

St. James United Church

Montreal, Quebec



**The Church in the heart of the city
with the city at heart.**

The Circuit Rider* *Volume 42 Number 3* *February 2010

Dear Friends,

The *Gloria Chorus* from the Christmas carol, *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*, is still hanging in the air; the 'Creche' has only recently been put back in the box; this week the remaining poinsettias were removed from the church, and the Christmas Trees in St. James Square are still there! And yet, by the time you receive this *Circuit Rider*, we will only be days away from Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. We have hardly had the time to catch our breath from Christmas and now we are off to the desert! Like it or not, that is the way it is! So, what are we going to do?

We can see Lent as a burden and do everything we can to resist going into the desert or, we can see Lent as an opportunity and enter the desert with courage and purpose. Each of us must choose!

The desert is a hard and cruel place. It is a place of testing faith; it is a place to strip ourselves bare and look at who we really are; it is a place to discern to whom we belong and whose voice is more powerful to us: that of Jesus or Satan. Is it any wonder then why some do not want to do this Lenten pilgrimage? The personal costs are enormous! But, if we do not go, the spiritual costs are eternal!

The defining question for each of us at the end of Lent, on Palm Sunday is: To whom do you belong? Are you one of Christ's? Or are you one of Satan's? The answer can only be formulated after the 40 days of self-examination, called Lent. No one will be asked to verbally respond to this important question on Palm Sunday. We may all 'safely' come to church!

However, the Gospel message that week will speak of two groups of people: those who welcome God's Messiah and the new life he brings, and those who reject him and call for his death. Indeed, the desert is a harsh place but, it will prepare us as to whether the response within our hearts will be: *Hosanna, Hosanna, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord* or *Crucify Him, Crucify Him!* All that we say and do makes us stand with one group or the other.

Our response will clearly set the mark for how we live out our faith together at St. James, in Christ's name.

I look to this Lenten journey with fear and trepidation. I am also a person of hope and I will step into the desert. I invite you to do so as well. Perhaps, by God's grace and through the love of Christ we will come through it in such a way that on Easter we, the community of St. James United Church, might in one voice proclaim together: *He is Risen, He is Risen, indeed, Alleluia!*

Rev. Arlen

The St. James community gathers for **worship at 11 a.m. every Sunday**, making a space where visitors and friends are warmly welcome. Enjoy the gathered community at coffee hour as well!

Upcoming services :

February 7th Holy Communion

February 14th Celebration of Love Service, Baptisms

An invitation to join with us on this special day has been sent to all the couples whose marriage was solemnized by Rev. Bonnar in 2008.

17th 12:15 p.m. Ash Wednesday

21st Lent I

28th Lent II, invited speaker honoring Black History Month

March 7th Lent III,

14th Lent IV, Baptisms

21st Lent V

28th Palm Sunday

April 1st Maundy Thursday : a light supper at 5:45 p.m. precedes the service at 7 p.m.

2nd 12:15 p.m. Good Friday

4th Easter Sunday. Holy Communion, Paschal Candle Procession, Reception of New Members*

* If you are interested in becoming a member of St. James please speak with Rev. Bonnar or call the church office.

Donation receipts for 2009 will be sent out in a separate mailing, before the end of February. If you have any questions concerning the record of your givings, please call Margaret in the church office.

If you wish to join the PAR (Pre-authorized Remittance) program to regularize your church offering through an automatic monthly withdrawal from your bank account, please fill in the Authorization Card and attach a sample cheque marked 'Void' and place it on the offering plate. PAR forms are available in the Narthex.

Meeting dates to keep in mind:

Wednesday, February 10th 6 p.m. Official Board ¹
7 p.m. "Believe" (Richmond Room)

Sunday, February 14th 9:30 to 11 a.m. M & P Committee (Richmond Room)

Sunday, February 28th. 12:30 p.m. Spiritual Discussion Group (Richmond Room)

Wednesday, March 10th, 6 p.m. Committee of Trustees
7 p.m. "Believe" (Richmond Room)

Wednesday, March 17th 6 p.m. Court of Session

Sunday, March 21st 9:30 to 11 a.m. M & P Committee (Richmond Room)

Wednesday, March 24th 6 p.m. Committee of Stewards

Sunday, March 28th. 12:30 p.m. Spiritual Discussion Group (Richmond Room)

¹ All boards and committees are asked to submit their annual reports at this meeting.

Also to note:

Watercolour Art Classes with teacher Susan Mott every Wednesday at 10 a.m. in the Douglas Room, beginning February 3rd. All are welcome, both beginners and those with experience in

watercolour.

World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 5 at noon with refreshments to follow.

Sundays from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. the **Every Kid Choir** rehearses. Kids from 5 to 13 years old are welcome. For further information, contact Jen de Combe at 514-844-9128

Every Tuesday at 12:30. Noon hour concerts by talented young musicians under the aegis of Musicians Without Borders. Freewill offering.

Matters of governance:

Watch the Sunday bulletin for notice of the date of the annual congregational meeting, to be decided at the next meeting of the Official Board. In the democratic structure of our United Church, the congregation's Annual Meeting is the opportunity for members and adherents to become informed and to vote on important matters concerning the life of the congregation. Among other things, it is the time when members of Session, Trustees and Stewards are formally elected to look after matters spiritual and financial during the rest of the year.

The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee wishes to remind the congregation that we are there to provide support and consultation for the staff and members/adherents of St. James in order to contribute to a positive spiritual environment and productive working relationships. In order to achieve that objective, we are involved in a number of activities one of which is to create a process for the receiving of complaints, concerns and positive feedback. As printed in the weekly bulletin, we welcome written, signed letters from members/adherents of the congregation regarding those concerns, complaints or positive feedback that pertain to our communal life at St. James. We encourage members/adherents to first deal directly with the people involved and if the result is not to your satisfaction, to communicate with the M&P committee. Please address your letters to the Chair of the M&P committee c/o the Church Office. All communications will be kept confidential.

Valerie Shannon

The members of the M&P committee are: Valerie Shannon (Chair), Sandy Woods (Vice Chair), Marlene Daley (Past Chair), Katherine Lyon, Uriel Gilkes, Jen de Combe.

Questionnaire 2010

Accompanying this issue of the Circuit Rider is a questionnaire that Session would like completed by anyone who is interested. The questionnaire is not limited to members.

This questionnaire grew out of the Congregational Brainstorming Meeting and Session Retreat Workshop held in the fall of 2009. It was decided that Session needed a means of polling those affiliated with St. James to see how best we can serve them.

Please help us to better serve your needs by filling in this questionnaire. Be assured that your answers will be held in the strictest confidence. If you have any questions, please direct them to the church office at 514-288-9245.

Your response can be returned using one of three methods:

- a. Drop the completed questionnaire in the offering plate on any Sunday.
- b. Return the completed questionnaire by mail, sending it to

Questionnaire Response
St. James United Church
1435 rue City Councilors
Montreal, Qc H3A 2E4

- c. Download an electronic version of the questionnaire from our website and return it by email to
stjamesquestionnaireresponse@gmail.com

Session would like to have all responses back by Sunday March 7, 2010.

A Ministry of Shawls

Among the newest means for expressing caring at St. James is the Prayer Shawl project, spearheaded

by Ann Martin and Valerie Shannon. These two enthusiastic knitters have been joined by Valerie's mother-in-law and a few others in the creation of warm and colorful shawls made in a spirit of love and prayer. It is their hope that shut-ins, hospitalized folk and others needing the support of caring and of prayer will feel, when wrapping these sources of comfort around themselves, that the people of St. James are indeed holding them in love and in prayer. An additional aspect of the project was inaugurated in December 2009 when specially made shawls were given to two babies on the day of their baptism as a reminder of the love with which they were welcomed into the community of faith. The participation of the entire congregation in the project was made concrete on Sunday, January 31st, when the shawls made to date were passed around the sanctuary for people to hold with caring and to pray over. They will now go to the Pastoral Care team to be given out to those in need of this kind of blessing.

Our hearts are with the Haitian people

For four days immediately after the devastating earthquake of January 12 the minister and members of the congregation were out in St. James Square collecting donations from passers-by for Haitian Relief. Special envelopes bearing the words "With God anything is possible" were available in the pews on the two Sundays immediately after the disaster struck. Between the outdoor collection and the special Sunday offerings approximately \$4,500 was received.

A moving *Service of Remembrance and Hope for Haiti* was held Sunday evening January 24th at St. James United Church in the presence of Mardi Tindal, Moderator of the United Church of Canada, and members of local United Churches and the Haitian community. A cheque for some \$25,000 gathered by half a dozen Montreal area United Church congregations was given to the Moderator to be channelled through the United Church's Emergency Response Fund under an appeal specifically for donations going to relief and reconstruction in Haiti. Rev. Arlen Bonnar led the service of remembrance and hope and the Peoples Gospel Choir of Montreal were present to sing. A special offering was collected, adding \$1,500 to the funds already raised in Montreal United Churches for Haitian Relief.

The St. James community has a particular connection with Haiti in that *Dr. Junie Hyacinthe*, a physician in training for the ministry under the Methodist Church of Haiti and the West Indies, did an internship at St. James prior to her ordination and spent time with the Montreal City Mission and the St. James Drop-in Centre before returning to Port-au-Prince. Both she and her husband, Dr. Hubert Morquette, play key roles in both medical and church contexts, he as the Haitian director for World Vision. Together they administer the 350-bed King's Hospital on the edge of Port-au-Prince, which was miraculously spared all but very minor damage. In an e-mail sent January 15 to their daughter Barbara in Montreal Dr. Morquette indicates that while many of their colleagues were killed, he and his wife were unhurt and that their house remained standing. Their hospital reopened the very next day after the quake, the staff working feverishly all day and on into the night treating hundreds of injuries thanks to a good stock of medical supplies received not long before the earthquake struck. He stresses that physical injuries are not the whole story, with the psychological toll severe as well, particularly the fear of being indoors lest an aftershock bring down still more chunks of concrete.

The Open Door

Just before Christmas, the Open Door program's 400,000th visitor since the program resumed in June 2006 walked into the *narthex* and was welcomed to St. James. There was no particular fuss made by Open Door staff and volunteers but there was a pretty good feeling about it.

We had several fine students working with us this year --Andrea Stuart, Pangiota Arhontou, Lindsay Booth, Jeremy Lakoff and - later in the year -- Thomas Jancarik, all from Concordia. They all brought their particular talents and skills to the church and we were very glad to have them.

In their absence, it has been noted that there is still a need to greet and help people in the *narthex* who arrive at the church during worship. For many years at St. James this was only done by students in the summer. The rest of the year people who arrived after worship started would just wander around, looking for hymnbooks or even on occasion taking pictures.

Since our attendance has increased, the Court of Session feels that greeting during worship should be done all year long. And in the absence of the students, the Open Door program has been asked to

coordinate volunteer members of the church who agree to be present in the *narthex* from 11 am at the start of worship and remain there until the end of the service. They can also help put the hymnbooks and Bibles away afterwards. Ideally, if we get enough offers, each volunteer will have to spend only one Sunday per month in the *narthex*.

For more information or to put your name on the list of volunteers for greeting people during Sunday worship, contact Rob Bull. You can also talk to him if you would like to volunteer for the Open Door at other times. It can be a rewarding experience.

Rob Bull

In our church family:

Sunday School meets most Sundays while church is in session. We have five regular members ranging in age from four to eleven and it is a lot of fun – especially on the days when everyone is there together. Before Christmas we listened to stories from the Old Testament that told us about God's creation and how He cares for us. This spring we will be hearing about some of the stories that Jesus told and what they might mean for us. Right now, however, we are working on a very special project for Black History Month and hope to take part in the service in February. We are excited that everyone will be able to share in what we have been doing and hope to see you then.

Sandy Woods

A warm welcome to the following people received into full membership on the first Sunday of Advent: Emily Bamford, Koa B. Boyd, Carolyn Christie, Patricia Spensley, Luc Therrien, and Jenny Trites. We are grateful for their commitment and for the energy they bring into the community that is St. James.

Congratulations to our organist Philip Crozier and his wife Sylvie Poirier who celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary on December 27th. They met in Paris in the summer of 1982 as candidates in the Chartres International Organ Competition; Philip immigrated to Canada on December 21st, 1984. Sylvie is not only an organist but also a painter. Visit www.sylviepoirier.com to see some of her work.

Wishes for a speedy recovery to Lorna Willey who is recovering from recent surgery.

Our sincerest sympathy to the family of G. Stewart Brown. Mr. Brown, who passed away on December 26th, was a member of St. James since 1941.

Times for sharing:

Spirituality Discussion Group

The discussion circle previously known as Women's Spirituality now warmly welcomes both men and women. Anyone interested in exploring how the Spirit works in and through us is invited to join in sharing and study once a month for an hour or so (12:30 to 1:30) on Sunday after coffee time. The theme for the next meeting, to take place in the Richmond Room on February 28, is "Learning from those who live close to the earth." For more information, speak to Liette Michaud or Lee Santiago.

BELIEVE: BE your authentic self & LIVE in the Light

BELIEVE is a Christian group reaching out to GLBT persons and friends from within the St. James congregation. This recently formed bilingual spiritual group meets once a month in a spirit of fun and joy, opening its doors to all God's people and looking for ways to reach out with caring. For further information, speak to Michael MacEachen, Luc Therrien or Koa Boyd or consult the group's Facebook page via the link on the St. James United Church website.

United Young Adults of St. James

The United Young Adults of St. James (UYA) is a diverse and dynamic group of individuals between the ages of 18 and 30-something. We are interested in exploring our faith through stimulating discussions, exciting events, various outreach projects and through joining in the community of faith. If you would like to join us or would like more information, please contact stjamesuya@gmail.com or speak to Ryan, Jenny or Emily during coffee hour after any service

This past Advent, the United Young Adults (UYA) of St. James were thrilled to have been given the opportunity to lead the Sunday of Joy service. Traditionally known as 'Pageant Sunday', this third Sunday of Advent fell on December 13th, 2009. The talents of our young adults shone through brightly in a wonderfully amusing but thought-provoking pageant written by Jenny Trites. The pageant illustrates

the issues that may have arisen that first Christmas night: Two angels (played by Dan Reed and Angus Rennie) argue over who had the harder task; the angel going to tell Mary she was pregnant or the angel who had to tell Joseph that Mary was pregnant. Meanwhile, a hapless holy messenger, an angel played by Sam Wan, struggles with her lines (*"Be afraid!... Oh wait... Be NOT afraid"*). Her assertive partner, an angel played by Katy Grabstas, questioned God's wisdom in sending shepherds (of all people) to Mary's side. The pageant ended with members of the congregation being asked to help the angels create a manger scene, which included (among other things) an enraged King Herod (played by Karl Pelton), and a wonderfully charismatic cardboard camel. The pageant was wonderfully backed up by our terrestrial heavenly hosts: the St. James Choir and the Every Kid Choir.

These dramatics were followed with an insightful reflection on Christmas Joy, written and read by Emily Bamforth and Geoff Duerden, with continuations by Cameron Maclean. Karl Pelton and Angus Rennie read scripture, while Ryan Fea lead us in the call to worship, the prayers, and the benediction. It was a successful and joyful Sunday indeed. Many thanks to all who helped and participated!

UYA kicked off 2010 on January 23rd with a fun evening of good food, great company, and enlightening conversations. We have several events planned for this year including a discussion on 'Why We Believe', a potluck dessert evening, a classical concert outing, and several faith-based movie discussion nights. We hope that faith, fun and friendship will prove to be the theme of 2009/2010 for UYA.

Emily Bamforth.

Library to begin circulation

About two years ago, a visitor asked whether one could find at St. James any books from which to learn about the United Church and its perspective on various matters. Since the congregation had no circulating library at that time, the idea arose to begin creating one. Several people were quite generous in donating a variety of books related to spiritual life and other helpful topics. Shelves were installed to hold them in a cupboard off Dawson Hall and Maureen Adams and Carolyn Cronk have been cataloguing and otherwise preparing the collection for circulation. For the first time on Sunday, February 21 a representative selection of books for borrowing will be available at a table in Dawson Hall during Coffee Hour. Volunteers will be needed to ensure that this opportunity is available to the congregation on a regular basis. If you are willing to help, please speak to either Maureen or Carolyn or call the church office to indicate your availability.

Hitting the street for people on the street

The St. James Drop-in Centre for the homeless began 25 years ago this year as an outreach project of the St. James congregation in an effort to bring some form of caring to those all too obviously in need of it on Montreal's downtown streets. It has grown immensely since then, especially in terms of breadth of programming, and is now its own independent entity, seeking funding from a variety of sources. In this anniversary year, the Executive Director himself, Alain Spitzer, is doing something very special to contribute to fundraising. Alain writes: "At the end of May 2010, [I] will be running the Ottawa marathon in the hope of raising awareness and financial support for the centre and those that we serve (those suffering from mental illness, homelessness, and or substance abuse). For more info on this event, check out our website at www.stjamescentre.ca, and click on the blog icon at the top of the page. If you would like to contribute to this fundraising event, you can do so through the CanadaHelps.org link (also on our website)."

Broader concerns:

The **Green Church** project is a movement to "live with respect in creation"* by reducing as much as possible the environmental impact of a congregation's activities. (*see the United Church's New Creed, page 918 in *Voices United*) Some simple actions are printing church documents (e.g. the newsletter) on both sides of the paper, specifically collecting for recovery *all* recyclable materials, using washable rather than throw-away containers for coffee at Coffee Hour. For further ideas, see www.greenchurchproject.org. The first Green Church conference will be held in Montreal on February 9, 2010 with St. Columba House (a community outreach of the United Church) a major sponsor and contributor. To see the impressive list of steps taken by St. Columba House to be as respectful as

possible of the environment, go to www.saintcolumbahouse.org/programs-and-services/environmental-program/.

The World Day of Prayer is a high priority project of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC). WICC is a national council of representatives from 10 church partners, focusing on four main concerns: social justice, women's issues, ecumenism, and the growth of women's spirituality. Kofo Dedeke is an elected representative on the council, which also includes members named by each of the partner churches. Involved over several years in organizing the annual World Day of Prayer services in Montreal, Kofo is a wonderful source of background information about the project.

Materials for the service of worship, intended as a time of prayer for peace, are written each year by women from a different country, touching over time each and every continent. The resulting booklet of resources is drawn upon by local, ecumenical planning teams for the service which traditionally takes place on the first weekend in March. Refreshments following the service are made from ingredients or recipes coming from the country whose women created the worship materials. The featured country for 2010 is Cameroon.

Offerings gathered at services all across Canada are pooled to become a source of funding for small grants (mostly \$500 to \$2000) in support of a wide range of projects put forward by groups addressing issues that affect the lives of women in numerous places round the world (e.g. empowerment programs for single women with children in Liberia, a sewing school for women in Haiti, a program to reduce violence against women in Papua New Guinea), see www.wicc.org for further information

Sponsorship of a child through Plan Canada (previously known as Foster Parents Plan of Canada) is a St. James outreach project that began in 1968 as an initiative of the Avant Garde Club and was taken over by the Outreach Committee some ten years ago. The \$420 per year required to extend support in this way comes out of proceeds from the sale of goods in the Depot thrift shop. A Honduran teenager is "our" sponsored child at this point. Life for him and his community is greatly improved thanks to Plan programming according to priorities chosen in light of local needs. In Honduras, these are reflection and awareness groups to prevent and reduce violence, ensuring clean water supplies, the prevention of AIDS, and promoting interest in a better level of education. For more information about Yelson-Adalid Lainez Corea, our sponsored child, consult the printed material attached to the bulletin board in the corridor outside Douglas Hall.

Musically speaking

Orgues Létourneau Ltée. of Saint-Hyacinthe has been selected to restore the organ at St. James. Stay tuned for more details of this exciting project!

The CD "Organ Music from St. James United Church", featuring *Philip Crozier* at his very best on both the main and the chamber organ, was released in December. It is available from the church office for \$20, with proceeds going to the Organ Fund for the restoration of the organ.



The organs at St. James are once again featured in the annual *Nuit Blanche* on Saturday, February 27th. At 11p.m. Philip will play the first of a series of hourly recitals by different organists. The general theme this year is *Organo Pleno!* Info: www.orgueetcouleurs.com

Ingrid Boussaroque of the soprano section invites appreciators of medieval music to "A delightful evening of 'Sweet Sins' on April 18th. Come enjoy delicacies and honey mead at the St-Raphaël Church (2001 Lajoie, Edouard-Montpetit metro). And to redeem your soul - very compromised by this excess of gluttony! - musicians from various medieval ensembles from all over Quebec will charm your ears with beautiful melodies. All the profits of this event will go to Les Reverdies de Montréal, a new medieval music festival that will take place in May 2011." Info: www.lesreverdies.ca.

Greetings from *Isabelle Huchette*, soprano in the choir since October 2008. "I'd like to invite you to a production in which I'll be playing the role "Arsena". The University of Montreal [Faculty of Music] is presenting "Le Baron Tsigane" by Johann Strauss February 24 to 27 at 19h30. My cast is playing the 25 and 27th. Former alto from the choir *Aura West* is playing [trumpet] in the orchestra." Info: www.musique.umontreal.ca

Liette Michaud, an alto in the St. James Choir and member of Session, is singing in the Montreal Opera Chorus during the production of "Tosca" by Puccini, beginning January 30 at Place des Arts.

Choir rehearsals are Thursday, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. and Sunday at 9:45 a.m. If you are interested in joining the choir, speak to either Philip Crozier or Jean-Sébastien Allaire.

A reflection from the editor

In the last few years space at St. James has been rented to various outside theatre groups presenting thought-provoking material. Last February, INFINITHÉÂTRE presented the play "Blessed Are They" in Dawson Hall over a period of several weeks; audiences were invited to stay on after certain performances to chat with the cast and each other about issues of faith raised in the play. The last two weeks of January this year saw Zeitgeist Theatre Collective, in association with Mischief Theatre, adopt the basement of St. James Church to represent various areas of an infamous (now closed) Canadian prison for women. Characterized by the Montreal Gazette's reviewer as more of an "experience" than true theatre, it raises the issue of how prison can brutalize rather than correct. Although in a very raw way, it jibes with a historical tradition at St. James of defending and helping those to whom life has been less than kind. In November, the Montreal City Mission hosted Mussaver and The Coal Choir in a powerful folk opera presentation of social justice issues raised by the lonely death, only discovered weeks later, of an aging immigrant woman who had been trying to return to her native land.

The St. James congregation is not without its own home grown theatrical tradition, notably expressed in pageants depicting significant themes from the Bible. This past Advent season, the traditional pageant, presented by the Young Adults group, took a decidedly unconventional turn to invite a renewed perspective on the meaning of the birth in Bethlehem. Theatre has great power to invite our reflection on matters that otherwise lie too deep to be accessible in day to day consciousness. Additional presentations by groups of St. James people at other times in the year would be a most welcome expression of the creativity that is among God's gifts to us all.

Carolyn Cronk

Our Web site

Thanks to the regular efforts of a skilled and dedicated team, our attractive and dynamic web site at www.stjamesunitedchurchmontreal.com is a rich and varied source of information and of reflections of our church and our congregational life, including podcasts of a number of services. Be sure to visit it often, since it is constantly updated. You can even find archived on it previous editions of the Circuit Rider!

Anyone with news or information to share through the Circuit Rider is invited to communicate with either the editor, Carolyn Cronk, or the church office. The next issue is planned for mid May.

St. James United Church

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