

Dec 1992/Jan 1993

## OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the New Year's edition of the St. John's Newsletter. Thanks to members of the Youth Group who coloured the Christmas wreath on our cover. The picture shows the choir of St. John's in 1922, and Frances Bain and Irene Munroe have written a story recalling some of the hi-jinks of those angelic looking choirboys which our youth might enjoy.

This is the first edition of the newsletter being sent only to those 33 members who asked to receive it. Extra copies are available at the church - if you are not on our list and would like to receive the newsletter, please let us know. We hope that people will continue to respond and the newsletter can begin to be an interactive voice in the life of the St. John's community.

A special thanks to Cynthia Stoddart-Webster and Lynda Woolrich for their hours of work in actually putting the newsletter together and making it look as good as it does.

Please continue to give us your ideas and opinions.

Best wishes to all for a Christ-filled Christmas and New Year!

Maggie Pawson 763 2266

Mike Maunder 961-1521

St. John's Church 763 2573

## ST. JOHN'S PLANS ITS FUTURE: JANUARY 17

St. John's parishioners will meet January 17th with an architect to consider the church's future. It's a meeting that is expected to look at

at major new directions for the church and at the same time confront some hard financial realities.

The major new direction is changing the church's fortress-like presence on Humberside into a more integrated part of the community - a church that is functioning seven days a week. The financial reality is that - unless the last week of the year brings in substantial collection plate revenue - St. John's will take \$37,000 out of reserves this year, instead of a budgeted \$17,000. At that rate, reserves will be gone in three years.

It's a time when the church could cut back and conserve in order to stretch out resources a bit further. Or launch into new directions which can bring growth and change. The meeting on January 17th is the time at which the congregation can make this basic decision. It will include the presence of architect Gerald Robinson who has worked with other parishes to help them visualize ways space can be used to move in the directions they choose.

For churchwarden Yvonne Johns it's time to look at using church space in ways that have not been considered before, in order to minister better to the St. John's community and foster growth and change. She sees the church facing a number of opportunities related to the its ministry and growth:

- Ministering to groups like Scouts and Day Care that use the building;
- Extending church ministry to those who visit once or twice;
- Providing meeting rooms and space for the many small groups that are part of the church family;
- Ministry to families in the parish which include persons with labels who are seeking ways to live in their own community;

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE  
Making the church more a part of the surrounding community, such as the high school, instead of having to lock the doors to deal with increasing robberies.

"Instead of a fortress church, where we are locked up and keeping everything safe, we need to look at how we can become a functioning church, seven days a week, ministering to our community," she said in an interview. "We have to begin a vision of St. John's, its people and its space, that's very radical from what we've been doing."

This is why the November Advisory Board meeting decided to bring in architect Gerald Robinson. He has helped several congregations visualize better ways to use their space. He has worked on a wide range of projects: restoring historic buildings; providing housing for those with special needs; designing recreation and meeting facilities. One of his projects came after fire destroyed St. George's Anglican church, behind the Art Gallery in downtown Toronto. Parish meetings determined there was a great need for green space in this area, and so he redesigned the still standing parish hall to include worship space and meeting space set in the middle of a much needed park.

The decision to rethink our future has been two years in the making. It started with the parish's annual meeting in 1991, just after Father Christian's arrival, where a large mural was drawn as parishioners asked themselves, "Where do we want to go as a parish?" Then, last spring, a parish meeting prioritized areas of concern, leading to a parish planning luncheon and meeting on October 18th this year (reported in the Fall newsletter).

All of this will come to a focus on January 17th in an afternoon long meeting following the Eucharist. Lunch and activities for children will be provided in order to ensure that as many members as possible from the St. John's family can attend.

## THINGS TO DO

1. St. John's is not the only organization struggling with difficult financial times. Representatives of Toronto's food banks are expecting this to be the hardest year they have yet seen. The depression is forcing more and more families to look to the food bank for their basic necessities. And that same depression is cutting down the money we all have to spend. If you can't donate money or food, think about giving some of your time.

All of the following need help:

- \* Stop 103 needs food and volunteers, 588-1963
  - \* Take toys or food to your local firehall
  - \* Take clothing to Goodwill or Salvation Army
  - \* Give a coin and a greeting to beggars you meet.
2. Be an active member of St. John's as it struggles with these decisions for the future and join the meeting after church on January 17th. The church needs all of us. January 17th is a chance to contribute that does not involve giving money, it involves giving ourselves.

## CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR

Christmas is a time when we think a great deal about family. Often in our society we think of the family as the nuclear unit - mother, father and children. That is certainly the family which is glorified in all the popular accounts of the Nativity.

But the Biblical family was much larger than this. The angel went first to Elizabeth, part of Jesus's extended family. The writers of the Nativity story are clear to start with a genealogy that traces Jesus through the generations of his family. Almost all of those with whom I shared in Africa could trace their family back through 50 or more generations.

It is this sense of extended family that we have lost in our society. Often it is only at Christmas that we catch glimpses of this wider family: aunts and uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents, friends and fellowship with the wider community. Jesus tells us that his family is made up of all those that do the will of God, and not merely blood relatives.

Today is a challenging time for family - both the nuclear family we know so well, and the wider extended family of friends and relatives and those that do the will of God.

As members of that wide family, may the Blessings that Jesus brought as the smallest and newest member on Christmas Eve be with you, and all of us, through the coming year.



# OUR CHURCH

- Thursdays **Bible Studies** - Tom and Judy Wolever continue to host bible studies at their home. Phone Lynda at the Church Office (763-2393) to join the fellowship.
- Dec 31 **New Year's Eve Party**  
At the Church - contact Evelyn Butler @ 604-8692
- Jan 10 Forum on AIDS, following the Eucharist
- Jan 14, Thurs **Budget Planning Meeting**
- Jan 17 Workshop on Use of Church Space  
With architect Gerald Robinson
- Jan 18, 8 pm **Day Care Board Meeting**
- Jan 23 Youth Group Toboggan Party!
- Jan 24 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Jan 25 **Day Care Annual Meeting**
- Jan 31 **PARISH ANNUAL MEETING**
- Feb 7, 2 pm **Earth Day - Ecumenical Clean-up Day on Humber R.**
- Feb 21 **Guides'/Scouts' Sunday**
- Feb 24 **Ash Wednesday**



# PAGES FROM THE PAST

by Frances Bain and Irene Munroe

St. John's parishioners have many memories of Christmas Past. Our cover shows the choir at the old St. John's Church around 1922, with Rev. Richard MacNamara presiding.

Phyllis Thompson remembers the large choir of men, women and boys. In the 1920's when a new boy joined the choir, he was initiated by the other boys by being blindfolded and sent sliding down the coal chute in back of the church.

Kathleen Shea remembers one choir boy at the old church as well. Not listening to the instructions of the choirmaster, he ended up the only boy marching down the aisle singing lustily. When he found he had become an unwitting soloist, he turned and dashed out the door, robes and all. Through the years, we have memories of the night before Christmas when hundreds of parishioners walked through snow to the sound of church bells to attend the midnight service. In those days the Twelve Days of Christmas started on Christmas Eve and went on to "Twelfth Night". It was bad luck to leave the tree up after that date. The Toronto garbage department still honours that tradition -they've set Jan. 7th as the date they'll accept Christmas trees.





Other memories of Christmas time were rides in a long sleigh driven by a team of horses and St. John's groups holding tobogganing parties on Grenadier Pond. Coincidentally, in this December's blizzard, several young St. John's members did the same, but they didn't match the parish record set in the 20's - down one side, across the pond and halfway up the other. Somehow it seems there was more snow then!

Our area was called "The Junction" because it was the point at which the transcontinental CPR tracks entered Toronto. The CPR bought two local lines which had western access to Union Station. It was here that the national CPR made its junction with those lines. After 1885, when the last spike was driven in the Rockies, the route through the Junction became the most important in the country as the West was settled. The area of the Junction thrived. St. John's was already here - not on our present site but in a little wooden church at the corner of Dundas and St. John's Road. The arrival of the railroad brought growth, and St. John's decided in 1888 to build a larger church and parish hall. That is the church shown here and on our cover. Can you find the coal chute where choir boys went for a slide?



Corner of Louisa St. (now St. John's Rd.), at Dundas, circa 1905. - Photo taken from a postcard donated by Eva Stoneham

Popular at that time were Saturday night hockey games at the Ravina rink, packed by 4,000 or more spectators. It was in that same year of 1922 that Toronto had its first radio station. One of the announcers was a Toronto Star reporter named Foster Hewitt who broadcast the hockey games from the much larger arena on Mutual Street in downtown Toronto.

In 1923 the parish took the daring step of closing down that location and building the present church much further south, a move made necessary by changing residential patterns. But years later, Irene Clayton Munroe remembers going for another slide at the old church. It was 1943 and the old parish hall had become a YMCA building. She slipped on the steps as she and her husband were carrying home a Christmas tree sold by the scouts. That was the year that all the radio stations started playing a new song by Bing Crosby - "White Christmas."



## THINGS TO DO

1. This year is the 50th anniversary of Irving Berlin's "Holiday Inn." The movie will be remembered for one thing - the introduction of a new song by Bing Crosby called "White Christmas." In 1992, no one in the western world can pass through Christmas without hearing this song, despite our modern airwaves being bombarded with messages from Madonna and MacDonalds. The movie will be shown FREE in a 50th anniversary screening, at 9 pm, Tuesday, Dec. 22, at the Nostalgic Cinema, 3030 Bloor Street West, near Royal York subway station. See you there!
2. Help save some of the Junction's history. Frances Bain was interviewed by the Globe and Mail on Dec. 3 about the impending fate of the old CNR station at Junction and Old Western Road.

The original CPR station from 1884 was torn down by the CPR ten years ago. "The same thing can't be allowed to happen to the old CNR station," she told the Globe. The station stands abandoned. CN plans to demolish it, but the historical society, of which Frances is a member, has asked the Federal Government to declare it an historical site. You can help by talking to Frances Bain. Her number is 767-7748.

## YOUR RESPONSE

In response to the Fall issue of our newsletter, we received 31 replies to the insert. Eleven were verbal responses and twenty were written. We have now put together a mailing list for future issues. I would stress that if you would like to be added to the mailing list, you have only to speak to Mike or me.



The success of the newsletter relies, in part, on our publishing your concerns. On the following pages we've listed the comments taken from your response sheets. Thanks for your ideas and criticisms!

*Maggie*

Thanks to Gavin Miller for the following:

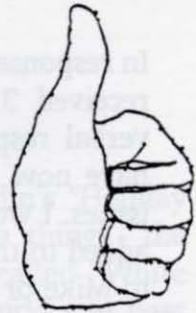
**Q. How many Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb?**

**A. 39! One to change it - and 38 to talk about how much better it was before!**

YOUR RESPONSE

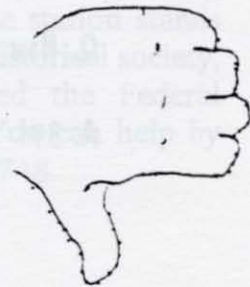
YOU LIKED:

- the format of the newsletter
- the cover photo
- the bulletin of upcoming events
- Pages From Our Past
- Things To Do
- the article on St. John's Trust
- informative lively articles
- everything about the newsletter



YOU DIDN'T LIKE:

- the idea of discontinuing the newsletter to those who don't attend church regularly
- jury is still out - judgement reserved



YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE:

- a kid's page
- more articles about ongoing events in the Church
- a place in the newsletter were the Church address and phone number is published
- something from Christian in each issue
- the newsletter continue as a way to help with growth and welcoming and a deepening of our understanding of each other
- more about the life and liturgy of St. John's from parishioners
- the newsletter be incorporated into a local community publication

Greetings from Linda Burnside!

I would be interested in hearing if there are people interested in exploring a feminist approach to theology/spirituality - perhaps gathering once a month to discuss a particular book or article? Could this go out in the newsletter? Anyone interested could be in touch with me at 763-5805.

We had several specific responses to our article on the **Planning Day**. We've given THE LAST WORD to Lucas Roffey who took the time to write a long and thoughtful description of the ideas that were discussed in the portion of the meeting he attended. He'd like to hear more detailed reports from people who attended some of the other groups.

Other comments on the Planning Day:

**YOU LIKED:**

the chance for people to express their concerns  
everything about that day

**YOU DIDN'T LIKE:**

the lack of active focus and direction - "It's time to stop navel-gazing and get off our fat asses!"

**YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE:**

more action - the Planning Day was a repeat of the initial planning session

more future direction

## THE LAST WORD

Our group at the planning meeting discussed growth. There were many virtues. In assessing our weaknesses, discussions gravitated first to evaluating the building and relationship with the community.

The church's exterior does not reflect or say to the passerby what is going on inside. The long, steep steps; the heavy, gothic, arched, double wooden doors; the stately bell tower; the soaring roof peak; and the monochrome brick all evoke images of "old high church" - imposing, remote, staid, antiquated - irrelevant.

The building's interior lacks the flexibility to respond to the parish's needs. The basement has been remodelled for its primary use by the Daycare, cubs, and guides, and AA. The congregation needs small, casual, contained spaces to serve its own meeting needs. The regimented, line-on-line, theatre-style arrangement of the pews does not reflect or facilitate the organic family celebration of the eucharistic meal to which our parish has evolved or permit alternate use of the space at other times.

We have not been relating to our immediate community (Humberside Collegiate, our immediate neighbours, the high-rise apartment complexes towards Bloor). Nor have we been relating to the three other Anglican parishes located within easy walking distance of us. Additionally, there are many churches of other Christian denominations serving the same geographic area. Yet the local population is very diverse with only a very small percentage being from an Anglican background. The "St. John's" sign, with its square shape, dark colour and prominent "Anglican" statement, suggests to those who may be looking to join a Christian community but who are



are not from an "Anglo" background that they may not find us "familiar", "safe" or "approachable".

In addressing what we can or should be doing, we initially focused on possible alterations to the building and its spaces:

- create a glass atrium on the front, somehow replacing the long, imposing steps;
- replace the doors we don't use with clear glass;
- promote "community and Christian" on the outside, remove "Anglican";
- more flexible, multi-use arrangement of the main floor interior space:
  - smaller, casual intimate meeting space
  - relocate or replace pews with more flexible seating
  - relocate or remove the dividing wall between the narthex and the nave?
  - a restaurant and/or drop-in centre for high-school students.

Then the ideas shifted to the process by which the space could be changed. So that the process itself would cultivate the reaching of the parish into its immediate community and result in a designing of its space that was indeed meaningful to the community.

The neighbours and the Humberside Collegiate community could be invited to provide input into what community needs they saw, and how the St. John's plant could contribute to those needs. Through that process, they could begin to orient towards the church as no longer imposing and remote, but as a relevant resource in their lives. We could also invite into the process at least the three other Anglican parishes in the neighbourhood. With the hope that we could turn our proximity into an asset and pool our collective human and physical resources, rather than exhaust our individual resources in duplicating each other.