

St Matthias' Musings

Pentecost, 2014

Across the Rector's Desk

"...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"

2Peter 3:18

In our physical bodies growth and change are intertwined. We grow from baby to toddler, to preschooler, to school age, to adolescent, to adult. Our bodies change considerably with cellular growth. Our mind develops and grows as we add information and experience to our memory. People are encouraged to read, to travel to "expand their minds". Our ideas change as we grow up, become more mature we might say. St Paul writes "*when I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child, now I have become an adult I have put away childish things.*" The expectation is that we have changed.

Spiritually, growth and change go hand in hand. When we are young in faith our concept of God is that of an old man in the sky who is supposed to answer our prayers and involves some magical thinking. As we grow in faith we begin to ask questions, want rational explanations for how God works, is God real, how can I believe that stuff in the Bible? With steady growth in faith our questions change: who am I before God, why am I here, what is my purpose in life. With continued growth the question changes to how do I love and serve God. We have changed into an adult in faith.

It is possible to get stuck, to have our spiritual growth stunted just as it is possible to be stunted physically. We stop wanting to learn new things, new ways of thinking. What we learned in confirmation is good enough—for an adolescent. But what about the adult: are the challenges the same, are the life events the

same? Has your spiritual growth kept up with your life?

We tend to think of growth in the church as growth in numbers but spiritual growth is as important and perhaps more important. We make very poor ambassadors for Christ if we haven't changed and grown.

It may not seem as though changes in parish life and worship are purposeful but they are intended to push us out of our comfort zone (or our comfortable pew) toward greater understanding of our faith, greater intimacy with Christ. The Disciples following the resurrection were still young in their faith, afraid, bewildered and unable to get on with the mission Jesus had given them. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit that changes them and they become the apostles Jesus knew they could be. A careful reading of the letters of Paul indicates a change in his thinking as he grows in his understanding of God and his ministry.

Pentecost challenges us to grow in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can be changed if we let the Spirit work God's will in our lives.



The Warden's Report

It would appear that the warm weather is finally here and let's hope it stays. This winter has taken its toll on church attendance, as well as our finances. Some of you will likely be going to cottage country, however remember that your offering contributes to the church and is always needed. As predicted in the Budget we are in a deficit position.

The gardens have been worked on and we would like to thank Vi Heyworth, Dianne & Ross Cato for their hard work and efforts. The women's washroom will be undergoing some renovations including a new toilet, as requested at Vestry, which will make access easier. The men's washroom will also be undergoing change.

The pastor of the Toronto Hana Church (Korean) treated the Wardens and Fran to lunch and this proved to be positive and enlightening. Pastor Mark Kim demonstrated responsibility and a clear vision for his growing congregation. They are with us Sundays for 3 hours, Wednesdays for 2 hours, and early Saturday mornings for 1 hour. We have allowed them to have a desk in the Counting Room and they have given us a large boardroom style table. The storage on the north west side of the basement is part of the licence.

We wish you a safe and happy summer!

Parish Workshop May 3

We met on the morning of May 3 to reflect on the past, present, and future of St Matthias; in attendance 19 people.

The Hall was divided into tables representing the decades from the '50s to the 2000s and folks were asked to sit at the table of the decade in which they arrived in the Parish.

It was interesting the way the decades were represented: there was no one from the 70s;

2 people for each of the 50s and 60s; 6 people for each of the 90s and 2000s and 3 for the 80s. It could be assumed that nobody came in the 70s but more likely those folks didn't attend.

Each table group was asked to answer 4 questions: who was the priest? What was happening in your life? What activities were happening in the church? What was going on in the world and what was happening in the neighbourhood?

The 50s

Priest: The Rev George Young

Children born, raising young families, 3 Sunday Services.

Activities: Adult choir, junior choir, Guild (later ACW) Altar Guild, Sunday School Picnics, Pub nights, Square Dancing lessons, exercise classes, boys hockey team, G.A. and J.A. 1st Rummage sale.

In the neighbourhood: many children, on one street 65 kids. Kids played outside unsupervised; the mailman knew what was happening on the street. No shopping centre close by, there were fields, apple orchards beyond the houses.

In the world: post war, cold war, sputnik, mums at home with the children, dads working at a job.

The 60s

Priest: The Rev David Stiles ('60-'65)
The Rev Henry Peasgood (66-74)

Newly married/ raising families; some women working outside the home.

Activities: Sunday School, Couples Club, Choir, Chancel Guild, Octoberfest, Sunday School picnics, ACW, anniversary dinner.

In the neighbourhood: Kids played outside.

In the world: Upheaval – Vietnam war in the news nightly. In Canada a new flag, Civil Rights code introduced, Universal health care. Expo 67. Moon landing.

The 70's

Priest: The Rev Henry Peasgood
The Rev Jim Kiddell
(the 60 's folks contributed)

More mothers working outside the home, not as involved in church activities, young families.

Activities: Choir (with wine & cheese once per month), Scottish night, Spaghetti Dinner, Pancake Supper, Choir gourmet club. Raffle, J.A., Children's choir, Cubs. Support for Ingles House .

In the neighbourhood: Lots of young families, 85 elementary school children on Tewsbury. Houses being built, no high-rises. Kids played outside without supervision; lots of ball hockey.

In the world: Women's rights movements, FLQ crisis.

The 80s

Priest: The Rev Jim Kiddell ('75-'85),
The Rev Don Clarke (86-91)

Kids finishing college – starting in workforce, involved as lay reader, youth programme, regular attendance of over 100, "new" Book of Alternative Services. 2 services. Moved altar. Pulpit lowered. Elevator installed. Outreach – sponsored Ethiopian family, began supporting YWS.

Activities: Youth group, men's group with speakers. Large Choir. Chancel Guild, Seder Dinners, Christmas pageants, dances, picnics, fashion shows, Confirmation classes, Pancake Suppers, Parish Retreat in Niagara Falls. Introduced lay people as reader for the 1st lesson, younger kids to serving, as torch bearers, crucifers. Out of the cold programme.

In the neighbourhood: Italian kids going to Separate School. Florist store on La Rose.

In the world: Repatriation of the Constitution, Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The 90s

The Rev Ralph Eibner ('92-'99)

St Richard of Chichester closed; some parishioners came to St Matthias. 2 services. Shared with new congregation: St Behnam's

Activities: Bible Studies, Flea markets, Choir, Sunday School, Good companions, Craft activities, dinners, confirmation class, picnics, BBQ's. Out of the Cold. Sunday Coffee Hour.

In the neighbourhood: potential subway along Eglinton, many children, less traffic, new condos, Buttonwood school closed.

In the world: end of the cold war. 1st Iraq War.

2000-2013

The Rev Jennifer Matthews (2000-'09)
The Rev Fran Kovar ('11-present)

Fewer working people, younger people, more retirees, Rectory and back of church property sold for Townhouse development. New rectory bought. Amalgamation committee, talks, votes. Small Sunday School to no Sunday School. St Timothy-by-the Humber closed. New members welcomed. St Behnam's bought their own church.

Activities: Bible Study, Book Club, Outreach lunches, Telephone tree, Thursday Coffee Hour, Card Party, Fundraising: Flea markets/Rummage Sales, Craft Sale in November, Purdy's Chocolates, lunches/dinners Concerts. Book sales to support Outreach. Joint services with St Philip's and St Wilfrid's as part of amalgamation talks. Interdenominational services: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,

World Day of Prayer, Lenten Retreat. Open House at the Rectory.

Building maintenance: new boilers, windows, shed, roof, carpet; parking lot paved.

In the neighbourhood: Increasing European population: Roman Catholic, Byzantine Ukrainian Catholic. Multi-ethnic, older people selling their homes. New Condos on Eglinton, fewer children walking to school or playing outside.

In the world: 9/11, 2nd Iraq War, War in Afghanistan.

The Present

The Rev Fran Kovar

In the neighbourhood: multi-ethnic, fewer Anglicans, more unchurched and dechurched people.

In the Parish: there are fewer people – 81 people on the mailing list, 60 designated givers, average 38 on Sunday. Less income from renters. Envelope givings do not come close to the Diocesan bench mark of 80% of the budget. Most parishioners are over 65 and on fixed incomes. Like many other Anglican churches in the area we are running a deficit. Few children.

Fundraising: Flea markets, Craft Sale, Turkey Dinner, Lunches such as St Pat's, Pancake Tuesday on Sunday.

Renewed worship with new hymns. More laity involved in worship. The Choir leads in singing the hymns, and the Altar Guild makes sure that all is ready for the Eucharist. Coffee hour every Sunday.

We continue to offer Bible Study, the Book Club. Our support for YWS and Ingles House remains strong. We were once more involved with Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the World Day of Prayer.

The Future

There has been a general decline as you can see from the reports on the decades. There are fewer people, fewer activities, and few children. The parishioners are getting older and less able to get out, to participate in activities and even to attend on Sundays.

The outlook is not very hopeful.

Pentecost

hesitant enough
to whisper your name,
much less tell others
of your presence in our lives:©
dare we ask for
tongues of boldness?

our hearts
fatigued by
the malignancy of poverty,
the terror of our times,
the children wounded in our streets:
dare we ask
for a transplant
of compassion?

souls numbed
by broken lives
and shattered dreams,
grace iceberged
by the chill of our culture:
dare we ask
for just the smallest spark
to engulf us?

dare we hope?

come, Holy Spirit, come!

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