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Jan
Feb
2020



Report From Your Board Chair

Since our September Congregational Meeting, when the Board was directed to examine all possible options regarding our property, building and financial options, there has been a lot happening. The Board continues to meet monthly to oversee the church and its programs. With some detailed analysis from Past Chair, Randy, we have considered what might happen if our revenues and expenses stay as they are now. Considering the realities of maintaining the building, we either need to find extra sources of funding to support us in the building or prepare to sell. An interesting opportunity is to look at developing the property with a partner and using the existing building, or a new build to develop a plan for continuing our programs and ministry at this site. The extreme option is to sell the building outright and relocate. We have approached the United Church leaders in the Shining Waters Region and TUUC (Toronto United Church Council) and have been given some guidance and updates on the necessary steps that must be completed before considering putting the building up for sale. The possibilities of developing the property were explored at a church-sponsored workshop at Fairlawn Avenue United Church, held on November 23. This session was attended by Randy Bowes, Frank Dixon and myself. We accumulated some useful information and developed some contacts there to help us pursue the development option. We now work toward having a clearer picture of the options before us along with the financial implications. Our next congregational meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 9th after Sunday Service.

The necessary work to prepare our budget for 2020 is in progress. Our members and supporters, including those who contribute through PAR, are asked to review their givings and consider how they might support West Hill in the coming year. A stewardship campaign might have to be considered.

This is a magical season during which we gather more frequently and enjoy the warmth and comfort we derive by getting together and experiencing the music and themes that we share at Christmas. We are fortunate to have Gretta as our inspiring and creative leader and Scott providing the music with a definite West Hill flavour. I know you appreciate the work that our staff, including Annie and Babette and Kathleen, put in to help us follow our values and be a presence in the community. There is some exciting work happening in building new community partnerships.

In conclusion, Louise and I wish you love, peace, hope and joy in this season and in the coming year.

Michael Lawrie, Board Chair



Precious Planet Recipe Corner

with Deb Ellis

Need a salad for your upcoming holiday feast? Try this delicious Kale Salad recipe! Filled with super-foods of kale, pecans, garlic, and cranberries, it's healthy and addictively delicious. (It has become a cornerstone of all of the Ellis family gatherings now - and my nieces and step-kids fight over who gets the last spoonful!) With its bright greens and reds, it will bring a festive, colourful bowl to add to your table.

The Best Shredded Kale Salad

Vegan, gluten-free, grain-free, soy-free

<https://ohsheglows.com/2013/11/25/the-best-shredded-kale-salad/>

Inspired by a kale salad my mom enjoyed at a restaurant called True Food Kitchen, I knew I had to make my own dairy-free version as soon as I was back in my kitchen. The key to this salad is finely chopping (or shredding) the kale. The lemon-garlic dressing will coat each and every tiny piece of kale, working its magical softening powers and infusing the shredded kale with so much flavour. I prefer to use Lacinato (or dinosaur) kale in this salad because it's much more delicate than traditional curly kale and it has a milder flavour. Instead of cheese, I topped the salad with a toasted pecan "Parmesan" topping and a handful of dried sweetened cranberries. The result is one of the best kale salads I've tried to date and you'll find yourself wanting to inhale the entire bowl. Two bunches of dinosaur kale might seem like a lot, but once it's shredded, it only makes about 8 cups and then it further reduces in volume by almost half as it marinates. If you are making this salad for more than 4 people, I suggest doubling it. ~ *Angela Liddon*



Yield: 4 small bowls
Prep time: 30 Minutes
Cook time: 10 Minutes

Ingredients:

For the salad and dressing:

- 2 medium bunches destemmed lacinato/dinosaur kale, finely chopped (8 to 9 cups/300 to 340 g chopped)
- 2 large garlic cloves
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) fresh lemon juice
- 3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 mL) extra-virgin olive oil, to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper (just eyeball it)
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup (35 to 70 g) dried sweetened cranberries, for garnish

For the pecan Parmesan:

- 1 cup (120 g) pecan halves, toasted
- 1 1/2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 pinches fine sea salt

Directions:

- ♥ Preheat the oven to 300°F. Spread the pecans onto a baking sheet and toast in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes until fragrant and lightly golden.
- ♥ Remove the stems from the kale and discard. (You can save them for smoothies if you are hardcore!) Finely chop the kale leaves (the smaller, the better).
- ♥ Wash the kale and spin dry. Place dried kale into a large bowl.
- ♥ For the dressing: In a mini food processor, process the garlic until minced. Now add the lemon, oil, salt, and pepper and process until combined. Adjust to taste, if desired. Pour the dressing onto the kale and mix it into the kale with your hands or toss with spoons. Keep mixing for about 1 minute to ensure everything is coated perfectly.
- ♥ For the Pecan Parmesan: Rinse out the mini processor and pat dry. Add the pecans into the processor and process until the pecans are the size of peas or a bit larger. Now add in the nutritional yeast, oil, and salt and process again until it has a coarse crumb texture. Be sure not to overprocess ... we still want a nice crunchy texture here, not powder.
- ♥ Sprinkle the Pecan Parmesan all over the salad. Toss on a handful or two of dried cranberries. Wrap and place in the fridge for 30 to 60 minutes to soften, or you can simply enjoy it right away. In the past, I've tried letting this salad sit overnight in the fridge and I greatly prefer the flavour of the salad served the day of, so I don't recommend making this salad the day before and letting it sit in the fridge overnight.

Tips:

Instead of a mini processor, you can chop/whisk the dressing and pecan "Parmesan" by hand.

For a nut-free version, try using breadcrumbs instead of pecans.

Deb's Tip:

I tend to put in about 1.5-2x the amount of the "Parmesan" it calls for in the recipe.

Nutritional yeast is a flaky, cheesy-tasting, inactive yeast, found in most grocery stores and health food stores.

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First Nations Study Group

Grassy Narrows:

the right to a healthy environment

This year, Amnesty International is highlighting a case right here in Canada of youth from Asubpeeschoseewagong (Grassy Narrows First Nation) who are fighting for justice in the face of 50 years of mercury poisoning in their community. Because of government inaction, generations of young Indigenous people have grown up with devastating health problems and the loss of their cultural traditions. It's time for the government to keep its promise to deal with the mercury crisis "once and for all" so that young people can grow up in a healthy and thriving community. (*You can help these people! Please see the Write a Letter - Change a Life Campaign at the bottom of this article*).

"Everything around us was disappearing... The clean water, our way of life, our traditions, even the wild rice picking and blueberry picking were all disappearing. It's all connected to the land." ~ Judy DaSilva, Grassy Narrows

"We have struggled for many years to save our way of life in the face of clear-cut logging, which has contaminated our waters and destroyed our lands. We cannot go back to the old way of business where decisions were imposed on our people and our land with devastating consequences for our health and culture." ~ Grassy Narrows trapper Joseph Fobister

The flooding of their lands ... The dumping of mercury into their waters ... The large scale logging of their traditional hunting and trapping territories. The people of Grassy Narrows – an Anishnaabe community in northwest Ontario – depend on the land as basis of their culture and as a continued vital source of foods and plant medicines, but this relationship has been repeatedly threatened and undermined as a result of government decisions made without their consent, or even adequate consultation.

One of the worst environmental disasters in Canadian history

Between 1962 and 1970, a mill in Dryden, Ontario dumped more than 9 metric tons of untreated inorganic mercury into the English and Wabigoon Rivers in Northwestern Ontario.

These waters had been a source of both food and jobs for the people of Grassy Narrows and neighbouring First Nations. Community members had worked as guides and as staff in the many commercial fishing lodges. When the mercury dumping was discovered, the commercial fishery was closed, cutting the people off from their most important source of income.

It was discovered that many of the residents had greatly elevated levels of mercury in their bodies and were exhibiting signs of the neurological degeneration associated with mercury poisoning. Compensation provided to the communities more than a decade later was based on the assumption that the effects of the mercury contamination would soon go away. That assumption has proven false.

Elevated levels of mercury continue to be found in the rivers and fish and community members, including youth, continue to suffer from disproportionate rates of serious health problems associated with mercury poisoning.

Scientists who have compared the lasting impact of the infamous mercury poisoning incident in Minamata, Japan with the situation at Grassy Narrows have coined the term "Canadian Minamata disease" to describe the health consequences of chronic exposure to mercury levels government officials still insist are safe.

To date, there has been no clean-up of the river system, no comprehensive assessment of the community's health needs, and no provision of specialized health care for the many who suffer from the devastating effects of mercury poisoning.

In February 2017, the long efforts of the people of Grassy Narrows finally led to a promise by the provincial Premier that the river would be cleaned up and that Grassy Narrows would lead the efforts. Given the long history of broken promises and stalled government action, Grassy Narrows and their supports remain vigilant about whether or not this promise will be fulfilled.

Logging and blockade

After the closure of the commercial fishery, the province began promoting expansion of large-scale industrial logging in the region. The people of Grassy Narrows consider clear-cut logging to be an unacceptable threat to their remaining ability to live off the land, and a key factor in the persistent contamination of their territory.

In 2002, community members at Grassy Narrows launched a blockade to stop clear-cut logging in their traditional territory. The blockade is one of the longest running Indigenous land protests in Canadian history.

In January 2007, the people of Grassy Narrows called for a moratorium on industrial logging and other resource development in their traditional territory. In the face of a successful community blockade of logging, the province has entered into talks about the long-term management of the forest. However, the province has never ruled out renewed logging, with or without the community's consent.

Fortunately, industry has been more responsive to the community's demands.

In 2008, the Boise paper company – a major client of AbitibiBowater's Fort Frances mill – announced that it would stop buying pulp from wood logged at Grassy Narrows until the community gave its consent.

Shortly afterward, AbitibiBowater announced that its Fort Frances mill would stop processing wood from Grassy Narrows. The company also said that it wanted to give up the provincial license under which it manages all logging in the Whiskey Jack Forest.





IN THE SPIRIT



Yoga Studio & Wine Lounge



REMINDER — YOGA CLASSES (SENIORS DISCOUNT). We still offer special seniors classes (yoga in chairs and for those with mobility issues) Mondays at 10:15-11:15 a.m. and Thursdays 9:00-10:00 a.m. (\$15/class includes tea/coffee & cookies). (Highland Creek Plaza, 376 Old Kingston Road)

We have many more options for all ages. Please check out our website for our class schedule, rates and more information (647-352-4879): www.inthespirtityoga.com, email letsconnect@inthespirtityoga.com

This brought clear-cut logging to halt at Grassy Narrows. In the decade that has followed, there has been no new large-scale clear-cutting. However, the provincial government continues to include clear-cutting at Grassy Narrows in its forest plans.

Good faith consultation, meaningful accomodation and free, prior and informed consent

The protecting of Indigenous rights in Canadian law requires a process of good faith consultation and meaningful accommodation of Indigenous concerns whenever government decisions might affect the rights of Indigenous peoples. In some instances, Canadian law, like international human rights standards, requires that no action be taken except with the consent of the affected peoples.

Given the harm that has already been done to the people of Grassy Narrows and the precarious situation in which they now live, Amnesty International has urged the provincial government to apply the highest standard of protection to their rights.

In a September 2007 briefing paper, Amnesty International urged the Province of Ontario to respect the moratorium called by the people of Grassy Narrows so that their rights would not be further eroded by continued large-scale resource extraction activities taking place against their wishes. We have campaigned for justice for the people of Grassy Narrows throughout this decade.



Write a letter – Change a Life

WRITE TO THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TODAY (no postage required)
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau - 80 Wellington Street Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

We are requesting that you restore what mercury has taken from the people of Grassy Narrows. The community and their future generations must be allowed to live in a thriving community and healthy environment.

submitted by Ruth Gill, First Nations Study Group

Inspired By Hollywood Series

See the movies beforehand and then attend Sunday Morning Services for Gretta's Perspectives.

The Farewell ~ January 5
(Best Actress nomination)

Parasite ~ January 12
(Best Picture nomination)

For Sama ~ January 26
(Best Documentary nomination)

Queen and Slim ~ February 2
(Most-Un-Nominated-for-an-Oscar-Movie)

Waves ~ February 9
(Best Supporting Actor nomination)

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Are We Progressive Christians?

One of the reasons we are considering this is because Richard Holloway commented that he didn't like our name. He didn't say exactly what he meant but I thought it presented an opportunity to think about how we identify ourselves and what merit, if any, our name has. Are we progressive Christians?

I am not going to define it. I am not going to answer the question either! The question before us is the launch pad for discussion about what matters to us and how we choose to identify ourselves, not about labels. I am sharing what matters to me and how I identify myself.

Owning a label such as "progressive Christian" is a big deal, at least for me. I do not want to be constrained by whatever ideas others have, accurate or otherwise, about what that means. I do not want to limit myself to a particular label. I expect to be labelled (by others) whether I like it or not and that's fine – I choose not to own one, at least not just now. I don't see them as useful as they tend to stick even when the owner's thinking has moved on. I don't want to define progressive or Christian because I'm not sure I like either of them! However, some comments are appropriate.

The word "**progressive**" might sound elitist to some people: is our understanding of Christianity better than, or superior to, the orthodox position? Or could it give the impression that we think we are more sophisticated or in some way better than ordinary Christians. I have no wish to give such an impression. If I say that I am progressive, what do I mean? It begs the questions, in what way or ways am I progressing and where am I going forward to?

The word **Christian** also presents problems. It can be understood in many different ways! It can be used to describe a bible-believing, born-again Christian; someone who attends church on a regular basis; someone who always has a good word to say about everybody; or a person known for helping others, being a good neighbour. That is a broad spectrum; does anyone need to choose a single position on that spectrum? It's possible to be comfortable on more than one position: no one spot precludes another.

Historically the Church has used its creeds as the basis for expressing what it means to be Christian. These are divisive as they **exclude** as well as **include** people; the proliferation of denominations is testament to that. Is it possible to find common ground with creeds as secondary? I think it is. Rather than trying to find a nondivisive creed, there are characteristics or qualities that encapsulate what I am thinking about now. I would like to mention **three** approaches or attributes that are more useful than creeds. These are applicable in every aspect of our lives and not just religion or faith:

Constructively critical in approach: prepared to challenge a "handed-down" view when it doesn't stack up with our experience of life or is not consistent with what we have learned through study. We can give ourselves permission to abandon these and explore alternatives. This can lead to the second:

Curiosity and openness to new ideas: after giving ourselves permission to let go of those "handed-down" ideas or teachings we no longer find useful or tenable, we can then explore new ones and the wider implications these may have: whether, for example, they have enough substance to sustain us when the old ones have served their purpose. And finally:

Accepting of and engaging with others without insisting on conformity to a given set of beliefs. As humans we are accustomed to gathering around shared beliefs. However, when we realise that these are divisive, we can choose a different approach: we can look for common ground, those things on which a diverse group can agree. It seems to me there is no reason why we cannot make that choice.

The ability to unite around common ground or shared values provides a glue to hold groups together. For example, acknowledging the importance of "love" as the guiding influence for our behaviour can unite a disparate group. This moves us beyond beliefs which cause division to shared values. It is the strength of the shared values that unites people and so plurality or diversity of beliefs or creeds needn't be a hindrance to common purpose for a community. I don't think it is an easy choice or path to take but one worth taking to see where it leads us.

I have suggested some approaches or attributes that might help us think about how we identify ourselves instead of another label. In the absence of that alternative label I have a summary message that explains my position, at least for just now. It is as follows:

Grounded, Guided, Growing:

Grounded in the interconnectedness of life: through the whole spectrum from fellow humans to the natural world, even the glaciers.

Guided by love: seeking to live a life where all our actions are guided by love.

Growing in wisdom together: giving and receiving the help and support of community to live to the best of our humanity.

None of these conflicts with any beliefs or creed and is, I think, a succinct expression of what can and does hold a community together.

submitted by John McKechnie

Upcoming Special Services & Events

Sundays, January 5, 12, 26 and February 2 & 9	Inspired By Hollywood Series (see Gretta's choices on p. 6)
Friday, January 10	Launch of Book Study (see Ongoing Events, below)
Tuesday, January 14	Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 15	Community Partnership Meeting ~ Arts In The Borough Conversation (7-9 PM)
Sunday, January 19	Guest Speaker (Scott Kearns)
Sunday, February 2	Board Meeting (following Sunday Service)
Sunday, February 9	Congregational Meeting (following Sunday Service)
Tuesday, February 25	Pancake Supper

Regular Services, Meetings and Ongoing Events

SUNDAYS

Every Sunday.....	Sunday Service	10:30 AM
First Sunday of every month.....	Visitors' and Travellers' Lunch	12:00 PM

MONDAYS

Every other Monday (Jan 13 & 27; Feb 10 & 24)	Men's Spirituality Group	7:00 PM
Last Monday of every month.....	First Nations Study Group Meeting	1:00 PM

TUESDAYS

Every Tuesday (resuming January 14)	Labyrinth Walk	10:30 AM
.....	Holiday Crafting	1:00 PM

THURSDAYS

Third Thursday of every month	Women, Let's Dine	5:30 PM
Every Thursday until June	Choir Practice	7:30 PM

FRIDAYS

Every other Friday (Jan 10 & 24; Feb 7 & 21)	Book Study ~ Me, Myself, They; Life Beyond the Binary by Joshua Ferguson	7:30 PM
Last Friday of every month	Dinner with Friends	6:00 PM

West Hill United Board of Directors for 2019

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 If you are interested in joining the WHU Board, please call the office.

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