

News from the Pews October 2022

The South Gate Presbyterian Church, 120 Clarendon Ave., Hamilton, Ontario L9A 3A5 Tel: 905-385-7444

Give Thanks
with a
grateful heart.



Every October, in Canada, we have a weekend devoted to Thanksgiving. So it is timely that this edition of South Gate's newsletter has as its theme, "**Gratitude...Giving Thanks.**" As you celebrate with your family and friends, do remember the words of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, "Nothing is more honourable than a grateful heart."

Taking Time to Give Thanks—by Rev. Steven Baldry, M.Div., M.T.S. (Interim Moderator)



When I pick up my mail and rifle through it each day, there is one kind of envelope that causes me to stop and open immediately. It's a handwritten envelope with that old fashioned thing we call cursive writing.

Why does it stop me? Because it represents (to me) a personal gesture from whomever wrote it. What makes a handwritten letter even better is when it contains words of encouragement or thanks for something I did. Those letters not only get opened first, but they also get thrown out last. Some "thank you" letters are kept for weeks, months, or even years! A word of thanks warms our hearts and makes us smile because someone values what we did for them.

The Bible is full of words of thanks to God. Thanksgiving is our way of telling God that we value who He is and what He has done for us. So here's the question: do we take time to give thanks?

In Luke's gospel (chapter 17), Jesus healed ten lepers (people who were doomed both medically and socially because of their disease). Jesus healed all ten of them and changed the whole trajectory of their lives. But here is the surprising (and disappointing) part: only one of them came back to give thanks. Jesus took note asking, "Where are the other nine?" Only one bothered to take time to return to Jesus to say that he valued what Jesus did for him. Maybe we are dumbfounded by the other nine. How shortsighted? insensitive? perhaps ungrateful? How could they have received such a blessing and then hurry off to other things and not stick around long enough to give thanks?

But before we come down on the nine who didn't give thanks, maybe we need to ask ourselves if thanksgiving is a part of our lives. And before we hurry off to family celebrations, turkey and pumpkin pie on October 10th, let's decide to first take time and thank God for the many blessings in our lives. Let's make sure we tell God that we value what He has done for us!

The Season for Ripening—from Rev. Bob Geddes, with Thanksgiving Blessings



There is a small but vibrant church not too far from our Lake Huron cottage. It is called Pine River United Church. It has been my privilege to preach there a few times, particularly during their recent vacancy. Through that I have become a participant of their Friday morning Men's Coffee Group. It is organized and promoted through the actions of one church member named Vaughn Munro (Yes, just like the singer, who this Vaughn has met). The group has in so many ways reminded me of the beloved Wednesday morning Men's Group that meant (and means) so much to me at South Gate.

While there are many similarities that I find quite comforting, there is one key difference. Through the coffee conversation, and my ability to ask questions, I learned a lot about the steel industry from my Hamilton buddies. The Pine River gang are predominantly farmers, so I learn a lot about crops, and in particular, corn. I have learned that it is important to have your corn at a moisture level at about 12%, before it is sold. Hence the corn has to be dried in propane-fired dryers, and if the price of propane happens to sky rocket when you need it (as is happening these days), it might turn a great crop into a money loser.

The ripening of corn and other produce is a critical biological process which becomes a focal point of our Canadian Thanksgiving. It's a time to celebrate the harvest bounty, glorious fall colours and shades, and family traditions. It is also an opportunity to bring gratitude into that stage of life many of us at South Gate will refer to as aging.

That might take some work! One of the most common phrases I heard from my visits to homes and residences of our South Gate flock goes like this: "Bob, when you hear people refer to this stage of life as 'The Golden Years', don't believe it!" Non the less, it might be helpful to refer to the aging process for us more as a "ripening".

I take some of these thoughts from a meditation of Father Richard Rohr, whose daily postings I recommend. Rohr suggests that ripening, at its best, "is a slow, patient learning, and sometimes even a happy letting go- a seeming emptying out to create a readiness for a new kind of fullness- which we are never sure about". Through this process, we learn how to hope as we ripen. Our teachers are reality, fate, destiny, providence and certainly tragedy. They are slow but insistent teachers. Some of the signs or manifestations of our ripening in a spiritual sense include an increasing tolerance for ambiguity, a growing sense of subtlety and a capacity to live with contradictions. (Anyone with me on this?). Rohr concludes "to live in trustful faith is to ripen".

An illustration might help, so I will close with a story I have used over the years at places. I tell the true story of my talking to the owner of the prize-winning pumpkin at the Ripley Fall Fair in Bruce County. I was bold enough to ask his secret to success, and his response was: "I just plant the seed on the top of the compost heap". I think of the Apostle Paul when he was thrown into a Roman jail (likely for the second time). As I have noted in a previous newsletter, conditions would be deplorable and he was there to just rot or compost away. Yet this is the very location where Paul wrote his Letter to the Philippians. This letter is known as "The Letter of Joy". It is centred on grateful thanksgiving to God, and reaches its summit in chapter 4 with the famous admonition to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice". He goes on to say "in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God". Paul showed signs of intense spiritual ripening, and it led to an undefeatable sense of thanksgiving, even as he composted away. I know I have referenced this text before, but I think of it every Thanksgiving (so you can too!).

I remember visiting Doreen and Gordon Birk in their beautiful home at the base of the mountain. In Doreen's kitchen was a large, ornate (of course) ceramic bowl where Doreen would place all her fruit to ripen together. There was an essence to the oils that would permeate all the fruit, she explained, and the more varieties of fruit there were, the more efficient the process. In this season of Thanksgiving, let's all ripen together. We don't even have to be close by to do it. The South Gate essence is strong.

The congregation submitted the following items they are thankful for:

The South Gate congregation is thankful for...

Our health care system
– Molly Shannon

Being born in a peaceful country like Canada

Laughter, talents, security

Friends

Halloween candy and books (in that order 😊) - Kathryn

Spring flowers

The bright daylight and airy sanctuary at The South Gate Church as it provides for an uplifting environment

That God has blessed me with the family and friends I have – Ken Young

The friendships we
have at the church

Jesus in my life, neighbours, friends who love the Lord
– Debbie Adams

Having such a long life

Fellowship and support I feel from all those around me, especially my church family

God's love for me, the supportive people around me, changing seasons, flowers, laughing children, pets – Heather James

Fall colours

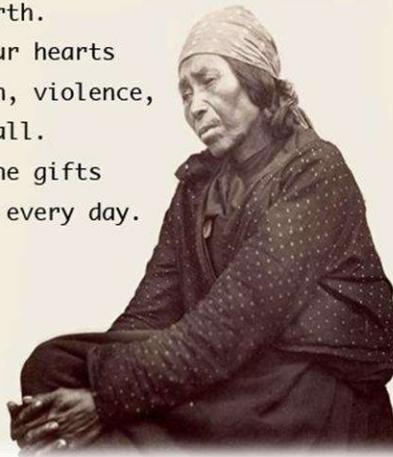
My South Gate family. I can count on them for support and love -- Teresa

Summer and Halloween candy
and Christmas

The outdoors, nature, gardens, birds, butterflies, plants, trees, sky,
waters large and small (and all that live in them).
Health and the ability to travel to see more of your world and its people.

Creator, open our hearts
to peace and healing between all people.
Creator, open our hearts
to provide and protect for all children
of the earth.
Creator, open our hearts
to respect for the earth, and all the
gifts of the earth.
Creator, open our hearts
to end exclusion, violence,
and fear among all.
Thank-you for the gifts
of this day and every day.

Mi'Kmaq prayer





Report from the Futures Committee—

as received from Rev. Cathy Stewart,
Rev. Janice Doyle, and Anne Forsyth
(Members of Presbytery)



Announcement that has been read at Trinity and The South Gate on October 2, 2022:

The official results have been tabulated from our recent congregational meetings to determine if The South Gate and Trinity congregations wish to proceed with official amalgamation talks.

52 Trinity people submitted ballots as did 51 from The South Gate congregation. The result in favour of proceeding with amalgamation talks was Trinity at 94% and The South Gate 84%.

An official amalgamation committee will be struck with four members from each congregation plus Presbytery representatives and any additional members when needed for their expertise.

Official permission for acceptance of the amalgamation process is on the agenda of the Presbytery meeting on Tuesday October 11. The motion will be forwarded with the approval of the business committee.

If you have interest in being a member of the amalgamation team, please advise the Clerk of your Session no later than October 16. The closure of the previous committee and the first meeting of the new one will take place on Wednesday, October 26, 2022.

*The congregation extends a thank you to the members of the Futures Committee,
for the work that they have done over many months, on our behalf.*



Thankful



Thankful for the long and glorious life given to our Sovereign Queen
For her leadership and graciousness wherever she was seen
Grateful for the love shown at her passing, around the world
As they paid homage to her life, she gave all that she could



Grateful to have been a member of The South gate for 55 plus years
For the friendships made, the happiness, joys, sorrows and tears
For seeing the changes, sometimes good, sometimes bad
So grateful for the many loves that I had

I'm so grateful for being so freely able to worship the Lord
And for the many years of singing His wonderful word
For the leadership of those who prayerfully seek to find a solution
As they meet and discuss to find our future evolution

by mip (Moira Paterson)

If Only . . .—by Kathryn Shanley

As the fury of Hurricane Fiona thrashed the Atlantic coast, we watched with horror trees ripped out of the ground, homes swept into the rising rushing waters, and bridges washed away as if Mother Nature had just wiped her easel clean.

Broadcasters referred to the deadly weather event as “the perfect storm.” I remember watching the movie, *The Perfect Storm*, based on the 1997 best-selling book, *The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea*, by Sebastian Junger, about the six-member crew of the Andrea Gail fishing boat that disappeared during a monstrous hurricane that battered the eastern coast in 1991.

While I was watching the movie, I kept thinking to myself *if only* they had turned back before the storm started. Or if only the storm wasn’t as strong as predicted and they returned safely to their homes and families. *If only*.

I can’t begin to understand the sorrow and heartbreak of the victims of these horrific hurricanes who’ve lost all their worldly possessions and tragically their loved ones. Feeling gratitude in a situation like this seems like a mountain that’s just too high to climb and I’m sure many people in the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona are thinking, *if only*.

But the words, *if only* can pack a punch and their impact is life altering. Looking back and knowing we can’t change the past steals our happiness, no matter how difficult or painful it is to stay in the present and look towards the future. Trying to be grateful amidst the turmoil of a catastrophic event like Hurricane Fiona is a pretty tall order. How have other people continued their journeys after facing such adversity?

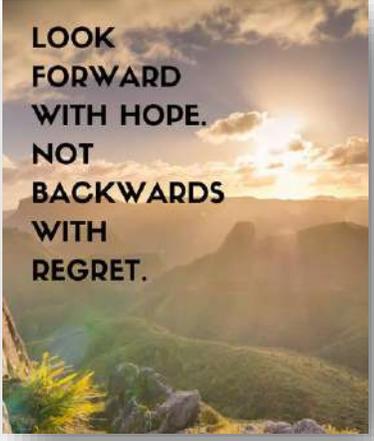
My sister, Teresa recommended an excellent and inspiring book, *The Choice: Embrace the Possible*, by Dr. Edith Eva Eger. She tells her courageous story of surviving her captivity at Auschwitz as a teenager and the unspeakable cruelty she endured in the death camps. She shares her struggle coming to terms with her past and how she began her journey forward.

It’s almost inconceivable to imagine that her spirit wasn’t broken after witnessing and experiencing the brutality that she did. But Dr. Eger didn’t let the past destroy her. Now a clinical psychologist, she uses her experiences to help other people heal. And in her book she talks about *if only*.

“If we are stuck in the past, saying, “*If only* I had gone there instead of here . . .” or “*If only* I had married someone else . . .,” we are living in a prison of our own making,” writes Dr. Eger in *The Choice* (Pg. 173). She goes on to explain that where we are right now is the only place we can use our freedom of choice. I’m reminded of the Bible verse, “The Lord our God said to us in Horeb, “You have stayed long enough at this mountain.” (Deuteronomy 1:6).

My prayers and thoughts are with the families experiencing excruciating heartache after Hurricane Fiona. I’m grateful for the love and compassion of the people living in the communities affected by the storm, who have come together to help one another. Putting their fractured lives back together will be no easy task. But with prayer and learning about the ways others have moved forward in the face of extreme hardship, I hope in time healing will happen. “God comforts, encourages and consoles me in every trouble. He enables me to console others who need comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Sometimes my mind drifts to the *if only* territory and I remind myself of my options—to look backwards or forwards. It’s my choice.



LOOK
FORWARD
WITH HOPE.
NOT
BACKWARDS
WITH
REGRET.

Gratitude...Giving Thanks—Compiled by Molly Shannon

- ✚ Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts.~~Henri Frederic Amiel
- ✚ At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.~~Albert Schweitzer
- ✚ Gratitude turns what we have into enough.~~Anonymous
- ✚ Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It's the spark that lights a fire of joy in your soul.~~ Collette
- ✚ Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.~~Karl Barth
- ✚ No one who achieves success does so without the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude.~~Alfred North Whitehead



- ✚ In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.~~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- ✚ Gratitude is when memory is stored in the heart and not in the mind.~~Lionel Hampton
- ✚ We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude.~~Cynthia Ozick
- ✚ When I started counting my blessings and being thankful, my whole life turned around.~~Willie Nelson

- ✚ Gratitude helps you to grow and expand; gratitude brings joy and laughter into your life and into the lives of all those around you.~~Eileen Caddy
- ✚ Two kinds of gratitude: The sudden kind we feel for what we take; the larger kind we feel for what we give.~~Edwin Arlington Robinson
- ✚ Gratitude is the sweetest thing in a seeker's life – in all human life. If there is gratitude in your heart, then there will be tremendous sweetness in your eyes.~~Sri Chinmoy
- ✚ As with all commandments, gratitude is a description of a successful mode of living. The thankful heart opens our eyes to a multitude of blessings that continually surround us.~~James E. Faust
- ✚ The more grateful I am, the more beauty I see.~~Mary Davis
- ✚ There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy.~~ Ralph H. Blum
- ✚ Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy.~~Jacques Maritain
- ✚ Being thankful is not always experienced as a natural state of existence; we must work at it, akin to a type of strength training for the heart.~~Larissa Gomez
- ✚ Today I choose to live with gratitude for the love that fills my heart, the peace that rests within my spirit, and the voice of hope that says all things are possible.~~ Anonymous
- ✚ If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.~~Rabbi Harold
- ✚ As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. ~~John F. Kennedy

Pocket Prayer Shawls for Ukraine—submitted by Teresa Robson



The Knit N '9 group joined with a WMS initiative to knit and crochet pocket prayer shawls to send to Ukraine. Shirley Miller informed us that we, in the Bruce-Grey, Hamilton, and Essex-Kent synods have gone over 1000 pocket prayer shawls!

Here is an approximate tally of shawls with prayer cards sent:
Jan 21 to Jan 22: pandemic shawls—547
April 22 to June 29: Ukraine/Cuba—704
Total - 1251

Sue and Larry Smith kindly drove our pocket pray shawls and medical supplies to Stratford so we could participate in this project. The Stratford Medical Supply Depot has been delighted to add these shawls to the supplies they are sending out. Mary Duffin has been receiving the shawls and taking them to the depot at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Stratford, Ontario.

I heard about this initiative when I attended the Synodical AGM and was captivated by the pocket prayer shawls that the ladies have been knitting and sending to Ukraine. I spoke to our knitting group who expressed interest in participating.

Here is a sample of the prayer we attached. This is the English version. We sent it in Ukrainian as well as English.

Pocket Prayer Shawl
Slip this tiny prayer shawl into your pocket.
Carry it with you as a reminder of God's unending love for you.
May it bring you peace, comfort, and strength as you struggle through each day.
Always remember you are a special child of God.
Prayers from _____,
_____, Ontario, Canada

Our knitters and crocheters who made pocket prayer shawls were Lynne Geddes, Marion McNair, Mary Pomfret, Karen Spence and Teresa Robson. Sue Smith was unable to participate due to an injury, so she drove our shawls to Stratford. Linda Smith was also unable to participate at this time. It is our intention to send more pocket prayer shawls in the Spring.

Thankfulness—submitted by January Will



I am thankful that I was able to go on a trip to Victoria, BC for ten days this September. With the pandemic people are afraid to go anywhere, but some of us are able to travel. I followed the protocols of traveling and wore my mask on the plane with no complaints of myself or anyone else. Sometimes it was easier to travel when my husband was alive, but now I know I can travel alone and I am thankful for that. I know someone is there at the other end to pick me up. I took the bus to the airport, a train to Terminal 3 and then the plane.

Knowing my sister was there to pick me up and we were able to go many places to sightsee, shop, eat out, relax, or just do nothing made me feel thankful. I am also thankful that I was able to walk all these places with the brace on my knee from suffering from severe osteoarthritis and knowing my knee gives out and I could fall. One day I will have to have knee replacement surgery, but being able to go walking makes me feel like I can accomplish many things, people don't think I can do. Just because of my sore knee, sometimes I can't climb or run, but knowing I can still walk makes up for it.

I also know now not to say it hurts so bad that I wish someone would cut it off, as there are people out there who literally have their leg cut off due to illness or accidents and I feel thankful I can move along. I may be slower but I will get to my destination on time.

I AM THANKFUL
FOR
nights that turned
into mornings,
friends that turned
into family, and
dreams that
turned into reality.

GratitudeHabitat.com



Update from the Finance Committee--Heather James, Brenda Podio, Ken Young

The Finance Committee and The South Gate Session remain committed to keeping the congregation updated on our finances by submitting a quarterly financial update for each edition of The News from the Pews. The following is our Fall update.

The congregation's faithfulness in maintaining regular offerings is very much appreciated, however, we have seen a 14% decrease in donations over the past year. As the congregation is aware, our income is still not able to meet our expenses each month. While our offering envelope donations are down, we are thankful that our rental income is up this year. We also had a small increase in our maintenance expenses with some work done on our boiler and hot water heater.

Here is a summary of our finances as of September 20, 2022:

General Fund:	
YTD Income:	\$46,448.45
YTD Expenses:	\$53,232.16
Short Fall:	\$6,783.71
Bank Balances:	
General Fund Bank Account:	\$28,398.45
General Fund GIC:	\$38,075.52
Special Reserve Fund:	\$4,551.26
Total:	\$71,025.23



We hope that the congregation will consider this information prayerfully and if you have any questions, please contact your elder or any member of the Finance Committee.

Yours in Christ, The Finance Committee



Giving Thanks for a Life Very Well Lived--by Molly Shannon

In 1947, while visiting South Africa, a young woman made a famous radio broadcast. She stated, "I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family, to which we all belong." This promise made by Princess Elizabeth became a vow, by which she lived her life.



At the time of her birth in 1926, there was never an expectation that Elizabeth would one day become the Monarch. Her Uncle David, being the oldest son of King George V, became King Edward VIII, on the death of his father. It was only when King Edward abdicated in 1936, that Elizabeth's father, the second oldest son, became King George VI. Suddenly at age ten, Elizabeth found herself first in the line of succession to the throne. In 1952 King George VI, at the age of 52, died unexpectedly and Elizabeth, not yet 26, was thrust into the role of Queen of the United Kingdom, Supreme Governor of the Church of England, Leader of the British Empire and the Head of State for many countries. With two small children, Charles age three and Anne age one and with very little formal training to take on such great responsibility, she became Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Monarch of a 1,000 plus year old institution.

Thus began a life of service and great duty, over a 70 year reign. During seven decades the Queen has been served by 12 Canadian Prime Ministers, the first being Louis St. Laurent and 15 British Prime Ministers, the first being Winston Churchill. She met 13 American Presidents and numerous world and religious leaders on her visits to 117 countries. She reorganized the controversial colonies of the British Empire, into the Commonwealth of Nations, which now has 54 countries as voluntary members. On passing she was Head of State for 15 countries.

Queen Elizabeth was credited with being a champion of charity work. Supporting more than 600 charities in Britain, she was responsible for raising £1.4 billion (over \$2 billion Canadian) for the charities and made it a special focus to help reduce poverty. Her generation saw it all: World War II, the Great Depression, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Falkland Islands War, the Iraq War, and the Brexit crisis. She never retired, never abdicated, but worked until two days before her death at age 96, appointing the new British Prime Minister.

Among her strong character traits, the Queen was known to be very resilient. She shepherded by promoting calmness and unity during very difficult times, most recently through the two plus years of a world pandemic. Her words during her address to the nation gave hope, ending with, "We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again."

Living by her mother's mantra, "Never complain, never explain." The Queen never gave an interview, never dabbled in politics, never really let people know what she was thinking. While celebrities and some on social media shared so many moments of their lives, the Queen kept her personal life private. At times her family garnered publicity for their actions, but she wouldn't comment or judge. It is said that she truly believed in forgiveness, she was kind and that she had a great sense of humour.

As a mother of four, a grandmother of eight and a great grandmother of twelve, Her Majesty was also thought to be a grandmother of the nation. Some said she was the grandmother of the world. A staggering 94% of the world's population was born after Elizabeth became Queen; many never knew of a time when she wasn't present.

Not everyone is a supporter of the British Royal Family and not all citizens of countries, where the Queen was Head of State, want a Constitutional Monarchy. But no matter what people feel about the institution, most are in agreement, that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, was a truly remarkable woman, worthy of great respect, admiration and our gratitude.

To Our Dear Friends at the South Gate Church—from Charmain and Andy Sebestyen

We send this note with gratitude for your kindness and generosity in gifting us with the “Terra” gift cards for the landscaping of our new home in Port Dover. After delays and supply shortages caused by Covid 19, our landscaping is now complete. As these beautiful trees and plants grow and flourish, by the grace of God, we will be able to enjoy their shade and beauty for years to come. When we look out our windows or sit outside in the garden, we will remember fondly our time at the South Gate Church, the many friends that we made, and all the joy that we had serving God and our community together. For such blessings, we are truly grateful.

Peace and Blessings to you all.



Charmain and Andy's house: River Birch, Boxwood, Japanese Yew & Hydrangea

Mary Fleming

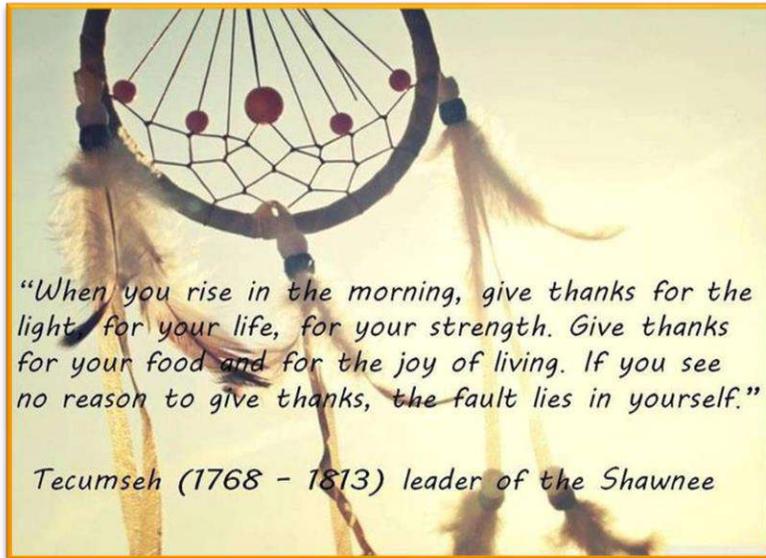


The congregation of South Gate gives thanks for the ministry of Mary Fleming, who served as our Music Director since July 2015. We so enjoyed the beautiful organ and piano playing that she provided. Mary made Thursday night rehearsals a fun, learning experience for our choir and offered warm friendship

to the members of our church. She was involved in running GriefShare sessions and for a short time, she chaired our Worship Committee. We wish Mary well as she continues to serve God, as Rector/Priest of St. Peter by the Park (Anglican Church in North America).

“How do you say "thank you" for sunshine or health...for clear days or gentle rains...for happiness, joy or love? You say it by sharing what you have. You say it by making the world a better place in which to live.”

~Thomas D. Willhite



WebNews—from Pam Kovacek, Website Administrator

Our website continues to be updated at the least, on a weekly basis with information about upcoming worship services, and how to access them, as well as on a monthly basis by information being given in the form of monthly events notifications for the Calendar and Welcome pages. A big thank you is extended to Mary Pomfret and Teresa Robson who keep me up-to-date on these monthly happenings!



The link to the Trinity Presbyterian Church website, as created and updated by the Trinity staff, remains on our website to provide information about their upcoming services, events, and Sunday, 10 AM worship services that are available on their YouTube channel.

Have you ever seen errors such as these, either in church bulletins, on websites, or as advertised on church signs that can take on a meaning of their own?

- *"The outreach committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church."*
- *"A cookbook is being compiled by the ladies of the church. Please submit your favorite recipe, also a short antidote for it."*
- *"After the sermon: A moment of silence for prayer and medication."*
- *"Visitors are asked to sing their names at the church entrance."*

Well...this type of blooper can, and does occasionally happen when our South Gate website errors and omissions go unnoticed. Thankfully, there continues to be really helpful feedback given to me by those who notice! Thank you and please continue to keep me informed!



A reminder to be sure to check out our informative **Twitter** site administered by Kathryn Shanley, which contains many interesting and timely posts that are both religious and secular in content!

NOTE: If you haven't signed up for **Twitter**, the "Tweets" can be accessed by clicking our website's Twitter icon (left).

This edition of News from the Pews has been formatted by Pam Kovacek and edited by Molly Shannon with initial input from the Communications Committee.