

The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter –
October 2020

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY

IN THIS ISSUE

Notes from the Chair



Spirit God be our Breath

Ted and I just finished a delightful weekend at our cottage. The deliciously warm autumn weather allowed us to enjoy

many outside activities. A morning of golf was followed by an afternoon cycling trip around Grey County. The hills were definitely challenging, but the view from the top was outstanding. This year the beauty in the colours is especially vibrant and the gift of sun and warmth the perfect backdrop. A little yoga and then dinner on the deck with our son, Lucas, and his girlfriend, Lauretta, completed the weekend and filled me with gratitude.

A change of the seasons is an expected change and provides a sense of normality in the rhythm of our lives. This change doesn't provoke fear...just perhaps a 'little' dread at the thought of a long winter. This fall, though, I am experiencing some anxiety because of the unexpected change that has been forced upon our world by COVID-19. How bad will the second wave be? Then there is the state of our world. What will happen with the US election? How do we rid our world of systemic racism? How can we fight climate change while living

through a pandemic? Some days I long for my old comfort zone and just wish everything could just go back to normal. BUT, I have started to hear the voices crying out that our 'old normal' was not promoting a just and fair world where we respected each other, all creatures on earth, and our planet.

Change is an inevitable part of life and when embraced can lead to a better world. We can't control the events that happen, but we can control our reaction to these unexpected events. Your leadership team at Parkminster has been striving to respond with an attitude of faith and optimism. We have tried to be open to exploring new possibilities and finding new ways of doing things. We are trying to incorporate more of the sacred elements of our Sanctuary into our online services. Some music groups are finding safe ways to practise and record in the Sanctuary. Our Resettlement Committee is busy planning for the arrival of our new refugee family. The Parkminster Walking Group, Men's Breakfast Group, Book Clubs and committees have found safe ways to meet and connect. We have welcomed back some rental groups and worked with them to develop safety protocols.

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Photos right to left: Heather with a great catch! Sandy Quehl (and fur friend Harley). Heather and Sandy have their cottage on Manitoulin Island...a beautiful summer retreat.

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Notes from the Chair continued

Outreach is once again running their annual food drive and they encouraged us to participate in a Global Day of Climate Action. We have been given opportunities to donate masks to Mary's Place, ukuleles to youth on Wahta Mohawk Reserve and participate in the Unsheltered Campaign. Membership and Pastoral Care are striving to keep people connected through phone calls, emails, card ministry and outside visits. Inclusive has created a Statement of Solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement and are looking at ways for Parkminster to honour our commitment to understanding systemic racism.

May our Parkminster family continue to work together to embrace and use the chaos of this pandemic as a vehicle to make meaningful change and move toward a more just and respectful world.

*Spirit God be our breath, be our song.
Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.
Through change, through challenge, we'll greet the new dawn.
Spirit God be our song.*

I welcome and will share any thoughts and ideas on moving forward with Council. Please contact me at kathy.shortt.123@gmail.com.

Kathy Shortt, Chair of Council

Message from our Ministers

How is this fall season feeling for you? It is a strange and unnerving one isn't it? The predicted second wave of COVID seems to be upon us bringing with it health, economic and social uncertainties. The return to school has been filled with anxiety. A US election looms with so much at stake not only for Americans but the world. The climate crisis continues to reveal itself in fires, storms and extensive ice melting. Racial injustice and the resulting backlash is front and centre. The patterns of church life have been disrupted with no welcome back Sunday and bbq, and no in-person worship. Are you overwhelmed yet? That whooshing sound you just heard were our arms shooting up in the air. At least summer gave us sunshine and the outdoors to lift our spirits.

You may have seen a popular Facebook/Twitter post where Professor Aisha Ahmad from the University of Toronto spoke of the six-month wall in dealing with unwelcome upheaval caused by circumstances beyond our control. Drawing on her experiences living in war zones she describes this wall as the slump that comes when the desire to "make it stop" or "escape" comes up against our powerlessness to do so. Ahmad says this passes after a few weeks, the key is to be gentle with ourselves. Don't expect to be sparkingly happy or wildly creative, if you can meet your obligations and be kind to your love ones that is enough.¹

We think this is wise advice as we look at the looming days of cold and darkness and wonder how we'll get through it. It makes a lot of spiritual sense as well.² Dutch author Etty Hillesum, wrote this in the midst of the horror that was the occupying Nazi regime in Holland, "There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there, too ... And that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters: that we safeguard that little piece of You, God, in ourselves." Maybe that's the best we can do, is to safeguard that divine core in each of us that still hopes, that stubbornly refuses to give into despair, which holds onto the possibility of joy despite all the facts. We are carriers of God, within each of us lies a holy centre that reflects the divine image in which we are created. The hope of the world, of our

families, our communities lies in each of us living from that core. That God centre cannot reveal itself if we're beating ourselves up for not doing enough or being enough. That God centre cannot reveal itself in a place of fear. That God centre cannot reveal itself in the cycle of news and social media claim and counterclaim, in the flow of online punditry and analysis, in so much angry noise and conscious deceit. The God centre in each of us can only be sustained and safeguarded in a womb of Love.³ So, perhaps that is the work for people of faith during this time, to stand guard at the doors of our souls and be vigilant and discerning about what we allow in. We might ask what do we need stop or start doing?

- Do we need to limit how much news and social media we consume?
- Do we need to go for more walks or take more baths?
- Do we need to send e-mails to politicians that speak from that God centre about the issues that concern us?
- Do we need to tamp down expectations about what we "should" be doing or accomplishing?
- Do we need to get back to that early pandemic habit of reaching out to people on the periphery of our circles?
- Do we need more silence?
- Do we need to start a habit of noticing and revelling in everyday moments of joy and delight?
- Do we need to be intentional about noting moments of gratitude?

We invite you to sit with these questions in the days ahead. May they lead you from feeling overwhelmed to the simplicity of grace. May they lead you away from the violence of the moment to the enduring peace of God. May they lead you from paralyzing despair to a gentle hope. May they lead you from a feeling of helplessness in the face of unbidden circumstances to a renewed sense of purpose as carriers of God for your families, your communities, your nation and your world. Blessings.

Rev. Heather and Rev. Joe

1. Brandie Weilde, *Time to Refresh Family Coping Strategies*, **Toronto Star**, October 1, 2020, B10.
2. Richard Rohr, much of what follows is adapted from a daily e-mail from the Centre for Action and Contemplation a version of which can be found here, <https://www.gnjumc.org/news/from-richard-rohr-september-19-2020/>.
3. Rohr

Exciting news from the Resettlement Committee

Co-Chairs Nancy Dykstra and Jim Bowman have received an email from the Canadian Government regarding our Refugee Sponsorship Application.

It is a Request for Arrival Confirmation for Siham Almohammed, and her seven children. The Resettlement Committee met and decided to move forward as Siham and her family are eager to come to Canada. (Note that Fadi, her nephew, will arrive later on and will be a male support for her and the family).

We are not sure exactly when they will arrive but we do know that they have completed their medical requirements and received the necessary Immigration Papers. Nancy and Jim have talked to Siham through an interpreter and facetime from the Al Mohammed's deck and know that Siham and family are hoping it will be as soon as possible.

Nancy has very generously made arrangements to live with a friend so that the family can have the luxury of staying all together in her home for their 14-day quarantine period in isolation. This is a real blessing because the alternative was two rooms at the Comfort Inn on Weber St. since that location is used by Reception House. The family will have the luxury of Nancy's whole house and a large backyard for the family to enjoy and be together. It will even make it possible for physical distance conversations to be much more easily arranged with an interpreter.

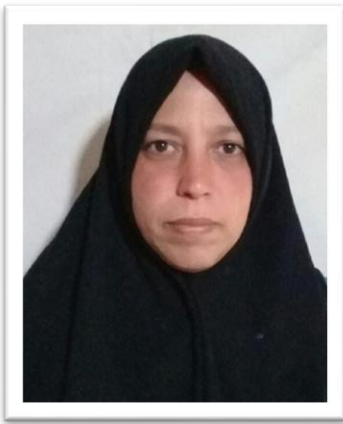
Rob Mac Queen also has good news! An anonymous donor will pay for the family's transportation from the airport to Nancy's house!

As soon as we know their projected arrival date we will begin looking for housing and we would welcome any ideas as to possible locations. We will share any new information received.

The Resettlement Committee

Photos of Siham and her children, taken early 2019.

Siham Almohammed



Ashlam (age now 16)



Mona (age now 15)



Zakareyah (age now 13)



Noor (age now 12)



Mahmoud (age now 9)



Ali (age now 8)



Aya (age now 4)

