

BLOORBEAT

The Newsletter of



Volume XXVIX, Issue 1

Minister's Message

From Cradle to Crucible

There is no respite, no free time in between. Christmas and the new year no sooner fade into the horizon behind than the dawn of Lent appears on the horizon before us. Other than a brief February interlude of 'romance' when the Valentine heart spawns love messages to whomever, our faith calls us to move from the marvels of birth to the shadow of death almost in the same breath.

We could probably do with a bit of a break in between, some pause, a time to gather the resources of heart and mind ... and then in readiness greet the Lenten theme and its accompanying spiritual challenges.

Our wishes to the contrary, the movement of faith reflects the reality of life. Life is not always, or even usually, balanced with appropriate pause for spirit renewal and transformation. Often we are called to respond to birthing goodness (in many forms), hand in hand with the difficult spiritual terrain of loss, letting go, and dying. Many of you in this circle of friends are in this space of spirit navigation, dancing in the joyous wonder of newness or promise, and coping, at the same time, with pain and loss. The wonder of a grandchild's first steps may be enveloped in the same frame as the shattering last breath of a spouse or a friend. The celebration of covenant between two in love is often positioned side by side with the sadness of relational rupture, sometimes almost too hard to bear.

Lent following so close on the heels of Christmas is a passionate reflection of this life experience, and invites us to trust that creation and chaos, construction and deconstruction, birthing and dying, joy and sadness, are all held in the promise of God. And sometimes all we need to know, all we can know, is that God is with us, through thick and thin, come what may.

As we move toward Lent, let us not be afraid to embrace both poles of our human condition and experience. We are invited to hold both the cradle and crucible imagery of our faith in the soaring, shadowed story of our years, trusting that in both there is a Mysterious Presence that bids and abides.

There is much happening at Bloordale for all ages as we undertake this ebb and flow journey, many of our programs outlined in these Bloorbeat pages. Blessings and peace as you travel.

Brian

Bloordale United Church

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Youth Leaders	Lydia McIntosh Sarah McIntosh
Administrative Assistant	Juanita Eldridge
Organist & Choir Director	Mervin Fick
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LOOKING AT THE WEEKS AHEAD

- **Friday, January 22** - "King Tut" Exhibit - Art Gallery of Ontario - 2:00 pm
- **Sunday, January 24** - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- **Sunday, January 31** - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- **Sunday, February 7** - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
- **Saturday, February 13** - Two Tenors and Friends—7:30 pm
- **Sunday, February 14** - Transfiguration Sunday
Holy Communion

WORSHIP SERVICES ARE AT 10:30 A.M.

Symbols of Christmas Concert at Bloordale

Christmas started early!

On Sunday, December 6, the Peel Choral Society returned to Bloordale with their Symbols of Christmas concert. Mervin Fick was the conductor, and led the choir with great animation.

The sanctuary was decorated for Christmas; and the choir performed their songs, under five symbols: Candles, Today's and Tomorrow's, Angels, Stars and Christmas Greetings. Merv was Master of Ceremonies, not only welcoming us, but also giving interesting background history tidbits on the pieces sung.

The repertoire was varied, featuring current contemporary pieces, such as "Somewhere in my Memory" (from the movie Home Alone) and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (by Martin and Blane) to John Rutter's "Angel Carols", to Palestrina's "Hodie Christus Natus Est".

The audience sang along to "Joy to the World", "Silent Night" and others. Two versions of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" were performed, a traditional and a more challenging, entertaining version. The all round favourite was "Do You Hear What I Hear" (lyrics by N. Regney, Music by G. Shayne) which the choir repeated for us, as an encore. Accompanying Merv and the Peel Choir, was David Murrell, on piano.

An audience of over 130 joined the 40 choir members for a wonderful evening, raising just over \$2,000 profit for Bloordale programmes. Juanita Eldridge's granddaughter Gracie pulled the winning 50/50 Draw ticket, which belonged to Bloordale's own John Everett.

The evening finished with complimentary juice, and a variety of dessert offerings.

Many thanks to Mervin Fick, the Peel Choral Society, the attendees, and the organizers, for such a Wonderful evening.

A Great Time Was Had by All!

Sunday School 2010

It's a new year and we are starting up Sunday School and Youth Group. We are looking forward to a wonderful year together. Remember to write to your Secret Pal! Maybe you could share what you did for Christmas and New Year's Eve! If you would like to volunteer or are interested in helping, speak to Lisa Mazzariol.

Brian's General Council Update - #3

Just this week, dated January 4th, we received a letter, as did every United Church across the country, from Nora Sanders, General Secretary of the General Council, inviting people across the church to participate in a national planning process through the sharing of ideas related to the five themes which were named by the General Council last August. I'd like to share some of her words, and invite you to speak to me if you'd like more information about either the invitation she's issuing or the wider work of the United Church in general.

"Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ: ...

I am filled with hope as we prepare this year to mark the 85th anniversary of our church. We are engaging in dynamic ministries, exploring new ways of being church together, and grappling courageously with contemporary issues of faith and justice. At the same time, we continue to rejoice and find community in the eternal mystery that is God. We have much to celebrate and much to look forward to as we discern and live out God's mission in the world.

"In the midst of this abundance, we are also facing challenges. Membership in the United Church is declining as church participation moves out of the mainstream in our society. Our financial resources, while rich, are not keeping pace with our costs.

"It is in this context that the Sub-Executive of the General Council has directed me to develop a planning document that will shape the work of the United Church from 2011 to 2013. This document will be informed by the five themes for this triennium that were named in August by the 40th General Council:

- *emerging church*
- *authentic relations with youth and young adults*
- *outreach, social justice, and care of creation*
- *faith formation*
- *becoming a whole people ...*

"The planning document will respect financial projections provided by the Permanent Committee on Finance that anticipate a shortfall of approximately \$6.5 million for the 2011-13 period. The Executive has also asked me to prepare a three-year revenue generation plan, but we cannot spend the hoped-for new money before it is raised.

"... what I have been asked to develop is a document setting out three distinct options ..., giving rationale as well as cost, program, and structural implications for each. One option would entail keeping our current configuration, with reductions to be shared broadly and equitably. The second option would involve radically reimagining the roles and relationships among the General Council office and the courts of the church (Conference, Presbytery and Congregations) to achieve reductions and lift up work in new ways. The third option would be to make deeper cuts than are required to balance the budget, with savings and additional draws from reserves being used to fund innovative work. These options are broadly described here, and the details are not yet filled in. That work will be done over the winter, and your ideas and advice will be gratefully received.

"The Executive of the General Council will consider this document at its next meeting in May 2010, and I anticipate that at that time it will choose one of the options as the basis of our work for the next three years.

"I welcome your input and suggestions, and may share them in various ways and quote from them as this planning process unfolds. Some of the questions ... to consider are: How can the United Church best use its resources to live into the themes named by the 40th General Council? ... How can we do our work more effectively, and in what court of the church should specific work be lodged? What stands in the way? What can we let go of? What shouldn't we let go of? In what innovative ways can we be church in our time and place?

"Please send your comments by Friday, February 19, 2010 ... Thank you for your wisdom and insight as we plan prayerfully and faithfully the future directions of our church. Blessings."

Stewardship Spot

"Stewardship is everything I do after I say 'I believe'."

The Stewardship of All Life

Within the Church, stewardship often has been treated as one of those necessary but tiresome activities of Christian life; for example, giving money (financial stewardship), attending Sunday services regularly (faith stewardship), or volunteering for a variety of activities and causes (stewardship of time). Stewardship, however, is something much more comprehensive. It involves working for what God seeks to bring about: the peace, abundance, and glory of humankind and

the whole creation. Christian stewardship engages individuals in all aspects of their lives and in the whole life of the world. It is a total attitude that places the God who loves each of us and this world at the centre of the Christian life.

For instance, as stewards of God's good creation, we are called to challenge those powers that threaten humanity or the earth today. This means many things: taking action on climate change, as we tried to do in the late fall by advocating for a good UN treaty in Copenhagen (which didn't materialize, to the detriment of the planet); asking ourselves some tough questions about our role and place in our community and church, and whether we're exercising our gifts and talents enough in seeking to respond to God's call to justice, peace and reconciliation.

It also means asking questions about our lifestyles: shall we use energy and resources only as consumers, or shall we be conservers as well? At the church we'll be seeking to do an energy audit of our building early in this new year, to see how we can reduce our footprint and make improvements. On a personal level we might ask ourselves: how shall we manage our disposable income, what little or large amount there is? How shall we care for our body, as the temple of the spirit?

Of course, stewardship does mean asking questions about our financial health, again on a personal and communal basis. How shall we respond to the biblical call to exercise responsible stewardship of our income, up to as much as the 10% tithe, for God's purposes in the world, through our support of the church? Questions before us as we approach the Annual Congregational Meeting in February might be: Which parts of our corporate budget need to be nurtured more adequately? What does our budget say about our spiritual priorities as a church? What criteria should we be using in our investment policies? Our presentation of a new narrative format to the budget will help us consider these and other issues, and your input is welcome.

These are the kinds of probing questions out of which Christian stewards must make practical, time-bound choices. As Moses said, "I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity." (Deuteronomy 30: 15) Which shall we choose consistently and courageously – not because we want our church to survive (though we do, of course!), but because we love God and neighbor and have an attitude of gratitude!

Linnea Good, a United Church musician who has a few hymns in Voices United and More Voices, wrote a song that speaks of the stewardship of all of life, and we sang it at our Annual Meeting lunch almost a year ago. I close by offering a reprint of the words below for your reflection.

Brian

*Bloordale United Church
Presents*

“Two Tenors and Friends”

Featuring

Mervin Fick and Brian McIntosh

*Saturday February 13, 2010, 7:30 pm.
at Bloordale United Church*

*An evening of inspirational music and show tunes
performed by Bloordale’s own Brian McIntosh and
Mervin Fick, together with guest artists.*



*Proceeds in support of The United Church
Mission and Service Fund, and
Bloordale United Church Programs*

*Tickets : \$20
Children 12 and under : \$10*

*For Further information and tickets contact
Patricia 416-622-5274, or
Julia 416-622-6309(h) 416-621-8050(w)*

Learning Options

Saving Jesus for the Third Millennium

Early last fall Brian held a four-session DVD-based video and discussion series entitled *Saving Jesus*, one of a number of *Living the Questions* resources from progressive Christians in the United States. The second series of four sessions begins this **Tuesday, January 12th**, with the following three on **January 26th** and **February 2nd and 9th**, all from **7 – 8:30 pm** in **Room 15**.



The topics to be covered are as follows:

1) Jesus’ Birth: Incarnation; 2) Teachings of Jesus: Wisdom Tradition; 3) Jesus’ Program: The Kingdom of God; 4) Jesus Ministry of Compassion. This series will conclude with four more sessions later in the spring, so come to have your faith stretched and transformed in conversation with others! Facilitated by Brian, you can speak to him if you’d like to know more.

Embracing Transformation: Congregational Mission in a Changing Canada

This **7 week Lenten Study** looks at the role of congregations in the total mission of the church in a changing Canadian cultural landscape. It takes account of the mission of the church in scripture, and looks at the church as evidence of God’s mission and as agents of God’s mission in the world. Refusing to equate mission with evangelism alone, it’s definition of a holistic congregational mission is: *to proclaim the good news to all who will listen and to gather people into faith communities that worship, evangelize, educate, and serve in mission and justice-seeking in their communities.*

This study, to be led by Brian **Tuesday mornings** from **10 to 11:30** in **Room 15**, includes video segments and reflection/discussion exercises, and will begin **February 16th**. Everyone who cares about the future work and witness of the church is welcome to attend. Feel free to speak to Brian if you would like to know more.

Outreach News

Just a quick note of thanks from your Outreach Committee for all your generosity in 2009, as our outreach givings for various causes and organizations were substantial. Whenever we ask, people respond, and for that we, and the recipients (many of whom we hear from!) are grateful. We hope and trust that this trend will continue in 2010, as we continue to become, even more than we already are, a church that truly cares for our community and for those in need within it!

Flower Deliveries

If you are providing flowers for a Sunday Worship Service, they must either be delivered to the Church by noon on Friday or bring the arrangement with you on Sunday between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m.

Lost & Found

If you or someone you know, who has attended Bloordale in the last 3 months has lost a cell phone, please contact the office Monday – Friday 9:00a.m. – noon.

Tea & Books

Tea and Books will start up on January 21 and run until March. The meetings are every Thursday at 10:00 a.m. in Room 15.

Christmas Pageant

I think everyone would agree that this year's Christmas Pageant was a great success. I would like to thank the many people who so graciously lent their help.

Thank you to Lydia, Sarah and Susan for all the backstage, costume and rehearsal assistance.

Thank you to all who donated sandwiches and goodies and allowed us to enjoy such a feast. Special thanks to the set up and clean up crews (often not thanked enough).

Thanks to Bob and John for helping me with the sound system on very short notice! To anyone I may have left out, thank you too.

Now my very special thanks go out to all my actors and actresses for working so hard and doing such a wonderful job. I'm so proud of all of you and I hope you had as much fun as I did.

Lisa Mazzariol

Community Partnership - and Fun with Kids Too!

I am writing this note, once again, in hopes that this time, someone will feel the urge to respond with an offering of their time and talents. As you may remember, in the fall we were approached by the Principal of Eatonville Junior School to enter into a community partnership whereby people from our congregation would volunteer approximately one hour of their time a week to help work with young children at the school by running crafts, games, chess, knitting or any other talent we would like to offer.

Remember, these are grade school children (up to grade 5-6) so your skill level doesn't have to be tremendous – all you need is enthusiasm and a willing heart!

This would be a wonderful way for the people of Bloordale to reach out to the community and live our faith beyond the doors of Bloordale.

Speak to Lisa Mazzariol if you would like to volunteer or if you need more information.

**Remember, actions speak louder than words.
Let's send a message to our community
about who we are a Bloordale.**

UCW Unit 1 Soup and Sandwich Meeting

UCW Unit 1 will meet at 11:30 a.m. for soup and sandwiches before the regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 26th.

Soup is provided but bring your own sandwich.

Out Of The Cold (O.O.T.C.)

The Out of the Cold programme was initiated in 1987 by the students of St. Michael's School with the support and guidance of Sister Susan Moran of the Order of Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow.

The programme was established after a group of students befriended a homeless man who had frequented the area near the school. In 1986, the homeless man named George died on the street.

The knowledge that someone could die of cold on a street in Toronto brought people together to take action. Sister Susan Moran, Father John Murphy and Rev. Canon John Erb, with the help of St. Michael's High School made arrangements to provide for a location, food and volunteers for the homeless.

A small storefront on St. Clair Avenue was opened on January 15, 1987. Sister Susan began connecting with various faith groups across the City of Toronto to discuss the opportunity of having the faith groups organize groups of volunteers at each church and synagogue to provide a safe refuge for homeless members of society as a temporary solution to the issue of homelessness.

The plan was simply that the faith group volunteers would open their doors one day a week for a period of approximately 23 weeks as well as provide food and hospitality to the homeless who are considered Guests of the programme.

The idea quickly caught on and, to date, there are now 19 various faith groups in the City of Toronto that provide this much-needed service. From this humble beginning, the Out of the Cold programme has spread throughout Toronto and many other cities across Canada.

Bloordale's Participation

As has been our custom for many years now, Bloordale will, once again, be providing a meal for the Out of the Cold Programme at All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church on Friday, February 12.

We provide the dinner, packed lunches and subway tokens and our group of volunteers cook and serve the meal on that evening.

Donations of cash, cookies, bananas, and subway tokens would be very much appreciated. We also need volunteers to cook (recipe and ingredients provided) and help serve the meal on the evening of February 12.

Please talk to Jill Donaghy if you would like to participate in this most worthy event.

The United Church Observer

"The Observer" costs

more: please note on the editorial page (#5), of the Jan. 2010 issue,

that the cost of a subscription, through the congregational group plan, has risen to \$20.00.

The figure on your donation envelope has been out-of-date for 2 years.

This is an award-winning, thoughtful magazine, well worth publishing; please help it to continue. Maintain your contact with the United Church at large, its people, its dreams, its problems; its efforts across Canada and on the world stage.

Serendipity Yoga Classes



Every Tuesday afternoon in the church gym from 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. Open to new members (previous yoga experience required).

Come join the group, we have a lot of fun. For more information, call Bernice Chandler at 905-793-0390 or just arrive in the gym any Tuesday a little before 2:00 p.m.



Happy New Year
Everyone from the
Bloordale Youth Group!

We just wanted to first
mention the Christmas

Pageant that we did on December 13th. Thanks to Lisa Mazzariol's directorial leadership of both the Children and the Youth Group, we managed to pull it off and it was a big success!

Looking forward into the New Year, there are lots of fun events that we've got planned. First is the beginning of our plans for a youth run Sunday service toward the later part of the church year. It will include all ideas from the youth and will provide an opportunity for the older members of the congregation to understand a different way of worship. Also, we're looking to have a skating outing at Nathan Phillips square, we enjoyed doing that last year and feel that it should become an annual trip! The other event we currently have planned is an out-of-the cold visit where the youth will get the opportunity to serve to those less fortunate than themselves.

That's all for now, Have a happy and healthy start to 2010!

The Bloordale Youth Group

Hearts of Love, Gifts of Gold

And who are we that gather in this ordinary place
to share a meal and friendship and to warm some
empty space,

but people seeking beauty and to offer what we
hold,

such things as we've been given: hearts of love
and gifts of gold.

And who is this who joins us in the sharing of this
meal?

'Tis God, who fashioned all we know, with loving
unconcealed.

So, as we break this bread of life, we're drawn to
see its goal:

that all would share in living hearts of love and
gifts of gold.

Yet do we have the knowledge and the tools to
make our way,

to shape a life of wonder at this turning of the
day?

We'll borrow from each other till each has
overflow'd,

and make this potluck feasting hearts of love and
gifts of gold.

And what shall be required in our living day by day,
but hands that work for justice, and the eyes for
mercy's way?

In joining in the dance of earth, with steps so light
yet bold,

we touch the hem of Mystery, hearts of love and
gifts of gold.

Christmas with the Canadian Brass

On Tuesday evening, December 22, 28 Bloordale family and friends went to see and hear Christmas with the Canadian Brass and the TSO (Toronto Symphony Orchestra), and the Mississauga Choral Society, at Roy Thompson Hall.

The TSO guest conductor for this performance was John Morris Russell, music director of the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. This performance was one of the Pops concert series, being lighter and less formal than a regular TSO concert.

The Canadian Brass quintet, who are entering their 40th season, came onto the stage through the audience, all five wearing their trademark white running shoes. Their performance was filled with wit and humour; they played a number of Christmas pieces in a Jazz style and did an exceptional job on 'Beale Street Blues'. They talked about their recent command performance for the Queen, "a command performance means you don't get paid".

The third component of the evening was the Mississauga Choral Society, whose conductor is Bloordale's own Mervin Fick. Their performance was excellent; some memorable pieces included Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' from Messiah and the 'Carol of the Bells' with the famous Ding Dinga Ling. TSO guest conductor Russell led the choir in the famous Mélé Kalikimaka piece, with the choir and Russell both sporting colourful leis, and doing Hawaiian hand movements. The evening finished with an audience sing along, to "Joy to the World".

Our seats were excellent, in the side Mezzanine, and we could see and hear Bloordale choir members Brian McIntosh, Verena von Stritsky, and Francine Morency, who were part of the MCS.

Thanks to all for coming, and a special thanks to the drivers.

A great time was had by all.

Deadline for Next Issue

Articles for the next issue of Bloorbeat should be submitted no later than **February 5th**. Send your articles directly to the Church Office at bloordale@bellnet.ca.

Bloorbeat is published 7 times a year by the Communications Committee of

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24 WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY	25 UCW UNIT 2 ROOM 15 7:15 PM	26 UCW UNIT 1 ROOM 15 11:30 AM SOUP & SANDWICHES	27	28 TEA & BOOKS RM 15, 10:00 AM CHOIR PRACTICE 7:30 PM	29	30
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14 TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY COMMUNION						
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