



The Sunday Plus

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE
IN OUR JOURNEY.

Message from the Chair

What are you searching for?

My husband asks “Have you seen my USB? I ask, “Where did you last have it?” He names a random spot in the house. I can see he is getting mad at himself. So, I join him in his search for this USB. I don’t know why he needs it or what he will use it for, but he wants me to help him, so I do. “Did you look in your desk? Did you look in the junk drawer?” etc. etc.

As I run out of places to name, I start to get frustrated and ask, “Have you looked with your hands?”. He rolls his eyes at me as if to say, “Don’t treat me like the kids.” I start opening drawers and sorting through a pile that’s been sitting on the counter. I even open the junk drawer. There it is.

This type of scenario happens monthly at my house. It has been happening for so many years that I’ve heard my daughter use the phrase with her dad many times as well.

What is the church searching for these days?

The United Church of Canada is seeking “deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice” according to the strategic plan.

Parkminster is searching for a new Minister of Spiritual Development and Care. It seems Committees are always searching for ways to contribute to our community.

As individuals we are searching for meaning in this world, friends with shared values, belonging, hope, support and connection.

What are you searching for when you come to church? What do you hope to find here? Why do you return to this place? The answers here are probably more similar than different. How do we search? We definitely “look with our hands” as we search for a new part-time Minister. We are typing up job descriptions, sending emails, writing minutes of meetings where we make decisions, etc. But the most important searching we can do with our hands is to pray.

What does God have planned for this ministry? Our Sunday School and Youth Coordinator (Bethany McMullen) along with the Christian Education Committee is building a community amongst youth and their families. **Momentum is building. I am excited to see what the future holds. God is working in this place.** We need to open up, not desk drawers, or piles of paper, but open conversations about what God is calling us to do in this building and with each other as a congregation, and further – in our community.

May we be blessed in our searching, as individuals and as a community of faith.

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." Proverbs 8:17

Debra Brown, Chair of Church Council

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Hiding Inside Pearls



There's something about a pearl which has always catches the imagination. Their smooth texture almost velvet to the touch, their apparently perfect symmetry which pleases aesthetically, their lustrous hues out of which our pleasure grows, all of it defies their genesis inside. A grain of sand invades the oyster, irritating the soft, delicate and vulnerable muscle tissue so that the oyster tries to smooth the edges and eliminate the discomfort. Over time, layer upon layer of protective coating is

wrapped around the flaw, covering the foreign material, changing what was relatively ugly into something of beauty.

We all do it, too. We all try to hide our inner selves behind a seemingly endless parade of masks. That which lies within is something we wish to hide, for to reveal it would wound too deeply, to allow others to see our true selves would leave us far too vulnerable. We are not ready to embrace such intimacy with others. Over time, the irritation of the whole of who we are, subsides. Over time, behind our layers of protective camouflage, we become comfortable in who we are becoming. It is familiar and no longer irritating.

Although our onion layers seem to placate the terror in our hearts that we might be discovered, still the flaw inside remains. Like the pearl, it all offers a beautiful exterior. Like the pearl over time, our edges, our rawness, our brokenness, becomes more seemingly perfect: a thing of beauty. Yet no matter how much we try to ignore it, no matter how much we try to conform to the beauty of our manufactured exterior, we know what is there inside. Fear remains that somehow the elegance of who we try to portray ourselves to be will be shattered, exposing the sin within.



Now I know that sin is no longer a word used with any kind of frequency in our world. We often use phrases like, “bad choices,” or “brokenness,” or “flaws,” but to do so is just another layer with which we try to cover up the ugliness. It isn’t comfortable to say or to admit, but we all sin.

Certainly, it’s easy to point to the tragedies in the world – the civil war in Yemen, the human rights abuses by far too many authoritarian governments, the seeming insurmountable control of international corporations of our economies – decrying such injustice and rampant short-sightedness. It’s easy to decry the feeble and inadequate response of the international community to the reality of human-accelerated climate change sweeping the world. We self-righteously mourn such sin and cry out with the Psalmist in Psalm 28:4, “Repay the evil ones according to their work, and according to the evil of their deeds; repay them according to the work of their hands; render them their true reward.”



That feels good, but God is not our police force. We know that our deeds are repaid in consequences. For every choice we make, there is a consequence. We must live with those consequences every day. I don’t mean that a lightning bolt will flash down from the heavens to fry us to a crisp. What I mean is that we must live with ourselves. That grain of sandy sin, supplied with the fertilizer of wrong choices, festers and grows, causing ever greater irritation and even more heroic efforts to layer that growing sin under

more and more elaborate masks. If bound too tightly within such denial, the sin eventually bursts free, uglier than we could ever imagine, making us more vulnerable than we ever thought we could be, robbing our families and our friends of a healthy relationship, robbing ourselves, of any kind of integrity. It is then we despair, moaning in supplication like another Psalmist in Psalm 51:3, 1a, “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is every before me. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.”

Again, God doesn’t do what we might expect. Regardless how awful and ugly we consider our sin to be, God’s arms of loving forgiveness forever encircle us. It’s not that those arms only arrive when we’ve hit rock bottom. Instead, it seems that we only recognize what has always been there had we but opened our hearts to God fully in the first place.



Imagine. No matter what we see in the mirror, no matter what our inner reality we try to hide from others, no matter how deeply we have hurt God by our wrong choices, by our sin, God loves us anyway. That is the gift of good news revealed in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Simon Peter, the one who denied knowing Jesus three times, became the rock, the foundation upon which the church was built. Judas, whom Jesus knew would betray him to the religious authorities, shared a dipping bowl and sat at a place of honour beside Jesus at the Last Supper. The criminal hanging beside Jesus was assured of a place in paradise, even as he died from a life of brutality and terrorist sin.



However, to nestle inside God's comforting, healing embrace requires an attitude change in us. There are three things we need to do once we recognize that healing is always ours for the asking.

First, we need to confess our sins. This is very tough, for it opens us to a state of vulnerability which seems too difficult to endure. It strips away the pearl layers to reveal the sinful grain inside. We become naked, revealed, yet it is the first step toward our healing in God's loving hands.

Second, we need to repent. Repent means to literally "turn around." It means to give up those choices and those behaviours which turn us away from God. It means we must consider every action, every decision, against the whispering of God's Spirit in our hearts. For that we must listen in prayer, in study, in worship, in community with other believers. For that we must remain open to being changed out of our comfort zone, from behind the masking layers we previously thought necessary.

Third, we need to reconcile; to mend the relationships we have sundered through our sin. This task is one which lasts a lifetime, for we will continue to make wrong choices and continue to need to confess, to repent and to reconcile.

That's a lot of work! The consequence of such work, however, is more than worth the effort. As John of Patmos writes in the book of Revelation 21:3b-4a, 5a, "See, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them as their God; they will be God's peoples, and God will be with them; God will wipe every tear from their eyes.' ...And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.'"



Honest vulnerability brings an integrity of healing within God's embrace. Only then do we fulfil who we are created to be. Indeed, it is only then that we are able to fully accept the freeing gift of forgiveness – not just God's forgiveness, but our ability to forgive ourselves – that we can stop hiding the wonderful people we are becoming each day.

Gord Dunbar
Part-time Retired Supply Minister

Come and walk with us on Wednesdays



Do you enjoy walking and discovering new trails in the area? Come and walk with friends on **Wednesdays at 9:15 am**. We always meet at a predetermined place and walk for about 90 minutes.

Thanks to John Bain for organizing us by designating a walk and sending out an email each week. All are welcome, and if you would like to join this group, please send John an email to get added to the distribution list.

johnbain89@gmail.com

Red Dress Day - May 5th

Red Dress Day - May 5th is the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit People

Beginning in 2010, this initiative was born out of the REDress art installation by Métis artist Jaime Black based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hundreds of red dresses were displayed in public spaces to raise awareness about the missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit people, which number in the thousands in Canada.

In line with Black's vision, every year empty red dresses and ribbons are hung nationwide in remembrance of these people who should be alive to wear them.

The dress is red: recognizing violence, vitality, and the lifeblood connection between all of us regardless of race, nationality and/or religion. The colour was also chosen based on the traditional knowledge that red is the only colour spirits can see. It is used as a means of calling the spirits of these lost loved ones home. *Adapted in part from Jamie Black, 2011*



Parkminster again marked this day with the dresses you saw hanging inside and outside the building. The service on May 4 paid particular attention to this challenge in our country.

To learn more...

Listen to local Indigenous leaders on this topic and show your support by attending an annual walk and/or vigil on May 5th. <http://healingofthesevengenerations.ca>

- **Walk at 10 a.m. from 300 Frederick to Victoria Park clock tower.**
- **Vigil at 6 p.m. at Victoria Park clock tower.**

Learn about the issue online. Search “MMIWG”

Upcoming Worship Services

Sunday, May 25th, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

The youth of Parkminster will be leading worship, sharing what they have been learning through their Changemaker programme and serving communion. There will be upbeat music, challenging insights, a little fun, and a whole lot of enthusiasm. Join us and be moved as you are fed.



Sunday, June 1st, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 1st is our **annual Music & Pride Sunday service**. It's sure to inspire and have you singing in the pews.

Sunday, June 8th, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.

Hosted at First United Church, Waterloo

The four Waterloo United Churches are celebrating the **100th anniversary of the formation of The United Church of Canada at First United Church**. It will be a fabulous opportunity to connect with our siblings in faith from across the city. In fact, we want to share a meal

together after worship. First United Church will host a **POTLUCK LUNCH** where they will provide tables, chairs, dishes, cutlery and hot and cold beverages. All we have to do is bring a picnic lunch to share. As well, there is a plan to have a Historical Display for people to peruse while everyone enjoys lunch as one. **Plan to join in this historic occasion.**



Save the date - Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion (STC).

June 14 - Mark your Calendars for the Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion (STC).

<https://mcc.org/events/strawberry-thanksgiving-and-communion>

Location: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener

Last year six members of Parkminster participated in the STC at Six Nations Polytechnic at Six Nations. There were about 150 people in attendance.

The ecumenical gathering presents an opportunity to collectively explore practical ways to engage with what Truth and Reconciliation can mean in a church context. This year's event will seek to build on the momentum of last year's conversation about Spiritual Covenants between churches and First Nations <https://mcc.org/resources/spiritual-covenant-churches-and-first-nations>.

Registration required as space is limited.

If you are interested and/or have questions, please contact Jeanne Foster, Annette Dekker or Nancy Dykstra.