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SEPTEMBER 2021

AUTUMN EDITION

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

By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister

Happy New Year!

September signals the beginning of the school year as summer gives way to autumn. Welcome to the season of change. While change is always present in our lives, we have experienced more than usual since March 2020. The plans that we make seem tenuous as we take a step forward then pause or step back before we move forward again. Our calendars, both paper and digital, provide a record of this.

We take various approaches to planning and subsequent changes. Some of us prefer to write down our plans to secure them and may not

like to alter them. Some of us rarely make firm plans. Others make plans and readily alter them as needed. Remember the smells of freshly sharpened pencils and new erasers at the beginning of the new school year? As young students, we learn to print and write in pencil; it is much easier to change or edit. What if we were to practice holding our plans more lightly? Change can make us frustrated or impatient, yet also offers opportunities to learn about flexibility, letting go, and trying out new, creative approaches. Are we are being asked during this time to grow in our flexibility? Are we also being asked to grow in our trust which can include deepening our spiritual roots? Are we being asked

to reach out to others and to let others reach out to us in love? There is much for us to consider.

We welcome the new season at St. Mark's. This is an active place as we continue to be the church. You will find numerous articles in this newsletter outlining plans for the upcoming season and there may be changes. We continue to call upon our patience and to be flexible as we hold onto hope. More than this, we move through this season together in faith, hope, and love. May you know in your heart that you are deeply loved in all seasons.

Deep peace.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

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

Hope for the Best

As we head into another school year, I can't help but wonder "Will it last? Or will the latest strain of COVID result in another shut-down?" As the mother of a hard-working crossing guard, I sincerely hope for the first option, but I can't be sure. I encourage him to practice his work routines anyways.

Many things seem to follow that pattern these days. I have the time to travel now, and am looking forward to a trip to the East Coast next summer, but will it be allowed? Or will there be an Atlantic Bubble again which leaves us Ontarians sitting in the suds. I call the tour company anyways, and book the trip.

I look forward to in-person worship again, with hymns brightening the walls, framing the stained-glass window. Will it happen this fall?

Will it even happen during my tenure as Board Chair? I work with the Transition Team anyways to ensure it can be done safely.

The coming months are filled with uncertainty, even for those of us who are immunized and following all reasonable precautions. Thankfully, the vaccination rate seems to be inching upward, but it only takes one conversation with a staunch opponent of "the shot" to realize that there will always be hold-outs. Are there enough of them to overfill hospital beds again? Nobody really knows.

Meantime, we hope for the best though preparing for the worst. We plan ahead and work toward our goals, even as we realize they might not be reached, or might not be reached on our timeline. We persevere.

Now, I'm not suggesting we persevere like the band on the Titanic: playing on stoically as the ship is sinking. Sometimes jumping for the life boats makes sense!

Rather, we acknowledge our trepidation about not knowing what's coming next, and share it with good friends, but without letting it define us. We cling to each other and to our faith, and in the words attributed to Paul *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed"* (2 CORINTHIANS 4: 8-9). Blessings.

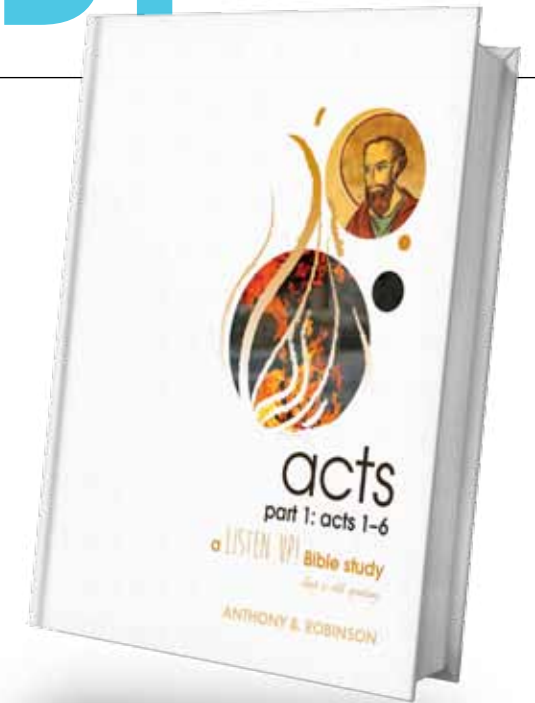


BIBLE STUDY

By: Glen Greenwood

"Acts is our earliest account of the Christian church, an account that speaks of the massive conversions to the faith, of miraculous deeds performed by the apostles, of opposition and persecution by non-believers...and above all the dramatic spread of the Christian church from its inauspicious beginnings among the few followers of Jesus in Jerusalem to the heart of the empire, the city of Rome."
– BART D. EHRMAN

We plan to start Tuesday, September 28, 1:30-2:15pm for six weeks. Bible Study guides will be provided. (Whether you have attended Parts 1 & 2 or not, you are most welcome.) We will meet via Zoom. If you would like to join us, please email Carol or Glen Greenwood.



SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES REPORT

By: Randy Stroud & Glen Greenwood

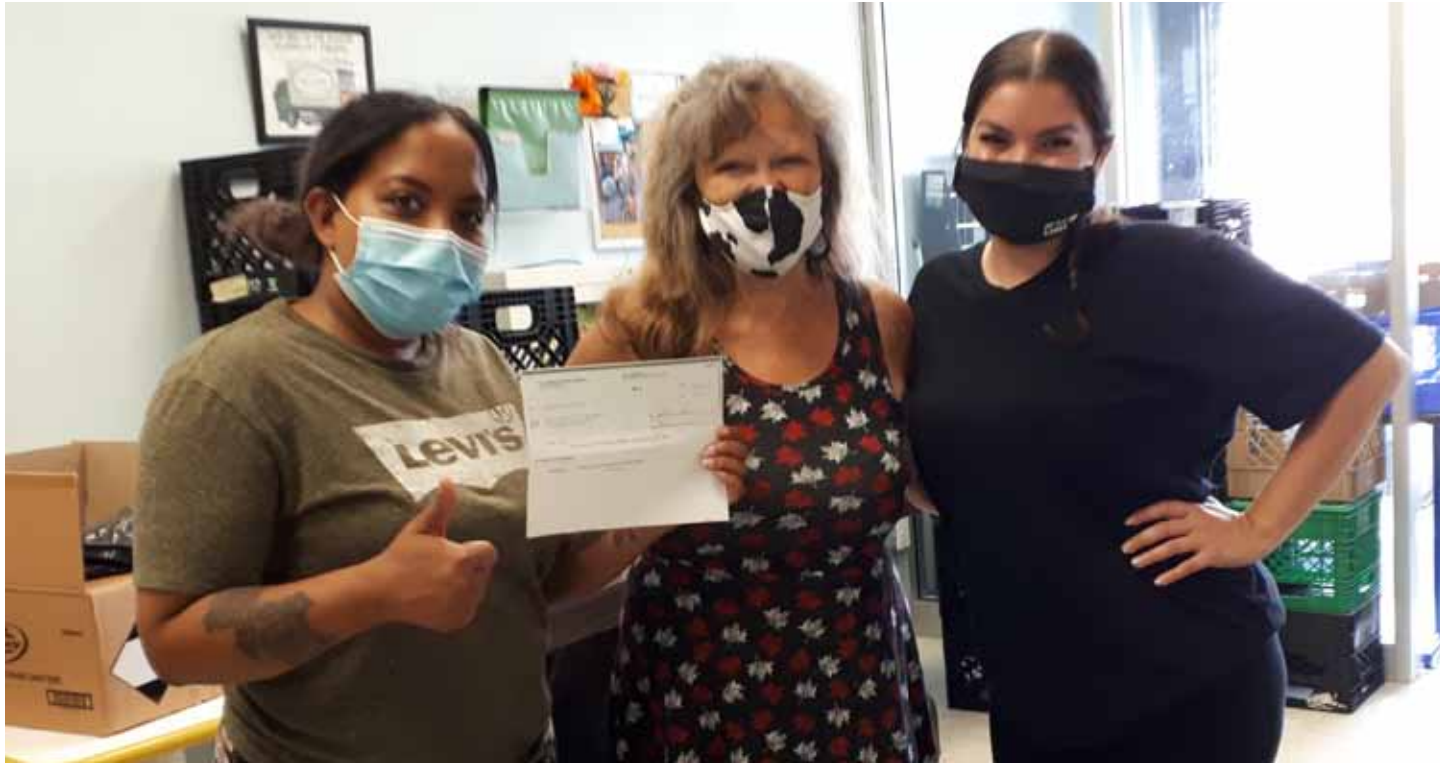
For many this is a quieter time of year in church affairs. When you have a moment check out the SWRC website, (there are always interesting announcements and more. Link at the end :) As well, SWRC plans on a Fall Regional Meeting, to be held online on Saturday, November 13, 2021.

You might want to check out the greater church website too. There is always news in our faith tradition. Links below:

shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca
united-church.ca

OUTREACH

By: Gayle Feeney



Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it summer vacation? NOOOOO Waaaay, it is simply St Marks United Church. Our members are alive and well and reaching Waaaaay out into the community. With your unending support, your Within Reach Outreach Committee has been scurrying about ALL summer long being of service to the community beyond our walls.

Donations of clothing and linens were given to the Scugog Camp for women and children. As well, additional items were directed toward Agincourt Community services.

Early in July a \$250.00 donation was made to the 202 Markham Road site for Agincourt Community Services. This money was used to provide lunch for the patrons who frequent the site.

Over the course of the summer over \$1300.00 worth of food stuffs were purchased and were donated to the Christ Church Food Bank. In conversation with the people running this food bank, their weekly number of families has increased from 50 to 70.no summer holiday there

for sure. We at St Marks can take pride in our efforts to support this all important endeavour.

School is no longer out for the summer and we at St Marks were ready for ACTION!!! Our Back Packs are Back programme was supported by the congregation and gratefully received by 3 local schools. GB Little, our next store neighbour, Galloway Road Public School and Eastview Public School were sooooo delighted to receive our chock a block, well equipped back packs. Each pack had pencils, markers, pencil crayons, erasers, crayons, glue sticks, rulers and folders with lined and plain paper. As well, packs for the older children housed calculators and pens. A selection of our very special St Marks homemade masks was also given to each school. For the child who comes to school without breakfasts Marks provided peanut free granola bars and real juice, juice boxes.

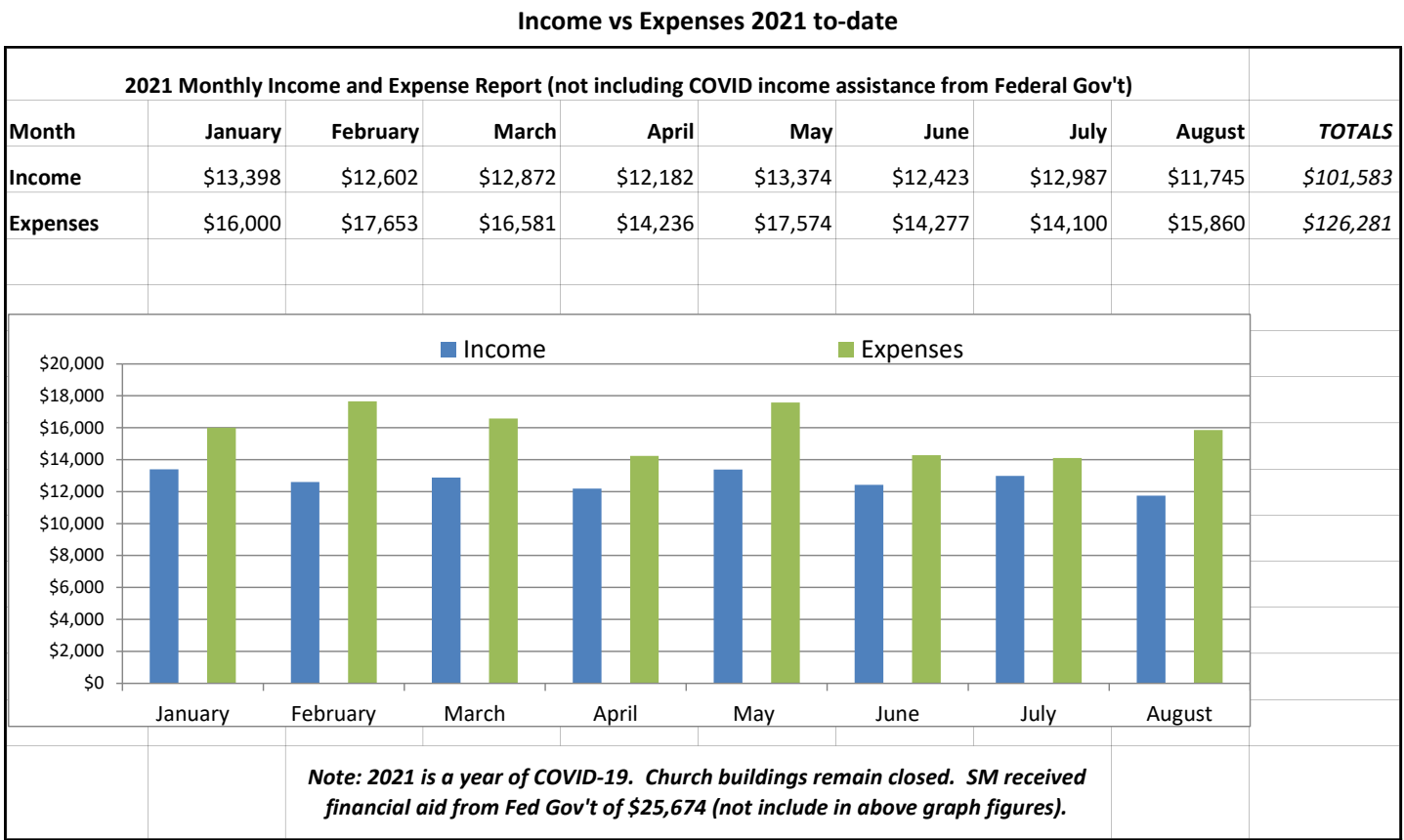
There is no 'I' in team and your Outreach team wishes to thank the St Marks congregation for their continued support. NO..... It is NOT a bird..... It is NOT a plane..... IT IS YOUR ST MARKS CONGREGATION making a marvellous contribution to the families beyond our walls.

Super St. Mark's



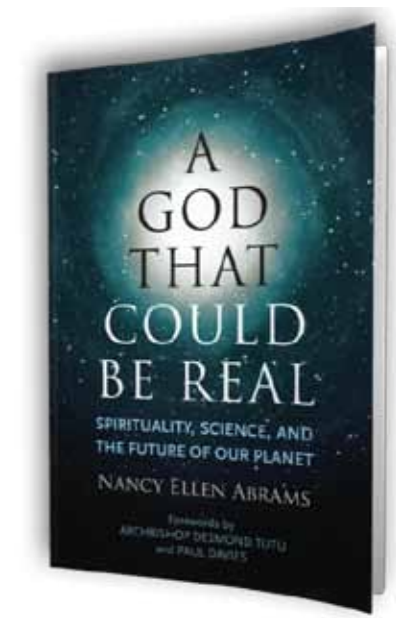
CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF SM OPERATING FUND

By: Jane Greenwood



ST. MARK'S FALL 2021 BOOK STUDY TAKES FLIGHT!

By: Rob Peck



Every year (sometimes twice a year!) St. Mark's Book Study Group looks at a book that increases our understanding of our faith. On September 10th, 2021, 16 people kicked off our latest project, a study of Nancy Abrams' book, "A God That Could Be Real".

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.

INTERESTED?

There are 8 dates, two weeks apart: September 10 and 24; October 8 and 22; November 5 and 19 and

December 3 and 17. All sessions will be on Zoom using the same link we use for St. Mark's Sunday services. The first 7 dates will be actual study sessions, an hour long, starting at 7:30 pm and finishing at 8:30 pm, all on Fridays. The last date, December 17, will be our Party where we just have fun and pick our book for the next session.

I facilitated the first session on September 10 where we looked at the book's two Forewords and Abrams' Introduction. In her introduction Abrams says:

"My discoveries are for anyone sick of the battle between religion and science. This book is a journey into those aspects of the new scientific universe that touch our core as human beings. Because in that connection between our new understanding of the universe and ourselves lies the key to a God that could be real.

"If we rethink God in light of this new knowledge, it may help us to find the wisdom and bravery to face our future together. What I have learned is this:

- 1 Having no spiritual life at all is like never really falling in love.
- 2 Developing a spiritual bond with a fantasy is like falling in

love with someone who will never love you back.

3 But developing a spiritual bond with the real universe is like falling in love with someone who is already in love with you. That is where God is!"

Melinda Calway will lead the next session on September 24.

If you missed the first session, no problem! We have summaries of the material covered at each session. Books are available from Rob Peck or from any good book store. You can also purchase Kindle or Audible versions. The books cost \$25.20, including tax, from Amazon.ca. St. Mark's Christian Education (CE) team has graciously agreed to subsidize \$5.20 of the cost bringing the cost of the book down to \$20.00 for each of us. Additional subsidies are available if needed.

If you are interested, or if you have any questions, you can contact either Carol at the Church office, or me, Rob Peck.

GIVING US A LIFT

By: Bart Boniface

The idea of installing an elevator at St. Mark's has been percolating for many years and now we are on the verge of seeing those dreams come to fruition. Back in 2016 and most likely even before, the issue of accessibility within our church building was being investigated and the Property Team at the time led by Gord Maunder included details about a potential elevator in a report that was submitted to the Board. As in every older building, the advantages of upgrades had to be balanced against the urgent needs of the aging structure so other projects took priority.

As we moved ahead into 2019 an awareness took place that accessibility was becoming more and more necessary and installation of an elevator would speak directly to our mission statement to be Inclusive and Life-Affirming.

This was a big ask for the congregation, with a total cost exceeding \$100,000 and yet the overwhelming majority voted in favour of moving forward at our Feb. 2, 2020 Annual Congregational meeting. So here we are. Plans are in place, fundraising is ongoing and off to a flying start and the necessary funds have been accessed through loans

to begin the construction process. Hopefully by the time you are reading this article, the work will have begun on the project.

Some day, we will look back on this time when we struggled through the pandemic, where isolation and anxiety troubled our lives. I believe we will see a period where the congregation of St. Mark's stepped forward in so many ways to remain connected and stay true to our mission statement. It is a time when we all came together and out of that care and concern for others, emerged a project of which we should all be proud.

Already \$36,000 donated



towards our goal of \$64,000
Thank You!!

BACK TO NORMAL (SORT OF...)

By: Alissa duHasky, Sunday School Coordinator

After way to many months apart the St. Mark's Sunday school met in person on Sunday September 12. We are meeting each Sunday at 10 a.m. outside in our beautiful courtyard. When Gabby Hewitt heard that Sunday school was starting she said, "I am so happy that normal things are starting again." Turning pages in the Bible while wearing mask proved difficult. Harder than opening the produce bags at the grocery store. But everything else felt so natural. Prepping crafts, telling our story, seeing dear friends all felt "normal". Everyone is welcome to join us, young or old, there is always space.

