

*Jubilation!* is the newsletter of Jubilee United Church 40 Underhill Drive \* 416-447-6846 \* <u>www.jubileeunited.ca</u> Editor: Elda Scott

March 2023

Notes from Norm

The clocks have shifted, the days are getting longer, and the feeling of Easter and spring seem very real. People are talking about new life, new energy, and wondering if we're ready to be resurrected. And let's be honest, it's been tough. Three years of pandemic and the darkest Toronto winter in 30 years have taken their toll on us all. Tempers are short, emotions are raw and hope is fragile.

**But Resurrection is real.** It's not a just a story in an old book; it's not just something that happened to Jesus a long time ago. It is something that happens all around us in every moment, if we have eyes to see. It happens in spring, as new life emerges in our gardens; it happens in relationships when we reunite with someone we haven't seen in ages.

I was speaking yesterday with someone who told me that it has happened for her at Jubilee. She wasn't sure about coming back to in-person Sunday worship - she noted that she almost forgot how much she liked it. But, after she decided to come back, she soon remembered why she loved it so much and how important it was to her. I would suggest that she came out of her pandemic cave of isolation and discovered new life for herself. Not just a sentimental journey, but a resurrection.

Now, it probably sounds like I'm trying to talk you into coming back to Jubilee, especially on a Sunday, but I'm not. You'll come back when it's your time. I know how nice it is to engage in worship through a screen that allows me to pause for a break, watch something again and share with a friend without having to even get out of my pyjamas. However, some folks have been saying that they're getting ready to return, some are saying that they will be back for Easter. If you are one of those folks, I just want to prepare you. It's not the same (except that it is).

On a Sunday, you'll notice right away that our music director is different. And you *WILL* notice Jeannie Wyse; she is not shy. You will also notice that the choir is different: different faces, different voices and different music! So, be prepared. It's not the same **(except that it is).** Be assured that the music will engage you, the quality of our choir is exemplary and the music will lift your spirit even as it meets you somewhere deep in your heart. There is nothing quite like live music.



Speaking of faces, you will notice that some of the faces of folks at Jubilee have changed. Familiar ones might look a little different (it has been a while); some of our dear friends are no longer with us and even though we know that, it is a little bit different to see that. You will miss some faces; I know that I do. It's not the same **(except that it is).** You will see new faces, and the new faces will be glad to see you and new relationships will be started; old friends will introduce you to that person who just started coming a few months ago after finding us on-line during lockdown, and pretty soon you'll be wondering if you can be a greeter and meet more folks.

The kids are different. It's not the same (except that it is). The ones you remember have grown up and new kids have arrived. Children, who will delight you and from time to time confound you. Coffee is different! It's now in the Garden Room and Anne Taylor and Elizabeth Clarke have taken charge. It's not the same (except that it is). The coffee and tea are still hot, the cookies are on the table and joining a coffee team is still a great way to meet people and support the community.

Bri-anne might be different. She is a Rev. now, called and serving Jubilee for over year in so many ways – some that you will see on Sunday, others you will experience if you engage with Jubilee digitally or if you get involved in the Green Team, the Refugee Committee or anything to do with compassionate justice in the community.

I'm a little different. Sure, the hair is longer, the weight is up and down, but I'm probably a little wiser than I was before. I am still slightly unpredictable, somewhat unconventional, and I remain hopeful. In fact, I might be even more hopeful that before. Hopeful because I see what it is happening as we emerge from this time of isolation. I see people reconnecting and discovering how important community is to them. Over time, staying home, we can find ourselves in a stupor and forget how important connecting with people can be. But when we reconnect, we are reminded of the value of being committed to being a community together. Studies show that live theatre, live music and live worship (which is theater and music after all) help to nurture empathy in people. Going to church nurtures empathy and understanding in ways that movies, screens and monitors simply do not. It seems a little bit obvious at first, but I don't know if we are always aware of why we go to church. We often go out of habit or to find God. In the past three years, we have changed our habits and many of us have discovered that God finds us and we can find God through all manner of media and experience. We start to think maybe we don't need to "go" to church. And maybe we don't.

(I probably don't need chocolate either... but, wow! Do I ever love !)



When you come back, it won't be same, except that, in many ways, it will be. That same spirit is present, the connection to each other and to the holy is real. The laughter is real. The chills when the music is just right are still there. The "I can't believe I'm still here; I was going to leave right after church, but it's been so nice catching up..." is still real. And together we are nurturing in each other a real empathy that not only connects us to the world in a positive way, but also allows us to change

the world in ways that make life better for everyone - in ways that God still whispers into our hearts when we dare to leave them open.

You may not be ready to join us at Easter, but I promise you that whenever you are ready to join us, you will experience a resurrection that is very personal and very real. You won't be the same (except you will still be you, beloved by God and valued in community).



God bless you and Happy Easter!! *Norm* 

Notes from Bri-anne

#### **Capital Punishment and the Crucifixion**

The following article was <u>originally published in Broadview Magazine</u> in its January/February 2023 issue. As we approach Holy Week, a time when we grapple with the story of Jesus' execution, I offer it as food for thought in the coming days. If you'd like to read more about my involvement with death row inmates, you can do so <u>here</u>. If you'd like to join those of us who subscribe to Broadview Magazine, you can talk to Pam Lock and she can tell you how to get signed up through our congregational subscription plan.

Jesus was executed by the state. Scripture tells a story of how Emmanuel - God with us in the flesh - came and lived among his people. He ate with his friends. He told stories to those who would listen. He loved with the fullness that it is to be God incarnate.

This love wasn't always gentle. It was a love that included justice for the poor, the forgotten and the neglected. It was a love of action, with its movement always toward the reconciliation of God's people.

However, as we read in The United Church of Canada's <u>A Song of Faith</u>:

Because his witness to love was threatening, those exercising power sought to silence Jesus. He suffered abandonment and betrayal, state-sanctioned torture and execution. He was crucified. The last executions in Canada occurred in 1962, and capital punishment was removed from the civilian criminal code in 1976. It can therefore be tempting for Canadians to believe that ongoing use of the death penalty in other jurisdictions has nothing to do with us. However, a recent survey shows that more than half of Canadians support reinstating the death penalty. This statistic makes me continually grateful for the work of Rev. James V. Scott, a United Church minister who, in the mid-1980s, co-ordinated a national campaign to oppose the reinstatement of the death penalty, culminating in the bill's defeat in 1987. My fear is that some future government will decide to hold another parliamentary vote on whether or not we should reinstate lethal processes to punish our citizens.

However, even more than the fear of capital punishment returning to this country, I believe it is important for Christians to discern our particular relationship to the death penalty because of its place within our faith tradition.

Capital punishment is an important piece of the Christ story. And yet, so often it is Christians who are its most passionate supporters. This enthusiasm is often displayed with painfully simplistic proof-texting, quoting phrases such as "an eye for an eye" (Leviticus 24) or Paul's instruction for early Christian communities to submit to government authority (Romans 13). In 2019, a Wyoming state senator even claimed that if the death penalty didn't exist, Jesus would never have been able to "save" us, which is reason enough to keep capital punishment around.

A theology suggesting the world and everybody in it was so bad that the incarnate God had to die doesn't resonate with me. My understanding of the crucifixion is much more in line with the Song of Faith statement: Jesus' witness to love was threatening. He was publicly executed under Roman authority in the same way that so many potential rebels and revolutionaries had been tortured before him. But Jesus' challenge to those exercising power wasn't because he wanted that power for himself. It was his unmasking of injustice, perpetuated by those in power, that led to his death sentence. This is what happens when God's love threatens power. Power tries to kill God. Citing scripture from his Jewish faith, Jesus insisted on a love of action that specifically named the poor, the hungry and the merciful as blessed. He demanded a love that left nobody behind and that favoured those the world did not.

We encounter Christ everywhere corporate and systemic sin is confronted. It is in this way that we bear witness to the crucifixion over and over again. It is also in this way that the hope of resurrection always remains present. Exposing evil is costly, sometimes even deadly. And yet, in the outrage and in demands for change, we are also reminded that there is always something greater. **Something more.** 

I'm not for one moment comparing the devastating actions of violent offenders to Jesus' lifegiving ministry. Rather, like Jesus, these deaths at the hands of civil authorities expose society's failings. In countries such as the United States, executions shine a spotlight not only on how a nation responds to the failures of its individual citizens, but also on the failures of the collective.

In Texas, where death-row inmate and convicted murderer <u>Ramiro Gonzales</u> grew up, nearly a fifth of all children live below the poverty line. Minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour and has not changed since 2008. More than a million Hispanic kids grow up in households where no adult has consistent, year-round work. Almost 20 percent of adults lack basic literacy skills. When the natural consequences of

ongoing systemic failures result in people engaging in criminal behaviours, these people are "othered" and dehumanized. We call them evil. We label them monsters.

How this othering happens with violent offenders is perhaps an extreme example, but it also occurs to those convicted of non-violent offences, such as simple possession of illicit drugs. We blame individuals for the failures of society, especially the failures of those who hold power and influence. However, those who commit violence rarely act out their brokenness in a vacuum. There are many cracks one needs to fall through first.

Gonzales fell through every crack imaginable. Those cracks combined until they became a crevasse so deep, it was impossible to climb out alone. While I would never discount Gonzales's personal responsibility for Bridget Townsend's death, I deeply believe that Townsend would still be alive today had this crevasse been filled with love - an incarnate love that American philosopher Cornel West describes when he reminds us to "never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."

This kind of love can cost a lot. If those who have committed heinous crimes are nothing less than human beings, if we can still recognize them as God's beloveds, there is a cost to that. To be honest, I find that cost terrifying. If there isn't something inherently evil or inhuman about people who have perpetrated terrible violence, then what else has contributed to these people causing so much harm, and where is my complicity in that? Do I have the capacity to also commit that kind of harm? If the social safety net has failed to prevent the circumstances that led to a chain of choices culminating with an innocent woman's murder, does the whole of society not hold some responsibility for her death?

This is, of course, a bit simplistic. Many people have suffered trauma and not gone on to perpetuate cycles of violence. I do not dismiss individual agency and responsibility. However, violence as a solely personal failure has been the primary narrative for too long. If society is complicit in creating the circumstances where violence flourishes, then it is no wonder our societal structure has been designed to resist that culpability and distance us from those we name as guilty, with scapegoating being the inevitable result.

The same forces that led to Jesus' death continue to be at work in the ways our society inflicts punishment. The ultimate and most tragic manifestation of this is the ongoing endorsement of a penalty, used against the God we worship, and disproportionately levied upon the very people Jesus named as blessed.

It is my hope that people of faith will continue to engage in this conversation, wrestling with our relationship to capital punishment, the crucifixion and the ways society scapegoats those who hold up a cracked mirror to our failings. Christ calls us to participate in a love that breaks down the barriers separating us, and that inevitably leads to reconciliation with each other and the God who is wholly love, and for whom death is never the last word.

In God's love, Bri-anne

#### Greetings from the Music Ministry!

It is hard to believe that it has been six months since I began my journey at Jubilee in September, 2022. Much has happened in such a short period of time.

• The choir continues to grow and we are consistently exploring a wide variety of repertoire - may I remind you of our Backstreet Boys anthem!



- *It's Comin' on Christmas* was a huge success and our special guest, *Broadsway*, brought many new faces into the church.
- Julie Michels blessed us with a beautiful rendition of Shed a Little Light (James Taylor) to close Black Heritage Month which moved everyone.

Now that Lent has begun, we turn our thoughts to the renewal of Easter and plans have begun for a spring concert on Saturday, May 13. This will be a perfect gift for Mom on Mother's Day weekend.

#### Please mark May 13 on your calendars now.

Our section leads, **Marie, Katie and Lily** bring joy and guidance to our merry band, and I am excited to announce that we have a baritone section lead!! **Henry** Paterson has joined us and is already familiar with Jubilee because he is also a member of the Amadeus Choir. In addition, Henry is also an accomplished tuba player. We look forward to getting to know him better and I am grateful for the talent all of our leads bring to the choir.

Thank you to all of our choir members for their unwavering dedication and commitment to the music ministry at Jubilee. I also want to thank the Ministry & Personnel Committee for their support. *Jeannie Wyse Music Director* 



**Brookbanks for African Grannies** are pleased to announce a movie evening at Hot Docs cinema to benefit the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers Campaign. The movie is about how four young men, escaping from Zimbabwe's political problems, became world class sommeliers! To purchase tickets, click here:

https://hotdocs.ca/whats-on/films/tslf-blind-ambition

To donate, click here: Donations

Jeanne Kennedy

# Holy Week @ Jubilee April 3-9

Monday-Friday Holy Week Bible Study in Person 830-930am Holy Week Bible Study on Zoom 12noon-1pm. He is Risen! What does that mean? What can stories of the resurrection mean for us today?



Maundy Thursday, April 6th at 6pm An informal hand washing, meal and shared re-telling of Easter Story

Good Friday, April 7th at 1030am The story of the Crucifixion, told with scripture and music

Easter Son-Rise, April 9th at 8am Outside on the Labyrinth, an informal gathering celebrating the Resurrection with scripture, song, Communion and prayer.

Easter Breakfast, April 9th at 9am. Yes, it's back. Details coming soon.

Easter Sunday Service, April 9th at 1030am. Yes, we will have all the bells and whistles, music and celebration. If you've been away for a while, this might be the service that welcomes you back!

Easter Egg Hunt after the 1030 service because everyone wants to have a little fun (and some chocolate!)

www.jubileeunited.ca

## **Maundy Thursday**



Maundy Thursday, also called Holy Thursday, is the Thursday before Easter. Christians remember it as the day of the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and established the ceremony known as the Eucharist or Communion.

People have been asking when this Jubilee tradition would return, and it seems like this is the year that we can safely hold this gathering. You are invited to join us in the Jubilee Sanctuary for a

#### Maundy Thursday Service on Thursday, April 6 at 6:00pm.

It will be an intimate service of worship around the table sharing food and friendship. In the sharing of a simple meal, we will search for meaning in the symbols and memories that are always with us. We will have hand washing; we will share food, laughter, companionship and together tell the story of the Last Supper and the events to follow.

#### The service will be casual and intimate and you are invited.

#### What kind of food?

#### Kraft Dinner will be integral and there will be meat, fish and vegetable options in a buffet style that will allow you to eat what suits you best.

All that we ask is that you sign up so that we can prepare the appropriate amount of food for all. The sign-up sheet should be easy to find in the foyer at church. You can also phone the church office (416)447-6846 or email <u>nseli@jubileeunited.ca</u>

Holy Week Study Group Monday - Friday, April 3-7, 8:30-9:30am What is the Resurrection? What does it mean that Jesus was resurrected? What did the Gospel writers believe? What did Paul believe? What does resurrection mean for us? Is this history, theology, metaphor, fantasy, reality?



Join us in the Garden Room every morning (or just one morning) for a short video and some safe, nonjudgmental reflection and discussion led by Rev. Seli.

The coffee will be hot, the welcome warm and the discussion worth your time and effort.

Some of our folks have passed away recently and we will miss them. Our condolences go out to their families. Nancy Rogers - September 28, 2022 Tom Johnston - February 19, 2023 Audrey McLeod - March 18 2023

#### MURDER MYSTERY DINNER THEATRE

*by Charlie Scott and Elizabeth Clarke* We are pleased to inform you that our earlier postponed Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre production will now be held on Saturday, April 29, @7:00pm. This evening will include a wonderful dinner provided by our own Gary Norris, and an intriguing murder mystery play, written by the late Ed Rutherford, along with some musical entertainment.



There are a very limited number of tickets available through the church office at \$40 per person or \$75 per couple. Previous ticket holders, who have retained their tickets, please know that your tickets will be valid for this new performance date.

Looking forward to your presence at this entertaining event. **Elizabeth & Charlie** 





Pizza and Bible Study for Youth (&Youth adjacent) First Sunday of Each Month 1-230pm in Heritage Room (info, Rev. Norm - nseli@jubileeunited.ca)

## The Garage Sale is back!!!



Saturday, June 3, 2023

Mark June 3 on your calendar, and start sorting through your stuff to get it ready to donate.

We'll be accepting donations on June 1 & 2, but no large item pick-ups this year.

We'll need lots of volunteers to make this a success, so contact Val Winters (437-989-8586) or Jeanette May (647-349-1315) if you're interested in helping. This is the excuse we all needed to start our spring cleaning.

Jeanette & Val



#### The Benevolent Fund

In the past year there has been a great deal of support for the Benevolent Fund, so let me start by saying "Thank You".

Thank you on behalf of those who have found it a little easier to sleep because there was food in the cupboard, heat in the house, care for a

child, books or tuition to support education, medical or mental health support, and just simply some hope that things can turn around. The Benevolent Fund is a discretionary fund that I administer confidentially to those in need. Our support is not meant to be "on-going" but rather occasionally (when it comes to food security) or "one-time only" when it comes to larger needs like paying a heating bill or getting books for school. We hope to help those whose needs are recognized by the system and existing supports and those who fall through the cracks. Sadly, there is no lack. Often, people come looking for money and go away with connections to existing programs or prayerful and emotional support instead, but mostly people leave with something in their hands that can meet an immediate need.

You might be amazed at who needs help and the kind of help that is needed; you might be surprised to recognize the people discreetly seeking support and may also be surprised to know that several of the folks that we have help in the past have come to be supporters of the Benevolent Fund in the present. Donations can be given to me directly, but are more likely to be properly receipted and/or included in your donations if give in the manner you are accustomed to giving (envelopes, etransfer, etc.) and simply mark the donation "Benevolent Fund". I thank you for your on-going support of the Benevolent Fund.

#### Norm



## We Will Help You to Help Jubilee

Have you got an idea for a social, cultural, education or fundraising event for our Jubilee Community? Don't know how to get started?



The Jubilee Fundraising and Event Support Committee is here to work with you to plan for events of any kind. Let us know your idea, and we'll not only walk you through the planning process, but will also connect you with volunteers, advertising locations, and those who have led similar events in the past.

#### We're Here to Help Make Your dream a Reality!!!

Want to join us? We'd love to have additional voices on the committee!

Speak with any of the committee members:

Pat Lansche (Chair), Val Winters, Lynn Moe, and Rev. Bri-anne Swan.

#### MISSION AND SERVICE (M&S) by Pamelia Lock

People often think that the work of Mission and Service is done in faraway locations. However, M&S does much locally and nationally, supporting theological schools, recruiting new ministers, and even shaping the hymn books that are used in worship services.

One way in which M&S supports ministerial candidates is by providing academic bursaries for students.

Beyond the financial assistance is the realization that people across Canada care enough to donate to M&S. The Reverend Alexa Gilmour (a Toronto minister) received a bursary when she was a ministry candidate. She said, "I was a single parent, and I knew I couldn't get through without support. I felt blessed by God through people who donated and who, by giving, encouraged me on my journey. I have tremendous gratitude for the important role the church played in my life at that time."

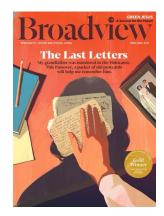
Our gifts to Mission and Service provide an opportunity to support future and current leaders. We can make a difference.

Pam

#### Advance Notice of Subscriptions for BROADVIEW Magazine

Our congregational subscriptions will be due for renewal in the spring. Subscribers will receive notification of payment due in late April.

Interested in becoming a subscriber? Please email Jubilee's office administrator, Dianne Clare, at <u>admin@jubileeunited.ca</u>; she will forward your request to Pam Lock.



## We Collect Things!!! Who Knew???

At Jubilee, we collect the following things to help care for the environment, as well as those in need in our community. Please bring them to the church office.

Milk bags (clean and flat) Pop tabs Corks Wool Used Batteries Used Cell Phones Used eyeglasses Used stamps Disposable paper coffee

Gently used clothing Non-perishable food items



## We're Here!!

In case you were wondering, Tuesday to Friday from 10:00am to 2:00pm is not the only time that your Jubilee Team is working.

**Monday:** Rev. Bri-anne is preparing digital content, writing worship services, meeting with Jubilee folk to plan outreach programs, and reaching out to individuals who just need her support as they engage with the spiritual lives.

She will have an evening check in with Resistance Church (she does a check-in every weekday evening).

Rev. Norm is likely at home, recording his daily meditation and podcast, starting to work on Sunday worship and will be in later for Ulterior Worship or a Council meeting. Dianne is answering calls, sorting out the week and responding to the needs of Jubilee from home by email and phone. Barb is making sure that the church building is ready for another week and setting something up for somebody who has an event or meeting (like Yoga, AA, Amadeus Choir, Choristers or a group of Jubilee folk).

Used printer toner cartridges

**Tuesday - it's all hands on deck.** Norm is in for Bible Study at 8:30am and everyone is here for a staff meeting at 10:00am. Jeannie is planning music for Sunday, sorting through our extensive music catalogue and probably writing a new arrangement or two. Norm and Bri-anne (often together) host coffee at 2:00pm and Norm usually has a study group around 3:30pm. Barb and Dianne prepare for our friends from the Amadeus Choir and signs are changed, phone calls answered, deliveries received, and paperwork completed by one and all. Bri-anne does an evening check-in with Resistance Church.

**Wednesday:** Barb will be probably be meeting with some kind of contractor to fix and or install something that Jubilee requires, Dianne will be managing organization materials on the web-site, processing donations and managing some of the 40 things that we asked her to do this week (it varies). Norm comes in early to record the sermon and other bits for the digital Sunday Service and Norm and Bri-anne meet to reflect on their work and shared vision for ministry. Bri-anne produces and responds to our content on Tik Tok and Instagram, produces a great podcast, an on-line Bible Study and a weekly on-line worship for Resistance Church, while Norm produces a daily video mediation and podcast and the majority of the Sunday Digital Service.



In the afternoon, both will tend to pastoral concerns that have emerged during the week with meetings and visits. Norm joins the Men's Contemplation group in the evening and Bri-anne checks in with the Resistance Church community with a Bible Study.

**Thursday:** Barb welcomes our friends from the Toronto Choristers and any other group that might be in that day. Dianne produces the Sunday bulletin with the materials from Norm, Bri-anne and the community. Norm likes to get some visiting in (hospital and home) and maybe fix the sermon that he recorded yesterday. Jeannie will be in that evening for choir rehearsal and often finds Norm and the others still at the church.

**Friday:** Dianne and Barb take care of our tenants and make sure that the building is ready for Sunday – bulletins are in place, pews are supplied with information and donation envelopes. Bri-anne meets with Jubilee folk, while Norm is at home doing the editing and producing of the Sunday service.

**Saturday:** There's probably some kind of event, it could be a wedding or a funeral, or a community event. Or maybe everybody's still catching up on what they couldn't get done during their "working" hours.

**Sunday...** well, on Sunday the magic happens. A full Sunday service is shared, a Sunday de-brief happens for Jeannie, Bri-anne and Norm. Visits and conversations inspired by the morning take place. Rev. Bri-anne, kids in tow, leaves the church around 1:30pm. Rev. Norm is out around 4:30pm. Of course, once a month Bri-anne and Norm are at Revera, sharing an afternoon worship service. And then... we rinse and repeat for another week.

Each of your team does a lot of work in a week, but remarkably they don't do it alone. They work together. They work with you. They work with God... and so with a little bit of prayer and hope, a little bit of patience and understanding and lot of love.

### God happens at Jubilee

(well beyond just Tuesday-Friday, 10:00am-2:00pm)





#### ULTERIOR WORSHIP The First and Third Monday of Each Month. Casual, approachable worship led by Rev. Norm Seli in the sanctuary at Jubilee.

Norm Seli in the sanctuary at Jubilee. Come as you are, relax, breathe and leave no more than an hour later feeling refreshed and connected. **Mondays at 630pm.** Ulterior (Adj. from the Latin Ulter):

Lying beyond what is evident, revealed or avowed.



In case you missed it, we had a lot of fun at the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper!