

Trees



"For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone. They are like lonely persons. Not like hermits who have stolen away out of some weakness, but like great, solitary men, like Beethoven and Nietzsche. In their highest boughs the world rustles, their roots rest in infinity; but they do not lose themselves there, they struggle with all the force of their lives for one thing only: to fulfil themselves according to their own laws, to build up their

own form, to represent themselves. Nothing is holier, nothing is more exemplary than a beautiful, strong tree. When a tree is cut down and reveals its naked death-wound to the sun, one can read its whole history in the luminous, inscribed disk of its trunk: in the rings of its years, its scars, all the struggle, all the suffering, all the sickness, all the happiness and prosperity stand truly written, the narrow years and the luxurious years, the attacks withstood, the storms endured. And every young farmboy knows that the hardest and noblest wood has the narrowest rings, that high on the mountains and in continuing danger the most indestructible, the strongest, the ideal trees grow." By Hermann Hesse
~ submitted by Janice Campbell

St. John's Needs Your Help

Over the past year, St. John's has been faced with many financial challenges. Fundraising and rentals have increasingly become a vital part of our bottom line. Fundraising requires willing volunteers and we are blessed with such a wonderful group. Volunteering can be hard work and time consuming, but there are lots of side benefits, too. The most common comment from the volunteers at the Giant Trunk and Table Sale last spring was that they had such a good time working with and getting to know the other members of our congregation better. I would call that a win-win situation.

My step-dad, Manley Densmore, used to laughingly call our church fundraising efforts "the bring and buy". My mother would bring a baked item, usually a pie, to the church to sell and Manley would buy it back.

St. John's has a history of using fundraising to top up our operating funds. In my memory, I recall the successes of the Albatross Campaign, Don Burt and a group of men with congregational support organizing a huge garage sale, and lastly, the creation of the Fun(d)raising Committee. I choose to believe that our recent deficit is but a momentary blip and that our St. John's members can once again rally and work together to eliminate our budget deficit.

The Fun(d)raising Committee meets in January to set out our plans for the oncoming year. We try to balance events which will raise funds from our members with larger events that will hopefully bring in outside funds. Ultimately the success of any initiative comes down to the willingness of our members to contribute their time, talents, and treasures. Treasures can be anything from the cost of the ingredients to bake or cook an item of food to an outright cash donation. Your Fun(d)raising Committee is depending on your generous efforts once again this year.

If you have an idea for fundraising or you would like to become involved in the work of that committee, please let Rob Allison or Jackie MacFarlane know.

~ submitted by Jackie MacFarlane-Finance, Fun(d)raising



"I want to thank Mrs. Smith and the drama team for that rousing presentation, and Stan, that laser show was wonderful! Now, turn with me in your Bible for a brief word from our Sponsor."

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Food for Life Canada

Food for Life Canada is a registered charity based in Halton Region that distributes surplus perishable food (fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy, prepared foods and baked goods) free of charge to 45 outreach programs (like St. John's) and 40 social agencies 7 days a week. *Food for Life* began at St. John's in March 2012. In 2013, our first full year of operation, we served 2,878 people, 34% of whom were children.

What happens every Tuesday?

Every Tuesday afternoon many volunteers (including shoppers) help out. Tables are set-up in Celebration Hall. Coffee is made. Then we wait for the food to arrive on the refrigerated *Food for Life* truck. Some food will have been placed on the truck at the warehouse in Burlington, but most has been picked up from grocery stores, bakeries and restaurants en route to St. John's. Most of the food is boxed, and these boxes may be heavy. We rely on the shoppers to help us carry the boxes into Celebration Hall. Once inside, the food is sorted and displayed.

The room is divided into areas for meat and dairy, dry produce, fruit and vegetables and bread products. Shoppers are called into Celebration Hall in groups of five. Shoppers move around the room clockwise making their own selections. If a product (often meat) is limited, then we make sure that all families share equally. Usually, we are encouraging shoppers to take more. Often they take less, preferring to leave product for others. The noise level is high! I hear comments like – “here, take more”, “what is this?”, “I use this vegetable in...”, “my children love this”, “can I have more of ...?”, “is there any gluten-free bread today?” Shoppers leave with 2-4 large shopping bags.



and us. They are resilient, creative and philosophical. They know our names and we know theirs. We do not require any proof of need. All we ask is how many adults and children are in their families. We show them respect

It's not just about food!

When we started *Food for Life* in 2012 we were overwhelmed with cleaning tables, organizing food, training volunteers, and even how to make coffee (that's me). In time we mastered these skills. Today, in addition to food, the program has expanded to meet other needs of our shoppers. It all started with a simple request from a shopper at Ev's Kitchen December lunch; he really needed a new winter coat.

”*Food for Life* started from very modest beginnings in 1995 when an Oakville resident, George Bagcao, recognized how many people were in need of fresh, nutritious food. George would stop at a bakery on his way home from work and fill his trunk with backed goods. He distributed the surplus goods to needy families in his neighbourhood.”
www.FoodforLife.ca

When everyone has shopped, we wait for latecomers, and then clean up. Dry products (crackers, can goods, etc.) are stored at the church. Leftover meat is put in the freezer. Sometimes root vegetables and hardy fruits are taken home by a volunteer and brought back next week. The remaining food is offered first to the volunteers (the bread is exceptionally good). Most is re-boxed and taken to North Halton Community Living for use in their group homes. A small amount of food is thrown out.

Our Shoppers

Our shoppers have become our *Food for Life* friends. They are the reason our volunteers come back week after week. Our shoppers are typical of food bank users across Canada. Some are seniors. Some are working. Many have children. Many can no longer work and are using government programs (ODSP, EI, OW) that do not provide enough to cover basic needs. All of them have a story to tell, and they share their stories with each other

“In 2010/11, *Food for Life* Canada distributed over 1,000,000 pounds of food, all donated by our many generous suppliers. This food, which would have otherwise gone to waste in a landfill, has a retail value of over \$4 million.”
www.FoodforLife.ca

Today we offer more.

- We have a clothing rack that is added to every week. Clothes come from St. John's members' families and participants in a Holy Cross exercise class that is held at St. John's.
- In addition to clothing, we have shared toys, seasonal decorations, and books.
- A Links2Care social worker comes quarterly to assist shoppers with social programs and housing issues, and to promote Links2Care backpack and hamper basket programs
- The parish nurse at Holy Cross attends monthly to answer questions and check on blood pressure.
- A 'community kitchen' for *Food for Life* shoppers was initiated in the spring of 2013, but will reopen in 2014 as a *Food for Life* community kitchen site.
- We offered one shopper the chance to be an entrepreneur.
- The most important item we offer is conversation and a relationship with St. John's and us.



The Future

Of course we wish that no one had to use food banks, but until that happens *Food for Life* offers St. John's a great program to

"Food for Life was recently named as a "Top Pick" in Charity Intelligence's (Ci) 2012 report, identifying Food for Life as one of the top-performing charities in Canada. One highlight of the Ci report was the fact that Food for Life has the highest "leverage" ratio of any food bank they surveyed. Food for Life turns every dollar donated into \$10.77 worth of food." www.FoodforLife.ca

help our community. Besides food we have added clothes, toys, books, access to a social work and parish nurse, and soon a community kitchen. And when we listen, we will hear other ways that we can help. Right now I would love to find a hairdresser who would visit us monthly. And so, until we have the energy and insight to address the real issue at the heart of our efforts, poverty, we will enjoy our new friends for the joy they bring into our lives.

~ submitted by Susan Tupling

creating INSPIRING SPACES

Our sanctuary is the heartbeat that sustains our spiritual life. It is a space that has brought joy and comfort to the significant moments of our lives. It is often the first, and for some, the only place that people experience what it means to belong to a faith community - to be part of St. John's.



From the time of its construction in 1880 up to present day, each generation of our worshippers has sought to create an inspiring space

that best reflects their approach to worship. It is now our time to put renewed energy and love into our Georgetown sanctuary.

Can you name the happy couple in the wedding photo above? This event took place 45 years ago on November 8, 1968. Theirs was the last wedding to take place at St. John's prior to our 1969 sanctuary renovation. Give up? It is Jackie and Dave MacFarlane!

Take a close look at the apse in the background of their photo. You can see the old pipe organ sitting on 1950's green walls, with the frames of exterior windows peaking up over the tops of the pipes. Today the pipe organ is gone and the apse holds an enclosed dome. Those rear windows in

the photo were repurposed in our 1990 renovation with new backlit stained glass and can now only be seen outside the sanctuary from the apse gallery. Have a look at the pews flanking the MacFarlanes and the carpet under their feet. In our 1948 renovation of the sanctuary, these new pews were installed creating our first ever centre aisle and the wood floor was re-carpeted with new burgundy runners. The carpet has been changed, but the pews have remained until today.

One of the best clues that our last sanctuary renovation was 45 years ago is our present day purple "wall-to-wall" carpet. Both the colour and the full room coverage were the latest trends of the late 1960's. In 1969, a

problematic pipe organ was removed and replaced with a new state-of-the-art electronic Shaw Concept Organ. A new interior dome shape was created in the apse and a false curved wall was built inside the space. This new wall included open screening at the top to allow sound projection from the 160 electronic organ speakers installed behind. A new choir loft was built to fit the curved shape and hold the new organ. The front of the chancel platform was extended, carpeted and furnished with new chancel furniture. The sanctuary walls were repainted a light blue-grey to match the purple carpet.

In the 45 years since its construction, our use of the chancel has changed which has resulted in a series of piecemeal modifications over time. We have dealt with these changes one issue and one solution at a time. The junior choir loft was removed, a second doorway into the sanctuary installed, the organ moved from the side to the middle of the chancel and the choir loft adjusted, a grand piano purchased, projection technology integrated, riser extensions built and duct tape used extensively as our fix-all solution.

When one looks at this next photo, you can see that today's worship at St. John's has evolved and our

performance needs have changed. Our current chancel is tired, cluttered, make-shift and requires modernization and improved accessibility. We require fresh thinking to create new overall plan for the use of this space.



Our renovation plan calls for the chancel space to be opened and enlarged in all directions to allow for a variety of worship and performance uses. All 3 liturgical elements: the word (lectern), the table and the water (baptismal font) will have a place at the front, but can be moved when an open platform is needed. The choir will be provided with moveable seating that can be arranged in any manner they wish. The enlarged space will accommodate the grand piano, organ and additional instruments, along with our computer technology, camera, and puppet theatre. An accessibility ramp will be fully integrated into the design.

With so much to deal with, we are facing a project that is more costly and more challenging than originally

envisaged. Given that the scope has grown since its inception in 2011, Council has requested that the congregation reaffirm its commitment, both spiritually and financially, to this chancel renovation project. This will be done formally through a series of motions presented at the AGM on Feb. 16/2014 and by the congregation committing to a 20 month "over and above" financial pledge campaign in support of the project.



It is our turn to be called to renovate our sanctuary to reflect the worship of our time. We believe that we should create an inspiring space that lives up to the great messages, amazing music and wonderful feelings evoked by our services. Let's join together in 2014 to support our local legacy project to mark 175 years of faithful witness by the people of St. John's.

~ submitted by Drew Leverette



We, at St. John's, count it a privilege to bring a little sunshine to the folks at the Bennett Centre. We sing all the old favourites and many of the patients join in and sing along too. This past December we were so pleased to have a good turnout of male singers. Pictured from left to right are Walter Doupagne, Ron Hunt, Ken Harris, Sue Taylor, Marguerite French, Jo Morrow and Eric Fuller. Missing from the picture is Evelyn McCallum who was out in the crowd bringing cheer to the folks there. She is good at that. We sing the first Wednesday of the month and would welcome anyone who loves to sing to join us. Who knows, you might receive a "blessing".

~ submitted by Jo Morrow

Finding Myself

...an excerpt from my message on Sunday, December 29th

Do you know that feeling when you have something to say, and then you say it? Immediately there is relief and a weight lifted off your shoulders. This is what has happened to me. I met with our ministers, Susan Garrod-Schuster and Kelly Thomson, and shared some of my hopes and dreams...they invited me to share them with you today. I have sensed a calling in my life for a couple of years now, and haven't been able to say it out loud until our meeting in mid-November. Perhaps I didn't say it because I didn't have the words yet...but I really think it was because I didn't feel deserving of such a deep longing. When the words were ready to be spoken, God allowed them to flow from my lips. And yet when I finally spoke, my eyes filled up with tears and I couldn't stop them...it was big – it is big - ...sometimes now I am still deeply overcome with emotion. God was in that place where we met, and when I spoke. God was present when the news was shared with Council and God is in this place now. I've had that inner voice speaking to me each day and each moment and I couldn't stop it from coming. So I spoke.

I love, love, love my job at St. John's...and I want you to know that. But I also want you to know that I love God, and how God is talking to me. I love all the ways in which I am involved at St. John's...dancing, singing, speaking, writing, helping, working, walking, hoping, healing, praying. The United Church of Canada has received my application and they will be walking with me, alongside members from St. John's ~ on a Discernment Committee. We will meet six times over the course of one year, and we will talk and share and hope and dream... I am so thankful for the courage it took me to speak and for the generosity of my friends who are joining me along the way.

Discernment – the process of determining God's desire in one's life...

I am *discerning*, and it still gives me goose bumps. I can feel the Holy Spirit at my side and my heart literally skips a beat. I may not be making sense, and at times it doesn't make sense to me either, - it just is. I just am.

It is a deep, deep longing to determine God's will – or God's loving, or God's desire in me. It is a path that is calling my name, with my name and God's name written on the road signs. Because I now see the path, and was able to say out loud that I have seen the path, I feel like I have been presented with a gift. A gift from God...walking with me, and keeping me company. ~ only I don't know where the path is leading me to, yet. Will I be an ordained minister, or a lay minister? Will I stay on as the church Office Administrator doing all the things I so deeply love, and

then-some? I haven't used the word "discernment" before. It wasn't a word in my vocabulary until recently. In fact, most of the words that I now have in my bank of words, were not my words growing up through adolescence and into adulthood. A gigantic shift has taken place for me. God has handed me my life, and Jesus, our saviour, reminds me every day to be thankful for my way of living, and the life I live today.

What I have comfort in knowing, as someone who



is very critical of oneself, is that, after a year of meeting with the Discernment Committee, I may decide to not change anything at all. The year's process of talking and digging deep will help me decide how I am to grow with God...and what that might look like. Whatever the outcome, it will be celebrated. This brings me an enormous sense of comfort...knowing I won't be disappointing you, or myself.

I know deep, deep down I've had this longing for quite some time, and until I met with Susan and Kelly I didn't have the words. It is a simple, raw desire of me discovering what God desires of me. *"do not be conformed to this world (says Paul to the Christians at Rome), but instead be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God ~ Romans 12:2*

We have just celebrated the birth of new life and we are about to celebrate or at least notice the ending of this year and the beginning of the next. Perhaps this is a good time to reflect on new beginnings and new opportunities. Perhaps we sense an invitation from God to go back to basics and reflect on what it means to us to live out our faith

in the world around us, or to pay attention to a particular area of our spiritual life.

Christmas has come and gone and the stories of Jesus' birth have been told once again. We sit in a time of knowing the story and longing to hear it again. With the New Year upon us, people make resolutions and stop things or start things... But you know what? Each day is a new year, a new day, Jesus birth – a time to take a new deep breath, step a new step....looking to God for guidance for He will always inspire.

I think we all want to have what God wants us to have, don't we? Don't you? ...but in order to have that, we need to dig deep and do all that God wants us to do, and "be" all that God wants us to "be"...then we can ultimately have what God wants us to have. And I know I've been in that place where I've seen someone else have and do and be....but I knew that for me to completely embrace the power of the Holy Spirit, I had to take hold of the hand of God and not give up. And believe me there have been many times that giving up was an option. Giving up, staying under the covers and looking at the half empty glass, is always an easier option....but persevering, getting out of bed and looking at the water remaining in the glass is much harder, grasping my numb hand or walking through pain or fighting to stay awake when all I long to do is have a nap. It is here where the work is done. Where you can decide to work, where we can decide to work, with God, with the Holy Spirit, with Jesus ~ to do better and be better.

Do you know what amazes me? That I am able to stand here today, and speak and share a bible story and how it may be perceived. I feel like I've been transported into the wonderful. Last year, on the first Sunday of Advent, I visited another church where my friend is a minister....I didn't say I was coming, so my visit was a surprise. But God had a surprise for both of us. The sermon was about me and my healing journey, about my hopefulness and my yearning to see the light. I was stunned. I sat, jaw dropping to the floor and tears just pouring down my cheeks. I had made a last minute decision to attend a different church, and found myself listening to how I somehow inspired this leader to be a better person. This is a snippet of what was said, *"When I think of advent candles I don't think of these resting on the table.*

I think of her, living candles of hope. People who choose to live from a place of love." But I am just little ol' me – I don't inspire people. It is God who inspires me. It is people like you that inspire me...not the other way around.

Somehow I kept using my faith, and my faith became greater. So great, in fact, that I couldn't sit with it inside me anymore. And sometimes when spirit is so close, the tears just stream out of me. Does this happen to you? Like the story Bill Hewitt told of his brother, on Christmas Eve...I wept. God was present in that story, every word of it.

When people ask for prayers or ask God to pray with them, you must know this. God can't do your work, just as you can't do God's. Do not fear, though, God will be with you, always and forever, and the light will shine. God will beside you and inside you. That breath you feel so deeply is the heavenly spirit inviting you to shine.

So now that Christmas Day has come and gone, what now? Well, it's back to the humdrum, to the laundry and the tidying, and the driveway still needs shoveling...you may be back to work, or have driven a family member back to the airport. But guess what? You are changed now....did you see Jesus at Christmastime? In a smile, in a snowflake, in your dad's eyes, in a candle? Did you see Jesus under the tree and around the fire? Yes yes yes – capture the joy (the joy of Christ) and take it with you!!

And we can **do** what God wants us to do, and **be** what God wants us to be...ultimately **having** what God wants us to have...glorifying where God is in our daily lives. Starting where we are, and knowing God is right here ~ in our eyes, in our hearts, in our smiles, in our fingertips, in our step.

Walk on from here this day, with a love unlike any other in your soul. Give thanks for your "God" moments, for the blessing of Jesus' birth, and your witness to it, this day. This is the Good News today. Amen and thanks be to God. © kekrul

~ submitted by Katharine Krul



Maple Katharine and Koda Herman born January 2nd, 2014 to Alison Lipp and Kevin Kempers in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Big sister McKenna adores her babies!!

~ submitted by Nora and Rudy Lipp



...after the ice storm
 ~submitted by Terry and Elvera Clark

The Garrod-Schuster family vacationing over the holidays...
 (Jim, Susan, Steve, Kendra and baby Isaac)
 ~submitted by Susan Garrod-Schuster



Look at all the cookie tins!
 Thank you to everyone who helped bake squares and goodies for *Ev's Kitchen* in December.

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