

the Messenger

PARKDALE UNITED CHURCH NEWSLETTER



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WELCOME TO PARKDALE

A special 2012 welcome to Parkdale United Church. We enjoy meeting you and being together in ministry.

Parkdale's congregation responds to God's call and Jesus' teachings by:

- a) **Uniting in joyful worship as an act of praise and gratitude, for inspiration and guidance**
- b) **Providing learning opportunities for the Christian way of life and to enhance Biblical literacy**
- c) **Supporting one another through pastoral care and concern**
- d) **Reaching out to people in need**
- e) **Promoting justice**
- f) **Praying for guidance, wisdom, and support.**

Visitors and newcomers to Parkdale, be on the lookout for our hospitality team on Sunday mornings. They wear pale yellow name tags and would be pleased to meet you and to answer questions about our worship service and about activities that go on through the week at Parkdale.

If you are visiting, please ask for a copy of the 'Welcome to Parkdale' edition of the Messenger. Please take a copy home to read. We hope you will come again for worship and fellowship.

The Parkdale Congregation

Where to find it... 	
Minister's Message.....	4
Carols from the Heart.....	6
Council Report.....	10
News from the pews.....	15
Letters.....	16
Friday Night Stories.....	17
Youth and Children update.....	20
Fostering Generosity.....	22
Kids Karol Sing.....	24
Recipe.....	25
What brought you to Parkdale?.....	26
Dispatches from Brazil.....	28
In From the Cold.....	31
Abu Nasar Wedding.....	32
Jacob Moon concert.....	36
Impressions of India.....	38
Presbytery report.....	46

In brief...

ANNUAL MEETING

February 26, 2012 is the date of Parkdale's Annual Congregational Meeting. Make a plan to attend and hear about some of the great work that has happened over the past year, and be prepared to vote on the budget for 2012. The 2011 Annual Report will be available two weeks prior to the meeting.

BAPTISMAL RECOVENANTING and FUMBLIN' FINGERS

Sunday January 8: Reaffirm our baptismal faith and join with the baptismal families of 2011 as they re-affirm their vows. The Fumblin' Fingers musical group will participate in worship.

FAREWELL TO JENNIFER

Jennifer Reid, Parkdale's Office Manager for the past six years left her position on December 30, 2011, to pursue other interests.

We are grateful for Jennifer's faithful and dedicated service to the congregation, and her support of various Parkdale programs and initiatives, and we wish her well in whatever new endeavours she

may choose in the future. The duties of Office Manager will be performed on an interim basis by a number of individuals on rotation, pending a formal recruitment process early in the New Year.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. Commemorative Service

On January 15, 2012, once again we will be welcoming people from all over the city to our MLK gospel service. Dr. King's commitment to the global beloved community reflected God's biblical vision. The Imani Gospel Singers from Montreal will be with us again this year. Spread the word.

SACRED MOVEMENT

An exploration of movement in personal prayer and liturgy. This free five session series, beginning on January 15 from 6 :30 – 8.00 pm, will include presentations and discussions about different forms of sacred dance, as well as the opportunity to experience different techniques. For more information, feel free to speak with Jennifer Payne (613-692-0876) Advance registration is required.



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

An Extended Season of Gift Receiving and Gift Giving



In the Christian liturgical calendar, the season of Epiphany follows the season of Christmas (12 days). Although gift giving and receiving is so popularly associated with Christmas, it may be that we are being invited to continue this into Epiphany, though perhaps in a different way.

Epiphany invites reflection on and commitment to the ways in which we may discern and join God in the revealing of God's self through Christ to all humanity.

The chief Biblical story that epitomizes the season of Epiphany is the one describing the arrival of the wise ones from the East who bring their worship and their gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold to present in adoration of the child Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). The essence of the story is not about the physical gifts *per se*, but about what they symbolize about the identity, life, mission, and meaning of God's gift of the one named Jesus. Namely, that Jesus is from divine royal lineage inaugurating a Reign of God wholly unlike anything humans can construct (*gold*); that the "aroma" of the in-breaking of this way of order-

ing creation's life and relationships will be a just and healing one (frankincense); and that the way in which this newness will be ushered in will be by way of absorbing pain, suffering, rejection, and even crucifixion (myrrh).

Epiphany is literally about the "shining forth" of God in the world. It is about how the gift that is God in Jesus continues to be poured out into the lives of people and into the life of the world. As well, it is about how we respond to that "shining forth" and that "pouring out". We are called to partner with God in giving the gifts of ourselves, our resources, our faith, our worship, our life.... It is truly a season of receiving gifts and giving gifts.

I am reminded of a Christmas card which someone sent me a few years ago. It said:

The best gifts aren't found in pretty paper under the tree... I can't unwrap a box of your happy laughter or welcoming smiles. And your steady shoulder and helping hands don't need fancy ribbons or sparkly bows. Thank you for the gifts of your friendship. How did you know they'd be just what I needed?

So as this new year breaks in, let us enthusiastically join in the ongoing divine "gift-exchange" with God, for the blessing and healing of this world that God so loves.

Blessing to you O gifted and gifting ones,

Anthony (ps. May I invite you into the following guided meditation on gifting.)

A Guided Visualization Meditation

The Gift

By Joyce Rupp
(abridged and submitted by Dr. Bailey)

Find a quiet spot to be alone, Sit with your back straight, feet on the floor.

Begin with taking some deep breaths and letting them out slowly. Ask the Spirit of God to open your being, to quiet you...

Picture the scene of the Three Wise Ones (Matthew 2:1-12) coming to offer homage and gifts to Jesus, the One sent by God...

See yourself as one of the Wise Ones...

You are coming to offer a gift...

There is a wonderfully-wrapped gift in your hands...

Inside the gift are aspects and qualities of your life that you most enjoy and appreciate.

Reflect on these aspects and qualities:

- Which ones are especially significant for you?
- Which ones have been most apparent during the past year?
- Which ones have seemed hidden or absent during the past year?

Now gather these qualities of your life into your gift. Visualize yourself coming and presenting your gift-wrapped package...

As you offer this gift of yourself, see the love, joy, delight with which your gift is received...

Visualize a gift being offered to you. It, too, is beautifully wrapped. It has a note-card on it, a special message from Jesus to you. Imagine what is written on the note-card...

Receive the gift, open it, and ponder its significance for your life...

After pondering, end this reflective time with seven deep breaths – letting them out slowly – and a prayer of gratitude for what you have received and what you have been able to offer.



Carols from the Heart

For most of us, Christmas is usually a joyous time of gathering with family and friends, and attending beautiful church services to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. It is a time for offering gifts and words of thanks to those who bless our lives, and a time for special foods that remind us of our childhood traditions.

For many in seniors' residences, however, it is often a time of isolation, loneliness, reflection and despair. Christmas seems like most other days. The nurse, dressed in blue scrubs just like yesterday and the day before, arrives early in the morning to do blood pressure checks and stands close to ensure that everyone takes their medication. The food is puréed because turkey is too difficult

to chew. The children visit only briefly because they have many people to visit. The residence is quieter than usual and the favourite roommate is much missed because he/she still enjoys good health and was able to be invited out.

With this in mind, the 80th Anniversary Planning Group wanted to bring a bit of cheer to some of the seniors in the community as a final event to celebrate our church's 80 years of ministry. And so, on Sunday, December 18, 2011, approximately two dozen Parkdalers went carolling at the nearby Grace Manor Residence on Wellington Street.

As we did for Parkdale's 75th anniversary, we gathered first in the Ladies' Parlour for a quick bite to eat after worship. Of course, there was enough food for everyone (think of the biblical story of the loaves and the fish). Having been well fed, we proceeded to Grace Manor for an hour of singing and lovely fellowship. On this occasion, we were especially blessed in that the youth joined the carolling. In a particularly thoughtful gesture, they brought beautifully boxed cookies and gorgeous homemade cards for the residents. It was a very moving experience for us and the residents for various reasons.



Grace Manor is a homey long-term and seniors' residence, which is appropriately divided into sections called "houses". We were greeted warmly by the staff and carolled in various sections, saying hello to former Parkdalers who are now residents. Some of the residents sang along and clapped. Many smiled warmly and tapped their feet on the foot pedals of their wheelchairs. It was also heartening to hear one man accompanying us on his harmonica. We were particularly glad to see Parkdaler Joe Sayer, a resident, who is still recovering from his automobile accident in February 2010 (Joe is pictured with Anthony Bailey and other carollers from Parkdale).

As we began singing in one of the last sections of the residence, an

elegant elderly gentleman was wheeled into the lounge. The nurse and the said gentleman were located just to the right of me. The man immediately caught my eye, as he reminded me of my dear departed father. He sat tall and dignified in his wheelchair.

When we sang our first traditional carol, I could not help but notice that the man was crying as he sang the familiar tune. My heart broke for him. What made him so sad? Was he missing his beloved spouse to whom he had been married for decades? Did we remind him of his children who were unable or unwilling to visit him regularly? Or, was he angry with himself because his dementia had gotten the better of him and he had forgotten some of the words of the carol?

I wanted to set aside my song sheet and rush over to hug him. Would a hug be appropriate and well received? Would the nurses be angry because I might be bringing him germs from the outside? Not wanting to embarrass the dignified man, I stood frozen in place. For a moment, I felt like the little drummer boy. What could I offer this fellow human, a child of God, for whom my heart broke?

Of course, as always, God's timing was perfect. At that moment, Anthony called to me from the other side of the room and invited me to select a carol. I chose the most cheerful one on the carol sheet. "We Wish You A Merry Christmas!" I shouted. I quickly decided that I would steward and offer my gifts of a smile and the best maternal singing genes that I could muster. I turned to the right to face the gentleman and smiled ear to ear! As I belted out the verses, his tears subsided and at last he seemed at peace.

As we departed, we wished all the residents and the staff a blessed Christmas, and prayed that our efforts had helped in some small way to make this Christmas a bit better than last year's when carolers and visitors were forbidden at the residence because of a flu outbreak.

In closing, the 80th Anniversary Planning Group extends its sincere thanks to all who joined us in carolling, and a special thanks to Melodee Lovering for organizing the youth who did a fabulous job of singing and sharing their card-making and baking skills.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not thank the Planning Group's right-hand lady, Faye Beaufort, and her daughter, Camille, who together organized the food and the set-up of the Ladies' Parlour.

Thanks also to Anthony Bailey for leading us in singing, and to Barbara Faught who continued her day of ministry by conducting a service with the seniors immediately after carolling. Blessings to all of you.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Hennessy
Chair
80th Anniversary Planning Group

Sacred Movement:

An exploration of movement in personal prayer & liturgy

"There comes a time when prose must give way to poetry, and a time when poetry must give way to dance." - Sam Kamaleson

Five Sunday evenings
Starting January 15, 2012
6:30 - 8:00pm
Parkdale United Church (Parkdale/Gladstone)



Themes:

- History of sacred dance
- Sacred dance around the world
- Dance as personal prayer
- Sacred dance in the Liturgical year
- Creating liturgical dance

Come and discover more about sacred dance, see how it has been used through the ages in Christian worship and in different cultures all over the world.

Experience participating in body prayer and praise, learn how to receive and appreciate this form of worship.

Sessions will be led by Wendy Morrell, longtime sacred dancer and Program Director of the international Sacred Dance Guild.

The program is free, however to ensure appropriate accommodation, please register by calling church office: Tel: 613-728-8656 or by E-mail at pdale@trytel.com

**Council Report –
December 6, 2011**

Supporting Parkdale’s visible ministries - Sunday service, pastoral care, Christian education, etc. - are a host of committees, task groups, and individual volunteers. Overseeing all of this work on behalf of the congregation is the Parkdale United Church Council.

Fuelled by Helen Hayes’ wonderful baked goods, Council held its final meeting of 2011 on December 6.

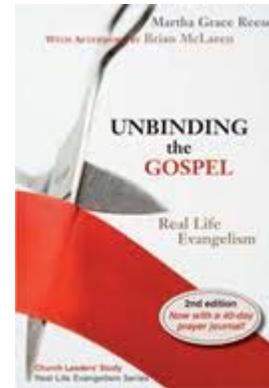
Melodee and Council Chair Ellen Andrews led a short opening devotional, dialogue, and hymn sing around the Magnificat (the hymn of the Virgin Mary, Luke 1:46-55).

Barbara’s planned retirement at the end of 2012 has triggered the requirement to conduct a “needs assessment” that will look at the congregation’s place within the broader community, as well as the emerging requirements of Parkdale’s congregation, based on our demographics, stated interests, and a wide range of other factors. This “needs assessment” will be undertaken by a 5 – 7 member congregational committee led by two representatives of Presbytery, Rev. Trisha Elliott (whom many will recognize as a regular contributor to the United Church Observer magazine) and retired Rev. Isobel Black. Other members of the Joint Needs Assessment Committee

(JNAC) will be appointed by Council from among the widest-possible cross-section of the congregation. The Committee’s primary task will be to consult within the Parkdale community to try to discern longer-term directions that will drive our future programming and staffing decisions.

After the JNAC’s report to the congregation and Presbytery has been approved by both bodies, a second group, the Joint Search Committee, again under Presbytery leadership, will be established to identify and recommend specific staff to fill the position(s) identified through the JNAC process. In other words, we enter this lengthy and important exercise not simply assuming that we are looking for the irreplaceable Barbara’s “replacement” (with the identical job description and range of involvement in congregational life), but that we are open to wherever the discernment process might lead us in terms of future staffing. Council has been canvassing the congregation for members willing to serve on the JNAC, and will be making its final decision at its January meeting.

“Unbinding the Gospel” is an initiative that now involves some 15,000 mainline congregations across North America. Its purpose is to help people recommit to the “why” of being a community of Christ’s followers. As a resource, Unbinding the Gospel helps participants to know and



deepen their faith lives, to grow in their practice of daily prayer, to be open to opportunities to share their faith with others, and to invite others to their congregations and to faith. Unbinding the Gospel takes the entire congregation through what can be called “pre-evangelism”, before advancing to community and small-group faith-sharing with friends and others who have little or no exposure to Christianity.

In discussing Unbinding the Gospel with Council, Anthony noted Parkdale’s long history of supporting the growth of faith through worship and Bible study, outreach to the local neighbourhood and wider world, and initiatives such as the Bethel Bible series, Christianity 101, Faith Foundations, Jesus 24/7, confirmation preparation, Lenten series, and Christian mediation. Several of the eight participants in an initial congregational “test group” shared with Council their overwhelmingly positive and powerful experiences in using the resources and approach of

Unbinding the Gospel. Council approved moving forward to engage the Parkdale congregation in this initiative. We shall be learning much more about it in the months ahead.

The Accountability Working Group (Matthew Baker, Peter Meerberg, Rob Maclachlan) was established in January 2011 to review and make recommendations on the reporting responsibilities and accountabilities of staff and committees within Parkdale’s new Council governance framework. The Working Group presented its report on December 6. Its overall conclusion was that the current Council structure is sound. However, the Working Group identified two underlying concerns: first, that not all Council or committee members are sufficiently familiar with their respective mandates and responsibilities; and, secondly, that consensus-building and smooth decision-making are impaired when key information is not shared.

The Working Group presented several detailed recommendations that Council will consider at its January meeting. In the meantime, Council requested that all of its committees develop one-page summaries of their roles and responsibilities, and approved in principle the holding of a retreat in late winter or early spring to focus on such matters as orientation of new Council members, establishment of Council goals for the year, and review of committee mandates and responsibilities, as well as

Council's governance structure, attracting new members to Council and committees, and team-building.

The Sunday School renovation project has been a great success. A dedication ceremony was held in November, and fund-raising continues. New accordion-type partitions to separate the rooms will be ordered and installed early in 2012.

Council officially received and approved an invitation from Metropolitan United Church in London, Ontario, inviting Dr. Bailey to be the initial speaker in a new series entitled the Dr. Maurice Boyd Preachers of Distinction program. Anthony will be preaching at Metropolitan on February 5.

On major questions of faith and other issues central to the identity of the United Church of Canada, the Church holds votes among its individual congregations and Presbyteries. These votes are called "remits". (Some remits that concern less central issues of policy or administrative procedure are held simply at the Presbytery level.) At present, congregations and Presbyteries across Canada are considering a remit that would add three additional United Church expressions of faith to those already contained in the Doctrine Section of the Basis of Union (the formal document that created the United Church of Canada in 1925 through a merger of the Methodist and Congregationalist churches and

a majority of Presbyterian congregations). These three expressions of faith are the 2006 "A Song of Faith", the 1995 "New Creed" (familiar at Parkdale through its recital during the sacrament of baptism), and the 1940 Statement of Faith that summarized the 20 doctrines of 1925.

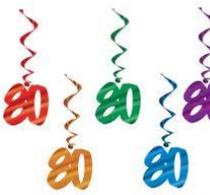
In order to meet the deadline of April 1, 2012, to vote on the remit, Council agreed to hold a special meeting in February. To be approved, 50% of all United Church congregations and Presbyteries must vote in favour of the remit (failure to vote is considered a vote against the remit). A concise background document prepared for Council is available through the church office.

As it does at all of its meetings, Council also received update reports from each of its committees, as well as from our ministry staff.

Property Trustees (Chair: Ken Elder) have, as usual, been busy with a wide range of projects, including the Sunday School renovations, signage for the Somerset West Community Health Centre (formerly the Queensway Preschool), replenishment of first-aid kits available around the church building, improvements to the women's wash-room, roof inspection, repair of a major heating cable, inspection and repair of the steam boilers and circulating pumps, wiring of the two bulletin boards at the Parkdale doors, and rewiring of exterior lights.

The **Ministry and Personnel Committee** (Chair: Don Macpherson) recently completed updated job descriptions for ministry staff and the Office Manager, and is considering establishing a process of periodic reviews of our ministries. These reviews would, among other things, help to assess the extent to which we are staying true to our mission and purpose, using our resources well, maintaining good communication, and remaining responsive to the needs of the communities we serve. The Committee also welcomed a new member, Judy Hamley, who has been active in many parts of Parkdale's life and work over the years, including Chair of the Official Board.

Financial Trustees (Chair: Harry Allen) reported that there is a strong possibility that we shall do better than our 2011 budget projections - depending on donations received in December. The final financial statements for 2011 will be included in the annual report to the congregation prepared for the February 26 Annual General Meeting.

 The **80th Anniversary Planning Group** (Chair: Barbara Hennessy) is winding up the many successful activities held throughout 2011. Fall events included an evening with

James Bartleman (September 24), the Celebrating Our Cultures retrospective (October 22), the Jacob Moon concert (December 10), and Christmas carol singing at Grace Manor (December 18).

Members of the **Pastoral Care Team** (Chair: Mary McLeod) participated in a continuing education event in early November focused on issues of aging. Another strawberry social is already being planned for June 2012. Visiting members of the Parkdale community continues to be a central element of the Team's work.

The **Mission, Outreach and Justice Committee** (Chair: Faye Beaufort) was active in planning the Celebrating Our Cultures event, which raised over \$1700.00 for the United Church of Canada's Horn of Africa Fund, as well as the Jacob Moon concert.

The first three "Friday Night Images and Stories" were well-attended, and three more are planned for January 27, February 24, and March 30. The Committee holds about \$1000.00 in its discretionary fund: it will be donated to the Ottawa Mission. The Abu Nasar family reports that Mr. Abu Nasar's surgery was successful, and that the second son, Mosa, was recently married in Hamilton, Ontario - an event attended by five Parkdale members. The Committee is already well-advanced in planning its 2012 activities. These will include further work on an Aboriginal

partnership, an expanded Earth Hour, a one-day intercultural workshop, another Celebrating our Cultures dinner evening, and a mission trip.

The **Worship Committee** (Chair: Jenni Troup) continues to explore how to incorporate more contemporary forms of musical expression into worship services. As well, the Committee arranged for the purchase of a new Christmas tree for the sanctuary. The central part of the report to Council detailed the Committee's search for volunteers in a number of areas, including senior choir, communion, ushering and greeting, sound, and the worship team (both leader and instrumentalists). After many years, Ken Elder is stepping down as head of the ushering and greeting team. An expanded leadership approach will now be implemented, based on a larger number of organizers and volunteers, working on a monthly rotation

The **Christian Education Committee** (Chair: Paul Crabtree) has recently been addressing several matters, in addition to the Sunday School renovations mentioned above. The decision has been made to launch two additional youth groups, one each in the grades 4 – 6 and grade 7 and higher categories. A confirmation class will be held in 2012: the challenge, as always, is to schedule meetings at times when the most candidates can attend.

Melodee's work is closely linked to that of the Christian Education Committee. The Parents and Tots group continued to meet on most Fridays during the fall. Several fathers participated in the program. The October 30 Luv2Groove hip hop workshop was a great success, as was the December 4 coffee shop, the December 11 Christmas pageant, and the December 17 Kids Karol Sing. This year's Christmas pageant was videotaped, and the children watched it during their December 18 Sunday School time. The Junior Youth group also joined the Grace Manor choral singing on December 18, and distributed gifts. The change of time of the Christmas Eve service to 5:00 p.m. to accommodate younger families will be assessed. The next intergenerational service will be held on January 29. On February 11, there will be another "The Point" gathering for youth from across Ontario and Quebec, sponsored by Ottawa Presbytery.

In closing, Anthony reported briefly on his recent focus on the Unbinding the Gospel initiative, outreach to new families in the congregation, and the fall stewardship conference that he attended with Scott Andrews.

The next meeting of Council will be held on Tuesday, January 31, 2012. All are welcome.



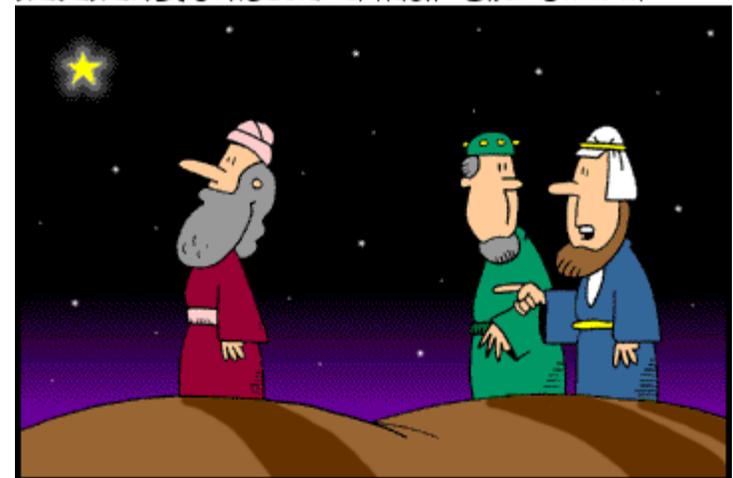
NEWS FROM THE PEWS



Birthdays in January
Our warmest greetings to:

1st	Barbara Drodge	11th	Megan Clark
1st	Joshua Lewis Milan	11th	Ruth Thompson
4th	David Gibb	12th	Quinn Fincham
5th	Abi Wicke	13th	Kyra Robertson
5th	Gloria Goodine	14th	Honor Charley
6th	Edith Sheen	14th	Devon Valcin
7th	Ryan Scott	15th	Jandra Drodge
7th	Murray Stevenson	15th	Joan Wilson
8th	Louise Bond	15th	Corey Symyk
8th	Shannel Charley	18th	James Bell
8th	Suzannah Pankhurst	18th	Theo Andrews
8th	Margaret-Marie Steele	20th	Charles Hurst
11th	Muriel Bellman	21st	Spencer Parent
		23rd	Kay Badgley
		25th	Faye Beaufort
		26th	Julia Mela
		28th	Cecil Toombs
		29th	Peter Dawson
		30th	Elizabeth Fitzgerald

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Thanks to Mikel Rice (See Matthew 2:1) 12-16-1998

OH I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT GETTING LOST
... WISEMAN #1 TOLD ME THAT HE HAS SOME
SORT OF GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM



LETTERS

Dear Parkdale friends,

First, I'd like to say how much I miss you all, very much. Cities recede, but friendships marinate! Sometimes I feel that if I hadn't attended Parkdale services and the Tuesday morning bible study group, I'd be walking with a limp the rest of my days...

A sense of history is very evident in this part of south-east New Brunswick - Fort Beausejour is a mere ten-minute drive away. It is set on a high ridge - a wonderful place to go roam the old ruins of the fort and watch the sunset over the Bay of Fundy. Life here over the past three years, for me has become a tale of two cities (or rather a town and a city!), as most of my requests for cello lessons come from Fredericton. That is 2 1/4 hours away on a good day, so I travel there three times a month. I'm likely moving there in the coming few months, although I will miss my idyllic location here in Sackville, on a quiet semi-rural street just a ten-minute walk from town.

My ride to church - the oldest Baptist congregation in Canada in Middle Sackville, takes me through farmers' fields bordering the marshlands and I bicycle on

fair days. I have learned much about the struggles and heartbreaks of farming this land - dykes, abideaux, and silage, etc. A pal of mine is still farming his family's 150-year-old farm - where he was born on Christmas Day 93 years ago!

Hopefully I will be visiting Ottawa this winter come February, and look forward to seeing you all some Sunday morning. In the meantime, please visit if you are in the region! (506-939-0913)

Fondly,
Charlotte Staples

Dear friends of Habitat,

On behalf of the families in our area who have benefitted from your generosity, thank you for your kind donation to Habitat for Humanity National Capital Region.

Habitat for Humanity NCR has an architectural plan for the future. We want to assure every member of our community a simple, decent place to live, mobilize a volunteer workforce, and create partnerships with neighbours and the business community. Your time, influence, donations, and endorsement will help.

Melissa Clark
President

PARKDALE COMMITTEES

MISSION, OUTREACH
AND JUSTICE



*Friday Night
"Stories and Images"*

AUSTRALIA, INDONESIA, AND
SINGAPORE
(presented by Marg and Don
Macpherson)

The third event in the *Images and Stories* series of monthly presentations organized by the Mission, Outreach and Justice Committee was held on November 25, 2011, in the Ladies' Parlour at Parkdale United Church. Once again, the event was well-received, as about 35 persons attended the presentation and stayed on for discussions and light (delicious) refreshments after the presentation.

The presentation was by Marg and Don Macpherson who treated the audience to a 'slide show' using about 240 pictures taken during a trip to Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore during February and March 2011. Marg handled the commentary during the first half of the show and Don handled the second half, while

Beth Hamley assisted whenever the 'temperamental' equipment needed a gentler touch.

The pictures were very well selected and we learned a great deal about the three countries visited, and incidentally, we learned a lot about Marg and Don. Indeed, they were actually on their honeymoon—only delayed by some fifty years. The trip was to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary that fell on July 8.

This *honeymoon* trip was done partly by plane and partly by ship. They flew to Australia and visited 3 states – New South Wales (Sydney), Queensland (Brisbane/Cairns), and the Northern Territory (Darwin). They started off in Sydney and were there for 10 days. While in Sydney they visited many famous icons, such as the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge, and Bondi Beach. They also visited the Botanical Gardens and took a tour of the Blue Mountains. Their pictures and comments helped to give a sense of being there, such as when they showed the blue haze that covers the mountains from the scented-vapour from the eucalyptus trees. They did not climb the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge, but noted that it is the same age as Parkdale United Church.

In Sydney, they boarded the Dutch ship, the Volendam, and cruised up to the Great Barrier Reef, which is



the largest reef system in the world. They stopped in Brisbane and then on to Cairns, a former gold mining town, and took a train to Barron Falls and the town of Kuranda.

The cruise continued up the coast to the northern tip of Australia to Darwin, where the climate is tropical. From Darwin, they cruised to the Indonesian islands.

Their first stop was Komodo Island, famous for the Komodo dragons, the largest lizards in the world. The human population of about 2,000 is mainly descended from convicts. Then it was off to the island of Bali and to the town of Ubud, noted for its wood carvings and the colourful local Barong play depicting the everlasting struggle between good and evil. The next stop on their journey was to the island of Java to visit

Borobudur, a 9th century Buddhist temple. Their last stop in Indonesia was in Jakarta, the capital, with a thriving population of 10 million. While cruising to Singapore, the Volendam crossed the equator and there was a ritual performed to celebrate this event.

The final stop on their cruise was to Singapore, called the Lion City, and made up of some 63 islands. One of the main stops Marg and Don made was to the famous Raffles Hotel, known for its notables of literature, such as Somerset Maugham. Inside the hotel is the popular Long Bar, featuring the notable drink, the 'Singapore Sling', but at US\$30 a shot, Marg and Don claim they did not imbibe this historic drink. From Singapore, they flew to Vancouver and on to Ottawa.



There was lively discussion after the slide show as an appreciative audience had many questions, because some had never been to these places while others had been there but wanted to get an up-date on what conditions are now. Thanks to Valerie Hum and a trio of 'committee members', Carolynn, Uchennah, and Daunett (pictured), a table of not-so-light snacks and beverages helped to round out the evening.

The next presentation in the series will be the last Friday in January, 2012.

Respectfully submitted by Faye Beaufort as reported by Gloria and Ike Goodine

Random notes of Thankfulness

Special thanks to all who contributed to the 80th anniversary activities in 2011. We were well-feted, learned some interesting things, got to know each other better, and gave of our talents to help others. The organizing committee deserves a special mention for an interesting, comprehensive, and well-organized celebration.

Thank you and well done to all.

Youth and Children Update

(submitted by Melodee Lovering)

Sunday School: We are super happy to have moved back into our classrooms. For the time being it has been decided that we will maintain the same classes as we had last year. In January, Claire Savage will be teaching in the preschool to kindergarten class; Lauren Barbour will teach grades 1-3; Paul Crabtree will have grades 4-6; Melodee will have the youth class. After Easter, we have the following schedule: preschool (Ellen Andrews); grades 1-3 (Jenni Troup); grades 4-6 (Jocelyn Barden-Underhill); youth class (Paul Crabtree).

Renovations are mostly completed. There have been several clear-out, clean-up, and furniture assembly gatherings over the months of November and December as well as a couple of after-church mass moving of items. Thanks to the many people who have helped in this regard. So far just over \$6000 has been donated for the project. It was great to have so many people attend the grand re-opening party. Kudos to Ellen Andrews and her team for organizing it.

Parents and Tots: This group has met most Fridays this fall. Attendance can be a bit hit-and-miss due to the many variables involved with babies from doctor appointments to

colds and sleep schedules, but people are coming as they are able and a good time of fellowship is always had. There are about four core families and three or four others who come occasionally. It is nice to be back in the beautifully renovated nursery. Dave Smith is a great team member, and having his help has meant that we have occasionally had some other dads join us as well.

Luv2Groove: On October 30 we invited Luv2Groove to come and do a hip hop workshop with our kids for an hour. Children from babies up to grade 6 grooved big time during this fun event. About 25 kids Participated, and afterwards they and their parents attended the potluck supper. What a fun afternoon!

Christmas Pageant: Crystal Syrnyk, Jenni Troup and Melodee headed this up along with many volunteer hands.

Christmas Eve: The family Christmas Eve service was moved to 5.00 pm in 2011 as a trial and at the request of some of the younger families. Because it was a Saturday this time, it seemed an ideal occasion to test whether this earlier time would work well.

Youth: The senior youth would like to report that profits from the last two coffee shops have gone to purchase 4 hens, 2 roosters, medicines for 20 children, and to help stock 2 medical clinics through World Vi-



to be able to take a good group of our youth to this fun and meaningful event.

Intergenerational Worship: The worship team led in music on November 13 at the Children's Day service. The senior youth provided a dramatic tableau, and the preschool class, with the help of Patrick Hall on guitar and with the back-up of the worship team, led a special song for the baptismal candidates. Emily and Megan Clark performed a skit that rounded out the "holiness" theme. The next intergenerational service will be held on January 29.

The Worship Team hosted a **Kids Karol Sing** on Saturday, December 17. This was a time for kids and parents to come and sing out and learn some traditional carols. Christ-massy treats were served.

80th Anniversary: The Sunday School undertook an 80th Anniversary project to learn 80 Bible verses. We had to conclude this without quite completing it due to the extended length of the renovation. Our board with verses was buried until November, at which time we had to move right into preparation for the Christmas Pageant. Over half the verses were learned in the first part of the year, and we would ask that those who made a financial commitment to the project consider how much of their pledge would be appropriate to give. Thanks so much!

sion's special gift guide to aid those living in poverty around the world. Thanks for your support of Second Blessing!

Confirmation classes will be held in the New Year. So far, five youth have expressed interest in attending.

Junior youth have been meeting regularly, and this year we have been joined by some boy members. Recently we made cards and cookies to give to the elderly folk at Grace Manor, and we joined other members of the church in singing carols there on December 18. The youth have been responding with some deep and meaningful responses to our devotional times. It is great to see them taking their faith to heart! Carolyn Faight and Joan Bailey have been offering support to the program. A movie night and sleep-over is planned for January.

On February 11 there will be another The Point gathering for youth from all over Ontario and Quebec, sponsored by Ottawa Presbytery. I hope



Fostering Generosity

Scott Andrews reports on the Ecumenical Stewardship Conference

I wasn't sure what to expect when I arrived that evening at the financial stewardship conference in St. Petersburg. What first struck me was the diversity of Christians attending the conference. There were many Mennonites, Lutherans, Brethren, Methodists, Presbyterians, and a whole host of denominations I had never heard of. It was always fun to sit with a bunch of American Christians and explain your denomination to them while they did the same for you ("United Church of Christ" is in no way affiliated with the "United

Church of Canada", for example).

But we all had a passion and we were there to discuss this unholly thing called money. There is not much in life that people like to discuss less. A comedy troupe called "Ted and Company" was there to break the ice and lead many worship sessions, with much Mennonite/Brethren style music that was both unique and inspiring.

Anxiety

What is it that is so mystifying and deeply concerning about money to people? Is it that we sense our self-worth is tied up in our salary and stock portfolios? Is it that we live

secretly terrorized by the notion that our paycheck-to-paycheck existence will end along with our layoff notice, or that the entire financial system will one day end in a sort of Black Monday Apocalypse? Is it that the only security we can depend on is that winning Lotto 649 ticket or a basement full of gold bars? We spoke of this anxiety at the conference. When it comes to money, many people live in fear. In fact, the headline of the St. Petersburg Times ran "Euro on Brink of Collapse" the morning the conference started. But at church we talk of God's unfailing love and abundance – virtually the opposite of the assumption built into our economic system, which preaches scarcity as its starting point. How can we overcome our fear?

Moving from the House of Fear to the House of Love

Security comes from trust in God and through relationships in a community of faith. Churches are for relationship building – with God and with neighbour. These days, most people have fewer and fewer authentic relationships with others that they can really count on. Make your friends know that they matter to you, that you really care about them, that they are not just someone to talk to at a party. "Making God's love tangible is the calling of every Christian", as one conference leader put it. And that's where generosity starts.

Lectionary for January 2012

January 1

Isa. 61:10—62:3
Psalm. 148
Gal. 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

January 6, Epiphany of the Lord

Isa. 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Eph. 3:1-12
Matt. 2:1-12

January 8 Baptism of the Lord

Gen. 1:1-5
Psalm. 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

January 15

1 Sam. 3:1-10 (11-20)
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Cor. 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

January 22

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm. 62:5-12
1 Cor. 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

January 29

Deut. 18:15-20
Psalm. 111
1 Cor. 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28



Kids Karol Sing

On the really cold Saturday morning of December 17, Parkdale children and parents gathered in the Ladies' Parlour for the first annual "Kids Karol Sing", organized by the Worship Team. The lyrics were displayed on the big screen, while Marianne and Patrick accompanied the sing-along on piano and guitar. The kids (and their parents) learned and sang traditional songs of Christmas: The First Noel, Silent Night, Joy to the World, Little Drummer Boy, Do you Hear what I hear?, Go Tell it

on the Mountain, and Away in a Manger.

The children listened to the Bible reading of Jesus' birth and "Room for a Little One: A Christmas Tale" by Martin Waddell. They enjoyed the beautiful illustrations from this wonderful Christmas story. The morning ended with a short prayer of thanks, followed by some hot chocolate, juice, and lots of cookies and treats.

Thanks to everyone for their participation and help. We look forward to doing it again next year!



RECIPE

Chinese Stir-fried Glutinous Rice Balls (Nian Gao)

Submitted by Wenxi Chen

Nian Gao is normally eaten for Chinese New Year, as it signifies good fortune for the coming year. "Nian" means year and "gao" means high — translating loosely to "every year, may you reach higher and higher. Chinese New Year is January 23, 2012.

- 1 pound glutinous rice balls, sliced (thawed if frozen or soaked in water overnight if dried).
 - 1 medium head napa cabbage, washed
 - 6-8 mushrooms, sliced (optional) – Chinese mushrooms are best
 - 5 green onions, julienned
 - 5 tbsp vegetable oil
 - salt to taste
 - 1/2 pound pork loin, cut into strips
 - 3 tbsp soy sauce
 - 1 tbsp sesame oil
 - 1-2 tbsp cornstarch
 - 1-2 cups chicken broth
1. Soak the thawed rice cakes in cold water for 30 minutes, or the dried ones overnight. Slice thinly.
 2. Slice the cabbage leaves into 1-inch wide segments.
 3. In a bowl, mix the pork, soy sauce, sesame oil, and cornstarch together until the pork is evenly coated.
 4. In a large non-stick wok, heat 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil, sauté half of the green onions over high heat. When the onions begin to sizzle, add the cabbage and mushrooms, and sauté. Sprinkle a little salt to taste. When the cabbage is almost cooked, remove it to a bowl.
 5. Heat on high the remaining 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in the same wok and add the remaining green onions. When the onions sizzle, add the pork and sauté until the meat is nearly cooked through.
 6. Pour the cabbage back into the pot and stir the pork and cabbage together.
 7. Drain the rice balls, slice and add them to the wok along with a half cup of chicken broth. Add more broth as needed or desired. Stir the contents of the wok around to prevent sticking. When the rice cakes are soft and chewy, remove from heat. Serve hot.

Glutinous rice balls are available at T&T, 224 Hunt Club at Riverside Rd: frozen foods section under vegetarian foods. Buy the plain ones for this dish.
<http://steamykitchen.com/15288-chinese-stirfried-sticky-rice-cakes-nian-gao.html>

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO PARKDALE?

Len Baird, since 1931, and Barbara

In December 1931 my parents brought me to the front of Parkdale Church to be baptized. I liked what I saw and decided to stay. I attended Cubs, Scouts and Rovers as well as Sunday School and later Young Peoples.

For many years in the late forties and early fifties, we had evening services in the sanctuary. About once a month we had a religious movie. I was happy to be the projectionist on those Sundays. New Year's Eve dances and Sadie Hawkins dances were very popular with our young people and with many others from other churches. Barb and I helped organize such events, and it was rewarding to work with other young people whose activities were centered around the church. Summer activities included ball games against other United churches in the Ottawa area.

Barb and I were married in Parkdale in July 1957 shortly after we became part of a couples club (the Ark Club as we came in two by two). After the birth of our third child we transferred to a church closer to our home so our children could attend Sunday

School with the neighbourhood children. We returned here in 1981 to rejoin this caring, friendly congregation. I was happy to serve on the worship committee, working with several excellent ministers. Barb and I were honoured to serve as elders for many years.

We are blessed with inspirational sermons, an excellent choir, and surrounded by a congregation who cares about their fellow man.

Ellen and Scott Andrews, Frederick, Isaac, Theodore, Rosemary, since 1976

I started attending Parkdale as a baby when my family lived on Geneva Street, and was baptized and confirmed at this church. I have great memories of my brother, Jeffrey, and I running around the basement like lunatics, hopped up on McDonald's orange drink, at church suppers. Scott got dragged to Parkdale a few times while we were dating and even had to pinch hit once on Christmas Eve, in the role of Isaiah, when one of the pageant participants came down with the flu.

When I left home for the University of Calgary, I didn't think much

about continuing regular church attendance. However, I had a Christian roommate and also found that I was absolutely sick of seeing nothing but 18-year-olds in residence. I needed some old church ladies! Scott and I started attending St. David's United Church together.

We were married at Parkdale in 1997 (my mom's UCW unit even threw a bridal shower!) with the Rev. Dr. Ott. McKennitt performing the service and with the reception in the Tape Hall. When my studies took us to Toronto, we re-connected with the Rev. Dr. Andrew Stirling at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church and made many close friends at the theological seminary, including Dale and Maryann Skinner.

Life and career brought us back to Ottawa in 2001, and we were back at Parkdale immediately. We quickly made friends through YO-MACOP. Twice we even tried to buy a house close to the church, but have now joined the legion of east-enders who commute across town (we're thinking of you Helen, Hazel, Angela, and Matt).

Over the years, Parkdale has met many of our needs - practical, social, and spiritual. We have found doctors, lawyers, accountants, realtors, and babysitters through the

church. Our parties and play dates tend to have high congregational representation. Scott and I have also had the chance to explore gifts of music, teaching, and leadership through the church. Over the past two years, I've even had the chance to be the Chair of Council.

We have been so blessed and supported by our Parkdale friends as we've kept the Sunday School full: Frederick (2003), Isaac (2005), Theodore (2008), and Rosemary (2010). Freddy attended the Sunday School picnic at 6 days old. Our kids are so used to our epic Sunday mornings that they feel cheated if we aren't at church an hour before and after the service.

We keep coming back in large part because of the amazing people we've met through the church. There are people who challenge us to be our best selves, who give so generously of time, talents, and treasures, and who model the type of family we would like to be.

We are so hoping to pass on the legacy of a healthy and inspired church to our children as they move through life with their best buddy Jesus.

Compiled by Valerie Hum. If you would like to share your story, please contact Valerie at 613-728-8830 or Email: valerie.hum@rogers.com



DISPATCHES FROM BRAZIL

Religious Diversity and Ecumenism in the Canadian and Brazilian Armed Forces

During the period of discernment, as I was preparing to come to Brazil to work with CESE (Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço), I was encouraged by Canadian colleagues to learn more about the relatively recent initiative to unify the Chaplaincy Branch of the Canadian Forces.

As I result, I met with Padre Karl McLean in 2008 and he ex-

plained how and why, over a 10-year period in the 90s and into this century, the Canadian Forces unified the Chaplaincy Branch. Prior to unification, there had been two separate services - the Catholic and Protestant Branches. The decision was taken to have one Branch and to include other religions to better serve the members of the Forces in their religious diversity. That process of unification proceeded steadily and respectfully, I am told, over an almost 10-year period. In 2003, the Forces published a book entitled 'The Ecumenical Model of Ministry in the Canadian Forces Chaplaincy Branch'.



I recently wrote to Padre McLean to share an experience here in Salvador where my work is helping to strengthen ecumenical and inter-religious relationships.

We at CESE had some hesitation about an invitation from the Local Command of the Brazilian Armed Forces. It was an invitation to attend the first-ever meeting of members of the Forces with representatives of the afro-brazilian and indigenous religions. Those religions are especially strong here in the north-east of Brazil, where descendants of African slaves are concentrated. Salvador is recognized as the most African city outside of Africa. Some 80% of the population is of African descent. Persecution persists for racial and religious reasons. I wrote about this topic in a letter that is now posted on the website of the United Church of Canada. <http://www.united-church.ca/communications/overseas>

The invitation said that the Forces meet periodically with representatives of other religious groups, with Catholics, Evangelicals, and Spiritists.

Personal experience of some CESE staff during the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985) including Eliana, Executive Director, in part explains

the hesitation in accepting the invitation from the Armed Forces Local Command. CESE workloads are heavy and that also contributed. However, I wanted to attend, as did one of my colleagues who is also involved in ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. Off we went!

To our surprise, there were as many as 200 people crowding the small amphitheatre. On Fridays, members of the afro-religions wear white and, in solidarity, so do many other Brazilians in the north-east. I often do too and did that day. Dress was a striking feature of the meeting, with half the participants in sparkling and flowing white and the other half in tailored military uniforms, including many who are members of one of the religions. Also striking were the drums that punctuated all discourse...

After general introductions, we received greetings from all the religions represented. Most salutations involved ritual expressions - chanting or drumming. There were many symbols being worn and displayed. It was all very lively, but also solemn. Lots of clapping by all. Twice in the proceedings we were all invited to move around and greet each other with hugs. Typical in Brazil!



to tears the whole time. He spoke about the scene before him of his military colleagues together with so many representatives of his own religion. He won all hearts and the respect of all participants.

It was an important advance in the struggle to end religious intolerance which is also a current CESE priority. It was also a remarkable privilege for me - a foreigner - to be welcomed and given a chance to speak. Being the only foreigner attending, I certainly stood out. It was an

The highlight for all of us was the presentation by a young soldier (of perhaps 40 years) about his work as part of a nucleus of Forces members providing support and service to members of the afro-brazilian religions and about the Forces relations generally with the religions. Religious and racial discrimination is a legacy of slavery and colonization. Within a minute or so, he was so moved by the historical moment and the celebratory gathering that he had to pause. He continued haltingly through his presentation, close

immensely moving experience for my colleague and me.

Our Executive Director, Eliana, said later that, as much as she sincerely honours such advances, she continues, unfortunately, to be almost unbearably uncomfortable in military groups or settings. You may recall that I recently wrote about her experience.

Happy New Year. See you soon.
Kathleen Stephenson

IN FROM THE COLD UPDATE



The tenth year of our In From The Cold Ministry has had another very successful beginning. Each Saturday, from 11:00am to approximately 6:00pm, the Tape Hall is a very busy, happy place. The number of guests continues to increase - 126, 146, 154, 149, 154, 175 for the six Saturdays. This increase in numbers is reported around the city from similar programs, and partially reflects the challenges presented by rising costs and lack of suitable, available work.

The contributions from the Food Bank and our local merchants are invaluable. Anthony's ongoing support and encouragement, along with the enthusiasm, efficiency, and cheerful kindness of our team of volunteers continue to provide a safe, welcoming atmosphere in which our guests relax, participate in crafts, read books, magazines, and newspapers, listen to excellent entertainment, and enjoy the delicious four-course

meal created each week by the kitchen teams.

The prayers and financial support of the congregation are needed and appreciated. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us give thanks that TOGETHER we CAN and ARE reaching out to our community.

HELP NEEDED: With the increase in the number of guests, the team of volunteers has increased and, as a result, more T-shirts worn by the volunteers and tea towels need to be laundered. This has been done by one person each week but to make the task more manageable, three volunteers are needed - two to do T-shirts and one to do tea towels. These could be picked up after church on Sunday and returned by Wednesday.

Please email Camille at infromthecold_parkdale@yahoo.com or phone the church office 613-728-8656. If we have a good response, no one would be asked to do the laundry more than once a month and we have only three months left. Please give this task your prayerful consideration.

COME JOIN THE TEAM.



Mosa Abu Nasar's Wedding

As you may recall, the Abu Nasar family came to us from the Syrian Al Hol refugee camp in September 2009 (other families arrived in Canada as well, and they were scattered in other cities, such as Halifax, Edmonton, Victoria and Hamilton). Early in 2011, there was a wedding among their refugee friends in Hamilton and off went the Abu Nasars on their first out-of-town trip to Hamilton.

As we now know, the two elder boys had their eyes wide open at that wedding because, shortly

after their return from Hamilton, Mr. Abu Nasar announced that he had intentions of speaking with the fathers of two young ladies to whom his boys had been attracted. Mr. Abu Nasar was advised that the middle son, Mosa, had been accepted by the young lady's father as a possible husband. There was great joy in the Abu Nasar family.

The young lady, Hanan, was given permission by her father and Mr. Abu Nasar to speak on the telephone with Mosa, after which Hanan's father chaperoned her to Ottawa for a face-to-face meeting. Thereafter, they got engaged and Mosa soon "flew

the coop," leaving his first Canadian home in Ottawa to live and work in Hamilton. Parkdale United Church was informed by Mr. Abu Nasar that the wedding reception was set for November 24, 2011, at 5:00 p.m. at the Polish Legion Hall in Hamilton. The official wedding ceremony, including marriage contract ceremony, was conducted by the imam (their religious leader) prior to the reception to which we were invited.

We arrived at the hall at 5:00 p.m. and Hanan's church sponsors were there to greet us. Anthony and Wendy Bailey arrived soon after. A lady ushered us into the reception hall, which was beautifully decorated in white and pink. There were approximately 15 round tables, all exquisitely decorated with white table cloths, pink centre cloths, and vases containing pink flowers. The chairs were adorned in white covers with bows tied at the back. The stage was draped in white background and pink netting, flowers, and strings of miniature white lights.

At 5:30 p.m., the couple arrived to much fanfare, jubilation, and music. They took to the stage in royal fashion, encouraged by clapping and loud acknowledge-

ment. The groom was dressed in a traditional three-piece suit – black, with a white satin vest. You should have seen the bride! She was a vision of loveliness in a dazzling and distinctive conical white satin hood that flowed into a shawl that covered her shoulders and continued past her waist. Her beautiful long bridal gown had an embroidered fitted bodice and a wide hooped satin skirt, with dozens of tucks and folds. She looked like a princess.

The festivities really began at this point. All the men, including the groom, left the room. Just as quickly as they departed, the music was turned up and the ladies removed their *hijabs* (head scarves), as well as their shoes if they felt more comfortable that way. They started dancing to the Palestinian music, with their hands in the air and their waists and hips moving in the famous Middle Eastern style gyrations. The bride removed her hood to display a gorgeous hairdo with little flowers tucked all over and hair flowing to the back. She descended from the stage with girls holding up her hooped skirt, and entered the middle of the ring of dancing women, beginning with slow graceful hand movements in the air and flowing into



a graceful body dance. Tired, no doubt, from the heavy dress, she returned exhausted to the stage.

After an hour had passed, there was a hustle and bustle in the room as all the ladies rushed to put on their *hijabs*, shoes, etc. “The men are coming,” called someone. The groom and all the men, including Anthony, entered the room. The music was turned up louder, and all the men and young boys took over the dancing area below the stage. The men wrapped their hands around each other in a ring and began a dance that starts off slowly and crescendos into a studied dance; moving together and to the right in a circle, stomping their feet at prescribed intervals, and then moving around faster and faster as the music and singing gets

louder and louder. Round and round they went, singing, laughing, sweating, and having uncontrollable fun!

Mosa’s mother, Eman, then went into the middle of the men’s circle, waving two handkerchiefs and that was when all the ladies joined the men and everyone, including our Parkdale group trying desperately to look authentic, danced round and round with the group. Of course, Anthony had initially been cloistered with the men, who taught him their dance during the hour they were away and he was, therefore, able to join the men in their energetic, gyrating and seemingly endless dance.

The dancing subsided and the caterers brought out trays of cooked mutton, seasoned long-

grain rice covered with nuts, tossed salad, and rolls. For dessert, we savoured delicious pastries called baklava. For refreshments, there was a casual array of non-alcoholic drinks.

Again, the bride and groom left the stage to join the guests in cake-cutting. The two-tiered pink and white wedding cake was cut and sampled by the bride and groom before they returned to the stage; but not before the groom embraced the bride and lifted her in a public display of joy.

Both the parents of the bride and the groom joined the happy couple on the stage. The groom’s father (Mr. Abu Nasar) donned the bride with a gold necklace, earrings, and a ring and kissed her. It was then the bride’s father’s turn to place more jewellery around his daughter’s neck. These gestures solemnly indicated that both families have been joined together.

The evening culminated when Mosa embraced the bride’s father, embraced and kissed his mother, and finally kissed his father several times on his cheeks, then his forehead, and finally his hands, expressing gratitude and respect. Mosa’s

two brothers, Whaled (older) and Mustapha (younger), and the rest of the family joined the couple on stage for family photos, and we were also invited to be photographed with them.

We all agreed that this was a wonderful experience that was full of much fun and laughter, and that we were honoured to have been invited. It was particularly unforgettable for Wendy whose birthday it was that day. Anthony and Wendy had travelled down by car, whereas the rest of us (three Parkdalers – Elise Mennie, Cheryl Perkins, and me, and Norma McCord of MacKay United Church) enjoyed the comfort of the Via Rail train to Toronto and then the Go-Bus to Hamilton.

We are all happy to have been invited to be a part of this wonderful experience and celebration, and were delighted to have taken greetings from you, our Parkdale family, to Mosa and Hanan. We wished them much happiness together, and we pray that they will have many blessings in their lives together.

Submitted by
Faye Beaufort
Mission, Outreach & Justice

**An Enchanted
“Moon-lit” Concert**



On Saturday, December 10, approximately 180 people welcomed Christian folk artist Jacob Moon for his third performance at Parkdale United Church. The penultimate 80th anniversary event was organized and hosted by the Mission, Outreach and Justice Committee as a fundraising event for the In From The Cold (IFTC) supper hospitality ministry.

Jacob is a critically-acclaimed performer from Hamilton, Ontario, who has won numerous awards. As a follower of Christ, Jacob is passionate about his faith and social justice. And so, he performs for socially-conscious organizations and churches, such as Parkdale United.

Anthony Bailey opened the anniversary event in prayer, reminding us of the reason for the [holiday] season, Jesus Christ. There was then a real buzz in the air as we waited for Jacob’s concert to begin.

Normally, the renowned singer-songwriter-guitarist is the sole performer, as he makes his guitar sound like an entire band. How does he do that? As his fans know, the answer lies in his outstanding footwork. Jacob uses an electronic foot-run sound device, known as live looping, which allows him to simulate various sounds, beats, and instruments. On this special occasion, however, he was accompanied by singer-drummer Lisa Winn (pictured) and the Michael Schulte string quartet (also pictured). From their very first inspired musical piece, Vivaldi’s “Winter,” we knew that we were in for an enchanted evening.

Many of Jacob’s songs are deeply personal. As a case in point, he performed a song that he recently wrote for his wife, entitled “Live a Little.” It was a song about finding love the second time around and the joy of it all. As he began, he reminded us to live in the moment because time is precious.

Later, it was hard not to be touched by Jacob’s updated story regarding his trip a few years ago to meet his sponsored child, Sara, in El Salvador. He was so moved by the Holy



Spirit and that experience that he and his wife decided to adopt a child, Gabriel. They are both absolutely thrilled to be new parents.

As Jacob performed, I reflected on how his family name is so apropos. Like the shimmering moon, he gently radiates his faith in Christ and what it means to be a Christian. An engaging and humble man, he makes no attempt to outshine the other performers. He merely glows with the energy from the Spirit that dwells in him. His fresh mix of non-preachy music touches our

soul and somehow it lights the darkest parts of our heart, particularly on chilly evenings when we yearn for a glimmer of better, warmer days to come.

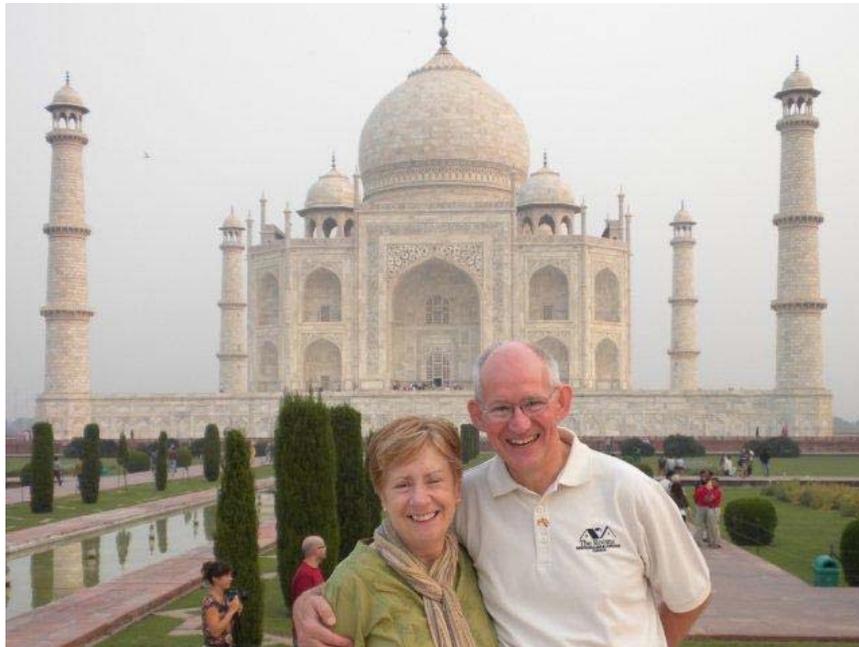
After the intermission, the string quartet played an exotic ensemble of three dances from Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker” play, and Jacob and Lisa sang several duets of beautiful Christmas carols. Lisa’s strong voice provided the perfect complement to Jacob’s mellow tones. It was indeed an eclectic and inspired mix of music.

In closing, thank you, Jacob, for an enchanted “Moon-lit” evening! Blessings to you, Lisa and the Michael Schulte string quartet.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Hennessy
Chair





Impressions of India

It seems presumptuous to read a few books, travel under the care of drivers, guides, hotel staff, and tourist company representatives through only parts of a large and complex country, then write an article describing that country. What can such an article be but highly personal, incomplete, and impressionistic? At the same time, how can we travel to wonderfully-exotic, far-off places and not come back from our experience bursting with insights - however unsystematic or uninformed - that we want to share. So I approach this article cautiously - fearful of displaying my ignorance and of stepping beyond what I can confidently state. Yet it is also a welcome oppor-

tunity to set down some of the thoughts that filled my mind while my wife, Elaine, and I were in India over five weeks, from early October until the first week of November 2011.

This is not as popular a time of year for westerners to tour India. It is still quite hot and dry in the north, and hot, humid and sometimes wet in the south. But it is a month in which many Indian families travel within their own country. This is because the festival of Diwali typically falls in late October or early November. Diwali is a celebration that is extremely popular and meaningful for Hindus and other religious groups. While it holds slightly different sig-

nificance (and even spellings) in different parts of India, Diwali everywhere “celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance....., a reaffirmation of hope, a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill, and a religiously-sanctioned celebration of the simple - and some not so simple - joys of life.” Sound familiar?

Outwardly, Diwali features strings of lights festooning businesses and homes, fireworks, and sweet food. (Still sound familiar?) Spiritually, it is, for many, a time to honour Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity. In the north, where Hindus predominate, Diwali is typically a one-week holiday. In the south, where there is more Muslim and Christian influence, Diwali is shorter, but still enthusiastically celebrated. (After all, who can pass up the chance to set off firecrackers, spruce up their homes, and pray for better times?) This holiday period meant that we met many Indians visiting the same temples, forts, and other sites as we were.

In area, India is the 7th largest country in the world, about one-third the size of Canada. But it is really a diverse group of countries grafted together both before and after independence in 1947 from a series of existing states and independent kingdoms through a process of hard bargaining with the new Indian government. What this means in practice is

that the various states of India still retain their own distinctive senses of identity, and political and social practices. For example, the southwestern state of Kerala is the only matriarchy in India, and is perhaps the first jurisdiction in the world to freely elect a Communist government (in a close result in 1957). Kerala also claims a literacy rate of almost 100% (while at least one other state, Bihar, has a rate below 65%).

India’s population is over 1.2 billion, 80% of whom live in the countryside and depend heavily on agriculture. The rest reside in large towns and cities of up to 10-20+ million people. Some 70% of Indians are under the age of 35. It was significant news in India in October 2011 when the globe’s estimated 7 billionth person was born. India was selected as the home country of that baby, Nardis Yadav, the daughter of farmers living near Lucknow - ironically, and sadly, a city known for the widespread practice of female feticide. Indeed, the imbalance in population toward males is a source of widespread concern. At the same time, women hold powerful positions in politics, government, business, and social institutions across the country.

The poverty in India is widespread and sometimes awful to see. (In a country as heavily populated as India, even low rates of a social or economic condition can affect millions of people.) Frankly, this is what had inhibited us from travelling



to India before now. On our drive in from the Delhi airport minutes after our arrival in the country, we saw a family of three sleeping on the ground in a bus shelter. In cities, people live on the sidewalks under makeshift tarps strapped to the walls surrounding luxury hotels. Rural hovels are often little more than plastic sheets or thatched roofs over a couple of cross-arms. Construction sites are sometimes surrounded by similar dwellings of migrant labourers. Maimed and disfigured people are common - travelling by hand-powered bicycles, flimsy skateboard-like contraptions, crutches, or simply pushing themselves along the ground on pieces of cardboard.

But we experienced very little of the in-your-face begging that we were warned to expect. Only a few of the people we encountered were aggressive or insistent. Even then, we found it hard to refuse their requests. In the end, though, we accepted our guides' consistent recommendations not to give money or gifts, even if we were skeptical of their assertions that many of the beggars are "professionals", who rent children by the day from their even needier parents. (Instead, on our return to Canada, we decided to channel our support through an Indian NGO, the Institute of Social Studies Trust, which runs street-level anti-poverty initiatives and women's shelters, while doing system-level social pol-

icy research and advocacy.)

When we arrived in India, the newspapers had stories and editorials about "Who are the poor?" These had been triggered by a recent report and recommendations on who should be eligible for entitlements under various central government programs. Some argued that India's "poverty line" should be raised to reflect continuing economic progress. Others found such "lines" arbitrary - more likely to exclude many who were genuinely deserving and to include many who were not. These commentators argued for universal access to benefits, rather than continuous tinkering and re-definitions. In either case, India recognizes that intolerably large numbers of its population are in grave need, and that the same state that provides such ready and generous support to its most wealthy and privileged citizens also has an obligation to help those in need. In many countries, such issues are never raised publicly.

What struck us most forcefully was the overwhelming sense of movement and energy everywhere in India. The roads in the cities, towns, and villages are packed with cars, trucks, motorcycles, buses, bicycles, auto-rickshaws, animal-powered carts, and pedestrians - all going somewhere. Two lanes marked on the road means 3-4 lanes of vehicles, side-by-side, honking, passing at what seemed to us impossibly small tolerances between vehicles. Then

there are the cattle, sheep, goats, oxen, dogs, and dromedaries roving freely along streets and across roads. Yes, there is intense and absolutely heart-breaking poverty. And there is also this sense of moving forward, of doing what is necessary to live and (hopefully) prosper.

One small example. On the Agra railway platform was a man circulating through the waiting passengers. His business was two-fold: shining shoes and repairing zippers and other broken bits of luggage. Have you ever tried to get the tag end of a zipper repaired in Canada? In India, someone makes part of his living doing just that - in an operation that takes about 20 seconds with a specialized pair of pliers and one of several hundred different tags hanging from a cord. India is full of small businesses, from road-side barbers, tire re-sellers, garbage pickers, and garland makers, to tailors, convenience store owners, fruit and vegetable retailers, and small engine mechanics. Every single business reflects the owner's desire to improve her or his economic and social lot in life - and the expectation that this is indeed possible. At the other end of the economic spectrum, India manufactures its own vehicles, has built a world-spanning information-technology industry, and creates more movies than anyone could ever watch (although we did just that in a crowded and comfortable cinema in Chennai at 8:20 a.m. on our last full day in India).



Here is an example of how India is trying to balance economic progress while addressing the needs of its most vulnerable citizens. In October, the National Innovation Council issued a call for proposals “for innovation to reduce the drudgery of our working-class population”, primarily in blue-collar occupations, construction, and street-level vending. (Interestingly, agriculture - much of which depends on stoop labour - did not seem to be included.) The Council is looking for ideas in such areas as improvements to the design of tools, work processes, equipment, and techniques. But what would catch any westerner’s eye, obsessed as we are with “productivity improvements”, is the requirement that “proposals should not be labour-displacing”. At least one high-profile organization in India seems to feel

that keeping people at work, at however modest a wage rate, is preferable to seeing them unemployed and even more marginalized from the mainstream economy. Indeed, much of the work done in India appears to be very labour-intensive. For example, dirt and rocks at small construction sites are most commonly moved in small baskets perched on the heads of a stream of labourers, both men and women. A front-end loader might do the job faster. But what would those workers then do?

Billboards advertising educational institutions and cement companies are everywhere - perhaps the clearest indication of India’s national secular priorities. Both public and private schools require their students to wear uniforms, to help level economic differences, and, we were told, to make it more difficult for the students to inconspicuously skip class. Post-secondary institutions highlight technical education. The several universities that make up the Indian Institute of Technology are world-class in every way. Canadian universities recruit actively for students throughout the country at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

But if India is intensely secular, it is also intensely spiritual. The country is dominated by Hindus. However, there are also regional assemblages of Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and others. Hinduism has literally millions of gods - many of them the

same god with different names, depending on the region of the country or the role the god is playing in any particular incarnation. Having said that, there are three principal Hindu gods: Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver), and Shiva (destroyer of evil). Gods are considered to be all-pervasive. Hindu representations of those gods are not, in themselves, worshipped. Rather, the god is seen to simply reside temporarily in the representation.

Hindus do not attend regular worship services. Instead, people pray and present tokens to the gods at any of the many local shrines, or (especially on special occasions) at larger temples, while going about their daily affairs. “Karma” is the result of an individual’s actions in any of her or his reincarnated lives. The objective of Hindu religious life is to create a karma that releases the individual from physical, mental, and emotional desires, and the cycle of birth/life/death/reincarnation, to make that individual one with the gods.

Jainism is a numerically tiny, but interesting and historically influential religion that contrasts sharply with Hinduism in several ways. For one, Jains have no gods, but rather celebrate a series of historical prophets. For many, Jainism seems to be a religion of extremes and absolutes. Its five tenets - non-violence, non-stealing, truthfulness, sexual purity, and renunciation of unnecessary possessions - seem reasonable

enough. But practiced in its purest form, this can mean behaviours that appear shockingly ascetic. For example, the injunction against violence of any kind means that Jains are enjoined from eating after sunset, in case an insect flies into the eater’s mouth and is killed. Similarly, root vegetables are avoided, in case a grub is harmed as the vegetable is harvested. Extreme Jain ascetics are known to live naked in the forests as a sign of their complete self-abnegation. At the same time, Jains are considered, as a group, to be very successful business people, and historically served as the bankers to many local rulers. Elaine and I spent a lovely evening with a Jain family at an outdoor entertainment. They freely acknowledged (as many Christians do) that their practice of their faith was considerably more “flexible” than its tenets, strictly followed, might require.

India is perhaps best known outside its borders for its caste system. This system, with its four major social groupings and its blizzard of sub-groupings, officially no longer exists, but has certainly not been eliminated in daily practice. (One of our guides - a middle-aged man in a rural area - proudly informed us early in our tour that the caste system was still followed in his region.) At the same time, there are a myriad of what we would call “affirmative action” programs in post-secondary admissions, public sector hiring, parliamentary representation, and

other fields. And individual “untouchables”, for example, have long played influential roles in political movements and in the Indian state.

Corruption is a continuing source of anger, frustration, and embarrassment across India. In many ways, low-level corruption - in the form, for example, of small bribes to have routine public documents processed - can be seen as simply a reflection of the low wage rates and an officious mentality. At the higher levels of the public and private sectors, massive corruption diverts scarce economic resources, warps the contractual process, and contributes to everything from unsafe working conditions to unfulfilled projects.

But what is striking about India is not that corruption exists, but that it is discussed and deplored so publicly. Even the people we met in the tourism industry - one that in other countries always presents an absurdly sanitized version of conditions - openly criticized business and public sector leaders. Clearly, a “tipping point” is approaching, where the country will move beyond individual prosecutions for corrupt practices, and discussion of stricter laws and enforcement, to one in which such practices are considered intolerable on any level.

Yet for all its intense challenges of corruption, poverty, infrastructure maintenance, employment, literacy, religious tolerance, sanitation, and



on and on and on, India is still the world’s largest functioning democracy, with a free press, an independent judiciary, hotly-contested elections, and tumultuous public discourse - all within a bubbling economy, an increasingly-educated population, and a heck of a lot of smart, hard-working young people. India appears to be a country that is intensely optimistic. If you are trying to anticipate the next world economic superpower, bet on India.

As for the “tourist” part of our vacation, our adventure took us through Delhi, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaipur, Agra, and Varanasi in the north-western region of the country, then Cochin, Alleppey, Munnar, Trichy, and Chennai in the south - with stops ranging from Agra’s Taj Mahal (yes, it is the most spectacularly-beautiful building imaginable), religious ceremonies beside the Ganges River in Varanasi (Hinduism’s most sacred city), the sculpted tea plantations (and exciting roads) running up and down the steep slopes of Kerala, and the rock-hewn monuments (ancient stone carvers’ workshops) in Mamallapuram. In all, we spent 34 nights in India, stayed in 18 hotels, had 23 local guides, and five drivers (two wonderful men for two-week periods each). Everything - and I do mean everything - went without a hitch. The tourism industry in India is a well-oiled machine, staffed by capable, conscientious, and pleasant people for whom “nothing is impossi-

ble”. And the Canadian dollar goes very, very, very far indeed! (If you would like our itinerary, feel free to e-mail me at jbutcher@magma.ca, or telephone me at 613-725-2280.)

Finally, we knew that our trip would be auspicious: our wedding anniversary (August 15) is also Indian Independence Day, and Elaine’s mother shares her birthday (October 2) with Gandhi.

References

For more on the Diwali, festival, simply Google the name and read the interesting Wikipedia entry, or the shorter BBC summary. Similarly, there are extensive Wikipedia entries on Hinduism and Jainism, as well as books such as Willard G. Oxtoby (editor), World Religions: Eastern Traditions (Oxford University Press, 2002). Two well-written, informative, and easily-available books on India are: Ramachandra Guha, India After Gandhi: The History of the World’s Largest Democracy (Harper Perennial 2008); and Patrick French, India: A Portrait (Allen Lane 2011). Mark Tully, a long-time BBC correspondent in India, has written several books on the country. Our guide book was Fodor’s Exploring India, but there are many others.

John Butcher
November 29, 2011

PRESBYTERY REPORT

Ottawa Presbytery met at Aylmer United Church on December 13, 2011. The Presbytery is appreciative of Aylmer's invitation to host the December meeting. It has become somewhat of a tradition to be recipients of Aylmer's gracious hospitality and wonderful food for the Advent program meeting.



Chair, Rev. Dianne Cardin, gave a report of the work of the Presbytery since its last meeting. Highlights of that report included:

- the meeting of Montreal and Ottawa Conference Executive and the planning work being done for the Annual Meeting May 27 - 29. Rev. Dr. Tom Sherwood will be the theme speaker, sharing insights from the research he has been doing on the Echo Generation. It was also indicated that Conference will continue to engage, beyond the General Council available funding, on a part-time contract, someone to resource stewardship work;

- highlights were shared from the March General Council Executive

meeting. There are a number of reports and recommendations that are being considered in preparation for General Council 41 in August 2012. A decision has been made to remain in the Toronto area in terms of housing the General Council offices, with a

number of proposals within that region under consideration. There is now an office of philanthropy to assist in new approaches to giving. There will be opportunity for consultation with our Presbytery in January regarding the Effective Ministry and Healthy Pastoral Relationship report;

- an outline of the action of the Presbytery Executive for information, regarding review processes with a particular pastoral charge and ministry personnel;

- inviting people to sign the card of best wishes for Larry Richardson, the office administrator for Conference who works in the Ottawa United Church Regional Centre and who is currently undergoing health treatments.

Rev. Paul Dillman, Chair of the Staff Committee, invited the Ot-

tawa Presbytery Staff forward:

David Stafford (recording secretary), Kiersten Jensen (resource centre coordinator), Judy Lawson (office administrator), Hilary Merritt (youth and young adult minister), and Lillian Roberts (Presbytery Minister). Paul expressed the appreciation of the Presbytery to its staff for their faithful service.

The theme of this program meeting was Celtic Prayer for Pilgrimage and Advent. During the summer of 2011 a number of presbyters had visited Iona and they shared their stories and resources during the worship and workshop time. Rev. James Murray, Rev. Christine Johnson, Rev. Elizabeth Bryce, Rev. Paul Dillman and the Bryce-Dillman children, and Rev. Lillian Roberts offered reflections on their experience. The time of worship was enriched by the gifts of the musicians: Sarah Adcock (harpist), Paul Sales (keyboard), Rev. Karen Boivin (drum), Rev. Hilary Merritt (clarinet). The members of Presbytery concluded the evening by sharing in Holy Communion.

Rev. Lillian Roberts
Presbytery Minister

**2012
Canadian Centennial Choir
Wild Berry Fundraiser**



Frozen **wild blueberries**
from Nova Scotia
(2 kg. bag for \$19, 12 cups)

Frozen **raspberries**
from Chile
(2.5 kg. bag for \$27, 24 cups)

Frozen **cranberries**
from Maine
(2 kg. bag for \$14, 17 cups)

Cookbooks: blueberry, cranberry,
raspberry
(\$11 each)

Order deadline and payment due
date is January 31, 2012
Cheques to be made out to Valerie
Hum

Pickup is Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012
St. Basil's Catholic Church parking
lot
9:30 -11:00 am
Northeast side of Maitland at the
Queensway
Val Hum
613-728-8830

When arriving at church on Sunday mornings, please consider leaving the Gladstone lot for those who



need to be near the door (those who are frail or who have young children, strollers, bags, canes, walkers, etc.) .

WOULD YOU LIKE GIVINGS ENVELOPES?

Parkdale United Church is financed by congregational donations. If you do not have envelopes and would like to, please contact the church office. Using regular envelopes with your own number helps ensure that all your givings are included in one charitable tax receipt at year-end.

the Messenger



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The Parkdale Messenger is published at Parkdale United Church, on the last Sunday of each month, and includes a calendar of events and activities for the following month. We appreciate any submissions to the Parkdale Messenger. We reserve the right to edit, condense, or reject submissions, but will try to find space for all.

Next issue: **February 2012**
Please submit articles and materials to pdale@trytel.com or the church office by **January 17**.