



ST. DAVID'S
UNITED CHURCH

The Shepherd

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May/June 2011



Thank you to St. David's UCW for the St. Patrick's Day Senior's Lunch

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Minister: Dan Chambers
Minister with Children, Youth & Families: Colleen Blair

Minister of Music: Marsha Goold
Administrator: Leanne Gilhuis

Update from the Board

At the end of a congregational meeting last year, the Board and staff were directed to instigate three task groups to help us clarify how we can most faithfully fulfill our mission and move into the future.

- Property Development – explore if we might develop part or all of the property to generate another revenue stream (Chaired by David Bouskill)
- Cultivating Growth – explore how to let the broader community know who we are and attend to our ministry of welcome and hospitality. (Chaired by Anneke Jonker)
- Sharing Resources – explore ways to build relationship and work more closely with other near-by United Church congregations. (Chaired by Janet Gear)

The three task groups have been working diligently for several months and for that we are truly thankful. Although their work is not yet complete we're at a point now where we need to draw at least some preliminary conclusions – share what we've learned, what our options are, and decide what is the most faithful way to move forward.

You are all invited to attend the Board meeting on June 21st to participate in this discussion.

This will be a very important meeting. We will hear updates and recommendations from the three task groups as well as from our property committee so that in the very near future (a few months) we will begin to make important decisions about where to put our energy and resources to best serve the St. David's community.

Here's what we've learned so far:

- Redeveloping the property would require an expensive and time consuming rezoning process, significant volunteer effort from St. David's, and support from the city and neighbourhood – unfortunately none of these factors are particularly encouraging at the moment.
- The Cultivating Growth group has generated a lot of good ideas and has started to roll out deliverables (an updated website for example) but it will take time to generate awareness in the broader community before we begin to see the fruits of this effort.
- The Sharing Resources group has entered initial but serious conversations with Highlands United Church to discuss, for example, whether or not we might share a building with them. We're in the process of recommending a consultant to guide us through these critical conversations.
- Our property committee has identified and prioritized a number of building maintenance tasks that must be addressed. The first phase of the project (the peaked roof and the north wall) is already underway and will take us into next year, but the majority of the maintenance work will still be outstanding and we need to decide how best to proceed.

You are encouraged to be there on June 21st to hear what our options are, the pros and cons of each, and share your ideas and perspectives.

Reflections...

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
(Hebrews 11:1, KJV)

Faith is filled with uncertainty. Life is brimming with uncertainty. Perhaps you've noticed. So I suppose it's no surprise that as we turn toward our future as a congregation we find ourselves once again looking into the face of uncertainty. It's a future of promise. It's a future of growing discipleship, but certainly the details are not clearly written in black and white. We have to step forward in faith.



This seems to be a common theme in the Bible. Moses had no idea what future would await him when one fine afternoon he encountered the burning bush. And when Abraham was called he had no idea what tests awaited him in his service to God. The same goes with Isaiah, young Jeremiah, the other prophets; the same also for the disciples when one day while on the beach or on a walk they happened to hear their name called by Jesus. They had no idea what saying 'yes' would mean for their lives. All we know is that for many of them, before they said, "yes," there was a strong voice within them that said, "no!"

That's the thing about life: we just don't know in advance how things will turn out. We don't know what's going to happen – whether we'll get the job, find love, where we'll live, when we'll die. We don't know. Faith is trusting in the presence of God anyway. Because we don't know, we trust that no matter what happens, God will be with us, and we'll live as faithfully as we can to be with God.

St. David's is being given a great gift. Some may see it as a problem, and it is. But I believe it's also a great gift. Our building needs some serious repair. And that serious repair is expensive. So here's the gift: when presented with a possible repair bill of about \$800,000, we're encouraged to ask ourselves questions that likely would never occur to us otherwise. The question that presses on me echoes from the 80's song by the Clash, "Should we stay or should we go?" I'm grateful to have some highly skilled and faithful company as we consider this question.

What's the right direction? I'm not sure. Faith is filled with uncertainty. And God is with us, and God is good.

What's my opinion?

First of all, I've said before, as your minister I will not take you where you don't want to go.

I serve you. Well, I guess it would be more accurate to say I serve God, but right now I live out that call to serve God by serving this community of faith of St. David's. And, unless otherwise indicated by the congregation, I plan to stay with St. David's for the foreseeable future to offer stability in a time of change.

Further, it seems only fair that you know my current inclination as to what we need to explore: After years of learning and reading about the church in our present secular context and in consideration of the 40 year decline in church membership, I don't think we're called to launch a million dollar capital campaign. You could talk me out of this if you want to, but I don't think this is where we're called to put our energies and resources. The mission of the church is more than the building. I think the more faithful question for us is, "what's our mission and how best can we live into that understanding of who we are and why?"

Some of you have heard me say (more than once!) that there are 8 United Church congregations on the North Shore. We built for the 50's, the decade when more people were attending church than ever before in North America. I don't know if you've noticed, but we're no longer in the 50's. We also know that no one wants to leave their building, for lots of good reasons. And I'm not saying we should. But I am saying I think we need to seriously consider this option.

My question is: what is the faithful thing to do? How best can we fulfill our mission of discipleship, of loving God and loving neighbor?

I love this congregation. It's a privilege to serve with you. We are in many ways healthy, vibrant and thriving. We are not being forced out of our building. We could raise a million dollars if that was what we felt we needed

to do and put our mind and heart behind the effort (Highlands, for example, has finished a two-part capital campaign: they raised \$1.5 million dollars in the first part, and now are ready to raise another \$1.2 million to finish renovations to their building. Highlands is about twice as large in number as St. David's). But is that what God wants of us? Are all eight United Church congregations on the North Shore with roofs and buildings that need repair supposed to dedicate ourselves to raise millions of dollars to keep our buildings propped up? Or is there another way? Is there another call we're meant to live into?

That's our problem and our gift. That's a question that keeps me awake at night. This is the disturbing uncertainty of our faith that I believe brings us to life.

Let me know what you think.

Talk with me. E-mail me. Call me.

Or find one of the Chairs of the Task Groups or the Chair of the Board. We're all ears.

This is a time to listen to each other, and to the movement of God in our midst.

Grateful for your faith,

Dan

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

- Corrie ten Boom (Dutch Evangelist, 1892-1983)



What's Happening

Sundays at St. David's

Something special happens every Sunday at St. David's, many of the most touching and memorable are unplanned. But here's a glimpse of the special things that are planned:

May 8 Janet Gear preaching; Mother's Day

Janet is a member of St. David's United, but during the week serves as Professor of Pastoral and Public Leadership at VST. Her preaching is widely appreciated and we're always grateful when she can offer a sermon here at home.

May 15 Dawn Pemberton is back! A beautiful person and great gospel singer, Dawn is back by popular demand. Also, we'll celebrate the baptism of Sienna, Vittoria, and Giahna, children of Jennifer and Ryan Venier, a family new to St. David's.

May 22 An ordinary, special Sunday.

May 29 Cal Stead preaches while Dan helps lead the Celebration of Ministry service at the close of the General Meeting in Penticton – his last official duty as President of BC Conference! Cal, a member of St. David's, has struggled with cancer for the last two years. A formerly smug and moderate atheist, his soul has also awakened to God. He shares with us his journey of discipleship with Jesus.

June 5 The Karim Family will gift us with their music and story of how their Muslim (Ismaili) faith fuels their compassionate work in Pakistan. (see article below)

June 12 Pentacost and what a day! The last day of Sunday school and a chance to thank our dedicated and fabulous teachers; the Baptism of Rory Ashcroft, son of Mike and Natalie, grandson of Anne. After the service and time for refreshments, Marsha and friends offer a great concert – 45 minutes of beautiful music to lift your soul.

June 19 Father's Day, and a celebration of Marsha's service as Minister of Music.

June 26 Michael Politano-Bowles preaching. Though Michael is not thoroughly entrenched in the church and is at this point exploring the possibility of ministry, he won the preaching award at VST last year and is respected for his integrity and insight. We'll be fortunate to have Michael with us later in the summer as well.



The Karim Family at St. David's



North Shore News Photo

Last September, Mark Fenster and his daughter Zoe offered beautiful music in our worship service and Mark gave a reflection on reconciliation. You might recall that Mark spoke about his Jewish father who was saved from a concentration camp by a Nazi soldier, and his Jewish mother who was hidden from Nazi authorities and rescued by a Catholic woman she didn't even know. Many of you expressed real appreciation for this moving and meaningful service.

Interestingly, immediately after that service Cynthia Sedun and later Emmanuel and Wendy Huchet approached me and said, "Do you know the Karim family? We should see if they could come." Others also expressed interest in hosting a Muslim guest so we could hear something about that tradition, all the more important when we live in a society that has growing distrust, fear and general ignorance about the Muslim faith.

In mid-December, Cynthia invited the Karim family and me to her house for coffee, Christmas cookies and a conversation. I was genuinely impressed and very much look forward to their visit with us as we open ourselves to people of different spiritual traditions and hear their story.

Residents of West Vancouver, the Karim family is creating an orphanage in Pakistan, close to the Afghanistan border. Their place offers a safe haven for children born to unwed mothers and a temporary home for the mothers who give these children life. It is the family's philosophy that "we are children of the same God", so it's fitting that parents and children from different backgrounds can come together to form a family in this often harsh environment. By creating and supporting this orphanage, the Karim family feels they are true to their belief that we are all "children of one God regardless of faith, beliefs" or geographical location.

Members of the Ismaili faith, a branch of Islam, the Karim family finds their work of sacrifice and compassion fueled by their faith. The family has held fundraising concerts at the Kay Meek center and Centennial Theater, and they have played and spoken in several schools to help others better understand the heart of the Muslim faith. We're delighted they can be with us on Sunday, June 5th. Don't miss it.

Marsha's Musings

This will be my last newsletter submission for St. David's (sniff, sniff). Alas, at the end of June, I will be heading off on a month-long, cross-Canada adventure, with the final destination being Stratford, Ontario. Indeed, it is in Canada's Shakespearean capital that I shall settle and I hope to ultimately find a suitable home to operate a modest B & B. I am counting on my friends at St. David's to make a point of coming to visit. Knowing I may see many of you 'anon' will make saying good-bye just a little less painful. The warmth of this congregation is beyond compare. I shall carry each of you in my heart all along the journey that lies before me.



In the meantime, here are some musical highlights that you can look forward to experiencing during Worship in the next little while:

- May 1:** Our fab folkie guitarist/singer duo (Emmanuel Huchet and Marion Walsh) will be inspiring us once again.
- May 8:** Mother's Day - expect some musical treats from our young people this day.
- May 15:** Dawn Pemberton will rock the house with her soulful funk/R & B stylings.
- May 22:** Victoria Day – if you're not going camping, I hope you'll be here. All-request Sunday! Get your requests into Marsha in advance and hear your favorite music!
- May 29:** Celtic music will fill the crevices of your soul, courtesy of the Kurz family from Capilano United
- June 5:** We will have some very special guests this day, who will share their music as an expression of their Muslim faith. Open your ears, open your world!
- June 12: Musically, this will be a historic Sunday.** After Worship, plan to stay for refreshments followed by a short (farewell) concert. Offered by Kaine Newton (violin), Hew Gwynne (tenor) and Marsha, in a program woven together on the theme of travel. Raising funds for St. David's Outreach activities including the Out of the Cold dinners served on the Downtown Eastside. Mark your calendar!
- June 19:** The last day that Dan and Marsha will have the opportunity to lead Worship together, this will be one of celebration of a 'Marshan' in our midst.
- June 26:** Marsha's last Sunday – Final ALL REQUEST Sunday. Get your requests in early to hear your favorites! "No request is too extreme"!

Blessings on your journey,
Marsha

Children, Youth & Families

A Thank You to Our Sunday School Teachers...

As I prepare to begin my sabbatical, I am overwhelmed with gratitude to the Sunday school teachers who support the children and youth at St. David's, and who are an amazing gift and blessing to me! We've all heard the phrase from the African tradition, "It takes a village...". It is abundantly clear to me that St. David's is a village in the truest, deepest and most beautiful sense. Parents are the first ones to love their children into being but none of us can do this alone. We need our village!



Community exists in many places...school, sports teams, clubs, dance classes etc. It's often wonderful but depending on the exact nature of it, it can be fleeting or its nature may be such that it doesn't allow for any depth of connection. There may be a commitment to a particular shared enterprise and to one another in terms of your obligation to the team, but not necessarily to you as a person or to your flourishing as a human being, or your yearning to be all that God dreamed for you to be. But that is exactly what happens at church and Sunday school teachers in particular, are key to that happening for our children and youth. The church community as a whole is important in providing the general environment of love and support but teachers embody God's love. They create relationship and it's in relationship, that we know God. Teachers help children and youth to recognize their experiences of the sacred, to articulate and give voice to their spiritual lives and they help them explore the relationship between what we believe and how we live.

The commitment teachers make is unlike any other that happens at St. David's. They are part of a "shelter of belonging" that helps children and youth to flourish in a world that to them, often seems full of disaster and suffering. Their care blesses our children and shelters them with a protective and strengthening circle of love. John O'Donohue writes, "It is difficult to love yourself, if you are not first loved. When you are loved, your heart rushes forth in the joy of the dance of life." On behalf of the parents at St. David's I extend my deepest appreciation to our Sunday School teachers for the village they are such a central and beautiful part of...for their skill and ingenuity ...and for their love and commitment to something eternal and true.

I am looking forward to this time of renewal in the weeks ahead...to time in my vegetable garden, time with family and friends, time to read and explore new ideas...time to simply be. I look forward to this time and to returning to you and to this beloved community in mid August. In the meantime, I leave you with this thought from Camas Lilies, by Lynn Ungar.

And you — what of your rushed
and useful life? Imagine setting it all down —
papers, plans, appointments, everything —
leaving only a note:
"Gone to the fields to be lovely. Be back
when I'm through with blooming."

Colleen



Youth Group Events for May and June

Friday, May 13th

- **Junior youth**- Jenny and Simone will host the junior youth event at Simone's home (Melanie and Warren's house). 5575 Molina Rd., North Vancouver, 604 924 9443. Call or email to let them know you're coming! simoneharrislowe@gmail.com
- **Senior youth**- Lauren and her Mom, Poh-Lin Yip, will meet with senior youth in the St. David's kitchen for a wonderful demonstration of how to make sushi! 6:30-8:30. Watch your email for any further updates on this delicious event!

May 20-23 May Retreat at Camp Fircom

- Youth in grades 7-12 from around the province, are going on retreat to the newly renovated Camp Fircom, on Gambier Island, including about 10 youth from St. David's. There's still time to register online at www.vanyaya.bc.ca If you'd like more information, contact Eric Hamlyn at eric@vanyaya.bc.ca or call 604 838 0554.

Friday, May 27th

- **Junior Youth event** – Swimming at the West Van Aquatic Center. Youth will meet and check in with one of the parent hosts (Molly and Anna's Mom, Kris or Katie's Mom, Melinda), at 4:30 in the observation seating area. Supervision in the pool is provided by the aquatic center life guards. The drop in swim fee is \$4.20. Pick up will be at 6 p.m. Parents, please arrange with your youth where exactly you will pick them up from!
- **Senior Youth Event** – Senior youth are being hosted by Nicole and her Mom Sabine, at their home in North Vancouver at 4545 Mapleridge Dr., North Vancouver. Please email or call to confirm that you are coming! ritsons@shaw.ca, 604 971 4523

Friday, June 10th

- **Junior Youth Event** – Games with Dan at St. David's, 4:30-6
- **Senior Youth Event** – Games with Dan at St. David's, 6:30-8:30

Saturday, June 18

A Youth Leadership training event is being planned for Saturday, June 18 from 9-1, at Ryerson United Church. Check the YaYa (youth and young adult!) website for further information and to register. www.vanyaya.bc.ca. Summer blessings to all the youth as you complete exams and head into a well deserved break from school and routines! If you're around over the summer, stay in touch with some of your youth group friends! We'll meet again as a group in September!

Thank You....to the Senior Youth and the Congregation!

The combined efforts of the youth and the generosity of everyone at St. David's resulted in almost \$1900 being raised for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's work with people with HIV-AIDS in Africa. The picnic lunch fundraiser has become a symbol of compassion and commitment towards well being and wholeness for all.

Children and Youth in the Summer...

If you attend St. David's in the summer months know that there is child care available throughout July and August, and for older children there are activity bags at the back of the sanctuary (and a library) for use during worship. Join us for the start of Sunday school on Sunday September 11th, followed by a welcome back BBQ to which everyone is welcome!

Summer Camps Sponsored by Highlands United

Our neighbours in Edgemont Village have an excellent couple of camps for children in the summer. Following the Vacation Bible Camp week, the children, youth and staff from the week lead the worship on the Sunday...if we had a few kids from St. David's involved, perhaps we could have the children involved in the leadership of one of our summer services. Wouldn't that be a summer boost?! Also...if you have any youth gr. 7 & up who would like to be part of the leadership for VBC, Sandi Parker would be happy to include them. In her words, "I sometimes think VBC is a greater ministry for the youth leaders than the children!"

Vacation Bible Camp

http://www.highlandsunited.org/downloads/brochure_vacationbiblecamp_2011.pdf

Musical Theatre Camp

http://www.highlandsunited.org/downloads/brochure_musictheatre.pdf



You're invited to Highlands United Church
vacation bible camp



**Monday-Friday
July 11th to July 15th
9:00 am to noon daily for ages 5—10 yrs**

Spend a great week of your summer making new friends at Highlands! Learn about how you can make a difference in God's world through:

- Cool crafts
- Engaging stories
- Snacks and t-shirt
- Energetic games

For Information:
Contact: Sandi Parker
sandi.parker@highlandsunited.org
Phone: 604-980-6071

Brochure and Registration forms:
www.highlandsunited.org

The mornings will just fly by!

Highlands United Church
3255 Edgemont Blvd. North Vancouver, BC V7R 2P1
604-980-6071 www.highlandsunited.org



Highlands United Productions presents...

musical theatre camp

Mon-Fri July 18-22
9 am-4 pm daily

For Grades 4-12



Highlands United Church
Mon-Fri July 18-22 9am-4pm
Registration: \$250.00*
Includes T-shirt, snacks, cast party and Friday Performance
*Early bird registration \$225.00 by June 15

Artistic Staff: Doug Irwin,
Gillian Irwin and Mark Steffens

**sing! dance! act!
come & have fun...**

Registration info: www.highlandsunited.org
or contact: Highlands United Church
3255 Edgemont Blvd. North Vancouver Ph: 604-980-6071
E-mail: churchoffice@highlandsunited.org

Coming in June...

Spring Strawberries



A June tradition, the wonderful women of the UCW will once again be holding their Annual Strawberry Tea in the Church Lounge. The date will be in an upcoming Sunday Announcement so please watch the Announcements and plan to attend this fun and delicious event.

Tickets are only \$5, but the smiles will last for days.

What's New Online

If you haven't been to our church website in a while, you might be surprised to see the wealth of information that's available. Sermons are now being recorded and can be heard right on the webpage, or download them to listen on your portable media player. Perfect if you miss a service for any reason, or to listen again to a particularly inspiring sermon (but aren't they all). Sermons are now open for comments as well, so if you have any questions or feedback for Dan, just type them at the bottom of the web page.

The Event Calendar shows a variety of activities coming up in the next few weeks, both within the church and in the community. Youth events, yoga, retreats, outreach activities – find out about these opportunities by visiting the website often. The home page highlights important announcements, upcoming musical guests, the most recent sermon, and some of the interesting things we're doing as a church. You may be surprised by everything that goes on!

Other things to look for on the website include photos and videos, artwork and writings from our children and youth, and the new Light a Candle feature where you can add a special prayer or reflection. The site will be updated regularly with new information and new features, so get used to visiting often.

Check it all out at **stdavidsunited.com**.

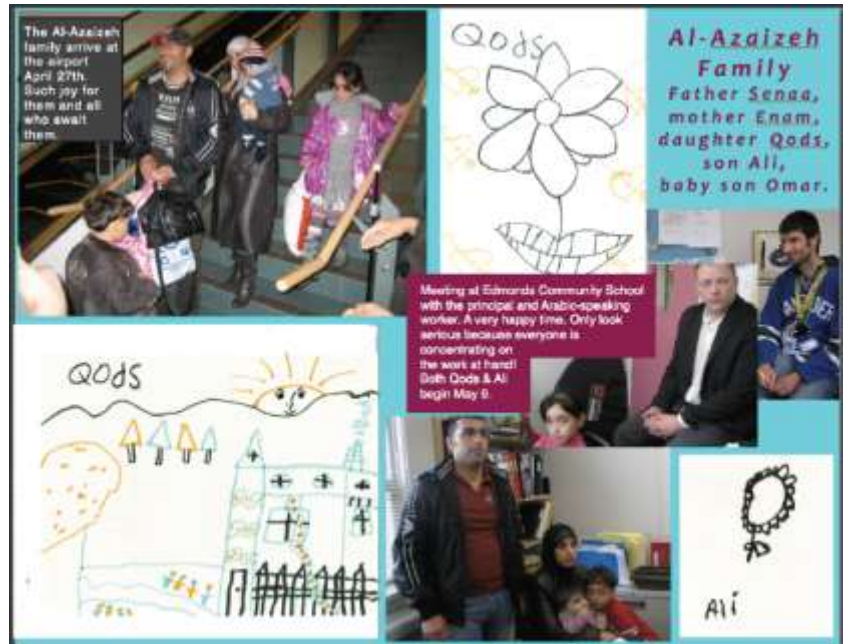


Outreach

Update on Refugee Sponsorship for the Al-Azaizeh family:

An update on the refugee family St. David's is sponsoring along with other North Shore Churches:

Last weekend, parents Senaa Enam, and children Qods (9), Ali (7), and baby Omar Al Azaizeh were moved into their furnished apartment in Burnaby close to Midlegate Mall, and not far from where other family members live who have also come as sponsored refugees. The whole family have SIN cards now as well as their completed landing documents all of which ensure that their Landed Immigrant status as Convention Refugees is documented and that the path to becoming citizens of a country is finally, for the first time in their lives, established.



This family has now been registered at Edmonds Community School. The two older children will attend regular school, and with a huge focus on learning English. The parents will hopefully attend either morning or afternoon English classes at the same school, once they get tested for their level of English Language, and arrange for childcare for baby Omar.

Thanks to Margaret Currie who has lovingly hand-made quilts for each of the 3 children, and to Ellie Boudreau who has acquired an English/Arab dictionary for them. Thanks also to all of you who have made donations of funds, gift cards and furniture, as well as your prayers.

Becky and Ellie will be visiting the family and offering friendship and support next week. If you are interested in extending your friendship and hospitality with a visit, please email or phone Becky Knapton at becky@canken.net or 604.980.0891 to make arrangements.

Thank you,
Becky Knapton
St. David's Outreach Chair



Quilts created by Margaret Currie for the children.