

# the merry Andrew

St. Andrew's United Church,

Nanaimo B.C. Sept. 2011

## AN INVITATION from Bert

As I write, it is yet September, and with our young I've marked the month by going back to school. This return was prompted by the United Church's requirement that its employees regularly engage in continuing education (and I am nothing if not compliant with the mandates of my superiors). So, I find myself for the second year in a row taking a philosophy course at VIU.

This year's class, however, has exactly the same title and nearly the same course description as one I took at UVic in 1977. This led me to comment to an old friend that it seemed a shame to spend time and money on a subject that I'd already mastered. He replied in what I take to have been an uncomplimentary manner that I might be surprised to find how much I'd forgotten since the 70s.

Sadly, he has proven to have been in the right. Much if not most of what my professor is teaching seems brand new to me. Aging is a terrible thing. But here's what brings me comfort--that learning is altogether joyous, whether for the first or the umpteenth time.

The question then arises: might we do some learning together at St. Andrew's? I know that people's schedules are often full, and that travel to the church is difficult for many, but perhaps we could simply read a book in common (suggestions?) and gather of a Saturday morning to discuss it over coffee. One of our members wondered if we couldn't have a monthly conversation after church about something from the latest *Observer*. Or maybe there are a few who would like to four or five sessions to go thoughtfully into the depths of the Lord's Prayer. Meanwhile the Unitarian Fellowship has expressed interest in following last year's combined study of Buddhism with another concerning the faith of our Sikh neighbours. The

possibilities really are endless. Would you please let me know what captures *your* interest?

Inviting you to stretch the mind with me,

**PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittances)** by  
Germaine Wilson

In early September there will be a table in the hall again for 4 weeks, for people who would like to sign up for PAR. PAR (or Pre-Authorized Remittances) allows the church to have a dependable revenue stream and makes it easier to manage its ongoing operational costs. I see my PAR commitment as my pledge to the financial needs of the institution that helps sustain my spiritual health and wellbeing. I want the church to always be there for me and I will do my part by always being there for the church.

Please consider signing up for PAR this fall. Changes can fairly quickly be made to your commitment if your circumstances change or if you move. I will make a personal pledge to do all I can to make a PAR commitment a pleasant and convenient experience for you by being your "go to person", if you need any help or change.

PAR gives the church a degree of financial security and simplifies the collection process. It would allow those who spend each Sunday counting to have some time to socialize for coffee if they choose. There will always be casual contributors, but let PAR be the bed rock of funding for the church.

## MY FIRST OVERSEAS TRIP

by Marguerite Hodgson

You may think this sounds like fiction but I assure you it is all true and happened to me. In 1981 a few years after my husband passed away, I decided to visit my sisters in Costa Rica. They and their husbands are there working with the Latin American Mission. It was my first trip by myself out of Canada in a large aircraft and I was very nervous. When I approached Mc Farlanes Travel Agency to get my ticket I was asked "Where's that?". When I replied it was in Central America, it didn't help much. Finally I got my ticket - Vancouver (overnight both ways) Chicago, Miami (also overnight both ways).

Travelling by bus, ferry and limousine I got to my hotel room late at night and too scared to venture further I stayed in my room.

In the morning I was away on my adventure. In Chicago (three hour stop) I encountered a very obnoxious girl who refused to wait until I counted out my American money but reached across the counter and grabbed a bill out of my hand. Obviously I wasn't impressed. At Miami I had to claim my luggage and find my hotel. There was no place to check my suitcases and it was not on the Board; so for information I had to walk and walk for what seemed like a city block across this big open barnlike building to a huge man sitting on a small bar stool. He was very helpful and found me the proper phone number. Leaving my suitcases with him, I phoned to be told it was too late for their limousine so I would have to go outside and take a taxi. There I found a fight going on between a man and woman. She climbed into the cab and he yanked her out again and again while the taxi drivers stood in a circle watching the performance. All the time she was screaming and no one paid any attention.

At the hotel I found the lobby full with a load of people (bird watchers group) and I had to wait until they were served to find out my room had been rented out. They claimed they had not received my payment but I could have another room if I paid cash in American money; (it took me six months to get it back and only after I kept phoning the travel agency). It was fortunate I had enough American cash with me. No redcaps wanted to bother with a single person so after waiting again a long time I went off to find my own way. In my room I phoned the airline to confirm my morning flight to Costa Rica and the answering machine informed me to call again at 6:00 am. At 6:00 am I phoned and found out I had been bumped off the flight; the next one was the next morning. I must have spent at least a half hour arguing with her that my flight had been booked three months ago and reading all the numbers I could find on the ticket. She finally gave in telling me to be at the airport at 2:00 PM. What a relief. A most sincere thank you went up to the Lord from a most thankful heart.

When I got back to my room after breakfast, I couldn't get in and couldn't figure out why - proper room, correct key etc. Off I went to find a maid; found one all right but she was Cuban - no English and me with a few words of Spanish. Eventually with gestures I made her understand my problem and she got the supervisor for me. In my room I felt like a prisoner afraid to venture out again.

The airport was huge and there was no way to get to the plane except by walking. Carrying one suitcase and pulling the other I walked and walked. The plane was packed. I found out afterwards they cancel a single ticket to accommodate parties of two or more. Seated beside me was a very nice looking young Costa Rican man - impeccably dressed - light grey suit, sparkling white shirt and red tie. He knew no English but was determined I have a glass of red wine. I refused and kept saying no, no, No and shook my head. When the hostess returned to refill his glass it was obvious she had been into the wine herself. She missed his glass and spilled wine all over him. What a commotion. Poor man.

Arriving in San Jose was another ordeal. You line up at three different lines to get your passport stamped. Later I found out this was the normal procedure; to keep people working each one only did one thing. Now to the luggage - one suitcase was missing. I walked all over the room looking but couldn't find it. Not able to fill out the papers for lost luggage I went to the gate where my family waited. The guard let my brother-in-law in to help me. We got the proper papers. I felt I should look around once more. This time I found it hidden behind a pillar. About that time someone dropped a gallon glass jar of wine on the cement floor. That quickly changed the perfume in the building.

After greeting my sisters and families, I started two weeks seeing the beauty of their country, which is about the same size as Vancouver Island with a much bigger population. There are four volcanoes and in the rainy season, they have a small earthquake nearly every day at the same time.

## 12 days on a Yukon veggie farm

*The following blog is written by 18-year-old Stephane Gallant, a member of the St. Andrews*

*United congregation. He is currently engaged in volunteer work in the capital of the Yukon, Whitehorse, on behalf of Katimavik, a government-sponsored youth service program that nurtures national unity among Canadians. Like all Katimavik participants, Stephane will be part of this program for six months; spending three months in two different locations.*

In addition to ongoing assigned volunteer assignments, every Katimavik group member is required to do 12 days of billeting, or living with host families in the community. I ended up working with Trevor, one of the other Katimavik participants, on a farm out of town for the 12 days instead.

So, on the evening of September 30th Trevor and I were driven out to Rivendell Farm, about half an hour out of Whitehorse on Takhini Hot Springs Road. The farm is around 160 acres - it's big - but only about a fifth of that is actually used to grow veggies. We stayed in a little (20 square meter) cabin with no running water and a bunk bed that creaks if you so much as twitch.

The main farm is composed of a large fenced-off area. Inside this enclosed area are three fields which rotate every year, peas, potatoes and mixed greens (lettuce, spinach, Chinese cabbage, *bok choy*, Shanghai cabbage, mustard greens, turnips, radishes (even daikon radishes) and more! There's also a field dedicated to strawberries, wild and domesticated, wild raspberries and black currants, as well as the Raspberry Labyrinth, which is exactly what it sounds like.

The owners are Mary and Roland Girouard, who've owned the property for over 30 years. They are both testament to the fact that you get to meet some pretty awesome people in the north. Mary, a native of Nova Scotia, is an organic veggie farmer who smokes, and is related to Dick Cheney. Roland is an architect *and* journeyman carpenter and plays Age of Mythology (I never did finish that game).

The average day looked like this: Get up at 8:30, start work at 9:00, one hour lunch at 1, then get off work at 3. Then it was free time until dinner at 7:30. Working with us were Toni, a older woman with an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of common plants, Reisa, a student from McGill, and Rosendo and Rohario, two Mexican farm workers.

The first day established the main duty that was expected from us: weeding. Our working itinerary looked like this: weed, weed, weed, write, nap, dinner, sleep.

Day two started with a harvest. We picked three buckets of yellow cherry tomatoes, which are probably some of the best tomatoes I've ever eaten, and then it was back to weeding. After lunch we were brought up to the house and set to work tearing up the deck behind the house. Apparently it was made of discarded wood that had been used to set concrete and was only meant to be temporary. Thirty years ago. It was a welcome change though, instead of being constantly bent over pulling weeds. Free time before dinner was once again spent napping. Mary told us that this tends to happen with volunteers; her theory is that fresh air has that effect on people who stay indoors too much.

On day 3 (August 3rd) Trevor and I managed to assemble two working bikes from the pile of partially-broken bikes on the farm and biked to the Takhini Hot Springs, only 20 minutes away if one takes the short cut. It was 8 bucks to get in, but it was totally worth it. I slept very well that night, the after-effect of having spent a few hours soaking in really, really hot mineral water.

The rest of the week was OK, the food was good. The work? Not so much. We tore apart the deck, but we also had to weed the driveway, which is probably the most mind-numbing work I've ever done. Still, it was pretty impressive what a difference it made in the overall appearance of the farm.

On Saturday we got up at 7:30 for a trip to Haine's Junction with Roland. If you haven't been to Haine's Junction, you haven't seen mountains. They *loom*.

On Sunday afternoon we visited the Bean North Café - good ambiance, nicely decorated, and great coffee. Also free Wi-Fi, which gave me an opportunity to check my e-mail and my tumblr dashboard (which, for some inexplicable reason, was crammed with Loki (from *Thor*)-themed images and memes [\*cough\*manisthemeasure\*cough\*]).

Our last activity was a walk around the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. Highly recommend! It may be difficult to get a close-up look at the various beasts (muskox, bison, caribou, elk, mule deer, lynx, arctic fox...), but it's much more interesting than staring at some poor, lethargic animal in a zoo, waiting for it to move.

The next day we went back to work. The highlight was thinning the Goldana turnips. At day's end we had a bin full of baby turnips, which ended up being sold to a high-end restaurant. Even though the turnip row looked like a tornado hit it, we *still* weren't finished.

On Tuesday we dug holes like in that book and that movie Holes. Well, as with the setting in the book and movie the area *is* an ancient lakebed. In this case, the holes are needed as somewhere for the water to go, since the underground irrigation pipes need to be emptied before winter. The rest of the week, from the 9th to the 12th, was spent doing a mix of hole digging, turnip-thinning, hole-adjusting and harvesting. The weather, unfortunately, was getting... weird. It was acting like it was autumn... in Vancouver. Normally, August in the Yukon is pretty warm. Climate change? The approaching apocalypse? Who knows? Didn't stop us from digging holes, that's for sure.

To sum up August 1st to 12<sup>th</sup>, Trevor and I spent most of our time either outdoors or in a small cabin without running water. We weeded, dug holes, pulled up turnips, soaked in a hot spring, and got to eat pretty much anything that was being grown at the farm. On the last day we got a bag full of greens to take back with us to the Katimavik house, and I just want to say thanks for a great 12 days, Rivendell Farms!

## A Poem For David

By Janet Spares

I never knew what friendship was,  
Until you came along.  
You caused me to tarry  
And shared a smile.  
And filled my heart with a song.  
Write your lifes story  
You challenged me,  
Don't worry if it is so-so.  
You'll find it's just the opposite,  
Unique, and inspiring also.

## Nanaimo's an Extreme Weather Shelter

Rev. Karen Fraser Gitlitz

For three years, the First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo has provided a warm and welcoming space on cold, wet winter nights, keeping some of our most vulnerable citizens out of danger.

While the weather has varied – the first winter we were open 50 nights, much more than the 14 originally predicted! - and the number of guests coming to find shelter has gone up and down, the fellowship has kept its commitment to do something useful to help people at risk. Although we have had some challenges, our volunteers have always worked hard to ensure that our Unitarian spirit of openness and welcome is maintained.

From the start, the members of the congregation who initiated the establishment of the shelter were keen to involve the whole fellowship. Questions relating to the shelter were discussed at our social responsibility committee meetings, at the board, and in congregational meetings.

Concerns and hopes were expressed, hard questions were asked, and values were debated. The congregation voted on the significant changes to the shelter – the decision to run an Extreme Weather Shelter in the fall of 2008; the decision to continue on with the shelter the following year; and the decision to move to seven nights a week in January of this year.

Many outside of the fellowship have also contributed to the shelter and come to see it as an important part of their lives. Individuals, families, volunteer organizations, churches and businesses

have donated cash and goods. People from all walks of life have volunteered their time.

More than half of our volunteers have come from outside FUFON, including those from other faith communities, social service agencies and ordinary citizens who just want to make a difference.

We are particularly grateful to the members of the St. Andrew's congregation, who have been loyal supporters of our work. The generous contributions of your time and your steadfast commitment to helping Nanaimo's homeless have been much appreciated.

It is clear that there is both a need for a shelter and a desire in Nanaimo to make sure that there is one for those who need it. We are anticipating another season of offering a warm, dry, and welcoming environment for our guests, and we look forward to working with you again to make that happen.

#### **My Favorite Teacher** by Madeline Bruce,

My favorite teacher was Mr. Gladwin, and that is because he fought for justice at some risk to himself, and so provided myself and my grade 8 classmates with an unforgettable model of bravery. At my grade 8 graduation in 1960 the girls were supposed to have sewn a blouse/skirt combination, which we modeled in a fashion show, to the string strains of Montovani. I was unable to complete this sewing feat. I failed my Home Economics course – not a good introduction to womanhood. I will have it be known though, that I won the Spelling Bee, and so beat out the acknowledged class brain, Gary Lund. Some things I am quite good at, and some things are beyond me. Geometry is another thing I cannot do, even if a gun were held to my head. The Principal apparently issued an order that I should not be allowed to attend the graduation because I did not complete my outfit, and would be the only girl not wearing a blouse/skirt combination. I seriously could not figure out how to complete that outfit. It's not that I had a surly attitude. I had painstakingly practiced a piano duet (Spinning Wheel) with the star athlete, Donna Fulcher, for the ceremonies. The class was going to sing Catch a Falling Star, which was

a big Perry Como hit that year. My classmates told me that they heard or witnessed an argument between Mr. Gladwin, the choir director, and the Principal. Mr. Gladwin told the Principal that he would not lead the choir if Madeline were barred from the graduation. I was, and am very touched by that. Justice is what first drew me to St. Andrew's Church. I attend the annual memorial ceremony for the San Salvadoran Christian martyr Archbishop Oscar Romero. As William Faulkner said, "The past isn't gone, it isn't even past."

#### **Vive La Difference**

*(The contributor of this little story is a highly respected member of St. Andrew's and she wondered if it was perhaps too risqué. Having removed the pictures that went with it, I think it is quite OK. However, to protect her reputation she shall be known as Ms. Anon.)*

A little boy was walking down a dirt road one Sunday afternoon when he came to a crossroads where he met a little girl coming from the other direction. "Hi," he said. "Hi," replied the little girl.

"Where are you going?" asked the little boy. "I've been to church this morning and I'm on my way home," answered the little girl.

"I'm also on my way home from church. Which church do you go to?" asked the little boy. "I go to the Catholic Church at the top of the hill," replied the little girl, "What about you?"

"I go to the United Church down in the valley," replied the little boy.

They discover that they are both going the same way so they decided that they'd walk together. They came to a low spot where spring rains had partially flooded the road, so there was no way that they could get across without getting wet.

"If I get my new Sunday dress wet, my Mom'll skin me alive," said the little girl. "My mom'll tan my hide too, if I get my new Sunday Suit wet," replied the little boy.

"I know!" said the little girl, "I'm gonna pull off all my clothes and hold them over my head and wade across." "That's a good idea," replied the

little boy, "I'm going to do the same thing with my suit."

So they both undressed and waded across without getting their clothes wet. Standing in the sun, waiting to drip dry before putting them back on, the little boy finally remarked, "You know, I never really knew just how much difference there is between Catholics and United Church people!"

## HOW TO COOK A HUSBAND

*(From a 1927 Cook Book of Tested Household Recipes put out by the Young Ladies Club of First United St. Andrew's Church, Nanaimo, B.C. A copy of the original is in our Archives. Women might find this funny while most men will deplore these cannibalistic tendencies.)*

"A good many husbands are utterly spoiled by mismanagement. Some women keep them constantly in hot water; others let them freeze by their carelessness and indifference. Some keep them in a stew by irritating ways and words; others roast them. Some keep them in a pickle all their lives. It cannot be supposed that any husband will be tender and good, managed in this way, but they are really delicious when properly treated.

In selecting your husband, you should not be guided by the silvery appearance, as in buying mackerel, nor by the golden tint, as if you wanted salmon; be sure you select him yourself as tastes differ. Do not go to the market for him, as the best are always brought to your door. It is far better to have none unless you will patiently learn how to cook him.

A preserving kettle of finest porcelain is best, but if you have nothing but an earthenware pipkin, it will do with care. See that the linen in which you wash him is nicely washed and mended, with required number of buttons and strings sewed on. Tie him in the kettle with a strong silk cord called comfort, as the one called duty is apt to be weak and they are apt to fly out of the kettle and be burned and crusty on the edges, since like crabs and lobsters, you have to cook them alive.

Make a clear, steady fire out of love, cheerfulness and neatness. Set him as near to this as seems to

agree with him. If he sputters and fizzles, do not be anxious; some husbands do this until they are quite done. Add a little sugar in the form of what confectioners call kisses, but no vinegar or pepper of any amount. A little spice improves them but it must be used with judgment. Do not stick any sharp instrument into him to see if he is becoming tender. Stir him gently; watch the while, lest he lie too flat and too close to the kettle, and so become useless. You cannot fail to know when he is done.

If thus treated, you will find him very digestible, agreeing nicely with you and the children, and he will keep as long as you want, unless you become careless and set him in too cold a place."

## One Can Make a Difference

(by an unknown contributor to Rafe Mair)

We went for a swim Monday, about two blocks from home, in the Gorge waterway. We swam in the salt water as the tidal currents swept under the Tillicum Bridge toward Portage Inlet. It was just a swim. And it was more - because even 15 years ago, I would not have ventured into the questionable Gorge waters.

The swim was a reminder that even when things are truly wrecked, we can fix them.

All it takes is one person with the will to start.

The Gorge is an urban waterway that extends inland from Victoria's harbour until it widens into Portage Inlet. There are a few creeks feeding into the inlet and the Gorge, but the big influence is tidal. Water surges in, and out. The rapids under the Tillicum bridge run one way, then the other.

In the last 120 years, the Gorge has gone full circle. Its heyday was the late 19th and early 20th century, although First Nations had fished for herring and salmon and used it as a gathering place for centuries.

Victorians travelled in boats and by wagon and streetcar to the Gorge narrows to picnic, enjoy the natural setting and listen to concerts.

In 1911, as Dennis Minaker noted in his book, *The Gorge of Summers Gone*, the British Columbia Railway Company built its own version of Coney Island at the narrows to encourage more people to use the streetcar line. There was a roller-coaster and an early version of

Splash Mountain that sent terrified customers down a steep ramp in small boats that plunged into the Gorge.

The water was always central to the activities. People swam and boated and gathered clams. There were races and exhibitions and bathhouses. Promoters built towers and staged diving shows - until, in 1922, 19-year-old Billy Muir was paralyzed in a 110-foot dive. He died three years later.

But a few decades into the 20th century, the Gorge waterway was too polluted for anyone but the foolhardy to go swimming.

Residential development all along its length and around Portage Inlet meant increasing runoff, often with storm water and sewage spilling into the waters. Industry along the harbour and Gorge had added its own toxic legacies over Victoria's early years. And the Gorge had become a dumping ground for unwanted items large and small.

It was fine for boaters, but its attractiveness for swimmers - and its once-rich environment - seemed to be lost forever.

But John Roe didn't think so. In 1994, he and his nine-year-old son started spending their days hauling stuff out of the water - shopping carts, rusted metal, car tires.

It seemed, frankly, nutty - a classically quixotic exercise in the impossible. The Gorge seemed too far gone for any effort to succeed, let alone one driven by one man and a boy in their spare time.. But individual efforts can have a powerful effect.

Other people started helping haul stuff from the water or contributed money. Scuba divers volunteered to pull up the junk Roe couldn't reach. Business and governments offered support.

Roe, who had covered all the initial expenses, led the formation of the Veins of Life Watershed Society. Grants and donations paid for equipment and bigger workforces. The cleanup efforts moved beyond pulling junk from the water and started focusing on stopping the flow of pollutants. And at some point, there was a transformation. It was no longer accepted as an inevitable that the Gorge would remain unusable. Instead, its recovery was seen as the imperative.

By 2000, a symbolic milestone Roe had set was reached. The Gorge was the site, for the first time in 65 years, of a swimming race.

Today, the transformation is remarkable. Salmon have returned, cormorants and eagles perch in trees along the waterway and herons and kingfishers haunt the shoreline. Emerald green eelgrass beds wave in the tides and otters and seals fish in the water.

And all because one man and a boy took a look at the state of the Gorge and decided to do something about it. It's worth remembering, in these days of problems that seem too large or complex to yield to our efforts. And pondering... perhaps as you enjoy a swim in the Gorge on a sunny afternoon.

## REFUGEE BLUES

by W. H. Auden

*(At the outbreak of the Second World War, the ship St Louis left Germany with 907 Jews seeking asylum. One country after another, including Britain, the United States and Canada, turned them away and the boat had to return to Hitler's Germany and the Holocaust. A fearful Canadian government, instead of giving humanitarian leadership, pandered to an ignorant anti-Semitism. This was the attitude towards Jewish refugees in general. Although Auden's poem speaks to the situation in Britain its basic message also applies to Canada and the States—today as well as 70 some years ago.)*

Say this city has ten million souls,  
Some are living in mansions,  
some are living in holes:  
Yet here's no place for us,  
my dear, yet there's no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,  
Look at the atlas and you'll find it there:  
We cannot go there now, my dear,  
we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,  
Every spring it blossoms anew:  
Old passports can't do that, my dear,  
old passports can't do that.

The consul banged the table and said:  
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead':

But we are still alive, my dear,  
but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;  
Asked me politely to return next year:  
But where shall we go today, my dear,  
but where shall we go today?

Came to a public meeting;  
the speaker got up and said:  
'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread';  
He was talking of you and me, my dear,  
he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;  
It was Hitler over Europe, saying:  
"They must die."  
O we were in his mind, my dear,  
O we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin;  
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:  
But they weren't German Jews, my dear,  
but they weren't German Jews.

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,  
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:  
Only ten feet away, my dear,  
only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood,  
saw the birds in the trees;  
They had no politicians and sang at their ease;  
They weren't the human race, my dear,  
they weren't the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,  
A thousand windows and a thousand doors;  
Not one of them was ours, my dear,  
not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;  
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro;  
Looking for you and me, my dear,  
looking for you and me.

### **Saying from the Holy Qur'an**

(When Eva and I attended a potluck dinner at the Islamic Centre to mark the end of the Ramadan fast, the following passage was read from their scriptures. For passages in our scriptures with a similar message see: Psalm 15:2-3; Proverbs 25:23; Romans 1:30; II Corinthians 12:20. J. M. )

Chapter 49 verse 12: "O you, who believe, avoid much suspicion (against others); indeed suspicion in some cases is sin; and do not spy upon one another nor backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No you would hate it (so hate backbiting)."

### **Welcome to Wadi J'Hesh**

by Dianne Baker

*(Dianne, the daughter of Patricia Baker and the late Glen Baker, both United Church ministers, is a World Council of Churches Observer in the West Bank of Palestine)*

The last two weekends, I have spent part of my time in the small Palestinian village of Wadi J'Hesh. This village consists of one extended family, in two households: one headed by Ibrihim and Aaliya, the other by Mohammed and Tamame. So it was that on Friday evening, September 10th, my teammate Jonas and I were in Wadi J'Hesh with the family.

We had taken a few trips up the hill behind the tents to oversee the valley and the illegal Israeli settlement of Suseya. From this settlement, often a few times a week, some inhabitants come to intimidate the families of Wadi J'Hesh. They have brought their ATV's up onto the hill and crushed the few tender plants that the sheep need to nibble on. They have driven their cars over the fields, spinning their tires and stirring up clouds of dust. They have opened the cisterns and acted as if they were dropping something down. They have shouted and yelled in the middle of the night, waking the families up and causing the young ones to be fearful, and the older ones to be fearful too, but to act angry. But this evening, things seemed quiet. We could not see anybody out walking the land. We stood enjoying the sunset, and then returned to the tent.

Tonight, Aaliya had prepared a chicken and rice dish, with a sauce made of dried yogurt reconstituted to soup, and of course, fresh bread from the taboun. After dinner, we all sat drinking cups of Palestinian tea (oh so sweet and flavoured with fresh mint!) and eating a dessert called "kanafe", made of angel hair type pasta, sugar syrup and sheep cheese! (Don't knock it till you've tried it!!) As we watched the news and

became a bit dozy, we could hear car engines.

And this is strange because last week, the Israeli defense force decided that Wadi J'Hesh was a huge security risk and blocked their road with a five foot high earthen berm!

So clearly, this car was not from the village.

Ibrihim collected the powerful flashlight and the small children stayed in the tent with Yasmin, who is six-months pregnant. 11 year old Zaarah was already asleep, as was tiny Amara. The rest of us quietly went up the hill. Below in the dark, two cars without their light on were driving back and forth across the fields, where in two months, the family will plant barley for their sheep. The flashlight was just enough to show the shape of the car; we could not see the number of occupants in the cars. Ibrihim and his sons, Yod and Hamed, looked frightened, but firm. They each had in their hands their shepherding sticks for protection is needed. On other occasions, the people in the cars have moved off the fields to the road and then come up over the hill, into the village tents. The cars moved out of sight. We all stood quietly, and waited.... 5 minutes... 10 minutes.... nothing. We went back to the tent, and in a nearly surreal scene, watched a Turkish soap opera and drank tea. The men quietly discuss who will stay awake, how they will take turns to stand guard, in case the settlers return.

The next morning, we all are awake by 6:30. the men have been awake all night. Despite their plans to share the watch, none of them could sleep. After a quick breakfast, they all head off to their work: Ibrihim to drive his taxi and the three sons, Dir, Hamed and Yod to temporary day jobs repairing a road in At Tuwani.

The women must do the shepherding today.

When I head out on the land with Kawsar, Thawle and Aaliya and 26 sheep and goats, the first thing we notice is the trail of car tracks crisscrossing the field. We follow the tracks far across the land toward the sheep well under the distant olive trees. We look for shoe prints as we approach the well. None! A sigh of relief. It means that the well is safe. In other villages, wells have been poisoned and sheep have been killed. The family fears that one day this may happen here. Kawsar pulls water and pours it

into the trough. The sheep seem to know to take turns; sheep first, then the goats. Kawsar leaves her cell phone on the side of the well as she pulls the water. Her mother scolds... "Kawsar, you are going to drop that thing!", and Aaliya moves it down to a small niche in the side of the cistern. A few moments later, it is nudged by the nose of a curious goat and falls into the dirt. Kawsar rolls her eyes at her mother! "That wouldn't have happened if you had just left it!" I giggle at the oh so typical mother-daughter dynamic in this context so foreign to my eyes! Aaliya is strong! Kawsar has her mother's strength, and this is often a source of conflict between the two!

The next Saturday evening, I am again in Wadi J'Hesh with the family. 12 young Israeli men and 4 women come up and over the hill suddenly.

They walk boldly across the family's land and go to the cistern and open it. I stand taking pictures, Jonas shoots video and Narjle, Aaliya's daughter-in-law also shoots video with the B'Tselem camera. The settlers mimic the women and sneer at all of us. Kawsar, strong outspoken Kawsar, stands up on the cistern and stares at them.

After a few moments, her older brother Yod comes up from the tent with his baby in his arms.

Settlers say, "Oh, there is a man here. Let's go!"

And they move slowly off down the hill, walking through the fields, back to the road on their way to synagogue in the closing hours of their Sabbath. I try to understand what the motivation is for them to be so bold and so intimidating.

How can it be an expression of their faith to create such fear in fellow human beings? Aaliya has said before, "They (the Israelis) want us to leave this land. But it is my home and I will make my grave here."

This small community of about 35 people has now had its road blockaded. This adds more than two hours to their trips to get water, and the big tank truck won't even make the trip anymore because it is too hard on their truck. There is no way to have the tanker drive to the end of the road and for them to meet it with their small tank and tractor because the road is patrolled by the Israeli Army who have declared it illegal for any vehicle to stop on the highway for any longer than to unload passengers.

The life is being slowly choked out of many villages along this highway. We counted at least four villages with road closures just this week. When they work to remove the earth berms themselves, there have been threats of arrests. when international have helped, they have been arrested and removed from the West Bank.

There is a need for water, for fodder for the sheep, for access to emergency vehicles. all of these lifelines are threatened by the road blocks. There is also a need for awareness among the wider world and for pressure to be brought against the Israeli government and its policies. If they choose to continue to act as a occupying power, they have obligations to care for the citizens under occupation, according to International Humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

The world needs to know that Israel is NOT living up to these obligation and in fact continues to practice intimidation, and harassment. Israel has also decided to ARM the settlers, to protect them from any possible Palestinian violence. What I have observed is that the villagers are trying to peacefully go about their lives. But they are becoming frustrated and angry at the constant (and increasing) control, humiliation and intimidation of living under occupation. If there is reaction, it will be in part because the seeds of discontent and anger have been sown over 44 years of occupation.

No one wants violence. No one wants a third Intifada. And surely if it begins, in the wake of the anticipated failed bid for Statehood recognition at the UN this month, we will hear a great deal about how the Palestinians are obviously 'not ready for Statehood'. Please, read with care between the lines, and try to understand the conditions that lead a people to stand up to tyranny.

Remember Wadi J'Hesh, and Shib Al Butum, and Qawawis. Their roads may be blocked with dirt and stones, but they are committed to creating a road to freedom, dignity and self-determination.

## **Refugee Sponsorship update:**

by Eva Manly

Thank you to St Andrew's and the Nanaimo Refugee Sponsorship Group for sponsoring Ashraf, Hala & Abdullah and for agreeing to sponsor a second family who will soon arrive in Canada! St Andrew's United Church sponsorship - agreeing to be the official sponsor, setting up a Refugee Fund and handling all donations - is making it possible for these stateless people to have new hope, new lives and to feel safe for the first time in many years. Thank you!

You have made something wonderful possible – new life and hope for two young families and inspiration for others to do the same! Now First United Church in Ladysmith is working with 8 churches in Ladysmith, Cedar and Chemainus to sponsor a family. Comox United Church, working with the area communities, will sponsor a family and Victoria is organizing to sponsor as well.

The St Andrew's United Church: Nanaimo Refugee Sponsorship Group sponsorship project has received strong community support. Many of the donations to the Refugee Fund are from members of other churches, of the Islamic Centre of Nanaimo and from generous individuals and groups in the secular community. Many individuals have contributed household furniture and other necessities. Many, including some members of St Andrew's, have given generously of their time and energy. We are deeply moved by their commitment to the needs of others!

Donations have been received from individuals in the following communities: Caledonia, Ontario, Prince Rupert, North Vancouver, Vancouver, Port Alberni, Duncan, Chemainus, Ladysmith, Parksville, Qualicum, Nanoose Bay, Lantzville and Nanaimo.

What is the impact on St. Andrews, Nanaimo? St. Andrews is given credit for making these sponsorships possible and for having a spirit of generosity and caring for others, for those less fortunate than ourselves, for these stateless families whose lives and future were in danger.

**St Andrew's is hosting a Welcoming Potluck  
Supper for the Auqab family on Sunday, Oct.  
2nd at 4:30 PM in St Andrew's Hall.**

At that time we will welcome Ashraf, Hala and Abdullah to St Andrew's and to the wider community and recognize and honour the donors, the contributions of St Andrew's United Church, of the Board, and of the Nanaimo Refugee Sponsorship Group who have made this work possible. (The Nanaimo Refugee Sponsorship Group is the inter-church and inter-faith group that is working with St Andrews to organize these Refugee sponsorships.)

**(Volunteers are needed to help the youth in the kitchen)**

Menu: Salads, main course dishes with eggs, fish or Halal meat (Because the families are Muslim & they and other Muslims eat only Halal meat. Halal chicken & lamb are available from Super Store, Quality Foods, & Thrifties in freezer section. Look for green Halal label.) Desserts.

**You are invited so plan to attend! Because seating is limited please RSVP to Eva Manly 758-0966 or [ejmanly@islandnet.com](mailto:ejmanly@islandnet.com).**

**Bread of Life by the Sunday School Kids**  
from Heather Northrop

Here's the bread the kids made lately (last page). The white bread is the grade 3-7's. I think that is where the 3-eyed alien was made! The brown bread is from my dear group of K-grade 2's. I have two rainbows, flatbread, one with so much flour added you will sneeze, and one that was SO kneaded I am surprised it rose at all!

**The Martyn Joseph & Stewart Henderson  
Evening of Song & Poetry is scheduled for  
Friday Oct.14<sup>th</sup>.7:00 pm at St.Andrew's United.**

**Tickets:** \$15 advance, \$20 at door.

**Ticket outlets:** *West Coast Floral, Lobelia's Lair, Fascinating Rhythm, Tom Lee Music and the Church Office.*