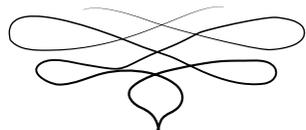




# ADVENT MEMO

DECEMBER 2014



**THE NEWSLETTER OF  
ST. MARK'S UNITED CHURCH,  
115 ORTON PARK RD,  
TORONTO M1G 3G9  
(416) 439-8623  
WWW.ST-MARKS.CA**



## MITTEN TREE

The Annual Mitten Tree project will begin on the first Sunday of Advent – November 30th.

Mittens and gloves are most needed. Other accepted items for the tree include scarves, toques, and even socks.

These items will be distributed to those in need at G.B. Little and Galloway Road Public Schools in the new year.



## FROM THE MINISTER, WELCOME TO DECEMBER!

*By: Paul Hutchison, Minister*

It is the season of Emmanuel – God is with us! It's a pretty big promise. Rather than a distant God, one who came to be with humanity through the birth of the Christ Child. Although we may have questions of the story of the birth narrative, the beginning of John tells us: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God... The true light that shines on everyone was coming into the world." This year, we have an Advent and Christmas challenge. I acquired 144 beautiful red unscented votive candles and gift tags to give out both as a Christmas gift and an invitation to be a part of something that means so much to you, your life of faith at St. Mark's. It is a gift to receive, to reflect on, and to share. Who do you think might have room for an invitation to be a part of our community of light? It is an easy way to open a door into conversation.



Who will you bring the gift of light to this Christmas?

## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR .... ROB PECK

As I write these words, I am looking at a random sampling of news stories from the past week.

On TV, in the newspaper and on the Internet, in Canada and abroad, the news is predominantly bad.

Unfortunately, good news doesn't sell newspapers, generate high TV ratings or generate large numbers of Google hits. Fortunately, the news from St. Mark's in recent weeks is overwhelmingly good!

Some examples,-

- Michael Gomiega, an incredibly talented and enthusiastic young man with a God-given talent for music, has agreed to be our new Music Director!
- Under Michael's direction, the choir is growing and the music they are producing is divine! I overheard them practicing for Christmas last week and I was in heaven!
- Louise Boyd's generous legacy gift and the other monies already in the Embrace the Spirit Fund, together with the ongoing support of the

congregation, give me confidence St. Mark's will continue in the years to come to generously support God's work amongst members of St. Mark's, the local community in which we live and the broader community in Canada and worldwide.

2,700 years ago, the prophet Micah said, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8 - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV))

700 years later God sent Jesus of Nazareth to remind us of what Micah had said. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself?" (Luke 10:27 - NRSV)

It is very fitting that each year we celebrate God's gift of Jesus. May we ever strive to faithfully follow him in doing God's work in our world.

*Amen!*

## MUSIC DIRECTOR SEARCH COMPLETED!



We are excited to announce that appointment of Michael Gomiega as our new Director of Music at St. Mark's. After a very successful interview process, Michael was the best decision we could make and we are thrilled. Michael has a wonderful and diverse musical background with a Bachelor of Music degree (Major in Piano), from the University of the Immaculate Conception, Philippines, as well as considerable experience both participating in and leadership of a broad spectrum of musical endeavours, from teaching to a

continuing role as the Pianist for the Toronto Beaches Children's Chorus. Michael formally starts as our permanent, part-time Director of Music on January 1, 2015.

## DEAR ST. "MARKITES,"

A very big Thank You to all who have supported our ministry at St. Mark's this year!

Although we are running a deficit, please remember all the good things that have happened and are happening in and through our church.

The church board decision, in 2007, to allow our church space to be used by community groups has returned 100 fold - the knowledge that we are ministering to our community as God would have us do.

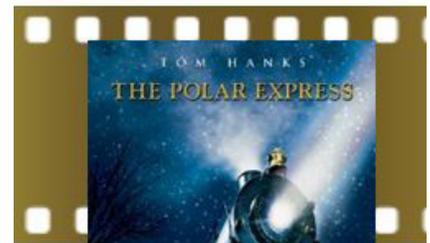
At this "miraculous" time of the year, we thank you for your continuing support & wish you all the very happiest & blessed Christmas.

*Your Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team'*

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS:

Our Free Family Movie Nights were a great success with our audience numbers for September at 80, October at 60 and November at 30. We have been very pleased to see some familiar St. Mark's folks attend as well as some new families who are now coming to church. Special "Thanks" to Paul for his engineering expertise that gets the movie on the wall, to Charlie and Tom - the popcorn makers, and Carolyn and Christian for helping meet, greet and making our guests feel welcome. Our last movie will be "The Polar

Express" on Friday, December 12th. Sunday school has been reorganized. Instead of having a senior class on Sunday mornings, we will have a monthly outing for students in Grade 8 to 12. We have created a list of email addresses for families who have youth, to be advised of plans. Please let us know if you would like to be added to the distribution list or know of friends or neighbours who might. Our next outing will be Sunday, December 21st. Tom and Luella and any youth who are interested will travel to and from



Friday  
December  
12<sup>th</sup>

**Free! Family  
Movie Night**

7pm in the sanctuary  
@St. Mark's United Church  
115 Orton Park Road



Criterion Films Site Video License

**Nut free treats provided**

downtown by GO train to attend the 4:30 pm "The Christmas Story" pageant at The (Anglican) Church of the Holy Trinity, on the west side of the Eaton Centre.

Please let us know if you have a wish list for Christian Education - for children, youth or adults, and we will do our best to offer additional opportunities for shared learning.

LUELLA STEPHENS

*Chair, Christian Ed. Ministry Team*

(416) 283-1267

tom.stephens@sympatico.ca

# THE HELEN JONES' LIBRARY

By: Karen Wigle

## NEW BOOKS



**HEAVEN IS FOR REAL** – A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back. This non-fiction book, written by the parents of Colton

Burpo, follows their four year old's story from emergency appendectomy to his "trip to heaven and back." It was recently made into a movie. Thank you very much to Ruth Joyce, who donated two copies to our library.

**LANDSCAPES OF PRAYER FINDING GOD IN YOUR WORLD AND YOUR LIFE** – this small book explores the power of landscape to spark prayer, and shows us places "that we can inhabit and explore, and meet God as tangibly as might meet a fellow traveller."

**THINK LIKE A FREAK** – the authors of the bestseller Freakonomics want to retrain your brain. They "offer a blueprint for an entirely new way to

solve problems...to think a bit more productively, more creatively, more rationally....no topic is off limits."

**TAKING YOUR CHURCH TO THE NEXT LEVEL WHAT GOT YOU HERE WON'T GET YOU THERE** – "explains the impact of age and size on churches and outlines the improvements that must be made at each point for a church to remain fruitful and faithful to its mission."

**FREE DVD TO TAKE HOME** – Winner of 2 Academy Awards, You Can't Take It With You is "one of the funniest movies ever made, a laugh-a-minute screwball comedy the whole family will enjoy." It stars Jimmy Stewart, Jean Arthur, and Lionel Barrymore.

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICES:

Our next workshop will be on Tuesday January 6th at 7 pm when we will continue our exploration of Landscapes of Prayer: Finding God in Your World and Your Life by Margaret Silf. The response to this book has been so good that we have had several additional requests for copies of the book. If you are finished with your copy or don't think you can attend our January evening please contact me so that we can share the books. I encourage you during the busy Christmas season to use the book to help find ways to connect with God and to take time to take care of yourselves. Ms. Silf writes: "Let the shooting stars delight you, and assure you that in your life's journey there will also be blazes of light that suddenly appear out of the darkness, enlighten the dark path for a while, and lead you a little closer to your destiny." May your Christmas season be full of stars. Thank you, Leslie Wright [wrightj@sympatico.ca](mailto:wrightj@sympatico.ca)

## ST. MARK'S OUTREACH MINISTRY IN 2014...

The Outreach Ministry Team has been occupied with a number of activities in our community. St. Mark's congregation's gifts and support, have enabled the Outreach Team to participate and take action in local initiatives with our warmth, love and generosity. We help change lives each day by contributing to a better or enriched of life for those less fortunate.

This year, the Outreach Team has focused not only on local agencies, but on local agencies with partnered programs designed for children and families. With support from St Mark's Outreach, opportunities are provided for children and families to be involved in some fun, exciting and helpful programs and activities.

Some of the partnered programs, even in a small way, are the building blocks for future success in their lives and our community.

Some programs provide assistance to families so that they are able to support their family needs, including their right to sufficient food to meet their nutritional needs.

With your support of the Outreach

Ministry, you can offer hope and love to those in need; when they are experiencing the darkest times of their lives. Our support provides a firmer foundation in our community with partnered programs such as: Back to school - Back Packs, Mitten Tree, East Scarborough Children's Multicultural Choir, SCHC - Food, Clothing, Furniture banks and Christmas Hampers, Lake Scugog and Ryde Lake camping opportunities. Hosting an "Out of the Cold" weekend Scarborough Community Legal Services. The Circle of Friends. The Holy Chef University of Toronto Scarborough Campus - Positive Space Curran Hall Community Association. Multi-faith Alliance to End Homelessness

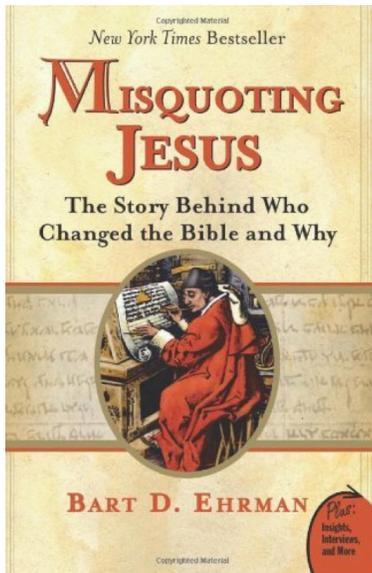
St. Mark's, through its Outreach Ministry, has a voice and presence in the community for those whose voices are often not heard. Our support helps create a better environment by striving to make the lives of all who live in our community be seen as valued contributors to our community.

We do not walk alone.

Your Outreach Ministry Team

# ST. MARK'S BOOK STUDY TO START IN JANUARY!

By: Rob Peck



Once again the Christian Education Team is offering an adult Book Study Group.

Who? Any adult who wants to eat, learn and have fun with other nice people.

What? *Misquoting Jesus* by Bart Ehrman. From Publishers Weekly: "In the absence of any original manuscripts of the books of the New Testament, how can we be sure that we're getting the intended words and meaning? Ehrman, professor of religion at UNC-Chapel Hill, has devoted his life to the study of such questions and here offers an engaging and fascinating look at the way scholars try to answer them."

When? From 7 to 9 pm roughly every other Friday from January to April, 2015 (Day 1 January 9, 2015; Day 2, January 23; Day 3, February 6; Day 4, February 20; Day 5, March 6; March Break, March 16 to 20; Day 6, March 27; Good Friday, April 3; Day 7, April 10; Day 8, April 24; On May 8 we will have our closing party and pick the book or video study for 2016).

Where? St. Mark's.

Why? The purpose of the book study is to have fun and fellowship while adding to our knowledge of our Christian faith.

How? Each session will have one or two presenters who will talk for 20 - 30 minutes about the material. After they are done, there will be 20 to 30 minutes of discussion in breakout groups of five or six. After a 1/2 hr break for goodies (also prepared by volunteers), we will come back into one large group and listen to each of the smaller groups present their views. The main purpose is to have fun. There will be no pressure on anybody to do anything other than attend and enjoy the gathered community. People will only do what they feel comfortable doing. We know that God will provide presenters and goodies!

If you are interested, or if you have any questions, please let us know your name, phone number and e-mail address so that we may contact you directly. You can either contact Carol at the Church office, me, Rob Peck, or place your name on the sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Buy a book from any bookseller or from Rob @ \$14 (no mark-up!)

## FOR ALL YOUTH GRADES 8 - 12

You are invited to join Tom & Luella Stephens, Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> for a youth outing.

We will take the GO train downtown to attend the 4:30 pm 'The Christmas Story' pageant, at The (Anglican) Church of the Holy Trinity.

Reservations for the pageant are required. If you want to attend RSVP by December 15th [tom.stephens@sympatico.ca](mailto:tom.stephens@sympatico.ca) or (416) 283-1267.

## LOCAL FOOD BANK NEEDS OUR HELP

Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities will need our help during the Holiday Season. This, at a time of year when those less fortunate, have a greater need for the Food Bank

Donations to the Food Bank are much appreciated and there is so much we can do. Examples are listed as follows:

*Sugar, Juice, Cereal, Pancake Mix, Kraft Dinner, Crackers/Jam, Cake or Cookies, Vegetarian Chilli, Spaghetti and Sauce, Baby Food or Formula, Canned or Powdered Milk, Canned Cranberry, Seasonal Candy, Canned Pork and Beans or Beef Stew, Canned Fruit and Canned Vegetables, Tea, Coffee or Hot Chocolate, Dry Packaged Beans/Peas, Dry or Canned Pasta, Peanut Butter, Canned Fish, Canned Meat*

Where possible, please choose items with reduced sugars and/or low sodium. There are so many delicious and healthier alternatives that can be non-perishable food items at your grocery store.

We also accept cash donations—simply place your cash or cheque in an envelope marked "Food Bank" and your envelope number & place it on the offering plate.

## SOCIAL COOKIE SALE

Sunday, December 7th, after the service we will have cookies and squares and all things yummy.

Paul has Christmas Puds, and Preserves. Gayle has a table of Christmas Crafts. If you would like to contribute to the sale, please bring your sale items to the kitchen before the service and we will make sure they are packaged and priced for the sale.

Look forward to seeing you there  
The Social Team



*The*  
**STARLIGHT**  
*Ball*



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR  
**FRIDAY, MAY 29<sup>TH</sup> 2015**  
AT QSSIS BANQUET HALL



WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TICKETS IN JANUARY

*DINNER & DANCE*



— — — — —  — — — — —



A TICKET TO THE STARLIGHT BALL  
**MAKES A GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT**

Call Trevor or Sharon White (416) 283-1209 for details.

