

News for Scattered Pews

September 2022



Val's Voice

As I write this, a hot September day continues to unfold. I am chipping away at a to-do list, grateful that things are written down and they can be crossed off one by one. Sometimes things are ordinary, and

simply need to be done... painting around the windows, as Brian and Alan have been doing today, dusting in the corners, etc.

Sometimes, though, we create things that are lovely or fun, and we get to celebrate that. (I felt St. Mary Magdalene Day was like that, as Carey and all those who cooked, and Caroline with her entertaining Bingo game got us all smiling!) I felt that way too, as we all trooped out to the bus bench in front of our church in early August to take part in the smudging ceremony that Amanda offered for all of us, as she prayed over the lovely piece of art that Annie Beach had created. Together, the fun and beauty of those things conspired, in a way, to give us hope that some of the joy of community could come back. That life could be rich! Both these days were fun. They were life-giving. They make me smile now as I think about them.

What a joy when life is fun, or when relationships make us smile. It is important, and I think it is what God would want. Not just for us, of course. For all God's people, those living through war in Ukraine, those living through flooding in Pakistan, those without a home in Winnipeg or Iqaluit. So much can be good in this world.

But of course, it isn't necessarily good. Sometimes it is beyond heartbreaking. That's when I think we need each other. That is also when we need to conspire to improve things. Con-spire. Breathe together. 'To plot' is the common meaning. Make a plan that doesn't just involve one or two. Plot, breathe together with a bunch, to make the world a better place.

This morning I opened Facebook to see that someone I know had posted a meme - a quotation about faith - that captured beautifully their most precious thoughts about who they know God to

be. The words inspired me. Clearly that person and I share a similar faith perspective. But someone else was not inspired. They insulted the poster's words, ridiculed their faith. Facebook at its worst.

We've all seen it. And sometimes I go the other direction. Sometimes I don't know what to say. But this time, I did. Today I knew that we need to breathe together. Create a better world, a kinder internet, a more hopeful space... together! I didn't do much, just a note of appreciation for the thought the poster had shared. A couple of lines saying how important those words were to me, and to many others that I know, how beautiful, how faithful.

The poster's response to my comment meant they knew they had been heard. An insult that could have wrecked a day lost its power. I was glad it worked, but it wasn't me that did it... it was the words themselves, the words that reminded me of who we are, and who God is. The words I liked so much were these, from John Shelby Spong:

"I rather experience God as the source of life willing me to live fully, the source of love calling me to love wastefully and the Ground of being, calling me to be all that I can be."

These days, that is what we all need - to remember that God, the source of life, wills us to live fully; that Jesus, love incarnate, invites us to love wastefully; that the Spirit to be all that we can be. Blessings of this, our God, be with you and with all...

Val



Vestry Notes from August 30

Parish finances are tracking close to budget, but that's not necessarily good news as the budget we passed ends the year with a \$25,000 deficit. At this time we are about \$15,000 in the red (expenses about \$112,000 and income around \$97,000), so the last part of the year will be critical. Please consider increasing your giving if possible. Thanks so much for the generosity you show in supporting our parish ministry!

We took some time to recall and give thanks **for many blessings:**

- The fun we had celebrating **St. Mary Magdalene Day** at the end of July, with BBQ chicken and other tasty treats thanks to a dedicated cooking crew, and the hilarity we had as Caroline led us through a game of Bingo.
- The **bus bench project**, completed with the talent and interest of artist Annie Beach (thanks so much Annie!), smudged and blessed by Amanda Wallin (thanks Amanda!) and toasted by our City Councillor, Brian Mayes, who gave us the funding to complete this lovely piece. The day of its blessing was a great celebration of community!
- The ministry of our former Primate, whose vision contributed to the recognition of the common work of the Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCIC (our Lutheran partner church) in the Waterloo Declaration. Flowers were sent to the **Most Rev. Michael Peers**, to offer our thanks for his ministry. His wife Dorothy expressed their deep appreciation, speaking on behalf of Michael, whose health is failing.

Vestry is pleased to announce **Yvonne van Dam** has accepted the position of **Administrative Assistant** and starts on September 6. She will work Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, for a total of 10 hours/week. (Judy Asker retains the financial side of the position, which she'll do remotely.) Welcome, Yvonne!

There was a good conversation around how we can better care for parishioners who are not well, or simply not able to get out to attend church. We will consider working on this challenge moving forward.

Our Vestry meeting ended with a tour of the building for newer members, so they could have a look at the various nooks and crannies they may not have known existed in our parish home.

Visioning Workshop: September 24

Our parish is having a visioning workshop on Saturday, September 24 from 10 am to 3 pm. It promises to be a good day, with a mix of large group presentation and conversation, small group discussion, and personal reflection. Deacon Michelle Collins, Assistant to the Bishop of the MNO Synod (our partner church) will lead us.

- ❖ We will take time to reflect and talk... about who we are as a parish, and what our values and priorities are.
- ❖ We will prayerfully ask questions... about what is important in what we do as a community and what gifts God has given us to help us serve our neighbour.
- ❖ We will learn from God and one another!
- ❖ Come and join in... bring a bag lunch and prepare to enjoy your fellow parishioners!

Fall 2022 Garage Sale

Friday, September 30 9 am – 5:30 pm
Saturday, October 1 9 am – 12 pm

Donations can be dropped off at the church until noon on Thursday, September 29. Sorry but we cannot pick up any donations.

Only 40 people will be allowed into the building at a time during the sale, so be prepared to wait outside, especially the first hour after door opening.

Mask wearing is strongly encouraged, and may be required if the Province mandates it at the time.

Please bring your own shopping bags.

To arrange to drop off items or to volunteer please email stmarymag.garagesale@gmail.com or phone 204-256-6157 and ask for Cathy.

Visit stmarymagdalenevpg.org/garage-sales.html for more information.

The Parish of St. Mary Magdalene is on Treaty 1 territory.

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A Glimpse of Warmth and Love

Anin, Boozhoo, niin Annie Beach ndishinikas, ma'iingan ndodem.

Hi, my name is Annie Beach, from the Wolf clan. I am a visual artist, muralist and community worker, born, raised and rooted in Winnipeg with relations from Peguis First Nation and Brokenhead First Nation.

My Cree/Saulteaux and Ukrainian connections have brought light to celebrating that Turtle Island today exists from different histories, experiences and perspectives coming together. That is a message I was able to capture when I was graciously invited by Val and Brian to create a design representing our hopes for a world directed towards reconciliation and healing.

When Val reached out, I was uncertain if this was a project up my alley, mostly because the mural projects I work on are quite large scale. However, I was instantly excited and intrigued at the community aspect this bench represents, not only for St. Mary Magdalene, but also for the neighbours, those living in St Vital and passersby who would be gifted with a glimpse of warmth and love.

I visited the church to get a sense of the energy and the space, and was inspired by the architectural design of the ceiling, which is referenced in the design as a sunrise in the horizon. While we toured outside, Val shared a story from this past Lent/Easter season, of how when the cross was set up outside draped with first purple and then white cloth, a small rabbit would visit. This immediately inspired me, as rabbits in Indigenous teachings are typically tricksters, personifying paradoxes and helping us establish social rules through storytelling.



(l-r) Annie Beach, Brian Mayes, Richard Mackenzie, Amanda Wallin, Shiraz Khan and Rev. Val From at the blessing of our new bus bench.

My role as an artist is to bring everyone's ideas together in a unified way, which is what I had the chance to do. Once I drafted a design, I got feedback from community members and had the chance to incorporate many of the suggestions.

The art on the bench represents many things:

A new beginning, with a sunrise, shining light on a new day. In Indigenous teachings a sunrise comes from the East and symbolizes conception of spirit and new life. The architectural reference brings the essence of inside the church to the outside community, with a reference to the medicine wheel in the centre, teaching that all things are balanced and part of one. The cross is present, with its cloth turning from purple to white to rainbow, celebrating the Two Spirit and LGBTQ communities.



There are various flora and fauna: rabbit, deer, chickadee, butterfly and dragonfly; the Seine River that flows through St. Vital; flowers like morning glories, sweetpeas and pussy willow branches.

On the left side, three individuals - a woman of African descent wearing a headwrap, a Cree boy wearing a long braid proudly and a young Pakistani girl - symbolize unique cultures and communities coming together under one roof, all connected to the natural world and its beauty.

It was an honour to create a design that brings together Indigenous spirituality and Anglican symbolism, to unify and create a harmonious image that reconciles towards a new day and brighter future.

Thank you, *miigwetch*, to St. Mary Magdalene for your compassionate hospitality, for inviting me in these doors to be a lasting part of your community.

Annie