

THE



## MEMO

OCTOBER 2020

FALL 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)

# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

“ Fall, leaves, fall;  
die, flowers, away;

Lengthen night  
and shorten day;

Every leaf speaks  
bliss to me

Fluttering from  
the autumn tree.

I shall smile when  
wreaths of snow

Blossom where the  
rose should grow;

I shall sing when  
night's decay

Ushers in a  
drearier day. ”

FALL, LEAVES, FALL  
By: Emily Brontë

*By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister*

Our lives have been upturned by the pandemic, yet some things persist such as the changing seasons. The new school year ushers in a period of change and renewal for students and students of life. It is demonstrated in an increase in planned activities, including at St. Mark's. You can read about these in this newsletter and go to the website for more information. We are adapting our programming to reflect our current situation.

The earth also demonstrates this time of change and renewal. As I write this, squirrels are scurrying across my backyard finding places to bury their food treasures undeterred by the daily temperature fluctuations. The burning bush behind the church is turning from green to deep red as its leaves perform their final act. All the trees

have started to show their glorious last hoorah before bidding farewell. We give thanks for this and the bounty of the harvest in this season of generosity.

Creation teaches us many lessons. Autumn offers a time of transformation as the leaves fall and die into the ground to nurture the soil. New life springs forth when the days grow warmer and longer. New leaves will eventually sprout. What a wondrous cycle of rejuvenation! It gives us pause to ask what things we can let go so that we have room to draw in new ways of living. This autumn season and this season in our lives will be filled with unpredictability. We can call upon courage, patience, and grace to encourage us as we support each other in community. Let's savour the magic of autumn – letting go and beginning anew.

# CHAIR'S MESSAGE

By: Katharina Manassis

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“We are truly blessed!,,

Hello, everyone! Hope you are all staying safe and well. I am truly honored to be chairing the St. Mark's Board this year and next, though realizing there is a steep learning curve ahead. Nobody could have anticipated our present, disorienting circumstances. I am so thankful that Charlie Wardell and the other chairs have agreed to mentor their successors (including me) in the coming months! Their wisdom and experience combined with the energy and ideas of the 'newbies' will ensure our church is in good hands.

Like many of you, I have not found it easy to adapt to the “new normal”. Planned trips and projects were cast aside, employment hopes for my children were dashed, investments plummeted, and the uncertainty of it all has been maddening. Just when you think you're on top of things, you're scolded at the supermarket for getting confused by the floor-arrows, and feel like a complete fool. Just when you think it's safe to unmask, a friend of a friend tests positive

and the nightmare returns. Some people argued that this time at home would make us all more reflective and compassionate...but sadly that's not true for everyone, as recent horrifying news events confirm.

Fortunately, in the midst of this tumultuous time where we cannot meet in our usual building, we have found a virtual sanctuary in our Zoom worship services, coffee hours, and meetings. Creating that sanctuary has been the work of so many devoted, talented staff and volunteers starting with the inspiring leadership of our minister, Janet Smith Zenwirt, sweetened by the musical talents of Caitlin Holland and our virtual choir, leavened by the technical expertise of Charlie Wardell and Kathryn Moase, and kneaded together by Carol Caise, our tireless administrator. Sorry, I couldn't resist a baking metaphor. We are truly blessed!

Admirably, despite the stresses, people at St. Mark's have also continued to reach out to one another and to the

community. In the early days of the crisis, I tried to organize drivers to deliver goods to isolated members of the congregation...only to find it wasn't needed because everyone was already looking after one another! People have also been giving of their financial resources. We now have more (not less) members on PAR than before COVID-19. Outreach donated thousands to the Food Bank even as their budget shrank. There are countless examples of selfless acts of kindness to celebrate here!

To summarize, we may not know where we're heading but we know the people and the Spirit who share our journey, and that makes all the difference.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL IN A BOX

*By: Alissa duHasky*

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

I look forward to fall each year. I do love cleaning out the classroom, rearranging the furniture, buying new markers and glue, but it's the excitement of seeing all the kids after a summer apart that I love most.

Our last Sunday together we ran out of time and didn't have time to play our game and I promised the kids we would play it the next week. Who would have known then that it would be so long until we were all together again.

We are not able to meet together in person this fall but Sunday school is running this year. Each month

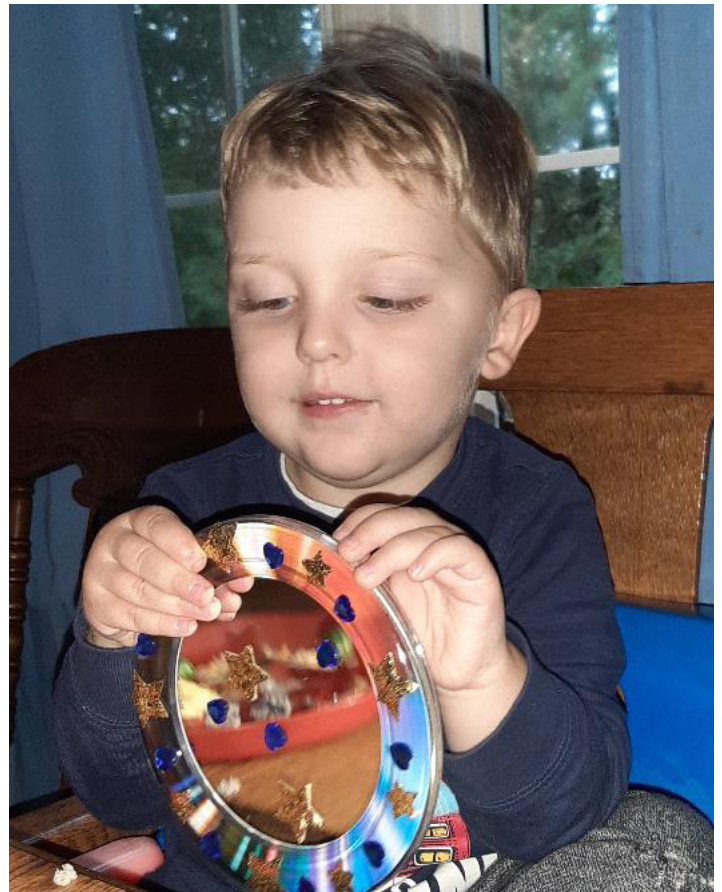
the families receive "Sunday School in a Box" which contains a weekly activity, a sheet with the bible passage, game ideas, table topics and instructions for the craft as well as extra things that match the monthly theme. Each week Rebecca and I film a YouTube Sunday school class.

For the month of September our theme was the United Church creed and October is "Superheroes"

We delivered 11 boxes and have had some great feedback of the crafts.



Having peanut butter sandwiches with the bread that Vera made which was one of week three's activities.



Alex making a mirror which was week one's craft.

# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

By: Jane Greenwood

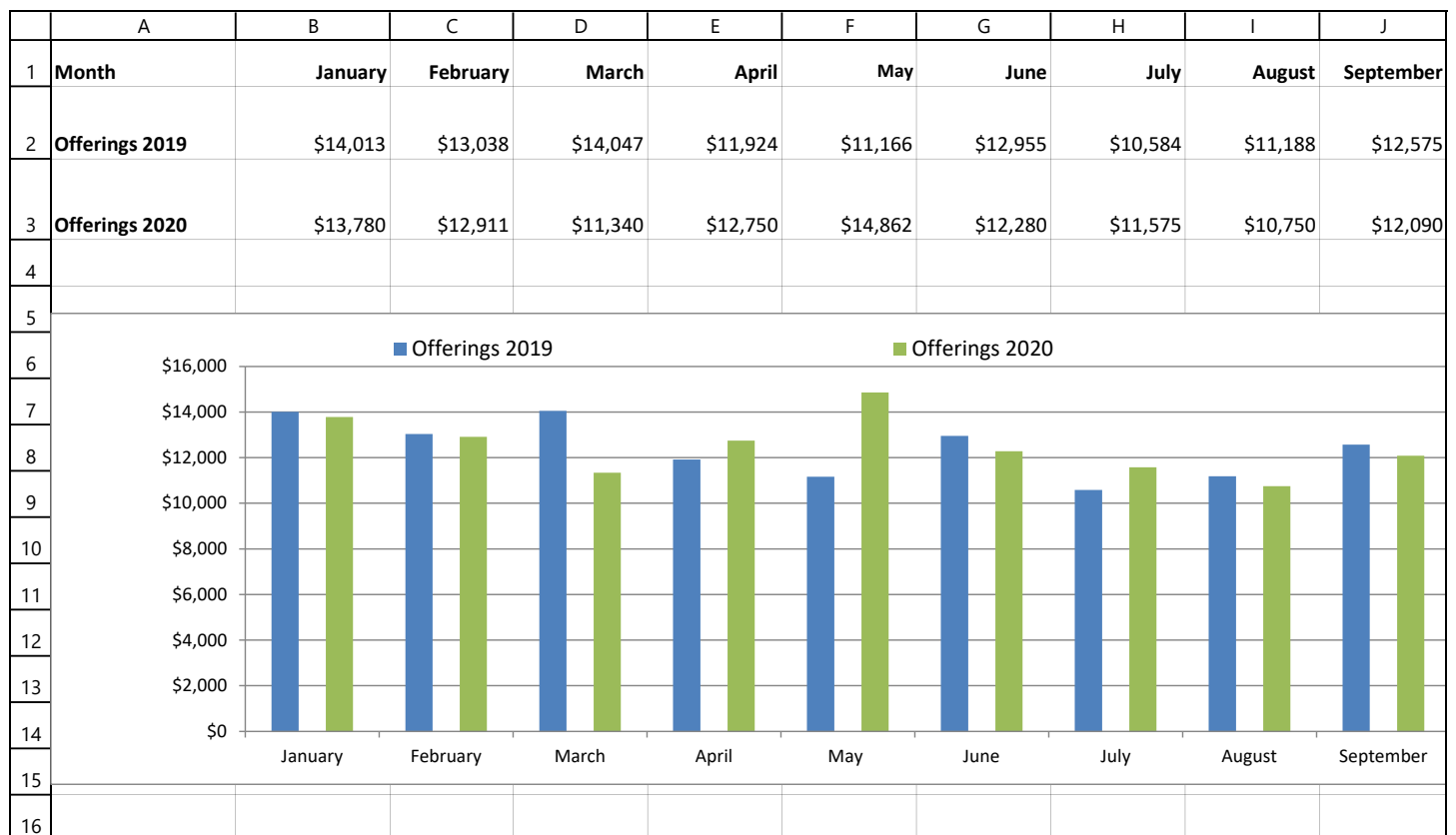
The chart below provides a look at this year's offerings (green) compared to last year's (blue). The members of SM have been wonderful at ensuring their donations are received whether by signing up for PAR or by dropping their envelope in the church's mailbox (now located at the front of the church – thanks property team).

The church is missing the revenue from our building users and from fundraisers such as the Spring Dance and Lawn Sale which together raised \$7,000 in 2019.

The Board and Ministry Teams have been very careful with the expenses this year and have managed to

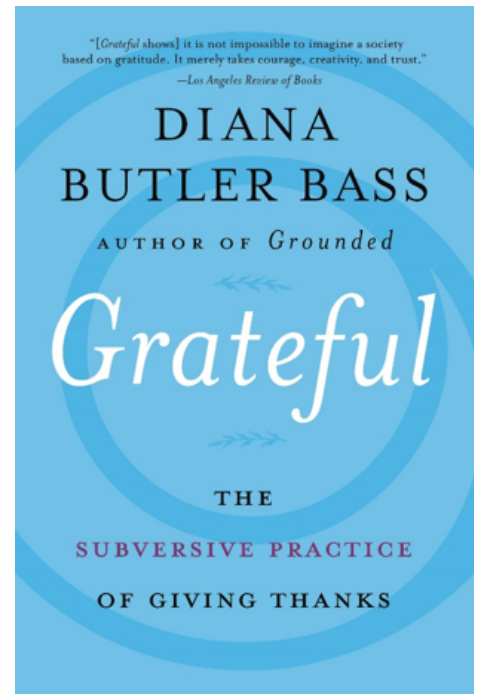
reduce costs while still maintaining staffing, caring for the property/building and ensuring the work of SM continues -- reaching out to members and the community.

St. Mark's United Church  
Offerings Comparison 2019 vs 2020





# ST. MARK'S FALL BOOK STUDY HAS STARTED!



By: Rob Peck



“If gratitude is good,  
why is it so hard to do?,,

St. Mark's Fall Book Study of Diana Butler Bass' book, **Grateful: The Subversive Power of Giving Thanks** started on Friday, September 18th and continues on alternate Fridays every two weeks thereafter: October 2<sup>nd</sup>, October 16<sup>th</sup>, October 30<sup>th</sup>, November 13<sup>th</sup>, and November 27<sup>th</sup>.

Although most of us know that gratitude is good — and good for us — there is a gap between our desire to be grateful and our ability to behave gratefully. 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.

Because of the pandemic, we are conducting our Book Study sessions on Zoom using the same link that St. Mark's uses for our Sunday services. The meetings themselves start promptly at 7:30 pm and finish no later than 9:00 pm although some people stick around and chat for a few minutes after the formal conclusion of the meeting.

Each session will have one or two facilitators who summarize the material for that day's session and talk to it for about 20 minutes.

Then we have break-out sessions for small group discussions which are handled in sub-groups within the Zoom meeting thanks to modern computer science and Charlie Wardell! At the conclusion of the small group discussions, we reassemble into one large group and listen to each of the smaller groups present their views.

If you have any questions or concerns email contact Rob Peck or Carol in the church office and we will do our best to help you.

# WITHIN REACH OUTREACH

*By: Gayle Feeney*

Our Back Pack initiative was well received and supported by the good folks at St Marks. Eastview, Galloway Road and GB Little Public Schools were most appreciative of our efforts on their behalf.

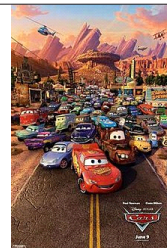
A special Shout Out to all of the musicians who entertained us at our Parking Lot Music Festival. Again, so many of you supported this event and showed your appreciation by offering donations for the Food Bank. Three large boxes of food were collected and nearly \$700.00!! Congratulations on a job well done, St Marks.

Stay tuned for St Marks Drive By ..... Parking Lot Food Bank Drive on October 17th from 1:00 until 3:00pm.





# Upcoming Events



## BEWARE

A DRIVE BY.....

### FOOD DRIVE FOR ST. MARKS

WHERE: ST. MARKS PARKING LOT

WHEN: OCTOBER 17<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 to 3:00pm

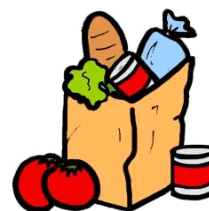
Your WITHIN Reach Outreach Committee welcomes gifts of food as well as financial donations. See you there!!!



**Feeding the  
Community**



**FOOD DRIVE**



## Soul Work

A time for reflection and spiritual practices

Monday Oct. 5 – Nov. 16

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

(in the church building)

Phone office to register

Limited to 8 participants

# SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL

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

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"Same same, but different." That is a phrase often used by folks in Abu Dhabi. Like so much of our world, we continue with many of the same activities as before COVID-19, but in different ways. Instead of communicating face to face we Zoom.

Our May SWRC gathering, and Celebration of Ministry service was cancelled, and this October meeting is taking place online, in an abbreviated form. We have attached a link to the upcoming meeting to give you an idea of the plans for that event. Please read our Presidents letter.

[shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/about/regional-meeting/regional-meeting-2020/](https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/about/regional-meeting/regional-meeting-2020/)

While we are thinking about our region, check out the SWRC website. God is not silent. The body of Christ is busy in the world.

[shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/](https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/)

One more suggestion...as you are cruising the World Wide Web, take a moment and visit our UCC website, our church is vibrant.

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

We are in the season of new creation... "thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

May it be so.

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## HAVE YOU HEARD

In the previous issue I started a column called Coping in Quarantine. I'd like to keep the idea of it going. The idea was to pass along recommendations for something you found enjoyable and thought someone else might also like to try. Last time around we had everything from what movie to watch, to a recipe to try, to a favourite song. This time around I have 2 suggestions for podcasts to listen to.

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### Poetry Unbound



#### POETRY UNBOUND

Immerse yourself in a single poem, guided by Pádraig Ó Tuama. Short and unhurried; contemplative and energizing.

Submitted by: Janet Smith Zenwirt



#### RADIOLAB

This podcast weaves stories and science into sound and music-rich documentaries.

Submitted by: David Niemela