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/ MARCH 2024 /

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

I am about
to do a new
thing;

now it springs
forth.

do you not
perceive it?

(Isaiah 43:19)

By: Janet Smith Zenwirt, Minister

Can you feel that sense of Spring in the air? As I write this, the sounds of children playing outside while birds are singing fill my ears and soul. It is March Break. Tender green daffodil shoots are just starting to sprout through the soil in my front garden. They remind me of St. Mark's since the bulbs came from our gardens. What a glorious time of year!

Spring is a time of promise and renewal as is the season of Lent and Easter. I invite you to join in the activities that we have planned for Holy Week. We will gather to support one another in community as we hear a difficult and wondrous story. Life provides personal challenges for many of us and our world right now. Yet, this is not the full picture for us or the Easter story. We may stand in

the garden like the woman weeping on that early Sunday morning, yet like her, we are not alone. Her healing starts as she walks away from the tomb to tell others what she has experienced – the Risen One. May we also stand in the light of God's love and be surrounded by the power of resurrection and renewal.

Read through this newsletter to remember some of the wonderful activities that have been held at the church and the plans for more. We have a flourishing congregation that is made more vibrant with your involvement among us and in our surrounding community. May Spring's abundant colour and growing creative force fill you and brighten our world.

Janet

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

By: Brian MacFarlane

The term in like a lion, out like a lamb is often applied to the month of March. At the time of writing this submission for the memo, almost uncharacteristically March has not been this way at all. The part of me that is the gardener rejoices with the early return of life to my garden and the birds that have returned to fill it with song. The part of me that craves warm sunshine on my face after the many cold and long dark days endured of winter, gladly embraces the precious warmer, sunny days when it is possible to quietly pause and take it all in. Most of all I am grateful for the warmer days for our city's unfortunately growing homeless population who struggle the most through the winter months. When I last wrote to you before Christmas I had reached out to staff of the Scarborough Warming Centre on Scarborough Golf Club Rd. to find out what their day to day needs were in serving their clients. Since then multiple delivery's, many of them with full car loads (car trunk, back seats, passenger seat full) of winter appropriate clothing, toiletries, coat hangers, laundry detergent, and reading material for visiting clients has been delivered and received by grateful staff of the centre. A very big thank you to the many people at St. Marks and in the community surrounding the warming centre for generously providing donations, including our neighbouring United Church congregation at Scarborough Bluffs that contributed a large quantity of new socks and underwear that were included with items delivered.

As most of you know, the United Church of Canada has proposed a Remit to allow for the formation of an

autonomous indigenous organization within the United Church of Canada. All church boards across Canada were asked to vote on behalf of their congregations. After meeting with the St.Marks congregation and providing information about the Remit and hearing comments and concerns from members not on the church board, the board met and voted. The vote was made not simply on a basis of a short yes or no from each board Chair, but with the allowance to articulate their feelings and concerns behind their individual opinion. From this, a strong majority voted in favour of establishing an autonomous national indigenous organization within the United Church of Canada. Concerns about the Remit shared by both the congregation and the board are being shared, accompanying the returned Remit ballot to the Law Clerk for United Church of Canada.

Some concerns expressed were the following:

- Concern of the unknown financial impact the Remit May have on congregations assessments. The aging and shrinking population of church members, less money coming in, the older buildings requiring costly repairs, an increase in the amounts payable determined by assessment may affect the ability for some congregations to keep their doors open.
- Concern that the Remit will be seen as a separation between the Indigenous Community across Canada.
- Concern that the UCC May be setting up expectations that it cannot meet. The development of a separate part of the UCC will

likely require more funding than Indigenous congregations are currently getting and 3-5 years from now, that will not be possible, given the trend we are seeing of churches closing and therefore diminishing revenue for the UCC.

It will be important to keep conversation going about the Remit proposal even after the votes have been tallied and a decision has been made. Even though it seems that there is a form of separation occurring in the passing of the Remit, there may also be opportunities for new relations and a deepening of our faith and understanding from a different perspective.

Renewal at St.Marks will be an important and ongoing topic for our congregation within the near future. In recent months a Renewal Team was formed for our congregation to look at our present and what would be the best pathway to take us into its future. February's Congregational Finance Meeting highlighted a need for greater financial stability to ensure our longevity as a congregation. The Renewal team is focussed not only on this but also our relevance and function in the community and what we can offer underserved needs. Changes are coming and an opportunity to be a part of these changes too, stay tuned!

In closing I wish to convey my deep thanks for all the great work of our ministry teams and their leadership, and the ongoing support they receive from members of our congregation, together we all make great things happen!

Wishing you and yours a blessed Easter!

Brian MacFarlane

SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL REPORT

By: Randy Stroud, Chair Property Committee

As always, we encourage everyone to visit SWRC website: shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca

That said, our site may seem quieter than normal, but appearances can be deceiving. The next big thing will be the annual regional meetings of all churches in the spring in Brampton. But there's more, much more. Micah 6:8 reads, He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

Our region is answering this challenge all the time with all that it has. The church is the body Christ. The body of Christ is busy.

Take a look at the Social Justice tab. Then look at Grants and Funding:

shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/communities-of-faith/grants-and-funding/

Scroll down to Grant Recipients. You'll see some you recognize and others you may want to check out.

The money donated to St. Marks on a regular basis supports the programs described in the link. Giving to local supports SM's operations, including SM's outreach program and

the assessment from UCC that provides funding to UCC for the various programs described in the link. And giving to M&S supports the UCC programs as well. The church, you, and all of us, is busy as the body of Christ, seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God.

TEXT BOLDDED AND IN BLUE IS A CLICKABLE LINK.

THE HELEN JONES LIBRARY

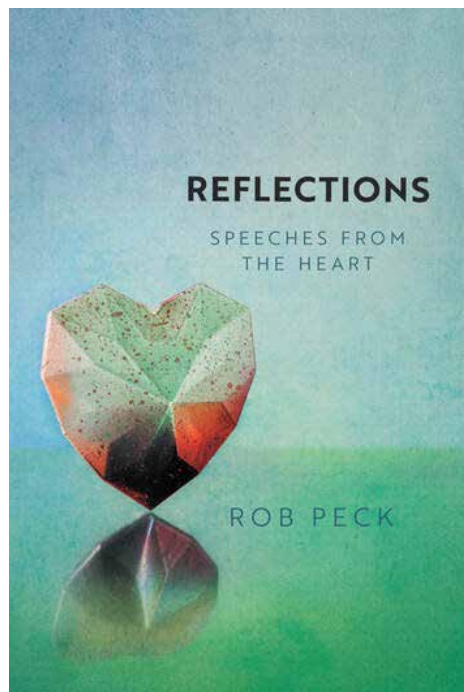
By: Karen Wigle

What's new in the library?

We now have two copies of Rob Peck's "Reflections Speeches From The Heart", kindly donated by the author.

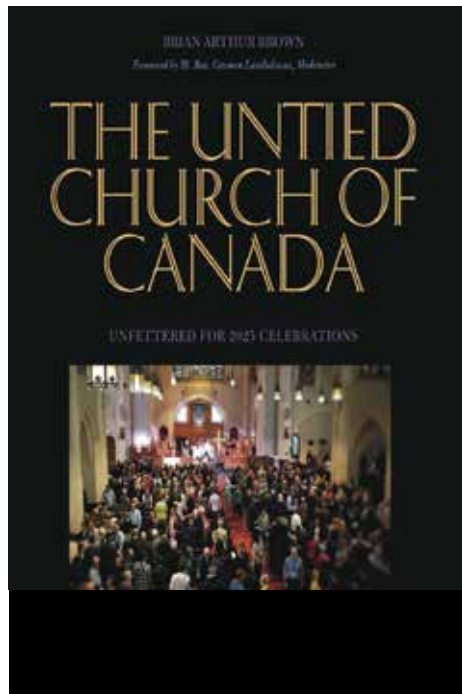
"The collection, drawn from a long and well-lived life, is a boon to professional as well as amateur speakers. The selected speeches include reflections on life, local and world events, and theological subjects. In these pages you will learn to craft and deliver strong speeches so that when you are called on to speak to audiences large or small, you can rise to the occasion feeling confident and inspired."

It can be purchased as a print or e-book from all popular book sellers.



Also new is "The United Church of Canada Unfettered for 2025 Celebrations." Thank you very much to Glen Greenwood for donating this important book.

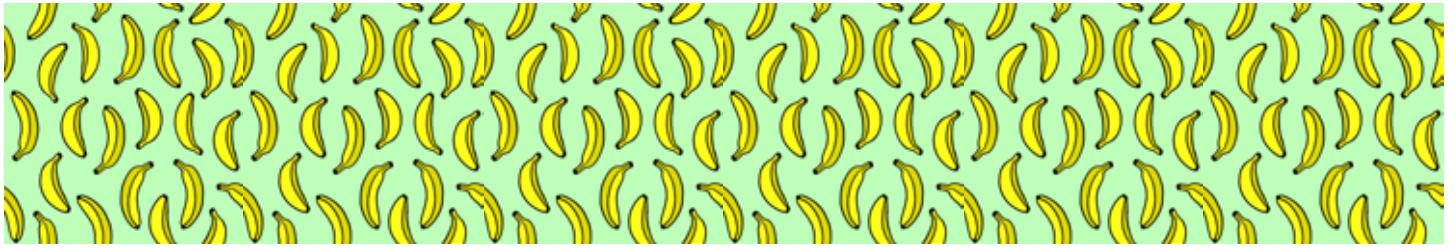
"After mid-century expansion, with changing demographics and smaller families, the United Church has now slimmed back down to its 1925 size of 300,000 active households, but is discovering that being leaner can actually mean being healthier in certain important ways. That "untied" church is now "an ecclesial machine; lean, green and keen," implementing a Strategic Plan for 2023–2025, celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025, and preparing for its next century in an evolving Canada."



There are several books about Lent on the centre shelf display for you to borrow and enjoy. Don't forget that we have a good collection of fiction, too. Have you read "Ru" by Kim Thuy or "Galore" by Michael Crummey? Those book covers were designed by C.S. Richardson, a Canadian artist and author of three internationally acclaimed novels. His latest, although not in our library yet, is "All The Colour In The World". It was shortlisted for the 2023 Giller Prize. I enjoyed it tremendously.

Here is the last verse of the poem "Love At First Sight" by Wislawa Szymborska. What do you think of this?

Every beginning
is only a sequel,
after all.
And the book
of events
is always
open halfway
through.



ONE BANANA, TWO BANANAS, THREE BANANAS, FOUR, FIVE BANANAS, & THEN 450 MORE!

By: Gayle Feeney

Your Outreach shoppers have truly honed this counting skill. Kraft Dinner, toilet paper, chick peas, bread, pasta, tuna etc..... all are purchased in multiple numbers. The unfortunate reality of this story is that the numbers at the Christ Church Food Bank are steadily increasing each week and so has the number of bananas and other foodstuff that we need to buy. Last week, there were 178 families at the food bank. That number represents almost 600 individuals. The constant support from the St Marks congregation has enabled your Outreach team to try to keep abreast of this most unfortunate situation and for that we are all most grateful.

When the children returned to our catchment area schools in the new year, they found that Outreach had purchased granola bars and juice boxes for those who found themselves hungry during the day. As well, a generous friend of Outreach, purchased socks and underwear for children in need at Eastview. To bring a bit of joy and to celebrate a gift from the HEART, for the folks visiting the Food Bank, Outreach purchased cookies to deliver at the time of Valentines.

This year, your Outreach Team, on your behalf, purchased a leaf for the Tree of Life, which will be mounted on the donor wall of the new Indigenous House to be

built at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of St Marks, who through their donations, support Outreach initiatives. I would also like to thank the Outreach team who give so willingly of their time and talent. In addition, I would like to acknowledge and thank the 'Friends of Outreach', who constantly support us with our endeavours. Dave Mac Kenzie, Bob and Liz Mc Crimmon and Rob Burridge are always at the ready. YOU, too, are always invited to share in our adventures. 'Many hands make light work.'

ST. MARK'S PROPERTY COMMITTEE UPDATE

By: Randy Stroud, Chair Property Committee

Your Property Committee (Randy Stroud; Larry Smith; Ken Niece; Reg Lanning plus project volunteer Bart Boniface) had a busy 2023 with noticeable changes to the church building. The building condition assessment completed by NoVi Engineering in April 2023 has helped the committee to focus on the maintenance and repairs highlighted by the engineer who conducted the building assessment. Needed maintenance/repairs have been successfully completed on washrooms, brickworks, caulking, patio, eaves etc.etc., but why do we do it?

Why is maintenance and preventive maintenance important for the church?

The number one reason to dedicate time and effort towards maintenance is to ensure the entire church is available for use safely and reliably by the many groups and individuals who use the building. Regular inspections, servicing and maintenance when needed can help to identify and address issues before they escalate into costly breakdowns or failures. Maintaining building safety is a key effort. We should all be on the look-out for potential safety hazards so they can be reported to Property and addressed early on to avoid problems.

Cost savings and efficiency are also a factor in regular maintenance. Costly emergency repairs and/or

replacements if an issue escalates into a major problem can be avoided by paying attention to maintaining the building.

By maintaining our church building, we will maximize our use of the building as safely and as comfortably as possible. We will also extend the useful life of the church building and it's facilities.

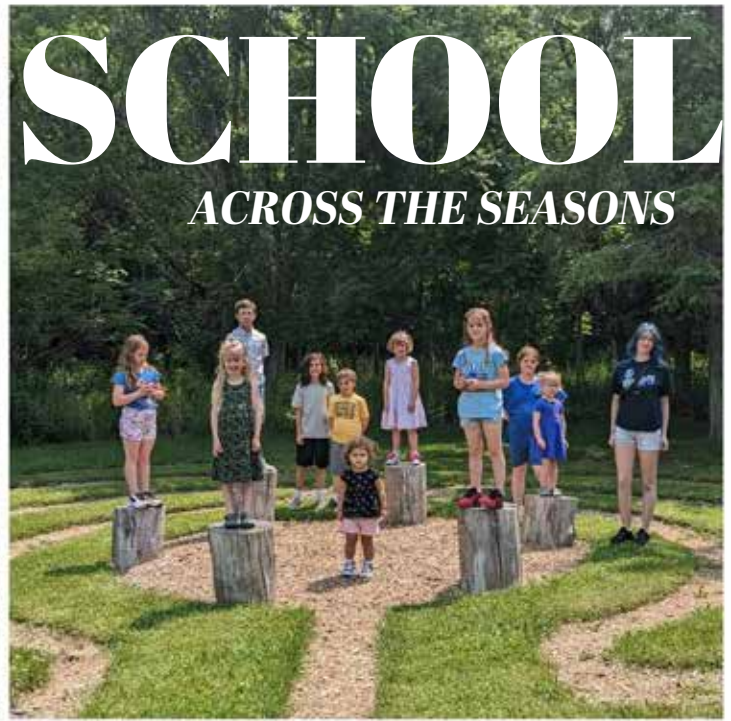
That's why maintenance and preventive maintenance is important for our church building.

By dedicating time and effort to maintenance and repairs, your Property Committee will continue to ensure St. Mark's will have a reliable, safe and functioning building to maintain our welcoming environment.

SUNDAY

SCHOOL

ACROSS THE SEASONS



By: Alissa duHasky, Sunday School Co-ordinator

Acts 14:17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”

Labyrinths are very ancient spiritual symbols and have appeared in some form in many cultures. They are associated with

many different ideas. One of the most important is that, unlike a maze with tricks and dead ends, the labyrinth is a path that you can trust and this is sometimes seen as a symbol of God – the path we can trust.

The Sunday school students often use the labyrinth for reflection and for fun, it’s surprising how long the pathway is when you are racing.

This past April we took a group photo at the labyrinth then I came up with the idea of taking their picture every season. Thankfully we had one snowy Sunday so we could complete the series.

We are grateful to have such a beautiful property to explore, to play and pray.

CEREAL & FROZEN PIZZA BOXES

By: Melinday Calaway

Thank you for continuing to save your Cereal & Frozen Pizza Boxes for my son Scott. He and his partner Elysha have started a business that is environmentally friendly, to upcycle and encourage people to mend what they have. They re-purpose items that would otherwise end up in the land fill and reuse and upcycle. One of the objects they make are ornaments from these boxes. It takes 4 boxes

to make one ornament. Any cereal box larger than the smallest Shreddies box works. They are donating 25¢ for every useable box donated. So far \$50 has been given to SM. (every little bit helps)

If you want to check it out their website is www.worthmending.com

Again...

Thank you.

Upcoming Events

UPDATE OF THE ST. MARK'S FAMILY PHOTO DIRECTORY

Having a photo directory is a great way to get to know the members of our church family better and we would like to update our family records from the last one we did in 2019.

- On Sundays, April 7th, April 14th and May 12th, 2024, we will take photos before church (beginning at 9:30 a.m.) and also after the service, in the Narthex
- If for any reason the dates and/or getting to church is a challenge, we will also take photos where and when it suits
- We encourage **everyone** to have their photo updated, even if you would rather remain "forever young"

If you have any questions please contact Luella or Tom (416) 283-1267 or email: tom.stephens@sympatico.ca

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A LABYRINTH WALK

Facilitated by a Veriditas-certified labyrinth facilitator

SATURDAY, MARCH

23RD FROM 2:PM TO 4:PM

(Held in the Church Sanctuary)

St. Mark's United Church, 115 Orton Park Rd.



Palm Sunday	March 24 @ 11 a.m.
Maundy Thursday	March 28, @12 (noon)
Good Friday	March 29 @11 a.m.
Easter Sunday	March 31 @ 11 a.m.

Upcoming
Events

MELINDA'S ART SHOW & SALE - SAVE THE DATE

WHEN:

Friday May 10th 12-8pm &
Saturday May 11th 10am-5pm

WHERE:

St. Mark's Sanctuary

WHY:

An opportunity for me to share my
gift & a seed project for SM

—20% of sales from original
artwork are donated to SM (Visa,

MasterCard & Cash accepted)

Refreshments will be served. Please
come out, take a look, and visit for
a bit. I would love to see you.

www.melindacalway.ca

