

THE EPISTLE

Thank you for the lessons, St. James

BY REV. JOAN MASTERTON

As I put pen (or keyboard) to paper (or screen), I am realizing two things: firstly, that this will be the last time that I do so, and secondly, that I've done this before, 20 years ago.

In 2004, I took early retirement from my career with the Meteorological Service of Canada in order to have the freedom to engage in more church work, including obtaining a job in the National Office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, working with Rev. Dr. Herb Gale in planned giving.

At that time, becoming a minister never crossed my mind, but in looking back, I have come to realize that perhaps there has always been a yearning within me to serve God in this way, even if I didn't recognize it.

Sometimes hindsight is far more revealing than peering into the future.

As you can imagine, the process of becoming a minister presents a learning curve that goes straight up, but learning new things has always been of interest to me. I was never a "great" student, but perhaps an "adequate" student.

Far more demanding – and rewarding – has been the spiritual journey of drawing closer to God, or perhaps lowering the barriers enough to allow me to become



more aware of God's ongoing presence. I remember one wise saint from St. James telling me that we must remember that we are human "beings," not human "doings." Putting together a "to do" list with milestones and deliverables on a specific timeframe is in my comfort zone.

Learning to wait, to pause, to listen, to ponder, to stay silent and not speak, to pray and to "wait on the Lord" were all new learnings for me.

The language of the church talks about ministers being "called" by God, but it is important, I think, that we broaden our understanding and know that we are all "called."

Each of you has within you yearnings, unspoken prayers, questions, hopes, and a multitude of gifts, many of which you already know about and use to the benefit of others. As children of God, we can still ponder the question of what we want to become when we grow up, or

when we mature a little more, or when we develop the wisdom that can surface as we experience life. Who do you want to be as you stand before God (as we all do, on an ongoing basis)?

I have learned so much from you, the people of St. James, and I will be eternally grateful for that. From members of Session, I have learned the wisdom of patience, the importance of prayerful discernment, and how exciting it can be to create visions of hope and then to make them happen.

Serving God, when we are intentional and state that right up front, creates a sense of joy and companionship that is worth all the hard work. I've witnessed change in St. James as we re-think our priorities and dare to move in new directions. We are alive and there is more that God wants from us! I am confident that St. James has many years of worship and service ahead of it.

Three scripture passages have great meaning for me.

- Psalm 130 became my mantra after I graduated from Knox.
- Psalm 126 contains all the joy and hope that I experienced when I arrived at St. James.
- When I "miss the mark", I have fallen back on Galatians 2:20:

Be at peace, St. James! A very exciting future lies ahead of you, and you will be divinely led and inspired all the way. I wish you faith, hope and love.

Joan

COMMUNITY

Frozen meals latest food offering at St. James

As food security becomes a growing issue in our country and community, St. James has become a hub for food distribution in downtown Stouffville:

Did you know, St. James is now a meal distribution location for Stouffville's own The Good Food Impact?

Good Food Impact is a nonprofit "focused on increasing access to nutritious meals for anyone experiencing food insecurity. Our meals are prepared by local volunteers, made with real ingredients, and will fuel you to tackle the day."

Meals are available for pick up at our church the first and third Wednesday of each month from 1:30-4pm.

Our first monthly delivery this month included two varieties of soup and breakfast items.

Big thanks to our friends at The ABLE Network for distributing the frozen meals – and assisting in all of our food projects at St. James.

And thanks to Peter and Sherri Moulds and family of Stouffville for donating the freezer we are using for the program.

St. James is Stouffville's location for York Region's Affordable Fresh Food Markets.

Open to everyone, "these markets are more than just places to buy veggies and fruits – they're vibrant, inclusive hubs designed for community connection."

Operated by the York Region Food Network, the market is open two Wednesdays a month year-round at St. James. Next market dates: Nov. 20 and Dec. 4 and 18. Times: 2-4:30

Since COBS Bread first opened in Canada in 2003, every bakery has committed to partnering and donating leftover baked-fresh daily products to local charitable organizations through **COBS Bread's End of Day Giving program.**

St. James, via the Little Free Pantry, was selected as one of those organizations by COBS when it opened in Stouffville's SmartCentre plaza last March.

"Over \$560 million worth of product has been donated to over 500 charity recipients, including food banks, school breakfast programs, after school programs and youth charities," COBS says on its website.

"With \$1,000 worth of product, on average, being donated each day by every franchise, this program is a cornerstone of our business, as well as one of the most important ways that we connect with our community."

Every Friday night, a small team from St. James goes to COBS, picks up the leftovers and returns to the church Library to bag them. Then, on Saturday morning, a few people gather at St. James to help distribute the bread to other Stouffville organizations.



York Region's Affordable Fresh Food Market opens at St. James twice a month, year-round.

More help is needed to continue this program. Could you spare a few hours to volunteer for this most worthy cause? See or call Charlene Mason (416-312-7084) for details.

Aside from our pantry, we distribute bread products to Karis Disability Services (formerly Christian Horizons), Loft Community Services, Blue Door's Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold at Wideman Mennonite Church, Shadow Lake Centre (Community Living Toronto) and Stouffville United Church.

St. James Little Free Pantry marked its fourth anniversary of "Take what you need, give what you can" this fall.

Thanks to the congregation and the community for their generous donations of cash (on the offering plate, please) and food:

- Pantry needs this fall and winter
- Instant coffee, tea and hot chocolate
 - Granola bars
 - Peanut butter
 - Cereal in boxes
 - Pasta and sauce
 - Mac and cheese
 - Canned fish, fruit and vegetables
 - Dry soup
 - cookies and crackers
 - Toiletries (toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine hygiene, soap)
 - crossword and jumble books

St. James prepares to welcome new minister

Session Report to the Congregation

Autumn 2024 has proven to be a particularly busy but also a productive time for Session.

While Rev. Joan continues to moderate the meetings, Rev. Robert Hayashi, our Interim Moderator, is present and is making important contributions to help prepare St. James to receive a new minister.

Session's primary responsibility is to "establish good order and provide for the pastoral care of the congregation" (Book of Forms, 109), including all persons within the fellowship of the congregation – that means everybody.

We pray regularly for the wellbeing of the congregation as a whole, as well as for individuals. As a leadership body, we seek God's wisdom in discerning how St. James is being called to serve God's mission in our place and time.

The Search Team, under the leadership of Rev. Robert, has begun preparation of the congregational profile that will be made available to all candidates; they hope to begin to receive applications in January 2025.

Two new members were recently received into our fellowship: Grace Beaton and Dale Stephens Wilson. This year we have lost three faithful members – Audrey Johnson, Ed Mewett and Barbara Breckles – and we mourn their absence but rest assured that they now reside in God's loving presence.

Session continues its ongoing oversight of the responsibilities of the various committees in St. James, and expresses its gratitude for good work faithfully exercised.



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Finally, Session celebrates with Ruth Burkholder her retirement as Clerk and as a serving elder after many years.

Ruth's dedication has been helpful, especially during challenging times in

in the past, and was much appreciated.

A new clerk will be appointed in the new year.

Rev. Joan Masterton
Moderator of Session

Meeting with consultants next step on our journey

Next step for the St. James Redevelopment Team is a meeting with our consultants, SHS Consulting of Toronto, tentatively scheduled for December.

The meeting, labelled Development 101, will provide us with an understanding of the development process, the risks involved at each stage of the process, typical timelines, the role of a volunteer board in a development project and examples of the cost and “capital stack” required for a project of our scale.

After this meeting, we can decide whether to proceed with a full feasibility study.

This fall, our congregation approved spending \$58,257 on the studies, including \$2,091 for Development 101.

The Redevelopment Team was born out of New Beginnings, a program St. James launched into three years ago. New Beginnings, a program founded in the United States, has been promoted by the Presbyterian Church in Canada since 2018.

From New Beginnings, the congregation said it wanted to be more missional and do more outreach work in our community and pursue possible redevelopment of our Main Street property.

Our home on Main Street has made us the envy of many congregations. Our spot on the main drag on the east end of the downtown core provides maximum exposure.

We have parking and lots of it.

And we have unused real estate, including the vacant lot to the east of the church and, possibly, some of those parking spaces.

But what should we do with that land? And where do we start?

We have no people in our church with a background in this industry. So we turned to our community and our neighbours.

The 12 members of the Redevelopment Team have had a busy 2023-24, listening, visiting and asking questions including:

- two meetings with our mayor who encouraged St. James to investigate building housing well before New Beginnings.
- an on-site meeting with our municipal director of planning and local councillor.
- meetings with five of six town councillors and our MP. Support and offers of assistance in dealing with government incentive programs have been encouraging.
- touring housing projects built by church-based organizations in Markham and Bradford, ON.
- meetings with two developers who have recently completed projects in our community.
- a series of meetings with the Markham Inter-Church Committee for Affordable Housing, which has constructed four projects. With its experience and connections in this

field, MICHAH has been an invaluable resource, right on our doorstep.

We’ve learned that a five or six-storey building would cost roughly \$30 million and generate enough income to be self-sustainable. (We may be able to build up to 10 storeys, according to some municipal officials. Intensification seems like a moving target. As you know, we are a five-minute walk from Stouffville’s downtown GO train station, which could also affect accepted building heights, we’ve been told.)

Energy efficiency and conservation through technologies such as geo-thermal heating and cooling, insulated concrete forms and triple-glazed windows make sense now and for the future.

We could put the sanctuary and Morris Hall under the umbrella of the property management company hired to manage the apartments. We’re talking cleaning, maintenance, security and other week-to-week duties currently managed by St. James.

Lots of possibilities.

Lots of questions.

We will know more after Development 101.

**Jim Mason for the
Redevelopment Team**

OUTREACH TEAM

Corn Boil, yard sale gave back to community

The Outreach Team of St. James has accepted with disappointment the resignations of Wilma Medley, Lorraine Smart and Tim Birtch.

Heartfelt thank-yous to these original members who have been a part of our successes since the committee's beginning, through New Beginnings, in 2023.

1) We held our second Spring Yard Sale June 15. which yielded us a successful profit of \$1,118.75.

2) Our Summer event was a Corn Boil on August 28. The success of this evening was measured more in the people from the community who attended. There were more new faces at St. James then in previous times. We served approximately 67 people who donated through our Good Will Basket \$348.50.

From these combined events and profits we have been able to donate to:

- A) Our Little Free Pantry
- B) Stouffville's Restore Hub
- C) Ten \$10 gift cards from McDonalds for the homeless man Kevin via Jim Thomas.
- D) Student Music Scholarship Fund
- E) The ABLE Network
- F) The Stouffville Terry Fox Run.

3) For two months of the year, we will serve, provide goodies and clean up the kitchen and Morris Hall following our congregation's Sunday Morning Coffee

FILL A PURSE FOR A SISTER CAMPAIGN

Till Dec. 1 donate toiletries and gently used purses, which will be filled and given out at local women's shelters at Christmas.

Darlene MacKenzie
Outreach Team



St. James' inaugural Corn Boil, held on August 28, drew a large crowd of members and community members into Morris Hall. Funds raised were donated to several community charities by the Outreach Team.



CHRISTMAS MARKET 2024

A sweet day at St. James in many ways

The Christmas Market, held Nov. 16 at St. James, was a great success in many ways.

Our guests received a wonderful welcome from the minute they stepped through our doors.

The goods we sold were top quality and attractively displayed.

There was a very happy atmosphere in our Santa's Tea Room and everyone enjoyed their tasty treats.

Having the young people from The ABLE Network join us was a wonderful bonus and their table and goods were beautifully displayed and what tasty cookies and jams they had for sale.

They are hoping to be included next year and we are looking forward to having them do so.

The Ladies Group made a profit of \$1,540 and ABLE made \$225.

Well done, everyone, and we would like to thank you for your donations, fellowship, participation and support.

**Committee,
Beth, Grace and Wilma**



EVENTS, GATHERINGS & MEETINGS

Upcoming activities at St. James, Stouffville:

Knitting Group – Every Tuesday afternoon in various homes. Call Doris or Wilma to find out where and come!

Choir Practice – Every Thursday at 4:00 pm in the Sanctuary. Join us!

Session – Wed. Nov. 20th at 2:00 pm.

Annual Student Music Scholarship Concert – Thur. Nov. 21 st at 7:00 pm at Stouffville District Secondary School.

Missional Leadership Webinar – Sat. Nov. 23 rd, 12 noon to 3:00 pm online. See Joan if interested.

****Annual General Meeting for Budget 2025** – Sun. Nov. 24 th following worship. Lunch will be served.

Advent 1 and Communion – Sun. Dec. 1st at 10:00 am.

Fickle Pickle Breakfast – Mon. Dec. 2nd at 8:30 am.

Search Team – Tues. Dec. 3 rd at 6:30 pm.

Presbyterian Ladies – Wed. Dec. 4th at 2:00 pm.

Advent 2 – Sun. Dec. 8th at 10:00 am.

Worship at Parkview Home – Sun. Dec. 8th at 3:00 pm.

Advent 3 – Sun. Dec. 15th at 10:00 am.

Advent 4 – Sun. Dec. 22nd at 10:00 am.

Christmas Dinner Wish – Sun. Dec. 22nd at 4:30 pm at 6240 Main Street. Christmas Dinner for seniors and low-income adults provided by Mayor Iain Lovatt's office and the Good Food Impact organization. By registration only; see <https://bit.ly/StouffvilleChristmasDinner>.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – Tues. Dec. 24th at 7:00 pm.

Epiphany – Sun. Jan. 5th . Communion will be served.



Wanna sing? Our choir will welcome you to a practice, Thursdays at 4 pm in the Sanctuary.

PEOPLE



A large crowd (right), including several former members who returned from out of town, attended anniversary Sunday celebrations at St. James this fall. (Top) long-time members Jean and Jim Thomas cut the 165th cake with Rev. Joan Masterton.



Rev. Joan Masterton shared the story of her war veteran dad and his watch during our Remembrance Sunday service. Rev. Masterton also officiated at two community Remembrance Day services hosted by the local Royal Canadian Legion branch.



BOARD OF MANAGERS

Financial challenges remain for congregation

Board of Managers - Nov. 2024

The Board of the Managers continues to oversee our available financial resources to ensure that the St. James church building and property is well maintained, is safe and is honoring to the Lord.

The Board is currently using a rotating chairperson model to administer our monthly meetings, which is working well. The board members would like to thank Joan and Pat for their ongoing assistance, advice, and encouragement to the members.

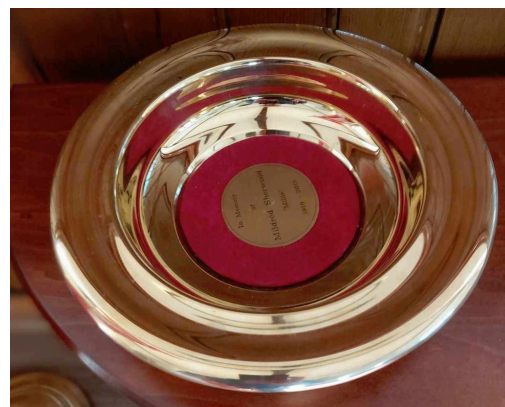
The Board of Managers and other volunteers continue to support the programs within the church that assist those in our community that are struggling with food security.



“Each month we run an operating deficit, which requires us to rely on interest income from our investments.”

Finances continue to be challenging for us. Each month we run an operating deficit, which requires us to rely on interest income from our investments.

We have also had generous assistance from the Memorial Endowment Fund and an anonymous donation to assist with funding a major cleanup of the cedar hedge.



Despite this, we are still projecting a deficit at year end. In your review of the newsletter, I am sure you will agree that our collective generosity benefits our community and those that are less fortunate.

As we approach the Christmas season and celebrate with our church family, please assist in any way you can.

Gary Ackerman
Submitted on behalf of the
Board of Managers

PEOPLE



The St. James Striders took part in Stouffville's Terry Fox Run this fall. Thanks to the Outreach Team and the congregation for the support. Save the date and join the team for the next Terry Fox run/walk: Sept. 14, 2025.

30th Student Music Night featuring nine schools

BY JIM THOMAS

On Thursday, Nov. 21, nine schools, represented by more than 400 students, will display their vocal, instrumental and dance skills at Stouffville District Secondary School.

The event will celebrate the 30th annual 'Student Music Scholarship Concert' hosted by St. James. The time is 7:30 p.m.

Adult admission is \$5.00 with all receipts divided among the participating schools to aid their financially stressed music programs.

To date, over the past 29 years, more than \$140,000 has been raised with the majority of funds provided by generous Stouffville businesses in addition to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Lions Club of Stouffville.

One student, excelling in music or dance, will receive a \$500 scholarship, courtesy of the St. James Endowment Committee and the Mac Keith Memorial Fund. This year's recipient will be Kendall Jones, a Grade 12 student at SDSS, perhaps better known as singer/songwriter 'Kendall Lily'. St. James knows Kendall from her performances at our Sacred Music Night, as well as in the community at Ribfest, Stouffville Spirit hockey games and other events.

Rev. Joan Masterton will make the presentation to Kendall.

Jim Mason will again serve as Master of Ceremonies as one of ten members of the congregation assisting.

The organizing committee includes - Pat Welch, treasurer, George Smart, stage manager, and Jim Thomas, chairman.

PROVINCIAL CHAMPION

The year 2024 will always be remembered by 18-year-old Brooke Beaton.

In addition to graduating from secondary school and enrolling in a business and accounting at the University of Guelph, Brooke recently captured a provincial equestrian championship in competition at Erin, Ont., north-west of Brampton.

She's the daughter of our Hugh and Grace Beaton.

It was while attending a summer camp, at age 10, that Brooke became interested in riding. For the past four years she has trained at Lake House Equestrian School in Ashburn.

In addition to a \$500 award, Brooke received a huge blue and white banner that she immediately attached to her horse's saddle,

While Brooke's time is now spent mainly in academics, she plans to return to equestrian enjoyment in the spring.

Congratulations!