



YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY

The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter – June 2022

Notes from the Chair



June is one of my favourite months. The days have a shininess that makes the fresh growth brighter and more vibrant. Council has its last meeting in June before taking a couple of months off. It is time to reflect on the year thus far and express deep thanks all who contribute to Parkminster's call to be an evolving community of faith inspired to embrace our future.

We deepen our commitment to each other through our connections. I'm grateful for our Communications team for refreshing our website, and capturing stories in this newsletter. For Membership and Pastoral Care for welcoming and reconnecting people. For Nominating for recruiting a powerful team of volunteers.

We nurture our spiritual vitality and growth through our development. I'm thankful for our ministry team and Worship and Music committee for the planning, thought and inspiration that goes into our worship services. For Reverend Heather, Reverend Joe and Music Director Neil for leading uplifting and inclusive services. For Office Administrator Melanie for keeping us organized and in the know. For our choral scholars, choirs, bands and singers who contribute such beauty and grace to our services. For our Audio-Visual team for enabling hybrid services that connect us all. For Christian Education for their commitment and creativity in our programs for the young. For Stewardship for connecting us to our purpose.

We live a life of loving influence in the world through community. I appreciate Inclusive Ministries for focusing on anti-racism and right relations. For Outreach for rallying support for so many causes. For Resettlement for bringing families together to safety. For Property for maintaining our building and grounds. For Custodian Allen for keeping our building sparkling clean. For Capital Projects for envisioning future opportunities for our physical space. For Food Trucks for bringing community to our grounds.

And then there are more people supporting this work. I'm so grateful for Ministry and Personnel and Staff Advocates, Finance, Trustees, COVID-19 Working Group, Council, etc. Thank you for your discernment, care and commitment. Finally, I'm so thankful for the Parkminster congregation that expresses its faith in such a diversity of ways. It takes each and all of us to make Parkminster the special place it is. Thank you all.

Jennifer Allan, Chair of Council

Message from our Ministers

Summer is here, if not on the calendar then definitely in our mindset. Spiritually, summer is a celebration of abundance. It's easier to understand and to know God's grace when the world is green, flowers bloom, the sun is warm, vegetables ripen and water flows. Enjoy and revel in the giftedness of life. As you head into the summer months here are some suggestions to help you meet God in the warmth and abundance.

Go Barefoot

Taking off your shoes changes your connection with the world. Get an unmeditated experience of the earth through your feet. Pay attention where you step and notice.

Tend a Garden

In taking time to contemplate the small — in observing the details of our gardens — we can experience life on a manageable scale. Get in touch with the spiritually liberating disciplines of attention, repetition, and humility while working in your garden.

Waste Some Time

Take a break from doing things simply because they make you feel productive. Be idle, mess around with things.

Cherish Moments of Summer Stillness

Notice and sit in these moments—a sunrise, a sunset, a starry night, a full moon, wind blowing through a tree, a child making a sand castle, a water bug on a still pond.

Float

Water heals, float, feel yourself supported, know grace.

Notice Beauty

Keep a beauty journal, you'll be amazed.

Take Naps

Realize life doesn't all depend on you, it's ok to rest.

Observe an Animal

Follow it as it moves. Notice it's mannerisms. Notice what it notices. Nurture kinship with this being, a different expression of the life you both share. When the animal leaves, send along a blessing.

Befriend a Tree

Pay attention to it, notice changes, notice characteristics. Ask it what it has to tell you about the art of living. Listen.

Savour Summer Sounds

Lie on the ground or a sit in a chair for 15 minutes without saying anything and with your eyes closed. Pay attention to what your mind is doing. Then notice what you hear around you. Silence and listening are great spiritual practices.

Look Up

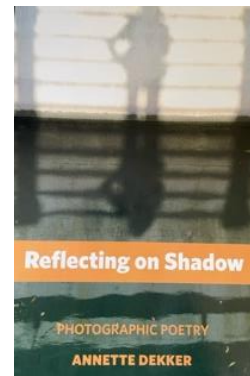
Lie on the ground and watch the sky. Notice birds, clouds, stars and whatever else comes into your field of vision. Wonder at your connection to these things.

May summer blessing be yours.



Parkminster's Poet Laureate

We have in our midst at Parkminster a number of people who have written books (life stories, textbooks, a corporate history, and perhaps some novels we're not aware of), and we also have a writer of poetry. A few years ago, Annette Dekker published *Reflecting on Shadow...Photographic Poetry*. What follows is a more recent piece of writing Annette has done, relating to the road to Emmaus bible story, the first of three [resurrection](#) appearances found in Luke, in which two men are traveling to Emmaus just days after the [crucifixion of Jesus](#) when a third man "drew near to them." Together they walked and discussed the life of Jesus of Nazareth and how he may still be alive after his tomb was found empty. When the men get to Emmaus and join in supper, the third man is recognized as Jesus himself as he broke and blessed the bread. Jesus then vanished, and the two men returned to Jerusalem where they pronounce to the "Eleven" that the Lord has risen!



of matter and vision
on the road to Emmaus

such gall!

you interrupt
my mourning walk
my eyes shrouded in tears

no- do not look at me
as though you know me
better to walk incognito
eyes on the road
– as strangers do

we walk incognito and
in and out of questions
what's the matter?
don't you know?
can't you see?
does it matter?

a matter of vision?
no - I can't see!
death disillusioned coarsely
changes colours of darkness
veils any hope

I might have sought
in your eyes

we walk in and out of stories
into dawn
step by step you weave light
echo words of ancients
rewrite histories
illumine prophecies
that matter

my heart burns
my eyes adjust
quest for that intimacy
reserved for strangers
who find familiarity
while sharing mysteries
and the road

no- do not leave me now
not yet another ending
stay, share bread and tears
come, grace us
with your stories
your presence

glances lace us across a table
relative strangers
still

unaware of your breaking
through death and matter
until you, eyes radiant,
break the news with bread
for life
and ever after
eyes see you
wholly One
redividus

your sudden disappearing
is beyond matter now
for with eyes that seek
mere glimpses
you appear in the eyes
of strangers on the road
and loved ones at table
where questing and stories
that matter
are bread enough
for the journey

such grace!

Upcoming Event: Welcome Back Sunday (September 11, 2022)

Hear ye, hear ye. Good news for all!

We normally schedule our 'welcome back' BBQ hot dog and corn roast following summer vacations. This year it is even a more special occasion...the first time since the pandemic struck...the first since September 2019 for this long-time tradition at Parkminster. Bob Forde, master chef, has agreed to serve up the very best of corn on the cob!]



So come one, come all...it's time to renew friendships, celebrate, and have a good time over an enjoyable lunch. Christian Education will be looking after activities for the children. Information tables will also be set up for those wishing to learn more about, and get involved with, the very wide range of activities at Parkminster.

There will be a free will offering.



Elementary My Dear Watson

That was the explanation that Sherlock Holmes supposedly gave to his assistant, Dr. Watson, when explaining deductions he had made in solving a problem. Well, our John Watson at Parkminster makes his own shrewd deductions, and thanks to his experience, foresight and industriousness, we're back in the food truck business again.

Food trucks have returned every Wednesday evening at Parkminster from 4:30 to 8:00 pm, providing delicious foods to satisfy all tastebuds from savoury to sweet! Good food, sunshine and neighbourhood fellowship...could it get any better? It sure can...Parkminster benefits from a percentage of sales made by every food truck, with the proceeds divided equally between church operating costs and outreach. So come out to eat OR volunteer, OR both!

And that's where John Watson comes in. Two years ago, John took over leadership of the event that Joe Sheldon had started up. John saw the value of continuing this really excellent outreach initiative. You might say...elementary my dear Holmes!! Although John was hoping to find someone who could take over leadership of the event, he nevertheless worked hard to negotiate a new protocol with the vendors, one that required less volunteer time on our part (e.g., no moving tables in and out of the church); and he has been able to recruit enough volunteers to keep the event going. So hats off to John Watson and to those who have signed up to take a few shifts at the event. Light duty and very satisfying for those involved.



May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Many are not aware that the Ontario government designates May of each year as [Sexual Assault Prevention Month](#). In fact, it's probably fair to say that most are not aware that child sexual abuse is a problem of major proportions in Canada, and in Waterloo Region, with significant implications for our children. These offences can have immediate physical, emotional, and psychological effects on the child, as well as very detrimental long-term effects.

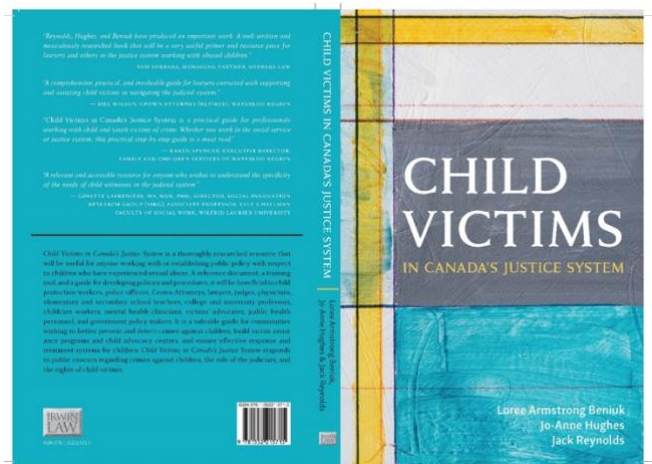
Along with the impact of the abuse experienced, the justice system inherently creates situations of stress for child victims and families, including lack of information and understanding about the court process, adjournments and delays, public exposure, facing the accused and cross examination.

Locally, the [Child Witness Centre \(CWC\)](#), a charitable agency, provides support for children that have been abused or are otherwise required to give testimony in court as a witness to a crime. Between April 2020 and January 2021, 443 children and youth from Waterloo Region and Wellington County were referred to the agency by police when charges were laid! CWC provides advocacy, support, court preparation and accompaniment, which includes:

- Emotional support and coping strategies to reduce stress and anxiety during the investigation and/or criminal court process
- Providing a specially trained facility dog during meetings and on the witness stand, which provides unconditional comfort and helps alleviate stress.
- Accompanying the child during important case-related meetings and at court dates.
- Helping parents and caregivers to be effective in supporting their children.
- Providing court updates and on-going assessment and advocacy throughout.
- Providing court preparation for a child or youth who is required to testify in court.
- Assessing the need for testimonial aids and advocating for testimonial aids to be permitted while testifying in court (e.g., testifying behind a screen or from a separate room).
- Providing court accompaniment, and standing with them at the witness stand if needed.
- Aiding with completion of Victim Impact Statements, so they have the opportunity to share how the experience has impacted them.
- Providing post court debriefs so families understand the verdict and/or sentencing.
- Providing information and support that connects young people, and their families, with community resources.
- Offering a welcoming and safe place that fosters healing, hope and well-being.

Two from Parkminster have served as Executive Director of the Child Witness Centre--Jack Reynolds from 2002 to 2013, and Laura Muirhead from 2013 to 2019. Laura also served as a Board member from 1995 to 2002, including two years as President.

Jack, working with two others, has written a book entitled *Child Victims in Canada's Justice System*, published by and available from Irwin Law, a Toronto publisher (also available locally at [Words Worth Books](#)). It is a resource for those working with children; for lawyers, crown attorneys; judges and government policy makers; and a text for those studying for law or social work careers. Royalties will go to the Child Witness Centre.



Kitchener Waterloo Outreach Group and Parkminster Helps Syrian Refugees!

Yes, it's true! Along with the families that you as a congregation have directly sponsored, you have joined with four other United Churches from Kitchener/Waterloo in a partnership with the Kitchener/Waterloo Outreach Group (KWOG) in eventually bringing 11 families to our city. Parkminster holds the KWOG funds for 4 of these families, with Jack Reynolds capably managing the deposits and disbursements. Wendy Watson has joined KWOG members in welcoming new arrivals and her Outreach Committee are overseeing this project, receiving monthly reports on our progress. Sheila Rule has acted as a consultant with important learnings from work accomplished with your own refugees. Bert Blackburn, Terry Ridgeway and Glen Harper have lent their time, strength and vehicles to the movement of furniture as families arrive. Bruce and Daniel Mutton have supplied tablets for ESL online and the children's educational needs. KWOG members are grateful for each and every valuable act of service on the part of Parkminster members. Thank You!

For the last six years, our new families have been marooned in countries bordering Syria to where they escaped during that war. They have lived with constant needs and fears from threats to deport them back to Syria where their homes and communities lie in piles of rubble, and dire repercussions from the Syrian government await them for having fled. We surely have seen this reality as it is now being played out in the Ukraine. What is unique is that all but one of our new arrivals have families already living here in KW who were sponsored by our government in 2016 during the Syrian war. These families are now fully settled and, in turn, are ready to help settle these loved ones as they arrive.

Let me briefly introduce you to the families we share:



The Al Abdullah's: Father Yasin, Mother Aya, 8 yr old Daughter Bailisan, 6 year old Daughter Mal Asham, and 4 year old son Jihad. This family arrived in Toronto from Jordan on October 4th, 2021 and spent the next 14 days in quarantine in Aya's sister's apartment in Waterloo. At the beginning of November they moved into the upstairs unit of a rented house at 380 Rittenhouse Ave., Kitchener. The youngest, Jihad, suffers from a genetic disorder called Smith-Magenis syndrome, which has a number of serious symptoms, currently including lack of expressive language and night time episodes of crying and kicking. This required us to find a home for this family with the fewest close apartment neighbours to be disturbed. Jihad is now being seen by a pediatrician, has done an intake at Kid's Ability and will join his sisters at Glencairn School next fall in JK. He shows many signs of an active intelligence and is very affectionate. Bailisan and Mal Asham are happy girls who love school and are on their way to becoming well integrated Canadians.

Aya and Yasin are enrolled in online ESL. Yasin is a seasoned painter and will seek employment when he has achieved a workable English vocabulary. He has passed his drivers course and tests and now has a used vehicle to help the family get to their appointments. This is a big help for us. Aya is a capable mother and home manager, keeping an impeccably clean house and offers wonderful Arabic coffee to all who come to visit. She is so happy to be in Canada, joining her mother, father and sister. Her brother, Akram and his family arrived from Jordan in January. They are being co-sponsored by Trinity

United Church. Right now, these two families are heavily involved in bringing their dental care up to par.



The Alshaars: Father Mohamad Miassar, Mother Walaa, 9 yr old daughter Yasmin, 7 year old daughter Thanaa, and 2 year old son Baraa. This family is the most recent to come, arriving from Lebanon on March 7th. Vaccinated and with protocols reduced, a period of quarantine was not required for them. During the remainder of March, the Alshaars enjoyed time in an Air B & B on Kent Street near the Mennonite Thrift Shop.

This is the one KWOG family without relatives in Canada but are friends with Malika Abd- Mohsin, a Canadian/Syrian woman who has lived in Canada most of her life and is a member of KWOG. Malika has been the translator for the Alshaars and has done an amazing job of getting them settled with all the important procedures accomplished such as acquiring health cards, bank accounts, doctors and dentists, ESL enrollment, etc. Thanks to Malika, Mohamad Miassar, being a seasoned barber, now has a steady job at a barber shop in the small Lancaster shopping mall next to Kypreos restaurant.

On April 1st, the Alshaars took possession of a new residence in the Tuscan Apartments at 205 Brandon Avenue. Walaa has come far in making this modest apartment into a comfortable home for the family. The girls have less than a block to walk to Westmount Public School, a wonderful multicultural environment for them. Yasmin had three years exposure to English in Lebanon and is rapidly approaching fluency. All members of this family are bright and eager to learn. It's a blessing to witness. They are a great family.

Our former two new families along with their extended Alhouzani family members in Kitchener have helped us welcome the Alshaars. This coming Sunday they are planning another visit with the family. As of the date of writing, this family could use some outdoor furniture for their deck.

The Al Adawi's: Father Mohammad, Mother Asmaa, 7 yr. old son Albaraa, 4 yr. old daughter Rosel, and 2 yr old son Abdelbaset. The mother, Asmaa, is a sister of Noor, one of the women in our English Enrichment group here in KW. Mohammad and Asmaa and their family are currently in Lebanon. Their file has passed through the national United Church and was received by the embassy in Beirut in September of 2021. They await word of their departure for Canada.

The Arab's: Father Talal, Mother Baraa, 6 yr. old daughter Janaa, 4 yr. old daughter Faizeh, and 1 1/2 yr. old son Hazim This case is of concern for KWOG members. Mother Baraa is the daughter of friend, Busra, who is a member of the English enrichment group organized locally by "The Aunties". Baraa and her family, still in Turkey, were the very first sponsorship we took on. Yet after four long years, we see no progress toward their arrival. Though they have completed all the requirements for refugee sponsorship, they remain in a state of limbo.

Baraa's mother, Busra and father, Tahir here in Kitchener, struggle with depression around this reality. Tahir was hospitalized for eight weeks this winter for mental health reasons. MP Bardish Chaggar has been very helpful, sending advocacy letters on our behalf, and we have consulted with an immigration lawyer. We wonder if the securities check, which remains unfinished by the Turkish Embassy, has been held up due to Talal's conscripted time in the Syrian military. Yet, Talal's military duty is reported as only having involved the guarding of a warehouse. We remain unsure about the reasons for this hold up.

KWOG and our resident Syrian friends wish to hold a welcoming celebration for all the new families who have arrived, yet it is difficult to celebrate until Baraa and Talal have arrived with their family. It would mean a lot to the parents to know we are all praying for this reunion.

We are grateful to our donors for providing monthly allowances to sustain all our sponsored families who are living desperate lives in the Middle East as they await reunification with their families here in Canada. KWOG is grateful to Parkminster and

the other local United Churches who are acting as co-constituents with us in the re-unification of these families here in KW. It is because of your partnership that we are able to bring these families to Canada through the national United Church of Canada, an official Sponsorship Agreement Holder as designated by the Canadian government.

Elizabeth Eberhart-Moffat, on behalf the Kitchener/Waterloo Outreach Group

Reconnecting

After two years of not having time with friends, 29 Parkminsterites had a most enjoyable afternoon, sitting together outside the church, chatting under the trees. Hosted by Membership and Pastoral Care. Our next mix and mingle social event will be on **Tuesday, June 14 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Mark your calendar and plan to attend.** All are welcome. Bring a lawn chair. If it rains, we'll move inside.

