



CALVIN CRC'S CONGREGATIONAL LIFE NEWSLETTER

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JAN-MAY 2011

We are well into the ministry year here at Calvin. Each week the building is filled with adults and children ministering and being ministered to. Though there will be articles on some internal things that are happening at Calvin, there will also be several articles about people that are involved with things going on outside the walls of Calvin. I hope you enjoy discovering the wide range of ministry opportunities that are going on. You might even want to get involved in one of them. I'd encourage you to do just that!

THE CARLINGTON COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY— A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

By: Chandra

It's not what you might expect from a cold, fluorescent-lit, cement-floored room in a public housing building, but walk into the DREAMS centre at 1465 Caldwell Avenue on a Tuesday at noon, and you'll discover a warm, lively, worship service. Down the hall, in the Strong Hold Community Home, 50-100 people will come through on a typical morning for breakfast, coffee, conversation and various activities. These are just two of the ministries of the Carlington Community Chaplaincy, a local ministry Calvin has supported for 24 years.



supportive, and empowering environment for everyone within a very diverse community.

The Chaplaincy is built around the *Empowerment and Respect* model. Everyone has a voice, and the work of the Chaplaincy seeks to support each and every person to remember, re-

discover and discover that voice. Community members therefore participate in shaping the programs the Chaplaincy offers to meet the needs of the local community. The programs seek to transform each individual to move toward wellness, to discover their gifts and talents, to be

challenged, and to learn new skills and working together. The Chaplaincy desires to build and foster a strong, vibrant community, emphasizing love for our neighbour, healing, forgiveness and hope for a positive future. They see this task as offering redemptive hope, building the reign of God in an underprivileged and struggling neighbourhood located just down the street from Calvin.

The biggest component of the Chaplaincy's work is counseling and pastoral care. Linton

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PLEASE SEND
ANY COMMENTS
ABOUT THE
NEWSLETTER TO
PASTOR RON.
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In October, a group from Calvin visited the Chaplaincy for a tour and a presentation on the many activities offered by the Chaplaincy. Rev. Linton Worrall, the current chaplain, explained to us the Chaplaincy's approach and its impact in the community. The Chaplaincy is a ministry of presence, rooted in the Gospel, fostering a safe,

(*“Carlington Chaplaincy”*)

meets with approximately 150 people a month, often people in crisis mode who need urgent support to deal with recovery from addictions or the challenges of extreme poverty, abuse or disabilities. Mentoring Moves Mountains, a recent addition to the Chaplaincy's program, offers life-changing individual and group support for 15 participants and their volunteer mentors.

Group programs include the BROS Team for men, the DREAMS centre for women, the CARES program offering spiritual direction and visits, worship services and workshops and educational opportunities, the Creative Path program offering opportunities for creative expression, and the Bellevue Young Adults in Action programs for youth. In addition to these programs, the Strong Hold Community Home is open 6 days a week with various activities and drop-in periods offered.

With so many community members involved, there is a big need for supportive volunteers and involvement from the churches. The need is even greater this year as Linton, the Chaplain, and Darlene Brewer, the Mentoring Coordinator are leaving the Chaplaincy to return to New Brunswick. There is an urgent need for volunteers to help maintain the programs during the transition period and to support the new Chaplain once he or she is hired. There are many different ways you can get involved to help: volunteer for one of the Chaplaincy programs, help out with the Strong Hold breakfast or afternoon programs, become a mentor, join the pastoral care team, provide transportation, or serve on a Chaplaincy committee (programs, communications, or resource development). If you want to know more about one of these opportunities, please call me or talk to me after church.



The Chaplaincy also faces significant challenges due to unstable funding. While 16 churches, including Calvin, support the Chaplaincy, the funding is not very stable from year to year and does not currently provide enough income to hire enough staff. One of the ways you can help is to make a special donation as a gift for Christmas, a birthday, Mother's Day, or Father's Day. A special card is available to give your loved one, along with information on the Chaplaincy. Another way is to become a Friend of the Chaplaincy. All you need to do to become a friend of the Chaplaincy is to make a donation of \$50 a year, as a family or as an individual. I want to encourage Calvin – if we can recruit at least 25 Friends of the Chaplaincy, think what a gift to our local community that would be in terms of stable funding for this important work. For more information on this important ministry of presence, please contact me.

Isn't it Interesting

how 2 hours seem so long when you're at church, and
how short they seem when you're watching a good movie?

As part of our evolving partnership with Gamaliel Church in Peru, we have invited [and paid for] Pastor Sergio to come to Ottawa to meet us. After much work, Pastor Sergio was granted a travel visa and will be visiting us from Saturday, April 9th, to Monday, April 18th. Erin, one of the members of "FrontlinePeru" [the mission organization we partner with when we go to Peru], will join Sergio as his translator. Below is a schedule of what he will be doing while here, and it is subject to change. We hope you will get the chance to meet with Pastor Sergio via one of the groupings in the schedule, or on Palm Sunday, when we will be hosting a pot luck lunch after the service.

As we continue travelling to Peru every other year, please take a look at my blog for the real reason why we continue to do this. Nick has captured those thoughts well. You will also find a letter from Pastor Sergio in which he shares his joy and excitement in the continuing relationship his church is having with Calvin CRC. Take a look at: www.ronhosmar.blogspot.com

Saturday - April 9th.

- ⇒ Sergio and Erin arrive @ 2:10 pm in Ottawa.
- ⇒ Ron and Nick pick them up at airport and give a driving tour of Ottawa area and then take to Nick's to rest for the day and evening.

Sunday April 10th.

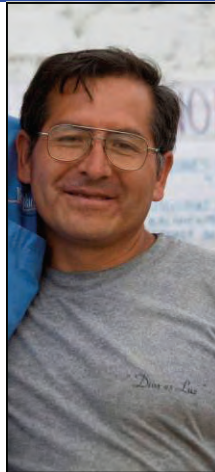
- ⇒ 8:30 AM - Sergio, Erin, Ron and Nick go to Cornwall CRC and Cornwall visits with him for the day. **CONFIRMED**

Monday, April 11th.

- ⇒ 9:00 am - Sergio visits Community Christian School.
- ⇒ 1:30 pm - Tour of Calvin CRC and then the afternoon spent resting.
- ⇒ 5:30 pm - Evening dinner with International Partnership Committee at Peter and Wilma. **CONFIRMED**
- 7:30 - 8:30 pm - evening meeting with members of council.

Tuesday, April 12th.

- ⇒ 9:00 am - Sergio visits 220 viewmount.
- ⇒ Afternoon - Relax time?
- ⇒ 6:30 pm - Sergio meets CIA/ETM, complete with Pizza. **CONFIRMED**
- ⇒ 8 - 9:30 pm - Informal Dessert time where



larger Peru group can interact with Pastor Sergio.

Wednesday, April 13th

- ⇒ 9:45 AM - Sergio visits with Coffee Break group **CONFIRMED**
- ⇒ 10:50 AM - Sergio speaks at Redeemer Christian High School Chapel and tours the school afterwards **CONFIRMED**
- ⇒ Noon: Lunch at Redeemer High School.

- ⇒ 2 pm ish - Sergio meets with 55+ group Wed afternoon.
- ⇒ 5:00 pm - Sergio goes to Ron's for dinner **CONFIRMED**
- ⇒ 7:00 pm - Sergio attends Prayer Group in the evening **CONFIRMED**

Thursday, April 14

- ⇒ 6:30 am - Sergio attends Thursday morning prayer group.
- ⇒ 9:00 am - Sergio visits OCS - **CONFIRMED**
- ⇒ Noon - Lunch at Harold & Bea's
- ⇒ 1:00 or 1:30 pm - Harold takes Sergio to tour the Mission. To Nicks for a rest after this.
- ⇒ 5:00 pm - Dinner at Brian & Ruth
- ⇒ 7:00 pm - Sergio visits with Boys Club/GEMS/ and Men's group **CONFIRMED**. Maybe Lofty Studies Group

(Continued on page 4 - See "Sergio's Visit")

(“Sergio’s Visit”)

Friday, April 15th

- ⇒ 9:00 am - Maybe a trip to visit with OIM and/ or Jericho Road, and visit or phone call with Jim.
- ⇒ Noon - Lunch
- ⇒ Afternoon - Sight seeing
- ⇒ 6:00 pm - Dinner at Eric and Brenda’s and then home to rest

Saturday, April 16th

- ⇒ 8:00 am - Breakfast social with Peru larger group, and then hopefully off to sugar bush or something??
- ⇒ 5:30 pm - To John and Annette’s for Dinner.

Sunday, April 17th (Palm Sunday)

- ⇒ 10 am - Sergio involved in Sunday church Service. **CONFIRMED**
- ⇒ Noon - Pot luck lunch after church to give congregation a chance to meet Sergio more and do a Q & A as well.
- ⇒ Evening - Dinner at Marg’s home.

Monday, April 18th

- ⇒ 9:00 am Ron and Nick will sit down with Erin and Sergio and reflect on the week with him, and talk more about Gamaliel church and plans and hopes and dreams and our evolving partnership.
- ⇒ **Lunch at Nicks and Margaret**
- ⇒ 1:30 pm - Ron takes Sergio and Erin to Airport and they are off to Peru.

FRIENDLY HANDS— 14 YEARS OF SERVICE

By: Rita:

The Friendly Hands is a group of volunteers (men and women) from Calvin church who have come together for fellowship, fun and hard work, while we cater luncheons, dinners and funerals.

We have celebrated 14 years of service as a group. Friendly Hands began on October, 1996 when we catered our first Classis Meeting. Before that time, we simply had several members of the church catering any funeral receptions of our church.

Here are some historical facts:

- ⇒ From 1996 until December 2005, we have catered 149 events, with 50 of those being funerals.
- ⇒ Other events we have catered include bake sales, garage sales, craft sales, boerenkool dinners, council retreats, classis meetings, dinners before congregational meetings, birthday, wedding and anniversary dinners, as well as

33 miscellaneous events and dinners and 3 very successful fund raisers.

- ⇒ From 2006 until December 2010, we catered 69 events: 22 of those being funerals. The events included 11 birthday, wedding and anniversary dinners, 2 Classis Meetings, 2 Day of Encouragement events, 4 Eastern Canada Diaconal Conferences & Eastern Canada Classis Safe Church Team events combined, and 28 miscellaneous dinners and events.
- ⇒ For this year 2011, we have already catered 2 funerals and 1 dinner for the Ottawa-Carleton Male Choir.

We were able to chronicle all of our events through photos. We have 4 photo albums located in the kitchen for everyone to enjoy. I was struck by the fact that many in the photos are no longer with us. I also noticed that for many of us who are
(Continued on page 5 - See “Friendly Hands”)

("Friendly Hands")

still around that things have changed when it comes to clothes fashions, hair styles/colour, and how we have all aged. :) As with many organizations, we are getting older and are looking for new young blood to join our group and one day take over. So please consider joining our group.

Since the church added our beautiful addition in 2002 and an equally wonderful kitchen/servery to work in, our group's goal has been to reduce Calvin's building/mortgage fund. We were able to donate back \$10,000.00 in November, 2009 towards the mortgage as well as contribute over \$6,000 towards other special needs expenses such as a bike rack, fellowship hall blinds and basement repairs. We intend to make another substantial donation towards the mortgage this spring.

All our purchases and donations were made possible because of the great support we received from our church community as well as outside groups. The Friendly Hands consists of 5 core members:

Anne, Rita, Nellie, Fran and Jetty



The Early Years - 1997



I volunteer once in a while. It's lots of fun, but don't spill..... :)



Always a smile. They aren't called FRIENDLY hands for nothing :)

We have a large group of volunteers who make our catering possible and we always welcome newcomers. Just contact any one of the core group if you would like to join us.

Editor's Note: As one who has worked with the Friendly Hands on several occasions, and even volunteered as a server, let me tell you that being part of the Friendly Hands is a hoot. Lots of fun and fellowship for a greater good. If you want an evening of fun while you help others have fun, please volunteer to be a server, or better yet, become part of the planning group. RH

Isn't It Interesting:

how difficult and boring it seems to be to read one chapter of the Bible
but
how easy it is to read 100 pages of a popular novel or ZANE GREY book?

Classis was held in Calvary on March 4 & 5. Sharon, our deacon representative, gives us this report on the happenings of Classis. If you have further questions, please contact Sharon, Pastor Ken, or Walter, who were also present.

A complete listing of committees and agencies that reported to classis can be found on the agenda of classis.

Summaries of reports of interest to Calvin:

A. *Campus Ministry in Ottawa: (Sheila)*

- ⇒ searching for facilities
- ⇒ advertising for applicants
- ⇒ working to get charitable status
- ⇒ fund raising is being organized

B. *Seafarers Ministry (Michelle)*

- ⇒ Michelle de Pooter is going on maternity leave as of June 2011
- ⇒ 1500 parcels in total were delivered at Christmas time
- ⇒ issues of seafarers include dealing with deaths at sea and piracy

C. *Classis Youth Ministry Team (Ron)*

- ⇒ Committee continues to meet every couple of months.
- ⇒ Over 20 applications for Mission Trip Scholarship funds and more applications coming in.
- ⇒ Several churches have good youth ministries going, but several are struggling and/or have no youth ministry.
- ⇒ Committee is trying to think outside the box to encourage youth ministry and will be coming to councils of churches for ideas and discussion on this.
- ⇒ A short Q & A time was held to discuss youth ministry

D. *ECDC West (Ineke)*

- ⇒ meeting held April 2010 was positively received by all who attended
- ⇒ the Sept. meeting had to be canceled due to the lack of registrations
- ⇒ classis Quinte also had to cancel their planned Day of Encouragement
- ⇒ discussion followed regarding possible reasons why participation is declining
- ⇒ ECDC meeting is planned for April 9, Kemptville

E. *World Missions (John)*

- ⇒ encourages congregations to promote their missionaries
- ⇒ global shift in missions: the centre of Christianity is shifting from North America to Africa
- ⇒ encourages more working with new immigrants
- ⇒ connecting children with mission ideas (see the CRC website)

F. *Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (Mike)*

- ⇒ Arrived to set up office in Ottawa last summer (in the First Baptist Church)
- ⇒ building relationships with parliamentarians
- ⇒ researches and encourages public debate regarding Afghanistan and indigenous justice

On Friday evening a discussion was held concerning the evening service. A theme heard several times during classis was declining participation in many areas, including Sunday services (am and pm) and training opportunities. Our own "parking lot" issues seem to be experienced in other congregations as well.

Did You Know?

Classis Eastern Canada has a web site! Check it out at:

<http://www.classiseasterncanada.ca/>

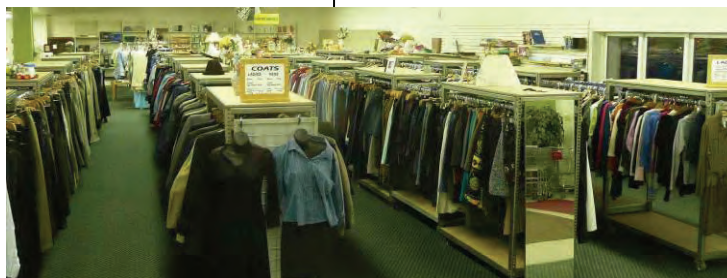
Isn't It Interesting:

how we need to know about an event for Church 2–3 weeks before the day so we can include it in our agenda, but we can adjust our lives at the last minute for other events?



By: Walter

After more than a year of discussion and planning, Ottawa's Bibles for Missions Thrift Store was opened in August 2009, at 1545 Merivale Road. Its purpose: *"to raise funds to support the mission work of The Bible League of Canada."* The Bible League is engaged in Bible distribution and prison ministry in Canada, but directs most of its efforts to overseas missions. This includes using the scriptures to teach literacy, teaching people to use their new skills to earn a livelihood, training evangelists and pastors, and planting hundreds of new churches each year. The Bible League is one of the agencies which the synod of the CRC recommends to the congregations for financial support.



Members from three CRC congregations took the initiative, but since then almost 200 volunteers, from nearly 50 congregations, have given some of their time. At present about 100 are active volunteers, sorting through clothes, house wares and other donations. They also test electrical goods, pick up and deliver furniture, staff the cash registers, clean floors and washrooms, assist customers, and have fun while they are doing it. Each day has two four-hour shifts of volunteers, who start either at 9:30 am or at 1:00pm. They start by meeting around the table for devotions, sharing personal news and needs, and receiving their assignments. The store opens at 10 am and closes at 5 p.m., so that volunteers can go home for supper with their families.

The store serves a variety of needs. For some volunteers it fills time that was empty. For

others it's an opportunity to use old skills and develop new ones. Still, for others it's an occasion to be engaged in good work and socialize with new friends. The store is a place to learn about other churches and other cultures. Many share products of their baking or cooking skills at break time. Others come to help themselves learn English and Canadian ways. Some learn that many Christians really are fun people. One of the few volunteers who has no wish to become a Christian said she comes because "I like what you are doing [for the environment] and I like the people here."

Who knows what her continued exposure to Christians may do in time?

By promoting recycling the store helps protect the envi-

ronment. Conscientious people have an alternative for disposal of unneeded goods. We save the city thousands of dollars on waste disposal because we divert much from landfill and pay hundreds of dollars each month to look after our own garbage disposal. We provide a service to many low income people by enabling them to buy quality goods at the best price in town. By maintaining a cheerful Christian atmosphere among staff, we are exposing customers and donors to a quiet Christian witness. One donor said, "I don't agree with your purpose, but I like what you are doing and I like the people in your store, so I'll give you more stuff anyway."

While we have been on a learning curve, we have experienced God's grace in many ways. The facilities, while not ideal and more expensive than we wish, have served us well. Our fears, while we

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(“BFM Store”)

were planning, of not getting enough donations, have vanished. In early March we received the promise of furniture from more than 30 furnished apartments, as they are being redecorated or refurbished over the next six months. Our staff have spent some 30,000 hours without any serious accident or injury. At the end of March or early April we will ring in the 50,000th customer, and in May our pre-tax sales will reach \$500,000.



Yes, our average sale is less than \$10. But, when we amortize our start-up costs, our profit to date is nearly \$100,000. For 2011 we expect a profit of \$100,000 to \$120,000— enough to teach several thousand children to read and to lead thousands more to Christ.

In a few years we hope to reach a profit of \$250,000 and to start looking for better premises which will provide a better working environment for staff and still greater funds for the Bible League. A few of the BfM stores have an annual profit between four and five hundred thousand dollars per year, and there is no reason why Ottawa shouldn't join them in the future. However, before we reach that point, we need much more prayer, more volunteers, more donors and more customers.

If you haven't visited us yet, why continue to deprive yourself; come and see/buy the best bargains in town.

By: John K

Earlier this year, I learned that a friend's mother had died from cancer of the duodenum, the first bit of small intestine just below the stomach. She apparently had not been feeling well at Christmas time and was diagnosed with the cancer at Easter time. She passed away shortly thereafter.

Her death brought back a flood of memories and many deep seated emotions. I was about the same age as my friend when my dad died suddenly of a heart attack some 32 years ago. The deep sense of loss that I felt at my dad's death came rushing back to the fore of my consciousness. The pain of the realization of that loss of my father is at times still as strong now as it was then, nearly half a lifetime later. It hurts that my children, then about the same age as my friend's children, never got to know my father, just like my friend and his siblings' children will never know their grandmother. I know that, like my family, when visits happen, there is always a missing person.

For Dorothy and I the parallel is even stronger, because that situation could have been our family. In 2000, Dorothy was diagnosed with breast cancer and treated for it. In 2003, the breast cancer was back with a vengeance and was treated with major surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. At the time, the oncologist warned us that if Dorothy did not take the treatments, she would almost certainly be dead within a year. If she took the full set of proposed treatments, she still only had about a 50:50 chance of living for 5 years. We are grateful that she is among the 50 per cent who survived. In April of 2009, I was diag-

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(“Musings”)

nosed with colo-rectal cancer and spent the past year and a half in treatment. I was very fortunate in that my cancer had apparently not spread at all and by removing the tumour, and with radiation and chemotherapy, the odds are pretty high that the cancer will not return.

At times like this, there is a sense of “survivor guilt.” Why did our friend’s mother, and so many others that we know, die of cancer and Dorothy and I have survived to express our condolences. For that question, I do not have an answer. To say “It is God’s will” or “It is in God’s plan” or “We will not be burdened beyond what we can bear” just does not cut it anymore. To me, these are platitudes.

Dorothy and I attended the funeral mass for our friend’s mother. What I did find very comforting was the fact that, even though the funeral style comes from a very different tradition than my own [French Canadian Roman Catholic versus Dutch Reformed], the words of comfort and the steps taken are the same. The priest had a short meditation focusing on the deceased and the comfort of the Lord. No different than in my tradition, other than it was considerably shorter than some of the sermons I have heard at Christian Reformed funerals. There was comforting music. We were comforted with Jesus words: “I am the resurrection and the life.....”. The funeral reminded me in fact of how much we as Christians have in common at these times. In the face of death, the distinctions between our various denominations and traditions tend to fall away as the real essence of our faith is brought to the fore.

While it is not part of my tradition, the celebration of Mass or Lord’s Supper at the funeral service, to me, was very moving and somehow very appropriate. The Supper is the celebration

that Jesus died for us and rose again. Somehow, when we celebrate it, we mystically partake in his body and blood. Article 70 of the CRC Church order states that :Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.” While I know the historical background of this article, it seems to me that this is an undesirable relic of an earlier age. The death of a member of the church family is a death in the family of God as represented in the local congregation. The celebration of the sacrament, be it Mass or Supper, in the presence of the remains of the deceased somehow seems as fitting to mark the end of a person’s life as the sacrament of Baptism is at the beginning of life.

We were again reminded that it is at times like this that God gives us strength to deal with what we have to deal with. Our friend’s father carried the urn containing his wife’s ashes from the church to the cemetery next to the church and placed it into the space provided for it. I suspect it must have been one of the most difficult things he has had to do in his life, carrying the ashes of his wife to their final resting place. The finality of the ending of the living relationship with one’s spouse that this act demonstrated was very moving. In a good marriage, the death and burial of a spouse means the end of a deep friendship, of a lover, of companionship, of a confidant, and the end of a history that has been shared. At the same time, the words of internment spoken by the priest provide comfort. For the Christian, it is not the end of our existence, but the beginning of a new phase of our being. As the song says: “I am the resurrection and the Life, he who believes in me will never die.” That is our comfort in life and in death.

Isn't It Interesting:

how a 20 dollar bill seems like such a large amount when you donate it to church, but such a small amount when you go shopping?

For the past several months the Ministry Board has been meeting and talking about Calvin's "Parking Lot" issues. Those are issues that are broad in scope and tied to Calvin's mission and vision. Leo has written an article updating the progress of Ministry Board on these issues and it is printed here so you will know what has been going on. If this article prompts questions or comments, please contact any member of the ministry board (or more specifically John B, Chair— or Leo.)

Greetings from Ministry Board:

Have you ever been on a project where you stopped and wondered – OK why are we doing this again? Or on a trip and had to stop to consult a map and ask the question – where are we going again? Or had to take a look at the house in which you are living and ask – does this house still serve our needs? Those questions will bring up questions about your project, especially if you are getting unexpected results, or if you encounter unexpected landmarks on your trip, or as family needs change.

Ministry Board and Council have been asking questions about Calvin, sort of like consulting the map and evaluating our programs and practices. There are a number of reasons for this happening now, but the process was triggered by a downward trend in our attendance (about a 20% decline in the last 4 years) and revenues. The discussion has gone beyond that, however, to more fundamental questions about Calvin's identity and mission. What is the new project to which God is calling us and what is the next stage of our journey?

First of all, we want to remind ourselves that the church (any church, not just Calvin) exists

for two reasons. The first is that we exist to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and the second is that we encourage commitment to and practice of a life long process of maturing in the faith in which we support and hold each other accountable.

However, these two purposes leave a number of questions having to do with practice. In other words, do all our practices encourage a living relationship with Jesus Christ and a life of sanctification (or maturing in the faith)?

Ministry Board has been considering these questions since September and has moved forward in three areas. The first is a commitment to gathering, in a more systematic way, information about the downward trend in our numbers. While numbers are not, by themselves that important, they do indicate trends and any leadership team

would be derelict in its duties if it did not try to understand why our numbers are on a decline. Ministry Board has adopted the proposal to initiate exit interviews with people no longer worshipping with us and to make exit interviews a standard part of our operating procedures.

Second, Ministry Board has been considering the area of defining what is central to and non-negotiable about our identity and what we could negotiate and perhaps leave behind. For example, Biblical orthodoxy is non-negotiable as is our Calvinist tradition in formulating our faith. However, there may be particular programs or practices which may no longer be effective and relevant or which need to be changed. One outcome of these discussions is a schematic diagram

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(“VISION”)

using a tree as a metaphor to distinguish between our roots, our trunk, the branches and the leaves to identify the negotiable and the non-negotiable features of our church family.

The third area of consideration is a process of evaluating our programs and practices to see how they fit into who we are and what God is calling us to do. A current example you will be asked to consider at the Congregational meeting is a proposal to replace elections with drawing lots as the final step in choosing Ministry Board members, pastoral elders and pastoral deacons. Other program reviews include Education and Discipleship around the theme of encouraging mature discipleship and Outreach, to evaluate our effectiveness in reaching people with the gospel message.

This is about your community and Ministry Board asks you to pray for wisdom and guidance and to offer wisdom and feedback. You are invited to contact your pastoral elder or members of Ministry Board about what you hear God saying to us about Calvin's mission and purpose in Ottawa.

Isn't It Interesting:

how 2 hours seem so long when you're at church,
and how short they seem when you're watching a good movie?

WORKING @ FIRST PLACE PREGNANCY CENTRE

By: Bea

FIRST PLACE OPTIONS is a place where anyone facing difficult circumstances related to an unplanned pregnancy can come for support. Men and women of various ages make appointments, walk in to the comfortable reception area at 889 Bank St., or telephone or e-mail. They are offered a chance to talk over their circumstances with a nonjudgmental peer counselor and may walk away with another appointment, material supplies or referrals to other agencies that help, depending on their needs.

First Place offers free pregnancy tests and the opportunity to consider each of the three options that a person faces in an unplanned pregnancy. People are encouraged to take the time to consider each option and make an informed choice. Each client is given unconditional support,

regardless of decisions made, beliefs, race or economic circumstances.

If a client chooses to parent, First Place will support them through the pregnancy. Sometimes that means frequent visits to the centre, referrals for housing, prenatal classes, dental hygienist care, and other community type supports. It also often means giving them baby clothing. Sometimes First Place is able to offer doula (birth coaching) support.

First Place is not a medical clinic, and does not provide any medical referrals. They are committed to giving information about all three op-

FIRST PLACE
pregnancy centre

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("First Place")

tions, because everyone has a right to an informed choice. If a client chooses abortion, First Place offers post abortion support. This can mean one on one support or support in a group setting. If a client chooses adoption, First Place provides them with information and continues to provide birth parent support throughout the pregnancy and after the placement.

Sometimes clients come just to receive diapers and clothing for their children. Whenever they can, First Place supports parents who cannot afford to provide the necessities.

Personally, I was looking for God's leading and a new opportunity to serve God when I retired from teaching over three years ago. I really wasn't sure what God had in store for me. At the same time, I knew there were so many opportunities to be part of the coming of the new kingdom that Jesus taught us about.....to be "Jesus with skin on". It can be a confusing place to be in, when you don't know where God is leading. In some ways that's a constant search that never ends. We always need to be listening and open to hearing from God.

However, in this instance, as I was praying about it while driving, God answered. I turned on the radio, and the first thing I heard was an advertisement from First Place pregnancy centre, asking for volunteers. I hadn't even heard of them before! Was this for me?? I had to check it out. That led to three months of volunteer training, followed by about a year of being mentored and

shadowed by Marlene, the client services director. Then one day she said to me, "Swim, duckie, swim!" I had to lead my first client meeting on my own. That's scary! Those are times when you pray fervently for God to help you, and God didn't disappoint.

Oh, I made mistakes, and likely will continue to do so, but God is always near, giving strength to continue. There is still so much to learn. It's a constant challenge. Marlene and other First Place employees are always supportive and helpful.

There are rewarding times and times when you wonder what happened to a client, and if your visit with her helped at all. Sometimes I get to do follow up calls for Marlene's clients or my own. These are times when I do see the results. That's when I see that First Place provides a role in Ottawa that no one else does. No other organization offers to walk with a client, through the ups and downs of difficult decision making, for as long as it takes.

First Place is totally funded by individuals and churches who see the need for this kind of support in our community, and by fund raising events. Even though there is the constancy of three paid employees to run the centre, they rely on volunteer workers for their board of directors, for fund raising and in the day to day running of the centre. First Place is a front line agency, doing the work of God in Ottawa and the surrounding region.

Isn't It Interesting:

how difficult it is to learn a fact about God to share it with others;
but
how easy it is to learn, understand, extend and repeat gossip?

Editor's Note: Throughout the year our growing together groups (GTG) have been meeting. They cover a variety of topics and interests within Calvin CRC and beyond. One such GTG has been meeting and wished to share with you some things that they have been discussing.

By: Kathryn and Kathy

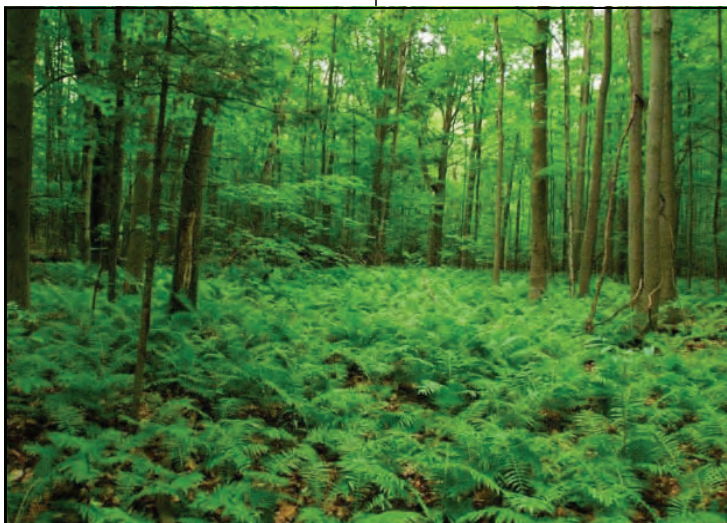
Did you know that those energy-saving, compact fluorescent light bulbs should not go in the garbage? They can be returned to Home Depot or other places that sell them for safe disposal. Do you know that you can buy paper that saves trees, at no extra cost? Check for the FSC label to show it is recycled fiber.

Ever hear about the Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change? There is a link between them. Know a good cleaner that does no harm to the environment? We do!

We hear a lot about being green these days, but not necessarily at church. In church we hear about creation, but not much about how we can care for it. The **Green and Christian Growing Together Group** brings together learning about creation, reflection on the links between our faith and our role in the world, and practical actions we can take. Above are just a few of the things we have shared.

As our group has continued to meet, we have seen the connection between common frogs, their habitat, and global issues elicits both praise

for the marvelous way God created things and concern about the harm being done to the ecology on which we all depend. One evening we learned about the amazing ecology of the old-growth forest in our city, the South March Highlands, and the threat posed by urban growth (See the picture below of the South March Highlands). On another evening we discussed food sustainability – and we always enjoy healthy and delicious snacks!



The South March Highlands Forest

Creation care at Calvin also means asking what we can do as a church community, in our homes and in our church building. The Coffee Break group on Wednesday morning is also talking about this. Though talk is good, we as a growing together group hope many of us will take action as well. From

simple things like composting coffee grounds to doing a full energy audit, we are discussing options with the management committee.

We also highlighted the new creation as an important theme for worship services, to remind us that God's plan is to renew this earth. We hope to see care for creation become an integral part of life at Calvin.

You may be interested in learning more or have good ideas to share. We invite others to join in as we grow together as members of Calvin and caretakers of God's creation. Contact Kathy Vandergrift if you have any further questions or comments regarding what you see in this article.

Volunteers



A church of this size is always looking for volunteers to assist in the various areas of ministry that happen here. Below are some areas that are in need of beefing up and if ANY of these appeal to you, please give Pastor Ron a call sooner than later and we can talk more about what they involve.

- ⇒ **Ushers and Greeters:** We are always looking for more Ushers and Greeters
- ⇒ **Fellowship Committee:** We'd love at least one more person to assist us in the Fellowship Events area.
- ⇒ **Outreach Committee:** We are looking for someone who has a passion for contacting our community around us and getting the congregation involved in missional activities in the city.
- ⇒ **Nursery Committee Volunteers:** At present we do not have a nursery committee. We are looking for volunteers to assist in ensuring the nursery is a safe place for our children.
- ⇒ **GEMS Counselors:** We will be losing some GEMS counselors next season and are looking for a couple of adult females to join the GEMS leadership team.
- ⇒ **Friendship Club Co-ordinator:** Steve will be focusing on Boys Club next season, so we are looking for a Friendship Club Co-ordinator. All other major spots are taken in the leadership team, but we need someone to co-ordinate activities and get the word out about Friendship Group.
- ⇒ **Extendicare volunteers:** We are always looking for more families/individuals to sign up to assist in the weekly Extendicare Sunday services. We need speakers, musical players, and people gatherers.

YOUR PASTOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

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Many of the events of Calvin, whether they be youth or congregational life, have been documented on Pastor Ron's blog.

If you wish to know more about them, please grab a coffee/tea/juice, settle down and go to:

www.ronhosmar.blogspot.com

and read about the events and issues that might surround them.

You will also find links to blog sites from our missionaries and other people.

Some of the articles Pastor Ron has placed on his blog in 2011 are:

1. *Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser*
 2. *How Youth Groups destroy kids lives*
 3. *Skating on the Canal with CIA/ETM*
 4. *Annette's teachings from the Service of Healing held February 13th*
 5. *Youth Leader's "Soul Care" retreat at Fair Haven's*
 6. *Lofty Studies (Young Adult) retreat at the Mulder's Cottage*
 7. *C.I.A's Chili dinner and game night fundraiser*
 8. *Why we are fostering international partnerships (Peru) and update from Pastor Sergio*
- Enjoy!

In addition, Pastor Ken keeps us up to date via email with the week to week activities of Calvin, as well as thought provoking tidbits through his

Pastor Ken's Notes, or PKN

as they have come to be known.

*He has also started a blog
(and he said he'd NEVER do that :))*

If you have an email address and are not yet part of PKN, may I suggest that you send him an email at:

pastor@calvincrc.ca

and become a PKN fan. You'll be glad you did.