

CATALYST

The People of St. Andrew's are Called by God **TO SERVE IN FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE** in the Heart of Toronto.

These Old Pews

I am writing this early on a Friday afternoon, having just listened to a beautiful noontime recital in the sanctuary at St. Andrew's. This week, it was a piano and cello duet playing passages from the works of Sergei Prokofiev and Sergei Rachmaninoff. It is such a gift to sit in these old pews and hear beautiful music wafting through the space, with close to 150 other guests and visitors also enjoying that great music.

Last Tuesday night, another large group of guests and volunteers filled the Great Hall to practise conversational English in the "Better English Café", and last Thursday night, yet another wonderful group of people from the neighbourhood and community joined together at the SingTO weekly rehearsal for the sheer joy of singing – something that, not all that long ago, was prohibited in public!

Last Saturday, still others sat in these same pews at a wedding, as two young people gathered their friends and family members around them to exchange their vows and commit themselves to a life of love, of loyalty and of faithfulness. The next morning, we celebrated the



In only a few weeks, St. Andrew's will draw large numbers of its members, friends and neighbours to the Sanctuary for Christmas services to mark the season of peace and goodwill.

baptism of a lovely young woman, and welcomed a group of new people into the community of the congregation, before also welcoming Tim Schmaltz, whose sculpture reflecting on the importance of hospitality was recently placed in the courtyard in front of the King Street entrance.



And in just over a week, these same pews will be filled with our Out of the Cold guests as we welcome them to the start of the 2023-24 dinner program. Over the subsequent weeks, we will sit together in these old pews as we welcome Advent speakers, enjoy the Sunday School pageant, and journey through the beautiful stories and songs of the Christmas season.

It is remarkable to take a moment, every once in a while, to ponder just how many different facets of the human experience take place before our eyes as we sit on these old wooden pews. Rituals at the beginning of life and faith and marriage; the rhythms of beautiful seasonal celebrations and the recitation of beloved spiritual stories; gatherings in times of loss and sorrow; times of music, laughter, friendship, tears and joy; times of quiet prayerful solitude and times of hospitality extended to friend and stranger alike.

And all while sitting on these same old wooden pews.

It can be equally remarkable to remember all of the different lived experiences that have brought people into this place, and onto these old pews, in the course of the history of our community of faith. As people wrestled with faith and doubt; as young people headed to distant lands in times of war and returned to lives of peace; as people came to seek solace and consolation in times of social upheaval and personal challenge; as still others wrestled to find meaning and inspiration in times of indifference and despair—all of these experiences, and so many more, have brought people to sit on these old

wooden pews and seek something greater, something different, something beautiful, something true.

Over the past few years, and in the worst parts of the pandemic, there were times when it seemed strange and sad to walk through the empty darkened sanctuary when we were not able to be together. These old pews sat empty. Each one of our lives was touched by the pandemic, in one way or another. Much that we experienced was difficult.

But as we move past that difficult time, there are also important insights to carry with us, and never to forget. May we never forget how challenging and disappointing it was not to have the opportunity to be together, sitting on these old pews...and may we never take it for granted!

Will

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The People of St. Andrew's are Called by God TO SERVE IN FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE in the Heart of Toronto.

Catalyst is published two times annually for members and friends of St. Andrew's Church.

Contributions on the life and work of St. Andrew's Church are welcome.

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Justice, Love and Grace

⁸The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.¹⁹He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. – Isaiah, Luke

Sermon by Bob Faris on the occasion of his retirement, September 17, 2023.

Throughout my years in ministry, I have deeply appreciated the discipline of the lectionary, which ensures that we don't just preach from the passages we like and forces us to reflect and discern passages that can be difficult for us. However, somehow the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of the entire Egyptian army did not seem to speak to me in this moment.

And so, I have chosen, from my list of greatest hits, the above passage of scripture, which has had particular import for me over my almost 40 years in ordained ministry and in my years here at St. Andrew's. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He has anointed me to preach Good News." That quotation from Isaiah and also from Luke's Gospel, was on the cover of the bulletin for my ordination service in Laurel Lea-St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Sarnia on a very cold and blustery winter night in January 1984. It was also the first reading at that service. Isaiah 61 and Jesus' quoting of it in his home town synagogue in Nazareth was a very common reading in those days. It was something of a manifesto for the growing Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, which was transforming the church there and having a deep impact on theological discourse and the life of the church around the world. In a world of growing inequality and inequity, with an onslaught on human rights and growing repression of those who raised their voices against this inequality, these words of Isaiah on the lips of Jesus called the church to action.

Justice. My call to ministry had been deepened and transformed in my studies at New College in Edinburgh and at Knox College in Toronto. In conversations with colleagues and in encounters with those who were coming to Canada fleeing the repression of brutal military regimes, often perpetrated with the support and blessing of the church, the ancient call to justice of the Hebrew prophets and their importance in Jesus' proclamation of the coming reign of God took me beyond my own context and comfort into the harsh realities of the world in which I lived. They were given particular meaning in my involvement with the Iona Community and in my work with Camp Kintail as we

sought together to create a different kind of community, where every voice could be heard and every person welcomed. As in Latin America, the call to justice and inclusion brought us face to face with the powers that be in the church and in the world that benefitted from their own privileges and pride of place. That included my own privilege and pride of place, which I continue to have to recognize and challenge.



The call to do justice and to preach good news likewise led me into my encounter with the Church in Mozambique and teaching at the ecumenical Seminario Unido de Ricatla, in Maputo. Mozambique was on the front lines of the resistance to apartheid in South Africa after its own struggle against Portuguese colonialism and its bold experiment in creating a new kind of society. Lest some quickly move to say I was looking at the world through rose-coloured—or even red-coloured—glasses, it soon became apparent to me that the new order brought its own challenges and the need to continue the call to justice when the temptations of power brought a new form of injustice. Indeed, that is what led me in part to do my doctoral work on the role of the churches in the liberation struggle and the way in which they were then marginalized and written out of the story by the new regime.

What has drawn me in all my ministry, both with Canadian ecumenical organizations related to cross cultural ministry and theological education and in my work at St. Andrew's, is the call to justice: responding to those who live on our streets and in marginal housing and to the refugees who continue to come to us; offering a safe space for those who identify as queer; supporting our national church through Presbyterians Sharing and Presbyterian World Service and Development; being there for the missions and ministries of our Presbytery that walk with the marginalized; and responding to immediate needs and crises. All of these have been an essential part of ministry here. And the call to justice continues to come to us in these days. It must be central to our life and ministry. Not simply a nice thing to do when you have enough money.

Justice can be cold. I have to admit that many times I have gotten lost while listening to a very long speech or reading a treatise – perceiving only words and words and

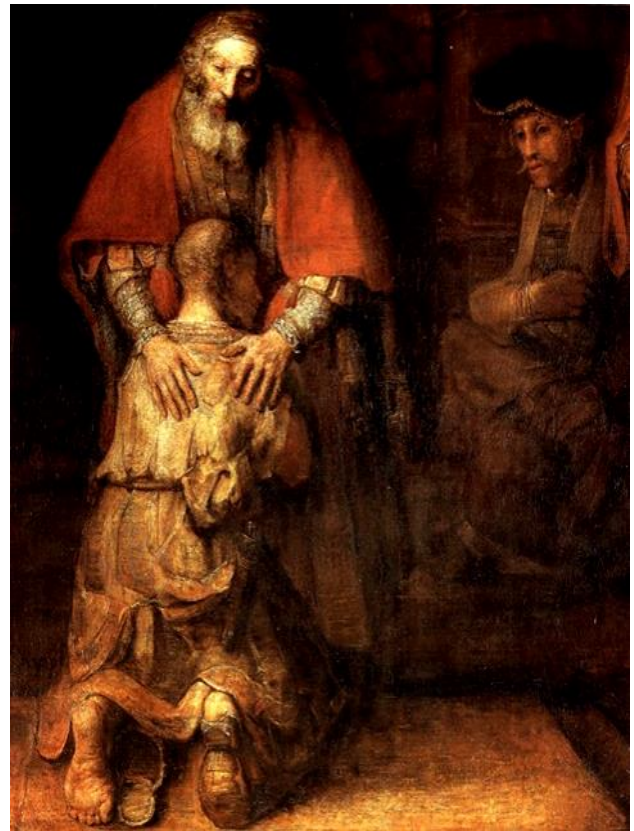
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more words. Complexities can confound us. As I have been clearing out my office and our home, I have found files and bookshelves full of reports of meetings and conferences and symposia and policy paper discussions.

All of them are important pieces of the bigger picture: as Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, “a part of the arc of the moral universe that is long, but bends toward justice.” However, the challenge can seem overwhelming and beyond the possibility of realizing. Volunteers from Out of the Cold told me they appreciated my ability to listen to the stories of our guests, no matter how long and how convoluted. While important, the stories of people’s lives, when they cannot be lived in abundance, when they are wracked by abuse, mental illness, addiction, and grinding poverty, could be discouraging. The tendency is always to become cynical, or callous, or judgemental. Or to feel defeated.

Love. You may recall a sermon I preached a number of years ago that was based on the reading from First John. There was a point in my life when I had had enough. I felt that I could not live another minute with the challenges of the world and the hypocrisy of the church. I had hidden as best I could my identity as a gay man because I knew that it would compromise my ability to practice ministry. That is a polite way of saying that I would have been forced to leave ministry because of the church’s homophobia, which had been systematized and which prescribed how those of us who are queer could participate – or not participate – in the life of the beloved community. All along, I knew that my response to the call to justice had to do with my own life and my own self and the impossibility of wedding my call to ministry and my identity as a gay man. I had spiralled down and I was ready to quit.

On another cold and snowy winter night, I went out for a walk from my parents’ retirement home near Wasaga Beach. As I walked, with a mind and a spirit full of anger and sadness and fear, I began to formulate the words, “God is love” and “Love is God.” For me, on that night, those simple words, said as a mantra, began to reaffirm the “why” of being in ministry and the “why” of working towards justice and inclusion. Despite the church’s continuing exclusion of queer people and its many other failings in the march toward God’s justice, we were called out of our experience of this fact, that God is love, and love is God, to continue to respond and to live our lives in a way that seems quite contrary to the other calls in our world. Love fills us and overflows out of our limited human capacities to all the world. For those of us who live with so much privilege, it is only love that will challenge us to transform ourselves and shape us into the people that God would have us be. And there are no



Return of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?>

limits to that love, despite the limits we constantly create. We can face challenges and discouragement and pain, but God is always there, love is always there, walking with us, breaking down barriers.

Grace. And that brings me to the third word that has been so important in my life and ministry, *grace*. I think the older I get, the more important that word has become. *Sola gratia* is one of Luther’s five solas, and perhaps this is my Protestant upbringing coming home to roost. To use that framework of understanding who we are, what does it mean to say that we are saved by grace alone? We are good at saying that inside in the church but perhaps not so good at living it outside in the world. Nothing we can do, say, write, think, or create can save us, can make us whole, can restore us. That is God’s work.

Admittedly, in the wake of the tremendous changes that have taken place in the church regarding the inclusion of queer people like me, I have been challenged to know what to do with my experience of exclusion and harm. I still have to live with the fact that, despite all the changes, it is still okay for us to be excluded, or to be given a different status in some instances; and what’s more, people’s consciences can still dictate to them that equality for us is not part of God’s plan.

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Every part of me that calls for justice says this is wrong. Meanwhile, harm continues to be done to queer people and especially to young people, who sometimes find the tension too difficult to bear and take their own lives. But I am also called to forgive those who have harmed me and others, and to live in a different way, even with the challenges that still exist. It's only grace that can make that possible.

The story of the prodigal son – or, in turn, of the loving Father and the unforgiving brother – has spoken to me throughout my ministry. In a sermon at St. Andrew's Ottawa last year, I spoke about how much I identified with the prodigal son, who wants to get out of the small town, escape the small mindedness of home and experience the world. Maybe he was gay. At the end of the story, we don't know what he will do next. I can't believe that he will be satisfied at home. But the difference is, he knows he is loved. And he is forgiven for whatever needs to be forgiven.

And what about the brother? He was some mad! Just like we get when we feel wronged (and in fact, have been wronged); when we don't feel valued even when doing our very best. We want things to be clear. We want people who do wrong to get their just desserts. We want that Egyptian army to be drowned!

But grace is messier. God's grace is for all: for our friends, our neighbours, our enemies. That's hard. In the mix of justice and love and grace, we come to where we have to live in and through those difficult times; those complicated family relationships; those attitudes that will not go away. We need to continue to call for justice. We need to continue to love. And we need to live in grace.

Thanks, my friends, for the opportunity to share my journey with you; and for me to share your journeys and the journey of this congregation. What a joy it has been. I wish for you justice, and love, and grace in your continuing journey.

Bob Faris



Strategic Planning: An Update

In early September 2023, the Strategic Planning Committee completed its final publication entitled "The Watch Report," which had been one year in the making. The Committee had, in fact, already submitted a final draft to Session, where it was given approval. The report was then forwarded to the congregation. Next, on Sunday, September 24th, a congregational meeting was held over lunch to further inform those attending. Rev. Dr. Will Ingram opened the meeting by highlighting key aspects of the report around three themes.

Our Mission

The people of St. Andrew's are called by God to serve in faith, hope and love in the heart of Toronto.

Our Vision

On *our watch*, we will be a dynamic and growing presence for the ministry of Christ in our community.

Our Goals

Worship: Dynamic worship that glorifies God and builds faith in community

Accessibility: Open and adequate space for all people and programs

Technology: Technology that facilitates our purpose and presence

Connections: Strong connections that bring us together in faith

Hope: Hope in the future driven by honouring our past

Will went on to explain that each of these goals has a number of strategic priorities that need to be implemented in order to facilitate achieving each goal. He asked four members of the congregation (not members of the Strategic Planning Committee) to present a number of these priorities, which will be addressed in the near term.



Oliver Dennis gave an outline of the positive impact new technology can bring to St. Andrew's.

Leslyn Henry stressed the importance of building community and welcoming newcomers to our congregation.

Daniel Hoogsteen, who recently started his work as our new Church School Coordinator, focussed on the importance of building a strong Christian education program for children and youth as part of attracting a growing community of young families.

Stephen Jackson talked about our worship and the need for innovative approaches.

Over the coming weeks the Strategic Planning Committee will be meeting with various Conveners and Committee Chairs to develop action steps to implement the eight strategic priorities identified as priorities by Session. Further updates to the congregation will follow.

Sandy Aird,

for the Strategic Planning Committee: Will Ingram, Candy Grant, Stephen Jackson, Judy Neal and Sandy Aird.



Good News at St. Andrew's

About a year ago, I wrote in *Catalyst* about the St. Andrew's Heritage Trust (HT) and the importance of giving thought to making it part of your estate plan. As a small reminder, the HT currently provides 35% of the funds for the church's operating budget. This money comes from the capital funds invested by our professional money managers. The original capital came from the sale of our air rights back in the 1980's.

You might also recall that specifically-named funds were set up as part of the HT to support various activities of the church. My last article encouraged all of us to make a provision in our will either to help build up the capital of the HT, or to set up a named fund to support activities at St. Andrew's. As an example, Olive Anstice did this in creating a fund to support the reference library.

As for the good news, a long-standing member of St. Andrew's recently created a named fund of his own. He felt that it was important to support the church building, which has been part of his family life for a very long time. There's no question that almost everything takes place in our wonderful old sanctuary. Of course, any building over 100 years old will constantly need maintenance. Added to its age, the sheer size of our church building means that costs are significant and ongoing.

This new fund will have a starting capital of \$300,000. With this outstanding generosity, the church will have an annual grant of approximately \$12,000 every year to put toward keeping our building ship shape. This will be a very big help as we have some big items of maintenance coming in the next few years, including stained-glass

window restoration and new flooring for the upper balcony. The income generated by this fund will be very helpful indeed.

I am deeply grateful to be able to share this news with the congregation! Let's hope this gesture of kindness and generosity will inspire others to act as well. Building up the capital of the Heritage Trust strengthens our ability to deliver the Sunday services we all benefit from while supporting community outreach and programs like Out of the Cold, the Better English Café, and others.

The other good news? You do not have to wait until you die to support the HT! You can donate now while you are still with us! Of course, you can also leave something in your will. Either way, the six named funds already in place include: Music, Christian Education, Outreach, Out of the Cold, the Reference Library and General Purposes.

Like our generous donor, you can also ask us to set up your own fund within the St. Andrew's Heritage Trust to support some area of the church that is important and meaningful to you. In this way St. Andrew's will continue to serve in faith, hope and love in the heart of Toronto for generations to come.

For more information please contact the church office, John Matheson (416) 567-3843 or Graeme Hepburn (416) 367-1414.

Graeme Hepburn



TIFF Book Sale and Refugee Sponsorship Drive

A big thank-you to the tireless organizers, Ian Foulds and Indra Narayansingh, and to all the wonderful volunteers who made this year's TIFF Book Sale and Refugee sponsorship drive so successful. We enjoyed some wonderful weather, great music and lots of friendly people who came out to visit the sanctuary, the 48th Highlanders Museum and our tables full of donated books and delicious chocolates. All monies raised from the books and the sale of "Chocolates for Peace" will help to support both our Out of the Cold Program and our Refugee Sponsorship initiatives. Thanks to all your hard work, "Chocolates for Peace" in support of refugees raised \$1,000 and the sale of books raised \$4,441 for the Outreach Program.





Search for an Associate Minister: A Message From Your Interim Moderator

Starting in April, the Presbytery of East Toronto appointed me to be the interim moderator at St. Andrew's to support the search process for a new Associate Minister at St. Andrew's. Your Session pulled together a dynamic and diverse committee representing a variety of skills and gifts, as well as having different interests in the life of the church.

Together, we have been piecing together the Congregational Profile, which is a document that gives an overview of St. Andrew's, your downtown setting, your ministry and your life together in faith. Once completed and approved by the Session, the Congregational Profile will become a public document that will attract candidates for ministry to St. Andrew's.

In addition, we are working on a position description outlining the scope of ministry that the Associate Minister will be responsible for as part of the ministry team alongside your Senior Minister, The Rev. Dr. Will Ingram. The Search Committee is engaging in training to

help us conduct interviews in a fair, informed and unbiased way. We are engaging in technology to help us communicate with each other and with you.

We ask for your prayers both for the Search Committee and also for the candidates who may feel called to ministry at St. Andrew's. In addition, we ask for your patience. It often takes a year or more to fill a vacancy in the church. We are always open to hearing from you and will provide you with updates along the way, as we can.

Candy Grant is the chair of the Committee. Committee members include Sandy Aird, Lauren Canzius, Keith Chambers, Ande Clumpus, Todd Cooper, Oliver Dennis, Margaret Hardy, and John Matheson.

The Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset



Calendar

Sundays

9:00 a.m.
10:30 a.m.
11:30 a.m.
1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Mondays

All Day
5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
4:30 - 7:00 p.m. (every other week)

Tuesdays

7:00 - 8:30 a.m.
7:00 - 8:30 a.m.
7:00 p.m.

Wednesdays

Noon
Noon
Noon

Thursdays

12:15 p.m.

Fridays (October through November and February through May)

Noon

Bible Study (Board Room and Zoom)
Worship Service
Coffee Hour (Great Hall)
Out of the Cold Supper Preparation

Out of the Cold Supper Preparation
Out of the Cold Take-away Supper
Out of the Cold Boutique

Out of the Cold Take-away Breakfast
Out of the Cold Boutique
Better English Café

Advent Meditation 1:Dec 6; Lent Meditation 1:Mar 6
Advent Meditation 2:Dec 13; Lent Meditation 2:Mar 13
Advent Meditation 3:Dec 20; Lent Meditation 3:Mar 20

Chancel Communion Service

Noontime Recitals (Sanctuary)

St. Andrew's Social for Women and Girls

A policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada is "Leading with Care," which promotes caring for one another, especially children, youth and vulnerable adults. We can only do that when we have come to know each other better.

On Sunday mornings, we have the pleasure of watching the back of each others' heads, and only turn around in greeting when we offer the Peace of Christ. Some of us do remain after church to have a coffee and chat for a little while. We know families have commitments, and not everyone is available on Sundays, which can be challenging.

We do appreciate your commitment and dedication in volunteering your time and talent in various ways to support the church. We are ready to offer our support when necessary, but we can only do that when we know each other. So, on Saturday, June 3, 2023, about 30 women gathered in the Great Hall of the church for our inaugural Women and Girls' Social (not a "Tea" as was expected by many...lol). It was a fun-filled afternoon.

Our guest speaker, Lesley Jensen shared her journey, which took her from the United States, where she was born, to the pews of St. Andrew's. She first entered the

church because she needed a place to rest, but she found more than rest there! She found a home. St. Andrew's is where she met her now husband and bonus children! Today, she is a Canadian citizen with a passion for her career in childcare. We knew her and loved her, but we didn't know about her journey, so we thanked her for sharing.



The afternoon continued with conversations, an exchange of notes about anything we wanted to share – where we grew up, what we do or did for a living, volunteering, family life, hobbies and interests – and concluded the afternoon with a lovely meal, which was enjoyed by all.

By the time you read this, St. Andrew's will have held it's second Social, where we will continue to focus on Care.

We thank you for your dedication and commitment to this Ministry.

*Leslyn Henry,
Host of the Social,
Co-convenor of Pastoral Care*



Following an afternoon of conversation, sharing personal stories and a delicious meal, participants gathered for a group photo.



Better English Café

Every Tuesday the Better English Café (BEC) welcomes people who wish to practise and improve their conversational English. Last spring, as a finale to the 2023 session, BEC put on a barbecue that saw 116 participants in attendance.

At the conclusion of that 2022-2023 season, we had an opportunity to compile our attendance and demographic information, and would now like to share the various statistics, which demonstrate the extent of the impact we have made. In 2022-2023 we welcomed close to 2800 attendees, with 700 new and 2100 returnees! This has been the largest number of attendees since the establishment of the program, yet we are very certain we will break a record again in the coming season!

On average, we welcomed 73 people each week, of which 18 were new, and 55 were returnees. This is the highest retention rate (75%) we have observed to date.

The 700-ish new participants listed 40 languages as their mother tongue. The top ones are as follow: Spanish (149), Japanese (136), Korean (87), Mandarin (70), Portuguese (29), Cantonese (28), Turkish (28), Russian (23), French (22), Hindi (22), Ukrainian (21), and Farsi (20).

In addition to these statistics, our main social media page on the MeetUp app also keeps track of feedback for us.

We received close to 600 reviews, and on average we were given a 5 star rating! The most common feedback comments were: "Made an impact," "Met new people;" "I felt safe;" "Engaging"; "Good setting." Again, these very positive comments are a testimony to the valuable service we offer!



On September 12, we opened the Café for the new 2023-2024 year. We started off with the largest attendance we have seen on the first night, with 63 new students; and by October 10, we have grown to 95. The great success we are having has to be attributed to the commitment of the 22 volunteers who come each week to chair a table of students.

Our Fall plans included a Potluck dinner to acknowledge the Canadian tradition of Thanksgiving and a games night to celebrate Hallowe'en.

We look forward to continuing to grow and serve this downtown community of young people eager to better their English and meet new friends.

Oliver Shen, Director



Last spring, a large group gathered for the Better English Café's final evening of English conversation, which included a Canada Day themed barbecue to celebrate a successful

Build It and They Will Come

What better model of “radical hospitality” for St. Andrew’s than its Refugee Sponsorship program STARS! STARS generously reaches beyond its doorstep, its city, and its country to welcome individuals fleeing persecution and despair! In the last two years alone, St. Andrew’s has opened its arms wide to two individuals.

In July, we welcomed our 12th refugee to Canada: a 23-year-old who escaped Syrian brutality and arrived from Jordan, where she had been living with her sister and, until most recently, her parents. Our sponsoree’s arrival was the result of a successful application to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that was submitted by St. Andrew’s through Presbyterian World Service and Development in 2021.



In fact, a member of the STARS committee who had herself come from Syria as a refugee was instrumental in bringing our Syrian candidate’s name forward. She had pursued other avenues of sponsorship for her friend, and STARS agreed to help. At that time, STARS was already working through Rainbow Railroad and

was awaiting the arrival of an Afghan refugee who was living in a Kenyan refugee camp and who arrived in Canada in December 2021.

Having successfully settled refugees in Canada since 2016 when the Abdo family of seven arrived, the STARS committee was anxious to meet and support our new Syrian friend. Between the time the application was accepted and her long overdue arrival, the team of dedicated volunteers focused on fundraising through cookie sales and canvassing for financial support. These efforts, which resulted in generous donations, including commitments from outside our congregation, continued until the required \$17,033 necessary to support one refugee in Canada was raised.

Acquiring accommodation is always the greatest challenge for any refugee committee. It is a balancing act: when and how to secure accommodation without confirmation of an arrival date and then scrambling to respond to the surprise of an imminent arrival. Toronto’s rental climate made it very difficult, and it became clear very quickly that, in fact, there was no affordable ‘room at the inn’ anywhere in the city or in surrounding

communities. Currently, the two friends share a basement apartment in London, Ontario, where they plan to remain for a couple of months. They are pursuing job opportunities and will continue online course work until the spring of next year when they will study dental hygiene



together at Durham College in Oshawa. In the meantime, STARS has assisted in many administrative tasks, such as opening a bank account and applying for ID and OHIP. Much of the day-to-day resettlement responsibility falls on our committee member in London.

As for our Afghan friend who arrived in December 2021, she has landed on her feet. After months of diligent sleuthing, she found a one-bedroom apartment close to work and school. She holds down two part-time jobs and is taking high school courses at City Adult Learning Centre that will lead her to a nursing degree. She sends money home each month to her mother and siblings, who live precariously as refugees in Pakistan. STARS, through the leadership of Chair Dan Richards, has applied to sponsor her family and awaits the decision of the Canadian government. Fundraising has begun to bring these family members together again.

On a personal note, I stepped down as Chair of the STARS committee in December 2022. My time at St. Andrew’s began in 2008 when I was introduced through Joan Matheson. I was looking to help out at a food bank and she introduced me to Out of the Cold. I joined the church a few years later. STARS came into being in 2015 in response to the shocking images that were coming out of Syria. Through the encouragement, guidance, and commitment of Rev. Dr. Bob Faris and through the teamwork and committed presence of compassionate and generous ‘neighbour’ committee members, it has been an enlightening and deeply moving experience. I have learned much about my own faith and realize that my connection to the Divine is to go where the need is greatest and to foster hope through working for social change.

For these experiences, for the comradery we have shared in working together to reach a common goal and especially for the knowledge that we have made a real difference in the lives of others – and they in ours – I am profoundly grateful.

Candace Brown

St. Andrew's Library

Have you had a chance to visit the St. Andrew's Library yet? The library is located in the St. Andrew's Centre, which is the building next door to the church. You will find it just across the hall from the boardroom on the main floor. The library offers both reference books and books for loan.

When you enter the library, you will find a few easy chairs, a small meeting table and a work table, making it a comfortable space for perusing holdings at leisure, using reference books for research, and/or holding small study groups. The library is open for use on Sunday mornings and may be booked through the church office for use at other times during the week.

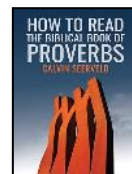
Materials available in the library are listed in St. Andrew's online catalogue 'StAndrewsTO' at <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/StAndrewsTO>. Using the catalogue's search feature, you enter the title, a keyword or the name of the author into the search field to generate a list of corresponding books. The advanced search function allows the use of additional fields such as subject or publisher. Each listing will include a call number that identifies the location of the book. Reference books are tagged as "Collection: Reference." Clicking on a book title opens a page with further information, which may include publication information, the genre(s) and subject(s), a short outline of the book and/or book reviews. Clicking on the author will result in a list of other library holdings by the same author.

Books and other materials that may be signed out for loan are shelved on the east and south walls, while reference books are housed on the bookshelves on the west wall. Please note that reference books are not available for loan but may be used on site. To sign out a book, remove the card from the pocket on the inside of the back cover, write your name and telephone number and/or email address on the card and leave it in the small box on the work table. Please do not reshelve any materials. All materials removed from the shelves, whether for use on site or off site, must be placed in the Book Return tray on the work table.

Elisabeth Paradis

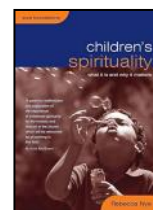
*Here follow some recent additions to the lending library:
(Cover images and descriptions are courtesy of the catalogue;
original sources: Amazon and other online booksellers.)*

How to Read the Biblical Book of Proverbs, by Calvin Seerveld



"Knowledge" in Proverbs means "firsthand, intimate experience of what God wants done"; and "wisdom" means "you are able to judge what God wants done," and "instruction" means "the rigorous discipline of acting according to God's Will." As a great-grandchild of the historic Reformation, Seerveld's Bible reading is one that assumes "the Bible be read as sacred Scripture." This we do in the communion of the saints, living and dead, carefully trusting the text will lead the community of faith enough to find definite direction in "the entire manner of service which God requires of us."

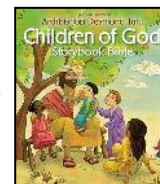
Children's Spirituality. What It Is and Why It Matters, by Rebecca Nye



This concise guide is an ideal introduction to the increasingly popular topic of children's spirituality. Mixing theory with tips on 'good practice,' leading expert Rebecca Nye shows how choices made in churches and homes can stimulate or stifle a child's spiritual development, exploring:

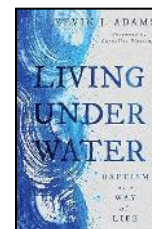
- Childhood as a natural source of spirituality
- Ways to help children value and express their spirituality
- The role of Christian nurture and worship in early spiritual development

Children of God Storybook Bible by Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Creating the first truly global Bible for children of all nationalities, Desmond Tutu retells more than fifty of his most beloved Bible stories in Children of God Storybook Bible. Many of the finest artists from around the world—such as Jago, E.B. Lewis, Javaka Steptoe, and Xiao Xin—have illustrated these favorite Bible stories from Desmond Tutu, connecting Scripture with the multitude of ethnicities across the globe.

Living Under Water: Baptism As a Way of Life by Kevin J. Adams



Our truest identity isn't something we create or build ourselves. It's a gift we receive. We live under water. What does baptism mean? And what do we do with it? Kevin Adams—an experienced pastor and church planter who has baptized people of all ages and spiritual origins—makes the case that baptism isn't merely a one-time ceremony but something to be lived and affirmed throughout one's life.



SingTO: An Update

Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything. – Plato

Picture this: a student attending the University of Toronto; an immigrant settling into life in Canada; a millennial on the way home from the office; or a retiree with some free time. What do they all have in common? Particularly in the wake of COVID-19, they are likely to be all too familiar with the effects of social disconnection. Earlier this year, the U.S. Surgeon General declared an epidemic of loneliness and isolation, advising that “lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.” It’s a grim reality in Canada as well, with a 2022 survey from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health reporting a spike in moderate to severe anxiety, loneliness, and feelings of depression among adult Canadians. Now picture this: each of these individuals sees an advertisement for a new community choir in downtown Toronto, and decides to visit 73 Simcoe Street on a Thursday evening to check it out.



The SingTO choir practices for the next performance while building connections and community.

Choir. Community. Compassion. These are the 3 guiding principles for SingTO, an initiative of St. Andrew’s

Community Services. Choir is all about singing together. We sing a variety of repertoires from popular music to spiritual classics to choral favourites.

No extensive musical training is required, and a range of singing abilities are welcome. Dan Bickle is a wonderful choral conductor, being skilled at coaching this ensemble to be the best we can be.

As disparate notes on a page evolve into beautiful melodies, so too do independent participants become an interdependent community. We meet those we might not otherwise talk to, learning each other’s stories, building connections, and making new friends. Compassion is about reaching beyond one’s group in service and support of our neighbours. We are currently looking for opportunities to share our music with others during the upcoming holiday season, whether that be at local retirement homes or with the church’s Out of the Cold guests on Monday nights. Together, we’ll make a difference in the wider downtown community.

In an epidemic of loneliness and isolation, music can be a healing balm. Through melody and cadence, harmony and rhythm, “song soaks into the very core of our being.” Singing is an embodied act that engages our whole selves and awakens our collective imagination to what the world can be: a place where brokenness is healed, lives are transformed, and peace is renewed. Simply put, we go home better for having come. Not convinced? Come see for yourself at our next performance..

Claire Lemiski

Claire sings alto and serves on the SingTO committee.

Follow @singtochoir on social media.



Ways of Giving to St. Andrew’s

- Signing up for PAR plan (pre-authorized remittance)
- Placing your offering in the collection plate during worship service.
- Mailing a cheque to the Church Office at 73 Simcoe Street, Toronto, ON M5J 1W9
- Donating online by Credit Card at standrewstoronto.org/donate/
- Sending E-transfers to: donations@standrewstoronto.org
- Clicking on the QR code:



Toronto Waterfront Marathon Run/Walk

On Sunday, October 15th, a group from St. Andrew's gathered in the early hours of the morning to walk or run in Toronto's Waterfront Marathon.

Toshio Ushiroguchi-Pigott ran an impressive half marathon. Everyone else, being Rev. Dr. Ingram, Rev. Dr. Faris, Pam Richardson, Lesley Jensen, Allan Lever, John Lever, Sherin Saleth, Claire Lemiski, Oliver Dennis, Lauren Canzius, Susan Kimani, John Matheson, Doug Sargeant, Dorian Persaud, Marcela Villalobos, Alex Villalobos and Karen Sargeant, ran or walked the 5 km distance.

Despite the early start time, everyone finished with smiling faces and enjoyed a coffee together before the worship service. Along the way, the group raised over \$20,000 in support of St. Andrew's Community Services. These funds will support our Outreach and Growth & Innovation Ministries and their programs, including the Better English Café, the Heart of the City speaker series, Music at St. Andrew's, Out of the Cold and SingTO. Thank you to everyone who participated or donated to a participant. Your support is very much appreciated.



Despite the early start time, everyone participated with a smile.

Karen Sargeant

Milestones

Baptisms

<i>April</i>	Sean-David & Kyle-Jonathan Bonugli Elle Ariette Darling
<i>May</i>	Aneeqa Jabeen Malik
<i>June</i>	Audrey Fay Robertson Heidi-Ellen Whitfield
<i>July</i>	Kemdy Okeke
<i>September</i>	Navid Bashi
<i>October</i>	Catherine Ava Hendrie
Marriages	
<i>June</i>	Justin Im & Luann Lee
<i>August</i>	Colin Lynch & Stephanie Zhou
<i>September</i>	Malcolm Cooke & Jacqueline Sproule John Pham & Alisa Phitsadaxay
<i>October</i>	Robert Gilmour & Rory Bryce Harold Barrett & Charlene Lucas

Deaths

<i>February</i>	William Hendrie
<i>March</i>	Philippa Bruce-Robertson
<i>April</i>	Beverley Reynolds
<i>May</i>	Andrew McCleery

New Members

Matthew Airhart
Phyllis Airhart
Ruda Barar
Rubik Barar
Navid Bashi
Andrew Clumpus
Oliver Dennis
Catherine Hendrie
Yi Hwang
Yaping Jin
Helen Kampfmuller
Aneeqa Malik
Kemdy Okeke
Rohan Thomas
Scott Tulpin
Charles Uwiragiye
Sarah Wilson

Cancel Culture: Justified Exclusion or Martyrdom?



For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.— Eccl. 12:14 (KJV)

In today's world of high-speed Internet and instant messaging, programming built into social media platforms like Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) can now quickly identify and remove any online behaviours deemed socially unacceptable. Such instances of 'cancel culture,' while thought necessary to maintain an environment free of different forms of discrimination, have some experts worried that such surveillance amounts to a "new McCarthyism."

Indeed, unfair cancellations leading to a person's "public humiliation and career/job loss"¹ are reminiscent of the post-war McCarthy era of the 1950s, when left-leaning Americans were denounced, prosecuted and even incarcerated for having so-called unpatriotic opinions or 'communist ties.' In fact, McCarthyism in turn had its roots in another era of persecution: under Massachusetts law at the end of the 1600s, "witches were to be treated like every aliens found guilty of conspiring against the government under which they lived; not only their lives but their goods were forfeit"². During the puritanical Salem Witch Trials of 1692, witchcraft was deemed a capital offense. Magistrates, judges and law-makers tried to ward off and disrupt rampant and unexplained demonism by accepting 'spectral evidence' as testimony in court and sentencing to death by hanging those who they believed could infect the pure souls of pious religious folk with their so-called 'spectres' or evil spirits.

While contemporary systems of detection, exclusion and disciplinary action in a rampantly fast-paced online world can later cascade into the realm of public media or the official press, one must be aware that modern 'cancellations' may in fact signal systemic forms of marginalization in response to an individual's views or stances on politics, culture or the environment, for instance. Such opinions may be deemed incompatible or too controversial in a workplace or work environment whose policies are designed to maintain the *status quo*.

Openly-publicized 'cancellations' often seem too intimidating and persuasive to question or challenge; however, actual evidence of unprofessional conduct arising in the predominantly verbal context of social media often turns out to be trivial or unsubstantiated; meanwhile, the alienation that results can parallel the archaic treatment of McCarthy 'communists' or Salem 'witches', who were often later vindicated for being activists, feminists or the martyrs of their time.

Toshio Ushiroguchi-Pigott

Sources:

1. Dan Kovalik. *Cancel This Book—The Progressive Case Against Cancel Culture*. Hut and Skyhorse Publishing; New York; 2021:p.54-55.
2. Marion L. Starkey. *The Devil in Massachusetts—A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials*. Anchor Books. New York; 1989; p.96.



So What's "The" Story?

In the Advent and Christmas seasons, we tend to mix details from the different Gospel accounts together into one story. When read separately, however, each unique gospel's details provide insights into the messages that the individual writers wanted to emphasize.

Join us for the 2023 Advent meditation services as we explore the unique themes that each writer chose to share about the Christmas story by concentrating on one Gospel narrative at a time.

What was "the story" for Matthew? For Luke? For John? Is there a reason why Mark did not mention Jesus' birth at all? And what do each of the Gospels offer to us in seeking to live our faith in the modern world?



Services start at 12 noon

Wednesday December 6
The Right Rev. Jenny Andison
St. Paul's Bloor St.
The Anglican Church of Canada



Wednesday December 13
The Rev. Alex MacLeod
Knox Church, Spadina
The Presbyterian Church in Canada



Wednesday December 20
The Rev. Dr. Jason Byassee
Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
The United Church of Canada



Ode to Bob Faris by ChatGPT

Saga held a retirement party for Bob Faris back in June, and I volunteered to make a card for everyone to sign. Bob and I have a running inside joke about my fascination with artificial intelligence, and ChatGPT in particular, so I asked ChatGPT to write a poem for the card. I gave ChatGPT Bob's biographical information from our website and the Moderator's page on the Presbyterian Church in Canada's website, and asked it to create a light-hearted, personalized poem suitable for a retirement card. In under two minutes ChatGPT generated the following poem.

Judy Neal

Ode to Bob Faris

From the heart of St. Andrew's, there echoes a familiar chime,
A ringing bell of kindness, of a journey, quite sublime.
Our Associate Minister, a man named Bob Faris,
Is bidding us adieu, as he retires from our parish.

A lifelong Presbyterian, with a spirit that's ecumenical,
Bob is known for his faith, as much as for the spectacle.
He's done innovative ministry for over three and a half decades,
Fighting social injustice, in the spotlight and the shade.

Of colonialism's harsh effects, he strived to turn the tide
In communities he nurtured, with compassion as his guide.
A steward for the underprivileged, for the voice that goes unheard,
Bob's commitment to social justice soars like a bird.

He led the Rainbow Communion in its sacred quest
To heal the hearts of those whom the church once oppressed.
In the canvas of acceptance, Bob painted every hue,
Understanding that God's love is for the many, not the few.

For LGBTQI folks, to those fighting off disease,
Bob's been a guardian angel, spreading comfort with such ease.
St. Andrew's owes him gratitude, for his support so sincere,
In our darkest hours, Bob made sure to bring some cheer.

He's seen the church's confessions, its triumphs and its flaws,
Witnessed its journey, its stand for a noble cause.
Change is in the air, it's a new chapter that's begun,
With Bob's retirement, it's an era that's now done.

But don't mistake this farewell for an end to his grand tale,
Bob Faris will still matter, in every hill and dale.
His legacy of love, of understanding, and of grace,
Will continue to inspire, in every time and place.

So here's to Bob Faris, a man of God and more,
His retirement is upon us, and he'll pass through a different door.
For he's left an indelible mark, in the hearts of those he's met,
We won't forget Bob Faris--he's one of the best friends
SAGA's had yet!



Dedication of “Angels Unawares,” October 29, 2023

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:1-2

Words of Introduction by Rev. Dr. Will Ingram

Hebrews 13 begins with these words. It's a great and mysterious passage; and a fascinating verse to contemplate in this sanctuary into which, so often, strangers are welcomed, not only for worship, but also on the many occasions when we meet, including on Monday nights when our guests also sit in the very pews we now occupy while their supper is being prepared for them. This Sanctuary is a wonderful space to contemplate not only the presence of our guests, but also all those who have gone before us in these pews.

A couple of years ago, our congregation hosted a presentation by artist Tim Schmalz about his beautiful sculptures. Today we are fortunate to welcome Tim on the occasion of the dedication of “Angels Unawares” to St. Andrew's. I would like to invite Tim Schmalz to come up and speak to us about his sculpture, which has recently been installed in front of the church.

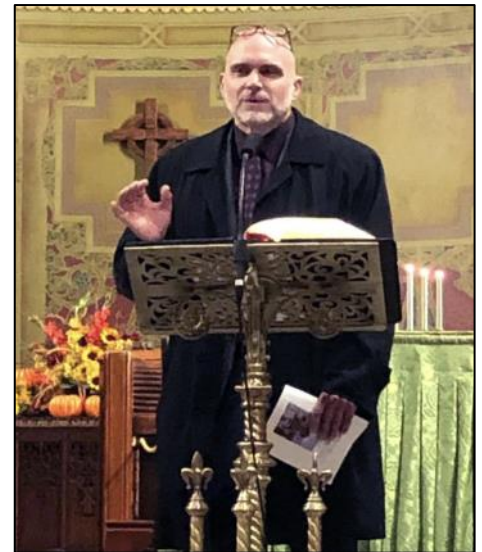


Combined front and back views of “Angels Unawares.” The apparent vagrant revealed as an angel.

Comments by Artist Timothy P. Schmalz

The sculpture outside was part of an amazing journey that started as a third project on the same subject. I was asked by the Vatican in 2013 to create a sculpture on the theme of migrants and refugees. And so I went back to my studio and began to work on a project that I had had in my heart for years: to visually translate Hebrews 13. I should explain that when I worked in studio, I listened to the Bible practically nonstop. I would turn it on playing CD after CD – I had been doing this for years. And I remember the exact time — it seemed like the first time ever I had heard “Be welcoming to the stranger.” And it just moved me so much that I thought there must be many amazing pieces of art based on one of the most poetic passages of scripture. But then I found that there were really very few representations of that scripture other than as printed text or engraving on a plaque. So I saw this gap as a wonderful opportunity. Then, when the Vatican requested that I do a sculpture on the theme of immigrants and refugees, I thought of the angel among the crowd of refugees. The resulting sculpture was installed by Pope Francis in 2019 in St. Peter's Square, off to one side. While the sculpture had a lot of impact, I thought it wasn't enough for me. I thought the text merited another sculpture.

It was about a year after that: I thought about a sculpture that takes that scripture and makes it so people can actually become a part of it, so they can participate in it. And so, as you can see outside, as you walk along on King Street, you see what looks like a stranger – a homeless person – and only when you walk



Artist Tim Schmalz.

around the sculpture do you understand that it's an angel. So it's a sculpture that really takes that scripture and reaches out to the passerby. And the angel's face: note how I sculpted the angel's face: as you will see, it's really soft; it's almost impressionistic and so one can imagine the face of someone they know from that very soft impression. And what's more, to have the sculpture here at St. Andrew's is a blessing in itself. I think it's not only a sculpture symbolizing this church, but also the city. It's a message that hopefully will promote the idea of love being the sacred spiritual light in everyone.

I would like to especially thank my patrons Anthony and Gay Longo, who supported this piece and it's installation here. And this is not the only piece they have supported. They also made it possible for “Angels Unawares” — the large one — to be brought here to Canada through their support. So thank you, Anthony and Gay. And, finally, thank you to St. Andrew's for giving this piece a home.