

January/February 2025

Our mission is to worship God, to spread His word, and to serve communities near and far.



Graceview Presbyterian Church 588 Renforth Drive, Etobicoke ON M9C 2N5

Minister's Message...

HAPPY NEW YEAR Graceview Family!!

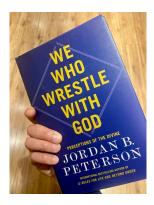


Entering a new year often prompts reflection—not just on where we're headed, but also on deeper questions about life and its ultimate meaning. What does it mean to wrestle with our faith and, in turn, with the realities of life and death?

Recently, I started reading Dr. Jordan Peterson's new release, *We Who Wrestle With God*. Although I haven't finished it yet, I'm already

captivated by its bold and insightful exploration of spiritual struggle. The book delves into how grappling with faith parallels the challenges of confronting life's uncertainties, particularly questions about suffering, purpose, and the inevitability of death. Dr. Peterson draws inspiration from Jacob's wrestling match with God in Genesis, presenting it as both a literal and metaphorical encounter that shapes our understanding of God's sovereignty.

As I ponder this, it strikes me that our wrestlings with God and with the fragility of life are inextricably linked. In life's moments of joy, we can celebrate, but in times of difficulty, we are confronted with profound questions: Is God truly in control? Why does suffering persist? What is the ultimate purpose of our existence? These aren't merely philosophical musings—they



are deeply personal struggles that each of us faces at various points in our journey.

The pursuit of answers often brings us to a crossroads: will we resign ourselves to despair, or will we trust in God's greater plan? Wrestling with God doesn't mean denying our doubts or fears—it means bringing them to Him in honest dialogue. Similarly, wrestling with life and death compels us to move beyond fleeting comforts and accomplishments to embrace a higher purpose, one rooted in God's eternal promises.

As I continue exploring Dr. Peterson's insights, I encourage you to join me in considering these weighty but vital questions. What control do we really have over our lives? How do we reconcile our limited understanding with God's ultimate sovereignty? Let us take this new year as an opportunity to wrestle—not to find quick resolutions, but to discover deeper truths that can guide us through both the challenges and joys ahead.

May 2025 be a year of meaningful wrestling—wrestling that refines our faith, shapes our character, and brings us closer to the God who holds us through it all.

In Christ's love and service,

The Rev. Eric Lee

"When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future." – Ecclesiastes 7:14 NIV

The Mysterious St. Valentine

In mid-February we will celebrate the Feast of St. Valentine, a day on which, traditionally, people express their love for each other, sending Valentine's cards or giving gifts, often of candy or flowers. In schools, children send greetings to their classmates, and often an entire week is devoted to Valentine activities such as the decorating of special bags to hold one's messages of friendship. Sometimes, there is a classroom party, with special treats such as cinnamon hearts or pink iced cupcakes. Oddly enough, although in many public schools these days the mention of Christmas is frowned upon, political correctness does not seem to extend to Valentine's Day. Every one of the many, many classrooms I worked in as an educational assistant, acknowledged and celebrated Valentine's Day. But where did it start? Who was this mysterious saint who has come to be associated with the mutual exchange of expressions of love?

Well, it seems there were several early Christian martyrs named Valentine. But there are two saints, and possibly a third, who are honoured on February 14.

Valentine of Rome was a priest who suffered martyrdom under the reign of the emperor Claudius in about A.D. 269. Valentine of Terni became bishop of Interamna (modern Terni) about A.D. 197, and was killed during the persecution of Emperor Aurelian. Both of these martyrs are buried near the Via Flaminia in Rome. Some sources believe that they were one and the same person. (The third Valentine was martyred in Africa, but very little seems to be known about him.)

Several legends exist explaining the relationship between Valentine and love, but one version or another of the following story kept cropping up during my research: The emperor Claudius was having trouble recruiting troops for his army. No one wanted to leave his wife and children to go to war for the emperor, so Claudius decided to outlaw marriage for young men. They would then have no reason or excuse not to be soldiers, and the emperor's army would thrive. Of course, the men of Rome were not pleased by this new law, and they found an ally in the priest Valentine, who defied the emperor and continued to perform secret marriages for them. Claudius was outraged, and promptly had him arrested and thrown in jail. Some sources say that Claudius took a liking to his prisoner, but Valentine made a strategic error in trying to convert the emperor and was sentenced to be clubbed to death. When this failed to finish him off, he was beheaded.

While in jail, Valentine established a relationship with a young girl who was thought to be his jailer's daughter. Before his execution, he is said to have sent her a note expressing his love for her, signing it "from your Valentine". Others maintain that before he died he miraculously cured her of blindness, which made him a candidate for canonization.

In 496 A.D., Pope Gelasius proclaimed February 14 as St. Valentine's Day. In 1969, the saint's feast day was removed from the church calendar as part of an effort to eliminate those saints who were viewed by some as being of mostly legendary origin.

In the mid nineteenth century, a young woman named Esther Howland made and sent the first commercial Valentine cards, and Hallmark has never looked back. Candy makers, florists, and jewelers knew a good thing when they saw it, and today in Western countries St. Valentine's Day is second only to Christmas in terms of the number of cards and gifts presented to loved ones. According to the Greeting Card Association, approximately one billion Valentine cards are sent each year, 85% of which are purchased by women.

The Past Life of Maureen Screen

by Parkland Resident Don Kerr

Maureen Screen awoke on a morning in 1954 to find that Hurricane Hazel flooding had washed away fourteen homes on her street and killed thirty-two residents, including the five-year-old neighbour she walked to school every day.

The first thing she heard that day was a voice on a loudspeaker from a helicopter whirring overhead. It was warning residents who had sought refuge on the roofs of their houses to remain there to be rescued and not try to swim to safety in the raging waters of the Humber River.

It was only later that Maureen, who was ten at the time, learned that eighty-one people had been killed in Toronto and that police and firemen were helpless to save some people. A fireman described houses being swept downstream with people in them: "People were screaming 'Save us! Save us!' We could see them, but they were too far out. There was nothing we could do; the water was up to our necks."

Maureen attended Western Collegiate, went on to secretarial school, and married her high school sweetheart when they were both twenty-one. Brian played hockey for the Toronto Marlies, was traded to a Boston Bruins farm team, and returned to Toronto to play with the Western Dodgers.

When South Africa was setting up a hockey league, Brian signed a two-year contract to play in the league that included German, Swiss and Dutch teams. He and Maureen emigrated to Johannesburg. They became very good friends with a local couple and stayed for nearly five years. Maureen describes South Africa as beautiful. "It's God's country", she says. Brian played hockey and worked for Wilson Sporting Goods. Selling golf clubs. The company paid for his membership in a golf club, at which he played with golf greats Gary Player, Ernie Els, and Nick Price.

Maureen and Brian returned to Canada where they both got jobs with airlines, Maureen with Cathay Pacific and Brian with Canadian Pacific. Their connections allowed them to travel extensively and cheaply. They both loved to shop and, being married with no children, they indulged themselves shopping in Japan and Hong Kong. Brian got a kick out of going to a tailor in Hong Kong one day and walking out the next in a handsome, tailor-made suit for an amazingly low price.

They maintained their warm friendship with their South African friends and alternated visits every other year. Maureen and Brian took the couple to Cape Cod, San Francisco and a summer cottage. Their friends took them on various excursions, including to a famous wild animal preserve.

Maureen and her friend continued to travel together after they both became widows. Maureen visited Israel during a peaceful period and was impressed to see Jews, Arabs and Christians living in apparent harmony. She was especially conscious of a sense of history in the country. "It was like walking in the Bible," she says.

For Maureen, the height of her travels was a safari to Kruger National Park, an African preserve, to shoot big game – with a camera, not a gun. "Elephants are my favourite animals," she says. "They travel together, look after one another, follow the same trails every year, and they never forget: if they come across the skeleton of one of their herd, they pause to run their trunks over it affectionately." She has ridden elephants and walked them, leading them by their trunks. In Morocco, she rode a camel which she described as "a mean animal – they bite."

Maureen is afraid of snakes and doesn't like "creepy crawly things like lizards." In South Africa, she checked under the covers every night to make sure she wouldn't wake up with a couple of geckos for company.

In the mid 90's, Maureen returned to her church and her faith and has been involved ever since. (She now lives) at Parkland, (where) she enjoys social activities, including playing Samba, bingo and trivia and attending Bible Study.

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"The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul."

Johann Sebastian Bach

Choir Notes

Kathy Twynam

The year was 1970, and Grace Church was struggling. Its minister, Rev. Bill Mitchell, retired on December 31 that year, leaving the pulpit vacant until the arrival in September 1971 of Rev. R. Campbell "Cam" Taylor. Cam served as Grace's beloved minister for almost five years, until May 1976, and after retirement in 2001 returned with his wife Sandy to the newly amalgamated Graceview as Minister in Association and later Minister Emeritus.

We tend to think of churches as thriving in those days fifty years ago, with large congregations, large Sunday Schools, large choirs, and enough youngish people to share the work willingly and equitably. But that was not necessarily so. Finances, which are a major concern today, were certainly so in the 70's, with liabilities as of December 31, 1970, totalling \$61,500. This situation improved as the 70's progressed, and in 1980 the rear property (where Centennial Park Place is now) was sold for a total of \$245,000, which eliminated, for the time being, any concerns about finances.

The choir at that time was gasping for breath. The Annual Report of 1970 included this report from choir member and elder Bill Downie, whom some of you will remember fondly. (Bill wasn't one for mincing words!)

The choir has been a disaster this year...Mary Lou Rigby has stepped into the breach as our organist and has done an excellent job. The whole load has been carried by her and our two regulars, Lynn Crawford and Marg McGee...to make up a choir of three. What we need now is (sic) a few keen members who will give up two hours on Wednesday evenings and appear each Sunday morning to give us the benefit of their efforts at practice. I am sure in our congregation there must be one or two people who can sing...

Music was then, as it is now, an integral part of our worship service. In 1970, it was abundantly clear that the choir was in difficulty and in need of new direction. Things began to look better with the arrival in 1972 of Eric Medhurst as Organist and Choir Director. Eric came to Grace from Martin Grove Baptist Church with little in the way of experience or credentials other than his prowess on the organ and piano. He was twenty-two years old and had been fired from Martin Grove. He used to say that they fired him because "they didn't like the colour of my tie..." Eric was to remain as Grace/Graceview's Choir Director for nearly fifty years, learning and growing in the position, until his retirement from the choir in August 2021. Sadly, Eric passed away a year later, in early September 2022. On a personal note, I was his elder and he was my friend, and I miss him and mourn his passing to this day.

Under Eric's leadership, by the early eighties the choir had made a dramatic turn-around, not only in appearance – they were sporting new choir gowns – but also in number and versatility. They were accompanied from time to time by brass instruments - a tuba, a French horn, a saxophone played by Bob Dobson, and a trumpet played by Rev. Terry Samuel, who was minister at that time. The rock opera "Godspell" was presented in 1981. A year later a junior choir began practising and participating in worship services under the leadership of choir member and teacher Doris Bryce. A wonderful addition to the music program was a new organ, installed in 1988.

Fast forward to 2002. I had retired from the Toronto District School Board that June. For years, I had been listening to the beautiful anthems that were sung by the choirs at Hillview Church and at our newly formed Graceview, and I wanted to sing them, too. I had no prior choral experience, but I could read music at a basic level and I didn't think my voice was terrible. When choir practices started up again after the summer hiatus, I gathered up my courage and presented myself at the church for the first Thursday evening choir practice in the Fall of 2002. I was met on the porch, quite literally with open arms, by the aforementioned Bill Downie, who was delighted to see me and gave me a big hug. Well, that was an auspicious beginning!

Once inside the church, I approached the music director, Eric, whose "audition" consisted of two questions: "Can you read?" (I was smart enough to know he meant music and not words), and "What do you sing?" That one gave me pause for a second until I realized he meant "what voice". Having no clue, I said "soprano", thinking that with no experience I had better start with singing the melody. Sitting up there in the choir loft beside Doris Bryce who, may she rest in peace, was a great mentor, I quickly realized that I had a few things to learn. But by Christmas that year I had more or less figured it out. In a very short time, I knew that joining the church choir was the best thing I had done for myself since retirement. It was a win-win situation, and I loved it. No matter what kind of a Thursday I had had, I looked forward to choir practice and always felt better afterwards. I hated it when the odd time, choir practice would be cancelled because of, say, a blizzard. Singing makes the soul take flight.

We are all nostalgic for times gone by, when the church was full and the choir boasted at its peak, twenty-two singers able to present a new anthem, in four voices, every Sunday. The back row was filled with tenors and basses, and it was lovely to hear the men singing out and supporting the sopranos and altos in front. We would start practising the Christmas music at the beginning of November, and by the time the Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols rolled around, we were superbly prepared and confident. Oh, the wonderful anthems we sang in those days, not only to mark the Christmas season but throughout the year.

But the times they are a-changin'. It's hard to say exactly when our numbers, both in the congregation and the choir, began to noticeably diminish, but as the years went on we could see that with the choir, aging, illness and death were taking a toll, and we were not replacing ourselves. A few years before the pandemic, the choir had shrunk to two or three men, two or three altos, and a handful of sopranos, still presenting a multi-voice anthem every Sunday. And then the pandemic came along and really did a number on many churches, including us. When Eric Medhurst died in 2022, it felt like the end of an era. His loyalty, devotion and dedication to our church and our choir were exemplary. He told me more than once that he never turned into our church parking lot without thanking God for the privilege of being Graceview's Music Director. Eric's passing was a shock to the choir and the congregation, but we carried on, determined to keep the choir going, to the glory of God and to serve our church. We embarked on a search for a new Music Director, which hadn't happened for fifty years. We had to start from scratch and were guided in the search by Susan Chopp, a musician in her own right and chair of the Search Committee. The search resulted in the arrival of Kento Stratford, young, enthusiastic, talented, with little experience as a choir conductor but who learned quickly. Popular with the congregation and the Sing!Etobicoke folks, Kento was with us for three years before moving on to a position at a bigger church that could offer a higher salary and greater challenges.

So it was back to the drawing board and a second search committee in three years. We were excited in October 2024 when Boris Treivus joined us as Music Director, and things immediately began to happen.

These days when we are all present, we are a choir of seven to nine women - but we are rarely all present. Some of us are experienced choral singers, others are not; some of us have basic knowledge of music notation, others do not; only one of us, Susan, is musically trained. All are volunteers who have made the heavy commitment to serve our church in this way and consider it a privilege to do so. The anthems we sing are either unison or two-part pieces for soprano and alto. We have a vast music library of wonderful anthems, all of them written for four-part singing. Many could be sung in unison or otherwise adapted to suit the present make-up of the choir, but Boris has a considerable library of music himself, totally new to us. He is challenging us to reach new heights, learning new pieces every Thursday and singing them that Sunday. Many are two-part pieces, which is difficult for some of us - but we have been doing it. Learning them with only one rehearsal, ready to sing on Sunday, is extremely challenging, but we are working on rectifying this

situation. Almost all of the comments I have heard regarding Boris and the music we are doing have been very positive. It is certainly different from what we are accustomed to. We work very hard at Thursday night practices. If you want to get a glimpse of what we are doing, check out our website. Google "Graceview Presbyterian Church" and go to "website" – "about us" – "church groups" - "choir", and you will see us at practice. I am very proud of our choir members for hanging in and reaching beyond what we believe ourselves capable of.

Dr. Victoria Meredith, a choral conductor and professor at the University of Western Ontario, in her study of four adult choirs, concluded, "choral singing improves overall health, increases respiratory function, heightens the immune system, and improves brain function." According to Professor Graham Welch at the University of London, England, "... singing is an aerobic activity that increases oxygenation in the bloodstream and exercises major muscle groups in the upper body, even when sitting..." The health benefits that are a by-product of choral singing are myriad. It is also a mood-elevator and a brain exercise that may help to ward off potential cognitive decline in later years. Singing in Graceview's choir is a no-lose activity, a wonderful way to serve God and the church while heaping benefits on oneself.

Did you know that only about 3% of any given population is tone deaf and truly cannot sing? So, what do you say? If you can commit to two hours every Thursday evening, 6:30 to 8:30, and an early arrival at church on Sunday mornings, and if you are among the other 97%, please consider joining the choir. Women are always welcome of course, but a few male voices would be a wonderful enhancement to our music program. If you think you can make this commitment, speak to Boris and show up at the church on Thursday night at 6:30.

Outreach



Craft Party

On Monday, December 9, our Outreach Committee hosted a Craft Party for the residents of the Wellesworth Group home. Three residents attended, with their caregivers and their driver. Brian.

Thank you to Su

Lim and Debbie Homebrook, who provided the crafts, to Nancy Green, who brought cupcakes, and to Evelyn Ramlakhan, who provided a beverage.



Spanish Dinner

On Friday, Nov

15th, almost 85 people enjoyed a delicious Spanish meal prepared by Chef Keith Hoare and his students. The students, assisted by Chef Keith and his wife, did a wonderful job of serving the food, clearing the dishes and cleaning up the kitchen.

Chef Keith talked about the menu items before we ate and then gave a short talk about the students' March break trip to Spain and the culinary program at Thistletown Collegiate. Our Music Director, Boris Treivus, entertained us by plaving a few pieces during



the evening. Ticket sales totalled \$2520 and we raised \$865 in additional charitable donations for the TCI Euro Trip. All proceeds from the dinner went towards the students' trip.

Christmas Angel Program

Thanks to the tremendous generosity of our congregation, we have received almost \$2050 in donations for the Christmas Angels program. As a result, we have been able to transfer this amount to the St James Food Basket and 102 people have been given a \$20 Walmart gift card. Since the Food Basket was closed during the Christmas holidays, every client received a gift card to help them at this difficult time of year. The members of Outreach would like to thank all of the people who contributed to this fund and helped to bring the joy of Christmas to those in need in our community.

Graceview's New Members

On November 24, 2024, we celebrated the reception of nine new members.



L - R: Alice, Rachael, Dedan, Godfrey, Caroline, Chris, Samuel, Jackson, Paul "Never apologize. Never retract. Never explain. Get the thing done and let them howl." Nellie McClung

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Susan B. Anthony Paves the Way

Adapted from an essay by Joanna Strong and Tom B. Leonard Kathy Twynam

It has been rumoured that sometime within the next year, Ontarians will be facing an election – perhaps provincial, perhaps federal, perhaps both, if our politicians can ever get over themselves and decide what to do. And many of us followed the recent compelling US election with great interest, knowing that the repercussions were bound to spill over into Canada no matter who won.

Ladies, as we cast our ballots in the next election, whenever that may be, it behooves us to give a thought to the brave women before us, whose fearless determination helped win for women in democratic countries the right, and the privilege, to help elect our decision-makers. One such woman was Susan B. Anthony, an American woman whose name, more than any other, is associated with the long struggle to win the vote for American women. I found this story interesting:

It was Election Day in America, 1872. The polling booths, all manned by men, were busy and noisy. The men greeted their neighbours with handshakes, laughter and much male banter as they deposited their ballots in the ballot box, probably never giving a thought to the exalted privilege they had been accorded by virtue of their gender. But suddenly there was a hush, and the room grew silent as the men gazed in hostile amazement at the fifteen women who had just entered. The man at the desk rose with a sneer. "What are you doing here?" he demanded to know. "This is voting day. You don't belong here. Go home!" But their leader, the dignified woman who confronted him, didn't give an inch.

"We've come to vote for the President," she said. "He will be our President as well as yours. We women are citizens of the country as much as you are, and we insist on voting for the man who is to be the leader of this government." And with great dignity, Susan B. Anthony walked up to the ballot box and deposited her vote. Every woman with her did the same, while the men watched in stunned silence.

In 1872, women in America could earn money, but they could not own it. If a married woman worked outside the home. every penny she earned belonged to her husband. The law appointed a male guardian to oversee any property that she was lucky enough to possess. Women like Susan writhed at this injustice. They saw no reason why it should be enshrined into law, and many vowed that they would carry on the battle to see that women were made equal in the eyes of the law while the Lord gave them the strength to do so. Susan waged this battle with thousands of speeches given across the country, pleading with men and trying to arouse women to fight for their rights. She wrote hundreds of pamphlets and letters and was the subject of many ugly and untrue things said about her as she carried on the struggle. Over time, women in America joined her by the thousands, many persuading their husbands to change their opinions and join them in the fight for justice.

On that day in 1872 when she and her followers had the audacity to force themselves into the polling station and cast their votes, the men were not impressed. Susan was arrested and brought before a judge, accused of illegally entering a polling booth. When the judge asked her "How do you plead?", this, in part, is what Susan said: "Guilty! Guilty of trying to uproot the slavery in which you men have placed us women...Guilty of trying to lift the standard of womanhood so that men may look with pride upon their wives' awareness of public affairs. But, Your Honour, I am NOT guilty of acting against the Constitution, which says that no person is to be deprived of equal rights under the law...You men have become slaveholders of your own mothers, wives, sisters and daughters."

The judge was more than a little nonplussed at this forceful speech from the tall, dignified woman before him – but the law was the law. "You are fined one hundred dollars," the judge informed her.

"I will not pay it", retorted Susan. "Mark my words, the law will be changed." And she turned and walked out of the courtroom. When the court clerk asked if he should follow her and bring her back, the elderly judge shook his head. "I fear that she is right, that the law will be changed."

Thankfully, Susan B. Anthony was right – the law was changed, but not until 1920, fourteen years after her death in 1906 and 48 long years after fifteen women forced their way into a polling station and illegally cast their votes for president.

Here in Canada, the right to vote was granted to some women a bit earlier, with Manitoba the first province to do so, in 1916. In 1918 Parliament passed a law removing the gender barrier and granting many women the right to vote – but not all. The struggle was far from over. Women in Quebec were not able to vote until 1940, and Indigenous women could not do so until 1960, well within the lifetime of most of us. Today, the women of Canada take the right to vote for granted. Remembering that it was a hard-fought battle by brave and determined women over the course of many years, let us be sure to exercise it in 2025 when the opportunity arises.

Hymn Stories: This is My Father's World Adapted from 101 Hymn Stories – Kenneth W. Osbeck Author: Maltbie D. Babcock 1858-1901 Composer: Franklin L. Sheppard 1852-1930

This is my Father's world, And to my list'ning ears All nature sings, and round me rings The music of the spheres.

Maltbie D. Babcock was born in Syracuse, New York, on August 3, 1858, of a socially prominent family. Later he became recognized as one of the outstanding Presbyterian ministers of his generation. He was a champion baseball pitcher and swimmer, idolized by the young men of his church for his physical prowess and his strong convictions and principles. Intolerant of injustice, he one day intervened when an older boy was bullying one younger than himself and was using unsavory language. Rev. Babcock simply picked the bully up by the nape of the neck and the seat of the pants and threw him over the fence.

He was also a skilled musician, performing on the organ, piano and violin, and was known to be a great lover of nature. While a pastor in Lockport, New York, he would often take a morning walk to the top of a hill north of town to admire the view of Lake Ontario and the surrounding countryside. His favourite expression was "I am going out to see my Father's world."

This hymn was taken from a sixteen-verse poem written by him and published posthumously in 1901. In it, he portrays the message of God's presence, personality, power and purpose.

The tune for the text was arranged from an old English melody by one of Babcock's closest friends, Franklin L. Sheppard. The tune name, "Terra Beata" is Latin for "blessed earth." I hope you have enjoyed the January/February issue of Graceviews. The next issue will be available early in January. **The deadline will be Sunday, February 23.**

If you have anything you wish to share with your church family, please make your editor very happy by writing it up and sending it to me by email. If it interests you it is bound to interest someone else. And don't forget my plea for recipes! I need your help, as my supply of recipes is dwindling.

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