

• GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION •



YPBC News



Published by:

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HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW !

Bird seed is not cheap. At least not the seed I buy to keep the cardinals coming back to the feeder. The cardinal is a magnificent bird and to see both male and female visiting the feeder on a regular basis all year round is inspiring. However, several weeks back I began to notice the seed going down faster than ever. It is a large feeder and what used to take two to three weeks to empty was now disappearing in less than a week. Did I mention the seed is not cheap?

Finally I decided I would keep closer watch and scout out the feeding patterns wondering who else might be helping themselves to the seed I bought for the cardinals. I knew the feeder was squirrel proof and the seed is apparently not of interest to rodents, though a small chipmunk does camp out beneath it to take the crumbs from the table, so to speak.

As I lay in wait I saw a finch go to the feeder which is fine, except they have a feeder of their own with a seed no other birds seem drawn to, but it couldn't have been one finch ravaging seed. I had no concern about the finch and the finch is also an attractive bird.

Finally I figured it out. It was a sparrow. Correction. It was a flock of sparrows. Sparrows have been wolfing down my expensive birdseed! I was feeling a bit like the farmers who from time to time see sparrows devour their fields of freshly planted seed. One might argue that it is nature's way except the sparrow was never native to the Americas. Some may say they devour insects, except they much prefer seed and apparently even the finest and most expensive seed.

Were all of this true of the cardinal or goldfinch I would still feed them because they are so beautiful, but there is nothing particularly attractive about the sparrow in its dull gray and brown foliage. Sparrows love the cities and I am not sure there is a single city in North America, or Europe, Asia and Africa that does not consider them a pest.

Some years back, China attempted to wipe them out, but they are far too resilient for such efforts. In fact so prolific are their numbers the ancient Greeks associated them with Aphrodite the goddess of love, but in most cultures they are simply associated with things common, vulgar and

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The cover. "Looking In" to the Sanctuary, a Worship Service; the Cross, flowers in the Chancel and the People, and "Reflecting Out" the west narthex windows, the entry doors and the City beyond, a car on Yonge Street.

In this issue one of the feature articles, by John Fenton, introduces our Administrative, and Buildings & Facilities Staff. The other feature article, by Peter Ferguson, presents rational arguments as to why the Bible is True (Christianity 101).

Comments and suggestions for future editions of the YPBC News are welcome. Please send them to:

pilgrim.h@sympatico.ca

Wishing everyone "The Joy of Summer"

Paul R. Hill

lewd. And that in a nutshell is why I did not want to share my expensive seed with a flock of sparrows. What's more, they seem to not only hog the seed, but actually keep the cardinals away. Yet they are smaller, so it must be either their superior numbers or their sharp ugly beak.

Getting rid of these beasts is not easy and so I have had it on my mind quite a bit which may well explain why I was taken aback by a familiar old hymn sung at a funeral I was conducted recently. Jackie Richardson, the great Canadian jazz legend, was our guest soloist and she was every bit as compelling and moving as Ethel Waters.

My eye was on the sparrow too, but not because I cared for it. The song was inspired by the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26) and "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father knowing. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

I am just going to have to learn to love the sparrows, because they are so precious to God. What a wonderful truth. If sparrows are precious to God, so are all those who may seem unremarkable and insignificant to the world around. This is good news for everyone the world passes over in favour of someone younger or older, or more beautiful, or richer or wiser.

Civilla Martin wrote the hymn in 1905 after meeting an Elmira New York couple who were full of joy in their lives despite the fact the woman, a Mrs. Doolittle, had been bedridden for over twenty years and her husband was an incurable cripple. No one could erase their smiles and their exuberance for life was contagious. So much so, that someone asked them their secret in the presence of Civilla Martin, "His eye is on the sparrow," they responded, "and I know God watches me!"

I am a reluctant learner when it comes to the sparrows, but the other day I dropped in on someone who had been sent home after weeks in hospital but still not able to get up and about. Yet she was beside herself with joy because a family member had pried open a window that had been painted shut twenty years ago and a sparrow had taken to perching on the branch and offering a song.

So I have given up my fight with the sparrow. I only wish I could entice them to a cheaper seed.

By the way Janet and I would be delighted to have you join us in our garden for Tea on Sunday, June 30 between 2 and 4 p.m. I guarantee the birds will make an appearance and hopefully there will be a few flowers in bloom too. It will be a great way to usher in the summer on the eve of our national holiday. There will be no 7 p.m. service on June 30, but if the sparrows make an appearance we are guaranteed a song.

Peter Holmes

MUSINGS FROM THE MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE



"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:14-15)

Years ago, when I was studying for the ministry at Wycliffe College, our homiletics professor was Dr. Leonard Griffith. Leonard had a great career as a preacher, including such famous pulpits as City Temple in London, England and St. Paul's Cathedral (Bloor Street) here in Toronto. Shortly after he retired, he wrote his autobiography entitled *From Sunday to Sunday*. In this book, he describes his 50 years of active preaching ministry. He chose this title because like every preacher,

Sunday is the key day of the week for preaching and connecting with the people of your congregation. Leonard touches on a significant point that is familiar to all pastors – Sundays are key days, but they come around all too quickly.

Prior to coming to Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, I preached almost every Sunday for close to 30 years. It is a great privilege and responsibility to get up in front of a congregation and interpret God's Word. It is a task which I (and I think most other pastors) do not take lightly. Over the course of my ministry, I have sometimes been asked about my vocation, and what challenges a pastor faces in ministry. Well, there are many responsibilities that require leadership, tact, grace and more than a little "fear and trepidation." Pastoral care, weddings, funerals, counselling, dealing with tragedies, helping people navigate the stresses of changing culture, etc. – these are just some of the challenges. But when someone asks me: "What has been the hardest part of your job as a pastor?" I can answer honestly and without hesitation: coming up with something intelligent to say about the Christian faith every seven days. It isn't easy, and most every pastor I know wrestles with the same question when considering a Bible passage to preach on: "Is there a word from the Lord?"

Over the past decade, I have attended the Festival of Homiletics five times. This festival focuses on the art or craft of preaching (or as one wag put it, "the art of keeping people awake")! I have come to believe that preaching is still an integral part of the church's ministry. We are called "to proclaim the message; to be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; to convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2) Last month, Peter Holmes and I travelled to this year's festival which was held in Nashville, TN. The conference featured speakers from across North America, including some preachers which we have hosted here at Yorkminster Park in recent years. A couple of hi-lights for me: Craig Barnes, a pastor and professor from Princeton Theological Seminary, wonderfully described preaching as "maintaining God's sacred conversation with the congregation." Walter Brueggemann, from Columbia University, is one of world's authorities on Old Testament interpretation. Now turning 80, he was interviewed one night at the festival about his years of teaching. His characteristic wit and biblical knowledge made for a humorous and engaging interview.

The late Scottish-American minister, Peter Marshall, was one of the foremost preachers of his day, and served as chaplain of the U.S. Senate. In one of his famous sermons, Marshall talks about the craft of preaching. He asks the question: "What gives a person the right to stand before one's peers and preach the gospel?" He concludes that it is not the fact that one has trained at seminary, or has oratorical gifts, or has even been ordained as clergy. No, Marshall affirms that it is God's calling. He calls it "the tap on the shoulder," where God touches us and we turn around to follow his call. Here's how he describes it in his own words (the language may be somewhat outdated, but the principle is true):

"By what right does a man stand before his fellows, Bible in hand, and claim their attention? Not because he is better than they are, not because he has attended a theological seminary and studied Hebrew, Greek and theology. But primarily because he is obeying a "tap on the shoulder." Because God has whispered to him in his ear and conscripted him for the glorious company of those voices crying in the wilderness of life. The preacher is conscious of being called, as we say, and that means that he is responding to an inward urge that could not be resisted.... The true minister is in his pulpit not because he has chosen that profession as an easy means of livelihood, but because he could not help it, because he has obeyed an imperious summons that will not be denied."

As part of the Yorkminster Park family, I thank you for the privilege of being one of your ministers – for the opportunity to obey "the tap on the shoulder" in my life, to be both a preacher and pastor among you. My prayer is that you also will consider God's "tap on the shoulder" in your life, whatever your calling may be.

Dale Rose

SELLING WATER BY THE RIVER

Selling Water by the River: A Book About the Life Jesus Promised and the Religion That Gets in the Way by Shane Hipps (2012, Jericho Books, New York)

Everyone gets thirsty. Jesus is the water, the river to quench that thirst. The church often is the obstacle to everyone getting to the river that is intended for everyone. This is the heart of the book "Selling Water by the

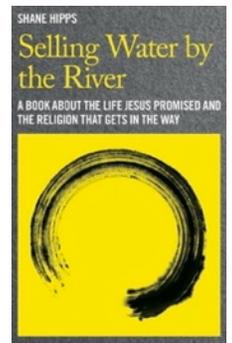


River” a sensitive critique of the church of Jesus Christ from within. Shane Hipps writes: “You can find members of that religion who will defend it, sometimes to the death (either their own or someone else’s.) You can also find those disillusioned by that same religion who vehemently denounce it; it failed them, injured them, betrayed them, or let them down.” (Hipps, 5) The book is written for each, the members, those killed (spirituality and emotionally) and clearly for those disillusioned.

Hipps shakes a gentle finger at the formalized church for obstructing the way. He begins with a discussion on how we hear and read scripture. He calls it our “lens.” “A lens can be a set of assumptions or beliefs that we have. Sometimes it can be an emotion like fear or anger.” (Hipps, 17) Everyone has a ‘lens’ and that lens can be

instructive and can also be the first obstruction to the river. Hipps uses the familiar stores of the biblical narrative to reclaim the access to the river always desired by God, beginning with the lens used by Jesus Christ! I was challenged my own lens which takes seriously the historical use of scripture to ‘hold down’ women, the disenfranchised and the poor as a read scripture. Is my lens obstructing the way for any of God’s children?

This easy-to-read book is filled with illustrations and stories making it perfect for every age or group, but I think the 25 – 40 crowd would hear within its pages their own critique of the church and ways to navigate those waters. The preacher, teachers and students of scriptures will glean deeper insight and may decide to set a new course, but all will reach the water and drink and never be thirsty again.



Cheryle R.C. Hanna

PARISH NURSE



First and foremost, I thank everyone for the welcome and support I’ve received as the new Parish Nurse for the Yorkminster Park Baptist Church community. I’m available for personal and family health counselling and/or referral to Church and community resources from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 pm on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Evening appointments are also available. Please feel free to contact me at 416 922-1428, or parishnurse@yorkminsterpark.com. All communications are confidential.

The *Nurse in the Park* program resumes at noon to 2pm, on Thursday June 27, and will continue through the summer in the YPBC park, where I will also be available for health counselling and information.

The YPBC Health and Wellness bulletins, which began in May, will continue with a focus on up to date health promotion information. Health promotion has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2005) as “*the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health and wellness*”. The YPBC Health and Wellness Bulletin will hopefully serve as an effective educational tool for optimizing the wellness of individual parishioners and the YPBC community as a whole. Please feel free to communicate with me, or members of the Health and Wellness Committee, any topics you would like covered. The Bulletin is now available in the new literature racks in the Narthex, YPBC Center Hall, and on the South Hall table, with the most current issue at the front of the racks, and previous issues at the back.

Thank you for your kind attention. I look forward to working together towards our collective wellness as we keep in mind Isaiah 40:31 *...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint*”.

Cathy Newman

FROM THE WOMEN'S EXECUTIVE ...

SOUL STRENGTH ...

This year's theme for CBOQ Assembly, June 13-15
(Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec)



Jesus asks us ...

What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?

Is anything worth more than your soul? Matt. 16:26

How do we respond ?

At this year's Assembly, Ruth Hayley Barton walked with us toward developing our soul strength. Ruth has a Doctor of Divinity degree from Northern Baptist Seminary and is the founder of The Transforming Center (www.thetransformingcenter.org), a ministry dedicated to strengthening the souls of clergy, Christian leaders and the congregations and organizations they serve. She is also a trained spiritual director and the author of numerous books including *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* and *Longing for More: A Woman's Faith to Transformation in Christ*.

In her introductory comments in *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, Ruth explains that when she refers to the soul, she's talking about the part of us that is most real - the essence of us that God knew before he brought us forth in physical form and that will exist after our bodies go "into the ground".

"This is the "you" that exists beyond any role you play, any job you perform, any relationship that seems to define you, or any notoriety or success you may have achieved.

It is the part of you that longs for more of God than you have right now, the part that may, even now, be aware of "missing" God amid the challenges of life in ministry (13)".

As the stability of a mountain comes from bedrock far below the surface, so the strength we need for life comes from a soul drawing deeply from a relationship with God. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* is a powerful leadership resource in which Ruth weaves together contemporary illustrations with insights from the life of Moses, Israel's greatest leader. She explores topics such as:

- responding to the dynamics of calling
- facing the loneliness of leadership
- leading from your authentic self
- cultivating spiritual community
- discerning God's will together



Each chapter includes a creative spiritual practice to ensure our soul nourishment and provide opportunity for further reflection.

In *Longing for More: A Woman's Faith to Transformation in Christ*, Ruth refers to the emptiness or numbness of soul we can experience when we get too caught up in the noisiness of daily life, materialism and being unable to say "no" to commitments that are not good for us. We forfeit the stillness in which God's voice can be heard and the truth that is born of quietness and expectant waiting on God. In this volume she guides women, whether married or single:

- to find all we need in Christ so that our human relationships are sources of joy but don't take God's place
- to learn to receive from God what only God can ultimately give
- to move to the place where our relationship with Christ is the bedrock of our self-esteem.

She encourages women to know that God's purposes for our lives go beyond all the roles and identities we fulfill and are rooted in His unconditional love for us.

"The challenge for women today is to take responsibility for the adult task of defining ourselves, not in relationship to gender roles, career or sex appeal but in relation to the identity, worth, purpose and enabling that come from God himself (37)."

Toward this end women are encouraged to examine the gifts, experiences, opportunities and burdens that God is blending together in our lives to make us of unique use to him.

"God is putting together a package in each of our lives, preparing us to make a unique contribution to his Kingdom. We need to ask ourselves, What have I come to the Kingdom for? Why has God brought me to this particular time and place? (54)"

Longing for More draws deeply and richly from the lives of women in the Bible such as Abigail, Deborah, Huldah, Esther and Priscilla – “women who made an impact for God’s Kingdom as they acted in courageous ways that even now strike us as outside the normal woman’s role “ (67).

For further enrichment and reflection, Ruth includes spiritual practices at the end of each chapter, a broad selection of quotes and poetry and a helpful bibliography for further reading. And for those who meet with a “spiritual friend” on a regular basis, there is available at the conclusion of the book, a “Guide for Discussion with a Spiritual Friend.”

Longing for More is an invitation to women...

to transformation in Christ

to find our identity in Him

to stand for what we believe as we follow him in freedom and abandonment.

submitted by Jonanne Fenton

JESUS YOU ARE THE EVERLASTING

by Ebrahim

Your name is the sound of joy,
Your name is love.
Joy comes from you,
The Spring begins with you.
You are the dew for the flower bud;
You are so tender
That I am calling you with patience.
Jesus, you are the word
Jesus, you are the never finishing one.

You are the first word that we speak,
And your name is the last answer.
Kindness comes from you.
You are the heart’s cure.
You are so great
That the whole world is calling you.

Jesus, you are the message,
Jesus you are always the never finishing one.
Your name should be sung in a hymn

As high as the sky.
You are the end of the creation
The sweetness comes from you,
Salvation starts with you.

Tell me!
In the shadow of your cross
How am I standing?
My Jesus, tell me
With which of your names
Am I living?
My Jesus, tell me
With which of your words
Am I living?

Your name is the sound of joy
Your name is love.
Jesus, for us you are always flowing,
A fountain that never fails,
Jesus, you are the ever lasting and continuous one.

A special Thank you to Cathie Phillips for her help during the translation of this poem

WHO ARE THEY ?

Come with me on a journey of discovering the lives of people who are essential to the care of our church and who provide the comfort which we so take for granted. Underlying our Boards and ministry activities are a crew of dedicated people, without which it would be difficult to provide the ministries at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Ray Tafaj was a Veterinarian in Albania

Sheila Stonehouse has been at Yorkminster Park for thirteen years

Linda Browning has been the Director of Operations for one year

Denise Byard wrote for her University newspaper

Louie Kraja starts work at YPBC at 5:30 AM

Lorenc Sherko often greets you at the central door

Carlos Lopez comes from Bolivia

So, who are they and how do they help us? Their stories may surprise you.

Putting the essential work in context...

Yorkminster Park is a very large church embracing more than 90,000 sq. ft. of space. The facilities include:

- A sanctuary that accommodates 1,400 people
- Five floors with multiple rooms
- A full size gym that is used most days of the week by many organizations
- A unique Art Gallery
- A very large underground storage area
- Three special meeting rooms - Friendship Room, Cameron Hall, Heritage Room
- A library, two Board rooms, ten offices, choir rooms, three kitchens, a Youth Zone, Sunday School facilities that are also used Monday to Friday by the Dalton School

Four major choirs use the church facilities for rehearsals and concerts. Sixteen regular and twenty-five plus occasional, paying tenants used the facilities last year. This is in addition to all the church and member driven events and activities that require tracking, communication, setup and clean up. For example:

- The Out of the Cold program provides safe refuge, hospitality and emergency shelter for up to sixty homeless people from 7 PM to 8 AM each Wednesday evening from November to early April
- A public park is widely used by the community
- The Church Operating Budget projects expenditures of over \$1,700,000 in 2013
- There are approximately 900 (881 tax receipts issued in 2012) donors to the Church
- There are about 260 events in the Church each month, an average of over 8 per day

We may take for granted that we come into a clean and well cared for church facility where order and comfort is expected. Suffice it to say we are blessed with a very efficient and caring staff.

In my short period as Interim Church Administrator, I came to deeply appreciate these people, mostly working behind the scenes without fanfare. In fact it was a sensitive task to get these people to provide me with their story. They simply quietly enjoy doing their job well. What I do know is they appreciate affirming comments from those of us who benefit from their hard work.

I also know, regarding administrative responsibilities, that the hard work involved in producing financial statements does not excite applause like choral/organ splendour, yet the work demands may be the same. Unfortunately financial statements don't usually have musical characteristics unless of course you produce a surplus!

What follows is a snapshot of the lives of the people who deserve recognition, appreciation and our sincere thanks.



ADMINISTRATION:

LINDA BROWNING – Director of Operations



Linda started at Yorkminster Park on June 6, 2012 taking on a demanding job that embraces many areas of administration such as: accounting, monthly interim and year-end financial statements, audit preparation, budgets, tenant activities, human resources, supporting ministerial staff and several other administrative functions.

Born and raised in Toronto, Linda tells me she grew up in a family oriented village. The house in which she was raised, and where her father still lives, is about two miles from the homes in which each of her parents was raised; and she grew up within walking distance of grandparents, great aunts and uncles and their families, grateful that there was always someone she could count on.

Linda was the first in her family to attend university, obtaining an undergraduate degree in anthropology from the University of Toronto, followed by a graduate degree in Library Science from McGill University in Montreal. The latter intrigued her because she had worked for the local public library all through her school years. Linda has worked in several different industries including information systems, bibliographic, publishing and financial services, and has had a wide variety of management roles throughout her career, with substantial experience in technology, business management, finance and human resources. A considerable amount of her time was spent on project implementations, including technology systems, large organizational restructuring, business process and policy improvements. In 2009 Linda temporarily retired from CIBC after thirteen excellent years. It was then the role of Director of Operations at Yorkminster Park caught her eye.

Linda believes that her success comes from a balance of analytical skills, pragmatism and valuing and developing relationships with others. On her first year at Yorkminster Park, she admits she is still learning, believing and finding that the role largely focuses on collaboration and facilitation. In addition she says, “there are requirements for many hands – on activities, as well as a need for the ability to react quickly to the next “something” and there’s always “something”:

- from setting up chairs in Cameron Hall for a community meeting, to negotiating an agreement with a new tenant
- from dealing with staff, tenants and the Fire Captain after a false alarm to producing T4 slips
- from surviving her first financial audit, to searching for 2010 invoices in one of the many little storage rooms secreted throughout this large edifice

“Our team is small and roles are very specific with only a little room for overlap, but everyone’s intentions are good, and we cover for each other as much as we can.”

Linda is single with a large circle of family and friends and enjoys an active social life that includes opera, ballet, theatre, bridge and frequent cottage weekends. Her closing comment – “I appreciate very much the support that I have been given this year by both staff and all of the members of YPBC with whom I have had the opportunity and the pleasure to work.”

SHEILA STONEHOUSE – Manager of Financial Services

Sheila began work at Yorkminster Park in July 2000. She progressed from inputting the membership roll, then offerings and accounts payable, adding more responsibilities until 2011, when her multiple services were recognized and she was promoted to Manager of Financial Services. Sheila is known for her strong sense of integrity in maintaining the confidentiality of donor givings. She can be relied upon to work hard and get the detail you need promptly. If she has one fault, it’s underrating her ability.

Sheila was adopted at a young age and twenty-five years ago was found by a sister,



which led to two sisters and a brother. She has a close relation with another sister, Karen in Sudbury, has two children and five grandchildren. In 1996, Sheila lost her husband through illness. Sheila enjoys live theatre, reading and cooking for family.

She confided to me that Ray calls her at home if she doesn't show up at work to make sure she is okay, citing this as "a wonderful example of caring for each other".

DENISE BYARD – Ministry Assistant



Denise was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia and began her spiritual journey in 1987 at First Baptist Church in Toronto. She has been involved in child and youth ministries since 1992. Athletics were her life from childhood to 1995 when she won an award for the highest point total over five years for being involved in the most sports in high school. Denise obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Humanities (Philosophy, English and French) from Trinity Western University in British Columbia, where her diligence and servant attitude was recognized by a Service Award in 1998. Prior to coming to Yorkminster Park she taught English as a second language for nine years. Denise developed a great love for travelling and reading, particularly her Bible, as well as books on spirituality, business and travel. An interest in Desk Top Publishing started in high school with the annual year book and continued on to writing for her

university newspaper as well as several community magazines and newspapers which grew into a love for online print and media.

Denise's work as Ministry Assistant at Yorkminster Park began in 2010, supporting the ministry through leadership, communication and administration skills. The position description as designed by human resources paints a complex set of functions and responsibilities requiring many technical and human skills, organizational discipline and a clear understanding of the traditional culture of this church.

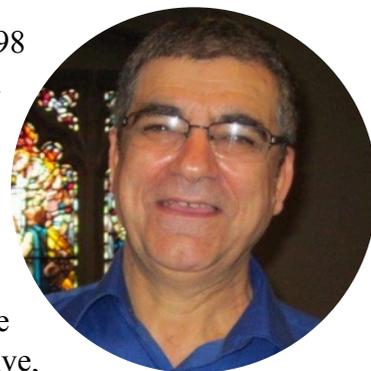
Denise requests our prayers for health and wisdom as she strives for the advancement of Yorkminster Park in knowledge, grace and godly living and uses her gifts and talents toward the mission of the church.

BUILDING & FACILITIES

RAY TAJAJ – Building Supervisor

I found his story so compelling it follows unedited:

"My family (me, my wife Salvana, and my son Marlin) came to Canada in May 1998 as landed immigrants. We came to Canada from Albania for a better life for our son and ours too. Since the second day of our arrival in Toronto we worked hard to get adjusted with the new life that was ahead. My wife got into the workforce much faster than me because of her background, BA in English Language and English Literature. She continues to teach at LINC (Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada) centres. I had to work harder to adjust. I considered trying to enter in the workforce in the field of animal breeding programs, but the immediate economic needs brought up other options. I did different jobs to survive, and attended courses for Building Superintendents and Quality Assurance, but mostly working with Alba Cleaning Company. In July 2000 I had the opportunity of working with Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. Since then I have become an inseparable part of it. Members of the congregation ask me why I am always with a smile on my face. My answer is simple - I am smiling because I am Happy. I have achieved a goal for my son. He is graduated in Aviation Management and is working in his field of expertise. My wife is working in her field of expertise too. As for myself, I can say I have found myself at YPBC. I feel respected and appreciated for who I am and what I do, and for me, this is the most important thing in life.



As custodial staff we are blessed for being with YPBC Family who has always considered us part of it. As a team we try our best to accomplish our duties to (provide) comfortable and smooth ongoing events, including not only

Sunday Services, Prayers and Bible studies, but also concerts, yoga and exercise and other events. There are about 260 events with room setups and teardowns, security, and assistance that Custodial staff covers each month. Blessings, Ray Tafaj.”

LULZIM (LOUIE) KRAJA – Custodian



Louie as he prefers to be called, immigrated with his family to Canada in mid 2000 from his home country of Albania – the reason, a better life for family especially his children, a son and daughter.

Louie holds a Bachelor of Science in Geophysics Engineering. Louie tells me from the first day he did different jobs to keep his family finances in shape, and “everybody is doing the best they can to achieve goals in life”. Both his son and daughter are attending Ryerson University in International Business.

Louie joined Yorkminster Park at the end of 2000 working as a night shift custodian, and for the past seven years as a day shift custodian. The change was a big turn, as he says - “because I started knowing the people and they could know me too. All these years, I have been working together with the custodial team to fulfill the

d u t i e s including clean up, set up rooms and tear down, providing security, and small repairs. I get along with my colleagues, and we put the maximal efforts to prepare and set up the Church and all the rooms ready for Sunday services, especially after a crowded concert on a Saturday night”.

Louie finds that he likes what he does. His final comment to me – “I am grateful to the members of the Church, who with their affectionate way of treating me, make my job much easier. Blessings Louie. “

LORENC SHERKO – Custodian

Lorenc came to Canada in February 2005 from his home country of Albania and established himself in Toronto. In May 2006 he finished York Construction Academy (YCA) receiving a certificate for Professional Management and Maintenance from the Institute of Building Management Training (IBMT) as well as a certificate for Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System.

During 2006-2007 Lorenc worked for Park Property Management Inc. In Toronto where he enjoyed the experience as Building Maintenance Manager and Superintendent of a 500 tenant high rise building. In October 2009 he applied and was accepted as Custodian at Yorkminster Park. Lorenc was also a volunteer for Meals on Wheels at YPBC. During his four years on the second shift at the Church



Lorenc has “...tried to do his best for the people at the Church day to day” and is “...proud to do facility and everything for our congregation and ministers”. He feels he is appreciated by the people and ministers of the Church.

From 2005 until April 26, 2010 Lorenc was a single Dad, years that he described as hard, trying to obtain education and supporting his son Kristi, who has finished high school and is now waiting to go to a college for training as an Automobile Technician. A very special day came on April 26 at Toronto City Hall when he married Mimoza, also from his home country of Albania. Mimoza is learning English from LINC School to enhance her English language. As Lorenc told me, they are very happy with a good family. This is evident from his friendly greeting at the door of Yorkminster Park Centre.

CARLOS LOPEZ - Custodian

“Hello Mr. Fenton, please let me take this opportunity to share to share with you and the congregation some personal information about me.” “My full name is Juan Carlos Lopez A. I do prefer to be called by my second name Carlos.”

Carlos comes from South America, born in Bolivia, which he describes as an amazing land and describes himself as a citizen of the world. Along with his family, Carlos came to Canada in the late 80s settling into, as he describes it “this beautiful vibrant city of Toronto”.



Carlos had worked in a number of Churches - Catholic, Presbyterian, United and Anglican before he met Ray Tafaj in another Church who told him about the opportunity at Yorkminster Park. Grateful to Ray for this, he began work at YP in June 2010. In the words of Carlos, "It is a wonderful experience to be part of YPBC, we got an excellent team at the maintenance department, and of course we are always trying to deliver our best, my duties at YPBC basically are, to keep the place, clean, safe and comfortable for our Clergy, congregation, visitors and the people that rent our property". Carlos hopes to keep working at YPBC for the next few years as long as his services are required. Carlos told me he feels very comfortable dealing with the Clergy and the members, described by him as "a wonderful community that always treats us with respect and consideration". "As I said before, it is very rewarding to be part of the community at YPBC." Juan Carlos Lopez A

In closing it is noteworthy to see the thread of gratefulness woven into each of their stories, and the positive influence of the encouragement of Yorkminster Park members.

To Linda, Sheila, Denise, Ray, Louie, Lorenc and Carlos, thank you for sharing a little of your lives with us, and thank you for being who you are. Our church at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church is a better place because of you and we are better people because we have come to know, respect and in Christian love bless you.

I am also grateful to Donna Willett and Denise Byard for their photographs.

submitted by John K. Fenton

LESTER RANDALL PREACHING FELLOWSHIP 2013

A TORONTO FESTIVAL OF PREACHING

Sun. Nov. 3 - Tues. Nov. 5

Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge St.

Theme: Preaching For Tomorrow – the Horizon of Hope

Sermons | Lectures | Workshops | Fellowship

An event for clergy sponsored by:

Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, in partnership with Metropolitan United Church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Timothy Eaton Memorial Church (United)

And in association with:

Emmanuel College, Trinity College, McMaster Divinity College, Wycliffe College, Huron College, Tyndale Seminary, Knox College and Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

Keynote Speakers:

The Rev. Dr. David J. Lose

The Rev. Dr. Jana L. Childers

The Rev. Dr. John M. Buchanan

The Rev. Dr. Paul Scott Wilson

YPBC RETREAT 2014: WALK WITH US

In 2014, YPBC will be holding a congregational retreat at Jackson's Point Conference Centre (about an hour north of Toronto).

The Theme is 'Walk with Us' – walk together as a congregation and walk with Christ. The retreat will be open to "all stages, all ages", and we'll have something on the agenda for everyone. It will be held on the weekend of Friday, May 30th to Sunday, June

1st with comfortable overnight accommodations on the site. There will also be a one-day option on Saturday, May 31st.

The schedule will include events designed for:

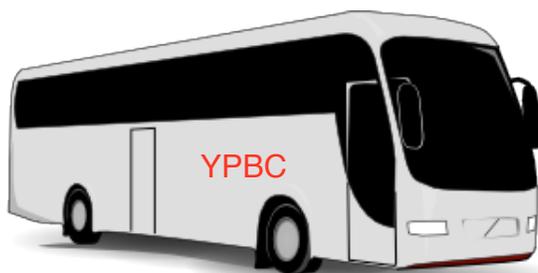
- Fellowship – delicious meals together, campfire songs and skits, group activities
- Spiritual Growth – Bible studies, Talks, Worship experiences
- Relaxation – free time, outdoor activities, conversation, games

Registration will take place in January and February as we need to confirm names and numbers in March. With this advance notice, it will give everyone a chance to arrange schedules. Please seriously consider reserving this weekend to share in strengthening our YPBC community.

There is an active planning committee for the retreat. We would welcome two more committee members to help with activities and planning. If you are interested, please talk to a committee co-chair, Harold Hetherington, Amy Charette or alternately, you may contact Miriam Little or Sam Lee.

submitted by Amy Charette

YPBC BUS TRIP



SHAW FESTIVAL THEATRE

Niagara On The Lake

Wed. Oct. 9, 2013

“Lady Windemere’s Fan”

Lunch at The Prince of Wales

Cost \$ 146



TRANSITIONS

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

Birth

Adelaide Marjorie Marie Rocca *d of Adrian and Ange Rocca*

Infant Dedications

Nozomi Ruth Cosby, *d of Peter and Mariko Cosby*

Kaitlyn Alexa Nguyen Thompson, *d of Annie Nguyen and O'Neill Thompson*

Baptisms

Jeffery Radford-Grant
Patrick Gallagher

New Members

Don Deathe
Patrick Gallagher
Jeffery Radford-Grant
Kelley Kil
Geoffrey Mitchell
Denise Tobey
Michael Wilson
Janet Wilson

Deaths

Irene Birtalan
Eldred Gooding
Claire Andrews

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS TRUE ?

The Biblical text is the only place where we can find what Jesus taught, what he did and what others said about him, both positive and negative. It is the only text through which we can find the good news of salvation for sure! It's the only place where we learn that God has broken into space and time in order to save the world through Israel and Israel's Messiah. From no other source can we know that God intends to fully recover his once perfect creation and rescue it from the consequences of Adam's fall by means of his covenant faithfulness. Paul knew that the event of Christ, the cross and resurrection had cosmic importance which is why he wrote that 'all of nature was moaning and groaning for the coming of the Messiah'.

The reclamation story we find in the text is God's single plan of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. It begins with the call of Abraham and comes to completion with Jesus' death and resurrection to which he was referring when he pronounced himself the fulfillment of the law.

Finally, I suggest that we read the scripture because it has the 'ring of truth' as it tells us how God has been, is now, and will, at the end of human history, rescue the entire creation from Adam's Fall.

Can we be confident that the text we read every Sunday is what the authors wrote and what evidence is there that their story is not a fabrication?

When we read the Bible on Sunday, are we reading what the apostle's preached and what the Gospel writers wrote?

The first argument has one very important virtue; it can be applied to support the veracity of any ancient text, including the Bible. Several distinct criteria will be applied to the Bible as an ancient text and as they are applied, evidence of its veracity will accumulate like moss on a tree. Positive data arises as we apply these criteria to the New Testament as an ancient document that supports the notion that we have what the early church wrote. Taken together, the application of these criteria does not go as far as absolute proof but taken together, they provide convincing and compelling evidence that must be taken seriously.

Number of Copies

First some basic incontrovertible facts that are widely accepted by the majority of scholars. Gary Habermas, a Biblical scholar at Liberty University, says that in the year 1900 scholars had about 2,000 complete copies (from 100 to 150 AD) of the New Testament. In modern times, Westcott and Horton say that we now have more than 5,500 copies, possibly as high as 5,800. These numbers will have more impact if we compare the number of copies of the New Testament with other ancient well known manuscripts. Homer is the best. We have 600 copies of his work. Caesar wrote the History of Roman war and we have 10 copies. Compared to other ancient texts, the New Testament wins 5,500 to 600 over Homer's Iliad. Caesar, with ten copies, isn't even in the ball park. The score is 5,500 to 10. In both cases, no contest. The number of copies we have matters! The more copies of a text we have, the better, because we can compare texts.

But some bad news resulting from comparison eventually turns out to be good news. In the 5,500 or so copies there are over 200,000 variant readings. We know how many because we know where they are and we can count them. This is outstanding good news because now we are able to compare and evaluate. Suppose I gave you a letter I wrote plus 100 copies done by various people at different times and you found variation in the words that appeared over time. By comparing the various texts you could come to a fairly sure reading of what I originally wrote. This is exactly what textual scholars have done with the New Testament. A British scholar in 1900, working with 2,000 copies, concluded that the New Testament was 95% accurate. Westcott and Horton, with 5,500 copies, conclude that the New Testament text is 99.9% accurate; what we read is what the authors



wrote. 99.9% means we have a good reliable text on which to ground our faith.

Historical Coherence

This criteria begins with several uncontested facts disputed by no serious scholar. These are facts.

1. Jesus was a real person.
2. He was an itinerant preacher.
3. He attracted a large crowd.
4. What he said and did led to his death.
5. After his death many witnesses proclaimed him to be Israel's Messiah and God's Son.
6. Many witnesses said that he rose from the grave.

The fourth point is critical. Something about Jesus' words and actions provided reasons for him to be crucified by the Roman state with the Jewish leadership working in tandem. There would have been no reason to crucify Jesus if had just travelled around Galilee speaking moral lessons and healing people. Who would



want to murder a man because of his moral teaching and acts of compassion? There had to be more. Jesus must have been seen as a threat to the Temple leadership and to the Roman state.

In the Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus claimed (1) to be a figure greater than Moses, (2) to be the fulfiller of the law, (3) to be superior to the temple, (4) to be greater than King David, (5) to have the authority to forgive sin. (6) Further, he announced that he had brought the kingdom without ever mentioning land. (7) His fellow Jews found it disturbing that God, through the Messiah, was judging Israel in the same manner as the other nations, a point Paul makes in the opening chapters of Romans. (8) Lastly, Jesus saw himself as fulfilling a covenant that did not involve ending the exile according to the expectations of his contemporaries. In fact, he insisted that the nation would suffer enormously if it held on to the expectation that they would get their land, freedom and nationhood back.

The Roman state cooperated reluctantly in his crucifixion because they feared Jesus would arouse the Jewish people to rebellion by claiming to be their King. The idea of kingship would resonate with first century Jewish hopes that the 'king' would threaten the Pax Romana by providing a rallying point for Israel to end their exile through armed rebellion against their Roman oppressors. The deeds and sayings recorded in the Gospels provide the only reasons why he was crucified and therefore the facts in the Gospel should be judged as authentic. Without these facts, there is no way to account for Rome's willingness to cooperate with the Jewish leadership who mistakenly thought that Jesus would be the gathering point for Jewish violence. Other Messianic claimants had not been taken seriously because they had not enjoyed Jesus popularity with the common people nor had they made the kind of claims for themselves that Jesus clearly had.

Take away the eight statements mentioned above and there is no way to account for the murder of Jesus. He was not a threat simply because he taught lovely moral lessons and healed people many people would agree with both then and now.

N.T. Wright and Ken Bailey are both very strong on this point with respect to the parables. Both these important scholars, for example, see in the parable of the Good Samaritan more than a moral lesson about neighbourliness. They both see the parable as a reason for wanting Jesus dead because his listeners would have heard a direct and breath-taking criticism of Israel. The priest and the Levite, in the narrative, represented Israel's covenant denying attitude towards non Israel. On the other hand, the Samaritan was presented as a non-Israelite fulfilling

the nation's Torah obligation which suggested also that the despised Samaritan was also their neighbour. Thus, the parable strikes down the sense of national and ethnic superiority from which they were nourished and energized. The Jewish leadership grounded their elitist position on the task of sustaining Israel's perceived ethnic and religious advantage over non Israel. In Jesus' teaching, they saw their political and religious position being threatened. A loss of control over the peasants would make preventing the Jewish masses from revolting against Rome almost impossible. Once Rome saw the power of the Jewish elite waning, they would have to take an aggressive stance against all of Israel and this was exactly what happened in 70 AD.

Remember that many early Christians died for their faith in Jesus the Messiah and people do not die for what they know to be a lie but they are willing to die for a substantiated truth backed up by credible eyewitnesses.

In short, the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or by people who had ready access to people who were there at the right time. Each was so sure of that the events they reported, the church saw no need to homogenize every detail.

I have mentioned several criteria that can be applied to any ancient text in order to determine its reliability. Gathered together and applied to the New Testament, we have compelling reasons to make a claim that our text is what the writers wrote and that it is accurate. Therefore, our theology rests solidly on an excellent text rather than human imagination. N.T. Wright, in "Jesus and the Victory of God", makes the case that the Jesus of faith is grounded on the Jesus of history. What we believe about him is solidly attached to real events. The Jesus of faith and the Jesus of history are the same person. What we say about him now as God incarnate and sin bearing Saviour, he would affirm. What we have done so far is to apply accepted criteria to the New Testament that are applied daily by scholars in every university. When we apply these criteria to the Gospels we discover reasons to believe that we have a reliable and accurate text.



Early Date

The earliest Gospel is assumed to be Mark written between 60 AD and 70 AD. Eusebius, writing from the second century, said that Mark wrote his narrative based on the sermons of Peter. If this is true, then the source for Mark goes back to the very beginning with Peter as his source. This early date and source is a strong argument for reliability.

Luke, in his Gospel, and in Acts, tells where he got his material. He used reliable people who were in the right place at the right time because he wanted to get it right.

The Criteria of Embarrassment

Personally, I find this criteria especially convincing. I am indebted to Craig E. Evans for his definition. "All it means is that material that potentially would have created awkwardness or embarrassment for the early church is not likely something that a Christian invented sometime after Easter. 'Embarrassing' sayings and actions are those that are known to reach back to the ministry of Jesus, and therefore, like it or not, they cannot be deleted from the Jesus data bank." (Craig Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, page 49) There are many examples that illustrate this criteria.

The baptism of Jesus, reported in the Gospels, is one of the best examples. What makes it so embarrassing? John called both Jew and Gentile to repentance for sin so when one person consented they were acknowledging their sin before God. The Gospel writers claim explicitly that Jesus was sinless so why did they write that he responded to John's call to be baptized. No writer would make up this story so the fact that it had the potential to embarrass speaks for its authenticity. It also clearly shows that the Gospel writers were so dedicated to telling the truth they even included an event that seemed to contradict their Christology.

Another example: Later, when John was in prison, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus a question. "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23) Jesus answered with his usual indirectness. "Go and tell John what you hear and see." Who would invent a story in which John, an important

ally of Jesus, had doubts about Jesus and who would invent a non-explicit reply. Logically, if the story was a fabrication, the writer would place these words in Jesus' mouth. "Go and tell John that I am the Messiah." This encounter, recorded by Matthew and Luke, gives historians confidence with respect to its authenticity because it had the potential to embarrass the church but they recorded it anyway because that's what happened. Truth trumped public relations!

Any writer of a document containing embarrassing information must have done so out of his personal integrity. What he wrote must have happened. No writer would make up embarrassing material unless it actually happened. What would be the point!

Dissimilarity

Jesus did and said several things that are discontinuous with first century culture and Jewish thought. This argument assumes that no writer would invent a narrative in which Jesus did or taught things so discordant with commonly accepted ideas they would be rejected straight away. Again, what would be the point?

Jesus proclaimed that he was inaugurating the long expected kingdom every Jew longed for. They expected YHWH to send someone to defeat the Romans, end their exile and gather the nation into one place by giving their land back to them. But as Israel's Messiah, Jesus did not appeal to any of these centuries old hopes. Instead, he taught that the kingdom involved the reign of God in the human heart and that eventually it would embrace non Israel and be established through his suffering and rejection. No Jew expected the Messiah to suffer and die on a tree as a curse for the sake of all of mankind's sin. A dead, defeated and suffering Messiah was no Messiah at all. The two apostles that trudged between Jerusalem and Jericho knew this so they decided all was lost. They were so utterly forlorn that they did not even recognize Jesus when he turned up and walked with them. Disappointed and faithless, they decided to go home and return to their previous life.

Jesus' Jewish audience was extremely disturbed by his universal call to repentance because it was an unambiguous sign that Israelites were not automatic members based on their nationality and the marker of circumcision.

What we need to see is that Jesus did not define his Messiahship and task according to what had been expected for centuries. It is obvious that his self-understanding was not the product of the early church because no Jew would speak of the Messiah as Jesus spoke about himself, so it is reasonable to assume that what Jesus said about the kingdom, his mission and his death was written down faithfully only because it is what he said and did. No Jewish writer would or could make up a story considered heretical by most Jews.

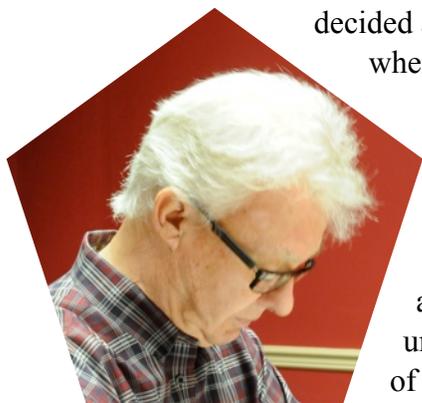
Conclusion

I must be as honest as the New Testament writers and admit that no argument can take a person all the way to saving faith and trust in Jesus as Lord, Messiah and sin bearing Saviour. When Peter confessed the Lordship of Jesus, he said that 'flesh and blood did not reveal this to you'. Peter's insight came from God, not from his own wisdom and logic. However, we can say that our spirit wrought confession of Christ is a response to a text that is reliable and accurate. Our confession is attached to 'real stuff'.

I have used two arguments to build the case that the Bible we read every Sunday is what the original writers wrote and that the events and sayings found therein really happened. If you add up everything I have written you have a sound basis by which you can say, "We have a reliable and factually true document!"

If you are willing to accept the arguments I have explained you must go one step further by saying, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." Then you will know that the very forgiveness offered to the women whose sin had been put on public display, is offered now to you. Then you will hear the master say, "Go and sin no more".

I end with an important reminder about the limitation of human intelligence from George Eldon Ladd. The paragraph comes from a book in which Ladd has argued logically for the actuality of the bodily resurrection but he admits that he could not get all the way to that peculiar knowledge we call faith because 'the heart has its reason, reason cannot know'.



“I believe in the living God because I met him through the living witness of the Holy Spirit. In the end, I accept the biblical witness to the resurrection not because of logical reasoning, but because of an inner quality of the Gospel, namely its truthfulness. It so overpowers me that I am rendered willing to stake the rest of my life on that message and live in accordance with it. My faith is not a faith in history but faith in God who acts in history. It is faith in God who has revealed himself to me in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, and in his resurrection, who continues to speak to me through the prophetic word of the Bible”. (I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, George Eldon Ladd, page 140)

This is an edited version of a lecture given at the church in April 2013. If you desire the entire paper email Peter Ferguson at p.c.ferguson@outlook.com

CHURCH PICNIC

On Sunday, June 9th around 300 people gathered on the lawn following the Church Service. The weather couldn't have been more perfect. Everywhere you looked, people were enjoying conversations, a delicious lunch, and various children's activities. It was great to see so many faces smiling as they jumped on the trampoline or sent bubbles into the air. And the face painter did some beautiful works of art on smiling children. The races were hilarious to watch – especially the water balloon toss and the three-legged race. Another event highlight was the wonderful hymn-sing with the Salvation Army Band under the tree. Thanks to all who volunteered – we can't do it without you. What a great start to summer!

submitted by Miriam Little and Amy Charette





photos by Donna Willett, Amy Charette and Ken Little