

AN INCLUSIVE  
CONGREGATION  
MINISTERING TO  
MULTICULTURAL  
TORONTO

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## **Annual General Meeting: Finance & Administration**

**Tuesday,  
February 27**

Come & enjoy great food and fellowship.

Be part of the discussion of the 2007 budget.

Discuss reports from the Redevelopment & Joint Search Committees.

**Potluck supper at 6 pm  
Meeting at 7 pm**

See you there!

# Good News ON BLOOR

*It was our first morning in Mexico when, after waking up to bright sunshine streaming through my window's wooden shutters, and tasting more flavorful, filling food than I had had for breakfast in a long time, I crossed the small courtyard and entered a relatively dim classroom space. Today, we were being immersed in a workshop on Mayan spirituality.*

The workshop, hosted by Petul Jiménez, was deeply spiritual and moving. Its emphasis was on unity with each other and the earth. A large circular altar

## MAYAN

## *Spirituality*

by Jennifer Gordon

caught my immediate attention. Its contrast to the intricate wooden carvings and candlesticks of Bloor St.'s raised altar could not be more pronounced. The only similarity is the candles, a universal symbol of light and life. The Mayan altar was flexible, temporary and beautiful. It consisted of a bedding of pine needles, fresh and still fragrant, into which four colours of corn had been spread to form a cross: white, red, yellow, and black. At each point of the cross, a tall candle stood, elegantly matching the colour of the corn in that quarter. As the lines intersected in the altar's centre, a blue and a green candle symbolized the crossing of people from North to South, and the sun's daily travel from East to West. Flowers, white, red, yellow and purple,

had carefully been placed over the pine needle surface to symbolize purity and truth. Our whole group sat in a circle around this altar as Petul described the symbolism of each item and the wholeness the thirteen candles ringing its edge. We were told how corn, the staple food in Mexico, symbolized people and their connection to the earth. It struck many of us how similar this altar was to the medicine wheel of many Native Canadian people. The four directions were carefully aligned to symbolize the travel of the people from the North to their home in the South. The red East, the direction of the rising sun, also represented how God lives each day for us and dies as the sun sets in the west, where the altar was predominantly black.

Sitting around this circle, we were asked to reflect on what brought us here to Chiapas, what our ancestors would like us to learn, and what we hoped to gain.

*(continued on page 4)*

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to **Don Cooper** who will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Queen's University in May. The award is in recognition of Don's many volunteer services to Queen's and the community. A member of the Queen's Board of Trustees since 1996, Don has served on the Investment Committee of the Queen's Endowment Fund since 1989 and was Chair from 1996 to 2002. He also served on the Investment Committee of the United Church Pension Fund for 27 years and continues to work with several other investment committees in the charitable/not for profit sector including the Community Endowment Fund of St. Christopher House, an organization with historic links to Bloor Street Church. Don is the long time chair of the Bloor Street Endowment Fund and is a trustee of the Church. He wisely guided our investments for many years.

**Randi Helmers** recently participated in a program at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, presented by the Royal Norwegian Embassy. On January 20 she entertained children with a telling of the Norwegian folktale "East O' the Sun and West O' the Moon". Children were invited to add paper trolls (Canadian trolls!) to a large canvas painting which Randi created for the occasion. The painting is evocative of the folktale which is the basis for the Norwegian play *The Snow Show*. The play opened at the National Arts Centre on February 1. Randi completed the canvas, painting in the lobby of the National Arts Centre theatre, in the two weeks prior to the opening. She lived in Norway for several years as a young adult. Randi's father was born in Norway.

Congratulations to **Marguerite Fidler** who celebrated her **99th birthday** in December. She receives the weekly bulletin and *Good News* by mail which keeps her in touch with the church. Marguerite was featured in an article in *The Observer* a few years ago - "*Marguerite and the Moderators.*"



BLOOR STREET THEOLOGY STUDENTS

**Dan Benson** is on leave this year from his Masters of Theological Studies degree program. He only needs two more credits to complete the degree. Dan's new job as Executive Minister for Resource Production and Distribution at the United Church of Canada keeps him very busy. He is also extremely busy at Bloor St. Church as Chair of the Worship and Pastoral Care Committee. He coordinated last September's rummage sale, is a member of our Redevelopment Committee and also the Joint Search Committee.

**Alcris Limongi** is in the Doctor of Theology program at Emmanuel College. This is her first year in the area of the New Testament. Her field will be Hermeneutics of Liberation. She would like to engage in a methodological conversation on the topic of Biblical interpretation among the Liberation, Postcolonial and Feminist approaches.

Alcris is still in the process for Ordained Ministry in the United Church of Canada. She was our Church School coordinator last year and this year is one of two nannies for our youngest children.

**Diane Meredith** is an Master of Divinity student at Emmanuel College, currently doing her Field Education at North York General Hospital in the Spiritual and Religious Care department. She is particularly interested in Christian ethics, spirituality and discernment, and liturgical worship and hospitality as a Christian practice. She is currently in discernment with a committee at Bloor St. Church.

**Carmen Palmer**, who is in her final year of the Master of Divinity program at Emmanuel College, was featured in the Advent issue of *Good News*.

**Rishi Sativihari** was raised in a religiously mixed (Roman Catholic & Congregationalist) family, and up to about age 23, he actively pursued a call to ordered ministry. He completed his B.A. in theology at a Methodist college in NY and was exploring ordination in the Episcopal church in the U.S.. Eventually, conflicts with the Church over his

# The CHANGING of the GUARD

by Liz Tinker

When our long term Ministers Linda Butler and Warren McDougall decided to move to another pastoral charge last summer, Bloor Street launched into an exciting (albeit stressful) process of choosing new ministers. The United Church process for choosing new ministers includes striking a Joint Needs Assessment Committee (to determine what the congregation is looking for in a candidate) and a Joint Selection Committee (to find and recommend candidates). It was estimated that this process would take about a year to complete so two temporary ministers, Paul Fairley and Ann Morwood, were hired to minister to the congregation during this time.

Paul, who was ordained in the Metropolitan Community Church, was exploring whether he wished to seek ministry in the United

Church when he joined Bloor Street.

In November, part way through his term with Bloor Street, he decided he was called to return to MCC and tendered his resignation. While Paul was only with us a short time he was able to bring a new perspective to a number of areas, including worship, stewardship and electronic communications. His last day was January 21. He will be missed.

To quote from Paul's favourite movie (*The Sound of Music*), however: "When

God shuts a door somewhere he opens a window". An Ad Hoc Selection Committee was struck and, after interviewing several fine candidates, hired Rev. Gary Redcliffe to take Paul's place. Gary has been a United Church minister for over 35 years. In addition to work in pastoral charges, his most recent work has been as a professor at Emmanuel College. In his CV he states that the focus of his teaching is Pastoral Theology, which includes congregations, their struggles to be faithful in tough times and their adaptability to changing contexts and inner dynamics. Gary joined Bloor Street on January 22 and will be with us until June 30.

*Editor's Note: Many of you may have already read this article which was sent electronically by the Church Office in mid-January. As it is important information for everyone, we are also including it in Good News.*



Rev. Paul Fairley, Rev. Ann Morwood & Minister Emeritus David Allan  
Photo by Harold Durnford

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## People *(continued)*

relationship with his male partner resulted in his taking a different path in life for the next several years. For most of his adult life, Rishi worked in the mental health field as a psychologist, first in the U.S., and later in Canada. He also studied Buddhism and lived as a Buddhist monk in Southeast Asia. It was through his involvement as a monk in an ecumenical project with the Archdiocese of Brisbane (Australia) that

his interest in Christ, Christianity, and the Church was renewed. When he returned to Canada from Asia he began exploring whether ordered ministry in the Christian Church was perhaps still the direction he felt most inclined to express his vocation. He renewed his baptismal vows at Bloor Street Church, and to began "unofficially discerning" by taking a few courses at Emmanuel College, and meeting with Linda and

Warren to get a feel for ordered ministry in the United Church of Canada. This past October, his Discernment Committee was officially formed and is now up and running. In terms of academic training, because of the part-time courses he took, Rishi is now somewhere between the first and second years of the Master of Divinity program at Emmanuel.  
*(by Chuck Baker)*

## Christmas in Guatemala by Ken McGuffin

The Sunday market in Solola, Guatemala is bustling as usual with sellers and buyers trading fruits, vegetables, cookware, meat, textiles and even live chickens. But it's not your typical Sunday as the unmistakable sounds of "Jingle Bells" drift in from the adjacent town park. Of course, this being Guatemala, it's the marimba version. It's Christmas Eve, or *Nochebuena* and the largely indigenous Mayan shoppers are buying the last minute necessities for the holiday. Some of the items are familiar to Canadians such as red grapes and apples (some even with the



Foodland Ontario label affixed) but others are very different such as the banana leaves needed for tamales.

With the shopping finished, I'm now packed into the back of a Toyota pickup truck with the purchases of the Xoch family. We're headed to their village of El Triunfo in the mountains of Central Guatemala. This is one of the communities where the women who participate in the weaving cooperative that I work with live. While Santa Claus and other commercial aspects of Christmas are making inroads in many urban areas in Guatemala, here in this rural village, the focus remains on the birth of Christ.

This evening families will gather for a meal and to exchange presents.

I'm told that the family didn't have time today to make the traditional meal of *tamales*, a tasty combination of corn and rice flour dough with a chicken centre, wrapped in banana leaves. But there is time to make *ponche*, a traditional hot drink served at Christmas consisting of many fruit pieces such as pineapple, coconut, bananas, apples, raisins, and plums boiled in a mixture of water, sugar, and spices. After the food, the



children receive presents, a small toy car for the only boy and dolls for the girls.

Despite the mountain chill, we stay up until midnight when firecrackers and fireworks are set off. It's a spectacular sight with light bouncing off the hills as far as the eye can see. Christmas Day is spent quietly with family, except for another round of fireworks at noon and again at 6:00 pm. Early the next morning, life returns to the daily routine as people head out to catch buses and return to work

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## Mayan Spirituality (continued)

After a time of meditation on this we were given a chance to share our thoughts with the group, and to listen carefully to each other. Once all had spoken their fill, we were each crossed with incense in blessing, then asked to hug and dance. At first I felt a bit foreign and out of place. Yet as strains of music floated through the room, our hesitant steps picked up spirit and began to flow. Deep joy moved within

me like a wide river. At the end of the ceremony I stepped out into the Mexican morning blinking at the light, wondering when I would find a similar sense of inner calm again, and searching my memory for the haunting, chanting music to which we had just danced.

*Jennifer Gordon was a member of the Mexico Youth Experience group which travelled to Mexico last August.*

# Cookies & Carols Party!

DECEMBER 16, 2006

Refuge Outreach Project's "Cookies and Carols" party filled McClure Hall with kids and parents and food and entertainment and lots of cookies to decorate and eat! About 90 kids were provided with gifts this year.

*Photos by Don Payne*



*#1 "Las Chapolaras" dance troupe shared Latin American folk traditions to great acclaim.*



*#2. Bloor Streeters share joyful moments during the party*



*#3. "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" captures the mood of the day. I*

# FilmPix

by Bill Davis



*There have been a number of recent movies that deal with power. In this issue we review the best two. In a future issue we may look at "All the King's Men" (rent the 1949 Academy Award version); "The Good Shepherd" (not worth renting) and "Stranger than Fiction" (a different slant and worth seeing)*

## THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND



The title is one of many Idi Amin chose for himself, primarily because he hated the British. Forest

Whitaker does not portray Amin, he becomes Amin. Whitaker should win an Oscar as best actor. The well-known excesses of Amin's dictatorship deserve examination. The film demonstrates his

rise to power and the pressure to meet expectations. What is even more compelling is to observe the young Scottish doctor who leaves home upon graduation, to escape an oppressive father, comes under the sway of two medical missionaries and convinces himself that being Idi Amin's personal doctor would be the best contribution to this newly developing African country. His confusion of service with power is worth the movie without Whitaker's amazing performance.

## THE QUEEN



Power is seen in three ways: inherited, elected and the public image. Elizabeth, with a life of training

and experience – representing her people - hedged about with supporting advisors and protectors – able to afford a lavish lifestyle, yet restricted in the capacity to enjoy it. Tony Blair, a popular prime minister, wavering between challenging inherited power and supporting the power of tradition – discovering that wisdom is lodged in surprising places – dealing with views of his family and his party. Diana the public's darling – more popular and troublesome in her tragic death than she was in life. A superb cast. It is very difficult to do justice to all the characters when a film is so current. In a way each of them is like the Stag hunted down so eagerly throughout the film. For what it is worth, I felt the people who came off the worst were the prime minister's wife and the queen's mother.



## Nurse's Corner

by Nancy Gordon, Parish Nurse

### Pandemic Preparedness

This is my theme for this issue. There has been a fair amount of attention to this topic in the media recently, and many may be wondering if this is all a lot of nonsense. How do they know that anything's going to happen, anyway? Well, the fact is that they don't know that it will happen, but after looking at history and the patterns that have emerged over time, it is a very likely that there will be a world wide pandemic in the near future. The public health authorities are therefore trying to prepare people for it in the belief that if we are

prepared, the impact of this disease will be lessened. As with all disease, prevention is better than cure.

So be prepared. Follow all the commonsense rules about hand washing, not spreading illness, and staying home from work and school if you are sick. Come to the **Parish Nurse Education Event on February 11** after the service. Feel free to talk me anytime about any questions and concerns that you may have.

Also, we need to remember the opportunity each of us in our church has - to look out for and support each other, during good times as well as times of sickness, and especially should a pandemic come along.

# News *in a Nutshell*

## OUR JOINT SEARCH COMMITTEE

members are: Chuck Baker, Dan Benson, Suzanna Cermak, Bill Davis, Nenke Jongkind, Mary Sanderson and Lisa Walter. The Presbytery representative is Dr. Ellen Redcliffe.

## THE UNITED CHURCH OBSERVER

is a mirror to our United Church community, telling our story across Canada and around the world. The February issue includes the insightful article "Defending Conscience in a Time of War" and "Korean Canadians: From Recent Arrivals to Mainstream Ministry", a fascinating insight into our extended church family.

## ETHICAL INVESTMENT

Are you wondering why the United Church is calling for economic actions to work for a just peace in Israel/Palestine? Call for a free booklet on the background of this conflict or for more information: 416-241-9698 or 416-241-2677. From the Toronto Conference task group on ethical investment.

## MYSTERY AT THE BOOK SHOP

Salt Spring Island is a rural paradise near Vancouver Island, home to artists, writers, crafters, farmers and lovers of nature. Small businesses flourish. Last October, in Sabine's Bookshop on the Island, I spotted a familiar book on the "Ontario" shelf. The small red volume *Seventy Years at Bloor Street United Church 1887-1957* was for sale at \$12. Written by our former ministers The Very Rev. George C. Pidgeon and Dr. Ernest M. Howse, this book is an excellent history of our church. How did this book find its way to Canada's West Coast? Who sold it to the book store on the island?

The book may be purchased at: [sabinesbooks@saltspring.com](mailto:sabinesbooks@saltspring.com)  
(Isabel Ward)

## YOUTH ON BLOOR PAINTING PROJECT

The Lower Club Room has a fresh new look. The youth and several adults from the congregation were busy for four recent Saturdays preparing and painting the old stone and brick walls of their meeting room. Lively colours of apple green, yellow and red have transformed the dingy basement room into a warm and youthful space.

## A NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

**Saturday, March 3 at 8:00 pm.**

Bloor Street friends are invited to the historic Distillery District to see *The Danish Play*. After the play meet our own Randi Helmers and other actors in the Mill St. Brewery Pub. Help raise funds for arts projects at the church while enjoying the evening. Tickets (\$30) are for sale on Sundays after the service.

### NAME THIS COLUMN!

*News in a Nutshell* was always intended as a temporary name for this column with short news items from Bloor St. Church. But the Communications Committee still hasn't thought of a better name. We invite readers to submit suggestions for a name change. Bloor Bits? News in a Snap? Short Scoops? What's your suggestion? Submissions may be left in the *Good News* mailbox in the church office or sent by email to: [book\\_sleuth@yahoo.ca](mailto:book_sleuth@yahoo.ca).

## Come Join the Parade

by Marie Marsellus

One might rightly expect feelings of grief and rage when listening to stories of African orphans and their grandmothers who, because of the AIDS pandemic, find themselves called on to parent these children. While tears were shed at the Grandmothers' Gathering in Toronto last August, many were tears of joy. Our African sisters expressed their hope for the future through their constant singing and dancing and invited us to join them in that tradition. They are so resilient!

Because the African grannies are already well organized into support groups and the Stephen Lewis Foundation has project officers across Africa, our responsibility as Canadians is to raise the funds to assist them in their efforts.

In a personal fund-raising effort, I have raised \$3,000.00. Each donor purchasing hasti-notes at five for \$5.00 receives two fact sheets about the campaign. It's been very much a grassroots effort. After each individual or group is approached, they are then connected to another group. There are interested people around Ontario who don't have access to large fund-raising events but are keen to join the parade of donors. This project will continue until the end of 2007. If you know of a group in Ontario of any size or description, please pass on its name and a contact person to me at [frosty@look.ca](mailto:frosty@look.ca).

# The Lord's Prayer and Church School

by Richard Chambers  
Chair, Christian Development and Community Life

Our delightful new junior class teacher, Meredith Beales has observed that it's been 25 years since children in Ontario have said the Lord's Prayer each morning before classes. The expectation that we can all repeat the Lord's Prayer as readily as the multiplication tables is no longer true. In 2007 Meredith will be exploring with the junior class the words and meaning of the Lord's Prayer. Meredith is originally from Kelowna, BC and is doing a Master's degree in English at the University of Toronto.

The primary class continues to be ably led by Janelle Artis. Janelle is completing her Bachelor's degree at York University and is considering further studies in education. Our church school has certainly been blessed by Janelle's gift for teaching. A warm, safe place is also created each week in the nursery by Alcris Limongi or Joan Irwin.

Alex and Cyrus are wonderful newcomers to the church school. The teachers appreciate the attendance and support of all the families of our church school in making it a fun opportunity to grow in faith. With an eye to the future, Shannon Neufeldt has been working hard with the Youth on Bloor Group to create a great new space for youth to meet in the Lower Club Room – thank you Shannon.

## Good News ON BLOOR

is edited and published 5 times a year by the Communications Committee. All articles are copyright and may not be used without permission of the author. 250 words maximum is the standard length for unsolicited articles. Due to space limitations, submissions may be edited.

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Ministers and Staff may be reached by contacting the Church Office at (416) 924-7439

**Deadline for the Easter Issue:  
Sunday, March 4**

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## COMING EVENTS

**Sunday, February 11** after the service  
*Pandemic Preparedness: Parish Nursing Event*

**Mondays, February – April at 7:00pm**  
*Exploration of Faith*

**Thursdays, beginning February 15**  
*Spirit Alive: Meditative group*  
Speak to Ann Morwood

**Wednesday February 21 at 7:00pm**  
*Ash Wednesday Service*

**Sunday, February 25** after the service  
*Development Issues in Tanzania:*  
hosted by Social Justice Committee

**Tuesday, February 27**  
*Congregational Meeting: AGM Part I –  
Finance & Administration*  
Dinner at 6:00pm. Meeting at 7:00pm

**Wednesdays, February 28 – April 4**  
Wednesday Night Study Group: details to follow

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Wednesday Night Study Group: details to follow

**Sunday, March 25** after the service  
Speaker event hosted by Social Justice Committee

**Saturday, April 7**  
*Easter Vigil* at 9:00pm  
*Communion Service & Reception of  
New Members* at 10:00pm

**Sunday, April 8**  
*Easter Sunday*

**Sunday April 15**  
*Craddock Lecture* at 10:30 am  
Guest Speaker: Bishop James Spang



Rev. Paul Fairley's Farewell. Photo by Don Payne.