



The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter –
March 2017

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY

IN THIS ISSUE

Notes from the past Chair

This has been a busy two years for Parkminster United Church. Much has been accomplished in that short period. I told Council when I started this position that I was not afraid of change and that change is important for success regardless of the group or individual. The Council and congregation agreed to go on this journey with me.

We are in the process of reducing the size of Council as per the new governance structure, allowing committees to be more autonomous in their decision making and giving more time at council to do visioning for immediate and future planning.

The Community and Service Committee has changed some of its focus, and its name to Outreach. The Committee has become more hands-on with the local community. We have invited the community into our site on a more regular basis with the Food Truck initiative, Christian Education family parties, Monday morning drop-ins and community barbecue. This should increase the community's awareness of Parkminster.

With the help of the Resettlement Committee, our Syrian family of nine is settling into the Canadian way of life. The children are eagerly attending school and making friends while the parents are learning English and Canadian customs. The congregation and committee are committed

to continuing their financial and societal support.

2016 was a year to celebrate our tenth anniversary of our affirming decision with a beautiful service and the placement of a rainbow flag at the street for all to see. More needs to be done with the LGBTQ community to support them. It is not enough to say we are an open and welcoming congregation. We must walk the talk.

Membership has been active in welcoming new members and there is an increased number of children and young families attending on Sunday mornings. We have had our struggles with keeping a Pastoral Minister in that role due to illnesses. However, many in the congregation have stepped up to the plate to ease Rev. Meg's load and to ensure no one is neglected. Membership and Pastoral Care are working together to provide a continuum of care as suggested in the 2013 Congregational Development Team report.

We have met and exceeded our budget for the past two years. This is encouraging as we look forward to the future and a re-arrangement of our staffing pattern. Together with Rev. Meg, the Transition Team has been active with their listening skills to make everyone feel heard and that their voice matters.

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Photos courtesy of Lee Osborne unless otherwise indicated.

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Notes from the past Chair, continued

All the objectives of the Transition Team will have been met by the end of June 2017. There is a positive vibe in the air at Parkminster.

We completed the Joint Needs Assessment process in November after a marathon of meetings. A Search Committee is currently meeting, advertising and receiving applications for our positions.

We wish the Committee well in their endeavours to find us new ministry staff to lead us into our future.

The main objective for 2017 will be the Remits that will change some of the current structure of the United Church of Canada. Remits are recommendations of the 2015 General Council to make changes that will best enable the church to flourish into the future.

Council is currently researching five Remits and will bring their findings to the congregation in late April or early May.

This is my last note as Chair of Council. I want to thank everyone for their support, suggestions and willingness to move forward on many issues.

I extend a big WELCOME to Maedith Radlein as our new Council Chair.

Barb Leask Wynne
Past Chair

Meet our new Council Chair, Maedith Radlein



Maedith was born and raised in Jamaica and lived there all through her school years. When she wanted to do post-secondary education she went to Scotland and got her degree and her qualifications for teaching. She returned to Jamaica to teach.

Maedith married Desmond and the couple had two boys, Julian and Gordon. When the boys were six and four Desmond received a job offer here at the University of Waterloo, so the family emigrated to our city.

Maedith could not use her teaching degree here so while raising her boys and working at Tim Horton's, she went back to school and got her Bachelor of Education so that she could work with our board. Maedith

was finally hired in 1992 and by 2004 she was a principal in the Waterloo Board.

Meanwhile, Maedith and the boys attended Parkminster and that was our good fortune.

Maedith has worn many hats here at Parkminster. She was on the Property Committee as our rep for the Day Care. She was on Christian Education. She helped with Beavers and she taught Sunday School for

eleven years. She was also Superintendent of the Sunday School for two or three years.

Maedith taught the Gr 7/8 Sunday School class and she understood that age of kids. She would organize sleep-overs here at the church. Once she had outlined the boundaries of location and behaviour, she would let the kids plan their own events. She slept over with the youth which really is going beyond the call of duty and deserves a medal.

Maedith's most recent commitments have been becoming a member of the choir, joining the Inclusive Ministries Committee and chairing the Outreach Committee. While chair of that committee Maedith got the Monday Morning Care Giver and Tots program up and running.

Maedith's sons are spread out across the continent. Gordon lives in New York, is married to Evette and will become a dad in a couple months. Julian lives in Vancouver, is also married and has a little son named Ishaan. Maedith retired in 2014 just in time for Julian's wife, Munisha to head back to work. In order to help out with this first transition year, Maedith went to Vancouver, rented a place to live and took over Ishaan's child care. She is an energetic and generous grandma.

Last fall, Maedith accepted her latest challenge: heading up Council here at the church. Maedith is a no nonsense kind of person who listens carefully, respects different perspectives and points out challenges that she feels need to be considered. She is full of ideas and puts her energy into what she has committed to.

We are lucky to have her as our head of Council.

We extend a big "thank you" to Barb Leask Wynne for her leadership as Chair of Council for the past 2 years. And we give a warm welcome Maedith Radlein who assumes the role.

Parkminster's memorial garden - a brief history



Parkminster's Memorial Garden serves as a pleasant and welcoming place for

people to remember loved ones, or merely to relax during busy lives.

The concept of the Garden was the inspiration of Howard Campbell and Dick Mutton. On one of their travels, Howard and Marjorie observed that some churches were creating Memorial Gardens on church property for the use of members. Dick became aware of a Memorial Garden at the Anglican Church in Stratford. In 2000, he invited people to look at the garden and to consider if the same five-sided monument could be used at Parkminster. In short time, Dick had enlisted five other people to form a committee to plan the design and implementation of our Memorial Garden.

In addition to Dick, the other committee members were Howard Campbell, Pat Harris, Alan McLachlin, Terry MacPherson and Barbara Whitney. The key issues were the design of the Garden, the type of



monument, location, record-keeping and funding. **A design that reflected**

the Holy Trinity concept was chosen and a landscape architect developed a plan for walkways and shrubs. The design was to initially include three monuments each holding forty names, for a total of 120.

With the blessing of the Trustees and the Unified Board, the proposal was presented to the congregation in the summer of 2001. By October 2001, 35 people had committed financially and another 25 expressed strong interest in becoming Garden subscribers. In January 2002, the committee invited members of the congregation to a meeting to unveil the Garden design and to announce that the Garden would be constructed in the spring.

The completed garden was widely accepted and considered as a pleasant and welcoming place for people to remember loved ones or merely to relax during busy lives. Membership in the Garden continues

to grow and over 100 subscriptions have now been sold. It may be necessary to add additional monuments in the future, as the design allows for an additional three monuments.

There are sufficient funds in reserve in the Parkminster Endowment Fund to provide perpetual care of the Gardens.

If you need more information about the Gardens, contact any of the current committee members – Pat Harris, John Rule, Wendy Ridgway, Swain Van Camp or Jim Bowman.

Submitted by Jim Bowman and Swain Van Camp, Co-Chairs of the Memorial Garden Committee



Eyes are the windows of the soul



Eyes are the windows of the soul, which I have to admit, was a beautiful feeling, that I had while sleeping. Eyes which we have to see the world

the eyes such as children see the world. Let me explain why I say this. The world has gotten mixed up. When I was a young girl of about 16, I was naive about politics and the ways of everything all around us.

Let me quote a beautiful way of putting it from my favourite book:

*"I can appreciate and love wholeheartedly and in the present moment.
I can experience life now and forever as holy and infinitely precious.
Whatever my age, whatever my circumstances,
I can reignite in my own life a child's passion and love for humanity, a child's curiosity, awe, sweet tenderness and joy.
I can learn from the world's children.
I can learn from the child I once was.
I can bless the world with what I find."
(Heaven on Earth, timeless Prayers of wisdom and love, by Stephanie Dowrick, p. 84)*

If you watch children at the church picnic, or during a service, they are busy singing, smiling, and dancing. They don't have any worries. Out of the mouths of babes. Eyes are the windows of the soul. Not a care in the world.

Sit down with a child and really, really listen and hear what their wants and needs are. Play with them or maybe read a story to them. Maybe you will become renewed with love and belief in something glorious.

Peace be with you and may you have such love to share. Don't be afraid of playing like a child. Don't be afraid of doing something such as chalk or reading a book like the Little House on the Prairie.

"the peace we yearn for is already within ...Every human heart is already enfolded in the capacity to feel peace as the direct result of loving -kindness, compassion, and truthfulness."

Paul R. Fleischman

Blessed be.
Kathleen Vanderlinden
Lay Worship Leader

Progressive church finds a future

Last fall, researchers from two Ontario universities set out to discover why mainline churches in Canada are dying. Of the 22 Anglican, United, Lutheran and Presbyterian churches they surveyed, all in Ontario, nine were growing, and 13 were declining.

Based on that research, they concluded that the more theologically conservative a church is, the more likely it is to be growing. The implication of the research seemed to be that if a church wants to grow, it should be more conservative. But a United Church in Winnipeg disagrees.

I'm talking about Charleswood United Church, a theologically progressive congregation that finds about 350 people attending services every Sunday. According to minister Michael Wilson, the church is doing well because it is a "friendly and welcoming place, warm and active."

Being the only United Church in Charleswood also helps, he acknowledges, but he says that people from other denominations are attracted by the church's gay-friendly, progressive and liberal stance. For Wilson, it isn't as much about whether a church is conservative or liberal, "as much as it is a willingness to change." Many churches, he says, "wait too long to make needed changes. The congregation shrinks to a size where it isn't sustainable. Changes need to be made when it is still healthy."

He cites, for example, Charleswood's worship style. It is still liturgical, he says, but it is also "adaptable and flexible" — the church has a traditional choir, but it also has a worship band.

Leadership plays a big role, says Wilson, who has been at Charleswood for 22 years. "Leaders need to create a culture of permission," he says. "We have to not get in the way when people feel called to do something new and different." This doesn't mean that anything goes, he says, "but if it feels right, and people are enthusiastic, let them go to it."

This can be scary for some churches, he notes, since it means giving up control. But thriving churches, he believes, don't have "a small group determining how things are

done," but rather are "dynamic, organic, fluid."

The key, he says, is to be always asking the question: "What is God calling our congregation to do?" This can also mean going against the way things have always been done, either as a church or denomination. **"There has traditionally been a United Church way of doing things, having to operate in a certain way," he says. "But revitalized churches are doing it their own way."**

Even though Charleswood is liberal and progressive, Wilson says that he is "surprisingly orthodox. I'm Trinitarian, and I believe in the authority of scripture. I'm progressive in interpretation." Ultimately, he says, "it's not about being liberal or conservative, but paying attention to people and their needs, honouring people where they are at, affirming them, creating a safe place, being welcoming." "The common denominator is that people who come here like coming here."

One of the places Wilson draws inspiration from for his ministry is Hillhurst United Church in Calgary. Unlike Charleswood, which had been mostly stable over the course of its history before increasing, Hillhurst "died and was born again," says its minister, John Pentland. When he arrived, in 2005, the congregation was down to about 50 people, and talking about closing.

Today about 500 people attend two services each Sunday, he says, noting that a third of the congregation are United Church, a third are from other denominations, and a third claim no church background at all.

To what does he attribute the turnaround? It takes time, he says, and "leadership that casts a vision" and isn't "afraid to let some things die." Pentland believes many people are looking for what liberal and progressive churches like Charleswood and Hillhurst offer.

"The culture is starved for what we are doing," he says. "People are trying yoga, meditation — they want something spiritual. But the church isn't providing it." That, he says, is why many aren't growing. "They aren't paying attention to the culture." For Pentland, "there's never a

better time to be the church... people are searching for meaning and they want a place to belong. They want a place to question. Same old, same old doesn't work."

At liberal churches like Charleswood and Hillhurst, it's a formula that seems to be working.

John Longhurst, Winnipeg Free Press
2/18/12

Monday Morning play group

Every Monday morning seven women from Parkminster and one woman from the neighbourhood (only two each week) run a program where care givers are welcome to bring their children to the church gym for play time. Parkminster provides a healthy snack for the children and coffee or tea for the adults. The adults get connecting time with each other while the children buzz around the gym using the toys that are set out each week. The care givers are responsible for supervising the food that their children eat but Parkminster makes sure that there is plenty available.

This is an outreach project enticing the neighbourhood to make use of our facility. We average about ten to twelve children each week. Only a few regulars are from the church so we are serving the surrounding community. In addition, Bluevale Collegiate reached out to us and asked if one of their students could be a helper at the program, to give that student a work-like placement each week. Our Bluevale student is blossoming before our eyes and becoming more confident and helpful to us.

This program has been free for the people using it and just this week the MayCourt Club of KW generously donated money to help us finance this outreach project.

Message from Meg

Rabbi Uri taught: think of a tree. If you stand in front of it, and watch it incessantly to see how it grows, you will see nothing. But tend to it; come and go from it, and in time, you will see its growth.
Quoted by Martin Buber in *Tales of Hasidism, Later Masters*

Sometimes we must simply wait to see transformation. Sometimes we must trust that, if we tend to life with compassion and justice, there will come a time when the change is visible, a time when a new reality is noticeable, a time when the paradigms of our ordinary everyday experience shift and we see life's possibility with new eyes.

We are smart enough to know that we have to wait some years for a tree to grow its canopy and produce shade. Are we smart enough to invest in our own spiritual journey, and to wait patiently until we have grown in compassion and welcome and forgiveness?

This season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1st and ends on Palm Sunday, April 9th, is a time to invest in the deepening of our own spirits. There are several ways to do this, of course. Here are some suggestions.

- **Commit yourself to a worship journey.** The season of Lent is

designed as a journey of discovery and depth. There is, of course, the regular Sunday worship. The stories this year are from John's gospel: Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the surprising-to-everyone healing of the blind man. These are stories of broken-made-whole and of insight gained. They are stories of seeing the truth about ourselves and therefore, the truth about the holy. They are stories of facing the shadow in ourselves and finding the light. Pondering these stories, singing these stories, and praying them are spirit-deepening activities.

- **Begin the season with intention.** There was a Taize worship to open Lent for us on Ash Wednesday. Taking forty-five minutes to put our feet on the Lenten road makes an unavoidable start to the journey. It is like showing up at the airport to board a plane to a new destination. My mother often told my sisters and me "to start the way we want to finish." This is good Lenten advice, for if we commit to the spiritual journey, we will find that we, like the tree, have grown.
- **Think about marking holy week.** We will have a Maundy Thursday service here that invites us into our own upper

room where we prepare our hearts for Good Friday. The service is an hour. It includes handwashing and blessing in the chapel, a candle-lit walk to the upper room, the double classroom, a potluck meal (Meg cooks for the choir) and communion around the tables. Lee McWebb is providing the music. This is one way of sharing the disciple-journey with Jesus.

- **Finally, we join the other Waterloo United Churches at First United for a Good Friday service.** We hear the story and try to take in the enormity of it all. The Joint Choir sings the sorrow of the day, and we are left with "It is finished" until Easter dawns with hope and rejoicing. The goal of this journey is to arrive at new life ready to welcome it. The goal is to grow in spiritual strength and wisdom and be ready for the miracle of resurrection to find a home in us. The goal is to stand in the light of Easter morning and know that we have tended the tree of our spirit-life and we have grown.

Think about your spiritual opportunities, and may this Lent be a time for you to grow.

Rev. Meg

Stewardship Easter update

Parkminster has much to be grateful for! We are extremely fortunate to have a congregation that is generous with its time, financial resources, and enthusiasm for outreach. As we enter Lent, a time of reflection, we bring to your attention a couple of upcoming initiatives.

1. Faith Bonds – What are they, and why should I care?

In April 2013, at a time when we had experienced several years of budget deficits, three-year promissory notes were issued to help address the shortfall in our local fund. We called them Faith Bonds. Through the generosity of ten Parkminster families, \$51,000 was raised. In April 2016, three things happened: the church repaid a number of the maturing bonds with assistance from the Endowment Fund; some of the bondholders donated all or a portion of their principal; and we re-issued \$23,000 of Faith Bonds. How wonderful it

would be if we could redeem these remaining bonds in 2017 and repay the generosity of those families who were so generous at a time when we were in a tight financial position. Because we also have to deal with a roof repair and one-time expenses related to a new ministry team this year, it would be wonderful if we could clear off this \$23,000 debt and not face a deficit going into the fall!

2. Choral Scholars Program

The Choral Scholar Program was established in 2016 at Neil Murray's initiative, to enable Parkminster to benefit from the very talented students in the music program at WLU. Council agreed to pay students a modest amount to participate in choir practice and Sunday morning services. In 2016 we were fortunate to receive additional, specific donations of \$1,240 to fund the program which had expenses totalling \$2,035.

I'm sure we can all agree that the contribution of Midori Marsh and River Guard has benefitted an already outstanding choir and we are so fortunate to be able to have them return in the fall! This is an exciting program and if music touches your soul, perhaps you might consider a donation to the Choral Scholars program.

As we approach Easter we ask you, if you are able, to consider a gift to Parkminster over and above your regular offering. There will be envelopes in the pews giving you options as to where you wish to direct your support - redeeming Faith Bonds, funding the Choral Scholar Program, volunteering, or something else you may want to support!

We have so much to be grateful for here at Parkminster. Help us to continue to run our programs with your support.
Stewardship