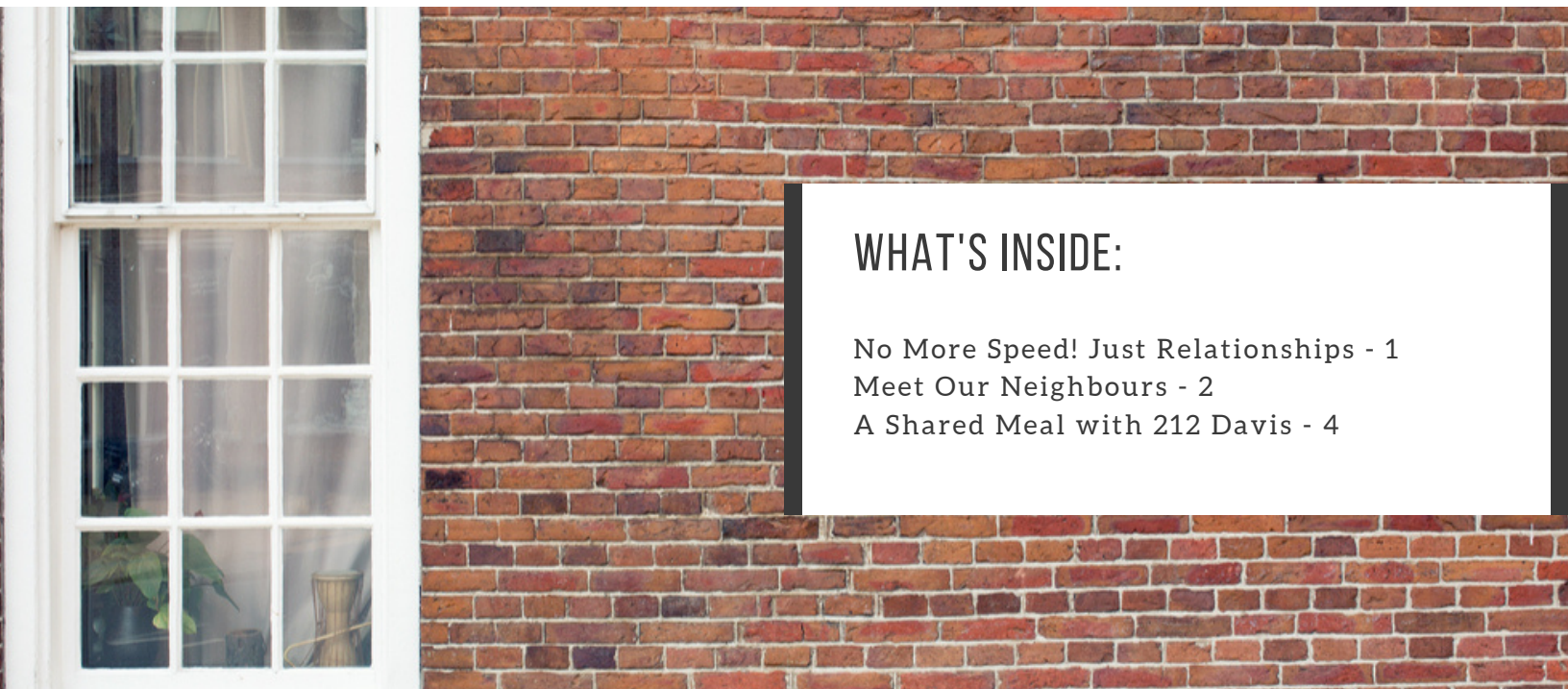


# PARISH HOUSE

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Newmarket Church of Christ

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## NO MORE SPEED! JUST RELATIONSHIPS

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Nathan Pickard

Speed! Everything needs to hurry up. We want our phones to be faster; we want immediate results! Andrew Root helpfully articulates how our culture (and our lives) are caught up in a perpetual spin called dynamic stabilization—defined as constant and stable growth (*The Congregation In A Secular Age*, pg. 176). Whether it's in the business world, sports teams, education and even the church, if what is grown this year is not exceeded the following year, we automatically assume we are losing.

continue reading, pg. 3

# Meet Our Neighbours

Without a doubt, our neighbours have been instrumental in helping us as a Christian faith community live into the mission of God. Our neighbours have helped us understand the neighbourhood, worked alongside us in various ministries, and even at times hosted the church for various events. We are who we are because we live in relationship with our neighbours. This edition of the Parish House Newsletter continues to introduce you to some of our neighbours and the gifts they share with the Newmarket Church of Christ and the neighbourhood.

## Meet Jenny

Jenny lives across the street in the neighbourhood called *Newmarket Heights*. Jenny is, in many ways, the matriarch of the neighbourhood. While sitting on Jenny's front porch, I asked her when we first met. *"Did I meet you when we had coffee with Stu in Tim Horton's?" "Did I meet you at Maple Leaf school?" "Did I meet you through Erin?"* After a few questions and stories, Jenny came to the conclusion that we met through Summer Camp. *"I don't trust anyone with my grandchildren and yet I trusted this church. The church has earned my trust and it's not earned lightly."* Hearing these words I remember the late Charles Siburt saying, *"Trust is hard to earned and easy to loose!"* As we continue talking on the front porch of Jenny's home, she laughs and remembers when the church ate with the neighbourhood. One could see in her eyes the longing to once again sit at the table together.

As I think over the years about our friendship with Jenny, I think how much our mutual friendship has brought many benefits, to Jenny and the church. Jenny says that her and her family have benefited from our friendship in times of death when the church hosted her family for funerals. Jenny continues to talk about the benefits received through Summer Camp, shared meals, shared neighbourhood projects, and how her son was helped to discover a life of sobriety.

The church has benefited in many ways: by gaining a trusted partner in managing and preparing the food boxes, inviting us to speak a word of resurrection in a time of death, to give us an understanding of the neighbourhood, to providing us an opportunity to serve, and to have a voice who vouches for the authenticity of the church in a neighbourhood that has grown skeptical of churches. We could not tell the stories we tell if it wasn't for our friendship with Jenny.



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We are deeply grateful for the partnership we have with our neighbours. Our neighbours are using their gifts in such ways whereby our Christian faith community can continue to bear witness to God's in-breaking kingdom. In what ways does your faith community welcome the neighbours and invite the neighbours to use their gifts? In what ways do your neighbours partner with you?

# No More Speed! Just Relationships, cont'd

This begs the question: how do we have constant and continual growth? Speed! We must increase our speed and continue to keep the plates of growth spinning. But again, as Root helpfully shows us, the faster we move the more burned out we become. With acceleration we become tired and when tired, we become disconnected and once we are disconnected, we become alienated from each other.

Consider what COVID did to many of our churches. When COVID shut down our churches, churches were quick to innovate. Pastors quickly learned to become IT specialists navigating Facebook Live, YouTube, and Zoom. We jumped into livestreaming our worship services because we knew that if we could not continue dynamic stabilization, our perception would be the church is losing. We therefore asked our ministry staff to increase their speed by developing new ministries, new programs, new ideas—not just maintain the current programs being offered but to speed up and offer new forms of ministry in order to keep the plates of growth spinning. In order to keep the perception of success, we need to show there is constant and stable growth and we do so by accelerating all aspects of our lives. Unfortunately, we are discovering a devastating outcome in our pursuit of speed to innovate: alienation. Not all, but in many cases, our innovation of Christian worship in a post-COVID world is leading us to become alienated from each other.

We seem to be caught in a perpetual spin. We work at greater speeds in order to facilitate growth. We think growth will be the answer to our problems so we continue to push harder and faster; we continue at a high rate of speed. But what is actually happening is that we are getting burned out. Speed is leading to burn out. Not only burn out; speed is leading us to be alienated from each other. And once we are alienated; alienation leads to a lack of commitment. Those who are alienated will not participate!

What's the antidote? Is the antidote to slow down? No. Slowing down (though may be healthy for us) will only accelerate our perception that we are falling behind and therefore losing. We cannot slow down because if we slow down the plates of growth will stop spinning. So, what's the antidote? Relationships! Alienation is overcome when we discover we are bound up in relationships. Relationships will keep the plates of growth spinning—NOT SPEED!

We are running a hybrid worship service. We have some people “in-person” and we have some people participating in our worship through zoom. For many people, this hybrid offering is great. In the busyness of our lives, we have the option of simply joining virtually. If we find ourselves traveling (for work or pleasure), we can still participate in our worship by joining through zoom. If we are unwell, we won't miss communal worship because we can join virtually. But if we are honest, though we try really hard to foster participation in this hybrid scenario, what some are experiencing is alienation. We are becoming alienated from each other.

Recognizing this alienation from each other, in early June, we hosted a BBQ and invited



some of our neighbours. In fact, it was our neighbours who cooked the burgers and hot dogs for us and shared in the responsibility of providing salads and deserts. We sat in the back field together and ate a meal.

One of the parishioners, as he was leaving the BBQ, effectively said, *"I didn't know what to expect. I was skeptical at first but after this experience, I feel more alive."* Later in the week when I met some of the residents of the apartment building beside the church, the residents effectively said, *"We felt alive; we felt for a minute our lives had meaning."*

We are nearing the point where we will actively look for a Parish House minister. My prayer for the Parish House minister is to help us continue the development of deep relationships with the neighbourhood for I am convinced that in these relationships we as a Christian faith community will encounter the presence of the living God and through this encounter, will discover meaning and purpose.

The same is also true for our individual lives. The antidote to our alienated lives is not to move with greater speed; the antidote is to pay attention to our relationships for its in the deepening of relationships that we will discover meaning and purpose.

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# Sharing A Meal

The church sharing a meal together with some of her neighbours



"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

Larry James, *The Wealth of the poor*

**NEWMARKET  
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