

Words from Wilmot



Volume 27 Issue 1

Lent and Easter Schedule of Worship Services



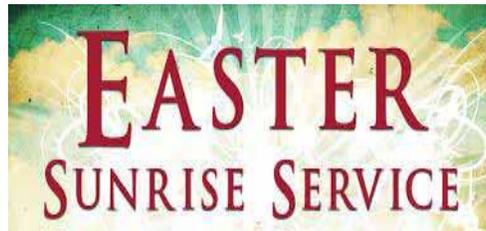
March 20, 11:00 am
Worship at Wilmot



March 24, 6:00 pm
Pot Luck Supper/Service
with Communion at St.
Paul's, combined service
(Downtown United)



March 25, 11:00 am
Good Friday combined
service at Wilmot
(Downtown United)



March 27, 7:00 am
by the pedway at the end of
Carleton Street
with breakfast at
St. Paul's, combined service
(Downtown United)



March 27
11:00 am
Worship
at Wilmot

February, 2016

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Words from**Wilmot**

Volume 27, Issue 1

February 2016

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The Labyrinth Path

Based on her studies in Christian Spiritual Traditions, Rev. Rose-Hannah Gaskin often looks for ways to incorporate ancient traditions to enrich her spiritual practice. Labyrinths have no known origin and their patterns are universal, having been found in early petroglyphs, Greek and Roman tilework as wall and floor decoration, and woven into American Indian basket designs. There are many examples of large outdoor stone labyrinths, with the most famous mythological labyrinth thought to have been located on the island of Crete. Closer to home, and without the Greek mythological Minotaur who supposedly dwelt at the labyrinth centre, is an outdoor stone labyrinth at the Tatamagouche Centre, Nova Scotia. In Christian medieval times tile mazes on cathedral floors were a kind of poor man's pilgrimage: a way to participate in a spiritual journey if you couldn't afford the fare to Jerusalem.

The path walked in a labyrinth is meandering but purposeful. The traveler follows a single line that leads into the centre and back out again. This symbolizes a journey, and when combined with prayer, meditation or intent, can be a tool to help find our spiritual core, and then return us to the external world, balanced and refreshed.

"Walking a labyrinth," Rose-Hannah explains, "is a gentle, deeply personal spiritual practice with no right or wrong way to do it, no predictable outcome and nothing to fear." A person should not feel self-conscious doing it. It is as simple as standing at the starting point, holding in your mind a thought or intention, a word, or perhaps a question, and allowing the lines of the labyrinth to gently guide you at whatever pace feels



comfortable. "You may become aware of the many thoughts running through your mind, your breath, the beautiful light shining through the stained-glass windows or the quiet of the sanctuary. Each person's experience is unique. It may simply provide a moment out of the day to quiet the mind, a respite from the constant need to be busy, and allow the space and time to enter into the simple joy that comes from being alive." Rose-Hannah then quotes Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who says, "Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy."

For Rose-Hannah, the use of the labyrinth "is part of the spiritual journey of life, a reminder to rely on the spirit, to trust where it will take us and to allow ourselves to let go."

We are fortunate at Wilmot to have the leadership to try something new and yet very old, with the use of a beautiful canvas labyrinth designed by Rev. David Brewer and on loan from Gibson Memorial United Church. If you try it, think of it as a very affordable mini-vacation right here in our Wilmot home. It does not take long, you do not have to go very far or pay any money, but it is guaranteed to be memorable and you just may discover your own quiet centre.

Pilgrimage of a Lifetime



Late last summer Deb Bradbury and Rita Roach started out from Pamplona on the pilgrimage of a lifetime. Their goal was to walk, in 35 days, the 715 kilometer Camino de Santiago—the Way of St. James—to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.



Deb, having retired as the principal of Harvey Elementary School and turning 60, wanted a way to celebrate both, contemplating the next part of her life. When she researched the Camino, she realized it would be perfect. Rita loves to walk and thought doing the pilgrimage was a great idea. They trained, walking with backpacks on the Fredericton trail system, up the steep Smythe Street hill, and in Odell Park.

At the beginning of the Camino there were miles of hills garlanded with vineyards. Even though they had trained and



were well-equipped, they got blisters. Rita says, “It is not a vacation. It is a pilgrimage. I wanted to challenge myself, especially my brain.” Deb says that after two weeks of walking, it did get easier. The first ten days were “difficult but exhilarating.”

In the middle stage was the flat plateau of Galicia. In that ancient farmland the villages were supported by the proceeds of the Camino. Farmers ran the hostels and restaurants. “For the most part we could make ourselves understood. For example there were pictures of the food on the menus.” Deb says at that stage she asked herself, “Why am I here?”



Every village had a church. “It was a beacon. We could see them in the distance.” Inside, these ancient churches were quiet; “more sacred than the big churches.” They were surprised how few young people and children

(Continued on Page 4)

(Pilgrimage continued from page 3)

they saw in the villages. They met people from all over the world. Many of the hostels on the way had a “pilgrim supper” where they met other wayfarers. They were invariably asked three questions: What is your name? Where are you from? Why are you doing this? They were surprised that the majority of the pilgrims were either middle-aged or seniors. They figured that seniors had the time and the economic means. A lot of women were walking alone. “The camaraderie made us always feel safe.”

Some days it was in the mid-thirties. They would be trudging up the hills in the heat, and then when they got to the top, turn around to see a beautiful view as a reward. “The tiredness and the heat would disappear.”

The feeling of being part of a community of pilgrims was strong, not only of the walkers they met, but those thousands who had walked before them. The basic greeting on the way was *Buen Camino*: a good pilgrimage.

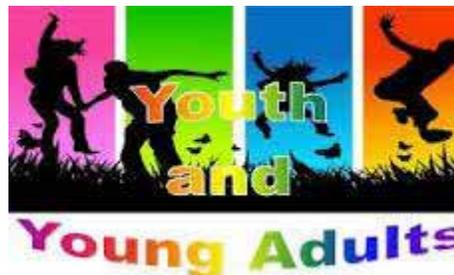
Deb says, “We had a lot of time to think, hours of quiet time. To think about what matters, what doesn’t matter. Whoever came into my mind I would think of that person, how they had impacted on my life. I tried to walk in grace, being grateful.” Rita says, “I wanted to stretch myself, take myself out of my comfort zone. I achieved that. I had always taken the route of least resistance, so this gave me a special sense of achievement.”

Deb had an added challenge. Early on the journey she sustained a stress fracture on her foot. Because of her limping, the sole of the other foot became a mass of blisters. Rita says, “Deb was in so much pain. She’s such a strong person.” Deb says, “I wasn’t going to give up.”

It isn’t surprising that Frederictonians want to go on the Camino de Santiago. A city icon is the Beaverbrook Art Gallery’s “Santiago El Grande”, St. James the Great riding a horse, with the cathedral vault as its background and an exhausted pilgrim, perhaps Dali himself,

slumped at the very bottom of the painting. Deb says that on the third stage of their pilgrimage, she could see the end and thought with delight, “I’m going to Santiago!”

© Nancy Bauer



Children's & Youth Corner

Since our last publication for *Words from Wilmot*, the children and youth have been very busy. Christmas brought the usual activity around the church and the contribution of our young people was so appreciated by everyone. The Children & Youth Sunday on December 13th was awesome! Christmas Eve, when families and young people gathered, was filled with special moments, none more powerful than when the gathering of some 40 children came into the sanctuary and saw a 'live' baby in the manger. **Vale McMillan** played the role as baby Jesus perfectly.



Evelyn Beairsto experiences Children’s Communion on the first Sunday of Lent

The Sunday School children continue to be great listeners not only as they sit and listen to storytime in church but during their Sunday School time as well. Perhaps one of our favourite times was the teaching and sharing of Communion a couple of Sundays ago – sacred moments for sure.

Both the Middle School and Senior Youth groups have started up again – Movie Night, Exploring the Church, Boulderling, Shrove Tuesday has kept us busy. Although our snowshoeing adventure had to be postponed, we are determined to make it happen.

Two of our youth/young adults are studying or working abroad:

Laura McCartney is teaching in Jeonju, South Korea. It took Laura awhile to adjust to the Korean culture. As the Koreans treat everyone as family she has made many new friends. Within the first couple of weeks, Laura travelled to Japan to get her VISA. She returned to begin her teaching which turned out to be 12 hour days. Long working days are very common in South Korea. In her last email, Laura told me about the streets in Seoul being painted with hydrochromic paint for the monsoon season which tends to be very dreary. Their hope is that citizens will come out of their houses to see the beautiful designs! Look it up on the internet—It is really neat: <http://www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/pantone-project-monsoon>

Jacqueline Young has settled into 'Kot Erasmus' which is a small residence with 8 Belgians and 10 international students. She lives in Louvain-la-Neuve, a pedestrian city just outside of Brussels. Jacqueline has one engineering class taught in French and 3 management/entrepreneurship classes taught in English (however all of her group work has been in French). Classes are very well organized and contain real-life experiences such as online international business simulations and design projects in which they actually have to construct their product. She has had opportunities to travel to Barcelona, Paris and of course to Brussels. Jacqueline will be heading to Stockholm in March to meet up with another UNB engineering student. ***What an experience for these two young adults!***

Blessings to all our readers from Ellen, the children, youth & young adults.

Pride in Education



Gail Costello

High school can be challenging at the best of times. For students who are questioning their sexual identity and orientation it can be especially difficult. Gail Costello, an openly gay teacher, spoke recently about her leadership role with the Gay/Straight Alliance at Oro-mocto High School. Approximately forty interested Wilmot members attended the information session given by her on December 6, 2015 following Sunday worship service.

“The GSA originated with the school guidance department behind closed doors,” Gail explains, “to help students deal with personal issues and peer pressure.” The program is now ‘out of the closet’ and has been nominated for a national award. Not only does Gail work with students, but also educators, middle schools, the CMHA and the RCMP. Through acceptance, inclusive activities open to all students and bright stickers on classroom doors indicating safe places, students now feel more relaxed and welcome in the school environment. Changing attitudes contribute greatly to their ability to learn and flourish.

Typically, Gail explains, schools have been dangerous and frightening places for LGBTQ students who can be harassed, bullied and even physically threatened. Lunch rooms, locker rooms and washrooms are often par-

(Pride in Education continued from page 5)



ticularly dangerous as they may be unsupervised. Some students will not use the wash-room at school out of fear, and wait until they get home. Seventy percent of all students will hear some form of homo-negative comment every single day and sometimes even from teachers. Feelings of isolation and suicide are common among LGBTQ youth. Many live in secrecy. Homelessness can be common as some lack support and acceptance at home, and may feel unsafe to disclose to their family, or if they do, may be kicked out of their home. Many students report that while they would like to attend church, it is not typically a place where LGBTQ people can feel accepted; often the opposite is true, and sadly, faith communities can be a primary source of misunderstanding, judgment and exclusion. For these youth, a rainbow flag, just like the bright stickers on their classroom doors, is a beacon indicating refuge and acceptance. Membership in a faith community would contribute greatly to their mental, physical and spiritual well-being.

Gail has witnessed the power of acceptance in action. She recently accompanied thirteen Oromocto High School students at a LGBTQ conference in Winnipeg. Through school activities these students were able to raise fourteen thousand dollars to cover expenses, a

strong indication of the support their group is receiving. Some reported feeling normal for the first time, surrounded by people who face the same issues, and most said it was difficult to come back to reality, indicating there is still lots of work to be done.

Wilmot sends a warm thank you to Gail for sharing her knowledge and insight as the congregation explores the Affirming Diversity process.

© Kathie Goggin

Jack Oudemans



Jack, our Wilmot Photographer, celebrated his 93rd birthday in February and was honoured by the WIT (Wilmot Information Team) members with birthday cake and messages in Dutch.



Wilmot Seniors

Wilmot Seniors has arranged a busy Spring and invite all Seniors and retirees to join us. We also always welcome folks of any age who would like to attend one or several of our times together. Here is what we have planned:

On **March 1st**, our mid-winter pot luck lunch at 12 noon, will give us the opportunity to have some fun and enjoy a meal together. (This time together might possibly incorporate some plans from our cancelled Christmas and Valentines celebrations.) Following our lunch, we will enjoy a rousing and entertaining old-fashioned hymn singing led by Steven Peacock.

On **March 15th**, Jon Sweeney will be our special guest, and share stories of a bug's life from his award winning work as an entomologist.

On **April 19th**, our guest will be from the City Planners Office and will talk about the new plan for the downtown area of which Wilmot is a part.

May 17th means Bingo, and lots of prizes!

June 7th will be our Mystery Day which is always a lot of fun (and top secret as well).

If one or all of these appeal to you, you are more than welcome to attend!

☺ Sue Breen

Update from Our Refugee Committee



The Interchurch Refugee Committee met on February 17th. On this date there had been no information regarding when our refugee family may arrive. Many of the families that have been arriving in Fredericton are government sponsored. Privately sponsored families like ours would hopefully start arriving in March.

As private sponsors our group takes full responsibility for the family for one year from the date of their arrival. Our responsibilities include providing housing, clothing, food, enrolling children in schools, adults in language classes, helping them with shopping, finding a family doctor, dentist, and assistance to integrate them into the community. The financial commitment for a family of four is \$26,000. We have received some household items and monetary donations from our church communities but will be needing more.

After our meeting, word was received from Immigration Canada in Winnipeg, that two families have been accepted on our behalf and their applications have been forwarded to Beirut for processing. This means that both of these families could be interviewed and have their medicals within the next few weeks. One is a family of four: mother, father, and two sons ages 14 and 4, plus a smaller family: mother, father and a 2-year-old.

We are anxiously looking forward to their arrival and will keep you updated. Exciting news – a busy spring!

☺ Elaine Kenyon

Affirming Diversity

OUR SHARED JOURNEY

You have very likely seen notes in the bulletin advertising information or listening sessions hosted by the Affirming Diversity Committee. You may have wondered about how we started down this path and what to expect as we continue on this journey. Our committee was formed following a motion by Council in October 2013 to develop a process by which we would affirm diversity in all its dimensions at Wilmot United Church. In our first report to Council, we identified six themes related to this broad scope based on what we had heard during our shared listening sessions with Wilmot on the Move. As a workable starting point, and with permission from Council, we turned our focus for the year to one of these themes: the affirmation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, with intentional inclusion of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) populations. So it was in October that we invited the congregation to reflect on the question of becoming officially Affirming in the sense of the process developed by Affirm United, a national committee that promotes full inclusion and whose program was officially endorsed by the United Church in 2000.

Questions and issues

Our first step was to seek input from our congregation on our hopes and concerns for the process. Based on this feedback, we planned information sessions and opportunities for discussion particularly around the following two questions:

1. Why is it important to raise the question of become an Affirming congregation? Aren't things okay as they are?

Certainly Wilmot is a place of welcome. However, there are still many challenges faced by sexual minorities, as described in the presentation by Gail Costello (see article by Kathie Goggin). By becoming Affirming we intentionally recognize (we say out loud) that people from the LGBTQ community are valued members of our congregation.

2. What does scripture say about sexual minorities and how does this question fit with our theology or faith?

The Very Rev. Peter Short provided insight and food for reflection on this matter, underlining the value of diversity and of attentiveness to the realities of others, and inviting us to consider how our faith has changed over time. Of course, it is always a little dodgy to claim to be accurately reflecting the words of someone else. It is perhaps safest to say that we took away the message that the Bible has no understanding of homosexuality, so whenever it was encountered it was seen as a deviation from the norm and thus treated as perverse (just as the lack of understanding of mental illness at that time led to it being equated with being possessed). The Bible is not intended to be used as a weapon, but rather is to be

evaluated based on the extent to which it reflects the love of God.



Part of our journey

There is a third question, namely what does an Affirming congregation look like?

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The answer that we offer is that it looks much like Wilmot United Church—so much of being affirming is already part of who we are. It would look like the path we have already followed together by simply responding as faithfully as we can to the questions of the day, namely:

If a member of the LGBTQ community attended our church, would they have to worry about what is said about them from the pulpit? No.

Would they be invited to participate in the ministry of the church? Yes.

If they walked with our community and then asked to be married in our church, would we affirm their relationship? Yes.

If their children attended our Sunday school, would they recognize their family in the way we talk about families? Yes.

If they were sick, would we visit them and would that visit be a safe space? Yes.

If stuff happened (and stuff just happens sometimes) would we be committed to figuring it out together? Yes.

When other Christians condemn the LGBTQ community, are we willing to be different and to say openly that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ?

It is really this last question that represents the step we are inviting the congregation to take. For many people these would not even be questions. For people from the LGBTQ community the questions are real and the answers cannot be taken for granted. In asking for recognition by Affirm United we would essentially be asking for accreditation of our public commitment to each other in this diverse, faith-filled community at Wilmot United Church.

© Affirming Diversity Committee

The Wilmot Quilters



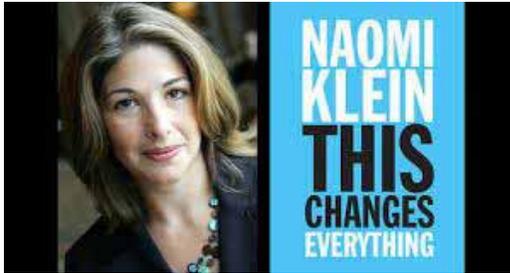
Jack Oudemans, the *Words from Wilmot* photographer, and I came into the parlour on a Thursday morning where about ten of the quilters were having a break over tea and goodies. “Would you like a cup of tea?” “Yes,” said Jack enthusiastically as he settled down to chat with one of the women. A strong sense of camaraderie permeated the room.

One of the quilters, Lois Campion, was leaving, others were arriving. Many of the regulars weren’t there, we were told. “Mecca Laverty isn’t here.” One woman opened the door and said, “I’m looking for Rose-Hannah.” Elaine Kenyon came in to tell those assembled that the refugee committee was going to sponsor two families. It was agreed there would be no problem getting the necessary money and gear.

As many as 13, and as few as two quilters work on any given day. They always have a baby quilt on the go so that anyone who wants to learn to quilt can be taught. “We always try to keep a finished baby quilt,” said Linda Gough. They make quilts for themselves and for fundraising for the church. One of the women found a quilt top that her mother had made many years ago. That was especially nice to finish. They keep a ring binder with a list of those who quilted on each day as well as how many hours each quilt takes to complete.

The fellowship is nurtured by “show and tell”: a woman brings in her current project—quilt, knitting or other. Sometime soon they are going to have “a day project.” All the women will bring in their sewing machines, and they will create a quilt from scratch. Jack and I felt very welcome.

© Nancy Bauer



This Changes Everything

On January 26th four people from Wilmot, Norman and Mecca Laverty, Lois MacDougall and David Coon, attended the Mount Allison University President's Speakers Series to hear Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. She is an award-winning journalist, columnist and international best-selling author. St. Thomas University had previously presented the New Brunswick premiere of the film of the same name in November, hosted by STU Young Greens, and some of our Wilmoteers attended this event as well. After the STU presentation David Coon provided a New Brunswick perspective on the Paris climate talks which he was about to attend, and related our province's issues to the content of Naomi's book and the film. It is interesting to note that STU conferred an honorary degree on Naomi back in May 2011 because of her forward thinking and bold political analysis of corporate capitalism, consumerism and climate change.

Wilmot Seekers Group chose *This Changes Everything* for discussion at their February 2016 gathering. Rev. Don MacDougall moderated the ideas expressed by the fourteen interested folk who attended and at the conclusion of our meeting Janice Harvey helped us consolidate and focus our thoughts around a leap into action for the future. Naomi Klein's book was likened to the book of *Jeremiah* in Hebrew Scripture, a book warning of impending disaster, but a book underlining hope through understanding in order to arrive at clarity for change, both personally and collectively as a global society.

© L. Caseley



Update

2016 got off to a great start for our UCW, adding another new member, Angela. Our Foodless Food Sale is again a big success. Thanks to our wonderful congregation we have received \$1,690.00. That figure is as of Sunday, February 14th and will most likely increase in the coming days. I know we have said thank you in the past, but all of you need to know how much we appreciate this support year after year, as we say another heartfelt thank you to everyone.



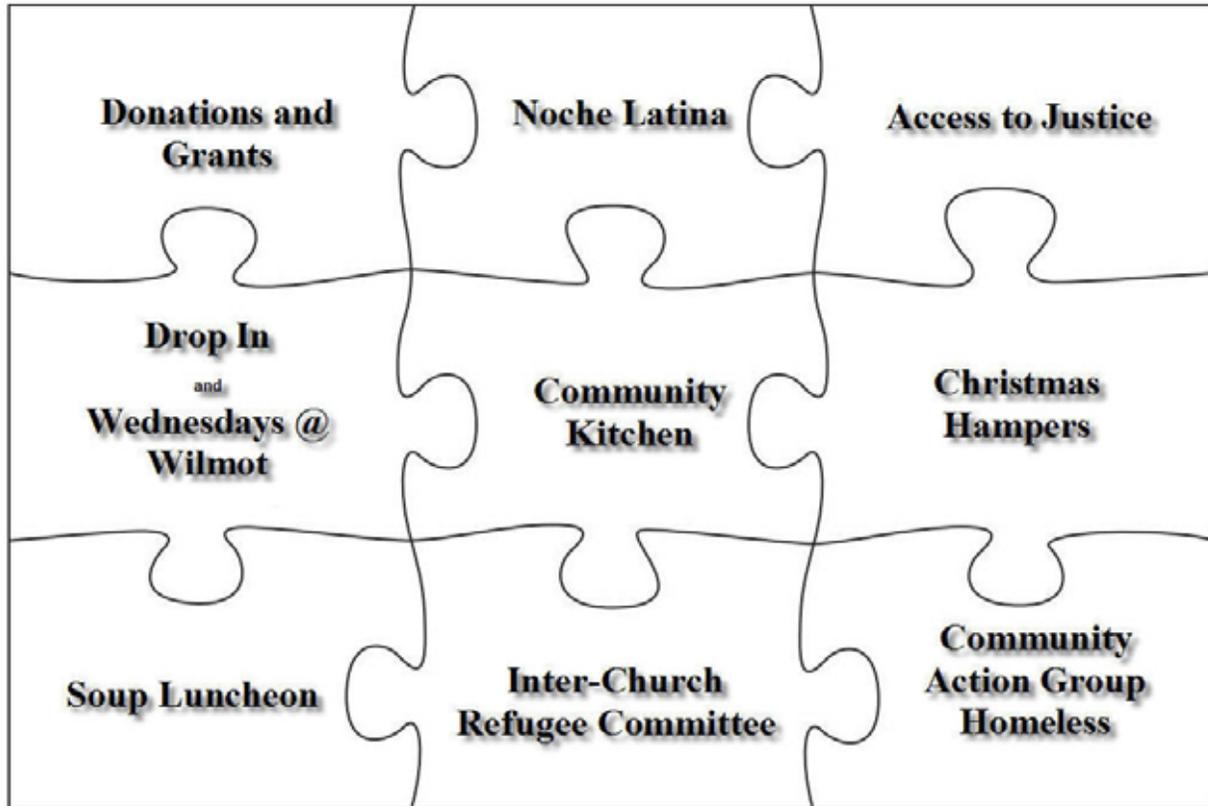
I can also inform you of our spring Rummage Sale dates: Friday, April 22 from 3:00 to 6:00 pm and from 9:00 to noon on Saturday the 23rd. It's nice just to be able to even say the word "April"...it conjures up visions of warm rains and daffodils. If the next two months go by as quickly as the last two, we'll all be fine. Donation deliveries for the Rummage Sale can be left on the stage of the gym.

Here's a quote for the day:

The best vitamin for a Christian is B¹.

☺ Lorie Nielsen

Outreach Committee



Donations and Grants:



We received a much appreciated donation of \$200 from Forest Hill United toward Drop In expenses and W@W has received another generous grant of \$3,500.

from the Fredericton Community Foundation. Melva Curtis has presented the new Outreach budget to Council for approval and included an increase in Drop In monies to reflect the past years' spending and to reinstate a summer excursion.

Noche Latina: This is an important project to support *Breaking the Silence* and was scheduled for February 5, 2016.



Drop In continues to be well attended. The participants are asked for input and feedback on the activities. We have new team members for working at Drop In and welcome any interest from the congregation on ways to contribute to activities or being part of a team.



One successful lunch was held on January 24 and projected dates are February 28 and April 10, 2016. The Christmas luncheon was a success and very much supported by the congregation.



We are looking for more volunteers to work on Sunday from 4 to 6 pm at the Community kitchen.

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HAVE YOU CHECKED
LATELY?

This newsletter can
also be read online
in colour
on our website

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These will be
available on a limited
basis for each issue.

If you would like to re-
ceive the LARGE
PRINT edition, please
ask your Sunday
Morning Welcomer.



Inter-Church Refugee Committee:



Elaine Kenyon reported that they are waiting for a Syrian

family to arrive via Lebanon. Another family is waiting as well to be processed. Donations have been received in response to the Syrian crisis.



W@W:

The Fredericton Community Foundation grant is key to being able to offer a nutritious lunch and offer programs and honouraria to speakers for Wednesdays @ Wilmot. Average attendance is over 40. Haircuts are being offered twice a month. We have applied for bus tickets with Fredericton Transit. Attendance was 1400 in 2015.

Community Action Group



Homeless: There was a point-in-time count on February 20 and 21, 2016. There is a need for volunteers to help enumerate homeless folks.

Christmas Hampers: Wilmot supported another successful hamper program with gifts and food gift cards to 20 families. Thank you to the congregation for your support.



Access to Justice:

As a follow up to our very successful November 12th Access to Justice public forum, the Access to Justice Coalition has requested through local MP, Matthew DeCoursey, the lifting of the federal legal aid funding freeze. Other officials at both the federal and provincial government levels have also been copied in order to highlight the serious need for better legal aid funding. We have asked that we be kept apprised of actions in pursuing this file and on the federal government's plans and intentions for legal aid funding.



The committee appreciates and welcomes volunteers for any of our activities.

© Lynn MacKinnon,
Terri MacLean
Co-Chairs



Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc.

CELEBRATING STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

Welcome, Adventure, Trust, Opportunity, Excitement, Hospitality, Gratitude, Love

One might think that the words above are describing my feelings – that of a FFF (First Fredericton Friend) volunteer with MCAF (Multicultural Association of Fredericton). Well, they do, but they equally if not more so describe the new Syrian Family I've come to know and love.

January 14, I got a call from MCAF saying there was a Syrian Family they'd like me to befriend. MCAF had been recruiting volunteers to be FFF who would help their settlement workers with the expected 55 plus Syrian families to arrive in Fredericton. Peter Short's analogy used in his recent sermon "stick your hand in" is a perfect description of what each FFF is doing. We really had no idea of what we might touch, what we were to do, what we might find. Discoveries have been amazing and sometimes overwhelming but so affirming of life and love!

I met my family of six (4 children ages 7½, 5, 4, 15 months) the afternoon they moved into their apartment. Most families have been met by a FFF at the airport but somehow this family was missed. I met them at their new apartment, empty except for six new mattresses and bags of things. I had some bedding for them. We sat on the carpeted living room floor with them welcoming me as

much as I welcomed them. It's a blur now but I assume they made coffee for me and I learned their names and that they all had sore throats and colds. I was fortunate that my friend Carol had started working with a family about a week before me and her family was living in the same building. Thus, Carol and I learned and helped each other over the next few days.

Those days were filled with obtaining furnishings from friends as well as the MCAF storage centre of donated items, waiting four hours at the After Hours Clinic, getting flu shots, buying school lunch bags, etc. Driving the family of six required either making two trips or having another car – oh yes, plus a toddler's regulation car seat. It quickly became evident that Carol and I needed to expand our families' support team! I immediately recruited my friend Deb Birch, then Ellen Blake who crossed my path after choir practice. When Ellen more or less made a rhetorical statement saying "I should do something to help the refugees" I enlisted her and she jumped in!

Adventure: Our family has approached every new experience with a smile and happiness, even when learning the bus routes in the cold. They must be very optimistic people. They have already discovered winter fun sliding at Mactaquac Park.

Trust: How great has been their trust in this journey to Canada and in us!

(Continued on insert page 2)

(Continued from insert page 1)

Opportunity: It has been a joy to see so many Fredericton individuals, especially whole families, involved – giving their time and friendship, experiencing another culture first hand. Not only do we have the opportunity to learn about the Syrian culture but our eyes have been opened to The Fredericton Muslim Association in Fredericton. They have provided rides to the Mosque and hosted two dinners for the newcomers and FFF with 200-300 attendees to date. Residents who can speak Arabic have been valuable volunteer interpreters. Some of these Arabic speakers have only been in Fredericton a short time and came as University students, refugees or immigrants. They have been so generous with their time and assistance.

Excitement: I sense my Syrian Family's excitement for a better future. Also, something huge has been happening in the city. I'm sure that those who get involved with settling and befriending refugees already know the feeling of belonging to a greater humanity, but the sheer volume of Syrian refugees, the number of people, organizations, and city resources offering special support is spreading a warmth, a sense of unity within the diversity of our human family. Yet, there are questions and discussions that need to be held with Fredericton residents who question and wonder about our government and city services helping so many Syrians, the consequences and fairness to the already existing Frederictonians who are struggling. While shopping for my family I had one such discussion with a store clerk. I don't think it is an either/or situation. Canada can and needs to provide a better life for our citizens as well as for our global neighbours in need of security and resettlement. Government sponsored refugees receive for the first year

the same financial assistance as those on income assistance.

Hospitality: Sharing a Syrian meal sitting on the carpeted floor of an empty room from one central plate, insisting that I come in and sit down, having John and I join them for a meal, and many cups of coffee.

Gratitude: "Thank you" must be one of the first English words the Syrians learn and they sincerely say it often! I too am filled with gratitude – grateful for their trust, friendship, and unconditional love. Gratitude for fate that I live in a peaceful country and have had many positive life experiences and opportunities.

Love: It should be so simple yet it is our Christian everyday struggle – to follow Jesus' path of love and to be in relationship with the 'other'.

As our Syrian friends' immediate settlement needs subside we will begin to grow this relationship of knowing personally more about each other. We look forward to learning more about their extended family, culture, skills, interests and dreams. I do know that the dad has been a motorbike mechanic and has done something with ceramics. My family showed me a video with the father's parents sending them messages while standing in their Syrian yard by a lemon tree. How old that video is I don't know. I know there are about 14 siblings in the family. Recently, they told me that a brother (in a refugee camp) was having a refugee resettlement interview and they hoped he'd get to come to Fredericton! Not being blind to the challenges ahead, we look forward to seeing these Syrian families become part of our Fredericton tapestry enriching our city and country.

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a First Fredericton Friend