

## EASTER'S BRIGHT FLOWERS

### Help Transform St. John's into a Garden of Tranquility for Easter

Throughout history, flowers have been brought to places of worship. To reveal one's love and faith, what better than flowers? Flowers speak a thousand words and express emotions that words alone cannot do. The Festival of Easter marks the beginning of spring —spring that brings with it lovely and gorgeous blooms.

Once again, you are invited to share your time and talent in contributing to the beauty of the Easter worship services at St John's. We are looking for the many flower arrangers in the congregation to put their talent to work throughout the Church. You might choose a window ledge or for a larger project consider the Chapel, the Baptistry, either Narthex, or another favourite spot. For the true gardeners, there are the west and main entrances to the Church.

**Saturday, April 3** has been set aside as a Quiet Saturday. Participants should arrive by 9:00 a.m. with their own selection of flowers and plants — think Easter lilies, hydrangeas, azaleas, hyacinths, narcissus, tulips, and other seasonal flowers in spring colors. Oasis and containers for the windowsills will be available as well as a selection of vases and baskets.

Donations towards transforming St. John's into a Garden of Tranquility for Easter must be received by Monday, March 29th in order for the dedication notice to be included in the Easter Bulletin. Cheques, made payable to St. John's York Mills and clearly marked Chancel Guild Easter Decorating may be left in the Church Office. More details will follow.

We look forward to your participation in this commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hope of life everlasting. To reserve your spot or for more information, contact Pamela Smith at 416-245-8422 or [pamelasmith@idirect.com](mailto:pamelasmith@idirect.com) before March 19th.

For those who wish to take a less active role, watch for details in the Bulletin on remembering a loved one or giving thanks with flowers, Easter Lilies, or other donation.

Pamela Smith

## LENTEN DECORATIONS

**Reminder:** During the season of Lent (February 17 – April 3), we ask that no flowers adorn the church. The exception will be the 4th Sunday of Lent (March 14) — Laetare Sunday. Laetare Sunday has traditionally been viewed as a day of celebration, on which the austerity of Lent is briefly lessened and flowers may adorn the church.

We ask you to consider contributing to the Easter Decorating Fund in memory of loved ones or as a thanksgiving. Thank you.

## A CHRISTMAS THANK YOU

Our many thanks to those — Mark Anderson, Melinda Barnhardt, Joan Beckett, Karen Campbell, Venetia Cowie, Bill Dennis, Linda Grasley, Sue Huggard, David Julien, Stephen Monk, Drew MacDonald, Miles Montgomery, Mardi Saunders, Barbara Shearer, Pamela Smith, Peg Trow, and Ken Wilding — who worked so hard adorn our church for the celebration of Christ's Birth, with evergreens, poinsettias, and flowers.

**Help Needed:** Every year we decorate our large tree with handmade crocheted snowflakes. We are seeking volunteers to undertake making mini snowflakes for the trees that flank the Good Sheppard Window. If you are interested, please let the Church office know and they will pass your name on.

## CHURCHYARD IN THE WINTER

This is a reminder from your Churchyard Committee that from November 1 to March 31 only permanent or winter wreaths are permitted on plots in the Cremation Garden or the Churchyard. An exception, of course, is made for winter interments when flowers and wreaths may remain for 8 days after which they will be removed by the Verger or Sexton.

*Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.*

Luke 12:27

## Regular Worship

### Every Sunday

**8:00 a.m.** Said Eucharist

**9:30 a.m.** Family Eucharist

**11:00 a.m.** Choral Service

Morning Prayer on the first, third and fifth Sundays; Eucharist on the second and fourth Sundays

**7:00 p.m.** The Gathering

## Special Services

### February 14 — Valentine's Day

8:00 a.m. Holy Communion

10:00 a.m. Holy Communion

7:00 p.m. Holy Communion at The Gathering

### February 17 — Ash Wednesday

7:00 a.m. Holy Communion

7:00 p.m. Holy Communion

### February 21 — Vestry Sunday

8:00 a.m. Holy Communion

10:00 a.m. Holy Communion

11:30 a.m. Vestry Meeting

7:00 p.m. The Gathering

## Lent & Easter Worship

### Wednesdays in Lent:

#### February 24 to March 24

7:00 a.m. Holy Communion

#### March 28 — Palm Sunday

4:00 p.m. Passiontide Concert

#### April 1 — Maundy Thursday

7:00 p.m. Holy Communion & foot washing

#### April 2 — Good Friday

10:00 a.m. Observance of the Passion of our Lord

#### April 3 — Holy Saturday

8:00 p.m. Easter Vigil Service

#### April 4 — Easter Sunday

8:00 a.m. Holy Communion

9:30 a.m. Holy Communion

11:00 a.m. Holy Communion

7:00 p.m. The Gathering

## RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS

A little boy attended Church with his Grandfather one Sunday. Grandpa's church had beautiful stained-glass windows. Grandpa told his grandson that the windows contained pictures of Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke, Saint John, Saint Paul, and a whole lot of other saints.

When he got home, the boy told Mom and Dad all about it. Dad, wanting to be funny and curious about what his son had learned, asked, "What is a saint?" The boy thought for a minute and then replied, "A saint is a somebody the light shines through."

I've always thought that was a pretty good definition of a Saint. Who are your saints? Who are the people in your life who let the light of God shine through them for you to see?

I believe there are a lot of saints right before our eyes — people one would not necessarily think of at first thought. I am struck at how difficult the year 2009 has been on so many. This year our economy and the world markets came tumbling down and many saw much of their life savings disappear. It was a year of great anxiety for many. In confidence I share with you that many have come to me in quiet desperation because the strain has been just too much. People have lost jobs; people have found the strain on family life almost unimaginable and yet they have remained faithful. I am pleased that many have found a certain comfort in our Church family. I think some of these people are real 'Saints' for being steadfast in the midst of such adversity and difficulty.

I am proud to be a part of a congregation that has rallied so well around each other. Financially we came up short this year and, although it forces the leadership of your parish [the Wardens and Council] to make some tough decisions, I am deeply encouraged by how committed so many of you are. So as we turn to a new year and a new decade I thought I would pass on how proud I am of the people of St. John's and I look forward to building a bright future with so many of you - Saints.



Rev. Dr. D.V. MacDonald  
Rector, St. John's York Mills

## DEACON CATHERINE'S DIARY

At the time of this writing the New Year has begun and most of us are back to work and the children back to school. Just as quickly as Advent and Christmas came and went so will Lent and Easter.

Time certainly marches on. This was especially evident to me as I assisted with the Eucharist over Christmas. I saw the children whom I remembered as little ones now looking more like big girls and boys. I often wonder how parents must feel when they look at their children and reflect on the passing of time – it is so evident in the growth of children. The older they get the less time they seem to spend at home and with family – first you send them off to kindergarten – remember the separation anxiety – for parents and child - and then off they go away to university – more separation anxiety. All of a sudden 'home' becomes the dorm at university and parents readjust to living life just a bit differently. Morals and values are pretty well set in young people by the time they get to university. We pray that we have instilled in our youth Christian values and that they will let their light shine no matter where they are.

In the next few months the Toronto District school Board will focus on the following attributes: Teamwork, Fairness and Honesty – ways to build character. The Toronto Catholic District School Board will focus on Courage, Love and Forgiveness – these are Christ-like qualities that we are to show others. How can our children make their light shine while the school in general strives to help them develop good

character? Ask the principal or your child's teacher about what they do to teach character in the school. Then consider how this fits with your values as a family and how it works alongside your faith.

The Christ Centered Character Team has met during this time to discuss the next steps in the development of the Centre for Excellence in Christian Education – CECE (formerly the Anglican Resource Centre - ARC). The group did receive the Area Ministry grant, for which we applied. This seed money will help us in reaching our goal to create a centre where those who minister to our children and youth can congregate and share successes. We are grateful to God and to the Diocese for the funding provided by the grant.

We welcomed Jenny Salisbury, Youth Minister from St. Clement's, to the CECE group. We discussed many ideas and are in the process of looking for a librarian to hire and help organize our resources and materials, catalogue the books and set up the resource centre. We have already had other parishes borrow from the Godly Play materials. If you would like to know more about CECE and how you can assist in building this resource for Christian educators please contact me through the church or at [ckeating@stjohnsyorkmills.com](mailto:ckeating@stjohnsyorkmills.com).

Wishing you and yours a spiritually reflective Lent in preparation for a most blessed Easter.

*In Christ,  
The Reverend Dr. Catherine Keating*

## ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

Our Annual Vestry Meeting takes place in the Auditorium on **Sunday, February 21, 2010** following a combined service at 10:00 a.m. The Vestry will receive reports, consider budget, elect officials and make plans for 2010.

Coffee, tea and cookies will be provided but we ask that you **bring your own lunch**. We encourage young families to bring their children - there will be a special children's program after lunch.

All people meeting the Diocesan requirements at St. John's York Mills are encouraged to attend.

*Your wardens*

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR?

If you notice that someone who sits near you in church has not been seen for awhile, a call to the office would be appreciated. The clergy and lay pastoral team are on the lookout for such circumstances, but need your help.

We would like to err on the side of caution and make a simple phone call. Sometimes, it is just a matter of a fellow parishioner needing a drive, Other times, a visit is required.

*a message from your Lay Pastoral Team*

## MCCOLLUM FUND BURSARY AWARDS FOR 2009

The Archdeacon A.C. McCollum Fund Committee will be convening soon to choose new recipients for the 2010 Bursary. In 2009, it was shared by four well-deserving Divinity students; a total of \$3500 was awarded. The committee received 14 applications; it was a difficult decision as all of them showed great promise. The Bursary, which was established in 1957, financially assists, supports and benefits individuals in need, who are engaged in the advancement of the faith and teachings of the Anglican Church of Canada.

**Dale Nikkel** received the largest bursary of \$1500; he is a creative musician and teacher, a gifted and talented student at Wycliffe College. He was instrumental in starting up an alternate service called "Fresh Expressions" in his home parish of Waterloo. He is moving to full-time study, after being laid off work; and though he has recently come into the Anglican Communion, his vision is to be a leader who embraces tradition yet inspires the next generation towards Christian service and worship.

**Pilar Gateman** re-applied this year and received \$1000. She did her placement here at St John's in 2009, whilst attending Wycliffe College. She is a teacher who had to leave her family in Alberta to pursue her own education with goals of parish ministry and missionary work to the native community near her home. Her mentors agree she is an exceptional student, and will be a highly effective minister in her Diocese of Calgary.

**Jeff Boldt** also re-applied this year and received \$500. He continues to be an excellent student, taking degrees at both Wycliffe and Waterloo, after which he hopes to complete his ThD. He comes highly recommended by his mentor, Ephraim Radner, and his purpose in ministry will be education, integrating theology and spirituality.

**Mary Anthony** received \$500 towards her goal of deaconship in the diocese of Eastern Newfoundland. She has overcome many personal obstacles to pursue her pastoral calling. She is involved in many aspects of parish life where she is highly valued.

The members of the A.C. McCollum Fund Committee for 2010 are the Rector, Venetia Cowie, Marsha Brooks, Win Herington, Bev Salmon and Chris Prentice. We wish to thank all of the members for their time and dedication, particularly to Bruce Snell who will be stepping down after 2 years, and a very special thank you to Bruce Palmer who is retiring from the Committee after many years of dedicated service. We welcome Kathleen Gow as our newest member on the Committee.

*Venetia Cowie, Co-chair*

**We are currently accepting applications for the 2010 Bursary** – requests for application forms should be submitted to the church office, the deadline for receipt of completed applications is **April 30th, 2010**. For further information, please contact Venetia Cowie or the Office Manager, Catherine Bryant at 416-225-6611.

## ALPHA: UPDATE AND A NEW SESSION

The fall 2009 session of The Alpha Course at St. John's York Mills was a great success!! Sixty participants registered for the 10-week Alpha course which began in September. Approximately 45-50 attended the program on a regular basis and 30 participated in all or part of the away-weekend at Fair Havens Resort. But the best measure of success was that our "graduates" enjoyed the course so much they invited 20 friends and family members to the celebratory final session so they could share a taste of Alpha.

The small group discussions were such a good experience that most Alpha participants are now attending one of the five small group bible studies

being held in the parish. Four of these groups are new so we are making solid progress on our mission to know Christ and make Him known.

The benefits were clearly stated in that guests made new friends, strengthened their existing faith, felt more at peace and more loved. Several commented that they had found "new purpose for life" and had "discovered a relationship with God through Jesus".

The next session of Alpha starts on **Wednesday, April 7 at 6:30 p.m.** and runs until June 30. The weekend away will be May 28 to 30. Join us as a participant, a volunteer or maybe a leader this time!

*Catherine Bryant*

## 2009 MEN'S DINNER

On Thursday, November 19th, over eighty men of the Parish came together for an evening of great food, excellent conversation and wonderful camaraderie. The evening started in the Garnsworthy Room with a glass or two of wine to go with the exquisite hors d'oeuvres prepared and served by the ladies of the Parish. We then proceeded to the auditorium to enjoy a delightful veal parmigiana dinner prepared by Gourmay Caterers Ltd. and served by our own Brass Bell Ringers. Dinner was followed by some words from Scott McDougall on Outreach, and a welcome and thoughts on the Parish from the Rev. Dr. Drew MacDonald. David Bawden came forward to present the St. John's mens tie to John Bowes as the St. Johns Man-of-the-Year for 2009. We then proceeded to the highlight of the evening when our guest speaker, Ted Barris, gave a thought-provoking presentation on his latest book, *Breaking the Silence: Untold Veterans' Stories from the Great War to Afghanistan*.

Our thanks to everyone who attended, and to all those who contributed their time and talents to make this a wonderful evening.

## FORWARD DAY BY DAY

If you're looking for a little direction for your daily devotions, consider picking up a copy of *Forward Day by Day*.

*Forward Day by Day* is a booklet of daily inspirational meditations reflecting on a specific Bible passage, chosen from the daily lectionary readings as listed in the Revised Common Lectionary or the Daily Office from the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer*.

The meditations are rich in substance and offer a wide range of witness and experiences. Each month's meditation is written by a different author—all who remain anonymous so as to keep the focus on the message, allowing God to enter your life through what is said and suggested.

*Forward Day by Day* is published quarterly: February/March/April; May/June/July; August/September/October; and November/December/January.

St. John's now has a subscription to this series of daily meditations. We have ordered regular and large print versions. The latest edition is available in the Narthex.

## MUSICFEST 2010

Can you believe Musicfest 2010 is just around the corner! Now, I realize most of you don't think about it quite as much as I do but somehow the time is really flying by these days. The first Musicfest I was involved in was in May 1991. Boy, have the concerts changed and evolved through the years. We think you will really enjoy this year's "Jukebox Memories" We have music from the 50's, 60's and a bit of the 70's. For sure you will be tapping your toes, clapping your hands and singing along. Rock Around the Clock on bells?? It's a tough one but we are giving it a try. Parents may recognize "Red and yellow and pink and green...I can Sing a Rainbow". Peter, Paul and Mary's Puff the Magic Dragon will rear it's head and Elvis is in the building! There could be some Beatles and Louis Armstrong's rendition of "What a Wonderful World" will have you nostalgic and feeling very grateful for all that we have.

Invite lots of friends to see what St. John's has to offer in a musically diverse, friendly, participatory concert featuring our own unique instrument – Handbells and our terrific Choir and Worship Team.

Thanks for your continuing support of the program and of my ministry at our wonderful church – St. John's. See you on Sunday, May 2nd at either our 4 p.m. or our 7 p.m. performance and the price is still \$15.

*Blessings,  
Carolyn Martin*

## PAY GOD FIRST!

Most financial planners will tell you to "pay yourself first" by making automatic transfers from your chequing account to your savings accounts and investments on the same day you receive your regular income. That way, you never forget to save and you'll have a clearer picture of what you have left to spend. As Christians and stewards of all God's gifts we should "pay God first" then others and ourselves last. An easy way to do this is to set up a pre-authorized giving (PAG) plan for our regular donations. Call the office to find out how!

*"... the earth is the Lord's and everything in it ..."*  
1 Corinthians 10:26

## WORSHIP OLD AND NEW

I hope you are all enjoying the New Year. Those of you who attend the 9:30 a.m. service have probably noticed some changes over the past few weeks. In November, we welcomed Allison Lynn and Gerald Flemming as new music staff members (though they are certainly familiar faces around St. John's!). I have really enjoyed getting to know them, and it has been a pleasure to work with such talented people who have a strong passion and compelling vision to serve the Church. In December, the children of our parish, under Rev. David Julien's and Jan Gardiner Williams' leadership taught us a variety of new songs, and we were treated to a special musical by the St. Stephen's Youth Choir and multi-instrumentalist extraordinaire Chris McKhool. 2010 promises even more musical opportunities, as we look at investing in some new sound equipment and as we prayerfully consider new directions for our services.

As I reflect on where we have been since October 2009 and where we are heading in 2010, my thoughts turn often to the delicate balancing act between tradition and innovation. As a student of church music and culture, I know from many first-hand experiences that "new" and "old" elements—whether that involves music, liturgy, or church leadership—can be divisive issues. Churches everywhere struggle to find the balance between the

Psalmist's injunction to "sing a new song" and the necessity of preserving styles and songs that express their communal identity. In order to gauge this balance, I compiled a comprehensive list of songs we have been singing at 9:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. and I was pleased to see that about one-third of them were Anglican hymns from Common Praise. While I feel strongly about the value of recent contemporary worship songs, I also believe our worship would be impoverished without these irreplaceable hymns of the faith, from the eloquent supplications of "Be Thou My Vision," to the litany of God's works in "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," to the sweeping narrative of the Christian life in "Amazing Grace." In hopes of incorporating even more of these stirring songs, we have added a song suggestion box in the narthex. Allison, Gerald, and I would love to integrate songs that have been meaningful to you over the course of your Christian life, so please feel free to suggest songs of any time period and style.

As we move forward into some exciting and challenging new times for St. John's, it is my prayer that our music will not divide us, but rather will unify us into a more healthy, vibrant Body under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Monique Ingalls*

## PASSIONTIDE CONCERT: W.A. MOZART'S REQUIEM

Back by popular demand, the St John's Choir (and friends) will be performing Mozart's Requiem K626 (1791) with the renowned professional orchestra, the Canadian Sinfonietta, here at St. John's at 4:00 p.m. on Palm Sunday, March 28. Soloists will be our choir leads, soprano Sophie Knowles, mezzo-soprano Catharin Carew, tenor Richard Szuba and bass David Roth. Tickets will be \$20 Adults and \$15 Seniors, Students and Unwaged. Any singers from the congregation or friends who would like to join us are invited to attend rehearsals either on Thursday evenings from 8:30 – 9:30 p.m. or special rehearsals Sundays after the 11:00 a.m. service lasting approximately 1 hour. If you or a friend might be interested, please contact Robin Davis at [robin.davis@rogers.com](mailto:robin.davis@rogers.com) or 905 409 6121.

Much has been made of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the much loved Requiem.

The theatre production and later movie production *Amadeus* paints a picture of Mozart on his death-bed dictating furiously to his musical rival Salieri, in an attempt to fulfill his commission to the 'disguised man in the grey cape'. Although much of the script is considered by historians to be fiction, it is believed that Mozart, in his delirious state, thought the grey-clad messenger was indeed the messenger of death and that he was composing his own requiem mass. Mozart died on Dec. 5th, 1791 with less than half of the work completed.

**The Link** is published quarterly by St. John's York Mills Anglican Church. The next issue will be published in May 2010. Items for inclusion should be submitted by April 5, 2010.

**Send articles to:** [thelink@stjohnsyorkmills.com](mailto:thelink@stjohnsyorkmills.com)

## COMING HOME: DISMAS FELLOWSHIP CHRISTMAS

On Friday December 18th the Dismas Fellowship held its annual Christmas celebration. The Anglican Diocese of Toronto Working Group on Justice and Corrections was the primary sponsor of the event and Deacon Bruce Williams, who acts as an advisor to the Board of the Friends of Dismas, has written the following reflection on the importance of community and friendship. The Friends of Dismas and the Dismas Fellowship participants would like to thank the Anglican Diocese of Toronto Working Group on Justice and Corrections for their support of our ongoing efforts.

John, now 28, fled home in his teens to escape an abusive relationship with his stepfather and has been homeless for much of the past eight or nine years. He has often been in and out of jail for petty crimes such as mischief, possession of drugs or shoplifting. Each time he ends up in jail he loses his accommodation and any source of income he has had. Each time he was knocked down in this way it became increasingly hard to pick himself up. John became ever more mired in despondency and drugs. But then John discovered, or perhaps God led him, first to Evergreen Ministry Centre for Street Youth and then to Friends of Dismas, a Christian support group for ex-offenders and their families supported by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto Working Group on Justice and Corrections. For the first time in his life John has found some stability. He now has safe accommodation and has returned to school to complete his high school equivalency.

We all want to come home for Christmas but John, like so many in his situation, has no home to go to. His family has long since disowned him and often our churches do not know how to make ex-offenders welcome.

Fortunately, Friends of Dismas is there to help John and other ex-offenders and to provide vital community support. However, John still faces a very

lonely Christmas and the risk of falling back into drugs. Friends of Dismas, through a generous donation from the Working Group on Justice and Corrections, was able to put on a Christmas dinner and party which went at least some of the way to filling this hole in John's life. This party, hosted at Walmer Road Baptist Church, was attended by close to 125 ex-offenders, friends, and volunteers. A fabulous Christmas dinner was prepared by the volunteers with a time of song and fellowship following.

Young men and women, such as John, are part of our future and it is vital that we foster and nurture them in order to build healthy and safe communities. As Christians we need to remember that some of Jesus' first words in his ministry were about prisoners:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because ... He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and... to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*


Luke 4:18-19

The Diocesan Working Group is committed to Jesus' vision and building safe and healthy communities of faith.

*The Rev. Dr. Bruce Williams*

PREPLANNING  
YOUR FUNERAL

A really **bright** idea.



6150 Yonge St., Toronto  
Ontario M2M 3W9  
Tel. 416-221-1159  
Web. www.rskane.ca

*Geo. Hatcher*

FLORIST WILLOWDALE LTD.

Since 1909

We have your flowers  
Open 6 days

5455 Yonge St., North York, Ont. M2N 5S1  
Tel (416) 221-5557 • Fax (416) 221-3718



Our Hands Move Hearts

## SILENT FILM NIGHTS ARE BACK!

Now in our 7th year! Please join us for three fun evenings in support of St. John's FaithWorks and Outreach programs. Silent film accompanist extraordinaire, William O'Meara returns as we venture into the dramatic film genre for 2 of the 3 films this series. Admission is free, donations greatly appreciated.

**Saturday, February 27 at 7:30 p.m.**

*Hot Water* (Harold Lloyd comedy, 60 minutes)

**Saturday, April 10 at 7:30 p.m.**

*Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1 hour, 35 minutes)

*Hot Water* (1924) is a light look at married life and in-law problems. Effectively three short films merged into one, the first features Hubby winning a live turkey in a raffle and taking it home on a crowded streetcar, much to the chagrin of the other passengers. The second features Hubby grudgingly taking the family en masse out in his brand new Butterfly Six automobile (in reality a 1923 Chevrolet Superior Sedan.), and the third is an escapade in which Hubby accidentally chloroforms his mother-in-law and is convinced that he has killed her. When she begins sleep-walking, he thinks that she has returned to haunt him. Its storyline is a departure from most of Lloyd's 1920s features, because his character was married with a family, and was not striving for

*continued from page 8*

The "Christ tree" became part of the gifts during the Eucharist. The Eucharist itself was a simplified rite, both in language and form. Everyone came forward and gathered around the altar. The children literally ringed the altar itself. Real bread, some of it baked by the children themselves, was used. We served each other the consecrated bread. The service concluded with more music and a procession led by the children.

The responses to these four services came from the clergy, musicians, the financial contributions to World Vision (\$4,000 was raised!), the results of a survey (33 responded) and verbal comments after each service by both parishioners and guests. These responses were very positive and indicated that these services had "tapped" into a need that we had not expected. People were most moved by the sight

of our children so involved and so engaged in worship.

Most respondents indicated that they would like to see a similar type of service continue in some manner on a regular basis. Some adjustments would need to be made—a few adults missed not having a sermon, and were also a bit disconcerted by the "tumult" of the children's presence. I would welcome your comments and suggestions as to how we might effectively continue to offer a version of this worship service to our families and their children and friends. I also thank St. John's from my heart for being such an open and accepting parish community where a variety of worship experiences are welcome.

*Blessings,  
Rev. David Julien*

## IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS?

That's the tagline on the Alpha poster outside the church. A person standing on a rocky peak looking at the world spread out before him. Most would say "Of course there is, look at the world in front of us." But I find that just as many are not looking out at the vista, but they are looking at the chasm below. They are reacting to the uncertainty of the 21st century and saying that there isn't much left out there. They have a hole in their souls that they can't fill and too many are losing hope.

This past fall, I was one of forty-five parishioners who experienced Alpha. For me, it was a fantastic experience. I gained a greater sense of community among the participants. I gained a greater understanding of Christianity. All this led to a huge growth in my personal faith. Words cannot describe it fully but I can say that I am energized like I never have been. It's affected my life within the walls of St John's and more importantly outside the walls of St John's.

Holy Trinity Brompton, the spiritual home of Alpha, designed a course that lends itself to the youth of today. It covers the same themes that the "adult"

Alpha covers and has basically the same format. It's just a lot more succinct and to the point. Rather than a lovely sit-down dinner and chat, we grab slices of pizza and talk about what's going on at school these days. Rather than watching the amazing Nicky Gumbel speak for 45 minutes about the week's theme, we cover the same points in 15 minutes using popular music, movie clips and even science experiments. We'll have a "weekend away" at the church while we discover just how the Holy Spirit operates. And then at the end of the 10 weeks, we'll sit down, celebrate our accomplishments and our God and discover that just maybe, with a new sense of faith, with new friends and with a greater knowledge of how God operates in our lives, there is a whole lot more to life.

We start January 21st in the Marsh Room and I hope to keep you up to date. I'm very excited about this and you should be too.

If you're a little jealous, don't worry, the "adult" Alpha will be starting up in April.

*Stephen Monk*

## ADVENT 2009

The four Sundays of Advent are a time when our worship reflects and retells centuries of waiting and the hopeful expectation of the fulfillment of God's promise to provide a Messiah to save His people and establish His kingdom on earth. Our hopeful expectations for our 9:30 Advent services in 2009 were far exceeded by the congregation's enthusiastic response to their worship experience!

Our intentions were to create a worship experience that would be truly inclusive of our young children. We wanted our children to understand that their worship in church is connected to their life in the world. The children (and any family member who wished to join them) sat on cushions at the chancel steps. From there, various children led the prayers and read the scripture. We knew that music would be essential to keeping the children connected from beginning to end, so our own wonderful musicians Monique, Gerald and Allison joined with our guest musician Chris McKhool to provide a dynamic,

interactive musical experience that even had the children (and a few uninhibited adults and clergy!) accompanying with various percussion instruments that Chris brought along with him. The length of the service needed to be tailored to the fidget threshold of a young child, so we made it 45 minutes, start to finish. For the same reason, we made the sermon an activity in which the children participated. Pictures of children in need were shown on the big screen. Discussion of these needs led to our children responding with their (and their families!) commitment to help provide these other children with what they were in need of. Special envelopes which would contain contributions were then clipped to a "Christ tree". The congregation was invited to place their contributions in the envelopes during the four Advent services. These contributions would then go to World Vision and be used specifically for the need represented by each envelope.

*continued on page 9*

## ST. STEPHEN'S OUTREACH

Those who had the pleasure of hearing the Downsview Youth Covenant Choir in December at St. John's will have some idea of how I developed such an interest in the association. It was this time last year that I became involved after hearing the choir and the Downsview Youth Minister speak at St. John's. Initially I helped with the homework program and now I sit on the Board.

The Downsview Youth Covenant (DYC) is the outreach ministry of the Church of St. Stephen, a church serving the Downsview community for over 50 years. In 1997 the outreach program was started. It provides activities for children and youth ages 6 to 24. The homework club is an after-school program for children 6 to 12 and runs Monday to Friday during the school year. This program offers help with homework and is a safe social environment for many children who come from single working parents and who would otherwise be going home to an empty house.

The Youth Covenant Choir members perform songs from a blend of Gospel, spiritual and Afro-Caribbean music. Participants range in ages from 10 to 24. The choir is invited to sing in various community churches and social functions; this is a wonderful experience for them as many have never travelled outside their community. They are all very dedicated and work hard to achieve their goals. Just watching them practice is inspiring.

The DYC started a much needed camp to keep the children safe and off the streets in summer and during March break. It has been running for 12 years now for six weeks in July and August for children aged 6 to 12. They offer a variety of programs, many run by volunteers. The activities include swimming, tennis, golf, crafts and day trips.

I am a member of the fund raising committee of the board - that is my major focus at present. The Board is made up of members of the community and chaired by Canon Stephen Fields who is very dedicated to the program. My experience on the Board has given me a better insight into the issues that many members of this community face in trying to provide their children with opportunities to maximize their potential.

At the Board meetings I have had the opportunity to speak firsthand with the parents of some of the children who attend or have graduated from the

program. These stories make clear what a worthwhile endeavour it is. One graduate stated that he probably would have been involved with a street gang had he not participated in the after-school program which ultimately led him to a university degree

Funding is an on-going problem as most of these children come from homes with very limited resources. Faithworks and Vision Canada are supporters but we still need funding from the general public to keep the programs running. To give you an example of costs; \$1 provides a healthy food snack for a homework participant for a full session, \$5 covers the cost of entire homework session for one child, \$20 would provide workbooks and \$100 would secure a session of after-school programming for 20 children ... not a large amount to accomplish so much.

Working on the Board is stimulating and fulfilling. I will continue to work to make the Downsview Youth Covenant an ongoing success.

*Pat Bent*

## FROM WINTER WEAR TO SPRING CLEANING TO THE CLOTHING BANK

New Circles Community Services has expressed their appreciation for many terrific donations and volunteer assistance received from parishioners in recent months. Throughout the upcoming months winter wear is still needed since they will soon start to stockpile coats for the beginning of next winter. As Spring cleaning season approaches, please consider donating any gently used clothes for children, teens, men and women plus sheets and comforters to their clothing bank. If you would like to make a charitable gift, please make your cheque out to New Circles Community Services. They are located at 10 Gateway Blvd., Suite 100 (east of the Shell station on Don Mills Rd, 3 lights south of Eglinton Ave.). Jane Craig can be reached at 416-422-2591 for further information or to discuss volunteer service opportunities. If you want to drop off a donation to the Church instead, please call me at 416-488-6760.

*Scott McDougall*

## FLEMINGDON PARK CHURCH MINISTRY

You, members of St. John's Church have donated generously to Flemington Park Ministry by contributing to the food box in the narthex, mittens, hats, toys and other gifts. It has come to my attention that you might wish to know more about this ministry, which you support.

Flemington Park Church is located in the basement of an office building at # 10 The Gateway Ave. and serves the neighbourhood south of Eglinton Ave. and east of Don Mills Rd. This is an area of subsidized housing where many nationalities live speaking a host of different languages.

The Rev. Helena-Rose Houldcroft is the incumbent of this parish where the majority of attendees are Muslim. She conducts regular prayer meetings and Bible studies. There is an area set aside for spiritual reflection and meditation – a place to feel safe, secure and supported. This is not a social service agency – rather a place for building community. Most of the people are immigrants coming with very little English, much poverty, fear, and loneliness. I believe most find this place an emotional haven.

The Star Program ( which stands for – skills training access resources) operates with some support from World Vision. This is designed to empower participants to set realistic goals for themselves, to make wise decisions and to access their necessary resources. Empowering people to help themselves by understanding their abilities and valuing their potential gives them hope and a sense of dignity. Upon graduating from this program with a certificate

of success, they are then able to be more self-reliant and to help others in the community.

The Food Bank operates in the same area four days a week with some of its functions overlapping with the Church. Two thousand people a month, half of whom are children, access this facility. It is in this area where I work. I love my job, which is interviewing newcomers when they arrive needing food. I record from their documentation, their identity, income and expenses etc. to determine if they qualify to receive food. This is usually the first contact we have with these people, who are mostly immigrants, so to be able to give them encouragement, a helping hand and a smile is exciting for me.

An After-School Children's' Program operates Monday to Thursday in co-operation with The Gateway Presbyterian Church. This supports 100 children in three areas of homework, crafts, and games followed by supper. This, of course, helps children with language skills, schoolwork and building their community.

Flemington Park Church Community is a lifeline for many, giving people a sense of community in a strange land and the hope to become self-reliant, contributing citizens. Fortunately Rev. Houldcroft has a wonderful sense of humour and a deep sense of compassion for all who come. She accomplishes much with three paid staff and 70 volunteers. Thank you for your prayers and your continued support.

*Diana McVitty*

## LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

Once again, we have available a Lenten study booklet, this year, a study of **The Acts of the Apostles**, another in the series entitled "**Passport to Life**". Written by Luke as a sequel to his gospel, "Acts" offers interesting insights for our own times into Christian discipleship and how to 'grow a church'. The booklet, suitable for individual or group study, is available from Olivia Lee (416-225-2981) at a cost of \$3.00. Prior to Lent, it will be available on Sundays in the Narthex.

## WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

The Reverend Dr. John H. Westerhoff, a noted scholar and priest from Atlanta, writes: "stewardship is the way to spiritual health and maturity, but for stewardship to have a chance we must begin with a serious spiritual question: What do we owe to God for the free gift of life and its accompanying benefits? The answer, of course, is everything."

*All shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.*

Deuteronomy 16:17

## THE BURNING BUSH ...AND KIDS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS...

You will remember the story of the Burning Bush: one day, while Moses was leading the Israelites through the Wilderness to the Promised Land, he took a solitary walk and happened upon a burning bush.

As I was telling this story in the children's chapel all the youngsters were as quiet as church mice waiting for the mystery to unfold. All of a sudden, a little girl began grunting and harrumphing with her boot. "Boots off!" she demanded in no uncertain terms.

(By her red-faced, determined look I could see that this would spell disaster. Fire engines and police chiefs would soon be arriving to the sirens of: "Two-year-old wants boots off. Now.")

I stopped the story mid-sentence and all eyes were on this young 'un struggling with her boots .

Phumph. Off came the boot.

Phumph. Off came the other boot.

Phew! A sigh of relief from all! And, now back to the story:

And, while Moses stood at the burning bush God said to him, "Remove your ..."

Ah, I thought ...

"God said, (and all the children chimed in) 'Remove your boots!'"

That morning we were all truly on holy ground!

### More of Kids saying the darndest things

It is always fascinating to observe babies and toddlers learning to talk. One day, no words, and all of a sudden, whole complex sentences!

During Christmas Season, a young toddler bounded into church and with outstretched arms reached up to me and exclaimed, "Jesus! Jesus!"

"Well, hello!" I greeted. "Merry Christmas to you!"

It might look to you, the reader, that this little girl is confused about my name. Well, she does, indeed, know my name and who I am. It just wasn't ready to come out at that time.

Likewise, she does know who Jesus is.

Later on, at the altar rail, during Communion, I knelt beside this young toddler.

Reverend Drew blessed the rosy-cheeked young 'un with ; "Jesus Loves You!"

With eyes as big as saucers, the little girl looked at the Rector, looked at me, and looked at the Rector again.

With a smile, she replied, "I know."

*Jan Gardiner Williams  
Children's Minister*

## HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?

The final question remains – how much should Christians give? Each Christian "should give, then, as they have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). No set amount or percentage of income is dictated, rather, "if you are eager to give, God will accept your gift on the basis of what you have to give, not on what you don't have" (2 Corinthians 8:12).

If you are seeking some sort of clarity for your own standard of giving here is a suggestion: Start by giving one hour's pay per week to your church—this amounts to about 2.5 per cent. Once that becomes comfortable give a similar amount to charity.

## PANCAKE SUPPER

You are invited to come out to our Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, on **February 16th, 2010** from **5:30 to 7:30 pm**. Hosted by the Youth Group and Children's Church as a fundraiser for Haiti. Donations welcome at the door.

**Volunteers needed!** If you have a griddle, or an extra spatula, come on out and help us cook up dinner!

**Get The Link online!** It's faster than Canada Post and tree-friendly too! If you'd like this newsletter delivered to your computer, please send your e-mail address to [thelink@stjohnsyorkmills.com](mailto:thelink@stjohnsyorkmills.com)