

## Celebrating 225 Years

**A Shared History:** March 12, 2011 marks the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Montreal, and KCK & F celebrates with the whole community. In 1786 the Rev. John Bethune organized services on Notre Dame St. for garrison officers and fur traders of the North West Company. Presbyterians at first worshipped in the old Jesuit church with Anglicans and shared space with the Franciscan monks in the Church of the Recollet. In 1792 the Rev. John Young established the first Presbyterian Parish church in Lower Canada: the St. Gabriel Street Church or “the Scotch Kirk”, whose bell now hangs in our 1948 sanctuary. Built on the S.W. corner of the Champs de Mars, it was a small stone church within the old walled town. From those beginnings, many streams have branched out as new congregations formed, new churches were built, others closed, the city grew and the population spread. Even natural disasters like fires altered the church landscape in Montreal. What endured was the people’s faith and commitment to worship together, reach out to help others and improve their communities. KCK &F reflects many of those changes, and that history is mirrored in our own church: not just its name, but the heritage it preserves and the social programs it continues to promote.

**A Gathering Place, home to many people.** KCK & F unites the histories of some fourteen separate congregations, as downtown churches closed, NDG grew, and people moved west. In 1984 an important change came with the final merger, joining with the congregation of First Church. Over the years, the Jewish Communities of Shaare Zadek (1952) and Beth Shalom Congregation (1956) worshipped here during construction of their own synagogues. The Japanese Presbyterian Church worshipped in our McKay Hall from 1955-1978 under the leadership of Rev. J. F. Horisaki as the only Japanese-language Presbyterian church in Canada, and since his retirement that community has continued to worship and serve in KCK &F. Several congregations of the Korean Presbyterian Church have been worshipping in our sanctuary since the early 1980’s, with shared music events, fellowship, and several joint English/Korean services.

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**Reaching Into the Community:** Over the years, our churches have served many different people. KCK &F has supported the NDG Food Bank and provided a new home for the New Hope Centre for seniors, with its active Meals on Wheels program. Activities of the Men’s Breakfasters help fund organizations like Action Réfugiés Montreal, the McGill and Concordia chaplaincies, Head and Hands, and the Mission of the Good Shepherd. The Women’s Missionary Society donates to Auberge Madeleine, the NDG Senior Citizen’s Council, and Action Réfugiés. It also has spearheaded drives for schools in India and the Gaza Strip Project. In November 2010, a KCK & F initiative called “Thrive” undertook to offer an alternative to the traditional mode of morning worship, with a light meal and discussions on Sunday evenings. Beginning March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, and on the first Tuesday for each of the next four months, our church will host a Community Outreach project intended for new residents in the NDG neighbourhood, particularly new immigrants to Montreal. Each meeting will include a meal featuring the cuisine of one of the cultural groups now living in NDG and a program providing assistance and resources for the participants. This month, Persian cuisine and job-search skills are on the menu. Currently, 70 participants have signed up for this new program as our church continues to serve the Montreal community.

We all have much to celebrate after 225 years. The fur traders, walled fortifications, and military garrison are gone, but our mission continues: to serve God and offer Hope, Hospitality, and Healing to NDG and beyond.



*St. Gabriel Street Church, 1792*