

# THE February MEMO



FEBRUARY 2021

WINTER EDITION

The Newsletter of St. Mark's United Church,  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

*By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister*

One message has appeared on many church signs across Canada since last March: *the building is closed; the church is open*. This is certainly true at St. Mark's. This newsletter is filled with stories about the innovative things happening in our church. This place is a beehive of activity!

Winter is a season for many things – both active and quiet. We may marvel at winter's beauty or simply endure these cold months. Winter gives us the chance to slow down and restore our energy. Some of us are drained and disgruntled with the slower pace of life in these days of lockdown. We may feel isolated or restless since many of our routines have been pushed aside. Others may be overwhelmed with additional responsibilities and concerns. Either way, we face an inward winter in our souls. The storms of grief, despair, and unease surround us. Connections with each other are

essential right now. At St. Mark's we continue to learn new ways to connect and share love.

Winter also can offer opportunities for reflection. Next time you are outside for a walk, notice the trees and shrubs. You will see little buds, terminal buds, on the end of the branches. These buds hold and protect the leaves that will appear in spring. Creation provides a wondrous example for us. Let's savour this time for hibernation and rejuvenation before we blossom for the coming season of growth.

Our theme for Lent will be *Growing in Love*. We can grow spiritually as both individuals and as a community while we help each other through this difficult pandemic time. This theme offers much for us to reflect upon as gardeners of plants or gardeners of love. We start with good soil, sow seeds, nurture and tend to them, and watch them blossom.

We will have opportunities to grow through gatherings – starting with our virtual Pancake Supper on February 16. We will welcome two guest speakers from our *Voices of Inclusion* sermon series (details on another page) in addition to our Lenten series *Growing in Love*. For a more reflective, quieter approach, join us for an evening service on March 4. Just as winter leads to spring, Lent leads to Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter. We grow in love and that love blossoms forth.

Let me close with words from a familiar hymn, *In the Bulb There is a Flower*.

***In the cold and snow of winter  
there's a spring that waits to be,***

***Unrevealed until its season,  
something God alone can see.***

There is hope in these winter days. May love and light surround you.

# CHAIR'S MESSAGE

By: Katharina Manassis

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Hello, Everyone:

This is the tough part: the holidays have passed, the winter cold has set in, and spring is still months away. Moreover, COVID isn't going anywhere fast. We started looking forward to the safety brought by vaccinations...only to have shipments cancelled or delayed. We anticipated the January 23rd shift back into red zone...only to face even stricter lockdown measures. No wonder the third Monday of January is considered the most depressing day of the year!

And yet, nature has a way of slowly turning things around. The days are getting longer now, even if we can't perceive it yet. Those extra

rays of sunshine help our brains produce chemicals that gradually elevate mood. The ice that makes our sidewalks treacherous also covers the wetlands for skating fun, and for every disgruntled snow-shoveler there are several excited tobogganers.

St. Mark's has captured that turnaround spirit. We continue to foster joy and connection in our congregation. There is an ongoing book study, an ongoing bible study, and the opportunity to reflect on "Star Words" as well as vibrant, inspiring online services. A Lenten activity for all generations is being planned, as is a take-out spring dinner and possibly a spring plant sale. Our Outreach team continues to engage with the community in a multitude

of innovative, helpful ways. Boxes of crafts and activities keep our children connected to their faith and their community. Our Pastoral Care team ensures nobody is left out of the St. Mark's circle of care.

Staying in our homes with only close family (as we must), we may not see all of this caring activity. It is there though, and will become more and more apparent as our circumstances improve in the coming months. It reminds me of some favorite song lyrics: "Just remember in the winter far beneath the bitter snows, lies the seed that with the sun's love in the spring becomes the rose." (*Amanda McBroom, 1980*)

Blessings,

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## UCC SOCIAL ACTION

“Lately I learned this phrase:  
*qui tacet consentire videtur*”

By: Glen Greenwood

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It is a silence procedure or tacit acceptance procedure (French: *procédure d'approbation tacite*; Latin: *qui tacet consentire videtur*, “he who is silent is taken to agree”, “silence implies/means consent”)

is a way of formally adopting texts, often, but not exclusively in international political context.

- *Wikipedia*

Perhaps you're like me, you want to act but don't know how. Sometimes we may not want to be silent. It may

be that you want to act on social issues but don't know or where or how to begin. This link to the UCC Social Action is helpful in offering suggestions on what we, as individuals, can do.

[united-church.ca/social-action](https://united-church.ca/social-action)

# SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL

*St. Mark's Shining Waters Regional Council reps: Glen Greenwood and Randy Stroud*

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Glen Greenwood and Randy Stroud continue in their role as the St. Mark's reps for the Shining Waters Regional Council (SWRC).

In addition, Glen continues work on the Licensed Lay Worship Leader Committee of SWRC.

We encourage folks to visit the SWRC website to learn more about the life and times of the greater church: [shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca](http://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca)

## SHINING WATERS WEBSITE

The region's website is being re-organized. The website has a wealth of resources: congregational annual meeting resources, Covid-19 updates, and worship resources to name a few. It also has all of the Regional Council policies and the Minutes of the Executive and Commissions. Check in often to keep up to date.

There is a new team within the The United Church of Canada (UCC) called The United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC). This team is a new corporation created by UCC to bring professional real estate expertise to communities of faith to provide them with all of the information needed to make faithful decisions about their real estate. Churches can access the services of UPRC at any stage in their property deliberations. The UPRC team will guide and advise as communities of faith assess options and make decisions on how to best use their real estate assets to renew their mission and sustain a lasting legacy in their neighbourhood. The UPRC team offers a range of services as a one-time consultation, a full package, and everything in between. It is nice to know there is a resource within the UCC to help communities of faith that may be considering doing something with their real estate.

Another team within the UCC named The Communities of Faith Commission has developed a [Collaborative](#)

[Ministry Handbook](#) for Communities of Faith. This resource contains guidance to communities of faith that are exploring collaborative ministry, working together, sharing ministry personnel and resources, and helps with the development of a collaboration agreement. It is nice to know there is such a resource available to communities of faith that may require some assistance in this area.

## CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Communities of Faith Commission has granted blanket approval to congregations to defer their Annual Meeting as per the General Council Sub-Executive temporary amendment. There is information on the Shining Waters website on [Annual Meetings During the Pandemic](#). This is an example of another resource provided to communities of faith to assist during these trying times with pandemic restrictions.

## INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY

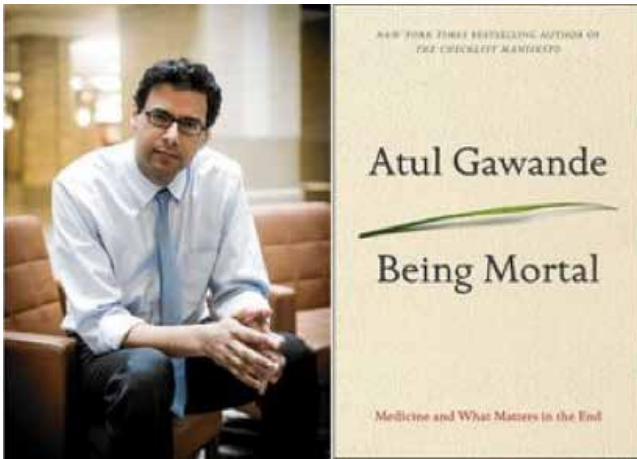
At its meeting in October, SWRC approved the creation of an Intercultural Diversity Commission. Work is progressing on the necessary policy to be added to the Regional Council governance structure and once the policy is in place, the Commission will be populated.

Other responsibilities of the Shining Waters Regional Council include requests from communities of faith within the region for approval of loans, leases, use of restricted funds, major renovations, sale of property, amalgamations, closures, and grants. It is comforting to know that our regional council is functioning during these COVID times to provide resources to communities of faith that may require them, as well as to continue to perform the regular duties to support all communities of faith in the region.

**TEXT BOLDED AND IN BLUE IS A CLICKABLE LINK.**

# ST. MARK'S BOOK STUDY OF "BEING MORTAL" TAKES FLIGHT!

By: Rob Peck



On January 29th, 2021, St. Mark's Book Study Group enjoyed their second Zoom session looking at Atul Gawande's amazing book, "Being Mortal".

18 people enjoyed camaraderie while gaining valuable insights into how we can better look after our loved ones, and ourselves, as we all inevitably get older.

Amazon.ca said of this book: "Medicine has triumphed in modern times, transforming the dangers of childbirth, injury, and disease from harrowing to manageable. But when it comes to the inescapable realities of aging and death, what medicine can do often runs counter to what it should. Doctors, uncomfortable discussing patients' anxieties about death, fall back on false hopes and treatments that are actually shortening lives instead of improving them. Riveting, honest,

and humane, Being Mortal shows how the ultimate goal is not a good death but a good life - all the way to the very end."

Our first session on January 15th looked at the fact that life expectancy, under 50 in 1900, climbed to more than 60 in the 1930s. Today it is more

than 70. There is no better time in history to be old. However, sooner or later independence becomes impossible and serious illness or infirmity strikes. Then what? In our discussions we considered the following questions:

Have you had personal experience with caring for an aged parent or relative? How did it go? What went well? Given the chance what would you do differently? Are your plans for your future impacted by your experience with aged relatives? How?

Chapter 2 of Gawande's book, which we discussed on January 29th, noted that the job of a doctor is to support quality of life. That means as much freedom from the

ravages of disease as possible and the retention of enough function for active engagement in the world. Unfortunately, most doctors feel that if they look after the disease side of the equation the rest will look after itself. Geriatricians look at how to maintain the active engagement since aging cannot be stopped but averting some of the worst effects can, but medicine and society do not value the role of geriatric care; currently geriatric care is being reduced through the removal of departments at hospitals and universities and reduced training of geriatric specialists.

In our discussions we reflected on our reactions to the material; specifically, what most surprised us in this chapter and how reading this chapter has changed how we will plan for our older years.

Would you like to join our intrepid group? It is not too late! For more information contact Rob Peck or Carol Caise in the church office.



# MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK



By: Gayle Feeney



Congratulations on a job well done, St Marks. You have, once again, through your hearts and your hands, been that shelter in this ever lingering Covid Storm. Your generous donations have enabled your Outreach Team to provide valuable contributions to our community and to the wider church.

Speaking of the wider church, our Mission and Services contribution from St. Marks was \$14,500 for the last calendar year! Now that reflects a BIG heart in and of itself! Congratulations on another job well done, St Marks.

Our Sort of Mitten Tree was laden with items for the school children but due to the Lockdown, those items have been redirected to

Agincourt Community Services, where hands and hearts will be warmed for those who frequent there. **WOW** and thank you to all those who with their hands and their hearts supported this worth while venture.

As the New Year dawned, your Outreach team has continued to provide both perishable and non perishable items to support the ever demanding need at the Christ Church Food Bank. In fact, we contributed over \$600.00 in goods to their shelves in January!!! We provided 60 dozen eggs, once again, (no yolk), bread, rice, pasta, cereal, and bananas etc. **WOW**!!!! Another real **WOW**!!!! made possible only, by your generous support of Outreach.

As well, St Marks participated in a bagged lunch for the Out of the Cold programme at the end of January. How can 80 bagged lunches be prepared and your committee still be able to fall within our present Lockdown Guidelines, you ask? Careful planning, cooperation and execution are integral, but more importantly, 'Many Hands Make Light Work'. Six hands did all the shopping. Each pair of hands was

armed and dangerous with masks and remained six feet apart from all other shoppers. All food went to one house where four hands packed grocery store bags with 2 bottles of water, a juice box, a package of cookies, a banana, 2 mini oranges, a granola bar, a bag of chips, tissues, 2 masks and a pair of warm socks. Those bags were then moved to another home where, four more hands jumped up to the starting line to make two sammys to add to the already overflowing bags. Carol, our church secretary busied her hands creating St Marks labels for each Sammy bag. Janet's heart and hands were instrumental in creating an inspirational message to be included on the bags. Two more hands jumped in to load and to take all bags to Agincourt Community Services for distribution on Sunday. Soooo many hands and soooo much love went into this project. Congratulations on a job well done.

Thank you, thank you, thank you St Marks. Your constant support is so appreciated and ever so enabling. Again..... thank YOU, friends.



# DO' VEMBER

By: Gayle Feeney



Your Within Reach Outreach team seemed to be asking you for money each month and wanted each of you to see that November would be different.... hence DOvember. The following is a compilation of the many acts of DOvember that were submitted this year. Thank you to those who supported this venture.

From people to plants to animals, the folks at St Marks have been DOING DOvember, during this somewhat dreary month, and in so DOING their acts of kindness have made the lives of so many better. Our earliest entry came on Day one when one of our congregants reported that her DOvember idea covered 3 seasons. Nasturtium plants were purchased

last year and like Topsy they grew and grew. Their blooms were shared with family and friends that year. In the fall their seeds were saved and replanted in the spring. During the pandemic, they grew and grew and brought beauty and life once again to soooo many neighbours, friends and family.

Soup kitchens are alive, well and operational, as many received the DOvember gifts of soup, bringing warmth and strength to soooo many in our neighbourhoods. As well, meals were made and shared with sooo many seniors, welcome recipients of a DOvember act of kindness

Pillows were made to accompany the mats made by another congregant.

Mask makers, cookie makers and packers were an integral part of the DOvember of the collaborative work for our own congregants.

Gift cards for Tim's and McDonalds were purchased for the homeless, waiting at the crossroads .... As well, paying it forward for the customer behind them in the Starbucks line.... Gift cards for the essential service workers.....Such DOvember gifts for others, who will in turn feel kindly toward others.

DOvember rides to appointments and grocery runs for others were

offered, as a gift of kindness.

Bringing in a neighbour's recycling and garbage tins each week not only helped the neighbour but saved family the extra trip to DO this task.

DOvember captured countless hours for ST Marks folks as they participated in two very important fund raisers.

A DOvember volunteer for the United Way, brings hope to others.

As a tall guy, this DOvemberer reached up to a high shelf for a fellow shopper, making life easier for the shopper. Speaking of shoppers, our DOvemberers are also shopping for their senior friends and neighbours. Pets have not been forgotten as meds were picked up for a friend's animal.

A shout out to these DOvemberers, who make calls and visits to isolated neighbours in the community.

A DOvember gift of weeding and raking leaves was offered to neighbours.

The gift of music was presented at a local Remembrance Day service.

Even the smallest act of kindness matters

It's like a ripple in a pond, flowing positive energy forever outward to infinity. ANON

Let it be YOU.

# RED ENVELOPE CAMPAIGN



*By: Gord Maunder, chair*

Thank you to the folks who returned their red envelopes prior to Jan.1/21. 38 envelopes were returned and these raised approximately \$7500.00.

Some folks found other ways to make their annual end-of-year offering. and this made it possible for St. Mark's to end the year 2020 in

a surplus position. The Stewardship and Finance team thank you for your generosity and support.





# HOW ABOUT OUR PANCAKE SUPPER?

## WHAT DOES “PANCAKE TUESDAY” HAVE TO DO WITH LENT?

The early church decided Christians should observe a period of fasting and penance during the period leading up to Easter, imitating Jesus' 40 days of fasting and reflection in the wilderness. In the middle ages the church set very rigid rules around the fasting: no meat, eggs or rich foods (except on Sundays). On the day before Ash Wednesday, people confessed their sins, a process known as “being shriven” and hence the name “Shrove Tuesday”. They also realized they wouldn't be using lard and eggs for 40 days. The solution? Pancakes! What better way to use up their supply of eggs and lard? ...and so the tradition began! In French the day became known as “Mardi Gras” or “Fat Tuesday”. Mardi Gras

became a day to let one's hair down and experience what will be given up the next day as the period of abstinence and serious reflection commences. As time went on, there may be less fasting, abstinence and serious reflection and more “letting hair down” on Mardi Gras (e.g. New Orleans and Rio).

## DO IT YOURSELF PANCAKE SUPPER

This year Shrove Tuesday is February 16th. We can get together

for the fellowship we enjoy during our traditional pancake supper. But it's going to be a little different! Watch for details and other pancake recipes in the SM News. The initial thought is that we can gather on Zoom with Alissa offering some games and Janet providing an Ash Wednesday/Lent activity (no ashes though). .... And you have to do the cooking!

If you want to try a pancake supper at home, here is the recipe we use:

*By: Tom & Luella Stephens*

## PANCAKES

### What you need:

#### Dry Ingredients

- 1½ cups flour (315 ml)
- 2 Tbsp white sugar (30 ml)
- 1 Tbsp baking powder (15 ml)
- ½ tsp salt (2.5 ml)

#### Wet Ingredients

- 1 egg beaten
- 1¼ cups milk (300 ml)
- 2 Tbsp melted butter or vegetable oil (30 ml)
- ¼ tsp vanilla (1.25 ml)

### How you put it together

1. Sift dry ingredients together
2. Stir wet ingredients together
3. Stir wet and dry ingredients together until smooth. It will be necessary to add more milk if the batter is too thick.
4. Fry in greased frying pan until bubbles appear. Flip once only.

*Sorry! You are also going to have to do the dishes!*

