

Saving the Brome Lake Duck Festival!

The Scoop
By Mable Hastings

For many, the news in July that the Brome Lake Duck Festival was cancelled for this year was disappointing. The promoter had informed the Municipality that he was withdrawing from the planning of the event with only a few weeks notice, leaving the Town feeling the need to cancel the event for this year. The situation presented a challenge to a motivated group to turn the situation around.

The Brome Lake Chamber of Commerce, merchants and volunteers as well as the Municipality that is organizing the musical acts, have given their all in

keeping this year's festival the tradition it has been for the past twenty years, refusing to stop for a year but rather deciding to join together in keeping it going.

"We're determined to save the duck!" said one person.

This year's festival is back on and will take place September 15, 16, 22 and 23 with kiosks, musical guests and a variety of delicious foods at all of the local eateries. With musical guests like: Mayday, Les Cavemen, Amos J, Angel Forrest and more performing over the two weekends, there is a lot to enjoy at this year's festival.

"It's a lot work to organize," explained merchant, Ghislaine Lebel of

"Antiquité Lebel Objet", who has been helping with the organizing of the kiosks for the event. "Working with the other merchants and the Municipality to keep this wonderful festival going has been a real collective community effort."

This event is attended by thousands and has become one that is highly associated with Brome Lake providing merchants and other local businesses with the opportunity to increase visibility and awareness not only in regards to Lac Brome products and produce but also the beauty of the region and the warmth and friendliness of its people.

Organizers are eager to share the good news that the Festival is back on and all involved hope that people will

come out in support as well as encouraging friends and neighbours to do the same. With many of the local fairs behind us, the Duck Festival provides folk with another opportunity to get out and enjoy the beautiful fall weather while celebrating another of the Eastern Townships unique festivals. If you have not had the pleasure of sampling Brome Lake Duck, now is the perfect time to do so. The weekend of festivities and fun will bring with it a variety of delicacies to experience.

Get out this weekend or next to Lac Brome and see what the quacking is about as we get our feathers drenched in all that the Brome Lake community has to offer.

ONE COLUMN, FOUR VOICES

Opening to the Spirit

Today's Word: Risk

By Revs Mead Baldwin,
W. Lynn Dillabough,
Lee Ann Hogle, and
Carole Martignacco

1) The first law of wing-walking, I heard somewhere, is: Never let go of one thing until you have firm hold of something else. A good motto for life! In the early days of bi-planes, wing-walkers were those daring souls who defied gravity by performing acrobatic stunts in aircraft shows, climbing out of the cockpit to balance on the wing while the plane was in flight. It's still done today with vintage aircraft. All for the thrill of a breathtaking view, beyond anything one could safely see from the tarmac.

Risk takers seek adventure, ready and willing to take the leap and try new things. Playing the stock market, engaging in sports, traveling to new places, exploring new ideas, stepping up to the podium to speak in a room full of strangers - you don't have to be a gambler or a trapeze artist. Just being involved is taking risks. We daily venture forth or learn something new even though failure or loss is possible. Changing jobs, moving across town or to the one side of the world, changing our minds or assumptions, growth of any kind - all are risky! We weigh possibilities, balance the odds and rewards against our own safety, before we decide to step out of our comfort zone.

When the outcome if I don't try is more painful to imagine than the embarrassment of failure - I'll go for it and let the proverbial chips fall where they may. Like standing for justice. I tend to avoid heroics, favouring everyday kinds of risk. Marriage and parenting felt a bit like wing-walking. Public speaking as well; I knew I could with training do the pastoral part of ministry, but standing in the pulpit claiming my vision was truly scary. Equally risky choices lie at the heart of every life story.

Let's look before we leap, by all means. Do the research. Assess the risks, the better to be prepared to meet them. But if your usual mode is to hold back and observe, ask yourself: Is being

safe worth the risk of never testing your own potential for greatness? When was the last time you felt the thrill of truly amazing yourself? What for you is worth the risk? Go for it - I double-dare you!

2) Nothing ventured, nothing gained. It's an old adage but still relevant today, pertinent in many areas including faith. In today's fact-based society, to trust in the existence of an invisible, un-provable spiritual realm is a risky business.

People of faith are sometimes exposed to the incredulity and even contempt of friends and co-workers. It is not cool to be religious. One has to ask: "why bother, when the rest of the world finds faith an antiquated, superstitious and even harmful practice?" Why, indeed. If science can't prove the existence of God, what keeps people of faith risking to believe? The answer, at least for me, is personal experience.

If you have ever been struck speechless by a moment of sheer beauty or humbling generosity or unmerited forgiveness or expansive love for this human family we are all a part of, you may have trouble attributing the event to a particular person or feature of Mother Nature. This experience may take on a profoundness that you cannot explain but that you know goes deeper than the particularities.

In Christian circles we are fond of imaging God as an energy that we live and move and have our being within. To risk being a person of faith is to be ultimately concerned with the big questions in life. Why are we here? What is our purpose? What gives meaning to my life? Parts of traditional religion that are pure superstition or culturally imposed need to be jettisoned. What ever is enduring, testifying to the human preoccupation with meaning since the time we became self-reflective - this we keep.

To risk being a person of faith is to subject oneself to critique from that part of our brain that needs certainty. Although some faiths attempt to offer this, it seems an impossible task to hold

to an all-loving and all-powerful God in a world full of atrocities. It hurts my brain trying to imagine this. Yet every day I risk believing in an all-loving God who offers no other certainty than a constant presence and that appeals to our higher, better selves. This God empowers US to do the heavy lifting of bringing about a better world. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. I invite you to give it a try.

3) Recently a friend posted a photo on Facebook showing two climbers standing on a cliff face looking down. The ledge they stood on was rather narrow, and reminded me of a similar spot on a local peak. He expressed amazement at the risk they were taking, while I remembered standing in a very similar spot last summer. Where climbing is concerned, I guess I have always been a bit of a risk taker in life as well. I believe this comes from having great support and security in my family and church life.

This past summer I attended a major conference for our national church with the theme of "Risking Faith, Daring Hope". Our denomination is going through many changes as we plan for the future. I must admit that at first the expression "Risking Faith" was a novelty. The word risk does not immediately suggest faith. Other words: danger, recklessness, bravery, carelessness, even stupidity, more likely come to mind. It took me a while to comprehend that for many, faith is a risk. Faith can bring us out of our comfort zone and lead to action, life changes, even danger. Sometimes to choose faith may alienate us from more cynical friends, or perhaps make us seem less fashionable to others. Some colleagues have given up more lucrative careers to pursue ministry. Faith can be a costly risk.

Looking back at my life, I see there have been many risks, physical and emotional. I pursued some dreams, not all of which came to fruition. I still haven't completed my novel or parachute jumped like one of my writing colleagues. Risking faith has led to great rewards and a lifetime of mean-

ing. How about you - what do you risk in your life journey?

4) If we take a risk, it means we are willing to lose something. Loving means risking loss. Honesty means risking rejection. Intimacy means risking betrayal.

My example of risk, as a follower of Jesus, is Jesus himself. He risked everything. To eat and drink with sinners and tax collectors he risked his reputation. To have a close circle of friends he risked betrayal. To save the world, and show us the way to God, he risked his own life.

Jesus didn't hold anything back. In his short years of ministry he spent time with lepers, got into many arguments with his fellow religious leaders, and drove the money traders out of the temple with a whip. He knew that his friends would turn on him, betray, and deny him. He knew that he would be arrested and killed. And, still, he persisted, risking everything.

Sometimes I feel shy. Sometimes there is something I should do, someone I should talk with, and I hold back. Maybe you can relate to this. Putting yourself forward at all can feel like a risk.

At a recent youth event the leaders had us find someone in the room that we did not know. In pairs, we took turns walking slowly toward the other person, and repeating after each step, "I can be hurt by you." This simple and profound exercise was all about risk. I can be hurt by you. And, yet, most of the time, I choose to risk.

One word, four voices - and now it's your turn to reflect: What for you is worth the risk?

Rev. Mead Baldwin pastors the Waterville & North Hatley pastoral charge; Rev. Lynn Dillabough is now Rector of St. Paul's in Brockville ON. She continues to write for this column as a dedicated colleague with the Eastern Townships clergy writing team; Rev. Lee Ann Hogle ministers to the Ayer's Cliff, Magog & Georgeville United Churches; Rev. Carole Martignacco is Consulting Minister to UU Estrie-Unitarian Universalists in North Hatley.