



# APPETITE FOR FELLOWSHIP

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

Once the signs go out advertising an upcoming church dinner, people automatically know the menu will include delicious food and good company. Anyone who doesn't want to cook, or has out of town guests or wants to socialize, can find what they are looking for at a church dinner.

"Church dinners are truly one ecumenical undertaking which bring together members of many faith communities. They offer wonderful food, good fellowship and the means to support the activities of the host church," commented John Reynolds of Johnstown.

No matter where you live, church dinners are all about socialization.

Susan and Marvin Ells, from New Brunswick, recently attended the Spencerville United Church dinner. They commented that in their community, church dinners are held in the spring and fall. The one in the spring is held on the long weekend in May because the cottagers are coming to clean their cottages and they don't have to worry about preparing meals.

"They all come to the church dinner because they haven't seen each other all winter long and they see all their neighbours and community people," noted Ells.

In this area seniors make it a ritual to check the newspapers to see when each church is having their dinner. Grandparents enjoy treating their grandchildren to a church meal and even the Red Hat Ladies have been spotted at several of these dinners. Most churches are easily accessible and barrier-free. Take-out orders are usually available and left-over's are sold immediately following the dinner.

People who have a sweet tooth love church dinners because they can indulge in more than one dessert. Charline Vande Burgt, who volunteers at St. Paul's United Church in Prescott, looks after the pies for their smorgasbord that serves more than 400 people. She commented there are 90 pies needed for the dinner.

The banquet-style setup of the tables allows diners to interact with, not only people from different communities, but sometimes people from different countries.

Sue Michael, from Sterling Heights in Michigan, was visiting relatives in Spencerville recently and decided to attend the dinner at the Spencerville United Church. According to Michael, church dinners in her community are usually held in community centres. She commented that she was looking forward to the home-cooked meal in the church setting.

Not everyone who attends a church dinner is there to eat. It takes many volunteers and hours to put a dinner together. For some volunteers, it is a family tradition to help out, but for others like Cameron Lawrence and his two friends, Liam and Noah, it is a fun way to get volunteer hours for school.

Over the years, church dinners have been a great way for churches to raise money to help pay for such things as tables and Sunday school supplies.

"Dinners are one of the most cost-effective ways to raise money," commented Revered Myra Garvin of St. Paul's United Church in Prescott.

Many people who attend these fundraising events know they will get a good home-cooked meal at an affordable price and at the same time, they help the church. It is also a chance for people in the community to see the church in a different light.

Whether they are serving ham, turkey or spaghetti, there are different reasons why people attend church dinners, so if you have the time and a good appetite, attend a dinner and meet new people. Socialize with your friends or neighbours and have a great time and meal. The money that is raised always goes to a worthy cause. **LH**

