



MOUNTAINSIDE UNITED CHURCH

July 2026 Newsletter

"Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer"

Calendar

July 5. Worship at Birks Heritage Chapel at 10:30am.

July 12. Worship at Birks Heritage Chapel at 10:30am.

July 19. Worship at Birks Heritage Chapel at 10:30am.

July 26. Worship at Birks Heritage Chapel at 10:30am.

- As we monitor the changing weather temperature, please note when it is necessary to move to Level 1.

- Lunch will be on July 19, a summer time lunch, a time to celebrate those who have a July Birthday, please join with JOY.

Elva Crawford, L&L.

Minister's Message

Dear Friends at Mountainside,

One of the major principles of the study of art and architectural history at Queen's University was the viewing of the actual works rather than just photographic reproductions. This led to 2 field trips per year to the US, and the second-year course, the Venice summer school, while I was in the undergraduate program. I have benefited from this perspective and hold it to be true. There is something different about being in the presence of the work. The sculptural quality of a Van Gogh, for instance, does not translate to reproductions which cannot adequately show the thick impasto of paint that bring his canvases to life.

You can study the various details of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes, but it is challenging to grasp the major theological program of the ceiling until you see it in person. In the chapel the iconography and presentation of the themes of the older Testament become clear.

Recently I finally made a pilgrimage to see one of the major works of Western religious art that resides in the dining hall of what is still a monastery in Milan. It was a work that I had studied in my 3rd year at Queen's for the better part of the fall term. It is a painting that is one of the best know Christian works of art and is displayed in needlework, petit point, and paint by number prints found in many Christian auditorium, parlours, and Sunday School classrooms. I have shared with you before; it is so well known that you never really take the time to study the masterpiece. You are blinded by familiarity.

Of course I speak of Leonardo da Vinci's fresco of the Last Supper found in the monastery beside Santa Maria della Grazie. The church itself was to be the artistic equivalent of the church of San Lorenzo in Florence that housed the Medici tombs by Michelangelo. Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, wanted to outdo the Medici and so his court painter, military advisor, architect and friend, Leonardo was asked to paint the fresco to adorn the adjacent dining hall for the monks, while Bramante built the church.



Placing 12 figures on one side of a table is not an easy task. Making it realistic and work is a huge challenge. Earlier depictions had an obviously Jewish Judas on the opposite side from the apostles, and often 2 apostles on either end making the task easier. Then halos were added to all but you know who!

Leonardo provided us with a psychological drama where there are no halos in gold, no single holy grail, no other outward signs of the holy, and Judas is equal in place to the others. The divine aura is from the 'natural light' of the three painted windows that look out to the Dolomites that are visible from the city. Then there is what become a presumed interior window that front-lights the fresco. Jesus in a triangular stance above the table is set apart from the groupings of apostles, and is enveloped in a diaphanous light that becomes the halo that shines on the others emanating from Christ who has moved from his shocking announcement, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me (Matt. 26:21)," to what we know follows when he reaches for the bread and then the cup, "Take and eat; this is my body." The others are wondering who will betray him, well all but one who moves back while the others move forward. Judas withdraws while the others openly express emotion. Only Jesus is serene and apart, he is already in the world but not of it, he is clearly divine.

Earlier I used the term pilgrimage. I believe that this was a prayer journey in a very hot Italy. For about 20 minutes of my life I was able to experience one interpretation of a meal that has in a symbolic, mysterious way, become the centre of my call and ministry. I mean when I stand behind the table, share the words of institution, and offer the bread and the cup to those who still take and eat and drink in memory of Christ. The luminosity of the figures and particularly Jesus will stay with me. The scale of the work (why I show the photo with the figure) and the strong simplicity of the complex design and iconography will be present to me for a very long time. For me to pray with eyes open before this painting was an experience of the holy.

That the fresco has survived is a miracle in and of itself. Leonardo did not opt for painting on wet plaster, the norm for frescos from Giotto's Arena Chapel to Michelangelo's ceiling. He found a way to paint on dry plaster. Sadly it did not completely hold and was even in serious condition during the artist's lifetime. The work was so altered that later monks cut a new door to access the room through the fresco. Then there were the numerous 'restorations' that painted over the original, and finally the bombing of the chapel in WWII. Miraculously it has survived when the other wall to its right crumbled. With herculean effort the previous alterations have been removed, the original cleaned and preserved, and the chapel climate and humidity controlled in a sealed space. In small, restricted groups you are allowed about 20 minutes. 20 minutes that for me were enough. Upon leaving the room I offered a private prayer of thanksgiving. I have been blessed.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Doug

Message from the Chair of Session

Greetings. As we commence Summer 2026, first and foremost, I would like to wish you all, your families and friends a wonderful and safe summer.

It's a little over 2 months since I started my role and duties as your chairperson. From the start I feel anxious to have such responsibility and doubt myself if I can do the job. But God's will be done and He will guide me along the way. With the support of the members of the session, it will definitely help me to fulfill my duties and responsibilities as a chair.

I will do my very best to serve Mountainside United Church and its members. I thank you all for giving me this opportunity to serve our church as well as your support and collaboration.

God Bless.

Yours Truly,
Ethel Ann Flores
Chairperson

Message from the Communications Committee

News Flash

We at Mountainside are updating our website to reflect better who we are today as a United Church of Canada Community of Faith, multicultural in nature, and worshipping on McGill Campus. We are planning on launching that this summer and you'll be the first to know when it happens.

June Photos

Rev. Morgan Bell, Diocesan Theological College, Director of United Church Studies, led the service on June 7th.

Photos & Message by Jill Harrison



Happy June Birthday John and Ester



Yummy lunch!



What's up Doc?