



YPBC NEWS

December 2011

FROM WHERE I SIT

If there is one thing I have missed out on as the minister of the church it is sitting with my wife and children during the worship service. In fact as a preacher's kid the only time I remember sitting with my father in church was when as a teenager I was asked to help conduct one of the Sunday evening youth services. There I was sitting in the chancel beside my father when part way through the service I turned and asked him something and received a look that had, "Sit still and be quiet," written all over it.

Even now if I were given a dispensation to sit in the pew with my family during worship, I don't think my company would be much different than my father's was that day. I have all but forgotten how to sit in the family pew. When one is entrusted with the leadership of divine worship it is



an awesome responsibility – you sit still and listen intently.

I remember sitting through church as a child and counting all the light bulbs and all the panes of glass in Central Baptist Church, Victoria, where my father served for many years. When one is leading

from the front you don't see the light bulbs, nor do you see the children who are counting them on their fingers and toes as I once did. When Barbara Brown Taylor first preached here she noticed the bank of lights going off as she got up to preach and said something to the effect of, "Wow. I have heard of churches with lights like this, but never been in one." It was the first time I had ever noticed it and I haven't noticed it since. One Sunday someone asked me if the webcasting spotlights were bothering me and I literally said, "Spotlights?" For the most part I don't see or hear these things from where I sit.

cont'd



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It was more than forty years ago I attended my first Carols by Candlelight Service at YPBC. The sanctuary was full, and in subsequent years overflowing. During that period of time there were few advertised Christmas events; but now WholeNote Magazine lists many. Yet, we still have nearly a full house each year, all of which is due to the quality of the music and the setting, and it is Christmas! May it continue.

The editor welcomes comments and suggestions. Please submit all articles for future editions to pilgrim.h@sympatico.ca

PRH

I did notice something in the summer of 1991 when I preached my first sermon at Yorkminster Park. I don't remember what I preached but I do remember how the first sentence echoed back at me. It has been a long time since I've heard the echo in the Sanctuary but it is still there and once, early on, it stopped me in my tracks as if to say, "Slow down!" And I did.

There are other things you hear but they don't sound as good from where I sit – the choir for one. Their voices are no less majestic, but I am so close I lose the balance of

the blended voice of the choir that can be heard out in the pews. Don't get me wrong, the choir is still very good from where I sit. What's more, I don't think there is a better place to hear the choir than is found standing waist deep in the centre of the Baptistry.

There are times when you see things no one else sees, like the sermon notes of a visiting minister slipping off the pulpit and falling to the floor. When he looked down they were gone and I was too far away to help. He never did find them but I learned something watching him transition into freestyle preaching. Then of course there was the minister, who liked to worship and preach in stocking feet. Thinking back I am not sure which of the senses it touched first, but the nose was clearly unimpressed.

One of the things that is hardest to see from where I sit is the Prayer With The Children which may be one of the reasons I decided to take responsibility for it five years ago. I love the children and much prefer to be in a place where I can see them and hear their voices.

Christmas from the Chancel is different again especially at a service like Carols by Candlelight, because while a wall of sound comes back at you when you sing the familiar carols, it is hard to see a single face when the overhead lights give way to candlelight.

Of course it matters not where you sit. There is a picture which hangs in my study of a mystical scene set many a year ago in St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh. The artist has painted an evening service where all the worshippers appear to be gathered in the front pews with the choir in the chancel, but in the very last pew there is a worshipper on his knees slumped over the pew before him in a posture of penitence. I doubt the clergy could see him and it doesn't seem any usher paid him much attention, but right behind him stands a figure bathed in light. It is Jesus Christ bestowing mercy and grace upon the sinner.

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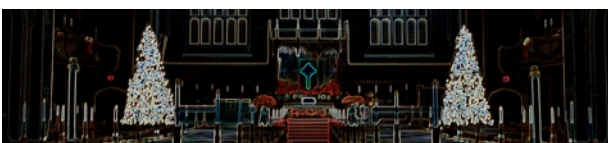
The painting has the wonderful title, The Presence. So, it isn't where we sit that matters. My view of the spiritual happenings is no better than anyone else's. It is the spirit in which we come and our openness to the One who has come to be with us - Immanuel – that makes the difference.

One of my favourite memories from where I sit happened years ago at our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. My son was one of the nine readers that year and like all the readers he was well rehearsed, but it wasn't until half way through the service I realized his reading was slightly out of synch with all the other readings. The service had been following a pattern of music, reader, music, reader, music, reader etc..., but before his lesson there were two pieces of music. He was still very young and partway through the first piece it dawned on me that it would be only natural for him to get up after the music and proceed to the lectern as all the other readers had done. Sure enough, when the song ended he rose out of his seat and started up the stairs only to see the Choir Director coming out to face his choir.

I am sure it was the Lord preparing me and whispering in my heart not to miss my chance and so I met my son at the top of the stairs and quietly brought him back and put him in my seat as I crouched on the floor beside him. There they were again, father Holmes and son seated together in the chancel. Half way through the song he looked at me and said, "Dad, I am too embarrassed to get up and read." This was not a time to sit still and keep quiet and so I said, "What's to be embarrassed about? You just gave me the best Christmas gift of all. I have always wanted to sit with you in church and now I have."

It is a lovely little memory I have, but from where I sit there is nothing to compare with the moment an individual becomes aware of the mysterious presence of the One who brings us home to the Father. He is here Sunday by Sunday and day by day and he too longs to sit in the sacred quiet with all God's children. Is this not why Christ came? Immanuel – God with us!

Merry Christmas, Peter Holmes



Dear Friends:

Margaret and I are looking forward to the special services during Advent at Yorkminster Park after a three year hiatus. The worship and music and Peter's messages from the Word lift our spirits and help us focus on the One who came to reconcile us to God, and inspires us to serve. As we celebrate the long-ago birth of Jesus, may He be ever-present to us through the living out of our faith amongst family, friends and community contacts.

I am most grateful to those who have opened up their homes to me during these months - giving me relief from driving from Keswick every day - and to all for the warmth of your welcome back.

May God's peace be with you through this blessed season and into the New Year.

John Torrance, Interim Associate Minister,
Pastoral Care



Last Sunday a child from Grade 3 looked up at me and said, "I know the bible verse off by heart". I urged her to say it and she slowly and clearly said, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

In this season of so much 'getting' it is also our privilege to give thanks and to share gifts with others. Our children have tender hearts to those in need. Karen Robinson met with our Grade 1 to 5 students and they asked great questions about how they could help families in need. Let's follow their lead and give out of thankful hearts in this season of celebration of Jesus' birth.

May the Lord bless you and your loved ones in this special season.

Miriam Little, Director of Children's Ministries



As you join together with friends and family near and far, may you indeed share the joy, love and wholeness, the Christ child came to bring.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas.

Heather Hetherington, Parish Nurse

BREATHING IN, BREATHING OUT...

On November 4, 2011, approximately seventy of us gathered at Tyndale Seminary to explore what it means to be people of mission and worship in challenging times where Christianity and the church no longer have the status that they once did in Canada. Alan and Eleanor Kreider, Mennonite theologians and good friends of our interim minister Brian Haymes and his wife, Jenny, engaged in a thought provoking dialogue about worship and mission after Christendom.

Commending what they refer to as *Classic Mission* - "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." (Matt. 28: 19-20), where the church or a mission agency are the senders, they also encouraged the expansion of our understanding of the *Mission of God/missio Dei* to include every Christian, with God as the sender and without force or coercion. We are all baptized into God's reconciling mission - the whole church is an instrument of God's mission!

Foundational to this conviction are central texts from John 5:19, "I can only do what I see the Father doing;" John 20:21, "As the Father sent me, so I send you;" Col. 1:20, "Reconciling all things..." and Isaiah 11:1-9, "the wolf and the lamb reconciled," a beautiful picture of the peaceable kingdom. In the *missio Dei*, the mission field, rather than being far from home as in *Classic Mission*, is "everywhere". All societies, cities, neighbourhoods, workplaces are in need of God's reconciling work, the healing good news of Jesus Christ. The goal of *missio Dei* and our goal as the sent people of God is to reconcile all things in Christ in an all-embracing *shalom*.

The Kreiders cited significant strengths of the *missio Dei*. Mission is God's activity - an expression of God's character, a gift of God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. God's methods are gentle. We can miss seeing God's action but we can't stop it! God's mission is also big as it's intended to reverse

the Fall and to bring *shalom* - right relationships with God, others and all of creation characterized by healing, wholeness, peace and justice. God is at work outside the church as well as in it. The Gospel is holistic as it holds together salvation with discipleship, spiritual work with secular work, mission with peace, sharing our faith along with reconciliation and caring for creation. God's mission overcomes specialization as it is the animating centre of the life of every Christian and of the entire church. There are no specialists and no mission-free zones!

How does this all come about? In worship, God forms us to participate in his mission. We assemble to ascribe worth to God and to glorify him - to praise, pray, hear God's story, give testimony,

celebrate the Lord's supper and baptism, make peace and welcome others. God sends us out as he answers prayer, feeds and ministers to us, builds a community of faith, shapes and heals us and gives us hope. We then notice God at work and become alert to opposition, greed, oppression, injustices and

violence in our culture. We meet others in "liminal" spaces or "the borderlands." Our incarnational lives become attractive in God's world and people are drawn to him as he lives and loves through us.

Worship and mission, then, are synergistic. Missional behaviour happens only as we are involved in worship and worship happens when we are involved in mission. In their book, *Worship and Mission After Christendom*, the Kreiders sum up their thesis: "It is God whose work brings cosmic reconciliation. It is Jesus Christ through whom God has definitively reconciled the world to God. It is the Holy Spirit who continues to nurture, nudge and blaze forth to enable the impossible to happen. And we? We are God's children, God's servants who ascribe worth to God by *breathing in* - worshipping the Lord with gladness and by *breathing out* - collaborating with God as God continues the story and brings the peaceable kingdom (Pg 247).

submitted by Jonanne Fenton



KNITTING INTO THE MYSTERY

On the fourth Tuesdays of September and October, this fall, 15 and subsequently 26 enthusiastic women of all ages gathered together in the YPBC Friendship Room to inaugurate a *Prayer Shawl Ministry*, coordinated by Rhoda Hill. Several beautifully crafted, multi-coloured, variously patterned, crocheted and knitted shawls were arrayed to inspire and encourage us. Interesting yarns, patterns, needles accompanied by expert advice and instruction were at our finger tips to help us launch a shawl on our own whether we were novice or expert: prayer shawls that will ultimately be distributed by members of our Pastoral Care team to enfold and comfort people going through chemotherapy, bereavement, in nursing homes or shut-in, as well as those with lengthy



illnesses, a terminal diagnosis or in need of a tangible expression of God's love. Each completed shawl will be delivered with a written prayer and card sharing the love and care with which each shawl has been created.

As we knit, crochet and pause from our chatting, a portion may be read to us from the wonderful book, *Knitting Into the Mystery* by Susan Jorgensen and Susan Izard. The authors share the stories of how the prayer shawl ministry began and has touched lives and hearts around the world. They offer directions for knitting the shawls and for starting a church or community knitting ministry and also provide a selection of thoughtful prayers written from many faith traditions to choose from and offer with each completed shawl. They also marvel that

“out of a single strand of yarn, a flowing fabric emerges that will eventually wrap itself around another's shoulders and speak love into another's heart, a visual expression of Mystery (Pg 8).” As



Jorgensen says, “we celebrate our God who knits us into wholeness, who enables us to care for others, who encircles the world in an eternal shawl of love and

comfort. We celebrate our God who is Presence, who is Wisdom, who is Mystery (Pg xi).”



Joyfully and contemplatively we embrace the authors' prayer for all those who are knitting and crocheting shawls wherever we may be:

Our Prayer for You

Susan S. Jorgensen and Susan S. Izard

May God touch your hands with love
May God guide your needles with compassion
May God fill your yarn with Spirit.

May God touch your heart with peace
May God guide your soul to freedom
May God fill your mind with silence.

May God touch your shawls with warmth
May God guide your community with joy
May God fill our world with hope.

May your knitting be blessed
(Pg 134).

Please note: Women and men too! are invited to join us whether just learning or expert, on the fourth Tuesday of each month, 7 PM in the Friendship Room. Expert help is available. A copy of *Knitting Into the Mystery* will be placed by the Women's Executive in the Gladstone Library.



submitted by Women's Executive

*Christmas hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon;
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heart of June;
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show.*

Christina Rossetti

MEN'S BAKING GROUP

Most Churches do not have a men's baking group. What started as a project to provide breakfasts for a speaker's series in April 2005 morphed into this fellowship of retired or semi-retired men who gather together in the church kitchen and produce exceptional Christmas fruit cakes, delicious chocolate muesli nuggets, and batches of hot-cross buns for Easter. In a burst of enthusiasm, one January they prepared a gourmet meal of appreciation for Sunday School teachers and on several occasions catered a picnic on the church lawn where the Salvation Army band performed and Dawn King led a hymn sing.

John Torrance, as Interim Minister of Pastoral Care, had a successful men's group at a previous church in Sarnia. They met at a local restaurant at 7:00 am to hear a guest speaker and then went on to regular weekday occupations. No local restaurants were available here, so it was decided to begin it at the church. The first speaker was David C. Bental, a businessman and author from Vancouver. Almost 50 men showed up so the project seemed encouraging. The next speaker was Neil Hetherington, CEO of Habitat for Humanity Toronto, in October 2005. In May 2006 Charlie Angus, MPP for Timmins-James Bay spoke. His sister, Kathleen, was the church administrator at the time. In October 2006 the speaker was the Rev. Dr. John Niles, Minister of St. Andrews United Church in Markham, and author of the book *How I Became Father to 1000 Children*. This book deals with abused children and how he and his wife Liane have provided foster care over the years. In January 2007 Stuart Campbell, CEO of Trimark Athletic Supplies talked about his faith journey and how it affects his work, family and church life. And in October 2007, Dr. Gary Ellis PhD and former superintendent of Toronto Police Services was the speaker.

Although attendance at these breakfasts gradually declined, it did bring together a dedicated group of

men who found a common purpose. We realized that those setting up and organizing the breakfasts enjoyed the camaraderie and worked well together. We also benefited from the expertise of "executive chef" Albert Schnell, whose talents could lead on to new projects. Thus the Men's Baking Group was formalized.

Since then we have acquired the equipment needed for baking on a larger scale and have supplied funds for many worthwhile Christian projects. The House of Compassion is a regular recipient of the funds we raise. Other projects we have supported include



Church sponsored missionaries, the Board of Mission refugee project, the Youth ministry summer intern project, a Baptist run orphanage as part of Haiti earthquake relief, Urban Promise Toronto, and Camp Hope at Warden Woods Scarborough Baptist Church. We have also supported a fund that CAMH uses for personal need supplies of patients that are not covered by Government support. The need continues to be great but we do what we can with your support.

So what began as a breakfast ministry now provides an opportunity to raise monies for a number of Christian projects, as well as an opportunity for you to enjoy delicious baking. As such, the calories are all guilt free.

submitted by Bob Allen

YORKMINSTER PARK GALLERY

The miracle of beauty is not that it exists, but that we are made with the capacity for seeing it and the urge to create it.

Artist **Robin Laws Field** recognizes beauty daily in the most ordinary settings. She closely observes patterns, textures, colours and designs of our everyday world: weathered fencing, rusting sheet metal, well-worn pavement. Whenever such a subject captures Robin's attention, she photographs it --- up close. But that is only the documentation, not the art.



Robin Laws Field is a fibre artist. Her creativity is ignited by the challenge of translating a closely-observed peeling poster into a small, exquisite art quilt. As Robin says, "I hope to show that art is always just a glance away." She uses beads, found objects, yarn, building materials and more in combination with every known art supply, yet in all her mixed media artworks the common element is the threaded needle.

Surfaces is an exhibition of eighteen mixed media art quilts and runs **through Dec 21, 2011.**

Coming in January – Yorkminster Park Gallery is very pleased to coordinate our first exhibition of botanical art. YPBC's own **Esther Lovrics** joins **Joan Burdette Ness** in a two-artist show of their

award-winning works.

**Opening reception: Sun, Jan 15, 2012,
12:30-2:30pm** Continues to mid-February.

TRANSITIONS

Since the last newsletter there have been several milestones in the life of the church.

Births

Lis Alison King *d of Rev. Carolyn and Greg King*

Abernathy Leannah Mundy *d of Naomi (Dawkins) and Steve Mundy (gd of Ettie Dawkins)*

Hanna Beatrice Elaine Carlén *d of Susan and Anders Carlén (gd of Rhoda and Paul Hill)*

Victoria Rose Schmidt *d of Rev. Pamela Fitkin-Schmidt and Paul Schmidt*

Jesse Robert Finn *s of Leanne and Stuart Finn (gs of Valerie and John Gerber)*

Baptisms

Eva Na-Guo

New Members

Eva Na-Guo

Elizabeth Wise

Ben Gelfand

Deaths

Ronald Bertrand Crowe

Norman William Purser

SPECIAL THANKS

Glasgow, November 2011 - The Spiers family would like to say a big "Thank You" to all our friends in Yorkminster Park Baptist Church for the wonderful support we received - expressed in cards, prayers and countless other kindnesses- during Kerr's illness and subsequent death on September 28th. We have all been sustained by this Christian love which has surrounded us and it has been deeply meaningful. Kerr, our Dad, felt a great attachment to Yorkminster Park Baptist Church and we wish to say Thank You to all our friends in this wonderful congregation.

With best wishes from Betty, Fiona and Graham.

COMMUNICATION NEWS

All You Need To Know About Blogging

Since Peter Holmes has started blogging, many of you have asked us questions about blogs. Here are some of your questions, answered!

What is a blog?

A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog is a “blogger.” Our Peter Holmes is a blogger! Individual articles on a blog are called “blog posts,” “posts” or “entries”. Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog. Postings on a blog are almost always arranged in chronological order with the most recent additions featured most prominently.

Blogs are created and maintained online by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Some blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other. A typical blog contains text, images and links to other blogs, web pages and other media related to its topic. Most blogs are however primarily textual. As of February 2011 there were over 156 million public blogs in existence!

Types of blogs

The **personal blog** is an ongoing diary or commentary by an individual and is the most common and traditional blog. Personal bloggers usually take great care of their blog site, posting regularly and in some cases corresponding with their readers. Blogs often become more than just a way to communicate; they become a way to reflect on life. Blogging can have a sentimental value. Few personal blogs rise to fame and the mainstream, but some personal blogs garner an extensive following. Some sites, such as **Twitter**, allow bloggers to share thoughts and feelings instantaneously with friends and family, and are much faster than emailing or writing.

Blogs used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation, or externally for marketing or public relations purposes are called

corporate blogs. Similar blogs for clubs and societies are called **club blogs** or **group blogs**. The typical use is to inform members and other interested parties of club and member activities.

How did blogs come into existence?

The modern blog evolved from the online diary, where people would keep a running account of their personal lives. Most writers called themselves diarists, or journalists. Early blogs were simply manually updated components of common websites. Now technology allows for regular posting of new articles and new browser software allows web users to access these blogs automatically when updates occur. This access tool is called an RSS feed.

What is an RSS feed?

It is a tool that allows you the user to automatically download a blog that interests you each time there is a new entry. This system can be fully explained to you when you click on Peter’s Blog on our homepage. On the left side of Peter’s blog page is the question “What is an RSS feed”, which links to a full explanation. From there, you will be coached on how to automatically access Peter’s blogs.



image National Post

Peter’s Blogs

Peter started his blog in the Spring of 2010, and now has over 20 entries. To our delight, he continued blogging while on sabbatical. His readership is plentiful and is widespread across the globe. When you click on Peter’s blog on the homepage of the Yorkminster Park website you will see a listing of all of the entries and can access any or all of them. The intent of this blog is for Peter to share his thoughts about life as he sees it, in the ordinariness of every day living. They are in turn thoughtful, humorous, sad, controversial, and serendipitous. There is always food for thought as we live out our Christian lives.

Peter welcomes feedback through his regular email at jpholmes@yorkminsterpark.com. We encourage you to sign up for an RSS feed and receive these blogs as they are posted!

Yorkminster Park Baptist Church is going national!

During this Advent season we will be viewed on national television! The first opportunity will be with the **City Carol Sing Concert** which is on December 17th, and will be aired on **Citytv** on Christmas Eve

and Christmas Day. We will advise of the exact times when they become available.

Our Carols by Candlelight Service,

December 11th, will be aired on CTS on the following dates:

CTS Ontario:

Saturday, December 17th 9:30 – 10:30 pm
Friday December 23rd 11 pm – Midnight
Sunday, December 25th 9 – 10 pm

CTS Calgary:

Saturday, December 17th 9:30 – 10:30 pm
Friday, December 23rd 2:00 – 3:00 pm
Sunday, December 25th 10:00 – 11:00 pm

CTS Edmonton:

Saturday, December 17th 9:30 – 10:30 pm
Friday, December 23rd 2 – 3 pm
Sunday, December 25th 10 – 11 pm

CTS can be viewed on Channel 9 on Rogers TV. On satellite CTS can be viewed on Shaw Direct 355 and Bell TV 651.

We encourage all of you to attend these wonderful services with your family and friends, and also to let people know here and in the west of these wonderful viewing opportunities. We are indebted to our Board of Music, our Director of Music, our Choirs, and David King and his webcasting crew, for making this exciting outreach possible.

submitted by the Communications Committee

OUR OWN “STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND” - Meet them at the Manger

The “wise men from the East” in Matthew’s account of the nativity story are usually referred to as *magi*. *Magi* traditionally denoted priestly practitioners of Zoroastrianism, one of the ancient world’s main religions, which originated in Persia. Their esoteric learning and wisdom included the ability to read stars; hence the *magi*’s quickness to appreciate the significance of that divine star that first Advent.



What powerful impulse impelled the *magi* to travel a dangerous distance to pay homage to an insignificant baby? We don’t know – only that it was divinely ordained for these princely priests to take their place in that stable, kneeling with their gifts among shepherds and cattle and other barn animals.

More than two thousand years later, the congregation of Yorkminster Park will unite in worship of that baby with travellers from that same country whence came the *magi*: Ebrahim, Batoul, and Nazli. This new Canadian family, whom we welcomed to Toronto in August 2011 as refugees under our sponsorship, also made an arduous and long, but divinely guided, journey toward our body of Christ. Slowly but surely, they have been making the transition from strangers to family members. They have met more and more of the YPBC congregation, through being guests of one-on-one hospitality and of larger meet ‘n’ greet gatherings; volunteering in church activities like the Men’s baking group; and in Bible study like the College & Careers group. Meanwhile, Ebrahim and Batoul have focused their energies on improving their English through daily ESL classes. Nazli has been excelling in her studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga, while she fulfills a major role as interpreter for her parents.

The hardships of life since they first left their homeland over ten years ago have given them innumerable opportunities to practice endurance, patience and grace under stress. This first year of their new life in Canada will continue to offer many challenges. From what we know and have seen, however, this family has a remarkable capacity to overcome difficulties.

In this season, we are reminded that following His birth, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph fled danger, and were exiled as strangers in a strange land. Out of our love for Him, in gratitude for the priceless gift He has given us for eternity and in obedience to His command, let us continue to show our welcome to Ebrahim, Batoul, and Nazli.

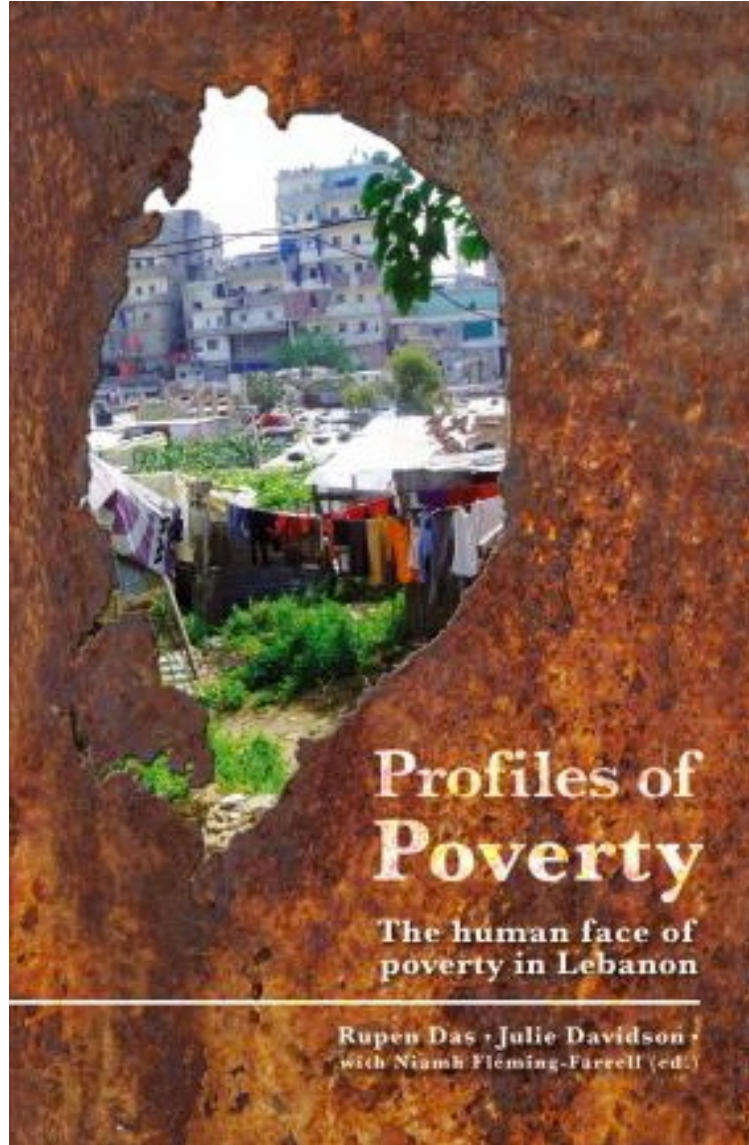
To learn more, or to get involved with helping Ebrahim, Batoul, and Nazli settle in Toronto, contact Janet Kim at 416-978-1950 or frozeninyellowknife@hotmail.com.

submitted by Janet Kim, Chair, Refugee Sponsorship and Settlement Committee, Board of Misson

BOOK LAUNCH - LEBANON

Profiles of Poverty, by Rupen Das and Julie Davidson, a study of poverty in Lebanon, was successfully launched on November 17th at the American University of Beirut. Approximately 250 guests including students, staff, heads of NGOs and the UN, representatives of several Lebanese churches, diplomats and ambassadors, representatives of international aid organizations and key government officials were in attendance. The Minister of Social Affairs was the chief guest and the Director of the National Poverty Targeting Program, a department reporting directly to the Lebanese Cabinet, was present as well.

Presentations were made by the national Director of World Vision, Lebanon and Dr. Nabil Costa, Director of the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development/Lebanese Baptist Society outlining the work of their organizations. An editor of the *Daily Star*, the national English paper, spoke about the need for the media and the press to begin to highlight issues of poverty and then Rupen spoke about his book. The Minister of Social Affairs acclaimed this study stating that many excellent poverty studies have been done all over the world but this was the first time they were hearing the voices of the poor. He affirmed that it was the government's responsibility to respond. He also mentioned the new poverty targeting program that the government is implementing and called on the Prime Minister and Lebanon to ensure that more was done.



Along with Lebanese media there were reporters who write for the *Sunday Times* and the *Independent* in the UK. The third largest Arabic newspaper had already published the full text of the executive summary and one of the major networks wants to do a feature program on the book and the issue of

poverty in the country. The UN agency libraries and some of the major national research institutions have subsequently called, asking for copies of the book.

Rupen acknowledges that none of this would have been possible if Canadian Baptist Ministries had not provided the funding for research and a good portion of the funding for publication. He expresses gratefulness for our prayers and writes that "God has been gracious in allowing us to speak and also allowing the poor to have a voice – this book was meant to do that for them."

His heart's desire is

that as readers get a glimpse of the values of the Kingdom of God they would start to thirst for the King as well - an Advent prayer as the world anticipates the birth of the baby King.

Rupen and Mamta Das are members of Yorkminster Park Baptist Church.

submitted by Jonanne Fenton

for additional reading and interview with RD go to <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/poverty-lebanon-white-elephant>

BOOK REVIEW

Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith; Sex God: Exploring the Endless Connections Between Sexuality and Spirituality; Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived all by Rob Bell



Several years ago a colleague recommended the book *Velvet Elvis* in hopes that several of us could have some discussion around the topics arising from the text. What began with *Velvet Elvis* also included *Sex God* and *Love Wins* each written by Rob Bell the Pastor of the Mars Hill

Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In *Velvet Elvis* Rob Bell sets out to ask questions about how we ‘do’ church; what it means to be a follower of Christ in this current age and makes some very provocative suggestions about both. The book is written in a very inviting style with an eye towards new believers and those discouraged by the ‘traditional’ church. For example:

And while I’m at it, let’s make a group decision to drop once and for all the Bible-as-owner’s-manual metaphor. It’s terrible. It really is.

When was the last time you read the owner’s manual for your toaster? Do you find it remotely inspiring or meaning?

You only refer to it when something’s wrong with your toaster. You use it to fix the problem and then you put it away (Pg 62).

Each chapter focuses on a specific topic, while always keeping the gospel of Jesus and the kingdom come within view.

When I saw *Sex God* in the denomination book store it was a ‘no-brainer.’ I couldn’t put it down! It is now the book, without exception, I will be recommending and purchasing for young people, teens and *twenty-somethings*, that are searching for godly discussion on sex, relationships and self-worth. Starting with the chapter titles the reader is compelled to read-on; God Wears Lipstick, Leather, Whips and Fruit and

Whoopee Forever, just to name a few. Like *Velvet Elvis* the text is filled with everyday stories and relevant analogies derived from biblical narratives. The stories of scripture are used to encourage and guide rather than to punish and beat us over the head. I was

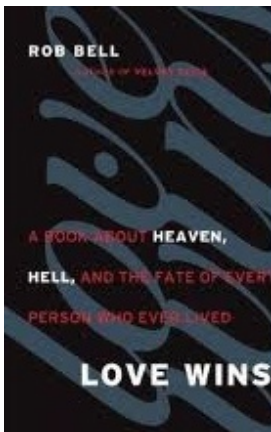
particularly taken with his way of relating sex to connection; “For many, sexuality is simply what happens between two people involving physical pleasure. But that’s only a small percentage of what sexuality is. Our sexuality is all of the ways we strive to reconnect with our world, with each other and with God” (Pg 42). The theme of connection, unconnected and reconnection is woven through topics including abuse, divorce, celibacy, sexual intimacy and love. The end notes include questions suitable for discussion in small groups or personal study and would make a good book study for college/career age groups.

Every man, woman, and youth, whether married or single, will be able to glean something from giving the topics mentioned serious thought and prayer; if not only to teach, but to reinforce and remind us of our special connection with God in Jesus Christ and how special we are and have always been to God.

The last of the three, *Love Wins*, has received much unfavorable press, particularly from the conservative /evangelical religious media; all this even before the book’s publication. Now having read the text I can only assume that the ‘uproar’ was more a marketing ploy and a great way to sell books as opposed to people really having some objection to its contents. I was all ears at Chapter 1 when Bell tells the story of an art show at the church. It seems one of the artist included a quote from Mahatma Gandhi and someone attached a note to it, “Reality check: He’s in hell”(Pg 1). If Gandhi is in hell, and I am not God, how would I know; maybe it isn’t going to win many to Christ by declaring it from the rooftops (*my words and thoughts*).

Bell is asking persons that profess Christ as Lord and Savior to give some thought to the probability that what we say and how we say it tells others what we





think about God. We are challenged to think outside of narrow notions of inclusion and embrace a more open perspective. He discusses heaven, hell and what God wants from us all as followers of Christ.

To be 'hell-bent' is to be "fixed, obsessed, unshakable in their pursuit, unwavering in their commitment to a

destructive direction" (Pg 90). God's love "speaks new words into the world and into us. Potentials, possibilities, and the promise that God has an imagination and is not afraid to use it" (Pg 116).

On inclusivity and exclusivity: There is an exclusivity on the other side of inclusivity. This kind insists that Jesus is the way, but holds tightly to the assumption that the all-embracing, saving love of this particular Jesus Christ will of course include all sorts of unexpected people from across the cultural spectrum" (Pg 155).

Rob Bell has written exactly the type of book that has the potential to speak to this current generation; who are being educated alongside and living next door to practicing Muslims, Hindus and Shiites who are good and decent people and gives them language for inclusion and permission to partner with them against the world's big problems, such as, hunger, water shortages and human trafficking. I recommend the book completely as an opportunity for the church, church leaders and church people to enter this timely dialogue believing that the love of God made known to us through Jesus Christ does what we say it does - wins.

Cheryle R.C. Hanna, Associate Minister – Discipleship

GLOBE AND MAIL 29 October 2011

Article by Colin Eatock (Re: Pianos), with Gene Dinovi, Jazz Musician



GENE DINOVI

What are your favourites in Toronto?

But there's a Steinway at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church that may be the best piano I've ever played in my life. It has an incredible range of sound: you can play a perfect pianissimo on it, and a fortissimo that can be heard across the street.

contributed by Fraser Fell

FROM THE PARISH NURSE

As we approach this Christmas I recall a wonderful experience of last year at this time.

During Advent, ninety-five members of our Church family collectively walked thousands of kilometers equivalent to the distance from Toronto to Bethlehem. But this wasn't just an attempt to increase our physical activity level. It was a time, through weekly meditations, to quietly reflect and prepare our hearts for Christmas.

This journey was shared with us by Dr. Nadel Tbaileh, who himself had made the spiritual walk from Islam to Christianity. Nadel, who then lived in Toronto, was by profession an anesthetist, and in an effort to retain his skills and support his family, he found it necessary to return to Palestine. After four months in Ramallah, working in a Government hospital where wages were withheld, conditions were abysmal, Nadel's prayers were answered when he was taken on staff at a Christian hospital in Bethlehem.

In May Peter Holmes and my husband Harold met up with him in Bethlehem, in Manger Square. The reunion of the three men in this most significant place brought much joy and comfort as they prayed together and shared the experiences of the past year. Health, we know, is not just the absence of disease but wholeness of body, mind and spirit. This year I'll remember and pray for our friend Nadel as he serves in the name of Christ the Healer, in Bethlehem, the birthplace of our Saviour and Lord.

Heather Hetherington