



Bala United Church

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Celebrating the life and work of our Church

Rev. Sue Woods, Minister

HAPPY
EASTER

Minister's Chat

The awakening of new life all around gives one the true sense of spring. Yes, the snow banks are melting away, the sub-pumps are running, and in a short time the tree frogs will fill our evenings with music. How do you express with paper and pen all these new feelings that spring brings? Have you ever thought of being a Psalmist and expressing your feelings to God? An assignment during our Lenten Study was to create a psalm. If you have ever opened your Bible to the very middle you will find the psalms; they are among the most human expressions you can find in the Bible. Some of them are so raw, we want to look away - and, in fact, many of our lectionary texts (readings chosen each week for the minister) skip over the passages filled with rage and violence. The psalms give us confidence, however, that no matter what emotion we are feeling, we can share it with God.

Psalm simply means song. In 150 chapters the writers pour out their innermost feelings to their God. They have written hymns of praise, songs of love and thanksgiving, and anthems to their kings. There are marriage songs, funeral songs, and songs about battles and war. Even today, these songs are among the most loved of our hymns and worship music. Like those ancient, faithful people, we sing in times of victory and triumph. We find it easy to sing in celebration. When all is going well the hymns of praise are full of joy, and our songs of thanksgiving flow in beauty and hope but

life is not always full of reasons to sing with happiness. There are times when lullabies are silenced and the words catch in our throats.

Sammy was only 10 years old when he died last week and I had the honour of sharing in his service. His tiny body couldn't fight off the last virus and Sammy passed away surrounded by his family. In his 10 years, Sammy could not speak or see but his life was a wonderful example of how to be and he taught tolerance to those who came in contact with him, no matter what their song was, to accept and not to judge. During the celebration of Sammy's life I read from children Bible Psalm 23:

"I think of God as my shepherd who gives me all that I need; who lets me lie down on soft green grass, beside a quiet stream.

I think of God as my shepherd, who helps me do what is right. God helps me feel strong when I'm weak and afraid; when I'm crying for someone who's sad.

My shepherd is glad when I'm happy, and gives me good things to eat. I know I'm invited to live in God's house for all the days of my life."

Songs are a source of comfort. How many children have been comforted by the voice of a loving parent singing to them in the dark hours of their fear? Perhaps the example that touches all of us is at the time of death. When we gather to face that loss, we sing to share grief and faith.

To sing in the face of despair is to bring hope to the situation. To sing in the presence of fear is to bring a sense of freedom. To sing in the midst of sorrow is to bring comfort and healing. This next month in our churches we will feel the wide range of the psalms as we journey through Lent to Good Friday and to Easter morning.

Blessings, Rev. Sue

Some Thoughts on a Welcoming Church

We are a very welcoming church. It's just who we are I think we work at it all the time. Each Sunday we greet others by name and inquire about the health and activities of each other. Last Sunday during service I reflected on how welcoming indeed we are. As I mused, I liked hearing baby Grayson making his endearing sounds while big sister, Skylar, scratched lightly the belly of canine resident, Diva. While I contemplated I enjoyed the vibrant Spring colours of Don Elliott's most recent art work brightening the windows to the falls. Before service I enjoyed conversations with others, a coffee, and one (or two . . .) of the cookies that new member, Nancy Perkins, had brought freshly baked to church. These and Rev Sue's infectious smile are just a few of the welcoming elements that distinguish our small church in Muskoka.

During our stay in Hilton Head, South Carolina, these last three years, Marian and I have attended church most Sundays. Not deterred by designations or caught up in dogma or doctrine we have enjoyed worshiping at a wide variety of churches including Presbyterian, Community, and Lutheran assemblies. Of course we have found welcoming components at each. The most welcoming church to date has been an A.M.E. church—African Methodist Episcopal church - Queen's Chapel. In spite of our colour—or lack thereof—we were welcomed warmly on a Sunday morning. Practically all members shook our hands or exchanged a personal greeting. At the door, we were greeted as we entered, had our photograph taken, and encouraged to write our names in "the book." A small welcoming committee introduced all visitors by name at some point during the service. First time visitors were encouraged to say a few words and, when nudged

by Marian, I stood and explained that our tour guide for the (African / American) Gullah Heritage tour, Irv Campbell, when I had asked for his recommendation of a church that was warm, welcoming, and "not too uppity," had suggested Queen's Chapel. There was appreciative laughter at that point, as you may imagine, and during the sermon Revered Ralston, referenced "Brother Campbell's" recommendations. When Revered Ralston encouraged members and visitors to stand, walk about, and greet each other personally, a very distinguished woman wearing a wonderfully contemporary high fashion hat—white, sculpted to her head, and adorned with rhinestones--approached Marian and me and explained that, "We're uppity, but not too uppity."

At our home church we are already doing a wonderful job in acknowledging and greeting others—old and new. We don't miss a one! It certainly helps that we are a very chatty bunch as well! Of course we can continue to grow as a congregation in many ways including how we respect, acknowledge, and widen our circles to include newcomers. I suggest an idea Marian and I saw recently in Hilton Head: at on one of the many Baptist churches on the island, in a community called "Sea Pines," we read on a shingle hanging from the church sign, "Visitors' Church." Let's add that small sign to our own!

Brian McDonald, Vice-Chair



Church Services for Lent and Easter

- April 3 11:00 a.m. Communion Sunday
- April 17 11:00 a.m. Palm Sunday Family Service and baptism
- April 22 10:00 a.m. Good Friday Service at Bala United Church
- April 24 7:00 a.m. Sunrise Service at Bala United Church and breakfast to follow
- April 24 11:00 a.m. Easter Service at Port Carling



Lenten Study
 “ 50 Ways to Pray”

Thursdays at 10 am in the JCE Wing
 Bala United Church.
 Everyone is welcome!

Upcoming Events:



The Bala United Church Gift Shop . . .
 The shop is open Mondays from 10 am to 12 noon
 or by appointment. Call Helen at 762-2625



Knitting Group
 Every **Monday** 10 am – 12 noon
 Jackson C.E. Wing – Everyone is welcome
 Coffee is served.



Bala United Church Council Meeting
 Tuesday, April 5, 2011
 9:30 am Jackson C E Wing



Hold the Dates:



A Spring Togs & Toys Sale will be held Saturday
 April 30 at Bala United Church, 8-12 noon. For
 more information or to make a donation of gently
 used children’s clothes, toys, books or gear, please
 call Marian 762-5178 or Marilyn 762-2870. See
 you there.



Don’t forget

A DIME A DAY FOR



MISSION AND SERVICE



You'll GO BANANAS FOR SON TREASURE ISLAND!

We're excited about Bala United Church's
 Vacation Bible School to be held August 9 to
 August 11. This year's program is Son Treasure
 Island, three days of treasure hunting and
 adventure in the Caribbean Islands. (really Bala!)
 Through their adventures children will discover
 that God's love is giving, kind, caring and forever!
 We will have a great time with lively songs,
 creative crafts, exciting games, Bible stories and
 tasty snacks - all things that make VBS so much
 fun.

Registration forms are available at the church on
 the very decorated bulletin board or online....so
 hurry and set sail for Son Treasure Island.



NEW ACT Project

“Shakespeare on Trial”

Launch -- April 9, 2011



Eva Moore and Annette Procnier will produce five plays this summer, reviving the summer stock theatre in Bala where “Straw Hat Theatre” in Canada actually began in 1934.

The new theatre will begin with a roast of the world’s most famous bard of the stage -- William Shakespeare. The fast-paced comedy brings Shakespeare face to face with a few of his most well-loved characters, such as Macbeth, Hamlet and Juliet, who relish their chance to talk back to their creator.

The New Actors’ Colony Theatre (New ACT) in the Bala Community Centre is presenting “**Shakespeare on Trial.**” Tickets \$25 per person and available at 705-641-2949. For additional information visit www.newact.ca

Longest curling game : Bala Curling Club sets world record



Bala, Ont. Canada – Curlers at the Bala Curling Club in central Ontario were on the ice 60 straight hours – setting the new world record for the longest curling game.

The previous Guinness world record for the Longest curling marathon was set last March by curlers in Burlington at 54 hours and one minute.

Participants included teens Brittany and Amanda Pearce of Bala, Stephen Collins and Shawn Kelly of Gravenhurst, Matt Williams of Bracebridge, Chad Arney of Bala, Steven Camin of Midland and Bracebridge native Jessie Williams who is ranked the third best lead in Canada.

www.World Records Academy.org



If you need to contact Rev. Sue
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Note: Monday is Rev Sue’s day off.