



TSP TIMES

Gathered in Community

Autumn 2024



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The Gift of Time and Talent

Alex Horsky

The strength and success of our work as a Centre for Faith, Justice, and the Arts relies on the dedication of many. You, TSP's members and adherents, volunteer your time and talents to support our mission, and we are deeply grateful. From short-term projects to long-term commitments, our committees are continually active. In thinking about volunteer stewardship – which is to say how best to engage participation in the work of TSP – we know that we must balance our call to action with the reality that each of us faces multiple demands and obligations in our lives.

That said, as an intentional community, we recognize the importance of inviting our congregants to actively engage in TSP's work, to enable TSP to remain responsive and relevant as a Christian community here in Toronto.

The Stewardship of Volunteer and Financial Resources committee is presently thinking about how to foster volunteer engagement at TSP. We deeply appreciate the countless contributions that have already been made. Whether you know it or not, there are so many hands and hearts engaged in making your life at TSP a meaningful one. You are held in an often unseen nest of care and concern.

Over the next few months, we intend to give you a better sense of what that care looks like behind-the-scenes, and hopefully, an idea of where you can fit in, in terms of your own engagement in the life and work of TSP.

Here are four key aims we are keeping in mind in our bid to foster volunteer commitment:

1. **Engage in ongoing dialogue and reflection:** Our Board and committees are committed to discerning our calling, and we regularly invite your feedback and participation in community conversations to ensure we are inclusive of diverse perspectives.
2. **Communicate our evolving mission and work:** Whether you are new to our congregation or a long-standing member, change is inevitable. Our governance structures, worship, and social justice work are continually evolving, and we must ensure that everyone understands how we work as a community, and keep people abreast of changes that impact how we do our work, and the impact we have in the world.
3. **Foster spiritual and communal nourishment:** We must continue finding ways to engage the congregation while nurturing our collective spiritual and communal well-being.
4. **Support growth and mentorship:** No matter where our members are in their spiritual journeys, it is our responsibility to mentor and support each other. We aim to be compassionate companions and to support one another, as we are able, to “do” and “be” together in community.

These four aims will guide us as we think about how to build a strong, connected, supportive and engaged community.

In the weeks ahead, we would like to invite everyone at TSP to reflect on ways they can contribute to the life of our community. One of our tasks is to help congregants understand the options as far as volunteer involvement goes. To that end, we are hosting a Volunteer Job Fair.

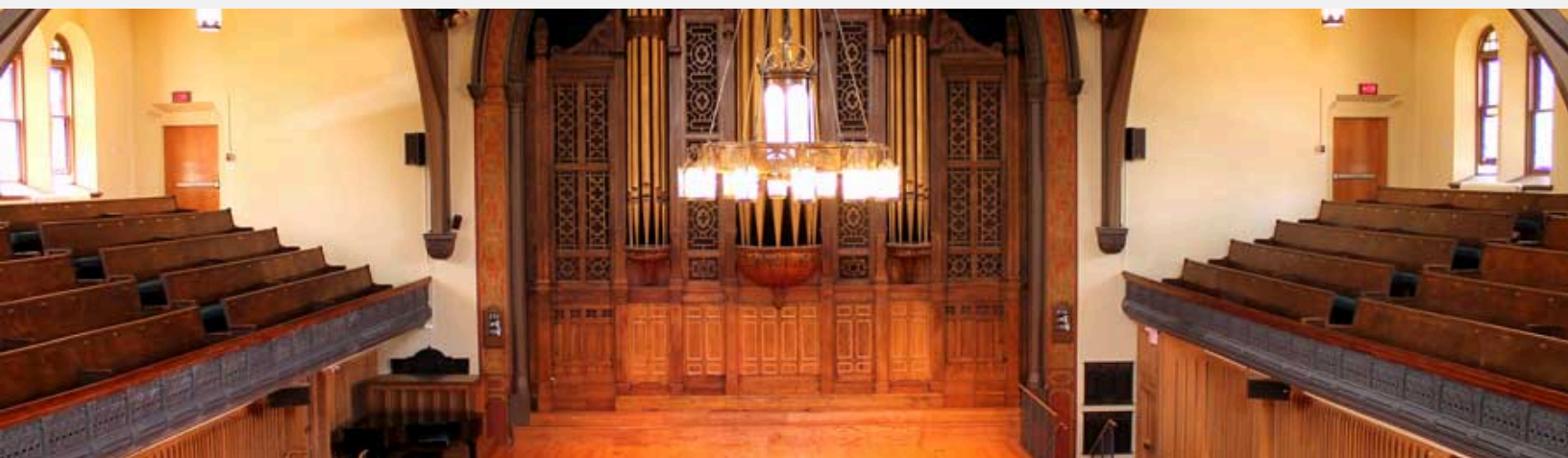
So please, mark your calendars for a gathering in the Studio after worship on October 27, 2024. On that day, you will be able to learn about the work of TSP through its various committees and groups, and gain a sense of the short and longer term projects you might like to support with a contribution of your time and talents.

It is a given that we intend to listen for Spirit’s call in all we do, but it is worth remembering that it is through each and every one of us that Spirit works. Without the engagement of our community, our work in the world is not only diminished, it is literally impossible. Your contribution of time and talent is appreciated!

We hope to see you at the Volunteer Fair.

Alex Horsky

Stewardship Committee, Stewardship of Volunteer Resources



A RENEWED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR TSP

Del Doucette (TSP Board, Member at Large)

In June 2023, the Working Group with a View to a Future presented a report on how TSP could begin to intentionally rebuild our congregational life as we came out of the COVID-19 lockdown. That work was then taken up by the Board and resulted in a Renewal Plan that, at the Annual General Meeting in March 2024, was received by the congregation for further discussion. Both the Working Group's report and the Renewal Plan dealt with the governance structure of TSP and things to be done by groups within that structure to continue and reinvigorate our congregational life.

In the spring of 2024, there were a series of consultations and a congregational meeting at which these topics were discussed, and at which an invitation was made to provide further comments on them. Over the summer, a proposal was developed that included some changes to TSP's committee structure and described tasks to be continued and that might be taken up by our committees. And, at the Board meeting on September 10, this proposal, which included the following committee structure (with those that are new or changed indicated), was approved by the Board:

- Finance (a new committee that is taking up the work of the temporary Budget Support Group that developed TSP's budget for 2025)
- Ministry and Personnel (M&P)
- Nurturing Community (a new committee yet to be formed that, following a recommendation of the Working Group, brings back together the work previously done by the Communications Committee and the Nurturing Community and Discipleship Circle)
- Public Witness to Social Justice
- Stewardship of Volunteer and Financial Resources
- Worship and Faith Formation (WAFF)

Some of these committees already have a full complement of volunteers. Others may need to be built up through additional volunteers. Most important, volunteers will be sought to discern the tasks and organize the work of the new Nurturing Community committee.



letters and updates





Letter from the Chair of the Board

Dear fellow worshippers,

Welcome back to TSP for Autumn 2024, we have a lot to be excited for! Hyun Hee (Deborah) has brought her own personal style as Music Director and, together with the choir, they are sharing such beautiful music with us. Similarly, Sarah Redikopp is bringing her gifts to the Communications and Administration Coordinator role, in particular increasing the effectiveness of internal channels and strengthening our outreach. We also welcome Jeorgina Hidalgo as our Children's Church Co-ordinator and thank Marjie Calla for preparing Jeorgina in her role – we are really grateful for this continued focus and look forward to the engagement and spiritual growth of children's church in the coming year!

We also have a number of priorities. Firstly, Janet Mairs, Sarah Redikopp and John Olthuis have led the development of our living faith story/community of faith profile. They have captured wonderfully our ministry focus, which we can next leverage in our search for a new Minister. Secondly, Del and Alex have led the charge on the stewardship front, increasing commitments and focusing the fall appeal on time in talent, to which we are grateful to their leadership and all of your contributions! We also thank Del for his leadership in advancing our governance efforts, finalizing our organizational structure and emphasizing our nurturing efforts going forward (and thanking James, Willy and Lois for their continued leadership!) And we have exciting developments from the building and "Future Directions" front. As always, Aaron has been tremendous in attracting ongoing grant opportunities (most recently for our work on the cupola) and the committee is advancing efforts to ensure the Trinity St. Paul's Centre is self-sustaining in the future.

On the social justice front, we thank all of you for your leadership, commitment and passion. We most recently held a meaningful and reflective orange shirt day service and on October 1, participated in the seniors for climate rally. Our other working groups continue, including active collaboration for anti-racism and our focus on the middle east, where all of us continue to pray for peace, in particular this October 7th and beyond.

And finally, we express our gratitude to Cheri, our Minister's final autumn, concluding her seven-year journey with us at the end of the year. There will be time for further reflection but we really are fortunate for how Cheri guided us spiritually through the pandemic and drew many new members to us, with her welcoming mantra, encouraging us to love one another and positioning us to undoubtedly thrive in the future!

Blessings with love,
Ashwin



Letter from the Ministry & Personnel Committee

Gillian Graham, Co-Chair, Ministry & Personnel

The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee of Trinity St. Paul's United Church acts under the guidelines of The Manual of The United Church of Canada. The committee functions around three roles. These functions are as follows:

- The consultative and supportive role;
- Building and sustaining healthy relationships;
- The supervisory role

The Members of M & P provide resources and support for the staff and the community of faith with respect to any issue affecting staff of our church, including ministry personnel and lay employees. The committee works to build positive and trusting relationships between staff and members and adherents of the community of faith.

If members of the community of faith have praise or concerns about staff, both ministry personnel and lay employees, these can be shared in signed correspondence with the committee.

PROTOCOL FOR RAISING PRAISES AND CONCERNS

If members of TSP community of faith have praise or concerns about staff, both ministry personnel and lay employees, it is suggested, if appropriate an attempt be made to address it directly with party(ies) involved. The issues can be shared in signed correspondence with the committee. The issues will be considered confidentially by the M&P Committee, who will recommend action.

Each Church Staff Person has a Liaise person. Our practice is for the liaison to be in touch with their staff person regularly to hear of any concerns or issues and to offer support to the staff. The M&P Committee meets annually with each staff person to review their work and ensure clarity moving forward.

The liaisons are as follows: For Cheri Di Novo – Betsy Anderson; For Deborah Park – Gillian Graham; For Sarah Redikopp - Jeanne Moffat; For Jeorgina – Hendrika Haasen.

The M&P Committee helps to ensure a climate in the community of faith where both constructive feedback and concerns can be offered and received. The M&P Committee ensures that when feedback is offered to staff about work performance, it is done to allow for direct discussion, explanation, improvement, or change.

STAFF CHANGES

Rev. Dr. Cheri Di Novo has been our Minister since January 2018 and will finish her worship leadership at TSP with the Christmas Eve service on December 24, 2024. There will be a reception following that service to share our thanks and celebrate her ministry with us. We are also anticipating doing a de-covenanting ritual with her at the Sunday December 22 service.

During Cheri's time with us we weathered many changes and challenges. Following the most severe effects and challenges of Covid we slowly returned cautiously hopeful and sometimes afraid. Cheri assured us we are all welcome regardless of what we believe or don't believe, what we've done or not done, and regardless of who we love. Hearing this welcome, several new people have come into our midst-- alone and in twos and sometimes in families. We recently welcomed 11 new members in the first "new members service" since Covid.

On another front, Cheri suggested a Wine tasting fundraiser last Spring and gained the support of dozens of TSP Building staff and church members, as well as neighborhood folk, including several of Cheri's former Queen's Park colleagues and friends. We raised \$14,000. We will miss your presence, Cheri.

Sarah Redikopp has been our Communication and Administration Coordinator (CAC) since June. She has brought a new energy and perspective to her work and has poured her heart into the TSP community. She can be seen Sunday mornings working with James Mackey and Noah Farberman to bring our Sunday Services to TSP members and friends all over Ontario and as far away as Alberta and Winnipeg. Sarah is making a major impact on the public visibility of our church services and programs and is putting TSP on the Annex and indeed on the Toronto social media waves. One person found his way to a Thursday evening rehearsal having seen the poster on the TSP web page! If you haven't seen the TSP web site yet, please take a look! Sarah's role as CAC is bringing a refreshing sense of order and enhanced communication to the church office. As the Board, M & P and congregation move forward to complete our Staff Team, Sarah will serve to steady us and keep us grounded and well informed, via the weekly Bulletin and numerous emails on the List Serve about the Life and Work of the TSP congregation and friends. Sarah also assists Lois Kunkel, Acting Communications Circle Chair, with this Newsletter, receiving submissions, formatting, and publishing the TSP Newsletter.

Deborah Park has been with TSP for over four months now. She feels quite at home at TSP and has been made to feel very welcome by staff and congregants. Deborah says, "I feel the spiritual connection with TSP and calling to the Music ministry here."

In September Claire Latosinsky, former Alto lead, a graduate of the Classical Voice Performance program at U of T, moved to France to teach English. She has been at TSP for 2 years and came to TSP on the prompting of her sister and loved it, and the opportunity to sing in the choir was an added opportunity.

Clara Krausse, former Soprano lead, left September 29th, to return full time to U of T. She enjoys performing a wide variety of music, including choral, chamber, and solo music, from early to contemporary.

If you would like to see Clara perform:

- October 24, 7:30pm - Soundstreams/Choir 21 - Letters to God - R. Murray Schafer, Melody McKiver, Tore Takemitsu, and more
- November 8, 7:30pm - The Elora Singers and The Elmer Iseler Singers - Fall Mysticism - Peter-Anthony Togni world premiere
- December 13, 7:30pm - The Elmer Iseler Singers with Viva and Amadeus - Messiah

Clara wrote to the choir and shared, "It has been an honour and a privilege to make music and worship with you over these past years, to grow alongside you and have so many wonderful experiences together which I will continue to treasure. I wish you all much continued joy and rewarding experiences in your music-making and worship. I am currently pursuing a Master in Library and Information Sciences, as well as continuing to perform."

George Theodorakopoulos our Baritone/Bass lead for the past several years, has a BMus (University of Toronto) and has begun his Master of Opera and Performance at U of T. We are pleased he was able to still be with us until Thanksgiving. George has also been singing with VIVA and has performed in several U of T productions.

Deborah has been busy hiring new section leads. Cameron Mazzei joined the choir during the summer as our tenor lead. Thea Nappert joined us in September as Alto Lead. Charlie Sadler will join the choir as the new Bass/Baritone Lead after Thanksgiving. There will be further information about the new Soprano Lead and Bios of all the Leads in the next edition of the TSP TIMES.

In September we welcomed a new Children's Church teacher Jeorgina Hidalgo. Her friend Lucy has agreed to volunteer as an assistant teacher.

THE PROCESS OF CALLING A MINISTER & NEXT STEPS AT TSP

Whereby M and P is directly involved in hiring the lay Church staff and makes recommendations for hiring to the Board, the Board of Directors has the ultimate responsibility to initiate, delegate, follow through and ultimately “call” a new Minister. The governing body, or Board of the community of faith, or congregation, is responsible for some pastoral relations actions and decisions that were previously the responsibility of a congregation. Some may be interested in looking at sections of The United Church handbook on Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for Search and Selection (April 2020) (united-church.ca).

Specifically, the governing body of the community of faith handles the following:

- The governing body of the community of faith handles requesting regional council approval for supply appointments.
- The Board in turn can ask M and P for assistance.
- The Board will keep the Community of Faith informed of these processes and decisions.

Our Board Chair has been in touch with our Shining Waters Regional Pastoral Relations Minister, and liaison for TSP has been appointed to work with TSP as it moves into a change of pastoral relations. This liaison will be involved at many steps along the way, including:

- when a change in pastoral relations has been requested
- when the community of faith begins writing their profile
- when the community of faith is ready to post their profile
- when a search team is appointed
- when the governing body requests a meeting of the community of faith to hear the recommendation of the search team
- at the covenanting service

Trinity St. Paul’s United Church is blessed with staff and volunteers who are committed to their work, and we are thankful for this work in our community of faith. Presently serving on the M&P committee are, Gillian Graham and David Fallis as Co-Chairs, Hendrika Haassen, Betsy Anderson, Jeanne Moffat, and Roger Townshend.

Letter from the Communications & Administration Coordinator



Dear Community,

Autumn blessings to you all! As I write this, the October sun is glimmering through the windows of the church office, and the air has taken a decided “drop” in temperature. Fall is here!

I am now four months into my role as the Communications and Administration Coordinator at Trinity-St. Paul’s. It has been a very rewarding few months, with a lot of growth, learning, and support from TSP community members along the way.

One of the first tasks of the job was re-organizing and rearranging the church office. I hoped to make the space feel a bit more welcoming. I have enjoyed sitting with many of you on the couch and chairs in the office, and I am so happy to have another space for fellowshiping at TSP.

On the communications front, I have been working to evaluate existing channels of communication within the congregation and to make these more efficient and user-friendly. Some of these changes have included updates to the structure and delivery of our weekly announcements, updating the bulletin board in the east foyer (forever a work in progress), and working with our Teach Lead, James Mackey, to update the congregational directory. I have also been soliciting meeting minutes from Circle Chairs and organizing our congregational Google Drive so that our church office “archive” is both complete and organized!

I have been working closely with Lois Kunkel, acting chair of the Communications Circle, to make some updates to the Trinity-St. Paul’s website. This has meant a bit of a learning curve for me – I come from a research background, not a web design background! - but I have been teaching myself (with the help of YouTube tutorials) how to use our Church website platform, and I’ve enjoyed the challenge.



Some changes to our website include: updating the online calendar to reflect the various activities of the congregation (it is now updated until the end of December 2024!), adding “Public Witness and Social Justice” and “Worship” pages to the site, and adding a sign-up form so that people can sign up for our congregational listserv directly through the website. These changes are all made in the hopes of making our website a more complete and user-friendly source of information for visitors, newer members, and longstanding members alike.

I have been enjoying the creative aspects of this role, including poster design and developing content for our social media pages. I encourage each of you to visit our Trinity St. Paul’s Instagram and Facebook pages to see photos from Sunday worship and gatherings, posters for upcoming events, and much more. I consider social media an important part of our outreach ministry, and my strategy in posting online has been to amplify the activities of the congregation so that the heart of Trinity-St. Paul’s can be seen – and felt – in our online presence. Into the winter months, I hope to continue working on the website, to continue with outreach efforts on social media, and to continue to keep you all informed and connected through our internal communications channels. These things are always works in progress, but they are important works!

As a member, and now an employee, of this congregation, it has been a joy to work with all of you, and very meaningful for me to serve this community which has, in turn, supported me in so many ways. Though the next months will bring many changes in our life together, I pray that we will continue to grow in the ways we are being called to by God, and with the love and trust in Him modelled for us by Jesus Christ. May it be so.

Peace, and with love,

Sarah Redikopp, PhD

Children's Church Update

Marjie Calla



TSP Children's Church staff Lucy Nhung Ngo (left) and Jeorgina Taganas (right)

The Children's Church programme has gotten off to a great start. We are so lucky to have a new teacher, Jeorgina Taganas and a very dedicated volunteer Lucy Nhung Ngo.

Jeorgina and Lucy come well qualified. Both are Early Childhood Educators. Jeorgina has elementary school teaching experience. They are warm, fun and have already connected with the children.

Children's Church began on September 8th and so far the feedback has been fantastic! I have heard words like 'awesome, fun, the teachers are really nice' coming from the children.

The programme is for children ages 4 and up and is in-person. It can be attended weekly or on a drop in basis. The teachers will be planning activities based on the *New* United Church Curriculum, "The GO Project," including stories, games, arts and crafts and more!

This wonderful programme is a great way for children to make new friendships, learn about our faith and have lots of fun.

Please tell everyone you know about this fantastic programme.

Message from the General Manager

Aaron Dawson



Hello everyone!

I hope you all had a wonderful summer, taking advantage of the weather, the great outdoors and perhaps some time to relax.

Our 135th anniversary year celebrations included the first Bloor Block Bash, where we closed off a portion of Robert Street on the east side of the building for a full day of fun activities including free salsa dancing and lessons, musical performances, and local food and craft vendors selling their creations. The day was a huge success. We were lucky with the weather and had a wonderful turnout. It was a great chance to invite the community to Trinity St. Paul's and see what a diverse hub of activity it is! Join us for more community activity on Nuit Blanche, Oct. 5, as three of the city's most prominent ambient and experimental music groups collaborate for an all-night, non-stop improvised night of music. The musicians will fill the upper part of the Sanctuary, creating an ethereal atmosphere for the public audience to experience in the lower level!

This year has seen a lot of repairs around the building. The repairs to the roof and to the clerestory windows on the cupola have been completed, and we expect the scaffolding to come down by early October. There will be some final repairs to the top of the spires using boom lifts, and that will complete the project. The clerestory was also painted, returning it to its original color, and new waterproofing and metal flashing was added to seal the entire structure and protect it from the elements. The broken pew in the upper balcony has been repaired. We installed a new pump and grease trap to the Montessori school kitchen and repaired some other basement plumbing issues. We were able to upgrade all of our IT network hardware to make it more secure, and had security audits performed for the internet system and for physical building security.



Many thanks once again to the wonderful volunteer David Sourkes, who polished the upper Sanctuary pews again this summer! Thank you David!

The project to install a mural on the protective covering around the northeast steps has been completed. Thanks to Joseph Sagaj for his wonderful artwork, to the Bloor Annex BIA for funding the installation of the protective structure and to the Toronto United Church Council for funding the design and installation of the artwork.

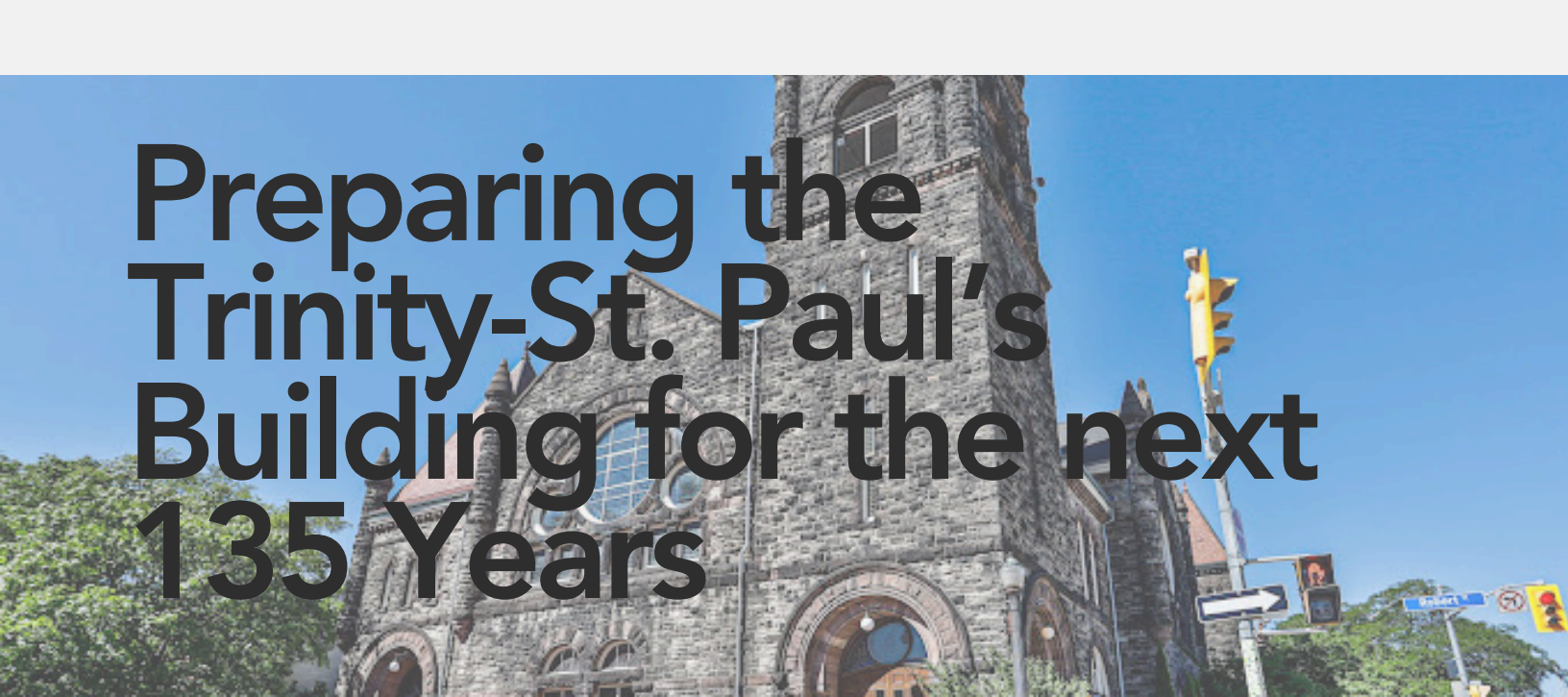
Our busy fall season is ramping up, and 2024 is on track to surpass our bookings from 2023. We continue to look for ways to fill the busy during slower periods, including outreach to possible new user groups and joining the Catch Corner sports app to book the gym for pickleball and badminton.

I look forward to seeing you around the building soon!

Kind regards,
Aaron Dawson, General Manager

Photos from top left: 135th anniversary banner and scaffolding, Bloor Block Bash dancing, clerestory before and after, northeast steps before and after.



A photograph of the Trinity-St. Paul's Church building, a large stone structure with a prominent tower and arched windows. The building is set against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there are green trees and a street with traffic lights and signs.

Preparing the Trinity-St. Paul's Building for the next 135 Years

David Craig

Lorna Niebergall

Jim Lewis

Our Trinity-St. Paul's building has been a place of worship and a vibrant community hub in downtown Toronto for 135 years. We are providing low-cost space for 60 faith, social service, and arts groups, together with their concerts, dance and music rehearsals, 12-step and meals programs and social justice activities.

At the same time, the long-term needs of our historic and aged building are far greater than the financial resources we have. Our church building needs a sustainable future. On November 10 at a congregational meeting you will hear about a proposal being developed to establish a not-for-profit corporation to handle and provide for the long term operation of our historically designated building.

This would involve re-structuring management of the building asset by having the Trustees approve the creation of a non-profit to be able to attract a wider range of government and philanthropic funds that support secular activities.

You will also hear a brief update on exploratory work underway on the feasibility of having attainable, secure, and environmentally sustainable rental housing built on the west half of Trinity-St. Paul's property. We are at the very early stages of this work and are excited by the potential for our building and property to serve the needs of our community in new and much needed ways.

In faith,

David Craig, Trustees Board Chair

Lorna Niebergall, Building Management Board Chair

Jim Lewis, Future Directions Committee Chair





life
and
work





MY EXPERIENCE AT THE 2024 GRASSY NARROWS RIVER RUN WITH THE IRSG

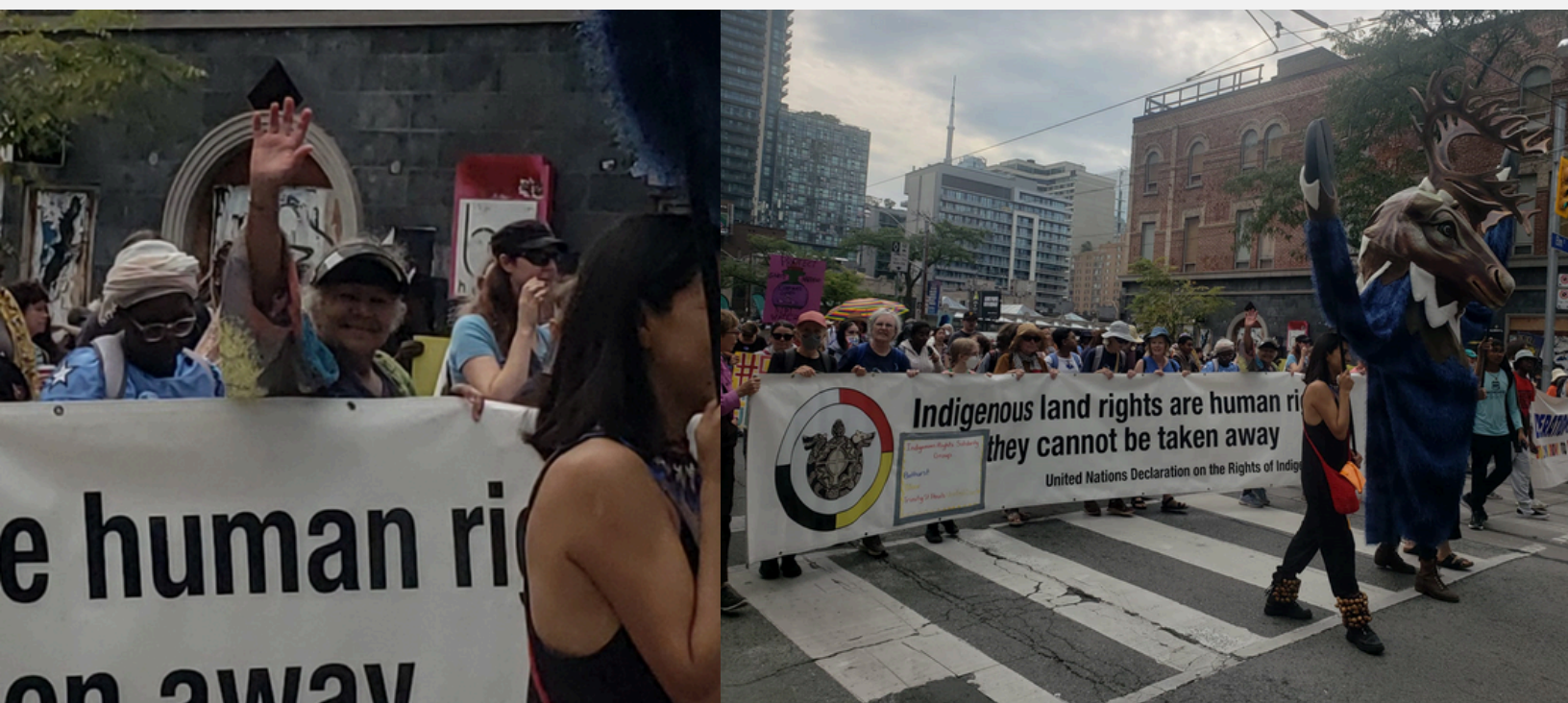
Maggie-Lis Jensen

On September 18th, 8,000 people gathered at Grange Park, marching from there to Queen's Park in solidarity with the Asubpeeschoseewagong (or Grassy Narrows) First Nation. The annual event, known as the "Grassy Narrows River Run", protests the Provincial and Federal government's lack of action related to the mercury poisoning of the Grassy Narrows community. The three demands are simple: the government needs to ensure that Grassy Narrows will be fairly compensated, have their protected land respected, and that they will be supported in restoring their community and way of life from the damage that mercury has done. Yet in the 70 or so years since Dryden Paper Mill dumped 10 tonnes of mercury in the English-Wabigoon river, the government has made continuous empty promises with little results.

I first learned about the River Run during a teach-in, and contacted an organiser through a friend. I did some outreach on my own until the organiser suggested I get in contact with the Indigenous Rights Solidarity Group (or IRSG) that TSP is a part of. I met with other members of churches across Ontario and our own IRSG in zoom meetings, planning on how to reach out to our community about the event. I do not think anyone could have predicted just how many people would want to get involved and show up!



When the day of the march arrived, I met up with members of the IRSG (which also contains members of the Bathurst and Bloor United Churches). We carried a large banner, which stated that: "Indigenous land rights are human rights, they cannot be taken away." A lot of photos were taken of our banner! During the march, I saw people from all walks of life – elders, students, friends and organisations from my university, educators, activists whose work I was familiar with — and even the cutest new baby. The march took about three hours, as we took breaks in walking for speeches, traditional dances, and Toronto traffic. There were volunteers handing out snacks, water, and masks, and others collecting donations for the cause. Due to Covid, I had not been to an in-person protest in a long time, and the River Run was a lovely way to integrate back into the physical experience of protesting and solidarity with community. The different ways people showed solidarity through chants, signs, and clothing showed me how kind, creative, and empathetic people can be. It is an incredibly important cause and an experience that will stay with me for a long time. I hope to see you there next year!



Carol Marples visits Trinity-St. Paul's, September 2024

Betsy Anderson



Many of us, lucky enough to travel to Iona, Scotland last year for a one-week retreat at the Iona Abbey with the Wild Goose Collective were thrilled to welcome one of their leadership team to our TSP community in early September.

Carol Marples has been creating art, designing worship spaces and facilitating and leading workshops for over 30 years, both in her home country of Scotland and beyond. She is the founder, artist, and creative liturgist for the Soul Marks Trust (Est. 2003).

We are grateful to Lois Kunkel who seized the opportunity last summer to invite Carol to stay and visit our space at Trinity-St. Paul's following her travel to Ontario this past August for a family wedding. We hosted Carol collectively enjoyed a week together, sharing the rich vibrancy of Toronto and giving her a taste of cottage life, including canoeing, sea-doing and paddle boarding for the first time.

In exchange she gifted us with a two-part workshop at TSP on Friday evening, September 6 and Saturday, September 7. We gathered in the sanctuary so that we could imagine new ways to use and interact with our space. Her Friday night presentation was an inspiring glimpse into the theology behind this work and wonderful stories and images of how this commitment unfolded in the context of her own modest congregation in the docklands of Edinburgh, St. James Episcopal Church, Leith.



I am sharing an excerpt from her presentation where she described an evolving sculptural liturgical piece in Lent last year:

Our Lenten theme was 'Healing and Well-being'

After a particularly windy day in February, I collected over 100 sticks from the ground, broken and blown down from the trees on a local walkway. On the first Sunday of Lent these, along with strips of cloth, were given to people as they came in. They were invited to put them under their seats for later.

I was leading the intercessory prayers and at that point in the service invited them to take the stick and cloth from under their seats and hold them in their hands. I introduced the idea of the cloth being seen as bandages, with the potential for binding wounds, for mending, for healing, for holding together. Then, I invited people in the silence that followed each of the stanzas of the prayer, to wrap the lengths of cloth around the stick - in a prayerful, symbolic act of healing, of mending, of holding together our broken and fragile humanity and world. As people came forward for communion, they were invited to place their prayer sticks on the communion table

At the end of the service I took the bound sticks away and started to bind them together with wire. I was planning to hang them from a regular small baton that we used to hang other things from, but at the end of that first service two of the young boys, who had gone outside to play in the garden after the service, suddenly dragged a huge branch inside – it was their own way of engaging with what we had been doing. It seemed right to use this as the base for all the other sticks to hang from.

The following week before the service, I hung the piece at the front of the church. One of the music group at the time, rehearsing, promptly burst into tears – 'it's so beautiful!', she said – I think it wasn't just the beauty of the work, that moved her but what they held. These broken sticks and simple rags held the weight of our prayers – the spiritual and the material explicitly coexisting through our shared prayerful making.

The positive response that first week led us to offer a basket of sticks and strips of cloth before the regular intercessory prayers each week during lent. Over a third if not half the congregation chose to continue to engage in this prayerful symbolic act. I continued to add these new prayer sticks to those already there, to the 'Prayers of the People.'

Saturday's workshop began with worship and a chance to reflect on some favourite spaces in our lives and what made them so. Then we moved individually to sit in different parts of the Sanctuary, the platform, the front, the back, the balcony and reflect on what we saw, felt, noticed in each of those spaces. When we regathered and shared our observations, we all had a wider sense of what this space means to us and how others might see it. After lunch we experimented with ways to add to the space to express our sense of coming back after some of us had been gone through the holiday months. Many of you saw the results on our Welcome Back Sunday, September 8.

The whole week and especially the workshop days with Carol were a wonderful reflection of the richness of our time on Iona and with the Iona Community. It was a real treasure to go deeper with some of what we had learned there in the context of our own worship space. As much as the amazing examples she shared from her worship life and space, I found inspiration in the theology that undergirds this engagement. In the words of Richard Rohr, which she quoted at the beginning of her Friday night talk:

Whenever the material and the spiritual coincide, there is the Christ. Jesus fully accepted that human-divine identity and walked it into history. Henceforth, the Christ "comes again" whenever we are able to see the spiritual and the material coexisting, in any moment, in any event, and in any person. All matter reveals Spirit, and Spirit needs matter to "show itself"! What I like to call the "Forever Coming of Christ" happens whenever and wherever we allow this to be utterly true for us. This is how God continually breaks into history. [3]

Adapted from Richard Rohr's Cosmic Christ





Owen Sound Choir Camp: July 15-19, 2024

Janet Mairs
Janet Haddock

How could we resist the chance for five days of singing, learning and friendship under warm summer skies when beckoned by beautiful Owen Sound and excellent choir leadership? So in mid-July we two TSP'ers arrived at St. Andrew's Presbyterian church, uncertain of our ability to meet musical expectations but quickly reassured by the openness and friendliness of all involved.

This was the second year of the Choir Camp, which had been dreamed up by Matthew Allard, the St. Andrews' organist and choir director, and Arlen Wiebe, an Owen Sound music teacher. Building on the success of the 2023 camp, Matthew and Arlen tweaked their design a little, recruited a fine team, and got ready to welcome a crowd of enthusiastic singers. The one hundred participants hailed mostly from various parts of southern Ontario, with one participant from Halifax, who teaches ESL through singing as director of the Halifax Newcomer Choir.

The hard work of the organizers was evident in every detail of the camp. Matthew and Arlen's organizational and community building skills kept us both disciplined and in good spirits the entire time. As he introduced each day Matthew would unbutton his long-sleeved shirt to reveal a crazy musical message on his t-shirt that started the day off with a laugh. (e.g. "Come for Jesus... stay for the organist!")

Two wonderful conductors, Elaine Choi and Mark Ramsay, led the entire group in a mass choir. Elaine is a dynamic, multi-award winning conductor, educator, adjudicator, chorister and collaborative pianist. She holds positions as Director of Music at Timothy Eaton Memorial church, artistic director of Pax Christi Chorale and founder and director of Babel. Mark Ramsay is Assistant Professor of Music Education and Coordinator of Choral Activities at Western University's Faculty of Music. He has served as artistic director of the Exultate Chamber Singers since 2018/19 and was adept at offering helpful techniques and fun asides. They made a super team!

For the mass choir Elaine and Mark had chosen an interesting variety of somewhat challenging music:

- Si Vox Est Canta (Damijan Mocnik)
- Dixit Dominus (Antonio Vivaldi, RV 595)
- Peace Flows Into Me (Paul Aitken)
- Dream a Little Dream of Me (arranged by Jay Althouse)
- Sing, My Child (Sarah Quartel, a young Canadian composer)

In addition to the mass choir, we each had an opportunity to be part of one of four smaller choirs. The options ranged from medieval/Renaissance, to a creative/collaborative ensemble, to a group that sang traditional songs learned by ear.

There was also a variety of workshops which we could choose to participate in. They included vocal techniques and ways to protect our voices, score reading for amateurs, learning the ukelele, and singing with body percussion. Individual vocal lessons could also be arranged (for an additional fee). There was a lot to learn and absorb in a short time!

Midweek, on Wednesday evening, tenor-soloist Matt Chittick and his musical guests put on an entertaining concert of both classical and musical theatre genres – a good opportunity to hear the “pros” practising what we were trying to learn.



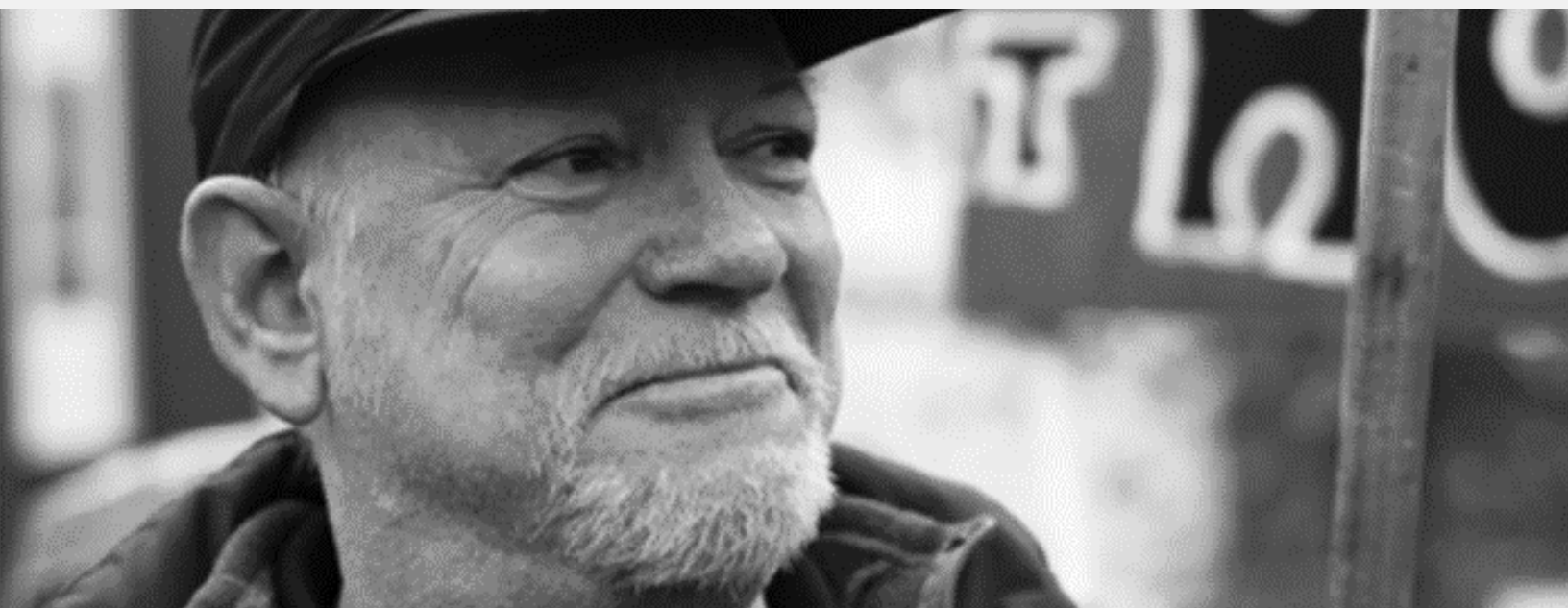
The week was topped off with our enthusiastically supported Friday evening concert that featured all of our Choir Camp singers and choirs. Apart from the camp sessions we were responsible for arranging our own accommodation and meals. Mornings gave us free time to explore Owen Sound's shores, parks, Victorian neighbourhoods and restaurants (or to just catch our breath!) before the rehearsals and workshops in the afternoon and evening.

Our closing concert was an opportunity to share what we had learned with an appreciative audience and with each other. It was rewarding to realize how much we had accomplished in only five days. Our farewells to the leaders and our fellow choristers were warm and appreciative, with many saying "see you next year".

To celebrate our grand finale, a lively group continued on to the patio of a local restaurant, where we found a performing duo who welcomed our enthusiastic singing along (and dancing) – a fitting final opportunity to sing our hearts out!

If you are interested in information about the 2025 Owen Sound Choir Camp, visit their website - <https://choircamp.wordpress.com/>.





REVOLUTIONARY TO THE END: JOHN ARTHUR BELL, 1955-2024

REPRINT: <https://www.socialist.ca/node/4856>

With heavy hearts we share the news that John Bell, a life-long revolutionary and tireless contributor to *Socialist Worker*, passed away on March 28th, weeks away from his 69th birthday. For decades, John's regular column "Left Jab" combined razor-sharp analysis with humour, providing ammunition – and sometimes comic relief – to activists taking on capitalism's many disasters.

John was born and raised in London, Ontario. As he wrote, "I was born into what was billed as a "middle class" family, in what is still considered a thoroughly "middle class" city, smack in the middle of the 1950s. My father was a high school teacher and my mother, a registered nurse, stayed at home to raise four annoying children... if ever there should have been a poster-child for capitalism triumphant it should have been me." Instead, his trajectory led him to an unwavering commitment to the politics of international socialism.

His love of reading and learning was nourished early on by an aunt who was a children's librarian. At university, he encountered the writings of Karl Marx, which he read with enthusiasm. As he quipped, "Marx led to Lenin. Yes, Marxism is a gateway philosophy."

It was there that he encountered the International Socialists, and the idea that the societies in what was then the Soviet Union, or China, were not socialist but "state-capitalist", and that workers in those societies were just as exploited and oppressed as those in the West.

The rebellion of shipyard workers in Poland in 1980-81 against the Stalinist regime was decisive in pushing John to become an organized socialist. As he said, "either you backed the workers or you backed the generals and their tanks trying to smash the strike. Shamefully, most of the left backed the tanks, characterizing rebellious Polish workers as agents of the CIA or the Vatican... History poses a test for ideas and for organization. The only socialist organization in Canada that passed the test of Solidarnosc was the International Socialists. I joined convinced that it was an organization that walked its talk."

Over the next decades, John devoted himself wholly to revolutionary politics. His interests and talents were wide-ranging, and sometimes mind-boggling. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of film and music, and was a passionate nature-lover and birder.

John was immensely talented, and could undoubtedly have opted for a comfortable life in academia. Instead, he was for many years a full-time revolutionary, living on the meagre earnings this entailed.

In 2018, after several years of a debilitating respiratory illness, he received a double-lung transplant. His new lungs were literally a new lease on life, and his comrades reaped the benefits of his prodigious output of writing, analysing everything from the rise of Trump and the far-right in the US, to disastrous Covid policies, to Doug Ford's privatization of Service Ontario and healthcare, the return of measles and what this says about capitalism's death-cult.

His very accessible and enjoyable writings on popular culture, racism in sports, history and much more, drew a loyal readership to Left Jab.

In 1999, John undertook to perform Howard Zinn's solo play Marx in Soho. His masterful performance led one audience member, well-known Indian communist Mythily Sivaraman, to say that at the end, when John walked offstage, she felt it was like finding the real Marx, losing him again and wanting him to come back! Such was John's ability to bring Marx's ideas to life

In November 2023, John had a fall and broke his hip, which led to his hospitalisation. Over the past years, John had warned of the deadly consequences of Covid policies which left immunocompromised people at risk in hospital settings. He contracted Covid in hospital, which led to a cascade of worsening health.

In the days before he died, despite his failing health, John devoted his remaining energy to writing an article on resistance to the brutal practices of Canadian mining corporations. As one of his comrades put it, he died with his boots on. Despite all of the health challenges he faced for so long, John was in active revolutionary duty throughout and right to the end.

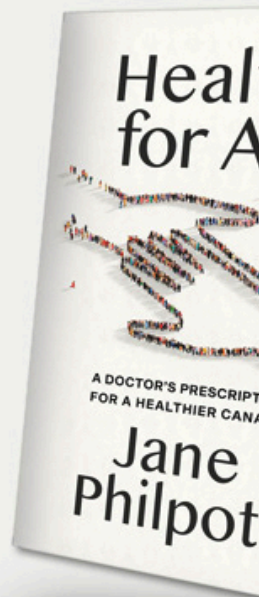
He will be missed more than words can say by his comrades, family and countless friends. But the struggle he enthusiastically supported against this death-dealing capitalist system will carry on, nourished by his legacy.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Pam Johnson and to John's family.

Rest in power, John Bell.



Health for All Jane Philpott



Review of Jane Philpott's (2024) Book "Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada"

Tom Clark

Former Federal Health Minister and now Dean of Medicine at Queens University, Jane Philpott is well qualified to give a prescription for Canada-wide Healthcare for All, published in her book of that name by Penguin Random House Canada early 2024.

Her book falls into four big sections sandwiched between a short introduction and an epilogue: Clinical; Spiritual; Social; Political. In these sections she uses human stories and her own experiences. The Clinical section makes her case for a health care home for everyone. The book veers a bit off topic since some sections are not powerfully related to this dream. Finally she returns to topic with a metaphor for Canada's healthcare as a romantic old cottage that needs a rebuild.

The Clinical section tells Philpott's dream: everyone should have a health care home just as every child has a school to belong to, a desk and teachers. Like me, she knows community health clinics – a team of doctors and nurses where you can call, be known, have the doctor you know; and, if necessary, another doctor will see you or a trainee doctor will help. Your doctor or the clinic can commission blood tests, bone scans and ultrasound and get back to you.

The status quo, the Canada Health Act, CHA, only finances a person's doctor or a person in a hospital emergency room. The various community health clinics in Ontario offer much more, but are piecemeal. In my community clinic, the wart on my foot was referred to a nurse for weekly treatment with my doctor checking in periodically and signing off. Obviously, this is cost effective. My doctor has my file, but others in the clinic can reply to a telephone concern and the clinic has arrangements for other clinics to step in for a place to go after hours. Philpott tells of other countries where such an arrangement is the norm – like the UK and Netherlands. And evidence there shows that overall costs come down. A doctor does not need to be a businessperson running a company practice, as many in Canada. Other actors can be part of an interdisciplinary team.

Philpott argues a place for primary care is fundamental to a person's healthcare as well as being key in a healthcare system. Philpott says the Ontario family health teams she was part of reduce the use of Canadian hospital emergency departments. Somehow, they have never become the norm in Ontario. But her vision is for Canada – despite federal provincial jurisdictions. Philpott's experience with the federal 2015 program to resettle Syrian refugees is that big national problems can be resolved with federal leadership, attracting cooperation from provinces and municipalities and the public when certain conditions are met. The federal fiscal transfer could be linked to an initiative like a pilot project in primary health care. But it must avoid becoming yet another lost eternal pilot project! A primary health care act could be modelled on the simplicity of the Canada Health Act.

Such primary health care depends on nurses and front-line doctors – the family doctors, pediatricians and emergency physicians. Family medicine is now attracting fewer and fewer graduates, family doctors are retiring and that workforce is ageing. Philpott found satisfaction as a family doctor. It was the people – the patients and the community health clinic workplace with its volunteers and trainees. Negatives today are that family medicine seems less glamorous than a specialty; the scope is so broad; the pay gap; non-stop responsibility. The response must change medical education to team-based primary care enlivened by real case studies. At Queens, Philpott has a satellite campus dedicated to training those who opt to be family doctors from the outset. The program has placements in medical clinics with transition to residency. Family doctor work conditions need change because holidays and working part time are difficult. Team-based primary care with support frees doctors to be doctors and to take holidays. Philpott is implementing this with model primary care units for geographical areas in Southeastern Ontario – where all residents have a home for their health care. Patients are attached to the whole team but have their doctor or nurse practitioner. Doctors are paid a salary or by shift.

The Spiritual section says the World Health Organization notion of wellness goes beyond medical cures to spiritual or mental wellness. Philpott is the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, who believes that any spiritual resource can give resilience and hope, a component of wellness. Hope is part of the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum, FNMWC, that she offers as a tool for mental wellness. Finding meaning can be important for mental health in exceptional situations. Belonging is essential - confidence that you are part of a family or community, knowing who you are and confident to be who you are. It is a key in the FNMWC. Lack of wellness is lack of belonging and loneliness. "Belonging" adds up to a secure personal cultural identity and assurance of being accepted in your authentic identity. Lack of belonging and loneliness has serious effects on health. Primary care centres can be a venue for coming together for health care advice or teaching and so assist with belonging. Seniors can be brought together for socializing, physical activity and healthy nutrition. Having a sense of purpose is what gets you out of bed in the morning. Purpose means feeling one is not in the world by mistake. One has daily decisions to make about that.

The Social section of the book points out health care goes beyond medicine. Health is affected by such factors as income, employment and work conditions, education and literacy, physical environments, childhood experiences, social supports and coping skills, healthy behaviours, access to health services, gender, culture, genetic endowment, race/racism. Hence the WHO report in 2005: Improve living conditions; tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources.

From her experience as a volunteer in a retirement home during the early days of Covid 19 – among shortages of staff, oxygen, protective clothing and very sick residents, Philpott raises quandaries about who speaks for health needs. Her underlying concern is being a voice of the voiceless – although drawing attention to important needs in a crisis seems to me an obligation for a person who has the power to attract that attention.

In her Social section Philpott talks about land, language, lineage and loved ones, categories that she discerned while working as a minister responsible for federal indigenous services. She shows how a federal politicians can improve the well-being of whole communities of citizens – in this case Indigenous people. She writes about problems in the child welfare system for indigenous children in Manitoba where a First Nation child per day is taken from its mother and family for a variety of reasons by automatic triggers – such as the mother is a minor, it happened with the last child etc. The impact of separation on children and their families is serious. In this case, there was a Call to Action in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that could be implemented.

Political is the final section. Philpott begins this section telling how she ended up as a Liberal Minister of Health. She knew Canada could not “arrest our way” out of a drug problem. There were no accurate figures, but growing numbers of opioid deaths. She oversaw legislation that enabled regulated safe injection sites across the country. She also looked at models in other countries responding to drug use. Philpott wanted a major move on the opioid file on account of the many overdose deaths, but was told public opinion would not support that. However, she managed to enable physician assisted heroin. Moving out of government meant an end to her initiatives.

Philpott left politics in a special way. She felt obliged to resign from cabinet because she felt that staying would be interpreted as support for the government’s action concerning then Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould. She had hoped to carry on as a Liberal, but after her resignation from cabinet she was removed from the Liberal caucus and became an independent MP.

The section ends the book with a parable about a crumbling cottage – an actual cottage on Philpott’s husband’s side. Built by his grandfather, it fell into a state of disrepair so that it was not a pleasure to use as it once had been. It needed a champion to rebuild it so it could be enjoyed by present and future family. Philpott uses this as a metaphor for Canada’s health care. Canada’s healthcare needs decisive action and not more hand wringing. Canada can only become a healthy country if it has good governance. Those with the biggest responsibility are those in authority in the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

Leaders tackling healthcare need to be driven by equity, fairness and justice so that healthcare can be for the common good and for every person. Our leaders have much power and we who elect them need to be sure we elect people with the right motivation.

The short epilogue repeats the story and times of Monique Bégin and The Canada Health Act. The provinces had a mixed variety of charges and fees and were not solidly behind it; the medical community was critical, and yet when it somehow came to a vote it was unanimously adopted and has lasted several decades. Philpott imagines a similar story about our current time with terrible pandemic, divisions and odds. It doesn’t have to end in disaster. We can create Medicare 2.0.

