

MAGNETIC CHURCH 2

A New Form of Evangelism: Success or Failure?

This is the second of Jim Hunt's articles describing The Magnetic Church, a general introduction to which appeared in last month's MESSENGER. This second part bluntly asks some questions and offers some equally forthright answers.

What specifically is different about the form of evangelism associated with an 'entity' called *The Magnetic Church*?

First of all, "church growth" as a primary goal will fail. "Church growth" can only be a by-product of sincere, effective individual and corporate evangelism. Two useful questions arise. "Are we trying to sustain worn-out programs or to satisfy unmet needs?" Secondly, "Are we trying to fill empty pews or empty lives?"

• Evangelism tends to falter or even fail, if you:

1. Don't have all the proper processes in place (because newcomers – even extroverts, will likely quit after three weeks of inattention).
2. Are aiming just to balance the budget and fill open job slots (because newcomers will sense they are being used).
3. Think you can "leave it" up to one small group within the congregation.
4. Think "it" is one of your clergy's "jobs". This is nothing less than a dangerous form of dependency.

• A general discomfort with evangelism stems from:

1. Cultural conditioning about not discussing personal issues
2. Inexperience in discussing broad or personal faith issues and beliefs
3. Ignorance of Christian specifics (e.g. an inability to quote the bible on demand) or denominational specifics.

• Evangelism tends to succeed when:

1. We get past our own external images which inhibit so many of us.

2. We overcome our internal negative images and put our trust in the Holy Spirit.

Realities for Christianity in Today's Western World

The statistics about the modern church and its place in society are quite sobering. The total number of people on parish rolls in Protestant churches in Canada (in this study, including Anglican, United, Presbyterian, and Evangelical Lutheran) declined by 24 % in the period from 1994 to 2004. The decline in Anglican churches in the same period was 36 %. From 1970 until 2008, the Presbyterian Church in Montreal saw a decline in membership of 73 %.

We are in a period of transition, from a church sustained by a homogeneously Christian society closely aligned with it, to a church made up of those who have reached personally a clearly and explicitly responsible decision of faith.

So this is the paradigm we face today.

1. The Western world is no longer Christian-centric
2. This world no longer views churches as "key pillars of society", but only as one of many options
3. Secular culture does not reinforce the benefit of or value of attending church.
4. The world has co-opted some of our Christian values and ethics, but people don't know biblical stories, much less their relevance
5. Many people say they believe in God or in a god, but they don't see church as reinforcing their belief
6. There is a disconnect between having "faith" and belonging to a church.
7. This disconnect is felt most keenly by young persons, who wonder whether God can be present in the weariness and scariness of their daily lives.



In an article in March's Anglican Journal, Diana Swift describes Lent as an "opportunity for rededication ... Lent has the distinction of being purely religious and, unlike Christmas and Easter, not also celebrated as a festive holiday by Christians and non-Christians alike."

We understand Lent to be "a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. The season originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days."

That being said, the season of Lent has not been well observed in much of contemporary Christianity, largely because it was associated with "high church" liturgical worship that some denominations were eager to reject. However, much of the background of evangelical Christianity, for example the heritage of John Wesley, was very "high church." Many of the churches that had originally rejected more formal and deliberate liturgy are now recovering aspects of a larger Christian tradition as a means to refocus on spirituality in a culture that is increasingly secular.

(Lent, continued)

Originating in the fourth century of the church, today Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the forty days of Lent. The number '40' is connected especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling.

Lent has traditionally been marked by penitential prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Some churches today still observe a rigid schedule of fasting on certain days during Lent, especially the giving up of meat, alcohol, sweets, and other types of food. Diana Swift mentioned the dilemma of one parishioner who had become "used to giving up meat for fish during Lent," only to realize that "fish was more of luxury in contemporary Canada than steak!" Other traditions do not place as great an emphasis on fasting, but focus on charitable deeds, especially helping those in physical need with food and clothing, or simply the giving of money to charities. Most Christian churches that observe Lent focus on it as a time of prayer, especially penance, repenting for failures and sin as a way to focus on the need for God's grace.

Perhaps the first noteworthy day for most in Lent is *Shrove Tuesday* or, if you are given to cavorting for three days in a skimpy, colourful costume, *Mardi Gras – Fat Tuesday*, for those who only speak the Queen's English. *Mardi Gras'* other name, *Carnival*, comes from a Latin phrase meaning "removal of meat," which suggests that we ought to remove the sausages from the menu at an event celebrated recently, St. J. the B's Pancake Supper!

The colour used in the sanctuary for most of Lent is purple. This colour symbolizes both the pain and suffering leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus as well as the suffering of humanity and the world under sin. But purple is also the colour of royalty, and so anticipates through the suffering and death of Jesus the coming resurrection and hope of newness that will be celebrated in the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Dennis R. Bratcher, Executive Director, Christian Resource Institute, Oklahoma / DLP



(The Magnetic Church, continued)

Finally, the *crazy-busy* pace of life for many people means:

1. Dual-income earners
2. Not enough time for spouse/partners
3. Not enough time for children
4. Fully 1 in 3 caring for an elderly relative
5. Stay-at-home parents now less than 30% of the parenting population.

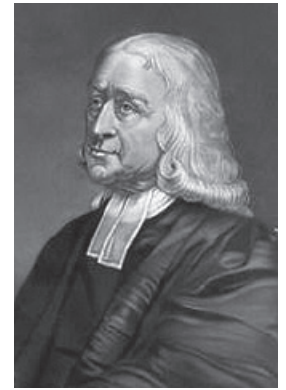
How can these people also relate to the church under these circumstances?

In the next MESSENGER, I will discuss some of the simple, straightforward – and "not too disruptive" – things a church can do to become more welcoming.

Jim Hunt

Directions for Singing

John Wesley's treatise, *Directions for Singing*, was originally published as an appendage to his publication, entitled, *Select Hymns: with Tunes Annexed (1761)*. Although the first of his seven directives was certainly included to underline the doctrinal value of this specific collection of Methodist Church of Great Britain hymn texts, the practical application of his other *Directions* cannot be faulted.



As an introduction, Wesley incorporated this appeal to his readers: "That this part of Divine Worship may be the more acceptable to God, as well as the more profitable to yourself and others, be careful to observe the following directions."

1. Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
2. Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.
3. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a single degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
4. Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, then when you sung the songs of Satan.
5. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
6. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.
7. Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Deo volente, may we all benefit from Wesley's timeless instructions.

Contributed by Barbara McPherson

Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else forgiving another.

Jean P.F. Richter

KEEPING UP ... with the Levesleys



While excitedly looking forward to talking with Mark and Betty Levesley, my immediate concern was whether I'd have time to walk the dogs before the meeting. Taking a chance, I set off for the Morgan Arboretum with two very happy English Springer Spaniels. An hour and a half later Cocoa and Milton were tucked-up at home and I set off for Dorval. No more than a minute, or so, late, I explained the need to walk the dogs. "Oh, we're not dog people," said Mark. "We're cat people and, if you like, I can tell you why."

When he was very young, he was regularly taken to visit his uncle and aunt, and the moment their door opened, an out-of-control, barking dog would lunge at him and knock him over.

"I was terrified . . . the result being that I've never liked dogs," said Mark, before adding that the dog in question was a spaniel. Feeling somewhat crestfallen, I felt compelled to admit that my dogs were spaniels. It was, then, with a bit of a grin and a nervous giggle that I sensed this meeting may not be getting off on the right four paws. Although I knew who Mark Levesley was, because I'd seen him at Parish Council Meetings, I wasn't ready for this Mark Levesley. He had as many questions for me as I had for him. Oh well, he's a Yorkshireman! It didn't take long before confusion set-in as to who was interviewing whom!

Betty and Mark have been St. John the Baptist parishioners since 1959 – that's fifty two years of dedicated service to our community.

Mark was born in Sheffield in 1924. He completed his Engineering Degree at Sheffield University in 1944. Betty was born in Croydon, south of London and attended Art School. However, a career in art was interrupted by the war and Betty went to work for the Royal Dutch Oil Company – better known as Shell, where she and Mark met in 1945, after the company moved its headquarters from Holland to England. Mark was then sent on a three

year contract to Venezuela where Shell was building a new refinery and that's where they were married in 1947, first with a Civil Ceremony in Spanish, with an interpreter, followed by an Anglican Service.

With the completion of the Venezuelan contract in 1950, they returned to England via the United States, paying a quick visit to Montreal. From England they emigrated to South Africa but, once again, returned to England because of *apartheid*. Then came their emigration to Canada in 1952, where Mark was a Civil Engineer with Texaco (now Esso), then with PetroFina, which was bought by Petro-Canada.

After settling in Montreal and then Beaconsfield, Betty and Mark had three children: Robert, born in 1955, Christine, in 1958 and Elizabeth, in 1960. In 1975, Betty and Mark lost their son Robert, who was a passenger in a fatal car accident. Christine and Elizabeth have both had two children. Christine lives in Boston and Elizabeth lives in England.

Since joining the Parish in 1959, both have served in many roles: Betty, as Flower Secretary for more than twenty years, taking care of weddings and other special occasions, as well as serving as President of the Altar Guild and continues to serve as a member of the Guild. Betty also oversaw a semi-monthly *Home Prayers* leaflet that was mailed to parishioners who were unable to attend church. She also paid monthly visits to a residence for the elderly to assist with Holy Communion and helped the wider

community by devoting some time to working with *Meals on Wheels*.

Mark has served as Rector's Warden, Church School Teacher, Stewardship Manager, and was a member of the Construction Team responsible for the rebuilding of the Church complex after the 1992 fire. Mark also made the plaque in the columbarium. He has been Scout Treasurer and Senior Sidesman and continues to carry out Sidesman duties.

Mark took early retirement in 1983, not that retirement slowed him down: far from it, he earned a pilot's licence after training at the little airport at Les Cèdres, just west of Montreal. (Although tempted, I declined to mention to him that part of the airport is now used for dog training!)

Betty's and Mark's love of travel was extensively covered in an article: "Meet the Levesleys", reported by Peggy Allen and Adelaide Bacon, published in *Dialogue*, Volume 6, 1987-1988, a forerunner of the *MESSENGER* and available in the church library. Their other loves are reading, classical music and the theatre. They are established and regular visitors to Stratford and are members of the Stratford Festival Theatre.

One final question to Mark was; "Is there anything you wouldn't want people to know about you?" After a hint of a smirk and a raised eyebrow, Mark said that there was and that he would tell me but only if I would swear not to tell. With that, he told me a tale -- set sometime in the past. My immediate reaction was one of disbelief . . . I looked at Betty. She nodded, "Yes, it's true," she said, "and he's still doing it."

Sorry, but it's a secret!

To leave things on a gentler note, Mark added that their daughter, Christine, had adopted a truly delightful Golden Retriever called Merlyn, a gentle soul and loved by everyone. However, even Merlyn hadn't quite succeeded in eradicating the spaniel legacy!

Liz Steinson



Hymns for professionals

Dentists	“Crown Him with Many Crowns”
Contractors	“The Church’s One Foundation”
Obstetricians	“Come, Labour On”
Golfers	“There is a Green Hill Far Away”
Gardeners	“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”
Librarians	“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”
Clothiers	“Blessed Be the Tie”
Dry Cleaners	“O For the Faith That Will Not Shrink”
Orators	“O Could I Speak the Matchless Word”
Traffic Police	“Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life”
IRS	“We Give Thee but Thine Own”
Innkeepers	“Abide With Me”
Paleontologists	“Rock of Ages”
Girdle Makers	“How Firm a Foundation”
Census Takers	“All People That on Earth do Dwell”
Airline Pilots	“Nearer My God to Thee”

With thanks to Evelyn Case





BOOK, BAKE & JEWELRY SALE

Saturday, April 2nd
9:00 a.m. - Noon

**PAPERBACKS
HARDCOVERS
MAGAZINES, CDs
DVDs, HOMEBAKED
GOODS, PRESERVES**

COME - BROWSE
Stock up on some
home-made baking and be dazzled by our
custom made jewelry!

English – as she is spoke

The parish priest was preoccupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to come up with more money than they had been expecting for repairs to the church building. Therefore, he was annoyed to find that the regular organist was sick and a substitute had been brought in at the last minute. The substitute wanted to know what to play.

“Here’s a copy of the service,” he said impatiently. “But, you’ll have to think of something to play after I make the announcement about the finances.”

During the service, the parish priest paused and said, “Brothers and Sisters, we are in great difficulty; the roof repairs cost twice as much as we expected and we need \$4,000 more. Any of you who can pledge \$100 or more, please stand up!”

After the shortest of pauses, the substitute organist launched into the *National Anthem!*



Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.

With thanks to Val Delacretaz

“Help Where Needed”

O.K., so I admit it ... I’m a feminist. The other thing I admit is that I’ve never attended a Pancake Supper, so when it was announced that volunteers were needed for the Pancake Supper, I added my name to the list. It didn’t occur to me to look at the other names on the list. All I noticed was that everyone who had signed up had clearly indicated which tasks they preferred and as most had been covered, I checked off ‘Help where needed’. That I was acknowledged and thanked for volunteering, during a Sunday morning service, was very unexpected. It became even more disconcerting to be informed by my neighbour in the pew that I’d volunteered to join a men’s group.

As I sit with the *spaniels*, mulling over this morning’s public exposure . . . replaying my moment of embarrassment and then grinningly reliving my lack of gender awareness, particularly when, for years, it bothered me that there were only *sidesmen* and not *sidespeople*. Having moved on from those days, when you think of it, joining the Pancake Group is just another example of blessed equality at work.

Now, here’s a thought. Saint John the Baptist is looking for new members of the Altar Guild. Let’s break down the stereotypical gender barrier, yet again! The Altar Guild welcomes equality. Each group meets for a couple of hours on Saturday mornings only once every six weeks. The choice is yours, viz. arranging flowers, preparing the altar, checking the candles, add a little light dusting or maybe run the vacuum over the carpet. There’s no heavy work and it’s pleasantly social.

So, come on chaps. Sign-up. The sign-up sheet is on the table where the one for the Pancake Supper used to be!

Dame Gaga

On Sunday, February 13th, during the service prior to the Annual Vestry Meeting, Canon Glencross preached a sermon which focused on future renewal here at Saint John the Baptist. The text of that sermon is reprinted here.

The Physical and Spiritual Renewal of the Parish

A number of years ago, I was awakened by the doorbell in the middle of the night. Not a good thing. When I opened the door there stood a policeman. Not a good sign either. My already racing heart was delivered a message I had never expected to hear. After identifying questions had been asked the Constable stated "your Church is on fire!" I stepped back as if some unseen hand had pushed me in the chest and uttered the word "No". "Yes," was the response. "Get dressed and come quickly. There is not much you can do but come. Come" I did.

The flames were towering up through windows and the middle of the Chapel roof as I stood on Ste Claire and watched. The question on everyone's mind was, "How did this happen?"

The Fire Chief, the next day, answered that question in language reminiscent of the movie about fires in Chicago called *Back Draft*. "Well", he said, "there was electricity arching in the Chapel electrical in-box in the basement even after we got the fire under control. This, we assume was going on for awhile within the building prior to the breaking out of the flames. And that is the tell tale sign," he said pointing to bits of glass on the pavement besides what used to be the Chapel. "Huh," I thought, with eyebrows raised looking at the various sized pieces of glass on the drive way.

"What happens," he went on, "is that the electrical arc uses up the oxygen in the air inside the building and also super heats the air. This superheated, oxygen depleted, air sings and chars both the flammable material in the building and the inside of the glass of the windows. Eventually the difference in temperature between inside and outside is so great it cracks the glass of the windows. Then a single window broke as a result of the cracking, and there was a great whoosh of oxygenated air into the window which then allows the flammable material to

burst with great power into flame and thus blowing out the rest of the windows where the bits of glass fall with the charred side up. Look for yourself."

Sure enough when I bent over the different sized bits of glass it was indeed charred on the up side and clear on the downside. "A clear indication of how the fire started", he said. "And that's why the flames got so high so quickly," he added.



Fast forward a year or so. A kindergarten class is taken to the Fire Hall on St. John's Blvd and a child asks, "What was your biggest fire?" "Well," came the answer, "in my 15 years as a fireman the biggest fire was the church fire of St John the Baptist." "That's my Church," said one of the youngsters.

Fast forward another year, to the final year of our three year rebuilding process that had started after that 1992 fire. Despite the horrible incident the Parish HAD chosen to rebuild just weeks after the incident, HAD adapted and been worshipping in a former nightclub for two years, HAD only lost a family or two in the interim, and HAD elected a committee of ten to oversee the project. Funds had come in to physically rebuild. In the face of adverse conditions the Parish came together. One of the accounts mentioned holding monies was named "The Renewal Fund." It was money that had been freely donated and it was to be used to replace many of the things that had disappeared in the fire.

We in God's Parish here are facing a new challenge. More than just the physical plant over which God has given us oversight, we now need to also look deeper and renew our spiritual base, too.

To say it in different words: we need to renew the Physical and Spiritual aspects of this Parish of which God has given us oversight.

We need to rise to the occasion, band together and all pull in the same direction towards this goal of renewal in the parish. Perhaps that so-called "Renewal Fund" can be resurrected and, as of old, free-will offerings will be sought to give it life. Human resources and

expertise, like that of the Fire Chief in those trying days almost twenty years ago, need to be consulted from within and without the parish. This "Renewal Fund" perhaps will take stock about what needs to be done to the physical fabric and how it will continue to bless our parish life in the years and decades to come. Some work has already been done on this. A second task will be to look at ways, new and

old, so that we become **A.W.A.R.E.** to use an acronym! That is aware of how to **A** - Attract newcomers. **B** - Welcome them. **A** - Affirm them as children of God. **R** - Respond to their spiritual needs and then **E** - Engage them to become disciples.

Even before I first came to St John the Baptist, at a meeting of the Corporation in December, 1991, there were funds in reserve, some nearly \$60,000.00 then. Today we have reserves of \$300,000.00. So we are not starved of a vital supplement to our operating income. But we also have had red ink for the last three years running and we have major repairs to our roof that we need to address shortly. While God has blessed us with some time to accomplish this, we have to get started - NOW! The way of Being God's Parish of Saint John the Baptist cannot remain a static thing. We need to act.

The reality is at that we are now not far off from where we need to be; a congregational population of 250 instead of 200; an average Sunday attendance of 85 instead of 65. This small increase in attending families would likely yield a corresponding increase of \$30,000 in our annual pledged income and thus our Budget. And you have a leader,

(continued overleaf)

myself, dedicated to achieving this aim and determined to work hard to bring it about. What might the end result be in two to three years hence, of the ideas, researched, chosen and acted upon.



Take the sculpture above. This is a picture of Rodin's *The Thinker*. It began as a rock. Then the vision came to the artist. The tools were then gathered. And then? Then the work began. The end result is *The Thinker*. I'm gathering ideas. St Peter's Church in TMR has increased its average attendance by 60% so, if that congregation can do it, why can't we? People have been coming to St. J. the B. from all over the metropolitan area of Montreal. The rental groups, LLO, the Stamp group, the other singing groups prove that there isn't a problem with our location. They come to their group here at St. J. the B. from all over! We need to ask them to consider coming on a Sunday Morning as well! How can we do that? By becoming an inviting church! Perhaps we can have a "Thank-you Sunday" for each group and I can invite them to come on that Sunday for a personal word of thanks from the Congregation at the beginning of every season. If we do not ask they will definitely NOT come. If we do ask however.....they might, some of them, just might come.

We need to re-learn the language of invitation here at St John the Baptist. We need to have everyone learning, be-

ginning to think, "How can I invite my neighbour to come and worship God" We need to become like that child, a year after the fire when we didn't even have a building, and say "That's my Church." We need to own where we are now, but more than that we need to own where we can be down the road not so far away. Just as there was expertise like that Fire Chief in the middle of a difficult situation to explain what was going on then, there is now a need to have the fire of the good LORD fall on us at this time like as at Pentecost back in the day, but here in God's Parish of Saint John the Baptist, to renew us, to fill us so that we might fill His Church. 'Choose life. Be God's field. Be God's building.'

Canon Bruce Glencross



The Story of Ruth

Ruth went to her mail box, and picked up the one letter there. She looked at it before opening and then again. There was no stamp, no postmark, only her name and address. She read the letter:

Dear Ruth:

I'm going to be in your neighborhood Saturday afternoon and I'd like to stop by for a visit.

Love always, Jesus.

Her hands were shaking as she placed the letter on the table. 'Why would the Lord want to visit me? I'm nobody special. I don't have anything to offer.' With that thought, Ruth remembered her empty kitchen cabinets. 'Oh my goodness, I really don't have anything to offer. I'll have to run down to the store and buy something for dinner.'

She threw on her coat and hurried out the door. A loaf of French bread, a half-pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk – leaving Ruth with a grand total of twelve cents to last her until Monday. Nevertheless, she felt good as she headed home, her meager offerings tucked under her arm.

'Hey lady, can you help us, lady?'

Ruth has been so absorbed in her dinner plans, she hadn't even noticed two figures huddled in the alleyway. A man and a woman, both of them dressed in little more than rags.

'Look, lady, I ain't got a job, you know, and my wife and I have been living out here on the street, and, well, now it's getting cold and we're getting kinda hungry and, well, if you could help us, lady, we'd really appreciate it.'

Ruth looked at them both. They were dirty, they smelled bad and frankly, she was certain that they could get some kind of work if they really wanted to.

'Sir, I'd like to help you, but I'm a poor woman myself. All I have is a few cold cuts and some bread, and I'm having an important guest for dinner tonight and I was planning on serving that to Him.' 'Yeah, well, okay lady, I understand. Thanks anyway.' The man put his arm around the woman's shoulder, turned and headed back into the alley.

As she watched them leave, Ruth felt a familiar twinge in her heart. 'Sir, wait!'

The couple stopped and turned as she ran down the alley after them. 'Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve my guest.' She handed the man her grocery bag.

'Thank you, lady. Thank you very much!' 'Yes, thank you.' It was the man's wife, and Ruth could see now that she was shivering.

'You know, I've got another coat at home. Here, why don't you take this one.' Ruth unbuttoned her jacket and slipped it over the woman's shoulders. Then smiling, she turned and walked back to the street, without her coat and with nothing to serve her guest.

'Thank you, lady! Thank you very much!'

Ruth was chilled by the time she reached her front door, and worried, too. The Lord was coming to visit and she didn't have anything to offer Him. She fumbled through her purse for the door key. But as she did, she noticed another envelope in her mailbox.

'That's odd. The mailman doesn't usually come twice in one day.'

Dear Ruth:

It was so good to see you again. Thank you for the lovely meal. And thank you, too, for the beautiful coat.

Love always, Jesus.

The air was still cold, but even without her coat, Ruth no longer noticed.

With thanks to Deacon Alan Marjerison