

AN INCLUSIVE  
CONGREGATION  
MINISTERING TO  
MULTICULTURAL  
TORONTO

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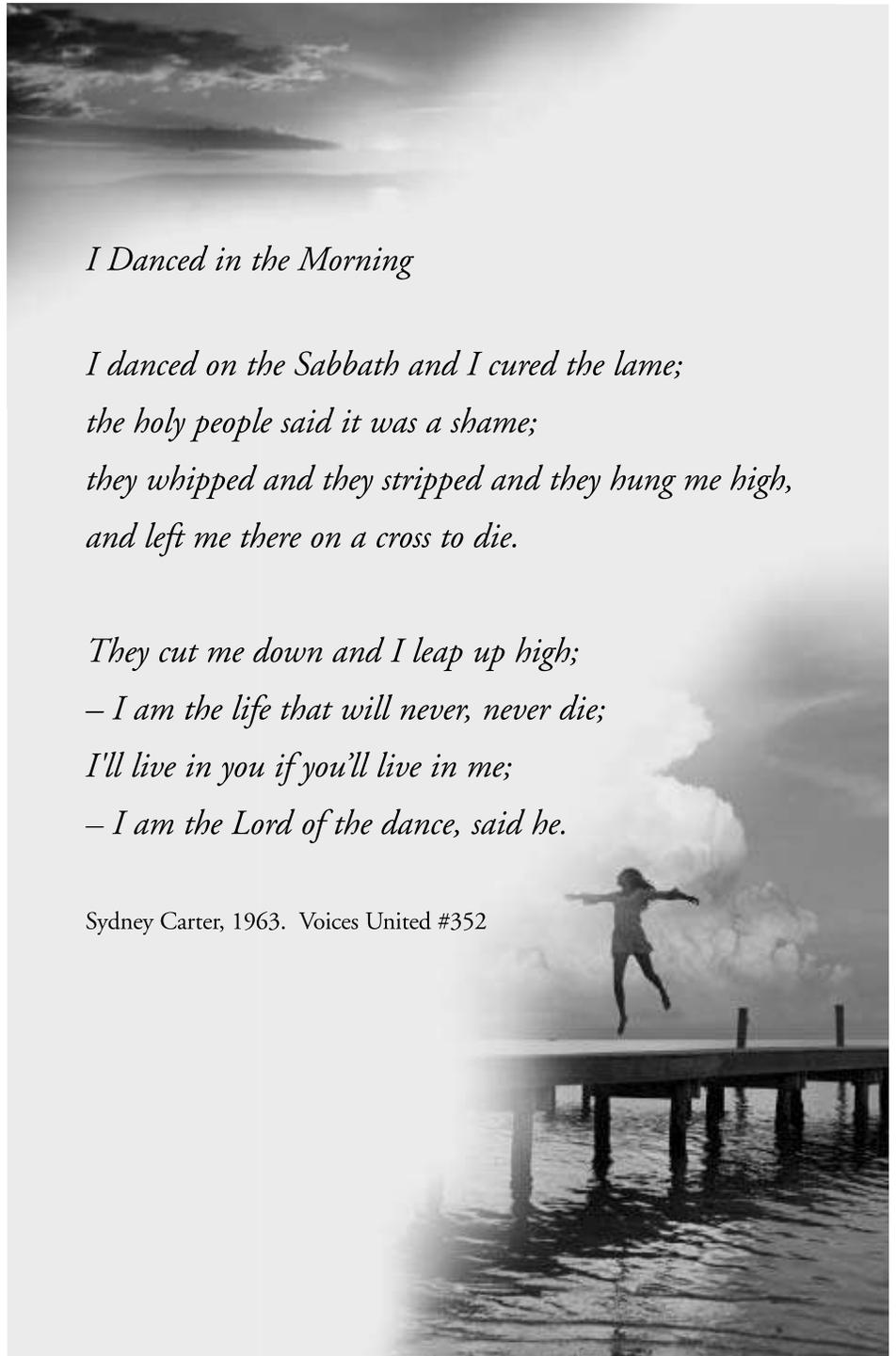
# *Good News* ON BLOOR

## *I Danced in the Morning*

*I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;  
the holy people said it was a shame;  
they whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,  
and left me there on a cross to die.*

*They cut me down and I leap up high;  
– I am the life that will never, never die;  
I'll live in you if you'll live in me;  
– I am the Lord of the dance, said he.*

Sydney Carter, 1963. Voices United #352



# David Passmore has Left the Building: *But He'll be Back!*

I'm writing this article on March 1, the first day of my sabbatical. There's a nasty winter storm brewing and I'm wondering whether choir practice will be cancelled tonight and if so, how Kieren MacMillan (Supply Director of Music) and Ed Connell (Supply Organist) and the choir will fare on Sunday. But I know they'll do fine, and I keep telling myself, now I'm on sabbatical, that's it's not my problem...

The blowing snow certainly makes visions of visiting Cuba (March 29- April 7) warmly inviting. With the welcome help of Alcris Limongi I was able to triumph over the linguistic and technological hurdles and register for the America Cantat V choral conference in Havana. The leader for the particular workshop I'm enrolled in is the Musical Director for the Protestant seminary in nearby Matanzas, and I'm hoping I can pump him for suitable Latin American repertoire for choir and congregation.

A few days later Arlene and I set off for a cooler but no less enchanting isle where we (almost) speak their language. While in London, Arlene will be researching the ROM's collection of Canadian historical paintings, prints and drawings (mostly executed by visiting Brits) that she curates, as I attend workshops, concerts, visit libraries and sheet music stores. Blair Batty, our organ rebuilder, has promised me a list of must-hear organs. Two of my planned events will be in Cambridge: a workshop on organ playing, and an academic conference that looks at music as a neuro-linguistic system. We thank Ruth Evans and her sister for providing living arrangements in London that will keep us from bankruptcy in this excruciatingly expensive city.

Back in Toronto at the end of May, I plan to register for the two week course given by Tafelmusik on historical performance practices.

## B L O O R P E O P L E

**Congratulations** to **Arthur Dayfoot** who recently celebrated his 92nd birthday. On April 19, **Arthur & Bessie** will celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary. They were married 60 years ago in West China where they met as Canadian missionaries. The wedding took place in the chapel of the Canadian School in Chengtu. A relative of the bride, Rev. George Sparling, gave her away. Rev. Howard Veals of the United Church Mission staff and Pastor Liu Beh Shang, from the Church of Christ in China, officiated. On their honeymoon in Kwanshien they visited Buddhist temples. After they left China they worked in Trinidad until the 1970s. Today Bessie and Arthur live with their daughter Nancy Gordon and her family. They seldom miss a Sunday service at Bloor Street Church. (*Details: Cathy Müller*)

**Congratulations** to **Audrey Honey** who also recently celebrated her 92nd birthday. Audrey's birthday was February 21.

**Geoff Keating**, our new bass lead in the Bloor Street choir grew up in Australia and graduated in voice from the

University of Melbourne. He returned to Toronto with his wife Cheryl (who has been subbing for Erin Bardua, our soprano soloist) after working and studying privately in London England.

**Bob & Jean Hilliard** have just returned from a visit to Ethiopia. Bob was invited to assist with the examination of paediatric students at the Addis Ababa Univ. Bob wrote on March 4: "Jean and I are in Addis Ababa today wandering around the city. We got to an English Anglican service and felt very much at home. But we hope later to go to one of the Ethiopia Orthodox Churches. We are here for this week and take a short tour to northern Ethiopia. The churches in Ethiopia go back historically to the early first few centuries AD. Their tradition is very old, yet it is important to so many. Ethiopia is a mix of Christian and Muslim and they seem to get along together." They attended morning prayers in a church that was carved into a cave in the 1200s. Son Michael Hilliard, who is on our Redevelopment Cttee. says: "Apparently it has no present redevelopment plans."

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# MINISTER'S *Reflection*

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by Gary Redcliffe

Lent began with an Ash Wednesday service at Trinity-St. Paul's where representatives from four congregations gathered for prayer, confession, reflection, quiet singing and to receive the ashes as a symbol of Lenten devotion.

One of the beautiful prayers of the service used the words, "...to travel with Jesus along the path which led him to the cross." Difficult as this concept is for modern Christians, it is nevertheless the purpose of Lent, and Lent is an unavoidable season of the Christian year.

The path of Jesus, on its way toward the cross, detours into a strange region of the heart, a geography matched by the wilderness where Jesus was tested. The season of self-examination and repentance is a time to contrast human failure with the Creator's expansive vision for human life. Looked at in this way, a Lenten perspective is the opposite of the simplistic self-help theologies that are so popular today. To be utterly engrossed in the self is, paradoxically, to lose it altogether, as Jesus suggested. Liberation of the true self comes only by ignoring the false selves that a consumer society tempts us to believe in to a greater degree than we believe in the goodness of God. Lent is an occasion when we are called to sort this out – in favour of the One whom we follow.

The cross of Jesus is a symbol of the final relinquishment of self – and yes, I recognize the difficulty of this term for the weak and vulnerable of our world.

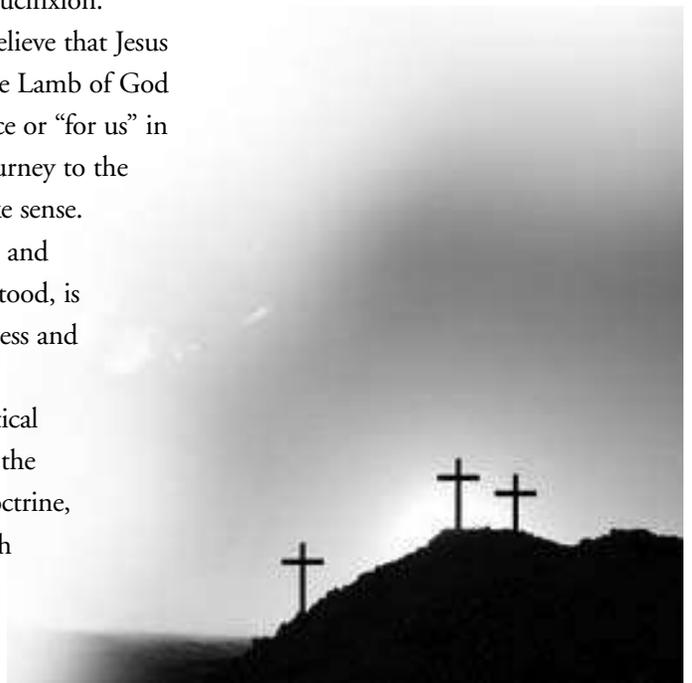
In spite of the problems with the term, relinquishment of self is a powerful expression for claiming one's identity. As our family watches a dear friend come near to death, we are reminded that the moment of relinquishment is a holy time. Knowing that she is dying, she has gifts to give. Knowing that she is dying sets her free to give them. It is a sacred exchange, and we are deeply blessed to be in her company during this all too brief season as she gives herself over to her God and redeemer. It is a Lenten moment. (She died between the last writing and this edit.)

The cross is a reminder of many meaningful mysteries – loss and recovery, death and new life, repentance and forgiveness, falling and rising again, and so on. The resurrection story is existentially and dramatically impossible without the cross and the crucifixion.

We do not have to believe that Jesus suffered and died (as the Lamb of God for instance) in our place or "for us" in order for the Lenten journey to the cross and Easter to make sense. The cross, symbolically, and even historically understood, is what happens to goodness and to voices that resist religious and political oppression. I believe in the resurrection, not as a doctrine, but as "real." Along with Bishop John Spong, I believe that "something of great and significant

power happened following the crucifixion of Jesus that had dramatic and life-changing consequences. What the disciples experienced compelled them to go beyond the limits of their own humanity." (from Bishop Spong's new book, *Jesus for the Non-religious*.) The resurrection is not about physical resuscitation. It is a story from the Mediterranean region of the first century B.C.E. that invited humans to journey beyond human boundaries to that realm of the experience we call God, who is not above the sky but rather is found in the depths of life. To go there is the goal of the Lent-to-Easter journey.

May your Lenten journey be blessed with surprise encounters, and may your Easter be joy-filled!



# Stewardship *Committee* by Nenke Jongkind

The committee's mandate is:

- **To build an understanding of Stewardship for Bloor Street United Church**
- **To nurture good stewardship practices for children, youth and adults of the congregation**

We continue to work with asset-based stewardship i.e. to focus on what we have. For instance, we have the Endowment Fund. It is our savings account. It is not our chequing account! The interest from the Endowment Fund is used to support the congregation's budget. In 2006 it was \$131,000 and in 2007 the fund will contribute \$137,200 to the annual operating budget of the church. We have received as much annually as the full value of the fund and it is still intact. From 1976 to the end of 2006 the Endowment has

received planned gifts of \$1,888,746 and has paid total annual income to the church of \$1,970,870. The market value of the fund at December 31, 2006 was \$3,137,000. We have borrowed from the fund in the past but this reduces the amount of income it can generate until the loan is repaid.

The results of the pledge campaign continue to grow both the number of people who pledge and the amount of money participants at Bloor are able to commit to the work of our congregation. With the financial resources you contribute we are able to offer transformational spiritual experiences and support social justice efforts.

This is the place where we come to be inspired, to commit ourselves to the person, values and character of Jesus. We continue to need to review our

individual financial contributions, and give more if possible. We continue to encourage people to give using PAR [Pre-Authorized Remittances]. This program of monthly givings evens out your contributions throughout the year and saves the congregation from the slump of summer deficits and the overdraft interest costs this entails. PAR and weekly envelopes form the back bone of our congregational givings. We also welcome gifts of strip bonds, stock, life insurance, an annuity or through a named amount or portion of your estate in your will. These contributions all offer tax advantages. The Gift Planning sub-committee will be providing specific information about this.

The Stewardship Committee welcomes your ideas, and participation. Thank you for giving to God's work through this church.



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## Nurse's *Corner* by Nancy Gordon, Parish Nurse

Here is an update on the arrangements for the joint Parish Nurse ministry of Bloor Street and Bathurst United Churches. At the congregational meeting on Feb. 27, in approving the budget, the congregation voted to make the Parish Nurse a member of the staff team. The salary will fall under the Ministry & Personnel budget and be supplemented by a contribution from Bathurst Church and a special Easter appeal. The position is for 8.25 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year, a slight decrease in the number of hours per week.

I shall usually be available for consultation in the conversation hour after church at least 2 Sundays each month. The other two Sundays are already taken up with blood pressure & blood sugar clinics, one here and one at Bathurst Church. Please feel free to leave a message on my confidential voice mail (416 924-7439 ext. 29) if you would like to schedule some time, either on a Sunday, or on some other day, to consult with or have a visit from me. Also, you are invited to take advantage of the blood pressure & blood sugar clinics that I offer usually on the last Sunday of each month.

## New Colours *for the Lower Club Room*

**YouthonBloor** held a well-attended Open House in the Lower Club Room on Sunday, March 25 immediately following worship. The most recent YouthonBloor project has been to paint our usual meeting space at Bloor Street Church. It was in desperate need of “freshening up”. The youth chose some great, bright colours- red, green and yellow, and did lots of work scraping and painting. There were many other helpers too. Refreshments were served in the bright new basement space. There were some brief presentations featuring photos from our past big projects (Germany and Mexico), announcement of our next project and Mexican coffee was sold. (*Shannon Neufeldt*)

*Photos by by Shannon Neufeldt*



# Andean Peru - a sustainable culture?

Story and photos by Garnet Ward

Peru is a huge country, a country of great contrasts, great resources, and great people. Thanks to Bloor St.'s Francisco and Rebeca Venegas I was able to live with the people for nearly 6 weeks this winter—actually the Peruvian summer—and get a feeling for their culture. I taught English classes three hours a day to kids from five to 52, attended church five times a week in the Assembly of God where Rebeca's brother Elías is pastor, preached eight times, and hiked to the top of the two closest mountains. Twice a week or so, I walked and rode for an hour into the city of Huaráz, and also spent seven days in Lima. It was a remarkably rich experience, living within the culture. Without the generosity of Rebeca's family, it would be impossible to get that close to the real community — I feel they are now my family as well.



*Mother carrying daughter in a manta, the traditional Peruvian carrying cloth*

The Lamb of God church is the centre of the community in Trigopampa, and it became the focus of my life too. The two-hour services are rich in emotion, growing through Andean-style songs of praise to intense prayer sessions, to a teaching message, and concluding with congregational announcements. The very personal approach to worship was a challenge for me at first, but

came to be one of the most valuable things I learned. For me, as for the members of the congregation who live close to the earth, God seems much nearer than in our urban whirlwind, and I felt God's influence and guidance more than ever before in my life.

Life in the high Andes of Peru is a culture in transition. These wonderful people are anxious to share in the developments of the modern world. The men and youth already look like North Americans in their dress, hairstyles and make-up. They all have television and cell-phones — and they are thirsty for capital to help them take advantage of their rich natural resources. But much of the life-style in Andean Peru appears to be that of a century ago. And from the point of view of this “gringo”, this traditional culture has a lot to recommend it —

qualities that could easily be lost through modernization.

During my four weeks at 3000 meters high, I lived with Rebeca's mother. In her home, and in the rural community around the house, however, there is ample evidence of the traditional culture. Most adult women still wear the traditional dress most of the time, they cultivate their fields by hand, and raise guinea pigs in their kitchens. I helped dig the church's wheat field with a pick, and harvest alfalfa with a sickle, carrying it back to the house on my shoulder.

What does this life have to recommend it? Well, it's all organic agriculture, for a start. All the wonderful meals I was served were prepared from scratch, without even refrigeration. The people are all in excellent shape - even the 70-yr-olds can walk a half-hour down the mountain to catch a bus into Huaráz. They have the close family life we only dream about as they work together most of the day, the youngest ones on their mothers' backs. And they are less rushed — they wait two hours if necessary for a taxi, when they have too much to carry by hand. And the traditional costume is well-adapted to the hot mid-day sun, and the chilly mountain mornings and evenings.

Will they ever be able to benefit from new development such as from the Canadian gold mines which currently have a practically tax-free deal with the government? And if so, will they still be able to maintain some of the best of their traditional culture? It's time they had the choice — perhaps they will choose to mix the best of the two.



*Llama on top of ancient temple of Chavin de Huantar*

# News *in a Nutshell*

**CALCULATING THE DATE OF EASTER SUNDAY** is complex and controversial. In the early church, Easter was celebrated on different days in different countries. The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 decreed that the day chosen would be the Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox. This full moon is a notional “Paschal” full moon which occurs in either a 29 or 30-day cycle, not the astronomic moon we can all see in the heavens. The theological significance of this was that it was a day of maximum light – 12 hours of daylight, followed by 12 hours of full moonlight. As a result, we celebrate Easter Sunday between March 22 and April 25. In 1990 the Vatican proposed a fixed date of Easter, but all other Christian churches and governments needed to agree. Agreement has not yet been reached so Easter still drifts from year to year. (Source: *Pancake Day Already?* by Denise Winterman, BBC News Magazine, March 8, 2005)



**THE JOINT SEARCH COMMITTEE** has been very busy interviewing applicants for our two full-time ministerial positions. The Committee conducted two rounds of interviews in March after sorting through many applications. Stay tuned for further news.

The **2007 CHURCH BUDGET** was approved at the annual meeting held on February 27. Please contact the church office if you'd like a copy of the *2006 Finance & Administration* report or the *2006 Financial Statements*.

**\$1000 FOR BLOOR ST.'S ARTS PROJECTS** was raised on March 3 when 63 Bloor Streeters and friends attended *The Danish Play*. This acclaimed production featured our own **Randi Helmers** who recreated her role of Helga. Randi was member of the original cast when the play was first presented five years ago. **Mary Louise Work** organized this very successful evening.

**DON GILLIES** sent us this historical item. “I am reading the most recent (I think) book on the life of **Glenn Gould**. Along the way, I came across this quote on p. 127: ‘On November 3, at the age of twenty-one, Gould taped his first commercial recording, a magnificent reading of Berg's Sonata, at the Bloor Street United church in downtown Toronto.’ The year was 1953 – just before the fire? Gould is one person who would find our musically “dry” acoustics to his liking, I suspect! The book is *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, by Kevin Bazzana. (McClelland & Stewart, 2003).”

**NEWS IN A NUTSHELL** is still looking for a new name! Suggestions for a new name for this column can be sent to: [book\\_sleuth@yahoo.ca](mailto:book_sleuth@yahoo.ca) or left in the *Good News* mailbox in the church office. *Bloor Bulletins?* *Quick Sketches?*

## The Clifford Elliott Spirit of Saskatchewan Ministry Trust Fund

by Mary Sanderson

Many Bloor Streeters generously contributed to this fund, set up a year ago in memory of Rev Dr. Clifford Elliott, who was a minister at Bloor Street from 1975 to 1986. He died in February 2006. The Fund is establishing a Symposium in Saskatoon July 1–4, 2007 called *Ministry Voices – Exploring Vocation in the 21st Century*. The purpose of the four day event is to ‘honour, promote and celebrate’ the Saskatchewan values that Cliff was so proud of. It will be held on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River in Saskatoon at Knox United Church.

There will be music, worship, preaching, jazz, art, small group discussions and more!

Presenters include: theologian William Willimon, The Hon Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan, and former moderator of the United Church, Walter Farquharson. Each registrant will be asked to bring an issue in ministry in which they are presently engaged and to present the issue within the small group. For a complete list of the presenters and more details of the Symposium, check out the website [www.ministryvoices.org](http://www.ministryvoices.org) or follow the link on the Bloor Street webpage.

Sunday, April 15 at 10:30 am  
Craddock Lecture  
*"Liberating Jesus from Religious Bondage"*  
**Bishop John Shelby Spong**

**Bishop John Spong**

John Shelby Spong, 75, was Bishop of Newark for 24 years. Promoting progressive Christianity, he calls people to step beyond boundaries of tribe, prejudice, gender or religion to create a new humanity. *Jesus for the Non-Religious* (Harper San Francisco, March 2007), expands his vision, peeling away dogma to reveal the essence of Jesus.

Spong's quest to rescue the church from irrelevancy has led admirers to hail him as champion of inclusive faith, and detractors to vilify him as a heretic. It is not a desire to destroy faith, however, that drives Bishop Spong, but rather the longing of a "God-intoxicated" mystic to enter the mystery that is Jesus Christ.

Spong delivers 200+ lectures/year. His books include: *The Sins of Scripture; Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism; A New Christianity for a New World; Why Christianity Must Change or Die*; and his autobiography *Here I Stand* – touring as the play *A Pebble in My Shoe*. His weekly online column is read by thousands. His media experience includes: "60 Minutes"; "Good Morning America"; "Fox News Live"; "Politically Incorrect"; "Larry King Live"; and "The O'Reilly Factor".

Bishop Spong and his wife, Christine Mary Spong, have five children and six grandchildren. They live in New Jersey.

*Good News*  
**ON BLOOR**

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Sunday, May 6**

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**COMING EVENTS**

**Thursday, April 5 at 7:00pm**

Trinity St. Paul's  
*Maundy Thursday Service*

**Friday, April 6**

*Good Friday Vigil* 9:30am  
*Service* 10:30am

**Saturday, April 7**

*Vigil* 9:00pm  
*Communion Service & Reception of New Members*  
**10:00pm** followed by Wine & Cheese Reception

**Friday, April 13 at 7:30pm**

Reel Activism

**Sunday, April 15 at 10:30am**

*Craddock Lecture*  
Guest Speaker: Bishop James Spong

**Sunday, April 22 following the service**

Speaker event hosted by Social Justice Committee

**Wednesday, April 25 at 7:00pm**

Discussion of novel *The Swinging Bridge* by Ramabai Espinet

**Friday, May 11 at 7:30pm**

Reel Activism

**Late spring: date to be announced**

*Annual Congregational Meeting*  
Part II: Programmes

**Sunday, May 27 following the service**

Speaker event hosted by Social Justice Committee

**Wednesday, May 30 at 7:00pm**

Discussion of novel *The Stubborn Season*  
by Lauren B. Davis

**Saturday, June 9**

*Fundraising Yard Sale* in the courtyard

**Sundays, July 1 – 29 at 10:30am**

Joint services with TSP at BSUC\*

**Sundays, August 5 – 26 at 10:30am**

Joint service with TSP at TSP\*

\* to be confirmed