

December 2022

fairhaven

a retreat experience for Christian leaders

FEATURED STORIES

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CONSIDER THE DARKNESS

Advent is a season of preparation culminating in the celebration heralded by angelic proclamation, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2: 10b-11)

Fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." (Isa. 9:2) Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Consider for a moment the darkness.

Before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, people walked in

darkness . . . deep spiritual darkness. Four hundred years scholars tell us. Four centuries of heavenly silence and seemingly divine absence.

My first office as a new member of the staff at Briercrest Seminary was at the end of a hall off Faculty row, with no exterior windows. I recall the first time the power went out during a counselling session with a student. What we experienced was the darkness that hides one's hand positioned centimeters from your face. Pitch black. Zero visibility.

Imagine if you will, this physical absence of light as a metaphor for the experience of the spiritual darkness of that first Advent. God, who up to that point had been so prominent in the storied history of the nation of Israel, silent . . . absent . . . no 'unchanging grace' upon which to rest.

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Struggle, uncertainty, alone, abandoned, without anchor in the 'high and stormy gales.'

Yes, consider the darkness.

We remember the culmination of the story to our peril. Advent invites pause; an interruption to the oft frenzied pace thrusting us headlong to the resolve of Christmas morning. Advent is counter. It is birthed in darkness. 'Tis the season of waiting . . . when all through the heavens not a Creator was stirring . . . Advent begins as a season of walking in ambiguity and insecurity.

As surely as dusk is followed by physical darkness, so too for those of us 'living in the land,' darkness will inevitably cast its shadow across our hearts and lives. Heartache, loss, loneliness, and uncertainty will come like an eclipse, blinding us to the Light.

In seasons of darkness the Psalmist lamented, "Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?" John the Baptizer articulated his experience of the darkness in a question . . . "Are you the one to come or should we expect another." The Apostle Paul "under great pressure, far beyond [the] ability to endure . . . despaired of life itself," as the darkness crashed in on the shores of his weary soul. Jesus in his darkest moment cried out My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Darkness, in one form or another, touches all of our lives.

AND . . . it is into the darkness that the One who would later declare himself, the Light of the world, was born. A popular Christmas song captures the longing of our hearts, "We pray in hope, please hear our cry, or is the story just a lie? We need the child to show the way. Come now, be born in us today." Jesus comes to us, he enters our darkness. The Good Shepherd joins us in the darkest valleys. His presence, our comfort. More than this, of Jesus presence in his personal struggle a ministry colleague recently wrote . . . "This is the closest I get to feeling intimacy in my relationship with Christ."

I was recently introduced to the song, Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me . . .

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

As we embark on the mystery of Advent through the themes of hope, peace, love, and joy, may we consider the darkness into which Immanuel came then . . . and now comes to be present with us.

THE YEAR THAT WAS

Guests often come seeking rest and renewal, the silence and the solitude of unplugged space. Testimonies reverberate with stories of having enjoyed the near presence of Jesus and hearing his voice. Those who connect with us virtually through the expanding counselling ministry would share likewise.

This past year opened space for us here on the mountain to reconnect in person with those who partner with us in this work. Events in the Okanagan and in Alberta provided the opportunity to network, update, and thank our supporters.

This has been a difficult season for those in ministry leadership. One regular guest of Fairhaven has captured what many would describe as paddling upstream at a time when the weight of leadership over the past few years is becoming increasingly evident through weariness, transitions, and ministry exits. The video is available here:

<https://www.fairhavencanada.com/whatweoffer/resources> (Rated: Raw)

This is a wonderful resource for boards and leadership teams as they care for those who serve among them. Please help us spread the awareness and the encouragement it urges by passing this along to decision makers in your church and ministry.

This past year Wendy Ng from Calgary was welcomed to the Fairhaven Board of Directors. Anyone who knows Wendy will be well familiar with the passion, energy, and commitment she brings to her service for the Lord. We are excited to have her as part of the team. We are actively searching to fill two additional vacancies and welcome your inquiries or referrals.



THE YEAR AHEAD

Post pandemic, the experience of ministry leadership underscores the continued need for a safe space like Fairhaven where rest and renewal can be sought.

In this coming year two main areas of focus will be celebration and sustainability.

2023 marks twenty years of God's faithfulness and his provision since the opening of the first cottages on the Fairhaven site. The planning committee has begun their work in anticipation of the June 10th, 2023 celebration. Emerging details follow.

Sustainability will involve a thorough review of our strategic plan and how that will shape and inform the expression of our mission in this next chapter. Who we serve, how we serve, staffing, stewardship of resources, growing our support base, promotion of the ministry, capital expansion, and broadening the invitations to individuals, families, and groups who

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can benefit from what Fairhaven has to offer will be key foci.

Sustainability also acknowledges that the ministry goes forward in strength tangibly supported by committed prayer partners, financial provision in response to the Lord's nudging, and through passionate volunteerism. There is a place for you in the continued work of the Lord through Fairhaven. Let us know how we might on board you or someone you know in the mission of encouraging the health and renewal of Christian leaders! For those already engaged, "Thank you for responding to the Spirit's nudging and for partnering with us in this work!"

Please consider a year-end gift that will continue the work of encouraging the health and renewal of Christian leaders. Received or postmarked by **Dec. 31st, 2022** is the deadline!

FAIRHAVEN 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Join us on site as we celebrate God's faithfulness over 20 years of ministry on this site with a view to the future of where we sense he is continuing to lead.

Saturday, June 10, 2023 • 12pm – 5pm

Live music • Presentations • Food • Open house • Site tours • Capital Campaign Launch

Guest Speaker: Mark Buchanan. Author, Professor, and founder, along with his wife Cheryl, of New Story Community.



On site accommodations are limited. RV spots are available.

An afternoon of remembering, of sharing stories, and of dreaming together. As we plan, help us tell the story by sharing memories through our website portal at fairhavencanada.com/contact

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Reimers, and our team of volunteers, Gwen and I wish you and yours a wonderful Christ-centered season and happiness in the New Year.

Blessings,

Tony Schnare, Executive Director

Donations are welcomed through e-transfer to donation@fairhavencanada.com
For additional giving options, please visit our website at fairhavencanada.com/donate

TESTIMONIALS

"Thank you so much! On behalf of all 8 of us! We had an incredible time of prayer, worship, and encouragement together in a beautiful home and in a beauty-filled landscape."

"Thank you for another wonderful personal retreat at Fairhaven. Fairhaven never disappoints - the cottages nestled into the wooded hillside remains one of our favorite places on the planet. The walks through the woods seemed to suck the noise out of our spirits. Thank you for all you do to provide this amazing space of rest and retreat."

WE'RE ONLINE

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