

inquiring minds

THE NEWSLETTER OF EMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH



this issue

Camp Chipembi Experience

The Story of Ann McNamee

An Ode to Ottawa

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

As we begin another New Year, Emmanuel continues to be active and busy. In this issue we have stories and photos of many of our activities including the Holiday Bazaar, the Just Gifts Christmas Market, as well as photos from the family Christmas Eve service, and the Anniversary potluck lunch on January 25. We also have a contribution from Phyllis Mazimba, one of the Leaders of Camp Chipembi in August 2025. As we usually do in each issue, we feature a story of a member of our staff. In this issue we have a story about Ann McNamee, our Music Director.

Producing the Emmanuel newsletter is very rewarding, and we hope that it reflects the life of our community. Assembling the newsletter takes a lot of time and effort, so Jon and I decided to take a break and put the newsletter on pause until until Christmas 2026.

If you have items for publication, suggestions or comments, please send them to:

newsletter@emmanuelunited.ca

Blessings to everyone and best wishes for a healthy and peaceful 2026.

Phyllis MacRae, Editor

Jon Jones, Publisher

Richard Johnston, Proof reading



FROM GRANT'S DESK

Before I looked out the office window this morning, I saw the sun shining bright behind me. Then I turned around! A heavy wind was drifting snow over everything in the parking lot. I often say this time of year that it's colder outside than it looks because the sun is often shining when the temperature plummets. Someone who just came into the building said that the wind is awful!

I wonder what the outside temperature was like as the Magi visited after Christ's birth. Jesus was given a bed in a feeding trough (but we call it the manger because it's lined with hay in the pictures of our Sunday school books and children's bibles.) As I envision this, I see this whole scene embraced by love: the hospitality of the innkeeper who offered them the barn, the warm cuddle of Mary perhaps singing a lullaby, the anxious care of Joseph always in the picture, looking on with delicate concern. If you read Luke (my preferred version), you'll see shepherds. If you read Matthew, you see Magi.

I wonder why the politics and economics of our 2025 seems so far from this picture. I wonder how the children of Israel and Palestine might babysit Jesus if just for an hour to give Mary a break. I wonder how the people of Ukraine will feel sheltered and safe this Christmas.

I think people of faith, in our compassionate wondering, ponder how together, we can, will and do, do something to keep this picture peaceful and safe. We can think of how our Global Partners at Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel in El Salvador and Camp Chipembi in Zambia make real life-giving change happen in the lives of the children, families and faith communities they serve. They do it joyfully with what they have, which is a call to all of our hearts, reminding us of what our faith can do.

Here at Emmanuel United Church in Ottawa, we've had a most active and full 2025. What we do is put so much energy and so many hours into creating ways for us to come together: in Sunday worship with music from our choirs and accompanists, in the hours spent over books and crafts, quietly making faithfulness and sustainability continue to take shape. From our technical teams that produce our livestreams of worship and keep our worship polished and seamless, to our Coffee and Conversation volunteers who remind us of the warmth that comes from more than just tea, Emmanuel is a place that is equally as comforting as it is challenging.



Our young families and youth continue to press the message that our worship and community life needs to include their fun and vital ideas.

From our sponsored families who were once refugees to our stories from the far away lands of Congo, we are richer because we keep our congregation's story full, wise and open. It is in our openness that keeps us welcoming one another every Sunday and all week long. We rarely pause to rest in this church, but when we do, we are here for each other.

So much reflection is packed into that journey the Magi made. So much hope is inside the heart of the baby in that manger. May you and your families and those who love you be having a 2026 that is off to a good start, full of the care that is shared by our community of faith at Emmanuel United Church.

Rev. Grant Stuckless

Minister of Worship and Pastoral Care



“Go out and preach the gospel, and if you must, use words”

Francis of Assisi



Photo Credit: Jon Jones



PASSAGES AND BLESSED EVENTS

We remember the following members of our Emmanuel family who passed away last year:

Audrey Mather – January 7, 2025

Cathy Borza – March 17, 2025

Joan Reveler – May 7, 2025

Margaret (Marg) Kneen – August 18, 2025

Marian Adams – August 22, 2025

Nanette Whitwam – October 3, 2025

Baptisms:

Arya Amani Zahinda, child of Chrispin and Rebecca Zahinda,

February 1, 2026



FROM THE PASTORAL CARE PROVIDER

The Unfinished Song of Faith

“When the mind is festooned with certainty, there is no room for the mystery.”

—John O’Donohue, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*

Faith isn’t a tidy set of answers we can neatly shelve. It is more like a song—full of movement, tension, and the quiet unfolding of God’s presence. Christian faith is not a system to master but a relationship to live, inviting us into the ongoing creativity of the God who continues to breathe life into the world.

Over the years, I’ve had to release the idea that faith could be contained within fixed questions and definitive answers—those echoes of the catechism that once gave me a sense of control. For a long time, I believed that if I gathered enough knowledge, I could avoid the unease of doubt, those liminal places where old assumptions fall away and new insights have not yet taken shape. I sometimes wonder whether that desire for certainty nudged me toward doctoral studies in pastoral theology. But that is a story for another day.

My understanding of faith has since shifted. I no longer imagine faith as something to secure or define once and for all. Instead, my faith continues to unfold—shaped by a surprising mix of experiences such as making music, gazing at the stars, and pondering the mysteries of quantum physics. These experiences have become, in their own ways, quiet sacraments—small revelations of God’s ongoing presence.

Music has been one of my deepest teachers. Playing the piano or pipe organ, or standing before a choir, has trained me to listen closely—to the rise and fall of melody, to the spaces between notes, to the way sound leans toward what comes next. Faith, too, involves listening: a willingness to dwell in tension, to wait through silence, to trust what has not yet fully resolved. Christian tradition has long spoken of the *via negativa*, the way of unknowing, and music has shown me that this path can be rich with beauty.

Astronomy and quantum physics invite a similar attentiveness. Astronomy asks us to observe the slow unfolding of cosmic history, where galaxies drift and stars are born. Quantum physics reveals hidden patterns at the smallest scales of creation—particles that flicker into being, share information across distance, and hint at a universe grounded in relationship rather than isolation. In this I hear resonances with the Christian confession that all things hold together in Christ.



Recent revelations of the James Webb Telescope, alongside the mysteries of quantum science, have widened my faith rather than threatened it. They remind me that creation is dynamic, relational, and astonishing—still unfolding in ways we scarcely understand. If the cosmos is evolving, why should faith remain confined to rigid certainties? The questions I carry are not signs of weak belief but signs of a faith alive, attentive, and responsive to the Spirit's movement.

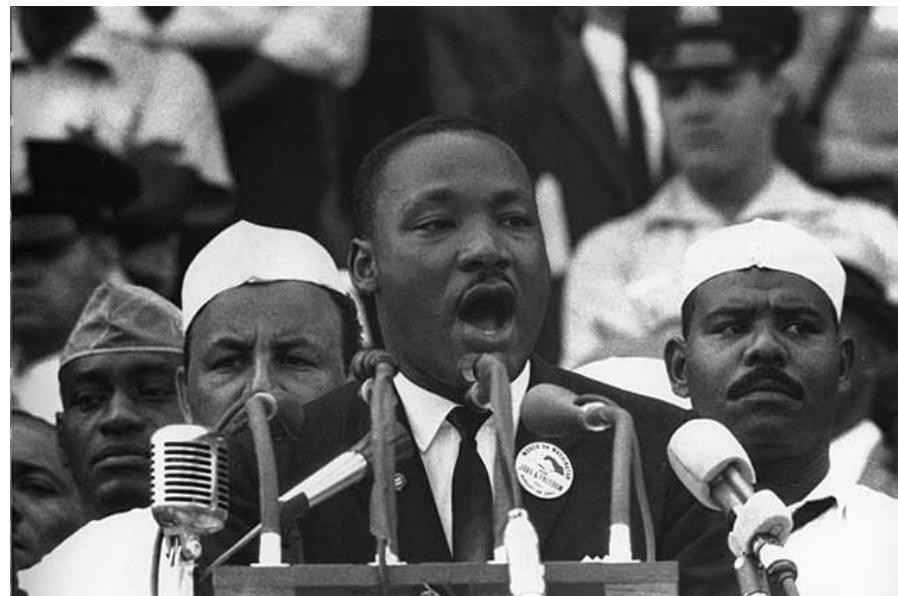
So I ask, if creation itself moves to a rhythm of unseen connection, could faith be the practice of learning to hear—and join—the music of God's ongoing creation?

What is the song your faith is learning to sing, is singing ?

“When the mind is festooned with certainty, there is no room for the mystery.”

— John O'Donohue, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*

Ron MacDonald
Pastoral Care Provider



“But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough, can you see the stars.”

Martin Luther King Jr.

Photo: David Erikson Licenced under Creative Commons 2.0



THE LIFE OF OUR COMMUNITY FROM THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORKER

In September at Emmanuel, the Christian Development Committee hosted a fall fair under the Lets Stay Together (LST) program. After church, we had a BBQ lunch, followed by lawn games, time on the bouncy castle and an intense cake walk! This will be the first of many fall fairs that we look forward to hosting for our church and community.

Through October and November, our youth were busy volunteering at the Shantymen's dinner and Bazaar. They were a huge help, and for our high school students these events also provided important volunteer hours. We are incredibly proud of the commitment our youth continue to show. Their willingness to serve does not go unnoticed.

In November we launched a new drop-off program giving young parents a couple of hours in an evening to run errands, while the kids had dinner, played games and made crafts. Our next drop off program was after church on December 21st until 2:30pm, which left just enough time for parents to get their last-minute shopping in.

In the month of December our LST program featured a carol sing, crafts and gingerbread house decorating. This took place after church on December 14th where lunch was provided. We encourage people of all ages to participate in the activities. Ten days later on Christmas Eve, the kids and youth of Emmanuel performed in the Christmas pageant at the 5:00 pm service.

As the year drew to a close, we look forward to Ontario Youth Parliament (OYP), taking place in Belleville from February 13-16 for youth aged 14-21. OYP is a place where youth from across the province debate current issues, connect with old and new friends while they navigate and explore their spirituality. Anyone interested should talk with Christine Hywarren or Val Lines for more information, including details about financial assistance.

Amelia



Mrs. Jones got a little too used to watching online worship from home.



Credit: UCC Resources



SUMMER YOUTH AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Youth Community Service Leadership Camp

We held a Youth Community Service Leadership camp from July 7 to July 11 for twelve youth going into Grade 6 to 10. The purpose of this camp was to provide opportunities for youth to volunteer in the community around us as well as have fun playing games, cooking and doing crafts.



Our youth visited and did some learning at the urban forest network located on the Just Foods farm in Orleans. Shelley Lambert, the director of ForetCapitalForest, and two of their summer students shared lots of interesting information. Our afternoon ended at the Birch Path Healing Forest which is a beautiful and meaningful place.

Our youth prepared and served a lunch for seniors at Emmanuel.

They had fun bagging food for distribution at the Heron Emergency Food Center. Special thanks go to Val Dowd for helping co-ordinate this for us and to the HEFC staff for being so welcoming. We bagged beans, coffee, sugar, tea.

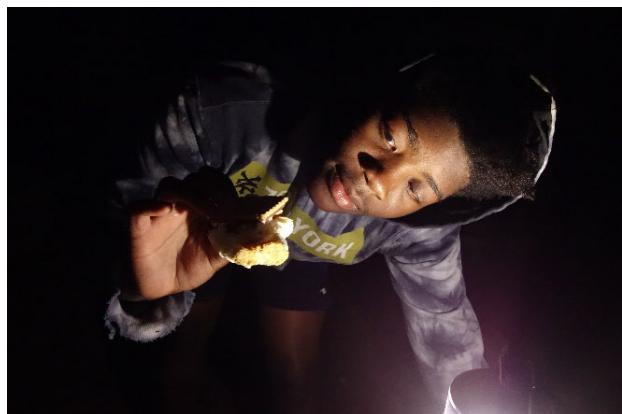
We played outdoor games (fun but hot!), painted, went to a pool and ended the week with a trip to Lac Phillipe.



Cook and Canoe Camp

Five youth participated in our cook and canoe camp from July 28 to Aug 1. Thanks to Denis-Guillaume Casault for being our youth leader and to David Burness and Val Lines for providing adult leadership. On the Monday and Tuesday, we made pulled pork and chili; cookies, brownies and muffins to take camping, and played games (hide and seek in the empty church at the end of the day is a favorite!).

At the campsite we swam and went to the jumping rock, had campfires and explored. Eka gets the prize for the best smore!



September Let's Stay Together

Lots of people gathered after the service on September 7 to take part in a welcome back fall fun fair organized by the CD team. There were lots of different games – including ring toss, ladder bean bag toss, and mini putt. There was a bouncy castle, a BBQ hot dog lunch, fresh popcorn, group games and a cakewalk. It was a fun way to connect with each other!



INTRODUCTION

Phyllis Mazimba is a young woman living in Chipembi, Zambia. The Chipembi Congregation of the United Church of Zambia has for many years been one of Emmanuel's two Global Partners. (The other partner is Emmanuel Baptist Church in El Salvador). In August 2025 Phyllis took part as a youth leader in Camp Chipembi, the children's summer Bible school that takes place each summer. The Camp is a cooperative initiative of the Emmanuel United Global Partners Committee, Bells Corners United Church and the Chipembi congregation of the United Church of Zambia. In August 2025 several leaders from Ottawa took part – Xavier Lamb from Emmanuel and two leaders from Bells Corners.

The Global Partners committee is now recruiting young adults from ages 18-30 to take part in Camp Chipembi in August 2026. If you are interested and would like to know more, please speak to Phyllis MacRae at pmjmacrae@gmail.com.

Phyllis MacRae

CAMP CHIPEMBI EXPERIENCE

My name is Phyllis Mazimba, born on the 27th of August 1994. Born and raised in Chipembi by a single mum with four brothers. By the way, I'm the only girl.

I have done my course already under Education as a secondary school Music/PE teacher which I completed in 2019. I'm currently unemployed but busy pushing and hoping for the best.

The month of August! It is always that exciting month of the year where you are looking forward to having fun with the kids, meeting the Canadian friends, having new experience and having wonderful delicious food. My experience during every camp has always been awesome for I have learnt a lot of things like believing in myself, time management, being innovative, being creative and having self-confidence.



Phyllis Mazimba



Stories from the bible in connection with the themes and the situation in our community, made me see things a different way, taught me how to handle situations and the people around me, more especially the wonderful kids.

Let me talk about the relationship with the Canadian leaders, what can I say? These are such amazing and sweet souls, very open minded, very free to talk to, they made it easy to bond, they became part of me. We shared songs during training, we did some dances hahaha, stories, games, O! And my favorite was during the camp fire every evening..... my goodness! Best experience ever!!!! .

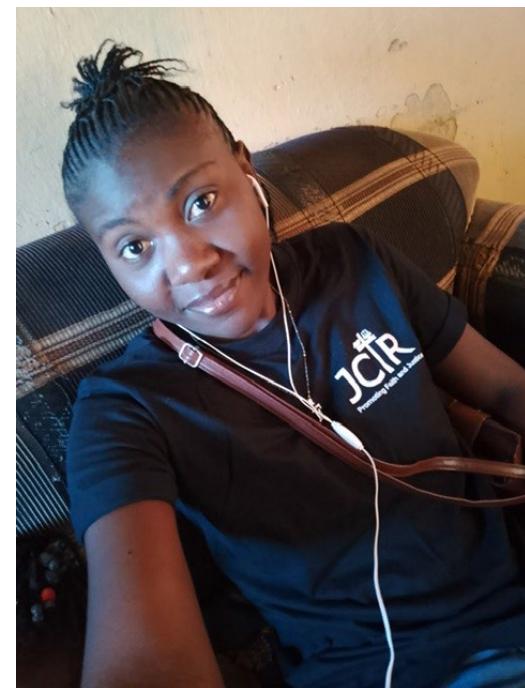
The exchange of gifts, cultural exchange, having meals together and more, brought us closer and closer each day that past. I can go on and on talking about camp because it is the best thing that has ever happened in our community.

My dreams for the future? I want to do some short courses like baking and becoming a makeup artist. With these survival skills, I can run my own business and raise money to push for my biggest dream of becoming a gospel artist. I have passion for music it is actually part of me. I write songs, I dream of songs, hoping one day they will be heard. Thank you!

Phyllis Mazimba



Camp Chipembi Kids



Phyllis Mazimba



THE STORY OF ANN MCNAMEE

Ann McNamee joined the music world of Emmanuel for the second time in the fall of 2024.

Her first experience at Emmanuel came in the 1980's during the time that Emmanuel was building its new organ. Anne Montgomery recruited Ann to be the organ and piano accompanist for the choir. At that time she spent a year or two working with Anne and the senior choir. In September 2024 when Theresa retired from her position of Director of Music Ministry at Emmanuel, Ann came in on an interim basis. Interim soon became permanent, and today Ann is Music Director of the choir. Abby Sanchez is the piano accompanist for the choir, Bells and Jam, and frequently plays the organ. Ann also plays with the EmmanuBells.

Ann was born in Jamaica in 1953. In 1962 Jamaica obtained its independence. One result was that Ann's mother Norma McNamee was posted to Ottawa to help establish the new High Commission for Jamaica.

Norma became the Secretary to the High Commissioner. Ann and her siblings came to Ottawa with their mother. Ann's father John followed the next year. He became the manager at Firestone at Shoppers' City.

Ann had 4 siblings, 4 girls and 1 boy. The youngest was born in Canada. She now has 3 siblings. Her brother and one sister live in Ottawa and one sister lives in Chicago. Ann's schooling took place in Ottawa. She attended Manor Park Public School, Queen Elizabeth Public School and Lisgar Collegiate, where she graduated in 1972. After high school Ann enrolled at the University of Ottawa where she studied for the degree of Bachelor of Music. She studied keyboard, organ performance and strings education as well as viola and harpsichord.



Ann's Family. Father, mother and siblings. Ann is at far right



While at Ottawa U Ann spent two summers studying music in Europe. She studied piano at Aix-en-Provence, France and organ at Haarlem, Netherlands. She graduated in 1975. At age 18 Ann became a Canadian citizen.

In 1976 Ann went to Cleveland, Ohio for an organ workshop. After studying at Ottawa U for one more year in organ performance, she attended the University of Akron, Ohio as a graduate assistant organist. In Akron she studied for one year in a Master's Program in Organ Performance.

In 1977 Ann returned to Ottawa. In the following year back issues led to a surgical operation in Ottawa. In 1980 Ann was married at Dominion Chalmers United Church. In 1984 Ann's son Devin was born. Ann and her husband separated in 1986. Ann has three grandchildren, Kaya, Felix and Elora.

After finishing her music studies, Ann became very active in the Ottawa music community. She was an accompanist at the Kiwanis music festival and she met both Anne Montgomery and Lee Langner. She accompanied students for voice teacher Barbara Ross.

Ann worked as music director and organist at a number of Ottawa churches, including as assistant organist at Dominion Chalmers with Bill France and at St Andrew's Presbyterian church with Carmen Milligan.

She was organ accompanist at St Timothy's in Alta Vista, and Music Director at St Stephens Presbyterian on Parkdale, and at Trinity United. During this period she joined Emmanuel as the music accompanist with Anne Montgomery as the choir director.

Ann continued to be active in the music world in Jamaica. In 1996 she started the *Kingston Jamaica International Chamber Music Festival*, where she worked for three years while living and working in Canada. In 1999 she became the first Director of the Bytown Voices choir. Jon Jones continues to sing in the Bytown Voices choir.



Members of National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica who came to Canada on exchange with NYO of Canada in 2014. Ann is fourth from left in top row.



In 2004, Ann returned to Jamaica full time to work in music education. She lived in Jamaica from 2004 to 2020. In Jamaica she took a teaching position as head of the piano department at the *Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts* in Kingston. In 2010 she became the first music director of the *National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica* (NYOJ). The orchestra used the famous El Sistema music education system that was developed in Venezuela in 1975. World famous conductor Gustavo Dudamel came out of the El Sistema program. The NYOJ engaged youth from “underserved” communities in Jamaica.

From 2002 to 2024 for 12 summers Ann accompanied the summer tours of the *Sing Unto the Lord Choir*, with singers from across Canada.

In July 2020 (when the Covid pandemic began) Ann retired from her positions in Jamaica and returned to live in Canada. She bought a condo in Alta Vista, where she lives near her son and his family. Covid caused the NYOJ to close and it has never restarted.

Back in Ottawa Ann joined the Parkdale Orchestra to play viola and met Ann Frederking. Having done some choir conducting in Jamaica, Ann has a good sense of the different music cultures in Canada, the Caribbean and other parts of the world. She enjoys being part of the vibrant and lively music community at Emmanuel. And the Emmanuel family is very happy that she is a new member of our family.

Phyllis MacRae



Gustavo Dudamel, the international orchestra conductor, Ann and Darren Young, conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica senior orchestra





Photo credit: Pierre Péron



Photo Credit: Jon Jones



AN ODE TO OTTAWA – ARETA CROWELL

Friends ask: "are you looking forward to going back to Pasadena?" Of course the political climate in the United States makes that a double-edged question! The answer is: "yes" and "no"! I hate the terrible reductions in health care, in food support, in freedoms and the increases in detention and incarceration of innocent people- just to name a few. But I love to be with my beloved family and friends from both my professional and church lives!

While the positives definitely outweigh the negatives, I will miss a lot in Ottawa which adds to my torn feelings.



The CalTech campus – Areta's and Russ's regular walking spot



View of the San Gabriel mountains from Areta's and Russ's apartment

Ottawa is a beautiful city which I am coming to love- with family here and Emmanuel as my church home I hate to leave. This autumn season has made me particularly sad to leave.

Beautiful fall colors make even the most trivial mundane outings times of joy. Tapestries of golds, yellows, oranges and reds line the streets . Reds shout for attention. Trees and shrubs, and evergreens are a never ceasing delight. Glorious! The daily changes out my window in our backyard woods are fun to track as they have crept into color, come to a peak and now are fading- but still brilliant in the late afternoon sunshine.

As our anthem recently celebrated:
How Can I Keep From Singing!



But this tribute to Ottawa can't stop with this season. Each year we come back just in time for my other favorite. Spring comes in like gangbusters! We arrive just as the leaves start to appear and we must look down for the tiny signs of spring: violets, crocuses, lilies. Then the more showy flowers emerge: trilliums- my favorites!- daffodils, tulips and lilacs. Ottawa is so beautiful with the canal and the river bordered so much with flower beds. And, of such immense international importance and awareness, the Tulip Festival!

So much to love in Ottawa!



West view from Areta's and Russ's apartment

My dual citizenship means I have dual loyalty- so I don't have to choose!!

I am blessed to be at home in both places. So I hate to go and I love to get back to my other home, family and friends- and my Pasadena Presbyterian Church family which is just as important to me as my Emmanuel United family.

Aren't I lucky!

Areta Crowell

All photos from Areta Crowell



The Crowell family, including Russell Smith



“NOT JUST AT CHRISTMAS” - MY DAILY MINUTE

Used with permission from the retired Rev. Paul Ivany, Norval United Church, Georgetown, Ontario.

Bible Verse

“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.””~ *Luke 2:15, New Revised Standard Version*

A Few Thoughts

It's one of my favourite parts of the Christmas story. (Maybe from all those years of wearing a bathrobe with a towel tied around my head.) The shepherds! What I love about them is that they didn't just sit there. They heard the news and said, "Well. We'd better go and do something about this." I love that.

We need to be more like shepherds. Life happens all around us. We could just sit back and do nothing, but I think we're called, challenged, invited to GO and do something with life.

So... what can we go and do? Email a friend. Call a senior. Smile at someone you don't know. Write a letter. Stand up against racism. Give to someone in need, and not just at Christmas! Be a better friend. Make a difference.

Yes, let's all be like shepherds. Get your bathrobe on. Tie that towel on your head. Hear an inspiring challenge. And then GO and do something.

Let Us Pray

So, here we go, God. Who knows what this day will bring? I go into this day and go I must, to whatever challenges, battles, joys, or celebrations this day will bring. I will do my best not just to sit around and do nothing but to think about what I can do and then go and do it. Here we go, God, (with a heavy emphasis on the we!) We all are in this together. Amen.

Words of Wisdom

“Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.”~ *Henri Nouwen*

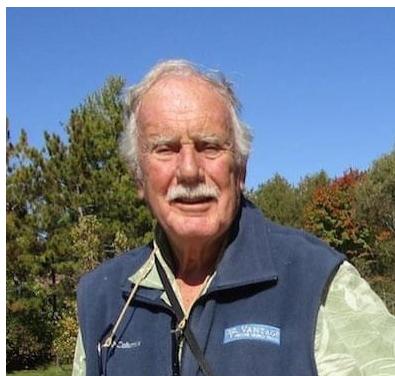
Submitted by Jill MacLean



Immediate Necessity

**Ours is an empire in decline.
Fascist fables wax as truth.
Falsehood corrupts the news
in every smoke-filled room.
Verity, for our common good,
obtains before assurance of a God.
Meanwhile the second law prevails —
to love our neighbouring enemy.**

© E. Russell Smith



All Hallows Eve 1

Below Grasshopper Hill the maples all
have lost their leaves. Suburban houses
reappear after a summer out of sight.
City towers rise beyond in shades of grey,
winking with affairs of state and commerce
as another day declines. Northern granite
shields the nitty-gritty from incipient chill.
Above it all there looms a sullen sky,
sunlight a slender memory of an hour since.
In the streets, with shrieks and laughter,
creatures of the fearful night creep forth,
creating and defying comic horrors
of deception and delights of fantasy,
to set aside, for dubious favours offered,
our concern for insecurity, forestalling
local treachery, and back sheds overturned.

© E. Russell Smith 2016



SILENT AUCTION, 2025

For a number of years, so many I have lost count, I have been part of the Silent Auction Table at Emmanuel's Holiday Bazaar. It all began in the late 90's when Eleanor Dyck "invited" me to take part as a helper and was a very good teacher. Eventually she handed me her store of Auction records and instructions, complete with bid sheets, registration sheets and valuable organizational hints.

In 1998, as a keen newcomer to being a Convenor for the Auction, I wrote a poem dedicated to the event and it could still apply to this year's auction, although the names have changed. With special thanks to Patricia, Evelyn, Dan and Joan this year's Auction team and Amanda for her expertise with her identification App that provided values of items.



The Silent Auction Table, 2025. Photo: Jon Jones



At the Silent Auction, 2025. Photo: Jon Jones

We all miss past items like Joan Halliday's socks, a tin of Jean MacDonald's shortbread and treasures from Shirley Doswell! But each year, we have had wonderful donations of collectibles, practical items, fine artwork and so much more! What could be better than finding a new home for good quality items so they can be reused. Emmanuel's Statement of Mission reminds us "to be stewards of God's gifts to us and of creation".

This year in addition to outstanding auction items, we were fortunate to receive donations from four local businesses Cob's Bakery, Green Bean Café, Three Sisters and Movies n' Stuff, as well as a calendar filled with original bird photos taken by birder extraordinaire, Aaron Hywarren.



Emmanuel has offered me many opportunities to learn and grow and the Auction was definitely a highlight of my volunteering. But there comes a time for a new Silent Auction team. Like Eleanor Dyck did for me in the 90's, I would be happy to share information and training with you. If you have good organizational skills and enjoy a community building event the Silent Auction is just right for you.

Some churches are going on line with their Silent Auction. I surveyed both helpers and buyers and the consensus seems to be that an in-person Silent Auction brings people in to the bazaar and creates an atmosphere of liveliness right until the end.

I hope to talk to you soon about how you can be a part of this fun event for 2026.

Joyce White



Bizaare Poetry 1998

“Twas the 7th of November and all through the church,

For wonderful bazaar items, the buyers did search.

At the Silent Auction table, the bidding was keen,

For such special treasures you rarely have seen.

With Graham and Phil taking care of the desk,

And Lori so ably watching over the rest,

Judy and Clara were helping, Kit-chi Pay too,

Valerie, Sam and Cathie knew just what to do.

When Ross called a winner there came such a sigh,

We heard few regrets for bidding so high.

Now the auction is over, the tally is done.

Thank you to all for being part of the fun.”

© Joyce White 1998



EMMANUEL'S HOLIDAY BAZAAR, 2025



Photos by Jon Jones



VOLUNTEERING AT THE RRCRC EMERGENCY FOOD BANK

How do you feed over a thousand people every month?

With the help of a lot of volunteers and dedicated staff.

The Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre (RRCRC) manages the Emergency Food Bank, the main one for our ward. It is one of more than 98 food programs in the Ottawa Food Bank's citywide network. In 2024, an average of 1,248 residents and family members relied on the RRCRC Emergency Food Bank each month—an increase of 24% over the previous year and a staggering 84% since 2019, marking a new all-time high. At the beginning of 2025, the Ottawa Food Bank made the difficult decision to reduce the amount of food being delivered to the programs in their network. The Emergency Food Bank has seen a reduction by an average of 50 percent, only deepening the crisis.

The RRCRC Emergency Food Bank is funded in-part by the City of Ottawa and the rest is supplemented by generous donations, both monetary and in kind. When possible, the RRCRC will also make purchases and is including fresh produce grown at the Centre through their Social Harvest program. Nearby food chains like Metro (Food Basics), Independent and Adonis generously support the Emergency Food Bank food rescue efforts.

As demand for emergency food support in our area increases and financial resources become even more stretched, our neighbours in need are facing tougher choices each day.

They often have to decide between putting food on the table or covering other necessities like rent, transportation, or medication. Over 65 hard-working volunteers help keep our local food bank stocked with items such as fresh vegetables, milk, canned soups, stews, meats, beans, eggs, and many other essentials. Last year in total, 418 volunteers generously provided over 16,000 hours in support of all the RRCRC's programs.

Several of my friends in Manor Park have been volunteering with the RRCRC for a number of years. I started about six months ago, deciding that it would be a good use of my time, after hearing that the RRCRC was in need of additional help. Several rooms in the basement of the old Rideau High School on St. Laurent Blvd. (now Rideau Hub) are dedicated to the Emergency Food Bank, packed floor to ceiling with the continual flow of products that help feed so many struggling people and families. Volunteers like me generally work a four-hour shift per work. These shifts include sorting, labeling, and distributing the food and other necessities for the hundreds of people that line up twice a week for support.

Take Caroline and Laurie, for example — two retired women I work with on my shift. Both have been volunteering for many years, diligently stocking the shelves, bagging flour, sugar, and coffee, unpacking diapers and children's lunch snacks, and generally helping newer volunteers like me.

The RRCRC also supports students with volunteer work placements.



Every week, I brush shoulders with newcomers from all over the world — people from Nigeria, Somalia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, to name a few. They gain valuable work experience and build their networks, all while providing excellent support to those in need.

On one of the two weekly service days, volunteers help the food bank clients navigate the shelves and refrigerators during their appointment. I was amazed one shift, escorting a single mother from Sudan in her late twenties who has five young children under ten. They had just arrived in Canada as refugees a few months before. Despite her incredible family load and with few other friends or family in Ottawa, she smiled and laughed with me. Her positive attitude was infectious.

Managing the Emergency Food Bank is no small task, but Program Officer Patricia Lau does it with spirit and heart. Originally from Nicaragua, Patricia moved to Canada many years ago and speaks fluent English, French, and Spanish. She energetically bounces around as she coordinates her small staff team of two and the many volunteers that flow through the Food Bank. She is a marvel to watch as she juggles countless demands — interviewing applicants, securing donations, managing staff, coordinating intake and distribution — often selflessly working many extra hours each week.

The RRCRC must constantly adapt to the strain of higher demand and reduced supply. They work to bridge the gap through food donations, their Gifts in Kind program, local partnerships and innovations such as their online booking system.

This helps to improve service efficiency and ensured equitable, low-barrier access for all. Unfortunately, sometimes a decrease in the amount of food that they are able to provide each client is required. The RRCRC also works to help its clients get out of food bank dependency and set them up for success with the help of their wrap around services and many partners that bring resources directly to the community members. These partners include the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health, YMCA Immigrant Services, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO), Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), Ottawa World Skills and CCI Ottawa.

I have had many jobs in my life, but nothing compares to the feeling that I get from helping in a small way with this critical task of feeding those most in need. By far and away I get more from this work than I give out. It's also fun and a great way to meet lots of interesting people!

The Emergency Food Bank at the RRCRC provides an essential service for our community and the volunteers are an integral part of the success of their operations. There are many ways to support this extremely worthy charity. One way is to donate directly to the Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre to support the growing needs in our community. Volunteering is also a meaningful way to support the organization.



The Emergency Food Bank is actively looking for volunteers, especially before the busiest season leading up to the holidays. If you are interested in volunteering, please email gabrielle.davis@crcrr.org.

To learn more or to make a direct donation, please visit www.crcrr.org.

David Goldfield
Manor Park Resident
and former President of the
Manor Park Community Association (MPCA)

Article submitted by Philip English
Chair of the Emmanuel Social Action
Committee

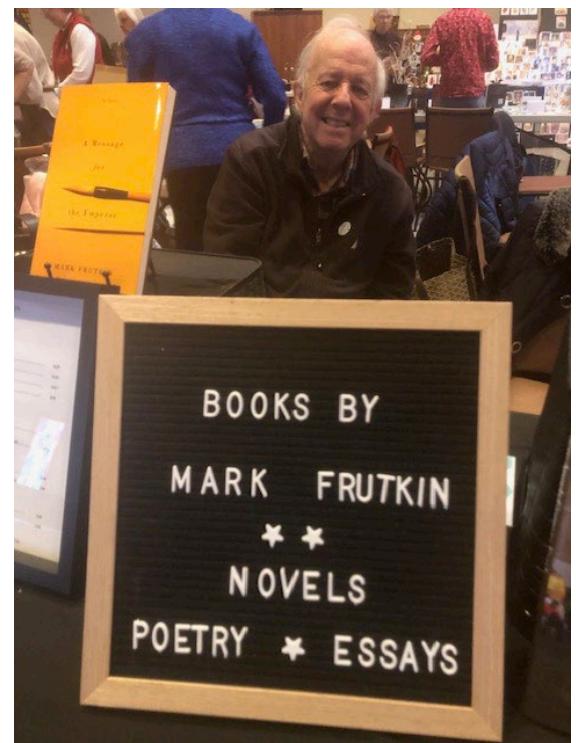


Market Mobile delivers food after Storm, 2022. Credit: Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre



GLOBAL PARTNERS CHRISTMAS MARKET

Global partners held another successful Christmas Market on line and in person in December. Lots of fun for everyone. Proceeds support Emmanuel's global partners in El Salvador and Zambia. Photos by Phyllis MacRae.



CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY SERVICE 2025

Christmas Eve family service 2025. Children enjoying the Nativity pageant. Photos by Val Lines.



CLUSTER EPIPHANY SERVICE, JANUARY 2025

Photos by Pierre Péron.





Photo Credit: Val Lines

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