

Christmas 2018

**BRITANNIA UNITED CHURCH**

**THE**  **Britannian**

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## **Editorial**

### **Edna**

Many years ago, I worked at a large high tech company called Bell-Northern Research (which became Nortel, and you know how that ended...). It was one of the most admired companies in Ottawa, working at the limits of technology: 40% of its employees had postgraduate degrees. But the most respected employee wasn't the President or the Chief Engineer. It was Edna. Edna ran the short-order line in the cafeteria. She knew everybody's name and never messed up an order, unless she "accidentally" gave you extra french fries. Even though she had 3,000 customers, she never rushed or hurried, but she kept four or five orders on the go at once. People admired her because she knew her job, and knew it well. They realized that a Ph.D couldn't do the job better, mundane though it seemed. She was as important to the smooth functioning of BNR as anyone else on the site.

Reverend Jim recently preached on the stewardship of talents. Edna's talent was feeding hungry engineers. What's your talent? You may not think it valuable, but it may be just what Britannia needs.

Peter Bain  
Editor

## Minister's Letter

While this newsletter will reach you at the beginning of Advent, I am writing it with our Remembrance service fresh in my mind. What a beautiful day that was.

It was so special to see Carly and Ella bring the flags forward on a day that their great-grandfather was honoured as a veteran. John Todd laid the wreath that day, wearing his medals with great humility. It was his uniform that was on display and several years ago the flags were dedicated to his father and father-in-law. A beautiful anthem...another wonderful rendition of The Last Post and the Rouse by Jean-Pierre Lafleur in full uniform, with a full row of medals on his chest and a touching anthem by the choir rounded out a perfect ceremony to honour and to remember those who served and continue to serve in our Armed Forces.

I thought that Remembrance Day would be put behind me as I headed into another week with Advent just around the corner, but at a meeting of Ottawa Presbytery the following Tuesday night I was once again touched by the lives of our veterans. A representative from the Multifaith Housing Initiative spoke to us about the plight of veterans who are homeless in our own city. We learned that there are 7,500 people living without a permanent residence in Ottawa. Of those, 8.5% are veterans. Some spend the night at shelters in the city and some are on the street, like one young man we heard about who has been living in a tent behind the Chateau Laurier.

Why are these veterans homeless? Most have come home from active duty suffering from alcohol or drug addiction, and many have PTSD. Some have no family support, and some families simply haven't been able to provide the support these soldiers need. Their issues make it difficult to find and keep a job, and one veteran said that 90% of his pension goes to pay his rent, leaving little to provide for his most basic needs. Thankfully, the shelter where he volunteers ensures that he is fed.

But there is hope. The mother of the young man living in a tent did not know if he was dead or alive until he was discovered by "Soldiers Helping Soldiers" and they contacted her. She came all the way to Ottawa from Newfoundland for a reunion with her son and to see if there was some way to help him overcome his problems.

One solution was presented to us by the Multifaith Housing Initiative. Having completed a successful housing project for low-income families in Barrhaven, the organization is now working on a residence for homeless veterans that will be built on the grounds of the old Rockliffe air base. The residence will house 40 veterans. It will provide counselling for alcohol and drug addiction, and PTSD. It will also help its residents reintegrate into society. There have already been several fundraisers, and a major contribution has been given by a successful businessman and veteran who believes in the cause. The United Churches in Ottawa Presbytery will be helping to make the vision a reality, and since posting information this morning about the residence, several of my Facebook friends have expressed interest in planning a fundraising event to support the initiative.

If you would like more information about the work of the MHI or if you would like to make a private donation and help to bring hope to our veterans in Ottawa, you may do so at the following website: <http://www.multifaithhousing.ca>

But there is more you can do. This morning as I was posting the information on my Facebook page, I heard about another initiative that costs very little, but can make a profound difference in the lives of our Armed Forces members in active service. The post simply said this:

When filling out your Christmas cards this year, take one card and send it to this address:  
Any Canadian Forces Member  
PO Box 5140 Stn Forces  
Belleville ON K8N 5W6

If we pass this on and everyone sends one card, think of how many cards will be sent overseas to these wonderful, special people, who have sacrificed so much.

And so the Remembrance celebration that I thought was behind us, is before us instead. As we enter into the season of Advent, where hope, peace, joy and love are celebrated, we have been given opportunities to show that we do remember and that we care.

I am truly thankful for the veterans who have gone before us, those who are living in our midst, and the men and women who are in active service. I hope and pray that they receive the hope, peace, joy and love that are at the heart of the Christmas season. And through our actions, may they come to understand that we will never forget. Amen

Reverend Jim



## **Local Outreach In the Community**

For approximately 8 months of each of the last 18 years, the “Monday Night Meal” program at Regina Towers, a 14-story Ottawa Housing complex located at the corner of Regina and Poulin, has been planned, shopped for, and supervised by Verne Bruce.

Over the period of roughly 600 nights about 10,000 meals were served. Verne and his regular volunteers from Regina Towers would arrive early on Monday afternoon to do the set-up in the community room for the meal. Jill volunteered as the ticket and records keeper and most recently Louise, who attends Britannia, has helped to serve the meals. Often these same volunteers have helped Verne serve at our Britannia fund-raisers.

Verne retired from this service that has become too physically demanding and served the last meal on November 5. He admits he has mixed feelings as the program he has coordinated for so long closes, because he knows the people who attend regularly will miss the opportunity for the food and fellowship.

Verne valued the support of the Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy, who initiated the meal program at the request of Ottawa Housing, and also the support in principle of Britannia.

Verne was touched by the gift of a plant, the words and cards he received in appreciation of his work from the Ottawa Housing group, the volunteers, and the people who have enjoyed the meals.

Steve Zink, Chaplain of the Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy continues to conduct Bible study in the community room at Regina Towers on Thursday mornings beginning at 9:30 a.m. and everyone is welcome to attend.

Marilyn Bruce for Susan Aitken.

## **Another Milestone for the Artin/Shao Syrian Refugee Family**

On June 30, 2018, Rim Artin returned to Ottawa and her family after having completed midwifery studies and a work term as a midwife in Kitchener-Waterloo. For the first time, she drove across the top of Toronto and two-thirds of the way to Ottawa, with Don Cullen and Marie-Therese O'Sullivan as her passengers.

Before leaving K-W, Rim prepared a celebration meal in honour of her Kitchener-Waterloo hosts, Caterina and Mark, and of Don and Marie-Therese, who had prepared the way for her stay in K-W. It was an amazing feast of kibbeh, cabbage salad, beans and bulgar, fattoush salad, hummus and flat bread, followed by lemon cake, peanut brittle, orange slices topped with strawberries, and Turkish coffee.

Caterina is of Italian and Mark of Finnish descent. The parents of both had experienced the Second World War and its horrors, and Caterina and Mark had felt called to help another family affected by conflict. Rim stayed with their kind and loving family for over three months. Don thanked them on behalf of the people of BUC and of our local community of supporters of Rim and her family.

Since then, Rim has come a long way on her journey to become a professional midwife. After being interviewed in several other Ontario locations, Rim obtained a temporary position for almost one year in Kingston which began this November.

Unfortunately, she must again be separated from her husband and two boys over that period, which is very difficult for her and for her family. Already, she has lived in Canadian households in Ottawa, Toronto and K-W. In Kingston, she will be sharing the home of an Anglican priest, Valerie, who learned of Rim's need through a Presbyterian colleague contacted by Don.

Rim's husband Abboud has been busy studying French and English, and is volunteering his time to handle some custodial duties at our church. He has also been caring for his boys Jack (12) and Christian (9). It has been very difficult for him to find work that does not conflict with parenting duties.

It has been said that a path worth taking will have obstacles along the way. Certainly Rim and Abboud have experienced this and have worked extremely hard to become successful. In the next year, the family will hopefully move to Ottawa or Kingston from Gatineau and will become more independent. Rim's brother Salem continues to care for his parents Raymond and Nadia who live in the Britannia area.

The Artin/Shao family sincerely thank all those who have assisted them in their journey.

For further information about this journey with a refugee family, contact project coordinators Don Cullen and Marie-Therese O'Sullivan, phone 613-726-1863, [brituniref@gmail.com](mailto:brituniref@gmail.com)

Don and Marie-Therese

## **Christmas Eve Service**

At our September meeting of the Worship Committee, it was decided that there will only be one Christmas Eve service this year at 7pm.

The decision to add a second service was made in 2001 in order to accommodate the number of people who attended the service in 2000; some of whom ended up sitting in the kitchen and the hallway. The second service also allowed us to provide a different style of worship and to provide communion.

The 9 pm service has been appreciated by many people over the years, particularly those who appreciate a quieter atmosphere and a smaller crowd. In fact, many of the people who have attended the later service also attended the service at 7pm. So why the change?

We have been taking note of the attendance over the past decade or so. The average attendance at the late service has averaged 30 people. We believe that if we have one service, the church will be full, but there will still be room for everyone.

We are also aware that a staff member must stay at the church until the last congregation member has gone home. On Christmas Eve, Para Transpo has difficulty arriving at scheduled times. Typically, the church remains open until 11pm and one year our minister was at the church until well after midnight. The past two years he has driven one of our Para users home, to the East End of Ottawa after the late service was done so that she would not have to wait as long. This still resulted in him arriving home after midnight.

Finally, we are also sensitive to the fact that our Choir Leader and Church Musician has a very young family and would like to spend some time at home on Christmas Eve.

So, after weighing all of the considerations, we felt we could make the decision to have just one service this Christmas Eve. Let's see how it goes. If the church is filled to overflowing, we will consider adding the late service again next year. In the meantime, the Worship Committee will – as always – work towards planning a very special and worshipful Christmas Eve experience at the 7pm service.

We would also like to note that the fourth Sunday of Advent falls on December 23rd this year, and we have added the celebration of communion to that service for those who find it particularly meaningful at this time of year.

## **PSALM OF HIDE AND SEEK**

O Divine, I seek for you.  
Where do you hide?  
I know this to be true:  
Though I try, I will *not* find you at the altar  
I will *not* find you in the bottom of the  
    offering plate.  
I will *not* find you in the words of scripture.  
I will *not* find you in the face of Jesus  
I will *not* find you within the church walls  
if I do *not* first open wide the church doors.  
I will find you in sharing tables,  
in breaking bread,  
and in joining hands.  
I will *not* find you by protecting myself and  
    mine,  
But in drawing the circle wider.  
I will find you in sinners,  
in addicts,  
and in outcasts.

I will *not* find you sameness, but in  
    difference.  
I will find you in Muslims,  
in seekers,  
and in atheists.  
I will *not* find you in peace,  
but only in the whole range of human  
    experience.  
I will find you in disasters,  
in need,  
and in help I give and help I accept.  
I will *not* find you in the song,  
but only in the singing together.  
I will find you in shared tears,  
in common despair,  
and in belly-bursting laughter.  
I will *not* find you within myself,  
until I recognize the divine in others.  
I will find you.

Michelle Parker, High River U.C., High River, Alta.

## **Christmas Potluck Dinner and Entertainment**

Mark the evening of December 9 on your calendar for our Christmas potluck dinner and entertainment. This is an exciting opportunity for a small team to come together to plan and coordinate an engaging, dynamic evening. To volunteer, contact the church office at 613-828-6018 or office@brituc.ca.

## **One World Living Together – What a Concept!**

### **Reflections of Canada Day and thoughts for Christmas 2018 at BUC**

Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King dreamed of a world where all people of all races worked and lived together in harmony. We come from many places to this land, which some indigenous people call Turtle Island. We come with hopes and dreams, fears and worries. People have been coming to this place for centuries in wave after wave of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. When did you or your family come to Canada? Was it within the last 5 years or more than 100 years ago? Let us affirm this diverse Canadian heritage with joy and thanksgiving. Bless us God, Creator and source of love. Open our hearts to truly seek the blessings of diversity amongst us.

What a joy it is to live in Canada and within our Britannia United community. May we continue to be instruments of peace, love, kindness and understanding for all this Christmas 2018 and every day of our lives.

Don Cullen

## **Britannia Memories**

### **145 years – WOW!**

**1873:** The first church service and Sunday School class was held in the “Little White Church” on the hill. Four years earlier several families began meeting in the Honeywell home and by 1873 they had the means and resources to build the little white church at the corner of Britannia Road and Carling Avenue across the road from the Olde Forge.

**The 1890’s:** The Little White Church was a busy place. Most people walked, but there was a drive shed to shelter the horses for the folks who came by horse and buggy or sled. Have you seen our three-handled friendship mug? Can you imagine using that today? Several years ago Ed Hare found this in the wood shed of the Hare homestead.

**1900:** The Little White Church was always hosting some event - a true centre for the community. Ever wonder about our Church picnics at Britannia Park? Here is a story written in 1998 by Thelma (Lillico) Hodgins.

### **A PICNIC IN THE PARK**

One of the most important events in our church year was the Sunday School Picnic. We had an ideal area for such an undertaking right on our doorstep – Britannia Park with its open space, race track, baseball diamond, many tables and a beautiful grove of trees under which to set up our picnic tables and supplies. Most families were within walking distance and we usually had a great turn out – not only the Sunday School but the whole congregation would be present. An advance team would head off early in the morning, reserve tables and gather them into an area set aside for Britannia United Church, ready for picnic baskets as they arrived.

At a certain hour, we gathered in the area where we were to participate in fun and games. We took part in 3 legged races, wheelbarrow races, potato sack races as well as running races for all ages, races for the gentlemen and walking races for the ladies. There were ball games and other games taking place while some of the ladies and gentlemen would look after the mounds of sandwiches, cakes, cookies, salads, fruit, vegetables, homemade candy, etc. all ready for the ravenous hordes at meal time. One of our favourite treats was a ‘Whyte’s Dubl Dip’ ice cream cone. Mr. Whyte had a well insulated bag in which he would pack a 5 gallon can of ice cream, transport it in his truck to our picnic area at the magic hour with enough cones to go around and everyone had to stand in line to pick up their special treat of the day; it was sheer delight. Remember ice cream was not as available as it is today; this was during the 20’s and the dirty 30’s—the terrible depression years! Everyone had a thermos with either tea or coffee or a cold drink. I recall lemonade being served from a huge container for anyone who was thirsty. What wonderful memories we have of an era in the midst of unemployment, depression and the threat of war—a time of fun and hope for better days ahead!

**1925:** The Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches joined together to become the United Church of Canada and the Little White Church changed from being a Methodist Church to being a United Church. One member was doing a church visit with 2 elderly sisters in the 1980s. After hearing many of their stories she made the comment "so you have always

gone to Britannia Church". Well she had said the wrong thing. The reply was a very indignant "Oh no!, only since 1925"- she didn't know that they had been Presbyterians.

At that time the church added a basement, but still had no electricity and no water . It was still heated by wood; water pipes would have frozen as on the days when the church wasn't used, it wasn't heated.

**1930:** The Great Depression. The Ladies' Aid had been formed and the church was still a busy place with turkey dinners, sometimes for over 400 people at several seatings; teas; Strawberry Socials; and Christmas Concerts led by the Sunday School Teachers. At these concerts there would be a bag with candies and sometimes an orange for each child, a rare treat in those times. A sleigh ride and bean supper for the young people (Tuxis boys and CGIT girls), cost 25 cents.

**1940:** World War II. Many young men from the area and from the church went overseas and twelve didn't come back. Their names are listed on the plaque at the back of the church and they are remembered here each year on Nov. 11. Many of the names are familiar as some of their brothers and sisters worshiped here for many years. Some you may recognize in the collage hanging on the wall.

**The 1950's:** The area was growing and so was the church. The Little White Church was bursting at the seams, but the city wouldn't let the church expand on that site, so a new location was sought. For a while, Grant School was used for Sunday School.

One tradition that Lois (White) LaSalle told of was of "Roses on the altar". When a new baby was born a rose was placed on the alter during the service and then delivered to the new mother after the service.

Also in the 50's, church services were held Sunday evenings at the Britannia Drive In Theatre on Carling. Each week the organ was loaded on a truck and taken to the drive in for the service.

**The 1960's:** A time of change. One acre of land was purchased from the Arkell's farm on Pinecrest Road and plans were made to build a new church. The first sod was turned in spring of 1961 and the first service was held in the new building on November 24, 1961. The last service in the Little White Church, that had served so well for so many years, was on Nov. 19, 1961. It was later painted red and used as a "pottery barn" by McIntosh and Watts. It was also used as a travel bureau, and an art gallery, before it was destroyed by fire in 1975.

The new Church was built as the Christian Education building with plans for a large adjoining sanctuary with a steeple, to be built later. When built, the new church was very active and already bursting at the seams. It is described in a poem written by Joan Archer in 1964.

#### **An Ode to Britannia**

Sing a song of thankfulness, a large church full of folk  
But givings are so miserable, the church is all but broke.  
The vestibule is crowded, there's hardly space to stand,  
Was there room to hang your coat? or shake an elders hand?  
The church school it is bulging, the teachers harassed - true,



## *The Britannian, Christmas 2018*

With not much room and lots of kids, they need more help from you.  
Stewards in the boiler room, counting up the cash,  
Toddlers in the washroom - did you hear a splash?  
Nursery's in the Study, mothers maybe frown.  
Where's John? he's in the kitchen, putting on his gown.  
Where does the Pastor meditate as he hops from here to there?  
Where does the choir congregate? Lord - do we really care?  
You are a member of this church, there's lots for you to do.  
Believe your God. In Him do trust, the rest is up to you.  
Your time, your talent needed here. You know the church is people,  
Much treasure is required of you, to raise Britannia's steeple.

Christmas Pot Lucks and a mitten tree, now known as Ada's Mitten Tree in memory of Ada King, became traditions. 200 women were organized into 11 groups of the United Church Women. The Teen Twirlers, a square dance group for Teens, filled the basement with music and fun every Sunday afternoon and the Chancel Players group performed as far away as Toronto; was this the precursor for our Murder Mystery Theatre and dinners today? A Resource Library was established with a budget of \$50.00 per year. Mary and Barbara keep busy today keeping our library organized.

The Building was full and the ecumenical movement was strong. This was a time of joining with St. Stephens Anglican Church across the road. Britannia held its Sunday School in this building and the church service and nursery was in St. Stephens church at 9 am. Then at 11 am the Anglicans did the same-using this building for their Sunday School.

Arnell House, the farm homestead located across the parking lot, had been donated in 1966 to Britannia by Margaret Arnell in memory of her parents. In the 1960's and 1970's it was the centre for Social Action, spearheaded by Katie Parker from Britannia, not just for Britannia United, but for the whole area. Meals on Wheels and a clothing depot were there. The West End Interfaith has its origins in Arnell House. Rummage sales continued for years providing clothing at an affordable price and money for Social Action. These rummage sales became a pet project for Heather Thuswaldner. The Ottawa Boys and Girls Club opened a new West end facility which was housed in Arnell House from 1971 to 1976. The Youth group sold Christmas trees and also used it for a Friday night 'Coffee House'.

The Britannia Co-op Nursery was downstairs here for many years. Pikangikun Reserve was chosen to receive our White Gifts with the children helping to pack toys and gifts for children on the Reserve. In return, as a thank-you, we received several original works of art from native artists. These are on display in the Little Chapel. AA and Al-anon were hosted by Britannia; we still host weekly Al-anon meetings. The Fellowship club reached out into the community. In the 70's with Rev. Hendry and student Bob Root, began the 9 am alternate service; it continued when Rev Barry Thomas was here. Family Clusters were formed. Explorers, CGIT, Scouts were strong and active. Did you know that the cross in the Little Chapel was donated by the Explorers? They baked and sold cookies to raise the money to buy the materials and Ron Cunningham built the cross.

As the aging Arnell House needed more and more repairs, permission was sought from Margaret Arnell to sell the house and property, from which 5 building lots were developed,

and the money was used to build the addition on to the back of this building. It was dedicated as Arkell Hall on June 9, 1977. No more running back and forth across the parking lot on Sunday Morning for Sunday school!

**1973:** The 100th Anniversary! What a party that was!

**1979:** Britannia United decided to sponsor two Vietnamese families as part of Project 5000 "The Boat People". These families were taken care of by the Green's and the Winacotts.

**1980:** Rev. Myron Maxted and his family came to Britannia. The Ladies' Aid still had the Dorcas Unit. Monthly services were begun at West End Villa. Lilian Anderson worked there and helped facilitate the services for many years. Hans Van Ginn conducted a Teen Band for about 2 years. Britannia hosted the Police Choir many times. At Myron's insistence, no sandwiches were served; instead the choir members looked forward to a chili lunch at Britannia. Apparently everywhere else they sang, sandwiches were served.

Many adults and youth participated in the 30 Hour Famine. 1982 saw the beginning of the Adult group organized by Audrey Marchant. The stained glass cross in the window was made by Cy Marchant and dedicated in his memory.

Early "Son" rise services were held at Andrew Haydon Park. In 1984, the tradition of Strawberry socials was revived and one has been held every year since. Anyone else remember the delicious aroma from the many chicken barbecues?

**1985:** We still had a large \$22,500 mortgage with Presbytery from the construction of this building and it was decided to work hard to finally pay it off. The Sanctuary Ownership Fund was established under the leadership of Brian and Michal Rose, and the goal was reached. Since then, Britannia has been debt free.

**1990's:** More change at Britannia. Tragically, Rev. Myron Maxted passed away in December 1996. The Christ candle is dedicated in his memory. This was a difficult time for our church family, but with faith and courage, and lots of support from other ministers and members of Presbytery, in particular, Rev. George Clifford, Rev. Stewart Hewitt and Rev. Camille Lipsett, we were able to get through the sad times and transition to where we are today.

**1998:** We celebrated the 125th Anniversary.

**The new century:** The talented Baldwin family to Britannia in 2000. Murder Mystery Theatre Dinners have become annual events along with other fund raising dinners. Spring garage sales continue as well as the Fall or Christmas Bazaars. We have the Sunday School choir, led by Valerie, the Senior Choir under the leadership of Lauren and many other members of the congregation who share their musical talents on a regular basis.

**2013:** We celebrated the 140th Anniversary in. In doing so, a fund was set up for the Memorial Garden and it has blossomed ever since. I don't think that Britannia has ever looked as good from the outside or been as welcoming as in the last 5 years. Thanks to all those who built the garden and who maintain it on a regular basis.

Pope John Paul II said: *let us remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, and look forward to the future with confidence.*

## CATS FOR SENIORS

The [Cats for Seniors program](#) is an innovative matching program that will help interested adopters find the perfect feline companions to match their home and lifestyle. Once a questionnaire has been submitted from an interested adopter, OHS adoption counsellors will begin the search for a match. After a match has been made, potential adopters will have their very own meet and greet with the cat and decide if their home will be this cat's forever home.

Not only will the cat find a loving home, but the new owner will reap all of the emotional, physical and psychological benefits pet ownership provides. By matching potential adopters to feline companions, we are providing both the animals and adopters the chance to create a lifelong bond.

### HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

This program matches clients 60 years of age and older and feline companions five years of age and older. OHS adoption counsellors will contact each potential adopter once a questionnaire has been received to get a better idea of the personality of the feline they are looking for. The adoption fee for all felines adopted through this program is \$105 and all retail items purchased at the time of adoption in the Buddy and Belle Boutique are 20 per cent off. Please note that this program is only available at the Ottawa Humane Society Adoption Centre.

Contact the Adoption Centre at  
613-725-3166 ext. 258  
or [adoptions@ottawahumane.ca](mailto:adoptions@ottawahumane.ca) for  
more information.

## Christmas Services

### White Gift: Sunday, December 2, 10:15 AM

This year's gifts go to the Elizabeth Fry Society to help women at risk. Please donate toiletries, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, and other non-perishable supplies.

### Blue Christmas: Sunday, December 16, 7:00 PM

For those who have a hard time at this time of year. A quiet and contemplative service.

### Advent Service: Sunday, December 23, 10:15 AM

Regular service with communion.

### Christmas Eve: Monday, December 24, 7:00 PM

The whole congregation is invited for this service. Please note there is no second service this year.

## Historic Newsletters

To celebrate our 145th reunion, check out the Britannia newsletters from years past. Reprints are on the vestibule table. Feel free to pick one up and browse through them and find out what we were doing 10 or 20 years ago. Remember to put them back when you finish reading!

## Music Jam

Every Wednesday at the Stittsville Legion, 1481 Stittsville Main Street, Brenda hosts an Acoustic Music Jam from 7 pm-9:30 pm. Wheelchair accessible. Musicians and audience welcome! No cover charge, no stage, just have fun, relax, and enjoy good music with good friends!

For more information contact Brenda Hamilton, email: [singersoloist@gmail.com](mailto:singersoloist@gmail.com) , call/text: [613-286-9173](tel:613-286-9173)

## **A HOOKER'S PSALM**

Then our minister rose up and decreed,  
"Thou shalt write a poem to thy god."  
So here I sit, O Holy One,  
hoop in my lap, hook in my hand,  
pulling the loops of my life  
through the canvas of your great love.  
Here is a loop of nondescript colour.  
It represents the day I let you down, God,  
the day I could have spoken for another  
and remained silent.  
But still the canvas of your love holds me  
firm  
and I give thanks.  
Here is a loop of shining colour.  
It represents the day I stood up in defence of  
another.  
There are loops here that represent the  
children  
who romped in my kindergarten,  
and the people I cared for through life and  
death  
The canvas of your love, O God, holds us  
together  
These loops, these special ones  
of softest thread and burnished gold,  
these are the loved ones of my heart

Joy Duncan, High Riber U.C., High River, Alta.

Joy is a rug hooker, weaving strips of recycled fabric through canvas.

These threads you have given me with  
greatest blessing.  
I thank you for showing me how to share  
the canvas of your love with them,  
now and through the ages.  
I cannot tell of all the loops in my creation.  
Some are a mystery and will only be  
understood  
when you hold me still and explain:  
loops that remind me of dreams and visions,  
of unanswered questions,  
and of the future yet to come.  
I trust the canvas of your love to hold me  
safe  
when there are no answers to my questions.  
Someday my creation will be complete.  
All the loops will be pulled,  
the bright and the drab,  
the loops that brought joy or hope,  
anguish or disappointment.  
Someday, O God,  
this work we did together will be my legacy  
but for today, here I sit, pulling the loops of  
my life  
through the canvas of your great love.

## **Choral Service in Support of OWECC**

On Sunday, December 2nd at 7pm Britannia United Church will host choral service presented by four choirs. Our own choir will be joined by St. Stephen's Anglican Church, a Chinese Community Choir, and a Barbershop chorus. Each choir will be singing three selections of seasonal music, there will be congregational Christmas carols, and then the four choirs will join together for a combined choir of about 60 people, to sing *Angels We Have Heard On High*. It promises to be a glorious evening.

There will be a freewill offering and all of the proceeds will go to the Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy. Donations may be made to OWECC through Britannia United Church, or cheques may be made out to OWECC directly. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over ten dollars.

Light refreshments will be served at the end of the concert. Come and join us! Tell a friend! We hope to fill the church for this worthy cause!

## **Hate Your Neighbour As You Hate Yourself**

I think Jesus got it wrong. All this focus on loving one another...it was the wrong word to use. The fact is, the word love has become so commonplace as to be virtually meaningless, and it has been so used and abused, that it has virtually lost its power.

Think about it. We use the word love for everything from cheesecake to sports to high-priced automobiles.

Young people send “I heart you” pics to a thousand Facebook friends at once – most of whom they have never met. It’s a very superficial kind of love.

I do love cheesecake. I buy it, take what I want and if I don’t finish it, I throw the rest away. What does that have to do with loving God, let alone loving one another? Then again, that’s a pretty good description of how some people define love.

I know a man who loved his wife...he told her so, every time he beat her up. Why did she stay with him? Because...she loved him...and she felt bad when he cried...and believed him when he said he loved her and that he would never do it again...until it happened the next time.

And what about Christian love?

It was used to justify both slavery and the residential schools, by people who claimed that loving their neighbour meant uprooting them, forcing a new religion upon them and even beating them – if – it meant saving them from their own culture and religion and led them to salvation.

Have you ever heard the phrase “Love the sinner, hate the sin”? On the surface, it sounds very Christ-like. But who gets to define sin? It used to be considered a sin to work on Sunday. Women would even prepare, on Saturday, all of the meals for Sunday so they wouldn’t have to sin against the Lord. There is a very long list of things that were once considered sinful, that are now accepted as commonplace – like eating shellfish. That was once a sin. It’s in the Bible.

People still debate whether or not homosexuality is a sin. Science has given evidence that it is biological and determined before birth. Most liberal theologians accept that it is part of a person’s nature, but I have a friend who can’t work on the garden at the front of his house, without someone handing him a pamphlet that condemns his lifestyle. They fall into the “love the sinner, hate the sin” category. They would say “I love you but I hate what you are doing” when what they really mean is “I hate you” or “I’m afraid of you” or “You disgust me” but it sounds so much better when they can use the word love.

It is interesting to note that the Bible even seems to move in its understanding of sinful behaviour and how to respond to it. For instance, in Matthew 5 Jesus says “You have heard that it was said ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

The use of the word hatred really caught my attention, so I did some research to see where the Bible commanded the people of God to hate their enemies. There isn’t an actual verse. Some

believe it may have been a teaching of the scribes that Jesus tried to counter. But I did find this on a website that is referred to as “The New Theological Movement.”

### **Did God command the Jews to hate their enemies?**

Some will point to Deuteronomy 25:19, *Thou shalt blot out his name from under heaven* – when God commanded Joshua and the Hebrews utterly to destroy the impious Canaanites, and to seize their land. However, we note that though the Law commanded their annihilation, it did not command that this killing be done out of hatred. Indeed, whatever violence and war was commanded by God in the ancient times, it was surely to be carried out in a true spirit of love – principally love for God, but even love for neighbour as well: Just as a judge might order a guilty person to be put to death, not because he hated him, but he may even condemn one whom he loved.

Certainly gets your attention doesn't it? Christians redefining hatred as love in order to justify violent, hateful acts.

Coincidentally, the story of Deborah also had to do with the war against the Canaanites. When the Israelites turned their backs on God, they fell into the hands of the Canaanites. Deborah remained true to God and God used her as a judge and a prophet to free the people from Jabin the king, who had oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Deborah gave advice to the commander of the Israelite army, a king was murdered, a war was fought and the people were delivered from oppression. It's a very biblical story, typical of the Old Testament. If you disobeyed God, you would be punished. If you were faithful, God would deliver your enemies into your hands, even if it meant they were destroyed.

It is the kind of story people have used to justify all kinds of violent acts... in the name of God...and success at any cost was interpreted as the fulfillment of God's love...even if the cost seems more like hatred or oppression.

And we can't speak about oppression without talking about the Bible's treatment of women.

There are many passages of scripture I could turn to here, but the obvious one is Paul's teaching in the book of I Corinthians 14:34-35. Remember, I'm just the messenger, when I read what Paul wrote:

As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

Now, I have read very convincing articles that suggest this instruction was in reference to a specific situation that was happening in Corinth at the time, and was never intended as a blanket statement about the role of women in the church. Nevertheless, Christian churches have used this passage to condone the oppression of women through the years; by the exclusion of women from ordination, or even from holding positions of importance within the church.

The interesting thing is that we just read the story about Deborah, who was a judge and one of seven female prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. She was respected by all of Israel and when she called for Barak – the most influential man in Israel and a military leader – he came.

What this demonstrates to me, is that the Bible contains a variety of stories that uphold the importance of women in the community and the church. They were leaders and prophets, they founded new Christian churches, accompanied Jesus on his journey, and were held up as examples for inspiration – and yet – the church at times held them up and at other times put them down, which tells me these actions were based as much on culture as they were on the Bible.

The story of Deborah is a history of a woman's leadership in the Israelite community, while Paul's teaching was included in a letter he sent to the Corinthian church. But which one has had more influence on Christian culture? And why?

A society that seeks to keep women down will hold up scriptures that support its agenda. Passages will be taken out of context misinterpreted – sometimes intentionally and sometimes not – and the root of these actions is hatred and fear wrapped up in a pretty package with a heart on it.

That's why people have so much difficulty with religion today. They hear our slogans about loving one another, but they see actions that look a lot more like hate.

Years ago there was a lovely young woman in one of my congregations who was a single mother, having separated from a man who had been repeatedly unfaithful to her. She met a kind, loving man of faith and they began to plan a life together, so he took her home to meet his family. On Sunday they went to church like they did on every other Sunday, but when communion was about to be served one of the ushers approached the man and quietly told him that while he would be welcome to receive communion, his girlfriend would not because she was still married to another man. I'm sure he would have reassured her that he loved her, but hated her sin. It's still hate, no matter how you package it.

When I was nine years old a song was released on the radio by a Canadian pop group called The Original Caste. It was an immediate hit due to its catchy tune and its powerful lyrics. I was only nine years old, but and I got the message.

#### **One tin soldier**

Listen people to a story  
That was written long ago,  
'bout a kingdom on a mountain  
And the valley folks below.  
On the mountain was a treasure  
Hidden deep beneath a stone,  
And the valley people swore  
They'd have it for their very own.

Go ahead and hate your neighbour,  
Go ahead and cheat a friend.  
Do it in the name of heaven,  
You can justify it in the end.  
There won't be any trumpets blowing,  
Come the judgment day,  
On the bloody morning after  
One tin soldier rides away.

As the song continues, the people of the mountain offered to share the treasure, but that wasn't enough for the valley people. They stormed the mountain, killed the people and claimed the treasure for their own, but when they turned over the stone, all they found was an inscription that said "Peace on earth."

Go ahead and hate your neighbour, go ahead and cheat a friend, but do it in the name of heaven, you can justify it in the end. Those words make us uncomfortable...and they should. They certainly get our attention more than love your neighbour does.

The notion of Christian people hating their neighbours and using faith as justification is unsettling to us...even shocking...and it should be.

Just as shocking as Jesus' answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour" after he gave the great commandments.

He told a story about the response of four men to a wounded man left for dead at the side of the road. Three were leaders of the religious community and one was a hated Samaritan. When the story came to an end, it was this Samaritan who had acted like a neighbour to the wounded man. It was the Samaritan who was held up as an example to follow. It was this man who was hated by the Israelites, who challenged them to look into their hearts and examine their understanding of love. Jesus didn't use the word "hate" but he knew what was in their hearts and telling the story of the Samaritan was like holding up a mirror so they could see themselves.

Hate our neighbour as you hate yourself...I know that's not what Jesus said, but it does get our attention. And it makes us uncomfortable enough to stop and think about what religion has done to the teachings of Christ and the commandments of God.

Sometimes it is hard to interpret the Bible, especially when stories seem to contradict each other. We need to remember that the Bible was written in a particular time and place. It contains history, myth and parables. Sometimes endings were added to the stories of Jesus, by way of explanation, by communities who thought they understood what he was saying. There are cultural and social implications that need to be taken into consideration.

Jesus tried to cut through all the rhetoric when he brought it down to two commandments: love God and love your neighbour.

But what is love?

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope and patience never fail. Love is eternal...it is love then that we should strive for. (I Cor. 13:4-8)

Anything else is not love, and it is not worthy to give or receive. And who is our neighbour?

In Jesus's day it is the Samaritan. Today it would be the refugee. It would be the transgendered youth. It would be the person living on the street, or on welfare. It would be the person who is mentally ill.

And what about the haters? Well...Jesus would tell us we have to love them too. Here's the thing...hateful people generally hate themselves...bullies typically suffer from low self-esteem and need to put others down in order to build themselves up. We don't have to condone their behaviour, we certainly don't have to engage and allow them to bring us down, but we do have to love them, because they are our neighbour too. And in loving them; by being respectful, patient and kind – while maintaining healthy boundaries – we might just be able to show the haters what the love of Jesus really means.

Amen