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Wesley Mimico United Church

www.wesleymimicounitedchurch.org

January/February 2012

Issue 17



A New Year: New Beginnings

It's been said that in life, the only constant is change. Wise words. Change happens all around us. Night turns to day. The sun plays hide and seek with the clouds. The moon waxes and wanes. Every living organism is part of the ceaseless rhythm of birth and death. Change is all around us, all the time. I wonder why we find it so difficult to accept.

We need a new minister. The Joint Search Committee continues its quest to find the right person to lead us through the transition to a different way of being the United Church in Mimico. We've met five times to discuss strategy and plan next steps. We've advertised locally and at theological schools across the country. Applications and resumes are considered as they are received. It's a slow process, demanding both time and effort from a dedicated committee. The committee understands the importance of the task ahead of us and we do not take lightly our responsibility to you and to our congregation and community. For the immediate future of Wesley, it's helpful to know that Harry Oussoren has no plans to leave the pulpit before June 2012.

Some time ago, the congregation formed a committee – The Hope and Faith Team – to help us envision the future and to examine the challenges facing us, including the state of our building. We've commissioned studies. We've hired consultants. We've declared our desire to remain together as a church family, to hold hands, and to see this process through to a communally agreeable conclusion.

But we need more. We need help – your help. At this point, our fight to keep our church family together has been neither won nor lost. It continues and is strengthened by our collective and individual efforts. Please come out to participate in our weekly worship services. Every soul matters. Let us truly unite in our support of our church, of our community and of each other.

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**communicate
educate
celebrate**

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Thanks to

- Margaret Heney and the Choir for the uplifting music throughout the Christmas Season.
- John Sullivan, Murray Seeley, Brent Carey and the whole crew who helped to erect and take down our front-lawn Nativity scene
- Cyril MacPherson and all those who helped supply, pack and deliver hampers and to Margaret Hansen for providing lunch
- Patricia McPhail and helpers for decorating the foyer and sanctuary for Advent/Christmas and to those who donated memorial poinsettias
- Deen Rochefort for co-ordinating the refreshments for both the Creche Blessing event and the Service of Remembrance and Hope as well as those who provided goodies for those occasions
- the many bell ringers who gathered in the community for both regular and special services during December. Please sign up again soon
- those who took part in the Christmas Eve dramatic readings
- the family of Lillian Ostrander for their generous contribution to our Food Ministries in memory of Lillian as well as other individuals and groups who made special December contributions to the Food Bank

Transitions

- congratulations to Larry McPhail on his retirement from the Mississauga Fire Department after 39 years, 2 months and 29 days of service faithful service!
- best wishes for along and happy life together are extended to Steven Hansen (son of Margaret) and Kimberley Roberts who were married November 5th at McMaster University in Hamilton
- we are delighted to report the safe arrival on January 7th of Landen Joey, son of the WMUC Church School Co-ordinator April Rocha and her husband Mike.
- several longtime Wesley members and associates, who contributed much to congregation and community over the years, have died in recent weeks. Condolences are extended to the families of Winnie Walker (children Marilyn, Gary and Wayne), Reta Clarke (daughter Ellen), George Moulson and Winnifred Chapin (husband Bill and children Bev, Leslie and Christopher)

News and Announcements

- 1) After 12 years on the job, Susan Milankov, our versatile and knowledgeable church secretary, is leaving her post to undertake a position at the Franklin Horner Community Centre. We will miss Susan greatly and wish her every success in her new vocational venture. Dolly Carr is staffing the church office until the position is filled on a regular basis.
- 2) We are also bidding good-bye to Maureen Newby and welcoming Lorne and Mae Grimmer as our new caretaking team. Thanks to Maureen and her helpers for the many years of caring for our church facility.
- 3) The Ministry and Personnel Committee has recommended that Southwest Presbytery extend the appointment of Harry Oussoren as interim ordained minister until June 30, 2012.
- 4) Liz Baker will be acting Church School Co-ordinator during the maternity leave of April Rocha. Liz's willingness to reactivate her teaching skills for this important work is much appreciated.
- 5) The 2011 Open Doors Campaign has more than met its goal of \$15,000. Thanks to all who contributed to helping WMUC meet its financial objectives for the year.
- 6) A picture of the Wesley Crèche was featured in the December issue of the Observer magazine to illustrate an article on crèche vandalism. Fortunately, our nativity scene has incurred relatively little damage over the years although, this year, somebody temporarily repositioned baby Jesus atop the cow's head and one of the shepherds was slightly injured and had to retire early.
- 7) The WMUC **Annual Congregational Meeting** will take place on Sunday Feb. 19th. Please have annual reports into the church office by the end of January.

Congregation Envisions a New Home

On Sunday, January 8th, congregational participants took the opportunity offered by the Faith & Hope Team to envision the future. With a concept sketch prepared by architect Robert Reimers – one of the Gibson and Associates consulting group advising the Team, WMUC folks identified the many and varied aspects that they would like to see built into or accommodated in a new facility.

The Team asked participants in the lunch-consultation to focus on three main areas that would be part of a redevelopment project: church space and uses; community space and uses; and affordable housing. A wide range of ideas were generated: from “green” concerns, to full accessibility, to valuing heritage features, to ensuring space for current food ministries, to children’s and youth space, to storage for the crèche, to innovative community office space, to rent-to-own housing, seniors housing, etc. The ideas have been recorded and will become part of the grist for the Team’s mill as it develops the overall redevelopment plan.

Participants heard that for three years the Faith & Hope Team had been working on how to envision WMUC’s future. Community soundings, building audit, program reviews, and a host of other activities led up to the recommendation approved by the 2011 AGM that mandated the Faith & Hope Team to come up with plan involving substantial redevelopment of the church site.

Three other consultations inviting input into the plan will be held. One will involve local neighbours around the church (Feb. 24 – evening); another will include community groups, faith communities, and social organizations (Feb. 7 – noon); and leaders of groups, e.g. Dundas Centre, Tai Kwon Do, Navy League, etc. currently housed in the church will be consulted. Nellie and Grace, the two church cats, are not scheduled to be polled.

Contacts are also being made with the City planning department, Ward Councillor Mark Grimes, and the larger United Church bodies which have a stake in the plan, in order to ensure that they are aware and supportive of the ideas being considered. The goal is to have a full report for the congregation to consider at its Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 19th.

The purpose of all this work is to ensure that the first 150 years of the congregation’s life will be sustained through succeeding generations and that our ability to worship, learn, care, and reach out into the revitalizing Mimico-Lakeshore community is enhanced. The prayers, hopes, and encouragement of all will be vital to a successful fulfilment of the dream for WMUC’s future.

Members of the Faith & Hope Team are Marion Franklin, Deen Rochefort, Robin McPhail-Dempsey, Brent Carey, Harry Oussoren; Community Members: Chris Shilton, Michaela Jones. Gibson & Associates consultants: Deirdre Gibson (project manager), Robert Reimers (architecture), Bob Martindale (planning)

For the Team: Harry Oussoren

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How can we call ourselves a congregation unless we make the effort to congregate? Let’s begin now to prepare the way for our new minister. Let’s show him/her that we are not just a United Church, we’re a united church. We are strong. Hopeful. Faithful. Committed. We are a family, one in Christ. Please join us on Sunday morning. Walk with us this year on our journey to discover a new WMUC. Happy New Year!

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3: 5-6

Dale Pringle Chair: Joint Search Committee

Many people want to serve God but only as advisors.



Men With Broken Hearts by Dale Pringle
(#3 in the series: Observing God's People)

The brown leather gloves were always the last item he removed from his briefcase. Long after the other passengers had left the train, he was still there, putting his gloves on as if he had all the time in the world.

Years ago, I was an engineer on Toronto's GO trains. Every morning, I operated a train from Hamilton to Toronto where the passengers were asked to leave the train. My shift was nearly complete then as I had only to move the empty train to GO's Mimico storage yard before coming home. The passengers all hurried to exit the train at Union Station. All, that is, except one. The man with the gloves.

Every morning I'd climb into the coach and wait while he calmly stood and removed his hat and scarf and gloves from his briefcase. I was impatient to empty the train so we could return to Mimico and go home. We were tired. Our shift began at 4:45 a.m. But this guy didn't care, did he? All he wanted to do was delay me. I tried sighing loudly. I tried coughing and clearing my throat. I even tried standing with my hands on my hips and tapping my foot. Nothing, it seemed, would hurry this idiot. He was completely oblivious of me and my sense of urgency. His hat was first. Then his scarf which had to be adjusted just so. And lastly, those stupid brown gloves. One .. finger .. at .. a .. time. It was infuriating.

One day, I arrived to find him gone. I was elated! "Maybe he's taken a day off work," I thought. "Maybe he's sick. Who cares? At least I'll get home on time for once." My joy was short-lived. A few days later, he was back. I decided to try something new. I'd try talking to him. Maybe then he'd understand the importance of leaving the train as soon as possible. He was wrapping the scarf around his neck with that same dull, vacant look on his face when I approached him.

Hi," I said, trying to sound as though I cared. "I haven't seen you for a few days. Where have you been?" He busied himself with his gloves and didn't look up when he spoke. "We buried my mother yesterday."

In the awkward silence that followed, I felt my indignation turn to shame. Suddenly, this man appeared to me quite differently. He was not an "idiot", deliberately moving slowly to delay me. He was a fellow human being, a man with feelings. He was a man with a broken heart and I'd judged him so harshly. I've thought of him many times since that day. Each time I do, a little humility wells up behind my eyes. Sometimes, it leaks out and trickles down my cheek.

I've borrowed the title of this article from singer Hank Williams. He ends his spoken word song Men With Broken Hearts, with the following lines:

"So help your brother along the road no matter where he starts.
For the God that made you made them too, these men with broken hearts."

A teenage boy had just passed his driving test and inquired of his father as to when they could discuss his use of the car. His father said he'd make a deal with his son: 'You bring your grades up from a C to a B average, study your Bible a little, and get your hair cut. Then we'll talk about the car.'

The boy thought about that for a moment, decided he'd settle for the offer, and they agreed on it.

After about six weeks his father said, 'Son, you've brought your grades up and I've observed that you have been studying your Bible, but I'm disappointed you haven't had your hair cut.'

The boy said, 'You know, Dad, I've been thinking about not doing that because I've noticed in my study of the Bible that Samson had long hair, John the Baptist had long hair, Moses had long hair...and there's strong evidence that Jesus had long hair.'

You're going to love the Dad's reply: 'That's right, son. But did you also notice they all walked everywhere they went?'





Practicing the Presence of God in Winter



God's presence may come upon us at any moment. Most of us have experienced that moment of grace when suddenly a space opens in and around us and we experience a deep feeling of connection to all things, a sense of oneness. We understand that we are part of a world without end. These experiences help us to understand what a living relationship with God is and to realize that our deep longings for wholeness are grounded in a reality that is true. The Mystery reaches out to us wherever we are and whatever we are doing and enters our lives. We understand, in a way that is grounded in our own experience, Emmanuel, 'God with us'. It is often difficult to remember this experienced reality in our culture which is so deeply alienated from soul and spirit.

However, there are ways to enhance this connection. Winter can be an ideal time to begin practising the presence of God. In a farming culture, the short days and long nights brought with them gifts of restoration and renewal. It was a time when the land lay fallow, and people relied on the gifts of the harvest to take them into the spring. Our culture is different but we are once again trying to understand how to reconnect to the earth and respect the gifts of the Creator. Respecting the ebb and flow of the seasons is a tool to help us experience the presence of God. Embrace the short days and dark nights and accept this time as a time of fallowness, when you and the world rest. Darkness can be a place of germination, of new beginnings.

Set aside a quiet time of five to 15 minutes in your day. Create a sacred space to welcome the Holy One. This can be as simple as clearing a space and lighting a candle, welcoming as you do so the light, life and love of the Holy One. Breathe deeply three or four times. This helps connect you with the deep place in yourself which is your spiritual core. The goal of this time is simply to empty one's mind of all the chatter that constantly runs through it and to create a welcoming space for God, one in which we are simply open to being present and listening. Some people find a mantra is helpful. This is the repeated repetition of a word or phrase designed to clear away the chatter. The word Maranatha is an Aramaic word meaning 'Come, O Lord'. If it is divided into four syllables, ma ra na tha one can breathe in on the first syllable, out on the second syllable etc. Do not be anxious about results. The results may not be clear until a future moment. Simply trust and open yourself to the total spaciousness of God.

The goal of this practice of attentiveness to the presence of God is not some kind of perfection or removal from life. Rather it is to enter more deeply into our humanity in the context of a living relationship with God, so that when we need to make choices in our lives we are deeply grounded in the Love and Presence of God.

Charlotte Sharkey

Love Winter When The Plant Says Nothing

O little forests, meekly
Touch the snow with low branches!
O covered stones
Hide the house of growth!

Secret
Vegetal words,
Unlettered water,
Daily zero.

Pray undistracted
Curled tree
Carved in steel –
Buried zenith!

Fire, turn inward
To your weak fort,
To a burly infant spot,
A house of nothing.

O peace, bless this mad place:
Silence, love this growth.

O silence, golden zero
Unsetting sun
Love winter when the plant says nothing.



Thomas Merton

Children's Book Review

Max Lucado has written many stories for children that beautifully and gently speak of what it means to have a relationship with God. **You Are Special** is the first of many featuring the Wemmick, PUNCHINELLO, who learns about life struggles through his relationships with other Wemmicks and with Eli, the woodworker who made them all. In this story, though, each Wemmick has been made differently and they begin to judge each other. They give either golden stars or gray dot stickers to other Wemmicks depending on how they look or what they can do. As you can guess, some Wemmicks get many stars, while others, only dots.

PUNCHINELLO, who received only gray dots, was very sad until he met Lucia, a Wemmick who has neither stars nor dots. Though other Wemmicks tried to give Lucia stars or dots, she discovered that they simply wouldn't stick to her. PUNCHINELLO, wanting the same, listens as Lucia suggests that he go and speak with Eli, but PUNCHINELLO is scared that that Eli may not want to see him. When PUNCHINELLO does go to see Eli, he discovers that Eli has been waiting for his visit and is happy to see him. In the end, PUNCHINELLO learns that Eli made him just the way he is and that it only matters what Eli thinks, no one else.

A very real and applicable message presented through a wooden character named PUNCHINELLO: We should only worry about what God thinks of us, not what others think.

I would encourage you to seek out and read Max Lucado's other stories written for children*...as well as his many for adults.

Colleen Pringle

** Editor's note: Some other Max Lucado stories include:*

The Tallest of Smalls
Hermie the Common Caterpillar
Just In Case You Ever Wonder

150 Years WMUC in Mimico: 1862-2012

In 2012, Wesley Mimico United Church will celebrate 150 years of faithful presence in the Mimico-Lakeshore area.

The 150 year mark relates to the activity of our Methodist ancestors who bought a piece of land on Royal York Road to be the site for building a Methodist church. This land purchase – at the cost of \$25!! - was the first tangible sign of the Methodist congregation's permanent presence and ministry in the community. It took about a year to complete the simple structure which was dedicated for church use in July 1863.

Even though our Presbyterian ancestors got going a little later, it is equally important to remember our Presbyterian heritage during this 150th anniversary year. The official Presbyterian presence in the community, a mission church, began in 1889. A church building was soon erected on land donated by the Hendry family; in 1892 the first minister was called; and in 1893, the congregation, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, was formalized with the election of 5 elders.

At the time of Church Union in 1925, the majority of the St. Paul's congregants chose to become part of the United Church of Canada and in 1927, the new United (Presbyterian and Methodist) congregation began worshipping at our current location in what was then a brand new church building.

As you get older, your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either.

**Faith and Community Development:
Mimico 20-20 Vision for Revitalizing the Lakeshore**

For decades the vision of a revitalized Lakeshore has been percolating in the community. The sixties saw the construction of many low rise rental apartments. Co-op housing projects sprouted as time went by. Industry moved away to new areas and some housing replaced factories. Commercial enterprises had difficulty staying in business. But residents believed in their community and cherished it as a great place to live and work and play.

In the 80's, reports were written to re-think housing along the shores of Lake Ontario. But not enough steam was generated to turn the wheels of developers and entrepreneurs. In the latter half of the first decade of this millennium, another effort was launched. In April 2009 a "charette" (consultation) was organized to re-think the Lakeshore. The event involved a couple of hundred local folks, experts, property owners and public servants. In October of that year a first draft report – Mimico 20-20 Vision - was tabled, but the Etobicoke-York Community Council said: hold a public consultation with residents and see how they feel about it.

Nothing happened for two years. But in April 2011, Longo Development Corp presented to the City a proposal to redevelop Amedeo Garden Court (Lake Shore at Queen's Ave.) with new high-rise towers – some over 40 and 30 stories high - to continue housing the 391 current renters plus an additional 1500 condo units. As the summer of 2011 wore on, Mimico residents began to worry: "what's happening to this Longo proposal and what would it do to our community if it were actually implemented?"

These concerns were shared by the Etobicoke Lakeshore Faith Community Leaders Network – leaders from about 35 faith communities – mainly Christian but also one Muslim community - in the Ward 6 area. The faith leaders had begun meeting in the spring of 2011 choosing to focus on housing issues in the area. Their first job was to identify core values they felt should be taken seriously as Mimico and the Lakeshore area undergo revitalization.

Six values were identified. Respect - working together appreciating and affirming each other's contribution for the common good; community involvement ("nothing about us, without us") as crucial to effective redevelopment; space and opportunity for healthy mental, spiritual, and physical development; decent, affordable housing understood as a fundamental human need and right; diversity appreciated as a gift people from diverse backgrounds bring, various types of housing meeting different needs, and various types of development – housing, economic, social; and, stewardship; and finally, appreciating and caring for the lakeshore area as a natural gift to be cherished for the enjoyment of all.

A planning group representing nine community groups, including the Faith Leaders, decided to hold a public meeting in the Polish Hall to remind folks about Mimico 20-20 and inform them about the Longo proposal. On November 15, 237 participants responded to the invitation from the planning group to learn, respond, and begin engaging the City about the Longo proposal in the context of the Mimico 20-20 Vision process.

The City then decided that it was important to inform residents where things were at with Mimico 20-20. So another public meeting was called so that City planning staff, consultants, and Council could update residents on the status of Mimico 20-20. On December 7, about 250 residents were told that many studies needed to be carried out before a final "Mimico 20-20 Vision" plan could be presented. Urban Strategies Inc. has been hired to carry out the studies with a mandate to report back by spring 2012. Residents attending the meeting expressed their concerns about issues like: density, transportation, rental accommodation, heritage issues, parks & facilities, integration of new housing development with the existing community, and, especially, about the need to involve residents in the ongoing visioning/planning process.

The Community Groups Network is continuing its efforts to help shape the Mimico 20-20 Vision by proposing constructive and considered ways of improving the draft Vision. The planning team meets weekly at WMUC. The next stage is a half-day community planning workshop to be held early in February to consider specific proposals to address some of the issues outlined above.

The Community Groups Network, along with the Faith Leaders, share the hope for a revitalized Mimico-Lakeshore where the health, well-being, and vitality of the area is the result of full participation by all residents contributing towards shaping their community's future in partnership with officials, developers, and other stakeholders.

For more information, speak to Harry Oussoren.

Some Bible quiz answers from Catholic elementary school students

1. When Mary learned she was to become the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.
2. The greatest miracle in the bible was when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
3. The people who followed Jesus were called the 12 decibels.
4. The epistles were the wives of the apostles.
5. Moses died before he ever reached Canada.

Cross Communication, the newsletter of Wesley Mimico United Church, is published 5 times a year. The editorial committee is Glenys Huws (editor) Joan Hewitt and Dale Pringle. The CC committee welcomes articles, jokes and news items for the newsletter. Submissions may be edited for accuracy and length. Next edition Mar/April 2012

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