

GRACEVIEWS

March/April 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...



What a winter it has been! With the multiple snowstorms we've been gifted with lately, it's hard not to marvel at the beauty and power of God's creation. As we take in the wonder of nature, let us also turn our hearts to something even more wonderful - the *Holy Scripture*. Just as the snow blankets the earth, may God's Word cover our lives with wisdom and truth.

I want to share with you an epiphany I received from the book I recommended last time, *We Who Wrestle With God*. Since then, I have finished reading it, and I have been deeply moved by how the book journeys through Scripture - from Adam and Eve to Cain and Abel, from Noah to Abraham, from Moses to Jonah.

What struck me in Genesis 3:1-7 is the subtle yet powerful deception of the serpent, tempting Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The temptation was cunning: *'You will be like God, knowing good and evil.'* In that moment, Eve sought to reach beyond her given place, attempting to grasp mastery over the moral order itself. Adam, too, followed her lead, committing the sin of overreach - not out of mere defiance, but in an effort to impress and maintain harmony. Unquestionably, both Adam and Eve reveal to us the sin of overreach, the sin of pride.

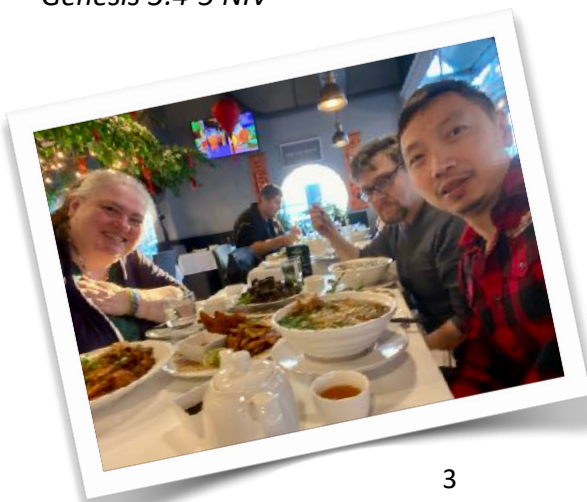
This interpretation reveals a deep truth about human nature. Men and women, in different ways, are prone to presumption - to extend beyond the wisdom given by God, to reshape order according to personal desires rather than divine will. How often do we, as men, act like Adam - retooling and

renaming order itself, indefinitely - all to impress women and maintain harmony? And how often do women, like Eve, fall into the narcissism of compassion, believing, "I am the mother who can encompass all"? These patterns are not just ancient mistakes; they are struggles that persist in our lives today.

I pray for you, my fellow members, that we take the Bible seriously and that a love for it may be ignited within us. May it not be a book we only read from a few verses during the service or let collect dust on a shelf, but a living word that shapes our hearts and minds. Let us encourage one another to open up and engage in faith-filled conversations, whether in Bible study or beyond, and wrestle with these truths together in community. May the ancient stories of wisdom move us by the Holy Spirit to interpret our contemporary culture through the lens of the Holy Bible, rather than the other way around.

In Christ's love and service,
The Rev. Eric Lee

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
– Genesis 3:4-5 NIV



**Staff Team Dinner
February 13, 2025**

St. Patrick - Patron Saint of Ireland

St. Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland and was probably responsible in part for the Christianization of the Picts and Anglo-Saxons. The available body of evidence about him is contradictory. It appears that Patrick was born in Roman Britain in the early part of the fifth century, but as a teenager was captured by Irish raiders and taken as a slave to Ireland. While in captivity, he prayed daily, his faith grew, and after six years he heard a voice telling him to go home. He fled his master, made his way to the western sea, and returned to his family. He entered the church, becoming a deacon and a bishop, and later returned to Ireland as a missionary.

Although the dates of his life cannot be fixed with any certainty, most modern historians accept March 17, 493 as the date of his death. He is said to be buried under Down Cathedral in Downpatrick, County Down, alongside St. Brigid and St. Columba, although this has not been proven.

Interesting Traditions surrounding St. Patrick

- Although post-glacial Ireland never actually had snakes, St. Patrick is credited in legend with banishing them. *Snakes* possibly referred to the serpent symbolism of the Druids.
- Legend also has it that Patrick taught the people of Ireland about the Trinity by using the shamrock, a three-leaved clover.
- St. Patrick's Day became a public holiday in Ireland in 1903. Before that it was celebrated only as a religious holiday.
- The widespread use of alcoholic beverages on St. Patrick's Day may be rooted in the fact that the Roman festival of Bacchanalia, honouring Bacchus to whom wine was sacred, fell on March 17.
- Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Canadian province in which St. Patrick's Day is an official holiday.
- In Toronto from 1919 to 1927, the Toronto Maple Leafs were known as the Toronto St. Patricks, and wore green jerseys.
- In 1780, General George Washington gave his troops a holiday on March 17, an event that later became known as the St. Patrick's Day Encampment.

Wealth isn't measured by money, but by the impact you make.

Money Talks

Kathy Twynam

So far in my life, which has included service not only to our church but to other organizations in which I have served as an executive member, such as the now defunct Home and School Association, my long-ago bowling league, and Let There be Music Choir, I have always managed to steer very clear of anything to do with looking after other people's money. Taking care of money and making financial decisions just wasn't happening, no matter in what other position I served. Until now, that is.

Throughout Grace, Hillview and Graceview's history, financial concerns have, to one degree or another, always been present. To be sure, they have ebbed and flowed – at times the financial outlook has been fairly rosy, at other times more dire. Today, Graceview is operating at a considerable deficit, which if ignored will only get worse next year and worse still the year after that, and so on until we run out of money. To address this situation, Session has established a Finance Review Committee – on which, by virtue of being co-chair of our Music and Worship Committee, I find myself serving.

Members are: Al Bishop (chair), Rachael Chen, Helen Cuthbertson, Janet Ottewell, Jim Pirie, Maureen Screen, Jackie Taylor, Robin Telfer, Bob Twynam, Kathy Twynam. The congregation, as you can see, is well represented.

These are the facts:

1. Graceview has experienced a deficit in the past few years. In 2024 the deficit was \$42,126.
2. The deficit is projected to increase to approximately \$72,000 in 2025 and continue to increase unless something is changed.
3. This situation is not sustainable.

We have a significant reserve fund, which is prudently invested to provide part of the income needed to meet annual expenses. In recent years we have had to withdraw some of the principal to balance the budget (i.e. to meet expenses). This is a short-term solution to a longer-term problem, as it decreases the future income from investments. Session has committed itself to the goal of achieving a balanced budget without compromising the worship experience. The mandate of the Finance Review Committee is to develop a plan to achieve that goal. We are meeting regularly and brainstorming possible ways to mitigate our financial woes and reduce, if not immediately eliminate, our deficit. That is a tall order. When we are ready to share our recommendations, we will report to Session.

How does Graceview get revenue? Well, looking at the financial pie charts in our Annual Reports going back to 2021, we can easily see where it comes from. The largest proportion comes from envelope giving, but that represents only about half of our needed income, give or take a few percentage points. The next largest share comes from investment income – money made through interest, which, as noted above, lessens as we continue to take money out of our investments. In 2021 and 2022, withdrawal from the invested reserve fund was our third largest source of revenue. In 2023, because we employed a minister for only half that year, we were able to meet our expenses without withdrawing from investments. It should be noted that in order to meet our obligations to Graceview, we now contribute absolutely nothing to Presbyterians Sharing. That is an obligation we have been unable to meet for the past few years.

There is another category, however, called “other income.” This comes from a variety of sources, some of which are rental income, some are restricted funds that are raised by groups such as Outreach and Mission which do not

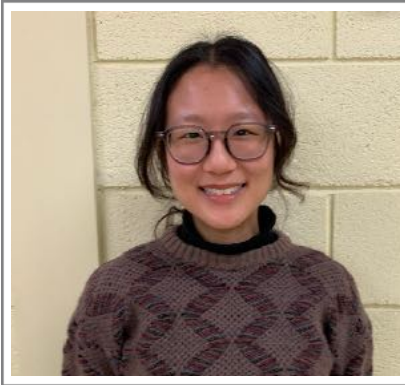
contribute to the operational costs of the church, and some are bequests.

Let's think for a moment about bequests. I know this is a sensitive subject that people often don't like to talk about, finding it hard to face and contemplate their own mortality. But wills and legacy giving are essential components of estate planning - the process of managing your assets and determining what legacy you will leave through them, including your legacy of faith. Making a gift as a bequest to your church gives you control of your assets during your lifetime and the secure knowledge that your legacy reflects your faith and stewardship values. This is what the Presbyterian Church's Guide to Individual Estate Planning has to say:

“You are living a life informed by the tenets of the Reformed tradition... You believe that material possessions are gifts from God to be used for advancing the work of the church and perfecting the kingdom of God on Earth...Estate planning is an act of both finance and faith, a joyful act of worshipping God and one of creating a legacy through the final disposition of your earthly possessions.”

“Stewardship is a fundamental act of worship for Christians. (The) Christian approach to estate planning... making faith-based decisions about your final act of stewardship – can be fraught with emotion, fear and anxiety. But it can – and should – be a time of reflection, joy and purpose.”

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Presbyterian Foundation, offer many resources to help you make important decisions regarding legacy giving. They can easily be accessed online. Perhaps this is something we all should think about, as a way to make an enduring statement of faith and make a lasting impact on the life of our church.



God draws people to Himself in many ways; for me, He used YouTube, among many other things.

My parents immigrated to Canada from China in 1999, and I was born the year after. Being new immigrants with the desire to integrate better into Canadian society and seeing the United Church helping the poor, they decided to join.

We moved frequently as my dad sought better employment, and we shifted to attending Chinese Baptist churches. I could tell church people were kind, but I never absorbed anything in Sunday school. However, I do recall while I was six or seven, there was one night I was really terrified of the dark, and spontaneously thought, “maybe I should try praying, like they talk about in church.” So I prayed, completely on a whim without any expectation. All of a sudden, my sense of fear vanished, and I was shocked. Sadly, I just went to sleep and didn’t think much about God afterwards despite my answered prayer.

My parents always went to church consistently despite never believing the Gospel. My dad saw the church as a place for great moral education, and nothing more. I had a similar attitude: the adults made up these stories just so kids would behave. My mom and I went to church mainly to socialize. I would find myself occasionally moved by the sentiments of God’s love and mercy in worship lyrics, but once church was over, I would brush all those emotions away, because I was never intellectually convinced.

Then in 2008 we moved back to China following my dad’s new job there. We went to international churches, which

were gatherings held in hotel conference rooms and restricted to those with foreign passports because the Chinese government only allowed its citizens to attend government-supervised churches. For me, church became a trendy thing – a special privilege I delighted to take part in because it was fancy and exclusive. Around junior high, I started attending youth group, which was the first place that I encountered deeper discussions about faith and where I received my first Bible. I started to pray every night, but still didn't really understand the Gospel. I would thank God for the good things he gave me and continue to ask for more, like he was a genie. I called myself a Christian because I did all the things Christians seemed to do – went to church, youth group, prayed, even took communion – but my heart was unregenerate. High school was a really tumultuous time, full of conflict, but God was starting to open my eyes to the gravity of my sin.

Then in 2016 we moved back to Canada, to a new city that was somewhat shabby, and the church we settled at was the polar opposite of the fancy hotels I was used to. Abruptly, everything superficial that I liked about church was stripped away, and I began to hate it. I realized that I had never actually gone to church for the message, and I didn't really believe. I stopped going to church and was at a crossroads – I felt compelled to find out whether Christianity was objectively true before deciding whether to return to church. By God's grace, that summer I got to visit my old church friends I grew up with, and at their Sunday school we listened to a sermon by Francis Chan. I was captivated, realizing for the first time how personal and all-encompassing one's relationship with God could be. Francis communicated the Gospel in a way that was starting to make sense to me and appear glorious and real. I took Francis' advice to read the Bible for myself, and the Holy Spirit illuminated my mind to begin to understand it. God's character revealed in the scriptures completely blew my mind. At the same time, I began consuming sermons on

YouTube nearly every day and delved into research about the Bible and the evidence for Christianity. After about six months, I was convinced of the truth of the Gospel, my identity as a sinner in need of grace, and that God was calling me to Him. I got baptized that Christmas.

I quickly started serving in youth group, continuing into college. I continued to listen to sermons from reputable pastors and teachers on YouTube, and was content in the Baptist/non-denominational circles where I first found faith. However, as my faith deepened and I developed a stronger interest in theology, primarily through discovering Calvinism through Desiring God ministry. I started to sense that something was missing in mainstream evangelical Christianity. The non-denominational churches that resembled rock-concerts with flashy lights, smoke machines and preachers in casual attire were the first signs to me that there was incongruity between the mainstream contemporary evangelical church and the universal church which had existed throughout the centuries.

“Tradition” always seemed to me a dirty word, synonymous with “man-made” or “artificial”, the very thing that Pharisees idolized above the essence of the Gospel. I felt very suspicious towards denominations that emphasized tradition, but the irreverent style of worship, shallow teaching and cult of personality that was common in churches without tradition made my heart yearn for it. Even when I was at a non-denominational church that had good, Biblical preaching, the shallow worship lyrics and gym basement setting still felt out of place. On the other hand, in recent years, many once-reputable, popular pastors had been exposed as hypocrites. Although I did make a point to read from multiple commentaries on Bible Hub and not rely on a single pastor’s interpretation, I found myself wondering if there would come a day when one of the pastors that had been influential in my Christian walk would be outed. From my brief interactions with some Catholic classmates, I knew they had their official Catholic Catechism. What did we Protestants have that was

timeless and trustworthy? Once again I was at a bit of a crossroads, except this time it wasn't a simple yes or no question; I didn't know what choices I had at all.

At the start of 2024, when I moved and needed to find a new church, I came across a YouTuber called Redeemed Zoomer, whose real name is Richard. He explained Christian denominations, different schools of thought, and theological concepts in witty and accessible short videos. For the first time, I learned that reformed Baptists (which I identified as) weren't really reformed even though they agreed with Calvin's soteriology, that there was so much more to Calvinism, and it was only recently that Baptists took on this label. I was opened up to the world of Classical Protestantism and the history of the Magisterial Reformation. I was fascinated to learn how Christianity evolved into the form it's in today and that everything I felt was missing in my familiar circles actually existed in the mainline denominations. Moreover, I was glad to learn that I was right to yearn for tradition and a sense of connection to the historic church. The creeds and confessions throughout church history and from the reformation were the timeless cornerstones of orthodox continuity and theological heritage that I was looking for. I tried going to an Anglican service for the first time and the liturgy blew me away. Although tradition could become an idol, I realized that which conforms to scripture, aids in reverent worship and points to Jesus is good spiritual nourishment and important to preserve. After months of discernment, I decided to become Presbyterian.

Aside from education, another important aspect of Richard's channel is his initiative – "Operation Reconquista". Its whole objective is to revive and "retake" the mainline churches, since they have largely fallen to theological liberalism and are dying out rapidly. Although some may find the name distasteful for its connotations of war, OR seeks to carry out its mission by peaceful, spiritual means, not violent ones. The mainlines, despite their widespread abandonment of

sound theology and foundational confessions, still contain precious heritage that's worthy of preserving. Richard urges young faithful Christians to join mainline churches that are still conservative or moderate and keep them going, and to let the extremely progressive churches gradually decline, thus reforming the mainlines back to orthodoxy. This goal is not just for the good of the church, but also to evangelize to our wider society, since the mainline churches have the most established institutions and great ability to influence our culture.

Liberal churches were always in my periphery, but I never knew how they came to be this way, nor did I know that the situation could be helped at all. Richard makes compelling cases from church history and from the principle that this is a cause worthy to fight for. In just a year's time, he had not only gained a huge following, news coverage, and made significant progress in his denomination (PCUSA), he had also inspired many Christians across all mainline denominations to start their own branches of OR. OR is not an official organization, nor is Richard our official leader; he is only an initiator of this lay-led movement, with the goal of inspiring others to spread this movement in their own denominations. I was ignited with passion to do my part in preserving the historic Presbyterian Church in Canada, and seeing that there was no PCC branch yet, I started it with an Instagram page, under PCC Renewal. We're currently a very small group of young Presbyterians, but we've already seen some growth this year and are hopeful about the future.

Our vision is the same as OR. We not only work towards reviving the PCC with orthodox theology, we would also like to bring back Presbyterian distinctives. It is deeply unfortunate that the church founded upon precious truths such as predestination, covenant theology, and Christ's spiritual presence in the sacraments, has totally watered down these doctrines and barely mentions them at all. These doctrines are not some nerdy, obscure, trivial nuances and

details, these are important teachings from the scriptures and faithfully handed down to us throughout church history. There are many misleading sayings such as, “doctrine divides”, “no creed but Christ”, “denominations are unnecessary, just be Christian”, however these are doctrines and creeds in themselves. Non-denominationalism desires to not be associated with any existing denominations but paradoxically became its own denomination. The hyper-individualistic and anti-institutional sentiments of modern evangelicalism have led to a harmful disconnect from Protestantism’s theological and historical roots, leading to many disastrous results we see today. While we recognize the good and unique purposes God carries out across all denominations and acknowledge all genuine believers as fellow workers in the faith, we believe that restoring the mainlines is the ideal form of preserving, reviving and uniting Protestantism and influencing the culture.

I felt great urgency when starting PCC Renewal, and a bit of fear, knowing the immense task ahead. By God’s providence, through connections in another church, I was introduced to Renewal Fellowship. It was a huge relief and a humbling reminder that the faithful Christians before me had already been fighting to preserve God’s truth. I felt a great sense of camaraderie with the RF board, which I had the privilege to meet, and it was a joy to connect with the past members of PSALT online. I learned a lot in a brief span of time and am eager to continue this shared mission together. Contrary to what older generations think, Gen Z is yearning for tradition. Many are converting to Eastern Orthodoxy or Catholicism, because the loudest voices that seem to represent Protestantism are the least historically rooted. Classical Protestantism is scarcely known, and even if it is, it’s mainly seen as a lost cause. OR believes that it’s the duty of Christians to preserve the historic church, including its theology and institutions, instead of passively letting false teachers hijack what the faithful have poured their lives into building. Gen Z is also severely lacking in community and

purpose, which the Gospel, the church and OR are great answers to. In a culture that is increasingly subjective and pluralistic, the desire for stability and connectedness is even greater.

There is a lot of work ahead, but we trust in the Lord to sustain us. We realize this is still an early movement and there is still much to learn, but we are convicted that our actions are consistent with the heroes of the faith, and are crucial in building a stronger witness to Christ in our world.

World Day of Prayer 2025

Graceview is the host church for this year's WDP which will take place on **Saturday March 8th at 10:00 AM**. The subject this year is the Cook Islands in the south Pacific.

The program was written by Christian women who live there. The program title is "I made you wonderful", based on Psalm 139. We hope we can count on your support.

Please mark the date and invite your friends.

Stew by Dave!

Hosted by Outreach

Monday, March 17 - St Patrick's Day

11:30 AM at the church

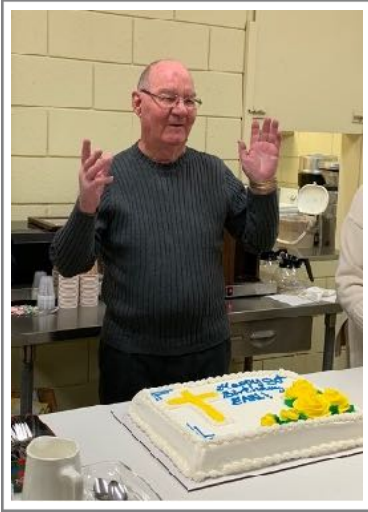
Irish Stew cooking demonstration by our own
Chef Dave Taylor

Followed by lunch - Irish Stew, Irish Soda Bread,
dessert.

Please join us and invite your friends.

Free will donations will be gratefully accepted.

Earl Nixon turns 90!



On February 3, 2025, a very special person celebrated a very special birthday. Earl Nixon turned 90! I'd like to tell you a bit about this remarkable man and what he has meant to our church for so many years.

Earl has been a fixture at Grace and Graceview church for a very long time. He is an elder and at one time was active on session. However, he didn't like what he viewed as "the politics", so he retired from active session

duty sometime after our amalgamation. He told Rev. Jan, who was minister at the time, "I can serve God best by working with my hands." He has done exactly that for more than 60 years. As far as I know he hasn't received a raise in all those years.

Earl first came to Grace church in 1963, and soon found himself involved in the maintenance of both the church building and the manse. In 1971, he served on what was then called a Vacancy Committee, which resulted in the call to Grace of Rev. Cam Taylor.

In the 1980's, as co-chair of the Property Committee along with John Wright, Earl oversaw many capital improvements to the church property – converting the oil furnace to gas, re-tiling the basement floor, re-shingling the roof, effecting needed repairs to the entrance and front door, and improving the parking lot. In 1980, he arranged for the sale of the property behind the church, where Centennial Park Place is now, which eliminated the serious financial woes of the time.

In 1984, he co-ordinated the construction of the addition at the front of the church. Throughout the life of the church, the list of things that Earl initiated, co-ordinated, caused to happen, and/or did himself, is extensive:

- fans in the sanctuary;
- AC units in the sanctuary, the lounge, and the offices;
- dishwashers in both kitchens;
- elevator;
- original screen and projector in the sanctuary;
- cushions on the pews;
- tiles and stair treads in the landings and on the stairs;
- carpeting in the halls and sanctuary;
- insulation and shingles on the roof;
- with help from Dave Taylor, removed the pews and had the oak floors sanded and revarnished;
- painting of the entire church;
- first sound system;
- replacement of the eavestroughs with larger ones;
- automatic door opener.

Sometime during the early years, to save the expense of a caretaker, Earl and Ted Wallace volunteered to take on caretaking duties, seeking help from others as needed. When Ted passed away in 2017, Earl simply carried on. Looking at the list above and the magnificent investment Earl has made of his time and his talents, is it any wonder that he views our church building as his own, and lovingly takes care of it as he would his own house?

On Sunday, February 2, we tried to convey our love, our thanks and our appreciation for what Earl has done for us over the past sixty years. Tipped off by his wife Julia, many of Earl's family members, having fêted him at their family birthday celebration the night before, surprised him by turning up at church on Sunday morning. Kathy Twynam,

who was responsible for the announcements that morning, didn't stop there but continued on to speak about Earl from the lectern in the sanctuary. Downstairs after the service, Dave Taylor said a few heartfelt words of appreciation and presented Earl with a beautifully framed picture of the church, which sported an engraved plaque.



And of course there was a cake! It was a wonderful opportunity for our church family to share in Earl's 90th birthday celebration, and personally thank him for his many years of faithful service to Grace and to Graceview.

Save the Date!

Graceview's 25th Anniversary is fast approaching!

Our first worship service as a united congregation was on April 2, 2000, with Rev. Dr. Bill Adamson officiating. The team that had been planning the pandemic-aborted 20th Anniversary celebration has reconvened to plan for the 25th. Members are: Lynne Bishop, Helen Cuthbertson, Eric Lee, Janet Ottewell, Sheila Thomas, Bob Twynam, Kathy Twynam.

Please join us on

Sunday, May 4th, 2025

Details to follow.

Hymn Stories: The Old Rugged Cross

Adapted from 101 Hymn Stories – Kenneth W. Osbeck
Author and Composer – George Bennard, 1873-1958

*On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suff'ring and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.*

This gospel hymn, a sentimental favourite of Christians and non-believers alike, was written by George Bennard in 1913. It is generally thought to be the most popular of all twentieth-century hymns. Following the death of his father when he was still a teenager, George entered the ranks of the Salvation Army and served for a time as an officer in that organization. Later, he was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal Church, where he served as a devoted minister for some time, conducting revival services in several states, especially in Michigan and New York. Over time, he became convinced that the cross was more than just a religious symbol but rather the very heart of the gospel. He gives this account of the writing of The Old Rugged Cross:

The inspiration came to me one day in 1913, when I was staying in Albion, Michigan. I began to write The Old Rugged Cross. I composed the melody first. The words that I first wrote were imperfect. The words of the finished hymn were put into my heart in answer to my own need. Shortly thereafter it was introduced at special meetings in Pokagon, Michigan, on June 7, 1913, (and later introduced before a large convention at the Chicago Evangelical Institute).

The Old Rugged Cross was highly acclaimed by Charles Gabriel, one of the leading gospel hymn writers of that era, and became one of the most widely published songs, either sacred or secular, in America.

Going to Church

Adapted from an article by Theodore Roosevelt, Ladies Home Journal, 1917. Theodore Roosevelt (1858 – 1919) was the 26th president of the United States, serving from 1901 to 1909.

1. In this ... world, a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at their religious needs, is a community on the rapid downgrade.
2. Church work and church attendance mean the cultivation of the habit of feeling some responsibility for others...
3. There are enough holidays for most of us which can quite properly be devoted to pure holiday-making...Sundays differ from other holidays – among other ways – in the fact that there are fifty-two of them every year...On Sunday, go to church.
4. Yes, I know all the excuses. I know that one can worship the Creator and dedicate oneself to good living in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in one's own house, just as well as in church. But I also know as a matter of cold fact the average man does not thus worship or thus dedicate himself. If he stays away from church, he does not spend his time in good works or in lofty meditation. He (reads) the newspaper.
5. He may not hear a good sermon at church. But unless he is very unfortunate, he will hear a sermon by a good man who ...is engaged all week long in a series of wearing and humdrum and important tasks for making hard lives a little easier.
6. He will listen to and take part in reading some beautiful passages from the Bible. And if he is not familiar with the Bible, he has suffered a loss.
7. He will probably take part in singing some good hymns.

8. He will meet and nod to, or speak to, good... neighbours. He will come away feeling a little more charitably toward all the world...

9. I advocate a man's joining in church works, for the sake of showing his faith by his works.

10. The man who does not in some way, active or not, connect himself with some active, working church misses many opportunities for helping his neighbours, and therefore, incidentally, for helping himself.

* * * * *

Out of the Cold

On Friday, February 7, our Outreach Committee prepared and served a hot meal to about 80 unhoused and needy people at All Saints Anglican Church, a program we have participated in for at least 25 years. The popular menu, which we have used for the past

several years, consisted of soup (prepared at the church), rolls, salad, shepherd's pie, and dessert. Nancy and Ken Green are always on hand to keep the dishwasher running and to scrub those pots and pans!



“Decluttering can be overwhelming, but living with clutter is exhausting.” –

Unknown

“The art of living well is knowing what to hold onto and what to let go.” – Lily Tomlin

If it Doesn't Give you Joy, Out it Goes!

Kathy Twynam

I look around my house these days, and it's easy to get discouraged at so much clutter! It's not a big house, as houses go. It's a fairly basic three-bedroom bungalow of about 1800 square feet, built in 1955, and it's pretty dated. In 1994 we moved in, and in 1998 gutted and replaced the original kitchen. In 2002 we did the same to the main floor bathroom. The updated version of both is now outdated. The kitchen is large, with lots of cupboards, every one of which is crammed full. The countertop is full of stuff that gets used almost daily and has nowhere else to go. Everywhere I look, I see clutter, even when the house is tidy and everything is where it's supposed to be.

Our current plan is to stay in the house as long as possible, but for years I have been thinking, surely it is possible to cut down on the clutter even if we have no plans to downsize any time soon. I have made a few half-hearted attempts – for example, at persuading Bob to part with his three banker's boxes full of school notes - high school and university notes from the 60's and teaching notes from his 30 plus years of teaching. Several times I gathered them up for recycling and they got as far as the bottom of the basement stairs - but he's a sentimental soul and wasn't ready to let them go, so they would find their way back to the shelf. “They represent so much work...” he would say. I would shrug and think, “Well, as long as we have the house we can store them, so what harm does it do?” And there on the shelf they sit today, mocking me.

So, when Susan and I were invited by a friend at Christ the King Anglican Church to come to a talk given by Etobicoke's

very own Downsizing Diva, on January 15th, we said, “Why not? It might be fun.”

And it *was* fun. Tea, coffee and goodies were available as we sat at tables with members of a Christian women’s group from various neighbourhood churches and learned how to make downsizing and organizing our homes less overwhelming, even if we have no plans to move. The number 1 rule seems to be, “Start now and start small.” There were two handouts – a brochure advertising Downsizing Diva as “Your Downsizing and Moving Specialist,” and a sheet outlining simple tasks that can be done in 20 minutes or less. Tasks such as:

- Clean out your cutlery drawer, tossing anything rusty, broken, or totally useless.
- Clean and organize the area under your kitchen sink.
- Clear out your medicine cabinet.
- Sort the winter hats, scarves and gloves drawer, matching pairs and discarding any orphans.
- Sort your towels, discarding or donating any frayed or discoloured ones.

You get the picture. I’m sure you can think of many other small, easy tasks that need doing in your own homes, that will get you started on the road to purging and organizing the entire house and will give you an immediate sense of accomplishment. The hand-out sheet had the catchy title, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” To quote one of my favourite authors, J.R.R. Tolkien, “The job that’s never started is the job that takes longest to finish.” How true.

There were two speakers, both very entertaining and engaging as they talked about the obstacles to carrying out a project like this.

Emotion is the number one obstacle to letting things go. There are powerful emotions attached to the objects we have accumulated over the years - memories, nostalgia, fear, love, sentimental attachment, the “What if...?” syndrome which, for people born in the 40’s and 50’s, was conditioned by the depression years of the 30’s. Our parents, for the most part, couldn’t bear to part with anything that might prove useful one day, and this attitude was consciously or unconsciously passed on to us. Some of the examples they gave would have been funny if they weren’t so common:

- A bag of colourful swizzle sticks collected from the bars and restaurants of one’s youth.
- Sports equipment that hasn’t seen the light of day for thirty years.
- Would you believe, bread tags. They actually mentioned this, and I immediately thought of a certain yogurt container full of plastic bread tags, carefully stored in a kitchen drawer since our now 47-year-old son was in Grade Two and his teacher wanted us to save them to be used as counters at school.
- Inherited photos from the past. I think of the top shelf of a bedroom closet whereon repose half a dozen boxes of obsolete photo slides, some of our own, some inherited from our parents. Why on earth are we keeping them? Realistically, are we ever going to have them converted to digital versions that can be stored on a computer? Not likely.
- Same thing with developed or printed photos, stored in albums or even shoeboxes, that are of no earthly use to anyone or ever will be, but which we can’t seem to part with because of the memories and nostalgia involved.

When a friend of mine a few years ago moved from their big house into a condo, she had to dispose of boxes of old

photographs that they would no longer have room to store. While still in the house, which had a wood-burning fireplace, she and her husband went through them all, fondly remembering the person or place featured in the photo and consigning them one by one to the fire. An emotional, but very satisfying, exercise in self-restraint.

The way to deal with emotional attachment is to maintain a determined, detached attitude as much as possible, honestly asking yourself if you are ever again going to use the article in question. Clothing is a case in point. How many of us have a closet full of clothes that no longer fit, are out of style or need repair, that we don't like, wondering why we ever bought them and knowing we will never wear them, some with the tags still on them? We hang onto them because they cost good money and one day they might come back in style or we will lose that extra weight. Get real. This will not happen. As Marie Kondo once famously said, "If it doesn't give you joy, out it goes."

A second obstacle to a purging project is the **physical and logistical reality** of actually doing the work. It takes a lot of time, physical exertion that we may not feel up to, and fatigue that we know will result from constant decision-making. That is why our Downsizing Divas urged starting small, building up stamina as we desensitize ourselves to the idea of letting things go, and confining the biggest jobs to periods of no longer than three hours. They offered several tips for doing this:

- Start early and downsize with purpose.
- Break up the work – take frequent breaks.
- If planning to move, declutter before you pack anything.
- Take pictures and preserve your memories in a photo book or album.
- Work with a partner, understanding that their emotions are also at play.

- Ask for help. Hire help if needed.
- Be as honest and realistic as you can.

During the process and afterwards, when our closets and cupboards are cleared of unwanted stuff and we are resting from our labours and feeling righteous and smug, we realize that everything must go somewhere. What do we do now? Donate, sell, or toss? Tossing is usually an easy decision, so it comes down to donate or sell. Many suggestions were offered for both, with the audience chipping in with their own suggestions.

Donation destinations include places like Value Village, Salvation Army, Habitat Re-store, Diabetes Foundation and Kidney Foundation (both of which offer free pick-up), Furniture Bank, church garage sales.

Where to sell stuff?

- Consignment stores can be difficult to deal with, as they are often very picky about what they will take and involve rules and paperwork.
- Auction houses were mentioned. (When we were clearing out my mother's house, we used an on-line auction company called MaxSold, which was very efficient and effective.)
- Social media seems to work well. When our friends Irene and Stefan were downsizing from a house to a condo, their daughter took charge of selling unwanted furniture and household items very successfully using Facebook Marketplace. There was a recent article in the Star about a woman moving from a big house to a much smaller laneway suite, who sold \$8000 worth of stuff on Facebook Marketplace.
- You can always have a garage sale, if you don't mind the work and the haggling over loonies and toonies that goes with it.

Many of you have already made the big move, sold your big houses and moved to a condo, or sold your condo and moved to a retirement community. If so, you know the work, both mental and physical, that big move entailed. When two of my sisters were planning that move some years ago, both said that it took them close to two years to divest themselves of the accumulated stuff of decades. If your move is imminent and it all seems so overwhelming, Downsizing Diva could be an option, to guide you through the process, help you make decisions, manage the selling, delivery, donation and disposal of surplus items, and make your home comfortable and safe.

Our afternoon with Downsizing Diva at Christ the King Church was well spent. Susan and I both went home filled with inspiration and enthusiasm for simplifying our lives by clearing our homes of unwanted stuff. The next day Susan proudly announced to me that she had already done many of the items on the list of “Ten Simple Tasks that can be done around the house in 20 minutes or less”. I went home and with Bob’s help over the next two days cleared out two over-stuffed closets, which resulted in four big bags of items for donation and one big bag of garbage. Providence took a hand – two days later, the Kidney Foundation people phoned wanting to know if I had anything to donate. Out went the four big bags, which were picked up on Feb 4.

Happy purging, everyone!

Walking in June and in January!



A recipe to save the day if you're out of steam, out of time, or out of ideas...I have made it many times.

Tortellini with Mushroom and Garlic Sauce

1 pkg. fresh or frozen tortellini

1 tbsp butter or margarine

1 small green pepper, cut into short strips

1 small red pepper, cut into short strips

1 can Campbell's Cream of Mushroom and Garlic soup (This is getting hard to find. If you can't find it, use regular Cream of Mushroom and add a tsp of minced garlic to the peppers in the frying pan.)

1/2 cup milk

Grated parmesan cheese

1. Cook the tortellini in boiling water according to directions on the package. Drain thoroughly and set aside.
2. In a medium frying pan, melt the butter and sauté the pepper strips about 3 minutes, until tender-crisp.
3. In a bowl, whisk together the soup and milk. Add to the peppers in the frying pan and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the tortellini to the frying pan and stir until well coated with the sauce and heated through. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Serves four.

That is the basic recipe. Easy and delicious. You can add other veggies to the peppers in the frying pan - mushrooms, onions, sliced zucchini, broccoli are all good choices - if you want to boost your veggie intake.

I hope you have enjoyed the March/April issue of Graceviews. The next issue will be available early in early May. **The deadline will be Sunday, April 20.**

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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