

UPC Fall 2026 Newsletter



**Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.
(Psalm 100:4)**

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The Sacred Art of Letting Go: Finding the Holy in Autumn's Transition

Friends;

There is a distinct shift that happens in the air as September gives way to October, as it did today. The frantic, expansive energy of summer begins to cool, and the Earth breathes a collective sigh of settling down. For many, autumn is defined by its vibrant visual palette – the brilliant ambers, deep crimsons, and rich golds that are just beginning to blanket our Markham neighbourhood. But if we slow our pace and pay attention, autumn reveals itself to be more than just a change of season; it is a profound spiritual teacher.

We have just concluded our annual acknowledgement of Truth and Reconciliation Day. September 30 asks us to remember and then work for a better future for residential school survivors and their families and descendants. And we know that truth and reconciliation are universal values that are rooted in Jesus' messages of love for all and self-giving of each. May we quietly live out those values in our own lives.

We often speak of a God who is constantly doing a new thing, a Divine presence woven into the very fabric of creation and change. Autumn reminds us that transformation is not always about immediate growth or outward achievement. Sometimes, holiness is found in the quiet, necessary work of letting go.

And that is what we pondered several weeks ago when we gathered and asked ourselves what it would mean to relinquish control and ownership of both our church manse and our congregation itself. However those possibilities unfold, may we find holiness in participating in preparing for the future God has in mind for our church.

Look closely at the trees. They do not cling desperately to their leaves out of fear of the coming winter. Instead, they release them in a breathtaking display of color, trusting the natural rhythm of life, death, and resurrection. All of the energy dedicated to nourishing the leaves is diverted into the branches, trunk and roots of the tree, in anticipation of the long, cold winter and the future re-birth of spring. There is a deep, inherent theology in this process. It challenges our culture's obsession with constant productivity and accumulation. Autumn invites us to ask ourselves: What are we carrying that we no longer need? What burdens, old resentments, or rigid expectations can we gracefully lay down to make room for something new?

In the Celtic Christian tradition, autumn is often seen as a "thin place" – a time when the veil between the physical and the spiritual feels wonderfully porous. As the days grow shorter and the shadows lengthen, we are drawn indoors, both literally and metaphorically. The season calls us to a deeper interiority, a space of reflection and prayerful pause. In the twilight of these autumn days, the Holy Spirit meets us not in grand gestures, but in the ordinary and the intimate: the warmth of a shared table (such as today's ENJOY lunch), the comfort of a warm, heavy blanket and the quiet beauty of a world preparing to rest.

This season also centres us on the concept of harvest, which reminds us of our deep interconnectedness. We give thanks for the literal fruits of the Earth, but we also look around at our community. Our faith compels us to ensure that the harvest is shared, that our hospitality expands as the weather cools, and that no one is left out in the cold.

As we walk through these autumn weeks together as a church family, let us embrace the sacred transitions around us and within us. Let us trust the God of the changing seasons, knowing that the same love holding the falling leaves is holding us, too. May we find the courage to let go of what is past, the grace to rest in the present, and the hope to believe that even in the dying of the year, God is quietly preparing the soil for a future spring. Be at peace.

Rev. Joan Masterton

Interim Moderator



A Canadian Psalm of Thanksgiving

Maple leaves crunch under my feet, bright orange, red and gold, blanketing the Earth to prepare it for its winter sleep. Ahead of me, the trees rise from the forest like cathedral spires reaching for the hand of their maker. The air is thick and speaks of colder days yet to come.

And so, I drink deeply of these sights, a harvest of wonder and joy to remember during the long nights of winter. In this place, I remember who I am and whose I am.

The wind whispers the scent of wildflowers clothed so as to shame those in Solomon's court. Around me are signs that the seed harvest will be plentiful - enough to sustain the creatures of the air for another season. In this place, I feel cradled in mystery, infinite, yet tender.

Preparing for sleep, I feel my spirit awakening to the touch of the maker. And as my spirit shakes itself out of its urban insensibility, it releases a sigh... a breath... a whisper... thank you.

Rev. Lynne Donovan (St. Andrew's PC, Picton)

Submitted by Rev. Joan Masterton

Message from Session

We will be okay!

The feedback received from the congregation has been very helpful to Session in understanding how people feel about the idea of a reimagined future for UPC and the willingness to pursue that future. Session used that feedback to guide our decision making.

Session then took the next step by calling a congregational meeting for Oct. 4th. At that meeting the congregation approved a motion to put the manse up for sale and a second motion to pursue the amalgamation of UPC with CPC.

Joan will now take these results and seek the necessary Presbytery approval. The CPC Session still has to take the idea to their congregation, and we will only move forward on this if CPC also agrees to pursue amalgamation. As new information arises, Session will make every effort to keep you informed. Please reach out to any Session member with any questions or concerns you may have.

In discerning God's calling for the future of our church, we pray that God prepares our hearts for what comes next. We know that change happens in life and by God's grace we will be okay.

Welcome to Session!

We are very pleased to welcome Ellen Kaine and Chris Watson to Session. Chris is returning to Session after a few years away and Ellen is new to eldership. We are so grateful to both these ladies for taking up this leadership role, particularly at such a significant time in UPC's life. We know they will bring much value to Session's work.

Important Sundays to note:

Nov. 8: Remembrance Service with Rev. Don Muir

Nov. 29: 1st Advent Communion

Dec. 6: 2nd Advent

Dec. 13: Joint service UPC & CPC – 3rd Advent

Dec. 20: 4th Advent

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve 7pm (Thursday)

Other UPC Events:

Daylight Savings (clock back) Oct. 31 midnight

Pie Baking Bee Nov. 7

Mistletoe Market Nov. 21

Christmas Wish Program Nov. 29-Dec. 13

Future Possibility:

Film Festival on Environmental Issues

Wishing Thanksgiving Blessings to you and all those you love

Margaret MacK

Clerk of Session



MISTLETOE MARKET

Saturday, Nov. 21

Our Refugee Family from Afghanistan

Remember all the things that have happened to you over the past 12 months? Now imagine how life-changing the last 12 months have been for a refugee family from Afghanistan who have just spent their first year in Canada. A father, mother, and two young adult children, the Naqi Zadah family was sponsored to Canada by the UPC congregation. They've navigated through a Canadian winter, finding a 3-bedroom apartment, finding employment, finding a religious home, understanding the GTA bus system, getting a driver's licence, dealing with the Canadian health system, attending English courses, integrating into the Canadian culture, and for the youngest, completing high school. Quite a year of change.

On the first anniversary of the family's September 2025 arrival at Pearson airport, Maryam Durani (a family member and refugee co-sponsor along with UPC) sent the following note to UPC.

Randy Carr

Dear Randy, Marg, Biniam (head of the Refugee Team at the Presbyterian Church in Canada head office), and the Unionville Presbyterian Church Community,

It is hard to believe that it has already been one year since we stood together and welcomed my brother and his family to Canada.

One year ago, after years of waiting, uncertainty, heartache, and so many moments when we wondered if this day would ever come, they finally arrived. I still remember the emotions of that moment—the excitement, the relief, the tears, and above all, the feeling that something we had hoped and worked for over so many years had finally become real.

Today, as we celebrate their one-year anniversary in Canada, I wanted to take a moment to say **thank you!**

Thank you, Marg, Randy, and Biniam, for everything you have done and continue to do. Thank you for

standing beside this family, for believing in their future, and for helping them navigate the many challenges that come with starting a new life in a new country.

And to the **Unionville Presbyterian Church**, thank you for being part of their story. Your generosity, compassion, and willingness to open your hearts and your community made such a difference. You showed us that welcoming someone into a new country is about so much more than providing a place to live—it is about helping someone feel that they belong.

A year later, there is so much to be grateful for.

There have been new experiences, new friendships, new memories, challenges overcome, and moments of joy. Most importantly, there has been the opportunity to begin building a life that they had waited so long to have.

When I think back to where this family was a year ago and where they are today, I am reminded of the incredible power of community. It took many people, many acts of kindness, and many years of perseverance to get them here.

You didn't just help a family come to Canada.

You Saved Their lives!

Thank you for being part of that journey and for showing what compassion, community, and humanity can look like.

Happy one-year anniversary to this very special new chapter. May there be many, many more years of happiness, peace, belonging, and beautiful memories ahead.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Maryam Durani



September 8, 2025

Toronto Pearson Airport

VESTIGIA by Bliss Carman

I took a day to search for God,
And found Him not. But as I trod
By rocky ledge, through woods untamed,
Just where one scarlet lily flamed,
I saw His footprint in the sod.

Then suddenly, all unaware,
Far off in the deep shadows, where
A solitary hermit thrush
Sang through the holy twilight hush –
I heard His voice upon the air.

And even as I marveled how
God gives us Heaven here and now,
In a stir of wind that hardly shook
The poplar leaves beside the brook –
His hand was light upon my brow.

At last with evening as I turned
Homeward, and thought what I had learned
And all that there was still to probe –
I caught the glory of His robe
Where the last fires of sunset burned.

Back to the world with quickening start
I looked and longed for any part
In making saving Beauty be ...
And from that kindling ecstasy
I knew God dwelt within my heart.

Submitted by Heather Jones



When we let go, we create space for new life and new growth. And when we do that, we grow stronger and more resilient. Just like the trees.

They don't cling to every leaf simply because it has been part of their story. They release what has served its purpose, trust the season they're in, and make room for what comes next.

Maybe we can learn something from them...
Not everything we lose is meant to be replaced.
Not everything we release is meant to return. And not everything we outgrow was a mistake.

Sometimes letting go is how we make room for peace, growth, healing, and a brand-new season.

We don't have to chase every leaf that falls from our tree.
We can:
trust the season,
trust the process,
and keep growing.

Submitted by Pat Richards

Both Mourning and Dancing

by Henri Nouwen

Gratitude at its deepest level embraces all of life with thanksgiving: the good and the bad, the joyful and the painful, the holy and the not so holy. Jesus calls us to recognize that gladness and sadness are never separate, that joy and sorrow really belong together, and that mourning and dancing are part of the same movement. That is why Jesus calls us to be grateful for every moment we have lived and to claim our unique journey as God's way to mold our hearts to greater conformity with God's own.

***... give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
(1 Thessalonians 5: 18)***