

St. Andrew's filled beyond capacity

A highway and byway tour of southern Ontario, in almost any direction from Dufferin County, would reveal any number of vacated churches, of whichever denomination, as rural demographics change and people are attracted either to other Sunday activities or to less traditional forms of worship.

Small wonder, then, that a sense of pride permeated the environs of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Mansfield, as the congregation celebrated 150 years on Sunday.

It might have been fitting that the first lesson, read by Georgina Greer, was taken from Jeremiah 29: 10-13, 'For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. '

Many of the multitude who crowded the pews and overflowed into hastily placed chairs in the foyer bore the family names of the faithful who had created the church building in 1863. Many of those family names can still be found in a local telephone book, throughout the cemetery adjacent to the church, and also on the Cenotaph further north on Airport Road.

Among those families, one cannot miss the name of 'Gallaughan.' D.M. Gallaughan served as treasurer for 52 years. He was succeeded by his son Bob Gallaughan, and Louise Gallaughan was the pianist on Sunday.

Matthew 25: 31-40 was chosen as the second lesson, read by Rev. Tobey Boyer. This is the parable of the separation of the sheep from the goats; of the righteous sheep inheriting the Kingdom and the goats sent to perdition.

It reads, in part, 'Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

'Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

'And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

Rev. Karen Horst delivered her sermon based, in part, on the lesson to be taken from the parable, and of the blessings received by the faithful and by those they have helped throughout the history of St. Andrew's.

A few years ago, Prof. Reginald Bibby (Lethbridge University, head of Sociology research) wrote of trends in religion. While it appeared that Protestant church attendance was significantly in decline, he found that it was simply taking another form; that many worshippers were gravitating toward revivalist and evangelical.

In the face of the changes, the Presbyterian Church at Mansfield survived as such the tumultuous years of union, the Great Depression, two world wars and the whims of climate.

It could take pride not only in its survival, but also in its continuing ministry and in the generosity of its members.

By Wes Keller