**3rd Aurora Scouting 60th Anniversary Reflection**

September 30, 2018

Rev. Andy Comar – Aurora United Church

It’s Tuesday night. My friend Bill and I make our way up Cowan Avenue towards St. Mark’s Anglican Church in Toronto. Wearing our grey jerseys with our Cub book in hand we enter the church. We talk loudly with the other boys – toss a ball around. Then it’s time to begin. Akela calls out Pack, Pack, Pack” and we run, shouting “Pa-a-a-ck” forming the circle around him. Then we wait – who will it be. Who will have the honour tonight to bring the Wolf head into the centre of the circle. A name is called. It’s not me tonight. Well – there’s always next week. With our totem in place, the chant begins – “Akela, we’ll do our best. Dyb, Dyb Dyb. We’ll Dob, Dob, Dob.”

Then it is time for the promise –

*I promise to do my best,*

*To love and serve God,*

*To do my duty to the Queen;*

*To keep the law of the Wolf Cub Pack;*

*And to do a good turn to somebody every day.*

“I promise…” Those two words that I would hear reflected back to me as we moved through our gathering. Those two words that had roots and echoed in the stories of our faith. A rainbow - God’s promise to Noah never to flood the earth again. The promise made to Abraham and Sarah that they would be the parents of a great nation. The dove revealed in Jesus’ baptism – “this is my son, my beloved.” Jesus words to his friends after his resurrection – “I will always be with you.” I promise.

These two words ground us in Scouting. For me they were the bridge between what I experienced every Tuesday night and what I experienced within the church – what I believed.

Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement recognized the value of one’s spiritual life within Scouting. When asked where religion came into Scouting and Guiding, Baden-Powell replied, “It does not come in at all. It is already there. It is a fundamental factor underlying Scouting and Guiding. … First: Love and Serve God. Second: Love and serve your neighbour.”

The values that we learn and the friendships that we make through Scouting remain with us throughout our lives – for many of us, always grounded in the divine – our relationship with God. The Religion in Life program, where youth meet with a representative from their faith community for a period of time, continues to deepen and explore what it means when we say the words, “I promise..” and “To love and serve God.”

Reflecting on 60 years of the 3rd Aurora Scouting Groups is a cause for celebration! 60 years of relationships – children, youth and leaders.

The young people who have moved through this 3rd Aurora and who continue to be part of this group have had to deal with a changing world – environmental problems, war, peace, human rights, social justice. Every youth has learned quite a bit that will prepare them for the time when they are called to be leaders - what it means to be a good citizen.

We have learned how to treat others with respect. We have learned, at a very young age, what leadership means and how to be leaders. And we as the leaders with the groups and Aurora United Church have supported them in this work because we believe it matters.

My hope is that the youth today will go on to be young people who are filled with confidence in their own abilities. My hope is that when later in their life they get some sort of a calling, some sort of a nudge in a particular direction, they will feel ready to accept it, and feel confident.

That’s my hope for all young people. That we would teach them what matters. That we would give them the skills that they need for a life time. And that we would understand that when we hand them something like a Beaver Buggy, Kub Kar or Scout Truck, we’re not just teaching them how to sand wood or put wheels on a car, we’re teaching them that God created them to do the things they never knew they could do before.

I don’t think my ‘Cub-self’ ever would have imagined the journey he would take in life. A life in ministry – in service and in Scouting as uniformed chaplain these last 31 years. As a dad – encouraging his three boys in the ways of Scouting.

I learned many life lessons through Scouting. It helped me prepare for life in ways I could not have imagined 50 years ago. As I reflect on this journey I come back to the two words “I promise…” and what follows – “...to love and serve God.” Spirituality and Scouting go hand in hand. The experience of sitting around a campfire that we helped build, sleeping in a tent that we helped set up, learning how to properly use a Scout knife, learning to store camping gear and the list goes on. And at every camp – at every campfire – there is time for Scout’s own – a service that connects each one of us to God – time for singing, “Come by here my Lord, Come by here.” Time for prayer, reflection and learning - how we care for one another and this earth, as we are cared for by God.

As we celebrate 60 years today – we look to the future and hope and pray that the 3rd Aurora will continue on.