

Twenty seven children begin the healing of a community

by Stephanie Curry

When Marilyn Campbell, All Saint's Anglican Church School Co-ordinator, called us this week, we didn't know her conversation would touch so many hearts. She said St. Andrews Presbyterian church had extended their hands to us by offering their Sunday School space to our Church School. We still had to practise for our Christmas Pageant and needed a location to worship and to put on the show. Many of us were reduced to tears, again. This time tears of joy for the community of Whitby and the surrounding area, for they have come together to offer their support to our congregation of All Saint's Anglican in a time of desperate need.

On arrival at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church on Sunday we didn't know what to expect. From the entrance we were greeted with the warmth and peace of Beverley Williams, associate priest and Ken Davies, priest in charge of All Saint's Anglican, both of whom have led us with such grace, in happy times and now in times of such uncertainty. During the turmoil of the last six days since our home church, All Saint's Anglican in Whitby, was set on fire and burnt down, the most important question many of us had was, how we were going to provide for the children. But, Marilyn, as caring as she is, emphasized how important it was to help the children make the transition to another space as easily as possible and to continue with their normal routines. So that is what we, the Church School teachers, tried to do with heavy hearts.

Marilyn's great idea, that we make gingerbread churches after the practise was met with joy. As we facilitated the building of these beautiful structures with twenty seven children, we were touched at how resilient they really are. They were all happy and eager by the story of the nativity and then excited to build the modern day church, one graham cracker at a time. Several times the walls crumbled under the weight of the icing, candy canes, smarties and jube-jubes, but that didn't stop them, they began again and again until their buildings were finished. So in the end, it was the message from the children that proved most important to our community - one brick at a time.

Yes, our building has burnt down, and it was among the most beautiful churches in the area, but All Saint's Anglican is much more than a beautiful building, it is a community, a god fearing congregation who has been blessed with the message of hope from that holy night so long ago. One of peace and love and we will rise up, with the wind at our backs, to face the challenge to rebuild our church as our children have demonstrated today.