



The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter –
April 2021

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY

Notes from the Chair



Last fall I planted daffodil and allium bulbs, thinking they would be an early and colourful addition to the garden. In the past weeks, I've seen green shoots

poking through the recently-thawed ground. What a treat! As we move past Easter and into spring (which for me is all about my beloved garden), I think about the freshness of new beginnings as well as the hope and growth that this season brings.

With the hard work of Parkminster's COVID-19 response mostly addressed through 2020, Council has the opportunity to turn more of its attention to other matters, and focus on growth and learning.

One of the areas we are exploring with intention is becoming an anti-racist church.

The United Church's statement, *Working to Become an Anti-Racist Denomination* says: "Public statements are not enough. Words are not enough. This is a moment for the United Church of Canada to wrestle with its white privilege, its role in systematizing anti-Black racism within its own policies, procedures and practices and its role within the wider Canadian context. There is a need to make becoming an anti-racist denomination dealing with anti-Black racism within our

denomination a missional priority at all levels."

The statement goes on to list what intentionality and action means, part of which is *equipping leaders*. "The leaders of the denomination – including clergy and senior staff – need to be trained to effectively integrate anti-racism work as part of their regular ministry practice." We include Council in this leadership group.

Church Council is making anti-racism a regular discussion item at Council meetings.

On March 16, in partnership with Inclusive Ministries, Council discussed [Stephen Colbert's video interview with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi](#). We shared our thoughts on the difference between being not racist and being anti-racist. The United Church's anti-racism policy states: "Even though by action we may not have been racist, by inaction we have helped sustain a social climate where racism can occur." Kendi tells us that to be anti-racist takes intentional action. We will include this reflection and discussion segment regularly at Council meetings.

Our journey to becoming anti-racist may be uncomfortable. The first steps are about collectively deepening our understanding and awareness of racism. Only then can we take meaningful steps to dismantle it. We have hope. This is the season.

Jennifer Allan, Chair of Council

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Rainbows and Pots o' Gold

On March 13, the Christian Education Committee hosted another online Family Party for Parkminster children and families to connect together and have fun! Our theme was: Rainbows and Pots o' Gold and these photos share our rainbow scavenger hunt creations.



The Hunt for Treasure

Hats off to Marilyn Hill. Thanks to her efforts, and the generosity of many of our Parkminster family, the church received \$2,500 in special offerings over the past year.

Marilyn called it a Treasure Hunt, and it was indeed that. Here's how it happened. A year ago, Marilyn was wondering how COVID-19 was going to affect the church's finances. She knew we would need some kind of fundraiser to help get us through, but COVID-19 complicated everything. The idea for a treasure hunt was, she says, triggered by what she refers to as 'those cheesy TV ads for Oliver Jewellers'.

She took her proposal to the May Church Council meeting, asking Parkminsterites to donate old, broken, and unwanted gold and sterling silver items and foreign currency/coins to the church. Marilyn would in turn find buyers for the items. She cleared her procedures regarding COVID-19 issues with the City and the Region, and ensured that there were no Revenue Canada concerns about issuing a tax receipt to each donor for the proceeds from the sale of the item(s) they donated.



Marilyn's advertisements resulted in many donations: rings, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, antique watches, a sterling mirror and brush set, silver tea services, foreign currency/coins, sterling nut dishes, sterling cutlery, etc. Many items had been stored away in jewelry boxes, drawers, or cupboards for a long, long time. Some items had come from the estates of elderly relatives. Marilyn said she actually enjoyed cleaning tarnished silver and gold, to bring them back to their original lustre and beauty.

The first batch of items she took to a Kitchener jewelry store that buys gold and sterling. For each item, the jeweler identified the precious metal content, weighed it in grams, and calculated the current melted down value. She left with a nice cheque for the church. Many such trips followed. The foreign currency was cashed in at a currency exchange location. Outdated foreign coins were cashed in at a coin shop, based on weight.

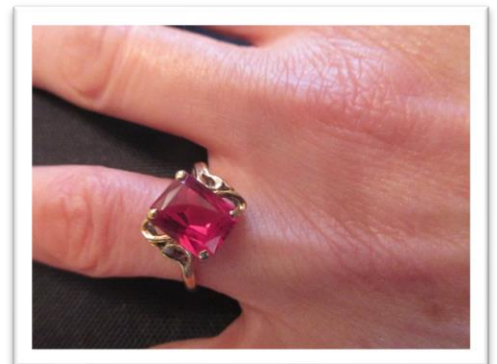
Among Marilyn's interesting experiences, here's a great story. While at the jewelry store, she had the jeweler look at the markings on one of the silver tea service sets. The donor believed it was sterling. Marilyn had checked the markings online and was fairly confident of that as well. After a cursory look at the hallmarks, the jeweler confirmed that the set



was indeed sterling. She figured she could sell the set online for much more than the melted down value that the jeweler would give her. The set included a heavy tray—in total almost 8 pounds of sterling silver! She posted an ad on Kijiji and within 24 hours had an enquiry from an individual in Toronto! She negotiated a handsome price and made the cash transaction in the safety of the Waterloo police station parking lot. The next day she received a phone call from the purchaser who, once he got home, thought the tea service might be silver plate instead of sterling. Marilyn assured him that, if that was the case, he would get his money back. The set had been manufactured in Scotland. Thanks to the internet, Marilyn was able to find a long-time silversmith in Edinburgh and emailed a photo of the hallmarks to them. The very next morning she had a reply saying that the markings indeed indicated it was silver plate. She immediately arranged to meet again for the purchaser at the police station and returned his money. The fellow knew this was an honest mistake and liked our fundraiser, so he donated \$200 to the cause. He was of a different faith and had made two trips from Toronto to Waterloo—a kind and generous man.

Marilyn still has a few items to be sold, mostly unique antique items which might possibly be sold online for a higher price. And she is still open to accepting more donations of gold, sterling, and foreign currency.

Sincere thanks to Marilyn for her ingenuity, endless hours of volunteer time, and her concern for the 'wellness' of Parkminster. And heartfelt thanks to all those who have donated valuables and heirlooms to the cause.



Parkminster helps “A Better Tent City”



For some months now, thanks to the leadership of Laura Hamilton, Roberta Hickey and members of Parkminster’s Outreach Committee, many at Parkminster have been lending a hand to support an important initiative in Kitchener. **A Better Tent City (ABTC) is a project aimed at providing shelter for some of the hundreds in the region who are ‘unsheltered.’** Living in such a circumstance is dangerous at the best of times, and even more so during a pandemic.

The initiative was the inspiration of Ron Doyle who owned the property at Lot42 on Ardelt Avenue in Kitchener, and has a passion for helping others. Ron made the property available to set up tents. Initially there were about 15 people tenting on the site. These are people who aren’t able to make use of the Region’s shelter system. Normally tent cities take shape where people are trespassing and they have to move on.

When the planning began, with assistance from students at the University of Waterloo, the first thought had been to find a property closer to downtown, at a walking distance to the supports that homeless and unsheltered people need. That included the St. John’s Kitchen with its noon hour meal program and Ray of Hope with its evening meal program. The Ardelt site emerged as a more immediate option because Ron was a willing land-owner, there was potential for a shared space, a building (formerly a bar) normally used for small private events (all of which have been cancelled) that was available as kitchen and community space for the residents.

Over time, a community of 28 insulated (8X10 foot) cabins and an indoor space where approximately 20 residents have tents has taken shape. The cabins provide a safe and secure place to sleep and store belongings, those in tents await the opportunity to move into a cabin. In addition, the community shares an indoor space that includes a kitchen, comfortable seating, and washrooms, and a trailer repurposed for showers and laundry. In January, a methadone treatment program was initiated onsite to support residents who are addicted to opioids. There are now 15 residents participating in this program, and the difference in their lives is palpable. The long-term plan is to support the development of some kind of social enterprise where people have a purpose and a sense of self-worth and can learn different job skills. This community is continuously improving, hence the name A Better Tent City.

So where does Parkminster fit into this? Well, it started when Roberta Hickey, a member of the Parkminster Outreach Committee (and having years ago triggered the start-up of the Out of the Cold programs operated at a number of local churches), raised the question of how the Committee/Parkminster could help with the ABTC initiative.

Laura Hamilton, also on the Committee and heavily involved with ABTC, briefed the members and all were keen to lend support.

Roberta brought forward the idea of providing desserts, initially once a month, and then expanded to the first and third Thursday of each month. Roberta and Wendy and John Watson are in the church parking lot on those days from 4:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. to receive dessert items, juice boxes, granola bars, fresh fruit (including soft hand-held fruit for residents with dental woes). Frozen orange juice is also welcomed, to support brunches. Donations are then delivered to ABTC residents.

Although donations are welcome from everyone, Roberta has a list of 17 volunteers she organizes so that each is asked to donate only once a month or once every two months as they wish.



Elna Robertson and Wendy Watson

One of the best results of this project, other than, of course, providing wonderful treats and bringing a little joy to the folks at ABTC, is the feeling the volunteers have of making a difference for those who live there. A question often asked by the “desserters” is: “What more can we do?” And, the drop off in the church parking lot provides a chance for a “socially distanced” visit with people not seen for way too long.

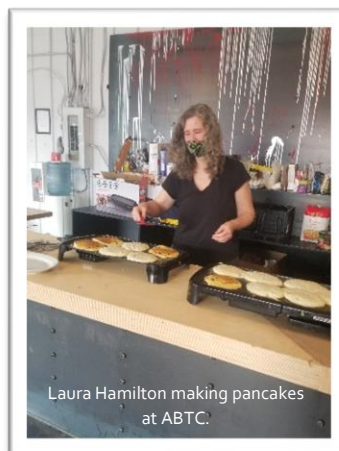


Left to right: Delores Benedik, Maureen Crawford, Roberta Hickey, Andrea Spracklin, and Norma Hutton

Hats off to all those on Outreach providing leadership for this work, and sincere thanks to the many from Parkminster who arrive with food donations. Outreach has also donated over \$1,000 to support operations at ABTC, so everyone who donated to Outreach last year supported the project!

ABTC postscript

Laura Hamilton was involved in the initial planning for and establishment of ABTC, and continues to support life on site by coordinating donations, food and meal preparation for the residents and access to other community resources including the methadone program. Laura works with the food bank and with donors in the community to ensure that the 55 residents have all of the food they need. She has organized teams of volunteers who prepare evening meals, or parts of meals, from five to six nights a week. With help from her husband Ray and son, James, they make dinner one or two nights a week, and fill in gaps to support other nights as necessary (for example, James makes giant pans of apple crisp, and vats of mashed potatoes, or roasted potatoes over the course of the week). Since implementing the methadone program, Laura has also started providing brunch on site every Saturday and Sunday morning as she is the 'wake up' person on the weekends (i.e., the person who makes sure that all of the participants in the program are up and available to meet with the pharmacist who arrives in the morning with their medicine). Actually, the wake-up job is made easier because of the yummy smells emanating from the kitchen. Brunch is a great way to celebrate the commitment of the volunteers, and to engage with other residents about the program to increase participation.



Laura Hamilton making pancakes at ABTC.

Ron Doyle was not well when the project started. His passing was not unexpected. Laura Hamilton is part of the group that has been planning and working toward next steps from the very beginning. ABTC is intended to be a 'demonstration project', and much has been accomplished by demonstrating what can be done by a community without or with nominal municipal support. Laura says that, for some months, they have been meeting regularly with the Region, the City, and with prospective private land donors. Although plans aren't finalized

yet, these conversations with stakeholders have moved from being held monthly to weekly to daily. By the time this article is published in the Parkminster newsletter, matters will hopefully have been resolved in a positive way.

Easter Sunday Parkminster-style

Thanks to Reverend Heather's ingenious idea, Easter Sunday started and ended with Reverend Joe wearing a bunny costume. Many thanks to all who donated to the Mission and Service Fund for this worthy and fun

project. More than \$2,200 was raised!



Our new camera equipment was used during the Easter Sunday service to show videos taken in the Sanctuary. Here is Neil Murray playing the organ.



Thanks to the Voices United Choir for another wonderful anthem.



Wendy Ridgway reads our Statement of Welcome on video from the Sanctuary.