

# The South Gate Church News from the Pews – November, 2020

## A message from our Interim Moderator, Rev. John Read

Under normal circumstances I would have met all of you as Interim Moderator following Charmain's last Sunday as it was originally planned back in June. As it is, I did start my work in June, but with Charmain staying on to provide you with stability as you adjusted to this new COVID I'm glad for the opportunity to write to all of you in this edition of your *News from the Pews*. In reality, my work has been with your Session and the special Future Planning committee we've assembled. We are making good progress, and I want to commend your elders and other church leaders for their hard work through this challenging time.

In the meantime, I thought I should let you now a little about me. My parents, Margaret and Walter, served the Presbyterian Church as a Diaconal Minister and Minister of Word and Sacrament respectively. I grew up in Burlington for the most part, and my parents served with a number of churches in Hamilton Presbytery over the years. As a result, I have some familiarity with The South Gate and its ministers. I remember well a children's story involving a penny and some vinegar told by Bob Geddes when he was working with my mother in the establishment of what would become Heritage Green Presbyterian Church, and Charmain and I were in the same graduating class at Knox College. I also have a well-used copy of *Wee Kirks and Stately Steeples*, which was a labour of love for your founding minister Rev. Dr. Melville Bailey.

I received my B. A. in History from McMaster University, before attending Knox and being ordained to Norval Presbyterian Church in 2010. I served there for five and a half years before being called to St. Andrew's Ancaster in 2016. My time in Norval was both rewarding, yet also heartbreaking. They were (and are) a small church trying their hardest to be faithful and reach out in Jesus' name. After going their entire history as a two-point charge, in the face of the decline experienced by so many churches, they stepped out in faith to call me as the first full-time minister to serve their congregation alone.

With much hard work we did experience the Spirit's renewal together, with new ministries started, and lives blessed. Yet in spite of the growth we did see, in the end we didn't grow enough, and just didn't have the resources to continue in full-time ministry together. Exhausted by our efforts, we knew that in God's grace we had done our best, and I had to seek the call that brought me back to the Hamilton area.

So as we continue to discern God's will for The South Gate together, I want you to know of the love I have for small churches and that I understand the heartache of giving the Lord your best only to come up short of where you hoped to be. Yet God is faithful, and he works in ways we do not always see. And when we are followers of Jesus, we know that transformation and resurrection are always a part of the story.

Grace and Peace,  
John

## Upcoming services:

**Sunday, November 29** – The First Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Hope  
During our worship service, we will also celebrate the **Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**Sunday, December 6** – The Second Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Peace

**Sunday, December 13** – The Third Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Joy

**Sunday, December 20** – The Fourth Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Love

**Thursday, December 24** – Christmas Eve Service, 7 pm



## **Pulpit Supply for South Gate:**



On November 1, South Gate met Rev. Dr. Dong-Ha Kim as he conducted our Zoom worship. Dr. Kim has served the Presbyterian Church in Canada as both a Minister of Word and Sacrament and as a member of the Faculty at Knox College. He has also contributed to national church committees in various capacities: Church Doctrine Committee, Planning Committee for Youth 2012 and Board of Governors, Knox College.

Dr. Kim is a graduate of the University of Waterloo with a BSc. He received a Masters of Divinity from Knox College, University of Toronto and obtained his Doctorate of Theology from Knox, in 2008. Dong-Ha has lectured at Tyndale University and instructed online for Ewart College. Serving as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, Dr. Kim was the minister at First Presbyterian Church, in Brandon, Manitoba. Since 2017 Dr. Kim has been on the faculty of Knox College. Currently he is Director of Basic Degree Studies and Director of the Centre for Asian-Canadian Theology and Ministry. He also teaches the "Theology and Practices of Ministry" course at Knox College.

We are very pleased to know that Dr. Kim will be with us as stated pulpit supply until the end of 2020, with the exception of December 6, when he has another commitment. We are currently waiting to see if his schedule will allow him to stay with us in 2021. As he lives in Ancaster, we welcome him as both our neighbour and a minister for our Sunday Zoom services. Hopefully we might meet him in person at a later date.

Submitted by Molly Shannon

## **Christmas at South Gate:**

As we all realize, the celebrations of Advent and Christmas will be greatly diminished at South Gate and indeed everywhere, with the restrictions of the pandemic. How well we all remember the joyful worship services during past Decembers, in our beautifully decorated sanctuary. There were poinsettias in memory of loved ones and the Advent wreath candles, that a different family lit each Sunday. We've had workshops with a Christmas craft, congregational lunches, the choir's performances of a cantata or other music, the children's pageants, Christmas Eve family services. Sadly much of that will not be possible this December, but hopefully those things can continue next year.

On a recent Zoom meeting of Session, it was decided that we will do the best that we can to celebrate Christmas at South Gate. It is hoped that a mailing will go to every household. Plans are being made to somehow still light the candles of the Advent wreath, at the Sunday Zoom services. Plans are also being made to have a Christmas Eve Family Zoom, with an opportunity to sing carols.

Since the pandemic started and we have been apart, the Elders have been phoning or emailing people regularly, so as to stay connected. It would be wonderful if during the month of December, all of our congregation could make it a personal challenge to phone, email or send a card to a few people from South Gate. It could be someone in long term care, someone at home with health issues, or just that person who usually sits in front of you in church, who you haven't seen since March. Do wish them a Merry Christmas and the best for 2021.

Although this will be a Christmas to remember....and not for especially good reasons, we can still celebrate the real meaning of Christ's birth and all the hope, peace, joy and love that He brings.

Submitted by Molly Shannon

## **The South Gate Website News:**

Have you checked out our church website lately at: <http://www.thesouthgatechurch.ca/>?

1. Monthly calendars with weekly recurring events have been reinstated again, beginning in October.
2. A new link to the “PresbyCan Daily Devotions” has been added to the WELCOME page.
3. Instructions for our Sunday Zoom services are available on the WELCOME page and the “At the Church Online” page (as part of the EVENTS tab).

For access to monthly Zoom meetings as listed on the church calendar, please send an email to South Gate at: [southgatechurch@rogers.com](mailto:southgatechurch@rogers.com), asking to be added to a particular group. This will enable the group leader to add you to a list for receiving the meeting login information.

Submitted by Pam Kovacek

## **South Gate Groups:**

### **On Zoom:**

Bible Study — Tuesdays at 10:00 am (Lead: Mary Pomfret)

Knit and Nine — Mondays twice a month at 7:00 pm (Lead: Teresa Robson)

Book Club — 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at 1:30 (Lead: Teresa Robson)

W.M.S. — 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month (Lead: Mary Pomfret)

Session — 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month (Moderator: Rev. John Read)

### **In Person:**

Neighbour-to-Neighbour – drop off (Lead: Mary Pomfret)

Men’s Group — no meeting but maybe do some painting and clean up around the Church (Lead: John Down)

\*Email [southgatechurch@rogers.com](mailto:southgatechurch@rogers.com) to get invited to a group or get more information

## ***Christmas 2020***

At this holy time in this tumultuous year  
We celebrate the birth of our Saviour dear  
Our thoughts are in turmoil with the pandemic in place  
That has shaken all of the human race

The celebrations will be strange, the message, the same  
If our Lord and Saviour who, as a baby He came  
Sent by the Father to resolve us from sin  
So we open our hearts and let Him enter in

The star that guided the wise men  
To the babe in the manger, they were sent  
With faith, they went to pay homage to Him  
With their frankincense, gold and myrrh

So we, as followers of the Christian faith  
Will celebrate His birth, with truth and grace  
To follow the path the wise men took  
As found in the passage of the Holy book

mip (Moira Paterson)



## **THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS**

At the start of 2020 things were going well  
What was about to come to us no-one could really tell  
As March came in with winds a blowing  
Covid 19 its nasty symptoms were quickly growing  
All things halted to help slow it down  
Though many at first they did frown

It wasn't long before we were sure  
That for this pandemic there was no cure  
Only those whose work was deemed essential  
All others stay home the warning was gentle

As the weeks rolled we were cloistered at home  
Then masks and gloves if going out, were to be worn  
No activities, no sports, no Church, my! such gloom!  
Then thanks to Heather she sets us up with Zoom

So all the Easter services we watched from our home  
And with Mary we sang all the special songs  
From then on Andy with Heather used their skills to good use  
So we could all feel we were still sitting in the pews

Each Sunday we would all get set and ready to view  
The service from home, it was so nice to see all of you  
The Psalms were read the Scriptures were retold  
As each of us knew we were part of this fold

Even communion was not on the shelf  
The elements, each sought for themselves  
As we followed on and partook in this special celebration  
Of the bread, His body broken, with great expectation and the wine,  
His blood shed for our salvation

As the fall season is well on its way we are told to get ready to say goodbye  
Charmain has fulfilled all the extended time, well done was our cry  
We wish her well as onward we go, to seek the next phase as a congregation  
Our faith must stay strong as we look ahead with some trepidation  
Our prayers to those who are looking to find the way forward for us all  
As they prayerfully, diligently, forge on, in a task that is tall.

Now, so thankful we are, for all the work that has been done  
As we all sit and wait nestled with each of our homes  
That soon it will end, and with our faith, our hopes still alive  
With thanks and prayers to the Saviour, who died, so we do survive

mip (Moir Paterson)

## A Sad Farewell to Ray Blyth



With sadness we learned that Ray Blyth passed away on Sunday November 15, 2020. Living at Idlewyld Manor, her health had been in decline for several years. Still, she made a noble effort to get to South Gate, by DARTS transportation, whenever she could. Following a challenging period after the amputation of her leg, Ray died peacefully. The day of her death, five people were allowed to visit with Ray. They included Ray's cousin, David and his wife, Camille, Rev. Charmain, Laura Doull and Myrna Tomalty. So Ray was certainly amongst South Gate friends in her final hours.

Ray, having been born and raised in Scotland, sought out a Presbyterian Church upon arriving in Hamilton. She became a member and served on many committees at South Gate. Ray will be remembered best for her contributions as an Elder, Parish Nurse, choir member and work with the Health Ministries team. Leadership with the Brownie and Guide groups at South Gate were also part of her service to others.

The words of her obituary tell more about Ray:

*It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our very dear friend and cousin Ray Marion Blyth at Juravinski Hospital, Sunday, November 15th at the age of 80. She passed away peacefully with family by her side. Ray came to Canada after completing the registered nursing and midwifery program in Edinburgh, Scotland, to begin her nursing career in 1965. Ray's career in nursing started at the Henderson Hospital (Juravinski) as a general duty nurse and as the years passed, she finished her career as the head nurse for continuing care at Hamilton's St. Joseph's Hospital. Ray also had many passions where she made many lifelong friends. As a leader and trainer with Girl Guides of Canada, Ray travelled extensively with the Guides, providing leadership and guidance to all in her charge. Amongst other roles in the Guiding organization, Ray was a District Commissioner and international Advisor. Ray was also a respected member of the South Gate Presbyterian Church parish, where she contributed to the church community as the parish nurse, church elder and choir member, all of which she enjoyed tremendously. She will be forever remembered for her spirited determination and tireless commitment to help others. Ray will be fondly remembered by her family in England, nieces Mandy (Rocco), Courtney and Jazmine and nephew, Kevin. She will be missed terribly by her Canadian cousins Joe (Betty), Jennifer, David (Camille), Kevin, Cydney and Emma, Susan (David), Michael (Becky), Alexander (Lucas), Julianne (Justin), as well as her countless friends who have shown her such wonderful support over the years. Special thank you to Laura, Myrna and Charmain for your undying support and friendship to Ray through her difficult times. We would also like to extend the family's gratitude to the health care workers who provided great care for Ray through her last days. As per her wishes, cremation has taken place.*

Due to the pandemic there were limitations around funeral arrangements. We appreciated that the celebration of Ray's life was available to us over Zoom, by Andy Sebestyen. Ray would have been comforted that Rev. Charmain conducted the service. Much love, thoughts and prayers go to her family and friends at this time.

Submitted by Molly Shannon

# Thank you

## Cards of Thanks

I would like to thank everyone from South Gate Church for the cards, visits and phone calls when Jim was ill and after he passed away. It brightens my heart that you all care, I'm still finding it very tough without Jim. He was the love of my life.

January Will and family

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Thank you!

I would like to thank the congregation for the beautiful flowers that I found in the church sanctuary when I conducted my final worship service at the South Gate Church on Sunday October 25th 2020. Your thoughtfulness and kindness is much appreciated.

It was also so nice to see so many of you in attendance at the Presbytery meeting on Tuesday November 10, 2020.

Special thanks to Karen Spence and Ted Leslie for their kind and gracious words that evening.

Thank you for all your prayers and support over the years.

I pray that God will continue to bless and guide the South Gate Congregation.

Peace and blessings,  
Rev. Charmain

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Sheila, Paul, and I would like to thank the congregation for their calls, cards, and prayers regarding Paul's progress during his leukemia treatments and subsequent stem cell transplant, and my recent radiation therapy. It is comforting to know that so many people in the South Gate family are concerned about our well being.

Ted Leslie

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I would like to thank the members of the landscape committee for their hard work and dedication to keeping our lawns and gardens looking great during the summer season. Also thank you to all of our committee members and other church members who came out for the three "clean ups" that were held this year. It's true that "many hands make light work".

Ted Leslie {chairman}



120 Clarendon Ave

## Simple White Envelope

It's just a small white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name. No identification. No inscription. I have peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so. It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas – oh, not the true meaning of Christmas. But the commercial aspects of it – the overspending, the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma – the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else. Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties, and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike.

The inspiration came in an unusual way. Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at school he attended. Shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city Church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparking new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat. Mike, seated beside me shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won." He said. "They have a lot of potential but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids – all kids – and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse.

That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the Inner-City Church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition – one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on. The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning, and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning it was joined by three more. Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their Dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope. Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us.

May we all remember Christ, who is the reason for the season, and, the true Christmas spirit this year and always.

God Bless everyone during this Christmas season



**DO YOUR BEST AND JESUS WILL DO THE REST.**



**Ronald Fox - December 21, 2012**

**June Fox - June 11, 2010**

**Close in our hearts you will always stay**

**Loved and remembered every day.**

**Missing you - Jen and Gary**