Pennies & Sparrows

CENTRAL SAINT JOHN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER BY TERENCE AND JASMINE CHANDRA

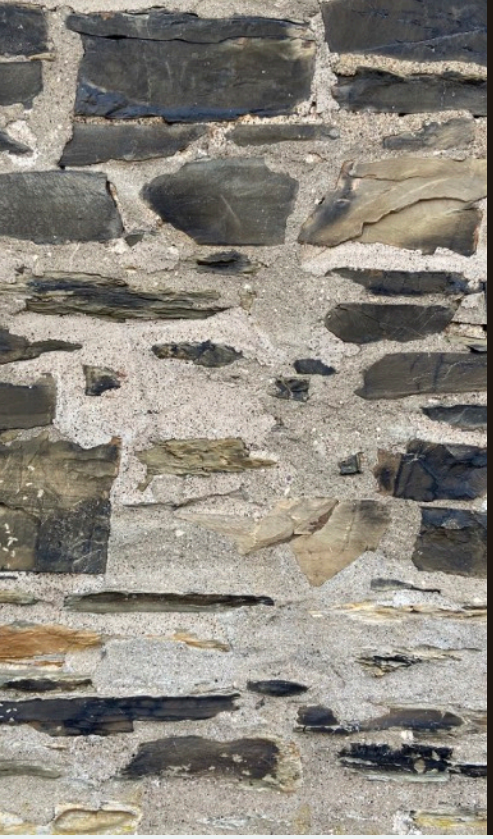
October 2021

Thanksgiving - an exercise in remembering by Terence Chandra

Every Tuesday morning I lead a conversation group for people learning English as a second language— a group hosted by the Saint John Newcomer's Resource Centre. My eclectic group of conversation partners is made up of people who hail from four different global regions: Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. This past Tuesday, we talked about the North American holiday of Thanksgiving, comparing it to other harvest festivals from around the world. Needless to say, it was a fascinating conversation— one where we were all able to share the cultural practices and traditions, unique to our region of the globe.

The ancient Jews, of course, had their own harvest festival. During this festival, everyone was required to gather up the first fruits of their land and proceed to "the dwelling place for God's name" (likely a reference to the Jerusalem Temple). There, at the temple, they would make a thanksgiving offering to the Lord. However, before making this thanksgiving offering, everyone was required to recite a brief history of the nation: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor…" (Deuteronomy 26:5) the offeror would say— a clear reference to Father Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people. Then, starting with Abraham, he would proceed to rehearse the entire history of his people— from slavery in Egypt to passover liberation, from desert journey to settlement in the promised land— "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 26:9). The offerer would then take the fruit of that very land, set it before the altar and bow reverently.

From this, we learn the following truth: Gratitude is a function of memory. It is when we recollect our story— paying particular attention to the moments when we were the gratuitous recipients of kindness, mercy, love and charity— that we are the most thankful. This recollection of blessing needs to be a deliberate act. With the all-too human tendency to highlight the negative, it seems as if we have to be particularly intentional about calling to mind "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure" (Philippians 4:8).



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Since ancient times the church has ritualized this recollection of blessing in what we call "the Eucharist"— a celebration that takes its name from the Greek word *eucharisteo* which literally means to give thanks. During the most solemn portion of this ritual, the priest stands before the bread and wine, reciting the story of salvation— the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. From the recollection of the story, thanksgiving naturally flows.

This Thanksgiving, it may be helpful to consciously recall your own story. When were you ever the recipient of peculiar grace? Who journeyed by your side, offering you love, companionship and support? How does your story connect with the great story of salvation? Recall these things and, as you recall, give thanks.

Mentoring Young Dads through the Saint John Pregnancy Resource Center

The Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC) is a Christian non-profit organization which, since 1989, has offered care and compassion to women dealing with unexpected pregnancy or other, pregnancy related challenges. The PRC, however, does not limit its ministry to mothers. They also offer services to dads; specifically, one-on-one mentoring and parenting classes.

Since June of this year, I (Terence) have been blessed with privilege of offering my services as a mentor. Each week, I meet with a young dad from the community. During our time together, we talk about many of the joys and challenges that come with raising a child. We also watch a video together— videos that tackle subjects like the following: How can we practice healthy discipline with our children? What does it mean to be a role model to our kids? How can we place boundaries around the use of technology?

The young man that I'm mentoring, given his background, faces more challenges than I do as a father. Still, he clearly loves his children and is intent on growing in his role as a parent. I consider it a huge blessing to share the journey with him.

Seniors Helping Seniors

We have now held four Seniors Helping Seniors events. These have been wonderful social times with music, dancing, and speakers on various topics such as Alzeimers, Dementia, and what programs are available through Social Development.

Street Walks!

Summer and fall mean warm weather. Warm weather means more people out and about in our community— chatting with one another in the park, sitting around on benches, or panhandling on the intersection of King and Germain. These are good days for what we like to call our "street patrols"— long walks around the neighbourhood where we try to meet new people, connect with old friends and offer small change or a prayer for those who request it.

During my most recent neighbourhood walk, I (Terence) met a woman fearing greatly for her adult son— a son who, around this time last year, moved to a different part of the country where he disappeared entirely. She hasn't heard from him since last fall and can't sleep and night, fearful as she is for his safety. On the front steps of a bank, I chatted at length with man who presently lives with a partner suffering from severe addiction issues. Over the past few months, he has become a kind of caregiver to her. While he's holding up well for now, he's certainly aware that burnout is on the horizon— especially if his partner can't turn things around. A few minutes later, I found myself sitting on a picnic bench, chatting with a middle-aged man with special needs. He has generally faired well over the course of the pandemic but, as of late, feels particularly lonely and isolated.

These neighbourhood walks bring us into contact with our friends in the community. This is especially important during the ongoing pandemic— a time when our drop-in program has been closed and we see fewer people coming in and out of our building during the week. But, just because we can't have people *in* the church doesn't mean we can't go out. Street patrols are, in a way, an opportunity to take the drop in program out into the neighbourhood.

RADVO Conference

We were fortunate to have been given the opportunity to share about our ministry at this year's RADVO conference in Dallas Texas. The conference is for clergy, aspiring clergy, or anyone wanting to learn more about the church and theology. It was an amazing time of great speakers, worship, and connecting with people throughout the Anglican world.

Ongoing Programs

While we were in Texas at the end of September we got the news that the Province of New Brunswick was putting additional restrictions on churches to try to encourage vaccination and curb the increase of COVID-19 cases. We realized that this meant that a number of programs we were planning would not be able to take place and others would have to be adapted.

Terence has been able to keep his ESL Bible study going online and we continue to support people through the Emmaus Way program. Thanks to the work of Inner City Youth Ministry our Family Connection program is still delivering monthly family night boxes across the city. We have put Messy Church and Kids Lead programs on hold for now and are assessing when we will start the next Art of Prayer program.

The complications created by Covid have been discouraging. However, it has given us an opportunity to reflect on what we do. We have been able to spend more time with people in the Neighbourhood, we have become more open to new possibilities around us, and as we take the pulse of the community, we are able to see what needs are emerging.

We would like to that all the volunteers who help our ministries, the donors who make our work possible, the Diocese of Fredericton who guide and support us, Stone Church who give us a firm base to operate out of, and our partners: mainly - Inner City Youth Ministry, Penni Eisenhauer and the Waterloo Village Association.

May there be peace and hope in the city of Saint John as we move through these challenging times.

How to Give

We largely rely on donations to make our work possible. Tax receiptable donations can be made to the Anglican Diocese of Fredericton with a note that funds are to go to Pennies and Sparrows. This can be done in several ways:

1. **Online** through Canada Helps (using the drop down tab on the page to select Pennies and Sparrows) https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/13778.
2. By **cheque** sent to the Diocese of Fredericton with Pennies and Sparrows in the memo line - 168 Church Street Fredericton, NB E3B 4C9.
3. By **cheque** sent to Stone Church again with Pennies and Sparrows in the memo line - 87 Carleton Street Saint John NB E2L 2Z2.
4. By **etransfer** to Stone Church with a note that the funds are to go to Pennies and Sparrows - stjstone@nb.aibn.com.

Contact us:

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