



The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter –
December 2018

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY

Notes from the Chair

It's almost the end of the year—Christmas looms as we begin our Advent series. Then the new year of 2019, our 61st year. It has been a wonderful year for Parkminster. We have strengthened our bonds as a congregation with committees increasingly working on common outcomes while others create projects and activities that interest them. Our connections with community agencies, other churches and our neighbours continue to develop and grow. Our ministry of music delights as it includes and embraces the multiplicity of talents in our congregation. Our understanding and commitment to being a church that fulfills its mission is increasingly understood and practised. Our mission calls on us to change and embrace new ways of doing things, realizing that clinging to the past does not help us be part of the future. This is a good time to reflect on what our mission means. *God is calling us to be an evolving community of faith inspired to embrace our future as we:*

- *Deepen our commitment to each other*
- *Nurture our spiritual vitality and growth*
- *Live a life of loving influence in the world.*

Currently we are immersed in discussion about our highly improved, digital communication media. The sign and TV Monitor have elevated our ability to connect and communicate to new levels. It also means that our website has more potential as it aligns with the messaging of the other two. As

our communications media becomes more sophisticated, its maintenance becomes more time consuming, requiring guidelines that will keep our information current and relevant. To this end, Council approved five paid hours per week to be devoted to media as the work involved is beyond what would be asked of a volunteer. The hours were first offered to Melanie who already coordinates announcements. She has agreed to take them on and we are grateful. Melanie is now the gatekeeper for all announcements so please be sure to discuss your thoughts with her.

We also celebrate the leadership of the Stewardship Committee in looking at new ways of giving and supporting Parkminster. We look forward to details of the 2019 Stewardship campaign. Growing in community requires resources and if our mission is to go out in love to advocate for and model social justice, then our mission is also to actively look for and support ways to get the funding needed.

2019 will challenge us in new ways. What does it mean to be in community? What does it mean to reach out and become a community church? It may require us to share our space in ways we may not have done previously. It may require us to give in ways we have not done before.

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Notes from the Chair continued...

Christmas is a time of peace, goodwill, giving and loving. It is a time to be thankful. I give praise and thanks for the gifts, community, purpose and love that Parkminster provides for us. I give praise and thanks for new people visiting our church and the growth in Sunday School

numbers. I give praise and thanks for our ministerial team and ministry of music. I give praise and thanks for the many who lead committees and support the numerous activities in the church. I give praise and thanks for you all.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Vancouver! I leave in mid December to visit with Julian and family. I wish a safe, happy and blessed Christmas for you and family.

Maedith Radlein, Chair of Council

Celebrating Parkminster's 60th anniversary

In October, Parkminster celebrated its 60th anniversary. The group photo on the left includes some of our charter members—those who founded the church. Included, left to right, are Gord Chambers, Betty McCallum, Dorothy Duxbury, Peggy Nodder, Ken Willsie, Grace Thede and John Heinbuch. In the photo on the right are children of founding members. Serving coffee is Bill Spall (son of Belle and Charlie Spall) and Ken Willsie (son of Marg and Asa Willsie). Ken is also a founding member himself. Barb Monteith and Mark Dunbar (photo on the front page) are the children of charter members Clarence and Loreen Dunbar. Photos contributed by Mary Reynolds.



Partnering with ACCKWA

When it came to the attention of Inclusive Ministries that people living with the HIV virus in the Waterloo area were being ostracized in their church communities, we wanted to learn more. Priscilla Muzira came from the non-profit organization, Aids Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area (ACCKWA) and spoke to interested people in an evening session. Because of people's lack of knowledge, individuals who are HIV positive have been asked to refrain from joining in church meals and asked to sit in certain sections of the church. Their church experience has not been positive and there is so much stigma attached to having this virus.

Priscilla told us that we could help by allowing ACCKWA to hold a cooking circle once a month here at the church. Inclusive Ministries voted to sponsor this group. The people who attend are often isolated. Many of them are immigrants and some are separated from their families, who live

back in their country of birth. Many are single mothers. For two years we have hosted the Cooking Circle.

The people who attend say that Parkminster is the most welcoming space that they have used. ACCKWA provides the groceries and everyone lends a hand and makes a large amount of food. After a delicious lunch, the food is put into containers for the participants to take home for another meal. Priscilla thinks that this is the only home cooked food that some of the men get that month.

Something that has been fun is the introduction of foods that the people from Africa have not tried. Priscilla does not want us to bring in samples of ready-made food. She wants us to bring the food and prepare it together so that her clients can learn how to make it on their own later. An example of this has been rhubarb.

Parkminster is currently hosting a Zumba class on the first and third Friday of the month. ACCKWA hires the instructors, we provide the space and a group of seven or eight people have the opportunity to gather together, have fun and get some exercise.

Parkminster participated in the red scarf project by knitting red scarves to help bring awareness to people living with the HIV virus in our community. Parkminster knit and donated twenty red scarves. We also gathered and listened to two people share their stories about living with the HIV virus.

Over time these people might feel as if Parkminster is one of their church homes. This is reaching out to a group of people who need it and truly appreciate being a part of the Parkminster community.

Inclusive Committee

Advent greetings from the Resettlement Committee

In this season for Good News we want to tell you about some of the ways that Parkminster folks are supporting our Al Mohamad family.



After almost three years of residency, the Al Mohamad family is essentially independent and self-supporting financially. Yehya's obtaining a full-time job is a wonderful piece of news. Yehya is now working at SwiftSpace, a company owned by Rob and Michelle Way. Rob Way was featured in last weekend's Record (picture below). They are friends of Lori McKim Lang. Kevin King, son of Gregg and Lynda, is his manager. David Osborne also assisted in getting Yehya introduced to his new job.



The lease on the home where the Al Mohamads have been living for three years expires in March.

We are helping them look for a place with at least three bedrooms and one and one-half baths so if you know of a suitable place please get in touch with Chair Rob MacQueen (rdmacqueen@gmail.com).

We are fortunate that John Bald from JOHN@HOMESHOPTEAM.COM is assisting us in looking for a house.



Many of our members are supporting the family, with tutoring and outings for the children. Sue Usaty took Khaled and Mohamad to Five Oaks for a Youth Weekend November 10-11 and mentors Ghosoun on Tuesdays. Lori McKim Lang tutors Hala and Rama and takes them and Ghosoun swimming on Thursdays and to other activities like the Santa Claus Parade.



Glenn Harper and Shelley Mutton tutor with Nour and Zakariya on Thursdays. Glenn also took the boys to a football game and it snowed. Kathy Shortt and Nancy Dykstra continue to tutor Khaled and Mohamad weekly.

In the November 5th Record you may have seen an article about a book called "Family Portraits". It features photos and stories about several refugee families including the Al Mohamad's. It is a beautiful book and we received two free copies which we'll make available for you to see.

Cobie Love has become a good friend of Khairiya and invited the family for her birthday party. She is helping Khairiya arrange needed dental work. Hopefully it will be covered by the Ontario Government but we will help if needed, as we did with Yehya.



We celebrate the fact that the family has settled in and accommodated so well to Canadian society. We are proud of, and thankful for, the continuing personal support that so many members of our community are continuing to provide for the family.



When we see the joy with which these members talk about the children and their interactions, we see love in action.

Christmas Blessings to all.
Resettlement Committee

Photos contributed by Lori McKim Lang and Glenn Harper.

Minister's message

Looking out my window at a snow-covered lawn and more coming down it feels that winter has come much too early!

Sometimes it seems as if the seasons fly by with us barely noticing them. As Advent and Christmas come upon us, I invite you to consider this reflection on the meaning of these seasons:

"God sent a present into the world, the gift of a loving presence named Jesus. The gospel stories indicate that Jesus gave few material things to people. What he gave most was his personal presence, gifts that were treasures of the heart: belief in self, inner healing, peace of mind, compassion, forgiveness, dignity, and justice. This loving presence lives on in us and is the central focus of Christmas gift-giving."

Sharing the gift of personal presence means that we see ourselves as a gift holding the goodness of Jesus who is Emmanuel, God-with-us." (Joyce Rupp, Out of the Ordinary, p.20)

You are the gift, not what you buy! It's not that we shouldn't buy gifts, it's just that purchased gifts are a poor substitute for the gift of self. What a counter-cultural message—you are enough, you have enough, you are what your family, your friends, your community, your world needs!

These are messages we long to hear anytime of year but they become especially poignant during the Advent and Christmas seasons. The distractions that threaten our sense of self, that tell us that what our loved ones most need is not us, but rather more possessions are rampant.

This Advent and Christmas season I invite you to ground yourself in a different reality—God's reality, by coming together in fellowship and worship. Come and worship on the Sunday's of Advent as we light our Advent candles, bring gifts wrapped in white for homeless youth, attend the One December Night concert, experience comfort and solace at the Longest Night service, celebrate and sing carols on Christmas Eve.

This is an invitation to community, an invitation to come together as God's people, to be renewed and restored, to give meaning and perspective to the shopping, the partying and the feasting. May Parkminster be richly blessed by your presence this season, may you be filled with the enduring joy and wonder of Emmanuel, God with us.

Rev. Joe

The gift of life

Two ladies in our congregation have received organ transplants in the past 18 months. Laura Forde received a new kidney and Maureen Crawford, a new heart. These two surgeries were life changing and life saving. Today, in Ontario, there are over 1,600 people waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant. This is their only treatment option, and every three days someone will die because they did not get their transplant in time.

Everyone in Ontario who has a valid OHIP card can be a donor. Once you have signed up, that information is attached electronically to your OHIP number. By registering consent for organ and tissue donation, you give hope to the thousands of Ontarians waiting for a transplant. Individuals on the transplant wait list are suffering from organ failure and without the generous gift of life from an organ donor, they will die. Tissue donors can also enhance the lives of recovering burn victims, help restore sight, and allow people to walk again.

Transplants not only save lives, they return recipients to productive lives. One donor can change eight lives.

The list of organs and tissue that can be donated include the heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, pancreas, small intestines, eyes, bone, skin, and heart valves.

Your current or past medical history does not prevent you from registering to be a donor. Individuals with serious illnesses can, sometimes, be organ and/or tissue donors. Each potential donor is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Age is no restriction. The oldest organ donor was 92 and the oldest tissue donor was 104. Also, you can still be an organ/tissue donor even if you are unable to donate blood as the regulations differ. You must be 16 years of age in order to register.

In the case of a baby or child, the parent or legal guardian may ask that the child's organs/tissue be donated at the time of death.

Your family can veto your wish to be an organ and/or tissue donor at the time of donation. So, it is imperative that you discuss your wishes with your family so that they understand how truly important this wish to be a donor is for you.

As a result, the Pastoral Care committee and I are teaming up to sign up new donors so that no person in Ontario who needs a transplant will do without. It truly would be the gift of life and bring hope to those in need. On Sunday December 2nd we will be available after church to sign volunteers up electronically and we will also have hard copies available for you to fill out yourselves and send in. You can also sign up at www.beadonor.ca. In case you are unsure if you signed up in the past, you can also check at www.beadonor.ca or the back of your green OHIP card. You can also sign up when you renew your driver's licence or OHIP card.

In this Advent season, please consider signing up to be a donor. That promise of a donation could be the gift of life.

Barbara Leask Wynne MD

Update on the Nicaragua Projects

This update is an excerpt of a more detailed version which is posted on the bulletin board in the upper hall of the church. It is also available upon request through John's email (drwatson46@hotmail.com).

In 2012, I returned to Nicaragua with my brother in law and a cousin. Through the Two Countries One World (TCOW) trip, I had established a relationship with a Non-Governmental Organization, that was working closely with a neighbourhood group in transforming an abandoned and barren bean field, to a functional community. There was a seemingly endless demand for physical and financial aid in making this dream become a reality, so with a modest amount of fundraising, primarily through family and friends and our personal contributions, we spent 19 days, working at Barrio Anexo Grenada, in the capital of Managua. We offered funding for housing repair, our non-professional and professional skills, and loving hearts and hands.

In 2013, our fundraising followed a similar pattern, but also included a call to members at Parkminster for financial aid for housing. This was an informal request, though many people extended their support for additional housing projects.

In 2014, the Nicaragua Project as it was called, took on a new life. It seemed the Spirit was at work in Parkminster. The members grew in support of the project and it was accepted by Outreach as a program they would endorse. This was significant in that donations through Parkminster could then be recognized as eligible for tax receipts.

These annual trips have continued with as few as two participants and as many as fifteen. Recruits who go to Nicaragua have largely come from conversations about the Nicaragua Projects. We have built many houses and schools, supported teacher salaries, purchased sports equipment and construction tools, and established cherished personal relationships with host families and many communities. Almost as important, is that we have learned more and more about this complex country and are able to provide a small voice to a broader audience.

In recent years, the Nicaragua Projects have focused not only on housing, but increasingly on helping in the development of schools.



The effect of poverty on education is probably the single most destructive force the country faces on a long-term basis. Without education, there is little chance of sustainable improvements for the future. It is currently estimated that 22% of rural children over the age of 10, are illiterate.

Tourism, which was slowly becoming the fastest growing industry in Nicaragua, has now essentially come to a stop.

Where are the Nicaragua Projects now?



In February 2018, a group of six ventured to Ometepe Island in the southern end of Lake Nicaragua, to assist in the financing and construction of classrooms for an Ometepe Bilingual School at Hacienda Merida. Hacienda Merida is a hostel/hotel in a remote corner of the island. It is primarily an agricultural area that until recently, had been a destination for tourists seeking adventures in hiking, cycling, ornithology, horticulture and kayaking. The owners/operators of the hostel have, for the past five years, been diverting profits from the hostel toward the construction of a Spanish/English bilingual school. Public education is free in Nicaragua, but since there was no public school for the local

children, the construction of a school became vitally important.

The Ometepe project is just one small example of the importance of Global Outreach. It is the act of reaching out to those less fortunate, to lend a hand up not a hand out, to empower people to become self-sufficient. It's working towards social justice to bring us together, not to keep us apart.

How Parkminster can help?

If you wish to financially support the Ometepe School, note donations to "Nicaragua Fund" in your offering to Parkminster United Church. Any non-designated donations received informally, will be sent directly to the families via Western Union. Financial tracking will be made available if requested.

Support with sponsoring the Nicaragua Projects, perhaps in partnership with Riverside United Church in London, will focus on:

1. Ometepe Bilingual school - for teacher salaries and construction of another classroom. Teacher salaries are an immediate priority right now. A typical teacher salary is \$200.00 per month, which is close to the extreme poverty range.
2. Individual families - for daily living, food, health, education, spiritual, overall well-being and quality of life. Currently, John Langford from Riverside United Church in London (a co-traveller to Nicaragua) and I support three families and would like to make this a community (barrio) commitment for other families as well.

Blessings
John Watson

Photos contributed by John Watson.

Parkminster December services



Join us!

Celebrate the season through the month of December. Share music, messages and celebrations as we reflect on the gifts that surround us.

December 2 – 16 - White Gift Tree

All are invited to bring in donations of new socks, mitts/gloves, hats, towels, personal hygiene products and more wrapped in white paper and place these items under the tree. Items will be donated to our friends at "oneRoof" in support of homeless and at-risk youth. **Check out their wish list for inspiration, oneroof.org/wishlist/.** Items will be blessed and dedicated on Sunday, December 16th.

Sunday, December 2 at 10:00am - Advent 1: Hope

Worship with Communion
We light the Advent Candle of Hope

Sunday, December 9 at 10:00am - Advent 2: Peace

We light the Advent Candle of Peace

Sunday, December 16 at 10:00am - Advent 3: Joy

We light the Advent Candle of Joy

Christmas Pageant presented by our Parkminster children/youth **White Gifts** will be collected, blessed and dedicated during the service.

Sunday, December 16 at 7:00pm - One December Night

A delightful evening of music showcasing the musical talents of Parkminster and Bluevale Collegiate. Tickets: \$10/person or \$20/family. You may purchase tickets the night of the concert or call Bob Hudgins at 519-741-4244.

Friday, December 21 at 7:00pm - The Longest Night

For some the Christmas season can bring with it reminders of pain, loss and emptiness. It is helpful to know we are not alone in these times. Please join us at Parkminster to gather in worship, share fellowship, and light a candle acknowledging our grief and loss.

Sunday, December 23 at 10:00am - Advent 4: Love

We light the Advent Candle of Love

Monday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

7:00pm – Family service with lots of music

10:00pm – Quiet, reflective service with communion, candlelight and carols

Supporting our mission

**You are not alone.
Come share the
journey.**

Sunday morning is a time when we can set aside the busy-ness or loneliness of the week and place ourselves in the safety of the sanctuary here at Parkminster. We are nourished spiritually and connect with one another during this time.

But Parkminster is more than just a "Sunday" place. We are called to live a life of loving influence in the world and this is a 7-day calling! During the week the church is alive with various community groups, committee meetings, choir practices and more.

All of this takes support to make it happen and as your Stewardship Committee, we encourage you to pause to reflect on what is needed from each of us to sustain this place of spiritual, emotional and community support.

It does require some financial commitment to continue this important work. With an annual local budget of \$300,00 and an outreach budget of \$80,00 that means that it 'costs' approximately \$1,000 per day to continue to do the great work we do within our church walls and out in the community!

In the old days tithing of 10% of income was common. Today 5% of after-tax income is the gold standard. This can be contributed in time and talent as well, as each of our circumstances allows.

Giving is like saving; it is more likely to happen if it is planned and carried out consistently. Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) is a great way to do this, providing an opportunity to continue to support Parkminster, even if you are away.

PAR ensures that Parkminster has a steady income to continue its mission. For more information, talk to a member of the Stewardship committee or pick up a PAR brochure at the welcome table. Help us to meet our budget so we can be that loving influence in the world!

Your Stewardship Committee

Bruce Mutton
Jeanne Foster
David Osborne
Sue MacQueen

What is TCOW?

TCOW—also known as Two Countries One World—is a service and learning initiative that is challenging and changing the lives of youth in Waterloo Presbytery. The goal is to awaken youth to the realities of economic and social justice issues in developing countries, and how our own trade and foreign policies affect these issues for others and for ourselves.

Every two years over March Break, the group travels to a developing nation, with day-long learning workshops throughout the preceding year to help prepare participants. TCOW was developed as a continuation to the growth and development of faith for youth after confirmation and as a way to encourage their global citizenship.



Photo: This year's TCOW youth and committee members at their first meeting in September. Photo contributed by Lillian Carvalho.

This year Parkminster has two youth travelling with TCOW to Brisas del Mar, Colombia, where

they will be hosted by the Colombia Methodist Church. Abbie Hicknell and Colleen Usaty will be away for ten days over their school break. No doubt you have seen Abbie and Colleen raising awareness and funds for their upcoming trip. Sales of coffee, empanadas and alfajores will continue into the new year. The girls provided Colombian sweets during coffee hour on November 18 and will be hosting a bake sale in the church gym on December 16 after the morning service. More to come in January!

Abbie, Colleen and their families appreciate your ongoing financial, spiritual and emotional support. For more information, check out www.waterlootcow.ca

Moderator's Advent Message 2018

Grace and peace to you, in Jesus' name!

This is one of the times of year that I have a *lot* of fun in congregational ministry. I call it the "Advent-Oh-No-Where-Did-We-Put-It?!" preparation time. This is the moment when the Worship Committee, or the United Church Women leadership, or the facilitator for the Children's Ministry, or someone else, pokes their head in my door and says, "Richard, have you seen the Advent wreath (or the wall hanging) (or the crèche) (or another of the Advent accoutrements)? I'm sure it was put away properly at Christmas last year, but I can't find it."

Sometimes it's because it didn't get put away exactly in the changeover from Advent to Christmas; but often it's because things have gotten moved during all of the changes and shifts and congregational living that happened during the year.

So we go searching. Often we find what we're searching for. Sometimes we don't—and we need to make a decision: is it something we need? If so, is it something that should be purchased, or is it something that someone in the congregation would be willing to make? Is it something that we'll forego this year, but work on having ready for next?

Then there are times when there's something new that is found, and we wonder how it can be shared—how it will fit into our Christmas traditions.

In many congregations, colours change as the cycle of the liturgical year goes on: green for

Ordinary Time, orange for Creation, purple for Lent, white or gold for Easter, and so on. Advent is interesting. Many communities of faith choose blue as the colour for Advent. I think that's wonderful! I grew up in a part of the church that used purple as the Advent colour. Not the deep purple of Lent but a lighter purple—a gentle purple. What I love about the purple is that it connects the two seasons together. Both of them are times for telling the journey stories of Jesus: in Lent, his final journey to Jerusalem, to the cross, and beyond; in Advent, his first journey from conception, to birth, to his beginning.

Historically, both seasons have been considered "penitential seasons": times for followers of Jesus to take a look at their lives, to recognize the places where how they're living their lives has shifted in ways that aren't aligned with Christ's call for them, and times to reset and rebalance our lives.

I really appreciate the fact that the liturgical year invites me to do this more than once. Like a car driving over constantly bumpy roads, I need to be rebalanced on a regular basis.

So, I'd like to invite you to unwrap the gift of Advent with me, this year—to join me in "rebalancing"!

Would you be willing to set aside six minutes, each day, between now and Christmas? If you would, consider trying this. Find a quiet spot in which you can sit comfortably. You might want to light a candle, or turn on one of those battery-powered ones if open flame is unwise where you are. Then, just breathe.

Seriously. For five minutes, just sit and breathe. As you breathe in, consider saying in your head, "Here I am, your beloved child." Then, when you're breathing out, consider saying, "What do I need to learn?"

At the end of those five minutes, get up, and go on with your day. And then, at the end of the day, take that one minute you've got left in the practice, and ask yourself the question, "What did God teach me today?" It may be that nothing jumps out at you. It may be that you have an "Aha!" moment! Whatever the case, keep breathing! Be open to the possibilities that God is giving you as our Christmas celebrations draw near.

Oh! And if you'd like to share some of your insights, consider sharing them on social media with the hashtags #uccan and #rebalance. If you're not on social media (or even if you are) why not partner up with someone else who is willing to try this. Get together for a beverage and some conversation. Or maybe just sit together.

May your Advent be fruitful, and your Christmas be filled with joy and wonder.

Christ's peace to you!

Right Reverend Richard Bott

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