

RCW Retirement Roast

Here we are at the long awaited retirement party for Ralph Carl. Being gregarious and loving a great party he gave us plenty of notice in order that this one be just right.

As is the way at Bathurst, volunteering and voluntelling are highly esteemed ways of getting the work done. A group of volunteers met for the party planning about 2 months ago. At that meeting the party planning and executing tasks were chosen and assigned. I was not at the meeting.

One of the activities that I found myself doing was recruiting someone to present the time-honoured retirement roast. It's a good thing that I am not in sales. Six people were approached with no sale. As it is summer my commanding teacher voice was on holidays. Even that did not work. So here I am to do the honours. I believe this would normally have fallen to Audrey to do, perhaps in the form of a skit in which I might end up being the sidekick. Today I am doing my best to channel Audrey's humour.

At Bathurst we like to really know our ministers. From week to week we like to hear what makes them tick. We want to hear of their personal journeys, to be inspired by their struggles and triumphs. Through their reflections, their moments of inspiration and transcendence, we seek a vicarious experience of these moments of liminality. Moments of liminality are a goal in worship planning that Ralph cherishes. I share this with Ralph and it is a goal that we have sought in a number of services, both explicitly and implicitly. If Ralph Carl has done anything with us it has been to model a life of liminality for us.

From the Oxford English Dictionary: Liminal: Occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold.

Life provides us with many boundaries, thresholds, and walls. As we know these take up space, they limit vision, they divide, they set up a duality. It is no wonder that Ralph's life teaches us of living in the liminal space where all have space, where vision is not clouded, where the divisions cease to exist, and where quantum theology rather than duality is the paradigm.

How have we experienced Ralph Carl as liminal you may be wondering? Consider the following. I have done my best to choose examples that will resonate with every number on the Enneagram. Remember the Enneagram? You may become re-acquainted with your type loyal sceptic? Epicure? Giver? as you notice which of these examples resonates most with you.

A fundamental duality is that of ruler and renegade. Where do we find Ralph Carl? Steadfastly standing with the Queen and with Luther.

Another longstanding division is that between traditionalist and hipster. Where does Ralph Carl stand? We're likely to find him grooving to the music at a hip club while expounding on Grandma Wushke's lazy cabbage roll recipe and how best to freeze the portions not needed for the day it is prepared.

What about the juxtaposition of precision crafting and every young man a poet or musician? We find Ralph treading that liminal space between Germany and Cuba, Uruguay, Brazil.

Of course there are the everyday dilemmas that put us on one side of the fence or the other, flashy tie, flashy socks or both? Jeans with keys chained to the belt loop or suit, gluten-free Saskatoon cobbler or gluten free Saskatoon-peach cobbler? You can see Ralph Carl, daily waking into liminality.

The most fundamental of thresholds for Bathurst, as we are re-discovering through our Eco-ethnomics work, is the one somewhere between activism and liturgy. For 18 years Ralph has led us to find and live on this threshold in the liminal spaces he has created and modelled. As we enter the last year of the metonic cycle that began with Ralph Carl's arrival at Bathurst, we find ourselves in a liminal space, between spaces, between places, between mission foci, between ministers, and blessed with the metonic quality, the common multiple of the solar year and the lunar month, that Ralph Carl leaves with us; the ability to harness the activity of the sun's heat and light and temper it with the reflection and beauty of the moon. In the liminal spaces we will continue to meet each other.

- *Kathryn Humphrey*