

Graceletter

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Be Amazed! Darrell Winger

As we get older does it become harder for us to be amazed? Do we sometimes think we've seen it all? Hopefully not! As we move into the season of Advent as a congregation, may we still be open to finding wonder in the way God comes to us in Jesus Christ. In fact, our Advent theme is, **Be Amazed!** Advent provides us with a reminder, that even in our waiting and longing, God is at work. He is present and his salvation is at hand. We want to embrace the words of Habakkuk 1:5, "Be astonished! Be astounded! For work is being done in your days that you would not believe if you were told." This Advent season may our minds and hearts be open to what God has for us.



Voices Together Annie Schulz

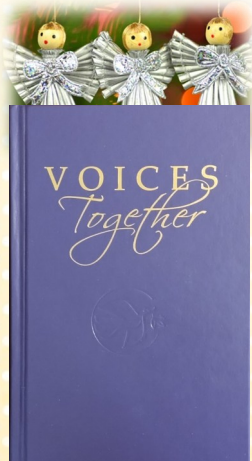
Since 2021, Grace Singers and Women's Chorus have sung about 100 hymns from the new *Voices Together* hymnal. The congregation joined in from lyrics printed in our bulletin. Lately, many suggested we get copies of VT, to be able to see notes too.

When my mother, Anna Goossen, passed away in February, Doug and I wished to donate funds in her honour toward acquiring VT at Grace. Worship Committee agreed to propose to Council the purchase of 60 copies. Paul and Mary Koop offered to cover the balance of costs.

Council agreed. Today, we are privileged to experience congregational singing from the Mennonite Church Canada and USA latest hymnbook offering beloved familiar hymns and wonderful new songs.

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Grace Providing Shelter: Reforming & Informing Dave Brubacher (MDS) & Jan Steven (Justice Group)

Reforming

According to the MDS website: “In March 2025, a house fire caused significant damage to one family's home in Orillia, ON. The three brothers who lived there were forced to leave, leaving them with nowhere else to live except their car. ... The Mennonite Disaster Service Ontario Unit is working to repair the home of the three brothers in Orillia. Volunteers are working to completely gut and rebuild the house.”



(Tyler Evans / Orillia Matters)

One of those volunteers is our own Dave Brubacher, who has spent parts of two weeks rebuilding the house—and the lives—of the brothers. Dave also just happens to be the Chair of MDS Canada. So he works both on the ground and “in the air” as he flies to significant board meetings.

Informing

Here is an excerpt from Jan Steven’s recent letter to local

political representatives at all levels: City Councillors, Mayor, Regional Councillors, Regional Chair, MPP and MP: “My home church – Grace Mennonite – recently held a Compassion Café put on by Grace’s Justice Group. Our guest speaker was from Start Me Up Niagara or SMUN. SMUN is a compassionate, community-based organization that supports individuals facing significant challenges such as poverty, mental illness, addiction, unemployment,



(Samuel Engelking / NOW Magazine)



disabilities, and homelessness.” The focus of discussion was “the increasing rate of homelessness among seniors. Some reasons for this include low income, high rents, long waiting lists for affordable housing, and loss of a caregiving partner. No one is ‘suited’ to being homeless, but older adults who have had a place of their own their whole lives – even less so.”



Could That Be Doug Schulz

I once mistook a twinkling light for a reindeer’s nose, then slept under the north stairway window, said Dad on Christmas morning.

Are you devoted today, old child, to a strange star? To a morning that woke this poor dark world with boundless bright wonder?

A Nip of Poetry for the Season



This Unto You Shall Be The Sign

Kevin McCabe

This unto you shall be the sign
That your redemption draweth nigh—
When human things shall show divine.

A babe shall come from David's line
And swaddled in a manger lie—
This unto you shall be the sign.

A prophet shall announce the time
And loudly for repentance cry—
When human things shall show divine.

Then water shall be turned to wine
And bread and fish shall multiply—
This unto you shall be the sign.

A Light to men will rise and shine,
That shall restore the blinded eye—
When human things shall show divine.

When Jonah in the whale shall pine
Three nights and days, and yet know why—
This unto you shall be the sign.

When only scattered grave-cloths line
The empty tomb where Death shall die—
This unto you shall be the sign—
When human things shall show divine.

Intrusion

Laur Steven

Walking the gravelled roadbed through the
woods in mid-November
at that hour between five and six when
afternoon vies with night
and evening is a matter of moments
and shadows, I see,
at the furthest corner of my vision,
a shadow swell, and dip

(I turn my head, while still walking),
weave up through birches,
extricate itself from rock and bank,
come floating
—reddish brown,
come trotting
—black brush hovering behind,
become, on the gravelled way, fox.

"Hah!" I hear surprise, pleasure
in my voice; not loud, but audible:
distinct, as I stand, arrested
by this conjunction.

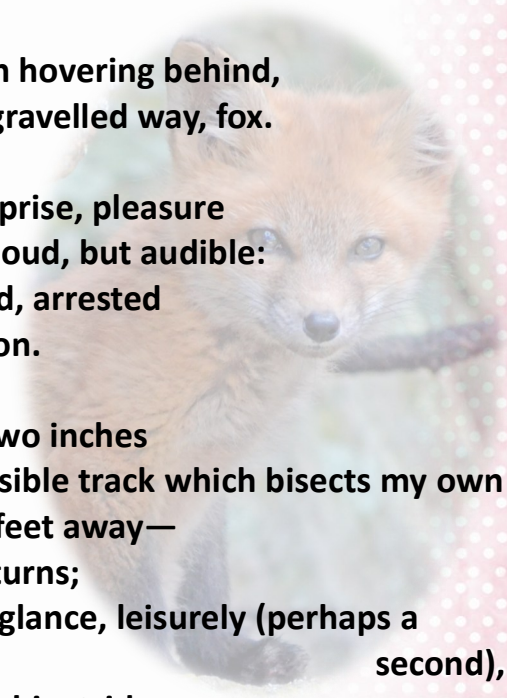
The snout

—an intent two inches
from the invisible track which bisects my own
about thirty feet away—
comes up, head turns;
he takes me at a glance, leisurely (perhaps a
second),

without checking his stride,
then drops the snout to its business again:
rabbit, or mouse, or vixen.

A branch snapping in the frost...
A car horn in the middle distance...
These intrude but do not impinge.

I stand, an intrusion, watching a fox
with even gait
become black brush
floating rust
and shadow.



Welcome Home

Doug Schulz

In 2020, after five years of refugee sponsorships for Syrian families displaced by war, Bridge of Hope Community (our team of Mennonites, Muslims, Quakers, United Church and other members) contemplated a focus on South Sudanese refugee families living in Ugandan settlement camps. Applications were begun in early 2021.

On August 27th this year, a 39-year-old S. Sudanese widow and her four children arrived and were settled into a house in the Haig neighbourhood near schools, settlement services, bus-routes and shopping. This home was provided for reasonable rent by a Toronto Quaker who invested in a St. Catharines property to help BoHC serve our incoming family's needs. This family had been living for over eight years in a small hut, making a meagre living by selling vegetables.

On November 14th, a 67-year-old widow arrived from a refugee camp with the remnants of her family that she'd rescued from massacre over 20 years ago. She, two orphaned grand-daughters (now in their early 20s), and her mid-30s son with

his wife and two young boys, are now settled into another house in the Haig neighbourhood – this one acquired last-minute for BoHC use by a local Mennonite businessperson.

'Home sweet home' for these families now means freedom from threats of violence and hope of opportunities to work, learn and grow as active members in their new community.



Why Grace?

Erika Klassen

Erika has a long history with the Mennonite Church in St. Catharines. When she was two her family immigrated from Paraguay and joined Scott St. MB. In her teens Scott St. decided to build an English-speaking church. Her family moved to Grantham MB.

In 1988 she and about 30 others decided they "could do church better" and started Westview Christian Fellowship. Erika was employed by Westview in various roles, eventually being commissioned as Outreach Pastor. She was instrumental in starting Westview Centre for Women. After 28 years she retired, just before the Fellowship and the Centre for Women parted ways. She felt she had to leave the Fellowship as well. Erika now picks up the story...

"After a year of resting at home on Sunday morning I decided I wanted to sing, something I've enjoyed my

whole life. Annie Schulz, being a longtime friend, welcomed me on one condition: I had to come and sing on Sunday mornings. YIKES! I wasn't really looking for a church, assuming I could never find another. Well, that was two years ago, and here I am. You have been so welcoming, it's been like coming home. Your expression of faith through peace and justice has resonated deeply with mine. Today I'm choosing you as my community. Thank you for having me."



Quilting at Grace: An Update

Kevin McCabe, with Hilda and Molly

Hilda Regier and Molly Enns have recently completed what may be the last of the Grace quilts. Hilda was not a regular quilter when she first came to Grace Mennonite Church some sixty-five years ago or more. At that time there was a large group of Grace Women who quilted three days a week in the church auditorium. Sometimes they displayed one of the more fancy quilts up on the stage.

Most of the quilts went to MCC, and most were fairly quickly put together, and were stitched (basted). They were usually hemmed at home. A few of them were sent to the New Hamburg Relief Sale.

When the Fellowship Room was renovated early in Waldo Paul's tenure, the quilters moved their operations there. There were fewer quilters by

this time, although a steady production continued. Waldo emailed Kevin on March 13, 2009: "The ladies have finished their quilting season with a total of 142 quilts. As this is the end of their quilting season I think it would be appropriate to have a quilt dedication as the Grace Abounding segment. I will probably make some comments and have a prayer of dedication at that point."

In recent years, the numbers dwindled further. When the Good Shepherd congregation came to Grace, they also had a small group of quilters. They invited any interested Grace women to join them, which Hilda did. In the COVID years, the number of quilters further declined. At Grace, along with Hilda and Molly, Anne Dyck and Marg Heinrichs maintained an interest in quilting.

The origins of the final quilt were described by Molly Enns: "When Hilda Regier and I looked for a quilting project, I recalled that I had a quilt top in my closet. This was taken from my mother's home after her death. The quilt top had been designed by Ella Heinrichs, aunt to Margaret Heinrichs. Ella Heinrichs had attended design school in the Ukraine before she left for Germany during WW 2. She later emigrated to Canada after the War. My mother made her acquaintance in Niagara, and had asked her to design the quilt that Hilda and I worked on. We enjoyed finishing this quilt, working together on many a morning in the quiet fellowship room of our church."





Falls Fairyland

Photos by Cathy McCabe

Cathy McCabe's arresting treatment of the popular tourist spot at Table Rock in Niagara Falls conjures up both Elvis's



melancholic crooning in "Blue Christmas", and the wondrous magic in the Narnia films. The blue tint brings out both the extremity of the icy location, and its transformative wonder. Though that lamppost



seems to be about ready to turn and chuckle at us ominously, the rainbow speaks reassuringly of promise and hope.



A Spot of Tea

Drawing by Sue McCabe

Combining hints of Maud Lewis's folk art and Van Gogh's shivering pencil sketches, Sue McCabe's drawing draws us into a festive yet restful tea time.



Graceletter

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"I do not understand the mystery of Grace —
only that it meets us where we are and does not leave us where it found us."

— Anne Lamott