

**“Breaking Bread”**  
**BCUC 173<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary**  
**Text: Acts 2: 41-47**

Prayer: Loving God, may your spirit of wisdom give us understanding as we savour and taste these words of life. Amen.

From its humble beginnings in 1850, when the first regular ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Bells Corners came in place, when the congregation called the Drummond Presbyterian Church was part of the Goulbourn-Nepean Circuit, when the first church building was dedicated in 1898, when Drummond Presbyterian Church joined the church union in 1925, and became part of a three-point charge congregation with Britannia and Fallowfield, when in December 1962, this building where we currently worship was dedicated, today marks the 173<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Bells Corners United Church. Friends, we have come a long way!

The reading in Acts gives us a glimpse of life in the faith. It describes the beginning stages of the early Christian community in the first century which were not extraordinary or controversial. No talk about what colour of the floor must be installed. No squabbles about financial deficits. No disagreements regarding which minister to hire. Interestingly, the life and ministry of the first century believers described in these verses are still being practiced in many Christian churches to this day. The early Christian community discussed theology and the scriptures – that’s Christian education. They attended temple worship regularly – that’s Worship Services on Sundays. They prayed together – Pastoral and Spiritual Care. They looked after one another, supported each other and attended to each other’s needs – this is Outreach for sure. And while this part of the story is not as noisy as the revival from the first Pentecost, it has its own unique utopian character. The early Christians literally shared their wealth and resources in a common pot so that no one would be hungry or homeless or in need. Think about it. This was the beginning of a guaranteed livable income, if you ask me. And they did it all in awe and with gladness and with joy--and the community just keeps growing every single day.

For me, the most exciting thing that the first Christian community did was breaking bread and having meals together – this is Congregational Life in action. And while many agree that the early church has not stayed the same, the church described in this Acts passage reminds me

of our life at BCUC! Breaking bread together is not just about food. It is also about good conversations, or keeping in touch – it is about companionship and friendships formed. Those may be some of the reasons why BCUC specializes in plentiful potluck meals and fundraising suppers. I can't remember ever going to our church potlucks and not finding a smorgasbord of eclectic tastes and calorie-laden sugary goodness spread like a crazy quilt of love and hope. I do believe that people of faith know how to fuel the body and include love as the central ingredient in almost any dish that is being served. When we lack words to embrace others, we offer comfort food. When we wish to dispense support and care, it often comes in the form of casseroles and hot dishes, freshly baked bread or yummy double chocolate chip cookies, all seasoned with the spirit of love and garnished with a dash of good wishes.

Lori Bateman, in her article entitled “We Are How We Eat”, gives us this wonderful reflection. She says: *“When we realize eating is our most intimate reception of the gifts of God, and when we begin to understand how our food consumption habits can impact our individual and collective well-being, we realize that food is deeply connected to our discipleship...gathering for simple meals with friends, and sharing picnics with our families in the park will make our lives richer.”*

One important aspect of being a church is the retelling of our faith stories revolving around food and fellowship– the sharing of our lived experience of how God has shaped and is still shaping our life as a faith community. One of the contributors in the first volume of the Book of Memories, put together by a committee led by Bob Ferguson and David Beard in 2000, was a woman named Glenora Tite. I haven't met Glenora and her family but I'd like to share the story she wrote entitled: “Country Fair Returns.”

*“Each Fall, during the 70's, we participated in and thoroughly enjoyed country fairs at BCUC. Friendships were pursued as we women peeled potatoes and turnips for the “pork BBQ.” Husbands shared jokes as they helped Clarke Topp prepare the pit for the pig roast. They set up display tables for the arrangements of Bittersweet and Silver Dollars that decorated the donations of crafts and baking. Who could forget David Donaldson's basket of multi-coloured gourds?*

*For weeks we bottled jams and jellies and produced all varieties of cookies, squares and large loaves of five grains and whole wheat bread. Our kitchens were alive with the good aroma of baking and cooking.*

*One year, hoping to create interests...it was decided to auction-off our vegetables and baking delights. From all accounts, the competition was fierce when the bread and brownies came up on the auction block. Jack McLean was generous in his auctioneer's praise for our baking efforts.*

*My husband and 2 of our sons appeared in the kitchen carrying several cardboard grocery boxes. "Not more plants," I groaned. "No," replied my husband, "...we bought back your breads and brownies!" I was a little shocked but secretly quite pleased with my men."*

It is precisely this reality that makes the stories of social Jesus so appealing to me. I believe that wherever there is food shared, you'll find God there. When we gather for fellowships and meals, we are fed not only with delicious food but food laden with love and well-wishes for the day. Eating is not simply about the filling of the stomach. It is also how we develop into particular kinds of people capable of Godly sensitivities, affections, responsibilities, and delights. We partake food - where God's presence is felt in prayers, conversations and while we are joyfully chewing each bite. Jesus breaks the bread after walking the Emmaus Road, and Jesus shares a shore-side fish broil with his still dazed and confused disciples. He shares fuel for the body and gives fuel for the faith. Both hunger of body and soul are satisfied in the presence of the risen One. Jesus provides both comfort food and true soul food—a plate of plenty for the hungry, aching heart.

Indeed, the first believers were empowered and equipped for ministry and mission through word and meal, and we know from story, scripture, and tradition that they took this kind of faith and ran with it. They spread it far and wide, boldly and sometimes at great cost. We today are recipients of that same faith and the Spirit-filled results of those early meals with Jesus.

Not surprisingly, we are also empowered and equipped for ministry and mission through word and meal. We hear scripture read at worship and study the Bible proclaimed in ways that help us live out our faith in everyday life. We gather around Christ's table for bread and wine—comfort food and soul food that has no need of “super-sizing” to satisfy our hungry spirits. We gather for coffee time and share stories and friendships.

Today, we celebrate and honour the women and men, young people and children, ministers and volunteers whose faith has encouraged them in making BCUC an active presence

in the community and beyond. This church stands as a witness to the faith of those who built it and those who came to find spiritual and physical nourishment in this sacred space. We celebrate those who worked over the years to keep BCUC open and alive and active. This church has been a haven of friendship— a place of prayer where kindred souls meet, a safe space for learning, nurturing and growing- where friends, young and old alike, have a place to call it their second home.

On our Anniversary Sunday, break bread and live to go and tell. We are Jesus' witnesses. Whether bold or fearful, let us be full and faithful in our going and telling, welcoming and inviting. There is room for everyone and plenty of bread to break and share. Thanks be to God, the giver of life. Amen!