

February 6, 2008

SJWT
TMC



Dear Friends,

Lent helps us look into our own souls - showing us our 'growing edges' and that God already loves us as we are. Holding this balance is the journey that lies before us.

Worship with us this Sunday, February 10: Transfiguration: 8:30 Early Eucharist; 10:30 Eucharist; Sermon: Gary van der Meer; Celebrant: Gary van der Meer; Musician: Barry Short. Refreshments following.

Support the Sunday School Cookie Bake! Have a wonderful cookie during refreshments, as the children begin fundraising for the Sunday School Retreat. We are beginning to organize and look forward to sharing our plans to go away for a Sunday School weekend.

Announcements & Events

Lenten Program

St. John's will host a shared Lenten program with Redeemer Lutheran Church, Wednesday evenings, February 13, 20, 27, March 5, 12, 19, 7:30 - 8:45 pm. The program will be held at St. John's. Bob Shantz will present his new book, "Windows on our Souls" along with artist Sarah Hall and art historian Peter Larisey. Learn about art, the early Christian catacombs, stained glass, and theology (Bob's writings!). The evening will include reflections, concluding with Lutheran Evening Prayer, Musician: Barry Short.

Commitment Sunday

As St. John's continues to grow towards a true programme church, your participation in the form of time, talent and treasure will become increasingly important. During the every member visits in January and February, each Parish member will be given their commitment cards to fill out. On Commitment Sunday, February 24, church members will hand these in at church. Think about what you can do for our community as we all have something special to give. We encourage you to give generously of your time, talent and treasure!

Writing Cheques

Our bank has tightened its rules about cashing cheques written to St. John's. Our official name for banking purposes: "St. John's Church, West Toronto". If you write "St. John's Anglican Church" or "St. John's West", we will have to ask you to change the payee! Thanks so much for your attention to this.

Great Upcoming Music

Sundays at 10:30 a.m. sharp - February 10: Barry Short, organ; February 17: Dorothy DeVal and Susanna McLeary; February 24: Jaroslav Czerwinec. March 2: Anne Lederman and Tom Layton.

Midweek Worship Services

Thursday February 7, 10:30 a.m. Morning Prayer, with scripture discussion followed by home baked refreshments; Tuesday, February 12, 7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer, with Anglican Rosary and silent meditation. During Lent, Tuesday Morning Prayer begins at 7:00 a.m.

Leadership Team Meetings

February 17 at 9:15 am the leadership team will meet in the blue room, downstairs in the church basement.

Nursery Get Together

We're planning a get together of parents to talk about the nursery and make plans. If you would like to be part of this conversation, contact Jennifer Smerek, 416-537-4679, bjennifer@gmail.com.

Burns Supper

The revenue from this popular fundraiser just over **\$3,500**. The success of the supper is the work of a dedicated team of parishioners and the support of the whole congregation. In particular Midge Ferguson, Sue Ferguson, Susan Rynasko, Trish Taylor, Greg Los, Tom Gehrels, May Webster, Frans Altena, Anthony Ruta and Noelle Carbone are to be recognized and thanked for their time and commitment.

Slide Show of England

As part of the Lent Program on Wednesday evenings, Gary will show slides of England: Cathedrals and Churches as Sacred Space, Weird and Wonderful, Wednesday, February 27, 7:30 p.m.

Annual Vestry Meeting

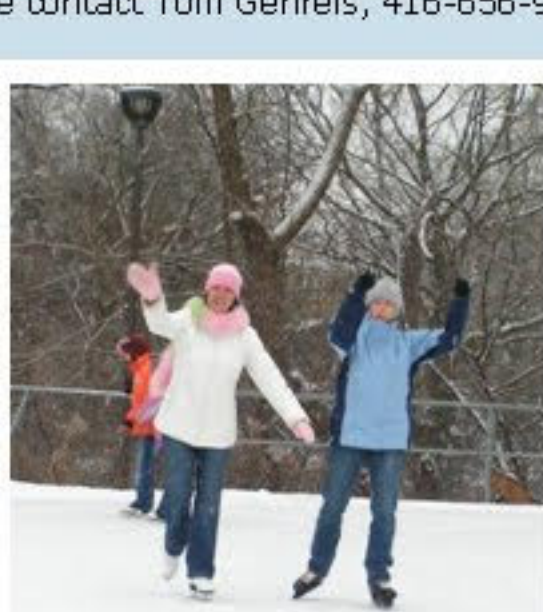
Sunday, March 2nd following the 10:30 service, there will be a sandwich lunch provided for all those who stay for the annual vestry meeting.

Skating Outing

After a busy Christmas season, where the outdoor program took a back seat, the next St. John's outing has been scheduled for Sunday, February 24, after church, around 1PM.

Following last year's success this will be another skating outing at Rennie Park. As there is a cantina on site, bring hot drinks, sandwiches and snacks so we can all chat and have fun!

February 24 is also Commitment Sunday, so we are counting on a great turnout! Dress warm, polish up your skates, and we'll see you there! For questions, please contact Tom Gehrels, 416-656-9111 or mariengehrels@yahoo.com.



Skating Fun last year!

Church School Needs

We have need of pens, pie plates (aluminum), and plastic or paper tablecloths for upcoming projects. If you are doing a spring tidy up in your home and come across any of these items, we would be most happy to have them!

Thanks:

Thanks to Tom Gehrels for his skating photos from last year. Thanks to Bob Shantz for the meditation below.

Spiritual Experiences

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. (Matthew 17: 2-3)

Christian mystics write of being overwhelmed by the presence of God. In a church in Rome you can see the artist Bemini's sculpture, created in 1652, of St Theresa in the throes of what can only be described as orgasmic ecstasy as she is being "pierced" by an angel's arrow. She had described in her writings her encounter with the divine as she experienced it - as orgasmic.

There are, of course, contemporary accounts of spiritual ecstasy. There are those who have had life-changing conversion experiences and you, dear reader, may be one of these people. Their conversion is often described as being overwhelmed by the presence of God in a way they could not ever have imagined: filled with peace, sublime joy and contentment; knowing everything that is truly necessary to know; filled with love for all creation; loving themselves in way they did not know possible and wanting to love others as they love themselves now. They have seen the truth of life in a new way. "Once I was blind but now I can see." And there are others who speak in tongues or have been cured by a healer. Peter, James and John in this morning's Gospel reading are invited to go for a walk up a mountain and at the top they see an ecstatic vision of the greatest of the prophets - Moses and Elijah with Jesus, dazzlingly transfigured by a glowing light.

But what about me? I have not seen visions or been overwhelmed with a spiritual orgasmic ecstasy (most unfortunately). Where is my spiritual high? Am I a modern "doubting Thomas?" Am I too spiritually immature? Perhaps. But I have been pushed by life's ambiguities to the edge of some of life's terrible cliffs and looked over, terrified by my vulnerability. I have been reminded of my reliance on community and the need to know well my deeper self. I have been asked to grow spiritually. These have been moments of enlightenment and growth. They have not, however, been ecstatic religious experiences.

Maybe I am one of those whose spirituality is enriched in other ways: by the birth of my children and death of a parent; by a community that reaches out to me when I am in need; by friends who astonish me with their understanding of who I am; by schlepping along through my life, awakened occasionally in quiet ways to the love that surrounds me. For I too have been blind but then saw what I had never seen before. Do I remember these moments of receiving new clarity and insight? I remember some of them but it seems that for the most part I have, without much fanfare, slowly grown into the person I am at this moment.

Perhaps Moses, Elijah and Jesus one day will show me their glowing presence. I suspect that they will do so to confirm that even through the dark valleys I have always walked in the shining light of the love of God. .

I walk in the shining light of the love of God. Amen.

Bob Shantz

For meditation and reflection in the coming week, consider the scriptures for next Sunday, February 10 (First Sunday in Lent): Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11.

P.S. I hope you find it helpful to get an update like this from St. John's Church, West Toronto. If you would like something listed in the announcements, or if you know someone who would appreciate receiving this, please contact me. If you would prefer not to receive news from St. John's in this way, please also let me know.

Best wishes, Gary+

Check our website. www.sjwt.ca

And remember this!

We are not a Building!

We are an accessible, accepting, diverse community. We are young and old, able-bodied, and disabled, employed and unemployed. We are married, single, divorced, straight and gay. We are from all over the world, yet we could live next door. You will find open minds and open hearts at St. John's.

The mission of St. John's Church is to build a community of caring believers committed to Christ, to work for justice and service to all in need. We gather to praise God, and to give and receive support to meet the challenge of our daily ministries. We call on all who will to come and join us.

