

Pennies and Sparrows

Central Saint John Community Ministry Newsletter from the Chandras



A Little Miracle And A Big One

There are two miracles at work in the biblical stories about Jesus' birth: a big miracle and a little one. Strangely enough, it's the little miracle that seems to give people the most trouble; namely, the notion that Jesus' conception took place through the power of the Holy Spirit without, as Mary puts it, "knowledge of a man" (Luke 1:34). It is something that a great many people have struggled with, in some cases, preventing them from having faith in Christ and embarking on the journey of discipleship that comes with it.

The greater of the two miracles is wrapped up in one of Jesus' names; that is, "Emmanuel." The name "Emmanuel," as Matthew informs his readers, means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). In Christ, God himself is with us. The Eternal Word of God who transcends all time and space becomes a helpless baby born in straw-poverty to a Jewish peasant girl sometime around the first century AD. In Christ, the infinite becomes finite; the eternal becomes time-bound; the Almighty becomes helpless. In Christ, God himself takes-up residence in the neighbourhood to abide with us forever. This, by far, is the greater of the two miracles.

If we, by the grace of God, can accept the far grander miracle of God being with us then the little miracle of the virginal conception becomes just that: *little*. No

"Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who has come to his people and set them free."
Luke 1:68



Community Walks

Spending time touring the neighbourhood on foot



Know Your Rights Kids!

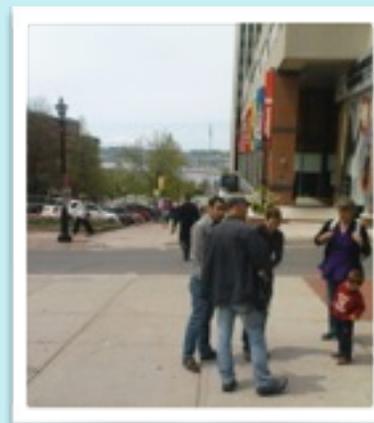
How we observed the Universal Day of the Child on November 20th.

longer does it stand as a towering obstacle to belief— a biological impossibility that makes faith difficult. After all, if the Eternal Word through whom all things came to be can enter into the muck and mire of daily human life to save us, then surely, anything is possible.

Although it doesn't always seem to be the case, we believe that the great Emmanuel miracle is at play in our humble, day-to-day ministry in inner-city Saint John. In other words, we believe that, in Christ, God is with us in the details of our work— guiding us and directing us, allowing us to be a blessing to others and others to be a blessing to us. As we review what has happened over the course of the last month, we hope that you too will see that this is so.

TERENCE'S NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKS

Over the course of the past several months, Terence has made it a goal to engage in regular neighbourhood walks— touring Uptown, the Southend and Waterloo Village, simply looking for people from the community to talk to. Sometimes, he'll purposely bring wool socks, mittens and hats to hand out. Usually, however, he goes empty handed with no other goal than to connect with people. If there are not a lot of people hanging out on the street corners, he'll go to the Salvation Army Drop-in and chat with people over a cup of coffee and a doughnut. Or, he'll drop by Romero House— a local soup kitchen— to share a meal and conversation with some of the folks there. As a result, he has gotten to know a lot of his neighbours on a first name basis. He has listened to their stories and gotten a far better sense of what they— as residents of high poverty neighbourhoods— are struggling with. Sometimes, people have asked him specifically for prayer and, on one occasion, he was even invited to perform a house-blessing in an apartment that one of his neighbours had recently moved into.



What We've been Up To:

Volunteering

Terence continues to engage in a number of volunteer activities. He is: (1) Teaching an intermediate level English Class at the Saint John Multicultural & Newcomers Resource Centre (SJMNR), (2) Doing street outreach in Waterloo Village through AIDS Saint John (3) doing one-on-one literacy tutoring with second graders in his neighbourhood elementary school through the ELF Program. Through these volunteer opportunities, Terence has managed to make connections with people across a very broad spectrum: immigrants and refugees, intravenous drug users and sex-trade

workers, middle-class educators and their students. In total, since the 3rd of September 2017, Terence's volunteer work with partner organizations has resulted in a rough total of 55 hours worth of interaction with people from the broader community.

Maternity Leave

Jasmine has been taking care of Naomi so she is on maternity leave until the end of June. This doesn't mean just sitting at home though. She's had a wedding, a couple of vigils and a funeral in the community. She also continues to be involved in the food purchasing club: making affordable fresh produce available to people in the South End.

Naomi has been going with Jasmine to some meetings and is giving everyone at Church Vestry, KAIROS, and 12/12/12 (a Diocesan peer mentoring program) monthly growth reports. At the time of this writing, we are looking forward to Naomi's baptism on Sunday December 17th at Stone Church.

Ongoing Groups

We are both very grateful for the partnerships and volunteers that enable us to continue to offer some valuable ministries to the neighbourhood. A youth program called "Youth Connection" which is run along with Inner City Youth, and a weekly community Drop-In are often the highlights of our week. We also enjoy planning and organizing the occasional Messy Church event and attending monthly community meals at the United Church next to our home.

Plans for the New Year

AS those of you who follow our ministry are well aware, we have formed a six-member "Fellowship Team" for one of our neighbours— a woman named Janet who is presently struggling with Parkinson's Disease. Our approach to her care is based upon a program we've designed in consultation with others. According to this program, Janet meets with her team once a month to share a meal, pray and plan the next four weeks. Over the course of that thirty-day period between meetings, team members practice small, humble acts of service for Janet— visiting her, driving her to church services and exercise classes, accompanying her to doctor's appointments and taking notes, etc. In short, they do the kinds of things that could be roughly equated with Jesus' washing of his disciples feet.

In 2018, we hope to take this idea of the "Fellowship Team" and apply it to at least two other people who may need the same kind of help. We'd help form teams around the people by offering training, guidance and mentoring to those who

want to engage in this type of ministry. Please pray for us as we embark on this new venture.

In the New Year, Terence will also be putting together a brief lay-readers training course on the history and theology of the creeds of the western church: (1) The Apostle's Creed, (2) the Nicene Creed and (3) the Athanasian Creed. This course will be used chiefly for the training of lay-readers throughout the Diocese of Fredericton although Terence hopes to use the material in other settings — perhaps even offering a similar course within the community.

OBSERVING THE UNIVERSAL DAY OF THE



CHILD

Last year one of our volunteers asked me to photocopy a document to hand out to our youth group members. It was the UN rights of a child in language that kids could understand. Our volunteer went on to explain how knowing her rights could have really helped her as a child growing up in care. This year, when our KAIROS group was looking for something to do for the Universal Day of the Child, we drew inspiration from this volunteer's story. We decided to print out some posters of the rights of the child in kid friendly language and distribute them to the schools in the area along with the children's book *Let's Make it Right: A Book that Explores the Rights of Children Around the World* on the rights of the child written by local writer Anne Huestis Scott. Autographed Books were distributed to 10 schools and educators in the Saint John area on behalf of KAIROS and Central Saint John Community Ministry.

How to Help:

We always appreciate your prayers and words of encouragement! Please contact us if you are interested in volunteering or just coming to visit.

We are also available to come to speak to groups or churches.

Half of our funding comes from the Diocese of Fredericton and Stone Church. The other 50% comes from generous churches and individuals who believe in what we do and who contribute financially to this ministry. At the time of writing this newsletter, we have about \$24,000 to raise by June 30th 2018. If you would like to help out in this way, donations can be made through the Anglican Diocese of Fredericton. Cheques are payable to the Diocese of Fredericton (115 Church St, Fredericton NB E3B 4C8) with a note that it is to go to Central Saint John Community Ministry. You can also donate online through the Diocese of Fredericton's Web site - anglican.nb.ca. or at canadahelps.org Anglican Diocese of Fredericton under the tab Central Saint John Community Ministry. Please call the Diocesan office if you need help making a donation - (506) 459-1801.

CENTRAL SAINT JOHN COMMUNITY MINISTRY

VISION:

Communities of people living their lives together towards wholeness in Christ.

MISSION:

Following the 5 Marks of Mission of the Anglican Church of Canada: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, to teach, baptize and nurture new believers, to respond to human need by loving service, to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation, to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

PURPOSE:

Our purpose is to offer dignity to people who find themselves on the edge, connecting them with others, cooperating with agencies, helping people to belong while gently pointing to Christ.

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