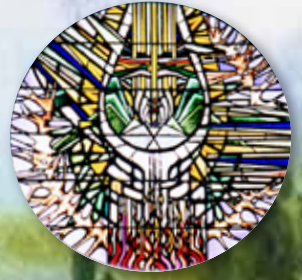


THE

Spring



MEMO

MAY 2021

SPRING EDITION

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)

Last night  
the rain  
spoke to me  
slowly, saying,  
what joy  
to come falling  
out of the brisk cloud,  
to be happy again  
in a new way  
on the earth!

# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister

New life is springing forth from the ground and branches. Summer will soon arrive. What is growing in you this season? Life may seem stunted as our days and nights are filled with many struggles and concerns. Some of us are lonely or weary after a year of isolation. Good news is spreading as vaccination numbers increase, yet we long for more and for justice to prevail for all people.

Love in action abounds at St. Mark's; we continue to find new ways to make a difference in this world. I am grateful for the energy and commitment that thrives at St. Mark's. Please read about some of the ways in this edition of the Memo.

We can still find joy and hope in our lives. I often turn to Creation to

encounter joy and God's presence. Listening to the gentle rain brings joy. The cool soil between my fingers tells me that the good earth is alive and so am I. We still can savour the beauty of a lovely sunrise or sunset. Relish the sights and sounds on a walk along Highland Creek, Rouge Beach, or along the Bluffs. The time to gather in small groups and eventually larger ones will come. Let's reflect on where we will focus our attention when restrictions are lifted. What new way on the earth is our Creator calling us towards living? In the meantime, may you be filled with love, peace, and new life.

May you be filled with loving kindness and peace.

FROM: Last Night the Rain Spoke to Me,  
BY: Mary Oliver

# CHAIR'S MESSAGE

By: Katharina Manassis, St. Mark's Board Chair

“I keep losing masks in the laundry. Remember when that only happened with socks?”

Hello, everyone:

Spring is in the air, though we must still breathe it in through masks. The UCC inaugural Mental Health Week highlights inclusiveness, but also reminds us of our own vulnerability. Schools and shops continue to be closed, and many whose work depends on them languish. We celebrate every time someone gets their “shot”, but vaccines are still not accessible to all. There are logical reasons for these circumstances, but also a deep, heartfelt sense that it is all taking so incredibly long...

Some people are really good at making lemonade out of lemons. The St. Mark's stalwarts are selling beautiful plants, creating musical marvels for worship, delighting children with Easter crafts, collecting contributions for the food bank, and carving out a labyrinth in the back forty, albeit one household at a time. We've even signed up to construct an elevator to ensure a more

accessible building, in faith that we will eventually worship there again.

Still, not everyone is so naturally optimistic. Some of us must find our own ways of coping, individually and (where safely possible) together. My favorite approach is “fewer newscasts and more humour.” Whenever you don't have online work, children to tutor, or some other job society considers productive, tune in to your favorite brand of comedy! In that spirit, I share a short reflection which occurred to me on laundry day.

## THE MISSING MASK

There are many different, natural reactions when fewer masks come out of the laundry than went in.

The nostalgic: “I keep losing masks in the laundry. Remember when that only happened with socks? Those were the days!”

The passive aggressive: “Honestly, officer, I would have worn my mask

but it got lost in the laundry.”

The anxious: “What if I can't find the missing mask? What if I can't find time to wash again till the weekend? What if the delivery guy knocks on my door the day I run out of masks? What if...”

The depressed: “Another mask gone (sigh). They never last long.”

The paranoid: “Before, only the socks disappeared in the laundry. Now, the masks are in on it too. It's a conspiracy!”

The mindful: “In this moment, the mask is gone. I must focus on my breath.”

The optimistic: “It's only static cling. The missing mask will eventually turn up attached to one of my clothes.”

And then, there is the realistic reaction, also known as Schrodinger's mask: “The mask may be in the washer, or not. We cannot know without opening the door.”

Stay safe and God Bless.



# ELEVATE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

*By: Randy Stroud & Glen Greenwood*

---

Your Shining Waters Regional Council reps (Glen and Randy) monitor the Shining Waters (SW) website [shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca](http://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca) and watch for interesting news or articles that may be of interest to members of your Board or the entire congregation. A very recent example of something new on the SW website that was shared with your Trustees, was a notice that the SW website now includes information on Grants and Funding. Why would Trustees be interested in information about Grants and Funding you may ask? Well we're glad you may have thought about asking this question, and we are pleased to provide an answer, so here goes....

A special congregational meeting was called for Thursday April 29th to discuss and vote on a plan to finance the construction of a proposed elevator for the St. Mark's (SM) building. Members of the SM congregation who attended the meeting were told that SM currently has some money to help pay for the elevator project, will have some money transferred from accounts held by SM's Trustee and would like to ask the SM Trustees to borrow money to help pay for the elevator

project. The SM Trustees would be interested in information about funding available to congregations, for the loan they will seek for the elevator project.

Information on the SW website includes details about a Capital Assistance Fund that is available to congregations. The purpose of the Capital Assistance Fund is to provide financial assistance for the renewal and development of congregations and other ministries. Low-interest loans are the main way the church invests in local projects. The ability to repay a loan is obviously a key factor, and the SM congregation voted to support the elevator project financially at the April 29th congregational meeting. By loaning money to congregations for capital projects, and then congregations repaying the loan over time, money is "recycled" for use in various ministry situations. Loans of more than \$100,000 must be secured by a mortgage. Our elevator project is under the \$100,000 threshold and the loan needed to help finance the elevator project is well under the threshold, so no mortgage is required for the loan our Trustees will arrange.

The Capital Assistance Fund is managed by the General Council Office and each application for a loan requires regional approval. There is money in the Capital Assistance Fund from sources like the sale of church properties, where, for example, a congregation was not able to carry on and the property was sold as the congregation disbanded. You will recall that the congregation at Church of the Master had to disband some time ago, however, instead of selling that property, the General Council Office decided to maintain the property for future use. Some church properties were sold to developers who built housing on the former church site. Money in the Capital Assistance Fund is being put to good use to fund capital projects like our elevator project.

Well now your knowledge about funding information on the SW website has been elevated on multiple levels, using our elevator project as an example. We would be happy to answer any other questions you may have about SW or information available to you on the SW website.



# THE OUTDOOR LABYRINTH IS IN THE WORKS!

*By: Karen Boniface*

---



At the April 8 church board meeting, the building of a labyrinth in the lawn beyond the parking lot was approved. As only one indoor labyrinth walk was held upon the onset of COVID-19 last year, it was felt that an outdoor labyrinth on our property would be a further accessible enhancement to find peace in these uncertain times.

It is a modified 3 circuit Chartres labyrinth, which will be made of grass, wood chips and logs. This will be built

by hand, shovelful by shovelful. We will also be creating a planting bed for future vegetable gardening and enhancing the degraded wooded area. A group of hardy souls, consisting of Tom Stephens (whose brainchild started the ball rolling), Brian MacFarlane, Linda and Todd Meyer and Karen and Bart Boniface are planning and building this beautiful amenity. The work is considered church maintenance, with individual

visits to comply with the current COVID guidelines.

It will likely take a number of weeks to complete, hopefully done by the time the lockdown is over. We hope that you will visit the church and walk this ancient and meditative pilgrimage.

# HOW DO WE CARE FOR EACH OTHER?

*By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister*

---

Every year, the Membership Team hosts a meeting for the Pastoral Care team. This year, we are inviting others to join us. Our speaker will be Ajith Varghese, Manager of Spiritual & Religious Care at Scarborough Health

Network. He will be addressing .... “How Do We Care For Each Other”. This is a topic of concern for many of us. We will hold our meeting on Friday, May 28 at 7:30 on Zoom. Link to follow in SM News.



## How do we support each other

Friday, May 28, 7:30 p.m.  
St. Mark's United Church  
Our speaker will be \_\_\_\_\_  
Ajith Varghese, Manager  
Spiritual & Religious Care  
The Scarborough Health Network  
link available through SM News



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

# FINANCIAL REPORT TO THE END OF APRIL

## ST. MARK'S UNITED CHURCH: BUDGET VS. ACTUALS 2021

January - April, 2021

	ACTUAL	BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
<b>INCOME</b>			
COVID Relief Income	23,411.57		
Fund-Raising Projects	161.00	16,900.00	0.95%
Offerings	<u>50,893.92</u>	<u>165,000.00</u>	<u>30.84%</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 74,466.49</b>	<b>\$ 181,900.00</b>	<b>40.94%</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Administration	2,067.92	8,500.00	24.33%
Christian Education	142.12	1,400.00	10.15%
Communication	198.50	900.00	22.06%
Membership & Pastoral Care	1,715.25	7,012.00	24.46%
Personnel	45,403.68	137,170.00	33.10%
Property Expense	14,592.23	37,550.00	38.86%
Worship	350.00	5,250.00	6.67%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 64,469.70</b>	<b>\$ 197,782.00</b>	<b>32.60%</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 9,996.79</b>	<b>-\$ 15,882.00</b>	

### REVENUE NOTES

- Offerings are keeping pace with expectations – Thank you to everyone!!
- Covid has closed our doors to user group which means no rental income
- Fundraisers are limited to online events
- Federal Gov't COVID programmes have provided \$20,000 which covers the loss of Rental income for 2020 and 2021.

### EXPENSE NOTES

- Expenses are continuing as expected
- Most of the Church's expenses are non-deferable (building and property maintenance, insurance, payroll, utilities, office supplies).

It is the support of our membership that allows SM to continue as a place of worship and as supporters of our local community. Thank you!

### NEW

St. Mark's is now able to accept donations by eTransfer sent to [treasurer@st-marks.ca](mailto:treasurer@st-marks.ca) Your donation will be recorded and included on year-end tax receipt.



# ONE ST. MARK'S BOOK STUDY CLOSES AND ANOTHER OPENS!

By: Rob Peck

On April 23rd, 2021, St. Mark's Book Study Group concluded their 8th and final Zoom study session of Atul Gawande's amazing book, *Being Mortal*. Over the 8 sessions we averaged about 16 attendees at each session.



Amazon.ca said of this book: "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."

We certainly found that to be true. I believe I speak for every one in the group when I say we each benefited immensely as we learned practical lessons on how to deal with family and friends who are facing end of life issues. In so doing we also learned practical lessons about how we can prepare for our own end of life.

How does one follow up such a success? That was the subject of our Zoom meeting on May 7th. We considered three excellent books for our next Book Study session which starts this Fall in September, 2021. Melinda Calway nominated *A God That Could Be Real* by Nancy Abrams. Exploring a radically new way of thinking about God, Abrams dismantles some ancient and common assumptions about God and shows a God that can comfort

and empower us. God, she argues, is an "emergent phenomenon" that arises from the complexity of humanity's collective consciousness and aspirations and is in dialogue with every individual. God cannot change the world, but God helps us change the world. It has 200 pages.

Charlie Wardell nominated *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* by Michael Sandel.



Affirmative action, same-sex marriage, physician-assisted suicide, abortion, national service, the moral limits of markets - Sandel relates the big questions of political philosophy to the most vexing issues of the day, and shows how a surer grasp of philosophy can help us make sense of politics, morality, and our own convictions as well. It has 320 pages.

Myrna Morton nominated *The Lost Art of Scripture* by Karen Armstrong. Here, a leading world commentator on religious affairs examines the lost art of Scripture as a medium to lift humanity and change our perception of reality. Today the Quran, the Torah, and the Bible are used to justify many actions we know are



evil. The misunderstanding of the holy texts at the centre of all religious traditions is perhaps the root cause of most of today's controversies over religion. Armstrong argues that only if the world's religious faiths rediscover an open and spiritual engagement with their holy texts can they curtail the intolerance and violence that flows from a narrow reading of Scripture as truth.

Unfortunately, *The Lost Art of Scripture* is a big book ...624 pages ... a size which the group felt was too large for our purposes.

That left us with two excellent books. After some discussion, the group overwhelmingly chose *A God That Could Be Real* by Nancy Abrams.

We decided our Fall session would run every two weeks for 7 sessions starting on September 10, 2021 and concluding on Friday, December 3rd. We shall meet one more time on Friday, December 17th to pick the book for our Winter/Spring session in 2022.

More on that later! Meanwhile, if you would like more information, contact Rob Peck or Carol Caise in the church office.

# THE NUMBERS GAME.....

By: Gayle Feeney

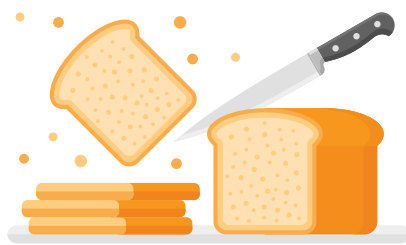


*"Food is a subject of conversation more spiritually refreshing than even the weather, for the number of possible remarks about the weather is limited, whereas of food you can talk on and on and on."* AA Milne

While playing the numbers, what would you call.....

**289**

slices of bread



**80**

pairs of socks



**160**

masks



**100**

slices of turkey breast



**80**

packages of tissue



**140**

slices of ham



**160**

bottles of water



**MANY  
MANY  
MANY**

baggies

**160**

slices of cheese



**80**

food store bags



**98**

bananas



**80**

real juice, juice boxes



**\*\*shopping 6 hands,  
stuffing bags 2 hands,  
sandwiches 8 hands**

**160**

clementines



**80**

granola bars



**160**

cookies



**80**

bags of chips





Those ingredients enabled St Marks to prepare **80** brown bags sandwiches along with all the extra goodies for distribution by Agincourt Community Services for the Out of the Cold Lunch programme. We did this not ONCE, not TWICE but THREE times. As you know the dinners had to be cancelled due to the Covid restrictions but takeaway lunches were a alive and well.

We continued to support the Christ Church Food Bank as the New Year dawned. An ever thrifty shopper spotted cheese slices on sale and we purchased **27** packages or **648** slices of cheese..... not once but twice.....**1296** slices of cheese!!!! Again, searching the food store flyers we found tins of soup for **\$0.50** per tin. Soooo nothing would do but we purchased **96** tins of soup on your behalf. Both of these purchases were made by using our own St Marks Gift Card programme, gift cards. I am sure that you are sitting on the edge of your seat waiting to hear that we once again, purchased **720** eggs this month. (No Yolk)along with **867** slices of bread or **51** loaves, **20** kilos of brown rice, 12 x340g of Kraft dinner, **\$33.00** of spaghetti (now that's a lot of spaghetti) **4** kilos of macaroni, **8** large boxes of cereal, **1200** tea bags, **40** rolls of toilet paper, **140** bananas, and finally **200** granola bars.

"Some people care too much. I think it is called LOVE," said Winnie the Pooh possibly about St Marks. You are the best folks and your Within Reach Outreach team, thanks you for your continued support.

YEAH St Marks!

# ST. MARK'S FIRST ONLINE PLANT SALE!

*By: Karen Boniface*

---



In the spirit of the St Mark's Lawn Sale, our first online Plant Sale was born. Tom Stephens, has been very busy inputting the information and descriptions for the catalogue, and Karen Boniface and Brian MacFarlane have been busy growing, digging and enjoying interacting with plants and people - what a great mix!

If you haven't checked it out yet, goto [ourfundraiser.shop/StMarks](https://ourfundraiser.shop/StMarks). Check the sale often, as we are adding plants as they are donated. We tried to keep the prices reasonable, less than what is charged at a garden centre. Final pick up of plants is

June 5, but if you buy earlier, you may be able to pick up earlier.

Also, please consider donating your plants! Healthy houseplants, perennials, herbs and vegetables are wanted! Email a photo to Karen Boniface or Carol with an idea of how many plants you have to offer and we will post it! The sale will continue until May 24.

This "fundraiser" supports our many programs; both to help with the running of the church, and to help fund vital outreach programs that are so important these days, especially for those who have lost family, jobs and homes during the pandemic.