

Parkwoods Alive!

A Newsletter for the People of Parkwoods United Church
85 Parkwoods Village Dr. Don Mills ON
M3A 2X9 (416)447-5519
e-mail: parkwoodsunited@bellnet.ca

December 2009



...message from the minister's study

A Gift of Faith

Do you remember playing “peek-a-boo” with a youngster? The squeal of delight from a small child upon “finding” our familiar face brings an equal delight to us older players of the game. And have you noticed that the farther away or the longer we hide, the greater the happiness of the child who finds us again? Is it relief from the anxiety of “losing” us that so heightens the joy of the child finding us? Indeed, it seems that the fear of losing the familiar and warm presence of a loving adult does contribute to making this child’s game one of the top10 on the all-time list of favourite ways to entertain a child. This game illustrates the deep human need for the faithfulness factor. The child is reassured about the dependability of the adult person who hides but never totally disappears.

Advent/Christmas is a peek-a-boo game on a grand scale, a time when Christmas delight is the faithful presence of God, whom we believe was embodied in Jesus Christ. The happiness we share at this holy time of year is the joy of knowing that God has neither left us alone nor abandoned us. It means we may go about our life in the confidence that God will – perhaps surprisingly – show up in our human environment again and again, which Christians turn attention to year after year.

But how do we see the supreme gift of God? We understand that our gift-giving God delivers the greatest of gifts in human wrapping. The gift of love pierces the silence of a dark night with a shaft of light, choruses of angels and the sound of a woman’s labour. God comes in human form, and therefore Christians are expected to place the highest possible value on all and every human life. In addition, because the gift of deepest love is given in human form, the gift is very specific instead of general. It was a *certain* woman and man who went to a *particular* town called Bethlehem, and there a special child was born and in whom all people may see the love of God.

In Advent/Christmas season we joyfully celebrate the one-time appearance of God in the form of a child, a supreme gift indeed that merits more than a once a year celebration. We claim in

faith that God has delivered this gift in quite a strange way – as a child of humble parents, an unwed mother, in a simple village, in a stable there, and then announced the whole blessed event to illiterate shepherds. Who would expect the best God had to give be handed over in this way? Not many then and not many now.

People, even faithful Christians, still have trouble believing that God has any intimate dealings with our tired and broken world. How much easier it is to stick to the notion that all this happened so beautifully back there in Bethlehem. But for the very reason that we believe in the specific moment of God's joining of our world's life, we also believe that God has not left our world behind. We are as amazed as the shepherds about this, and we fear the demands of such a faith claim. We know that this means we need to take better care of God's "little ones," those who walk the back alleys and sleep in the cold outdoors of our own city.

God comes – and we remember it especially at Advent/Christmas – to lay a child at our back doorstep. He taps lightly before slipping away into the night. It is so discomfoting for us to hear the words, "It's yours." The whole church has post-partum shock, for Christmas still wants to avoid the unto "us-ness" of the birth and its demands upon us. The peek-a-boo game reassures us that God is closer that we think, and we realize that the birth we celebrate really makes a difference to our human world. Unless of course, we are all "boo" and no "peek."

Christmas blessings to one and all and to all a wonder-filled New year!

**Yours in Christ's service,
Ellen Redcliffe**

Co-Chairs' Corner

Seasons Greetings from Parkwoods Council.

I think almost everyone looks forward to the Christmas season and certainly for our congregation this is a most meaningful time in the Christian year. It is a busy time with many demands. Hopefully, you will have a moment to reflect on the many aspects of Christmas that you have cherished over the years. Rev. Ellen and our worship committee have planned services that will add to our deeper moments at this time of year while the choir has been practicing for weeks in preparation for a Christmas concert for everyone's enjoyment. Outreach efforts by many in our congregation on behalf of overseas recipients and members of our surrounding community are a wonderful example of the sharing and support that is exhibited in our congregation. A Blue Christmas service has again been scheduled in December for those who are particularly challenged by personal loss at this time of the year. Your quiet support will always be appreciated.

As the year draws to a close, I am amazed that next year will be the 10th year after the start of the new millennium. Time passes quickly. This has been true especially over the last year in our congregation where there have been changes in our pastoral leadership and many challenges that have been met by our volunteers. We are stronger as a worship community in working though these challenges. Both the committee chairs and the co-chairs of Council have enjoyed the year working together and having such great support from our congregation. It is rewarding that worship and work can be followed by fellowship with friends especially during lunches and receptions hosted by our Loaves and Fishes.

Next year will be the 50th Anniversary for Parkwoods United Church. Another exciting year is coming up. We encourage you to be involved and enjoy the journey!

Your Council wishes you and your family the best for the Christmas season.

Ron Wigle
Council Co-chair

Worship

As we enter the season of Advent, I would like to wish you all Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. May we be blessed during this Holiday Season. The Worship committee has been meeting on a monthly basis, planning our upcoming services and discussing any items brought to our attention.

We are indeed blessed, as a congregation, to have Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe walk with us. We are so lucky to have many dedicated volunteers that work tirelessly on a very regular basis. I would like to thank our décor group (Mary Kishi, Dorothy Bray and Bud Bray) for putting together such a lovely display for our Thanksgiving service. Thank you also to Rita Kent for her work in arranging the ushers for our Sunday services.

Please speak to any of the members of the Worship Committee if you would like to provide feedback or items of discussion.

Jane Reid
Worship Chair



We Remember

November 11



Baptisms

Oliver James Clarke

Son of Gary Lawrence Clarke and Andrea Florence Pasher

Maliq Jacob Collins-Whyte

Son of Christopher Whyte and Donique Collins

Anniversary Sunday

Parkwoods' 49th anniversary was held on November 22nd. Seven Charter Members were in attendance as well as other former members. A new banner was made displaying the hands of the Sunday School children and Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe presented the first Prayer Shawl to Rev. Shorten. An Anniversary cake and coffee followed the service and many gathered for lunch prepared by the Loaves & Fishes and an opportunity for fellowship and to renew friendships with our visitors.



**Minister Emeritus Rev. Robert Shorten
And Lorne Van Vliet**

Joint Search Committee Report

The Joint Search Committee (JSC) has been meeting most every Saturday since September 2009. Our Ministerial ad will be published in the December and January issues of the Observer. Please contact any member of the committee if you have any questions about the process. At this time there is nothing to report other than we continue to work on finding our new minister and thank you for your trust in us.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Reid and Dave Griffin

Ministry & Personnel

You should all have noticed by now; Parkwoods has been blessed with the supportive and creative ministry of Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe! She has adeptly fit into the Parkwoods family with meaningful worship, interesting ideas for upcoming services, visitations, and many stimulating weekday initiatives. Ellen has been with us only three months but already has won the hearts of Parkwoods. Ellen, we thank you for your spiritual leadership and ministry.

From the Parkwoods M & P Committee and the staff, “a blessed Advent, a merry Christmas, and a joyous celebration of the Epiphany to your family!”

Lynda McCowan
M & P Chair

Presbytery

Parkwoods United Church is an active member of the Toronto Southeast (TS) Presbytery. The vision of our new Presbytery is to enable and support good, faithful and healthy communities of faith within our member Pastoral Charges; and to provide opportunities for cross-congregational initiatives where individuals from Congregations with shared calls to specific ministries may work together. Toronto Southeast is seeking to make Presbytery a meaningful and welcoming entity. As noted from the TS Presbytery Chairperson, Rev. John Lee:

The period of preparation leading up to our opening meeting in September was like expecting a newborn baby. That first meeting was a meaningful celebration with overflowing energy and great anticipation for the coming future. We had over a hundred and twenty in attendance. Most of the things that had to be done were done at the beginning of the new Presbytery. And since then, we have had some very positive suggestions for the future of our journey - how we can make the system more efficient and how we can create our environment to be more welcoming, caring, inclusive and safe. The Church is called to bring a clearer and more meaningful vision to the world. If we want to do away with outdated thoughts, systems and technology, we need to move beyond a simple dream that will only end up with frustration and complaints. How can we creatively cope with changes and update ourselves as we move forward with this vision? If we want to interact with the world changes and fast developing systems, we need to be intentional in our emphasis on education. I hope in our every aspect of planning for the future, presbyters would consider education and training as a priority.

Lynda McCowan
Presbytery Rep

Christian Education

The “Really Bad Girls” of the Bible are alive and well at the church. We have had some lively discussions on women: Jael, Bathsheba, Herodias and Athaliah. Some were bad for good reasons; bad and proud of it; or bad, but not condemned. Each relate to our living today in some way.

The Wednesday study on the Ten Commandments is also going well and we are finding that these commandments as relevant now as they were in Bible times and it is good to be reminded and to strengthen our faith and will to serve the Lord in our day to day living.

Watch for any New Year study that may come up. I do thank all of you for your support and hope you have found these sessions helpful.

Mabel French
Christian Development Chair

Sunday School

So much happens in these first months of the church year, and there has been much for your children to enjoy and learn as well. During Pentecost, the children met four strong and faithful women; Esther, Ruth, Naomi, and Hannah. Their stories were background for teachings about Jesus, and through these lessons the children studied how being a follower of Jesus, God's way of love can be displayed. In sharing God's love, the children participated in packing gift boxes for Operation Christmas Child.

The next segment of our curriculum starts with the Season of Advent on November 29th when we will celebrate Communion as a Sunday School unit downstairs. Again this year, the children will be assisting Outreach by making personal Christmas cards for each of the Cheer bags sent to our Parkwoods shut-ins. In the upcoming weeks we will be anxiously preparing to celebrate the joy of Jesus' birth and after Christmas, focus on lessons to rejoice in God's ongoing promise to reshape and restore our lives.

The number of classes we are able to sustain in our Sunday School still depends on the number of faithful volunteers agreeable to assist in the Christian Development program. With a total of 38 registered children and varied attendance each week, we currently have two groups - Primary for ages 4 to 8 year olds and Junior for ages 9 and above. The Christian Development committee, chaired by Mabel French, is always actively seeking additional teachers and helpers. We **urgently** need volunteers for Baby Care!! Please carefully consider an opportunity to work with our young people.

Our Sunday School wishes that you and your families enjoy an Advent season that nurtures your faith and may the understanding and joy of Christmas be upon you that day.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A Sunday School teacher decided to have her young class memorize one of the most quoted passages in the Bible; Psalm 23. She gave the youngsters a month to learn the verse.

Little Bobby was excited about the task. But, he just couldn't remember the Psalm. After much practice, he could barely get past the first line.

On the day that the kids were scheduled to recite Psalm 23 in front of the congregation, Bobby was so nervous. When it was his turn, he stepped up to the microphone and said proudly, "The Lord is my shepherd and that's all I need to know."

IN GOD'S OWN MAKING

A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a Bible story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again.

Finally she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"

Lynda McCowan



MUSIC NOTES

Music is the language that transcends every cultural and national boundary. It connects us all with the tethers of our faith and our mutual dreams for hope and peace. Music teaches us what can happen when differences come together to make harmony.

At Christmas the wings of song carry us to far away places, and we learn that in Christ there is no East or West, in Him no South or North. All who gather at the manger find that the noisy babble of hate and prejudice melt into a joyous anthem of praise for the child born Prince of Peace. In the Gentle candle glow of Bethlehem's stable we are washed in the colors of God's grace and all our differences surrender to the light. Shepherds kneel with Kings and angels blend their voices with the songs of earth as all the creation is united by worship and adoration.



*You are invited to sing your favourite Christmas carols
and enjoy the Christmas Concert*

“A WORLD OF CHRISTMAS”

on December 13 at 3 pm

Please come and bring your family and friends.

*And as you listen may you discover the miracle of being at one
with the One who is Savior of all.*

**Musically yours,
Rasa Gudiene**

A Note from the Past

From

Parkwoods Reports - 1968

Christmas Greetings went out from Parkwoods in a very concrete way in the form of Christmas baskets and food vouchers to families in or community. Bette Van Vliet, the Social Convener for the U.C.W. had a busy time organizing our Christmas gifts, trying to match those who could donate with those in need. It was a big job and well done, 26 families were helped and a total of 120 people for whom **Christmas'67** was made a bit brighter. There should be some special award for people like Bette. Thanks again to Bette and all who helped.

Outreach

LOCAL & GLOBAL

Christmas preparations are well underway. The **Christmas Cheer Packages** will again be given coordinating leadership by Nancy-Jean Nickel. This year the delivery of the packages has been advanced by one week, to Sunday, December 13. The **Linkert Memorial Fund** is sponsoring this annual gift-giving to those who, through illness or other affliction, may take comfort in being remembered by the congregation.

Operation Christmas Child, with Wally and Rena at the helm, has become an annual fixture. This year, the number of boxes filled for children-without-other-gifts has reached an all-time high.

The Mitten tree, decorated by Maaike Russell and friends in a practical way, with knitted articles, will be on display outside the office throughout December.

Gentle Yoga resumed this fall, with Parkwoods women taking part in a relaxing form of exercise tailored to physical capability. Gomati is the skillful leader of this group. Glory Wigle is the contact person, and collects the modest fees.

African-style Drumming has been a feature of Parkwoods for many years. Recently, it included community members who wished to learn the art. This year and last, the focus has been on a largely Burundi group of drummers drawn from a variety of neighbourhoods. Leadership has been given by Frederic Nzeyimana, who represents Parkwoods annually as chief entertainer at the Canada Day Broadlands Community Picnic. This fall, the drummers are making a *financial gift* to Parkwoods as a tangible thank-offering for the practice space made available to them at Parkwoods on Friday nights.

Mat-making from Plastic Bags is an innovative project to save the environment AND to help people lacking beds. Plastic bags, knotted, make attractive, waterproof 'mattresses', while it recycles plastic bags. Johanna Lansche made an eloquent 'how to' presentation to the children and adults at a recent Worship Service. A number of mat-makers are emerging at Parkwoods to help this excellent cause!

White Gift Sunday Taking Stock(ings)!! This year's white gifts will be white sock donations, rather than the usual white-wrapped food gifts. The cause: a donation to the out-of-the-cold program housed at Rev. Ellen's former church, Eastminster United. Rev. Ellen will speak to the need of dye-free socks, and the importance of the program. Brian and Carol Jeffs have been our principal connection with the program for many years. The Outreach Committee and the Linkert Committee join forces to subsidize clothing purchases to assist the homeless.

Weekly food donations continue to the **Rayoak Foodbank**. Special collections were made at Thanksgiving. Cam Ferguson and a backup team make the pick-up and deliveries.

A special Christmas campaign to **Support our Troops** in Afghanistan has been launched. A large box of 'treats' was filled to capacity, and delivered to Division 33 who are now shipping the goodies to the battle zone. Spear-headed by the Reid Family and Nancy-Jean Nickel, the intention is to bring morale-boosting tokens of our support and cheer to our troops.

A **special appeal** for the victims of hurricanes, floods and earthquakes in South East Asia was made in October. Money was donated, through the United Church of Canada, for **Emergency Relief** to the Philippines, Indonesia and the afflicted islands of the South Pacific.

John Horton
Outreach Chair

Loaves & Fishes

It's like a big happy family having dinner at our "end-of-the -month' lunches. If you haven't been, you should try it. It's cheaper than McDonald's and you get to know the people at the church.

We had fun making "stone soup" with the vegetables you brought us. No one knew what it would taste like but the results were great if the empty bowls are any indication. We hope it proved that if you give a little, you receive a lot.

We have a busy season coming up with Anniversary Sunday lunch (replacing the end-of-the-month lunch). The Young at Hearts will have their annual turkey dinner on Dec. 4th and a new one for us is dinner for the Toastmasters' Club on December 8th. As usual, there will be no end-of-the-month lunch in December.

We enjoy working together in the kitchen and are very grateful for the help of the men who lift the trays of dishes in and out of the dishwasher. Hope you enjoy your holiday meals in and out of your kitchens.

Lois Keir

The Quilters

The draw for our "Autumn Star" quilt was held on Sunday, November 29th (not November 30th) as printed on the tickets.

We're now working on a pastel "flower" quilt.

Our small group enjoys sewing, chatting and laughing together. We even take time for a coffee break. You're welcome to join us Monday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30.

Lois Keir

Mission & Service

From the Heart

Gary MacDonald is a teacher from the United Church who works in China teaching English. He is paid for his work with our gifts to the **Mission and Service Fund**. Here is an Advent story from Gary about giving.

Every year Gary's school puts on a concert. Students practice all kinds of acts for this important event. Four young men were going to dance in the concert and on the first day of rehearsals they came on stage ready to work. Three of them wore shiny new "city shoes" bought just for the occasion. The fourth stood shyly in his cloth village slippers. He had no other shoes to wear.

Rehearsals went well and soon all four knew their steps. On the big night – the night of the concert- they stood in front of Gary behind the curtains with big smiles. As they walked onto the stage he knew why they were grinning. All four were wearing "city shoes" and they were ready to dance!

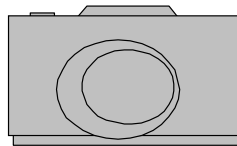
Weeks later, Gary was marking English compositions after class and read one called "City Shoes" written by the boy with the village slippers. All the students in the concert had put their money together to buy the fourth pair of shoes.

When they put their money together, they gave a gift from the heart that brought hope, joy and love. When we put our money together in **the Mission and Service Fund** right across the church, we can do more than any of us can do alone.

Our M & S gifts can bring hope, joy and love and huge smiles to many faces!

Maiike Russell

Communications Permission for Photographs

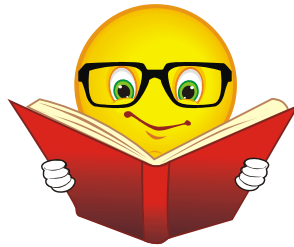


New Freedom of Information Guidelines requires that we have permission to use photographs of its members or guests for use in print or on the Church's website. If you have not already signed a form indicating your permission please fill in a form and place it in the communications box or give it to Glory. If you do not wish to have your photo used in any way, please indicate that on the form. You will find these forms on the table outside the church office. Since we often put photos of special occasions in the Newsletter and on the website, it is important that we have this information on file.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Carol Keffer

You are invited-----



To help with the Parkwoods Story for our 50th Anniversary

Do you have recollections or special memories of activities, events or people of Parkwoods?

Do you have copies of information that you have put away in a box or drawer?

If so, please jot down your recollections and memories and hunt for those pieces of paper and information that you think could be included.

Write your name on all material so that it can be returned to you.
Place it in the communications box or give it to me personally.

This is YOUR story, so let's include everyone.

Carol Keffer

Property

- 1) In preparation for the oncoming fall, winter, and spring inclement conditions, we have placed new weather carpeting at all entrances. The reasoning behind doing this is we can now save the cost of the rental contract for carpets, as we now have our power steam vacuum to clean the carpets, as snow and salt etc. are deposited.
- 2) I have been advised by Mike Reid that due to some questions on his availability, he would like to go back to his original hours as designated on Sundays, that is, he will cover only from 8:30 to 10:30 on Sundays.

We ask you all to be aware over the winter period to follow the signs on the coat racks, and be sure to remove and take all valuables with you, when you go into the Sanctuary for the service. There will be less security coverage in the narthex and entrance area after 10:30 am.

- 2) I regret to have to inform Council that as of December 31, 2009, the Korean Grace and Love Church will no longer be using our facilities. They have thanked us most sincerely for their time here, but will now be joining another Korean congregation for worship. We wish them God's speed.

This constitutes a very significant loss of revenue for us in the new year. I am negotiating presently with another group and it is hoped that the void can be filled starting January 2010. Please advise me of any groups that you may know of that are looking for worship accommodations, should my present negotiations fall through.

Mac McInnes
Property Chair

Envelopes

It's that time of year again. Your new envelopes for 2010 are now available on Sundays at the back of the sanctuary or in the office during the week. There will also be envelopes for the yearly subscription for the Observer.

Visitors Envelopes

We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to put out Visitors Envelopes in the pews every Sunday. The task entails putting them out in the pew slots before the service starts, preferably about 9:30 a.m. before people arrive, and collecting them again after the service. It would only take about 5 mins. before and 5 mins. after the service.

It would be wonderful if we can find a few people to do it and then the job could be shared. Please contact Linda or Mac McInnes if you are interested in volunteering. Thanks and Merry Christmas to everyone. Have a safe Holiday.

Linda and Mac McInnes
Envelope Stewards

United Church Women

As we approach the year end, we look back and look ahead at the same time. On Monday evening, November 30 the UCW had a short business meeting and looked back at the year past. We lost Martha Garvie, a beloved member of the Pearl Unit and some of our ladies have been laid up with illness for the past year.

Refreshments followed the meeting and "A Northern Nativity" Candlelight service was held with music provided by Helen Bawtenheimer playing piano, Joanna Lansche playing flute and soloist Glory Wigle.

As we look ahead, several things lie in our year coming up. Parkwoods continues to keep ties with the new Presbyterial and we try to have a Parkwoods representative at the monthly meetings.

The World Day of Prayer service will be held at Parkwoods on Friday, March 5, 2010. We hope as many people as possible will support us and come to the service.

We continue to have wonderful fellowship together and I continue to hope others would join us and keep the Parkwoods United Church Women alive and vibrant in our Church.

Mabel French

Pastoral Care

Here we are just a few weeks from Christmas with many chores to work on and traditional events to enjoy as we prepare to celebrate the Saviour's birth. During all the "hustle and bustle" take time out to count our many blessings and think of those who need a little extra "TLC" in this busy season. It is easy to forget others when we are so caught up in our own busy schedules.

Throughout the year we have had illness, hospital stays and the loss of loved ones in our Parkwoods Family. Please take a moment to remember these folks with a telephone call, a note or short visit. Just a pause in your hectic day may turn out to be very rewarding.

Our Team of dedicated volunteers once again sends along wishes that your Christmas be blessed with joyous times with family and friends. Anyone who has lost someone dear to their heart; may wonderful memories sustain and comfort you in this season. Also may the New Year bring peace and good health to each and every one of you.

Enjoy your Christmas Holiday.

Barbara Griffin
Pastoral Care Chair

IN MEMORIAM

**Martha Garvie
(Charter Member of Parkwoods)**

Mother of Alice, Evelyn and Linda

OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH THE FAMILY

Celebrate Advent & Christmas at Parkwoods

Sun. Nov. 29 10:00 am	First Sunday in Advent "Hope" Worship Service and Communion
Mon. Nov. 30 7:30 pm	UCW Candlelight Service Meeting and refreshments
Sun. Dec. 6 10:00 am	Second Sunday in Advent "Peace" Worship Service & White Gift Sunday
Sun. Dec. 13 10:00 am 3:00 pm	Third Sunday in Advent "Joy" Worship Service Parkwoods Christmas Concert
Thurs. Dec. 17 7:00 pm	Blue Christmas Service
Sun. Dec.20 9:45 am 10:00 am	Fourth Sunday in Advent Carol Sing Worship
Thurs. Dec. 24 7:00 pm	Christmas Eve Worship Service & Communion
Fri. Dec. 25 10:00 am	Christmas Day Worship Service
Sun. Dec. 27 10:00 am	1st Sunday after Christmas Worship Service



*Christmas Blessings
To You and Yours*