



THE PARISHIONER

Easter 2022



THE PANDEMIC IS WINDING DOWN. THANKS BE TO GOD!

The Rev. Canon Dr. Lorne Mitchell

Thanks be to God that we can be in the church and worship together in person! As I sit down to write this, Holy Week is about to begin. It's been three years now since we have been able to gather and do Holy Week and Easter in our church. That is a long time.

For all of us, this pandemic has been a real challenge. At first there was fear. Then there was a sense of working together to get through it. Then there was confusion about how to deal with ongoing restrictions and the changes that occurred on a weekly basis. Then there was the realization that there would be multiple waves of infection. Then the sense of togetherness broke into contention and division. Vaccine and mask wearing mandates became contentious and even divided families. When the Omicron wave hit, our sense of weariness was almost unbearable.

We know that this latest wave is spreading quickly through our community. Thank goodness most people have had enough vaccine doses by now to give them good protection. In church we will continue to wear masks for a while so that we can protect others who are still vulnerable.

I would like to thank our Wardens who have done a superb job of keeping our church building and our members safe. Key decisions have had to be made on a regular basis and we owe them gratitude for their diligence.

Easter is always a time when we re-experience the sense of new life that comes through Jesus Christ. His rising to new life is, for us, always reflected in the new life that is springing up in the land and animals. This year we will especially welcome this new life because we need a sense of hope that the heaviness of the pandemic will be lifted.

Let's encourage one another as we walk with Jesus through this Easter season.

May God bless us all as we move forward with faith, hope and love.

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

— *Book of Common Prayer, 1979 version*

WARDENS' UPDATE: SPRING AHEAD

Owing to the fact we found ourselves at the time in the unenviable position of having to find a new Rector, a new Organist/Musical Director, a new Office Administrator, and a new Treasurer, the theme of the wardens' December Update was that of major transition. Although we continue to find ourselves involved in that transformative process, the wardens are happy to be able to report that, since January, Stéphane Potvin has been appointed Interim Director of Music and that Kyle Gascho has taken on the role of Treasurer. These important changes have happened in the parish notwithstanding the fact that, just before Christmas, St. James again found itself having to close its doors to the public, in this most recent instance until the beginning of March. Although the building may have been closed to the public, worship continued as it has during past shutdowns, and so has the work of the wardens with respect to finding replacements for the Office Administrator and the outgoing Rector.

Having discussed the matter repeatedly over the course of the past two or three years, the wardens decided to avail themselves of this period of transition to have a fresh look at the role and expectations of the parish Office Administrator. Primarily because of advances in technology, it is a role that has changed a good deal in the years since the previous Office Administrator was hired. Once these changes had been incorporated into a new job description, the wardens advertised the position and enjoyed a more robust response than they had anticipated. Although several of the applicants were not qualified to take on the position, six were. That number was narrowed down to three who will be interviewed for the position during the first week of April. Selecting the successful candidate and making a recommendation of employment to the wardens will be a committee consisting of three of the four parishioners who have been taking turns filling the position of Office Administrator since January 2022: Pam Ayres, Kyle Gascho, and Nancy McCallum. The parish owes these three and their trusty "Girl Thursday," Karen Hunt Mitchell, a huge debt of gratitude for their months of selfless service to the parish since the beginning of the year. Please thank them individually the next time you see any of them. The wardens are hopeful that the new Office Administrator will be able to take up her/his position shortly after Easter and certainly no later than the end of April.

As parishioners are already aware, work has also begun on the process of appointing a new rector for the parish. In early March, Archdeacon Kim Van Allen met with a Selection Committee previously approved by Parish Council and commissioned the committee with two tasks: the completion of a Parish Questionnaire and a Parish Profile. With the former, most members of the parish are already well acquainted; indeed, the wardens wish to take this opportunity to thank all who so promptly and prayerfully completed the questionnaire and returned it within the requested time frame. We have been informed by a parishioner who knows about such things that the response to the questionnaire has been extraordinary given the size of the congregation: 77 households responded: since 12 of these responses represented the responses of two people, the wardens are gratified to know that a total of 89 parishioners participated in the process. The responses to the questions in the survey will be tabulated by the members of the Selection Committee and passed on to the diocese, where they will be used by Church House in the selection of eligible candidates for the position of rector and by the candidates themselves as they prepare to be interviewed by the St. James Selection Committee. It is hoped that these interviews will take place in May or June.

The second document being prepared by the Selection Committee will be a lengthy Parish Profile. It, too, is designed to tell the diocese and prospective candidates who we are as a parish and what we are about and hope to be about in the future. The Profile is an inclusive document that looks at the state of the church buildings, at worship patterns and liturgy, at the parish finances, and at congregational life and ministry, which includes outreach and ecumenical relationships. Peter Mussen, who is spearheading the compilation of the Profile, reports that church leaders have been very co-operative in contributing materials required for the Profile. The wardens applaud these efforts and see in them and in the response to the questionnaire a strong desire on the part of the parish to move forward into whatever it is that God has in store for St. James in the course of the years that lie immediately ahead of us.

In response to our pressing building needs and concerns, the wardens are pleased to be able to report that the repairs to the nave floor have been completed without having to resort to the contingency fund

that had been built into the budget for the project; accordingly, the project was completed under budget. The wardens have also sanctioned the repairs immediately required to replace the North Roof of the nave. Because construction costs have more than doubled since the pandemic began, the estimated cost of replacing this portion of the roof is now approximately \$810,000. Although there is \$460,000 in the Capital Fund that has been designated for the repair of the roof, the parish is going to have to come up with a fundraising scheme to raise the balance owing, some \$350,000. Although \$350,000 is a staggering sum, it is a reality to which the parish may respond in one of two ways: we can respond with fear and simply crawl into a fetal position and do nothing. Within fairly short order, the roof and walls of the nave will begin to weaken and collapse, and the diocese will close the church, and possibly the parish at the same time. Alternatively, we can resolve as a parish to do what we can to preserve the roof and begin to think about other repairs that will need to be done to the building. The tower is a major case in point.

Although the task of saving the church buildings as they stand at present may ultimately prove impossible, the wardens believe that it would be premature to make the decision now to stop trying to preserve them. We say this because it is impossible to say just where we may be in three years time. As a parish, we may well be on our deathbed. With God's help, however, we might just as well have found a new way forward, a direction and an energy that will see us doing things as a congregation that are completely unthinkable at the moment, given how few of us we are now and how old we are all getting. But if God has a plan for the future of St. James, a plan that a new rector will help us to shape and implement, there is no telling what could happen in the next three years or just who might show up to help us accomplish the work that God has in mind for the parish. The wardens invite you to pray about that prospect and to start thinking about how you might be able to contribute as generously as you can to the fundraising effort that will need to begin very soon to pay for the repairs to the North Roof.

Yours in faith and with our very best wishes for a Blessed Easter,
James Noble, Pam Ayres, Nancy McCallum, Nancy Munnoch

WELCOME, STÉPHANE



Members of St James, it is my pleasure to join you as Interim Director of Music. In case you wonder who I am, let me tell you a bit about my background. As you will figure out from my French accent when we get a chance to talk, I was born and raised in a small town near Québec City. I started piano lessons at the age of seven. During high school I became interested in music leadership and more specifically choral and orchestral conducting. That desire brought me to Nicolet where I studied with the highly talented and dedicated Soeurs de l'Assomption. I then went on to McGill University—not speaking a single word of English—to study piano performance and choral conducting. I later received a Master's Degree in choral conducting from the University of Illinois under the tutelage of Fred Stoltzfus. I am very privileged to have further studied conducting with Frieder Bernius, Otto Werner Mueller, and Gustav Meier to name a few.

Throughout my musical training I was also an active church musician. I started leading my parish choir in my late teens. While in Nicolet, I played the organ at the weekly student mass. During my years in Montreal, I took on my first official Director of Music position in a large church north of the city. There I also learned a great deal about organ playing and registration. I also directed several choruses including a children's choir. After ten years, I moved to Hamilton where I served as Director of Music in a Lutheran Church, an Anglican church, and a Catholic Church. I also substituted in churches of various denominations. It is all that experience that I bring with me to this new position which I hope will serve this community well for the next little while.

I look forward to meeting you all - whether in choir or at coffee hour.

~~ Stéphane Potvin

WALKING THE GOOD ROAD by The Reverend Stephanie Donaldson



All life is a journey, a journey made up of many smaller journeys.

In late 2014, after much prayer, discernment, and reflection I began a journey that, if God and the church were willing, would take me to ordination, ordination to the Vocational Diaconate. I had fought the calling, oh how I fought. I told the pesky voice sitting on my shoulder, actually the Holy Spirit (HS), to clear off and leave me alone. The HS has staying power and is not easily dissuaded. Once she makes up her mind she will get her way in the end. At the same time some clergy friends of mine got behind

the HS and told me that I should consider the Diaconate as a vocation and still I resisted. The HS persevered. Then one day, there were no lightning bolts, no claps of thunder, just a simple voice saying, "Now do you get it?". It is a quiet voice but a powerful one, I stopped resisting and was willing to proceed to see if this was truly what God and the church were calling me to. I applied to the diaconal formation process and was accepted into formation. As part of the process I was sent to St. James on a three month internship, I never left. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me".

The road to ordination has many speed bumps and detours. With the love and support of my family, my caring parish family and many, many friends I navigated through and around them and journeyed on. Last October 25th I was asked to meet with the Deacons' Board, they recommended me to the bishop. Bishop Todd and I met on the 29th, he told me that he wanted to ordain me on November 30th, the Feast of St Andrew and the 45th Anniversary of the ordination of women in Canada. I must confess, I wept. If I had doubted my worthiness in the past, doubts and fear were overwhelming. I prayed as I had never prayed, was this truly where I was meant to be? There was much to be done, a red stole to be ordered, a pre-ordination retreat at Mt. Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara Falls, submitting the names of my sponsors: The Reverend Dr. Grayhame Bowcott, The Reverend Canon Tom Patterson, Kyle Gascho and Peter Mussen, and the other 12 guests that COVID protocol allowed me. It was quickly becoming a St. James' evening, Tom was asked to preach, David Allely was the AV technician for the evening, Rick Falshaw was the Diocesan Crucifer, Kyle had duties behind the scenes, Lorne+, Nancy McCallum, Bobbie-Jo Allely and my 'grandson' Red George were in the congregation, Archdeacon Tanya was present in her official capacity. St. James was very well represented that night at the cathedral. Taking advantage of our amazing new AV system St. James hosted a 'watch party' at our beloved church. Many more watched from home, to include my sons and their families in the United States. As I had been on the journey I was not alone, but then we are never truly alone.



The ordination was so powerful, when Bishop Todd laid his hands on my head I was changed forever, transformed. I felt a calm go through me, I realized that this was where God wanted me to be. There are not words sufficient to adequately express all the emotion, majesty and awe of that moment. You might think that here endeth the journey, but it has only just begun. I will never be the best deacon but I will give you, God and The Church the very best that I have to offer.



Every time I vest as I put on the proper stole for the season, I pause and look at the embroidery on the lining of each stole: "Stephanie Donaldson, For your ordination, Given in love by the Parishioners of St. James, Stratford".

"I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was a stranger and you welcomed me", together we journey on.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR 2022 by Wade Phibbs

A group from all three Stratford Anglican Churches - St. James, St. Pauls and St. Stephens formed a team to be part of this local fundraiser. The team of 11 people had a good mix of people from each of the Churches - St. James' very own, Nancy Adams, Nancy McCallum, Jane Foster and Wade & Tanya Phibbs participated.

The annual walk raises money for Shelterlink. Shelterlink provides Perth County youth, ages 16-24, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with shelter, basic needs, support, community aid and advocacy services. New this year was the addition of raising money for Stratford Connection Centre, a place for those experiencing homelessness or those at risk of becoming homeless to go to connect with services including showers, laundry and meals. Stratford Connection Centre operates out of St. Pauls Anglican Church. Stratford/Perth has over 107 homeless people, with almost 100 of those considered chronically homeless.

It was great to have a joint team that raised approx. \$5,200.00, placing 5th out of 65 teams for funds raised -- amazing work!

February 26th brought a cool but sunny late afternoon. The walk started at 5:00 p.m. and after completion of the 2 km around the Avon river, we arrived back at the start line by 5:45 p.m. with cool faces from a brisk west wind, but with warm hearts for a great walk!

We were fortunate to have a wonderful sign to promote our team. Designed and painted by the talented James Colbeck- thank you James! We were especially blessed by those who supported the team with their donations. Without YOU we would not have been so successful.

Looking forward to the 2023 walk ... please consider joining the team and/or donating again. Let one of the walkers know and we will keep you informed of next year's event.



CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

I'll just ask you to imagine the first time you heard about meditation. What did you feel when you heard about it? Did you feel an immediate attraction; did you feel 'oh, this is what I've been waiting for'? Or was it something more vague or something less clear but there was still some interest, some fascination maybe? And then remember the first time you tried to meditate, and maybe you thought that it's going to be very easy and you're going to be enlightened within three or four days. And then you discovered that this is going to be a journey. And taking the first step is the most important thing, but we continue to take that first step all the way.

(The Brick Wall of the Ego, by Laurence Freeman OSB)

If you are interested in taking that first step, please join one or both of the following groups of meditators here at St. James. We will soon resume our in-person meditation on Wednesday afternoons at 4:30 and on Saturday mornings at 10:30. Look for further information coming soon in the Sunday bulletin or contact Doug Ayres (519-273-0494) or Nancy McCallum (519-273-0297).

SPRING UPDATE FROM THE ST. JAMES GARDEN GROUP by John Hindley

“Every spring is the only spring, a perpetual astonishment.” – Ellis Peters

As I write this, the weather has turned around again for the better. After a day of more snow and bitter cold, this day is mild, melting snow and ice with the relentless press of rising temperatures. The air has the musty scent of damp newspapers as the soil sighs patiently, knowing that its release from its icy coverlet is at hand. But, neither the melting of winter's bounty nor the warming of the soil can be rushed by human hands or wishes. Patience is everything this time of year, for when has winter ever made less than a graceless exit?

Do you ever notice how in the dying days of February, the quality of the light changes? Unlike the cold, crisp clarity of winter, the light of impending spring is warm, soft and beguiling. It glows with promise and possibility.

There is much in this great world of ours about which to be weary and downcast. We all struggle to make sense of the worst of humanity juxtaposed against the best of humanity coursing across our news feeds. Here in Stratford, we have gardens to uncover and plant; others across the globe have craters left by shelling and bombs in their yards and parks.

But if we believe in the constancy that good inevitably triumphs over evil, and if we believe that we can, at the very least, improve the lot of others and our environment in our small corner of the world, then we should yield to the primal pull of the spring light that draws us to the promise of resurrection around us. As others hold the Christ light for us, we must hold the Christ light for them, wherever they are. And so we donate, we write, we email, we text, we call, we petition, we serve, we feel, and we plant.

Over the past two years, the Garden Group has worked steadily on the renovation and restoration of our beloved South Garden. The details of our accomplishments this past year can be found in the Annual Vestry Report, but suffice to say that much of our work entailed site preparation and completing most of the hardscaping – moving the lamp post, adding a water tap, removing sod, and adding soil and compost.

This year, we look forward to planting the South Garden and bringing colour and life back to the south side of the church. It is slow work, requiring determination and patience, elbow grease and gentleness, but the results will be worthwhile. The process of ordering native and non-native plants for the garden is already underway; a planting scheme has been developed to guide our work. Once again, we are grateful for the generous allotment of funds from the roof repair budget to fund our work, which will not come fully to fruition until the entirety of the roof work has been completed.

On the subject of funds, the Garden Groups is pleased to announce that the wardens have approved our request to hold our annual plant sale on **Saturday, May 7th, 2022 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.** Once again, we would ask parishioners with gardens to cast a discerning eye around their yards this spring and pot up extra plants and donate them to the sale. Please label the plants as to type and colour and drop them off during the week of **May 2nd - 6th** on the southeast side of the church on the table or ground near the garden shed. Donations of house plants, garden tools or decorative pots (in good condition, please) are also welcome. Our hope is to hold the sale in the Lower Parish Hall as well as outside the Hamilton Street entrance, observing pandemic protocols as they unfold in the coming weeks.

The money we make from the annual plant sale averages around \$1,000.00. These funds are used to care for all the gardens at St. James: The Spencer Garden, The Alan Slater Garden, The Rhododendron Garden, The Sign Garden, The Parish Hall Garden, The Front Garden, The Barrel Planters, and (post-restoration), the South Garden. Suffice to say, it's a tall order to maintain these beds and borders on such a budget. Other than the plant sale and donations, we have no other source of income to support the care of the gardens at St. James. So, if you are without a garden where you live, please consider making a donation to the Garden Group to help care for the parish gardens. Your support is greatly appreciated, and we look forward to seeing you among the gardens in the seasons ahead!

A REFLECTION ON PSALM 63:1-8 by The Ven. Nancy Adams
(originally delivered at Jazz Vespers, March 20, 2022)

1. O God, you are my God, eagerly I seek for you,
my souls thirsts for you, my whole being longs for you,
in this dry and barren land where there is no water.
2. I lift my eyes, and behold
I see you standing in your holy place;
I gaze and see your strength, your power,
and the beauty of your face.
3. And now I know that one small drop of goodness
From your hand is better far than life itself.
I cannot stop these lips from praising you.
4. So as long as life shall last for me,
I will bless the name of God
and lift my hands to you in prayer.
5. For my whole heart and soul are filled by you,
and satisfied as with a feast;
that loosens tongue and lips with songs of praise.
6. When evening comes I go to be with you;
and through the passing hours of the night
I invoke your name in prayer.
7. So whether day or night, it matters not,
for you are ever at my side
to guide, protect and shade as by a sheltering wing.
8. My soul ever clings to you in joy,
Your strong hand reaches out and holds me fast. *

Thirst is without a doubt a sensation that all of us can easily relate to; and hovering as we are on the cusp of Spring, I daresay our senses are beginning to anticipate everything that the awakening world will have to offer. Personally I'm thirsting for my first taste of fresh maple syrup and the opportunity to marvel as the yearly cycles of growth and regeneration unfold in the days and weeks to come. After the dark days of winter, that's a longing, a thirst, that we all experience. There is another kind of thirst that we experience, though, when life unfolds in ways that we neither desire nor anticipate - and Psalm 63 reminds us of that. ***"O God, eagerly I seek for you; my soul thirsts for you."***

It is widely held that the Psalms have more to say about the human condition than any other book found in the Bible, and it's been observed that at least **half** of the psalms deal with **life gone wrong**. And indeed, tradition has it that Psalm 63 was penned by King David while he was being pursued through the desert by someone who wanted to kill him; and so the first eight verses of it reflect, to my ear anyway, some desperation; some bargaining and perhaps a bit of flattery directed to God; followed by a little wishful thinking and then finally some bold statements of faith. David needs God's strength and power to get him out of his present scrape, and hopes that his praise and prayers will be the ticket to guarantee his physical safety; but at the same time he also expresses a kind of confidence that his soul is safe with God, no matter what may befall him personally. In a few brief verses he has moved through want, to recollection, to hope, to trust: a thirsty soul revived through renewed connection with the Source of all Life.

David's sticky personal situation of being chased around the desert by someone intent on killing him may not be **our** present concern, but I suspect I wouldn't be too far off the mark to suggest that the current state of our world, both at home and abroad, has left many of us with souls that are withered and thirsty, longing for peace, longing for truth, longing for the love of God to be known. A parable out of the Jewish tradition speaks to this same dilemma faced by untold generations before us and it may add some useful perspective. This is how it goes:

*As God was nearing the completion of creation, an announcement was made in heaven. "I'm going to fashion creatures who will appreciate all that has been made", God said. "I will call the creatures **human beings**, and will bless them with intellect, reason, understanding, and the ability to make choices."*

Then Truth appeared before God and objected. "I fear that this being that you are creating will be capable of lying; so there will most certainly be deception and falsehood let loose upon the world. Please, God, reconsider this plan!"

Next, Peace appeared before God. "I echo the sentiments of Truth", said Peace. This creature will be capable of upsetting the tranquility of earth; no doubt there will be revenge and war, bloodshed and destruction if you proceed with this project. Please, God, reconsider this plan!"

Soon thereafter, Love approached God, and said, "O God, please remember that any being created in your image has the capacity to perform great and noble deeds. With the help of your Spirit, human beings will be able to shelter one another, care for the sick and lonely, and will no doubt bring glory to you in their capacity to love deeply."

And so it was that, although God heard the voices of Truth and Peace, it was the voice of Love that prevailed in the creation of humanity.

When our souls are feeling withered and thirsty because our faith in humanity's better nature has been eclipsed, and truth and peace seem like mere pipe dreams; and God seems far, far away.... it may help to recall that love, God's love, was installed deep within us in the act of our creation, planted more deeply than all that is wrong; and that, as the ancients of our church claimed long ago, where there is charity and love, God is there in the midst of it - bringing living water to thirsty souls.

* Source: [Ancient Songs Sung Anew: The Psalms as Poetry](#), by Lynn C. Bauman, Praxis Publishing, 2000.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VIETNAM WAR by Tu My Tran

I was born in a small city called Binh Minh in South Vietnam and raised in a family household that was larger than most. We had seven members: my parents, three older brothers, my younger sister and myself. Our family had a grocery store business that allowed us to live comfortably for most of our lives. We were living through the wave of the Vietnam war (1955-1975). During that time, South Vietnam presented itself as a developing democratic nation but behind the scenes was anti-democratic as there was lots of corruption. North Vietnam was attacking the South to take over as a communist regime. For many years, I would hear bombs exploding from both sides, and my family would scramble to the back of our house to find shelter. We always hugged each other and were deathly afraid that someone would get hit by one of the bombs. It was terrifying. In April 1975, Saigon (the capital and 4 hours from my hometown) fell as it was taken over by North Vietnam's forces. The city was later renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

When South Vietnam surrendered, it dramatically changed everyone's lives. New policies enacted by the communist government established a different set of monetary bills. As a result, every family owned the same amount of new money called Dong, a currency that is still used today. There was a core value that everyone had to be equal in wealth. We closed down our store as the communist party confiscated businesses and properties. Wealthy people were forced to move back to the village. They brainwashed and rationalized that an individual got rich because they took from the poor and they must move to work on the farms. From this point on, we lived a life full of restrictions and were unable to express any thoughts or have freedom of speech. If any of us got caught talking about the communist party in a negative light, they would put us in prison. We lived in fear. The uncertainties have triggered many waves of refugees to escape outside of Vietnam.

We knew in advance how risky it was if we were to escape, as many of our friends have died trying. But in March 1979 (four years later), our family decided to escape this travesty and risked everything we had for ourselves and the next generation to find one thing. Freedom.

Escaping Vietnam

I was only 12 years old when my mother woke me up with my brothers and sister. I still remember when we had to leave, saying goodbyes to our home for the last time. We travelled a whole day by a Vietnamese cyclo (a bicycle taxi) to Ca Mau City, the southernmost part of Vietnam.

From there, we escaped and boarded a small fishing boat that housed 180 passengers. My family paid around 90 oz. of gold to get us all on the boat. The gold was hidden underground and had been buried for many years when the communist party took over. For reference, the amount of gold is roughly equivalent to 160000 USD today and took my family 25 years to accrue.

On our journey, we became a frequent target of pirates (on five different occasions), taking away all of our valuable possessions and anything we owned. The last round of pirates got extremely violent because we had nothing to take. So they took our clothes, beat us up, and threw us into the ocean. I was almost kidnapped by one of the pirates, but my mother begged them to let me go. One infant died and the body was thrown into the ocean. In another instance, I witnessed a female on the boat that they raped, and this was very traumatic to experience. The trip was dangerous because we didn't have any food or water, and it took four days and three nights to reach the shore. We were out at sea in terrible conditions: the boat was constantly leaking, overcrowded, and many people were vomiting due to seasickness. Vietnamese people are resilient and strong, as all but one survived the trip to Malaysia. Our lives and fate would continue to be tested as we pulled up on one of the islands.

Malaysian Camps

We were transferred to Pulau Bidong Refugee camp. On arrival, we immediately went to work as we needed shelter and had to construct a house. My brothers cut down trees to build our house. We received daily supplies and food from the United Nations. We got used to eating the same food every day, having no electricity in the camp (no lights), and going up to the mountains to use the washroom. Sometimes when it rains, it pours and floods most of the island. The water level on the ground floor would reach our knees. It was also scary if one of us got sick because there were no doctors on the island. We were known as the "Boat People." Eventually, after 11 months, we were very fortunate to be sponsored and accepted by Canada. As we were being escorted from the island to a big city in Malaysia, I couldn't believe my eyes. Hundreds of dazzling, bright city lights were shining in the night sky, and I have never seen so many cars buzzing down the streets. It was a completely different world.

In February 1980, our arrival in Canada was exciting yet scary. We had only the clothes on our backs and travelled with empty hands and pockets. Everything had been stolen or used during our escape from Vietnam and living as refugees. But our dreams have come true. We are now living in a land of freedom.

New Life in Canada

The extraordinary people at St. James Anglican Church kindly sponsored us. They have welcomed us with open arms and were very determined to help us settle in and start our new life.

I fondly remember when we arrived at our new house in Stratford, ON. It was my first time seeing snow and I thought to myself how beautiful and strange it was to see the white specks falling from the sky. It was cold outside yet our home was cozy, and my heart was filled with joy and gratitude. I remember the first meal I had from the kitchen. It was a hearty pot of warm stew already made on the stove and a loaf of bread next to it. In the basement, there was a big crate of red delicious apples for us to enjoy. Racing upstairs, we found three bedrooms fully furnished, and I was ecstatic when I saw a small dressing table with a mirror in my room. It had been so long since I could find a place that I could call home. We told each other how lucky we were as tears were streaming down our faces.

Shortly after, we found it hard to acclimatize to the new culture and climate. The first few days we were very hesitant when encountering others as we were afraid of not being able to communicate (didn't speak the same language). Luckily, with the help of the people from St. James Anglican Church, they regularly provided us with support and resources to ensure we had everything we needed to live comfortably.

In the first six months of arriving in Canada, we all went straight to work. My father worked as a gardener, and my mother was a cleaning lady. My two eldest brothers (Hung and Buu) studied ESL and worked in a restaurant part-time washing dishes. My third older brother, sister and I had the opportunity to go to school. We worked hard to save money and bought a house a few years later. We are all thankful for our parents because they have worked so hard throughout their lives to provide us with the opportunities we have today.

My oldest brother - Hung worked for Parson Association until he married and moved to the United State of America with his wife in 1986. He owns a cookware store in San Francisco. He has a daughter.

My second oldest brother - Buu worked as a Welder at Blackstone Inc. until the company shut down. He and his family then moved to Toronto with my parents in 1999. He is married and now has three daughters.

My third oldest brother - Cuong graduated from the University of Guelph with a B.A. degree. He is currently working in an automotive company as an Estimator. He is married and has a daughter.

My youngest sister - Tu Ha graduated from Centennial College in Scarborough, ON. She is currently working as a Payroll and Benefits Administrator. She is also married and has a son.

As for myself, I graduated from the University of Guelph in 1988 with a B.A. degree majoring in Mathematics and worked over 20 years in Human Resources. Currently, I am retired and helping my husband with his insurance and investment business. We have two children, my daughter lives near us in Ontario, and my son lives in British Columbia.

Final Thoughts

I always had terrifying nightmares during the first ten years living in Canada. I dreamed about the painful reminders of the war, my hometown, being stranded in the ocean, and the refugee camps in Malaysia. But reflecting on 43 years ago, I am so glad, fortunate, and proud to be a Canadian. I reflect on the hardships in our past and bring forth positive change in the future. My family is striving to live honourable lives, and my heart reaches out to all those who are suffering, especially to the people in Ukraine. With all the immense challenges that we are presently facing with the pandemic and now the war with Russia/Ukraine, we need to remind ourselves that life is precious. We need to embrace and help one another. We need to weather out these storms and live more fruitful, hopeful lives.

Our family would like to thank the McCarthys, the Parsons and the Clarks who helped us settle into this country and St. James Anglican Church in Stratford for sponsoring our family to come to Canada which changed our lives, forever.

Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own; look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, homeless and hungry. Bless those who work to bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BUILDING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE UPDATE by Herb Klassen

Having taken over the role of Chair for the Building and Property Committee at the January 30th vestry meeting, I am at a bit of a loss for words to compose an update for the congregation of St. James on the status of the buildings. My best strategy at this point is to build on the words of the past chair of the committee, Dave Allely, in his vestry report. His shoes as chair will be hard to fill. So here goes. I will copy his words in *Italic* and add my comments in **bolded standard script**.

In addition to the many improvements and upgrades that have been done to the church buildings over the past 10 years, the one that was the focus of attention has been the support of the nave floor by the south wall.

Belliveau Construction was selected as the contractor for the nave floor restoration project. The first stage involved removal of the drywall from the south wall. It revealed that the shifting of the walls resulted in a lack of support for many of the joists. It certainly confirmed that undertaking this project was the correct course of action. A supportive wall will be constructed with supporting header beams by the windows. This will lessen the disruption to existing structures. Once the drywall is replaced, a team of painters from St. James will be recruited to finish the job.

As of March 2022 the majority of this work has been completed by Dave and his renovation crew (thanks Dave, Chris, Wade, Mark et al.).

The roof remains a critical piece of work that should be a priority. It cannot be ignored for fear of roof failure resulting in water damage. For financial reasons, a decision was made to split the roof project into two phases. Phase one would be the north side and chapel areas. The north side and chapel areas are phase one since they are in the most need of support. Plans and budget pricing for this first phase was requested and forwarded for consideration by the leadership. A fundraising campaign will be needed to secure funds to complete this project. Once it is completed, we can consider phase two (It should be noted that in the spring (2021), we had a group replace missing shingles and secure those that had become loose. This will "buy us some time" but is not intended to be a permanent solution).

*As part of the Gardening Groups work to relocate the gardens, the lamp post on the south nave wall was relocated to provide a pathway for the "lifts" required for future work on the **south roof/wall and tower reconstruction**. The lights were adjusted and replaced with LED bulbs which are more energy efficient.*

This work was completed in the fall of 2021.

Keeping water flow away from the foundation is essential. Currently, the downspouts on the south side flow into drainage lines underground. Over time, these lines have become inefficient and are prone to freezing. The downspouts will be adjusted so they can drain above ground and use the natural slope to take water away from the south wall.

This work has been completed as part of the nave floor work. The downspouts on the south face are now draining to grade and away from the building.

In addition to renovation projects, the Building and Property Committee supports general maintenance and safety concerns. Inspections have been done by Georgian Bay Fire and Safety Ltd and sensors have been replaced. We also test the alarm system to be sure it is functioning properly.

The Fire and Safety Inspection and testing of the boiler were completed during February and March of 2022. There are some minor items the committee will follow up from these inspections, but otherwise systems are stable.

As was mentioned above the roof over the main body of the church and the tower are of major concern and will require substantial investment in the near future. The process of dealing with these areas of concern has been hampered by the Covid restrictions that have plagued the world for the past two years. A process review will be undertaken by the Committee along with a financial review being undertaken by the wardens. More information will be communicated to the congregation as they get firmed up.



ACW NEWS by Karen Haslam, President



Where does the time go? Isn't that something we used to ask ourselves often?

We were so busy at St. James attending meetings, going to meditation, enjoying our ACW lunches, visiting our members in nursing or retirement homes, working in the Archives, or preparing for the Annual Sale and Mistletoe Market - TOGETHER! But during the past three years of the pandemic COVID 19, we have endured three years of on-again off-again self-isolation, three years of cancelled lunches and meetings, three years of trying to stay in touch through new technology like Zoom, Text Messaging, YouTube, Facetime and Messenger, yet time seemed to sit heavy on us. Instead of hoping for more time, we were hoping time went a little faster. Being alone will do that.

So we dug in. We mastered the Zoom meeting, we set up phone checks, we watched Church through Livestreaming, we participated in coffee hour without coffee, we learned the knack of sending text messages, and yet we missed something. We missed the togetherness of being an ACW Member. We missed our fun, fantastic, free lunches, we missed the camaraderie of our meetings and discussions and decisions about what to do with our funds.

Seven years ago, my May 2015 President's message was about Change boy have we gone through lots of that. Let me quote from that report:

"We have gone through change, change and more change; we have embraced the call of the Bishop for Renewal; we have re-examined our work and our service and re-energized ourselves for the future. Our ACW has continued to adapt and move forward while at the same time not forgetting our traditions and purpose.

But as we continue to look to the future, I see more and more of our members reaching an age where the job of setting up and working at our Variety Sale and Mistletoe Market are taking their toll. We need to address the difficulties and barriers that hinder some of our hard-working people in their endeavours to continue working for us.

And don't imagine that we can sit back on our laurels thinking that we must have finely conquered all of the changes that are in our path, for I am sure that there will continue to be more changes in our future. There has to be for our Parish to flourish."

And here we are 7 years later – facing new changes and challenges. New technology for our services, a new Minister, a new Treasurer, a new Music Director, a new Office set-up and new Office Manager. Is it time for a new ACW President - a new ACW?

All I can say is that if we continue to be united in the fellowship of worship, learning and sharing; if we continue to deepen and strengthen our lives; and if we continue to lead a life full of Christian service we will survive. We will remain a body of women working as a Christian Community to share our abilities, our resources and ourselves. We will seek to unite all women in the fellowship of worship, learning and sharing. We will enable and encourage others to identify and use their gifts and abilities as Christians in their own community not really such a big change after all.

We are the ACW of St. James' Anglican Church.

A PENSIONER'S PRAYER

Today, dear Lord, I'm eighty
There's lots I haven't done
So I hope, dear Lord, you'll let me live
Until I'm eighty-one.

In your glorious universe
Oh dear Lord, I could survive
So if you would be willing
I'll do four score and five.

But if I haven't finished
All the things I'd like to do
Perhaps, dear Lord, you'd let me live
Until I'm eighty-two.

Many a dream I need to fulfil
So perhaps you'd like to fix
To let me still be here, dear Lord,
When I am eighty-six

So many places I could go
So much that I could see
Perhaps, dear Lord, you could manage
To make it eighty-three.

I know, dear Lord, it's a lot to ask
And it must be nice in heaven
But I really would be so happy
To be around at eighty-seven.

The world is changing very fast
There is so much more in store
I'd like it even better, Lord,
To live till eighty-four.

I know by then I won't be fast
And sometimes I'll be late
But I'm sure it will be pleasant
To live to eighty-eight.

I will have seen so many things
Had a lovely time, all's fine
So I'm sure that I'll be willing
To leave at eighty-nine.

~ Author Unknown



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