May 8, 2023

TO: Friends of Melrose

FROM: Rev. Sonia Ireson

Greetings in the name of the One who loves us and holds us dear.

The days are galloping by leading up to my “great escape” for June, July and August. Carolin and I are starting to plan what we will be taking with us and whether it will be one or two vehicles. I am going to do a prepacking trial run. I’m really looking forward to the three courses that I will be taking. It has been a long time since I have sat in a classroom.

The first two weeks the course will be **The Congregational Song**. I’m sure Alex will be pleased to learn that I may come back with some knowledge about congregational music. I should tell you that as a child in my first year Christmas pageant, the teacher informed me that I was to “mouth” the words only and not inflict them with my less than acceptable singing voice. That reprimand stayed with me throughout my life and in spite of my enjoyment of music, music has always remained a mystery to me.

The second two-week segment is **Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament**. It will look at the influence Judaism had on the formation of the New Testament. This will feed into my deep love for the tradition and background of the one we follow and serve.

The last two-week segment course is the **Deuterocanonical Books,** known as the Apocrypha, found in the Catholic bibles but not the Protestant bibles. This covers the period between the Hebrew Old Testament and the New Testament and consists of seven books. None of these courses were part of my Seminary studies. I am expecting new insights in a field that I love to read about and research. Thank you for allowing me this time to learn and grow. I am a firm believer that as long as we have breath and memory, we have been given the gift of curiosity and exploration and should use it wisely.

The church has been a beehive of activity this week. The technological people supported by Tim Webb were in this week, connecting up the new AV system to make it ready for our use in worship yesterday. Unfortunately, there are still kinks to work out. While the sound worked perfectly in house, it was non-existent during the live streaming. That was quite a disappointment that we hope will be quickly fixed.

A group of volunteers led by Gwyn brought out the vast number of items from storage on Friday to ready for the garage sale. Saturday, we were blessed with good weather and a large turn-out of community members looking for a good deal on purchases that were generously donated by our congregation. While it was a significant clear out of items that we had been holding in storage for a long period of time, it was not a major money maker given the low price of the items but it was a great time connecting with our community members. Thank you to all who worked hard on set up, taking down and be part of the community event.

The Bach Elgar musicians and choir presented their first concert of the season to a rousing success. It was a full house and got rave reviews. I have never seen a movie screen so large, (it covered the entire first level of the altar - could we keep it?) as the one they used to dazzle guests with an array of space pictures accompanied by music. We can be quite proud of Alex’s artistic work with this renown group.

Two of our committees – Resource Management and Worship and Faith Formation met to plan out the work for the next few months. Thank you to the dedication of our committee members for their ongoing willingness to bring their energy and ideas for the benefit of our church.

Sunday was a special day in which we celebrated our LGBTQ1A+2 Spirit community with a service especially themed involving our Affirming Committee members and readers in a liturgy of candle lighting and scripture. Thanks to Alex and our choir for using Contemporary music that supported the theme. The service was followed by a superb lunch in the parlour in which our members supplied home-baked savoury and sweet pies. This was in keeping with United Church PIE day – in relation to Affirming Ministry – Public, Intentional and Explicit.

The rain of the past week has turned into warmth and sunshine and grass is growing and more and more people are outside cutting lawns and preparing the soil for the growing season. We had our first cut thanks to Colin with his brand new Koboto tractor that he tried out with us before using for his landscaping business. Spring brings a time of renewal and a fresh new look. There is much to enjoy, to discover, and to be thankful for if we allow ourselves the opportunity to see and appreciate it.

Some of you are getting ready to head back to your cottages or have planned special trips to mark the passing of your summer. Some of you are enjoying decorating your new homes and some of you are preparing to wind down for summer relaxation. A number of our youth are finishing their school year and will be heading off to new adventures in university and college. Life is cyclical and carries on. It brings us ups and downs, trials and testing, but it is never boring. So much of what unfolds for us has to do with our attitude in how we approach it.

One should never lose the delight a young child brings to life. Wide eyed with wonder, there is much to behold. Pick something new to tackle this summer. Do not let it go by without tasting its fullness – do an art walk; take a bicycle trip; attend a concert or an outdoor festival; visit the water front; try a new restaurant; go for a day trip somewhere you haven’t been before or one you wish to rediscover; entertain friends and family in your backyard around the barbeque; try a new hobby; go to a sporting event; or just allow yourself to chill out and enjoy being in the moment. Intentionally choose to “live and enjoy.” Don’t put off what might bring you moments of joy. We never know how many there still are.

A sobering thought comes from the headlines in Burlington this past week – innocent little 8-year-old girl gets out of her parent’s car and is brutally struck down by a 21-year-old hit and run driver near her school. Lives irrevocably changed in an instant – the driver, his family – and the family of the young girl, her teachers, her school, and her friends. What a heartbreak for all.

I remember cleaning out my uncle’s apartment after he passed away in 2000 in PEI and finding new bed linen, and items that I had purchased for him for Christmas and birthdays, still in their boxes under his bed. Too good to use, saving for a special day - which never came. Get out the good china; wear that special dress or pair of shoes. Enjoy what you have - **today.** Take that trip you have always wanted to; read that book that has been calling out to you; go see that play, make that call that has been left undone, whatever it is that your heart is telling you would be good for you, don’t let regrets keep you from truly living, give it your all! We are intended to enjoy this life that has been given as the most precious gift we will ever receive from our Creator. Make your imprint felt so that others will know that you have been here!

Be strong! Stay Safe! Be of good cheer!

Together in the Service of Christ

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