

Portside

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Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Dramatic Reading

Charles Dickens has probably had more influence on the way that we celebrate Christmas today than any single individual in human history except one.

At the beginning of the Victorian period the celebration of Christmas was in decline. The medieval Christmas traditions, which combined the celebration of the birth of Christ with the ancient Roman festival of Saturnalia (a pagan celebration for the Roman god of agriculture), and the Germanic winter festival of Yule, had come under intense scrutiny by the Puritans. The Industrial Revolution, in full swing in Dickens' time, allowed workers little time for the celebration of Christmas

The romantic revival of Christmas traditions that

occurred in Victorian times had other contributors: Prince Albert brought the German custom of decorating the Christmas tree to England, the singing of Christmas carols (which had all but disappeared at the turn of the century) began to thrive again, and the first Christmas card appeared in the 1840s. But it was the Christmas stories of Dickens, particularly his 1843 masterpiece A Christmas Carol, that rekindled the joy of Christmas in Britain and America. After more than 160 years, A Christmas Carol continues to be relevant, sending a message that cuts through the materialistic trappings of the season and gets to the heart and soul of the holidays.

The reading brings to us



the pleasure of hearing a good story, the joy of music of the season, and the inspired energy of those who want to make their community a better place. The net proceeds from our Port Nelson reading, in keeping with the interests of Charles Dickens are given to Wesley Urban Ministries, 'No Charge Christmas Store' and to the Literacy Council of Burlington

We thank CBC Radio for their sponsorship.

December 12, 7:30 PM

Michael's Musings – R.I.C.E.

Michael's Musings:
R.I.C.E.

Do you know what "R.I.C.E." is? There is another meaning, besides the light, fluffy (or sticky, as I prefer it) accompaniment to Chinese food.

I just learned about R.I.C.E. from someone in

our church family. R.I.C.E. is an acronym for "rest, ice, compression, elevation." Apparently, it's a common sports medicine acronym. As I write this article, I have a broken ankle. The best advice I've been given is RICE! I'm on my way to the kitchen. Sticky or dry? Long grain or short grain? White or brown?

Maybe some of you knew about R.I.C.E. Without having it defined for me, I didn't know. I suppose if I hadn't broken my ankle, I wouldn't know about R.I.C.E.

Acronyms are code language. Those who have fractured a bone might know.

Continued on page 2

Michael's Musings – R.I.C.E. continued from page 1

"But what about those who have never been part of a church?"

Those in medicine might know. But what about the rest of us?

M-2. E-7. Narthex. Chancel. Hymn. Voluntary. UCW. M & S Fund. Nave. Rainbow Connection. Sermon. Presbytery.

Many of you may recognize some or all of these words and acronyms. If you do, you have probably been involved in some way with a church. But what about those who have never been part of a church?

I remember attending an annual meeting of Hamilton Conference (the meeting of United Churches in the area) many years ago as a "newcomer." Those of us "newcomers" received an entire sheet of definitions to help "decode" the proceedings of the meeting!

I sometimes wonder if we ought to produce such a sheet for Port Nelson!

Each and every week, I work from the assumption that "newcomers" are among us. Actually, I prefer to refer to them as first-time worshippers. They may be "just visiting" (and if we use that language, well, then perhaps that's all we're expecting of them!). They may be new. They may be guests. But on Sunday mornings at 10.30am, all of us gather to worship. Some of us gather each week. Others come for the first time.

And this happens every week. That is why we would do well to be conscious of our code language.

This past fall we have been focusing on "building community" in our worship and work. Part of building community is reminding ourselves of the basics of living, and how connections with others can be widened through welcoming, praying, eating, listening to creation, knowing

neighbours, giving, accompanying one another and telling stories. It has been a time to reflect on what is truly important when we find ourselves gathered in various communities – families, neighbourhoods, places of work, school classes, retirement home dining rooms and churches.

It has been a time to explore more deeply the faith to which God has called us, and the connections that are ever widening. It has been a time to try to use everyday language – church without a glossary.

And it has been a good time to be among you, in this, our first year together. We are building. We are deepening. We are widening. We are, in all of this, growing.

A blessed Advent and Christmas to you and those you dearly love.

-Michael



Do You Need A Ride to Church?

Are you are in need of a ride to church on Sunday, either occasionally, or each Sunday? We have drivers willing to pick you

up and return you home.

Interested in attending the Senior's luncheons, and you need a ride. Call me,

Dorothy McDonald at 905-637-1475 and I'll make the arrangements for you

Help Our Gardens Grow!

When you shop at Holland Park Garden Gallery, and you don't have your own Grow for Green account, remember to tell them that you are a member of the Grow for the Green Club.

All you need to do is give them the Church telephone number 905 637-5631 or our church name. A percentage of your purchase will then be credited to Port Nelson.

These credits will then be used to buy garden supplies and flowers.

Property Management Committee



GORD'S STUFF

He heard the story in church one Sunday: the one about the widow who gave everything she had as an offering. Maybe that was the answer for him, too. What did he really have to live for? Who would truly care? What did he have to lose?

He had been doing really well just five years ago. He had made a good living, carried a large mortgage, but it was manageable, and boasted an idyllic family life. Sure, he had lived a bit beyond his means from time to time, but who didn't? Then the recession hit. He was laid off from his management job. The bills began to bite and the debts spiral out of control. It all fell apart too quickly.

No one else knew, not even his wife, for it would be too humiliating to admit his failure – to her or to anyone. It would be best this way. He'd just give it all away and then kill himself. A few pills and his life insurance policy would take care of his wife and kids. His friends would be shocked, but he couldn't bear the pain any more. It hurt too much, too deeply.

It seemed like forever getting out of church that morning, the line snaking far too slowly past the ministers, too many people wanting to chatter,

too many smiles adding to his pain. He was almost free, almost gone, when it happened.

A little girl, barely school age, looked up at him with big brown eyes and asked, "Mister, could you lift me up to put this on the Giving Tree?" In her delicate hand she held out a cut-out of a red butterfly. It meant that she had given a gift to the Carpenter Hospice – the butterfly symbol – so she was encouraged to hang the butterfly on the Giving Tree to celebrate her gift.

"I wanted to give to people who lost their hope," she stated boldly, "Because they hurt so much. I want them to feel better, so I'm asking Jesus to love them. Can you lift me up?"

Hesitating but unwilling to disappoint her, he lifted her up. "Higher!" she giggled, "I want it on the top like an angel." In that moment he breathed deeply, smelling the soap and water fragrance of little girl, reminding him so much of his own daughter when she was little. She squirmed mightily to get up higher and he helped. He steadied her and the butterfly was placed, a beacon of hope and of companionship. Setting her down, she gave him a quick hug, a muffled "thank you," and ran off into the chattering crowd.

He looked up at the red butterfly on top of the tree. It took both of them to place it there. It took others to craft the symbol and to create the programme. It took so many to make things work.

He realized he wasn't alone after all. He looked again at the people drinking coffee or tea, shaking hands, giving hugs, building relationships. This was the gift of Christmas: being there for each other and allowing others to be there for you. It was harder to receive, it seemed, instead of giving, but it brought healing to his aching heart. Maybe his gift was actually to let others reach out to help him.

He looked again at the giving tree, at the red butterfly symbolizing the new hope he was beginning to feel. He felt as vulnerable and as helpless as a baby, but a small child had shown him that working together made a huge difference. In that was no shame, just caring.

He breathed deeply once more. There was now an Advent promise wafting through the air.

Rev. Gord Dunbar

"He heard the story in church one Sunday."

"Advent &
Christmas
Season"



Upcoming Worship

Please join your church family in worship as, together, we seek to deepen our faith and widen our connections:

Theme: "Building Community"

- November 1** Building Community: "The Greatest Building of All"
Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated
Reception of New Members
- November 22** Reign of Christ – a service of reflections and music
- November 29** The First Sunday of Advent
Sacrament of Communion will be celebrated
- November 29** The Service of Advent Lessons & Carols **4.30pm**
Led by our Choir
- December 6** The Second Sunday of Advent
- December 13** The Third Sunday of Advent – "Pink Gifts"
Led by our Rainbow Connection Sunday school
- December 16** "Christmas in a *Minor Key*" **7.30pm** A Service for those finding the season difficult. Led by our Pastoral Care Committee
- December 20** The Fourth Sunday of Advent
- December 20** The Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols **4.30pm**
Led by our Choir
- December 24** Christmas Eve Family Service **7pm**
- December 24** Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion **10pm**
- December 27** First Sunday after Christmas
- January 3** Epiphany
- January 10** Baptism of Jesus
Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated

Dickens' A Christmas Carol Reading, Dec 12

On **Saturday Dec. 12** at 7:30 PM, please join us to hear a dramatic reading of the story 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens. This is our sixth year.

Our Guest Readers

Robert Fisher, CBC Radio, Here and Now
Barbara Budd, CBC Radio, As It Happens
Sunni Genesco, 102.9K-Lite FM Radio host
Rev. Gord Dunbar, Port Nelson Associate Minister, Pastoral care
Ruth McQuirter, Port Nelson Member, Professor Brock University
Don McMillan, Port Nelson Member, TV Cogeco Play by Play Sports Announcer
Joined by our Chancel Choir and musicians.

This reading brings together the pleasure of hearing a good story, the joy of music of the season, and the inspired energy of Port Nelson to make their community a better place. The net proceeds will be provided to the Wesley Urban Ministries 'No Charge Christmas Store' and the Literacy Council of Burlington.

Dickens Tickets \$15 Dickens

Christmas Dinner & Dickens' Ticket \$38. Dinner starts sharp at 5:30 PM

Dinner Only \$23 (advance tickets only for the Christmas dinner)

We thank the CBC for their generous support of "A Christmas Carol"

"Enjoy Christmas
dinner before the
Dickens' A
Christmas Carol
reading"



More Gathering Opportunities

Monday Evening Women's Soulwork Study. We will begin the fall by looking at Gretta Vosper's book "With or Without God" (the study will include a road trip!) Give Bev a call and come and join us.

Tuesday Evening Novel Study has begun – we will look at "The Art of Racing in the Rain" "The Hour I First Believed" and "Gwen" among others...give Bev a call for more details.

Seniors Lunches – watch for more news about who our speakers will be and come and join us for a great hot meal and entertaining guests on the first Wednesday of each month gathering in the O'Brien Room at 12:15.

Taize Worship

In the midst of busy days, all are invited to attend a Service of Prayer with the Songs of Taize at 7:30 on Sunday, November 15th in

our sanctuary. Set in candle-light this evening service is an opportunity for silent prayer, reflection on scripture and singing the music of the

Taize tradition.

Our service is open to the community beyond our doors so please invite others to come.

From Your Library

MUSIC FOR THE SEASON – From Our CD Collection

A True North Christmas – The True North Brass

Five musicians playing brass instruments are joined by a percussionist to present a collection of traditional Christmas music. This was recorded in our Port Nelson church.

The Spirit of Christmas

Classic FM presents a collection of 14 Christmas classics, including works by composers such as Handel, Bach, Corelli and Palestrina. Several different orchestras and choirs are represented in this grouping

Thanks Be to God...a Festival of Lessons and Carols for Christmas

Our Port Nelson Chancel

Choir under Organist/Director Keith Hopkins presents readings and seasonal music in a December 1994 program. You will recognize some familiar voices.

NEW BOOKS READY TO BORROW:

GWEN – by Carolyn Pogue

Many of you will remember meeting Carolyn when she visited Port Nelson with her husband, Rev. Bill Phipps. Perhaps you've read her column in *The Observer*. This new novel was inspired by the story of Carolyn's own Grandmother, one of 100,000 Home Children sent from England to Canada between 1870 and 1920. Gwen is a feisty, curious little girl with dreams of a life on stage like her idol, E. Pauline Johnson, the Canadian Mohawk performer. Orphaned at the age of 11, Gwen happily

trains as a maid for placement in Canada as a Home Child. Then her poignant story begins. An interesting read for ages 10 to adult.

236.2 – ETERNAL LIFE – A NEW VISION – By Bishop John Spong

636.8 - DEWEY – THE SMALL TOWN LIBRARY CAT WHO TOUCHED THE WORLD - by Vicki Myron and Bret Witter

A great book for all ages.

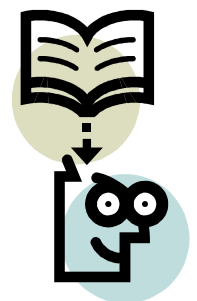
RETURN TO THE ONE HUNDRED ACRE WOOD - by David Benedictus - in the tradition of A.A. Milne's *Winnie-The Pooh*

For the young and young at heart!

Songs of



"Be sure to bring the children in to see our excellent collection of Christmas books"



Thoughtfully Shopping for Those in Need

“Our continued involvement with and support of the Partnership West Food Bank is a blessing for us and for those whose need is so great.”

In the September Portside, I reported on the small group which has organized to raise awareness of those folks in Burlington who are unable to provide the necessary, basic food items for their families or themselves. “Thoughtfully Shop for Those in Need”, is the theme we use when asking the Port Nelson community to provide needed items for the Food Bank on the third Sunday of each month. The generosity of our Port Nelson congregation, since the formal connection to the Food Bank began in late summer, has been gratifying and so very helpful.

In September, 7 bins were filled with cans and dry goods. In October, 12 bins and assorted bags were delivered and happily accepted. In addition, cash donations since mid July have totaled \$2600. When I asked how our money might be used, Michelle Quinn, Chair of the PWFB stated that the cash donations support the purchase of milk, margarine, cheese, eggs, bread, fresh fruit and vegetables. \$1300 of our donations went to buy 350 bags of 2% milk, or 92 boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables, or 450 loaves of bread and 270 dozen

eggs. It is quite amazing how a few dollars grow to be so useful!

Our continued involvement with and support of the Partnership West Food Bank is a blessing for us and for those whose need is so great.

My heartfelt thanks go to all who donate their time and resources to help Burlington individuals have the life God intends for us all.

For information about how **you** might help, please contact: Susan Posgate or Patrick Sweeny.

Stewardship Committee

*“Living
is
Giving”*

It has long been the desire of our Church Council to form a new Stewardship Committee. Last June, a small group gathered together to get started.

Since September they have been joined by other passionate persons. Time has been spent getting to know one another as well as listening to one another's views on Stewardship. Many resources have been distributed and read. People have reported back on what they have learned.

Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church by Kennon Callahan is also on the reading list. A copy is in the library. So many “do-able”

ideas come from it. Our Church Council all read it. (a gift from Michael) It is stimulating reading for all.

At the present time, the committee will be involved with looking at ways to help the congregation support financially all of the great things going on these days.

There is also an exciting plan to look forward to in 2010 which will be revealed later.

This committee provides opportunities both for learning and doing. It is spiritually based and deals with the fact that living is giving.

Committee members to date (a few more are expected) are: John Ashfield, Mary Carey, David Geldart, Gord Gilmore, Roberta Robb, Hal Rosser, Joan Thompson, June Wright and Pat Gilmore from our Church Council have been working with the committee. Steve Jones, PNUC treasurer is a consultant and encourager. Staff support is provided by Rev. Michael Brooks

Our service is open to the community beyond our doors so please invite others to join you!

News from Council, June Wright, Chair

It has been a busy seven months since I became chair of Council. During our first meeting together in March we spent a considerable amount of time getting to know each other. This has helped us to work well together as a team. At that meeting it became apparent that we were facing a serious financial challenge. It was decided to hold a strategic planning meeting to brainstorm short and long term ideas to address our growing debt. Many good suggestions came out of this meeting.

Many thanks to Doug Leggat who attended the strategic planning meeting and decided he could help us. Doug spearheaded a small committee that made a quiet personal ask of a few congregants. They were able to raise over \$80,000. These special gifts allowed us to go into the summer months of quiet givings without too much financial anxiety. The summer doldrums are over; we are experiencing wonderful turn outs for Sunday worship. The last 2 Sundays in September and the first 3 Sundays in October saw givings increase 29.5% over last year for the same period. This is very good news!

An ad-hoc governance committee has been formed to look at the structure of Council, the

underlying committees and to receive proposed policies and procedures from the different committees. As a result of thoughtful research it was recommended by the ad hoc group that Property Management is now a Ministry with the chair sitting on Council. This better reflects the scope of this very busy ministry.

Also on the advice of the governance ad hoc committee a nominating committee has been formed. It is made up of the vice chair of Council, another Council member and two members at large from the congregation. As vice-chair of Council Pat Gilmore is also chair of this new nominating committee. Please call Pat if you are eager to serve on the Council or any committees. She would love to hear from you!

Another role of the ad-hoc governance group will be to provide direction with any future Mission and Vision experience.

As was mentioned in a weekly e-mail from Port Nelson, the Council all read Kennon Callahan's book, *Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church* and participated in an enthusiastic discussion at the September Council meeting. It helped each of us to further our personal ideas on stewardship and showed us how we can implement some of those ideas. These books were a

wonderful gift from Michael to all the Council members.

After the business portion of the October Council meeting we shared what our personal mission statement for Port Nelson might look like. We related good and not so good mission and vision exercises which we had experienced. It is my hope that we will have the opportunity as a congregation to develop a new mission statement with the very important underlying values associated with our church. It is an exercise I am keenly anticipating.

These are just a few of the items we as a Council have been working on. The minutes from our meetings are in the office and are there for your perusal. What aren't contained in the minutes are the fun, laughter, thoughtful discussion, respect and sense of community which are part of our Council meetings. A few have even told me they look forward to Council meetings!

I welcome any questions or comments. Please feel free to send me an e-mail or give me a call.

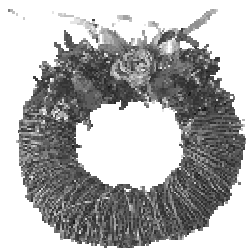
With faith and hope,

June Wright

Chair of Council

"Many thanks to Doug Leggat and those on the committee who made the personal ask within our congregation"

Mistletoe Mart, Saturday, Nov 14



HELP WANTED!!

Plans are well underway! Everyone's help is needed to make this Port Nelson fundraiser a success.

Volunteers are needed now to help with the preparations, Sign up for set up, for take down and the helping the day of the event. Participate and enjoy the fellowship.

NEW THIS YEAR, A Silent Auction, we need your donations: *Paintings, theatre tickets, golf, or golf & lunch, use of your cottage, hand crafted sculptures, or use your imagination and see what you can come up with!* A coordinator is needed.

HAVE YOU STARTED A MISTLETOE MART PROJECTS?

Let us know. Here are

some of the items we need.

KNITTING PROJECTS ...HAVE YARN...NEED KNITTERS... Toddler and youth sweaters are popular items..

CREATIVE SEWING ITEMS like PJ bottoms, placemats and fleece items.

BAUBLES...BANGLES... BEADS... Locate the hidden treasures in your jewellery box...chains, fancy beads, earrings. This is a VERY popular table and all of your contributions are gratefully accepted.

UP-SCALE COLLECTIBLES... Save unwanted light fixtures, lamps, collectible plates, statues, figurines. Fine china, crystal and table linens are excellent sellers

at Mistletoe Mart. Good quality, clean items only, please ... excellent items that would make unique gifts for someone special.

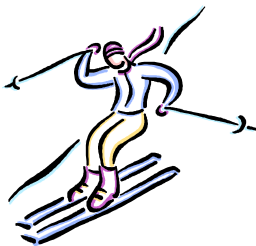
PRESERVES...When preparing your favourite jams, jellies, preserves, relishes, chutneys, pickles, etc., please remember to put aside a few jars for Mistletoe Mart. These items sell out very quickly every year...

THERE IS NEVER TOO MUCH!

Please contact Jocelyn Young to lend a hand or to get ideas of how you can contribute.

Jocelyn@ergohq.com or 905-634-1358

Attention: SKIERS



You are invited to join a small but keen group of PNUC skiers, in a day of skiing.

We are hoping for a SKI DAY on Saturday January 30 or February 20, snow permitting. Possible ski areas are Blue Mountain,

Collingwood, or Holiday Valley, Ellicottville, New York for the first outing. Age is no barrier, but those under 18 must be accompanied by a parent for insurance, health, safety and security reasons. Group rates start at 15 or

20 people depending on ski resort. Car pooling is the only option, unless we have 35+ people participating.

If you are interested please contact Bill Brockington 905 643 8537 wbrockington@cogeco.ca

Port Nelson Weekly Email



Are you on the Port Nelson email list?

If not please contact the office and we'll add you.

Each Thursday (or Friday) you will receive an email from Port Nelson, with messages from our

Ministers, updates on our church family, and reminders of upcoming church activities.

Adopt a Garden Program



The Property Management Committee is looking for some help to beautify our Church

gardens. We would like to start an 'Adopt a Garden' program. If you are interested please contact

the church office or the Property Management Committee.

Sing Me A Love Song, Sermon by Michael Brooks

In the past two months, there have been a number of references to and questions about the sermon of August 30th, 2009. The complete text is below for your personal reflection:

“SING ME A LOVE SONG” A Sermon on Song of Solomon 2: 8-13

August 30th, 2009
Rev. Michael Brooks

Well *Romeo and Juliet* isn't playing at Stratford this year. Good news, though! You don't need to go to Stratford to hear one. Because it *is* the year of the love story at church. We read a piece of it a moment ago. It only shows up occasionally in our schedule of readings. And some may easily miss it.

It's understandable if we don't initially realize we have love stories and love songs in the Bible. Because for most of the history of the church, including the history for many people here today, the Song of Solomon has been all but shelved. Stories of erratic love and flirtation and sexual relations weren't read from pulpits. People just didn't want to hear about that. It wasn't what we came to church for. Certain topics were seen as, well, off limits when it came to worship. And clergy who dared to even mention such topics were often ridiculed. Some of you may remember the story of Rev. Russell Horsburgh in the 1960s that made national headlines both inside and outside the United Church. I had a number of people in my congregation in Chatham who remembered Horsburgh personally – about how he dared to preach on topics that were taboo and, furthermore, to discuss them in the youth groups he led. He was arrested and charged with “juvenile delinquency,” but was later acquitted. And now, people generally say that Horsburgh did nothing wrong. He was simply 30 years ahead of his time.

It wasn't always this way. Barbara Lundblad, professor of preaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, reminds us that for much of the early history of the church, Song of Solomon was one of the most read and preached-upon parts of the Bible. That's until memory turned to morality.

So what is it about Song of Solomon that has historically made the church, and in particular its preachers, so uncomfortable? I mean, it's about love, and isn't that what we preach about every Sunday? Don't we speak about a loving God, and about how we are supposed to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and about how we are supposed to love our neighbour as ourselves? Why all the fuss about a love story? Why can't we sing a love song in church? Why can't we sing a love song in church?

For some of the great composers of church music, the question hasn't mattered. Indeed the likes of Henry Purcell and William Walton and more recently Healey Willan have written beautiful anthems on Song of Solomon. Perhaps choir loft was ahead of pulpit in this regard. So why has it been such an issue for so many in the church? Let me suggest two things this morning. For those who love a standard two or three-point sermon, here it is.

Firstly, I think it has to do with the type of love of which we speak about and sing about. I'm sure some of you are aware that the word “love” is really an inadequate English word that tries to do the work of a number of different words used throughout the Bible. And Song of Solomon and the 2nd Chapter of the Book of Genesis are about the only two places in the entire Old Testament where the word “love” means “eros” – the sexual attraction between two people. In Greek mythology, Eros was the god of lust. Elsewhere, love is more explicitly about being in friendship. Or, love is about being in community – Koinonia. Or, love is the self-giving, unconditional love of God directed toward neighbour, often revealed in a meal – Agape. Continued on page 10.

*“A Sermon on
the Song of
Solomon 2: 8-13,
given my Rev.
Michael Brooks,
August 30, 2009”*

Sing Me A Love Song, continued from page 9

But in Song of Solomon, love is about mutual attraction. Love is a love story between two people. Love is a love song between two people. And it may shock us to find out that the sexuality it celebrates is not necessarily marital. It is erratic love, sexual desire fulfilled.

For some, this continues to be uncomfortable. It's still seen as a taboo topic for church. But for others, it is liberating. It is liberating because it means there is some biblical affirmation to what has long been thought and felt, but not really expressed. And that is, human love allows us to celebrate God through our bodies. Song of Solomon, if we read it and take it for what it is, gets us into our bodies, and gets us to recognize our bodies, and particularly our sexuality, as one of the many wonderful gifts of God.

And as is so often the case, it is music that can unite a division, mend a fracture, compose common ground. In a few moments, the music will help us sing of getting into our bodies as gifts of God.

In my first few years of performing weddings in churches, I remember telling couples that secular love songs were not appropriate for the wedding ceremony. They would be best suited for the reception. But then I realized, if the church can sing "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded" on Good Friday, then why can't the church sing "You Raise Me Up" by Josh Groban at a wedding? Some of you may have thought it an odd choice this morning to sing "O Sacred Head" on a summer Sunday. But it's a classic example of how a secular love song was imported into Christian worship. "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded" was borrowed from a love song titled "My Heart Was Wounded for the Love of a Fair Maiden." And so how is that any different than singing "You Raise Me Up" by Josh Groban or any number of love songs that express "eros," the love of two people, as a gift of God. You see what's happening here? Song of Solomon is all about the love of two people as being expressed in a very intimate way, as a gift of God.

And such expression of the love of one person for another was also made known to us in our Lord Jesus Christ and his ultimate love for us – the love of dying and of rising. What more fitting love song is there to sing then, than "O Sacred Head?" Jesus gives us a human face. God reminds us in Jesus Christ that God is human and divine. Jesus puts a body to the Spirit. In becoming and being the Word made flesh, our Lord is a living reminder of God's wonderful gift of our bodies, including our sexuality. Bodies matter, says Song of Solomon. Bodies matter. That's point number one.

Here's the second point for today. Love cannot be legislated. At some point, it must give its ascent. It's sort of like this past week's newly appointed Senators. They must give their ascent at some point. They cannot legislate.

And we in the United Church have been talking about eros love – the intimate, sexual love of two people – for a bit longer than most churches. And we've been talking about whether or not it is right to legislate the love between two people. Twenty years ago, when this congregation called The Rev. Don Parsons to stand in this pulpit, the United Church was engaged in a discussion about human sexuality and the movement of the Spirit in individual lives. Nobody else was talking about it. Remember that Song of Solomon had been all but shelved for centuries.

And the decisions and direction of this congregation over those twenty years has helped to shape the understanding of those who have gathered in this place of what it means to be an inclusive community – a place where all are welcome. When we put "all are welcome" on our sign outside – when we say on our website that we indeed have "open doors" – we have to really mean it. All are welcome, even two women or two men who walk through the open doors we say we have holding hands. Even two women or two men who want to be married here. Because all are welcome, right?

Continued on page 11.

Sing Me A Love Song, continued from page 10

And in 2007 this congregation decided that the love between two people couldn't be legislated. This congregation decided that, to judge the love between two people is not our place as human beings. And by affirming that the wonderful blessing of covenant love as expressed in marriage is indeed a gift of God for any two people, this congregation took an active and visible step in living out open hearts, open minds, open doors, open welcome. We paid a price, and in some ways, we continue to do so. The church has always paid a price in the name of justice. I often wonder if those early church people – those who wrestled and prayed about what to include in our biblical canon – paid a price, too? Did they fully realize that to include such things as Song of Solomon in the Bible meant a less restrictive approach toward human sexuality than the legal material of the Hebrew Bible? Is that why it was all but shelved? Yet there it is, part of our canon, part of the wonderful collection of the human witness to God's love. And part of that very witness is a woman writing about her lover, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice, running, leaping, bounding over the hills. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!" Love, dear friends, cannot be legislated. It piers around lattices, calls from balconies, leaps over hills, crosses genders. Love sings. And love can lead us to praise the One who makes joy possible. And love can lead us to praise the One who gives us the capacity as humans to love with our whole being – body included.

Will you sing me a love song? "You Raise Me Up, so I can stand on mountains; you raise me up to walk on stormy seas..."

Will you sing me a love song? And the church replies, "you already do." You already do. Because God has first sung, in love, for you.

Family Graces for Advent & Christmas

During this season, sing or read a verse from a relevant hymn as your grace. Invite different members of the family to suggest a hymn they would like to use. Referenced from the United Church website.

- During Advent: a verse from "Hope Is a Star" (*Voices United 7*)
- On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day and during the season of Christmas: verse 3 of "Down to Earth, as a Dove" (VU 42) or a verse from "Joy to the World" (VU 59), "Away in a Manger" (VU 69), or "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime" (VU 71)

God of Sunlight

God of sunlight glistening on snow
 God of melodies and favourite carols
 God of friends and families reaching out through cards
 God of sparkling trees and radiant homes
 God of holy days, holidays, and all our days
 We are thankful for the beauty of this season
 God of trembling lips and saddened hearts
 God of gently falling tears and heartfelt sobs
 God of loved ones gone and memories cherished
 God of forgotten dreams and broken relationships
 God of holy days, holidays, and all our days
 We remember all who grieve and are sad in this time of festivities.
 God of holy days, holidays, and all our days
 Surround us with your comforting and challenging presence
 Guide us in our daily living
 That we may embrace the joys and the sorrows
 Knowing that you are always with us.
 We pray. Amen.



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Secretary of Council	Ruth McQuirter
Treasurer	Steve Jones

Back Page Stories

An elderly woman died last month. Having never married, she requested no male pallbearers. In her handwritten instructions for her memorial service, she wrote, 'They wouldn't take me out while I was alive, I don't want them to take me out when I'm dead.'

Rib Tickler – A minister in a little church had been having trouble with the collections. One Sunday he announced, "Now, before we pass the collection plate, I would like to request that the person who stole the chickens from Farmer Condill's henhouse

please refrain from giving any money to the Lord. The Lord doesn't want money from a thief!"

The collection plate was passed around, and for the first time in months everybody gave.

Internet Joke

A man was in his front yard mowing grass when his neighbor came out of his house and went straight to the mailbox. The neighbor opened it, looked inside, slammed it shut, and stormed back into her house.

A little later the neighbor came out of her house again, went to the mailbox,

again opened it, and slammed it shut again. Angriily, back into the house the neighbor went.

As the man was getting ready to edge the lawn, here came his neighbor again! The neighbor marched to the mailbox, opened it and then slammed it closed . . . harder than ever!

Puzzled by his neighbor's actions, the man asked, "Is something wrong?"

To which his neighbor replied, "There certainly is! My stupid computer keeps telling me I have mail!"

In Memoriams

George Warren Irving
Dorothy Isobel Wilson
Emerson Stewart Lavender

James Franklin Proctor
Elinor Elizabeth Shepherd