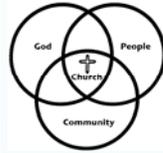




# LIFE AT ST. GEORGE'S

5350 Yonge Street, North York, (Willowdale), ON, M2N 5R5, 416.225.1922



**“Our mission is to nurture our relationships with God in Christ, with one another, and with our community.”**

## FROM STEVE'S DESK

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I am very pleased to make my first contribution to “Life at St Georges” as Priest in Charge.

Pleased because St Georges is a friendly and alive congregation that to me has so much potential for further serving the Lord.

Pleased because the Lord has asked me to do something more, just after I had retired from my job as an executive at Pearson Airport.

But also challenged because I am aware that I am following the long and successful ministry of Canon John Wilton. My job is an interim one, to help St Georges congregation to grow, to prepare for the next incumbent, and to help build a new church complex.

It will be my privilege to share in fellowship with you, my delight to enjoy worship and my call to serve you in the best way I can. As I begin this period I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of the Wardens, of Kathy Lindsey and Janet Kirk and of Sister Constance Joanna. But we are all in this work together and each of us has an important part to contribute to the vitality and life of St

Georges.

As you will know, we have had to accept that we cannot continue in our present building once demolition has begun and we are very grateful that St. Patrick's has invited us to share their worship and their church during the construction period. This will require of us tolerance, and a special effort to remain in touch and connected as St George's congregation. I am meeting with the Rev Fran Kovar of St Patrick's to work through all the many issues to ensure a smooth arrangement that will enable our two congregations to worship together but maintain their separate identities and undertake all their specific ministries and activities. Changes and moves are unsettling for us all, but as we rise to the challenge let us make it an exciting one!

But our focus has to be on completing our new church building, and in that we can all be involved. It begins like all projects with gathering the required funds. The Capital Program had gone into a silent mode in the past year while ...

*Cont on p. 2*



## FROM STEVE'S DESK (CONT)

Diocesan approval was being pursued but now we have to be serious and I encourage everyone to be prayerful and thoughtful in considering how to contribute so that we will have the funds in place when they will be needed.

However, while the building project is important, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is the members of the congregation who are the church. The building is where we meet and worship. Therefore, we are also called to enrich our worship and fellowship, deepen our faith and grow in number, so that when the doors of our new church are finally opened St George's will be a strong congregation worshipping in a new and beautiful church; a witness to the glory of God.

As I shared in a sermon recently:

***This enterprise we are embarked upon has to be God's work or it is all in vain, and because it is his work he tells us "do not be afraid."***

***None can foresee what might lie ahead of us, in terms of what God can do and wants to do.***

***What we can do, indeed must do, is to place it all in His hands and remember who we are:***

- ***God's people committed to worshipping him***
- ***God's people committed to following Jesus***
- ***God's people committed to loving and serving others***

***• God's people committed to extending his kingdom.***

***A big task, a great challenge but remember Jesus words, as he encouraged his disciples, lifting their vision to see their labours as part of the bigger picture – the bigger plan – the coming of God's kingdom: "Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." (Luke 12: 32)***

My warmest greetings to you all,  
In Christ's name and in His service,

Rev. Steve Shaw

## BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

This event is being carried out throughout the Diocese on **Sunday, September 27**. This day was chosen to welcome newcomers, as well as invite fellow parishioners who have been absent from church for awhile.

The timing for this Diocesan event couldn't have been better for St. George's, as we

go through our Redevelopment stages. This is such a critical time in our Ministry when we need to work together as a Christian family to secure and maintain that fellowship bond for one another and to be able to reach out to our community.

Throughout the month of August and the weeks in September leading up to this

special Sunday let's keep our hearts and minds open to make Sunday, September 27 and unforgettable and everlasting memorable one for St. George's as we move forward. Our theme will be "Back to God's Future". Stay tuned!

Eileen Turner



## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Change can be a very threatening thing, particularly if we focus on what we have lost rather than focusing on the future. I think we can do a bit of both. We can certainly focus on the start of our new building and the Ministry we will be undertaking there, and we can also focus on how we can honour Father John.

Several years ago we launched our Capital Campaign for the new Church. This was a matter very dear to Father John's heart, and he played a key role in setting the level of donation that he thought was possible at St. George's. As you all know, there have been many obstacles thrown in our path that have delayed even the thought that a new St. George's was a real possibility, but we have managed to overcome those obstacles and our reconstruction opportunity is very real now. We look to the future with hope and expectation.

With the delay in getting all the approvals, efforts to achieve our goal for the Capital Campaign were put on hold. It is now time to revive those efforts and to fulfill Father John's aspirations that we can reach the goal that he so vigorously supported. To this end, the Sperling's and Hazel Perkin have decided to complete their initial pledges to the Capital Campaign today.

I feel very strongly that every member of the Parish should give to the Capital Campaign ac-

ording to their means. If you have been holding back giving because you want your contribution to be dedicated to a specific item or items in the new Church, please don't hold back; make your gift or pledge on the understanding that

your contribution will be spent for a particular purpose. If you have already given or pledged, please examine your ability to increase the amount. If you haven't given or pledged because you thought that the project was perhaps pie in the sky, please now give or pledge what you can. Let us honour Father John by reaching our goal for the Capital Campaign quickly and let us demonstrate to the community at large that we are dedicated to building the new St. George's, both physically and spiritually.



It might be of interest to some parishioners that Geraldine and I are in the process of preparing new Wills. Whichever one of us survives, we are leaving funds to St. George's. St. George's is very often overlooked when considering testamentary dispositions, and this should not be the case.

**Alan Sperling**

## WE'VE COME A LONG WAY

When we first entered St. George's, in the summer of 1988, the congregation offered a very different picture from the way that it looks today. The dominant colour, if there was one, in looking around the worship area was white. It seemed

that the vast majority of people sitting in the pews that morning watching Brian's baptism had white skin, with Anglo-Saxon or related origins, topped off with white hair. Many of the people there that day had been a part

of St. George's for many years, raising their families in the area, watching their children be baptised, attend a booming Sunday School, get married and then ...

*Cont on p. 5*



# ST. GEORGE'S REDEVELOPMENT MOVES AHEAD!

With Diocesan approval granted for St. George's redevelopment, we will soon break ground for our new church building. The plan is to start demolition of the Claude Secrett wing by December 1, 2009. We hope to complete by the end of 2010, although hurdles along the way could stretch that by a few weeks. One such hurdle was the City of Toronto strike, which held up site plan approval for six weeks.

Our architect, Elizabeth Davidson of Davidson-Langley Incorporated Architects and her staff are working flat out on detailed drawings for building permit application, and coordination of the work of engineers and other specialists on such matters as stormwater management, sewers, acoustics, landscaping, detailed layout, and on and on. And the parish's Redevelopment Committee will meet in August to review progress and discuss selection of materials, finishes and furnishings.

Our new building will be beautiful as well as functional. St. George's website ([www.stgeorgestoronto.ca](http://www.stgeorgestoronto.ca)) has

details about the plans and appearance of the new building. There is a short video which some of you have already seen, that allows you to "walk" around the completed structure, as well as a site plan and floor plans.

## Capital campaign

The time has come to pick up our socks again on the capital campaign. We set a target of \$270,000 for parishioner donations; to date pledges are about \$205,000, and actual donations are about \$100,000. There are many needs in the new church that call out for faithful and sacrificial giving; these are just a few:

- Refurbishing stained glass windows
- Buying 350 pew chairs for the main sanctuary and chapel
- Harvesting the maple trees and turning them into sanctuary furniture
- Furnishing the Heritage Room, the Library and the Rector's office
- A new organ for the sanctuary and a new piano for the chapel
- Equipping the Nursery and

toddlers' rooms

- Equipping the new kitchen

Your leadership team has been negotiating with the banks to secure a mortgage, and the more generous the donations, the smaller will be the mortgage!

Please continue to pray for the success of the project.

## Redevelopment Committee

Murray Browning, Angela Goodwill,  
John Hunter, Janet Kirk, Kathy  
Lindsey, Hazel Perkin, Rev'd Steve  
Shaw, Geraldine Sperling  
(Coordinator), Elizabeth Davidson  
(Advisor)



## WE'VE COME A LONG WAY (cont)

often move away as they started their own lives. The congregation was now small, gone were the days when 'everyone' attended Church on Sunday morning and there were only a few families that had small children attending the Sunday School.

We certainly cannot say the same of the congregation here at St. George's today, where we have developed into a vibrant multi-cultural congregation with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Many of the other fellow Lay members that I spoke with at the recent Synod were literally drooling over the size and dynamics of our Sunday School. It seems that to many of the churches around the Diocese we are to be envied, as they seem to be locked into that position that we were at here 20 years ago.

I have been reading some of the literature that I picked up at the Fresh Expressions conference held earlier this year, and one of the points that an author makes is that when he was young (growing up in the 1950's and 60's) the Churches were filled every week. This was partly due to what he considers to be the fact that both the Church (it's ideals, beliefs, and make-up) was the same as the society around it. There were no stores that opened on Sunday, sporting activities for young people were never held during

a time that would conflict with worship, and everyone looked and thought the same way. To put it simply, society and it's ideas and values changed, but the mainstream churches did not. From what my fellow Lay members of synod were telling me about their struggling congregations consist of and believe in, this part of the equation appears to be true. They will not, or cannot change, and this has caused many of their congregations to decline to the point where many face possible closure.

One of the most interesting comments that I heard personally came from the lay members from a church on downtown Toronto where approximately 80 to 90 percent of their congregation is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. He is a former priest in the Anglican church, and a gay man who has been in a committed, monogamous relationship with his life partner for over 30 years. He stated that the members of his congregation did not care if the Diocese chose to bless their unions or not. He spoke of their desire to be accepted as full members of the congregations in the Diocese, where they would be welcomed and treated as equals by all.

There are many among them who feel that they have a choice to make if they wish to express their desire to worship Christ. Either joining together in a congregation such as he be-

longs to, where their lifestyle is the norm, or by joining another congregation and possibly have to hide their lifestyle in order to be accepted.

Maybe St. George's can take a lead and show how it can be done. We have constantly grown and become stronger over the years because of our acceptance of the differences in individuals, knowing that we all desire to know and understand Christ better. Even as understanding and accepting as the people of St. George's are, and have been over the years, we can also do more. No one, regardless of race, colour, or sexual orientation, should be denied the opportunity to experience Christ in any congregation that they choose. By continuing to welcome and accept all people equally, we will continue to grow and become stronger.

**Doug Heyes**



# CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Greetings to all as we approach our mid summer. I hope you are all enjoying a time of refreshment.

I wish to thank Kathy Baillie and Geoff Clennett for their expertise and leadership in preparing our farewell gifts for Fr. John and Diane. Thanks also goes to our church school families for your contributions of pictures and special thoughts included for these gifts.



We now look to the fall and new challenges that await us. We welcome Rev. Steve Shaw and his wife Chris to our parish family and know we will have many opportunities for fellowship as Steve begins his new role as Priest-in-Charge and his ministry with us.

Our church school staff will meet the first week in September to finalize plans for this coming year. In the mean-

time we invite you to mark your calendars for the activities planned thus far.

Enjoy the rest of your summer.  
Blessings,  
Janet

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**Church School Family BBQ**  
Thursday, August 27th, 2009  
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

**Games** - 5:30 p. m.  
The Yonge Street Lawn  
**Barbecue:** 6:00 p. m. - Montessori Space

If you live at an even numbered address please bring a dessert. If you live at an odd numbered address please bring a salad. Beverage and barbecue material will be provided.

Come Join us for an Evening of Fun and Fellowship

R. S.V.P. to Janet Kirk (905) 764-7818 or the church office (416) 225-1922

## REGISTRATION SUNDAY

September 13th, 2009

Please register before or after the service in the Claude Secrett Hall. Regular classes begin on this Sunday.

## CURRICULUM INFORMATION

Sunday, September 20th

Parents please join the church school staff in the lounge during coffee hour to look at our program plans and curriculum for this coming year.

## PLANNING DAY FOR FAMILY SERVICE

Saturday, October 3rd, 2009  
Watch for details for this day the beginning of September.

## FAMILY SERVICE

A special service with participation by our church school.  
Sunday, October 25th, 2009

Watch our parish bulletin for details about a "FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT" in the fall.

## The Celebration of New Ministry for Rev. Canon John Wilton

The Celebration of New Ministry for Rev'd Canon John Wilton will be held at St. Augustine of Canterbury Anglican Church on Wednesday, September 9 at 7:30 p.m. St. Augustine is at 1847 Bayview Ave., northeast corner of Broadway Ave., about halfway between Sunnybrook Hospital and Eglinton Ave.



## A CALL TO PRAYER

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles describes the history of the development of the early church. Everything did not go smoothly. There were several incidents that could have driven the apostles into hiding. There were also many miracles that encouraged them to continue their journey. Their persistence and resilience were remarkable, as they preached and taught the Good News of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They knew the story well and were guided by the Holy Spirit.

Prayer was central to their lifestyle. "They (the new believers) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42) The congregation at St. George's is preparing for a new

beginning as we go through a period of transition until a new sanctuary is built. There will be challenges along the way but the Holy Spirit will guide us. We need to diligently practice the lifestyle of the early church: attend worship to participate in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Every member of the congregation is called to pray for every aspect of the transition period. "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." (Psalm 121:1) The saying: "The family who prays together stays together", holds true for our congregation. We are a family so we should pray together to ensure that we stay together. Acts 12 records the story of Peter's imprisonment and his

miraculous release. In verse 12 we read that "many had gathered and were praying" for him. God's ears are open to our prayers and His arms are not shortened that He will not bless us.

The Prayer Chain group continues to meet and to pray specific prayers as requested. Are you feeling overwhelmed because of the economy, illness, unemployment, indecision, fear and uncertainty? The Prayer Group is committed to share your burdens by praying with and for you.

May all our prayers rise like sweet incense to our God. He will answer them in His time and in His way.

Margie Lyttle

## KNITTING AND THE BIBLE

### Psalm 139: 13

*"For you created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother's womb."*

### Ecclesiastes: 4; 12 (NIV)

*"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*

### 1 Samuel 18:1 (NASB)

*"Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathon was*

*knit to the soul of David and Jonathon loved him as himself."*

Common Threads & Early History of Knitting:

" Knit your hearts with an unslipping Knot." (Antony & Cleopatra) - William Shakespeare

Knitting has a rich history. Over 5,000 years ago, Ancient Egyptians knit fabric from animal hair and reeds to make fish nets and

snare. The seafarers from Arabia were making knotted fishing nets and selling and trading goods in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

In 13th and 14th century Europe, especially in Britain, Germany, and France knitting was gaining in popularity. In 1390, Master Bertram depicted the Madonna knitting in the round.

Lori Grauds



## CROCHETING & SOME EARLY HISTORY

Crochet is derived from the French word crocheter, which means to hook. As early as the Stone Age, crude rough implements and hooks were joined to form clothing.

Crocheting and knitting do require patience and these crafts can create such joy, and peace and beauty.

I have always been very interested in knitting and I became a self taught knitter several years ago. Knitting is something that requires perseverance through trial and error life long learning.

I really enjoy the connection between knitting and prayer as knitting is a spiritual practice with open ended possibilities. This has certainly been affirmed over the last few years of knitting prayer

shawls. Knitting, crocheting, and so many other forms of arts and crafts are not only forms of creative expression, they are also healing arts.



Lori Grauds

## PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

"PRAYER SHAWLS BECOME TANGIBLE SYMBOLS OF LOVE WHEN words can't be found to adequately express one's feelings. They can be warm hugs of happiness, empathy, and support; a private place of escape in which to rest, relax, and renew; something to hold when all else seems to slipping away". Prayer Shawl Companion" Janet Bristow & Victoria A. Cole-Galo. (Founders of [www.shawlministry.com](http://www.shawlministry.com) .)

This exciting Prayer Shawl Ministry at St. George's is for every one to join and support. If you would like to learn how to knit and or crochet, lessons can be arranged. If you can find some time to knit or crochet or just to be a prayerful companion that would be fabulous. I can provide some patterns and resources for the prayer Shawls.

There are so many amazing patterns and books at the library. You can spend some time surfing the net for so many fabulous websites and blogs, such as [www.lionsbrand.com](http://www.lionsbrand.com) [www.soulfulministries.com](http://www.soulfulministries.com).

For further information, Lori Grauds will be available after the 10:30 a.m. Sunday service during coffee time.



**REMEMBER, EVERYONE IS WELCOME**

**AT ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH**

**SUNDAY SERVICES AT: 8:00am & 10:30am**

**"To nurture our relationships with God in Christ,  
with one another, and with our community."**

**416-225-1922 [www.StGeorgesToronto.ca](http://www.StGeorgesToronto.ca)**



## REMEMBRANCES OF ST. GEORGE'S BY JEAN ORR

St. George's Anglican Church, Willowdale was my home for 70 years and seven months.

On March 25, 1931, I was born in a two-room house on Horsham Ave. near the Church. My birth was announced at the Mothers' Friendly meeting. My Mother later became secretary of this club.

There were Boy Scouts, Rovers and Cubs but nothing for the girls, and so my Father, James Gordon Orr, and Mr. Will Lindsey got together in 1930 and formed the 1st Willowdale Guides and Brownies. The Guide Company became so large that they eventually became two and became known as the 141st and 142nd Toronto Companies. Thus began my life as a Girl Guide and in later years I became Captain of the 141st Company.

In my baby years my life was taken over by my surrogate Father, the Rev. Claude P. Muirhead who, I am told, took me out in my pram when he visited his flock, and also took me to the Rectory as often as he could. He called me "My Jeannie Girl" and I was spoiled by everyone there. However, their maid Fanny had OCD and if I dropped my rattle or any toy it had to be scalded before I was allowed to have it back. If anyone touched a doorknob it was immediately scrubbed clean, and heaven help a smoker. As soon as an ash was dropped, the ash tray was whipped away to be scrubbed clean.

I called Rev. Muirhead "Papa" and my parents took me to his 90th birthday party in Toronto. As soon as he saw me walk in, he called out "My Jeannie Girl, come and sit beside me". The Rev. Claude Secrett also became a friend, as well as his children, Mollie and Victor. Mollie and I still keep in touch.

I remember the wooden church mostly because of the awful yellow painted windows. You could not see out. Some young boys scraped off some of the paint and once in a while you could see a bit of the outside.

When I first came to Church with my Father (when I was able to walk), he told me we were going to God's house. I asked why we did not knock at the door before we went in. He said we did not have to. When I could not find God in His house I asked, "Where is He?" and was told He was in heaven and he pointed to the roof. For a long time I thought God was sitting outside on the roof and I wondered why He didn't come in during the bad weather!

We had a covered walkway between the frame church and the new basement Church. The door to the basement opened onto the stage. I spent many happy hours in that basement, where I learned to sing all the hymns. My father was Superintendent of the Sunday School for a time. We had a magic lantern and slides with the hymns, and prayers on them, which were then projected onto a screen. I remember the Sisters of St. John were some of our teachers. I especially remember Sister Christine who was sure that my Father had named me after her (my third name is Christine).

I was confirmed by Bishop Beverley in this basement and joined the choir here.

*...See reverse side...*

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## REMEMBRANCES OF ST. GEORGE'S BY JEAN ORR

The AYPAs [Anglican Young Peoples' Assoc.] needed a singer for a large show they were putting on and they wanted me. However, I was only 15 and you had to be 16. Special permission was received from the Rector for me to join and a lot of my girlfriends joined as well. The AYPAs had a very active drama group. We produced both religious and comedy plays. I was always typecast as the Virgin Mary, even in the Christmas pageant, as Mary had to sing the Magnificat.

From my Sunday School days I remember that the Church always hired two trolley cars to take everyone to the docks where we boarded a boat to Centre Island, where we had our parish picnic. When the Ballards came, I was their official babysitter for Jimmy and Andrew. After they went to Toronto I still babysat for them.

When the Rev. John Thompson came, he included me in his family as I was friends with his children. I still keep in touch with them. I joined the Altar Guild and the Mary Martha Prayer Group. It was this group who called him "Father John" after a priest farmer they had read about. He was the only priest that we called Father, and he was in their prayers until he died. He always celebrated Communion on Annunciation Day at 7 a.m. for me, and then I went to the Rectory for breakfast with Florence and him because it was my birthday, and then I went to work. When he became Canon, someone presented him with a tiny brass cannon that you could light firecrackers in. He decided to celebrate my day doing just that. Needless to say, Florence and I disappeared into the house – it was 8 a.m.

During Father John's time, I started a girls' choir as only boys sang with the senior choir. I had thirty girls in the Angel Choir and they took up the first two rows on both sides of the Church. The mothers had to make their gowns – black skirts and little white surplices. We then bought little black velvet beanies. We also had to buy our own hymn books with no help from the Church, although Mr. Lindsey helped us by getting them wholesale. I also had six little girls in a Cherub Choir. These little ones sang at the 9:15 service and went to Sunday School during the 11 a.m. service. The Angel Choir sang at 11 a.m. and went to Sunday School at 9:15. If they didn't attend Sunday School, they couldn't sing in the choir.

I taught Sunday School at 3:00 in the afternoon and sang in the choir at 11 and 7. It made a long day before they made the changes.

After the War, we had so many people coming that we had to build the big Church. All the furnishings were donated. I used the money I made singing at weddings to pay for the choir pew that I sat in. At Christmas and Easter we had services at 7, 8, 9:15 and 11 a.m., and they were all full. This is the reason they had to build four new churches and our congregation diminished.

During my high school days, I would stop in at the Church on my way home and play the organ and sing, and sometimes if the organist was away I would play for Sunday Evensong.

After 60 years in the choir and seventy years in the Church, my niece convinced me to come to Cobourg where I am still singing in a choir here at St. Peter's.

Jean Orr

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## HOMILY BY REV'D SISTER CONSTANCE

In Alice and Wonderland, Alice proclaims to the White Queen, "One can't believe impossible things". And the Queen replies, "I daresay you haven't had much practice. When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed in as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

I think that sums up perfectly the good news in our readings this morning and the good news for St. George's in this exciting and challenging time of transition. All the readings this morning are about seemingly impossible things. In the ongoing saga of David's kingship over Israel, he deliberately organizes to get Bathsheba's husband Uriah into the front lines of the battle so that he will be free to have Bathsheba as one of his own wives. Earlier in David's kingship he had been equally manipulative and immoral in order to win the hand of Abigail as one of his many wives.

What is nearly impossible for me to believe is how and why God chooses someone like David to be king over his chosen people, to be the composer of the beautiful psalms which have been the centre of Judeo-Christian worship for several millenia, and even more important to establish the kingly line which Jesus the Messiah will fulfill. David is a womanizer, a flouter of the law, someone who manipulates others and uses his power for his own ends. He would never make it through the psychiatric and moral screening that candidates for the priesthood have to go through in our church.

So this shows us how God uses even the basest human instincts – lust, jealousy, and power – to further the building of the kingdom. But David is only one of many people in the Biblical narrative that seem to be the most unlikely leaders. Think of Moses, and Saul, and many others. Virtually all the leaders of the Kingdom (until we come to Jesus) broke God's law. None of them were what we would consider models of Godly life.

As we move into the New Testament story, we see a similar pattern. Jesus chooses for his disciples a group of men who are rough and ready, uneducated, unrefined, and who might not even be welcome in some congregations of Christians in our city. Peter denied him, Judas betrayed him, and all of them ultimately ran away when the moment of testing came.

There is something about this religion of ours that says to me that the Kingdom of God is different from our expectations of good and efficient government. And there is a lot of good news in that, because so many of us feel unqualified to fulfill a role in the church much less a role in bringing about the kingdom of God. If God could choose such people to work out the plan of salvation, then maybe we aren't such impossible candidates ourselves!

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians this morning, we see a different way of measuring the kingdom. It does not come about by human effort or special qualifications, but by being called into a relationship of love with Christ, within the Christian community. We ourselves, here at St. George's, are part of the larger kingdom. Paul's prayer in Ephesians is for us as much as the early Christian community of his time, when he prays that we "may have the power to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God." What an amazing prayer that is. It seems impossible that we should aspire to such joy. But then Paul uses those inspired and courageous words which we recite at the end of every Eucharist in a slightly different translation. He gives glory to God "who by the power at work within us" – that is, God's power – "is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." The impossible becomes possible. And that power is seen in the two stories we heard in the gospel this morning.

The narrative of the loaves and the fishes was apparently one of the favourite miracles circulated in the early Christian community, because it appears in all four of the gospels – there are actually 6 slightly different versions of the story. John tells us that it takes place near the time of the celebration of the Passover, and it reminds us of some elements of the Passover and the journey in the desert that followed. A little boy provides a few barley loaves and small fishes – this is a seemingly impossible situation – "what are they," Andrew says, "among so many people?" But Jesus just replies "Make the people sit down." Well, you know the rest of the story – everyone has plenty to eat with lots left over. Not unlike the manna which God gave Moses and his people in the wilderness.

..see reverse...

And not unlike the Eucharist itself, in which one loaf is divided among many people with – usually – lots left over. In the Orthodox tradition, the bread left over is taken home by parishioners to nourish their families. In our tradition – especially here where we don't use real bread – the leftovers are more symbolic, and perhaps more powerful for that reason. What is "left over" after the Eucharist is the love which is given to us and which the sacrament signifies – and there is so much of that love that we cannot but take it home with us, out of the walls of the church, into the areas where we live and work and go to school.

Impossible things – small barley loaves and dried fish multiplied to feed thousand of people with plenty left over to share; bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, nourishing us with the love of Christ to feed thousands more people.

And then there is the storm at sea. Another impossible event – Jesus walking on the water, and the boat landing immediately safe at the other side. That story, too, is told in different versions in all four of the gospels, and again there are 6 different variations. The early recorders of Jesus' ministry were obviously fascinated with impossible things which, in God's kingdom and in God's power, are in fact possible.

We call these impossible things miracles. John calls them "signs." In other words, the miracle of the loaves and fishes or the calming of the sea are not the most important thing. They are signs of the Kingdom, signals that we are called to go out and build that kingdom and that we are given the tools to do it – most importantly the knowledge of the great love of God for us and within us.

We are facing many seemingly impossible things here at St. George's – the challenge of staying together and even building up our congregation as we share in worship with the people at St. Patrick's; getting everything accomplished before we move from this building in November; reaching out to the community around us with the good news of Jesus as more and more high-security apartment and condo towers are going up around us; and making all the decisions that have to be made, step by step, as the building is built. Well, these apparently impossible things will become reality – we've already accomplished the greatest impossibility of all, getting permission from the Diocese to build!

There are many spiritual practices, or disciplines, that we can follow which help us in our Christian life and will help us through this time of great transition. They include daily prayer, coming to the Eucharist to be fed and receive the strength we need, and participating in the community life of this parish. We all are aware of

these central disciplines of the Christian life, along with many others.

But there is another spiritual practice that may be new to us – and that is to following the advice of the White Queen in Alice in Wonderland and practice believing six impossible things every morning before breakfast – particularly the six we have heard about in the readings this morning – and I'll just summarize them here:

God's criteria for choosing leaders in the kingdom are truly counter-cultural.

By extension, we who are just ordinary sinners, trying our best to follow Jesus but failing often – we are the people chosen to work out God's mission here in our neighbourhood.

God can take the least that we have to offer, and multiply it beyond our imaginings. All of us in this church this morning, with our limitations and fears and reluctance – we already have the gifts we need to reach out to people around us with the good news of Jesus Christ. We just need to believe it.

After we have offered all we have to God and for God's purposes, there will be so much love and generosity left over that it will spill out into all our relationships, our jobs, our school life, and our family life.

God is able to calm the storms of our lives simply by his presence among us – without doing or saying anything.

And through something so simple – just being aware of God's presence with us – we are enabled us to do the same for those who are suffering.

All that is required for us to believe these six impossible things is to commit ourselves to growing in love for God – to let our roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love, as Paul says it, and to stay rooted in the Christian community. The more deeply we know God as our creator, our redeemer and friend and brother, and as the Spirit of life and renewal, and the more deeply we experience that in community, the more we will come to know that we, even we, can be used by God for the building of God's kingdom.

And so as we look to the future of this church with all our challenges, let us not be overwhelmed or skeptical like Alice, but follow the Queen, and every morning before breakfast practice believing six impossible things.

"Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever."