



Photo credit: Matt Bruce

The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter – March 2022

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY

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Notes from the Chair



As I write this, spring is in the air. The forecast is for a sunny, warm and windy day. In early March, a springish day is a bit of a tease. The

snow starts to melt, and we see glimpses of our lawns and gardens. But alas, we know more snow and cold temperatures are coming. And so, it goes.

This back and forth has been the theme of our lives for a while now. Cases up, then down, then up again and then gradually down. Life locked-down, then opened, then closed and gradually opened again. Strict rules, rules changed, new rules and soon no rules at all. We have been scared, hopeful and confused. And this has caused all kinds of emotions: frustration, disappointment, unmet expectations and even resignation.

I feel like now is the time to really start moving forward again with our lives. Restrictions continue to ease and

there is a growing sense of normalcy (whatever that may mean). The COVID-19 Working Group has been examining how to gradually ease restrictions in our worship services, Church groups, and use of our facility by tenants and other groups. Know that the decisions made by this group and Council look to balance the safety and well-being of all.

As this optimism builds, I am discerning what I want to retain from the past two years. Life has been simpler. Time with family and friends has been precious and cherished. I've spent more time in nature, taken more walks, and gotten more sleep. I've spent hours doting on a dog. These things I will intentionally protect. What about you? As you reflect on the past several months, what are the things you want to hold close? And, what are some things that you will release as less important or bring back as something you've missed? With that awareness we can move into the future with intention and purpose.

Jennifer Allan, Chair of Council

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Message from our Ministers

Dear Friends,



We're all at different places when it comes to how we're dealing with recent changes to the pandemic. Omicron is receding, we have a high vaccination rate and governments are lifting vaccine mandates, abolishing capacity limits and there is talk of lifting mandatory masking orders. Some of us are relieved and thrilled and feel a new sense of freedom. Some of us are wary, not sure what to make of the speed at which regulations are being dropped. Some of us are frightened because we are immunocompromised ourselves or have loved ones who are or because we have unvaccinated young children.

One of the most challenging aspects of a prolonged traumatic situation actually comes when it ends because of the expectations to "get back to normal". Whether that pressure is internal or external there is a sense that we should just be able to pick up where we left off with the same energy and vitality that existed prior to the trauma. But that's not the case.

When you think it's over, it's not over. The pandemic has taken a toll, our bodies and minds have paid a price. The day Joe's son Calvin came home from the rehabilitation hospital after months of surgery, radiation and rehab to deal with a brain tumour it was Joe who wound up in the hospital that very same day. He noticed tingling and numbness in his extremities, a family friend drove him to the emergency ward. There the nurses took his blood pressure and discovered that the systolic pressure was an astounding 180. He's not sure why this happened and perhaps one of you more medically inclined knows why, but the point is to say that trauma changes us and just when we think it's over, it's not. So it is with the pandemic, the truth is our reserves are spent after two years of being in a constant state of high alert.

Lent is a time of re-focusing on the spiritual journey, preparing ourselves to live into the Jesus story of sacrificial love and encountering the mysteries of death and resurrection in our own lives. Maybe you're thinking, "oh great, that's all I need, one more thing to do!" But that's only true if we fall into the trap of seeing God as a demanding task master and the spiritual journey in terms of productivity and achievement. The relationship with God is not rooted in productivity and achievement but in grace, in noticing the giftedness of life and living in gratitude. God's grace can only be experienced in vulnerability. The good news is this is the human condition. The bad news is we often try to run from this reality. Let's not let the return to normal obscure this reality. Let's stay connected to what is actually happening, that we are tired, that we're worried about the future, that we're anxious, that our memories aren't what they used to be, that we're agitated, we're not sleeping well. This kind of vulnerability is the basis of true community because then we can choose to take care of each other with compassion and kindness. Then we will know gratitude, then we will experience grace.

May our Lenten journeys be blessed with a fierce commitment to reality that we may know God's grace in dying and rising.

Rev. Heather and Rev. Joe

Welcome Back

What a great joy it is to welcome back to Parkminster three former members--Joan Gugeler, and Andrew and Karen Cartmell.

Joan Gugeler

Joan grew up in Montreal and was an elementary school teacher. She then undertook United Church training to become what we know today as a Diaconal Minister. She served as assistant to the Minister for two years at St. Paul's in Cornwall before becoming a Director of Christian Education at Southminster United in Ottawa... where she met her husband Ernst. They were married in 1966 and went to Nepal the following year as Overseas Workers for 4 1/2 years under the United Mission to Nepal. Travelling home in 1972, they drove from Nepal to Germany in a VW camper with a 4-year-old and a 1-year-old!

After returning to Canada, Ernst took his MBA at Western in London, where their youngest was born and they spent the next several years in Southwestern Ontario, arriving in Kitchener about 1993. They attended Parkminster for five years (Ernst made the very fine picnic table that sits across from the entrance to Parkminster at the Peace Garden). When Ernst retired in 2000, they moved to Grand Bend. Ernst passed away in 2003.

Joan's career also included teaching English as a Second Language for five years with the Oxford Bd of Education; Director of Outreach at a Presbyterian church in Simcoe; Volunteer Associate Minister at Trinity United in Kitchener, working with Jack Paleczny.

Joan's children now live in Waterloo, Nanaimo, and Toronto, and Joan has five grandchildren, ranging in age from 6 to 19. She is transferring to Parkminster from Trinity, and is happy to reconnect with many she knows from years ago.



Andrew and Karen Cartmell



Karen and Andrew Cartmell began attending Parkminster in 1990. They left for Regina, SK, in 2009, thinking they might be back in just a few years. Thirteen years later, they are now transitioning back to their home in Waterloo. Andrew is retiring as President and CEO of Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) in April, and they are commuting back and forth until then.

With sons living in Ontario, Karen and Andrew haven't been totally absent from Parkminster during that time, as they came back periodically each year to visit. Greg and Rebecca (Blackburn) and their son James are members at Parkminster. Alexander and his wife Stella live in Toronto.

Some history on Karen and Andrew for those who don't know them.

Karen was originally from Lindsay, and Andrew from Toronto. They met in "math class" while attending the University of Waterloo where they both graduated with B Math degrees. They lived in Toronto, Cambridge, and Waterloo before moving to Regina.

Andrew became a Casualty Actuary and has had a very successful career in the insurance industry. Prior to leading SGI, he was Regional VP for Co-operators. He also has a Chartered Director designation and is currently on the Board of Directors of 3 S Health in Saskatchewan.

Karen's journey was more diverse – obtaining an MBA, working in various Life insurance companies, then teaching at Conestoga College and the University of Regina, and then becoming a Licenced Lay Worship Leader (LLWL) in the United Church. Most recently, Karen finished her Master of Theological Studies degree – courses which she thoroughly enjoyed. As an LLWL, Karen leads worship at churches where ministers are on holidays, churches that are between ministers, and churches that are having trouble obtaining a permanent minister. It has certainly kept her busy!

In their spare time, Andrew and Karen have enjoyed travelling the world, having visited 42 countries so far.

Returning to Waterloo has been an easy transition, as many people at Parkminster have reached out to welcome them back. Karen is particularly grateful to have joined the PUC Walking Group, to see friendly faces every Wednesday morning. They look forward to seeing more of their friends on Sunday mornings – either on Zoom, or in person as restrictions allow.

Coming Soon: Racial Justice Pop-up conversation with Adele Halliday



Inclusive Ministries is planning to hold a **Racial Justice Pop Up conversation in the spring**. It is our hope that it will help us along the journey of becoming an anti-racist church. Adele Halliday has agreed to facilitate this important conversation. **Adele Halliday is the United Church's Anti-Racism and Equity Lead**. The date has not yet been set but **all are welcome to join us**. This is a follow up to the fourth sermon in February with thoughts on how we can transform PUC's ways of being.

While personal growth is meaningful, systemic transformation is a concrete challenge that requires deep and ongoing commitment. How might your committee invite change? What else at Parkminster can be transformed? In a concrete way, what might transformation look like for us as a church? Think about your engagement in various spheres in the Parkminster community – worship, Sunday School, music, social groups, committees. February is a time of new beginnings for committees. What changes, if any, do I think we need to make these spheres more inviting, in the deep sense of the word? Who can I talk to about these changes?

Inclusive Committee

Did you Know?

When you make a gift of stocks or mutual funds to the United Church of Canada Foundation, you are making a larger gift than if you had sold the securities yourself and donated the resulting money to a charitable organization. This is because the government does not collect capital gains taxes on securities that have been given to charitable organizations. Once gifted, you can immediately have the Foundation disburse the proceeds to the charities of your choice, provided one of them is a United Church. Some of our members gift a block of shares each year to do an annual lump sum contribution to Parkminster.

Stewardship Committee

Back to the Future

As we near the end of the pandemic, or at least begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, it makes one think about all the activities that go on at Parkminster. Some of them carried on during the past two years, but many others were put on hold. At the risk of missing some, here's a list of much of what hopefully will continue in full as we gradually return to normal. What the list does illustrate is that Parkminster is a wonderful 'community' to be a part of, a very active and caring congregation, living our faith.

1. Better Tent City food donations throughout the year
2. Significant donations to many local charities...ROOF, House of Friendship, Foodbank, etc.
3. Significant annual donations to the UCC M&S fund
4. An annual neighbourhood BBQ

5. A labyrinth open to all
6. A walking group
7. Food trucks weekly during the summer months, for members, neighbours and others
8. Free space provided for Scouts and Cubs
9. A range of inclusive activities (BBQ, cooking group, anti-racism call-to-action and initiatives)
10. A Monday morning playgroup (caregivers and tots)
11. Welcoming newcomers (follow-up, luncheon, cards)
12. Support for Indigenous groups (1492 Landback, Healing of Seven Generations)
13. Euchre and bridge clubs
14. A men's breakfast
15. A listening to God group
16. An active youth group
17. Social get-togethers...Welcome Back BBQ, Chili Lunch, Strawberry Social, Tea with Heather
18. Active pastoral care...calls, visits, cards, special remembrances at Easter and Christmas
19. Donation of 30 iPads (and tech support) to those who need them
20. Ongoing support for our three refugee families
21. Partnering with KW Outreach Group on four externally funded refugee sponsorships
22. Speaker Series
23. A games afternoon
24. The Memory Garden
25. Music groups – choir, bell choir, band, choral scholars
26. The annual Stephen Lewis scrabble event
27. The prayer shawl ministry
28. Christmas dinner for residents of Mary's Place (KW Emergency Shelter)
29. Help to individuals from the Benevolent Fund
30. Plett soup lunch by the youth group for South African children
31. Socks for Souls fundraiser by one of our younger members
32. Virtual events for young families at Valentines, Halloween and Christmas
33. Continuing zoom services for those not able to attend in person
34. A Longest Night Service for those grieving
35. Starting up a community Bocce League
36. Doing initial exploration for other use of our property...affordable housing??

WOW! And now it's time to come back to church. All hands on deck. Friends reconnecting with friends.