become, just like in the book passage above. At the same time, I feel that my dream of the seminary experience is more alive than ever. My calling, bigger than any plan I could create for myself, has not been threatened. In fact, what if I stopped looking at these years as a liminal space to push through and

instead consider being planted here rather than stuck? This time has not been a waste. What if even in this season that has stretched over way too long, there was a purpose and a lesson? What if time...is on our side? Can I, having done what is in my power, choose to welcome this period rather than lament it? How can I cultivate a mind and a heart that are capable of discerning that which I can change and that which is safe to go along with. And even though I'm not where I would



choose to be at this time, I remember that I am *forever* falling into the calling that is my God. So grateful for the Son who is the Sun, for this communion, this one dialogue that breathes life into my bones. Oh, the loyalty, the promise to be with us through the fire and through the flood—the assurance of provision and rest.

Of course, I am concerned about this process, but, somehow, I am not anxious. Especially when there are Ginna and Lois (and all of you with them)



who have kept in touch with me, always wondering how it is coming along and how they can help. Together with them we will figure out the best course of actions. The support of all of you is the wind in my sails. For now, I am going to start taking classes online again (most of the classes at Union are in

person, but a handful are offered online and, funny enough, they are the very ones I am most interested in) and as soon as I successfully apply for and get the visa, I will travel to the East Coast. I miss you all, I want to meet my classmates and get to know the professors, I want to feel and serve the city, I want to gradually be moving towards what is next for me. It is a dream to be on campus in time for the January session if not sooner, so please be hoping and praying with me!

Among other news: my summer. Ah, it unraveled me and healed me at the same time. I went to the mountains and spent time by the sea. I was in the woods, the ones that usher you into simplicity and grant you a judgment-free mind. I saw distant family members for the first time in 20 years. I stopped by my birth-town, hugged my dear cousin

and held her daughter, my niece. During that visit, I was sharing about my chosen path with those who have known me the longest, and I was awed when, to my surprise, they poured so much understanding and support on me. It's almost like it was of no surprise to them that studying theology at a seminary overseas is what I would be doing at 26. It was profoundly reassuring. Upon return to Saint-Petersburg, a state of unfamiliar numbness and lostness overtook me for a little while. Those feelings seem extremely privileged and I know I need to strengthen my foundation and learn about my thought-patterns in order not to end up there again. By cosmic grace and grace alone, many of your and others' kind messages and prayers came through just in time, hugging my heart and giving me strength to stand and to walk again. Today, I feel proud of who I am growing into and am very intrigued by this fresh nudge in me to create. I see that my gifts and my skills could help supply a solution for the needs that are sprouting around me, and I aspire to invest in the development of the former. That is why I need Union to happen in its fullness! I "came" there not only to better grasp my life-path, but to actually get trained in ministry and ministerial leadership, to learn to facilitate liturgical experience and offer spiritual care that matters. I have been getting some good practice lately through guiding people in meditation, authoring one for a popular app, helping out my future supervisor at Saint Hilda's with lesson planning, creating space for quality communication, supporting social innovators in the country and maybe even starting a little church of our own with the two friends of mine. Fun!

I pray these days for perseverance, for the ability to see that what's inside of God is what's inside of me; the strength to care for what I am entrusted with and wisdom to perceive reality clearly. My soul is towards You, inhabit me.

I leave you with wisdom from Krista Tippet, a journalist and podcast host: "We have it in us to rise to the grave and beautiful callings that have been placed before us, but only if we walk toward them together. And we will."

With gratitude for your rising and walking with me still,

May we become more like the One who is Love, and more like ourselves,

Nastia

Horsemanship Through Feel

Decoding “Living Like a Shepherd”

Jesus was being censored when he asked us to “live like a shepherd.” The primary role of a shepherd is to defend his herd from predators. (*The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. John 10:12*) However, in nature, the *whole herd* has responsibility, not just the shepherd.

Horsemanship is the method of communicating with horses from their *point of view*. Horses are herd animals; horsemanship provides insight.

Shepherd by choice or circumstance? As a teenager Jesus was thrust into the operating role of a family “shepherd” when Joseph died. Circumstances forced Jesus to become the protector and sole income provider for his mother and siblings. Likewise, in nature, a single horse rises to herd leader to fill a leadership vacuum.

Chosen Shepherd: image versus reality Jesus was chosen by God to emerge as a leader despite not meeting the Hollywood image criteria. Both Joseph and Jesus were lowly carpenters in the elitist Roman Empire



As a life-long donkey owner, Jesus understood that donkeys are by their nature herd guardians. Herd leaders are not chosen because of breed, size, beauty, or sex; they earn it.

Herd leaders viciously *fight*, which is their way to get to and remain at the top of the pyramid; rules are followed.

Predator... is in the eyes of the Beholder Understanding *who* is a predator to a herd animal is crucial. Horses by their nature are prey animals, driven by self-preservation. When faced with a predator they choose fight, flight, or freeze. People learn that a predator is *in the eyes of the beholder*.

Horses change behavior based upon *their* perception of reality, not ours.

Horses are simple creatures; they understand intent not motivation. Predators *intentionally* create chaos to isolate and kill them. When my horse sees a local nun from Wethersfield in her habit, she “sees” a predator and quivers (freezes). When she “sees” a jogging nun she wants to choose flight. As the rider, I can mitigate disaster only when I am a trusted leader.



Herds integrity: reciprocal responsibility By asking us to “live like a shepherd” Jesus asked us to share the responsibility for safety. The herd leader directs the next in the pecking order who in turn directs the lower down. Safety is assured only with collective action—“if you scratch my back, I will scratch yours.”



Jesus was revolutionary; he asked people to value individual lives like herds do. He said that God chose leaders based on their competency, not image.

Jesus believed herd integrity mattered. **Dig deeper to determine the truth, choose wisely.**

Lois Zarembo

A Miracle in Lithgow

Last week I found myself on solo grandparent duty with my adorable granddaughter, Sawyer, two days in a row. A challenge that required imagination, inspiration from sources beyond my peabrain, and focus.



Sawyer at the Kayes' Koi Pond

On day one I took young Sawyer down Deep Hollow Road in her stroller, to visit the Kaye donkeys. That worked out well for about 20 minutes. The donkeys' big ears amused Sawyer, and the donkeys seemed to appreciate the atten-

tion. We continued on a stroll down Deep Hollow Road, but then it began to rain and we scurried to take shelter under the eave at the Okens' back door.

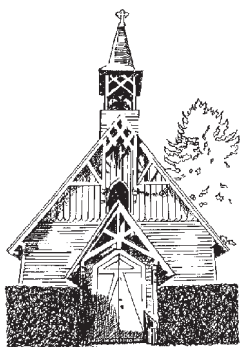
The next day we helped ourselves to the swings and slide by the church — but that worked out to amuse Sawyer for only five minutes. A bit panicked that the morning overall would turn out badly, my mind was spinning. But then I made use of a tried-and-true approach. I calmed down, became still and felt God's presence in my soul — and then the solution came to me. YES! The little children's room in the Parish Hall, well-stocked with a doll in her stroller, a barn filled with farm animals, a play kitchen and a small container of fluid for blowing little bubbles. It was like a miracle.

Thank you, God; thank you, St. Peter's; thank you, Okens; thank you, Kayes. The marvelous miracles of Lithgow.

David Parshall



Jake Dell officiated at the wedding of Hallie Bonnar and Theo de Gunzburg on July 17. One of the guests refused to sit in the pews.



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A Weekend Job at Ridge Field Farm



On June 26, Jessica Sander and James Church were married at Laureen and Ragnar Knutsen's Ridge Field Farm in Millbrook. James is the son of the farm manager.

Ragnar drove Jessica to the ceremony in his Meadowbrook cart, pulled by his Norwegian Fjord horse, Bjarne

Ragnar bought the 20-year-old gelding in Wisconsin from a Norwegian-American who raises Fjord horses

Bjarne was trained both for riding and driving. and Ragnar says he does ride him, "but timidly. The horse is quite calm and easy to handle which is good for an amateur like me."

Outdoors all year, with a donkey as a companion, Bjarne develops a thick coat during the winter and is never sick (which keeps the vet bills low).