

GOOD NEWS *on Bloor*

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Frosty foliage
Harold Durnford photo

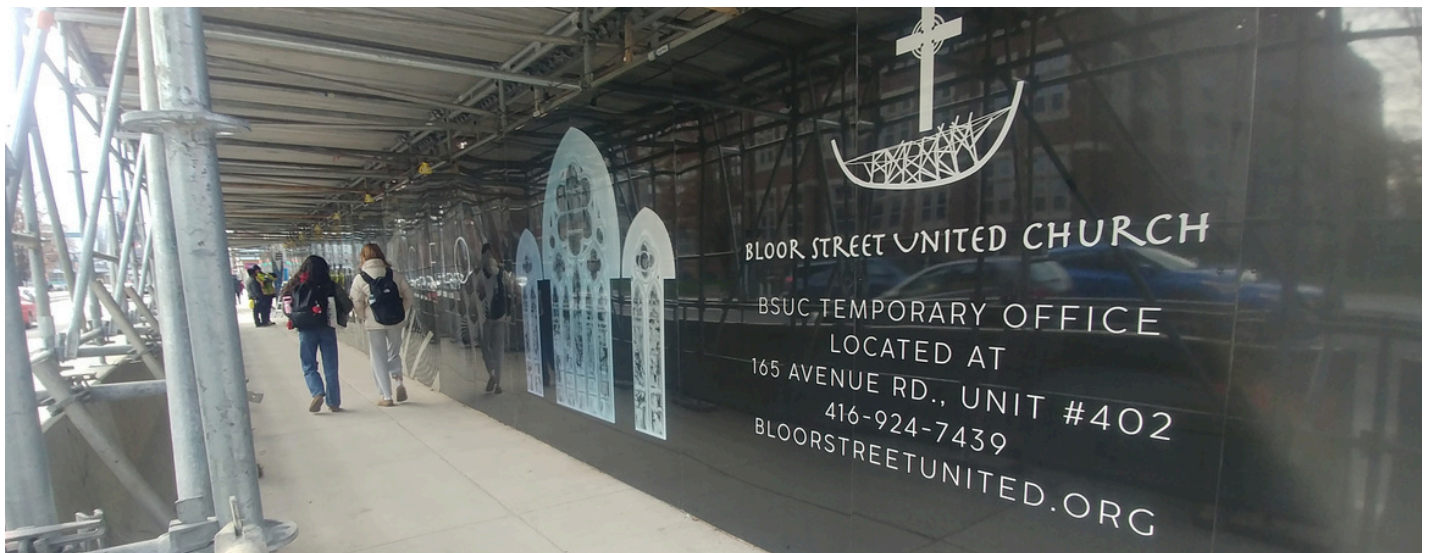
At 300 Bloor St. W.



The first wall rises at 300 Bloor St. W: Jan 31, 2025 view
Susan Jennings photo



View of tower (still standing!) & cranes, Jan 2025
Ian Ward photo



Finally: our new church sign on the hoarding around the construction site
Wendy Goodwin photo

PEOPLE

Thanks to former Bloor St. Minister, Reverend Warren McDougall, who led the combined service at St. Matthew's on Dec. 29. He was enthusiastically welcomed. Warren spent 13 years in team ministry at Bloor Street and the last 10 years before retirement at Richmond Hill United. He was in team ministry with the Rev. Linda Butler at Bloor Street, and they moved as a team to Richmond Hill. Warren says that they are the "poster children" for team ministry and now teach team ministry for the Shining Waters Regional Council. He's been very busy since he retired eight years ago. He says that more than half of the time he was doing contract ministerial work such as filling in for sabbaticals, family leave, etc. Warren recently became a VAM -- Voluntary Associate Minister at Metropolitan United. He says that he always knew that would probably end up at Met. He lives nearby, but it is also the combination of progressive theology, intelligent preaching, good music, and (as a gay person), an affirming congregation. We hope to see and hear you again, Warren!



Brigid Maya Douglas, Warren McDougall & Michael Blair



Beth Symes, Suzanne Bradshaw & Warren on Dec. 29

Harold Durnford photos



Congratulations to Tony Katsuno who celebrated his 99th birthday on Dec. 3! Mary Katsuno, who rarely misses a Sunday in-person service, is only 95.



Small-town Christmas Charm

by Amanda Christie.

As much as I love living in Toronto, I enjoy seeing small-town Christmas charm, and was lucky enough to experience it twice this past December.

The first was in Elora, Ontario, beside my hometown of Fergus. This year, they put lights on the shops and buildings downtown, as well as the bridge and Elora Mill Inn. The whole place looked so beautiful, and just like a Hallmark movie! A walk around town seeing the soft lighting against the old stone left me with feelings of peace - much needed in the busy holiday season. From there I went to Port Elgin and took a walk along the Bruce Trail and onto the waterfront path. Along the trail, there was fresh, deep snow. The wind hadn't distributed it yet, so there was plenty of snow on the trees - a wintery scene indeed! As I approached the waterfront, the colour palette turned to greys, whites, and cool blues. The ice floating in the water was captivating, and the stillness and quiet of the water was a calming sight.

No matter the location or season, getting out in nature is always a welcome experience for me, and I am grateful I was able to do so this past Christmas season.



Elora Church Dec. 23



Elora lights

Amanda Christie photos

Leadership Connecting Generations

by Rev. Douglas duCharme

One of the biggest challenges for our transition work at Bloor Street United is how to respond to the need for new leadership, to provide the direction and vision for what comes next as we live into God's future for us.

Our current leadership has been extremely gifted and able in navigating a complex and challenging path through the parallel tracks of building redevelopment, and faith community renewal – and factoring in a global pandemic as an additional wrinkle! But as they glance behind them, they are not seeing clear indications of people who will step in to take this dynamic spiritual vision for the future onward. That concerns me. It is not just about recruiting and mentoring younger people to take on leadership at Bloor Street. It's about understanding how younger generational cohorts (Millennials/Gen-Y, and Gen-Z) might approach leadership differently, changing how we work together, how we inspire one another, and how we share in the challenges and opportunities of leadership.

I am a Baby Boomer, born in the 1946-1964 era, and a good deal of Bloor Street's core leadership are in that cohort. A few are Gen-Xers, born between 1965 and 1980. But Gen-Y – better known as Millennials – are 30-45 years old, and Gen-Z who are now 14-29 years old, already represent 18% of the working age population in Canada. Along with Millennials, Gen-Z are the most educated generation, and Gen-Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in Canada's history.

In 2023, for the first time since 1964, Boomers made up less than a quarter of the Canadian population, and declining. But Gen-X, the cohort following the Boomers, who were born during a period of sharply declining fertility, will never be the largest generation in Canada. In fact, due to immigration patterns, Millennials (Gen-Y) are right behind the Baby Boomers as a percentage of the population, and Gen-Z (born between 1997 and 2012) are now in third place, ahead of Gen-X. That may be interesting, but what does it have to do with leadership development at Bloor Street? Well, firstly, leadership succession is not just a practical strategy, it is a deeply rooted biblical responsibility. Through the biblical narrative we see leadership transitions that are intentional, relational, and guided by shared purpose. From Moses to Joshua, Elijah to Elisha, Jesus to his disciples, and Priscilla to Apollos, these transitions emphasize shared ethics and intergenerational partnerships.

Secondly, while I have tended to think of the “next” generation of faith community involvement and leadership as Gen-X, and maybe some older Millennials, the people I really need to get to know and understand are Gen-Z! This is especially true because the Barna Research Group has recently published a report showing that Gen Z is (surprisingly) spiritually open, with 74% saying they are “highly or moderately open spiritually.” Of course, spiritual openness doesn't necessarily lead people to church - it can just as easily lead people to Buddhism, or a self-directed spirituality, among many other options.

Not surprisingly, according to the employment and careers website Glassdoor's 2025 “Worklife Trends” report, Gen-Z don't just represent nearly 20% of those in Canadian workplaces, they will by next year hold 10% of all managerial positions – and growing. And recent studies indicate that Gen-Z's leadership dynamics, styles and expectations reflect the rapid societal changes and challenges they encountered in their formative years. They emphasize adaptability, collaboration, and values like equity and inclusion. They prioritize flexibility, well-being and social advancement efforts. As their numbers and skills increase, how do organizations like Bloor Street United align our approach to nurture the leadership potential of this emerging generation?

In other words, we need to learn from, and adapt our existing leadership culture and practices to people in the Gen-Z cohort if we are going to attract and retain a younger generation of leaders who approach this role very differently. A recent study from Leadership Education team at Duke Divinity School identified five leadership frameworks for a changing world *[see text box on page 8]* that are rooted in the Gen-Z generation's values. They're encouraging reading, because they also reflect some of the core values and guiding principles that are emerging in our transition work! I pray that Bloor Street continues to take steps to evolve and grow alongside new generations of thoughtful, open-spirited people.



LIGHTS OF CHRISTMAS



Bloor St.'s poinsettias in St. Matt's chancel
Harold Durnford photo



Christmas Eve clergy: Douglas duCharme, Miguel Fernandez, Brigid Maya Douglas & Aliyah El Mansy
Harold Durnford photo



St. Matthew's crèche
Harold Durnford photo



Christmas Eve candles in St. Matt's bleachers (gallery)
Harold Durnford photo



Christmas Eve combined choir
Harold Durnford photo



Atticus (son of Emily & Mikey) as baby Jesus at pageant
Harold Durnford photo



Pageant Sunday: Emily Ding, Atticus & Mikey Zahorek as the Holy Family
Harold Durnford photo



Close-up of one of St. Matthew's Christmas decorations
Harold Durnford photo



James inspecting Bill Mowat's tuba while decorating the sanctuary for Christmas
Mary Louise Work photo

Transition Team Report

by Mary Louise Work



Transition Team with Mikey Zahorek at Nov. Prince Arthur service (Jay Gordon is missing)
Harold Durnford photo

At the risk of sounding like “The Twelve Days of Christmas”, I began totalling up the work of the Transition Team (TT) since our launch in January 2024: one Intentional Interim Minister, two leaders’ retreats, three book studies, three Prince Arthur services (almost at the room’s capacity), fi-i-i-ive buckets of work. But rather than just list our shared accomplishments, better to elaborate on our collective progress.

Between January/24 and January/25, the TT met 35 times - over 2 times each month, almost always in person at the office. Our workplan includes 5 focus areas requiring deep dives into how the congregation understands who it is and why it’s here:

1. our long-term financial situation and priorities;
2. the redevelopment timeline and impact on transition work;
3. mission/vision/values;
4. inclusion and diversity: external; inclusion and diversity: internal;
5. governance, volunteers, staff and leadership development.

We quickly realized that all 5 areas formed a complex, inter-dependant web of issues. Decisions couldn’t be made in one area without affecting others. For example, program decisions depend on a budget and finance/budgeting decisions depend on what our mission and identity is. How do we decide to fund or continue a program if we don’t have a sense of what our priorities in mission are? Learning to manage Bloor Streeters’ future expectations about what we could and might do would be hard work. Money will be tight and volunteers few. The status quo was no longer an option. The congregation had to find a new way forward.

As a result, a long-term financial planning group was struck with assistance of a pro bono external financial consultant; implications of the estimated timelines for moving back into the building were clarified; rethinking started on how Bloor Street understands its social justice values (a post-service congregational discussion was held Jan 19); rethinking started on managing our pastoral care needs; experiments started on how we could understand worship and celebration differently (Bloor Street-only services at Prince Arthur, two jazz services, a “talk back” format in worship, and a revival of the Craddock lecture), work has started on understanding the hard realities of our current volunteer capacity and its impact on how we govern ourselves.

All this plus of course Rev. Douglas’s sermons, and sometimes those of Rev. Brigid Maya, asking us to reflect on the current state of the church, how the congregation understands the nature of the challenges as we move forward, what scripture tells us about being faithful disciples in times of change and adaptation. Plus Rev. Douglas’s thoughtful reflection “Becoming Bloor Street” every week in the e-bulletin. And his pieces in *Good News on Bloor*, including this issue.

On the TT’s 2025 workplan is articulating our mission and values, and tackling how to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion; two more leaders’ retreats; a new video series on the status of redevelopment; continuing weekly “Becoming Bloor Street” reflections so we think more deeply about our future together; more exciting experiments in worship; congregational conversations and listening to each other about pastoral care needs and what worship might look like; reports and recommendations to Council on governance structures, future staffing needs, and leadership skills we’ll need once we’re back in the building. Whew.

It’s important that we stay connected, and that Council and the TT hears from you. Congregational conversations over coffee with Council members or after services are opportunities for feedback. If you have thoughts or concerns about the TT’s work, please contact any member of the **Team: Jay Gordon, Estelle Chen, Don Payne, Ellen Schwartzel, Mary-Louise Work, our Shining Waters rep Mary Ellen Richardson, or Rev. Douglas duCharme.**

Bloor Street bids good-bye to Aliyah El Mansy as she returns to Germany to lead her own congregation

by Sandra Cruickshanks



Aliyah wearing her new stole
Harold Durnford photo

The congregations of Bloor Street and St. Matthew's said a special thank you, honouring Aliyah El Mansy who was the volunteer Community Ministry Support at BSUC since June 2024. While she stayed until the end of December, this thank you took place during the service led by Aliyah on December 8.

Most Bloor Streeters first got to know Aliya in 2019, when she attended services at 300 Bloor St W, while studying at U of T. Before the pandemic landed, she returned home to Germany and she continued to connect with Bloor Street as a regular, very long-distance participant in our Zoom services. She even became active as a Zoom host.

Aliyah finished her theological studies and also completed a PhD between 2020 and 2024. She started at her own church just outside of Frankfurt in January and will be ordained in February. But first she wanted to complete a time of service – and she asked Bloor St. if she could join us for six months to learn a little more about how a church handles its transition. Her church financially supported this effort allowing her to become a Bloor St. volunteer working with the Transition Team and ROP, providing leadership at Sunday services and helping out with pastoral care. She was, well, everywhere and always with a smile on her face.

As Garnet Ward says, "It would be difficult to find a single Bloor Streeter who has not been personally touched by Aliyah's warmth, energy, enthusiasm and encouragement ... she has so woven herself into the fabric of our congregation and beyond, that she now represents what we would like to think is the best of Bloor St."

Bloor Street has a couple of special traditions to honour staff who provide professional support as they leave the congregation, one is a financial gift for retirement, ordination, new postings, etc. This gift comes from the hearts of individual Bloor Streeters. Sandra Cruickshanks presented Aliyah with a certificate representing this special gift. Bridget Hough and Nancy Gordon presented Aliyah with a beautiful new stole hand-made by a few in the Quilters group. This stole highlights Canadian motifs including an embroidered canoe!



Aliyah with our staff technician Oscar Akamine Kina
Harold Durnford photo

The Transition Team, represented by Ellen Schwartzel, offered deep thanks to Aliyah for her efforts with the Team in helping to understand the changing community around 300 Bloor Street W, information that will help them prepare for our return to the new space.

Bloor Street Church sends its blessing with Aliyah as she moves to the next stage of her life in the German church.

ALIYAH'S IMAGES OF TORONTO



View overlooking Toronto
(also photo on page 8)



Snowman family
on Woodington Ave (east end)

World Premiere of "A Dove": A New Composition

by Daniel Meeks

On Sunday January 12, I had the privilege of singing and conducting the world premiere of my latest composition, *A Dove*, during a baptism service. This new work, written for choir and piano, invites listeners to reflect upon the sacred moment of Jesus's baptism, and upon the promise of baptism more broadly. It was a great honour to share this piece with the Bloor St. and St. Matthew's faith communities.

When the opportunity arose to include my own music in a service, I was eager to compose something new that was liturgically appropriate and musically accessible. I searched for text that could capture the essence of baptism: that of renewal and devotion. My hope was to set lyrics that offered some narrative description of the events surrounding Jesus's baptism, and to use the powerful symbolism that so often enhances our understanding of scripture. After exploring various poems, short stories, and scriptural passages, I found that Luke's account of Jesus's baptism offered a fitting foundation. The final result is my own paraphrasing of and reflection upon Luke 3:22.

The framework features the dove, an earthly representation of the Holy Spirit. The rising and falling contour of the main theme mimics the simple and elegant flight of the dove as it descends onto Jesus's head. At the structural and musical heart of the piece is a quotation of God's voice saying, "You are my Son, whom I love. In you, I am well pleased." I set this section to music with the goal of conveying God's words as simultaneously awe-inspiring, comforting, and calm. The music transitions form a simple call-and-response structure between the basses and tenors, building in complexity as the treble voices enter. The swirling polyrhythmic landscape of this section reflects God's all-encompassing love for Jesus and the world. The final verse is the dramatic climax: the main theme returns in a brighter and uplifting modality as the dove takes flight, spreading the hope of renewal, the promise of baptism, and foreshadowing the influence of Jesus over his people following this moment. The piece concludes with a dramatic *Alleluia* that settles into a tranquil *Amen*.

Conducting *A Dove* in its world premiere was a deeply rewarding experience, made even more special by the talented choir members of Bloor St. and St. Matthew's, who entrusted me with their voices and brought my musical vision to life. I received the encouragement of Paul Jessen, who offered me this opportunity to share my music and graciously accompanied on piano during the service. The warm support I've received from both the choir and congregation has been overwhelming, and I extend my deepest gratitude to all who participated in bringing this piece into the world.



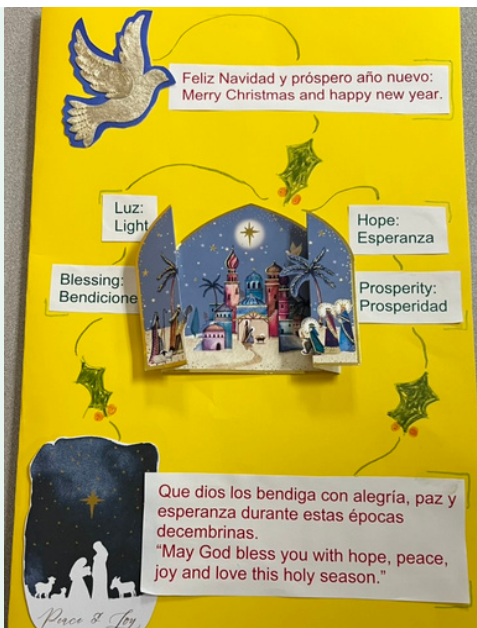
BSUC soloists Maria Milenic, Sarah Schmidt-McQuillan,
Daniel Meeks & Christopher Chan
Harold Durnford photo

A new path for welcoming newcomers

by Sue Kaiser

More than 20 people joined in the first worship service of the Bloor Street Hispanic Church on December 14, 2024, in a basement room at Trinity St. Paul's Church. Joining Miguel Fernandez in this special occasion were Emo Yango, Growth Coordinator who supports new emerging migrant and diasporic communities of faith, current and former BSUC ministers Douglas DuCharme, Aliyah El Mansy and Martha ter Kuile, as well as Garnet Ward, Chair of Worship. A Christmas themed card and gift of cookies was sent by Rev Deborah Hart and members of Deer Park Church to welcome Miguel and this new initiative.

BSUC is walking in partnership with Miguel Fernandez, Hispanic Community Faith Lead, to grow a Spanish language congregation within the United Church. Miguel welcomes our support and asks for our prayers, our ideas and for us to share the news far and wide. We hope that BSUC members, especially those of you who speak Spanish, will show support by attending a Saturday service in person. For more information, contact miguel@bloorstreetunited.org



Spanish Christmas card from
Deer Park congregation

SAD *by Nancy Gordon*

Here we are in the midst of the darkest season. The days are short; it's often cloudy, snowy, even rainy sometimes, and it's cold! People tend to stay indoors due to the cold and dark, and this is the time when people can feel depressed, sad, gloomy, discouraged and even despairing. Appetites can change, including having cravings for carbohydrates, (which causes weight gain), energy can wane, sleep patterns can change including more insomnia, and there is less motivation to get out and do something that might make one feel better. This is quite natural due to the season, but some people are particularly affected this way, to the point where it impairs their performance at work, at school or in social relationships. The term SAD has been coined for these sufferers. It stands for Seasonal Affective Disorder, and is a form of depression, which for some can be debilitating. It is quite possible that within your circle you know someone who suffers from this, be it a neighbour, a friend, a co-worker, maybe even yourself. Some things that can be helpful are: light; exercise; walking outdoors; vitamin D; eating more fish and colourful vegetables; and avoiding carbohydrates. Also, medication and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy have been used. So, what can we do if we know someone with SAD? It can be hard to know what's best. Some people might welcome distraction and your company, but others might not want you to bother them. Play it by ear. Be a friend and if you invite them to do something with you, do not take it personally if they refuse. Even knowing that you offered, and that you care, will be helpful for them on some level. Feel free to contact me if you'd like to discuss this further: 437-431-3039 or nancy@bloorstreetunited.org.



Sparkling tree in downtown Toronto
Aliyah El Mansy photo

Leadership Connecting Generations (*continued from page 3*)

by Rev. Douglas duCharme

“5 leadership frameworks for a changing world”

These frameworks developed by Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, are based on social science research, and provide a foundation for intentional, inclusive leadership transitions that connect generations

1. Prioritize relationships

Leadership thrives on genuine relationships in environments where trust, empathy and collaboration flourish. Relationships are not transactional or utilitarian; they are sacred and foundational to effective leadership. Healthy relationships of mutuality and respect form the heart of leadership.

2. Foster mutual learning

Engaging young leaders begins with listening: inviting their insights, valuing their expertise and embracing their fresh perspectives. Leadership thrives when wisdom flows both ways. This challenges top-down models and fosters collaboration. Gen-Z leaders will value community wisdom over hierarchy, hospitality over competition and collective well-being over personal gain.

3. Forge and nurture allyship

Emerging Gen-Z leaders frequently seek allies, not traditional mentors. Allies walk alongside them, offering guidance and opening doors without imposing a top-down dynamic. These relationships can help empower young leaders to innovate boldly while building on existing foundations.

4. Prioritize emerging leaders' passions

Aligning our mission with younger leaders' passions and values helps create opportunities for meaningful work. For example, Gen Z leaders with a commitment to causes like social justice and equity will see that commitment as central to their leadership identity.

5. Support entrepreneurial efforts

Young leaders are already addressing key issues — mental health, systemic inequities, generational trauma — through platforms like podcasts, blogs, social media and art. Their creativity is inspiring, but without organizational support, these efforts often remain in the experimental stage. By being incubators for these initiatives, offering resources and guidance for long-term outcomes, communities like Bloor Street United can not only empower young leaders, but also strengthen our own ability to meet evolving challenges.

By building bridges across generations, we create a leadership legacy rooted in collaboration, where faith-driven principles shape the future.

IT'S WIN- TER!



Red-tailed Hawk at 25 stories above ground
Nancy McNee photo



Tom McCauley with Karen Marshall (St. Matt's)
Harold Durnford photo



Patsy Porter at Nov. Prince Arthur service
Harold Durnford photo



Late Nov. Leaders' Retreat at our office: Bob Hilliard, Bill Mowat,
Doug Welwood, Harold Durnford & Nancy Gordon
Don Payne photo



Sheila Moll & Marcelle St. Amant,
two of St. Matt's hardest-working members
Harold Durnford photo



Bill Mowat & Atticus at Jan.
Prince Arthur service
Emily Ding photo



Bernice Brazier (St. Matt's) preparing
Advent communion on Dec. 1
Harold Durnford photo



Music Director Mikey Zahorek at his
portable keyboard at the Nov. service
at 95 Prince Arthur
Harold Durnford photo



Storm clouds over Nottawasaga Bay in late Nov.
Susan Jennings photo

Quick Sketches



Anniversary cake

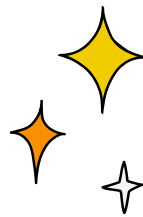
St. Matthew's Church celebrated **100 years** at events on the weekend of Nov. 23 and 24. An organ recital, photo display and special dinner were held on Nov. 23 and the morning service on Nov. 24 featured guest preacher Rev. Eleanor Scarlett, a supporter and mentor to Rev. Brigid Maya Douglas. After the service a beautiful cake, created by professional baker Karen Marshall, was enjoyed by all.



Christmas Market Sunday
(Sandra Cruickshanks on left with Karen Marshall)

Christmas Sales on Dec.15 : Great Success!

A big thank-you from St. Matt's to everyone who contributed items to the food and craft sales, purchased items, and helped the day of the sale. It was impressive! The sales in the Parlour and the online sale were both a huge success financially and in community building.



Marmalade oranges spilled in Bridget's elevator

Marmalade for the Winter Blues. On Jan. 25, **Bridget Hough** and her team boiled the fruit, cut up the oranges and lemons, dumped the cut fruit back into the BIG pans, measured and added sugar, stirred the pots, filled the jars, tightened the lids and sold the translucent jars to our congregations. Thanks to Bridget for organizing this annual event and for her description of the process.

Photos from Bridget Hough & Harold Durnford



Betsy Anderson & John Shipman
with thank-you cake

St. Matthew's raised more than \$3,000. And from the Bloor St. Togogos' group, thank you to everyone who contributed and purchased items in support of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation! Over \$550 was raised.

Retirements at St. Matthew's.

St. Matt's said thanks for many years of service to retiring congregational liaison Betsy Anderson and retiring building manager John Shipman on Dec. 22. The behind-the-scenes' capable leadership of both will be missed by our congregations.

A happy family style gathering for Christmas

The Christmas season was well celebrated by the Refugee Outreach Program participants who gathered to sing Christmas songs, applaud the lively and comic dances of the group Juventud Divino Tesoro (Youth Divine Treasure). The group enjoyed a simple meal of soup and arepas and pot-luck dessert. This year's participants included former and current campers, a former ROP placement student and the former BSUC Sunday morning nanny, current conversation group volunteers and former Jeremiah's Field loan recipients. Long-time and recent arrivals shared some of their successes from 2024 (like a new job or a new home) and their hopes for the new year. (Sue Kaiser)



Good News on Bloor is published 4 times a year by Bloor St. United Church.

All submissions should be concise and may be edited.

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Early submissions are always welcome.

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