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# ST. ANDREW'S IN ACTION

Fall Edition, 2020



This quarterly newsletter is published the first Sunday in March, June, October and December. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is November 15. Please respect the deadlines for submissions. Please email your articles and high-resolution photos at any time to [StAndrewsInAction@gmail.com](mailto:StAndrewsInAction@gmail.com).

## A Letter from Karen

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

<sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*Phillipians 4:4–7 (NIV)*

Can we talk about thanksgiving? And Gratitude?

This was the question that came up at one of our committee meetings this summer. We were talking about the programming for this fall and the reality that we are still in the midst of the pandemic. The implications of that for much of our congregational life and personal lives were sinking in. All the changes... It has been different for each of us but all of us I believe have experienced and can name some deep loss since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. Family members, jobs, daily patterns of living—there is little that is not affected and even the ways we would normally grieve have had to shift as we cannot gather.

And so I appreciated the depth from which this question was asked? The great need it addressed: Can we talk about thanksgiving? How important it is to not lose sight of gratitude. I have spoken in the past of my own experience, life changing, though I didn't realize it at the time, of praying with someone who was very ill, perhaps close to death, far from home and missing loved ones. We had talked about all this but when we began to pray this person's words turned to thanksgiving. Thank you God they said, and they named before God all the people and places they were missing and thanked God for them in their lives. And they thanked God as well for the people caring for them there, doctors and nurses and then they thanked God for me. It was like a ray of sunshine across my soul, revealing the presence of God and affirming the goodness of life, the gift of it all. I found something of my own calling in that experience. So yes, let's talk about thanksgiving and as we do let me start with Kid's Church and Table Grace. Kid's church started up again this past month. Like much of what we do at St. Andrew's, this monthly time for young families to gather to worship is doing new some new things this year and doing some things differently and I give thanks for this—their commitment to continuing.

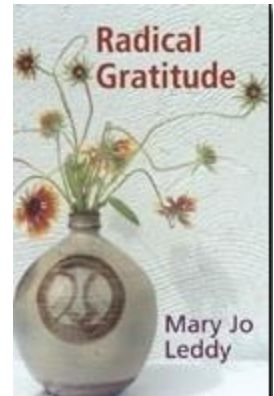


Kid's church is a monthly gathering for younger families at St. Andrew's. Held on a Saturday afternoon there is a Bible Story related activity, some Kid-friendly worship in the sanctuary that involves singing and story telling and sometimes leaving behind a gift or message for the congregation to find on Sunday. One February for example they tucked God loves you Valentines into the hymn books!

One of my favourite moments when I am able to be with them is when the activities are done and the Kid's Church families gather for dinner. For many years Barbara Sawh would provide a main course and the families brought salads, desserts and other contributions. Then just before we ate one of the families would lead with a grace. I loved the gift of that moment. There was a pause in the chatter and activity and parents and children together shared with each other the songs or words they used to thank God for their meal in their own homes. It drew me back in some ways to many meals shared with family and friends down through the years, but it also brought me into that moment and meal in a new way. As we said grace together we became family to each other. It was not unlike the feeling I sometimes have at communion. Such is the power of gratitude and the Spirit at work.

There is something very simple and profound, ordinary and important about the act of saying Grace, thank you, before eating a meal. Sometimes it is almost lost in the routine of it but in the pause, the stopping to say thank you before we satisfy our own hunger, we are doing something profoundly spiritual and life shaping. And when we begin to extend the practice of saying thank you into the rest of our lives as well, thank you to God, thank you to each other, it opens us up to new ways of seeing the world and understanding our place in it.

Now I could go on and on writing about gratitude (and I certainly have things I can say), but I am also and ever mindful that Mary Jo Leddy in her book *Radical Gratitude*<sup>1</sup> suggests that the best way to learn gratitude is to begin to act gratefully. There is a power in this that she writes about. It releases us from patterns of dissatisfaction and the sometimes overwhelming feeling that we don't have enough, that we are not enough. I believe her.



Just like saying grace at a meal, when I take the time to sit down and write thank you notes or emails, or pick up the phone to thank someone, it creates a pause in my life that can shape my whole day. As I search for the words to write I remember the person I am writing to. The time I take is very often very little compared to the time they gave, I realize. And as I write or speak I am reminded of who they are, the passions of their life and an awareness that they have in their love and service offered something to me or the congregation. Writing a note like this is simple in many ways but it has the power to lift me beyond any sense that everything is centred on me. I have received so much and am not alone. And as I am consciously awakened to the generosity of others, I find I am inspired to generosity in my turn.

Practicing gratitude comes with practice. You don't have to feel it to start. Start before you are ready and you will see. Here's an idea: At Kid's Church two years ago, Sydney brought us a whole pile of pumpkins a couple weeks before Thanksgiving (Thank you Sydney!). And on them we were invited to write a whole number of things we were thankful for. After that we were invited to take them home and place them on our thanksgiving table so that when it came time to offer grace we had it all ready and waiting for us.

<sup>1</sup> Leddy, Mary Jo, 2002. *Radical Gratitude* (Orbis Books Publishing, Marknoll, New York). page 161

I wonder if you might do something like that this year. Make a list of the things you are grateful for this thanksgiving. The generosity of others. The gifts of God in your life. Things simple and important—laughter, a phone call from a friend, good news from afar, memories you cherish—take a day and write down everything that comes your way for which you are thankful. You can do this on a pumpkin or a piece of paper or anything else you might creatively come up with. Then find a way to share your gratitude. Write a letter and tell someone if they are the one you are thankful for. Send a photograph or find another way to share what gives you joy with someone else. I know that many of our tables will be smaller this year as we work hard to reduce the spread of Coronavirus in our community but we can still share our thanksgiving.

For Mary Jo Leddy, gratitude has the power to shape our attitude towards life and the world. It is, she reminds me, all encompassing and liberating. She invites us to think about people we know in our own lives who live out of gratitude and adapt them as our teachers and models. Those we would imitate. And as she writes this she points to the life of Jesus. Jesus, she reminds us, lived simply, continually blessing God. The power he had, she writes “was the power to create a new beginning, a new way of living and imagining, that was according to the great economy of grace. He taught us that what we give away, including the gift of ourselves, multiplies and grows in the giving. He invited us to believe in a world transformed by the power of giving. Love one another...”

Such is the way of gratitude.

A Blessed Happy Thanksgiving to all of you! And thank you for being you, for being part of our community, for the prayers and support you offer each other, for the simple notes sent in the mail, the phone calls you make, for all that you give, you make a difference and we wouldn't be who we are at St. Andrew's without you.

God bless you and keep you,  
Karen

## Greetings from the Kirk Session

*Heather P., Administrative Clerk*

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8*

I am always grateful for the opportunity to write something for St. Andrew's in Action. It provides me with an opportunity to reflect on the events of the previous months and look forward with anticipation for what is to come.

This is what I started out doing, but as the week progressed and the deadline for submissions grew nearer and nearer, what I ended up writing about changed quite significantly. Originally, I wrote about the resumption of services in the sanctuary and what a blessing this has been. While it has indeed been a blessing, due to the rising rate of COVID-19 cases in Ottawa, we took the decision to close the sanctuary to congregational worship on October 4 and we all worshiped from home. As we had only just been able to return to the sanctuary, this was hard news to deliver. A lot of difficult decisions have had to be made in the past seven months, but each one has been made with the well-being of the congregation as our first priority.

What remains consistent between my first article and this one is the idea of transition and the faith required to meet the challenges it brings. We have adjusted and re-adjusted many times over the past

seven months, and most of us had just gotten used to either returning to worship at church or once again seeing the sanctuary on YouTube. Through it all, what has been uplifting to see is the steadfastness of our faith: in Jesus Christ, in our church and in each other.

At present we are not able to express our faith through participation in the worship service, volunteering at the rummage sale or attending lunch and learns (to name just a scant few), but we are able to express our faith through Zoom prayer meetings, planning and participating in meaningful online programming and checking up on fellow St. Andreans through calls and emails (again to name just a few). No matter what you are doing and how you are expressing your faith, your participation matters and is valued. As we move further into autumn and the days get shorter and cooler, these types of gatherings will become more and more important.

## Fall Letter from Sydney

*Sydney McIntosh, Christian Education Coordinator*

### Rooting yourself in Jesus

Hello Families of St. Andrew's!

How was your summer? Did you find any new local spots that became a favourite?

Tim, our dog Callie and I found that we loved exploring local hiking trails around the city. We also went camping in Sandbanks Provincial Park and it was lovely, totally recommend if you're looking for some fall camping spots.

Happy start to Fall! Yay for all things pumpkin spice, apple picking, cozy socks and the Thanksgiving food coma.

As we begin September and your children are starting to returning to school (online or in person) we too are returning to fall church activities. Lots to look forward to.

Enough about my excitement over Fall, what's new with your families?!

- What have been some of your family's highs and lows this summer?
- What have you been finding life-giving for your families—things that have been encouraging your walk with Jesus?
- What have you been praying for?

I have been finding comfort in praying for God to direct me to not focus on the unknown—things I can't control—but rather all that is known. God is our constant, ever present and never-changing Saviour. We have this assurance through the storm called COVID-19 that the Lord is a calm, unshakable presence in our lives.

I want to encourage your families during this time with a verse I have been focusing on:

Jeremiah 17:7–8 (NIV) says:

*<sup>7</sup> "But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.  
<sup>8</sup> They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream.  
 It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.  
 It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."*

I love this verse and reminder that those who trust in the Lord will be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots. It does not fear the drought, it bears fruit.

Trees are amazing when you think about them, they last for generations. Tree's roots go down deep and spread out great distances.

In order to grow they do the hard work of digging their roots deep to find the nutrients they will need to sustain themselves. They find what they need to grow.

It is easy to be tempted during this time to be led away from digging into scripture, investing in time with Jesus, and be tempted to spend our free time being distracted in whatever way the devil wants to tempt us. The devil wants us to be distracted, so we ignore Jesus and the peace that only Christ can give us.

I have been so tempted in this season to be in my PJ's on the couch watching Netflix all day ever day when I have free time. I was prompted recently by a book I was reading by Jennie Allen's *Get Out of Your Head* to think how am I fighting my sin? How am I disciplining myself? Am I allowing this season to pass by?

I want to be that tree by the water, going deep, using this season as a time for spiritual growth, spending time with God, using discipline to invest in my relationship with God.

When we are like that tree planted by the water we realize that God gives us everything we need by the water. We aren't afraid, we don't freak out when the storm hits because we have a peace that does not come from circumstance but by the Holy Spirit. Our roots will be deep and we will be unshakeable with Christ beside us.

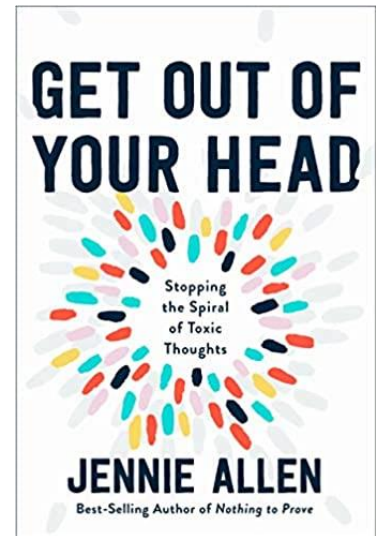
There are a lot of unknowns as we enter into this fall but we know that we can trust God and that He will give us all we need.

Now is the time to dig our roots down deep and root ourselves in Jesus.

I would encourage you and challenge you to spend time in the word of Christ everyday as a family. Opening his Word and spending time thinking about what God is telling you in those moments. Praying that He would give you peace and the courage to trust Him, believing that He's got you.

You are loved.

Peace, Sydney



## Vancouver School of Theology Course

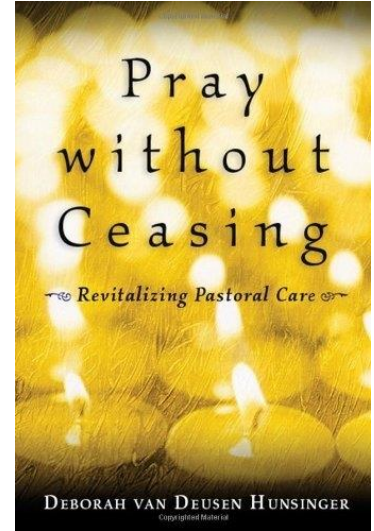
*Sydney McIntosh, Christian Education Coordinator*

This Fall I am blessed to be taking an interesting course on spiritual and pastoral theological foundations at the Vancouver School of Theology. The course is looking at different ways in which we can involve spiritual practices in our lives, and so far we have looked at hospitality and discernment.

Each week we meet on Zoom to join together to meet and discuss the readings, one of the books being *Pray without Ceasing* by Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, and it is super good! I am really enjoying it and would recommend it to anyone! It helps you think about how important our prayer life is and how vital it is to pray for each other.

A highlight of the course would be that people from all over the world are taking it. We have students from Jakarta, Brazil, the U.S., New Zealand, countries in Africa and Asia and everyone brings such interesting perspectives and come from all faith backgrounds. Some are considering ordination, some are Muslim and Buddhists, others are exploring faith for the first time and the conversations we have are so deep and meaningful.

I think it so important to never stop learning and talking to people who hold opinions different from our own. Taking an online course during this pandemic has been so life-giving to me as I have something to look forward to every week and feel connected across the globe with people living lives so different from my own. I hope you will consider and be encouraged to try something new this fall and explore what new things you can be learning during this time. We want to make good use of this time and continue to share and talk about Jesus with those around us. Things you could consider participating in this fall at the church include joining the book club or movie night, as well as the Wednesday evening study. Another great option to consider is the library which offers free workshops as well as there are tons of free courses online to explore. I pray that in this different and strange fall that God would breathe into that space and give you the courage and peace to explore something new.



## Words to Remember for October

*“He is the living God, enduring forever.  
His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion has no end.  
He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonder in heaven and on earth;  
for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”*

Daniel 6:26–27 (NRSVA)

I hope this verse will remind you of the courage God gave Daniel as he waited in the lion’s den to be saved by God. That God will give you courage to face the lions in your life and that you would look to Him for assurance that He knows, loves and cares for you. He is with you and holds you in His hand. Take heart for our God is a good good Father. Amen.

P.S. Check out Chris Tomlin’s song “Good Good Father” if you haven’t heard it before—a real jam.

In Christ’s love,

Sydney

## Upcoming Dates for Church School and Youth Group

### Kid’s Church

- **Saturday, Oct. 24**—Halloween + No need to fear, God is with us always
- **Saturday, Nov. 28**—Love God + Loving your Neighbour: Helping others in our community

**Sunday school**—each Sunday @ 11:15 a.m. online Zoom

**Youth Group**—Working through the book of Ephesians Fall 2020

- **Friday, Oct. 9, 7 p.m.**—Smores and Bonfire at Syd and Tim's (Ephesians 3–4)
- **Friday, Nov. 6, 6 p.m.**—Hot coco and cookie making (virtual if need be) (Ephesians 5–6)
- **Friday, Dec. 4, 6 p.m.**—Make your own Nativity scene, virtual or in person (recap of Ephesians, story of the birth of Jesus)

To join the mailing list of to get Zoom invites to these events contact Sydney McIntosh: [sj@standrewsottawa.ca](mailto:sj@standrewsottawa.ca) or **613-406-6066**.

## The Meaning of Reconciliation between Canada and the Indigenous Peoples

*Dr. Laurentine M.*

Beyond racism and mostly anti-black racism; beyond a system of oppression by a minority which would like to impose division, hatred, denial, contempt; beyond the unprecedented health situation that the whole world is currently experiencing as a result of the new coronavirus; we are all forced to admit that we have a common identity: the Human Identity. In the name of this common humanity, we must all militate for peace, for the acceptance of others (who are different from us), for reconciliation. Reconciliation firstly with ourselves; then reconciliation with others.

The word “reconciliation” simply means that there has been a break in a relationship or a separation between people. As far as Indigenous Peoples are concerned, the separation happened because in a deliberate attempt to strip them of their indigenous cultural identity they were forced to assimilate a culture that was foreign to them and adversarial to their ways. They lived through a cultural genocide.

Reconciliation, therefore, must first and foremost involve the restitution and recognition of that identity which has been denied and banished.

During our 2019 mission trip to Indigenous Peoples, an Indigenous Elder recommended us:

*“When you go back home, please tell others about us. Please tell your children about us. Please also practice things that you have learned here because these things are part of our culture and our identity, and if you practice them then that is the recognition of us, the recognition of our identity”.*

For me, this is what reconciliation is all about. First of all, it is the remembering of their existence; the acceptance of, valuing of, and practising some of their habits and customs. This can be translated into something as simple as sharing their language.

Reconciliation should not be reduced to a contract of a monetary value or to the experience of one (who thinks having in abundance) who gives to the other (considered in misery). In other words, we need to separate ourselves from an understanding of relationship as described by the saying: *“the hand that gives is above the hand that receives.”*

Indeed, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples must firstly contribute to the rebirth of their essence, which is the very first thing that was taken away from them.



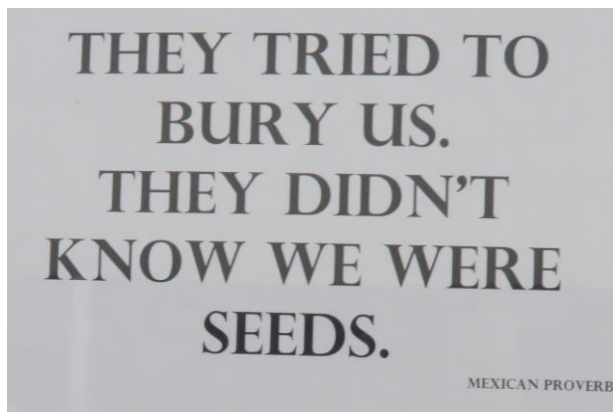
Through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we have “94 calls to action” that were identified in a process that involved listening to Indigenous Peoples and their concerns, and that articulate concrete actions for reconciliation between settlers and their descendants and the Indigenous Peoples of this land.

While these actions speak to the country collectively, they start at the individual level. Therefore, the first, simple and personal action to take is to read the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (or just the executive summary) and learn more about the history of Indian Residential schools and their ongoing and terrible legacy.

As Canadians today, we have inherited the failings of our predecessors who orchestrated and implemented the cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples. Beyond our contribution to the reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, beyond our contribution to the revival of indigenous cultural identity, we wipe away our own tears; the tears we shed as we read the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; the tears testifying that we too have an inner wound and brokenness to heal.

During that mission trip, I had the grace to discuss with one of the Indigenous Elders we met. He simply and sincerely told me his story.

He is 70 years old today and had entered residential school when he was 4 years old. And he remembers everything as if it happened yesterday. This 70-year-old man had tears in his eyes when



he spoke to me because some of the memories were painful. One thing that struck me was the courage of this person to tell his story. The courage of all the people who tell these chapters of their lives in this way. And that courage is a testament to the resilience of an entire people and the strength of their culture. The tears in their eyes are a testimony to the burden that has been on their shoulders for generations. A burden that is also carried today by Canadians of present and future generations. Reconciliation is also about listening carefully to these life stories.

### *My Takeaway Message*

Reconciliation is a paradigm of thinking which starts at the individual level; it starts with each of us; it starts with you. Please reconnect with yourself. Recognise and acknowledge your identity and be proud of your identity.

- Then move a step forward and challenge your assumptions and your biases. In fact, conscious and mostly unconscious biases are not negative at all because they are all constructed from our socio-professional-cultural backgrounds and/or from our spiritual environments; however we have to

be aware of them and challenge them in a way that they do not negatively influence (or have less impact) on our judgments.

- Then move another step forward and recognise and acknowledge the identity of Indigenous Peoples; and be proud of Indigenous Peoples too.

Reconciliation is a **commitment** at the collective level. And it is a choice at the individual level. And I personally encourage all of us to make that choice, for social justice, for equality and equity, for our God's love.

Migwetch ! (Indigenous language)

Ayue rèni ! (African language)

Thank you ! (English language)

Merci beaucoup ! (French language)

## Audio-Visual Upgrades in the Sanctuary

*Rob R.*

The arrival of the pandemic has underlined the importance of communicating services from the sanctuary to those at home. We are looking at ways to enhance the technical quality of the transmissions, both on You Tube and by streaming. We need to ensure that the sound quality we have in the sanctuary is replicated in the transmissions, and we also want to offer a wider visual scope, including the ability to see the choir loft.

A process is now underway to engage appropriate suppliers of advice and hardware to upgrade our audio-visual capacity in the sanctuary. The current circumstances are somewhat limiting because there is such a call on companies operating in this area. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that in the coming months we will be better equipped to provide an attractive transmission of services, and especially when we return to the full range of components in our worship.



Picking apples with Kid's Church— *photo by Koko N.*

## Church school programming

*Koko NyeBessi*

**Rally Sunday** was held on September 20, with virtual blessing of backpacks (tags delivered to families' homes) and a colourful balloon backdrop in the Sanctuary. This usually signifies the beginning of our church school year with lots of activities planned for children and youth.

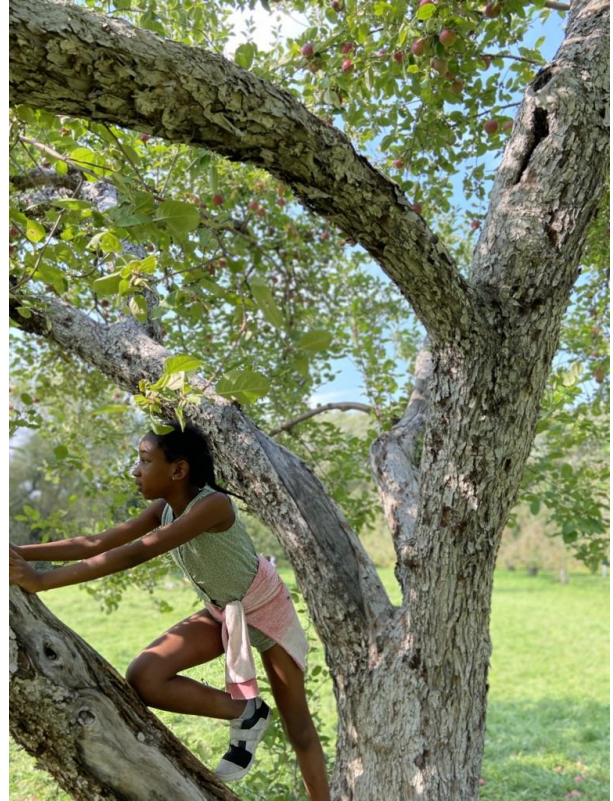
**Kid's Church** was held outdoors on September 26. Ten adults and twelve kids met at an orchard for an apple-picking outing with the theme of *being thankful for God's gifts*. We will continue to hold these get togethers monthly. The next Kid's church will take place on Saturday, Oct. 24 from 2–4 p.m. Please get in touch if you want to know the details of the next adventure.

**Sunday School** classes have also commenced online every Sunday at 11:15 a.m. Though the format is virtual we continue to do all the things we love, singing God's praises, reading bible stories and doing a craft and reflection with some of your favorite teachers. We look forward to welcoming you into our virtual Sunday school.

The **Youth Group** will study the book of Ephesians throughout the fall—creatively linked with some outdoor activities (with appropriate physical distancing) such as a bicycle ride to the War Museum in September, a smores and bonfire evening and virtual walk for the food bank in October. Other home-based activities via Zoom include cookie making in November and DIY Nativity scene in December.



*Photo by Koko N.*



*Photos by Koko N.*

## Update on St. Andrew’s Refugee Sponsorship

*Nathalie B.*  
*Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator, St. Andrew’s Church Ottawa*

Over the summer of this year I became the Refugee Program Coordinator for St. Andrew’s, taking over from the very capable hands of Terry Collins-Williams.

Terry, as well as some members of the congregation, has been keeping in regular touch with our past sponsored refugee families, including the Saleem family from Iraq, and the Al-Aje family and Rana Kanawati, both from Syria. They are all doing well. We would like to highlight the kindness and support provided by Barbara Sawh with the Al-Aje family and with Rana Kanawati. She is sorely missed.

A year ago, the Mission and Outreach Committee recommended to Session to initiate sponsorship of a family from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) headed by (Mrs.) Mubikayi M., a widow with two children, a 16 year-old boy named Joly, and a 13 year-old girl named Misenga, residing in a refugee camp in Uganda. While the family speaks French and Lingala, a regional language, their time in the refugee camp in Uganda appears to have given them the opportunity to learn some English. Some of IRCC’s immigration operations offices overseas are open during the pandemic and have continued to process refugee applications. Fortunately this has been the case with the Dar es Salaam office in Tanzania which is processing the family’s sponsorship application.

To follow from Terry's news in St. Andrew's in Action this spring, the family has passed their medical tests, one of the all-important hurdles to be approved to come to Canada. Authorization to travel to Canada is indefinitely delayed due to the pandemic travel restrictions.

The uncertainty related to the pandemic, potential vaccines and their deployment in Canada and overseas, and the resulting opening of borders, leads to an uncertain timeline with respect to estimating their potential arrival in Canada. Nevertheless we can continue to plan for their upcoming arrival and resettlement needs.

With this in mind, we are forming a team of 5–7 people to plan for the practical aspects of the family's resettlement in Canada. The team will be responsible for the family's anticipated needs for the 12 months following their arrival. Responsibilities include: fundraising, budgeting and financial orientation, education and training, housing, medical services, community orientation, and employment. Lorna Afolabi has graciously joined the team to take care of education and training. If you are interested in helping with the resettlement of the family, please get in touch with me through the St. Andrew's office (email: [office@standrewsottawa.ca](mailto:office@standrewsottawa.ca)).

While we await their arrival, would you like to learn more about their home country? Did you know that the DRC is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa? Because of its size, it borders with 9 other countries in Africa, and it has a population of over 100 million people. In the new year, St. Andrew's will be holding a learning event online, via the comfort of your own home, so that you can learn more about where the family comes from. Stay tuned!

## Summer 2020 at Gracefield Camp

*Jim P.*



Interns and volunteers at Gracefield  
*photo by Jim P.*

It has been an unusual but gratifying summer at Gracefield Camp this year. Unusual because of COVID-19, but gratifying because so many people were able to enjoy the Camp this past summer anyway.

2020 got off to a good start with a lot of groups enjoying the beauty of winter in January and February. But then in mid-March the Quebec government order came down that the Camp had to close. No one apart from essential maintenance staff was allowed onsite until June 25. The Camp officially re-opened to the public on July 1.

Since then, the Camp has been well used by guests who have stayed in the new Erskine Cabin Village, woodland cabins, tent and trailer sites, lodges (one family per lodge), and the Manager's cabin. While the dining room was closed to all but staff, takeout meals were provided, including popular pizzas. We were also blessed with six young interns who did a

lot of volunteer work while developing camp counsellor skills. Overnight children's camps were not permitted this past summer, but we hope to see our interns back as counsellors in 2021.

Through all of this, Camp staff ensured that proper precautions were taken to ensure the safety of both staff and guests. This enabled the entire Camp community to 'breathe in' the beauty of God's creation and enjoy appropriately distanced Camp friends in spite of the pandemic.

At the same time the energetic beavers at the Camp have been busy. The East Block washroom benefited from a much-needed renovation, and the shoreline in front of Jolly Roger Lodge was rebuilt. Another volunteer crew has been hard at work repairing the Boathouse.



The rebuilt shoreline in front of the Jolly Roger Lodge

*Photo by Jim P.*



Summer 2020 has also been noteworthy due to the arrival this past June of the Camp's new Managing Director, Mark Hamilton.

Mark was born and raised in Shawville Quebec. His earliest memories of Sunday school and church are of being a young child at Bristol Memorial Presbyterian church. He comes to Gracefield after thirteen years in the GTA—ten years of which was spent as Warehouse Manager for Canadian Stone Industries.

He has experience as a volunteer coach and worked with students at multiple high schools and at sports camps, and while living in the Vancouver area he served as the chaplain for the Vancouver Canadians baseball team. He has also served in congregational ministry in the roles of youth and young adult ministries, musical worship, and as

a small group leader at churches in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. He has served in many areas including as an elder and on the communications team for the church he attended in Brampton, Ontario

Mark completed his BA in Strategic ministry at Millar College of the Bible in Pambrun Saskatchewan. He has a long background in camp ministry where he has served as a cabin counselor, director, and as a camp speaker/bible teacher.

In Mark's words "GCCRC is an answer to my prayers, and I am excited to get started with the chapter that God is bringing me into. Looking forward to getting to know everyone and coming alongside the board to steward this wonderful camp and retreat centre."

The Camp is also very pleased that Marianne Rasmus, office administrator at Knox Church, has taken on the additional role of bookkeeper for Gracefield. Her expertise and dedication are a big plus for the Camp.

The Camp is open year-round! Heated rooms may be booked in White Pine lodge through the winter. Meals are usually available now in the dining room subject to safe capacity limitations. We hope to see you there!

Camp contact info:

- Email: [info@gracefieldcamp.ca](mailto:info@gracefieldcamp.ca)
- Phone: 819-463-2465
- Website: [gracefieldcamp.ca](http://gracefieldcamp.ca)

## Staying Connected During a Pandemic

*Colleen G.*

Across all of St. Andrew's services and programs staying connected and quickly was paramount when the global pandemic was declared in early March, and pastoral care was no exception. It is hard to believe that it has been six months since we entered this pandemic and since that time a group of St. Andreans has served as connectors to many in our church family to stay in touch when we cannot always see each other face-to-face. The Connectors are one of the many blessings that this surreal time has provided us. Therefore, we have formally made it a sub-ministry of Pastoral Care that we will continue even when we are out of this pandemic.

The Connectors reach out to many households in our church family by virtual means (e.g., phone) and sometimes even driveway visits. There is also an opportunity for Connectors to chat with other Connectors every few weeks. Thank you to all the Connectors for what you do and how you do it.

Below are some anecdotes of how the experience has been for a few of our Connectors. If you are interested in becoming a Connector, please reach out to Colleen ([colleen.gushue@yahoo.ca](mailto:colleen.gushue@yahoo.ca)).

"A few times this past year, I have checked in on many members from St. Andrew's to see how they might be doing in these COVID times.

I have had the opportunity to chat with people some of whom were only a name for me.

I feel fortunate to have had this communication with them and look forward to when I might be able to see them in person again."

"Being a connector has brought much joy and blessings to me.

Like so many of us, living alone during these Pandemic months has been to the least challenging. Elderly Couples and families have not been spared each, in their own way. Vulnerability keeps them home except for essential needs, following the guidelines. With plenty of time available, projects on the back burner are worked on. More time to pray, to read, knit, garden and reflect. Some voice hope that all this will be over soon while others question when it will be over.

I remember the joy of a couple when I shared with them a virtual tour of a garden in Holland. It

seems they had at some point visited there but now, it was most special as due to the Pandemic, no visits were allowed there. They were able to enjoy from home the true beauty of this magnificent garden. They shared with others. Another person so thankful for a video of a joyful, inspiring song. It seems that families have had unique opportunities to communicate, forgive, and heal relationships of 3 generations. Situations like these affect the physical, mental and emotional health. Prayers for many years came to fruition. Inestimable joy and hope of meeting great-grand-children, seen so far only via Facebook.

Elderly couple grappling with the sudden sickness of an in-law living far away, are unable to visit. Even if a trip was possible, they realize they would not be able to help anyway and might be a hindrance. Listening and prayers on their behalf as we keep in touch.

Elderly couple so thankful for meditation booklets and for occasional calls.”

“This past six months have been both a challenge and an opportunity for pastoral care in our church. Since this forced isolation, I have missed meeting in person, being able to sit closely and listen to the stories of celebration and of sadness; recognizing the feelings and worries of those who have been bereaved, ill, facing difficult decisions and aloneness. In particular, I have missed the casual and unplanned visits in Grant Hall before and after the services on Sunday, talking with an elderly person as I drive him to church, visiting during our special communion receptions and joining families during funeral/memorial services. Perhaps this pandemic has reinforced how much we took for granted the value of physical togetherness in enhancing pastoral and companionable relationships. How important is touch, sensory cues and facial expressions in conveying understanding and caring! There has been an opportunity however, to connect in different ways. Many people are alone and home more, and phone calls, email connections and zoom meetings have enabled some very good relationships to form and to continue. I have been regularly in touch by phone with one of our elderly members who I have known for a long time. We have had long talks about books, family, politics, religion and of course memories and times past. I have enjoyed weekly meeting with church friends by zoom over this past summer and been strengthened by chats about many different topics. We have become better acquainted with each other through sharing of life’s events, values and experiences. Connecting with someone virtually is challenging however with persons who have hearing deficits and are not able to use the internet. In this case, short factual phone calls have sufficed to keep us in touch and reinforce to someone that they are thought of and valued.

It has been amazing to me how resilient we have all been, and talking, writing, zooming about these adaptations enable us to remain as close friends and a viable and nurturing congregation.”

## St. Andrew’s Women’s Guild

*Jill C-W*

The pandemic has certainly affected the activities of the Guild, but it has not dampened our spirits. We stay in touch every Thursday with an email chain. It lets us support one another with anecdotes, news, photos and prayers. On the first Thursday of each month, we meet by ZOOM at 10:30 a.m. We miss the sandwiches and sweets we enjoy when we meet at the church, but we still enjoy “seeing” one another and carrying on with the business of the Guild. We’ve had to suspend our fundraising until next year. In normal times, October would have brought our Fall Rummage Sale and November, the Scottish Tea and Christmas Bazaar. We will miss the fun and even the hard work those entail. We will still make some donations to charities in Ottawa from our savings because the needs are so great in



our community. We have contributed money to Pastoral Care for flower gifts, and have offered to buy a new refrigerator for the Grant Hall kitchen.

Our planned speaker in November is a CBC journalist. Please consider joining us. Call Jill if you would like to join our email list and/or attend our meetings. We are always delighted to expand our group of caring women.



Myles, bored with COVID—*Photo by Joan R.*

## Poem for Janet

Clouds up in the sky,  
white fluffy puffs rolling by.

With the backdrop of pale blue,  
when I look at them, I think of you

Who can understand the wonder of it all,  
something more powerful than I can recall.

Oh, the mystery of how this all came about,  
God in the heavens is giving a shout.

All is well in my life,  
remembering what this is all about.

This has been given to me as a gift,  
don't forget to love, be kind, and continue to live.

Dilys W.,  
August 2020

Dilys was a member of our church for many years.  
She wrote this poem in memory of her daughter  
Janet. Thank you Dilys, for sharing this beautiful  
poem with us.

Yvette D.

## Book Study: A Beginner's Guide to Advent

*Presbyterian Church in Canada*



LIGHT of  
the WORLD  
A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ADVENT



In Advent 2020, Presbyterians across the country are invited to join a denomination-wide book study of Amy-Jill Levine's *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent*.

Guided by Levine's knowledge of the New Testament, strong storytelling skills and deep love of the gospels, Presbyterians will journey through Advent reflecting on the birth of Jesus as it is told in the first two chapters of the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

*Light of the World* traces the Christmas narrative through the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, the journey to Bethlehem and the visit from the Magi. Lingering in the often-overlooked details of these biblical characters and the situations they find themselves in, Levine explores the historical context, the literary and aesthetic implications, and the significance of the nativity story for readers then and now. Contemporary readers will learn how these texts would have been read by

those in the time they were written, and also how Matthew and Luke's accounts of the nativity continue to be good news for us today.

***Don't let the title fool you; this book is not just for beginners!***

The book provides a rich and challenging learning experience for people from different stages in their Christian journey. As Levine draws us deep into the Nativity stories of Matthew and Luke, you'll find yourself pondering allusions to Jewish texts and Roman history that you hadn't noticed before, making connections to other stories in the gospels, and exploring themes that are as relevant today as they were when Jesus was born: birth and death, youth and aging, taxation and immigration, revelation and hope.

"These Gospels seek to tell us, we readers then and now, about the good news of Jesus both to the story of Israel and to the gentile world, about the clash of imperial and heavenly values, about a world for which many of us hope but not enough have the chance to find. To express such important, such sublime, messages, they write to spark our imaginations, to get us to see otherwise" (p. 12)



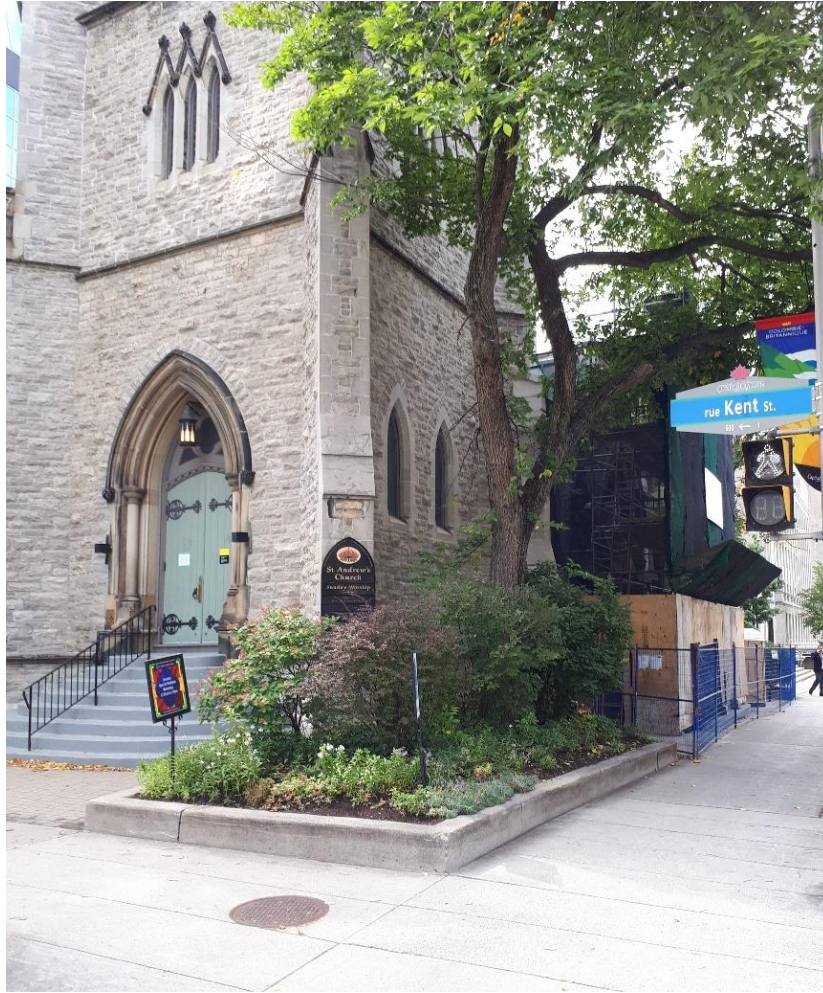
There is a free, downloadable study guide available at [presbyterian.ca](http://presbyterian.ca). The four-part Presbyterian study guide is designed to work for discussion groups meeting online or in-person. For each week of Advent, the guide contains prayers, an overview of the theme, biblical reflection prompts and a weekly spiritual practice. The spiritual practice prompts will help you create intentional time for personal reflection on what you have read or can be adapted to be completed within your small group.

If you are looking for a group to read and discuss with, then reach out to Rev. Karen ([kd@standrewsottawa.ca](mailto:kd@standrewsottawa.ca)). The book is available as an e-reader from Amazon and you can order paperback copies there as well. Please speak to Rev. Karen if you are having trouble getting the book. We will order some for the church library.

## Looking After Our Heritage Building

*Thomas Znotins*

For those of you who have been attending the Sunday worship services or had other reasons to come by St. Andrew's, you will have noticed a very different look on the Wellington Street entrance. There is no cause for concern—this is part of the on-going maintenance that we do to keep our 146-year old (and counting!) building looking good. Our masonry contractor is repairing the mortar, cleaning up the sandstone columns adjacent to the doorways, repainting metal work, and doing whatever else is necessary. St. Andrew's has been a part of Ottawa's history since its early days. We have been at the corner of Kent and Wellington for almost 200 years now and we look to be here for many more years to come. Did you know that our original church structure was built by stone masons brought over from Scotland while they waited for construction materials to begin work on the Rideau Canal? Once the work is completed on the Wellington Street doors, they will be open again to Congregants and Visitors, and the scaffolding will be moved over to the Kent Street door. The project is expected to be completed sometime in November.



Note the scaffolding around the Wellington St. entrance.

*Photo by Thomas Znotins*

## The Men's Fellowship

*Peter L.*

The Men's Fellowship meets on the last Monday evening of the month, most months of the year. While we used to gather in person in St. Andrew's Hall for a light supper we have lately resorted to Zoom. After a short time of devotion we regularly hear from a guest speaker. We have welcomed speakers on a wide variety of interesting topics such as recent developments in automated vehicle technology, the history of the reconstruction of St. Andrew's in the 1980's, Zatoun olive oil as a peace-builder in the Middle East, and even personal finance.

Our speaker in September was Melanie S., a front-line worker in the Harm Reduction program of the Somerset West Community Health Centre. The SWCHC is one of 13 such facilities around the city of Ottawa. Somerset West operates a Harm Reduction program to respond to the growing crisis of opioid abuse and other drug use in the community.

On average 6 people die each day from drug overdose in Ontario, and 74% of them are men between the ages of 30 and 59.

The Centre laments the failure of the “war on drugs” policies and advocates for an end to criminalization in favour of a focus on the health aspects of drug abuse. While high-functioning drug users are in the majority, Melanie’s work is with the group she describes as “chaotic drug users” trapped in a cycle of petty crime, drug use, and addiction. Three years ago the Centre set up tents in the market area of the city and worked in teams of professionals, including nurses and other volunteers to try to prevent overdoses among drug users.

We learned there are presently four safe consumption sites where users are welcomed, screened, and assisted to inject or inhale drugs. In conjunction with Ottawa Public Health the people on Melanie’s team also use two vans to distribute safe supplies of needles and other equipment to drug users. Says Melanie “We want to foster an atmosphere of trust and non-judgment where clients feel comfortable discussing their health needs and challenges.” Their motto is “conversations with care”.

Melanie welcomed questions from the men and a lively discussion ensued.

During her talk Melanie mentioned one particular issue. Because of COVID-19 ordinary personal hygiene has become a special challenge for many clients of the Centre, and Melanie appealed to the group for towels. Members of the Men’s Fellowship have already begun to respond to the appeal by collecting donations of towels and delivering them to the Centre.

The Fellowship welcomes all men who are affiliated with St. Andrew’s, whether as members, adherents or friends. Richard Lauzon convenes the group, and he would be happy to hear from any of the men in the congregation who are interested. Richard can be reached by email at [richard.lauzon@gmail.com](mailto:richard.lauzon@gmail.com).

## **PWS&D: Responding to the Pandemic**

*Rob R.*

The world-wide pandemic has seriously affected people living in developing countries. Not only is their access to health care less than ours, many jobs have disappeared or have been seriously compromised, as supply chains have broken down and tourism and other industries have collapsed. The United Nations fears that the number of people suffering from acute hunger may double.

As with other church-related budgets, PWS&D’s is suffering from some reduction in donations. Nevertheless, with the resources available we are contributing to emergency relief in fourteen countries. We are also re-purposing some project funding to the purchase of protective equipment for health workers.

St. Andrew’s has always been a strong supporter of PWS&D. Over seventy members make regular contributions, and others contribute on a case-by-case basis. Let us respond to these unprecedented circumstances by supporting COVID relief efforts through the web site: [presbyterian.ca/pwsd/](http://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/) or [www.WeRespond.ca/donate](http://www.WeRespond.ca/donate).



In Guatemala, PWS&D continues to support the work of small farmers by delivering inputs like seedlings. Here, a woman shows her home garden in Chiquilá, Guatemala.

Photo: AMMID



## The Great Journey in This Year of Pandemic, Part II

*Elizabeth P.*

Good morn, faithful readers, it is your loyal servant once more! I hope that you are all well and safe, my friends!

Some of you may remember the first episodes of this Tale which your scribe sent forth to you in June of this year, in the scroll known as *St. Andrew's in Action*. Some of my loyal followers have asked for more, and so I bring it to you this day. Remember back to the closing days of March, if you are able, for this is where we left off. Settle in, my loyal ones, and let us begin. We are in the abode of our Mistress Elizabeth, and our travellers are wandering about. And so...

Sadiq nudged his confrères and headed forth.

'I think we should look for an acceptable food supply this morn, I have a hunger that seems insatiable! Shall we proceed?'

'Yes, yes, I am always hungry!' answered Najima. 'After all, we must be strong for our arduous journey (licking his lips). Lead us, Sadiq!'

As they made their way, Shams felt the hairs rise at the back of his neck, and he trembled in his pelt. He felt an uneasiness, and turned around. Who, or what, in Hades was following them?



*Cast photo, to keep you focused...*

*Back row (l-r): Boaz, David Ben-David, Amos  
(Boaz and Amos are sons of David).*

*Front row (l-r): Najima, Shams, Asteri, Sadiq  
(Najima and Shams are half-brothers).*

He turned back to the others: 'Do you see that odd creature behind us? What do you think it is?'

Sadiq looked around and saw...nothing. 'Shams, are you light of head?' Shams became troubled: Sadiq and Najima seemed oblivious to this apparition! Was he not yet awake? He shook his pelt and hurried after his brothers.

In the distance Sadiq saw a strange sight, and approached with care. The others gathered around with him: what were these things? They had quite a delightful aroma...

‘Dig in, there is no one close at hand to notice a few bites into the flesh of these things’, said Sadiq. Shams took a taste, then another, then another. The juice ran down from his lips. ‘How delightful! I don’t suppose we could take one of these along with us.’



Meanwhile, Najima had spied something else further along; he galloped ahead and looked over a trio of peculiar cylinders. They smelled rather tasty, but when he took a bite, he recoiled: bitter! Not worth exploring further...

And so, replete, our travellers continued on.

What (or who?) will they find next? What adventure shall our caravan of camels take on? In the meantime, the sun is high in the sky, there are flocks overhead, birds in the trees. Enjoy your day, think gentle thoughts, help those in need...



### March 30

It was quite dark when at last the trio stopped for the night. They looked ahead and saw the moon rising; yes, time to rest...

‘What a day we have had, Sadiq! Tasty victuals, good company, adventure ahead: for what more can this dromedary ask?’ said Shams. ‘What?’ replied Najima. ‘I thought you were my brother: I thought we were camels! It seems you are full of surprises, dear Shams, I have much to learn from you...’

Sadiq shook his head and thought again that these two were peculiar companions.

Out of the corner of his eye, came an apparition: who was this coming toward them? Looked like a...shepherd! What was he doing here? From where did he come? The other two were busy gazing at the full moon, and didn’t seem to notice him.

‘Is someone there? I smell camel! Where are you?’ said the stranger. ‘I have little sight, I suffer from blindness of the sun. Where are you, please help me!’

Sadiq replied, ‘Greetings, we are here in front of you. We are a trio travelling towards the grand edifice of Andreas, who are you?’



'I am David Ben-David, a poor shepherd. I seem to have lost my flock, I can no longer smell them (as I see little). Have you seen any sheep nearby?'

'You are from a noble tribe, David' said Shams.

'Yes, I am from the family of our great King David! Even though a poor herder of sheep, I am very proud of my noble blood.' replied the shepherd.

'Join us, rest awhile; we wish to hear your tales!' said Sadiq (anything to take my mind from the antics of my companions, he thought).

'Ah, let me begin, I have much to tell,' said David.

And so the four settled down, with the moon lighting their camp.

What will David say? How will his tales change the journey? You must wait, dear readers, for another day.



## April 1

The sun has risen and is bright in the sky; geese are overhead, flying to their northern nests. Although this fierce plague continues to overtake our dear land, we must not waver: we WILL succeed in slaying the beast! It is time for another chapter in the tale of our caravan and their new visitor. Are you ready? Of course you are! Let us proceed...

Shams, Najima and Sadiq were quite curious about the background of David Ben-David. Where is his land? Just who is this King David of whom he speaks?

The four rested overnight, and in the morning, Sadiq began to question the shepherd. David Ben-David answered him with this:



'Yes, I have a noble ancestor,' began David, 'but it was long ago when he ruled. He was a proud man, and did much good for his people. His God Yahweh gave him strength and made him king, but David allowed hubris to take over his soul, and this almost destroyed him. For all his faults, his people loved him, and in the end he ruled well, became the father of his people.

I am a very humble descendant of this great king: my branch of his family continued down through generations as shepherds. Now, I am almost blind, searching for my flock, and my own dear son Boaz, who seems to have disappeared as well! Why have I been left alone in my despair?'

‘Ah, David, you have come upon us, this is a good thing, is it not? We will help you, if we can,’ said Sadiq. ‘Remain with us. You will find Shams and Najima amusing companions (or most annoying, he muttered). Where do you think you mislaid your sheep? Wait a minute, what is that behind you?’

David turned, put out his hand, and felt the fleece of this small creature. ‘Oh, this, I think, is Asteri (which is Star in Greek: the same name as Najima)! I know his smell. Oh Asteri, it is so good to find you at least. Where are your brothers and sisters? I fear that the rumours are true...’

‘What rumours, David?’ asked Shams.

‘There is talk in my tribe that many beasts have been taken to the edifice of Andreas, far north of here. I fear my flock is there! Asteri must have escaped. What if my dear son Boaz is with them all?’ David began to weep, and tear at his garments.

‘Do not despair too much, David, we will help you; we are planning to get to this place of Andreas, too,’ said Sadiq. ‘My brother Sama may be there. Let us join forces, you must not travel alone...’

And so our trio became four. Will they meet others along the way? Will there be danger? And what is this talk of the High Priestess Aikaterina, in charge of worship in the House of Andreas? You must wait, dear readers, to hear more.

Keep well, keep safe in this plague time. Listen to good King Justinian, follow his edicts: it is for the best.

## April 6

Did you think your humble scribe had forgotten you? Ah, no, but there have been some trying days, and meditation and prayer were required to refresh your servant: the festival of the palms was most inspiring. Shall we return to our intrepid trio-plus-one? Yes, it is time...

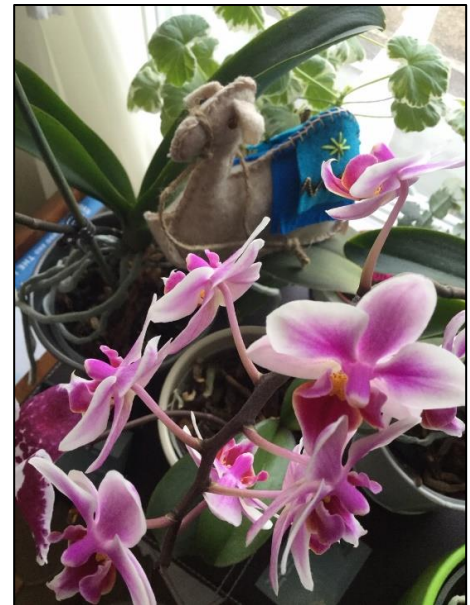
As you recall, the shepherd David Ben-David was conversing with his new friends, and weeping for his dear son Boaz, whom he feared was locked in the House of Andreas northward where the great river flows. Najima was soon bored by all of this talk, of folk he did not know, and events of which he had little knowledge. He soon wandered off, and Shams decided it best to keep an eye upon him. Just what was Najima thinking? There might well be great perils in this place! And so he followed...

Najima came to a place of sunlight and plant life.

‘Oh, I like this place, I wonder if these bright things are tasty?’ exclaimed Najima.

‘These roots look good, too, perhaps I will have a little nibble. I wonder why it is that in this place I always hunger?’

Shams cried, ‘No, Najima, have care, we know not what these plants are, do not eat of them until Sadiq gives us permission: he seems to have more knowledge of this place in which we find ourselves. I am sure we will soon find suitable victuals.’ And so Najima turned away, and explored further.



Shams, true to his breed, enjoyed nothing better than lying in the bright daylight, and soon found a place next to a palm.

‘Yes, this is what I have missed! Most soothing is the sun upon my pelt!’ He smiled, stretched out under the branches, and settled into a gentle sleep.

And so we leave our tale for now, gentle readers. Soon our dear leader King Justinian will speak to his people once again, I must be ready. And it was most inspiring to hear of the words of our great mother Queen from across the sea yesterday: perhaps we will all meet again, as she so spake.

This is a most Holy Week, dear readers, take comfort in your daily meditations, as will I, indeed.



### April 13

The sun has risen on this morn full of rain and dullness: what better time than this to continue the tale of our intrepid travellers! And so, gentle readers, settle onto your sella [i.e. chair in Latin] and we will begin...



After a time of exploration, and after a refreshing nap, Shams and Najima set off once more. Alas! The two found the sunny skies had turned to rain, and so they halted in their tracks.

‘Oh Shams, I am full of disappointment! I truly wished to go out into this wide place: explore and find some new delights to feast on. I am SO hungry, Shams, this is not good.’

Shams replied, ‘Najima, you are always complaining of hunger, you must stop this. A camel does not live by victuals alone.’

Shams, of course, had a weakness as well: he LOVED to nap. Any chance he got, he looked out for a lovely spot in which to smile, close his eyes...and dream of his boyhood, where all was gentle and happiness came easily. Yes, if they could finally end this journey, perhaps those days would return (and he could cease worrying about Najima all of the time).

Suddenly he spied a perfect spot. ‘Najima, come! I perhaps have found us a place upon which to rest awhile, until the skies turn to sunshine once again. Just over there, let’s go!’ Najima sighed a heavy sigh, and knew that Shams had won yet again: there was no point in going through the rain and wetting their pelts, that would be very uncomfortable indeed.



Najima's pelt, being of lighter hue, was quite delicate, and he was prone to irritations of the skin. Best to follow Shams...

'Isn't this lovely, Najima? Isn't it soft under our bodies? Tuck your legs in, so, and settle into this softness. I believe it is a pelt from another beast, it has the smell of sheep, I think. I will surely nap in comfort now!'

Najima sighed, rolled his eyes, and accepted what was to come. Shams felt his eyelids grow heavy, and he slowly closed his eyes. 'Ah, yes, this is what I live for...' and he was gone, into dreams and past memories.

And so, gentle readers, we leave our beloved brothers to their gentle day. Let us do the same, perhaps, as the day is dreary: prepare some tasty victuals, or unroll a scroll to read, or write upon another your thoughts and musings. The day is open to you, use it wisely, for we know not what will come to us in future times.

Keep well, keep safe, keep vigilant, but whatever it is you do, think gentle thoughts.

## April 20

'Shams, open your eyes, we must get on! You have rested enough, time to explore,' said Najima. 'Alright, alright, keep your pelt on,' muttered Shams, 'you must not go anywhere without me, you have a very deficient sense of direction, and will soon get lost! Let us go, then.'

And so they started out. Soon they came to a dark place. 'What is in there, Shams? It looks quite terrifying!'

'I have not an idea, Najima: it is quite the beast! I think it best not to touch it...'

The two very quietly backed up, deciding that this is not the type of adventure of which they were thinking...

And so they shuffled forward. 'Shams, what do you think Sadiq and David Ben-David are doing? Do you miss them? Do you think they have found victuals? My mouth has unexpectedly started to water...'

'To the gods in heaven, Najima, do you think of nothing else?'

'Not really, I have not the great swollen head that you do, Shams...I mean, great wisdom,' sniggered Najima. Shams rolled his eyes, wondering how this young beast could be of the same bloodline as he...





And now, let us return to Sadiq and his companions, the wise David Ben-David and his gentle Asteri. The trio have stopped in front of an odd sight, and wonder if it is safe to stand upon such a thing.

‘I have gazed upon many a beautiful carpet, but this is most odd,’ declared David. ‘Those were of wool or silk; this is quite different. It appears to be most slick, I fear that we would have great difficulty in crossing over it. Perhaps we will go around?’

‘Aye, that is a most excellent idea, my friend. But before we carry on, I must ask you about

your kin. Have you only your dear son Boaz? Why do you think he has been captured by Andreas?’

David became somber in his thoughts, and after some time, with tears welling up in his eyes, replied to Sadiq.

‘My dear friend, I have another son: his name is Amos. He is young, and foolish, I fear. I know not where he is, for he did not stay with Boaz, but set out to find a flock of sheep that he had seen far off in the hills. Boaz waited for him for some days, but Amos never returned. He may be safe, for he has many skills for survival that I taught him, but I do not know. As for Boaz: well he was taken to the house of Andreas, I was told, but is safe. Those in charge of the Great Bazaar of Andreas took him there for their beasts, for those sheep and cattle need care, and Boaz is expert in this. However, this plague upon the land may delay the Great Bazaar this season, so I know not what will happen to my beloved son: I hope that Andreas will be kind to him. The High Priestess Aikaterina has charge of spiritual matters in the House, and has much influence over Andreas: she will make sure that all is well for all manner folk—and beast!’

And so they talked until the sun began to sink into the horizon, becoming fast friends, so much so that they had no thoughts of Najima and Shams! When will they all unite? When will the plague retreat so they may make their way northward to the Great River? Will the Great Bazaar take place in the autumn season? We will continue the tale, gentle readers, in coming days. Are you intrigued, do you wish your humble scribe to continue? A reply to these questions would be most welcome, dear ones. And so, until then, think gentle thoughts, feel the sun upon your faces, send thoughts and prayers to those dear to you.

***Until we meet again, to you I send pax et lux. Your servant.***