

Open Seating

It seems I struck a nerve in the January 6th e-mail blast when I wrote about being told you're sitting in someone else's seat on a Sunday morning. Since then, several more people have told me about times they were asked to move. A couple of others encouraged me to write about it in my Messenger article (because there are still some parishioners who don't get the e-mail blast).

It all started after a couple of choir members started sitting in the congregation (because they had retired from the choir or were taking a leave of absence). They were surprised by the number of Sundays they were told "you're sitting in my seat" or "you're sitting in so-and-so's seat". As I began to hear these stories, I was appalled and ashamed because this doesn't sound like the kind of community I thought we were. I was also concerned about the impact these kinds of comments might have on people who are church-shopping or checking out a church for the first time. It's bad enough when this happens to people who are already committed to the parish – but can you imagine the impact if we said "no room at the inn for you" to visitors or seekers? It would be amazing if they ever came back!

The sense of "my pew" has deep roots both in Protestant history and in the human psyche. There was a time (in the 18th and 19th centuries) when families rented their pew

annually. Thus the more well-to-do members of a community would have the best seats (closer to the front or to the stove) while the less affluent members competed for the open seating at the back or on the sides and the slaves were allowed to sit in the galleries or at the very back. There are still a few churches in the Diocese of Niagara where you can still see the little brackets to hold cards designating the owner of the pew. It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that the radical notion of "free pews" emerged. One of the churches we attended in Toronto (Holy Trinity, next to the Eaton Centre) was the first church in the city with no rented pews when it opened in the 1840's.

On a more human level, we are comforted by a sense of "home". We all need our own space and we carry that emotional habit with us wherever we go – when we drive our own car, work in our own office, work on our own computer, work in our own garden, use our own phone, or even shop in our own neighbourhoods. In fact, consumers spend millions of dollars each year to customize their environments and their tools to enhance this sense of "home space". So it's not surprising that we carry the same emotional wiring to church. To varying degrees, we all love familiarity.

So what's different about church? It's not private space, it's not even public space – it's holy space.

That means it belongs first and foremost to God and to God's loving purposes in creation – not to us and to our needs. Sure, we get our needs met at church (after all, that's why we keep coming) but that's not why the church is here. In fact, it is confusion about precisely this point that condemns so many churches to decline and closure: people start to think the church somehow belongs to them, there is nowhere for the divine to sit in the midst of the community, and in time God lets them have what they want.

When you boil it down to basics, our sole purpose is to be a place that embodies and expresses the life of the God we worship – the living God, made known to us in Jesus as loving, gracious, hospitable, and just. That's how God has treated us and it's how we want to treat each other.

So folks, let's be kind. Step outside your comfort zone to give comfort to somebody else. Slide over and invite someone new to sit with you – because every seat in this place belongs to God and every stranger represents the presence of Christ.



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# PARISH PROFILE

by Noreen McNair



Christyn Perkons

The Coombs family has been a constant presence in the church life of St. Christopher's for many years. When Steve retired as the rector of St. Bartholomew's, the family moved to their first non-manse house in Burlington and have been with us ever since. Christyn was fifteen then and, even as a teenager, she was involved in the broader scope of the church, going with her dad on Sundays to the Anglican convent in Oakville to conduct services.

After completing high school in Aldershot a year early, she set off with great hopes for her first year in Philosophy at McMaster University. Disappointed in large, impersonal classes and an emphasis on information regurgitation, she spent a year working at a children's home associated with the Community of the Sisters of the Church in Broadstairs, Kent, England. Upon her return, she finished the degree with a minor in Anthropology. Marriage followed her graduation and with neither she nor her husband sure of their paths, an article in *Mother Earth News* about a couple

who sailed, in a canoe, to the Bahamas, called to them and they set off for the Florida Keys to follow suit. In their 16 foot dinghy, they chased sea turtles and dolphins off the Keys but the reality of leaving sight of land kept them anchored on Big Pine Key for the winter. It was of interest that Christyn happened upon the very copy of this magazine when she sorted through volumes for the church book sale!

She and her husband moved back to Canada and settled in Waterloo where they worked as house parents in a children's home. The travel bug attacked once more and the sun beckoned them to California. Christyn completed her Master's degree in Marriage and Family Counselling first at Johnson College, and then at California State after Johnson closed. During her time in school, she worked as a manager at McDonalds which provided her with yet another aspect of her education, preparing her in part for her employment in college relations for California State University where she worked with community colleges and high schools after she and her husband separated.

Remarried to a retired Marine who worked in vocational rehabilitation, they settled in Redlands where Dylan was born and where they welcomed Kaitlin, born at home. Betty and Steve, taking advantage of Christyn's twenty years in California, became very familiar with the American Southwest. Once they were a family, Christyn stayed at home with the children and became accredited as a La

Leche League Leader. She later served La Leche League as Assistant Coordinator of Leader Accreditation. She home-schooled the children and continued to do so until 2000 when the three of them moved back to Burlington. She had recognized a need for the children to relate much more often to family rather than just a few weeks a year and Betty and Steve welcomed them back to Canada.

Christyn, Dylan and Kaitlin were committed to self-directed learning and except for a year at Assumption High School, Kaitlin's education reflected the intersection of her interests and the community's resources. Dylan, looking for more social opportunities, joined the learning community at Gary Allan, where he focused on playing guitar, bass and drums, and began to write songs. They were exceptionally close as children and then as teenagers with the move to a different country, and so, when Montreal beckoned, they relocated together. Kaitlin is now working as a sous-chef with hopes to open her own café/gallery, and with Dylan currently mastering his first album; they appear to be forging their careers.

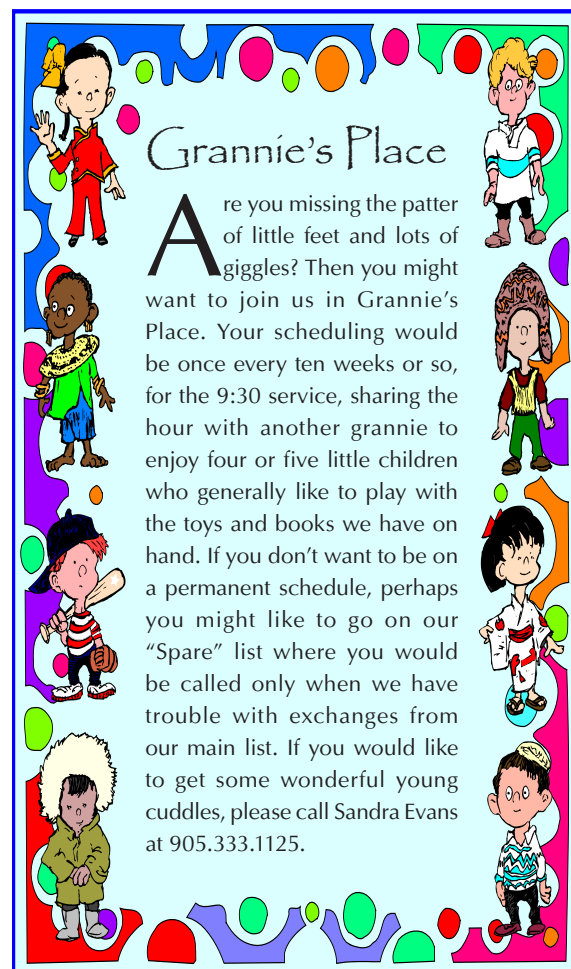
Christyn began work as a Professional Lay Worker in the Diocesan office in 2003, first in a half-time children's ministry position and in 2005, fulltime with Children, Youth and Family Ministry. Half of her job responsibilities now involve Congregational Development which takes her out to parishes on many Sunday mornings. She

chairs the Life Changing Worship focus team for diocesan vision, serves on the Candidates' Committee, a discernment process for divinity students in the Diocese, the Hands Across Niagara Committee, and the Journeys in Faith team - a group called together by the Bishop to support a deepening of faith in Anglicans across the diocese.

At home in St. Christopher's, she recently finished a term as warden (which she loved!), and will shortly wind up a year as Chair of Parish Council. At age ten, she continued the family tradition of singing and joined the choir, first at St. Bart's and then at St. Christopher's a

love she kept up through her years in the Lutheran church in California and resumed on her return to St. Christopher's. She also leads the Prayers of the People, is a Eucharistic Assistant, and bakes Eucharistic bread. She participates in the Liturgy and Learning work, bringing a deep love for the words and shape of liturgy. She is a member of the Open Doors Steering Committee, and was the first coordinator of the clothing store.

We are indeed fortunate that Christyn decided against sailing to the Bahamas so long ago, but chose instead to return to St. Christopher's; she is an integral component of our worship and outreach and for this we are indeed grateful.



## Youth Groups

Our Youth Groups continue to meet every Sunday evening. We had our Christmas bash back in December, enjoying a day bowling, watching movies, enjoying a meal out together and celebrating a Christmas Eucharist. But we also in our time of celebration remembered the Christ who came to change the world by his presence. We collected a huge donation of toiletries for the Living Rock Youth Centre in Hamilton which we delivered the week before Christmas; thanks to everyone who gave so generously. We created gifts for parents in our Tuesday evening community and have also taken time to write to politicians about issues of Justice in our community. Some of us wrote to our MPP about the need for GSA's in our schools to support students who are LGBTQ. Some wrote to our MP about the situation faced by so many First Nations Communities, urging the government to take action. Most recently, following the lead of Bishop Michael, we wrote to the Minister for Immigration in Ottawa to protest Bill C-4 which punishes refugees seeking sanctuary in Canada rather than targeting the smugglers who put their lives at risk. We've also launched a mega-food drive as part of our preparation for Justice Camp 2012.

## G.I.F.T.

Stands for 'Growing In Faith Together' and is the name given to our children's program that runs every Sunday during the 9.30am service. G.I.F.T. doesn't just happen by itself – lots of planning and hard work goes into our preparation starting months in advance. We run three programs a year: September - Christmas, January - Palm Sunday and Easter until the summer break. Our programs are based on V.B.S. packages like those we run during our summer camp. Buying packages like this allows us to access music, publicity and presentation materials unlike any you get in traditional 'Sunday School Curricular'. A team, headed by Mary Loree, meets to unpack and adapt these five day packages into a 10-14 week experience for the children and teens of our worshipping community. Lesson plans are written for each week by age group, leaders for each group are recruited and prepared, music and opening talks are planned, and every week Kathy Sims gathers all the materials that each group will need to produce their craft or undertake their activity. The aim of G.I.F.T. is not to be a Sunday school, but to be a worshipping community where the children and leaders alike can grow in faith together. A huge thank you to everyone who makes that happen! Don't miss our current program: 'Shake It Up Café' where we are learning about God's recipe for our lives.



Shine performed our Christmas Pageant 'A Christmas Carol' on Sunday, December 18th at the 9.30am and 11.15am services. Jessica Wilson played the mean 'Eliza Scrooge' who was taught the true meaning of Christmas by a visiting Angel (played by Adam Sims) that came crashing through her TV screen and took her on a whirlwind tour of the first Christmas. After a brief Christmas break, Shine is back, preparing for several performances in the coming weeks and a special role leading our Palm Sunday service. Shine meets every Thursday after school 4pm-6pm, to play games, learn songs and rehearse. Please speak to Mike Deed, Katie Wilson, Elizabeth Cunningham or Elizabeth Wright for more information.

## Ash Wednesday, February 22nd

An educational day for children and young people in grades S-12 which will explore through music, drama, teaching, prayer and games the meaning of Ash Wednesday and Lent. This year the program will be held at St. Luke's Church, 1371 Elgin Street in Burlington from 8:30am - 3:00pm. Snacks are provided, children must bring their own lunch. For more information, please speak with Mike Deed.



## CONNECT

On December 28th, 12 of our CONNECT group who were home for the holidays got together for an evening in Room 1 to eat pizza and share our most recent experiences at university and our hopes for the future. It's awesome to be in a group of young adults with such varied gifts and talents. Here's a note from Thomas Pyper who started at University in September 2011:

*My first semester at Ryerson University has been very enjoyable. I am in a program called Graphic Communication Management, which focuses on the printing industry, Graphic design and business. I found my first semester courses very fun and informative, and I am looking forward to building my knowledge in the coming years.*

*Also living on residence has been a lot of fun. My residence is located very close to the Eaton Centre in downtown Toronto. Living in downtown Toronto gave me the chance to do a lot of cool things, including seeing a film and some celebrities at Toronto's film festival, going to an all-night art festival called Nuit Blanche and seeing some of my favourite Blue Jays players at an autograph session. As well, I have made a lot of new friends living in residence, some from the Toronto area, and others from different countries. We spend a lot of time together in residence, but we also go do things together outside of residence like going out for dinner or seeing a movie.*



## WE WELCOME OUR INTERIM DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Ian Sadler began his training as a chorister at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, England. He then won the Organ Scholarship at Bristol University followed by the Organ Scholarship back at St. Paul's Cathedral during postgraduate study at London University. Ian holds degrees in musicology and education, with organ diplomas from Trinity College of Music and The Royal College of Organists. Before moving to Canada, his final engagement in the UK was to play the organ in the movie *Chariots of Fire*.

In 1980 Ian was appointed Director of Music at Toronto's Grace Church-on-the-Hill and Choral Director at Upper Canada College.

In 1986, Ian took 1st prize at the Syracuse Organ Competition in New York. Recital tours have taken him to Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France, Austria, USA and Australia. In 1995, Ian represented Canada as organist for the United Nations 50th Anniversary Celebrations in San Francisco. In 1999, Ian was the first Canadian juror at the International Liszt Organ Competition in Budapest, Hungary and was awarded the honorary adjunct position of Professor of Music at Laurentian University in Sudbury. Also in 1999, Ian was presented with a Juno award for a choral CD.

This season, Ian is presenting a concert of Handel Organ Concerti with the Stratford Symphony followed by recitals in San Francisco, Grand Rapids, New York City (St. Patrick's Cathedral) and in Boston's Trinity Church. He will be Organist-in-Residence in the UK for a week each at St. Paul's Cathedral (January) and Gloucester Cathedral (July).

Ian has been nominated for The Order of Ontario (2003) and The Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts (2007). For his dedication to promoting Canadian music at home and abroad, The Royal Canadian College of Organists awarded Ian with an Honorary Fellowship in 2007.

## HAVE YOU HEARD?

by Judy Jupp

- On Christmas Eve, at the four services, 1195 people worshipped here at St. Christopher's. There were 408 people at the 8.00 service!
- After the 10.00 service on Christmas Eve, the choir and congregation sang "Go Now in Peace" to Mary Jane and Howard. We wish them well in their retirement.
- On Tuesdays the Seniors meet at 2:00pm in the Family Room. They have refreshments and time to talk and laugh together. Afterwards they play games in the Narthex. It is a fun and very supportive group. All would be very welcomed.
- On Sunday, January 15th, the organ committee met with some would-be St. Christopher's organists, and choirmasters/choirmistresses. Watch for further news!
- The Tuesday night supper group served turkey dinner on December 20th to 205 guests. Just how many turkeys was that? Coupled with vegetables, salad, and dessert, and tons of labour, they sure did a grand job. Three cheers – let's up that to at least ten!
- Faithfulness, in the volunteer department abounds, as well as in the staff department. Here, in the new year, there are many ways in which we can all contribute. If you feel an itch to do something in some way, call the church office – 905.634.1809. Is it pastoral, child care or church school, Tuesday nights, welcoming, hospitality, helping with seniors, food box, helping sometimes in the kitchen with special events, Christmas Market, whatever? Some staff members need some help and maybe we can jump in to ease the load!

## PIE SALES THROUGHOUT 2011

by Anne Hay

Chicken pies have been made by many loyal participants in the spring and the fall of this year. A variety of fruit pies were made as the fruit became available during the early and late summer.

We are very grateful to our generous parishioner who pays our bills for all the ingredients; this means that all the money we make is clear profit for St. Christopher's

I am, of course, also so grateful to the men and women who volunteer to help at these cooking sessions; without them this year's effort would not have been possible. The fellowship and laughter which takes place on "pie days" gives me a real spiritual lift; thank you to each and every one of you.

There were a small number of our pies left to be sold at the Christmas Market, thus all our total receipts are not in. However the total raised in pie sales throughout the year is in the region of \$8500. Well Done, the Holy Rollers!

## From The Registry

### Baptism

Jan 8 Philippa Amy Christine Ford-Jones

### Deaths

Dec 12 May Elizabeth Partridge

Dec 17 Muriel May Gesner

Jan 9 Cora Louise Ritchie Dvorak

# MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT – SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

by Carol Henley

In a recent conversation a relative newcomer to the parish voiced the opinion that one of the distinctive characteristics of St. Christopher's is a commitment to excellence in all that we undertake. It was gratifying to hear but the statement rang true to me as well. I can see it in the dedication of our staff. It is evident in the many volunteers who often go

above and beyond the call of duty and it is reflected in generous responses to specific requests in time of need. I have been fortunate over the years to work with quite a few motivated and talented groups of people who have made some exceptional things happen. I've been pondering the ingredients that go into that kind of experience and what might make them sustainable over the longer term. One common feature in my experience has been a shared goal or vision. In the groups that I can recall that have been truly exceptional there has also been not only a careful

sharing of the workload but a genuine discernment of the gifts and abilities of each member of the group. In simple tasks, "who's doing what?" doesn't usually take much time but in larger or more complex undertakings it is a process of discovery and accommodation that unfolds over time and sometimes changes as the group matures or the goal shifts. At St. Christopher's our vision statement confirms that it is God who transforms the world and that we will be participants in that work. There are many ways that people come to feel spiritually nurtured in our parish. Ministry

Development, at least in part, means helping each other to find the ways that we can participate in the community that clarify and employ our unique gifts. If you participate in the parish in ways that bring you joy, feed your soul and help you in your life beyond the parish I'd really enjoy hearing about it! Over the coming months I hope to share some of those stories. If you know someone that you think might enjoy the same thing, why not invite them to join you? 2012 will bring new challenges and opportunities for ministry and I look forward to exploring and sharing them with you!



## Justice Camp 2012

In his last pastoral letter before his assassination in 1980, Oscar Romero, then Arch Bishop of San-Salvadore, wrote that the purpose of the Church is:

"to be the voice of the voiceless, a defender of the rights of the poor, a promoter of every just aspiration for liberation, a guide, an empowerer, a humanizer of every legitimate struggle to achieve a more just society, a society that prepares the way for the true Kingdom of God in history".

It is a challenging, perhaps overwhelming, call to begin to imagine the world and our society in the way that God intends it to be, more so to understand the causes of the injustices that face us and to take action. But the commandment of Jesus, to be known because of the love that we show, was never meant to be easy, rather a challenge, to step out of our comfort zones and give of ourselves. The journey of being a disciple is about learning how to do that.

Justice Camp 2012 is one way to begin to answer this calling. Throughout Lent this year, I invite, even challenge you, to learn some of the ways that we can participate in God's work of Justice in the world. Each Sunday we will have preachers that speak about how people of faith have answered the call of Justice. Each Wednesday, our education evenings will unpack issues that affect people on our doorstep on issues of housing, poverty, refugees, food security, discrimination, slavery and so much more.

But in particular, we are hoping to create the chance for us all to get involved. On Saturday, March 24th you'll have the chance to take part in one of a number of visits to places in our area seeking to make a difference in the lives of the voiceless. Please keep this date free in your diary, and even if you can't join one of the activities, come in the evening to our 100 mile dinner and hear about what's been going on all day. Look out for more information posted in the Narthex in the coming weeks. Please speak to Mike Deed for more information.



# COMPASSION & CARE

by Sue Nicolls

Thank-you comes in many forms. Sometimes people say, "Thanks" with a smile or a hug. Sometimes people have a tear in their eye. Sometimes people are speechless because they are overwhelmed by the generosity they have received. Some people telephone. Some people write thanks on a card. No matter how people respond, it is clear that the Getting Ready for Christmas program has indeed enabled other families to celebrate Christmas in ways that would not have been possible.

So, to all of you who offered assistance by purchasing a gift, food voucher or gift card I THANK YOU! To those of you who shared the extra you had or bought more, I THANK YOU! To Liz Woloshin for organizing the program; to Margie Swire, Cathy Stokes, Carole Deldman and Marianne Scott who wrapped the adult gifts, I THANK YOU! Getting Ready for Christmas would not have happened without all of you.

We were able to offer assistance to 37 families in total! These are comments of thanks we received:

- "Oh, thank you so much!"
- "Thank you for your generosity. Your kindness is greatly appreciated."
- "I would like to thank you for all the help in 2011 and for the ... Christmas gift...Thank you greatly."
- One 7 year old child said it simply: "Thank you for the lovely dinner and help." The card was signed by the child, who included the name of baby brother and "my Mom".

Being rooted in the life-giving, life-affirming, life-changing love of God reaching beyond ourselves and making a difference for others, indeed!

## ACCESSIBLE GUIDE

*St. Christopher's Church Accessible Customer Service Guide*

As of January 1, 2012, businesses and organizations that provide customer service are required to meet accessibility standards according to The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), (O. Reg. 429/07).

Instead of being an additional layer that is applied to what we do by the government, the AODA gave us an opportunity to look at how we welcome and include everyone here at St Christopher's.

That is, making what we do well, even better; and increasing our awareness of situations when we aren't necessarily being as welcoming and accessible as we think we are.

With the help of Joanne Vassell-Pittman, Amanda Shiomi, Mike Shiomi and Marilyn Wilson, "St. Christopher's Church Accessible Customer Service Guide" was created. It outlines what a disability is as well as ways to refer to and interact with a person with a disability.

Copies of this booklet are available on the Welcome Table. We think it is easy to read and easy to use. There is a "Points to Remember" page at the end, summarizing what we can do to be as welcoming and inclusive as possible.



# Annual Vestry

Our Annual Vestry Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 12th. For that Sunday only, service times will be 8:00am and 10:00am. A light lunch will be served after the 10am service followed by the vestry meeting. In order to prepare, please join us on Wednesday, February 8th at 7:30pm for a complete review of the parish's financial situation.

All parishioners 16 years and older; who have for at least six months been involved with this parish through worship, fellowship and financial support; and have not voted as a member of any other vestry within the past six months, are eligible to vote.

**Sunday,  
February 12th**

## GINGER GROUP

A gathering of retired men of the parish and their guests will meet February 6th at 11.45am for refreshments followed by lunch and a presentation about technology for seniors. Contacts: Winston Campbell, 905.336.1397 or George Beadle, 905.637.8640.

## CROCHET MATS

Some of the crochet sleep mat group members with the largest batch of mats we have made for Haiti so far. There were 47 in all sent in October. The group members are Lesline, Jean, Lois, Dorothy, Marilyn, Mary, Sylvia, Carol, Margie, Fatmeh and Jeanne.



## THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

For my party, your gift, and all the kind words that you gave me. It was far more than I could have ever wished for, I feel lucky to have such good friends. I feel honoured that many of you wanted me to stay on but after 21 years, I'm ready for retirement. Howard and I have some plans we hope to fulfill together, one being to not get up at 5:30 am Sunday morning. It is very hard to leave our family at St. Christopher's, Howard and I have wrestled with this decision for a long time. We will both miss all of you very much. God bless all of you, and again, from the bottom of my heart, Thank you. *Mary Jane*





The Messenger is published monthly for the parishioners of St. Christopher's Anglican Church. All questions or concerns should be directed to the Messenger Editor, c/o St. Christopher's Parish Office, 662 Guelph Line, Burlington, Ontario, L7R 3M8. Call 905.634.1809.

Thanks to this month's contributors: *Steve Hopkins, Mike Deed, Sue Nicolls, Mary Jane Price, Noreen McNairn, Anne Hay, Ian Sadler, Jeanne Seaton, Carol Henley, Judy Jupp, Ken Beeby and Sandra Rudge*

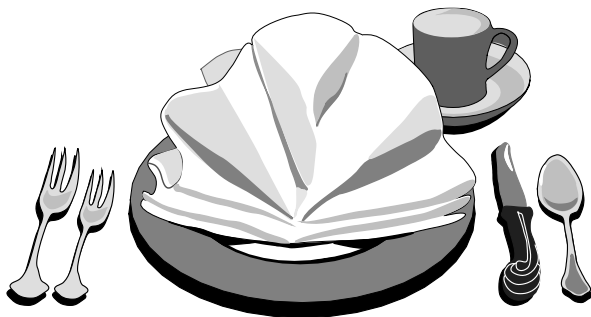
## MAILING ADDRESS

### Let's Stay Connected!

Sometimes, e-mail is the easiest and fastest way to share information or ask your opinion. Don't be left out of the loop! Please make sure we have your current e-mail address by sending a message to [staff@stchristophersburlington.com](mailto:staff@stchristophersburlington.com).

If you no longer wish to receive a hard copy of this newsletter, please let us know.

# You're Invited



## Seniors' Lunch

Thursday,  
February 9, 2012  
at 12:00 Noon

St. Christopher's Church  
662 Guelph Line

RSVP to  
905.634.1809



# Pancake Supper

## Feb 21<sup>st</sup> 2012

### 5 - 7pm

**Adults \$6.00**

**Seniors \$5.00**

**Children \$2.00**

**Families \$12.00**

