



Bala United Church

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Issue 49

Newsletter March, 2011

Celebrating the life and work of our Church

Rev. Sue Woods, Minister

Minister's Chat

It is never easy watching someone you love suffer with illness. It is so difficult to say good-bye. You find yourself sitting by their bedside remembering all the good times, all those wonderful memories. You don't want the person to go but you don't want them to suffer. It is hard to let go. During the many hours I have sat by Aunt Elsie's bed I find myself in quiet prayer.

What is prayer? Prayer itself is ethereal, baffling, uncertain, and impossible to fully explain. In Christian prayer, we "pray" anytime we deliberately choose to relate to God. Thus, prayer consist of a vast assortment of modes, including: using words to converse with God, using no words with the aim of listening quietly and savouring divine presence, ruminating over thoughts and ideas, trying not to have any thoughts and ideas, extending love and receiving love, imagining and visualizing, and searching for guidance by discerning choices and decisions. Within these modes, there are numerous human expressions in communicating with God: intercessory, praise, contrition, gratitude, grieving, searching, celebrating, struggling, etc.

Jesus often withdrew from the crowds to pray. He went into the wilderness, he knelt by a rock, or he stood in the temple. Luke tells us that Jesus went to the synagogue,

the house of prayer, regularly and often. It is this kind of a regular pattern that makes prayer a part of our lives. And when one prays regularly, prayer becomes comfortable and a source of nurture and strength. Varied methods comprise the content of prayer: reciting the psalms alone or with others, pondering scripture passages or other sacred texts, using repetition such as a word or phrase in centering meditation, carrying on a conversation with God, walking meditatively, enjoying the beauty and wonder of nature, using written prayers of others, journaling one's own reflections and prayer, sitting in solitude and contemplation, reading spiritually oriented books that help one pause to ponder and draw inspiration for communion with God and, every now and then, doing what a friend terms "emergency prayer," which consist of just one loudly spoken word: "HELP!" These ways, plus all those unexpected moments in the midst of life when we sense a oneness with the Great Mystery, are part of what is known as "prayer."

*Breath of Life, You ride the waves of life
with me in the rhythms of my communion
with you. You enter the comings and goings of
each day and in every prayer I breathe.
Whether I am in the stillness of quiet of
prayer or in the fullness of the day's*

activity, may your peace flow through my being. Amen

Come be part of our 6 week Lenten Study beginning on Wednesday March 23, 10:00 a.m. at Port Carling United and Thursday March 17 10:00 a.m. at Bala United, we will be looking at PRAYER - *not only to talk to God but to listen to the "still small voice of God" within us.*

Blessings

Rev. Sue

Notes from Council

At the recent breakfast hosted by Council, congregants chatted happily, ate heartily, and lingered into the early afternoon. Kudos go to Chef, Leo Couture, Sous-chef, Bill Niess, and all Council members who assisted in set-up, kitchen assistance, and clean-up.

At our most recent Council meeting discussion included the Movie Night—March 26, the preparation of the Annual Report, and rental agreements with groups that make use of our church. Council resolved to support the invitation of the Valley Men's Choir (from the Ottawa Valley) to present a concert in our Sanctuary in September. Thank you, Marilyn Niess, for taking charge of this fundraising initiative that will include providing a modest meal for performers and their partners. Marilyn will share more detail with readers as it is available.

The refurbishing of the basement of the Jackson C.E. Wing has begun—thanks to John Baird, and Bill Niess. Signs of mouse and chipmunk habitations have been removed along with rotting wood. New inside walls will include an appropriate vapour barrier, insulation R factor of 20, and a new window or two. Property Chair, Bill Niess, is happy that these repairs are going forward as these issues have been on Council's list of recommended changes for three years, pending available funding. Our Treasurer, Leo Couture supports these expenditures at

this time. It is proposed that this project be completed over a three year span.

Guest to Council and Member of our Church, Sandy Currie, shared concerns about possible negative impacts to the Community at large and to our Church if the Swift River Hydroelectric proposal goes forward. It is possible that Swift River may use properties adjacent to our Church to "stage" construction over many months. As this may impact safety and security, appropriate fencing would limit access to the Moon River for all tourists and local residents. Such fencing may never be removed. Letters will be written by Trustee, Anne Snowdon, and Vice-chair to appropriate Provincial Ministries. The Vice-chair will delegate the Township of Muskoka Lakes Council on March 14, 2011, on these same matters.

Lastly, on behalf of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, Bill Niess reported that the Annual Performance Review for our Rev Sue Woods went forward well. Members around the table applauded the outstanding, spirited, and committed leadership of our Minister. Her infectious charm and charisma continue to attract visitors and new members to our Church. Thank you, Rev Sue! Thank you, simply, for being you!

Brian McDonald, Vice-Chair

Out Of Egypt

At about 17:30 on February 1st, 2011, John and Maggie Vellinga breathed a mutual, deep sigh of relief as Egypt Air lifted off from Cairo International Airport. Our escape from the chaos and danger of Cairo now seemed pretty well certain.

We had just completed an absolutely wonderful 10-day tour of Egypt including a four day sail on the historic Nile River. The abundant relics of ancient Egypt were positively stunning. Our first hint of the

unrest in Egypt was the military helicopter which swept over us at Aswan. In addition, we observed two fighter aircraft ready to scramble at the Aswan airport. We had heard that small, peaceful groups of protesters were forming throughout the cities of Egypt. Later military aircraft flew over the streets of Cairo.

Wherever we went we found the Egyptian people to be very hospitable and friendly. A recurring theme among those who we engaged was their dissatisfaction with President Mubarek's obsession to hold onto the reigns of power for 30 years, his use of the hated police force to enforce his will, his determination to position his son as his successor and his resultant total failure to connect in any way to the common people of Egypt and improve the circumstances of their difficult life.

The last evening of our visit was spent at the beautiful Fairmont Hotel near Cairo airport. We were told that we could not leave our rooms - virtually under house arrest as one guest put it. The next morning we found out that the shops in the hotel next to us had been looted and the adjacent police station had been burned to the ground. The hated uniformed police had been taken off the streets and, in plain clothes, infiltrated the crowds and had bullied and injured many people. The military was in control now and the people were much happier as they have always respected and loved their military for some reason that we don't understand.

Next morning our family took the shuttle bus to the airport to position ourselves for the flights. On the shuttle bus to the airport we were told to draw the drapes and to not take any photos. Our Lufthansa flight, as well as many other flights, was cancelled due to the ongoing revolt in Egypt. Our daughter Catherine, and family were luckier because their flight back to Dubai operated on

schedule at midday on Monday, Jan 31st. However, since they were at a different terminal, we didn't know whether they had gotten out until we heard, via land phone, that they had arrived back in the UAE very late but safe and sound. What a relief!

When we parted from them on Monday, our prime directive was to acquire tickets to anywhere in Europe, ASAP. Since Internet and cell phone service had been cut off, we knew we had to get tickets at the airport. Rumours were flying rampant. Planes that had been sent from various countries to pick up their citizens were not being allowed to land. We were unable to make contact with the Canadian Embassy because the land lines were jammed. After standing in the crush at the Egypt Air ticket counter for about three hours, John finally got two tickets to Rome on Egypt Air, departing at 13:50 on Tuesday. There was absolutely nothing available on Monday. The experience was very unpleasant. Throughout John had to use very sharp elbows, his height, his weight, his two feet FIRMLY planted and immovable plus his determination, just to reach the desk where tickets were being sold. People were literally climbing onto his back to get ahead. Particularly challenging was a middle aged woman who literally tried to grab him and pull him out so she and her husband could advance a little. However, they were no match for him as he stood fast and gave absolutely no quarter.

After acquiring our tickets, we took the shuttle to the nearby Fairmont Heliopolis Hotel because the Fairmont Rep in the departure area assured us that rooms were available there. The shuttle bus ride to the Fairmont was very unnerving as we passed through at least 25-30 vigilante street barricades.

As it turned out, the British Embassy gobbled up 50 of the Fairmont rooms and

there was no availability for us. We could hear a lot of gunfire behind a wall across from the Fairmont. The Concierge found us an expensive suite at the nearby Radisson Blu Hotel. So we got a taxi and, once more, passed through the gauntlet of vigilante posts towards the Radisson. Our cab driver was almost in tears as he lamented the mess prevailing in his beloved country. There were a few anxious moments when vigilantes came up to our taxi window with machetes and long clubs at their side. Looking into their eyes, we knew that they were not going to hurt us. They were looking for looters and hoodlums, especially after the prisoners in some of the jails had been set free. White hair does come in handy at times.

Our stay at the Radisson was more of the same. Under house arrest, throughout the night we could hear gunshots and observe the ever present vigilantes all around the hotel. Although they looked threatening, these men were all part of an extreme 'neighbourhood watch' network intended to protect their homes and families from looters and hoodlums. Apparently it worked well. Notwithstanding, we had to pass through this intimidating network many times enroute to and from the airport.

Prices were soaring. Hotel rooms went from \$500 to \$1000 per night. Schools, shops, banks and ATM's were closed. Several of the television news networks were shut down and the internet and cell phone systems were still blocked.

On February 1st, our check-in at Cairo airport was totally chaotic and confusing. We arrived at the airport at 0800, assuming that it would take several hours to battle the crowds, deal with the chaos and get to the aircraft. We were right. Our 1350 departure was delayed until about 1720 as other

confused passengers found their way to the flight. Although the Cairo Terminal Building is a beautiful, modern facility, the sanitary conditions were appalling, food and water were not available and there was garbage everywhere. Some poor souls had been there for two days or more.

After seven hours of fighting our way through line-ups at Security, mass confusion as to which check-in counter to go to, changing of the departure gate five times, finding someone in our seats when we boarded the airplane and a two hour delay sitting on the tarmac waiting for other passengers, we finally took off.

As we winged our way towards Rome, both of us felt very deeply the tug of what we were leaving behind. In our short time there, Egypt had really grown on us and, like our cab driver, we were lamenting the plight of this 7000 year old civilization. We were fervently hoping that the inevitable unrest would take the country in the right direction.

After spending a night in Rome, we were able to get tickets via the internet for a flight to Frankfurt the following morning. Upon arriving in Frankfurt we were met by two people carrying huge Canadian flags. We were so delighted and curious to see the Canadian flag. When we went over to speak to them they told us that they were from the Canadian Embassy. They were there to greet the Canadians coming in from Egypt. The planes from other countries had apparently been allowed to land in Cairo. As we saw the lineups coming through we rushed to get on to the flight to Ottawa flight which was about to leave. Arriving on Canadian soil was a wonderful feeling. We really do live in the best country on the planet. After a short wait in Ottawa, we took a flight to Toronto exhausted but so happy to be home safe and sound.

The people of Egypt deserve much better.
We wish for them some of the freedoms
which we Canadians simply take for granted.

Submitted by John and Maggie Velinga

Upcoming Events:

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

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

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

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Hold the Dates:

"MARCH BREAK KIDS KLUB PARTY"

PORT CARLING UNITED CHURCH
FRIDAY MARCH 18 TH
10:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.
LUNCH PROVIDED
BRING YOUR FAVORITE BOARD GAME
RSVP: revsue@bell.net or 765-559

VBS 2011 "SonTreasure Island"



Mark your calendars
Port Carling United July 4-8
Bala United August 9-11

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Saturday, March 26, 2011 Movie Night



MOVIE NIGHT
In The
Jackson CE Wing
7:00 pm

Memory Lane!

1973 was the year Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes by 31 lengths, becoming a Triple Crown Winner.

Hailed "The Greatest Performance by a Racehorse in this Century," we were all proud Canadians. Ron Turcotte was the winning jockey.

Disney productions has captured the excitement of horse racing with their new 2010 movie 'Secretariat.' If you enjoyed the move 'Seabiscuit' you will be on the edge of your seat watching "Secretariat!"

See it at Bala United Church in the Jackson C E Wing on March 26th at 7p.m. Popcorn and drinks will be available.



A DIME A DAY FOR

MISSION AND SERVICE

Don't forget to collect those dimes!

Church Directories Have Arrived

They will be mailed to those who are unable to attend church. The others will be held at the church and distributed when you return to Bala in the Spring.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2011

Friday, March 4, 2011

2:00 pm



at

MUSKOKA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1852 Muskoka Road 169

Please join us to enter into a process that draws us into the Bible, into the context of Chile, and into the real situations of our lives and community.

Everyone is welcome!

If you need to contact Rev. Sue

Home Office: 705-645-9266

Port Carling United - 705-765-5596

Bala United Church - 705-762-0116

(answering machines at all three numbers; please leave a message)

email address: revsue@bell.net

I will try to reply as soon as I can,

Note: Mondays are my days off.