



# ST. GEORGE'S

## ANGLICAN CHURCH

*The Oldest Church with the Youngest Ideas*

Thanksgiving 2019

To my dear Church,

St. George's has a long and faithful history of serving the community in which God has planted us. Generations that went before us gave generously of themselves and their resources and built this church in the centre of St. Catharines. This church has seen our community struggle with varying needs, always believing that God gives us what we need in order to be able to respond. Ultimately, we know that our response has to be founded in God's love—that is to say, our care and concern and compassion is founded in relationship, in the willingness to meet one another as fellow human beings, worthy of dignity and respect.

To that end, the word that has been on my mind most this fall is the word "STEP." It is the name of our new outreach centre, opening on September 29<sup>th</sup> in our recently-renovated Lower Broughall Hall (rust coloured door off the parking lot). Building on our long-standing relationships with some of our city's most vulnerable population, and responding to the changing needs of our city, this STEP centre is literally just that: it is a step. It is a new step on a journey that St. George's has always been on. It's a step in how we are connecting with, resourcing and mentoring some of St. Catharines most vulnerable youth. It's an invitation for at-risk youth in our city to take a step of their own toward healing. It's a step that we make together, believing one thing most of all:

That one of the most valuable things any of us can learn, and then offer to others, is that each of us is a beloved and treasured child of God.

In a recent sermon, I invited us to consider two of Jesus' shorter and simpler parables. He tells us that God is like shepherd, who will go to any length to find one lost sheep in any sort of wilderness that sheep may have wandered, and to bring that sheep home again, carried across his shoulders if need be. God is also like a woman with ten valuable silver coins. If one coin gets lost, she will search faithfully and persistently until that treasure is found again and she may call her friends together to rejoice with her that the lost has been found.

It is easy to apply these parables to our work and ministry at St. George's, particularly in our Breakfast Program, Community Dinner, Out of the Heat, Out of the Cold, and now the STEP Centre. We can be part of how God is able to offer this searching, faithful, strong love out into a world so desperately in need.

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But what I also need to remember, and what I need you to remember, too, is how these parables are also about you, how God's voice of love and guiding hand has also been at work in you. When have you been lost? What wildernesses have you found yourself in? Have there been times when you have felt alone? *When and how have you known your true identity as God's beloved treasure?* And how has God reached out a hand to you, leading you, or carrying you home?

This is no mere charity work that we are asked to do in the life of the church. We are best able to receive God's commission on our lives, to be those people of compassion and generosity and service, when we start by knowing first and foremost what we have received. We aren't sent out to seek the lost without first knowing what it has meant to be found, welcomed and held in the embrace of our loving God.

May we reconnect this Thanksgiving to the riches of all God has given us. And may we be willing to take one more faithful step in how those riches get multiplied through us into our world.

Yours in Christ's love,

Reverend Martha.

