

*A door is truly an amazing thing.
Closed, it is an agent of separation.....
But swing it open and it becomes an invitation,
Uniting what before was separate. Drew Leder*

To my friends in Christ,

In the first weekend of June this year our church participated in the Doors Open Ottawa event and even though it was a rainy weekend, it was a great success as more than ninety people visited our church and learned of our history. An enthusiastic team of volunteers offered them tours of our sanctuary, explained our history through archival photos and offered them refreshments and jam. On Sunday afternoon we entertained them with a wonderful piano duet played by Carol Gurofsky and her student Philip Burness. Our Council has decided that we would like to participate in this event next year and would consider sharing more of the story of our people and our current ministry of hospitality and diversity.

Our church is indeed becoming a very busy place here in Sandy Hill as we welcome a diverse group of people that seek a safe and beautiful place to worship, to express their creativity, to offer a variety of ways to heal and enliven the mind, body and spirit. Our regular participants in the life of our church are the Eritrean church called Tsegawit, the Pilipino Congregation called Free Believers in Christ International, Jericho Road Coffeehouse, Nia Dance, Tai Chi and Yoga. Through Stephen's finesse at juggling times, we have welcomed more theatrical productions such as the Fringe Festival which are performing throughout this week. One weekend in May, the whole church building was transformed by eight or more theatre groups who participated in an experimental theatre production called Subdivision. It was incredible to experience how these very creative actors used the spaces they had chosen in our church to let our imaginations be set free – especially the group that did their whole performance on stilts!

Our local city councillor, Mathieu Fleury is developing a conversational network in the North West corner of Sandy Hill where we are located. Last week I was able to attend the roundtable meeting which included representatives from churches, the police, bylaw officers, the Student federation, Action Sandy Hill, Board members of Centre 454, the Condominiums on Rideau St, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, the Harm Reduction Program. At the table there Councillor Fleury set a tone which allowed the free sharing of concerns, trends in the neighbourhood, ways of improving communication and anticipating future problems. These meetings will continue to be held and I welcome the participation of a few of our Council members.

Our church picnic is being held on Sunday June 24 at the beautiful cottage of Louise and Richard on the Gatineau River so we hope you can participate. I will be taking my vacation for three weeks in July, beginning July 2. The following three Sundays, July 8, 15, and 22 Rev. John Moor, our Voluntary Associate Minister, will be leading worship. He is going to celebrate July 22 as Christmas in July which has been greatly appreciated other years. Carol Gurofsky

will also be taking her vacation in July and we will be welcoming Paul Grose and Philip Burness to share their musical gifts and help lead your worship.

At the end of July, on the 27th, our church will be hosting the World Hepatitis Day educational event and BBQ from 10:30 to 1:30pm, a collaborative event involving many different health organizations in Ottawa, led by the Canadian Society for International Health. Please feel free to show up and learn or volunteer to help out.

The month of August will be a busy month as our Ottawa Presbytery welcomes General Council to Carleton University August 11^h to the 18^t. Derek Carlisle is our congregation's liaison and Betty Mackenzie has generously offered to be our hospitality co-ordinator. She will be looking for people to make some fresh baked muffins and cookies which will be offered to the Commissioners at their well-earned refreshment breaks. I have been Chairing the Local Events afternoon planned for Wed, August 15. Thomas Stow, who attended the Youth Forum at the Annual meeting of Montreal and Ottawa Conference, will also be attending the Youth Forum of General Council representing Ottawa Presbytery. We hope it is a wonderful learning experience for him.

Our congregation will be sponsoring the downtown justice walk so if you would like to volunteer for that event please contact me. The group will also be arriving mid-afternoon for some light refreshments. One of the afternoon evenings will be a hike on King Mountain led by our own resident ecologist Nick Stow. If you wish to volunteer for General Council, please be in touch with Derek or myself.

On the evening of August 15th, our Moderator Mardi Tindal is inviting all church members and anyone interested, to attend an evening song and prayer vigil on Parliament Hill which is the culmination of an afternoon pilgrimage with the youth of General Council who will be joining a walk with our aboriginal brothers and sisters whom they will join at Victoria Island. The vigil will begin at 7:30pm.

Looking ahead to the fall, we will still continue being involved in the Open Table ministry with and to the students of Sandy Hill. Their kickoff event will be on the last Sunday evening of September. In October we hope people will attend the education event with Diana Butler Bass on *Christianity After Religion* to be held on Oct 12th and 13th. Plan to read her book ahead of the event and we will be discussing it together sometime in September.

As you can see from this letter, our church is a vibrant, energized community of faith which is willing to open her doors to the world, to creativity, to learning, to compassionate caring. I sincerely pray that you will each find time and enjoyable ways to open the doors of your spirit, , body and mind this summer so that you might welcome the renewing, healing Spirit of God into your lives. God's doors to life and love are never shut, especially when we remember that Jesus is the gate that leads us to abundant life.

Yours with gratitude for abundant life we share,

Laurie McKnight-Walker