



Dear Friends in Christ,

I have gotten to the age where I have begun to think about retirement and what I will do with all that time. Watching retired people, it doesn't seem that I will have much "extra time." Recently, one of my sons taught me how to play pickleball. I'm looking forward to that.

I have a couple of projects that I want to work on. One idea is to try to write a book. I'm not creative or artistic enough to write fiction. But I have an idea for a book titled, "The Divine Mysteries." It seems to me that far too many Christians have lost a sense of mystery in our faith. We have sought simple explanations (spiritual bumper slogans) to explain the mysteries of faith. We have stopped wondering about the deep mysteries of faith.

But mystery is essential to a living and inspiring faith. I love mysteries. When I was young one of my favorite authors was Agatha Christie. I love the way a mystery can seem so impossible until the final revelation that puts it all together in a way that I would have never guessed. So it is with our faith. I believe God calls us to live by faith in mystery without jumping to easy answers.

God is a mystery we will never have a mind to fully comprehend. We dare not reduce the Creator of time and space and matter and energy to just a bigger version of ourselves. There is so much about the God that is simply mystery.

Creation is another mystery. How did God bring it all into being? The mysteries of creation are meant to inspire us with awe and wonder. The more I learn about biology and physics, the more in awe of God I am.

The dark mysteries of evil and suffering are mysteries that we can't help but wonder about. How we think about them shapes our attitudes toward life. We dare not give simple, superficial answers to the mysteries of evil.

The mystery of Jesus is incredibly profound. What does it mean that the infinite God became one of us? And how does Jesus' death on a cross and resurrection make a difference in us today? Christians have given way too many simplistic answers to those questions.

The work of the Holy Spirit and of the gift of faith are mysteries that many have given little thought to. How does the Holy Spirit work in us? And why do some people believe when others do not? Why does anyone believe the incredible message of the New Testament?

And the final mysteries of resurrection and heaven are sometimes thought to be too far beyond our imagination, but the Bible invites us to imagine eternity with all kinds of images.

I don't know if I will be able to put this book together, but my purpose would not be to solve the divine mysteries. My purpose would be to invite us all to wonder more deeply at the awesome mysteries of our profound Faith.

Yours in Christ, Phil Nielsen