



# **THE BURNING BUSH**

101 COBURG STREET, SAINT JOHN, N.B. E2L 3J8

**GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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## **Thanksgiving 2013**

**MINISTER: THE REV. DR. JOHN CRAWFORD, B.A., M.Div., D.Min.**

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I write on a dampish fall day, the skies are darkened and the wind from the south threatens a rain. I like to think that our autumn weather is more upbeat than this but for today this is what God has given to me and to all of us. I write this pastoral column today thinking of the dialectic between thanksgiving and suffering. You may ask how the attitude or act of thanksgiving and the experience of suffering have anything to do with one another, and yet these experiences within the human spirit and psyche have a lot to do with each other.

Victor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search For Meaning* (1959) writes, "In some, way suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of sacrifice (Frankl, p.113). Frankl does not suggest that we must suffer to have a meaningful life but only that if the experience of suffering is given meaning whether by the individual, those observing at the time or reading about it as history.

What meaning does the crucifixion have for us? This is a teleological question which certainly pertains to the way in which we give thanks to God for our salvation, our life, and the way we face our own suffering and death. As Jesus left Galilee on his way to Jerusalem he understood that he would never be coming back because he was going to die in the Holy City. His act of sacrifice was imbued with meaning; theologians have different theories on the meaning of Jesus' death. Some focus on Jesus' death satisfied God's righteousness, or that Jesus paid a ransom to rescue the world from evil or that Jesus was punished in our place to name a few.

In any case, Jesus understood his suffering has meaning because he believed a new covenant with God was being created with humanity by his death and resurrection. Jesus also found meaning in his suffering because the Father who loves the world was glorified by the gift that the Son has given to the world. God's love for the world is not thwarted by death but now for Christian's death is imbued with a new meaning. Death has been trampled down by death as we carefully remember Saint Paul's words to the Church at Corinth, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

We are an Easter people at Thanksgiving. We give thanks that Jesus' suffering had meaning for him but also for us. We are included in The Covenant of Grace through the sign of baptism which seals us to Jesus' death and resurrection and gifts us with a relationship to the Father. Thus as Frankl points out something terrible can have important meaning. The cross has meaning because it points

to a moment in time that did not just show something but rather did something. We became the very apple of God's eye.

We give thanks to God that the meaning of the cross and resurrection are not lost in ideas or theology but truly located in the very mind and soul of every Christian. The love of Jesus creates meaning for us and how we choose to live this meaning out within the Church and world is an ongoing event for which we can be thankful. Our lives continue to be the focus of God's loving kindness and this makes meaning for us whether we experience joy or must endure suffering of any sort.

Take some time and think on these things because having meaning in your life – or finding the meaning of your life in Christ will create a thankful and compassionate heart.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. John Crawford

### **News from Session**

Exciting new opportunities to share your gifts are coming. Grace Church has many and varied programs and activities that you may not be aware of. The Ministry Fair will be a chance to become as enthusiastic as your session. Keep your eyes peeled for more details in the bulletin about this fantastic event. Be prepared to be awed by the wonderful work Grace does and will continue to do with your support.

### **Congregation News**

- Fred Hammond and Maggie Gunter are off to university
- Brendon Hutchings, a boy from the After School program, won an International Soap Box Derby in Ohio
- Craig Haines is an Elder at St. Andrew's Church in Ottawa

## **CHURCH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Church Management Committee has diligently been looking for some time now at ways to reduce the operating costs of the church, which exceed \$500.00 per day.

A few years ago the church furnace was replaced with a gas subsidized furnace and prior to that the windows and doors were replaced. Because of church is located near St. Joseph's hospital, a large natural gas user, the church was given an incentive to change from oil to a natural gas furnace. This change from oil to natural gas has significantly reduced the church's annual fuel bill. If you are a little chilly at this time of year the heat will be turned on shortly for the winter season.

This past year, the committee was able to reduce our telephone expenses and are presently in the process of reducing our garbage bill. By getting a large garbage container the church can reduce the garbage bill by more than \$100.00 per month. It presently costs \$8.00 per bag of garbage removed and we average 8 bags of garbage a week. The container charge for garbage pickup is significantly less.

We also are now looking at putting the bathroom lights on some sort of timer. Because of our fixed costs we are running out of options for reducing the cost of running the church, any suggestions from the congregation on how to further reduce the operating costs for building would be welcomed by the CMC. Just drop the suggestion in an envelope with your collection on Sunday.

Before too long the roof will need replacing and the kitchen is badly in need of upgrading.

This summer the floor in the Ladies parlor was recovered. Before the next major project, upgrading the kitchen, The CMC will be coming to the ladies of the church for suggestions on what changes should be made.

Thank you to those who have contributed to the work of the church through their building fund contributions. The capital costs for keeping the building in good condition come from this fund.

Laurie Hossack

CMC Chairperson

## **AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM**

A new "year" is underway. Although several of our familiar faces are gone having moved away over the summer break or advanced to High School, each week we welcome new people to our club. With many of the Middle School Children busy with soccer at present, we are registering a number of lively 9-11 year olds who will have a chance to settle in before the Middle School people return.

We have also had changes in our leadership. Leo has changed full time jobs so can no longer be with us. We have a new Sports Director.

Wendy Rowe and Katie Gunter are back. We are thrilled to have a new male high school volunteer. Brenda, who accompanied a child from Family Plus is back. She is accompanied by Alex, who is from the same group and in her charge.

As we settle in to meeting the needs of our new group most of our activities remain a constant. The meal at the end of each day is a highlight as each child chooses his time to ask, "What are we having to eat today", a silent prayer can be seen ascending, "Please God let it be Tacos".

## **CO-OP KITCHEN**

Our group of girls welcomed a new Mom to our September meeting. She had lost everything when her apartment was destroyed by fire in August. We now number 8, but some of the girls will be out for short periods while they take courses.

Netta and I took 3 girls to a free Sobeys seminar on lowering blood pressure through diet, and now those same girls have embarked on another Sobeys "Healthy Weight Program", this time of 6 weeks duration. After Christmas we will offer the remaining girls opportunities to attend similar programs.

In our own group the girls will be pairing off to work in teams that will choose the menu of the day and study the flyers to provide the shoppers with the lowest possible prices on food.

Our nursery group will be active again this year with 2 three year olds in attendance. This is an important part of our program, allowing the mothers to work undisturbed in the kitchen while their children experience a structured program upstairs.

## **BOOKS AND BLANKETS**

This literacy group meets each Friday with ages varying from 7 to 11. We also have some new faces and are happy to be encouraging reading with a larger group of young people. At our last meeting there were 8 children in attendance.

"The Secret of Freedom" by Marcia Vaughn was our choice that day and was read by my Co-Leader Wendy, who happens to be black. The book tells of the Underground Railway which led so many black people to freedom. It also incorporates the quilt code, a little known aspect of the Underground Railroad. A pattern on a quilt hung in a particular spot delivered a message to those looking to escape. The "Monkey Wrench" meant pack your tools; "Tumbling Blocks", it's time to go; "Bear Paws", head north through the mountains and "Shoo fly" referred to conductors who guided the Slaves north.

Quilts were an unknown item to some of our children so we sent them down the hall to peek in the Quilter's Room and come back to tell us what they saw and what the secret message on the quilt there was.

The children listened intently to the story, some with tears in their eyes. They discussed the origin of prejudices and what enables them to continue and asked Wendy, who was born in America, questions about slavery. As Wendy closed the book, she patted it and said, "maybe this is why I have always loved quilts". As our group moved onto another activity everyone seemed pleased with the Story of the Day.

Choosing a book to read aloud for such a wide range of children can be a challenge. Chapter Books do not work because our attendance is not constant and readings are 1 week apart. If you have a book which will deliver an important message to our children, please mention it to me.

Being given a book to keep at the end of each meeting is an important feature to the children. The 9-11 year olds enjoy "The Wimpy Kid", "Captain Underpants", and "The Princess Fairy" series. The 14 year old girls are ready for inspiring books to encourage their hopes and dreams. Should you find yourself purging your book shelves of any of these books please remember our group.

Glenda Hossack

## THE WOMEN'S GROUP

It is now fall and we have started to make soup for Romero House.

During the summer we had two Funeral Receptions. One was for Bruce MacDonald and the second was for Russell Webster.

We will co-ordinate the lunch which is the last Sunday in October.

Respectfully submitted  
May Megaw  
Vivian MacDonald

## NURSING HOME NEWS

Wow, where did the summer go? The residents were kept busy through the summer months with outings. They visited many places including Kingsbrae Gardens in St Andrews and even the recent concert at Harbour Station with Danny O'Donnell. They appreciate the warmer months when they can get outside the building and enjoy the sun and fresh air. They like to watch the gardens being tended by our wonderful gardening volunteers. Any excuse to get outdoors is gratefully accepted! We have a new person who can drive the Home van so that makes it easier to organize trips in the community and beyond. The "Fall Colour" excursions are on now with maybe a stop at the Pumpkin Patch for some ice cream on the return trip. Fall is in full swing.

Resident rooms are slowly being renovated with new furniture to replace the old and tired as well as free up space in the cramped quarters. We are looking for room sponsors to help fund this important renovation. There will be a single room and a double room set up as display models shortly and anyone interested in sponsoring a room can see what the final plan will be.

### **\*\*\*\*Volunteers are awesome\*\*\*\***

Did that get your attention?? If you have a few hours a week or even a month to spare, the Home can find a spot for you! Activities such as playing cards, reading, going on outings, gardening, cooking, games, transport for church services and helping with church services are just some of the things that go on at the home. Everyone is welcome! The smile on a resident's face is worth it.

Pastoral Care is the area of expertise that our home is known for. There will be a Pastoral Care Workshop at the end of November for anyone who is interested in this vital service. There will be more information about the workshop closer to the dates.

Janet Soper

## **Joyful Abundance Campaign**

Our Congregation is embarking on a 4 week Stewardship Campaign.

Stewardship tends to have a single minded connotation. Money. Well, money is only one aspect of stewardship. True Stewardship is giving of our Time, Talents and finances to God. It is doing God's work here and now on His behalf.

To properly prepare us for this journey, we will embark on a 4 week program. Each week we will explore a different aspect of Stewardship and Giving;

Week 1 – Giving God My Day – taking time each day to appreciate and acknowledge the daily presence of God in our lives.

Week 2 – Giving God My Worship – Appreciating the benefits of Worshipping together as a Congregation and how we can help & support each other in our daily journey.

Week 3 – Giving God of My Spiritual Gifts – We will discuss the unique talents entrusted to each of us. How can we use these gifts to become agents of Christ.

Week 4 – Giving to God of My Income – We will discuss Joyful Giving. Not giving out of a sense of duty or reluctance, but out of Faith.

During this 4 week period we will also have a ministry fair to better communicate and understand how we as a congregation fulfil our mission of Sharing the love of God in Greater Saint John.

We have also been working on Joyful Abundance Campaign as Stewardship does also have to do with Finances.

Our 2013 Budget had a deficit of \$24,000, which is being covered by drawing on current investments. Year to date we are behind budget. During the next 4 weeks we will be asking you to review your offerings. This will be done through submission of pledge forms and home visits.

For those giving through envelopes we will provide pledge cards, giving you an opportunity to commit your offerings for the next year. Alternatively, if you give through weekly envelopes, you could enrol in pre-authorized debit.

For those already giving through pre-authorized debit, we will provide a form giving you the opportunity to increase your current monthly offerings on an ongoing basis.

We would appreciate receiving these forms back; returning them in the collection plate. This will cut down on the number of homes to visit, we only be visiting those homes who have not submitted a form.

A few weeks ago, I reviewed the Joyful Abundance Campaign with Session. In a very short period of time, I am pleased to say we have had a positive response from both our Minister & Session. So far they have agreed to increase their collective offerings by \$6,000.

We are already part way to achieving our goal.

- Neil Hossack

## Announcements

**NEEDED** – The Co-op Kitchen is looking for a crib meeting current safety codes for the nursery. If you can help, please speak to Glenda Hossack.

- The Books and Blankets program would welcome donations of books from "The Diary of a Wimpy Kid", "Captain Underpants", and the "Princess Fairy" series.

**MEMORIAL SERVICE** - Saint John Regional Hospital Auxiliary will be having their annual Memorial Service on **October 29, 2013 at 2:00pm** with a General Meeting following. All Auxiliary Members are welcomed to attend. Please RVSP to the Auxiliary Office 648-6292 no later than October 22, 2013.

**JAZZ NIGHT:** let's have a party! On **Saturday, November 2nd** we're planning for food, music and fun.....with a little fund raising too! The fun will start with a silent auction at 5pm, potluck supper at 6pm and the Jazztet will join us at 7pm for a couple of hours of jazz, blues, and big band selections. The Jazztet are 4 of NB's best musicians with piano, bass, saxophone and drums. It ought to be a blast! Contact Kate McLellan, Claire Driscoll or Jill Driscoll. More info to come. Stay tuned.

**SPECIAL EVENT** - Presbyterian World Service & Development is opening up its biannual meeting to the public. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the work of PWS&D firsthand from our staff and international partners. Special guests include Webster Moyo from Malawi and Ruben Feliciano from Guatemala.

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**

**77 Hildegard Drive in Moncton, NB**

**Saturday, October 26 from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.**

**QUILTERS** - If you have a quilt you would like quilted, contact **Carol Bowes at 693-0336** or **Helen Humphreys at 696-1071**.

**ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION** - Who was John Calvin? Why were his ideas so influential in the 16th century and well beyond his time? The online course "Calvin- Histoire et réception d'une Réforme" begins October 21st. The course will discuss Calvin, his ideas, and how he fits into the history of the time. The course will be taught in French with English subtitles. You may audit the course or you may participate in all of the activities to earn a statement of accomplishment. The course is offered by l'Université de Genève through Coursera.org and is completely free. Simply sign up on the website and you will receive an email when the course is ready to begin. If you have any questions contact Denise McGill at dmcgill@bellaliant.net or 674-0198.

## Death Notices

Bruce MacDonald July 5<sup>th</sup>  
Eleanor Burnett August 21<sup>st</sup>  
Monica Clarke September 20<sup>th</sup>

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The deadline for the Advent edition of The Burning Bush will be November 24<sup>th</sup>. Please contact me at 849-8934 or [nancyhossack@hotmail.com](mailto:nancyhossack@hotmail.com) to submit articles at any time up to that date. Please pass along news of graduations, anniversaries, or things that the congregation would be interested in reading about.

- Nancy Hossack

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