

St. George's Anglican Church: 5350 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario

“Mark’s Musings”

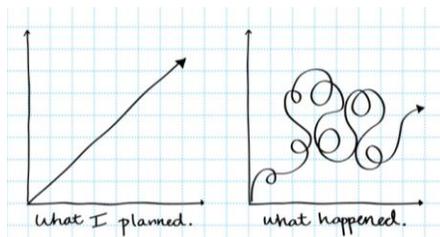
From the Incumbent’s Desk ...

Dear Friends,

Greetings as we mark the beginning of a new church year!

There comes a point in our lives when we keep plodding along, one day after another; one year after another. We get set in our routines and schedules, the demands placed upon us, the expectations of others and that we make of ourselves too. That becomes the normalcy of life which in some ways is comfortable and predictable.

And yet, life as we know it and experience it isn’t linear and static; there are curves, hills, valleys and the path is rarely straight, without rocks and roots that have the potential to cause us to stumble. And somehow we have to navigate the way forward. It’s like this image I saw on a friend’s Facebook page.



What we plan and even hope for in life has the potential to become something more akin to the second image. That’s daunting, overwhelming and can produce anxiety that affects us deeply. It’s natural for us to enjoy and value what’s comfortable and predictable in life.

The season of Advent in our church year reminds us that our lives of faith are not static or linear either. We have hopes and a sense of anticipation for what God promises us. And yet we experience the curve balls that cause us to feel unsteady and out of balance.

The recent tragedies in Montreal and at the war memorial in our nation’s capital are an example of things that can intrude upon the normalcy of life as

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we know it. Our security becomes threatened like it never has before; a sense of innocence is lost; we really are at risk as much as the rest of the world. The upheaval in other parts of the world is brought close to home. How do we cope? Where do we turn with this new twist and turn we hadn't expected and couldn't have predicted?

The message of Advent gives us a clue. The gospel calls us to always be attentive, awake and seeking out the presence of Emmanuel, God here and present with us in our lives and in our world. And we are especially called to do so in times of uncertainty and anxiety. The faith and hope we are blessed with through all that God promises us is so obvious and tangible when things are going well and life is good. But when things that are important to us are threatened and we feel a sense of loss and grief, our faith and trust become all the more crucial and significant. And yet so easily challenged, compromised and even lost at the same time.

One of my favorite of the prophetic readings for Advent is Isaiah 40: 1-11:

*Comfort, O Comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, ...
God will feed his flock like a shepherd;
God will gather the lambs to his arms,
And carry them in his bosom.*

What words of comfort for the people of Israel and for us too! They were in exile; and sometimes it feels like we are in exile too. They needed God to save them; we need God to save us too. Just like them, we need our valleys to be lifted up and our mountains and hills to be made low; and all the uneven ground around us to become level; and the rough places to become plain.

The prophet assures the people of Israel "*the word of our God will stand forever*". Friends, let's remember that too; no matter what tragedies are happening in our world or closer to home; given what may be happening in our lives that pulls us down and makes us tired; God is here; God is present; God is engaged in our individual lives and in the world as a whole.

Questions will always be there; even doubts; events may lead to cynicism; but as an advent people who are waiting, may we watch with attentiveness for God who never abandons us and walks the journey with us, no matter what route the path takes.

As we await the joyous incarnation, the gift of Emmanuel, let's take each step of the journey of this Advent season, and each step of life too, confident that God gives us the strength and courage, the hope and promise to keep going and to keep believing no matter what.

Blessings during this time of preparation; of watching, waiting and anticipating the coming of God among us.

Mark+

Faith on Film and Television

by Craig Gustafson

[As I was missed for the last newsletter, here is a review for a new television series, and a Christmas movie.]

Signed, Sealed, Delivered (2013 to the present). Starring Eric Mabijs, Kristin Booth, Crystal Lowe, Geoff Gustafson (no known relation). Currently shown on M3 (formerly Much More Music). Available for purchase through iTunes.

From Martha Williamson, creator of Touched by an Angel, comes this delightful new series. Four people work in the Dead Letter Office (DLO) of the United States Postal Service in Denver, Colorado. Any letters or packages that are undeliverable (torn or illegible recipient address) are sent to this department to determine the intended recipient or, if the recipient is not able to be determined, to be returned to the sender. This team believes that every person who mails a letter has faith that it will reach the recipient, and it is their job to ensure that faith is not let down. Therefore they "revive" the dead letter and send it along. Even though the letter may not arrive on time, hopefully it will arrive at the right time. They look for clues on the envelope, and then open the mail and read only so far as to determine the recipient and the address. They have a system and a set of rules for doing their work, but the system and rules tend to get stretched in order to serve their clients, namely the sender and recipient. The employees see themselves primarily as civil servants.

Normally in reviewing a series, I would select a couple episodes for reflection. Since this series is not only current by also quite new, I will instead look at each of the main characters and what each brings to the series and the team.

The series begins when Shane McNerney (Booth) is transferred by accident to the DLO. In fact, she was to be transferred to another department with the same initials. The team's supervisor promises to investigate the transfer, but Shane is stuck until it is sorted out. She is a bit of rebel, and demonstrates to her new co-workers how to bend the rules. She has a passion for her job, but she also has a keen sense of curiosity about her co-workers, as well as the senders and

recipients of the mail. She has advanced computer skills that assist in looking people up on the internet to learn about the current whereabouts of the sender and recipient. At first the strict adherence to rules and procedures bewilder Shane, and she cannot fathom how she will ever survive while the mistaken transfer will take place. She finds that she has been dropped into an odd bunch of people who are totally unlike her. She soon grows very fond of them, and decides that she has much to learn from them, and they have much to learn from her. When she is given the opportunity to transfer to the correct department, she decides to stay with her new co-workers.

Oliver O'Toole (Mabijs) is the team leader. He is quite taken off guard by Shane, as she challenges the rules and protocol which help Oliver feel safe. He is at a total loss when he encounters a situation that is not answered by the rules. Oliver is a man of faith; he is a tenor in a church choir and is quite familiar with the Bible. He is sometimes called upon to pray on behalf of the group. He is married to Holly, who left him some months ago to move to Paris. He is still in love with her, and hopes she will return. Shane reminds him of Holly; therefore he is torn between enjoying Shane's presence, and feeling unfaithful. For this reason, he always calls her Ms. McNerney, while calling Rita and Norman by their first names. Even though Oliver is the leader, Shane often challenges Rita and Norman to follow her. In the six months that have elapsed since Shane joined the team, Oliver finally finds the courage to send a letter to Holly; it is yet to be revealed if he is asking her to come home, or if he is saying goodbye.

Rita Haywith (Lowe) is very shy and quiet. She has a photographic memory, which is invaluable when she recalls things that she has read in the newspaper or seen on television. She has a crush on Norman, as she has subconsciously and unwittingly written a thinly veiled romance story about her and Norman. She is not even aware until Shane and one of their supervisors points it out. Norman completely misses the connection. Both Rita and Norman take a liking to Shane as the new addition to the team.

Norman Dorman (Gustafson) is also shy, but it is easier to get him to come out of his shell. He is a hand-writing expert, as he is able to identify the gender and age of a person by examining the writing. He can also read lips, and is a master of looking things up in various reference

books. His interesting connections with friends and family assist the team in discovering clues contained in the letter being investigated. He often recites odd facts, which surprisingly relate to the matter at hand. He was adopted, and through the encouragement of his co-workers, decides to meet his real grandmother.

One of the main strengths of this series is the characters. Each of them is quite likeable, in spite of each one's quirks. Even though we might not choose them as friends, we would be truly blessed to call them friends. Each person brings invaluable attributes to the group. A group is a sum of its parts, and when one person joins or leaves the group, the nature of the group changes. Shane definitely changes the nature of the group for the better. Incidentally, three of the four main actors are Canadian.

Another strength is the storytelling, of how the letter comes to be lost, and uncovering the mystery behind it. Lives are changed by the delivery of a lost letter. The team believes that it is never too late to make a difference, no matter how complicated delivering the truth might be. An episode usually begins with a glimpse of the person sending the letter. This scene contains clues as to the reason for the letter.

Often the sender and the recipient are shown to have a broken relationship, but the members of the DLO are just as imperfect as the people they are trying to help. Being a perfect person for them, however, is not a prerequisite for helping others.

It appears the first season has concluded, although repeats may be seen. Notable guest stars have included Valerie Harper, Della Reese, Valerie Bertinelli, and Carol Burnett. A Christmas movie is being filmed which should air later this year.

Christmas Miracle (2012). Starring Allison Hossack, Aaron Pearl, Dan Payne, David Nykl, Valin Shinyei, Lori Triolo, Randal Edwards, Siobhan Williams, George Canyon, Victoria Duffield. Available for purchase.

On a cold Christmas Eve night in the midst of freezing rain that turns into a blizzard, several people

drive down a country road (as the highway is closed because of several accidents), and encounter a fallen tree across the road. As each of their vehicles approaches the tree, the drivers try to avoid collisions. This is the story of how they come together and learn to rely upon each other in order to survive.

Drake and Madeline appear to have everything as they are quite wealthy. Drake has lost most of their fortune through bad investments, but is afraid to tell Madeline; Madeline, however, already knows. Nick and Christy are returning from their honeymoon, and have high expectations for married life. James is a minister, who recently lost his wife and child during childbirth; consequentially he questions God's presence. Darryl has a learning disability, which has prevented him from becoming a doctor. Finally, Joseph is separated from his wife, Mary. They have an autistic son, Matt, and they disagree about how to him.

These seven people make their way to an old abandoned church not far from the road where they are stranded. Joseph has plans to be with Matt for the evening, and calls Mary to tell her about the accident. Mary packs up food and other supplies to take them to Joseph and the others, only to drive off the road herself.

As the evening progresses, each one learns that they have a difficult time being honest, not just with themselves, but also with the people they love. They are lost (physically and emotionally), tired (physically and emotionally), and burdened. They gently challenge each other to be totally honest, because only in honesty will they be truly happy. The importance of community is revealed, as it grooms compassion, support, and love for others.

A miracle is an extraordinary event that surpasses all known human or natural powers; Christians attribute these events to God and Jesus. The Gospels refer to Jesus's miracles as signs, which are numerous. Giving sight to the blind man and raising Lazarus are two examples. Do you expect to experience miracles? If not, why not? If yes, are you able to recognise them?



Dates to note on your Calendar

Advent at St. George

Wednesdays, December 3, 10, and 17

7:30 p.m. Candlelight Eucharist

Sundays, December 7, 14, and 21

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Eucharist

Sunday, December 21

6:00 p.m. Carol Singing, Refreshments, and Christmas Goodies

7:30 p.m. Christmas Festival of Readings and Music

Christmas at St. George



Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. Family Eucharist & Birthday Cake

8:30 p.m. Bringing Food to Emergency Workers in Gratitude for Working Christmas Eve

10:30 p.m. Eucharist

Thursday, December 25

Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. Eucharist

Sunday, December 28

First Sunday after Christmas

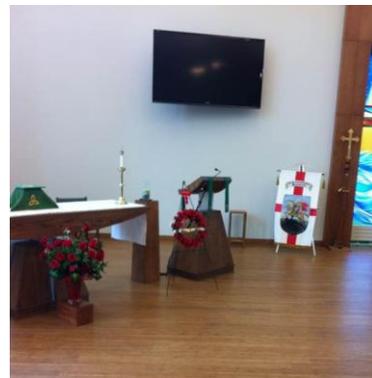
8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Eucharist

Sunday, January 4

The Epiphany of the Lord

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Eucharist

Remembrance Day Service



Report from Prayer Group



The Diocesan Prayer Conference was held at St. John's York Mills on October 25, 2014. Five members of St. George's prayer group attended. We were blessed by a profound presentation by our Guest Speaker, Emma Marsh. The theme was "Abiding in the Word of God." There was great music and singing by a group from St. John's. There were three talks, each followed by discussion in small groups.

1) "God's desire for me and my desire for God."

God wants us to be holy as he is holy. God cannot be turned on and off, god is always there. We are accountable to God in everything we do. We feel God's presence most when we are in a crisis. God hears our prayers and answers in various ways. God can raise up the most unlikely person to improve the faith of the church and the life of prayer.

2) "Come to the Water" Isaiah 55:1

We can experience God using various approaches to prayer.

John 4 --Listen to what God wants us to hear. We respond by coming into God's presence and be transformed. The Rule of St. Benedict is practical and centered in Christ.

Jeremiah the prophet records that he devoured God's word. We need to listen with our heart, to make our heart a chapel. Then we can go into the world to preach, teach and heal. It is daring to come into the presence of God but there you are coming to the Living Water.

3) "Finding the Way on the way."

Recalling our early faith can save us.

1 Kings 19:19 Elijah set out and found Elisha who plowed with the oxen. Who went ahead to plow the way for us? Who were our spiritual guides? Is anyone yoked to us now to help us plow straight? God is with us we are not alone. There are new challenges to our faith. It seems more people are living their lives without God. Moral decisions are according to how they feel, they behave as they like, to be free. But that false freedom has brought more slavery to alcoholism, promiscuity and addiction. The church is deteriorating, more of the faithful are left high and dry. The answer is to have people praying from the heart for God's Holy Spirit is moving in us and around us. God invites and encourages us. God can reverse the trends of hedonism and moral sickness. Prayer unites. We need to encourage prayer among all people and teach others to pray. Never give up! Prayer is preparation for heaven.

The conference concluded with a time for prayers for healing.

Margie Lyttle

Prayer Conference

Emma Marsh hails from Central Newfoundland. Emma spoke on the topic of "Abiding in the Word of God". Emma spoke about & focused on God's grace & how it is generously & freely bestowed for everyone. One of the key points by Emma was that God's main task is to make us holy nurtured by God's grace.

Emma delivered an uplifting message in her 3 addresses including that God leads us to be where we are. Emma spoke about the Saints being God's antibodies. Emma emphasized the importance of a need to teach people how to pray and for the real need for Prayer Groups to form in formal & informal ways.

Submitted by Lori Grauds

Announcements

Food Bank: The second Sunday of each month is "Food Bank Sunday" and we will try to fill our shopping cart. Upcoming dates are **December 14, January 11, February 8, and March 8**. The cart will be presented at the Altar along with the offerings that day as a symbol of our gift in reaching out to the hungry in our community. When you are shopping remember to pick up some non-perishable canned goods. And remember Jesus saying "When you did it for the least of these, you did it for me."

Fergie's Knights: Come join the Knights on the 4th Thursday every month. The longest journey begins with just one small step. Take that first step and join Fergie's Knights for spirited conversation, a cold beverage, and great food this month at the "Frog & Firkin" (4854 Yonge Street, across from the Sheppard Centre on Yonge Street). The next dates are **January 22, February 26, and March 26**. **Please note there is no gathering in December.**

Did You Know? Bulletins along with recordings of the service (sermons and announcements) are available on our website on the "Worship Schedule" page. If you cannot make it to the service, we hope you will feel connected to us via these tools!

Please remember that we strive to keep our building a seafood- and nut-sensitive environment.

For the safety of our children, and the children in the daycare, please remember to refrain from bringing food that contains peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and seafood into the building. Thank you.

The Church Office will be Closed Wednesday, December 24 to Thursday, January 1 inclusive. In an emergency, please call the church and, when prompted, dial "1" to be forwarded to a member of the pastoral staff. You will be able to reach the pastoral staff any time – day or night!

St. George Prayer Shawl Ministry News:

Psalm 139: 13

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

The Prayer Shawl Ministry here at St. George Church began 10 years ago. Since that time over 110 Prayers Shawls have been made, blessed and given out, They have been Knit & crocheted.

Knit Together:

SUMBIBAZO: Signifies to cause to coalesce, to join or knit together. (New Testament Words Expository Dictionary 1966.) (Christian Journey.)

These Prayer Shawls are fun & are easy to make. They can be knit, crocheted, sewn or woven. Patterns are available to borrow in the Parish Library.

Thank you to the friends of the Prayer Shawl Ministry that have generously donated their time, skill & expertise for this very important Ministry.

"Of Heaven & Earth

The space is thin between them.

Knit by a moment."

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 himself."

Common Threads & Early History of Knitting:

Knitting has a rich history. Over 5,000 years ago, Ancient Egyptians knit fabric from animal hair and reeds to make fish nets and snares. The seafarers from Arabia were making knotted fishing nets and selling & trading goods in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

"Knit your hearts with an unsleeping knot."

(Antony & Cleopatra) William Shakespeare.

Continues...

"Praying & Knitting:

Covers those you love with love, disguised as a shawl. (Knit One, Haiku Too.) Poems & Stories by Maria Fire.

Your prayerful support & assistance is needed for this Prayer Shawl Ministry of Healing & Wholeness to continue as these shawls are tangible signs of God's love.

Lori Grauds St. George Prayer Shawl Ministry

Special Announcement from the Wardens

We have decided to develop and implement an accounting system with the following features

- a. Will be based on a commonly used accounting system
- b. Will not be dependant on the abilities of any individual
- c. Will automate as much as is possible

To accomplish this we have made to following decisions.

We will be switching the accounting system to Quick Books. Quick Books is perhaps the most popular accounting system in use today and most bookkeepers or accountants will be familiar with it. We have engaged an accounting firm to manage our accounts. This firm will supervise our staff in the posting of entries to ledgers and the payment of cheques. They will provide system/process training as required. They will do monthly reconciliation of our accounts and work with our treasurer to ensure that all necessary reports are done in a timely manner.

The firm we are working with, Hummingbird Financial, has already begun the conversion of our files from the present system to Quick Books. They are doing this conversion at no charge to St. George. They expect to have all of our accounts up to date by the end of this year. The ongoing cost will be approximately \$100 per month. It is important to note that we will continue to maintain full control of our accounts and once the conversions are completed we will be able to bring back the

accounting in house or change accounting firms if we so desire.

In order to ensure that we have proper oversight of the transition between the systems and to ensure continuity until Vestry 2015 Anne Wynter has offered to volunteer as the church's interim treasurer. Anne is very familiar with Quick Books and its associated payroll system. She will not be treasurer after Vestry and for avoidance of conflict; she will not be a signing officer. Instead, the two deputy wardens will be signing officers (along with the Canonical wardens) until the end of their terms of office.

For anyone whom may be interested in taking on the position of Treasurer on our leadership team using the formula of responsibilities listed above for the 2015 year please speak with Max, who can provide further detail regarding expected time requirements that this will entail.

- Max and Doug

Reimagining Church

A number of St. George people attended Bishop Yu's recent 5-session workshop for our deanery called "Reimagining Church". The workshop was developed by Wycliffe College's Institute of Evangelism, and is linked to the "Fresh Expressions" approach to evangelism started in the U.K.

Canadian culture has changed enormously in recent years; one result is that church attendance has declined sharply. Many ordinary Canadians don't relate at all to church as we know it. Fresh Expressions is a form of church for the changing culture, for the benefit of those who are not members of any church; they may be people who used to attend church, or who have never attended. It is a new form of mission, that takes church out to the people, rather than expecting them to come to the established church. Fresh Expressions is not intended to replace traditional established church (the "inherited church"), but rather to supplement it. It's interesting that Fresh Expressions are often initiated and led by lay people and not always by ordained persons.

We as Christians are called by Jesus to join the mission of God. We are Jesus' disciples and his apprentices - learning his trade, which is spreading the Gospel and mission. Evangelism means cooperating with the Holy Spirit to help other people take steps towards being Jesus' apprentices as well; it involves reaching out, invitation, welcoming, teaching, prayer. Jesus sent out his disciples; and it's important for us to go out, not always to stay in.

How might we do Fresh Expressions at St. George? For example, our first steps with the Ontario Housing residents on Willowdale Avenue might develop into a Fresh Expressions initiative. We learned from the Reimagining Church workshop that the way to do this is to

- go where the people are; build relationships
- listen to their needs, learn about their circumstances
- serve people in need and through this form new communities of faith, make disciples, and potentially have this grow into a church in its own right, not a traditional church, but church all the same

It can take as long as 4 to 5 years for people to respond; we have to be patient and persistent.

How can we make this part of our culture? We were advised to include neighbourhood outreach in our weekly prayers; to survey our congregation to discern gifts and talents that could be used in ministry outside the traditional church; to ask community leaders and local business people about community needs and how we might serve these needs; to pray about this; and not be afraid to start and to make mistakes.

To be a healthier and more missional church, we need to learn the skills to make Fresh Expressions possible, while sustaining our inherited church. There are tools and resources available to help and support parishes in mission:

- Natural Church Development helps to turn around declining church attendance. St. George has already done three surveys, and we need to continue with them regularly, so we know

ourselves better, and how we are developing.

- Spirit of Invitation includes resources to help church members become more invitational. This resource will be available online shortly.
- Table Talk dinners cards with questions and discussion points for faith sharing.
- "Reach" grants for mission, to encourage small experiments, and "Stretch": grants for continuing successful Reach grants ministries that parishes are not able to fund
- TREC missional coaches, to teach skills needed for mission
- Church planting conference, which some St. George people have attended in the past. The next one will be held at St. Paul's Bloor Street January 29-31, 2015.

At the closing session of Reimagining Church, St. George attendees discussed where to go from here, what to do next. Suggestions included strengthening our own community, with more parish potluck meals, more singing, strengthening the youth group, all this to help us move toward being more missional and looking outward.

Some websites to check out:

- Diocese of Toronto website : www.toronto.anglican.ca - TREC; Reach grants; Spirit of Invitation; Table Talk and Sharing Faith cards; NCD
- Fresh Expressions Canada www.freshexpressions.ca
- Fresh Expressions UK www.freshexpressions.org.uk
- Mission Possible: Five week Bible study course www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-life/mission-shaped-parish/learn
- The Vital Church Planting conference: Toronto January 29-31, 2015 <http://vitalchurchplanting.com>

Geraldine Sperling

Community Notices

Yonge Churchill Child Care Centre: Before and after school programmes are available! Please see the flyer on the Welcome Desk for contact information.

Daylight Saving Time Begins Sunday, March 8, 2015. Please remember to set your clocks **AHEAD** one hour before you go to bed on Saturday.

Services

Sunday	8:00 a.m.	Said Eucharist (BAS 1962)
	10:30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist (BAS)
		3rd Sunday of the month (AWE)

BAS 1962 (Book of Alternate Services) uses the 1962 rite which is the traditional language as in the BCP (Book of Common Prayer)

BAS (Book of Alternate Services) uses contemporary, inclusive-language

A.A.A.W.E. (Amazing, Awesome, Alternate Worship Experience) is a Communion service that is more informal with alternative music and prayers

The next edition of the newsletter will be coming out on March 22nd

Deadline is Sunday, March 14th at 4:56 p.m.

Email articles to the editor: Kathy Baillie at fambail@hotmail.com



We're on the Web! See us at:
www.StGeorgesToronto.ca

**REMEMBER,
EVERYONE IS WELCOME
AT ST. GEORGE ON YONGE CHURCH**

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

5350 Yonge Street, North York