

CHURCH CHAT

ALPHA
EXPLORE **BIG** LIFE QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS:

- Is there more to **life** than this?
- Who is **Jesus**?
 - + understanding the evidence
- Why did **Jesus** die?
 - + how does that relate to our lives and our mistakes?
- How can we have **faith**?
 - + the evidence in believing in Christianity
- Why and how do I **pray**?
 - + Prayer is at the heart of Christianity
- Why and how do I read the **Bible**?
 - + the Bible is one way God speaks to us
- How does God **lead** today?
 - + God is still healing today
- Why and how should I tell **others**?
 - + Telling others about our faith is a natural part of our relationship with God
- What about the **church**?
 - + The value of Christian fellowship
- How does God **guide** us?
 - + God has a plan for our lives
 - + He has creative ways to reveal
- What does the **Holy Spirit** do?
 - + Gives new life
 - + Transforms us
 - + Blesses us
- How can I be **filled** with the Holy Spirit?
- How can I make the most of the rest of my **life**?

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH
All are Saints
All are welcome
All are loved
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Alpha at All Saints'

This past fall saw over 45 participants come together each Tuesday from September 19 to November 21 to ask life's big questions, explore their faith and learn from each other. The group was made up predominantly of All Saints congregants, yet there were a few who accepted the invitation to explore what a relationship with God would look like.

Each Tuesday the group would gather for coffee and deserts lovingly prepared by Connie Green and her team in the Narthex decorated by Brenda Banham at 7:00 pm. After some time

getting to know each other, the group would move into the sanctuary for one of the new videos from Alpha. Each video is about 30 minutes in length. After this time, we split into 4 different small groups to discuss the video's message and theme for the night.

Thanks to Larry Kieswetter and his team for setting up for us each week. And thanks to Shadde DeHaan, Stephen Swatridge, Jane Bender and Barry Ferguson our small group leaders. And thanks to Angela Googh, Scott Davis, Jim Sulston and Diane DeHaan our small group helpers. Thanks to Pat Murphy for arranging the greeters. Thanks to Mary Hunt for operating the screen each week. Thanks to Val Haiser and her team for preparing our lunch on the Alpha weekend. And a special thank you to Jane Bender and Larry and Joan Kieswetter for all their work in helping to coordinate Alpha.

Throughout the course of the program I was deeply moved by the depth of questions and engagement with the material. I was also moved by the community coming together to nourish one another and live the Great Commission. It was truly a profound moment of the church being the body of Christ.

Submitted by Rev Pastor Marty Levesque
Info Graphic: Janet Holmes

Book Club Notes

Book Club is back to business. We met in September at the home of Kay Cairns for our discussion on "Still Alice" by Lisa Genova. We had an insightful discussion led by Val Haiser on the early onset of Alzheimer's disease which is the theme of the book. I think we all came away with a more enlightened view of this condition.

We met in October to discuss Kate Morton's "The Forgotten Garden" a tale of undiscovered secrets within one Family from three points of view of the main characters. The novel is driven by the mystery of why a four year old child is found abandoned on an Australian wharf in 1913.

November's title is called "Emancipation Day" a profound and compelling book examining the complexities of love, race and loyalties of choice. We will be meeting at the church on November 27 for discussion, feel free to come and join our discussion.

"Your story will never end, as long as your chapters are shared"

"Viola Shipman"

Submitted by Joyce Harry



Rector's Christmas Message

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

Approximately 700 years before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah made the bold prediction that a young woman, from the House of David, would conceive and deliver a child. That child was to be called Immanuel, which means 'God among us'.

Nearly 700 years later Mary found herself with child. And from that miraculous birth, God the Father sent his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into this world for the redemption of all people.

Christmas provides a unique opportunity each year for us all to re-focus. Not only are we reminded of the awe-inspiring, world-changing, life-altering gift that is Jesus; but we are also reminded of the need for this Jesus to heal the brokenness of the world. That is indeed why he came, to bring peace between God and humanity. This is why the angels declared triumphantly "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!*" (Luke 2:14).

As the parish looks to future with confidence I want to take a moment to thank you for your support of the parish over the years. Through careful stewardship, the parish will be in a good



position going into the future. And through your continued support, new and exciting possibilities for growth, outreach, programs, youth and children's ministries and evangelism are just beginning.

As a new year approaches, I want to challenge us, the church, to continue to impact this world for good. People are in great need. We need to be people of prayer,

faith, righteousness, and compassion. We need to love each other and love God above all else. We need to reach out with the love of God to those who desperately need to hear the saving message of Jesus Christ.

I am looking forward to seeing you on Christmas Eve at our 7:00 pm family service or our 10:00 pm traditional candle lit service and on Christmas day at 9:00 am

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child. God bless you now and forever.

Yours in Christ

Rev Pastor Marty
Levesque

Women's Retreat

The Women's' Retreat: the
Spiritual Power of
Community

On November 3rd and 4th I
attended the Women's'
Retreat for parishioners of
St. Columba and All
Saints'. Reverend Julia Gill

of St. Columba was the director. The theme of the retreat was discovering our spiritual gifts.

Friday night, after prayer and a brief introduction, Rev. Julia asked each of us to introduce ourselves to the other participants. We were then invited to take part in a craft exercise, which encouraged us to reflect on and start the process of discovering our spiritual gifts. The lively article by Twila Niemi, below, describes this Spiritual Exercise.

Saturday's process was a series of brief talks by Rev. Julia, which had several purposes: defining the general characteristics of a spiritual gift, reflecting on our own spiritual gifts, and the ways in which these gifts are used for the good of others. After each talk, we were given time to reflect, with Bible passages and focus questions. This spiritual Exercise helped us *name* our spiritual gifts and wake up to ways we can use them for the good of the community. After this quiet time, we came together in a circle and shared our reflections with the others.

This process was a spiritual gift in itself. The sharing of our reflections deepened as the retreat progressed and thus, we came to a better understanding of the spiritual gifts we possess, plus the ones God is calling us to develop, and the wisdom to realize that these gifts are meant to be

What Has God Given You?



given in service to others. We become more united to the divine presence that dwells in us as we dwell in the divine presence of the Christ, when we receive the Eucharist.

St. Ignatius Loyola, about 500 years ago, wrote the Spiritual Exercises. They direct us to use the active imagination to contemplate the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Within these Exercises are guidelines for recognizing the “movement of spirits” in those contemplating. He identified two foundational movements, i.e. consolation and desolation. These are special terms in the Exercises. Consolation is an experience of deeper love for God and unity with the divine: we are given strength, courage, inspiration, peace, trust, and an increase in faith, hope and charity. Consolation is deeper than joy and happiness. It is the awareness that, in God, “all is well”, even when life is difficult.

Desolation is the opposite. Here we suffer darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit and feel separated from God. Throughout Saturday there was a spiritual evolution of the group as a whole,

We were given the gift of communal consolation.

towards greater loving-kindness, non-judgement, trust and deeper sharing. We were able to listen, with the heart-mind, to the wisdom of others. We were given the gift of *communal consolation*.

I gained a greater appreciation of the spiritual diversity in the participants and its potential for a harmony and unity that is greater than the sum of us.

Rev. Julia's retreat facilitation and her skill as the *spiritual director of the group* was a wonderful gift!

In addition to all the above, we were served a great lunch by Pastor Marty and group of men in the parish, three of whom were married to retreat participants. It was a generous gesture!

Perhaps, in this season of Advent, we can reflect on our spiritual gifts and recognize that through their use, we also give birth to the spirit of the living Christ.

Submitted by: Lois Zachariah

WOMEN'S RETREAT, A SECOND REFLECTION

I was among the attendees of the Women's Retreat led by the Rev. Julia Gill as described in the preceding article by Lois Zachariah.

On the Friday evening, Julia organized a 'craft' for us. Now I wasn't the only one who groaned! Tables laden with colourful 5" x 8" paper gift bags, coloured gel pens and markers, glue and scissors;

stacks of magazines from which we were to cut out pictures and words to create our personalized gift bags.

This was, however, 'craft' with a difference! On the outside of the bag we were to write, paste or draw pictures that define who we are, e.g. colour of eyes, hair colour, relationships with others (mother, sister, aunt...), physical stature, etc.

On the inside of the bag we were to write descriptive words or glue or draw pictures that tell something about the kind of person we are; our likes, dislikes, beliefs, etc. At the end of the allotted time we would share what we had done with someone else, preferably someone we didn't know.

Describing myself was easy: Side one: blue eyed, grey haired, bilingual (English-Finnish), shrinking, hearing impaired. Side two: I'm a mother, grandmother, aunt, great aunt 2x great aunt, 3x great aunt (I keep telling the family that is 'grand' and 'great' as in fantastic!).

Leafing through the magazines thinking I was never going to find a picture appropriate to the outside, I spotted a picture of four young children of various hues – hooray, the perfect picture! Why?, you ask. Well, my family at large is multi-racial. In addition to the usual 'white' English/Scottish/Finnish/German/French we are Filipino, Jamaican, Ugandan, Chinese, Sioux, Cree, and Ojibway. A real melting pot.

But the 'inside' stuff! Oh, I struggled, shuffling through four magazines without anything catching my eye until a dish of LINGUINE POMODORO WITH TRICOLOR SALAD caught my eye. I'm not the world's greatest cook but I do make all my food from scratch, including soups, and even though I live alone, I do make proper meals every day.

Now what! A small picture of a cream-coloured ceramic jar of Dundee Orange Marmalade filled with **yellow pencils**. Well, I've always been a prolific letter-writer and write for Church Chat; so, I guess, that'll fit.

Next, a heading "FOUND TIME TO READ". That certainly fills the bill! I'm an avid, eclectic reader and have a revolving home library that always seems to hover around 700-800 volumes.

Still haven't found anything to fit with my beliefs and what exactly would fit? Voila! Another heading - **THE SECRET INGREDIENT**. Faith is my secret ingredient. It forms how I strive to live my life; it gives me strength in times of trouble and doubt; it is my comfort and my joy.

Another headline grabs my attention and I almost shout aloud with glee: "SOURCE GUIDE". The Bible is my 'source guide' and the next item I see is says exactly what I need to do with it - "CHECK IT OUT" and I do through daily readings.

I seem to be on a roll because along comes "**CLEAN SLATE**". I am so grateful that God's grace gives me a 'clean slate' when I confess how I've messed up. God's mercy is wonderful.

Just as we love to share meals with family and friends, Anglicans have always gotten together over food. We're also good about helping those who are without through our food cupboard and donations



to organizations such as the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. And who could forget hearing when some of our refugee families wanted to show their appreciation to the Refugee Committee Members by preparing a meal for them.

Along comes "**BUILDING A BETTER HOME**". That works - not just the home where I lay my head but taking care of this 'home planet' of ours and lastly "**MONEY MATTERS - BIG IMPACT ON A BUDGET**". I've

always lived on a budget yet still manage to tithe. When I decided to be really intentional in my giving I realized that the more I gave the more I received.

All of a sudden it's 'time's up'. I was blessed to be partnered with a wonderful lady from St. Columba with whom it was both a pleasure and a privilege to share our 'gift bag' reveals.

Submitted by: Twila Niemi

Development update



The development of property is moving ahead. On November 21st 2017, the Committee of Adjustment at the City of Waterloo officially granted the severance of the property and the parking variance. This means there are now two official lots, one for the church to be built upon and the other for the development of the townhouses.

The special parking variance means that instead of requiring 8 parking spaces per 100 square meters of building footprint, we will now only require 6.75 spaces per 100 square meters. This will give the church 74 parking spaces. This does not include the shared parking with the housing development.

It remains our hope that we can break ground in the spring/summer of 2018. This is, of course, conditional upon the zoning change being approved in earnest. The Development Committee will keep the congregation fully updated as we continue forward with a more precise timeline once the zoning changes have been finalized.

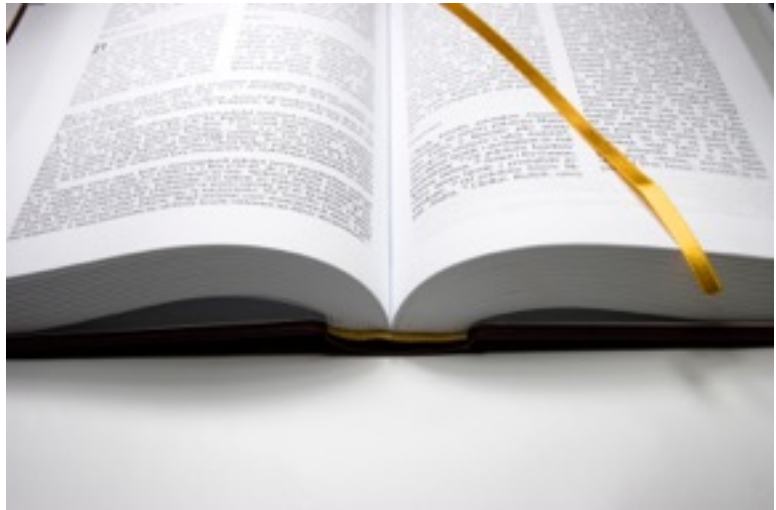
It is an exciting time at All Saints' as many years of work is coming to fruition. God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good!

Submitted by: Development Committee

Save Your Used Postage Stamps

First, a big 'Thank you' to those who have supported this project throughout this year. We are now sending them to the Canadian Bible Society, who pack them into 10lb bags which are sent to stamp collectors and vendors. Money received for each bag enables the Canadian Bible Society to distribute approximately 20 Bibles for their prison ministry. We invite you all to keep saving your used postage stamps over the Christmas Season, leaving a ¼ inch of envelope around each stamp. Then bring them to church in the New Year & leave them in the box marked 'Stamps' beside the Laurel Hall doors. Thank you.

By the way, we also collect pop can tabs which are sent to the Canadian Legion who collect them towards payment for wheel chairs for their Veterans. Please save all your tabs from pop & beer cans etc. over the Christmas Season, then leave them in the jar beside the stamp box.



Submitted by David Martin

Stewardship Moment

The more you give of yourself, the more you find yourself.

“A rich life,” writes philosopher and theologian Cornel West, “consists fundamentally of serving others, trying to leave the world a little better than you found it.” Every one of us can have a rich life if we choose.

If you are wealthy but unable to share your wealth or give of your possessions and knowledge, you are not really rich. Conversely, if you are not wealthy but give of your self, your time, and your knowledge, you are indeed quite rich - and you will receive far more than you can (ask or) ever imagine.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “There is always enough for the needy but never enough for the greedy.” Have you ever noticed how the needy frequently find a way to be grateful for the little they have, whereas the greedy never seem to have enough?

If you are worth billions of dollars and no people or causes to give your money to, what do you do with your money? How many houses can you live in? How many cars can you drive? How many meals can you eat? And even if you indulge in all of these things to excess, what do you do with the rest of your money?

There is a story of a wealthy businessman who never gave anything to anyone. A tenacious fund-raiser approached the man to ask for a gift to a charitable cause, but the man refused to contribute. After much persuasion, the fund-raiser eventually asked the wealthy man to pick up some good dirt from his garden and hand it to him as a gift. Wanting to get rid of the fund-raiser and knowing the dirt was free, the man picked it up and gave it to the fund-raiser, who then left. A few days later, the wealthy man, who was curious, asked the fund-raiser why he had asked for the dirt. The fund-raiser explained, “I wanted you to taste the beauty of giving something small, you will eventually give something big.”

Of course it would have helped if the miserly man from our story had understood that the more you give, the more you receive. This may sound like a paradox - but it's true. The more you give of yourself, the more you find yourself. When you make a positive difference in the lives of others, you make a positive difference in your own life. Giving is a “win-win” proposition.

Author Earl Nightingale tells a story of a man who went to his empty fireplace and said, “Give me heat and I'll give you the wood.” But giving does not work that way. In fact, giving functions under the universal law of cause and effect. You need to work for the wood before you get the heat. In other words, our reward will always match and follow our service or, in the words of the Bible, “You will always reap what you sow.”

“When all is said and done,” says author Og Mandino, “success without happiness is the worst kind of failure.”

How can you find that happiness? It all comes back to giving. If you want to have happiness, you need to give happiness. If you want wealth, you need to give wealth. If you want love, you need to give love. For it is only in the giving that you receive. Giving enriches your life with meaning, fulfillment, and happiness. It allows you to unleash your potential and create breakthroughs. In fact, it is a privilege to give. So give of your time, your knowledge, your wisdom, your wealth, and your love - and experience the power and beauty of giving.

~The above excerpt is from “The power of Giving” by Azim Jamal & Harvey McKinnon

The Gift

Recently I was privileged to be part of a group of ladies from All Saints' and St. Columba churches who attended a Friday night and Saturday Women's Retreat led by The Rev'd Julia Gill. After opening the evening with prayer and an overview of the agenda Rev'd Julia started the session with an ice breaker. We were asked to introduce ourselves and then to share about a significant gift that we have received.

The gift that first came to mind was given many years ago. It was a gift from my Heavenly Father's heart to mine. It was a gift that He alone knew I needed and desired. Even though many years have passed since I received this treasured gift, I was unable to share it verbally, it's emotionally too overwhelming.

Since the retreat my special gift has often been in my thoughts. With Advent, Christmas and gift giving upon us my prayer is that we won't miss those special gifts/moments that come straight from His heart to ours.

Thank you Rev'd Julia and Rev. Pastor Marty for offering this time of retreat and spiritual refreshment. Your efforts on our behalf are truly appreciated. Below I share with you thoughts from my prayer journal many years ago as I processed my gift. I pray that in some way this sharing might draw you closer to our Father's ultimate gift in His giving of His Son.

Christmas is coming. I love nothing better than finding that perfect gift, especially for my children. I listen and watch thorough out the year hoping that they will drop a hint as to what they would like. I make a mental note of it, shop for it, tuck it away eagerly awaiting the next occasion when I can present the gift. Even better, I like to surprize them with something that they've never thought of. That perfect thing that they will treasure.

Our heavenly Father gave me such a gift many years ago.



It was 1996 and our oldest son was graduating from university. He decided not to attend the ceremony. When his father and I heard of his decision we promptly and firmly overruled it. Neither of us had attended university and we were not going to miss this milestone. When asked if additional tickets were required we replied that extended family would not attend so we just needed tickets for ourselves and our younger son.

Commencement Day came and we arrived at the university gym in good time to get seats that would allow us a view of the stage for picture taking. Since we were there extra early we all brought reading material. I was too anxious to settle into my book so I amused myself by watching people as they chose their seats. After observing the families coming in, the obvious struck me. Most people came in with some extended family. I thought that I was long past caring that we had no one to share special moments with. Apparently, I wasn't and tears began to roll down my cheeks. In silence I gave myself a pep talk and worked hard at gaining my composure. A short time later I decided to read the program. Imagine my surprise when I saw the name of a dear friend from my childhood. Apparently she was in the procession and would be on the platform for the ceremony. I was delighted. Someone who cared would be at my son's graduation. Reality set in quickly. The chances of her hearing and recognizing my son's name were slim to none. My excitement turned to sadness.

Soon the students began filing in, class after class taking their seats. The three of us were busy

scanning the crowd looking for that familiar face. We spotted him, our excitement rose. Did he see us? Should we wave or would that embarrass him? I was as fidgety as a two year old waiting for the ceremony to begin.

The noise of the crowd ended abruptly as the first notes rang out. The procession began. Eventually I spotted the face of my friend amongst the dignitaries of the university. Of course I gave the appropriate nudges to my family making sure that they saw her too. My husband looked at me with a puzzled expression. My face, so full of emotion caused him some concern. Soon the platform seats were filled and I was able to settle in to enjoy the moment. Through the opening remarks and speeches my gaze went from our son to my friend. We had a perfect view of the stage and I could see that she was really attentive to all that was being said. Could she keep that focus as name after name was called out? I'd soon find out because the process had begun. The name I was waiting to hear was close to the middle.

It seemed like everything was happening in slow motion but finally the moment came. I held my breath, there it was. His name spoken loud and clear. After a brief glimpse of him making his way to the platform my eyes went immediately to my friend just as her face broke into a huge smile.

What a moment, it was wonderful, she recognized the name and knew who it was. That smile could not be a coincidence, could it? Doubt immediately crept into my thoughts. I need to focus on my son. Now, he's at the platform, arm extended receiving his diploma. I proudly take it in. Suddenly I notice another arm extended. It's coming from a different direction. I can hardly grasp what has happened. My friend has left her seat and come to congratulate our son personally. How incredible, my heart is full of praise and thanksgiving to my heavenly Father. Now, though many years have passed, thoughts of that day still fill me with gratitude. When I think of our Father so wonderfully meeting that need hidden deep within my spirit I am overwhelmed by His goodness and love. It is truly a gift that I treasure.

Submitted by: Joan Kieswetter

My heart is full of
praise and
thanksgiving to
my heavenly
Father.

Advent reflections

“We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is

it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of Man is begotten in us.”

Ð Meister Eckhart, 1260-1328, German Dominican monk



If
you want
the Virgin will come walking down the road
pregnant with the holy,
and say,
“I need shelter for the night, please take me inside your heart,
my time is so close.”
Then, under the roof of your soul, you will witness the sublime
intimacy, the divine, the Christ
taking birth
forever
as she grasps your hand for help, for each of us
is the midwife of God, each of us.
Yet there, under the dome of your being does creation
come into existence eternally, through your womb, dear pilgrim—
the sacred womb in your soul,

as God grasps our arms for help; for each of us is
His beloved servant
never far.
If you want, the Virgin will come walking
down the street pregnant
with Light and sing ...

--St. John of the Cross, "If You Want" in Daniel Ladinsky *Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West* (New York: Penguin Group, 2002), 306-307.

Advent Calendar

He will come like last fall's leaf fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shrouds' folding.

He will come like the frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like a child.

Rowan Williams



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