

PAYING IT FORWARD

Dear Editor:

On Dec. 18, 2011, Lake Ainslie Presbyterian Church burned to the ground. After the initial shock & sadness, the small congregation unanimously voted to not only continue, but to rebuild. Many people, no doubt, questioned the decision & thought it crazy to rebuild at a time when so many churches are closing due to lack of support. However, once the decision was made to rebuild, financial assistance came from many parts of Canada & the U.S.A.- from individuals, businesses, and other churches of various denominations. Their generosity [for which we will always be grateful] assured us we had made the right decision, and there are still people who appreciate the work of churches. With some previous savings, the insurance settlement, and donations, in less than a year we were worshipping in our new debt free church building- an impossibility without volunteer labour & financial support.

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the fire, allow us to review what has been done in that time. We believe a church has two roles- to preach the gospel, and do our bit to help those less fortunate. We are served by a minister who believes the Bible, and bases his sermon on it each Sunday. Our doors are open, and everyone is welcome and invited to attend.

The purpose of this letter is to review what has been done in this time period to fulfill the second role of a church. We leave it to the reader to decide if it was foolish to rebuild.

- \$15866.62 has been donated to the various levels of government of the Presbyterian Church. While some of this money supports the administration of the church, a lot goes to mission & service work. A breakdown of how monies are used is available on the Presbyterian Church website under "Presbyterians Sharing".

-\$1340.00 has been donated to "Presbyterian World Service & Development", which is entirely used for mission & charity work.

-\$2000.00 has gone to student bursaries through the local Presbytery.

-\$2017.00 has been donated to the Presbytery's children's camp- Camp MacLeod in Mira Ferry.

-\$4248.40 has paid for subscriptions to the church's monthly magazine, "Presbyterian Record", to keep those who regularly support the church informed on developments within the denomination.

-\$1000.00 was just given to Kenny & Susan MacLean to help with their efforts to get a wheelchair accessible van.

\$1000.00 was given to Calum MacQuarrie for his accessible van.

-We have continued our program of monthly donations to the Inverness Food Bank, and they know our donation is coming each month. \$6886.00 has been given in this time period.

-\$1380.00 has been donated for Christmas gifts through World Vision & Christian Children's Fund.

-\$835.00 was donated to St. Mary's Polish Church in Whitney Pier to help with their rebuilding efforts.

-\$1000.00 was donated to IWK Children's Hospital

-\$600.00 given to Inverary Manor.

-\$400.00 given to Christmas Daddies

-\$2510.00 donated for other various items such as memorial donations, Christmas food baskets to local seniors, appreciation gifts, donations to the sick, etc.

A quick totalling on the above figures will tell you that over \$41000.00 has been donated in just less than 5 years. That does not include what members do additionally on their own- some are members of other charities, some do volunteer work, some sponsor foster children, etc. While this is just a "drop in the bucket" of what is needed in the world, each church closure means another drop dries up.

The figures above may not seem like a lot to some people, but when you consider that our average regular Sunday attendance varies between 15-35 people, one has to wonder how much more could be done if those who like to criticize churches would do their part. While people can donate to charity without belonging to a church, and many do, many others do not give enough to claim a "charitable donation" deduction on their Income Tax return.

At some future time, this church may become a victim of what is happening to so many other churches of various denominations. Until that time, we will continue to do our bit to add a few more drops to the bucket. While we cannot control the future, we can do our part to ensure a better future for those we try to help. The only way churches can continue is if they have the support of the people - they are a lot more than a group meeting for an hour on Sunday morning. Because of the generosity of so many, we will continue to do our small part to pay it forward.

Sincerely,

Session & Congregation of Lake Ainslie Presbyterian Church