

STAYING CONNECTED

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR MCIVOR CHURCH FAMILY

October 25, 2026

Rooted in faith, renewed in hope and moving forward in freedom.

MEMORIES OF MCIVOR CHURCH – ELLIE (LABUN) CHARACH

The light filters through the vibrant hues of the stained-glass window high above the baptismal tank. To the right, tucked into the place where the two main walls meet, hangs a large, smooth, wooden cross. These are the beautiful symbols and centrepieces of the church I grew up in.

When I think of McIvor, I remember a warm community of believers and a wonderful place to grow up. I remember the feeling of belonging, of being known, and of being surrounded by families who were sharing life and faith together.

I was ten years old when McIvor first opened its doors to the community of North Kildonan. My family had attended North Kildonan MB Church, and we were part of the group of families who moved from the Kingsford location to the newly established church on McIvor.

I can still picture those early days. I remember the new carpet and the pews, the white brick walls, and the way the sanctuary seemed to draw your eyes toward the cross and the pulpit. Those things may seem like simple details, but they remain vivid in my memory. It has been many years since I have attended McIvor, and perhaps that is why those early images have become even more precious to me. They belong to a time when the church was new, our families were young, and so much of life still lay ahead.

In the '70s, McIvor was filled with families with young children. Church was not just something we attended on Sunday morning; it was a community that extended into the rest of the week. There were Brigade and Pioneer Girls programs on Wednesday nights, and there were the familiar faces of friends and families who became such an important part of growing up.

There were also the simple pleasures that seem so memorable now–like many of the families going out for lunch together after church at Bonanza. A great salad bar and enough food to feed a family of five for $20 felt like a pretty good deal!

Young People's was a small group in those early years, but it became a place where friendships grew and where we learned to enjoy being together. One particular evening stands out in my memory, although it is not a memory I would have chosen at the time.



It was a bitterly cold Saturday night in February, and our youth group was headed to Spring Hill for an evening of tubing. We were young and full of confidence. Teenagers can feel so invincible. A large group of us piled onto a tube and headed down the icy hill. The tube, carrying far too many young people, spun into a T-bar, and several of us were thrown onto the cold, hard snow. For a moment, everything was silent. We were all trying to understand what had just happened.

Allan Labun was summoned from the MB Church Conference that was being held that weekend. Several members of the group were injured, including his daughter Theresa who spent several months in the hospital.

Those months changed our group. We visited her, supported her, and supported one another. We learned what it meant to care for each other when things were difficult. The group that came together during that experience continued on into College and Career, and the friendships formed during those years became an important part of our lives.

While I was at McIvor Allan Labun was the pastor. He and his wife Irene poured everything into their ministry inviting those who were visiting the church or needed a place to go to their home for lunch after church. They were always looking out for people who might need a friend or some support. In Irene's words during baseball

games, "Everyone hits, everyone runs!"

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Looking back, I can see how McIvor helped shape my understanding of what it means to serve and to show love and grace through action. One of the experiences that stayed with me was participating in MB Missions' Urban Adventure, where a group of us spent time with young children in downtown Winnipeg. That experience opened my eyes to a world beyond my own and encouraged me to take my desire to serve even further.

Eventually, I found myself teaching English in Japan through MB Missions at Osaka Bible Church. It was a long way from McIvor Avenue, but in many ways, the journey had begun there.

Years later, my husband and I embarked on another adventure, this time teaching in the Middle East. This four-year experience was not through a church or missions organization, but once again, faith became an important part of our lives away from home. We met other Christian teachers and American soldiers stationed at Camp Shiloh in Kuwait City, and together we formed a Bible study group. That group became our family away from home.

Closer to home, my connection to the McIvor church family continued in ways I never could have anticipated.

In 1990, I began teaching at a small private Christian school operating out of Grant Memorial Baptist Church. Over the years, the school grew and many other teachers joined the staff. Many of those teachers were attending McIvor, some were people I had known while growing up there. My children attend Linden Christian School now and many of their teachers attended McIvor at one time or another.

Later, when I began teaching in the public school system, I found myself teaching alongside another teacher who had also grown up at McIvor. When my mom was in Donwood Manor it was Sherryl Koop who was the chaplain. My former teachers and coaches in high school attended McIvor, which supported the feeling of community I felt in the church.

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These connections have made me realize that the influence of a church community is rarely confined to its building. The families who worshipped at McIvor, the children who grew up there, and the people who were spiritually mentored, encouraged and cared for by that community carried what they had received into other parts of Winnipeg and into places around the world.

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Community goes a long way in shaping our character, our values and our understanding of faith. The seeds planted in childhood can continue to grow for decades, sometimes in ways we never see coming.

When I look back now, I see McIvor as much more than the church I attended as a child. It was part of the foundation of my life. It was where I learned, through the example of others, about community, forgiveness, service, compassion and faith. It was where I experienced the joy of growing up surrounded by people who cared about one another.

God allowed a good work to take root at McIvor, and then He took His people and used them to carry that work into other communities, other classrooms, other countries and other lives. It is humbling to look back on a journey that began when I was just ten years old and to see how the threads of those early years have continued throughout my life. The church, the people, the experiences and the lessons became part of who I am and how I understand God's work in my life.

What has been planted in us can travel wherever we go.

Perhaps that is one of the most beautiful things about a church community. We may leave the building, move to another city, travel across the world, change careers and enter entirely new seasons of life—but what has been planted in us can travel wherever we go.

I am grateful that McIvor Avenue Church was part of my story. I am grateful that my parents chose this church community to raise their family in.

Looking back, I see it as a quiet confirmation of something I have come to believe more deeply over the years: **God takes care of His people, and He uses them for His purposes.**

GIVING

We accept donations by cash, cheque, e-transfers to mcivor@mcivorchurch.com, or via credit card (scan the QR code). For Direct Deposit, contact the office.

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