

Knox e-knews

January 29, 2012
www.knoxhalifax.ca



Minister's message

Greetings and peace to you in the name of Jesus; have you noticed the sign that faces you as you descend the stairs to the Hall? It is a piece of Scripture carved into a lovely piece of pine and has obviously been there for a long time; no indication who carved it, but the message is profound especially in light of our journey these days. The verse is from Hebrews, the first verse of chapter 11: "Faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for ~ it means being certain of the things we cannot see." I see and read that message each time I go up and downstairs (several times a day) and I wonder what we hope for? What do you hope for in your personal lives and the future of your church here at Knox?

Faith means putting your full confidence in the things we hope for: That is to say, putting your full confidence in God to deliver on what you hope for according to His will. We can hope for all kinds of things, but it is God who delivers on our hopes and dreams. It also requires our full confidence in God to deliver according to His will. Do you believe that God can and or will do that? Do your actions and words demonstrate your trust in God to deliver? Do your prayers reflect your full and complete confidence in God to lead us forward and are you obedient to following Him where He leads us? These are important questions of faith that we need to wrestle with as we discern His will for this community of faith, His ministry in the North-End of Halifax. I have said it before; I do not believe God is finished with us; rather, I believe He is just waiting for us to get out of the way, for us to let go of the wheel for a while, so He can steer us in the direction He desires us to go; so that He can reveal to us the possibilities He has planned for us.

Friends, I know it is frustrating not knowing; believe me, I know and I understand. However, we must not lose heart; we must not give up on God or ourselves; we must persevere in prayer, in service to God's Kingdom in the here and now. We must not cease putting our full confidence in God to lead us into the plan He has prepared for us. At the meeting with Rev. Ruth Houtby, we discussed a number of things, and made notes which I am including below along with a number of questions which I encourage you to consider as you turn to God for guidance through prayer and meditation.

We have called a brief (1/2 hour) congregational meeting following the service on the 5th of February to come to a decision as to what we believe God is calling us to be and where He is

guiding us to focus our ministry. We need to do this in order that we can then direct Rev. Ruth so she can put together a plan to help us move toward fulfilling that focus. This is something that requires the efforts of the entire congregation; it cannot be the desire of a few people as the decision we make will have a direct impact on the future of Knox.

Faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for ~ it means being certain of the things we cannot see. Place your trust, your confidence, your faith in God to lead us; fall on your knees in prayer, listen for His still small voice speaking to you and then be prepared to follow Him where He leads us with joy and thanksgiving. Let us have faith in the One, the only God and Saviour who able to accomplish far more than we can imagine and let us get out of the way so that His good purpose may be done.

May God bless you and keep you in Christ's service,
Rev. Brian

News from the flock:

This feature will require some help from all of you. As many of you know, the minister is always the last to know; however, if you are aware of some news that is permitted to be shared, please let me know and I will include them here. Your contributions to this newsletter would be welcomed at any time.

- ✚ We conclude our 5 week study of the Book of James. Week 5 (chapter 5) is this coming Tuesday the 7th of February at 7:00 p.m.
- ✚ You are reminded and invited to our prayer time in the parlour on Sunday mornings from 10:15 – 10:45. Prayer is vital as we continue to discern God's will and plan for us. Everything begins with prayer.
- ✚ Many of you are no doubt aware of the situation with St. Patrick's Alexander school and St. Joseph's Children's Centre which meets there. We have begun preliminary discussions with the daycare centre to see if there are opportunities for us to provide space for them. These conversations are not "public knowledge" at this point; however, we felt you needed to know that we are entertaining the possibility of some kind of arrangement with them. The conversation continues and we will likely have something to report and some decisions to make in the coming days/week. Stay tuned and continue to pray for God's leading in this opportunity for us.
- ✚ **Lay Readers:** The Session has agreed to encourage the use of lay readers in our regular worship services. I have put a sign-up list of readings for the next 6 Sundays on the table in the lobby as well as small take-home slips with each week's readings. If you

would like to participate by reading the passages of Scripture on a particular Sunday, sign your name beside the week you'd like to do and take the slip with the corresponding readings as a reminder. If you would be more comfortable only doing a couple of the prescribed readings rather than all of them, please speak to me and we can arrange that. I encourage you to share the gifts God has blessed you with by participating in sharing the good news of God's Word for His people.

- ✚ **Your Ideas:** The Session is considering a number of initiatives to open our church up to the wider community and invite folks to join us in worship and fellowship. If you have any ideas, please do not keep them to yourselves. Let one of our Elders know or speak to me personally. It has been said, the only dumb idea is the one that is not voiced.
- ✚ **Greeters:** Due to health reasons Mary Redmond has ceased being able to look after getting greeters for each Sunday. The Session has decided to adopt the "Duty Elder" approach to serving the congregation and have taken on the responsibility of getting greeters. Each Elder has a "call list" of folks they are responsible for keeping in touch with; each month, the duty elder will be contacting the folks on their list to ask for help in serving as a greeter. It is our hope and prayer that you will support them in this vital aspect of our ministry of welcome here at Knox.
- ✚ **Annual Congregation Meeting:** The Annual congregation meeting has been set for March 4th. As we did last year, we will move from the service into the meeting which will likely be relatively short and will conclude with the benediction. We will have a light lunch in the hall following the meeting to allow us a have a time for fellowship. Please ensure that Jean Dunn has the reports as soon as possible, but no later than February 5th as the annual reports will need to be printed and available for pick-up as of Feb. 19th.
- ✚ Ruth Day is singing with the Chebucto Singers at the Dalhousie McInnis Room on **Sunday February 12th at 2 pm** (Sweet Serenade Concert). There are approx 80 singers in this group (not all will attend). Admission is \$15 and dessert and coffee/tea are included. All different kinds of music will be played.
- ✚ Just a reminder, the Out of the Cold shelter is now running for the winter months and we have now experienced some very cold nights. We will be collecting items each week which I will deliver on Wednesday evening when I work my shift. If you would like to contribute, a list of needed items is on our website in the News section, on the Out of the Cold's website, <http://outofthecoldhalifax.org/> click on the Volunteers tab, or check the list on the bulletin board in the church lobby. Any and all support for this vital ministry will be greatly appreciated.

Dates to Remember

February 4th – 7:00 p.m. – Faith Café at St. Thomas Aquinas Hall - You will be treated to coffee/tea and desserts. The theme for this Café is THE WORD (as in the word of God) and other words. The Word is powerful. Other words also have power...power to heal and power to wound, to encourage and to betray. And sometimes, when words are not enough...there is music. We have two professional actors, a poet, two singer/guitarists, and a special guest...Artem Kolesov. This café night promises to be entertaining and thought provoking. You won't want to miss it.

February 5th – We will hold a brief congregation meeting following worship. We will give folks a few minutes to get a cup of coffee/tea and bring it in to the sanctuary for the meeting.

February 7th – 7:00 p.m. – Our Bible Study of James concludes.

Musings and other Stuff

Let's Read through the Bible Together in One Year

As we continue on our spiritual journey, reading through the Bible in 2012; please find below the readings for February. Do not worry if you have fallen a bit behind, because of the organized manner of this journey, it is relatively easy to catch up. We will continue to meet twice a month on Sunday mornings from 9:45 to 10:15 to discuss the passages we have read. I hope and pray that you will continue on this journey of discovery as we read and learn from God's Word year.

February 1: Leviticus 14 – 16

February 2: Leviticus 17 – 19

February 3: Leviticus 20 – 23

February 4: Leviticus 24 – 27

February 5: Numbers 1 – 3

February 6: Numbers 4 – 6

February 7: Numbers 7 – 10

February 8: Numbers 11 – 14

February 9: Numbers 15 – 17

February 10: Numbers 18 – 20

February 11: Numbers 21 – 24

February 12: Numbers 25 – 27 – Meet in the Parlour at 9:45

February 13: Numbers 28 – 30

February 14: Numbers 31 – 33

February 15: Numbers 34 – 36
February 16: Deuteronomy 1 – 3
February 17: Deuteronomy 4 – 6
February 18: Deuteronomy 7 – 9
February 19: Deuteronomy 10 – 12
February 20: Deuteronomy 13 – 16
February 21: Deuteronomy 17 – 19
February 22: Deuteronomy 20 – 22
February 23: Deuteronomy 23 – 25
February 24: Deuteronomy 26 – 28
February 25: Deuteronomy 29 – 31
February 26: Deuteronomy 32 – 34 – Meet in the Parlour at 9:45
February 27: Joshua 1 – 3
February 28: Joshua 4 – 6

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Notes from Congregation round-table discussion with Rev. Ruth Houtby – Jan.21/12

Who are we?

1917 Presbyterian presence – Grove Street Presb.
Halifax explosion – church destroyed – people killed – remnant formed congregation with Methodists
1928 – different location – worshiped in Baptist church
1933 – Knox formed – built church at Agricola and Bilby
Building sold – old – too small – fire reg's/over-crowding – more commercial than residential
1974 – built in present location – multi-purpose hall/sanctuary/Sunday school etc
Why here? More residential – vacant lot - land available for lease from city – financial – majority of congregation lived in North-End
Move in debt-free
'94 – hall packed (100) – active groups/S.S./Ladies Guild/fundraising/variety of activities
1995 – New Sanctuary added – made possible through a bequest – debt free
Aging congregation – decline – youth moving away – lifestyles change
Energy around building Sanctuary – Ladies Guild
1933 – 1974 Members part of local community – family growth in North-End
1995 – today – Members live outside North-End community
Now requires travel to get to the church – impacts activities
Changing family dynamics

2007 – manse sold – was not in the community – dynamic: minister not living in the community

Congregation is family oriented – welcoming

What is God calling us to be?

What is our future?

Community: lower income

Seniors

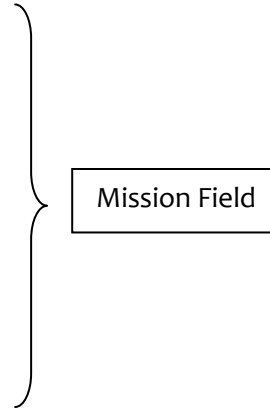
Professionals – Hydrostone – some with children

Shipyards

Families

Shift in community – no longer predominantly RC/Anglican

6 churches in immediate area



5 Questions we need to prayerfully consider:

- What is changing in our neighbourhood? Are we being responsive?
- What is no longer working in our church the way it did 20 yrs. Ago? Why?
- In the long run, what is really important for the future of this congregation?
- What do we have to do to ensure this? What does our faith call us to do?
- How do we become relevant again? How do we fulfill our goals in these new times?

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P.U.S.H!

A man was sleeping one night in his cabin when suddenly his room filled with light, and God appeared. The Lord told the man he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to Push against the rock with all his might...So, this the man did, day after day.

For many years he toiled from sunup to sundown, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmoving rock, Pushing with all of his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Since the man was showing discouragement, the Adversary (Satan) decided to enter the picture by placing thoughts into the weary mind: (Satan will do it every time). “You have been Pushing against that rock for a long time and it hasn't moved.” Thus, he gave the man the impression that the task was impossible and that he was a failure. These thoughts discouraged and disheartened the man. Satan said, “Why kill yourself over this? Just put in your time, giving

just the minimum effort; and that will be good enough.” That's what the weary man planned to do, but decided to make it a matter of Prayer and to take his troubled thoughts to the Lord.

“Lord,” he said, “I have laboured long and hard in Your Service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a millimetre. What is wrong? Why am I failing?” The Lord responded compassionately, “My friend, when I asked you to serve Me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to Push against the rock with all of your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to Push. And now you come to Me with your strength spent, thinking that you failed. But, is that really so? Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back shinny and brown; your hands are callused from constant pressure, your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much, and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. True, you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to be Obedient and to Push and to exercise your Faith and trust in My Wisdom. That you have done. Now, I, my friend, will move the rock.”

At times, when we hear a Word from God, we tend to use our own intellect to decipher what He Wants, when actually what God wants is just Simple Obedience and Faith in Him. By all means, exercise The Faith that moves mountains, but know that it is still God Who Moves the Mountains.

When everything seems to go wrong - just P.U.S.H!

When the job gets you down – just P.U.S.H!

When people don't do as you think they should – just P.U.S.H!

When you can't find the right work - just P.U.S.H!

When your money is “gone” & the bills are due – just P.U.S.H!

When people just don't understand you - just P.U.S.H!

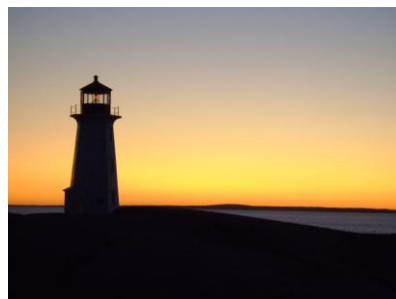
P = Pray

U = Until

S = Something

H = Happens

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Guess where?