

## &gt;&gt; COMMENT

## Learning to speak a 'grammar of intimacy'

Lessons from author, bishop wonder Saturday us climate change is most pressing issue of our time

Deirdre Pike  
OPINION

"Are you OK there," asked the well-intentioned fellow, looking concerned as he heard me talking to myself while I struggled up the street.

I was carrying a load of four-foot-high raspberry plants sitting unstably atop my spade.

I wasn't actually talking to myself for a change.

I was speaking to the raspberries, encouraging them in this bold move they were making, thanks in part to my generous neighbour three doors down.

Before her property was sold, she had invited me to share in a few stalks of her bountiful berry patch, so I was transplanting some up to our garden with the hopes of fresh picking come spring.

I might not have offered those encouraging words to the plants, let alone aloud, if it hadn't been for Robin Wall Kimmerer. I had recently heard a couple of interviews with the author of "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants," and left with some messages calling me to attention.

Kimmerer, a member of the Potawatomi First Nation, is a plant ecologist, writer and distinguished teaching professor in Environmental Science and Forestry.

Although her New York Times bestseller is still on my must-read list, at least 769 people listened to it through the Hamilton Public Library in 2020, landing it on the

Top 10 list of borrowed books that year.

When I tuned into the first interview by accident, Kimmerer was expressing her concern over the relationship children have to nature.

"It worries me greatly that today's children can recognize 100 corporate logos and fewer than 10 plants."

I'm not sure the adult version of this research would show dissimilar findings. As soon as I heard the statistic, I started listing all the plants I knew in my head and was relieved when I passed 10.

**While I begin to learn the grammar of intimacy, so as to deepen my relationship with all Earthly Gifts, I, too, am looking for bold action by this government**

However, it's not enough just to know their names. Kimmerer wants us to, "speak a grammar of intimacy," when referring to Earthly Gifts, her choice of phrase over natural resources.

"These beings are not 'it,' they are our relatives."

I heard a similar theme at the recent synod of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara.

A motion passed with a resounding "yes," to have Climate Justice Niagara assist parishes in completing energy audits of their church buildings by the end of 2022.

This will lead them to achieve Part 2 of the motion, creating a plan to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10 per cent by 2024.

Even on mute, the jubilation expressed through the silent laughter and applause of Sue Carson, chair of the Climate Justice Niagara Committee, and presenter of the motion, was loud and clear.

"We will be showing communities that we care and that we love our planet and stand with people who are already suffering from the effects of climate change," Carson said as she shared the motion.

Since becoming the first female leader of the Diocese of Niagara, Bishop Susan Bell has identified the global climate emergency as, "the most pressing moral issue of our time," and continues to speak out for action.

Just before COP26 began, she joined her voice with those of 50 other Anglican and Lutheran leaders from across Canada, in a letter to the prime minister.

"We believe that a better world is possible and that, in fact, we are all called to play our part in building that world together. We stand ready to support bold action by your government at COP26."

While I begin to learn the grammar of intimacy, so as to deepen my relationship with all Earthly Gifts, I, too, am looking for bold action by this government.

We are long past the days of thinking the climate crisis is "much ado about nothing." Today we know it is much to do with everything.

Deirdre Pike is a freelance columnist for The Hamilton Spectator. She is blessed to be a facilitator of Climate Justice Niagara, taking in all she can from these longtime climate activists and lovers of Mother Earth. You can write her much ado about anything at deirdrepik@gmail.com.

## READERS WRITE

LETTERS WELCOME, 250-word maximum, full name required. Send to letters@thespec.com

## Where will downsizing baby boomers go?

Canada may be vast, but our arable land is not. Only 4.3 per cent of the entire Canadian land mass is suitable for growing crops and we lose more and more of it by the moment. One third of Canada's Class 1 farmland is visible from the top of the CN tower. In fact, you can see Hamilton's prime soil from there — as well as the sprawl of Waterdown and Stoney Creek that is paving it at lightning speed. Taken a drive to the new subdivisions lately? Noticed any "affordable" housing? Not so much. A recent letter writer states he "wants to retire to a quiet part of town." Well if it's anything like my parents, it may have to be in another part of the city altogether. Finding appropriate housing for aging parents is next to impossible when the only thing on offer is more single-family homes! My parents would have loved to stay in their own neighbourhood when it was time to downsize, but as there were no apartments or condos. What Stop the Sprawl is advocating for is more "missing middle" housing — semis, townhouses, small apartment complexes and condos to be built tastefully within existing neighbourhoods. This would allow folks like the writer to downsize to a quiet part of town — his own — because there would be a mix of housing in each neighbourhood, for each stage of life.

Nancy Hurst, Ancaster

## Who says single-family homes are must-haves?

"We need the urban boundary to expand aggressively into Flamborough too along the Highway 6 corridor east and west." Says who? You cannot replace land, especially agricultural land. This statement sounds like it is from a developer's handbook.

We are not responsible for making single-home dwellings a "must-have" for anyone who wants it. Most of us worked hard for that down payment and now there is a greater selection of high-density living. Ya, we lived in "mortgage poverty" for decades, so what? I cannot countenance, and many would agree, using up our agricultural lands for any more of this outdated style of development. Further, have you noticed how much our fresh food costs have gone up? We are cutting off our noses to spite our face if we continue to pave over farmland instead of developing within the city's core.

Bruce Craig, Hamilton

## How else could the family feel?

A young girl is killed by a reckless speeding driver who had alcohol on his breath and the Spec headline is "overwhelming hate for the driver?" One innocent life gone and the guilty driver will probably be out of prison in only a few years. I am not sure what other emotion any family member could possibly have. No one can imagine the pain this family is suffering. They deserve better from the Spec.

Mirko Grubisa, Dundas

## What's with GO and Hamilton?

Did the city disrespect GO? The GO train runs from Union Station with numerous stops between Union and Aldershot then the next stop is St. Catharines. We have two stops in Hamilton that it passes on its trek to Niagara Falls. Why are Hamiltonians denied access in Hamilton?

Dan Copeland, Hamilton

## Why not meet virtually?

All the world leaders travelling to Glasgow for a climate conference, couldn't they have used teleconferencing? Instead, they flew on private jets and were squired around in Range Rovers. This is disgusting! Their carbon footprints were all over the world.

The only thing that Justin Trudeau plans to do is increase our taxes. We had the opportunity to rid ourselves of him in an election and we didn't. We better do it next time or we are sunk.

We are importing some of our food, that we could easily grow here, but still we keep building on good growing earth, or paving over it. This PM, who has never had anything denied him, has the impression it never will be — he is wrong. If food becomes scarce he will be denied it as well. I need to repeat myself — this needs to stop, this flying all over the world with no criticism being levelled. Canadians need to wake up!

Susan A. Frandsen, Dundas

## Put the spotlight on real-life superheroes

Just watched video of "Superheroes" scaling the wall at McMaster Children's Hospital with the spotlight on — it looked really cool — however, imagine how much more impressive it would look if, instead of Batman and Superman and Spider-Man coming down the ropes, real life superheroes like ER workers or ICU nurses or first responders or PSWs were the ones scaling down the ropes... now THAT would be impressive.

Rusty Escott, Dunnville

## Many questions about HWDSSB's review of books

After reading Scott Radley's article on the HWDSSB's review of its library books, I have a number of questions.

Who will be on these equity teams? What are their qualifications? Will they include English teachers? Who will they be accountable to? By what criteria will they be judging books? Will they simply be looking for bad words, or will they be examining content and context? Will they reread books in their entirety, or just examine jacket blurbs? What is to be done in cases of ambiguity? Will literary or historical merit be considered? I am sure the HWDSSB means well. Nevertheless, I do get nervous when bureaucrats review books, and would be much happier if these questions were addressed.

Steve Dylag, Dundas



THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

A view of a sunrise behind the branches of a banana tree in East Africa. Writing about tonight's change of the clocks, and the power of light, Thomas Froese writes, "It would be nice if Canada was some tropical nation along the equator with no worry about any of this."

## How many sunrises have you really seen?

Holding on to our sense of wonder for the light as we head into Standard Time

Thomas Froese  
OPINION

Today is a good day to consider the light. Because it's easy to walk around the light, or through the light, or even in the light while still being oblivious to it. A student of mine recently reminded me.

We were looking at a story. This is what she said.

"The remark by Itzie in his response to Ozzie talking about God making the world, and light, made me realize how numb I've become to some of the miraculous workings of God. I've heard the stories so many times, I've lost the sense of wonder that they're worthy of. I hope to get that wonder back."

The story, a Philip Roth short story, is about living in that wonder, living free, versus being bound. It's about light, really.

It starts with Itzie and Ozzie, two young Jewish boys. They're talking about God's power at creation. Itzie is a bit of a dull boy. He'd equate the creation of the animals to God pitching a one-hitter. It's pretty good, but, you know, Meh.

Ozzie, on the other hand? He's full of wonder, especially about the light. "I mean, when you think of it, it's really something." Ozzie says to his buddy, with awe. It's the light, more than anything, that really gets him.

Now if you're like me, you woke up this morning and showered and got dressed without really thinking about the light. The light is here. It's

around. Again. Still. Yeah, yeah. We're all a little like Itzie. I've been alive for about 20,000 sunrises, and how many have I really seen? Then again, you don't look too close at the light — it can sometimes blind you — as much as you look at a tree, or a seascape, or a face that's made visible by the light.

But if there's a time to acknowledge that there's something mysterious and powerful about the light, this is the day. Because tonight we change our clocks back to so-called Standard Time, otherwise known as Winter Time, otherwise known as "It Would Be Nice To Stay On One Clock for 12 Months A Year Time."

Germany and Austria, by the way, were the first to try Daylight Time in the early 1900s, spring for fall. Much of Canada, with about 70 other nations away from the equator, have now done the same annual dance-of-the-clocks for decades. But people don't love the routine. And Ontario, depending on decisions in Quebec and New York, may opt for permanent Daylight Time starting next year. Albertans, you likely know, just rejected that idea. Good thing.

Sure, more light in winter evenings would be nice. But there's a price.

Russia, our cold-weather cousin-of-sorts, tried permanent Daylight Time, a short adventure in grief, in 2011. If you lived in a Russian city on the same latitude as Calgary, you'd see sunrise at 9:30 a.m. Traffic accidents with sleepy drivers, for one, went way up.

In an energy crisis, the Americans, in 1974, also briefly tried permanent Daylight Time. Congress voted 383-16 to ditch it after one year. Business and consumers with an extra hour of evening light, were happy. But Daylight Time actually took more energy. Most recently, the EU moved to scrap Daylight Time altogether, having voted for permanent Standard Time across Europe starting now in 2021. But the pandemic has stalled that.

The biggest knock against Daylight Time, a sunny but misleading term, comes from the scientists. They understand how our bodies have an intrinsic relationship with (surprise) light. Our internal clocks, our circadian rhythms, are attuned to sunlight especially at waking. Thousands of scientists support research showing that without enough morning light in particular, we get more heart disease and obesity, along with mental illness.

Which is to say that it would be nice if Canada was some tropical nation along the equator with no worry about any of this. It's not. Regardless, when you wake tomorrow, take comfort in that extra hour of sleep. Take comfort also in knowing that, as we now fall back into Standard Time, we fall into a more natural, healthy alignment with that precious morning light.

It's good news in this part of the world. With any luck, we might even wake up with a little more wonder.

Find Thomas Froese at thomasfroese.com.



Scan to see more letters to the editor at thespec.com

