



## Key Insights for Christian Discipleship @ Jazz Evensong

#19 – Jan 24, 2018

### Caring for Our Neighbourhoods

#### Jeremiah 29:7

*But seek the welfare of the city  
where I have sent you into exile,  
and pray to the Lord on its behalf,  
for in its welfare you will find your own.*

I'm addicted to acronyms.  
I collect them, I make them up,  
I revise and refine them.

*Ad nauseum*, according to many of my long-suffering friends.

But I found a new one this week  
that I think applies really well to living in a city like Vancouver.  
It comes from an American theologian, Greg Jones.  
He used it to describe the world we live in  
and that world, for fully 1/3 of the Canadian population,  
is living in the three urban centres  
of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.  
That concentration of city-dwellers is unique in the world.

Here's the acronym – VUCA.  
It stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.  
Do those words capture a sense of living in this city?  
They do for me.

I suspect people moving to,  
even growing up in our cities,  
find them equally confusing.  
Perhaps they always have.

Certainly, Babylon was confusing to the Jewish exiles.  
They were dragged off from their own country,  
enslaved by the imperial power of Babylon.  
How could they possibly sing the Lord's song  
in this strange, confusing, oppressive city?

The blues as a mode of North American music  
emerged from a similar urban experience.  
Dislocated from an agrarian existence in the American south,  
an existence marked first by slavery, then by poverty,  
the blues sprang from black homes, and corner bars or juke  
joints,  
where people gathered to share their pain  
and overcome it with music that brought them together,  
a music that travelled well from the rural south to the urban north.

There's a strong thread of blues  
running through the playlist tonight.  
Into the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity  
of urban life today,  
it shines a light of resilient hope.

It's a hope that has its roots in the faith of the Bible,  
no matter how far from that home it may have roamed.  
It's a hope that has its roots in the Exodus,  
when God led Israel out of bondage in Egypt.  
It's a hope that sustained God's people in Babylon,  
when they were told to stay put and be a blessing.

I think that's the message from God,  
through Jeremiah,  
down to an urban people like us, all these centuries later.  
The city is your home for now.  
Embrace it and love,  
with all of its struggles, and pains, and sorrows, and threats.  
Sing and play my songs of love in its midst,  
for its benefit,  
out of love for all its peoples.  
Because in their welfare, you will find your own.