

## Newsletter – Fall 2019

### From Rev. Sarina

*"I lift my eyes to the hills - from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." - Psalm 121:1-2*

Starting up new routines and an increased workload in the fall can often feel like being dropped off the edge of a cliff with a hang glider without instructions. (Did I mention that I don't know how to use a hang glider? I'd have to learn on the fly!) It can feel like total chaos. How can we hear the voice of God in the midst of chaos?

We just finished a sermon series on the Psalms. If you missed it, you can listen to the sermons on our website

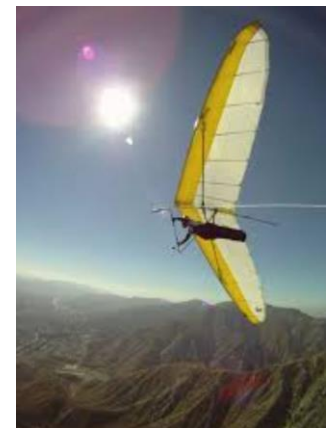
(<https://briarwoodpresbyterianchurch.ca/sermons>). We learned about how God is with us and working to bring good into our lives no matter what we are going through. After the last sermon (about Psalm 146), someone said to me, "I get it! Life has its ups and

downs, but God is the wind in our sails." Yes, in our celebrations and in the storms of life, God is always with us. When we are living through a storm, how can we hear the voice of God?

While I am learning new routines on the fly, I am connecting with God in short intervals throughout the day. Life feels so rushed that I cannot find a long time to connect with God, so I am finding five minutes of time several times during the day. I set a timer for myself in the morning, at lunch, and before bed. When I sit down I feel like I don't have five minutes, but once the five minutes is over, I often stay with God for longer.

How is this prayer time structured? I often start by reading or reciting a Scripture verse in order to help me focus on God. Some good examples from the Psalms are Psalm 121:1-2; Psalm 23:1-2; Psalm 27:1; Psalm 27:13-14, Psalm 46:1-2; Psalm 46:10. Or, sometimes I will start with a Scriptural image in mind, like being on a ship in the midst of a storm. After orienting yourself to being in God's presence, you can either sit in silence and be attentive to what God wants to say to you, or you can bring to the Lord all of the issues on your mind and give them over to God's care. Since you will spend several five-minute (or longer!) chunks of time with God throughout the day, you don't have to tell God everything in one sitting. You'll be back in God's presence soon enough!

Spending this time with God helps us to stop panicking about all that needs to be done. It helps us to relax in God's presence, and notice that God is the wind beneath our wings, holding us aloft while we work on our to-do lists one thing at a time. We also learn that while we can't do everything at once, God holds it all until the time to work on it comes. So, when you feel overwhelmed with the chaos of life, remember that God is the wind beneath your wings.



## It's a Girl!

Our newest member! Stevie and Zak Thriepland are the happy parents of a baby girl, a wee sister for Wesley.

Violet Carolyn Thriepland was born in the early hours of July 16<sup>th</sup>. Both Mum and baby are doing well. Stevie reports that Violet has a good appetite!

Congratulations everyone!



## Introducing our interim Children & Youth Director



Born in the village of Babungo in the North West Region of Cameroon to a Christian mother, Rev. Oliver Kondeh Ndula grew up within the church. He attended Sunday school and later taught Sunday School and was very active in the Youth Movement of his local congregation and Presbytery. He was first trained as an elementary school teacher and upon obtaining his Teacher's Grade One Certificate, served as a teacher with the Cameroon government for six years. Thereafter he resigned teaching and pursued pastoral formation at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Kumba, Cameroon, graduating with a Bachelor of Theology in 2007.

He was ordained as a Minister of the Presbyterian church in Cameroon in 2009 after serving as an Assistant Pastor for two years. He has served the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in three parishes over a period of 10 years. In his last parish he doubled as the Presbyterian Chaplain to the University of Buea, Cameroon.

Rev. Oliver moved to Canada in 2017 where he is currently studying for a Master of Sacred Theology at McGill University through the Presbyterian College. His research interests are in the area of Inter-Religious dialogue. He comes into the position of the Children and Youth Director of Briarwood Presbyterian Church with a lot of excitement, as he hopes to interact with children and youths in a context very different from that in which he was brought up and taught. The position will also give him the opportunity to once again actively contribute to the spiritual upbringing of children and youths, an opportunity he missed during his years of congregational ministry.

Rev. Oliver is married to Stephanie Mawoh Tchinda, who lives in Bamenda, Cameroon with their four sons, Courage, Fortune, Splendour and Jubilee. In his spare time, he spends time in video chats with his wife and children. He also listens to news and music.

## Remembering Rev. Coralie Jackson-Bissonnette

At the request of the editors of our Briarwood Newsletter, I have been asked to write a “eulogy” to celebrate Coralie’s life. As I write this I want to start by thanking the members of our Briarwood Church Family for the support of our family during the past few months. Phone calls, e-mails and cards have meant more than words can adequately express. Drives to Lakeshore General Hospital and the West Island Palliative Care Residence were so appreciated!



### **Rev. Coralie Jackson-Bissonnette: A Celebration of Her Life and Service**

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a time for everything. All time belongs to God, and how well we know this today ... for there is a time to be born and a time to die. On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 we gathered at Briarwood to give thanks for the life and service of Coralie. We remembered with great love our beloved Coralie, for hers was a full life. Coralie understood that in life there are times for mourning and times for joy. Coralie’s funeral service was indeed a strange mixture of both sadness and joy. Sadness at her passing, but joy in the wonderful memories and knowing that she is home and at peace.

Coralie was tireless in her devotion and energy because at the center of her life was her strong faith in God and her love of her church, family and friends. She touched many lives, not superficially, but with interest and love. Coralie was a person with a huge heart who had room for everyone. She was an intensely alive person, wonderfully whole and certainly her life gave glory to God. I have never met anyone who had more energy and drive quite like Coralie. She spent a lifetime helping others and enjoyed doing so. Between her community service and her church here was a woman with a deep and abiding faith lived out each and every day.

Coralie grew up here in Montreal and after finishing high school, went to work for Sunlife for 12 years. Coralie was in one of the first groups to move to Toronto when Sunlife relocated its head office there. Then at the age of 29 Coralie heard the call to ministry and attended the University of Western Ontario where she received her B.A. She then returned to Montreal where she attended Presbyterian College, graduating in 1987.

In 1991 Coralie was ordained receiving a call to the congregations of Ephraim Scott Memorial and Robert Campbell Memorial. It was a unique call; Coralie and Kate Jordan were called as a team to this two-point charge. After several years Coralie found herself as the Minister of Ephraim Scott Memorial where she faithfully and passionately served until 2011 when the Church closed.

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Coralie quietly served the Presbytery of Montreal taking on the role of Interim Moderator on three occasions: once for First Presbyterian Church in Verdun and twice for the congregation of Maisonneuve St. Cuthbert's. Coralie served on a committee given the task of finding a Clerk of the Montreal Presbytery. Coralie was so pleased that Dr. Michael Pettem was hired and over the years she spoke with Michael offering her support.

Coralie lived out her life what she called her Journey of Faith, as the extended family event planner, organizing birthday celebrations, Christmas dinners, BBQs. And of course there was what Coralie called her "Little Family": Leo, Alison, Dan, and Jack! While she was deeply committed to the pastoral care of her congregation and friends, for her, family always came first. She was a beloved wife for 35 years, mother for 30 years, and Marmee for a far too short 19 months.



God for Coralie was in the bits and pieces of everyday life. Coralie understood the words of the psalmist, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For, Thou art with me." This is the God we Christians worship, believing as we do that God has confirmed his promise in the person of Jesus Christ whom we call "Emmanuel" which means God-with-us. God is with us here and now. God will be with us. In her final weeks, she expressed that she was not afraid to die, that she had lived a good and full life filled with wonderful memories and was simply going on ahead of us.

Jesus knew that when he was gone his family and friends would be sad and so he said, "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know where I am going." Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me. If you had known me you would have known my Father also. Henceforth you know Him and have seen him. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Therefore let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid."

Our consolation today comes in the faith that looks through death, in the hope that gathers us here, the hope that as Coralie believed in Christ she now belongs with Christ in her new life. We cannot always understand that hope, and yet we can have it. We cannot always put words on that love of God, and yet when we have seen it in a good person's life and death we too are able to say a deeper and a much more grateful YES to God.

For all that Coralie was, and is still, in the hearts of those who love Coralie, and for all that Coralie has become through the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we give thanks and praise to God.

*Leo A. Bissonnette, PhD.*

## Beverley May - Glimpses of an Exciting Nursing Career



Beverley May, 87 years young, is a graduate of Queens University (B.A.52) and the Kingston General Hospital Nursing Program, specializing in pediatrics, 1956. As a new graduate, she took a teaching position in Pediatrics at the Ottawa Civic Hospital. Bev married and moved to Pointe-Claire in 1959.



### A LIP GRANT

An interesting opportunity arose in 1975. The federal government was offering a LIP Grant of \$25,000 to community groups who would find out the health problems and health needs of Canadians. A population of 50,000 would be considered a community.

Bev and a friend grouped Pointe-Claire (30,000) and Beaconsfield (20,000) and applied for the grant, which they received. They then hired a secretary, and 12 interviewers. They got great help from the McGill School of Nursing in terms of people to be interviewed. They designed routes and sectors, and McGill designed the questionnaire and offered statistical services. Off went the interviewers knocking on doors.

The gathering of information took 4 months. The project was very successful and all the gathered needs were turned over to McGill and the Federal government.

This information gathering was done all across Canada. The Federal government turned over the results, once compiled, to each province for them to put in place what they felt would work best in their province. The result in Quebec was the formation of CLSC's. The closest one to the church is on Cartier Avenue in Pointe-Claire.

### THE MAYWOOD RESIDENCE

While Bev's nursing career continued, she was asked to join a committee for the City of Pointe-Claire who were sponsoring the first Maywood Residence located on the street of that name.

They needed Pointe-Claire citizens to design a questionnaire which would determine eligibility for having a place in the Residence. The residence was meant for those with very little means. Residents would have to be independent (no care services).

The two top questions were: 1. Expectation of the resident and 2. Eligibility. This latter was tricky since some people owned homes and could not afford to keep them repaired, but were not penniless.

The residence came into existence and Bev found this work very satisfying.

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## **THE LAKESHORE GENERAL HOSPITAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Bev was appointed to the Board by the University Women's Club. She was the only woman; the others were businessmen. Bev did not know what they knew about running a hospital, but she knew she needed help in this regard. So, sensible woman that she is, she took a course in Hospital Administration! That gave her a solid foundation for her 12 years on the Board and she said she learned a lot.

Bev has done lots of work over the years as a volunteer, especially in the palliative field. She is now cosily ensconced at a seniors' residence in Pointe-Claire, getting some of the care herself that she has given over the years to so many.

Bravo Bev, and thanks.

*Virginia Bell*

## **Introducing Edythe Arnott – our Student Minister**



Edythe's first profession is teaching and most of her adult life has been spent working with students with learning disabilities. Although she has taught in South America and Quataq, QC, most of her life has been lived on the Island of Montreal, where she was born.

As a Stephen Minister and Stephen Leader, Edythe has provided confidential one-on-one spiritual and emotional care for people going through difficult times in their lives, and also helped lead the Stephen Ministry at St. Andrew and St. Paul.

In her free time, she enjoys visiting with family and friends, reading, and spending time in nature. She is an aunt, and great-aunt to some very cute pre-schoolers, and has recently adopted a two-year-old cat named Mulligan.

In the B.Th/M.Div program at McGill/Presbyterian College, Edythe enjoyed studying under professors who had a strong faith and many years of scholarly experience.

This year she looks forward to more learning and growth as she gains practical experience here at Briarwood and at the College.

## A Faith Adventure for our Tabea De Vries

Blessed with a \$1,000 grant from Briarwood's Micah Fund, Tabea De Vries spent seven weeks this past summer at Intervarsity Pioneer Camp Ontario.

Here are some excerpts from her reports home.

"I am writing this email as my first update of summer 2019 in my time at Pioneer Camp Ontario. I have now been at camp for the past two weeks. I have already grown and learned so much in this short amount of time, I can't wait to see where God leads me through the rest of my time here at camp!



The first week that I spent here was precamp which involved a lot of staff training and team building. We learned different skills such as how to deal with difficult campers, how to share the gospel and how to talk to campers about faith.

This session, I have a leader in training in my chalet who I am 'mentoring' and helping as she transitions from camper to leader. ...She is great to work with, which is a gift.

At camp we run a drill every week where we complete the procedure for if a camper were to go missing. My job, as a lifeguard, is to do dive patterns in the lake and scan the bottom of the lake for a body....Today there was a real situation where a camper went missing, and we had to use our training to search for her, and I successfully dove as I was needed to. It was amazing to see God give me the strength to accomplish it and I am so grateful that I can now do it confidently. The camper was found quite fast and turned out to be an administrative mistake.

The fifth week I was there, when I was the leader of a high-functioning girl with Down syndrome, I was also the leader of three international campers: one from Spain, one from the States and one from China. The girl from China spoke little English and she came with a younger friend who spoke even less. Her friend was very homesick and cried most of the time, so she was switched to our chalet to be with my Chinese camper. After the switch was made, she was a lot happier.

Last week, the worship coordinator had a week off and she asked me to replace her. I was a bit intimidated by the magnitude of the job ... but it was cool to see God provide wisdom and musicians to equip me with. It really taught me a lot and I was so grateful for the opportunity to take on that role and grow in that area of my gifts."

Many thanks to Tabea for sharing her adventure with us. Please talk to her to find out more.

*Virginia Bell*

## Douglas Burns

Doug Burns is a lucky man. Almost uniquely today, his four children and his nine grandchildren all live on or near the West island! In addition, and more seriously, Doug had a successful heart transplant 25 years ago and has enjoyed a full and successful life ever since. He has reason to be happy.



### BEGINNINGS

Brought up in Ottawa, Doug's family attended St. Andrew's, a very formal Presbyterian church, where his father, an Elder, wore a Morning Coat when on duty. As a teenager in these post-war years, Doug looked forward, and listened intently, to the sermons preached by Rev. Dr. Ian Burnett, a gifted Scottish minister of the old school. "He preached with enthusiasm and sometimes with fire".

Having graduated in Montreal as a Certified Public Accountant, Doug worked in the high echelons of Treasury in the Seagram organization, until increasing heart problems forced an early medical retirement.

With deteriorating health and time on his hands, Doug turned to genealogy and became a serious student of his family history, all Scottish names - the Burns, the Kinnears and their predecessors. Doug identified over one thousand of them, going back to the Sixteenth century "and finding a few surprises along the way".

### A NEW HEART

Doug's health deteriorated until, after two coronary bypass surgeries, "a heart transplant seemed the only future. I remember the day, lying in bed in the Royal Victoria Hospital, I was told by Dr. David Latter that a heart was available. A young motor cyclist had been killed in an accident. I woke up the next morning and the first thing I noticed was that my feet were pink. The day before they had been black!"

Doug, as might have been expected of such a mannerly man, recently wrote to Dr. Latter, now at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, thanking him for the last 25 years. To his delight, Dr. Latter replied.

### GIVING BACK, GIVING THANKS

When he was restored to full health, Doug decided that some form of acknowledgement was necessary for his good fortune with his transplant and the good treatment he received at the Royal Victoria Hospital, now part of the MUHC; he became a member of the RVH Patients' Committee, promoting and defending the rights of patients and, in addition, volunteered to join the Royal Victoria Kidney Fund (later renamed "DialyTran"), using his accounting experience. As time passed, he became more and more involved in the fundraising, serving as Chairman until recently.

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The Fund raises between \$200,000 and \$300,000 every year, to support efforts to make the lives of transplant and dialysis patients more tolerable as they wait, often in vain, for a kidney transplant.

“There are up to 300 dialysis patients at the three hemodialysis units of the MUHC. Curiously some ethnic groups seem more susceptible to kidney disease and failure. Many of the patients are of Mediterranean or Asian background.

With two full-time Certified Recreation Therapists and up to 300 volunteers, we support these patients who spend four hours a day, three days a week, undergoing kidney dialysis. It’s a tough grind. We try to make these hours more tolerable with some educational programmes - digital literacy, musical entertainment, ever popular bingo, exercise activities and, for some, organized outings.”

Doug is still involved with “DialyTran”, although to a lesser extent as he struggles with increasing arthritis and finding the hours required to keep in touch with his children and grandchildren. We see him regularly at Briarwood, coming to give thanks for his good fortune.

*Jim Murray*

### **An Obituary for George Halliwell**

George Halliwell passed away in August. A gentleman, and a school master of the Old School, failing health has prevented George from attending Briarwood in recent years, but he has always maintained a great interest in Briarwood when he has met his Briarwood friends.

George is survived by Ann, his wife of 65 years, having nursed and cared for her through failing health for many years, daughter Brenda (Rick), son Peter, grandchildren Susan, Steven and Kristen (Matt), great-grandson Jake, and many nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and past students.

George had a big heart, and will be missed by many.

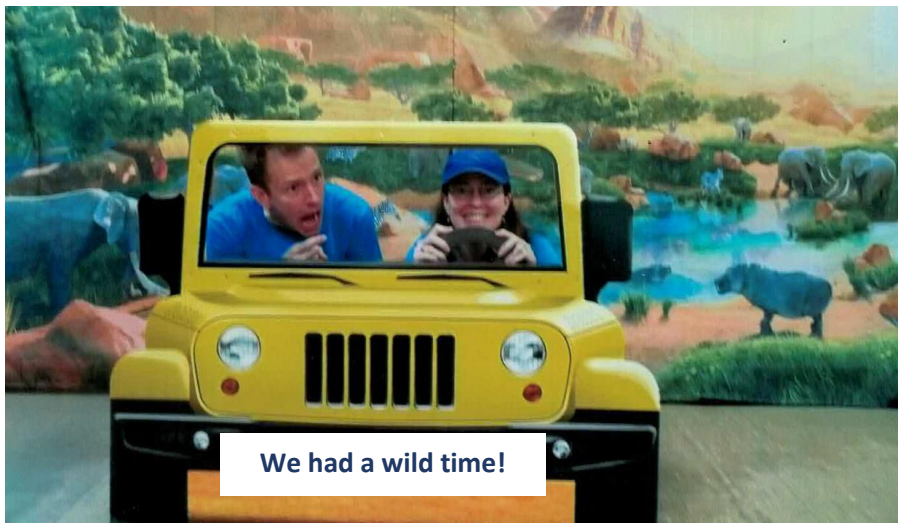


# Vacation Bible Camp

Briarwood's Vacation Bible Camp took place the week of June 25<sup>th</sup>.  
This year we were taken on a safari adventure, as we learned that  
**Life is Wild! God is Good!**

With the help of more than 20 dedicated volunteers, 22 children and youth spent the week hearing the story of the Israelites' flight from Egypt, exploring the science of God's amazing creation, building their co-operation skills through games and team-building, singing, dancing, and celebrating the unique way God made them by engaging with their own unique talents and interests through our afternoon ateliers.

It was a blessed week, and just the way to kick off the summer break!



## **Action Réfugiés Montréal's Detention Program ... and how the phone cards fit in**

During July and August, Briarwood collected Outreach donations for Action Réfugiés Montréal to purchase long distance phone cards, to give people being held in detention a valuable link to their families while awaiting a decision on their refugee claims. Here are some details from Paul Clarke, Executive Director ...

Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) provides support to people detained in the Laval Immigration Holding Centre through weekly visits to detention, accompaniment to detention review hearings, and assistance by telephone during office hours. For over 25 years, ARM has been providing support to people detained for immigration reasons in the Montreal area. ARM visits the center twice each week, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

ARM representatives offer legal information about detention and other immigration procedures. We provide over 2,000 long-distance calling cards each year to people with no other way to contact friends or family. Priority is given to refugee claimants, vulnerable people and families.

Since the middle of 2018 we regularly see families in detention, and we strive to never say no to a request for a phone card from anyone with children.

*Paul Clarke, Executive Director  
Actions Réfugiés Montréal*

## **Finances**

At the end of August, offerings were \$5,119 or 4.3% below budget. As we move toward autumn, please continue your increased support of the programs at Briarwood. Thank you.

## **Thanks**

- THANKS go out to all who volunteered in any way for the Vacation Bible Camp.
- Much gratitude to those who led the summer services while Sarina was on vacation, to those who played piano, and to those who set up the narthex. And to Nancy who got the bulletin info ready each week.

**Blessings abound!**