

Pennies & Sparrows

DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER BY TERENCE AND JASMINE CHANDRA



During the season of Advent,

Christians anticipate not only the coming of Jesus as a baby (which, of course, we celebrate on Christmas Day) but also his coming again to usher in the Kingdom of God. But what is this “Kingdom of God” that Jesus spoke so much about? Simply put, the Kingdom of God is an eternal era of justice and peace that Jesus, the King, promised to inaugurate upon his return. Everything that Jesus did and taught was meant to bear witness to this coming kingdom—to give people around him an insight into the wonderful new world that was to come.

For example, when Jesus restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, wholeness to the leper and life to the dead, he was declaring through his deeds: “My Kingdom is near. And when it comes, there will be no more suffering sickness and death.” Likewise, when Jesus miraculously multiplied the loaves and fishes, providing a seafood bonanza to the poorest of the poor, he was declaring through



this miracle, “My Kingdom is near. And when it comes, there will be no more starvation. All will share and have an abundance to eat.”

Just as Jesus, the King, bore witness to the coming of the Kingdom of God through his teaching and his deeds, so too should we, the people of the church. In fact, that’s at the very heart of the mission that Jesus gave us. In the power of the Holy Spirit we are to do the things that he commanded us to do—feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, minister to the sick and visit the prisoner.

As we do these things, we are giving the broader world a glimpse of the coming Kingdom where hunger, thirst, ethnic divisions, poverty, sickness and isolation will be no more. This is certainly what we endeavour to do at Pennies and Sparrows; that is, minister to others in the name of Jesus and, in so doing, give the broader world a glimpse into the Kingdom of God.

Ongoing programs

Youth Connection, Drop-In, Seniors programs, Foodie Friday, English Language classes have all been going strong. We are also in the process of starting a couple more Emmaus Way groups to help care for people who are going through unstable circumstances.



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Youth Connection

Our weekly Youth Group has been steadily active with trips to the aquatic centre, the Imperial theatre, and even attending a bowling fundraiser with the Church of the Resurrection (pictured here). While we



Our Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees

In God's coming Kingdom, there will be no more ethnic hatred and division. Instead, all of humanity will be united under the authority of Christ, the King. It is in the spirit of this hope that we've been engaged in the ministry of welcoming newcomers to our city— people who have arrived in Saint John from literally every continent: Asia, Europe, Africa and South America.

One way in which we reach out to this immigrant and refugee population is through our adult English Language classes. We currently offer 2 free classes: an intermediate English class taught by Clare Andrews and a beginner English class taught by Miriam Westin. Although attendance fluctuates, each class gets between 10 to 15 students. Not only do students have a chance to learn new vocabulary, improve their grammar and practice their conversation skill; they also get to connect with other newcomers from around the city, satisfying their need for friendship and community (things that are vital when settling in a new country).

Not only have we been ministering to adult newcomers but to children as well. Starting in September, Clare Andrews has resumed her Newcomer's after school program. Through this program, Clare creates a safe, stimulating and educational environment for newcomer children, still in the process of mastering English and figuring out all the quirks of Canadian culture.

Ministry to Homeless and Impoverished

We believe that, in the Kingdom of God, there will be no more homelessness but that, instead (to quote the prophet Micah) “everyone will sit under their own vine and fig tree at peace and unafraid” (Micah 4:4) Sadly, we at Pennies and Sparrow, have NOT succeeded in providing a vine and fig tree (that is, a home) to every homeless person now sleeping on the streets of our city. However, through our thrice weekly drop-in program called the Stone Café, we have welcomed the unhoused into our space, thereby bearing aspect to this

aspect of God’s coming Kingdom. At each drop-in program, our guests are offered snacks (sometimes even meals), refreshments, warm clothing, toiletries and 2 or 3 comfortable couches to nap on. At least once a week, in cooperation with a community nurse from Horizon health, we’re able to offer very basic healthcare service (vaccinations, blood pressure checks, frostbite treatment and so on). We have people come in on a regular basis to provide things like free haircuts, counselling sessions and nursing care.

Foodie Friday

Based on what we’ve read in the scriptures, we believe that, when the Kingdom of God comes, there will be no more hunger; that there will be an abundance of healthy and nutritious food for all. In an effort to bear witness to this aspect of God’s coming Kingdom, we also offer a program called Foodie Friday— a program that is the brainchild of Miriam Westin (who, if you recall, is the same member of our staff who teaches beginner English). Each Friday morning, Miriam and a group of people from all walks of life gather in the little kitchen at Stone Church. Using mostly fresh, local produce they make foods as simple as stewed beef and shepherd’s pie; or, if they’re feeling particularly adventurous, they may try making homemade pasta or Chinese soup dumplings. Then, when the cooking is over, they all gather around the same table, say the grace and proceed to break bread. Miriam’s program provides certain members of our community with basic cooking skills that they may not have learned as children. More importantly, though, Foodie Friday is a ministry that breaks down social barriers, draws people together in friendship, and provides a sense of belonging to some of the most isolated members of our community (the poor, immigrants and refugees).



The Emmaus Way

We believe that, in the Kingdom of God, nobody is isolated. It's with this in mind that we offer a program called The Emmaus Way—a program which places teams of support around lonely people in our community, struggling with crises entirely on their own. Each team involves what we call a “core member”; that is, an individual person or family who is struggling with a personal crisis. It also involves a group of roughly 5 or 6 helpers— people who agree to journey with the core member over the course of roughly a year as work towards the attainment of simple goals. Over the course of our ministry, we've launched about 15 Emmaus Way teams. Recently, we've launched an additional two: One team of support has been formed around a young man in his early thirties, currently struggling with severe depression and PTSD. The other team of support has been formed around a middle-aged woman who is currently experiencing homelessness. Please pray that these teams function well and that the helpers are able to effectively support their core members.

The season of Advent is a time on the church calendar when we look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom— a kingdom of righteousness and peace where there will be no more ethnic division, no more homelessness and poverty, no more hunger and no more social isolation. Be inspired by the promise of the coming Kingdom! Let it fill your heart with hope. And, in that spirit of inspiration and hope, think of things that you can do in your community to make the coming Kingdom of God visible to all. Amen.



Our current Programs:

Youth Connection: weekly youth program with a meal.

Drop-in: 3 times a week open to everyone in the community.

Seniors Step-it-Up: once a month seniors event and twice a month craft and chat.

The Emmaus Way: Teams of support for individuals and families.

ESL Language Classes - Beginner and Intermediate English Language Classes.

ESL Kids: After School Program to teach kids English.

Foodie Fridays: A weekly cooking program where people cook together and invite friends over to share the meal.

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:

Online through Canada Helps (using the drop down tab on the page to select Pennies and Sparrows) <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/13778>.

By cheque sent to the Diocese of Fredericton with Pennies and Sparrows in the memo line - 168 Church Street Fredericton, NB E3B 4C9. Or by cheque sent to Stone Church again with Pennies and Sparrows in the memo line - 87 Carleton Street Saint John NB E2L 2Z2.

By etransfer to Stone Church with a note that the funds are to go to Pennies and Sparrows - stjstone@nb.aibn.com.