

# Welcome

## LOTS OF FOOD !

*Last month's pot luck was a lot of fun, and lots of great food!*

The ninety or so members were put to work with markers and post-it notes answering a couple questions. Like the pots on the table, there was no shortage of responses!

### *What do you like about St. Mark's?*

The recurring theme was the abundance of *spirit* around this place. Our motto, if you will, is *Embrace the Spirit* and it turns out that there is a lot of it evident. We're glad about that! Being a spirited community is important. Another theme was appreciation for how we work hard at being respectful of question and difference. Thanks for saying this. It is something we work hard at, don't always get right, but keep working at. Laughter was another appreciation along with a strong sense of being *connected*. Oh yes, and the window was noted by many people.

### *What puzzles you about St. Mark's?*

Ha! This is a funny one! Someone wrote *How you attracted so many good cooks!* It was probably the same person who asked, *Why can't we eat ALL the food at a potluck?* A couple others wrote *Why it took me so long to come here!*

There were some practical questions, like how to make offerings and what is the significance of how the chairs are arranged. The first is easy -- give a call or email to Carol and she'll go over our offering opportunities. There is also a quick note about this on the last page of this *MEMO*.

The chair arrangement is not as quick. Basically, with chairs, rather than pews, we have the great advantage of being able to configure space to accentuate certain characteristics, even theology. We worship in the round during Advent, Christmas and Epiphany to emphasize that God is not remote or distant but right here, in our midst. Think *incarnation*, the whole point of Christmas. At other times of the year the chairs are arranged to focus attention specifically upon the Table or to facilitate our strong sense of community and of the Word being in our midst, literally.

More than one person commented on the parking. Sorry about the current status! We've not had this problem before. On the first plough of the season the contractor failed to clear the entire area (maybe he goes to a church that doesn't need parking??). Partial thaw, freeze again and we are stuck with what we have. Not great but until spring the remnant of a lot and the street are all we have.

You also asked about hymn books. We used to have baskets on the back of the chairs that held the books. With the projections most people don't use the books but still managed to kick them, knock them out, step on them (we did that, too, when we were using them). When moving chairs more time was spent moving books and baskets than chairs. So we decided last summer to move books to a trolley at the back door for members who like to have the music. Most of us who do, usually forget to pick them up when we come in or an unfamiliar hymn comes up and we wish we had the book. For now we will stick with no baskets but speak to Mary Ethel, the chair of the Worship Team if you really miss them.

### *What do you value from other church experiences?*

Lots of things were mentioned but, you know, most people wrote about people, friends. Church really is *community*. Church works when people connect, lives are shared, and relationships are forged.

Passing of the peace every Sunday. This is something that has not been a part of our service, though it happens informally over coffee. The Worship Team will talk about this. Thanks for the suggestion.

### *Hopes.*

Bigger parking lot!

Continue the openness, honesty, and integrity. To be here for another 40 years! Get off the grid! To expand our outreach with the community. To put a big rainbow on the sign! To learn some names.

Long, happy associations.

Indeed, may our associations be long and happy, may they be challenging and faithful, open and honest, and may they be long.

### *Grace.*

Mary Ethel offered this beautiful grace as we came to table:

*Our lives are like a journey  
We're called upon to roam  
We visit many places  
And call these places home  
The people met become our friends  
Sometimes they're very dear  
Sometimes we may lose sight of them  
Although we know they're near  
Sometimes we move away from home  
And mourn the loss of place  
And then we find another spot  
That gives us sense of grace*

*So, as we share your bounty  
Lord, we give you thanks and say  
For food and friends and family  
We are so blessed today!*



# The MEMO

The Newsletter of St. Mark's United Church, 115 Orton Park Road, Toronto M1G 3G9

[www.st-marks.ca](http://www.st-marks.ca)

March, 2009

## LENT - A TIME TO RE-MEMBER

*The Rev. Alan Hall*

At the Ash Wednesday service I was recalling how with time and distance I had lost touch with my brother who had moved to Australia some 35 years ago. It was not that I had forgotten about him, but I knew little of his life, he knew little of mine, we seldom talked on the telephone and, well, we lost touch. When his daughter died eight years ago I was surprised at the strength of the pull I felt to be with him and his wife. I hardly knew Kay but I felt like I needed to be there with them. St. Mark's, as always, encouraged me and, even though it was in the midst of our busiest time of year, the Ministry & Personnel Committee said, "*Get out of here.*"

Those couple weeks, and the subsequent two months with Barry and Kay during my sabbatical leave, vitalized a bond I didn't know I had. It filled a void that I wasn't aware of until it was filled. And then I realized how huge that void had been. We both met again, as if for the first time, family. We found a grounding and centre that brought us to a greater sense of wholeness.

I share this story with you because it illustrates something of the Lenten journey. Over these forty days, we are drawn into a *re-membering*, a putting back together, of the pieces of who we are. We are reminded that we are of the earth, one with it, fashioned by the same Will and Love. We are reminded that we are of God, one substance. We are reminded that bred into us are inherent capacities to live kindly, generously, and graciously. And we discover that when we do, we, too, find a grounding and a centre that makes us more than we were, that blesses us with a wholeness that we were missing.

So come along on this journey. Hear again those stories of faith that speak about how our ancestors *re-membered* themselves as God's. Practice some of those disciplines of kindness and generosity and graciousness as we reach out to each other, to others, to the earth, to ourselves. Doing so, we are reaching out to and touching the very being of God, restoring wholeness and blessing to ourselves and to others.

In the stairwell to the Sanctuary is a large swath of paper on which you are invited to post some of the things that you are doing to *re-member* yourself. Be an inspiration to others! Use the post-it notes and markers to name what you did this week!

As you put it back together, you will find blessing.

## CURLING & DINNER !

Enjoy a great evening of dinner and curling  
with family and friends!



Not interested in curling,  
but want a night out?

Join us Saturday March 21, 2009  
Tam Heather Curling Club

\$25.00 a person. Fun, Games & Dinner

Arrival 5:30 to 6:00, Curlers start 6:15,  
Dinner served around 8:30.

Sign up at the church, call or email the office.  
Payment due by March 7th.



The United Church of Canada

L'Eglise Unie du Canada

*St.. Mark's is a progressive, inclusive, life-affirming Christian community of faith  
within The United Church of Canada.*

*Worship services are held Sundays at 11 am.*

*St.. Mark's offers a range of online services and material at [www.st-marks.ca](http://www.st-marks.ca).*

CARING FOR THE CARE GIVERS

Thurs, Mar 12 @ 7:00

We have a great team of pastoral care givers at St. Mark's. And many of us have care responsibilities at home and for elder family members.



Our Membership Team invites you to an evening with the Rev. John Taylor, chaplain at the Rouge Healthcare Centre and a member of St. Mark's, as he leads us in some tips for caring for ourselves as we care for others: Thursday, March 12th at St. Mark's. Refreshments at 7:00 and conversation from 7:30.

CLEAN UP !

We have very limited storage space at St. Mark's and it is packed! Time to do a clean out!

Teresa is looking for some ready helpers to lend a hand for a couple hours during March to help toss, fix, and paint. No previous experience required! Great experience for tackling your storage locker or garage! Leave your name with Carol in our office.

EARTH HOUR -- Make a difference!

Sat, Mar 28 @ 8:30

Earth Hour is a call for us to take a symbolic pause in our use of fossil fuels, to think about the impact of our activity on people and ecosystems around the world, and most importantly, to pledge to make a difference – as individuals, communities, and as a nation.

We'll be turning the lights off at St. Mark's and hope you'll do so at your home, too! We *can* make a difference and help save a planet. After all, we have only one.

LOOKING FOR AN ARCHIVIST

St. Mark's recently celebrated 50 years as a congregation. It certainly was a joyous time coming together to embrace the future while lovingly remembering the earlier years.

When one thinks about it, 50 years is a considerable time in congregational life. 50 years of baptisms, marriages, deaths, membership roles, special events. 50 years of significant events, Board and congregational decisions, community relationships. Indeed 50 years of community lived out day to day, Sunday to Sunday.

The United Church calls each congregation to chronicle year by year the essential records and events of its life. At St. Mark's oversight for the keeping of the church archives is designated to the Board of Trustees.

So, an opportunity for one or more folks to take on a project to establish a process for the keeping and maintaining of our

archives! Church Archivists traditionally enjoy history and nostalgia and place great value on keeping an accurate, complete and accessible resource. If you, or anyone you know, are interested please contact Carol in the church office and one of the Trustees will be in touch with you. You will not be working alone: the Trustees will support you with resources and the national archives provides lots of direction.

DON'T FORGET YOUR CANADA HELPS RECEIPTS!

Have you contributed to St. Mark's with your credit card through Canada Helps? Nearly 10% of our donations in 2008 came through this online service!

St. Mark's does not issue receipts for these donations -- you download and print directly from CanadaHelps. If you did not print your receipt at when you made the donation, log on and retrieve it now!

How do I give to St. Mark's?

St. Mark's ministries are funded almost entirely by donations by members and friends. For your support, thank you!

There are several ways that you can contribute financially. The most common way is through preauthorized (PAR) bank deposits. Other members give by cash or cheque. We don't distribute the traditional "boxed offering envelopes" but provide donation slips and mailing envelopes for your convenience. These are sent out every three months. If you would like to sign up for PAR or have offering slips, give Carol a call in our office!

You may also contribute by credit card. Go to [www.st-marks.ca](http://www.st-marks.ca) and click on "Donate Now." You'll be taken to Canada Helps, a registered charity itself, that facilitates our bank card receipts.

Of course, your prayers, your time, your voice in worship are invaluable to the conduct of our ministry. Thank you.

FACE TO FAITH

You recently received receipts for your 2008 offerings, thanks to the work of our new Stewardship Administrator, Dan Slovitt!

Dan was born in St. John, NB, one of five children. His mother and father died when he was seven. His dad was Jewish and his mother was Irish Catholic. He grew up in a Catholic neighbourhood and played hockey and baseball in Catholic leagues.

He started a journalistic career early by working as a sportswriter during high school for 35¢ a word, moving on to Canadian Press as a summer replacement where he stayed for 39 years until retirement last year. Dan described his career as having been rich and full, with the places he has seen and the people whom he has met. For example, he covered the 1976 Olympics in Montreal and interviewed Prime Ministers and other celebrated dignitaries.

In 1986, Dan took on the added responsibility of acquiring computers and software for the journalists employed by Canadian Press. He had to ensure they fitted the journalists' needs and, as a journalist himself, was well qualified for the task. Later in his career, Dan was responsible for the training of journalists in Afghanistan and leasing offices for CP in various parts of the world.

Family is of paramount importance to Dan. He has a son, Darin, and daughter-in-law, Kory, son, Bill and future daughter-in-law Jaclyn, daughter, Jacki, and, of course, his wife, Nicky. He is very proud and supportive of Nicky who has a graduate degree in Nursing, works for the City of Toronto in Public Health, and is an instructor in Nursing at York University. Nicky is also the former Chairperson of the Outreach Ministry Team at St. Mark's.

About five years ago, Dan and Nicky acquired a cottage near Minden. Dan's project this spring is to finish the screened-in porch before the onslaught of mosquito season.

Dan is an avid hockey player and a member of his son Bill's work team. In 1984, he joined the Malvern Oldtimers' Hockey League. He was on the executive and instrumental in trying to keep the teams balanced and having fun. There is a friendly rivalry between Dan and Bart Boniface, also from St. Mark's, whom he encouraged to join the league a few years ago. They never play on the same team. Bart explained that Dan had helped reorganize the league; he was instrumental in re-instituting the end-of-year party and encouraging membership growth among the teams. Bart mentioned how Dan is not shy about discussing St. Mark's with friends and co-workers outside the church and inviting them to worship and to spend time with us.

Marg Mooney profiles Dan Slovitt



When Dan became Stewardship Administrator (he's also on our Board of Trustees), he put his computer skills to good use collaborating on the tailoring of a new programme for recording offerings. He also sought feedback regarding the counting practices and streamlined the task. Kathryn Moase, another person involved in that monumental computing task, said she admires how Dan gets things done with no apparent fuss and muss, and gets them done right. He tackled the new financial system without complaint.

As was the case for many members, Dan and Nicky began attending St. Mark's when their family was young. The rest is history. Dan likened St. Mark's to Canadian Press - a progressive company implementing innovative practices before they come into vogue. He described St. Mark's as a cohesive, eclectic group, where there is a combination of religion and realism. He loves how St. Mark's is so accepting of children and how here we are not afraid to push the envelope, and worship and question in non-traditional ways.

When describing the atmosphere at St. Mark's and the integration of newcomers, Dan remarked that it is so comfortable there is no need for arguments that waste valuable time in the "getting-to-know-you" process. He also called St. Mark's, "The Church Without Borders", where we sometimes make up the rules as we go along.

Dan is a self-described, "hopeless romantic", who is passionate about his family and life in general. He is genuinely thankful for a career that has been full of interesting people and situations. Dan has an infectious "joie de vivre" and a twinkle in his eye. And, as one of his friends noted, "Dan is a great 'go-to' person on how to turn retirement into a new career."