

# Conversations in the Parlour: What Was That All About?

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Why those Conversations in the Parlour? As our committee planned the Conversations, three purposes emerged.

**1st:** We wanted the invitees to connect or re-connect with St. Mark's. St. Mark's is *their* church—they belong—until they tell us otherwise. So right at the start, there will be a warm welcome by the hosts, with refreshments. There will be name tags, with first and last names, so we can put face to name—if you're a long-time member of St. Mark's, you don't need that. Many of us do. There will be time for both the hosts and the guests to say a little about themselves and their relation to St. Mark's.

**2nd:** We who are heavily involved in St. Mark's and its ministry and mission want to convey to the invitees something of the excitement we feel about St. Mark's and its ministry, in the hope they too will come to feel some of that excitement. That is the purpose of the tour, which I'll talk about in a minute.

**3rd** We also wanted to place St. Mark's church in some perspective. We're almost 100 years old. What has happened in Kitchener-Waterloo, in Canada, in the world, in that time, that can help us to understand St. Mark's and its ministry today and how to move ahead? I'll come back to that.

## 2nd Purpose: Details

- We thought that one of the best ways to get to know more about St. Mark's and its ministry was **NOT** to sit and talk about it, but to get up and move—to take a tour of the building, stopping at each room to talk about what goes on in that room—what activity, what ministry---and maybe what used to go on there: What memories does that room bring to mind?
- We printed out the Tour Guide on bright yellow paper. Each guest will get a copy. You can access the Guide on the St. Mark's website: [stmarksluth@on.aibn.com](mailto:stmarksluth@on.aibn.com) (look for the link Conversations in the Parlour). Print out the guide and follow it through the building some time for yourself. Form a tour party and take the tour. At each stop there is a little explanation of what goes on at that stop. Here in the Parish Hall there's a great variety of activities and ministries that go on every day of the week. They're listed here on the Guide.
- I think all of us on the Committee as well as the hosts found out things about St. Mark's on the tour that we didn't know before. How many of you have seen the inside of the Property Committee's nerve centre, their workshop downstairs? It used to be the choir room. The tour guide reads Wow! at that stop. I think you'll say Wow! too when you look inside.
- A few steps away is the Scouts Room. Bob Harlock said that room, and Scouts, made him what he is. Now we can debate what Bob is, but we have to give him at least an A-. Every stop brought up memories, ideas, suggestions—and some surprises.
- At the top of the Tour Guide you will find St. Mark's charter, our ID, so to speak: the Bible passages that spell out who we are as a church of Christ—the Body of Christ—at King and Green.
- That is to say, St. Mark's is a building but more than a building: it's us, people. So, at the very end of the Tour Guide is a section called **St. Mark's Off-Site**: St. Mark's is people out in the world, carrying out their Christian callings in many and various ways. There's a Bible verse from Jeremiah that underscores that.

## 3rd Purpose: Details

- The tour ends up in the Parlour. There we want to try to get a better understanding of St. Mark's through our long story. Darlow Pringle suggested we put it on a Time Line. So here it is, 100+ years, with pictures showing what was going on here and in the world over that time. You can access it too at the St. Mark's website.
- At the top section of the Time Line you'll see boats, boats, boats: immigrants made the Lutheran churches in Berlin, Kitchener, Waterloo, including St. Mark's. You'll also see many, many churches in Berlin-Kitchener-Waterloo. They were there to welcome those immigrants and include them in their fold. Then come the roaring 1920s, the jazz age, ending in the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression.
- In the middle section is the post-WWII boom, with St. Mark's and other churches bursting at the seams. "Those were the days, my friends, we thought they'd never end. . . ." But they did end.
- On the very bottom line—that's today: it's a changed world, with so many of the benefits that drew people to St. Mark's now found elsewhere in our 24/7 world. Immigrants again, but not from Europe now: so we have a changed society, a pluralistic society, with many colours and many faiths. And finally the current stock market crash. St.

Mark's is still a place of word and sacrament, but in a much changed situation from 1913 at its founding as First English Lutheran.

- I cannot fail to add that these coloured Time Lines cost .30 each to print, and that's a bargain price. Two angels paid for the printing of them: Allan and Prijna Gingrich. Thank you to them.
- And finally each guest will get a commentary on the Time Line (St. Mark's & Other Faiths Then & Now), spelling out what the pictures tell you. It's on the website too.

Those are the goals for the Conversations in the Parlour.

They are seed we scatter on the ground.

God gives the increase.

### **The Sowing and the Reaping: Post-Town Hall**

The Conversations went very well. Guests were warmly welcomed. There was connecting and re-connecting. We heard a variety of stories, some quite moving. The tour brought questions and comments, with some expressing surprise at how much was going on in the building—the various activities and ministries. The conversations about the Time Line and the various illustrations of St. Mark's world over its 95 years evoked many comments as well. The Committee gives thanks that, though the numbers were small, the Conversations were very fruitful.