

MICHAEL'S ANNUAL EPISTLE 2020 – YEAR OF THE VIRUS



The year of the rat has been a bit slow, but not a bad one for me. I am well, my calendar is less full than last year, no trip to Taiwan. So am spending a lot less \$. I take long naps while the dishes await the invisible maid. The eve of the March lockdown I took six friends to see the UofT Opera (La Nozze di Figaro). Since then I have learned how to do things online – preach a sermon, give three talks on Mackay, hold meetings and attend concerts on the sofa with a glass of wine.

In the spring I began in earnest the Canadian Mackay Committee campaign asking Canada Post for a stamp honouring Saint George Leslie Mackay in 2022. I hope you signed the online petition <http://chng.it/7GPkqbrV> ! It has over 3200 names and received strong support from Taiwan's consul in Toronto. We also have 36 letters from related groups and key individuals. I'm optimistic!

My 72nd with Albert & Sophia Lin In March I helped George, the Chinese student whose parents live in Japan, do a beautiful thing. He sourced 6000 masks from China (when nobody had any in Canada), got them shipped (not easy! A letter from my MP Ali Ehsassi helped), then donated them to a hospital and a senior's home – all using his own money. This fall I helped him get through a twice-failed sociology course he needs to graduate. Doing the same for William. I have finally made use of all those years of anthropology!

During the summer I enjoyed cottage in Kawartha with Taiwanese friends, then in Muskoka with sister Karen's family. One June day had a BYO socially distanced picnic with Karen, Bruce and our cousins Janet and Susan. Less socially distanced was Karen's outdoor 70th backyard birthday party, for which Tim came from Vancouver. Karen's neurological degenerative disease has taken away her ability to speak and increasingly drains her. A hard time for her and Bruce.

I did the funeral for William's grandmother (6 people present), met friends at the airport and taken them to their self-isolation, shopped for them and other shut-ins. I attended three definitely not distanced rallies in support of Hong Kong. (Check out my Hello Kitty mask, William's gift from Taiwan) One beautiful October day Louise Gamble and I did a drive and hike along the Beaver Valley. I do many walks in the parks and gardens near home. But swimming and skating didn't last long before the fall lockdown in Toronto.

At home I am reading boxes of old letters, preparing to deposit my life in the Archives of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Mom kept them all, and I am like her. Eye opening to revisit friends of fifty years ago. I have adopted orphaned books from my shelf: Tale of Genji, Pilgrims' Progress, Durkheim's Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Bronowski's The Ascent of Man, Trevor-Roper's The Hermit of Peking; and Nino Ricci's wonderful novel Testament. Ironically, with so much time to cook, I have discovered frozen pizzas. Less work for that maid.



So out with the old year! Have a blessed Christmas, with or without family! I will be without. Maybe frozen pizza.

As a gift, here is Healey Willan's "Three Kings" <https://youtu.be/BHneX2YVMG8> . I add the lyrics in the email. Wishing you a peaceful end to this year to forget, and new hope in 2021. LOVE,
M

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The Three Kings (1958)

Words: Laurence Housman (1865-1959)

Music: Healey Willan (1880-1968)

"Who knocks tonight so late?"
the weary porter said.
Three kings stood at the gate,
each with a crown on head.

The serving man bowed down,
the Inn was full, he knew.
Said he, "In all this town
is no fit place for you."

A light in the manger lit;
there lay the Mother meek.
Said they: This place is fit.
Here is the rest we seek.

Come, come. They loosed their latchet strings,
so stood they all unshod
"Come in, come in, ye kings,
and kiss the feet of God."