

Same-sex wedding hits home at church

The same-sex marriage debate continues to be a major topic of discussion across Canada.

But nowhere is the issue more apparent than in this town of churches, Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The reality of it all hit home when it was learned a marriage of two lesbians had been performed last fall by a Stouffville minister at the Toronto Board of Trade Golf and Country Club.

The whispers, confined initially to coffee clusters, swelled to a chorus when the wedded couple participated in an Advent candle lighting at Stouffville United Church, Dec. 5, prompting at least one couple to leave the congregation.

According to the presiding pastor, Rev. Kathi Phillips of St. Paul's United Church in Richmond Hill, the women had known each other and had been living together several years. She described them as "loving and caring people".

Rev. Phillips said she wasn't sure what prompted them to seek out her services "but I felt privileged to be asked".

She described the ceremony as "wonderful", with supporting families from both sides in attendance, along with many guests.

"They're mature adults who wished to make a commitment," said Rev. Phillips. "They could just as easily have gone before a justice of the peace, but that wasn't their choice."

The pastor thinks the time has come for people to look beyond prejudicial opinions and judge others for who they really are.

"These are truly wonderful ladies," she said.

Rev. Bob Nightingale, pastor at Stouffville United, said while he played no personal part in the wedding ceremony, he knows both women well. With respect to the candle lighting, he said the decision was a recommendation from the church's worship committee.

Rev. Nightingale expressed regret two long-standing members of the congregation had taken exception to the decision and were now attending elsewhere.

"This is indeed a concern," he said. "There's been reaction on both sides." He said the roots of this particular husband-wife team are deeply embedded in church and in church tradition. "It's something that's difficult for them to accept," he said, "and I understand this."

More importantly, he thinks, is the need to treat everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, with dignity



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

and respect.

The make-up of the Church Street church has changed drastically in the last 20 years. The majority of people, with roots now embedded in congregational life, aren't life-long residents of the town or even life-long members of the denomination. Their attitudes, he notes, are more understanding and accepting. And this, he thinks, is good.

"The Bible states very clearly that homosexuality is an abomination," he said. "But, at the same time, the scriptures teach us to love and nurture each another."

"One must sometimes look past the literal sense," he said.

Rev. Nightingale praised the "acceptance" of his congregation towards two people who, he said, have so much to give.

It was at the 38th General Council of the United Church in Canada, held in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, that a formal request was submitted to Ottawa, asking the federal government to recognize and legalize same-sex marriage.

While debate on the issue was described as "argumentative and emotional", the conclusion was overwhelmingly in favour.

Rev. Nightingale said a marriage request from a homosexual or lesbian couple would, in his opinion, be dealt with like any other nuptial application. He noted, however, the issue of same-sex marriage has not yet been put to a vote of the congregation.

The final word goes to the relative newlyweds.

"The congregation at Stouffville United Church has been absolutely wonderful," said one, asking for anonymity.

"This community has been accepting far beyond our expectations — we feel very lucky to live here."

"The ladies of the church hosted a shower for us — we were overwhelmed by this."

"To light the Advent candle was an honour."

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has been writing for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER!

From our frozen section this week, we're featuring our Shepherd's Pie, which to some is comfort food at its finest. We use sautéed Spanish Onion, our medium ground chuck and freshly peeled Idaho or P.E.I. potatoes — mashed. You just need to warm it.

Reg. \$10.95 ea.
Serves 3 - 4

25% OFF THIS WEEK

FRESH ASPARAGUS

We sell lots of fresh asparagus because (a) we always buy the very best quality available (b) we take lots of care in handling it which translates into the best eating enjoyment, and (c) we charge a fair price.

1.99 LB. THIS WEEK

MEATLOAF!

This isn't about the musical guys a generation or two ago, this goes back further. This reminds me of my old aunt Minnie's meatloaf — which I had never had until that particular day of culinary enlightenment when I was 8 — and on really good behaviour on our bi-annual family visit to my dad's oldest sister. I thought that I had gone to heaven — it would be a long time till I realized that the reputation of meatloaf had fallen into disrepair — that is, until I met Doreen. This is her's and it's just as good as my aunts, rest her soul.

We'll be making this in two sizes and it will be available in our prepared food counter this Thursday, Friday and Saturday — and beyond!

You'll love it.

Large will be \$9.95 and the smaller size will be \$5.95

TOMATO BASIL SOUP

We make this soup using, you guessed it, fresh tomatoes and fresh basil, the base being chicken stock. In fact, I invite you to read the full ingredient list — all good stuff!

One further point; this can be served either hot or chilled, as your mood dictates.

Reg. \$5.49

Serves 3 - 4

25% OFF THIS WEEK

OUR BRATWURST

It's your lucky week. Not only will these be available as our sausage feature, you can have a hot one to go as well. We make them with beer, just like in the olden times.

Reg. \$3.99 lb.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

LATE ~ BAKING NEWS!

* We've had a number of complaints about not having sufficient sugar and gingerbread cookies of late. This week we'll have a generous supply of St. Patrick's Day Leprechauns, Irish wenchies, four-leaf clovers, spring flowers, Easter cookies, Roosters (what?) Cows of course, Mooses and rainbows to name a few.

* We've been slacking-off in the turnover department, but now we've mended our ways and we'll have a continuous supply Thursday to Sunday — and we'll have more berries in the strawberry-cream cheese ones!

* Lots of individual desserts are happening. We'll have various flavours of mousses, mini lemon meringues, tarts, mini fruit tarts, meringue nests filled with fruit and last but not foremost, eclairs!

* Watch for new items starting next week — **TIRAMISU** in individual size; **CROQUENBOUCHE** in various sizes and fillings, **WHITE TOBLERONE MOUSSE** in almond meringues and **HAZELNUT MERINGUES** with mocha and milk chocolate ganache.

CHIPWAGON DAY — ACT II

Our first chipwagon day a month ago was a good success, even with a couple of glitches in our fry production. Our intent is to do one on the first Saturday of every month.

On the menu this time are fresh cut fries, New York style, grilled brats on a bun — and an ice cold coke. It's a great lunch for \$5.00. We'll be going at 11 a.m. until 3 p.m.

See you there!

... SO WHAT'S BAKING THIS WEEK?

We'll have an apple-almond deal taking place this week — and the main characters are

* **BRANDIED APPLE CUSTARD CAKES** - these are our custard cakes with brandied-spiced apples baked in. A word of advice would be to serve these ever so slightly warm — \$13⁹⁵ and \$18⁹⁵ two sizes

* **APPLE-ALMOND CUSTARD TARTS** - this is new - and it contains spiced apples, toasted sliced almonds, amaretto and vanilla custard — \$1²⁹ ea. this is also best served warm

* **APPLE PIES** - these are our old favourite we use spy apples mostly. They're available either with a streusel top or a pastry top — 9" size \$8⁹⁵ ea.

* **APPLE ALMOND SCONES** - with a hint of maple syrup \$1⁴⁹ ea.

* **AMARETTO CHEESECAKE FLANS** - amaretto cheesecake with sliced almonds and apples fanned out on a shortbread crust \$17⁹⁵

* **APPLE-OATMEAL MUFFINS** - these are with dates and almonds, they're healthy with reduced sugar and oil, they're loaded with apple chunks, dates and sliced almonds \$1³⁹ ea.

* **CALVADOS CREME BRÛLÉ** - with the fabled beverage and spiced apples \$3⁹⁹ ea.

P.S. — In case you don't know, you can return the ramakins from past purchases for a refund of 50¢ each.



SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY MARCH 6TH

Hours:

Mon. 11:00-7:00 ~ Tues.-Thurs. 9:00-7:00 ~ Fri. 9:00-8:00

Sat. 9:00-6:00 ~ Sun. 10:00-5:00

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