

June 2022

BLOORBEAT

The Newsletter of



Volume XLI Issue 2

Minister's Message

God Speaks

Friends in the circle of faith that is Bloordale United Church, we head into the summer this year with our future as much up in the air as it has ever been. We appear to be coming out of the worst of the pandemic, and yet anxiety still stalks the land to a large degree, particularly among the elderly, and worship attendance is nowhere near where it once was. We prepare for major decisions to be made regarding our building, our missional identity, and even prepare to start a conversation about our viability as a congregation and the ways and means of our potential renewal, and the timeline to achieve it. There are fewer and fewer volunteers to carry the load, and we've become highly dependent on our staff to undertake various activities in light of our diminished Committee structure. What does our faith mean to us in the midst of such a cascade of dilemmas and concerns?

Well, as hard as it may be to hear sometimes, faith in such circumstances is to not fail to remember that God's primary purpose isn't to save our church, or our legacy, or even our way of life as it's currently constituted. What really matters is that God's passion is for the transformation of the world, which goes way beyond our particular church's survival. The most important thing is to listen to your own life, and to the life of the church, and to the life of the world, as beleaguered as we all may be, for the Spirit of God to speak you into a future both you and we may not even be dimly aware of at present, to face forward in faith and find whatever measure of hope and joy and solace and holy companionship as we can affirm.

Friends, if God speaks anywhere, it is into our lives that the holy speaks. Someone we love dies, for instance. Some unforeseen act of kindness or cruelty touches the heart or makes the blood run cold. We fail a friend, or a friend fails us, and we are appalled at the capacity all of us have, ourselves included, for estranging the very people in our lives we need the most. Or maybe nothing extraordinary happens at all – just one day following another, helter-skelter, in the manner of days. We sleep and dream, well or not, we wake and work, we remember and forget, we have fun or grow faint with foreboding, are delighted or depressed. And into the

(Continued on p.3)

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Custodian	Victor Nguyen

Church Council

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Church Council Secretary	Beth Jazvac
Congregational Meeting Secretary	Beth Jazvac
Board of Trustees	Julia Stavreff
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Presbytery Representatives	Norman Dundas Paul Rose
Minister	Rev. Brian W. McIntosh

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Congregational Life (co-chairs)	Pat Nelson Pat Conway-Willis
Communications	Julia Stavreff
Finance, Stewardship, Planned Gift	Norm Dundas
Outreach and Christian Development	Lynn Lawrence
Pastoral Care	Sylvia Williams
Property	Pat Conway-Willis
Social and Fund Raising	Vacant
Worship	Melody Klassen
Member-at-Large	Joan Hollowell

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WORSHIP SERVICES IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

June 19 2nd after Pentecost / Indigenous Right Relations Sunday
 26 3rd after Pentecost

July 3, 10, 17 at St. James UC (Burnhamthorpe, east of 427)

July 24, 31, Aug. 7 at Richview UC (Wellesworth/Renforth)

Aug. 14, 21, 28 at Bloordale UC

Sept. 4 Creation 1 / Ocean
 11 Creation 2 / Fauna and Flora
 18 Creation 3 / Storm
 25 Creation 4 / Cosmos

Oct. 2 Worldwide Communion Sunday
 9 Thanksgiving Sunday

All Services at 10:30 am except as indicated

Minister's Message

(continued from Page 1)

thick of each hodgepodge of circumstances, or out of the thick of it, God speaks.

God speaks, though not just through the sounds we hear, but through events in all their complexity and variety, through the harmonies and dissonances and counterpoints of all that happens. As to the meaning of what God says, there are times that we are apt to think we know. Adolf Hitler dies by suicide in his bunker with the Third Reich going up in flames all around him, and what God says about the wages of sin seems clear enough in such a seemingly transparent moment. Or Albert Schweitzer renounces fame as a theologian and musician for a medical mission in Africa, where he ends up even more famous still as one of the great saints of Protestantism, and again we are tempted to see God's meaning as clarity itself. But what might God be saying through a good man's suicide? What about the danger of the proclaimed saint becoming a kind of religious prima donna, as proud of his own humility as a peacock of its tail? What about even sin itself as a means of grace? What about grace, when misappropriated and misunderstood, becoming an occasion for sin? To try to express in even the most insightful and theologically sophisticated terms the meaning of what God speaks through the events of our lives, or through, in the larger picture, the decline or demise of a church, or through the events of war, in the Ukraine or elsewhere, or even through the pandemic, is as precarious a business as to try to express the meaning of the sound of rain on the roof or the spectacle of the setting sun.

But, friends, despite our crucial inability to claim any certainty about God's speaking in our lives, in our time and times, we still

choose to hold to faith, believing that God speaks nonetheless. The reason that God's spoken words are impossible to capture in human language is, of course, that they are ultimately always incarnate words, words fleshed out in the everyday give and take of life, the extraordinary in the ordinary, no less than in the more liminal crises or triumphs of life.

The question is not whether the things that happen to you are chance or random things, on the one hand, or God's given things, on the other, because they are never either and always both at once. There is no chance thing through which God cannot speak, such as someone dropping by the church on a whim last week and having what turned out to be a 30-minute chance encounter with me, which to me was random but to his self-professed delight was a sign from God. One never knows! Even the walk from the house to the garage that you have walked five thousand times before can become the time for God's whispering wind. Even, friends, the moments when you cannot believe there is a God who speaks at all anywhere can become, precisely then, such a moment.

God speaks, and God's words are incarnate in the flesh and blood of our own selves and our own footsore and sacred journeys, or in the to and fro of an argument or an exchange of ideas, in the nightly news or in the tree you've passed by too often to count but never really seen until now. We can't live our lives constantly looking back, or listening to the playback of memory in our mind, lest we be turned into pillars, even church pillars, of longing and regret, remembering only how it used to be to the degree to which we live in remembrance alone, as Jesus said, "*failing to put our hand to the plow*" (Luke 9: 62). But to live without listening at all to both our lives

and to life as it unfolds before us is to live deaf to the fullness of the divine music embedded in creation.

Sometimes we avoid listening for fear of what we may hear, and the current anxieties and challenges of our life as a church, as I outlined earlier, as well as our own weary and worn lives as individuals, may well cause us to lean more toward memory than toward listening for the meaning in the eternal now of the present. Sometimes we deliberately shut our ears for fear that we may hear nothing at all but the empty echo of our own voice or the thump of our shoes on the floor beneath us. Nonetheless, as Jesus said, "*Be not afraid, for lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28: 16-20), or the end of the church, or the end of our own days. He says he is with us on our journeys, that he's been with us since each of our journeys began. So listen for him. Listen for the whisper of the Spirit this summer. Listen to the sweet and bitter airs of your present for the presence beyond our past alone who points forward in faith, and promises his passion to accompany us, come what may.

Brian

Stewardship Spot

"Stewardship is everything I do after I say 'I believe'."

Gratitude is Subversive

Almost every Sunday, friends, could be considered a little Easter, as we rejoice in the day of resurrection. But, then again, every Sunday could also be considered a little Christmas, or a little Pentecost, or any number of feast and holy days that fall in the Christian calendar. But one festival mood that we also bring to every Sunday worship celebration is equally valid, despite it not being in the Christian calendar per se, and despite its yearly secular observance in

October being entangled with historic white settler violence against Indigenous peoples. I'm talking, of course, about thanksgiving, noting that, despite constant reminders of daily challenges and upheavals in the world, gratitude to God is the hallmark of the Christian life. Thanksgiving acknowledges that we are on the receiving end of life and the generous Creator God is on the giving end of our life. Such an attitude of gratitude should be cultivated in our young from an early age, as we become stewards of the praise of the One who made us, liberates us, and transforms us.

St. Paul asked a rhetorical question in First Corinthians over which we do well to linger: "*What do you have that you did not receive? And if you have received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?*" (1 Cor 4: 7) The answer, of course, which is what makes it rhetorical, is "nothing!" We have nothing durable that we treasure that we have devised, invented, produced or achieved, and responding back, therefore, to Divinity's limitless generosity, to the One who gives good gifts to all God's creatures, is gratitude.

While gratitude is an attitude that marks all of our life of faith, it also consists in regular specific practices. Our thanksgiving is lived out in a) our offering of material goods to support God's mission, and b) our voicing in prayer and song of God's blessings for which we are grateful. In the assembly of the faithful in worship, we're invited each week to "*count our blessings!*"

If we fail to live regularly into these two disciplines, we easily fall into the trap of imagining that we're the initiators of the blessings of which we speak or sing. We imagine that our worldly success is our achievement, and therefore our possession, at our disposal for our own use. In the world around us that lives by a calculus of quid pro quo, some are led to imagine their self-sufficiency that leads in turn to greed and eventually to predatory violence toward those who threaten our guarded surplus. We then further succumb to the seduction of pride in our self-sufficiency, an illusion which we can't sustain indefinitely, which then leads to

despair as we realize we can't ultimately make our world safe and happy for ourselves. So we oscillate between pride and despair, wavering between fooling and disappointing ourselves constantly.

Gratitude, friends, is the antidote to despair, because in every circumstance we still live by gifts faithfully given, and not by our self-sufficiency. Gratitude is a form of vigorous resistance against the seductions of this quid pro quo world, empowering us to live alternatively from both pride and despair, apart from the ideologies that beset our giftless economy.

The foremost Protestant hymn of gratitude to which we regularly give voice, and not just in October, is "Now Thank We All Our God." Did you know that this warm, trusting poetry was written by Pastor Martin Rinkart in 1636 as a table grace during the Thirty Years War that devastated all of Europe. He was doing about 30 funerals a day, 50 on bad days – yes, 50! – his wife had died of the pestilence (read "pandemic!"), and he wrote this hymn for his children. The hymn became a defiant cry of blessing to God for all people of faith who suffered horrible fates, and affirms that we are on the receiving end of God's goodness and grace even in the most dire of circumstances.

This alternative way of being in the world, alternative to the common fear, greed, and violence that marks our public life, has immense practical implications for public life and policy, as well as for the church. It proposes, against both pride and despair, that public practices may be generous in the sharing of common resources with all of our neighbours, giving up the withholding that seems to define so much of our modern life. That "normal" withholding is based on our tacit assumption of self-sufficiency that we have made it all and are entitled to it all, and on our "normal" despair that there is not enough to go around, and therefore those at the bottom are on their own. Gratitude refuses both assumptions and declares such stinginess to be abnormal, out of sync with the reality of the Creator who gives good gifts in limitless abundance.

So gratitude, friends, is an act of subversion that sees all of our neighbours, including our creaturely kin, as common recipients of the gifts given to all, given organically in creation and given theologically through the grace of the Great Giver. So in our ways of mission and liturgy, in our work and in our worship, we are called to be stewards of gratitude and witnesses to the way of thanksgiving in the world. In this way we correspond to God's good intentions for both us and for creation, and are released from the anxiety of both endless accumulation or endless worry. May we be such stewards of God's good graces, no matter our dilemmas or disappointments, as we trust in the One who releases us into the freedom of faithfulness through word, witness, prayer and song in worship. Why not join us on Sundays to be consistently turned into truly grateful givers, mirroring what God has first done for us?!

Brian

Outreach News

Refugee Update

There is no news yet on the sponsorship applications we've made, through the United Church of Canada, for two Syrian refugees, Nathmya Alsalloum and Yosr Alsaud, and it may be some time since we hear anything.

Indigenous Kairos Blanket Exercise Happens June 18th!

As reported in the last Bloorbeat, on June 18th, the Saturday closest to National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st), local ecumenical justice organizations Kairos Toronto West and EcuLinks partnered to co-sponsor a Kairos Blanket Exercise for our community. This event, held in the gym at our church, was meant for first-time KBE participants, and Beth Jazvac of our Outreach Committee attended.

A second Kairos Blanket Exercise is also slated for Etobicoke on Saturday September 24th, the Saturday prior to National Day for Truth and Reconciliation September 30th. Contact

Brian if you would like more details about this upcoming KBE.

Etobicoke Climate Action (ECA) Group Very Active!

EcuLinks Etobicoke and ECA partnered recently to co-host two Candidates Town Halls for the ridings of Etobicoke Centre and Etobicoke Lakeshore to enable voters to be informed of the positions of the parties on social and ecological issues. Both Town Halls were held just before the advance polls opened, and Brian moderated both Zoom meetings, which garnered over 160 and over 200 participants respectively.

Brian continues to serve on the Etobicoke Climate Action Group's Core Leadership team, though Bloordale could use a representative on this team beyond Brian, so be in touch if interested.

Ukraine Prayers for Peace Service Raised \$750!

As Paul mentions in his report, the special Ecumenical Service, held here at Bloordale in mid-May, raised \$750 for Ukrainian relief efforts. We were pleased to host this Service, and continue to pray for peace in Ukraine.

Bloorbeat on the Internet

This issue as well as past issues of Bloorbeat can be accessed on the Bloordale United Church website at:

<http://bloordale.ca/bloorbeat/>

Property Options Update

Since the last Bloorbeat your Executive has continued in discussions with United Property Resource Corporation, working toward an agreement with UPRC that would enable us to give up responsibility for regular property management and rentals. This Term Sheet agreement would also enable UPRC to undertake upgrades to the building in order to increase the potential for rental income over time, providing capital for these upgrades

that we don't have at our disposal. We will still be drawing a sufficient amount from rental income to enable us to maintain our ministry, and we'll be free to pursue an enhanced mission.

There are still some questions your leadership has about this potential agreement, and we'll be pursuing some further discussions with UPRC in coming weeks. No agreement will be signed without the explicit approval of the congregation, such meeting likely to occur sometime in the fall.

Update on Community Ministry and Property Options with Fellowship Christian Reformed Church

Further to the above Property Options update, the vision we've outlined to join with the CRC on Burnhamthorpe to pursue a joint Community Ministry in our area has led to preliminary discussions about leveraging our two buildings to enable such a venture. UPRC is involved in these discussions as well, and the agreement about our property mentioned above will include the freedom to pursue such options with the CRC. Please note that this is not a planned merger or amalgamation of the two congregations, but simply an opportunity to work together to enhance our shared Christian ministry in our community.

Since the last Bloorbeat we've undertaken a shared Mission Study discussion on Zoom, with about 25 in attendance, had meetings with representatives of both UPRC and the Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative, and had a first joint Council meeting to discuss some options for moving forward. These options may include a significant housing component, a portion of which would be affordable, as well as potential community use spaces, for rental income to sustain the joint ministry and the two congregations. Much work remains to be done, and your Vision Team members – Paul Rose, Pat Conway-Willis and Brian – welcome your feedback and suggestions. Again, no

decisions are in the immediate future, and the congregation has the final word when it comes time to affirm any plan. The process will continue to unfold in the coming months.

From Your Chair of Council



Good day to all and hope that all of you are doing very well and enjoying this lovely weather we are having. (Without the humidity)

We are still having our church service weekly, and we look forward to seeing you and enjoying coffee time in Room 15. It is always great meeting up with our friends.

Paul W has been working with our choir and thanks to him and all of the members who sing at our services.

I guess some of you are looking forward to taking a holiday soon, being the first in 4 years. If so, please continue to be very safe.

I would like to thank Grace and Jo Em for looking after the gardens again this year.

Many thanks to our volunteers at church, Debbie, Joan & Pat. Also, as we are back having coffee time, thanks go out to Dana and Beth, who have helped,

I want to thank Charles Desgrosseillers of Church of God "for all he has done and is doing for us."

Lynn Lawrence and Beth Jazvac cleaned up the front steps, but unfortunately someone removed all the shoes..

Rooks to Cooks will be starting their cooking classes in July and continue to the end of August.

We continue to receive a number of calls to rent our premises, this is good.

Your foursome are still meeting regularly making sure that all is going very well. Thanks to Paul, Julia, Brian & myself

I also want to thank Beth for all the work she is doing around the church. It is very much appreciated.

Thanks to both Julia and John for looking after our Bloorbeat 4 times annually, We all look forward to receiving it.

During this month (June) we will be having another Council meeting as there are a few things that we have to discuss. I am sure that either Paul or Brian will mention it in their reports.

Hope that all of you will have a great summer, but just remember to continue to be very safe.

Pat Conway-Willis, Chair of Council

Connecting with the Ill, Bereaved, and Shut-in

The Pastoral Care Committee connects with members who are ill, bereaved or are shut in. We are unable to make a connection if we are unaware. We are therefore appealing to members who may be aware of someone who might need a contact from us. Please obtain permission from that individual to contact a member of the committee. Thank you.

Sylvia Williams Chair,
Pastoral Care Committee

Tri-Church Worship at a Glance

July 3, 10 & 17 St James UC
Burnhamthorpe East of 427

July 24, 31 & Aug 7 Richview UC
Wellesworth/Renforth

Aug 14, 21, & 28 Bloordale UC
4258 Bloor Street West

*All of the above services are at 10:30.
Services revert to home churches Sept. 4*

From Your Choir Director

I would like to take this opportunity and express my deep gratitude to our wonderful choir! After a long pause we were finally able to resume regular singing for our Sunday services. And there was no better time to do this than Easter Sunday, when we sang an anthem called You Are Holy - nearly 2 years after the first lockdown. Amazing!

Our last Sunday before the summer break was this past weekend, June 12th. We will be resuming our choir practices in the fall.

I was also very proud to have our choir singing for the Ecumenical Service for Peace for Ukraine, which was held at Bloordale United Church on May 15th. Choir beautifully sang Let There Be Peace On Earth; very fitting for this solemn occasion. We had guest musicians

contributing and playing banduras, an ethnic Ukrainian instrument resembling a classical guitar. Through our efforts we were able to raise money for the Ukrainian -Canadian relief fund as well as support the bandura group with a financial contribution which will help to run the group going forward.

I hope that in the future there will be more opportunities for our choir to partake in such services and other joint performances.

If you are considering joining our choir, or you might know someone that is interested, please reach out to either myself, Brian, or speak to any of the choir members. We are a fun and welcoming group and I'm sure that new members would feel comfortable singing with us.

Thank you,

Paul Wisniewski



Staff Holidays

Halyna is not in the office throughout July and returns in early August. Brian is taking holiday time for three weeks from July 18th to August 9th inclusive.

If there's a problem or a concern, please call Pat Conway-Willis, at 416-695-3976.

For pastoral care contact John Kim of Richview UC.

IN MEMORIAM

Norman Edwin Gray

December 29, 1925 – April 20, 2022

Potential Social Committee Outing for October 2022

After two plus years of Covid hibernation followed by lethargy, I had a sudden tinge to put together a Bloordale United Church outing.

The outings that have been organized since Bloordale formed the Social committee were generally performances that I wanted to go to.

Reviewing ads in Bloorbeat from September 2014 to the present, we have been to performances put on by:

- The Toronto Symphony Orchestra for Kids
- The National Ballet of Canada
- The Canadian Opera Company
- Soulpepper Theatre

and Five Mirvish Productions, including:

- Come From Away
- Anastasia
- King Charles III
- The Audience
- Blithe Spirit

What recently caught my eye, that we could go to is the upcoming production of 'Singin in the Rain' at the Princess of Wales Theatre, performing September 23 to October 23, 2022. Performances are Tuesday to Saturday 8pm and Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons. Prices at Mirvish vary, not only by where one sits, but also by when one goes. If we have a group outing of 15 people, there is the added joy of a 20% discount per ticket (excluding Saturday nights).

I am thinking of a group outing sometime mid to end of October, when the cottage/lake people are back, and can come, if they wish.

This outing would not be restricted to Bloordale members; friends and family are always welcome. Our prices would be in the

\$100 to \$140 range for orchestra seating, (\$80 to \$112 with the 20% discount) and carpooling will, of course, be provided.

Please tell me if you are possibly interested in this outing, and I will start my list.

If we do not get 15 people to qualify for the group discount, we can still arrange for a smaller outing, but no 20% discount.

Julia Stavreff

For the Social Committee

416-622-6309

stavreffj@stavreff.ca



Favourite Recipes Dorito Taco Salad

I found this recipe on the internet and the boys were eager to try it, mostly because it had the word "Dorito" in the name! Guess what – they loved it! This recipe makes a huge bowl of salad that is delicious and satisfying, even if you skip the Doritos. I've made it for BBQ's, family get-togethers, group lunches, and I even brought it for one of the church pot luck dinners, and everyone loves it.

Hope you like it. Halyna Parypa.

1lb Ground Beef

1 packet Taco Seasoning

2/3 cup water

Brown the beef until no pink remains. Drain off any fat and add the Taco Seasoning and water. Simmer until thickened (about 5

minutes) stirring occasionally. Then set aside to cool.

Salad

1-2 heads lettuce chopped into small pieces or one small box of Spring Mix Greens, washed.

1 each red and green pepper, chopped

1 cup tomatoes, seeds removed and diced

¼ cup green onions sliced thin

1 can Black Beans (or Kidney Beans work just as well), rinsed

½ cup sliced Black Olives, rinsed

1 cup shredded Cheddar Cheese

Catalina Salad Dressing, as much or as little as tastes good to you

1 small bag of Nacho flavour Doritos, crushed but not too much

Add the above ingredients in the above order, except for the Doritos, adding in the cooled cooked beef at the end. Mix until thoroughly combined and then add in the crushed Doritos.

(Note: The Doritos are mostly for texture, the salad is just fine without it.)

No Food Trucks This Summer

The Food Trucks will not be in Bloordale's parking lot this summer, as Community Support was not there last year.

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Consider a Planned Gift to Bloordale United Church

Giving a gift to the Planned Gift Fund through your will is one way to continue faithful stewardship beyond your lifetime. When your estate plan is prepared please consider a gift to your church through the Bloordale Planned Gift Fund. Contact Julia Stavreff or Norm Dundas for further information.

Bloorbeat Submission Guidelines *(updated Jan. 2019)*

When you email items to Julia and myself for Bloorbeat, please include the word "Bloorbeat" and words about the specific content in your e-mail header and in any file names, e.g. "Bloorbeat Upcoming Events". This makes it much easier to locate the items in my rather busy e-mail inbox when putting the Bloorbeat together.

In general, for text-based submissions, please avoid use of fancy fonts, and fancy spacings or tab settings because these create more work for me and make it more difficult to maintain a consistent style in the newsletter. And please never use "All Caps" in headings or elsewhere .

Straight text, in 11 point font, with bold (but not underlined) headings in 14 point font, is best. Use word wrap within a paragraph and "Enter" key at end of paragraphs, but not at end of each line.

For photographs of church related items we can handle the standard graphics formats such as .tif .gif, .jpg, .png or .pdf. We print in black and white but post on the church website in colour.

For advertisements, PDF or uncompressed TIFF are the preferred formats. Please check picture clarity and text clarity of your ad printed in your chosen size in black and white on a laser printer and viewed in colour on a computer monitor.

Health Guidelines for In-Person Worship Attendees

Friends and visitors, while we continue to encourage vaccination, we no longer require proof of being vaccinated, and will therefore no longer do contact tracing or be asking for either a medical exemption letter or negative PCR test. Our only continuing requirements are masking, with one exception outlined below, and physical distancing.

There will be two sections of the five in the church, namely the choir section and the one next to it, where people who are vaccinated can physically distance and take off their masks while singing if they're comfortable doing so. Re-masking after singing is required.

Invitation for Submissions to Bloorbeat

Spiritual perspectives, committee news, community happenings, and ideas for changes and improvements to make Bloordale an even nicer place than it already is are all welcome.

Please submit or discuss your ideas with our Communications Committee chair

Julia Stavreff, 416-622-6309,
stavreffj@stavreff.ca

Bloorbeat Publication Schedule

Following are tentative publication dates and submission deadlines for upcoming issues

Publication Date	Submission Deadline
Sept 24, 2022	Sept 19, 2022
Nov 13, 2022	Nov 6, 2022

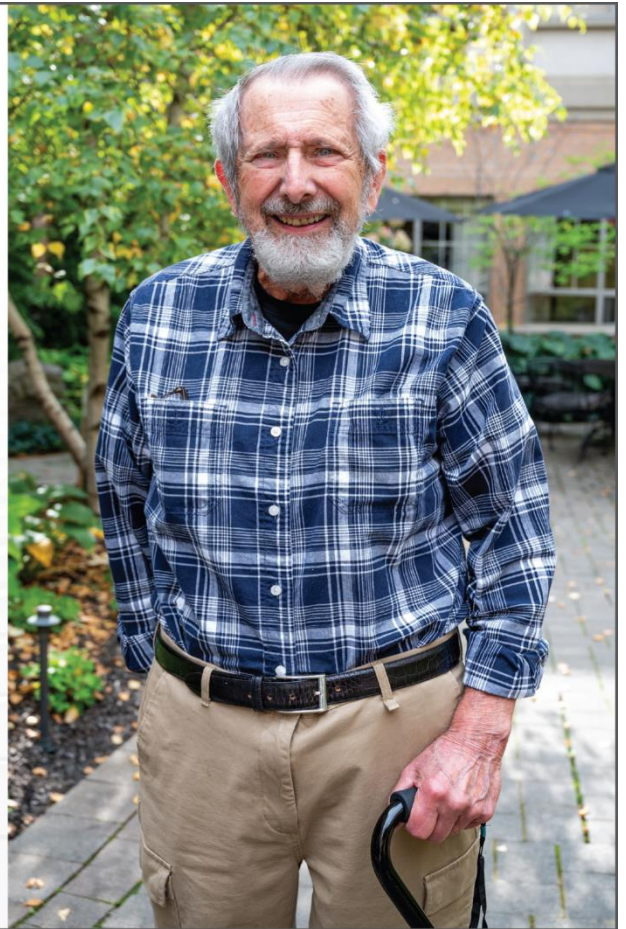
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Would you like to advertise your business in Bloorbeat? Prices per issue of Bloorbeat are:

- Business card size \$ 20
- ¼ page size \$ 40
- ½ page size \$ 70

Our printed pages size is 8 1/2" x 11"

To advertise, please call Julia Stavreff, 416-621-8050 or email stavreffj@stavreff.ca

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