

# PARISH HOUSE

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Newmarket Church of Christ

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## KEEPING TIME

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Nathan Pickard

When I was a little kid and allowed to roam the streets on my bicycle, my parents would often give me a time to be home. The problem: I didn't own a watch. The clock out in front of the BMO bank often never worked. So how would I ever know what time it was?

There was a payphone out in front of the Muxlow pharmacy and we learned that if we picked it up and dialed 0, we would speak to an operator and we could ask her the time. We also learned that older people carried a watch so we would politely ask people the time. We kept time by asking others what time it was.

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# Parish House Breakfast

We are hosting a Parish House breakfast for anyone near the Toronto area on Saturday May 6th @ 9am. At this breakfast we'll present a video of the neighbourhood, remind everyone of the vision we're living into, update everyone on what's been happening since COVID, present the financial requirements and outline the next steps for us. For those in the Toronto area and can travel to Newmarket for the breakfast, please let us know.



**Parish House Breakfast**  
Saturday May 6, 2023 @ 9:00am

At the breakfast:

- We'll tell stories that have happened during COVID
- Present financial requirements for the Parish House and seek financial partners
- Next Steps we're undertaking

Please RSVP for the breakfast by Monday May 1<sup>st</sup>  
905-895-6502 or [newmarketcofc@gmail.com](mailto:newmarketcofc@gmail.com)

## The Neighbourhood

Over the next few issues, we'll paint a picture of the neighbourhood that the Parish House will focus on. The outline covers 500+ homes and 8 high rise condominiums and apartment buildings in roughly a three square mile radius.



Maple Leaf Public School that serves the elementary age kids (grades K-8). Roughly 200+ kids attend this school.

Tim Horton's Coffee Shop, where we meet the neighbours

The location of the church building

# Keeping Time, cont'd

James Smith has written a fascinating book called, "*How To Inhabit Time.*" It is certainly not a book for managing your everyday affairs of work and family obligations. There are no formulas, methods or tips for organizing already "filled lives." Instead, Smith helps us *recognize* ourselves and our context in relation to God who encounters us in time. To quote Smith, "*It's like living amid the cacophony of the modern world and finally discerning the beat of the Spirit in history and knowing how to dance in time.*"

The church is a community that always prays, "Your kingdom come." Thus, the church is always looking for how God's kingdom is breaking into our present time. As a result, we're not counting down the time until the "trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ are raised." Instead, we're trying to discern where the Spirit of God is at work "at this time." Thus, we keep time, not in terms of "clock time"; we "spiritually keep time." We're keeping time to the work of God, in Jesus, through the power of the Spirit.

In order to spiritually keep time, we need to practice discernment. We need faithful disciples of Christ to discern together what God's spirit is up to in our midst. We need inquisitive minds to help us see what otherwise we might miss. Like a tour guide who points out various points of interest, we need people who can help us see what God is up to in our midst. By seeing what God is up to, we can (re)arrange our lives (and churches) in ways that are responsive to God's on-going redemptive work.

It's here that Smith uses a really helpful image. We're not keeping time, such as a regimental march: left-right-left-right! Its more like a subtle dance--a feel for what comes next. Sometimes, we misstep in the subtle dance--sometimes the music speeds up and we're still thinking the music is slow; sometimes the Spirit moves in a new direction and we stumble and our feet get twisted. When this happens, we don't throw up our hands and storm off the dance floor; we center ourselves, listen to the beat of the gospel and start moving once again to the rhythms of the Spirit.

Acts 10-15 is a story of the church keeping time with the Spirit. When Peter is praying and falls into a trance and sees unclean animals being lowered down, he hears a voice that says, "Rise, kill and eat." Peter responds: "Never." Only for the voice to respond, "What I have made clean, you must not call unclean." Immediately following this vision, a knock on the door could be heard and standing there are "unclean" strangers. Peter goes with these "unclean" strangers to the home of Cornelius where he and other disciples of God discover God's Spirit is working in ways they could not have imagined.

Once word leaks out that Peter is sharing table fellowship with "unclean Gentiles", a congregational meeting takes place. In this meeting, we have individuals who think what Peter has done is heretical. Others, such as the apostle Paul, recount similar stories and experiences of God's Spirit at work in new ways. Scripture is read. The outcome of this congregational meeting is the church discerns together that the Spirit is working in ways

never imagined. With this discernment, the collective church (re)arranges its collective and individual lives in light of what God is up to.

Growing up, I was given a time to be home. Not having any means to tell time, I would ask others, "What time is it?" Now, nearly forty years later, I'm still asking the same question. I'm not interested, however, in "clock-time;" I'm interested in how to spiritually keep time. I'm interested in keeping time according to what God, in Jesus, through the power of the Spirit is doing in our midst. By becoming spiritual timekeepers, we can stay in step with God's on-going redemptive work.

Thus, faithfulness, as Smith argues, is not "*prolongation and preservation of what has been*" (guarding against change). Being faithful to our calling is spiritually keeping time according to the work of God. By spiritually keeping time, we know how to live into and out of our calling of being God's kingdom people.

O God,  
You entered into time; You moved into the neighbourhood.  
You continue to enter into our lives and churches in various moments  
of time.

Help us to recognize  
When you show up in our midst  
What kind of work you are doing  
Where your kingdom work is taking place

So we can be a people and churches whose lives are reoriented around  
you.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

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"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  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST**

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God through friendship  
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