



THE PARISHIONER

Pentecost 2021



DREAMS AND VISIONS by The Rev. Canon Lorne Mitchell

Then afterwards

*I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions. Joel 2:28*

Even before the arrival of COVID-19, the culture in which we live, move and have our being was changing at a breath-taking rate. We were working hard just to keep up and reflect on these changes. The questions our leaders have been asking themselves are:

*How can we be “church” in this day and age?
How are we being called to let God’s spirit lead us?*

But then the pandemic hit. Wow... what a shock this has been...
For over a year now, the question has been:

How can we be church if we can’t physically meet?

Talk about a Challenge!

Certainly, the internet and our expanded forms of communication have helped. We in the church have been trying out a variety of possibilities. Having videos of the readings, music and sermons online for people to watch is certainly one way to stay connected. Thank goodness we now have an AV System where we can livestream our worship to people at home.

Staying connected through phone calls is a more personal way, and many of us are rediscovering the intimacy of a good phone call. Thank you so much to everyone who has been part of our phone tree. Our wardens, parish council and other leaders have been using Zoom to have live meetings. This has been very helpful in making decisions and getting things done.

But, for nurturing a real sense of faith community, still nothing compares to gathering together. Nothing compares to *seeing each other, hearing each other, singing together, praying together, eating together, laughing together,* One of the things we have learned through the pandemic is that all the technology in the world cannot give us this same experience of meeting as a loving faith community.

That’s an important learning.

That's not to say that technology doesn't have a place. Indeed, one of the things we have discovered is that good and healthy use of technology can expand the possibilities for reaching out beyond our usual boundaries. It will never replace gathering together, but it certainly can increase our ability to reach out and touch people who can't be reached otherwise.

But I feel, very strongly, that whether we gather together physically or whether we connect with each other in online formats, we need to make sure that we keep a clear sense of what our purpose is. The two great commandments are:

*Love God
Love your neighbour as yourself*

This is what we need to always stay focused on.

The purpose of the Church is to nurture and support people in their calling to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and to love neighbour as self. Doing this will transform hearts and transform the community we live in.

There's no doubt in my mind that this time of pandemic is becoming a prophetic moment for the Church. Like everyone in society, we are being challenged to focus more on the things that are truly important. As we move forward in this prophetic moment, there will be opportunities that open up for us. Our parish council is having wonderful conversations about what the church can be as we move out of this pandemic. It's a time for dreams and visions... God's spirit is in our midst.

But no matter what possibilities the Holy Spirit is opening up for us, we will keep our eyes firmly on the calling that Jesus has given to us.

We will proclaim the love of God for us and all God's creation.
We will serve one another and help one another love - just as Jesus taught us.
Amen



NEWS FROM THE ST. JAMES GARDEN GROUP

by John Hindley

“Show me your garden and I shall tell you what you are. ”

-- Alfred Austin

Dearest parishioners of St. James, the South Garden regrets that it's unable to lunch today - or tomorrow, or the day after. Oh, it's nothing too serious, so please don't be worried. It's just tired and more than a little frayed around its borders. After forty years maintaining the same look, it's ready for a change -- hair, wardrobe, shoes and perhaps some new frames -- a complete make-over. Alas, its dear friend and neighbour, the Church, has recurring bouts of shingles which cause no end of grief and disruption to the South Garden's self-care regimen and overall well-being. Indeed, rumour has it that the Church now suffers from fractures in its belfry, but it's best not to comment on such things in polite society. Suffice to say, there is talk of surgery, perhaps even scaffolding! It's all too much! The burden of all this drama has left the South Garden looking haggard despite the best efforts of its carers. Consequently, the South Garden's carers (aka The Garden Group) have ordered immediate bed rest for the foreseeable future; however, a glorious transformation is in the works!

We are working on a design for the South Garden that will expand the southern edge of the garden while relinquishing the section of the garden north of the grass pathway to become a permanent “green space” for future maintenance. As such, all the shrubs along the south wall of the nave section of the church were removed on April 21st to make way for roof repair and future maintenance. Rest assured, the restored version of the South Garden will be every bit as beautiful, more accessible as a usable space for the community, and much more ecologically viable. More of this later.

Along this same line, the Garden Group has undertaken to renovate the Sign Garden by removing all of the overgrown evergreen shrubs (relics from the days of the previous wooden sign). When we are finished, the Sign Garden will not only be much more aesthetically pleasing, but it will also demonstrate the new direction of the Garden Group to balance native plants and non-native plants to create a harmonious and pleasing garden for passers-by. And of course, the messages on the sign will be more visible. An unexpected bonus to our plans is a renewed interest within the parish for flying a flag on the flag pole which has been vacant for several years. The work on the Sign Garden will unfold in stages this year and next. Like many things these days, some nursery stock is in short supply, so don't be concerned if things seem a bit barren for a while.

“A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust.” — Gertrude Jekyll

Last autumn, Veronica Douglas approached me on behalf of the Garden Group to ask if I would take over as president in January 2021. Confession -- I was surprised, humbled and flattered too, but, I was definitely surprised. Firstly, I lack a British accent which I always assumed was a prerequisite. Secondly, I have been wandering in the spiritual wilderness beyond the church walls for a number of years searching for something that remains elusive. Thirdly, my participation in the group had been limited to the annual pruning of wayward shrubbery in summer and serving at the May Plant Sale. Although I have been gardening for most of my life, I wasn't sure if I had the skills necessary to guide us through the challenge of not only renovating the South Garden, but also articulating a new vision for how we should view the property that surrounds the church. I suppose, then, that the answer to the question "Why me?" is often another question: "Why not me?"

Having undergone the penitential rite of clearing the undesirable growth from the William Street and Mornington Street hedges last summer, I suppose I proved my mettle, atoned for my sins and omissions, and earned my leadership badge (though I am but one in a long line of penitents who have braved the hedge ordeal). During the process, I certainly found myself muttering "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us" albeit in a less than prayerful manner. However, with the wholehearted support of the Garden Group members, I have embraced their vote of confidence and my duties, and I look forward to working together with the group to develop a fresh look to the St. James Gardens in a post-covid, post-roof-repair, and post-belltower-repair world. More importantly, I look forward to an opportunity to work with these experienced gardeners and build relationships wherein we can share our knowledge and wisdom as we grow in trust and respect. I have already been the recipient of their patience and expertise for which I am most grateful. Particular thanks must be extended to Veronica Douglas and Sheila Howard who have guided the group so well, and fortunately, will continue to act as our treasurers.

"The garden suggests there might be a place where we can meet nature halfway." - Michael Pollan

Also last autumn, Terry Marklevitz arranged for us to meet with Paul Zammit, a professor in Niagara College's Environment Division and former director of horticulture at the Toronto Botanical Gardens. Paul is also working with the landscape architect designing the gardens at the new Tom Patterson Theatre. Through productive dialogue about the property, its location, and our challenges, we articulated a vision statement for the future of the St. James gardens and property outside the boundary of God's Holy Acre. Here is an excerpt from the Vision Statement we shared with the wardens and rector last December:

Beginning in 2021, it is the intention of the St. James Garden Group to renovate and refurbish the South Garden to create a new chapter in the story of the garden. The impending repairs to the roof and bell tower are the catalyst for redesigning the South

Garden space in order to accommodate the necessity of on-going maintenance of the church building without negatively impacting or endangering the design, content, and function of the garden.

Our vision is to create a garden that blends non-invasive ornamental and native plants into a symbolic statement of what a 21st century Canadian garden should be for all visitors: bio-diverse, sustainable, responsible, accommodating, engaging, beautiful, and educational. It is our intention to extend this vision to the entire property surrounding St. James in due course. We can no longer view the garden as a lovely ornament within the grounds of the church or as merely an enhancement to its facade; instead, our vision is that the South Garden becomes a place that is integral to the rites, rituals, pastimes, playtimes, gatherings and activities that make up the lives of the parishioners and wider community. In short, the developing story of the South Garden becomes part of the developing story of the lives of those who visit it, whether it be in celebration or in grief, in quiet contemplation or exuberant play. Moreover, we envision a garden that changes and develops as our own understanding of stewardship grows spiritually, environmentally, and intellectually.

Looking ahead, parishioners can expect to see a mix of non-invasive ornamental plants and shrubs and non-aggressive native plants and shrubs in the St. James Gardens (with the exception of the formal rose garden in God's Holy Acre). Since 1970, the songbird population in North America is estimated to have declined by [3 billion](#), and we are all well aware that our pollinators continue to be under threat from pesticides and habitat loss. Our private and public gardens, therefore, need to become places where bird and insect life can thrive, and to do that we need to redress the imbalance created by an excess of non-native ornamentals and too few native plants. Unfortunately, most of our urban gardens, private and public, are sterile food environments for both birds and insects, which is a major factor in their decline, but we can address this moving forward. Author Isabella Tree writes that "We forget, in a world completely transformed by man, that what we're looking at is not necessarily the environment wildlife prefer, but the depleted remnant that wildlife is having to cope with." So, you can expect to see changes in the way we care for the gardens at St. James, changes that represent quite a paradigm shift in our practice and understanding. For example, we will be piling leaves onto the flower beds every fall and leaving them there to rot down next year; we will be leaving the dead stalks of perennials standing in the fall because many pollinators overwinter in them. The previous practice of "cleaning up" has proven to be detrimental to both insect habitat and soil fertility. As well, in order for birds to find the caterpillars they need to feed their young, we will need to get comfortable with the fact that plants are going to get eaten. For more information on how you can be part of the solution to habitat loss in your own garden, have a look at Douglas Tallamy's insightful book *Nature's Best Hope*. An excellent resource for native plants is Lorraine Johnson's *100 Easy-to-Grow Native Plants for Canadian Gardens*.

"A society grows great when old men [and women] plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." - Greek proverb

One morning last summer, as we took our break on the Gloating Bench, we figured out that our average age as a group was probably about seventy-three. And even I, one of the “youth” at age fifty-eight, am in the queue to have both my knees replaced (aging is not without its challenges). Yet, in defiance of the ravages of sun, wind, arthritis, and time, our work as gardeners keeps us both physically active and creatively engaged. To garden is to glimpse the wonder of creation in nature and play a small part in its processes. However, we have a greater responsibility to be stewards of the environment in which we live, work and worship. Because we are aging -- gracefully and with dignity, of course -- we want to create gardens at St. James which are self-sustaining and, therefore, less labour intensive while still preserving their aesthetic beauty and appeal; however, we also want to create gardens that serve as environmental allies in the form of food sources for the creatures with whom we share this space. We want to create gardens that will be a blessing to the parish and the city for another forty years, and we want to create gardens that will survive the ebb and flow in the numbers of volunteer gardeners available to look after them.

We are grateful to our fellow parishioners at St. James for their long-standing support and enthusiasm for the development of the gardens on the property. As you know, we generate our revenue to maintain the gardens through our annual plant sale and, occasionally, private donations. Unfortunately, we will be postponing our annual May plant sale again until pandemic conditions improve; thus, we have lost our major source of revenue for the second year running. We are fortunate that generous funds were allotted as part of the roof repair allocation at the January 2020 vestry meeting to restore and redesign the South Garden, but in the meantime, some of the other gardens will need to be refurbished as we move toward the implementation of our vision statement. So, in addition to your regular contributions to support parish operations, you may also wish to support the work of the Garden Group with a personal donation of funds. Such a gesture would be most welcome and appreciated. Donations can be made via e-transfer to treasurer@stjamesstratford.ca, or by cheque mailed to the church office. Either way, please indicate in the message or memo line that the donation is for the Garden Group. If you have any questions or concerns about the gardens, please feel free to contact me at john.hindley3120@gmail.com.

“Help us to be ever faithful gardeners of the spirit, who know that without darkness nothing comes to birth, and without light nothing flowers. ” - Mary Sarton

Biography: John Hindley is the retired Head of English at the former Stratford Central Secondary School. He has been associated with St. James since 2005 and has served in the past as chorister, cantor, reader, and gardener. John is married to the Rev. Kathi Urbasik-Hindley, pastoral care minister at Avondale United Church and retired chaplain at the HPHA. They have one daughter, Julia, and four beloved grandchildren: Maximus, Alice, Aoife, and Maven. Pastimes include choral singing, piano, reading, writing, gardening, and genealogy.

Garden Group Members: Veronica Douglas, Sheila Howard, Christine Pitts, Jan Ryan, Jan Schoenfeldt, Susan Gardiner Marklevitz, Diane Edgerton, Dennis Rawe, Roy Thiel, John Hindley.

YOU'RE INVITED ...

Lorne's birthday is June 27th and the party cannot be in person this year. However, for anyone who would like to send birthday wishes to Lorne, we hope you will do so by video! Just video yourself or yourselves, or get someone to video you -- saying, singing, dancing, lip syncing, etc. your 60th birthday wishes for Lorne. All of the videos will be put together into one long video which Lorne will enjoy over and over again. And then one day when we can get together, we can all watch it together! To keep this birthday project manageable, please make your video 30 seconds or less and send it to Karen Hunt Mitchell at carinalamama@gmail.com or text 519-703-1519 by June 15.



Please note that Lorne is aware of this birthday project as surprises during the pandemic are not his idea of a good time. I am really looking forward to receiving your videos!

WARDENS' UPDATE ON THE STATE OF THE PARISH

by James Noble, Pam Ayres, Dianne Gaffney and Nancy McCallum

As we move into the second half of May and find ourselves looking forward to warmer weather in the weeks and months that lie ahead, we are again brought face to face with the reality that we have been waiting for more than a year now for virtually everything in our lives to change, even the weather. This waiting has taken a toll on all of us, even if we are among the fortunate who have not succumbed to the coronavirus or lost family members and friends who have. As a parish, we continue to wait until we can again meet safely to worship together. Just as many of you have been missing the intimacies of family life that come with regular visits to and from your children and grandchildren, as parishioners of St. James we have been missing the friendship and mutual support that we once all took for granted when we assembled for coffee hour, ACW meetings, weekly Bible Study, Benedict, Christian Meditation or Celtic Prayer sessions, and all the other gatherings that routinely take place in a healthy parish.

The choice of the adjective *healthy* is deliberate, because the first thing that needs to be said in this update is that, all things considered, the parish is in remarkably good shape thanks to your faithfulness to it and to one another. In large measure, our financial stability is due to the large number of parishioners who contribute through the Pre-Authorized Payment Plan (PAP); every single one of these contributors has continued his/her monthly payments since we first went into lockdown in March of 2020. No less worthy of commendation are the envelope holders who have remained faithful in their givings, even though doing so has meant that they have had to put their weekly offerings in the mail or deliver them by hand to the mailbox outside the

church office on William Street. For your dedication in continuing to contribute to the financial stability of the parish, your wardens can express nothing but gratitude, a gratitude that is also mixed with admiration for your tenacity in the past fourteen months of waiting. The words that spring immediately to mind are “Well done, thou good and faithful servant[s]!” (Matthew 25:21, KJV).

The parish has seen other acts of faithfulness and generosity in the past months. In February, Gerry Camden made a generous contribution to the parish in memory of former choir member Barbara Colley. The money was used to purchase special face coverings for singers, enough masks for all members of the St. James choir. We look forward to seeing these masks in use until such time as we are again able to enjoy the faces behind them. We owe special thanks to Warden Nancy McCallum for coordinating this PPC project and the hope it brings that soon the choir will sing again and that, eventually, we shall all be able to sing again. What a joyful noise to the Lord will be raised at St. James on that happy day.

A second response to the pandemic has been a fundraiser initiated by Lori and James Colbeck who have challenged parishioners to contribute some of their COVID savings to the parish: the savings in question are monies that we would normally have spent on theatre tickets, concert tickets, shopping expeditions, weekend getaways, or meals at local restaurants, pleasures that have been denied us in the past year because of the pandemic. Although this appeal has already resulted in more than \$6,000.00 in contributions, the treasurer would continue to welcome anything you might like to donate to this worthy cause. Unfortunately, it looks as though we are not going to be attending as many theatre performances, concerts, or meals in restaurants this summer as we have all been hoping would be the case, so perhaps you have some extra money that you would consider contributing to this fundraiser. The wardens express their very sincere thanks to the Colbecks for setting this inventive fundraising initiative into motion.

Because the pandemic has prevented the parish from launching the major fundraiser needed to obtain the monies required to repair the church tower, we have had to put that project on hold indefinitely. Doing so will probably mean that the repairs to the tower will cost us more when we are able to get to them than would have been the case had the lockdown in March of 2020 not forced us to put the project on hold. With the permission of Vestry, however, plans are proceeding to reinforce the nave floor. This work will begin as soon as provincial restrictions on construction are lifted. The parish has money in its Capital Fund to cover these repairs; we hope that will also be the case as far as the nave roof is concerned. Unfortunately, the roof has begun to leak in ways that will soon prove catastrophically damaging to it; it will have to be replaced soon, as opposed to in two or three years from now as was originally planned. Because the Building and Property Committee has begun looking into the matter, there will likely be further news on the roof repairs in the next wardens' update. While everyone is hopeful that there will be sufficient monies in the Capital Fund to cover the cost of the new roofing, the project will deplete the fund and leave the parish solely reliant on fundraising for any further work that needs to be done to

the building. That will have major implications when it comes to considering what we are going to do about the tower.

While on the subject of money, we must report that our treasurer Jeff Boyce is projecting a shortfall for the year, thanks in no small measure to a very sharp increase in our insurance costs for 2021. Anticipating a slight increase for this year, Jeff had budgeted \$11,000.00 for insurance. When it arrived, the annual insurance premium came in the form of a bill for \$32,524.42, an increase of 171% in a single year. The explanation offered by the Diocese was that its former insurer has stopped insuring churches and that the diocese had no alternative but to switch to the only insurance company that continues to do so. We were afforded no option but to pay the bill for this year and nothing more than wispy promises to the effect that the diocese will continue looking into the matter of finding alternatives to the new insurer. Although it is probably in a better financial situation than a lot of other churches in the Diocese, St. James is no more capable of sustaining these exorbitant insurance costs than any other church and faces the same prospect of being shut down by monopolistic price gouging as do smaller churches in the Diocese. As a parish, it seems incumbent on us to put as much pressure as possible on Church House to find a satisfactory resolution to this insurance crisis. This may very well be an instance where we can actually do something constructive while we are sitting around waiting for the pandemic to end. Although it is not scriptural, in this instance there may be much to be said for the popular axiom that God helps those who help themselves.

While we must keep the prospect of a financial shortfall in mind, the wardens and Parish Council have begun working on a new Strategic Plan for St. James that we hope will take us into the immediate future. Under the able leadership of Warden Dianne Gaffney, we are in the process of drafting new vision and mission statements and a new set of goals and objectives for the parish. Our next step will be to look at our strengths and weaknesses as a parish and to establish a timeframe within which these goals and objectives can realistically be met. Given the progress it is making, the committee hopes to be able to bring the results of its initial deliberations to the attention of the parish in late September. If necessary, it will be doing so by Zoom, although by later in the fall we may actually be in a position to host physically distanced focus groups. The focus group format served the parish very well two years ago when we went through our Discernment Process and should prove equally useful this time as a way of affording everyone who wants to participate in this renewal process the opportunity to do so. The wardens and Parish Council want as much input from the parish as possible and will do whatever is necessary to achieve this objective.

A new Strategic Plan for the parish seems only appropriate at this juncture, for whether or not we are prepared to acknowledge the fact, the outcome of this pandemic is going to be all about renewal in one form or another. Renewal does not necessarily mean radical change. At least on the surface, things may not look all that different at St. James when the pandemic is over; but, change will have occurred. Our perspectives on certain things will have altered: things that used to seem fundamentally important to us may seem less significant than some of the new priorities that will face us as a parish once the pandemic has finished with us, both

individually and collectively. We may want to do some things differently as we head into a future that none of us could have anticipated fourteen months ago. As Lillian Daniel suggests in the reflection to follow, we need to prepare ourselves to embrace the prospect of change because ours is a faith that is all about renewal. The reflection seems a fitting one as we come to the end of Eastertide and find ourselves waiting once again for change, this time for the Wind that will blow us where it will as the Spirit of Pentecost is unleashed upon us yet once again.

The Resurrection Is Radical by Lillian Daniel, April 21, 2021

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” Luke 24.5 (NRSV)

After twelve months of this pandemic, if our greatest desire is to get back to where we were a year ago, we have missed the memo from the Holy Spirit.

The women get the news when they are looking for Jesus’ body in the empty tomb. “Why do you look for the living among the dead? Why do you look backwards for God’s future?”

If all you want is a sentimental sign of spring, I’m sure you can find a crocus growing in a graveyard somewhere, but the promise of new life is more than that.

What is dead is gone because it has been transformed into something entirely new. So much so that after the resurrection, when Jesus ran into his closest friends, they did not recognize him. They were looking for the living among the dead. They were massaging their memories, clutching to sacred scrapbooks from a pretend past, the kind that grows more perfect the further we are from it. When Jesus actually showed up on the street where they lived, they almost missed him.

New life does not mean more of the same. So why settle for some pre-pandemic, nostalgic normalcy for your church, your children, your institutions, your society, your schools, or your street? Why do you look for the living among the dead?

<https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/the-resurrection-is-radical/>

“Spirit of the living God, move among us all; make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love; humble, caring, self-less, sharing. Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love.”

ACW NEWS by Karen Haslam, President

The future?

Because the future is unkind to the unprepared, the best thing a leader can do is prepare. We as an ACW have for the past few years been preparing for the future. We have informed the wardens for the past 5 years that our membership is aging, that our ability to continue to fundraise for the parish is limited, that we need an influx of younger parishioners.

And then Covid 19 hit.

Disruption is hard because disruption is inconvenient. It's far easier to keep doing what you're doing, hoping for better results, or going back to normal as quickly as possible to regain what you've lost. But, if there's one prediction about the future that seems to be accurate, it's that the dislocation and uncertainty we're seeing now will continue. It's hard to go back to normal when normal has disappeared or the new normal, whatever that is, is a way off. So, as usual, the St. James' Anglican Church Women continue to deal with change, to deal with obstructions, and to deal with difficulties. We continue to support each other, to discuss our issues in a calm supportive manner and to encourage each other in many ways to 'stay the course'.

The future?

We are reminded that 'The ACW are a body of women working as a Christian Community to share our abilities our resources and ourselves. We seek to unite all women in the fellowship of worship, learning and sharing which will deepen and strengthen our lives and will lead us into fuller Christian service. Our aim is to enable and encourage others to identify and use their gifts and abilities as Christians in their own community.'

There are no plans for a Mistletoe Market again this year, no plans for group lunches, and doubts as to whether we will be able to hold one last gigantic Variety Sale.

Our membership continues to age, but to our amazement, they also continue to be engaged.... they WANT to be working to benefit the parish, and indeed our community.

The future?

It is predicted that churches will shift their focus from Sunday to every day because people need to find faith and live out their faith every day – and as usual, St. James Church and the ACW of St. James will be adapting, and flourishing in this atmosphere. There may not be a sale or a Mistletoe Market, but there will always be gatherings of ACW members, intent on working together to benefit our parish.

The future?

It will always include an ACW at St. James Church.



A HAPPY TALE OF THE PANDEMIC by Nancy Adams

Earlier this year, while the morning was still dark, I was rudely awakened by one of those annoying anonymous calls -- no one on the line, just dead air. I'm rather used to them by now and they take their place with calls that threaten legal action by Revenue Canada... you know the ones. (I'm truly amazed at the persistence of some of these scammers!) So, on the same morning, when the phone rang a couple of hours later waking me out of a deep sleep yet again, imagine my surprise when I was treated to a rousing 2-part chorus of 'Happy Birthday.....Ruth'.

Now, I'm neither Ruth, nor was it my birthday -- but, I let them sing the song through to its end, and thanked them profusely before confessing that I wasn't the intended recipient of their thoughtfulness. We checked the phone number....yes, they had the right one....but clearly Ruth had made the switch to using a cell phone only, and what they had was the old number. No matter, we had a lovely visit nonetheless. They were calling from Nova Scotia where they operate a Bed and Breakfast. They had been up for quite a while already - and she already had two loaves of bread rising, two homemade pizza crusts also rising, and a batch of quince jam in the making (shame on me for still being in bed when such industry was going on in the Eastern realms of this fine country!). We chatted for about 10 minutes before signing off.....but not before establishing that I could be Ruth's alter ego -- I apparently sound like her and laugh like her.

What a surprisingly lovely way to start the day.....the gift of a cheerful voice from another part of this amazing country, an entertaining chat with a total stranger and a reminder that personal connection can happen in a myriad of ways in these strange pandemic days. I got off the phone determined to spread a little joy myself.

P.S. Happy Birthday, Ruth..... whoever you are.

ST. JAMES ARCHIVES by Mary Lou Kingham, Archivist

At the present time, we are not working in the archives. I would, however, like to thank everyone who is keeping archival material safe at home until we are able to resume work. We will have some material that will need to be shredded when we get back to work which will be a priority to allow us the space to store new material.

One project that I would like to begin is labelling stored posters, signs, plans and other material which are now stored in archival envelopes. This will require identifying filing numbers and recording appropriate information so items can be accessed when needed. Pictures and other memorabilia can be included in the listing. If you would be interested in helping with this project for an hour or so each Thursday when we get back to work, please let me know! Any help will be greatly appreciated!

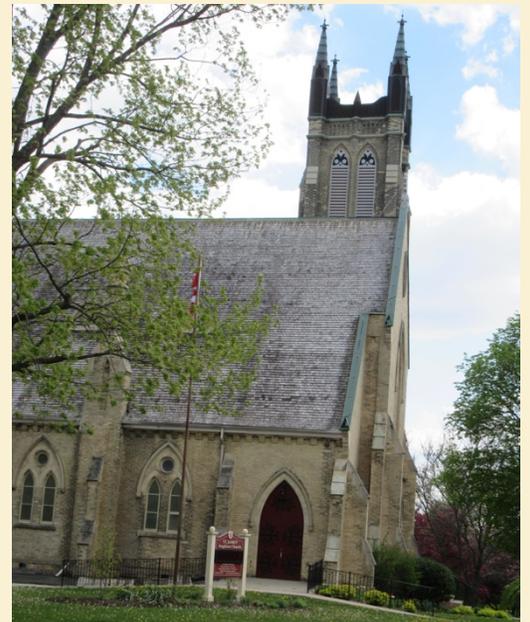
Did you know we store artifacts pertaining to the history of St. James? We have plaques, a printing block, old choir outfits and many other items too large to file!

BUILDING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE UPDATE

by Dave Allely

We have been able to hold our meetings virtually to keep the work of our group moving forward. The following is an update:-

1. As you may be aware, at the Special Vestry meeting, approval was given to proceed with the work on the south wall of the Sunday School area. Belliveau Construction was selected to do the work. When the south wall shifted, it affected the integrity of the support for the nave floor. The drywall will be removed and a supporting wall will be constructed to support the floor joists. New drywall will be installed which will be painted and finished by volunteers of the parish. As I write this, we do not yet have a start date for the work. Thank you for your support of this project.
2. The committee met with Chris Willie from Pow Peterman and Associates to consider options for the replacement of the roof. These have been preliminary discussions only. The committee will consider all of the options available to us and then make a recommendation to the Wardens for their consideration. As you can imagine this will not be an inexpensive project. Further information will be provided to you as we work through this process as the decision to proceed will be discussed at Vestry. There were temporary repairs made to the roof this past week. Shingles were replaced and others were given more support to keep them in place. This was done to protect the nave from water damage until we can replace the cedar shingles.
3. Georgian Bay conducted their annual fire inspection. A few sensors were replaced and some extinguishers recharged. We also ensured that the monitoring station is working properly.
4. The lamp post on the south wall will eventually be relocated a few feet further south so there is a path for mechanical lifts to travel along the wall. Mechanical lifts will be used for any future work on the roof, fascia, and eaves.



We applaud the work of the Gardening Group as they revitalize our grounds and the work done by the team in God's Holy Acre. They make the grounds of St. James the jewel that it is.

In the past week, I have been told by members of the community that St. James is a special place. The structure, grounds, bells, and people make this a wonderful place that we should never take for granted.

REPENT ALL YE WHO PINE FOR COFFEE!

by Peter Mussen

Greetings St. James pilgrims! Yes, our Wednesday “Coffee in the Park” get-togethers are on the horizon. (If you are a member of the Flat Earth Society, forget the horizon part.)



Here’s a stimulating question: “Why did Robert Parkinson avoid looking out the window at his school in the mornings?” Because he wouldn’t have anything to do in the afternoon! (Got to love eight-year-old humour!)

The current and extended lockdown, brought to you by Dauntless Dougy, is scheduled to end on Wednesday, June 2nd. Sooooo.....why don’t you plan to pop your lawn chairs and umbrellas in the trunk, your significant other in the passenger seat, and the coffee mugs et al in a safe carry-all. Here’s another great idea ... we’ll meet at 1:30 p.m. right near Duke’s Grill and Ice Cream Shack on June 2nd. There’s usually ample parking in the parking lot by Duke’s or across the street.

Never joined us before? Well, what are you waiting for? We are a delightful bunch of riff-raff with lots of attitude. Please join us, it really is fun and it is just so swell to see everyone and hear their tales of Covid Lockdown Life. Bikers welcome. Singles welcome. Friends of yours are very welcome, too - they might lend the event some class! We are socially distanced, of course. No hugging ... yet.

As an extra bonus, you might be happy to know that some of our crew bring books to share and even DVD’s and CD’s.

Starting June 2nd, 1:30 p.m. in UPPER QUEEN’S PARK. It’s fun. It’s free. It’s stimulating (sort of like prunes). The St. James Outdoor Coffee Club.

P.S. If we don’t see you there, we might just push your name to the NOMINATING COMMITTEE for next year’s wardens. Just kidding Hmmm

Rest eternal grant to them and let light perpetual shine upon them. May they rest in peace and rise in glory ...

Melissa Ayres

February 22, 2021

James Alexander Sebben

March 24, 2021

Betty McCreadie

March 29, 2021

BENEDICTINE PRIORY SODA BREAD

Nancy Adams

(Got this recipe at a retreat I was on 40 years ago and have been making it ever since!)

Dry mixture:

3 cups oats – whole or quick cooking, but not instant
2 cups whole wheat flour (or a gluten-free substitute if needed)
(2-3 Tbsp. wheat germ or ground flax seed – optional)
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt

Wet mixture:

2 ½ cups yogurt or buttermilk
3 Tbsp. honey or maple syrup

Combine.

Grease and flour baking tin. Transfer batter to tin, smooth down a bit as needed, and cut a shallow cross into the top of the loaf, lengthwise.



Bake at 450 for 15 minutes; reduce heat to 400 and bake another 30 minutes. Check to make sure it's done....it makes a moist loaf, so there's little danger of over-baking.

Add chopped nuts, coconut, apricots or other dried fruit to the batter for a little variation. A sprinkle of sesame seeds on top is good.

Makes one large loaf or two small. (I make mine in a long oblong pan, 12" long x 3.5" wide x 2" deep).

Excellent toasted with a scrape of butter and raspberry jam; cream cheese with a bit of jam is delightful also ... freezes well (slice it first). Makes a dense, moist, bread that sticks to your ribs.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



“WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED” by Rev. Julie Meakin

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew.

Because of the pandemic, Christians have had to gather via Zoom – whether for our regular church services, for coffee hours, for meetings, or so on and indeed, we have felt connected in spite of not being physically together. This has also been my experience of practicing Christian meditation via Zoom throughout the pandemic, but especially in the past five months. As terrible as this pandemic has been on many levels, it has also brought unexpected gifts. One of those gifts has been the experience of making new friends and experiencing Christian community in a deep and meaningful way.

I had a small meditation group at my church and made some inquiries via my mother, Rev. Glenda Meakin, about the St. James group, which I knew had been going strong for some 20 years. I wondered if they were meeting via Zoom and after connecting with Nancy, can say what a gift it has been to be with the St. James meditators during the past five months! Along the way, other people have joined in as well. The group currently consists of people from various denominations, backgrounds, and locations - Edmonton, Kingston, (Hi Jane Kirkpatrick!), St. Marys, Mitchell, New Hamburg, Brampton, Caledon, Markham, and Mississauga. We meet Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. and in the past five months have formed a special bond through the practice of silence, stillness, and simplicity.

One of the most difficult, if not the most difficult things about the pandemic has been our inability to be together – “in the flesh” as it were. We’ve had to practice social distancing, wear masks, stay home, and see each other via our computer or iPhone screens. We realize how much being together matters to us, how it is such an integral part of being human. We see the toll the pandemic has taken on people’s mental and emotional health. People need a sense of belonging and community, and we know this is one of the reasons church itself is such a gift. No doubt we all miss being together in church – a sacred space where we can worship, pray, and do all the wonderful things being part of a faith community entails. We all know how churches have had to “pivot” and find ways to offer worship online, and especially to keep people connected.

The pandemic has forced us to ask what it means to be the church, and we can see the meditation group as a form of church – not the most complete form of course -- we miss the Eucharist and the tactile and sensory experiences and energy that come from being physically together. And yet, “wherever two or three are gathered together....”

One of the gifts of meeting via Zoom is the limits of geography and mobility disappear. As mentioned, we have a meditator who joins us from Edmonton! We are

able to meet people we might not otherwise have met, from places we might never have thought of going to. We are able to make friends from literally any corner of the world (with the help of wi-fi). We can meet via the comfort of our homes. The carbon footprint is much lower, no need to brush the snow off your car, and if you're having a bad hair day, you can turn off the camera.

In meditation, we are simply moving from the noise and busyness of the mind to the silence and stillness of the heart where the Spirit of Christ dwells. So, the more silent the surroundings the better. On Zoom, being able to use the "mute" function means less noise and fewer distractions than meeting in a physical space. Once the basic Zoom functions are figured out, it's easy to join and participate. Some of the people in our group have been meditating for a while and are used to sitting in a circle with a candle in the middle. Some are brand new and Zoom has been their only experience. The use of power point slides means there is a visual aspect that can enhance the teaching (although our eyes are closed during the actual meditation time!).

The heart of the meditation time is sharing silence together. And, we have come to see how true was John Main's insight that "meditation creates community". This is because praying in silence connects us with ourselves, with others, and with God. Like so many paradoxes of our faith, we find "The cure for loneliness is a shared solitude" says Fr. Laurence Freeman, the current Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

John Main said the various meditation groups created a "monastery without walls" – and so it has, for this year the World Community for Christian Meditation celebrates its 30th anniversary. Meditation groups in over 100 countries in the world meet weekly to deepen their faith and accompany one another in their Christian journeys. We are united with one another because we are all united with the Spirit of Christ who dwells in our hearts, as St. Paul tells us. We have the gift of fellowship, of Christian community, and just by being together we are encouraging and supporting one another in our common pilgrimage. Christ is indeed with us even if we gather via Zoom!

Among other things, the pandemic has been a time of unpredictability and uncertainty. We've been unable to make any plans for the future. We've felt the weight of the physical, mental, emotional, economic suffering of others both locally and globally. And throughout all this we have the unremitting cycle of daily news with all of its attendant worries and concerns.

We need some way of anchoring ourselves amongst all the uncertainty, anxiety and suffering. The practice of meditation is like an anchor, rooting us in what is real – the love of God, the faithfulness of God, the gift of our being and of life, the gift of Christ and the Holy Spirit moving in our lives. And it is not only to benefit ourselves, but others. We are able not just to cope, but to live – and to offer hope and wisdom to others. John Main states,

"A group of Christians who meet together to meditate, to pray, to worship is not, then, just a mere social gathering. It is a group aware of its power: a power

that arises from the transcendent reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus in their midst.

The purpose of their meeting is, before anything else, to attend to the reality of this presence, to deepen their silent receptivity to it, to make it (what it already is) the supreme reality of their lives. So, each member of the group is other-centered, turned away from him or herself towards the living Lord.”

It has been a real joy to meditate with the St. James group – old friendships have been rekindled and new ones have formed. My thanks to Nancy and Doug for their willingness to join with other meditators, and I look forward to continuing the journey together as we deepen our fellowship and our faith in the Risen Christ.

O God, for your love of us, warm and brooding, which has brought us to birth and has opened our eyes:

We give you thanks.

For your love for us, wild and freeing, which has awakened us to the energy of creation: to the sap that flows, the blood that pulses, and the heart that sings:

We give you thanks.

For your love for us, compassionate and patient, which has carried us through our pain, wept beside us in our sin, and waited with us in our confusion:

We give you thanks.

For your love for us, strong and challenging, which has called us to risk for you, asked for the best in us, and shown us how to serve:

We give you thanks.

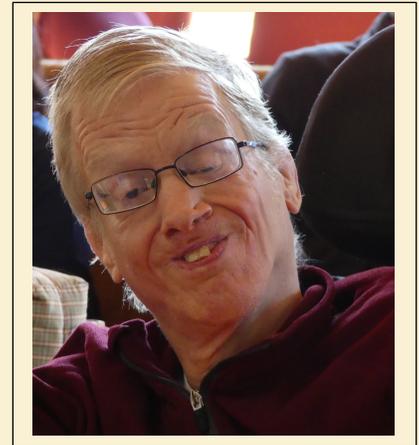
O God, we come to celebrate that your Holy Spirit is present deep with us, and at the heart of all life. Forgive us when we forget your gift of love. Awaken us to the love that Christ offers, and draw us into your presence.

Amen

—from Iona Abbey Worship Book

A FRIEND INDEED by Mark Allwood

As life would have it, there is often an upside to things that most of the time seem to be unremittingly sad or oppressive. You may have noted a few of these upsides yourself over the last fifteen months of being afflicted to one degree or another with Covid 19. I'll pause while you may wish to fill in the blank:_____. At the same time, it can feel downright trite to observe anything positive within the context of the unspeakable tragic circumstances unfolding in India and elsewhere in the southern part of this planet or in individual lives closer to home.



With that reservation in mind, might I ask your indulgence in my wanting to share some ill-formed, if not ill-timed, thoughts and sketchy ideas concerning a friend and our fellow parishioner, Dalton Heard? It's been two and a half months since Dalton died and that's still sometimes hard for me to believe. An aforementioned "blank" for me was filled when I observed the empty space at the left front corner of St. James' nave where Dalton used to sit with his support person or perhaps one of you as his faithful driver. Though the absence of his life force was a palpable ache, at the same time I couldn't help but be grateful for what he has meant to my life and to my experience of worship at St. James. I thank Dalton for that abiding sense of gratitude that almost feels like it glows.

During his on-line service of remembrance hosted by L'Arche Stratford and participated in by several members of St. James, it was evident there was something extraordinary about what Dalton brought to people's lives and to life and worship at St. James. By all accounts knowing Dalton was transformative, as it was for Diane and I as we often supported Dalton during our time with L'Arche. I would be interested to hear from you, Dalton's fellow parishioners, whether you may have special memories of Dalton or how he may have left a lasting impression on your lives or life at St. James.

There has been some support expressed for finding a means of remembering Dalton in a lasting way. What, or even if, that might be is still up in the air. Assuredly, given what else is still lingering in the air, any decision or conception of what might be an appropriate memorial is some way down the road. If you have any thoughts on this yourself, there is time to share. I would be eager to listen, or read. Please contact me at home: 519 273-6104, on my cell: 226 880-1414 or by email markallwood@cyg.net.



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