**3rd Aurora Scouting Service Reflection**

**September 30, 2018**

**Bill Newman**

*“Scouting has been described by more than one enthusiast as a revolution in education.*

*It is not that…*

*It may be taken to be complementary to school training, and capable of filling up certain chinks unavoidable in the ordinary school curriculum…*

*The subjects of instruction with which it fills the chinks are individual efficiency through development of –*

*Character,*

*Health, and*

*Handicraft in the individual, and in Citizenship through this employment of this efficiency in Service.*

*Therefore, the aim of the Scout training is to replace Self with Service, to make the lads individually efficient, morally and physically, with the object of using that efficiency for the service of the community”.*

This passage was written over a century ago by Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the scouting movement, in the preface to his book Scouting for Boys. While the character and composition of Scouting have changed since B-P wrote those words, the core values remain as relevant to the life education of today’s youth as ever. No other group, I would argue, offers the unique blend of personal character building, spirituality, citizenship and outdoor skills that scouting does.

It is this emphasis upon development of well-rounded youth based on “Duty to God, Duty to Others and Duty to Self” that has made the 3rd Aurora Scouting Group a valued part of Aurora United’s youth education programmes for the last sixty years. Starting from its official formation on February 13, 1958, the 3rd Aurora Scouts have been very much a part of our congregation’s life. As the group evolved and grew, weeknights at AUC reverberated with the sounds and sights of Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Ventures and Rovers gathering for their meetings. There were special events and activities such as Apple Day, pancake suppers, spaghetti dinners, Beaver Buggy and Kub Kar races, and the annual church parade during Scout/Guide Week. Scouts were provided with instruction under the aegis of AUC’s Christian Education Committee to earn their Religion in Life badge. Although an exact number is not available, I would hazard the guess that several thousand of our youth have been part of 3rd Aurora’s history.

Those who have been youth members, leaders and volunteers with 3rd Aurora undoubtedly have many fond memories of their time in scouting, as do I. Lasting friendships have been formed and in several cases, marital bonds have been forged. Although the examples are too numerous to recite, one in particular warrants specific mention. Can you imagine the memorable experience that Jack Smith (who unfortunately could not be with us today) created for his scout troop when in the 1970’s, he took the group to New York City for a weekend camp at the top of the Empire State Building. How do you top that?

The reality is that Scouting could not be possible without the willingness of people to step forward to serve as leaders, parent volunteers and Group Committee members. Over its history, 3rd Aurora has been very fortunate to have so many enthusiastic and dedicated individuals serving in leadership and volunteer capacities. I only wish that time and space allowed me to mention some of the many who have served and continue to serve. We have been fortunate, moreover, to have our Ministers serve as the Chaplain for the 3rd Aurora group. Starting with Rev. John Hunter from 1969 to 1977, Rev. John Houston from 1977 to 1996 and continuing with Rev. Andy Comar from 2010 to the present, our Ministers have provided the group with spiritual leadership and support.

In certain ways, 3rd Aurora and AUC are on parallel journeys. We are both part of larger bodies undergoing cultural change and organizational restructuring. We are both “movable feasts” occupying temporary quarters while eagerly awaiting our return home to the corner of Yonge and Tyler. We both are challenged by a rapidly moving digital world in which there are so many competing personal priorities and distractions to service, community and spiritual growth. It is more important than ever that we remain true to our values and our faith. B-P’s words may sound arcane but they remain as valid today as they were a century ago. The lasting value of Scouting lies in its focus upon the development of character, health, handicraft and citizenship amongst our youth and the personal fulfillment flowing from service to others. “Duty to God, Duty to Others and Duty to Self”.

Happy 60th anniversary, 3rd Aurora. We walk together on our continuing journey.