



I Wonder As I Wander

Five Pilgrimage Walks for Advent

Learning@Redeemer invites all to share the journey of Advent in a series of weekly meditative walks. The themes of the walks will follow the themes of the four candles of the Advent wreath: hope, peace, joy, and love, respectively, and finally, the Christ candle.

A focus for meditation from a member of our community, based on the text of an Advent hymn, forms the basis of the pilgrimage. You are invited to follow the suggested route, on your own time, either in person if you can do that safely, or as reflection from your home.

This week's walk has been prepared by Richard Van Delft and AJ Finlay.

Church of the Redeemer

Advent Love



Standing on the east side of Church of the Redeemer we start our Advent walk by gazing at the bell and imagining the sound of its welcome ring calling us to worship. Wonder at its sound when it peels at noon on Wednesdays for the overdose victims in our city. Erase the white noise of the cold traffic going by. Listen to the loving cry of the steeple.

And now we wonder as we wander.

Seek a Sign

*"Seek a sign," the prophet counselled
"deep as earth or high as sky.
Seek a sign to bolster courage
when faith falters or hope dies.
Know that God will come to meet us
and within our midst will dwell:
God with us, Emmanuel."*

*When we long had walked in darkness,
God appeared in glimm'ring light.
When we long had sat in silence,
God's word echoed in the night.
Now our God has come to meet us
And within our midst to dwell
God with us, Emmanuel.*

The Pilgrimage Walk Begins...

Staying on the north side of Bloor Street we walk west perhaps seeking a sign. We look to our left and see the silent music conservatory. Imagine its melodies halted because of a virus.



We look to our right and see the silent music store. Imagine its melodies halted because of a condo.



*God's great sign at last is given
For all those with eyes to see:
not as lightning rending heaven
but a child on mother's knee.
Here our God has come to meet us
and within our midst to dwell:
God with us, Emmanuel.*

With love dwelling in our midst, the music cannot be silenced. We continue west past the Intercontinental Hotel until we find a portal to our right.



*Yet this sign confronts us
with God's presence to our race
in the child, the poor, the needy-
all who bear a human face.
Here our God still comes to meet us
and within our midst doth dwell:
God with us, Emmanuel.*

Notice our sister at the gate as she sorts through all her worldly possessions. Imagine love guiding her to a hot meal and community at the Common Table. Love her and pray for her as we wander through the walkway.

“But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

Matthew 7:14

Wandering in the alleyway let us for a moment ignore the hotel's motivation and see a designer creating an oasis with these little domes meant to protect couples from the cold, and from a virus, while they have a drink. Keep hearing the church bell. Let its loving cry keep you from distraction.



Exiting the narrow gate we come to a parkade. Concrete used as icing to cover the earth.

*“They paved paradise
and put up a parking lot.”
Joni Mitchell*



Yet, because of the effort to discard creation, someone decided to bring some beauty with a mural depicting a scene of creation thousands of miles away.

Wander west and wonder how love will guide us while we walk.

With the alley exit behind us, turn left and go west through the parking lot to Bedford Road. Turn right and walk north to Prince Arthur Avenue. In front of the apartment building on the north west corner a statue catches your eye. Her name is Rosamund which means "Guardian of the truth". Her gaze never changes. She seems to be waiting with all the patience love can give. Not even the snow stirs her posture.

Hear the church bell. Its patient ring calls to all who wait.



Bidding adieu to Rosamund we wander north on Bedford Road to Taddle Creek Park. On the way, the sound we welcome is the laughter of the children passing with their teacher. We laugh with them as we wander. Imagine how often love sounds like this laughter.

“The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground- trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.”

Genesis 2.9a



Entering the park from Bedford Road we stop to honour what is below our feet. Taddle Creek once flowed with life giving water full of fish. The Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe people were sustained by this abundance. Settlers built around it and when the life giving creek became inconvenient, creek fillers fixed the problem. Hear the weeping steeple toll with its message of loss.

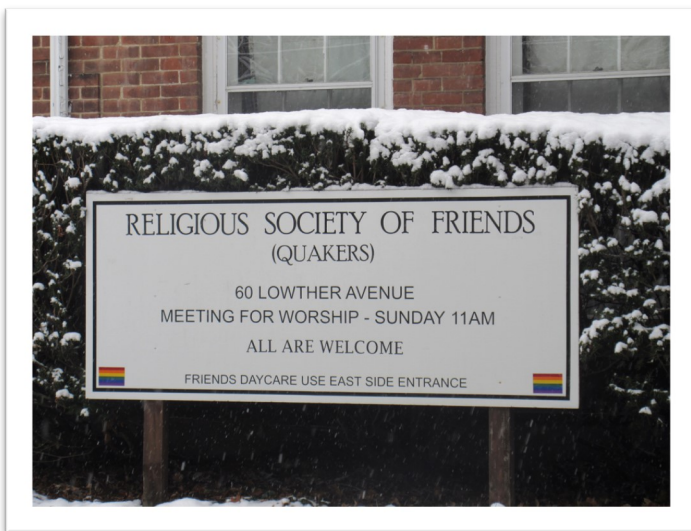
With the bell's message of loss we come to the sculpture of a water vessel. Someone's love of what is lost provided a reason to bend and shape a stainless steel rod, measuring the length of Taddle Creek, into a working fountain. The pitcher overflows quenching the thirst of the ancient copper beech tree and the vegetation of the park. Imagine the loving spirit of God tipping the ewer and refilling the creek. Imagine the hearts of the creek fillers yearning for creation's renewal. Imagine being a creek filler no more. Imagine a different sound from the tolling bell.



The park has another history as well. The filled creek once housed families with famous residents. Sharing the view of the giant copper beech tree was Frederick Banting, co-discoverer of insulin, and Beatrice Worsley, co-writer of software for the first computers. Could the stubborn creek continue to love its inhabitants? There is plenty to wonder as we wander.



*People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able;
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the guest is on the way*



Leaving Taddle Creek Park from the north exit we prepare for our Advent journey east to the beckoning bell. Across the street notice the house made fair by the religious Society of Friends. See how our sisters and brothers wave the rainbow flag welcoming all. Could they be expecting Love the guest?

*Furrows, be glad; though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there:
give up your strength, the seed to nourish
that in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the rose is on the way.*

Imagine you hear the choir sing this joyous Advent chorus as we wander east along Lowther Avenue to Bedford Road. A newly built snowpal watches as we stroll past the community bicycles. They have time to watch until the weather warms. They will then melt and join the waters where the creek should be.



*Birds, though you long have ceased to be
guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the bird is on the way.*



Reaching the corner we come to Bedford Road. We turn north and take in the comfort of the homes we pass. Wander with the choir until we reach Boswell Avenue with its neighbourhood feel.





A turn eastward on Boswell Avenue bids us welcome by this home's seasonal butler. When the weather warms our friend will not know the waters of the creek. The butler will wait in the back closet until next year when we will be bid welcome again.



Wonder while the trees and plants ready themselves this winter's eve.

Wonder while the sparrows raise their voices before the shortest day of the year.

Wonder as you hear the bell chime, calling us back from our wander.



*Stars keep the watch. When night is dim
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining above the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the star is on the way.*



The calm of Boswell Avenue ends.
Walking through the narrow path
brings us back to the bustle of
Avenue Road.
Imagine the heavens keeping watch,
not interested in the voiceless sound
of traffic.
The heavens are far more interested
in the bell as we wander south, back
to the steeple.

*Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look eastern sing today:
Love the Lord is on the way.*

We find ourselves on the west side of
the Church of the Redeemer.
We finish our meditation looking east at
the bell with its welcoming ring calling
us to worship, calling us to community,
and calling us to remember.
Today we answer the call with love, for
Love the guest is on the way.

