

**Liturgy commonly employs** the practice of “call and response”. I believe that this liturgical practice provides a clue to how we are expected to engage in God’s good world. The very idea of “call” counters the belief that we are radically independent individuals and to flourish we must do so on our own terms. A call comes from outside of ourselves and invites us to respond. One thinks of Frodo and friends in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. Ralph Wood captures this idea well – “... “these folks – usually against their own wishes – were embarked upon a Quest – a mission whose outcome involved something immensely larger and more important than their own happiness. ... Gandalf draws a fundamental distinction between a quest and an adventure. An adventure ... is a ‘there-and-back-again’ affair. One undertakes an adventure as a matter of one’s own desire – often from boredom and a lust for excitement. ... A Quest by contrast is never a matter of one’s own desire but rather of one’s calling.” (The Gospel According to Tolkien – p.45)

“Now the word of the Lord came to ...” is a familiar phrase in the biblical narrative that consistently reminds us that “God speaks” and that the life of faith requires that we hear. Divine speaking may come when we least expect it or we may have to engage a posture of waiting and watching for the Word to arrive. This is what Advent invites us to do.

The season of Advent is a time for us to hear and indeed to

see – to listen and to watch. We are to hear and see in such a way that we will be able to gain fresh perspective on the landscape of our lives and of our culture. Advent invites us into a different time – “biblical time” –



## Simone dei Crocifissi (circa 1370) Nativity – Florence

This delightful painting is likely unfamiliar but it expresses a very gentle rendering of the nativity. It is a narrative work – with deep human sensitivity. See the face a Mary for example and the weary Joseph. A gentle pleasing bovine alongside an exuberant donkey each in their own way taking pleasure in the birth of the child. Off to the right side – sheep grazing and a shepherd looking “sore afraid” as he gazes on the heavenly host praising God and saying Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will.

look like to live our lives full of grace and truth? What we are remembering in this season is a time of the divine breaking into history and the calling of humanity to an alternate Kingdom. Engaging Kingdom values poses unique challenges in our technological society as we try to sort out what faithfulness means. At the very least it will mean a posture of resistance to the powerful trends that characterize our culture and lure us to self indulgence. More positively it is an invitation “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God”.

Advent and Christmas are replete with the presence of the arts as with all celebrations: music and drama, dance and poetry, story and a wide diversity of the culinary arts. And art is one of the ways in which we may respond to the call of the Word made flesh.

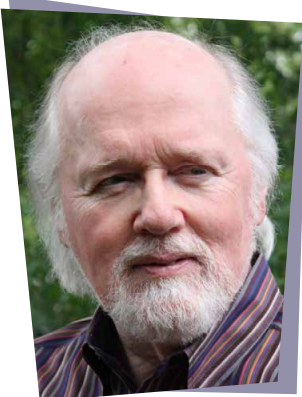
We are grateful to all those who support this work and ask that you consider a year end gift to IMAGO. We are dependent on the support of our friends and are grateful for the work we are able to accomplish because of your generosity.

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where the focus diverges significantly from what we find in “secular time”. With the latter the invitation to consume is everywhere usually laced with some form of sentimentality and no end of feel-good outcomes. N. T. Wright in his little book on Advent with attention to the gospel of Matthew – notes four themes; time to watch, time to repent, time to heal and time to love. These options change the tone of things and pose a challenge to us all.

*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

The story of Advent and Christmas is a call to engage our imaginations and consider what might be – to discern how the extraordinary reality of the Incarnation – “... veiled in flesh the Godhead see” alters our perspective on the world and on ourselves. What might it



## “Crossings” An IMAGO initiative

This project is part of a series that has taken place in London England, Washington DC, New York City and in Amsterdam in 2019. The Toronto version has been initiated by IMAGO now in its 48th year serving church and culture at the interface of art and faith. The public will be invited to visit distinctive art works created specifically to capture the meaning of the Scriptural Stations of the Cross\* in uniquely relevant expressions for our current urban context. We will invite artists to create works for the fourteen Stations of the Cross as well as Triumphal Entry and Resurrection. Multiple venues – religious and civic – will allow the public to make a “pilgrimage” to the stations. In addition to the visual art we will initiate events that include music, poetry, drama, dance and film. As part of the project we will host panel discussions, lectures and conversations that will explore applications of the Good Friday biblical narrative to urban social issues – all providing a unique opportunity for religious presence that speaks into the realities of a secular urban context through the arts.

Our theme is CROSSINGS. Its meaning echoes with “Toronto” – Huron for meeting place, and captures our city’s identity as an intersection of ethnicities, cultures, races, religions and ideas. It also alludes to the possibility for spiritual encounter through the narrative of Good Friday.

As we come to the close of 2019 we are grateful for a year that has provided a number of exciting opportunities to profile artists from both within and outside our network. IMAGO continues to extend its range of partnerships and has been actively engaged in providing venues for artistic events. On April 1st we hosted an evening with British poet Malcolm Guite at Wycliffe College in collaboration with Image Journal and once again we held our annual June event at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. The Executive Director continues to curate visual art exhibits at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries at the CBC Building and at Wycliffe College, Leonard Hall. In each location he conducts public interviews with the artists. In November IMAGO hosted an evening at Trinity College U of T with

We will be encouraging our local audiences to connect the Good Friday story with important themes of social justice, including poverty, racism, refugees, environment and ethnic and religious diversity. Each contemporary issue will be engaged through the arts to increase awareness, bring healing to our brokenness, a bridge over our divisions and compassion to our actions.

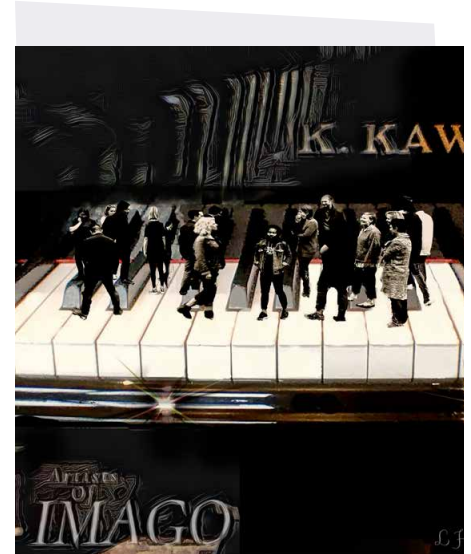
This project will generate ecumenical participation among diverse religious communities including; at least twenty downtown churches, eight seminaries and twelve Christian organizations all focused to bring the Good Friday story to unique public expression through the arts.

We are grateful for the opportunity to take on this initiative which we believe will be good for the city and good for the arts community. Our hope is to gain the backing of a wide community of friends and supporters to assist us in realizing this ambitious project. We are looking to raise \$200,000 to support this project with a significant portion of these funds going to the participating artists. At this time we see before us a steep hill to negotiate but have full confidence that we can gain the momentum needed to get us to our goal of generating a unique exhibit and providing settings for transforming conversations that relate to

two talks on *Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Henri Nouwen* partnering with the Henri Nouwen Society and Trinity College Divinity. We have also launched an email posting under the title IMAGO Reflection which goes out twice a month. If you are not receiving that posting and wish to do so send an email request to [imago@rogers.com](mailto:imago@rogers.com).

Mike Janzen and Kristen Mark Westwood each completed a CD this year as IMAGO artists. Catherine Daniel launched her CD *Sacred Christmas* in November and Kaili Kinnon completed her 18-12 music project. In November we hosted a “soiree” at our home for visual artist Betty Spackman whose installation work *A Creature Chronicle* is also an IMAGO project. The book detailing the work is now available on line.

this iconic story and its wide and deep implications for the world in which we live.



Laurie Haughton Photography  
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### Your support keeps us going.

Donations can be made on the IMAGO website – [www.imago-arts.org](http://www.imago-arts.org) or through Canada Helps. Or donations can be mailed directly to – IMAGO 630 Indian Road, Toronto, ON M6P 1C6.

The most challenging development of this past year has been our application, acceptance and commitment to host a Toronto project focused on The Scriptural Way of the Cross for Lent of 2021. This is a version of Stations of the Cross established by Pope John Paul II in 1991. Though still fifteen months away there is plenty to do to give shape and substance to this very large project. A Steering Committee has been formed with a membership of seven leaders each bringing distinct areas of expertise. So far we have had two meetings and things are well underway in the planning. There is a brief outline of the project detailing some of plans for this special event in the article above.