



Creative Arts Anthology 2024

**First Baptist
Lethbridge Authors**

"Street in Cuba" by Dianne Porter

Dianne P.

Community

On my drive through the country,
I saw a solitary tree in a
great, wide open plain.
Tall and proud,
its arms reaching to heaven.
I admired its strength,
its sheer willpower to thrive on the empty plain.
As I drew near,
I saw its trunk was split down the middle;
it bore no buds, though it was springtime.
A gust of wind caught its bare arms
and it trembled violently.
The ground around it lay bare.

I continued down the road,
coming upon a thicket.
At once, I saw buds on these trees,
their arms intertwining to heaven,
bending and waving in the wind.
I could not tell where one ended and another began.
One tree leaned upon another;
a community of trees
– birch, ash, oak, spruce, and pine –
protecting, nurturing, sheltering one another.
Flowers, shrubs sprouted around them,
a riot of color.
A pool of water lay below,
from which I knew their roots drank deeply.

I pondered these things as I drove,
thinking that I would rather be part of a thicket
than a solitary tree.

Katelyn Entz

Haiku (nature theme)

Winter bitter cold
Trees sleep, birds shiver, leaves die
Earth rests quietly

Barbie Paterson

Senryu (human theme)

Tears ooze unbidden
Bruised reed, God has not broken
Hope stands tall, renewed

Barbie Paterson



Stepping Out of My Comfort Zone

by Lucy Graham

I have had the opportunity to go to Cuba with the FirstB Mission Team all seven times. Every time we meet with a group at the Kairos Centre or other places in Cuba, we are asked to make a presentation. The first year, that word scared me. But I learned that "presentación" in Spanish means, introduce yourself.

When I say who I am, I often say, "Soy una directora de campanillas de mano en mi iglesia de Lethbridge." (I direct handbells at my church in Lethbridge).

One morning when we were introducing ourselves, Orquídea was in the room and she said, "When are you going to play the bells for us?"

I replied, "I would love to, but it is too difficult to bring the bells with us to Cuba. The cases are so heavy and would take up all our weight allowance".

Alicita, our interpreter was in the room, and she told me that she thought the Presbyterian Church in Matanzas had a set of handbells. She asked me, if she checked to see if she could borrow them for Friday night, would I play them at the Talent Show? What could I say but, yes.

This was Wednesday morning. Thursday morning she told me she had arranged for us to pick up the bells Friday afternoon. I said could we pick them up today? I need time to practice. She called back and we were able to get them that afternoon.

Long story short ... They were not handbells but a two octave set of hand chimes. Ezra carried them out to the taxi for me and we brought them back to the Seminary.



Friday night, I set up the chimes that I needed so I could play "Kum Bah Yah" and "Step by Step". It turned out I was first on the program and I managed to stumble my way through both those short pieces.



The next morning, one of the delegates, who lived outside of Matanzas, spoke to me. She was so pleased that I played the bells for them. She said that she had been to South Carolina and had the chance to hear bells but most of the delegates at the assembly had never had the opportunity to hear or watch someone play the bells.

Sometimes God asks us to step out of our comfort zone and do things that surpass our expectations.

I was delighted to have the chance to share the bells in Cuba!

The Kingdom of Heaven (God)

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the one seed that is cared for intentionally - it took root. At first it only needed water (the basics of the gospel - remembering being told that if it believed in God, it did not need to fear dying).

For some years it barely survived, though, as life got in the way . When the Master Gardener took over, then the Son shone on it and new life sprang from it as it was cared for with focused attention.

New branches grew and some others were pruned.
It protected smaller plants that seeded from the main plant.
The gardener knew what it needed, and it bent in the direction of the Son.
Cold winter winds caused it to become stronger, it lost some of its needles (priorities) but its roots went deeper.

Through every season, its branches stretched and swayed in praise and worship, for giving it life.

Bea Nemeth

A Hero or a Saint...

I wish I were a hero
A martyr or a saint
But so far I am battling zero
For my life is rather quaint

I could rage a shout like Amos
Or mission-ate like Paul
But the chance of being famous
Hasn't come my way at all

For the villains who need chiding
Don't live near my address
Nor do kings who seek confiding
Nor apostles in distress

So I am really getting nervous
That ahead of me there ain't
No act of thrilling service
That will make of me a saint

No, the earth will not be shaken
By an act of mine – not nary
For unless I am mistaken
I am rather ordinary

I've come of late to ponder
On something I have read
About that day of wonder
When five thousand souls were fed

It seems there was a lad
Among the hungry bunch
Who acted rather mad
When he offered Christ his lunch

I bet other thought him daft
I wonder what they said
I suspect they grinned and laughed
When he gave his fish and bread

Five loaves, two fish, five thousand fold
Now that is really dumb
Will some one tell that crazy kid
He'll only get a crumb

He may have yearned as I
To pull off some great deal
Move the earth or change the sky
Or produce a catered meal

In that desert dry and hilly
The simple country lad
Feeling sort of silly
Offered Jesus what he had

But what he had was plenty
Jesus took his fish and bread
With it not ten or twenty
But five thousand folk were fed

From this I've come to understand
What cannot be denied
A little gift in Jesus hand
Is vastly multiplied

Oh I'll lead no great invasion
Of that I have a hunch
But there may be an occasion
When I can share my lunch

Stan Coxson

The Glory of a Sunday Morning

The glory of a Sunday morning's writ large in sunshine.
Easter all over, as the sun rises, resplendent and radiant,
bathing in warmth, warming with life,
wrapping in golden, gleaming arms
all of creation, all of civilization,
all-loving, all-encompassing, all enfolding
in hope.

The darkness flees before him,
hiding only in the dankest, most festering of hollows.
Ice-bound, frozen, petrified frost
melts in soft, sparkling dew drops,
glinting with the glory of a billion rainbows,
all-gracing, all-revealing, all-mysterious
with joy.

The glory of the Easter Son rises with this day's dawn,
reigning with majesty, power, glory, and love,
calling forth worship in a billion ways
from buds and larks, from clouds and hearts
all-praising, all-empurposed, all-embodied,
all-humbled, all-empowered, all-emboldened
by God.

Bruce Martin

Observation

The astronomer prophesied stars would align.
Underneath that blue-black ocean, looking up, and swimming,
Eyes frosted, mind searching every path those lights could take,
A little dust was waiting—
And she didn't know she was waiting.
We are watching the stars be still
As God's hand moves the galaxies,
Moves the earth.

Underneath the blue-black sky—
Power lines like shivering harp strings—
The song she sings evaporates and seeps into the universe.
The light that lit her searching was coming long before—
Before she ever knew to look up.
Before the telescopes were trained to see,
The sun would just come up
And cloak our observations.

The astronomers proved faithful—God faithful.
The sweetness we would taste
Years later—never late—was well on its way to us.
Stars were smiling. Stars were satisfied.
Heaven sighed.
"How many times?" asked the astronomers.
"How many times do we have to remind them?
God will set things right. It's already in motion."

Hannah Roberts

The One Whom I Seek

The One whom I seek
falls to the earth like lightning.
Like fire, he purifies those
who worship him.

The One whom I seek
made his living among us.
In his life, there is home for
those who trust him.

The One whom I seek
suffered to break the power
of death to liberate those
who believe him.

The One whom I seek
rides victorious in battle.
The King of glory to those
who declare him.

Katelyn Entz

When I kneel, I offer it all.
With fighting spirit, I kneel.
He takes my sword and makes me heal.
I kneel and focus, pressing down.
I hear the sounds of serving;
They jar my mind, my heart.
I feel His hand upon my shoulder
And soldier on; He's with me here.

It's over and my knees give way
This time, in tears; my strength is low.
He lifts me up again.
He tells me that I have done His will.
"It's hard," I say, then wipe my tears.
He takes me to a place to watch -
A guard upon a tower tall,
To see the needs around.
He uses me again - to speak, to pray
To clean, and free
To love His children all around
And send them off - they're free!

"The battlefield was clear before
But other strengths you have.
So let me use you," says the Lord,
"And still you will serve me.
Your sword is good, your spear and feet,
I know your heart is mine
But child, I have a plan for you -
Adventure, hardship, trials fierce.
Yet always I'm with you.
And the enemy you'll pierce.
You'll soften hearts and bring them home.
You'll be a standard bearer yet.
But never as you see it, Child.
I am the King," He said.

So here I sit, in waiting, yes,
I'll follow near and far.
I'll go with God and do His will
And rest - He is the Star!
Amen

Anna Braun

Have You Heard It?

It begins with a breath of wind, carrying
something more
than just autumn leaves.
With a familiar chord, ringing
with a new invitation
to seek the unseen.
With a whisper in the darkness drifting,
drifting in through the half open window.
Before ink hits the page,
before time has a chance to snatch it away,
before you even know there's something to say,
you've seen a corner of the reflected.
And maybe,
just maybe,
there is such a thing as water
after all.
So now you sit,
trying to squeeze the universe
through the pinpoint tip of your ballpoint pen,
and wondering about the right angle
to let the light shine through.

Lenna Isleifson

Exploring Belize (Lucy Graham)

Belize is a country on the eastern coast of Central America.

It was colonized by Great Britain and called British Honduras before being granted independence from Britain in 1964. The name was changed to Belize in 1973 but because of border disputes between the UK and Guatemala actual independence was delayed until 1981. The capital city is now Belmopan.

Today, Belize is still a Commonwealth country and at the time of this writing, there was a picture of Queen Elizabeth on all the Belizean money. The Queen visited Belize in 1985 and again in 1994 with her husband, The Duke of Edinburgh.

English is the official language of Belize, but most of its population speak creole. Many people are multilingual.

The country has The Caribbean Sea to the east and there is a dense jungle to the west. Just offshore is the world's second-largest Barrier Reef with rich marine life and the famous Great Blue Hole. Along the shoreline there are hundreds of low-lying islands called cayes. Belize's jungle areas are home to Mayan ruins.

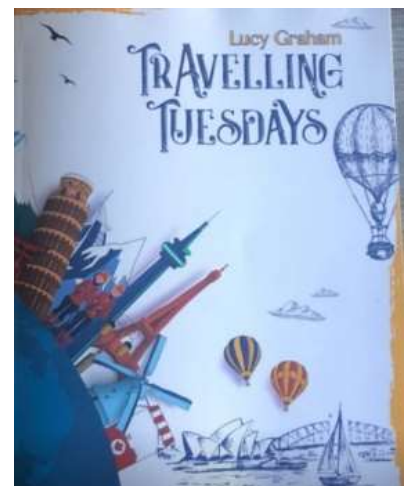
I first learned of Belize when I taught a student whose family came from Belize to work and live in our school district. They moved back to Belize for a while and this student wrote me a couple of letters. The post mark on the envelope was stamped, Orange Walk, Belize. This was in the mid 1980s.

When I came home from teaching school in Kuwait, I decided it was time to travel to places in Central America so I booked a trip to Belize. While there I enjoyed seeing the Mayan ruins and discovering more of this delightful country. Before leaving I decided to arrange for a taxi to take me to Orange Walk. I had a wonderful day with the driver as we headed off the beaten track to see if I could find the family of a student I had taught 25 years ago. I ended up having a visit with a lady who remembered a family from her village who went to Alberta, Canada.



This bell is my souvenir from my trip to Belize.

I share more of my adventures in Belize in my *Travelling Tuesdays* book. You can place an order for an autographed copy of my book @ www.lucy-graham.com



Eastertide

From winter cold and dark,
From Lenten season so forlorn,
That time of sorrow and lament
Of which my soul is worn.

The sun's rays are warming.
Hark! The birds are sweetly singing
On lofty branches in the breeze,
A new dawn beginning.

A sleeping bear awakes,
A cocooned worm begins to stir.
My soul, it hears the call to spring,
From death to life transferred.

Death's linen shrouds are shed,
One layer torn, then another
Abandoned in the warmth of spring,
Gloom to bursting colour.

What joy shall fill the earth
As gentle buds begin to green!
New life springs forth, resurrected,
What hope heard, felt, and seen!

Katelyn Entz

Lament for Nova Scotia (April 2020)

Heartbroken

 Evil had its way we are
heartbroken
 as darkness cloaked that day and
Unspoken
 anguish grips our souls
 in silent pain no words can dare convey

Forsaken

 Lost in grief and woe, we feel
Forsaken
 In the wake of such a foe, Lord
How long then
 'till we see some sign
 that God has not abandoned us to Shoal

And yet the birds still raise a tune
Buds are forming on the trees as the earth prepares to bloom
If we but lift our weeping eyes
Life is stirring with sunrise - not all has not come to ruin

To broken

 hearts You will draw near
Unspoken
 prayers will find Your ear so
Awaken
 Within our hearts the hope
 that e'en in death, new signs of life appear
 that in spite of all, Your love will be made clear.

Faye Reynolds

Why, as we grow older ...?

Why, as we grow older,
must we lose the music,
the magic,
and the mystery of youth ...
Can we not remain children?

Why, as we grow older,
do the lavish landscapes of Narnia,
of Middle Earth,
and the 100 Acre Wood
become carbon copy homes,
photocopied parking lots,
and assembly-line shopping malls?

Why, as we grow older,
do the fawns,
the elves,
and Winnie the Pooh
become faceless bosses,
Sunday drivers,
and used car salesmen?

Why, as we grow "wise,"
does the imagination,
the mystery,
the romance
become the cold economic logic
of "I think, therefore I am."

But I, I will not forget
the thrill of walking in the winter woods with Mr. Tumnus,
nor the light from the lamppost splashing a warm,
golden glow on the soft, snowy boughs.

I will not forget the woods of Lothlorien,
The bite of wind in the reaches of Rohan
Or the laughter in the Sam Gamgee's smile.

I still play pooh-sticks – now in the Oldman River –
I still bounce with Tigger;
And I still play with Roo.

I dream, therefore I am.

Bruce Martin

Psalm: Breath of Life

Inhale the breath of life
God breathed life into my lumpy earth
Inhale the breath of life
God breathes His Holy Spirit on me
Inhale the breath of life
God breathes His fragrance all around me
Inhale the breath of life
God molds me, this humble jar of clay

Exhale the breath of life
Confess, repent, and be forgiven
Exhale the breath of life
Care for the poor, lonely, and captive
Exhale the breath of life
Love others as God's fragrance to each
Exhale the breath of life
Almighty God, breathe through me, Yahweh

Barbie Paterson

Meditation of Our Time Apart

("Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.") 1 Peter 5:7

Lord, it is easy to feel you near
As the gentle breeze I hear
Rustling through the tree.
And the laughter of friends abound
Echoing the joyful sound
Of the river flowing free.

The sun shines from above
As a reminder of Your Love
Rekindling warmth inside
While in a flower I can see
An industrious bumble bee
Seeking food that You provide.

A little goldfinch flutters by
Trusting frail wings that he might fly
As he goes on his way.
May I, too, in my feeble frame
Gain Your Strength to do the same
From day to day.

A little squirrel clothed in red
Comes out of the woods, as by You led
To a place to feed.
Birds, bees, creatures (especially we)
Are strengthened, fed and led by Thee
To meet our every need.

On evening stroll I thrill to find
Colourful mushrooms of many a kind;
And ferns in fine array.
Then as the sun sets in the west
I relax to enjoy the solemn rest
Of your handiwork display.

Your Presence makes fellowship sweet
As longing to share your Word we meet
In this appointed place.
A foretaste of that for which we long
To sing Your praise with the heavenly
throng
And see You face to face.

Remembering Your Faithfulness
in the past
Gives assurance Your Love will last.
We walk not along!
Thank you, Lord, now as we part
Joy bells are ringing in my heart—
"Our God is on the throne."

--"It is well with my soul" -- Amen

Elinor Mullen

For Mother's Day

To the mothers who are,
For their self-sacrificial love
Borne each day
In snotted shirts and dirty diapers,
In painted walls and crooked letters,
In gentle love and discipline
Of wild temper tantrums,
In music lessons and first-time driving,
In basketball games
 and high school grads.
A mother's love,
Steadfast, sure,
Imitating the enduring love of Christ.

To the mothers who wish to be,
For their tears of grief
Borne each day,
Each week,
Each month,
Each year.
Waiting for what may or may not be,
Grieving dreams lost;
No snotty noses or dirty diapers,
No painted walls or crooked letters.
Instead, waiting for the fulfillment
Of every dream
In the enduring love of Christ.

To the mothers who once were,
Who weep for what was lost

Each day,
Each week,
Each month,
Each year.
Grieving what was or would have been,
Grieving dreams lost;
No more snotty noses or dirty diapers,
No more painted walls
 or crooked letters.
Instead, waiting, longing for
The comfort
Of Christ's enduring love.

To those who lost their mothers,
Who never knew their mothers,
Who no longer know their mothers,
Remember the love you once knew,
Or dream for the love you wish you had.
The mother
 who wiped your snotty nose,
Who cleaned your dirty diaper,
Who washed your paint off the walls,
And celebrated crooked letters.
Grieve and celebrate
What you had or wish you had,
Knowing that,
As a mother hen,
Christ wraps you in enduring love.

Katelyn Entz

Chinook

Great ghouls of wind wolf up the coulee:
growling, grasping, gruelling, grinding,
howling with rage,
blasting the sage,
gouging the grass
(teeth-gritted against the gale).

"Snow-eater" they call you,
chomping ice, devouring drifts;
"Soul-stealer" I call you
consuming my passion, devouring my joy,
not even pausing to ravage your feast,
defiling my spirit and leaving me cold.

But I will not be conquered,
I will rebuff your field-foddered fangs:
Howl, hard winter wargs with your perilous pleasure.

I will face your great gusts like a mariner of old.

Here on this lookout o'er the blue gramma gale
I will relish your blasting.
I will savour your squalling.
I will weather your woe,
coat open, hair streaming, eyes squinting, heart beating, defiant, bold ...

I choose not to whine when your westerlies scour me.
I choose not to growl when your teeth tear my skin.
I choose to rebuke you and treasure your testing.

I choose to embrace you and welcome you in,
icy-eyed but never cold-hearted,
frozen in formidable resolve,
and burning with unquenchable love.

Bruce Martin

"And now for something completely different ..." 😊

Please Don't Read

Please do not read this
You are making a grave mistake
I'm warning you not to read this
I won't repeat myself
This is a waste of your time.
If your eyes move this way
Slap them – DO IT!
If you read this far DON'T!
If you haven't, that's neat.

Wally and Elwood Stanley (Mark Archibald – 'nuff said ...)