



# JUNE MEMO

The Newsletter of St. Mark's United Church, 115 Orton Park Rd, Toronto M1G 3G9 • (416) 439-8623 [www.st-marks.ca](http://www.st-marks.ca)

JUNE 2019

SUMMER EDITION

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

*By: Daniel Reed, Minister*

On Sunday, I was practicing my sermon in the sunshine out in the back field when Raijko and Asher came over to visit. I explained that when they went to Sunday School, I talked to everyone for a little bit. They thought that was pretty neat.

Through Lent and into Easter, we have experimented in worship, exploring how different practices contribute to our relationship with God. We called out our prayers, we spoke to one another, we stripped the altar, we lay palm branches under the cross.

Through that time, here are some of the words that I have shared –

‘The renewal of the heavens and the earth is emerging in our midst, through the love that we have for

one another and our community, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. As we step towards that new thing, the Spirit rushes out to greet us; it gives us the chance to try again, and nurtures us with the fertilizer for that new thing to grow.

At the table, the disciples experience God's presence close enough to touch. From an empty tomb, Jesus rises as the first-born of the resurrection, and that third day is the first light of the new dawn; his story represents the inauguration of that process of renewal.

Over the course of our lives, we have each encountered God's guiding presence, have each been invited into newness, have each experienced resurrection. As we take part in that resurrection, we begin to hold our self-interest more loosely, and Christ increasingly begins to live within us; and we can trust that living presence

to guide us to unity with the divine like a child reaching to their parent.

This summer, we'll have the opportunity to hear different voices and new perspectives, and to grow in faith through our encounter with their wisdom. I am grateful for those who have volunteered to lead in worship. I am also grateful to be able to put my energy into visiting with people. Please give me a call, and we can talk together.

As we celebrate Pentecost, we will all be outside in the sunshine as the participants in the Sunday School talk for a little bit. We'll all hear different voices and new perspectives, we'll experience new dimensions to our relationship with God, we'll eat at the Table and the table, we'll be empowered by the Spirit of God within us.

Already, in our midst, we can witness renewal. Thanks be to God.

## PREPARING A PLACE

*By: Charlie Wardell*

Did you notice in the news? St. Stephen's Presbyterian, just down the street, is looking to build affordable housing. Thanks, Alissa, for bringing this forward! Many of us remember walking the big wooden cross down the street with the St. Stephen's folks for Good Fridays.

St. Stephen's has applied to the government for funding to replace their

building. The new place would have not only a church, but also an 11-storey apartment building. It will service multiple areas, including the Boys and Girls Club, indigenous people, and people with developmental disabilities.

As we engage with the community, we too need to look around and see if our place is ready.

St. Mark's building is one of our many assets. The layout of our sanctuary invites closeness and community. It enables us to do things like the Amazing Yard Sale and Movie

Nights. Our downstairs is home for diverse groups like the Anniversary Group and Holy Chefs.

And we could do more with our community and for ourselves with easier access between our upstairs and downstairs. WheelTrans gets to our front door, but mobility challenged people have difficulties getting to our downstairs. Our fall bazaar spans both floors, but it's not practical for walkers and wheelchairs to go out the front door, down the

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driveway and then along the ramp to the downstairs door. All the more so in rain, snow and ice.

We're being asked to do what we have always done. To do more. To remember those different abled. To be inclusive.

The Property Team is proposing an elevator. It's a good idea. They have a solid plan. We are working out how to make it a reality. In some ways we already know. It's up to us. Together we can make this happen.

When the time comes, we'll reach into our hearts and give.

For that, and so much more, we are blessed.

## THE HELEN JONES' LIBRARY

By: Karen Wigle



As you put together your summer reading list don't forget our church library has a wide range of books to inform and entertain. How you read these?

*1,519 All Natural All Amazing Gardening Secrets - Expert Tips for Gardens and Yards of All Sizes.*

*Make It! Don't Throw It Away- Create Something Amazing* – in the Children's section.

*Galore* – Newfoundland fiction by prize winning novelist by Michael Crummey.

*The New Interpreter's Study Bible New Standard Revised Version with Apocrypha.* "Sixty distinguished scholars have provided background and insight...Features include

extensive historical and theological annotations... brief introductions and outlines for each biblical book... background and insight regarding particular themes and passages... maps detailing the biblical world at various historical periods."

*The Apprentice - Trump, Russia and The Subversion of American Democracy* by Greg Miller. This well received non-fiction account of the Russian involvement in the last U.S. election is recent and topical.

## UPDATED FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF MAY 26, 2019

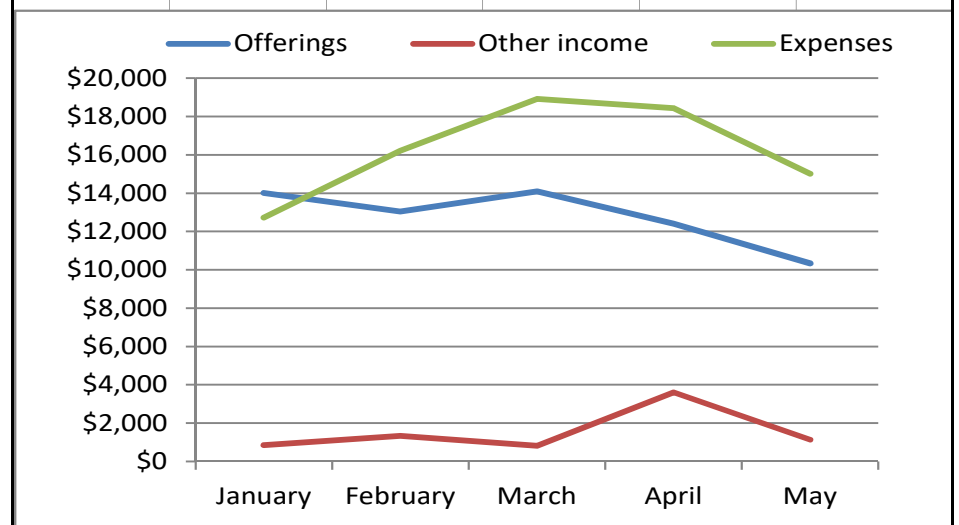
By: Gord Maunder & Jane Greenwood

The following report brings us up to date to the end of May services re our St. Mark's U.C. financial health. I am happy to report that the PAR donations are being maintained as pledged. However, there is a concern re the additional offerings being below expectations. As summer is upon us and the church expenditures do not stop, please keep St. Mark's in mind as you consider your financial plans ahead. Some of our traditional fund raising events are still to happen and these should make our financial picture brighter in the fall.

Blessings, Gord Maunder (chair of F & S team)

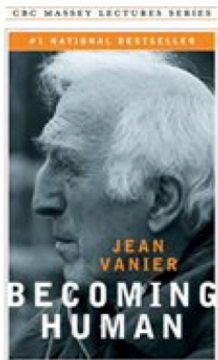
### Offerings and Other income vs Expenses

Month	January	February	March	April	May
<b>Offerings</b>	\$14,010	\$13,040	\$14,100	\$12,410	\$10,330
<b>Other inco</b>	\$850	\$1,339	\$818	\$3,607	\$1,132
<b>Expenses</b>	\$12,720	\$16,210	\$18,915	\$18,435	\$15,005



# ST. MARK'S BOOK STUDY, 2019/20

By: Shirley Criscione



On May 24, 2019 St. Mark's book study group celebrated another wonderful session end by feasting at a pot luck supper hosted by Luella and Tom Stephens. Thank you from everyone

in the group to Tom and Luella, the consummate hosts. After an amazing meal, much laughter, scintillating conversation and sheer joy shared in a beautiful home, we proceeded with the book selection process for next year's study. Many people presented very thought-provoking suggestions.

We chatted, we debated, we voted and decided on Jean Vanier's book *Becoming Human*. Please feel free to join the group next year and expect conversation, thoughtful sharing, caring connections and of course – food (it is a United church, after all). Speak with Rob Peck (our leader) or with anyone else in the group if you're interested in joining the book study group for the 2020 session. All are welcome. The Book Study typically runs roughly every second Friday evening from January through May with breaks for sundry competing events like Easter and March Break.

A big thank you to Rob for continuing to lead the book study.

Here is the list of books that we were considering for next year's study in case you're interested in expanding your reading of current texts about our faith journey.

**Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks** by Diana Butler Bass. In *Grateful*, Bass weaves together social science research, spiritual wisdom, and

contemporary issues as she calls for a richer understanding and practice of gratitude. What emerges are surprising insights about the power of thankful living to change how we treat one another, and how we might transform our world.

***Grounded: Finding God in the World—A Spiritual Revolution*** by Diana Butler Bass. The distant God of conventional religion has given way to a more intimate sense of the sacred that is with us in the world. This shift, from a vertical understanding of God to a God found on the horizons of nature and human community, is at the heart of a spiritual revolution that surrounds us—and that is challenging not only religious institutions but political and social ones as well.

***Jesus in the World's Faiths: leading thinkers from five religions reflect on his meaning*** by Gregory A Barker. What Jesus and his teachings mean to contemporary Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the context of their traditions and in their personal faith experiences.

***Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*** by Elaine Pagels. Pagels returns to her investigation of the "secret" Gospel of Thomas, and breathes new life into writings once thought heretical. As she arrives at an ever-deeper conviction in her own faith, Pagels reveals how faith allows for a diversity of interpretations, and that the "rogue" voices of Christianity encourage and sustain "the recognition of the light within us all."

***Why Religion*** by Elaine Pagels. Why is religion still around in the twenty-first century? Why do so many still believe? And how do various traditions still shape the way people experience everything from sexuality to politics, whether they are religious or not? In *Why Religion?* Elaine Pagels looks to her own life to

help address these questions.

***Seven Fallen Feathers*** by Tanya Talaga. "Tanya Talaga's powerful book is a hard-hitting story of the realities of Canadian racism, complicity, and Indigenous suffering. It is also a testament to the resilience of the Anishinaabe families who endure the crushing impacts of historic and contemporary injustices. In spare prose and a direct voice, Talaga documents the tragedies of the lost lives of Indigenous youth while creating a compelling narrative that educates the reader on the sad history of Indigenous-White relations. This book is a crucial document of our times, and vital to the emergence of a true vision of justice in Canada."—Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing Jury Citation

***Becoming Human*** by Jean Vanier. In this pivotal work, Vanier clearly shows how we can live in peace despite our many differences. This book has inspired many people to rethink their perceptions and attitudes toward people who have disabilities and become more involved in their communities. It has been central to discussions, retreats, workshops, research and teaching. Vanier shows how, through genuine encounters, we can resolve conflict and see difference as fruitful. Through his work at L'Arche, Vanier is a powerful advocate for the weaker, more vulnerable members of society. They have been his teachers, he writes, and it is his hope that he can reveal a bit about what he has learned, and is still learning, about helping others to discover our common humanity.

It was a difficult choice! Each book had many strong supporters. It took 4 votes using the ranked balloting system some have proposed for our political elections. After each vote we dropped the lowest one or two

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books off the list until *Becoming Human* by Jean Vanier was the last book standing.

The picture shows Rob happily posing with Katharina Manassis and Carol Collinson, the two ladies who, completely independently, both

decided to recommend *Becoming Human* as our book for 2020.

Rob has ordered 20 books from Indigo which we expect to be able to offer to interested people for \$15. Do let Rob or Carol in St. Mark's church office know if you are interested in getting your own copy.



## INNOVATION AT ST. MARK'S: ROOTED IN INCLUSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

*By: Lexi Salt*

I have always loved my church. First of all, St. Mark's folks give the best hugs! Then there is the abundant food at every meeting and social event. When Jesus distributed the seemingly endless supply of fish and bread in Matthew 14, he clearly was thinking about our church. Finally, I resonate strongly that we are a "progressive, inclusive and life-affirming congregation". My faith has always been very tied into my social justice views and activism. This started at a young age with volunteering with Outreach, through the Christmas Hamper Project and Out of the Cold, and led into the rest of my life.

I am proud of my church. I am proud of our Pride flag in the sanctuary and our beautiful land acknowledgement. I remember when I was younger, people were always shocked when I told them that my minister was gay. For them, the Church was one of the driving forces behind homophobia and it has been. However, I grew up

in this beautiful, supportive faith environment where inclusion was the norm. As I have grown older, I have realized that there is a difference between an inclusive mandate and seeing that actively reflected. When I look into the congregation, I do not see the diversity we so often preach about exemplified. We do not accurately represent the Scarborough community. I want St. Mark's to be home to more people of colour, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, low-income members of our community, etc. My God is a God for all people, not just those with privilege.

This is why I am passionate about the Innovation Team at St. Mark's. For those of you who have not heard about this new committee, "the ministry of the Innovation Ministry Team shall be to formulate and create new and non-traditional forms of church to meaningfully engage with the congregation and broader community, with particular focus on welcoming and meaningfully including those most marginalized." We are trying to bridge the gap between St. Mark's mission of inclusion and actually seeing it in practice. How can we invite those who are currently not present, without "shoving them in

the door"? (which happened to be Raijko's innovative suggestion)

This is what we worked on at the AGM. For those of you who were not there, I did a creative consultation exercise with the congregation, using lots of colourful sticky notes. These were the questions that I asked. Feel free to reflect on them and if you have any feedback, please contact myself or Daniel.

**1** What does innovation look like for you for St. Mark's? What kinds of innovation would you like us to consider and in which facets of congregational life?

**2** How would you like St. Mark's to develop in the next 5 years? In 2024, what do you hope the congregation looks like and what work do you hope we do?

**3** What groups of people aren't meaningfully represented in the St. Mark's community? How can you imagine us becoming a more hospitable space for them?

**4** How can you imagine supporting the work of the Innovation Team?

May we work together to build a church community that truly reflects our diversity, celebrating our differences while recognizing our commonalities!

## Upcoming Events

### CELEBRATE CANADA DAY

*By: Rob Peck*

Rob and Julia Peck invite you, together with your family and any visiting out-of-town guests, to our 21<sup>ST</sup> Annual Canada Day Celebration.

**WHEN:** Monday July 1<sup>st</sup>

**TIME:** 3 pm until the last person leaves

**LOCATION:** 43 DrArcy Magee Crescent, Toronto

**RULES:** You provide the beverage of your choice and your choice of appetizers, salads or dessert; we will provide burgers, sausages, chicken and buns.

**RSVP:** to Julia & Rob Peck (so we have some idea of how much food to buy!) at (416) 284-3975 (Home), (416) 569-3646 (Cell) or robpeck40@gmail.com.

### BAZAAR & CRAFTS MARKET – NOV 23<sup>RD</sup>

*By: Luella Stephens*

Donations of crafts and gift items for our church tables at the St. Mark's Bazaar & Crafts Market November 23rd, will be appreciated. Big or small, we will welcome them all! We would like to have an assortment of tree and other Christmas ornaments, themed gift baskets, and decorated gingerbread houses.

### ST MARK'S CPR/AED TRAINING SATURDAY, JUNE 15 AT 2:00 P.M.

St. Mark's will be hosting a CPR/AED training workshop which will be led by Michael Wilson of LionheartCPR.

The session will begin at 2:00 pm and run until about 5:00 pm.

It is a hands-on workshop that covers all the key topics and skills of adult CPR, defibrillator use, adult choking, etc. Please be aware though that this is not a certification course, no official certifications will be issued, although letters of participation could be provided.

The cost per person is \$20 based on a minimum enrollment of 10 people and we have set the maximum enrollment at 20 participants. As this is certainly a life affirming and possibly life saving exercise the enrollment costs for this event would be paid for through the Christian Education Embrace the Spirit Fund.

If you are interested in participating in this training course please sign your name to the list which will be posted on the bulletin board at the back of the church or contact Carol in the church office (416) 439-8623 or Bart Boniface through e-mail at bartboniface@gmail.com

*You may save a life someday!*

### ONE REMAINING PHOTO SESSION – JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup>

CHURCH PHOTO DIRECTORY ANNUAL UPDATE

If you would like to have your photo replaced in the church directory, or if you want your photo added, please come to the Friendship Room on **June 23, - before church starting at 10:00 am, or after church.** If June 23<sup>RD</sup> does not suit you, please email: tom.stephens@sympatico.ca or contact Luella Stephens: (416) 283-1267 to make arrangements to have us take photos in your home, at the church, or any other suitable location.

### CANOE, BUTTERFLIES, WILDFLOWERS! PLANTING DAY SUNDAY JUNE 23 AT NOON

St Mark's in partnership with the Suzuki Foundation, will be making our grounds pollinator friendly!

Please join us in the front of the church after the service to help plant this garden, and celebrate our commitment to the environment during Pollination Week.

Our garden bed is the inside of a canoe, generously donated by Sharon and John Banks. The canoe reflects our Canadian heritage with our indigenous and European explorers who used this essential

and versatile boat throughout the wilderness. We also recognize and celebrate our continued use of canoes for fun and recreation.

The wildflowers bear nectar and pollen throughout to growing season, all of which are attractive to and essential food for bees, hummingbirds, moths, flies and butterflies. These animals are effective pollinators which help to fertilize our fruits and vegetables - essential for our survival!

A group photo after the planting will also be a great way to record this fun event!

For more information or if you would like to get involved, feel free to speak to Karen Boniface or Brian MacFarlane.

# LABYRINTH REFLECTIONS

*By: Katharina Manassis*

"Thanks to all who participated and helped facilitate the Lenten Labyrinth Reflections this year! ...and that includes our many "chair helpers" who cleared and re-constituted the sanctuary before and after each walk. The tall, open room, light from the stained-glass window, and gentle music, provided a beautiful and serene "sacred space" to experience the wonder of the labyrinth journey. We experimented with different styles of music, with walking together and alone, and with a variety of reflections and reflective activities in the Narthex. Twenty walkers participated in the series, and many came more than

once so we had groups ranging from six to eleven people. Most gave a resounding "yes" when asked about wanting further walks, and several expressed interest in learning about

other spiritual practices too. We are truly blessed at St. Mark's with both an inspiring place and so many inspiring people."



## WE HAD A BALL!

*By: Trevor White*

On the evening of Friday, April 26th the 2019 Starlight Ball took place and was successful in raising \$2,056.60 for St. Mark's. The Organizing Team wishes to thank those who purchased tickets and who donated door prizes, both individuals and businesses. The team also appreciates the special attention we received from the Qssis staff and the management's donation of two bottles of wine for each table. This event was a definite "fun-raiser" with great food, dancing, door prizes and socializing with friends. Be sure to mark April 24th on your 2020 calendar - the date of our next Starlight Ball!



## ART SHOW/SALE

*By: Melinda Calway*

Thank you to all those that helped with the preparation, running and cleanup of my art show. And thank you for all those who came out, purchased art and had a snack at the cafe. I've been doing this seed project for more than a decade and this time \$1,100 of the proceeds have been donated back to St Marks. I like having my art show at St Marks because I always know I will get the support of my Saint Mark's family. Thank you all!

## SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL

*By: Randy Stroud & Glen Greenwood*

Our new Shining Waters Region had its first meeting over the May 25, 26th weekend in Barrie. Daniel and Glen attended the Saturday sessions. Our new region includes about 150 churches. [We will share news from the meeting as we are able.] Kathryn Moase was nominated to serve on the Intentional Interim Ministry Committee and as a Regional Pastoral Relations Liaison. Daniel was nominated to serve

on the Council Executive, Glen was nominated to serve on the Licensed Lay Worship Leader committee. Our Regions website is: <https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/> We are also on facebook Shining Waters Regional Council. Please do check them out! It is written:

**Isaiah 43:19 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

*Blessings,*