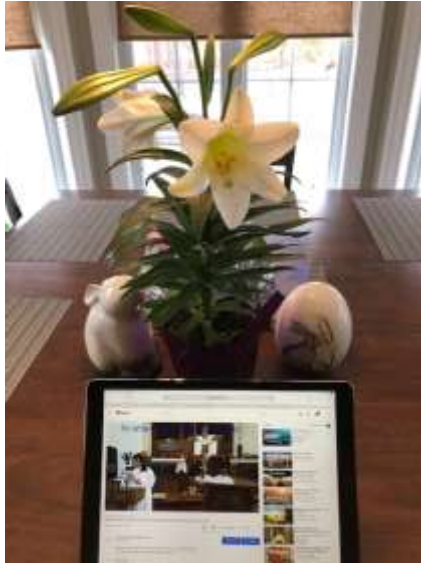


the Messenger

PARKDALE UNITED CHURCH NEWSLETTER



Parkdale United Church

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Many thanks and keep those contributions coming!! We are always looking for new ideas, volunteers and submissions.

We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject submissions, but will try to find space for all.

Next issue: June 2019

Editor next issue: Kathleen Stephenson

Send submissions to:
Messenger@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca
by **May 24**

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In brief:

This protracted time of isolation and social distancing does take a toll on us.

If you are feeling in need of support/help, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Rev. Bailey, Rev. Limongi and members of the Pastoral Care team stand ready to come alongside you.

Rev. Bailey (613-292-5152)

abailey@trytel.com

Rev. Limongi (613-728-8656, Ext 224)

alcris@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca,

Mary McLeod (Chairperson of the Pastoral Care Team)

mcleod.mm@gmail.com

Financial contributions to our ministries have been very much appreciated. Our staff salaries are secured, and we have been able to help many people in our community with support during these difficult times. The Mission Outreach and Justice Committee voted to send the

discretionary Mission and Outreach payment of \$1,000 to the Parkdale Food Centre, and Dr. Bailey personally delivered the cheque. We have also transferred donations earmarked for the Food Centre promptly. In addition we have paid some of our budgeted annual commitment for the year to some organizations which help those in need, such as Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Interval House and Multifaitth Housing.

Thank you to all those who have sent photos and descriptions of activities during isolation. The cover photo is from Liz Harrison, who set up a worship centre to view the online church service. She writes that “it’s not the altar at Parkdale but it’s good to be able to worship ‘together’”.

Many thanks to Custodian Norman Reid, who has polished our building until it gleams! This is one advantage to having the building to himself - lots of time to let the wax dry!

IMPORTANT: When submitting photos to the Messenger, please ensure you have asked permission of the individuals if their faces are clearly recognizable. They should know that an electronic PDF version of the Messenger is posted to the Parkdale website.



Exposed by the Pandemic

In the calendar for this month of May, there are two Sundays – the second and the fifth – that in different yet particular ways lift up the celebration of community.

The first of these two Sundays highlights the community of family (May 10). It has been renamed as Christian Family Sunday (formerly Mother's Day), but no matter what name it is given, it refers to connectional relationship. The fifth Sunday (May 31) is Pentecost Sunday which celebrates the powerful bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the community of disciples; spiritually equipping them to live and proclaim the good news. Notice this powerful endowment comes while they were together in one place.

This reminds us of the insistence of the Biblical witness that God intends us to do life, do faith, do service and do witness together. Notice how many times in the New Testament the phrase "one another" appears; one hundred times to be exact. Approximately 59 of these references are specific commands teaching us how (as well as how not) to relate to one another.



You know: "love one another", "care for one another", "honour one another"; "build up one another"; "forgive one another"; "do not lie to one another".

Community is meant to be the default position of Christian life and essentially of all human living. Of course we have personal roles to play, but these roles are inextricably connected to the communal life. It is not only the Bible that bears witness to this fundamental communality of human living. This has been the assumption and practice in all civilizations and peoples up until the 19th century. It is at this point in history that the notion of 'individualism' was created. It is not possible in this article, to explore all the reasons now. In short however, the notion of individualism had to do with the convergence of historical events and the emergence of a new political and social philosophy.

What we do know is that this doctrine of individualism is pervasive, especially in the West. It is found all over the world, yes, but a number of societies in the global south and other pockets of the world, have resisted and are still resisting this construal of human living, in favour of their traditional and communitarian practices. What does this have to do with our present moment? Well, one very significant thing that this COVID -19 pandemic has dramatically exposed is the the myth of individualism. It is calling into question this vaunted notion of individualistic life. The lexicon that usually accompanies the myth of individualism, include words/terms like: ‘self-sufficiency’, ‘self-made’, ‘autonomous’, “fiercely independent”.

The reality and devastation of the corona virus and its pandemic status has shown us again that we are all interconnected; that we are capable of infecting others and being infected by others; that we are ‘dependent’ on health care workers risking their lives for us; that we are ‘dependent’ on scientists and researchers and law enforcement personnel and government bailouts and emergency cash; that we are ‘dependent’ on other people observing social distancing and quarantining; that we are ‘dependent’ on nurses and doctors to intubate

and treat us when we lie unconscious in that hospital bed; that we are ‘dependent’ on farmers growing food and truckers transporting the same. And we could go on and on. Yet we persist in the damaging illusion of individualism. Where then is this vaunted individualistic ideal in these scenarios? We are not independent, we are interdependent, and not only with each other but also in relation to God’s Creation.

Ethics professor Dr. Luke Bretherton writes:

“COVID-19 points to the need to move beyond attempts to balance individual freedom with collective need. It demands a more synthetic approach. The true, good or flourishing life cannot be reduced to individual happiness. We are not atoms bouncing against each other but mutually vulnerable, interdependent creatures whose flourishing depends on being embedded in just and loving forms of common life. COVID-19 makes this reality painfully clear. We cannot survive, let alone thrive without others, but others put our lives in danger. Yet what should also be clear is that any meaningful response must account for how our individual biological, social and economic flourishing is symbiotic with the flourishing of a wider ecology of human and nonhuman relations.”

This pandemic has also exposed again – because this is not the first time - the systemic racism and economic inequality in our societies. Black, brown, immigrant and poor citizens are dying from COVID-19 at a disproportionate rate relative to the general population in the United States. Here in Canada, we cannot make any definitive determination about racial identities and COVID-19 because Canada does not collect this data. Some researchers have raised this possibility but in the third week of April Dr. Theresa Tam told CBC News

" There are currently no plans to add more social determinants of health (such as education or income) as risk factors to the case reporting form used for the collection of COVID-19 data."

Although she only mentioned education and income, this also included race. But these excluded risk factors are important.

Here in Ottawa, Suzanne Obiorah, who is the director of primary care at Ottawa's Somerset West Community Health Centre, (not far from Parkdale United) along with a group of Black medical practitioners are petitioning officials to instruct the collection of such data. They wrote to the Ontario government stating, "Without an evidence base, the inequitable experiences of

marginalized populations are dismissed as anecdotal and interventions are not prioritized." Not only race data, but economic data as well.

This current crisis is provoking us to ask deep and probing questions. Why are those experiencing poverty and homelessness made to carry such a disproportionately heavy load? Why are petitions for divorce increasing? Why are children more at risk and suffering more abuse at home? But also, why are so many people stepping up and helping neighbours and strangers? Why are people smiling more?

Especially as followers of Jesus, we need to ask ourselves again: What is God calling us to in these times? How serious are we about our faith, and our faith-in-action? Surely we are to trust the good news of the gospel. Surely we are to pray for each other and especially those who are sick and suffering and dispossessed of the necessities of life that make for human flourishing.

But we are also to accompany those prayers with action and commitment. Our connection to and relationship with God is intimately wrapped up in obeying God's commands relative to how we treat the vulnerable.

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; then you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin (Isaiah 58:6-7)

The integrity of our faith and our destiny is bound up with how we relate to the vulnerable, because that is what Jesus modeled and taught.

“34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’” (Matthew 25: 34-36)

We belong to God – all of us – and we belong to each other. We have been exposed. So if we believe in Jesus and believe Jesus, then let us obey and follow what Jesus modeled and taught: in community – for the sake of the world that God so loves.

Anthony

Supporting those Experiencing Homelessness in Ottawa

Here is something we can do! I invite you to consider supporting Councillor Catherine McKenney’s initiative.

We know something of the crisis here at Parkdale United because the City of Ottawa approached us to explore housing some of the homeless population in our gym. In the end they deemed our space unsuitable due to the lack of showers and other factors. Please read and pray/reflect on what response each of us can offer in support of this initiative. (See below)

“As we enter the second month of self isolation, it’s clear that we are experiencing a crisis of historic proportions, one that will effect each of us in some way.

If you’re experiencing homelessness today, you’re facing two crises at once. Ottawa has declared a State of Emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also declared a Housing and Homelessness Emergency earlier this year. Ottawa’s shelters are overcrowded and, while shelters are doing everything they can to enforce social distancing, hygiene, and cleanliness it is more critical than ever that we do what we can to find

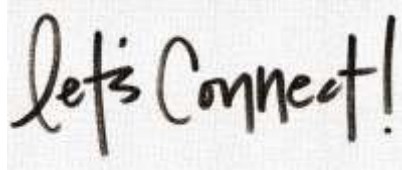
housing for people who have no home to stay at today. On April 8th, the Alliance to End Homelessness [sent a letter](#) to the Mayor and City Council suggesting that the City purchase hotels to provide accommodations for people experiencing homelessness. It is a good plan, and one that would not only make our communities safer for everyone during the COVID-19 lock-down, but would provide housing options for people in the years to come.

We can't do it alone. We must call on the federal government to help us with the funding required to purchase empty hotels and motels while we have women and men who have no safe housing.

Please visit housingemergencyottawa.ca.

You'll find a quick way to send a message to your local Member of Parliament on this critical issue. Please visit the site and lend your voice to protecting our most marginalized residents while helping protect our community as a whole. Stay well!"

Catherine McKenney
(Ottawa City Councillor representing Somerset Ward)



Here is the contingency plan to promote connection (Parkdale Web) in different ways. Contact Rev. Alcris Limongi or a Web Weaver to be connected.

1. **PARKDALE BUDDIES:** The idea is to have someone with whom to check in everyday or frequently, in this rapidly changing reality. This will help in identifying those in need of further pastoral care.

2. **POSTAL CODE BUDDIES:** Buddy Groups based on Postal codes from the congregational email list to keep Parkdalers connected, to encourage and support each other and to be aware of other's needs

3. **PEW BUDDIES:** connect with those who usually sit close to you in the sanctuary on Sunday Worship

4. **PRAYER BUDDIES:** Sometimes it is difficult to pray on our own in a time like this...

5. **PARKDALE SPIDER WEB:** Connecting existent groups and committees in a web of connections. Each group has a leader called Web Weaver. Some of the groups are:

- Moving in Spirit
- Prayer Group
- Cancer Prayer Group



PARKDALE'S COFFEE KLATCH

Is on Zoom every Tuesday at 3:00 pm. Let's try it! Join us with a cup of coffee for informal conversation and check in. You can use your laptop, phone, iPad. Just check that your mic and camera are on. If you need further instructions, please email alcris@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca We had our first coffee time on April 21.

- Prayer Shawl
- Caring Kitchens
- Small Groups
- Women's Retreat
- Summer Women's Retreat
- Men's Breakfast
- Gracefield
- Godly Play
- Sunday School Teachers
- IFTC
- Tuesday Bible Study
- DaleSong
- Senior Choir
- Ignite
- Bazaar
- Rummage Sale
- Young Adults and Youth
- Book Club
- Sound
- Projection
- Committees
- Council
- Ushers



SUPPORT WITH GROCERIES AND NECESSARY ERRANDS

Contact the church office if you need help. 613-728-8656



OUR EARS ARE OPEN

We are more than a month in. For many this is starting to impact their mental/emotional health; it is normal. If you are feeling troubled, need to talk with someone, or in need of prayers, we are here for you.

For one-on-one pastoral counselling you may call 613-728-8656 and leave a message for Dr. Anthony Bailey at ext. 222 or Rev. Alcris, ext. 224, or send Rev. Alcris an email at alcris@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca. We can meet on Skype, Zoom, talk on the phone or exchange emails. You are not alone, we are all together in this!

These are unprecedented times in which more than ever we are called to look out for each other, to welcome new people into our lives, look after each other's needs, pray for one another and show "virtual" hospitality as we are all in the same situation even though our personal circumstances are unique.

We are one body, one family, we are in this together with God as our guide.

“ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” (words from the Letter to the Romans 12: 11-13)

Rev. Alcris Limongi

COVID-19 and the Organizations We Help



The Parkdale Food Centre

On March 14, 2020 our In From The Cold ministry closed abruptly two weeks earlier than planned because of the spread of the Corona virus. We were heartened to know that the **Parkdale Food Centre**, situated pretty well around the corner from our church, would be there for our vulnerable people in the Hintonburg-Mechanicsville area who are in need of a meal, groceries and counseling. They focus on their drop-in people being well fed good healthy food says their Director, Karen Secord. She wants to ensure that the vulnerable people who come to their door feel welcomed, cared for, and know it is a place to come if they are feeling lonely and hungry.

Unfortunately, an employee became ill with the virus and they had to close their doors. When they opened a week later on March 30, guests were not al-

lowed inside; it was not business as usual. They were now delivering packages of food to homeless people and people in rooming houses.

They continue to work with the Carlington Community Centre which has families in the Travel Lodge and with the Caldwell Community Centre providing items such as diapers for the children and providing many other needs. They provide a form online should you wish to donate, and you can also note 'Food Bank' on your church envelope and we will forward the donation. They are very grateful for the financial support from our church during this difficult time.

Ottawa Innerscity Ministries (OIM)

The Ottawa Innerscity Ministries is a social service organization doing missionary work on the streets of Ottawa. They are out on the streets giving practical care and bringing Jesus Christ and hope to vulnerable people who call the streets their home. The Rev. Ken MacLaren, Executive Director of OIM says their focus is on bringing good news of Jesus Christ to the people on the streets and offering



hope and practical care and encouragement. Street Outreach is the main program which operates in the downtown core with volunteer teams working mainly 7 nights per week from 7:00 to 9:00 giving snacks, other provisions, and pastoral care to people. These mobile teams of 2 or more volunteers can be seen mostly in the evenings in their bright red jackets with the OIM logo.

Their office is located at 391 Gladstone Avenue where they have a stock room with blankets, sleeping bags and packages with socks, gloves, etc. which they distribute to the people on the street. This location is also a drop-in centre where they run various programs for youth, including the Youth Art Program. With the Corona Virus COVID-19 pandemic, Rev. MacLaren

says that they have had to shut down their operation in order to protect their staff and must, therefore, reinvent how they operate this ministry. All staff are working from home with the communication norm being e-mailing, texting, etc.

One of the problems, Rev. MacLaren says, is maintaining contact with the youth. "In order to treat the kids who normally drop in at the Centre fairly, they really need to have data for their phones as well as food vouchers which now run into about \$20 per month" - an additional expense.

He expressed his appreciation for the financial donations which Parkdale contributed this year.

*Submitted by Faye Beaufort,
Mission, Outreach & Justice*

LECTIONARY

Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 3,
2020: Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 10,
2020: Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 17,
2020: Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20;
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

Ascension of the Lord, May 21,
2020: Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47 or Psalm 93; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53

Seventh Sunday of Easter, May 24,
2020: Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

Day of Pentecost, May 31, 2020:
Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!



90 and counting!

Len Baird, Parkdale's longest active member, will celebrate his 90th birthday on May 9.

He was two years old when our Parkdale United Church congregation was founded in 1932, and he was in the first group baptized that year by Dr. Norman Coll, Parkdale's inaugural Minister.

Len and Barbara were married in 1957.

How does it feel to be approaching 90? "It's nice to be able to be up and get around," Len says, with his typical understated modesty.

Any particular secret to hitting the 90-year mark? Nothing special, although he thinks that being a non-smoker helped.

Happy Birthday, Len!





BIRTHDAY NEWS

Birthdays in May Our warmest greetings to:

1st: Sarah Ursacki
2nd: Emmanuel Okumo
4th: Kendra Huggins
5th: Anney Adams
6th: Angela Christopher
6th: Evie Bosch
6th: Beth Rodgers
7th: Curtis Cunliffe
7th: Benjamin McInnis
8th: Ruth Foster
8th: Isaac Barbour
9th: Len Baird
11th: Alexander Fitzgerald
16th: Helen Fortune

16th: Mylcha Kerr-Faucher
18th: Udobong Akpan
20th: David Odumodu
20th: Anael Chimu
21st: Kerry Lynn Grozinger
21st: Marley Payne-Odumodu
22nd: Zoe Lo Botten
23rd: Katrina Grozinger
24th: Mercy Lamunu
24th: Debbie McGregor
25th: Graydon Emberg
29th: Helen Hayes
29th: Adam Hinds
31st: Stanley Baird



*If you would like your birthday to be
a secret, please let the office know
and we will leave you off the list.*

FOOD FOR THE SOUL BODY

There seem to be flour shortages at the supermarket so...

Vegan Flourless Chocolate Cake

(Submitted by Kathleen Stephenson. We have one vegan in our family but this is everyone's favourite cake! And it's a flourless feature!)

2/3 cup quinoa (2 cups when cooked)

1/3 cup almond milk

1 1/3 cup applesauce

1 teaspoon vanilla

1/2 cup agave nectar (or a little honey or maple syrup)

3/4 cup coconut oil, melted

3/4 cup coconut palm sugar (could be a little less and/or any other sugar!)

1 cup cocoa

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt



1 cup strawberries

Chocolate Ganache

1 1/2 cups dark chocolate (70 or 85% Cocoa Solids)

3/4 cup coconut milk

3 tablespoons agave nectar or other sweetener (I use maple syrup)

Instructions

For the Cake

Heat oven to 350F. Grease two 8-inch cake pans (springform if available) with coconut oil, line with parchment paper.

Combine almond milk, applesauce, vanilla and agave nectar. Blend for about 20 seconds.

Add cooked quinoa and melted coconut oil. Blend all ingredients for 30 seconds until smooth.

In a large bowl, mix together sugar, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add the quinoa mixture and mix well.

Divide batter evenly in baking pans and bake for 1 to 1 hr. and 20 mins. Check if your cake is ready by inserting a knife or toothpick. If it comes out clean, your cake is done.

Remove from the oven and let cool completely in the baking pans. (Cake is delicious but fragile, might need to use frosting to patch cracks but it's worth it!.)

For the Ganache (Or use an alternative chocolate frosting)

Heat coconut milk in a small pot over medium heat, stirring occasionally.

Melt chocolate in a double boiler or on a plate over boiling water stirring occasionally.

Combine warm coconut milk and chocolate, add pinch of salt and syrup or nectar. Mix well. Cool at room temperature.

When the cake is cool, place the first layer on a plate. Frost and slide the second cake layer on top and spread with frosting. Decorate with fresh strawberries (or other favourite berries). Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week or freeze.

Notes: Prepare quinoa the usual way then turn off the heat and let it sit on the burner for another 10 minutes for a fluffier texture.



COUNCIL

Council's Vice-Chair

During the annual general meeting of our congregation last February, Rob Hilkes was elected Vice-Chair of the Council. (The Vice-Chair assists the Chair in dealing with administrative business of the church, and assumes the duties of Chair in the latter's absence.)

The Council is responsible for the congregation's spiritual well-being, the management of financial affairs, and the administration of church property.

In a "virtual interview" with *The Messenger*, Rob talked about growing up in a Catholic and Mennonite background, prior to joining the Parkdale family.

With his three sisters and two brothers, Rob grew up in Ottawa's Crystal Beach area west of Bayshore. The family attended St. Basil's Catholic

Church on Maitland Avenue, which remains one of Rob's favourite buildings in the city. The family originally intended to be part of the congregation at St. Martin de Porres Church in Bells Corners, but at that time they felt it wasn't sufficiently child-friendly. "For my Mom, who wanted all six kids in the front pew, this was a deal-breaker, and so St. Basil's it was!"

After Rob left home to attend the University of Waterloo (from which he obtained a Bachelor of Applied Science degree), he became associated with Conrad Grebel College, a Mennonite residential college affiliated with Waterloo. When he informed his parents that he was beginning to attend a Mennonite Church, "they wisely told me that they'd rather I was 'a committed Mennonite, than a lukewarm Catholic.' This was after I reassured them that I was not selling everything I owned and joining an old order 'horse-n-buggy community!'"



Rob met his future wife, Irene, while at Waterloo, and they attended Waterloo North Mennonite Church, which was a vibrant and growing congregation. When they moved and put down roots Ottawa in 1998, they first joined the Ottawa Mennonite Church on Kilborn Avenue, and 10 years later became part of the Parkdale family.

Why Parkdale?

Why Parkdale? The Hilkes appreciated the Mennonite focus on social justice, and on environmental and financial stewardship, “and we had a hunch that these values in us

would be welcomed at Parkdale.” In addition, they hoped that the younger two of their three children would find classmates closer to their new neighborhood, which is in walking distance of Parkdale.

Although he has no formal musical training, Rob participated in some community musical theatre in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. He plays a mean guitar, and also masters the flute, saxophone, and piano. He has always loved to sing, which influenced his decision to join our Parkdale choir. He was a member of a former rockband known as FOAM, which often played at weddings and corporate events. The band is now basically defunct, except for an annual “reunion” of sorts, including the occasional gig at Parkdale’s *In From the Cold* dinner program.

Last fall Rob, together with five other Parkdale men, formed a “book club,” which he is thoroughly enjoying. They have read two very interesting books: *Christ in Crisis*

by Jim Wallis, and *The Universal Christ* by Richard Rohr. “Both, in their own way, provide insight into what makes the Christian life, and a Christian community, vibrant and rich.”

Talented entrepreneurs

Rob and Irene are both talented entrepreneurs in Ottawa’s high-tech industry. Rob is a corporate manager with a background in product development and business management. During the past 10-12 years he was affiliated with a couple of companies that developed medical devices for the visually impaired. He is presently involved with some researchers on a brain implant device to treat epilepsy. He says that developing these complicated types of products takes lots of time and money, and is frequently unsuccessful – but at the moment he has his fingers crossed!

Irene runs a small company that develops talking scientific calculators for visually impaired students – a business that unfortunately ground to a

halt this spring, when schools closed due to the COVID-19 virus restrictions.

The three Hilkes children have grown up. Chloe, 31, and her husband Chris live in Toronto, where she is employed with CBC Radio. Seth, 23, lives in Ottawa and is employed with the federal Department of Industry, Science and Economic Development. He is part of a team working long hours collaborating with industry on its response to the COVID-19 virus. Gabriella, 21, is finishing her third year of forensic psychology at Carleton University.

Parkdale’s future

What does Rob see in the future for Parkdale United Church? “There is nothing about the ‘bricks and mortar’ of PUC that I inherently cherish, and I do see the many practical limitations of our physical facility that inhibit our Christian witness to the community.

“I believe that a church active-

ly serving its community will naturally attract people and grow, and a church that doesn't act boldly, audaciously, and faithfully to lift up the community around it, will quietly vanish as its "older generation" departs. "Parkdale is the former, and

can be even more so, as we continue with gratitude to the God who has called us, to envision how we can grow our architecture, our programs, and our demographics to be an even more brightly shining beacon in our community."

Peter Meerburg



An activity at the Andrews home

What are you doing during COVID isolation?



Peter Meerburg is Social
Distancing



The Andrews family:
Decorating eggs



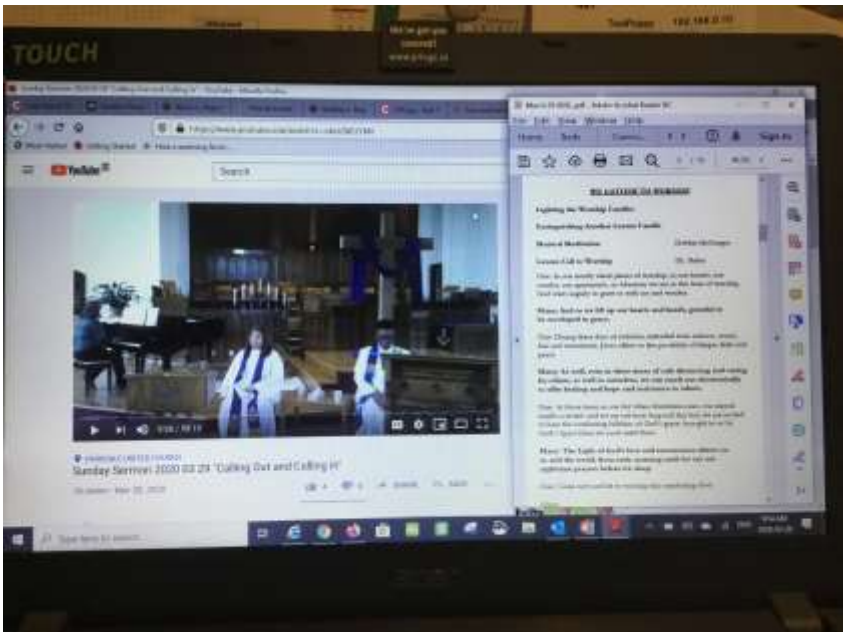
Ellen Andrews is at work



Roxanne Akhtar is
singing!



Ed Ellis: I am playing with my 1952 Marx tin wind-up train just like I did when I had to stay home with the measles!



Susan Mailer: Watching the on-line service on two screens

**This narrative was inspired
when Gloria Goodine
walked through downtown
Ottawa on a recent sunny
Wednesday morning**

I see, I hear, I smell, I touch, I
taste.

I see deserted streets, closed
shops, closed restaurants, peo-
ple avoiding people as they
walk,

I see the homeless, looking for
somewhere to go,

I hear the sounds of birds an-
nouncing Spring is here!

I hear the sounds of silence --
no chatter of university stu-
dents walking to class;

No hums of aeroplanes nor-
mally flying overhead, no
laughter of children playing
outside during recess,

I smell the freshly-brewed
coffee from the only opened
Starbucks, as people line up

outside,

I touch the buds on trees and
feel the rain on my face after
a shower, and then the sun
comes out,

I taste and eat food, discover-
ing creativity in preparing
new meals.

I see God's love in the kind-
ness of others,

I hear God saying, "Don't
worry -- it will be all right,"

I smell lavender and it re-
minds me of my daughter, far
away in Vancouver,

I am touched by physical dis-
tancing but my spirits are lift-
ed by a friendly voice on the
phone,

I taste and experience the
slow pace of life it awak-
ens all my senses, and I say
out loud

Thank you, Lord!!



Picture by
Vero Photoart



“Until now, I never understood why you got so excited when someone walked past the house.”

CartoonStock.com



May the God of
hope fill you with
all joy and peace as
you trust in him, so
that you may
overflow with hope
by the power of the
Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13

From
Elaine
West

What are families doing during COVID isolation? Sunday School activities are happening on line every week. Children and youth were invited to make a “last supper” perhaps out of lego or Minecraft. Here are some examples.







PRAYING

PRAYER REQUESTS INBOX
alcris@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca

Prayers continue to flow in this time of Pandemic. Please feel free to send your prayer requests: for you, your loved ones, our country, the world. Whatever you feel moved in your heart to pray for, share it with us so we join in with you.

PRAYER GROUPS

Our regular praying groups continue (Prayer Group and Cancer Focus Prayer Group). We are gathering on the phone to pray for our congregation's needs and specific requests in a confidential manner. Members of our Pastoral Care Team continue to pray for and stay in touch with our elder saints in this difficult time. Given the circumstances in long-term care residences, let us keep them in our prayers too.

OPEN PRAYER TIME

On Thursdays at 11:00 am for a half hour there is an open phone prayer. Dial 343 882 1920 and then enter 343 882 6443# and you will be connected to an on-going prayer.

Note: If you need/want to pray one-on-one, email alcris@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca to call you.

SOME SUGGESTED PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THIS MONTH

In your personal prayers to God you could include:

- Families who have lost loved ones; especially remember people impacted by the massacre in Nova Scotia (families, friends, community, Canada).
- People dying alone and loved ones dealing with grief in times of social isolation.
- Parkdalers going through health challenges (i.e., post-surgery, chemo treatment, waiting for results, traumas, etc)

- Isolation and fear in care homes (residents, families, and all staff)
- Frontline workers and volunteers (medical doctors, nurses, technicians, janitors, cooks, volunteers, PSWs).

We have a number of people in our congregation serving in the health care system. Please pray for them and their families for safety, health, strength and faith as they are dealing with an enormous amount of stress daily.

- For mental and spiritual health; remember those suffering from depression, anxiety, and other mental and emotional issues.
- People living alone and in need of assistance.
- For those falling into the system cracks; especially unhoused individuals and families.
- Ottawa Mission.
- Governments to make wise decisions
- Researchers to find vaccines

and cure for COVID-19

- Parents schooling children at home
- For healthy family dynamics
- People who have lost their jobs and small business owners who are forced to close
- For vision to see the big picture and grace to live in the present, day by day.
- For patience to accept what we cannot control and wisdom to make the most of this time.
- For children and youth.
- For first nations people living conditions and the impact of COVID -19 on their communities
- Things to be thankful for

Let us remember the old grace song: “For health and strength and daily food we praise thy name, O Lord!”



WASH YOUR HANDS!

How many times have we heard that in recent weeks? More often than we ever did in the past, and with much more importance placed on doing it properly.

There has been lots of television and YouTube instruction, with encouragement to sing a couple of verses of Happy Birthday or some other little ditty as you wash your hands, with the aim of ensuring that that the washing continues for at least 20 seconds!

Well my friends, effective hand-washing has recently become more easy to accomplish at Parkdale. On the advice of Dr. Ed Ellis, Trustees recently proceeded with the replacement of seven faucets in washrooms in the basement, the Coffee Shop, Queensway preschool, and the washroom off the Ladies Parlour.

The water from the new faucets runs for between 25 and 30 seconds, after which it shuts off automatically, eliminating the need to touch the faucet again with your now clean hands!

The faucet in the disabled wash-room was not replaced as the faucet there is in accordance with specifications for disabled access. There will, however, soon be a new paper towel dispenser beside the sink so that a person can easily take a paper towel to hold while turning off the faucets with his/her now clean hands.

We have learned many things during the COVID-19 outbreak, not the least of which is the importance of clean hands. In fact, handwashing with soap and water is more effective than hand sanitizer!

That said, you will notice that hand sanitizer stations have also been installed throughout the church and everyone is encouraged to use these when hand washing is not convenient. We will get through this! And when we do, we will be better equipped to help continue control of disease spread, whether this be COVID-19 or the common cold.

*Helen Hayes
Chair of Trustees*

**PROPERTY
DEVELOPMENT
WORKING GROUP REPORT**

In this very strange environment that we are currently enduring, the work of your Property Development Working Group has slowed down to some extent, but it hasn't stopped! We have received two draft reports from IRC Building Sciences Group and on March 13, just before social distancing and self-isolation became a fact of life for all of us, a few members of the working group met with Sourya Vongmanisak in Barry's office to discuss the draft reports.

We accepted the Phase I Environmental Assessment Report, which did not identify any on-site or off-site issues of potential environmental concern; a Phase II assessment is therefore not required to support a future potential RSC (Record of Site Condition) submission. The invoice of \$4,800 has been paid. We asked for clarification of a couple of items in the Designated Substances Report and are awaiting receipt of this information. Upon receipt of the additional information, we will receive a finalised report and will proceed with payment of the invoice in the amount of \$4,200 plus HST.

We have also received a draft proposal from Cahdco and had a few questions and suggestions that we will sort out by phone in coming days/weeks. Cahdco is the only non

-profit development corporation in Ontario and combines the affordable housing experience and resources of the Centertown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC) with a team of development, construction and project management experts. Cahdco clients/partners include the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, Carefor Community and Health Services, CCOC, Cornerstone Housing for Women, The Elizabeth Fry Society, Ellwood House, The King's Daughters and Sons, Multifaith Housing Initiative, Ottawa Mission, Ottawa Salus, Somerset West Community Health Center, St. Patrick's Home, World University Service of Canada, and the Youth Services Bureau.

We are confident that Cahdco can provide us with the advice and leadership that we need in moving forward and we're excited about getting started when the current situation eases a bit and will apprise you of the details when we are confident of our way forward.

May God bless you all and keep you well in these -dare I say it! – unprecedented times.

Helen Hayes

THE SHAWLS MUST GO ON (prayer shawls, that is)



Parkdale's Prayer Shawl group normally meets every other Wednesday morning, up in the Ladies' Parlour, and the group of up to 12 members work on crocheting shawls that, once completed, are prayerfully given to an assortment of beneficiaries (our baptisands, our elder saints, church members with health concerns or in hospital, and others who can benefit from knowing that God's love is with them always)

The arrival of the covid-19 pandemic put a little bit of a wrinkle into those plans as physical distancing meant that we could no longer meet together in person. Or did it? Our spiritual leader, Rev. Alcris Limongi, discovered this app called ZOOM, and, we are able to con-

tinue our Wednesday gatherings - albeit virtually (by video and by phone). What a great way to continue this ministry. The need continues for these items.

Here are some of the beautiful prayer shawls recently completed by one of our group during the quarantine.

Are you recently spending more time at home crocheting or knitting, and wondering if you might want to join us (either virtually, or in spirit) in making a prayer shawl? If yes, please contact Rev. Alcris and we will get you the measurements. Or, have you been motivated to do some spring cleaning and discovered some unused yarn / wool that you do not plan on using? If yes, please contact the office and we will arrange for someone to pick it up. After all, "the (prayer) shawls must go on".

Susan Mailer



NEWS FROM THE PEWS

Brian Innes and Lacey DeVreese and older sister Vayda, are proud to announce the arrival of baby Livia on April 12. All are doing well. We congratulate the family and give God thanks for Livia's safe arrival.

Please remember Judy McIntosh's children, Kerry and Jay and dear friend, Linda in your prayers. Judy died on April 17.



Judy (PhD) had retired as the nurse at Bethany Hope Centre, where she was instrumental in setting up a clinic to provide stable health care for the young

families who attend there. The Centre plans to name the health clinic after her in a dedication ceremony when gatherings are allowed.

Some in our congregation have relatives and friends impacted by the terrible tragedy in Nova Scotia. Let us keep all in our prayers.

Welcome back to Treasurer Kathleen Stephenson, who has returned from four months in Brazil. Welcome back to all those who have been travelling and have arrived safely home. Don Mockett is manning the church office remotely, and is happy to receive emails and phone calls.

Valerie Hum responded to a request for sewers to help out with Operation gowns. She writes that by May they will have enough sewers but money donations are always needed. What a great story!

Our online services (5 people in church!)



The Ministers, Rev. Limongi and Dr. Bailey



Music, Debbie McGregor

Camera and the
entire congregation
(on site)
Danica Rogers



Sound, Richard Hamley





SUCH A SIMPLE THING

Who would believe that such a simple thing would have such a huge impact.

As often happens during the year, the church receives donations of all sorts of things. In this case, the donation was an assortment of sewing and craft items, such as needles, crochet hooks, safety pins, hooks & eyes, fasteners, and buttons. It was all in a bunch of assorted boxes - quite the mishmash.

Once sorted, the buttons numbered in the several dozens, and we found a taker - one of our cherished members who does amazing knitted

goods for the bazaar and would use the buttons for adornments.

Enter the covid-19, and the sudden need for PPE (personal protection equipment) and the call went out for all sorts of helpful equipment. One of the ingenious ideas was headbands with buttons on them to hold the elastics part of the mask so the ears would not be rendered raw by constant rubbing.

So, our thoughtful volunteer made the executive decision to pass these buttons on to the group called Ottawa Handmade.

Look at what they created

Susan Mailer

Introducing: Dr. Ed Ellis

A “prescription” for our society

Many people these days are wondering whether the Coronavirus-19 pandemic will transition our society into a “new normal,” and whether or not it will be for the better. Ed Ellis, a prominent member of our congregation who has had front-line experience in dealing with global respiratory illnesses, is skeptical.

Ed is a medical doctor who has dealt with diseases and public health issues globally and nationally – including the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002-04. “Will Canadian society be more generous, caring and loving after COVID-19 is over? I ask myself if Toronto was that way after SARS was over, since I worked there for months during the epidemic. My answer is no,” he says.

“I will be pleasantly surprised if the answer for COVID-19 in general society is yes. However, for us individually, the answer needs to be, and can be, YES, with the help of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit,” he said, in a virtual interview with *The Messenger*.

Dr. Ed says two of the biggest problems are asymptomatic trans-

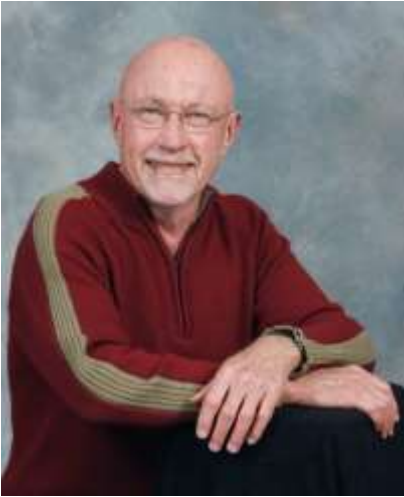
mission of the COVID-19 virus from one infected person to another, and (active) persistence of the virus on hard surfaces for up to three days. (SARS was more deadly, but not as infectious, and did not become a problem in every country.)

It remains unknown when the current pandemic will end. But Ed says (1) we need a national stockpile of personal protective equipment for use by health care facilities, (2) elimination of wildlife markets everywhere in the world through education and enforcement, and (3) deciding now who gets the anti-virus vaccine first, when it eventually becomes ready for mass usage.

A solid faith

Ed was born in Windsor, Ontario, and at age five moved with his family to Glendale, Arizona, because the climate there was advantageous for his father’s arthritis. The change dramatically improved his father’s health, and he became a house builder, and later owner of a hardware-auto parts store in Mesa, “where I learned a lot about human nature as a clerk.”

The Ellis family was active in the Methodist church, and as a young child, Ed was entranced by colourful stained-glass windows. Pipe



organ music was his favourite part of worship services – something that he still loves. After a friend told him, at age 17, about a trip to a Billy Graham Crusade, “I asked Jesus to be my saviour, and realized that He hung on the cross for me personally.”

While Ed’s faith wavered for a few days after the 9/11 tragedy in the US, “it is (now) rock solid due to some experiences that I can only call supernatural, and that absolutely convinces me that we are not alone.”

A varied career

Ed loves animals, and as a young man, he thought of becoming a veterinarian. But his junior high school counsellor suggested to his mother that he should treat people

instead. Ed took the advice. That led to college in San Diego, medical school in San Francisco, internship for one year in Miami, pediatric residency for two years at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and masters in public health for one year in Ann Arbor. That was followed by a move to the southeast African country of Malawi, where he managed the public health component of a rural development project for five years.

When Ed returned to Canada in 1980, the specialty of public health and preventive medicine had been established, and he was hooked on it, especially after witnessing the effects of basic public health in Africa, versus the toll of preventable disease while working as an intern in Miami, at the county hospital ER and Veterans Hospital.

Subsequently, there were two years with Alberta provincial public health, five years with Toronto Public Health, three years with Health Canada, 12 years with Ottawa Public Health, and finally nine years with the Public Health Agency of Canada. While in public health, he concentrated on communicable disease, environmental health, and multicultural health. Following retirement, Ed continued with some part-time

medical work, teaching communicable disease, and critical appraisal of medical literature to medical students. He has also undertaken committee work for the Medical Council of Canada, which creates and administers the exam that all physicians must pass in order to practice independently.

Eclectic interests

Ed is involved in a variety of volunteer activities, the most unusual being a stem cell courier for the Ottawa Hospital! His “loves” include running, cycling, swimming, ice skating, singing, classical symphonic concerts, trains, cherries, raspberries, a good mystery, and travel. He took piano lessons as a child (up to about grade eight music), and is now seriously considering buying an electronic piano to play his old music.

Ed met his future wife on the ward at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto. She became a pediatric nurse practitioner. The couple, who separated in 2013, have four sons, of whom two are married, one with four children, and the other with an infant.

When Ed visited different churches after moving to the Westboro area, he attended Parkdale United, where a member of the choir introduced himself following a worship

service. That resulted in an invitation to join the choir – which Ed happily accepted.

Ed has attended a variety of churches over the years. He prefers those that “both encourage and challenge me, when I learn something, and feel like I have worshipped. I don’t expect all four (of those) things all the time, but if most happen most of the time, that’s good for me.” He feels that churches which regularly pray for guidance and care for all will grow, slowly and steadily. “Helping people to develop a personal relationship with Jesus is very important.”

He supports the redevelopment of our church, “while hopefully preserving the organ and chancel.” Any future plan should include geared-to-income housing. “Thousands under-housed is an unnecessary embarrassment and indictment of our affluent society.” (He volunteers as a resident relations volunteer with Multifaith Housing Initiative, and says he sees the difference that adequate housing makes in the lives of the poor and ill.)

Peter Meerburg



The Joys and Miseries (mostly Joys!) of Video Conferencing

By now many of us have probably seen the uplifting videos of various choirs, orchestras and bands collaborating from their homes, showing the tiled view of all the participants singing and playing in wonderful harmony (those of us who are a little older are reminded of the opening credits of “The Brady Bunch”, or “Hollywood Squares”). There’s just one thing: it doesn’t work quite as advertised...

You see, these days almost all communications, even regular phone calls, use internet technology called “Voice over Internet Protocol” (VOIP). Gone are the days of Ruth Buzzy making an actual wire connection from your phone to someone else’s. The way that VOIP works is that your voice, which is an analog waveform, is “digitized”, just like a CD only with much poorer quality. Then, that digital data is chopped up into small snippets called “packets”, each with infor-

mation about their intended destination and their ordering relative to the other packets. These tiny packets – each only 30 or 40 milliseconds (thousandths of a second) long – each get sent across the internet from their source to their ultimate destination. For a long distance call, some pieces of the conversation may even travel through entirely different countries on their journey. They get shuffled up with other things, like someone’s banking transaction, a packet of a Netflix show that someone’s watching, an email, an Amazon order, or a 1001 other things that the internet is used for. When packets ultimately arrive at their destination they are sorted into the correct order, converted back into analog form (i.e.: soundwaves), and sent to your speaker. As you can imagine, all of this complexity takes time – probably a couple hundred milliseconds.

So, when we collaborate over Zoom, Skype, Teams, Facetime, Chat, etc., you hear everything from any of the other participants perhaps two or three tenths of a second after it actu-

ally happened. To make matters worse, when they hear your reply the same delay applies in the other direction. This works very well for a conversation, since it's quite natural, even polite, to pause briefly before you respond to someone. Not so great for music though, as the choir has discovered most hilariously.

Singing in a choir is all about listened to your choir mates, to make sure you are in tune and on time. So, the piano plays and we all begin to sing, about 250ms too late. Then the pianist, who hears what we sing 250+250=500ms later, slows down because she senses that the choir is waaay behind. We all hear the piano slowing down and so we slow down some more and so disaster unfolds. To make matters worse, not everyone hears the same delay, since that depends on your connection speed, your computer, who's in your basement watching Netflix, and many other things. As if that wasn't bad enough, most video conferencing tools have a feature that gives prominence to whichever participant is speaking, muting the others. This is to prevent feedback (which is another topic altogether). They are intentionally designed to inhibit everyone talking (or playing) at once. For a choir it's mayhem!

So how do those choirs and orchestras that have shared with us such lovely collaborations do it? The answer is that each musician records themselves individually while listen-

ing to a pre-recorded track, which they then send to a producer who synchronizes them in time, and adjusts the volumes for each track so that no single player drowns out the others. There have been some truly lovely results, but our Thursday night Zoom choir practice is certainly not one of them!

I understand that the prayer shawl group is also using Zoom on a regular basis to gather together, enjoy each other's company and pray together. Susan Mailer tells that story.

Also, Church council has been faithfully meeting over Skype, courtesy of Dave Mason's corporate account.

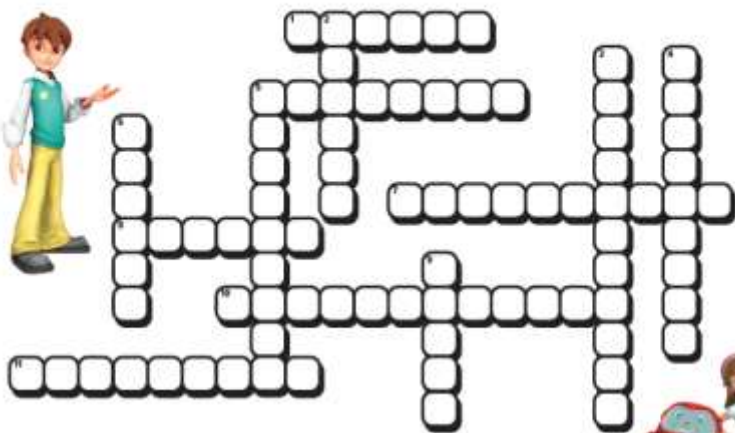
Camille has put her unbounded energies to good use too, "virtualizing" our children and youth programs. Did you know that there is still Sunday school class at 10am each Sunday, and the kids are permitted to bring their breakfast and attend in their PJs. Camille tells me there's lots of movement, singing and stories. The Junior Youth and Senior Youth are also meeting over Zoom, learning together and sharing their quarantine experiences.

So, video conferencing is serving us very well indeed. Even the choir continues to meet in spite of our technical challenges, but I suppose I'd call it more of a "fellowship" at this point than a "choir practice", although we continue to sing!

Rob Hilkes

EASTER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

NAME: _____



ACROSS

- 1 To proclaim or teach. _____ **C** _____ (Luke 4:43)
 5 To identify with Christ by immersion in water. _____ **Z** _____ (Acts 2:38)
 7 The third person of the Trinity. _____ **S** _____ (Acts 2:4)
 8 Greatly surprised; astonished. **A** _____ (Acts 2:12)
 10 Christ's rising from the dead. _____ **R R** _____ (Acts 2:31)
 11 Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit. **P** _____ (Acts 2:1)

DOWN

- 2 To ask forgiveness for wrongdoing or sin. _____ **T** _____ (Acts 2:38)
 3 A pardon from sin. _____ **S S** _____ (Luke 24:47)
 4 Jesus' 12 friends. **D** _____ (Luke 24:36)
 5 Those people who believe in Jesus. _____ **V** _____ (1 Peter 1:21)
 6 Thoughts and images occurring in a person's mind during sleep. _____ **M** _____ (Acts 2:17)
 9 Freedom from chaos. A feeling of tranquility. **P** _____ (Acts 9:31)

PASSING THE TEST

Namby: Good morning, Pamby.

Pamby: And a good morning to you as well.

Namby: How are you doing?

Pamby: I am fine but I have been asked that questions so many times over the past month that I am going to tape it and tape my answer as well.

Namby: But you haven't answered the question and you sound grumpy.

Pamby: So you are a judge this morning passing a judgement?

Namby: For God's sake, cheer up! It's Easter time; life is starting again; spring is in the air.

Pamby: Really? Thanks for telling me. It's so quiet around here I would never have guessed that anything is happening.

Namby: So you think that nothing is happening because it's quiet? Don't you remember that a lot was going on when your kids were quiet in the playroom?

Pamby: Ok, you got that right , but there is Quiet and quiet.

Namby: Good old Pamby. I can always trust you to complicate things. So you are telling me that there are two kinds of quiet?

Pamby: Maybe yes, maybe no; but right now the quiet all around us is like everything has stopped, as if life has stopped , nothing is happening on the ground , in the air , inside or outside. It's as if the silence is loud.

Namby: Aren't you forgetting something?

Pamby: Like what?

Namby: Well, well, do I have to remind you that a Pandemic is paralyzing this country and the world?

Pamby: That's so obvious and in every conversation on radio and TV that I didn't think that it was necessary to mention it.

Namby: So when you talk about quiet as if nothing is happening, aren't you forgetting the doctors, nurses and all who are still working in Long-term care, the cleaners, truckers, pharmacists and food vendors, all those people who make sure that life still goes on for us, they are not quiet, are they?

Pamby: Oh, I see what you are getting at. There is a lot going on which we don't see; we take a lot for granted.

Namby: Yes, and some people think that the virus is a wakeup call.

Pamby: Don't tell me that you are going there joining those gurus who say that it has been sent to test us?

Namby: Some even quote scripture and argue that it's the fulfillment of prophecy, that our generation is paying for the sins of generations which came before us.

Pamby: Such people can't be serious. Are you and I to believe that some God has sent a dreadful disease which is killing thousands of people all over the world because the people who lived before us messed up?

Namby: Well, if that's true , our children are going to be in big trouble because we aren't saints.

Pamby: Speak for yourself!

Namby: Ok, neither of us is perfect,

but why should our children suffer for our mistakes?

Pamby: Good question! Don't you think that it all depends on what we believe about God?

Namby: Well, maybe. I think that God is very convenient for some of us. We can use him to explain anything we don't understand whether good or bad.

Pamby: Looks as if we make him very complicated at times, such as sending a disease to wake us up. Why doesn't he wake us up by simply saying 'Stop messing up'?

Namby: Maybe that would be too easy and we wouldn't learn anything.

Pamby: So he has to punish us

along the way! And whatever happened to forgiveness?

Namby: I'll tell you this. I don't believe that there is anyone out there with a big stick waiting to punish us or our children if we mess up.

Pamby: And I don't believe in testing through punishment or anything, but I do believe that we can learn from the experience of suffering just as we may learn from a happy experience.

Namby: I think that a lot that happens to us is mysterious. I would also believe in a forgiving more than a punishing God. That's why Easter makes sense to me.

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Moving in the Spirit Dancers, Parkdale United Church,
televised as part of the recorded
Good Friday Service



SMALL GROUPS USING PHONE OR VIDEOCHAT

There are two options available, if you are interested to participate please let Alcris know by email.

WEDNESDAY EVENING SMALL GROUP

(7:00 – 8:30 pm
starting April 29th)

Sabbath Pause: Seven Weeks of Daily Practices

These small group sessions will encourage us to build in spiritual structure through spiritual daily practices in our unplanned Corona Virus pause. We will use the book *Sabbath Pause: Seven Weeks of Daily Practices* written by Terry Chapman, a renowned scholar and spiritual director. The author uses poetry, Scripture, questions and prose to encourage us to breathe, reflect on a Scripture verse, focus on a daily intention, pray/journal, and listen to what God might be saying to us. The methodology is the same as we used in ‘The Cup of

Life’. If you are interested in joining us please contact alcris@parkdaleunitedchurch.ca for more info. The book is electronically available on Kindle (under \$10).

FRIDAY MORNING SMALL GROUP

(10:30 – 11:30 am
starting May 8th)

Liturgy of the Ordinary, by Tish Harrison Warren.

“In overlooked moments and routines, we can become aware of God’s presence in surprising ways. How do we embrace the sacred in the ordinary and the ordinary in the sacred? Each chapter in this book looks at something that the author does during the day — making the bed, brushing her teeth, losing her keys...life through the lens of liturgy, of our Sunday worship service. The book is available on Kindle (amazon books) (under \$10).



Balcony Reflection

Just two weeks before the horrendous pandemic hit our beloved country and the rest of the world, I moved back to my condo (see condo balcony photo). Surrounded by my mountain of unpacked boxes and reflecting on my recent widowhood, I lamented to God and my youngest son during a long, lonely evening that life is hard. Very hard.

"Try to make your home your happy place!" suggested my son. Wise advice. "Why don't you purchase a small life-affirming plant or drink your

coffee out on your balcony each morning?" he continued.

"Good ideas!" I replied (read: easy for my son who lives in the temperate climate of Vancouver -- not so easy to sit on a balcony in Ottawa when the temperature was hovering at the freezing point each morning).

And so, the very next morning, I bundled myself in my oldest blanket around my cozy housecoat and ate my breakfast *al fresco* on my balcony. Huddled with my knees up in a semi-fetal position, I drank my steaming coffee and savoured

my homemade egg on an English muffin. I was amazed how small pleasures can seem so grand!

I smiled as I listened to the chirping birds and was grateful for the fake owl that my late husband had installed on my balcony to scare away the pigeons with their dropped "gifts" from heaven. I noted the whooshing sound of the newly-functioning light rail train in the distance and was thankful for the reduced noise pollution now that there are so few cars on the road.

It became more and more evident to me how much our priorities have shifted over the past months. I prayed for all those who have been impacted by the pandemic, petitioning God to grant them a peace that surpasses their understanding. I gave thanks for my Parkdale family and those who have found so many creative ways to bless others.

Slowly, my joy has begun to return. When I walk outside alone, maintaining the recom-

mended physical distance, I make sure to smile and greet others. When I stop quickly into the grocery store for my weekly visit, I thank the cashier for working.

Yes, the dark nights of the pandemic are hard, but I know that God is here with us in the hard stuff. God is here each dawn in the dedicated healthcare workers, cashiers, food supply workers, the computer technicians who enable us to worship virtually and in our friends and family who telephone us just to chat.

In closing, I wish you the best of health and may your home be your happy place!

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Hennessy



Parkdale United Church

**We respond to God's call and Jesus' teachings
by:**



Uniting in joyful worship as an act of praise and gratitude, for inspiration and guidance

Providing learning opportunities for the Christian way of life and to enhance Biblical literacy



Supporting each other through pastoral care and concern

Promoting justice



*Reaching out to
people in need*