



Spring 2011

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Touched by the Holy

*Juanita MacKinnon-Smith,
Community Minister*

Daily we are aware of the challenges that face our community. So, when the opportunity presents itself for us to **“Celebrate good times, come on!”** it is indeed a very good thing! There has been much to celebrate these past few months.

Volunteers from Silver Heights United Church provided us with our annual Valentine's Feast complete with hot chili, warm buns and specialty desserts befitting the event! We celebrated Lydia & Doug Wilsons' (volunteers) 25th wedding anniversary (Feb. 14th) and Jon Rowes' (volunteer) 71st birthday (Feb. 9th) and discovered the hidden piano playing talents of one of our community members. It was a long and fulfilling day.

Jacob began accessing the Food Supplement Program here 2 years ago. In a recent conversation, he shared with me his first impressions of the ministry. *“The first time I came here I remember feeling very welcomed and felt I was treated with respect. The second time didn't feel as good, but, I thought, ‘Hey, everyone has a bad day now and then.’ So, I kept coming back and then I started thinking, ‘I'd like to volunteer here.’”*

And so it came to pass that...Jacob began volunteering to unload the Winnipeg Harvest truck on Monday and Friday mornings about 18 months ago. He is a likeable kind of guy: personable and dependable although often a bit on the anxious side due to an anxiety disorder he lives with. He has a very tender heart which he wears on his sleeve. He's a good team player and is well liked by everyone. He is the proud father of two young boys (from an earlier relationship) whom he sees every other weekend. He's an avid movie buff, a sports fan and a music lover which also makes him a great conversationalist.

A few weeks ago, Jacob appeared at my doorway sheepishly asking if he could speak with me privately for a couple of minutes. As is his way, Jacob fumbled around for a few minutes trying to get his thoughts into a coherent order in order to share them. Watching him, it is easy to see that his thoughts are all rushing to the front of his brain tripping over one another in their effort to find freedom. *“Breathe deeply, Jacob. There's no rush. When you're ready, just pick a point to start and we'll take it from there.”* Jacob closes his eyes and breathes. And I wait. *“I've been with my girlfriend, Rachel, for a few years now and she's the* (Cont. on page 2)

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woman I want to spend the rest of my life with. . . I've asked her to marry me and we're wondering, 'Would you marry us?'" Jacob is always sharing stories of how great Rachel is, how much he loves her and how important she is in his life. Needless to say, I said yes – quickly! And was delighted when the following week, Jacob arrives at my door again – this time with Rachel in tow. She is everything Jacob says she is: gentle, kind, loving and good for him and to him. Her presence in his life inspires him to want to be the best he can be. Next time I see Jacob I say, "It was a delight to meet your fiancée, Rachel. I can see why you love her so much." He beams.

Each week Jacob arrives with new questions for me about the wedding and an update on the plans. Last week he inquired as to what my fee would be to perform the ceremony. "Please consider my services as a gift to the bride and groom." He is a bundle of emotions – relieved, uplifted, overwhelmed. Then he shares that the budget for their wedding is \$500 – for everything – and it is I who am overwhelmed. A modern day 'widow's mite' offering. "I would like to bring a guest with me to the reception if that would be okay with you and Rachel? If there's a cost I'd be happy to pay for that myself." Jacob responds that it would be more than okay for me to bring a guest. My "guest" is a filmmaker and when I shared news of the wedding with him, he generously offered to take stills of the wedding as his gift to the happy couple. Generosity and a willingness to be vulnerable and open to the spirit is contagious it would seem.

This is only the second time a couple from the community has asked to be married during my time with the ministry. The last community wedding was held in the Peace Chapel (inside the sanctuary upstairs), Helen Whetter, long time church volunteer, offered to provide music for the ceremony and the reception being held right in the Drop In following the ceremony. Having weddings here means we are able to support community people by not charging for rental fees for space. Jacob & Rachel's wedding will take place on Sat., Aug. 27th, but, it won't be able to be held here in the community. So, this week, I'm trusting the Spirit will be at play once again. I plan to appeal to the generosity of our church partners for a church willing to play host to the wedding and reception at no or minimal charge. I'm trusting one of them will catch the spirit and respond with 'shout of acclamation' – as the old hymn says.

What an honour and a thrill to be included in these holy and sacred celebrations! My heart is full. I am reminded again that "if not for sorrow, joy would be only half as sweet." Life is sweet and full and God is indeed good.

Blessed be!

Change is Coming to St Matthew's Church

St Matthew's is a glorious church. If you stand in the middle of the sanctuary, the architecture, the stained glass and the sheer size will surely move you.

But like many congregations this parish has had to face some tough facts – an aging and shrinking congregation – a building too big for their needs – a list of costly repairs. What to do?



Some would simply close the doors and walk away. But the people of this Parish had another plan. Why not renew the building, downsize church space needs, keep all the community resources in the basement and add an important asset to the community – family housing.

Plans for this \$6 million project, to be called "West End Commons", have been in the works for a few years but they hope to see some "shovels in the ground" soon – the construction of 25 family apartments in (cont. on p.3)

(cont. from p.2 Change...) the existing building envelope.

St Matthew's Parish will continue to worship here, but in a smaller space. The community resources, like this Ministry, the Lutheran Urban and others will continue to have a home.

These changes offer some long term stability for St Matthew's Parish and for the community resources. But there is still a long way to go and a lot of community fund raising must be done to complete this ambitious plan. It has been an exercise in courage, vision and optimism for this Parish and we wish them every success.

Volunteer Spotlight

Paul Schmidt

Meet Brenda, Raven, Diana and Sheryl, our volunteer administrative assistants! If you ask Juanita, the community minister, or myself about these four women, there's a good chance we'll say something like "they're the ones who get the real work done around here!" That response is a testament to their long list of responsibilities, which is filled with conversations, phone calls, emails, filing, faxing, planning, helping, problem-solving, and of course, "other duties as assigned" - a full-time job in itself!

On top of all this, our admin volunteers are often a first point of contact for the many different people who visit the ministry, and so they act as the "face" of St. Matthew's-Maryland. They carry out the mandate of St. MMCM, which is to be a welcoming ministry of hospitality.

Volunteer(s) Wanted – Food Supplement Program Supervisor

Paul Schmidt

Do you have an interest in helping children, parents and single people in Winnipeg get the food they need to make it through the week?

Are you a people-person, keen on fostering an atmosphere of respect and hospitality?

Do you have good organizational and leadership skills?

If so, you might be a great candidate to volunteer as a supervisor in our Food Supplement Program!

Each Monday and Friday afternoon, we receive a shipment of food from Winnipeg Harvest, which we then distribute to 20-40 individuals and families who have registered in advance. Responsibilities of the supervisor(s) include overseeing the other volunteers on the FSP team, and ensuring the fairest possible distribution of food to the community.

We are currently in need of an FSP Supervisor for Friday afternoons.

Interested? We would love to hear from you. Please contact Paul Schmidt, Volunteer Development Coordinator at 774-3957 or volcomymn@mymts.net

Each volunteer delights in unique aspects of volunteering. Sheryl enjoys being active in the community and getting her hands dirty doing good work. Diana enjoys helping others and seeing the results of the team's efforts. Raven enjoys the worthwhile work and the challenge of multitasking. Brenda enjoys the people and putting her organizational strengths to good use.

Interested in using your skills as a volunteer at St. MMCM? Contact Paul Schmidt, Volunteer Development Coordinator at 774-3957 or volcomymn@mymts.net

Annual Garden Tour

Our own Back Yard

Don't miss the notice on the back page about St Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry's Annual Garden Tour. This year it is in the St Matthews neighbourhood. There will be no better chance to walk through this inner city neighbourhood, visit some backyard gems and maybe get a chance to talk to some of the people who call this community home. **PLUS** you support the great work of this ministry – **win / win.**



Visit Gardens in the West End

Urban Retreats Garden Tour
supporting
St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry
Community Gardens program

Saturday, June 18, 2011
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Tickets \$15.00
available at
McNally- Robinson Bookstore
and
The Garden Room 444 Academy Road
or by calling
St. Matthew's- Maryland Community Ministry
at 774-3957

Manitoba Tea 11:30-2:30 p.m.
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 600 Minto Street.
Tickets for the Tea and Bannock are an additional \$5.00
and available at the tea site that Saturday.

Annual General Meeting

*St Matthews-
Maryland
Community
Ministry*

Thursday, June 16th

at St Matthew's Church
(St Matthews & Maryland)

4PM
Aboriginal
drummers/dancers
& light refreshments

5PM
Speaker from the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission
&
Short business meeting

This Ministry has many supporters in the Community. The Board looks forward to sharing the past year's experiences and the challenges and opportunities of the future.