

All Creation waits MEMO



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ADVENT EDITION

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

Message From the Minister



By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister

The cold weather has finally arrived to join the longer evenings as reminders that winter is coming. The glorious autumn leaf display is giving way to barren branches. Wildlife scurry about preparing for the cold. I wonder what the fox that visits our Oasis at St. Mark's is doing? All of creation is preparing and waiting for winter, a time of restoration and renewal.

We are also waiting for Christmas as the stores are filled with decorations and gifts. We are planning activities and making to-do-lists. Christmas movies and music are filling the airwaves and our screens. It can be challenging for the child in us to wait through Advent; we are drawn into the excitement of the festive

season. Yet, we are weary as we wait for a sense of normalcy to return to our lives. We are weary as we wait for justice for all people. We are weary as we wait for action regarding climate change. Some of us are weary from our current situations. Some of us struggle with the Christmas season. We wait.

In our waiting, can we also find time for restoration and renewal? Can we balance our desire to be festive with our desire for recovery? I invite us into a counter cultural activity. We can take an example from nature and find time to slow down, to notice our surroundings, to deepen our roots. When we stop for long enough to catch our breath, we may also see glimmers of hope that surround us. We continue to have opportunities to

gather with family and friends and to attend community events. As you read through the pages of this newsletter, you will see that we have held some wonderful activities at the church and have plans for more. Let's join the rhythm of creation and find balance as we wait with joyful expectation.

As the days grow shorter and colder, let us embrace the longer nights. We wait with all creation remembering that this time brings in new beginnings. We can wait together like Mary and Elizabeth did. Together, we wait for God's love to be birthed in us, once again. Let's wait. Something is on the horizon. That is the Advent promise for all creation.

Chairs Message

By: Brian MacFarlane

Looking out over my backyard from the window I am seated beside, my first thought is of how fast the time has gone by this year. The last leaves of autumn, just a few, still cling to the odd branches. The browns and yellows of fallen leaves await the dance and descent of snowflakes soon to arrive in the weeks ahead.

St. Mark's has been a hive of activities this fall, a welcome change from where we were last year. We are indeed in very different times now than in years past when Covid disrupted the order of so much and signalled that now is the time to evolve, to be innovative and follow new pathways.

Recently both Janet and I welcomed the new principal and vice principal from next door at G.B Little P.S for a visit to St. Mark's. It was an excellent opportunity to hear about their challenges and to revive working relations with the school with which our congregation and the school's long history has intertwined many times over the past 65 years. Since that initial welcoming of our neighbours I have attended a meeting at the school in the capacity of representing St. Marks as a community partner. I am particularly pleased that some of the hopes and aspirations for the school

expressed by the principal and teachers are parallel to our beliefs of inclusivity and as an affirming congregation.

This past autumn saw the return of many fundraisers and fun-raisers at St. Marks to raise funds and fun's to keep both the operation of our church, its congregation and community's spirits in good shape. Thank you to everyone who contributed towards the fundraisers and fun-raisers, be it in the leadership, planning, volunteering to help or supporting financially, you have all made an incredible difference with what you have contributed.

Our ministry teams continue to support the day to day needs of the congregation and the community beyond the walls of 115 Orton Park Rd. As always I am grateful for the dedication of those who set aside time in their lives to commit to a term with a ministry team. For anyone not on a ministry team currently and not able to commit time to being on one, but are willing to help out with short term projects from time to time-your help is needed.

Volunteers are needed to help out with ministry team projects that pop up from time to time with tasks

at the church, or ones that can be tailored for volunteers to work on from home. If you or anyone you know of is interested in volunteering for a few hours at different times throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Nominating team to express an interest in this.

As we now enter the advent season and the year that has been draws to a close, please take some time to visit the Labyrinth behind the church at some point as long as the weather conditions are favourable. Time is precious as the season demands so much of this from all of us, but it is important to find the time to reflect on the wonder found within the season, the expectation, the truth and the light, the quiet miracles, blessings.

I wish you and yours a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

The Helen Jones Library

By: Karen Wigle

I am pleased to tell you that we now have another Lillian + Kokomis book in our library. Lynda Partridge's award winning *The Spirit of Dance* features Lillian "a girl of mixed indigenous and white ancestry who is in the process of being shuffled to her seventh foster home. At school, she doesn't fit in with the white kids and she doesn't

fit in with the indigenous kids either. Lillian is a complex and not-always-lovable hero but she eventually finds a sense of peace and belonging from a surprising spirit that returns her to traditional ways. " This book is for young readers ages 9-12.

Here is what Senator Kim Pate says about it: "...I think everyone, not just children, should read it. With gentle

empathy and joyous hope, Lynda Partridge paints the heartbreaking realities lived by far too many young people, while simultaneously generating optimism. She describes what is possible when we provide opportunities for generations to heal and lead us forward. The possibilities are both tremendous and endless."

Walking Home by Eric Walters

Book Review By: Karen Wigle

This dramatic adventure, written for young readers ages 9-13 is "Set in both the wilds and slums of Kenya, a powerful story about a brother and sister's brave journey to find a place to call home.

13-year-old Muchoki and his younger sister, Jata, can barely recognize what's become of their lives. Only weeks ago they lived in a bustling Kenyan village, going to school, playing soccer with friends, and helping at their parents' store. But sudden political violence has killed their father and destroyed their home. Now, Muchoki, Jata, and their ailing mother live in a tent in an overcrowded refugee camp. By day, they try to fend off hunger and boredom. By night, their fears about the future are harder to keep at bay.....Driven by a desperate

optimism, Muchoki and Jata set off on what seems like an impossible quest: to walk over a hundred miles across Kenya in search of their last remaining family." Thank you, Barbara Merriam, for donating this book to our library.

Why Are You Still Here? A Lillian Mystery by Lynda Partridge with illustrations by Dave Nicholson.

Lillian is a complex and not-always-lovable foster kid who has been shuffled from home to home. "An exciting adventure begins for Lillian when her friends Chloe and Grace ask her to help them investigate a mysterious window in the old barn. Lillian's sleuthing ability helps uncover surprises that return the family to Indigenous ways of knowledge."

Author "Lynda Partridge is a member of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. She grew up in the child welfare system and spent her childhood in numerous non-indigenous foster homes. At a later age she obtained an Honours Bachelor of Social Work (Native Human Services), followed by a Masters of Social Work Degree. It was while obtaining her undergraduate degree that she found her birth family and reconnected to her Indigenous culture." Lynda is Art and Caroline Nicholson's sister-in-law. The illustrations by nephew Dave Nicholson are based on their farm. Thank you to Art and Caroline for donating this wonderful book to our library. It is suitable for young readers ages 9-12.

Celebrating The Success of The GST, 2022

By: Luella Stephens



The Organizing Team for the GST were reminded of the famous African proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child”.

We were blessed with many generous contributors, whose combined efforts made the GST another very successful event. First on the organizing agenda was the gathering of goods, services and talents to

sell. Next was re-enlisting our two amazing auctioneers, Rob and Dave, who once again did a wonderful job of encouraging friendly competition amongst enthusiastic bidders, with some tasteful entertainment thrown in. MANY others worked tirelessly, behind the scene, in the kitchen or on the auction floor to make the evening fun and successful. Thanks

to ALL, the GST raised \$8,471. to support the good work of St. Mark's. The originators of the GST established a pattern of having a GST every two years, and we have carried on with that tradition... so circle October 26, 2024 for our next GST... and perhaps even be on the lookout for items to donate.



Back Packs Are Back and Sooooo Much More

By: Gayle Feeney

Yes, the hazy, lazy days of summer are over but your Within Reach Outreach Team was alive and well and working on your behalf, as September was biting at our heels. We packed 40 backpacks again this year to insure that children in need would have their own new backpacks to begin their year on a positive note. The backpacks were stuffed to the gills with pens, pencils, paper, folders, rulers, erasers, crayons and calculators, etc. The backpacks were delivered to GB Little School, Galloway Road and Eastview. As well, we fulfilled a request from the kindergarten teachers at Eastview who called on us for socks and underwear for their little people. Quickly following on the heels of that delivery, we delivered peanut free granola bars and real juice, juice boxes to all of the schools mentioned, so that children who come to school without breakfast would indeed have a nutritious breakfast or snack to proceed with their day. A lovely card of thanks was received for our efforts from Eastview.

Outreach continues to support the food bank at Christ Church. Their

numbers increase each week. There are more than 80 families registered and that number represents some 400 plus individuals. As your personal grocery bills have increased, so to have ours as we strive to maintain our Outreach efforts on your behalf. We base our food choices on Canada's Food Guide. Despite costs, we endeavour to purchase fruit, eggs, cereal, legumes, bread and pasta. We are sooooo grateful for the support that Liz and Bob Mc Crimmon have offered to our shopping sprees. Your Outreach team, continues to endeavour to maintain our level of support to Christ Church. Please know that we would appreciate any and all support on these shopping sprees that you might be able to offer us. If you can push a shopping cart and can count to 10 or maybe 320 (the number of bananas we buy), you will be greatly received!!!!

Teresa and Larry Smith notified your team of the availability of children's clothing. This clothing was graciously received by Juliette's Place. A very touching letter of thanks was received from Juliette's Place. We look forward

to further supporting Juliette's Place as we approach the Christmas season.

Outreach has once again extended their support to the University of Toronto Scarborough Chaplaincy initiative with a \$200.00 donation. For those of you who attended the Anniversary Service in person or on line you will recall that our guest speaker for that service was a representative of the Chaplaincy programme. As well, we made a \$100.00 donation once again to the Ryde Lake Camp. The Out of the Cold hot lunch programme at 202 Markham received a cheque for 250.00 to enable them with their hot lunch programme.

This month we would like to thank the Scarboro Golf and Country Club for their donation of \$500.00 to our Outreach fund. As well, all of these worthy causes are only made possible because of the donations made by the generous folks at St Marks. We are truly grateful for that support and we thank you sooooo much for being all that you are.

Property Committee Update

By: Randy Stroud, Chair, Property Team

Your Property Committee has continued to address property issues at the church. Some of the more major issues dealt with over the past few weeks include an inspection of the entire electrical system at the church, another inspection of the plumbing system, renewing contracts for snow removal (yes, winter is coming), cleaning the church and grass cutting, and planning for a major renovation of the upstairs washroom to make it wheelchair accessible.

The electrical and plumbing inspections were mandated by the insurance company that covers our building. The inspections by a licenced electrician and a licenced plumber were required by the insurance company because the electrics and plumbing have not been upgraded since the building went up in the 1980's and had not been officially inspected since then. I am pleased to report that both the electrical and plumbing systems were found to be fit for use and in proper working order. There are, however, a variety of upgrades and repairs recommended by the inspectors, that your Property Team will be addressing over the next few months.

Renewing contracts for clearing snow around the building, cleaning the church and grass cutting in 2023 were an interesting exercise. As you know, the cost of everything has gone up recently, as have the cost of snow clearing, cleaning and grass cutting.

The church cleaning and church grounds grass cutting contract was renewed with Peter Hills, who has contracted with the church for these services for many years. The writing of the contract with Peter was a team effort with input from Jane Greenwood (our Treasurer), Heather Urbansky (Chair of the Ministry and Personnel Team) and Brian (Chair of the Church Board). Getting contracts right is important to the church and the person with whom the church contracts for specific services. Discussions with Peter for cleaning and grass cutting services were very enlightening for me, because I came to realize how critical cleaning and grass cutting services are to making sure our church building and grounds are clean and safe. We can't take these things for granted, nor can we take the service providers for granted. Many thanks are due to Jane, Heather, Brian for their assistance with the contract drafting and signing process and to Peter for his cleaning and grass cutting services.

The upstairs washroom renovation is another interesting project. The planning stage we are in has revealed a few things that are worth mentioning. The thing that struck me most was not the drawings showing how the new wheelchair accessible washroom will be configured or the discussion about how electrical wiring must be moved so a new wider door can be installed or what finishes will be used on walls

and the floor in the new washroom but the people who are helping make the project as efficient and successful as possible. The contractor who will quote on the job brought his foreman, a worker and a subcontractor to the church recently to take a look at the space, take measurements etc. Larry Smith, Bart Boniface, Brian MacFarlane all showed up as well to add their assistance to the project. Everyone at the little gathering was engaged in the project and I thought, how fortunate are we to have people interested and engaged in something like a washroom renovation. We all want a successful project to end up with an accessible washroom that people in wheelchairs, who will use the church once the elevator is completed, will be able to use safely and comfortably. The people who are engaged in this project are giving their time and talents to make sure we end up with a successful project, and I'm thankful for that.

Your Property Committee will continue to address whatever is needed at the church. We must prioritize projects due to limited time, people and money, but we soldier on as best we can. If you spot something you think should be looked at, please let the Church Office know. If you have some time to get involved in a future project at the church, please let the Church Office know, as we can always use the help, and there are always things to do - big and small - around the church.

Hello from the Stewardship & finance Team!

By: Janet MacKay on behalf of Stewardship & Finance.

Our gratitude to the many of you who returned your Stewardship forms to the church office in the last few weeks. Much appreciated as we go into 2023 budget process.

We have chosen not to do a mail out red envelope campaign this year due

to the fiscal uncertainty in the world. However if you choose to donate to the Red Envelope Campaign we have some on the table in the narthex (or by e-transfer to the Treasurer) and such offerings will of course be met with our gratitude.

No matter your choice we thank you for your support during the last almost 3 years since the start of life with Covid. You have all stepped up to keep St. Mark's thriving during this difficult time.

Elevator Update

By: Bart Boniface

Unfortunately, the past few months progress has not been encouraging in regards to our elevator installation. We have moved through COVID, supply chain disruptions, inspection delays and most likely priority issues which have drastically hampered construction efforts.

I have maintained close contact and expressed our concerns with multiple representatives from the

elevator supplier throughout this extended process. Some of the issues were beyond their control, but my understanding is that they have all been resolved and what remains now is to get people on site to finish the installation. I am hopeful that this can be done soon so that inspection of the elevator can be arranged and the construction company can return to perform the finishing touches.

I know this has been very discouraging and upsetting for many, myself included and I want to express my thanks for your patience and understanding as we move forward. I want nothing more than to see this project come to its conclusion and look forward to the day we celebrate its opening. Let's pray it will be sooner than later.

Thankful for Another Wonderful Turkey Dinner

By: Bart & Karen Boniface

Standing before the congregation Sunday morning following our latest Take-Out Turkey Dinner a wave of gratefulness swept over me. For years, Karen and I have taken the lead organizing the different forms of our Annual Turkey Dinner and over those same number of years so many members have been there for us. What a privilege it is for us to work alongside all of you, but also to bear witness to the grand scope of your contributions. Our Turkey Dinner only exists because of your support and for that, I am truly thankful.

To remain on the safe side of COVID protocols we decided to offer our latest version of the dinner as a Take-Out and once again it was well received. The new front lawn sign created by Tom Stephens helped us reach out into the community for a significant number of orders.

At the end of the night, we were able to serve about 180 Turkey dinners along with 12 vegetarian orders. The extra turkey, gravy and potatoes were further made into soup and pot pies for the bazaar. Taking this into

account along with contributions received from members of the congregation I am very pleased to announce that approximately \$2,800 was raised from this event towards the operating budget of the church.

Thank you to everyone who planned, cooked, mashed, baked, cut, carved, served, cleaned, poured, ordered, packed, delivered, purchased and contributed. You all make it happen.

Upcoming Events

Scarborough Needlearts Guild is now Meeting At St. Mark's!

If you are at the church on Mondays, between 10 a.m. until approximately 1:30 p.m., you will notice a pleasant hum and chatter in the basement. It is the Scarborough Needlearts Guild who started meeting at the church this fall. Formed 46 years ago by a group of friends, it is dedicated to promoting the practice and knowledge of the art of embroidery.

It is a community of stitchers who share and learn their needle craft together. About 20 women get together, share stories and stitch away on individual embroidery works. There is a weekly show and share, where members bring in their works of art.

Karen Boniface and Julia Peck are

members, and we welcome anyone who would like to check us out. It is likely you have a UFO (UnFinished Object) at home that you would like to complete! It is a great time to decompress, do some meditative stitching, and meet some thoughtful and creative ladies. You will notice that their hand stitched banner is proudly hung up in the large room downstairs.



St. Mark's Bazaar & Crafts Market

Christmas Decorations

Great Variety of Crafts

Books

Bring your neighbours and friends to SHOP

Bake Table

Tea Room

Great variety of Vendors

ST. MARK'S BAZAAR & CRAFTS MARKET

Saturday, November 19th 2022
10am-2pm

Questions? Email bazaar@st-marks.ca
or call (416) 283-1267

Upcoming
Events

All Creation waits

ST. MARK'S UNITED CHURCH

PROGRESSIVE, INCLUSIVE, LIFE-AFFIRMING

Join us for our online services on Facebook.

Advent 1 Nov 27 ✨ 11:00 AM
The waiting begins

Advent 2 Dec 4 ✨ 11:00 AM
Includes Communion

Advent 3 Dec 11 ✨ 11:00 AM
Children's Pageant

Quiet
Christmas Dec 13 ✨ 7:30 PM
A time for reflection, candlelight & song

Advent 4 Dec 18 ✨ 11:00 AM
Music Sunday with Choir

Christmas
Eve Dec 24 ✨ 7:30 PM
We tell the story with carols, candles & Communion. [All ages]