



Fall 2020

ON THE ROAD

Learning, Living, Loving, Affirming ♦ News and Stories



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I have never been more grateful to be in ministry at Silver Spire than this past year. The year began making plans for my mother’s discharge from Hotel Dieu Shaver. Mary had been home for a week and the news announced schools were closing. Then everything was shut down. My caregiving leave had begun and it was hard being away from the church during at the beginning of the pandemic. I had no idea returning to church months later we still would be living with the COVID restrictions. It has been an incredibly challenging year. It is even harder for anyone coping with the additional stress of illness, grief, or financial concerns.

September has brought an uncertain sense of normalcy. Fall routines are being re-established and students and teachers have returned to school. Yet, nothing is quite what we expected. Living with the quiet and invisible threat of COVID is both exhausting and boring. It’s taking its toll and we are tired, so very tired. Jesus says, come to me all you that I weary and I will give you rest. During this uncertain year we have continued to offer worship and care to our congregation and community. Now, more than ever, we need the presence of God’s grace and peace to carry us through our days.

It is my hope and prayer that you feel connected and supported by the ministry of Silver Spire. We have had our motto, Learning, Living, Loving and Affirming, guide our life as a community of faith. During October these words are shaping our Sunday worship. Together we will explore how these words and our values shape our faith. It is my hope that this reflection will uplift you. Each Sunday you will hear Why I Give statements shared during worship and more people have shared their stories in this newsletter. Let us hold each other up in faith. May we hold the Christ candle flame for one another and be a guiding light for our community.

Blessings, Rev. Jane



Silver Spire has been livestreaming services. If you would like a DVD copy, please contact the church office at 905-682-8328.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

By Karen Orlandi

Learning, Living, Loving, Affirming – those are our values as a church condensed into four simple words, packed with intention and action. It has been a trend in large corporations that the brand name and what it stood for had to be known throughout the company, from the assembly person on the plant floor to the sales director on the top floor. As a community of faith that should be our goal too, for each one of us to know our values and vision. But the difference is this: as a community of faith, we have to live them out whether we're inside the church or out and about in our daily lives.



To be open to continuous learning, we have to be brave and willing to make mistakes. The Black Lives Matter movement has taught that we have a lot to learn about systemic racism in our communities that impact our black and brown friends and neighbours. But the onus is on those of us who are privileged to learn what that's all about and to incorporate what we learn into our lives.

Living with respect in creation is not easy in a country where the foundations of our economy reside in the extraction of resources which translates into the pollution of our environment. In Indigenous culture, they often refer to 'all my relations' and as a settler it's easy for me to assume that they are referring to people, but what if we broaden the scope as they intended? What if we include animals, birds and fish? What if we include mountains, rivers and forests? How can I better live in all creation?

The election to the south of us has shown me how difficult it can be to love one another when our viewpoints are so incredibly divergent. Building relationships often begins with finding common ground, but when we are commanded to love one another, especially our enemies, we're being told to love without anything in common. We are called to love one another merely because God chose to create them, and we are their brothers and sisters.

Affirming – did we save the best for last?! I love the work we do to affirm people as they are – it's a culmination of love for one another, and it takes learning about one another. Affirming draws our values together to lift one another up and rejoice in each of us as a unique creation that God has made. I was musing with someone the other day that I thought I was lucky because I grew up in a time where we had choices, you could be gay, straight or bisexual and now, I pray, the children who grow up will learn to be who they are without labels, without having to fit into a confining box if they don't want to, free to be who God created them to be.

Together our values define who we are and who we wish to be. They are integral to all we do here at the church and throughout our lives. The United Church has often defined itself by what we're not... we don't have priests, we don't do mass, we're not like those folks... but now is the time when we define ourselves by who and what we are – Learning, Living, Loving, Affirming.

BACK TO CHURCH

Silver Spire opened its doors on August 9 for in-person Sunday Morning Worship. Since that time, approximately 25-35 people attend each week. That number includes the team of Seaters and Greeters as well as our tech team. There is no in person Coffee Hour following the service but there is a Coffee Hour on Zoom. Contact tracing information is recorded, people attending are screened for COVID symptoms, masks are required, there is no singing and seating is socially distanced in the sanctuary. One wedding and two funerals have also been held in the sanctuary during this time. As always, the Sunday morning service continues to be live streamed. If you are planning to attend in person, check out our video on our website so you know what to expect.

As we move into October and November, the Back to Church Team is continuing to explore how to build community at Silver Spire within the COVID restrictions. Silver Spire's Second Survey is here! Please take some time to complete this short survey to help the Back to Church Team guide Silver Spire forward. It's also a great way for you to offer feedback about our journey so far and suggestions for what happens next. Feel free to contact the Back to Church Team members: Jane Capstick, Karen Orlandi, Kathy Dallaire, David Hall, David and Kathy Reid, Anne Scott, Shirley Scott and Janice Slade.

UCW UPDATE

In light of the current COVID-19 issue, it is not feasible for UCW to hold mini bazaars after church keeping the social distancing protocol in place. However, Bill Stark (905)935-6104 has indicated that he has raspberry jam and beet pickles that he will gladly sell. You may give him a call.

It is anticipated that next year we will hold our bazaar so please tuck away your knitting, sewing and other projects for that time.

Our UCW continues to do God's work as we just donated \$500 to Niagara Nutrition Partners.

Blessings,

Susan Carter & Kathy Cuddy

Co-Chairs

STATEMENT OF FAITH

By Emily Pitz

I believe that we are not alone in this world and that God is with us everywhere we go.

I believe in only one God that has created and is creating all things and has made every living thing unique in its own way. It is my responsibility to care for God's creation.

I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ born from the virgin Mary who gave his life to save us from sin.

I believe in the power of prayer and that it is important to thank God for everything you have and for helping guide you through each and every day.

I believe that the bible is important, and I promise to follow God's Word to love my neighbour as myself.

I believe it is important to be part of a community that includes family, friends and others and to serve God as part of that community.

I believe that God is in me and I am in God and that God will always be with me.



A FESTIVAL OF GIVING

Why I Give

The sharing of Why I Give Statements has become a tradition for the month of October at Silver Spire. We hear the stories of our congregation shared during worship and in this edition of On The Road.

In a culture of gratitude, we thank God for the blessings in our lives. Each week we will celebrate one of the words of our Motto: Learning, Living, Loving, Affirming, and what it means to each of us. We will hear from some members of the congregation as they share “Why I Give” stories. We will consider what Silver Spire means to each of us and which ministries are important to our families. We will also consider how our gifts of time, talent and treasure make a difference at Silver Spire. We hope this will be a rich opportunity for each of you to reflect on the blessings of your life, and how you could live out your own response.

As a young family, we emigrated to Canada in June 1993. My introduction to the United Church was through a Mums and Tots program at Welland Avenue, with my daughter Becky, where I was welcomed with kindness, support, and most of all, friendship. That Wednesday morning program felt like a life saver for a very lonely and homesick young mother.

I will never forget the warm welcome our son Philip and I received on our first visit to Welland Ave United Church in 1994. Before long I was teaching Sunday School, (at the polite, but persuasive request of Lori White) which I loved, and continue to this day. When our churches merged to create Silver Spire I was proud to attend our new church.

I give to Silver Spire because I wish to support our church in its efforts to help the local community and I want to pay back all of the kindness shown to myself and my family. Sometimes, incidental programs bring us to the church, but the warm, loving, inclusive, evolving, supportive Silver Spire gives us a wonderful reason to stay.

That is why I give.

WHY I GIVE

Margaret White



WHY I GIVE *Hugh Fraser*

I like top 10 lists, so here are 10 reasons why I give my talent, time and money to Silver Spire.



1. I give because I've been lucky to have had people look out for me while I grew up. I was fortunate to get a good education, steady employment and a stable home life. I am able to give when others may not be as fortunate.
2. I give because it is really true that it feels better to give, than to receive. There are lots of ways to give without giving money, but the realist in me knows that despite people giving their time and talent, it still takes cold, hard cash to operate a successful church like ours.
3. I give because those who came before us built this beautiful church and it is they who took huge risks to get this church off the ground. They provided for us, so now it is our turn to grab the torch and keep the church moving along its progressive path.
4. I give because there is no doubt I have spent talent, time and money on things of lesser importance than a church like Silver Spire that is arguably one of the most, if not the most progressive churches in Niagara...and that includes all denominations.
5. I give so the lonely, and those alone in our church can find comfort with others to be their support in family and friends.
6. I give so those who need a hand-up can hopefully need fewer handouts.
7. I give so we can help our church children navigate their way in an uncertain world.
8. I give so we can provide a safe haven for those who don't feel safe.
9. I give through PAR because it provides a steady and predictable source of income for the church. It is simple because it disappears from your bank account without any fuss.
10. I give during this uncertain time of COVID-19 because the church needs all of us who are able, to step up to the plate and support it through a tough time. Many churches will close forever when this crazy time is over....if it is ever truly over any time soon.

That is why I give.

WHY I GIVE

Anne Scott

As a child living in a rural area I used to walk through my grandfather's orchards and acres of farmland, and along his farm paths to attend Sunday School in our very small community United Church, a mile from our house. I loved the Sunday School stories, leaflets to take home, and the caring people.

As a teen living later in the nearby small town of Brighton, I taught Sunday School, played piano for our Sunday School band, sang in choirs, attended CGIT, Young People's and United Church camps as a camper and later as a leader.

Our ministers at our United Church in town knew every family so well, and so often reached out to the town's people far beyond our own church community- something I very much noticed. They were always there for us as individuals and as a family, supporting us personally during really difficult medical problems experienced by my Dad in his early 40's, the self-employed, sole breadwinner for our family of five. The church was always very important to my mom as a very active church and UCW member. We were so strengthened by these mutual commitments of love. Our own wedding and the baptism of our first born took place in this home church of ours in Brighton. Many other very special events for our extended family also happened there. Such memories of these strong roots are so abundant and life-giving.

At Silver Spire I have continued to experience such a caring community, always reaching out to support others in our church, and so importantly reaching out to support others in need in our downtown area, city, region and beyond. The genuine welcoming of others of all colours, ethnicity, and gender fills me with such huge gratitude and also a chance for very important learning. At Silver Spire I have also had the opportunity to continue my lifelong love of working with children through Sunday School, "Messy Church" events and the Niagara Youth Festivals. Leadership and learning opportunities through Christian Nurture, Council, Sunday School Teaching teams and Study groups have been equally significant. Assistance at "Arts" events hosted by Silver Spire, and often our broader community have also been very enriching.

All of these experiences, plus the strong ministry personnel and church leadership over our entire time at Silver Spire, have allowed me to keep learning so much more about myself and others. These, in total, are enabling me to continue to give and receive with so much gratitude.

That is why I give.



WHY I GIVE

Johanna Agnew

Silver Spire will always be about family to me. The church has always been an important part of my life. As kids, it's what we did: we went to church, and Sunday School -- at home, in Owen Sound, and even while camping. After my mother was ordained, it's what we did: we went to church and had the gift and privilege of hearing her words from the pulpit. Her reflections were always insightful, relevant, inspiring, current, and thought-provoking, not unlike how she parented. Being a member at Silver Spire has given me many gifts and special "mom memories" such as singing next to her in choir, getting to hear more of her sermons and meditations during her "retirement", working with the Junior Choir together, and having her marry me and Alastair while Tom, Fran, and Janice provided beautiful and perfect music for the ceremony. My sisters I have been blessed to have had our children, Ayden, Willow, Finn and Owen baptized here by her; we are very lucky daughters. Now that I am a parent, it's what I do: I go to church and want my boys to have what I had. I grew up with an understanding that it is important to give. You could give a gift of money, music, words, or love. I loved getting my box of envelopes every year and taking my offering to Sunday School. Having that money go to the Mission and Service Fund made sense to me from a young age. As we teach our children about financial literacy, having them understand the importance of giving will be paramount. Silver Spire feels like home where you can always count on smiles, those fondly-remembered embraces, and words of encouragement that helped me start, endure, and overcome life's obstacles. I give because Silver Spire is part of my family and now it's just what we do.

That's why I give.



WHY I GIVE

David and Eleanor Reed

We both grew up in church-going families and both our fathers were elders in the Church of Scotland. Sunday school and youth group were part of our young lives, where we learned to believe in God and to give to others less fortunate than us, both at home and overseas.

When coming to St. Catharines with a young family, we wanted our boys to have a similar experience to ours. We chose Welland Avenue United as our new church home, and our sons attended Sunday School there. Although the United Church was a bit different from the Church of Scotland, we liked the open, forward looking faith it offered. Silver Spire has felt comfortable to us since amalgamation. We feel welcome and accepted by the friendly congregation and clergy.

We believe in the mission and values of Silver Spire and feel grateful to be able to contribute to attaining these goals. That is why we give.

TREASURER'S REPORT



This season of COVID has had some impact on our financial situation and I'm pleased to report that much of it is good news. On the downside, our collections are down YTD through the end of August 2020 about 15% over last year. If you haven't already, this is a good time to consider enrolling in our Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) program. By enrolling in PAR, your regular and continual support to Silver Spire and to the Mission & Service Fund helps ensure these ministries can continue their good work even when it's not easy to attend church. Enrolling in PAR is also a good way to avoid "catch-up" periods. It's easy to enroll and change your PAR at any time.

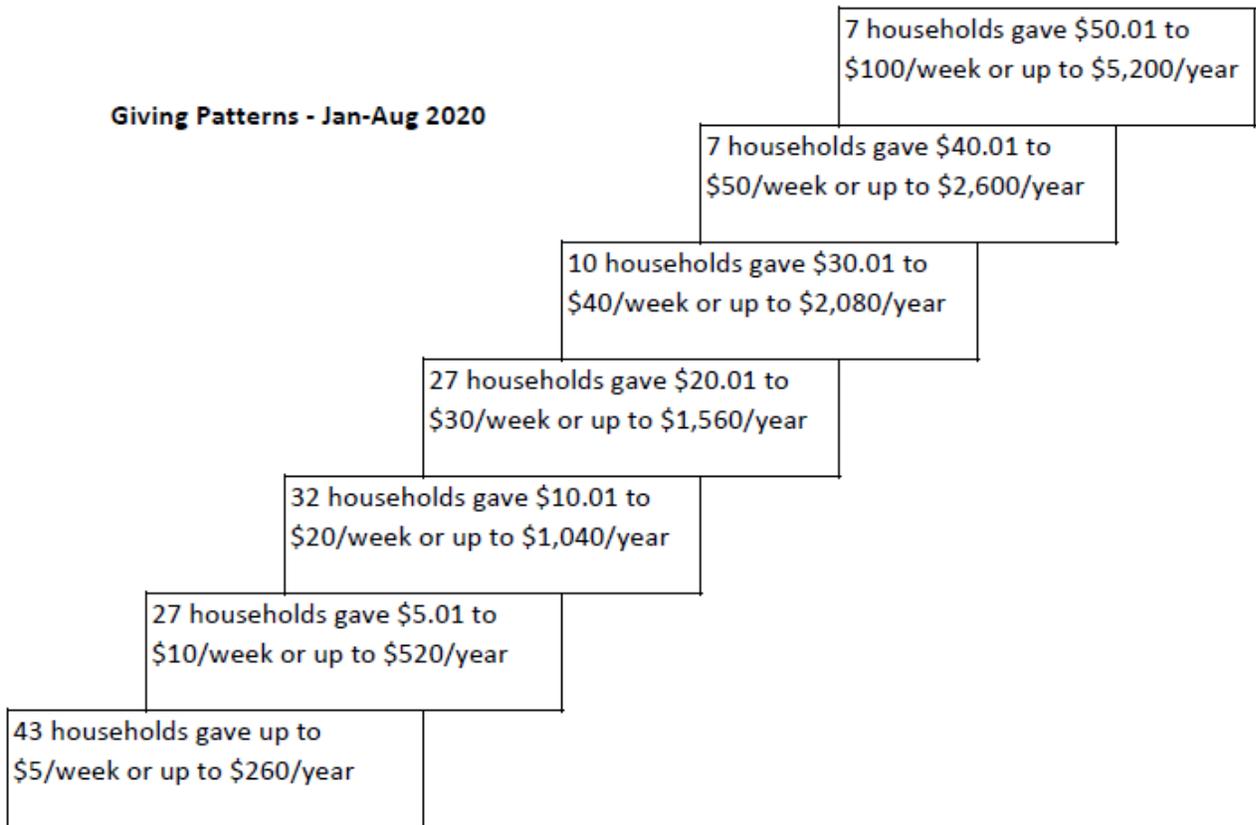
On the bright side, thanks to Karen Orlandi, we successfully secured a couple of grants to support our drop-in/cooling center this summer. Additionally, we've received some income from the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) to help make up for the shortfalls in contributions. Thank you to David Reed for making that happen. I'd also like to acknowledge the UCW for their unending support, especially during this season of pandemic. As a result, overall, our total income increased by about 5% over the same period last year.

Also, among the good news, our expenses are down about 6% over last year.

As your new treasurer I delighted to report income is up and expenses are down. We'll continue to monitor our financial position closely and keep you informed.

When considering your pledge or donations for next year, consider the charts on the following page. While these may be helpful tools for some, please remember that any donation, whether it is time, money, or skills, is greatly appreciated. Silver Spire and its ministries would not be able to run without the generosity of its members and community.

Giving Patterns - Jan-Aug 2020



Based on an Annual Income of	Proportional Giving Per Month				
	1%	3%	5%	7%	10%
\$ 10,000	\$ 8	\$ 25	\$ 42	\$ 58	\$ 83
\$ 15,000	\$ 13	\$ 38	\$ 63	\$ 88	\$ 125
\$ 20,000	\$ 17	\$ 50	\$ 83	\$ 117	\$ 167
\$ 30,000	\$ 25	\$ 75	\$ 125	\$ 175	\$ 250
\$ 40,000	\$ 33	\$ 100	\$ 167	\$ 233	\$ 333
\$ 50,000	\$ 42	\$ 125	\$ 208	\$ 292	\$ 417
\$ 75,000	\$ 63	\$ 188	\$ 313	\$ 438	\$ 625
\$ 100,000	\$ 83	\$ 250	\$ 417	\$ 583	\$ 833
\$ 125,000	\$ 104	\$ 313	\$ 521	\$ 729	\$ 1,042
\$ 150,000	\$ 125	\$ 375	\$ 625	\$ 875	\$ 1,250
\$ 200,000	\$ 167	\$ 500	\$ 833	\$ 1,167	\$ 1,667

DROP-IN/COOLING CENTRE

This summer we filled a huge gap in the system for folks without homes, and those without air conditioning. For the months of July and August we opened our auditorium, bathrooms and showers for Saturdays, Sundays, Holidays and Heat Alert days for a total of 29 open days. We also cooked approximately 2500 meals that were served inside for those in attendance or delivered to hot spots around the city where people were congregating.

Excitingly, we developed new partnerships with the mental health unit of the Niagara Regional Police who also distributed our meals and found them a tool to begin conversation with those at risk. Similarly, the security at the bus depot also distributed some for us, changing the conversation from ‘move along’ to ‘are you hungry?’

One of the most exciting perks was the camaraderie in the kitchen between community members, Silver Spire members, and folks from other churches who met on common ground – Christ’s call to provide comfort to those who are afflicted.

Many thanks go out to our volunteers, to those who donated food, time and money. We thank the Horseshoe Falls Mission and Discipleship committee and the United Way who both supported us with grants. Thank you to the folks at Community Care who donated vegetables, fruit, bread, tinned goods and more. Thank you to H2Only who donated water and coolers to re-hydrate folks in those brutally hot summer days. And thanks to the folks who used our facility who told us it was a safe and comfortable space where they could relax and sleep out of the heat and humidity.

This winter is going to be tough on folks with no homes. The city and the region are working to get people housed, but as we know ‘the poor will always be among us.’ With no access to warm spaces, bathroom facilities and running water, the weekends are tough. Keep them and our leaders in your prayers as we head into colder days and nights.



OUT OF THE COLD

Once again, this year the Out of the Cold Program has had to make some adjustments. Folks who require a bed overnight will continue to stay at Westminster United Church every night of the week. This kind of consistency is extremely helpful for those people whose lives are in a state of constant flux and upheaval. They will continue to receive a hot meal served to them, but instead of having to move from church to church, all their meals will be served at St. Barnabas Anglican Church which is located at the corner of Calvin and Queenston streets. Currently breakfast and lunches are take-out meals, to be eaten in the cold, wherever you can find a windbreak. To be able to sit down and enjoy a meal in the warmth of St. Barnabas, which extends beyond just heat, will be a real kindness to those without a home.

Most of the people who come to the Out of the Cold dinners are not homeless, but live in poverty, and that meal each night allows them to divert money to rent, bus passes or prescriptions. This year, we will continue to offer meals on Monday nights as take-out dinners for those in need – no questions asked! Our average last year was 150 per night but leapt up to 250 by the end of the season. We are busy sourcing compostable containers to minimize our environmental impact, and re-engineering the process in the kitchen to make this operation as smooth as possible. The pasta will be rich and creamy and the soups will be hearty and delicious!

Volunteers and financial support are always needed. Feeding the hungry is one of the simplest enactments of Christ's call to us. It is desperately needed, cheerfully fulfilled and accepted with gratitude.



"Christ in the Breadline" by Fritz Eichenberg

SILVER SPIRE ARTS TEAM

In some ways, six or seven months ago seems like eons ago! We are all dealing with the impact of the pandemic and the cancellations and postponements caused by the shutdown in March. The Arts Team was then in rehearsals for a reading of *The Humans*, a play by Stephen Karam, directed by John Sweeney and the reflective arts program *Creative Spirit*, led by Carolyn Campbell, was at the half-way point. Both these activities have been postponed (hopefully only postponed!) to later dates. Other cancelled spring and summer activities remain as plans to reactivate when we can.

Nonetheless, we have been able to participate very successfully in Culture Days this fall! Our first event was in-person and about ten people – socially distanced and masked - enjoyed Marion Griesse' Spark Joy Postcard Workshop on September 26. Marion introduced us to the work of Brazilian artist Romero Britto and led us through the creation of postcards inspired by his art using bright colours and patterns. Her idea was either to send the postcards by snail mail, so appreciated now, or to leave them in public places in a clear plastic bag for others to find as random acts of kindness.



That same weekend our neighbours banded together for a fun-filled time of arts and culture events, with Rhizomes, a series of site-specific art installations and performances presented by In the Soil Arts Festival throughout our building Friday evening. Saturday, Niagara Artists Centre held a rummage/sidewalk sale, as well as sponsored outdoor art and it all happened on our front lawn!



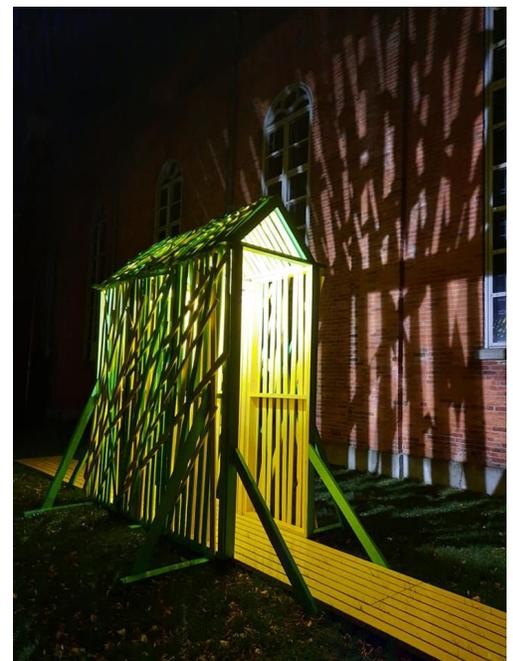
Then, on October 3, Jenn Judson led a workshop called Collage Hour! via a video posted to YouTube. Jenn and the Arts Team had kits available for pick-up by participants. This video will remain up for the duration of Culture Days, until October 25, and you can do the workshop anytime you like. You need: scissors, glue, a piece of backing paper and old magazines, books, posters, postcards, envelopes, cards or other paper material you have laying around the house! You can find the video on the Arts page on our website (www.silverspire.ca).

Finally, John Sweeney is leading a live Children’s Virtual Drama Workshop on Zoom, Saturday, October 17 from 1:30 – 2:40 pm. The drama and role-playing games will use word games and improvised storytelling; and, most intriguingly, participants are encouraged to wear a costume! Participants must pre-register for one of the 12 spaces by midnight, Saturday, October 10th. Register by email with “Culture Days Registration” in the subject line to office@silverspire.ca After registration you will receive an email with final details.

Silver Spire was the recipient of a grant from the City of St. Catharines through the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program, Culture Days Activity Program fund. We are very grateful for this funding which enabled us to employ the three artists for workshops and supply workshop materials.

The Arts Team hopes to do a virtual ‘Paint Night’ sometime this fall and we have been collaborating with Niagara Artists Centre, Dispatch, and The Lincoln by hosting the outdoor art installation *Traversées* by Jose Luis Torres on our east side lawn. Torres says of his art, “Beyond their sometimes-rudimentary aspect, my works touch on the notion of the memories of a location, a building and the inhabitants. Some of my projects also integrate the public in their production.” If you haven’t been downtown to drive by Silver Spire recently, try to take in *Traversées* in the evening to enjoy the lighting!

We hope and pray that all of you are safe and healthy and encourage you to use the arts to relieve your stress, express yourself and enjoy connections with others, in-person when safe, and virtually as an alternative. Check out the Culture Days website for ideas: <https://culturedays.ca/en/on> and the City of St. Catharines listings: <https://www.stcatharines.ca/en/experiencein/Culture-Days.asp>



Traversées by Jose Luis Torres

Submitted by Dorothy Franklin on behalf of the Arts Team



Our Vision

As a downtown St. Catharines church, we will participate in the creation and growth of a healthy and vibrant community as we seek justice and live in kindness in the world.

Our Mission

As an inviting and welcoming community, centered in Christ, we work with individuals and partners to transform lives.

Our Values

We strive to be . . .

Christ-Centred - We live out the teachings of Jesus Christ, embodying compassion through listening and responding to others.

Reverent - We treat the earth and all creation as sacred gifts of God.

Welcoming - We are intentional about being invitational, building relationships and community.

Open and Accepting - We affirm diversity by including and celebrating people of every age, race, belief, culture, ability, income level, family configuration, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation in life and ministry. Full participation of everyone is included in all aspects of the life and work of our ministry.

Committed to Learning - We inspire, explore and grow together in our faith.

Truth Seeking and Truth Telling – We seek reconciliation with those historically harmed through their relationship with the church.

Good Stewards - We give to God of our time, talents and treasures and use them wisely in service of our community and the world.

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