



# The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church  
Newsletter –  
February 2021

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY**

**IN THIS ISSUE**

## Notes from the Chair



I'm taking a break from my favourite COVID-19 project to write this, my first message as Chair. As a Parkminster attendee since 2003, a member since 2006 and the

editor of our quarterly newsletters and Annual Reports over the past six years, I have developed strong love for and appreciation of our community of faith. As Chair, I believe I will experience that in much greater depth. And that is very exciting.

As Vice Chair over the past two years and a Council Liaison prior to that, I have had the privilege to learn from Kathy Shortt, Maedith Radlein and Barb Leask Wynne, as Chairs and/or Past Chairs. These smart and strong women are each incredible role models and leaders who have led our Council through change and challenge. Our Council members around the table (both literally and virtually) are also mission-focused, hardworking and supportive. Then there are Reverends Heather and Joe who bring their light and thoughtful perspective into our midst. Of course, there is Allen, Melanie and Neil, many volunteers, and our congregation who make up the exceptionally vibrant Parkminster community. I am looking forward to working with and getting to know you all better.

So, a little about the COVID-19 project I referenced at the beginning. Since the fall I've spent my evenings making a braided rug out of old blue jeans. I ordered a "how to" manual online, written in a delightful style (copyright 1949). I solicited old denim from friends, neighbours and family, and over the course of a few nights I ripped about 20 pairs of jeans into piles of fabric strips. For three months I've been braiding different tones of blue denim and lacing the braids into an oval rug. I've learned lessons about connecting different strips together securely, ensuring the rough edges don't unravel, holding the right tension in my braids, and ensuring they are laced together smoothly. It has been one of the most enjoyable and rewarding projects I've ever done.

As I finish my rug, and start my role as Chair, I wonder if there are any lessons from one that I can apply to the other. Intertwining diverse ideas, opportunities, and concerns; strengthening rough edges for greater durability; holding space for tension and differing perspectives; and ensuring it is all woven together into something beautiful and purposeful.

Over my time as Chair, I hope I am as effective as those leaders before me. And I hope to put my COVID-19 project learnings to good use!

**Jennifer Allan, Chair of Council**

Photo "Let there be love" by The Band on January 17, 2021.

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### Greetings!

Bruce Mutton (wearing his favourite sweat pants) sends his regards from an undisclosed, secret location.

## Message from our Ministers

Last week we received postcards in the mail. They weren't from someone who takes clandestine visits to sunnier and warmer regions. These postcards had original art work on the front and poetry on the back. They were created by Paul Roorda and sent to us on the initiative of Ginny McQuay, for which we are both grateful. The images and the words bring the recipient's attention to the elemental forces at work in the world—water and air. One card asked whether water falling from the sky one drop at a time could, by seeping into the cracks, pry apart bricks and bring down a wall. The other asked if the sky would stop the one who dove into it or would you fall or take flight? The cards had a strange, uplifting yet grounding effect. Simultaneously they both provided an escape from life (pandemic, winter blahs, news) and thrust us deeper into life, beyond the surface realities to deeper truths—beauty, awe, wonder, the power of nature.

Lent is like that. Lent is time set aside to focus on the spiritual journey as Christians. It's a time to prepare for resurrection by dying to self. Lent is both an escape from the surface realities of life and a deep engagement with the deeper realities of life. Lent invites us to look at what keeps us fearful and ego-obsessed. Lent invites us to look at what in our lives obscures the presence of God; what hides the beauty and wonder of life. Lent invites us to pick a practice that will help us escape the surface distractions of life that often provoke fear and keep us self-focused but at the same time a practice that takes us deeper into life by helping us to see the oft hidden work of God all around us.

Engaging with Lent is an act of faith and hope. In the words of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, "All that surrounds us

proclaims the cross. But those who have Christian faith and hope know that Easter resurrection is never far away."

What practice might help you go deeper into life this Lenten season and see the reality of God at work during these pandemic times? We encourage you to sit with this question with a sense of compassion and love for yourself and the world. You might want to consider being a part of the Lenten Pause group on Wednesday evenings as we set aside time to walk this Lenten path together. Also, come together to worship (via ZOOM and Facebook) and walk the Lenten path into Good Friday and beyond toward Easter.

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- Sundays in Lent (10 am) — February 21 & 28 (Communion), March 7, 14, 21 & 28 (Palm/Passion).
- Thursday, March 31 — Maundy Thursday — Joint service of the Waterloo United Churches, Parkminster hosting, 7 pm
- Friday, April 1 — Good Friday — Joint service of the Waterloo United Churches, Emmanuel hosting, 10:30 am
- Sunday, April 4 — Easter, 10 a.m.

We look forward to being with you over these coming weeks. May God bless this holy time.

Reverend Heather and Reverend Joe

## Becoming anti-racist

Inclusive Ministries is on a different path, and it is so new to us that we are feeling our way forward. This summer when I saw the murder of George Floyd on television, I knew steps needed to be taken to address white privilege. I wondered "how am I contributing to a world where such blatant disrespect for human life exists?" I thought of myself as a good person, but I also knew that somehow, I was part of a world where racism occurs and in my white privilege I sit back and allow it, therefore I was part of this problem. I knew that if change is to happen it had to start with those like me: people who think that they are good and not racist.

I thought of myself as a good person, but I also knew that somehow, I was part of a world where racism occurs and in my white privilege I sit back and allow it, therefore I was part of this problem.

I started listening and learning. I have realized that I needed to become more mindful. I learned that to be anti-racist is to act. Questioning my attitudes and actions means that I have started my journey to being anti-racist. I have stopped sitting back thinking that I am not part of this. I can support Black Live Matters by attending rallies but when the day is over, I

get to go home and forget about it. Our friends who are racialized get to go home and still face discrimination based on the colour of their skin. I do not see a clear path forward but I know that at Parkminster we cannot let this issue be ignored. We need to read and listen to interviews, have discussions and become aware. As a first step, watch a short talk by Joy DeGruy who describes checking out groceries at the store. To watch it, Google: Joy DeGruy A Trip to the Grocery Store. On YouTube, the series, Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man by Emmanuel Acho is also informative. I especially recommend the second episode with Matthew McConaughey.

Inclusive Ministries invites you to join our on-line pop-up discussions which address issues of racism and white privilege. We do not offer solutions but an opportunity for reflection. I always grow in understanding by attending these. Somehow, we need to make a difference. I have no skills or knowledge but I have persistence and I know that we need to keep this issue front and center. So, this is what we, Inclusive Ministries will be doing.

Thank you for reading this and hopefully you will join us for one of the discussions.

Liz Forde, Inclusive Ministries

# It takes a village

Siham Al Mohamed and her family of seven children arrived from Lebanon on December 16, 2020. Upon arrival they entered quarantine and by the time they finished their 14 days we were in provincial lockdown, which then tightened into Stay-at-Home orders. Two months later, on February 16 as we were all easing back into a (slightly!) lighter restriction they had just moved into their permanent home and were starting school.

What a frame for the beginning of their life in Canada! Living in isolation from the very people they came for — her sister Khairiya and her family —

and adjusting to a cold, foreign place with very little in-person support. And yet, every time we see them either briefly at the door or in virtual meetings we are greeted with big smiles and ongoing rounds of “Thank you!”

Even though from the outside it might not have looked like much was changing during those two months, the Resettlement Committee (RSC) was busier than ever preparing for their future here. What’s involved? Here’s a snapshot — imagine these activities with almost no face-to-face contact. Then add technology and language barriers!

## Orientation and Relationship Building

To the local park, our city and its cultural support groups, Canada — getting a SIN card!

## Transportation

From the airport, to shopping and medical appointments, to their new home, to school.

## Finance

Budgeting, banking, Child Tax Benefit applications.

## Education

Registering and planning for Howard Robertson Elementary, Sunnyside Senior Public and Eastwood Collegiate.



## Health

Visits to Joseph Street Refugee Health Clinic, applying for dental support, OHIP, tracking COVID-19 symptoms during quarantine.

## Clothing

Much of it donated from the Parkminster congregation.

## Housing

Quarantine housing and first-year housing, hydro, WiFi, coordinating the move.

## Furniture

Beds, new mattresses for eight, kitchen and household effects, computers — much donated from Parkminster.

There are 14 Members of the RSC, which is co-chaired by Nancy Dykstra and Jim Bowman. That number doubles and triples because so many friends and family and Parkminster members are involved. Siham’s sister, Khairiya and her family are an integral part of the committee. They are their emotional lifeline. They bridge language and cultural barriers and provide concrete support for everyday living.

And the circles expand beyond our Parkminster community. Priscilla is our invaluable interpreter who has agreed to assist whenever we need her help. RSC members have worked with local Refugee Settlement staff, National United Church staff, teachers and administrators in our schools, settlement workers from the YMCA, not to mention countless government employees as they complete what seems like endless paperwork!

The ripples of support and assistance that have been offered by so many have been beyond all expectations!

We all share in the blessings of social interaction and relationship, compassion and gratitude as we witness the generosity, courage and resilience of Siham and her family and welcome them into our ‘village’.

As this is being written, Siham sits drinking tea on her first day in her new home. She has been dreaming about this for a long time, she told Cobie, and she is very, very happy.

## Resettlement Committee

## Spreading the love



Valentine's is a time of year for expressing care and affection for special people in our lives. Because we're not so able to do that personally this year for many of our members, the Pastoral Care/Membership Committee assembled Valentine bags complete with handmade cards, homemade Shortbread cookies, tea bags and a special verse.



The bags were hand delivered to 25 special members of our Parkminster family.

Marion Mutton who received one of the bags is quoted as saying "Thank you so much for the delicious cookies and the teabags. And the thoughtfulness behind them. I miss seeing you and I hope it won't be long until all this is over."

Pastoral Care/Membership Committee

## Reflections on a virtual annual meeting

On Sunday, February 21, Parkminster held its first ever virtual annual meeting. This may sound easy and it may have felt straightforward, and if so, the goal was met! What may not have been so evident are the hours of preparation to ensure the meeting went off without a hitch. Here are our reflections on six things we're thankful for.

### When people take the lead.

Council Chair Kathy Shortt led the charge by rallying a small team around her (Sue MacQueen as Tech Host, Barb Leask Wynne as Scrutineer #1, Jennifer Allan as Scrutineer #2, and Rob Hehl as Participant Support).

### When help appears.

There was a brief virtual course covering Zoom tips for Annual Meetings, specifically for churches. This provided great insight into some of the anticipated challenges:

- How to include those who don't have internet access,
- How to ensure quorum considering multiple people on a device,
- How to run the PowerPoint and make sure everyone has an opportunity to provide their report,
- How to manage making and seconding motions,
- How to manage questions,
- How to vote and count votes, and
- How to provide instructions and tech support.

### When people share their important skills.

Kathy Shortt is a teacher extraordinaire and she put those skills to use by teaching everyone the meeting "how to's". Sue MacQueen is a problem-solver and never hesitated to provide ideas and suggestions to enhance the meeting. Melanie Chisholm is a PowerPoint guru and developed slides that were clear and easy to follow.

### When you can count on people to do their part.

All the presenters were an integral part of the meeting's success:

- Reverends Joe and Heather for the opening and closing prayers. And, I dare say, prayers during the meeting to make sure computers and Zoom didn't crash.
- Kathy Shortt, Council Chair for running the meeting and keeping it moving along smoothly.
- Gregg King, Treasurer for the Finance report, our numbers guy.
- Wendy Watson and Jim Bowman, for the Outreach report and finances, a great team effort!
- Mary Reynolds, for the Nominating Committee report. You and your committee members have assembled an amazing team of volunteer leaders!
- All of those who made and seconded motions. You are movers and shakers.

### When people show up.

Our congregation attended the Annual Meeting! We well exceeded quorum with over 110 attendees. We received questions and explanations. Thank you for your patience as we worked our way through the "Flip the Script" voting procedures.

### When it's over.

We all hope that this first virtual Annual Meeting will be last one we have to conduct in this way. Even though we are all thankful it ran smoothly, we hope we can be together next year at this time: in our sanctuary, reporting, discussing, moving, seconding and passing motions together. Parkminster is a special place, and even when we are virtual we can feel the support, care and love that emanates from our community of faith. For these things, we are truly, truly grateful.