

VOLUME NO 2 | ISSUE 1



# ENCOUNTERS

WINTER/SPRING 2022

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**DO NOT BE CONFORMED  
TO THIS WORLD, BUT  
BE TRANSFORMED BY  
THE RENEWAL OF YOUR  
MIND, THAT BY  
TESTING YOU MAY  
DISCERN WHAT IS THE  
WILL OF GOD, WHAT IS  
GOOD AND  
ACCEPTABLE AND  
PERFECT.**

**-ROMANS 12:2-  
[ESV]**

“



# HELLO, ESC!

## PASTOR RICHARD

I am so very grateful for the tender mercies of God in our lives -how he has given little glimmers of hope through what has been a most challenging couple of years. Through adversity, God has given us opportunity to grow. Our AV and Multimedia Team have really stepped up to provide necessary communications and helped us to stay connected. Kay, Paul and James have initiated and sustained a discussion about mental health and the Body of Christ. The COVID-19

Health and Safety Committee have been guiding us through safety protocols. We have all adapted to modifications in gathering in order to fulfill our purpose as a worshipping community and also to be obedient in teaching, fellowship and outreach. Even now, we are still adapting and seeking to do more in all of these areas.

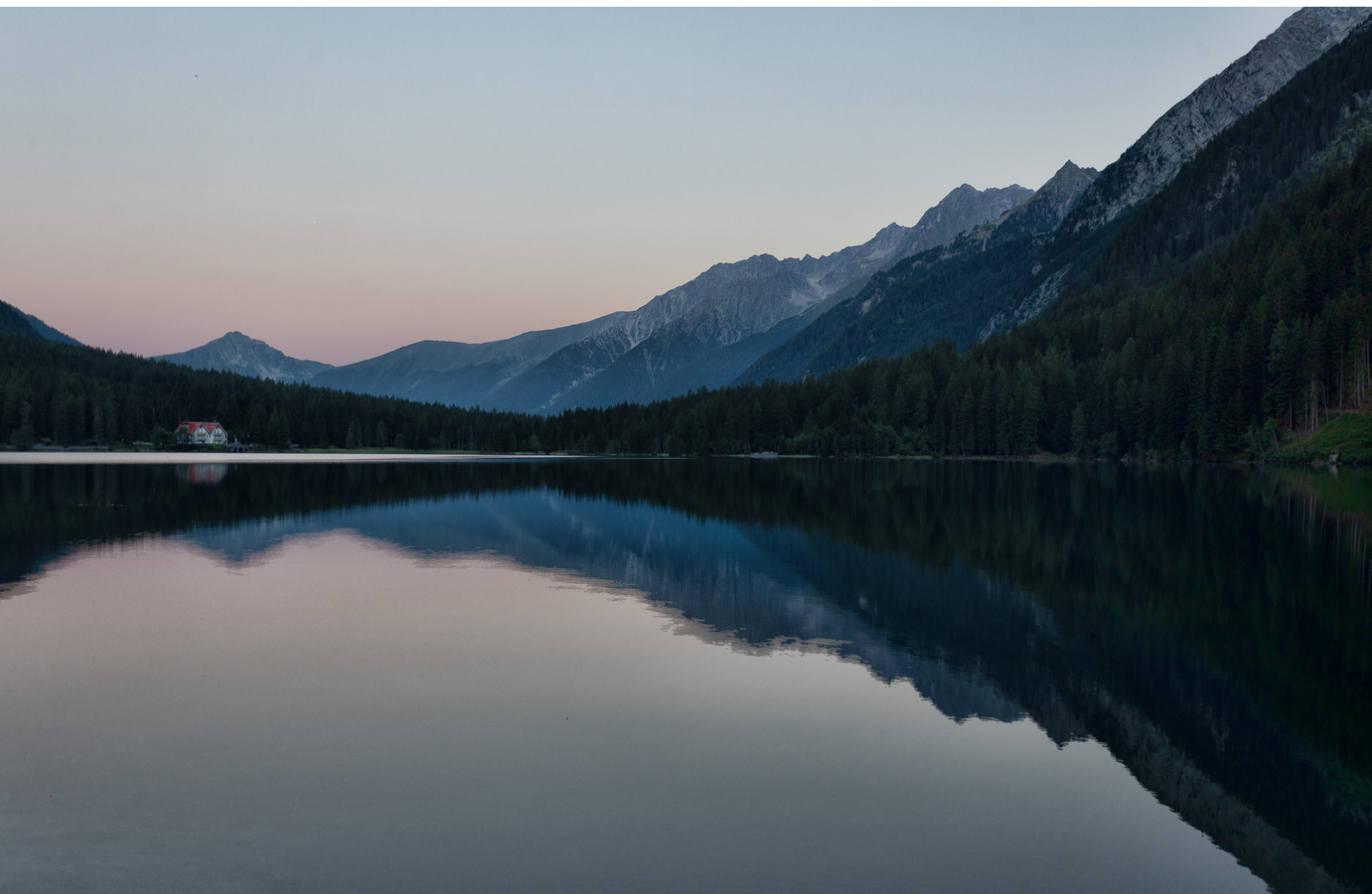
The pandemic has also shown us where we are weak. Some have pointed out that our community

lacks warmth. As you peruse the offerings in this issue of Encounters, you will notice that there is plenty of warmth and loving welcome to go around -we just need to share it with those who really could use a tender, Christ-like touch in their lives. Think of those whom we haven't seen for some time. Think of those who constantly serve and appear strong in the Lord, but whom we mistakenly think don't need loving care. Think of those who have sustained loss. Think of those who are suffering or caring for loved ones who are suffering.

Think of those who simply need to hear from you.

We should always be reminding one another of the hope we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour has overcome the world. We turn to him in every circumstance of life and walk by faith in and with him. So... welcome to this issue of Encounters, which is just such a happy reminder. Thank you to BLM, for letting us put thoughts into print. May each one of you be encouraged and strengthened in the Lord by what is here. God bless you!

-Richard



# 3 DAY DEVOTIONAL

TEACHING MINISTRY



## DAY 1

### FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." James 1:1-8 [NIV]

Are you tired of COVID entering into its third year? Even though most of us have continued to press on, we cannot say we have not experienced trials of various kinds in these past couple of years. Some of us have faced loneliness or depression from isolation, while some of us may have gone through financial hardships, loss of jobs or businesses. Many students' learning and mental health have suffered from school closings. Some might have gone through illnesses or death of loved ones. Churches may have been negatively impacted from not meeting together; some have even suffered through division. The persistent effects impact every profession and sector, especially health care workers, teachers, parents, children... the list goes on.

The book of James addresses how we should deal with trials: *2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. [NIV]* James is saying trials are inevitable and just a matter of "when". Surprisingly, he also says to consider it pure joy when you meet trials. But why should we consider it pure joy? James explains it as such, *3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. [NIV]* James is saying trials are tests of faith. Why does faith need to be tested, one might ask, since God knows the depth of our faith already? Is it for us to discover it for ourselves? Do we turn away from God or do we cling onto Him in the midst of suffering by faith?

James goes on further to say that the purpose of trials is to produce perseverance, and the result of perseverance is maturity. The maturity from trials when persevered is why we should consider it pure joy when facing trials.

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**CONSIDER IT PURE JOY,  
MY BROTHERS AND  
SISTERS, WHENEVER  
YOU FACE TRIALS OF  
MANY KINDS. [NIV]**

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Here is a question for all of us: when we are going through trials, who do we turn to first to know what to do? Family, friends, experts or the internet? James in verse 5 tells us we should first ask God for wisdom. *5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. [NIV]* It doesn't stop there- the asking God for wisdom has to be done in faith without doubting that He will give it to you. *6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. [NIV]* Here, the doubter is depicted as the sea tossing chaotically back and forth. It is portraying how the person has not really placed his trust in God for wisdom, and in effect, has not asked for anything. Consequently, that person should not expect to receive anything in return. Therefore, when asking God for wisdom, we do it in faith, trusting that He will give generously as he promised.



Reflection:

Since trial is the testing of faith that produces perseverance and leads to maturity, what is maturity? When faced with trials of various kinds, how do you deal with it? Do you go to God first without doubt, or is He your last resort?



## DAY 2

"But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected." Numbers 14:31 [ESV]

The Israelites had witnessed the mighty plagues the LORD brought upon Egypt, his deliverance through the Red Sea, his provision of water and manna in the wilderness. By his word- his solemn oath- to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the LORD had promised to give them this land flowing with milk and honey as their possession.

However, 10 out of 12 elite men sent out to scout this promised land brought back a discouraging report of the land because of the size of the inhabitants. They were giants living in large fortified cities. *"We became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight"* (Numbers 14:33, ESV). This led the whole congregation into grumbling, mutiny, and rebellion

against Moses, Aaron, and the LORD. *"Would that we had died in Egypt or in the wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"* (Numbers 14:3, ESV). Eventually they put Aaron and Moses (and the LORD) on trial and were about to stone them, until the LORD stepped in.

What was the logic that led this congregation into rebellion against the LORD? Here are a few observations:

- **They had a man-centered rather than God-centered perspective.**

*"We became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (Numbers 14:33, ESV).* By contrast, 2 of the spies, Caleb and Joshua looked through God's perspective: *"if the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land... their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us: do not fear them."*

*(Numbers 14:8-9, ESV).* The congregation was self-reliant. God did not factor much into their calculations.

- **They despised the LORD (Numbers 14:11, ESV).** Perhaps because they wanted to rule themselves? Perhaps they resented the challenges and discomforts of wilderness living he was leading them through? Maybe they disliked his laws and commandments? Maybe they wanted to be like the other nations, who had gods who cannot speak and tell them what to do? There was no joy or satisfaction in following him, worshiping him, dwelling with him, being taken care of by him. Instead, their journey had been marked by grumbling, complaining, testing, doubting, accusing (Numbers 14:22, ESV).

- **They would not believe in the LORD (Numbers 14:11, ESV), despite all they had seen.**

- **They feared for their wives and children (Numbers 14:3, ESV).** Admittedly, a lot was at stake and the road ahead presented a formidable challenge. Perhaps it is one thing to die in battle, but even worse to think of your loved ones tortured and oppressed for a lifetime after you are killed. It is a reasonable concern. But herein is the paradox, captured in Jesus' words: *"Whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:25, ESV). If we hold onto and bear our fears ourselves, we may be hindered from obeying the LORD. But if we surrender our fears to our Father, we find freedom and fullness of joy walking with Him through the terrors of life. *"Cast all your anxiety upon Him, because he cares for you."* (1 Peter 5:7, ESV). In fact, the LORD directly answers their fears: *"Our wives and our little ones will become plunder" (Numbers 14:3, ESV). "But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected."* (Numbers 14:31, ESV).

Reflection:

How about our own logic? Can we see ourselves in the sons of Israel? How can we aspire to be as Caleb and Joshua who have a *"different spirit, and have followed Me fully?"* (Numbers 14:24, ESV).



# DAY 3

## WORSHIP AS A BEAUTIFUL GIFT AND OUR WEAPON

2 Chronicles 20:1-30

The people of Judah faced an invasion from the enemies in the East and King Jehoshaphat was afraid, but he set himself to seek the Lord. Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground and Judah and the inhabitants fell down before the Lord worshipping.

*"Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's."*

*2 Chronicles 20:17, ESV*

It is incredible to see the moment when God's Spirit is poured out onto those who look to Him. In the face of giants and being afraid, they realized that they needed to take up their positions, stand firm to believe in the battle that belonged to God all along. When we hit a road block or face challenges, we have the privilege to take up the armour of God and use worship as our weapon. At the very moment the people of Judah began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon and Moab to start fighting amongst themselves. Their victory had nothing to do with their military might, nor their talents and gifts.

Throughout this pandemic, I have struggled with doubt, negativity and a cynical mindset, focusing on all the bad that I witnessed or experienced. But praise God, worship is a beautiful gift, something we are always invited to and available to us. Worship also means a lot of humbling, getting ourselves out of the way, letting God speak when we stop talking, allowing God to move and take over every chamber in our hearts for Him to dwell, uproot and rebuild us. That we may encounter God face to face as He makes Himself intimately known to us. Negative circumstances may still be around, but our perspective can change as we face the battle with worship as our weapon.

Prayer:

Father God, may your truth continue to invade, pervade and illuminate in our hearts and bring a radical change in our lives, in the way we see situations in life, so that we may still worship you in every circumstance.

# HOW GREAT THOU ART

## HYMN

Oh Lord, my God  
When I, in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

When Christ shall come, with shout of  
acclamation  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart  
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration  
And then proclaim,  
my God how great Thou art


Stuart Wesley Keene Hine

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LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF  
THE AIR: THEY NEITHER  
SOW NOR REAP NOR  
GATHER INTO BARNES,  
AND YET YOUR  
HEAVENLY FATHER  
FEEDS THEM. ARE YOU  
NOT OF MORE VALUE  
THAN THEY?



-MATTHEW 6:26-  
[ESV]

“

# MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT: *ESC MULTIMEDIA*



Do you ever wonder how you can hear the worship team from anywhere in the sanctuary? Or how the lyrics and passages are displayed? Or how the service is live streamed over YouTube?

The short answer: the ESC Multimedia Ministry team. Take a few minutes to learn more about us. We've answered a few questions that will hopefully give you a sense of our team and how we serve the church. And don't be a stranger, we are always happy to share more about our team, so just reach out to anyone on the Multimedia team.

### *Who are we?*

The ESC Multimedia Ministry team is part of the church-wide Multimedia ministry. We have counterparts that serve the CSC and MSC and we work closely with them to help meet the audio and visual needs of the congregations. We are a diverse group of ESC congregants that enjoy playing with audio and video technologies and equipment.

### *What do we do?*

We have many responsibilities, but in short, we provide audio and visual support for programs like Sunday Service, Sunday School and special programs (think Good Friday Service, Christmas Service, etc.). However, we also do much more than that and have expanded into activities that support our congregation's online presence.

Here's a snapshot of what we do:

- Set up and operate audio during services and programs
- Assemble visual materials (e.g., lyrics, passages, videos) to display during programs
- Facilitate and/or run our online platforms (e.g., Zoom, YouTube, Google Meet)
- Manage, create and support announcements and other graphical materials
- Manage our ESC's Instagram account
- Manage and support our church's check-in and registration system
- Build and maintain our ESC's website
- Support and enable AV tools for other ESC ministries
- Update and maintain the weekly ESC bulletin and email digest
- Manage recordings for our sermons and Sunday Schools

There are a lot of things under our belt, but we have a large team that diligently shows up week after week to get it all done!

*What changed during the pandemic?*

As you can imagine, the team's list of responsibilities expanded when the pandemic hit. A lot of things we do now were new to us and we've never done before. We're thankful that our church is equipped with the necessary tools for us to quickly create online options for our congregations, and over the past two years, we've refined them and made it more

seamless. Of course, to enable this we've made tons of upgrades to our systems and equipment which will now allow us to be more nimble and flexible with whatever method we choose to minister to our congregation and community.

In addition to creating new online platforms for our programs, you might have noticed that the AV team isn't as visible during services now. The pandemic has led to new ways for us to run all the AV equipment and we are able to do it all remotely from upstairs. This has enabled us to have our team all in the same place and ensure that we can meet all our safety precautions.

*What is one blessing from serving on Multimedia?*

There's a lot for us to be thankful for. Although we are not the most visible during programs, the team has experienced a lot of blessings. As a team, we are overjoyed at the blessing that even in a time of lockdowns, safety precautions and being spread out across Toronto, we are still able to worship and connect virtually. We are happy at seeing our various ministries still thrive and people in our congregation connect even though the interactions are a bit different.

Another blessing during the pandemic was that we got a lot closer to our CSC Multimedia team. As we share the sanctuary and a lot of equipment, it created an environment where we needed

to work a lot with our CSC team to figure out the best way to continue to serve our church. This allowed us to get to know some of our CSC brothers and sisters better and also gave us a chance to work with them for events that we normally wouldn't work together on.

One final blessing to note is that with the launch of our website, we've had some people in the community reach out to us to find out more about NYCBC. In fact, a few of them even checked out our Sunday Service, our BLT gatherings, and some even attended our Friday night youth programs. It allowed us to connect with people we normally wouldn't be able to connect with.

*What does a typical Sunday look like?*

We start bright and early at 8:15am, and for the next hour, we're on our feet moving about quite a bit to make sure our worship team is plugged in, all the lyrics and slides are ready and our speakers and presenters are ready.

Here's a rundown of what our Sunday mornings look like:



CALENDAR

now

Get coffee



CALENDAR

now

Set up audio for worship team, make sure everything is working and coming through audio system so they can practice



CALENDAR

now

Set up lyrics slides for songs and ensure it is displaying properly



CALENDAR

now

Create slides for passages and download new announcement slides and/or videos, set up playlist for projectors



CALENDAR

now

Set up all camera positions for our online viewers



CALENDAR

now

Complete a final round of audio and video checks and turn on YouTube live stream



CALENDAR

now

Make sure everything runs smoothly during service and make adjustments as needed. Troubleshoot whatever issues arise.



CALENDAR

now

Quickly take everything down and disinfect in record time after service is done so CSC can start preparing for service

*What's the most memorable event the team served and why?*

For the team, it's the special events that are the most memorable. Primarily, it's because it's one of the few events where we need a lot of the team to help out and it allows us to fellowship with each other and hang out as a team, which we don't do often.



We often get to work on AV needs that we don't normally do like help film videos, create graphics, and work with a much larger group of people from the congregation.

*What skills do you need to help out?*

Honestly, no skills are needed. There's a role for everyone who is interested and is willing to serve. A lot of things we do can be taught and learned and so most of the things that we do as a team, someone can pick up over time. Of course, if you already have skills with audio or video equipment, website design or graphic design, we would love to have you be part of the team.

*How can we pray for you?*  
There's a number of prayer requests from the team:

- Pray for resilience and endurance for our team as the pandemic has made us busier than before and the team is involved in a lot.
- Pray that the team can connect with God and worship even when we are busy doing Multimedia.
- Pray that we continue to remember the reasons why we serve on Multimedia. It's easy for us to get caught up in our work and we sometimes need a reminder of why we are doing this and who we are serving with our skills.

Hope you learned a little bit more about us! We're happy to share more and so reach out to any of the Multimedia team for a chat anytime.



# CONGREGATION CATCH-UP

## DAVID, LING, ERIKA AND MICHAEL C.

Hannah had the pleasure of virtually meeting up with the Chan family to check-in and see what was going on in life. She was joined by David and Ling and their two kids, Erika and Michael. We got things started with a speed quiz between Erika and Michael:

1. What time does school start?

M: 8:40am

2. What time do you wake up?

M: 6:30am; E: 7:00am

3. Who has the cleaner room?

M: me! E: me!

H:... are you sure??

E: ok maybe Michael

H: Is that consensus?

M: It is

4. Who's the slowest eater in the family?

E: me!

5. Between mom and dad, who's the better cook?

E+M: Dad

6. If we played "the floor is lava" amongst the whole family, who would win?

E: Michael

**H: We heard some rustling noises from your new puppy during the quiz, tell us about her!**

M: So I spent my summer writing a business case on why I wanted a dog, then went online to look for adoption agencies and found the website where we got Cara from. We found out we had to fill out an application form and go through a long process. They asked things like how we would train her and did a virtual interview just like this! She's from a northern First Nations community in Manitoba and was 4 months old when we got her.

L: We were very lucky because part of the process was to meet the foster parents because they had to approve us to adopt. The foster parents spent a month with Cara

and were able to start us off with house training Cara. When we got her, she was house trained and crate trained. We never owned a dog before, so we're learning a lot about dog ownership! Michael has been really great and wakes up early every morning to walk her and feed her.

D: I'm very proud of Michael because prior to this we had to yank him out of bed, but now he gets up by himself without fail.

L: He promised his dad that if we got a dog, that she would be his responsibility.

E: Michael's a father now!



**H: That's so exciting! How has your family been adjusting to the pandemic with all the changes? How have you all been doing?**

E: We actually adapted pretty well I would say, even though we can't go on vacation or see our friends.

L: We also got to know the Ontario Trails map very well. One of the things that we've done during the pandemic that we wouldn't have done nearly as much before the pandemic would be to go hiking. Sometimes we would meet up with family friends and go for a walk outdoors.

D: And practice talking to people!

H: If you were to recommend a trail, which one would that be?

E: The one where we did some climbing!

L: We went to Limehouse Conservation Area in Milton. It was really nice and had lots of rock formations. G. Ross Lord Park was also really great. We also went to Port Perry and met up with some families from church on the waterfront, so yeah, it was a great way to spend a day outdoors where we know it can be safer.

**H: Safe to say, hiking is a new hobby! Have you discovered others?**

E: Yes! I've gotten into baking. I've made blueberry muffins, cookies (L: she made 200 cookies for Christmas!), Japanese cheesecake,

lemon pound cake, strawberry shortcake, brownies, lemon meringue pie, cinnamon rolls, apple crumble, sponge cake, matcha green tea roll, chocolate cake, black sesame mousse cake, and also creme brulee.

M: Apple crumble!

E: I said that already.

H: WOW Erika, that is quite the repertoire!

L: That's the other reason why we need to go hiking!

H: Are you baking something new every time you bake, Erika?

E: I've been trying to increase my repertoire, but now that I'm going back to school, I either repeat a recipe or try a different recipe and improvise... no one in my family knows how to bake, so I had to start learning from scratch.

H: Which one is your most successful bake?

D+M: The Japanese cheesecake!

E: Japanese cheesecake... or the cinnamon rolls!

L: Everything.

**H: I'm certainly learning a lot of things about your family! Is there anything new that you've learned about each other?**

E: For my dad, I learned that he can cook! Pre-COVID, he didn't cook, but now I trust him completely in the kitchen.

D: It's a survival instinct!

E: I've also recognized that Michael is nice and my mom has a demanding job!

M: My dad taught me about financial management during COVID, I discovered that Erika

could bake pretty well... because her first bakes weren't the best bakes, and I learned that my mom could do arts and crafts because she made masks for us.

D: I love how they were both so candid with each other!

L: I've learned that Michael has a great capacity to take on responsibility and be true to his word. Even when it was really cold outside, he was responsible and took Cara out for walks. He's a trooper! He also had two RCM piano exams online during the pandemic and was able to successfully complete them. He also grew about 6 inches and is taller than me now! Like the kids have been saying, I'm grateful that David has taken on the responsibility of cooking for the family because it is certainly a huge burden taken off of me. Sometimes I'm like, "Wow, how did you come up with this?!" He's very creative actually because he'll watch a cooking YouTube video and then he'll adapt the recipe. He knows how to plate food, and I would dare say he's better than the original YouTube videos! For Erika, her baking skills have definitely stood out. She also reduces the sugar in recipes and we see a big difference between what you buy in-store and what she makes. So that's the justification to bake because it's "healthier"! We've gotten to literally live with each other 24/7 and sometimes it feels like the house isn't big enough, but it's brought us closer as a family, not to say there haven't been



challenges. I think we've also learned to not take things for granted, like going out for a bite to eat, or going to a friends' house, and even waking up on Sundays and going to church and having a meal afterward. Things we look back and say, "wow". We miss all of that right?

D: I think with Michael, I'm definitely happy that he's able to step up to the plate and take responsibility. When I agreed to get a dog, I was actually not supportive initially, but he gave me his promise that he'd do it, and so far I'm very impressed that he's able to do it. I've also noticed that Erika's a really, really great helper who always tries to support Michael. She might say, "Oh Michael, you forgot this," and would go ahead and help prepare food for Cara and they become a bit of a team. I think this bodes well for Michael when he has a human daughter and not a canine daughter.

L+E: haha

M: \*insert bewildered look for the future\*

I'm also impressed by how productive he is with his time. For Erika, she's a very social person, so I think not coming to church and fellowshiping at church is a big damper on her, but somehow she has an amazing ability to make the best out of the situation, and I'm really happy about that. She's also demonstrated that she's able to take care of her mom. She'd check in on her mom through the workday and ask if she needs a coffee, which makes her mom's day so much easier.

E: I'm her personal assistant!

D: For Ling, I'm seeing even more how she is able to multitask so many things. There's a lot to her work, but she's still able to keep an eye on the kids and look after their piano and swimming lessons when pools were open too.

**H: So this is a harder question, open question really, if you were to go back in time to March 2020, one week before the lockdown happened, what would you tell yourself?**

E: I'd say, "Erika, hold on tight for this ride because this will be a LONG journey! Get ready to have a lot of family bonding. Don't be too stressed out. God is always there even though He has modified my life very much."

M: I would just tell myself not to worry because God is there with me. Mentally I've been ok because I've been doing a lot of things to keep busy and go outside, especially since I have to walk Cara, but just tell myself not to be worried and to stay focused, especially in school.

D: I would tell myself to go out and try to eat everywhere before the lockdown, go on a short trip, and see all the friends you won't be able to see.

E: You're going to be up 24/7 doing all that in a week!

L: I totally agree with seeing if we can do a small trip before everything goes into lockdown. Knowing what we know now and talking to myself back then, I would say to God, "Truly, it is in Your hands. We are not in control and we must remain faithful that God will reveal His plans in time. He is allowing this to happen for a reason." While we are still in the middle of this pandemic we might not know why, but one day when we look back, maybe He will help us discern and tell us why, but in the meantime, we must remain faithful. I think part of what we need to do is to keep our eyes open and try to understand what these opportunities and paths that He is paving for us are. Because this will pass one day. Many

people have come and gone in the world and would not have gone through what we have gone through. We still don't know what our new normal will be after the pandemic, and we know that the bible says we can't change anything by worrying about it, so we have to leave this in God's hands.

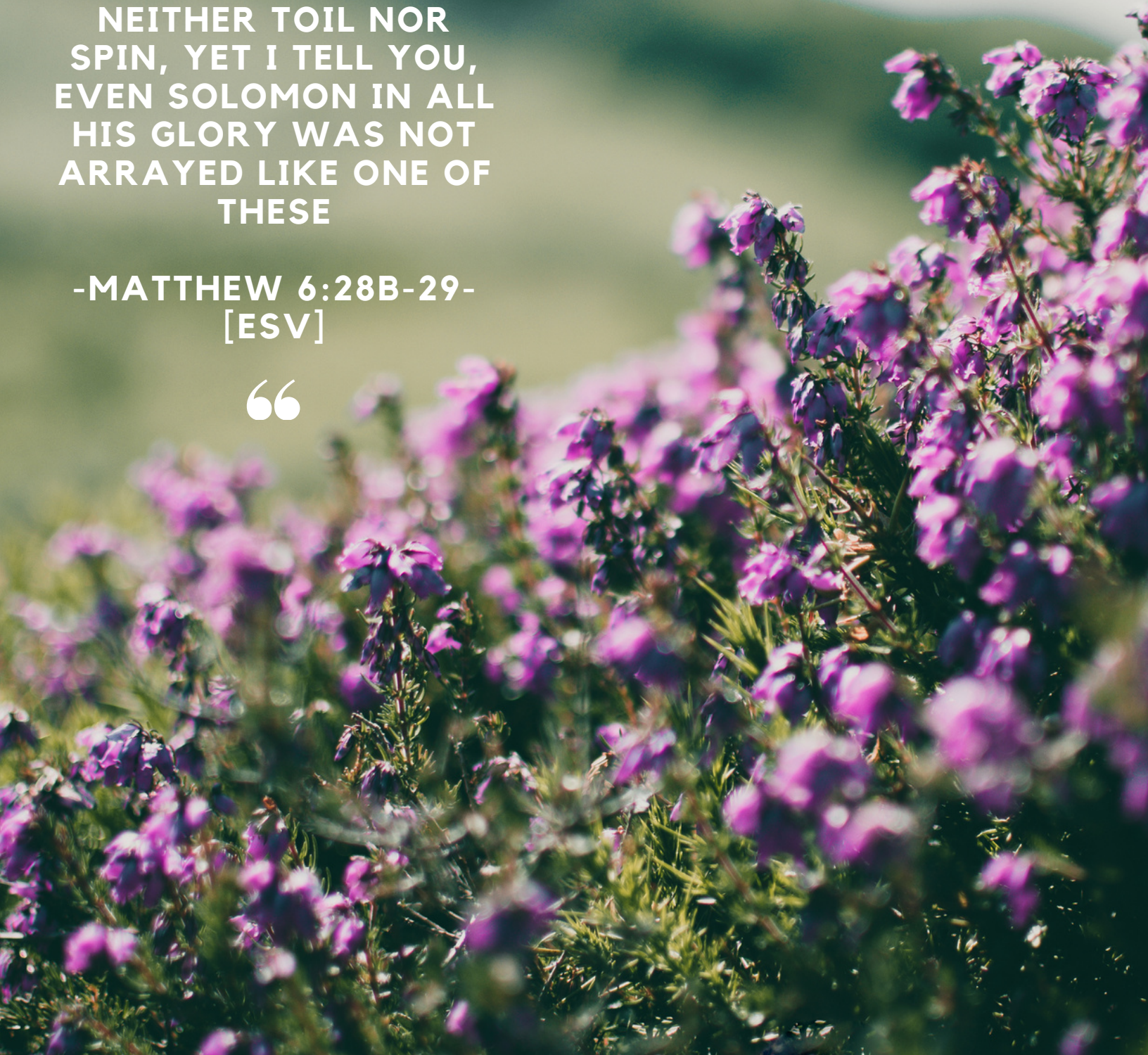


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CONSIDER THE LILIES  
OF THE FIELD, HOW  
THEY GROW: THEY  
NEITHER TOIL NOR  
SPIN, YET I TELL YOU,  
EVEN SOLOMON IN ALL  
HIS GLORY WAS NOT  
ARRAYED LIKE ONE OF  
THESE

-MATTHEW 6:28B-29-  
[ESV]

“



# CONGREGATION CATCH-UP

## ALBERT Y.

Even during the pandemic, people are still getting through school and graduating. Curious about one of our new grads, we asked Albert some questions.

**Q: Hey Albert! What are you up to? What does life look like for you right now?**

Last year I graduated from Carleton University in Ottawa and have since moved back to my home with my family. Praise the Lord, I recently started a new job as a remote graphic designer at a startup company based in Toronto.

**Q: Have you discovered any new hobbies or revisited some old ones during these past two years?**

I have recently got into a bit of casual running since last fall, as it was a convenient way to live a more active lifestyle and meet others that share the same hobby.

**Q: How has God shaped/changed/taught you over the course of the pandemic?**

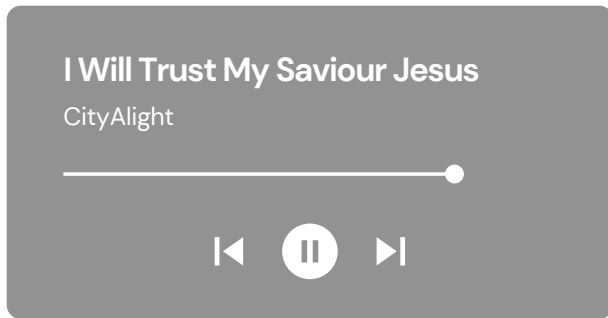
Like many, the pandemic was a novel experience, and being a fresh graduate, I was filled with



many doubts about my future career and life path. Truthfully, I can tell you that I still don't have it all figured out. Anxious about not having a clear roadmap, I read books, listened to sermons, talked with people, trying to grasp what God had planned for me in the future so that *I can plan* for everything. I was trying to be God in my life. I may not have it all figured out, but I have now learned to actively trust in the living hope (1 Peter 1:3) we have in God, knowing that His ways are beyond what I can even begin to comprehend (Isaiah 55:8-9). This is not blind faith, but a faith in the sovereign, omnipotent God that holds the heavens and the earth in his hand, and has brought me to where I am now and will continue the good work until Jesus comes again (Philippians 1:6).



**Q: One worship song on replay or is near and dear to you?**



**Q: You're serving in Youth Ministry! What has that experience been like so far?**

Serving in Youth Ministry has been a rejuvenating experience giving back to the ministry that helped me when I was a student. Especially since the individuals in the older fellowship (Benjamin Fellowship for university students), are very close to me in age, it is a blessing for me to have this opportunity to help and learn from those who are in a similar position to where I was back then.

**Q: What is one thing you're thankful for in the past two years, or one joy that you've experienced in the past two years?**

If I were to only choose one thing that I am thankful for in the past two years, it'd have to be the people that God has blessed around me. From new friends to my family since birth, I am grateful for all the individuals that God has brought into my life. It is rather difficult to pin down one singular joy that was in the past two years,

but if I had to choose, I'd say I am joyful that I was able to graduate after 4 years in school, especially during the uncertain times of the pandemic.

**Q: Preference for cats or dogs?**

Personally, no preference between either, but I'd probably get a dog in the future because they'd be able to accompany me on my runs. :)

**Q: Knowing what you know now, if you could step back in time to March 2020, one week before the pandemic, what would you say to yourself?**

I don't think there'd be anything I can say to my previous self that will prepare him for this, but if I could say something, it'd probably be, "Pray more, have faith in God, it's going to be a wild ride."

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**AND I AM SURE OF THIS,  
THAT HE WHO BEGAN A  
GOOD WORK IN YOU  
WILL BRING IT TO  
COMPLETION AT THE  
DAY OF JESUS CHRIST.**

**-PHILIPPIANS 1:6-  
[ESV]**

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# FROM ONE KITCHEN TO ANOTHER

## SANDWICHES

Nothing beats a sandwich as an easy, go-to meal. We asked a few of our ESC family members to share their take on a sandwich. Perhaps this will inspire your culinary adventures this week!

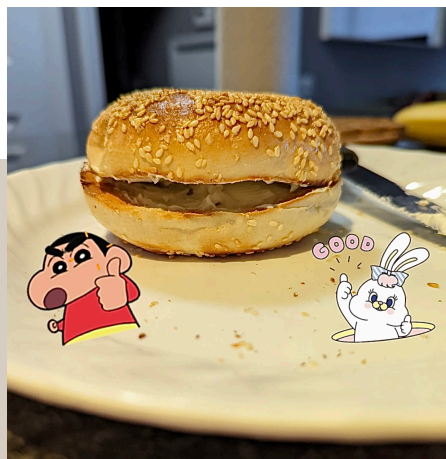


### **KIMCHI GRILLED CHEESE**

**DENISE L.**

Pan fry kimchi before putting inside toast.

Notes:  
Cheese and butter are essential.



### **CREAM CHEESE BAGEL**

**ALLAN W.**

Gently toast a bagel and cut in half. Generously spread cream cheese.

Notes:  
Camera eats first. Add stickers for added effect.



### **BREAKFAST MUFFIN**

**JOY Y.**

Crack an egg into a muffin tin and poke the egg with a toothpick so the yolk mixes with the whites. Put the tin in the oven and bake for 10 min at 400F.

Notes; Freezes well! Pre-make and wrap in parchment paper. Microwave the whole thing when ready to eat.



## **KIMCHI AND EGG**

**SANDRA T.**

Pan fry kimchi before putting inside toast. Scramble eggs, sprinkle green onions, pour over kimchi.

Notes:  
Sandra and Denise are good friends. Can you tell?



## **WHAT'S-IN-THE-FRIDGE-SANDWICH**

**ESTHER L.**

Cherry tomatoes, green salad and eggs with sesame seed salad dressing on an English muffin.

Notes:  
Dictate to parents what they should eat. Can soil a diaper to get their attention.



## **SPINACH AND SALMON**

**RYAN C.**

Spinach, cucumber, mayo, mustard and salmon.

Notes:  
Multi-grain sourdough is amazing.



# GROWING IN WINTER

MICHELLE C.



When I was approached about writing something for this edition of Encounters, I was asked, "Do you like gardening?" Those who know me know that I do... during most of the year. Winters... not so much. Especially in Toronto, where the temperatures tend to be below freezing and the snow above knee-level, it can leave many yearning for where the grass seemed much greener and the hours of sunshine longer.

What could I write about? How to care for houseplants in the winter? How to start seedlings for the summer? Interestingly enough when I asked God what to write about, He prompted me to share about the importance of winter

when it comes to His kingdom. There are actually *many ways* that God reveals Himself through winter -and what I'm about to share is just *one* of them! How amazing is that! Our God is matchless in His creativity and love for His creation.



Fun fact: Did you know that some plants need a certain number of cold winter days in order to look their best and thrive come springtime? If they don't experience a long enough cold period, they fail to flower or produce a harvest when warmer weather comes around. The fancy term for this is "vernalization." (You can try slipping that word into the next conversation you have with someone and they'll probably be so impressed that they'll think your big toes are green too, haha).



So although it doesn't *seem* like growth is happening because there are no leaves, blossoms, or fruit in the winter, for many plants there's a lot of essential development that is going on below the surface that is hidden to our naked eye. It's a beautiful and tangible illustration that God gives us about our lives.

Perhaps you're in a winter season of your life right now where everything seems barren and bleak, and it feels like you've been

waiting for forever for spring to come. Perhaps you've been praying and asking "Why?" or "When?" and you've seen little or no change and it all seems to be in vain. Perhaps this season has left you frustrated, confused, and exhausted. If that's you, here is a word of encouragement today: *You are not alone. the Holy Spirit is at work, and nothing we commit to the Lord is wasted.*

In the New Living Translation version of Matthew 11:28-30, it says, *"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.'"*

Jesus sees you and hears you and is with you in this long and difficult season. He's here with open arms to help carry the load and teach you how to do it well. Our first response to any situation is to call out to Jesus. There is no condemnation in Christ -Jesus paid once and for all for sin, so run to Him. No mistake is too big, no burden too heavy, no problem too complicated that we can't bring it to our Saviour who fully knows us and can do more than we could ever imagine. Jesus died on the cross for our sins **so that** we could be reconciled to Him, **not** so that we could struggle to figure out

how to do everything by ourselves. There's nothing wrong with falling at His feet and crying, "Jesus help."

Remember that the enemy will do whatever he can so that we give up hope when we're faced with a grueling season; the devil and his cronies are out to kill, steal, and destroy. They're doing everything they can to kill you... but also stunt the fruit that God is growing in and through you. We are in the midst of a very real spiritual warfare.

Allow me to share one of my favourite passages in the Bible from 2 Chronicles 20. It's the story of King Jehoshaphat leading the Israelites into battle against their enemies who were coming against them. I highly recommend reading through the entire chapter, but I wanted to highlight 2 Chronicles 20:21-22 (NIV):

*After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:*

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."*

*As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.*

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## **GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD, FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.**

**-2 CHRONICLES 20:21B-**  
[NIV]

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If you're in a winter season of your life right now, I encourage you to *make praise and gratitude a priority* and watch as the Holy Spirit shifts your focus from your weaknesses and the uphill battle in front of you to the truth of God's love, power, and sovereignty.

Sometimes it's only in retrospect that we can see His fingerprints. Often when God feels far away, we need to be reminded that our feelings/thoughts don't dictate the truth of God's presence. Just as we do not always see or feel the warmth of the sun even though it continues its life-sustaining course in the heavens -God continues to be present even if we don't feel Him near. He has promised that He will never leave or forsake us, and He is faithful to His word.

Another interesting tidbit is that not every plant goes through vernalization, but many plants you're probably familiar with (and will find around your house) do go through this process, including: garlic, carrots, cabbage, turnips, beets, kale, lavender, peaches, plums, apples, tulips, daffodils,

wheat, and rye. So the next time you bite into an apple or cook something delicious with garlic, I hope you will be reminded of the sweet truth that there is something worthwhile even in tough winters, and some fruit would not exist were it not for those cold, long days. God is doing something beautiful amidst the bitterness.

*Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
nor fruit be on the vines,  
the produce of the olive fail  
and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold  
and there be no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD;  
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.  
God, the LORD, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the deer's;  
he makes me tread on my high places.  
To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.*

*Habakkuk 3: 17-19  
[ESV]*

# LET'S GET EXERCISING

HANNAH L.

As we come out of winter hibernation and adjust to life with more sunlight, there will naturally be more activities that we can enjoy outdoors. Think summer softball, fundraising walks/runs, group hiking adventures, etc. In light of this, pardon the pun, let's ease our way into incorporating more physical activity into our lives to get ready for the season ahead.

## 1 Take the Stairs

Perhaps you're back at the office or live in a condo. Take the stairs the whole way to your destination, or ride an elevator for part of the distance and then take the stairs for the remainder.

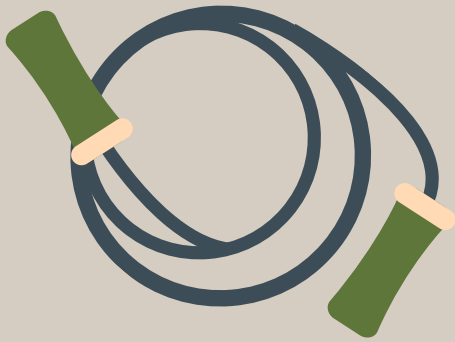
## 2 Circle Around

If you're walking around a mall and see something you want to purchase, make a note, keep walking around the mall, and come back to purchase it after your extra walk. You might decide you don't need that item after your walk!



# 3 Enjoy Fresh Air

Fresh air does wonders! Start your day with a quick walk around the neighbourhood, or have a comfortable evening stroll. If you're bored, put on a nice podcast to listen to.



# 4 Jump Rope

Not the best on your knees, but can be self-paced. No one said you have to jump with a jump rope. Feel free to walk or step over the rope instead. This will still give you an easy arm workout while you're doing some cardio.

# 5 Keep Trying

It's alright to miss a day of physical activity here or there, but try your best to stick with what you've decided to do. Even if you can't exercise for the full length of time you had envisioned for yourself, just do a little bit instead. Habits take time and persistence to develop!



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**BUT SEEK FIRST THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD AND  
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS,  
AND ALL THESE THINGS  
WILL BE ADDED TO  
YOU.**

**THEREFORE, DO NOT BE  
ANXIOUS ABOUT  
TOMORROW, FOR  
TOMORROW WILL BE  
ANXIOUS FOR ITSELF.  
SUFFICIENT FOR THE  
DAY IS ITS OWN  
TROUBLE.**

**-MATTHEW 6:33-34-  
[ESV]**

“

# OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

Looking for help! Especially:

- Drummers
- Electric guitarists
- Bass
- Piano players

If you are interested, please contact Bhagat, Evy or Jerry

## DISINFECTION TEAM

As we are in the process of reopening our church to more brothers and sisters and multiple congregations, we need some more help disinfecting different areas of our church. No skills needed!

If you are interested, please contact Kathy, Jeff or Hannah

***Other opportunities always exist! If you would like to serve but are unsure of how, please contact any of our church leaders to get connected.***

# COMING UP

Some important dates:

**MARCH 13**

Daylight Savings Time

**MARCH 19**

ESC Board Games Night

**APRIL 15**

Good Friday

**APRIL 17**

Easter Sunday

**MAY 13-15**

ESC Spring Retreat

**JUNE 11**

2nd Annual NY Softball  
Tournament

**HAVE  
FEEDBACK OR  
WANT TO  
CONTRIBUTE?**

Please contact any  
member on BLM.

# EDITORS' NOTES

We hope you have enjoyed and been blessed through this edition of Encounters as much as it has been an enjoyment and blessing to those that put this publication together.

You may have noticed that there are some similarities in theme and passages amongst different devotionals and reflections throughout this publication, so we wanted to give you some background behind how Encounters was put together.

Some ministry groups were reached out to as a group while individuals were reached out to separately. Besides ministry groups, no one knew who else would be contributing or what each person would be writing about. It was up to each person to sit with the Lord and discern what to write. As time went on and submissions were received, it became more and more apparent that the Lord was at work; people were writing about the same topics and were expanding upon similar passages, and we could not help but be in awe.

May we continue to walk in step with the Spirit, and may His name be praised.