

Mrs Mod's Blog 11 - Part B From Princeton, Toronto and home

Princeton Seminary

In the afternoon we left NYC behind and headed to Princeton by train and then on to the seminary by the 'dinky' train. We were met at the station and taken to our accommodation at the Erdman Centre. We were invited that evening to join some of the seminary staff for a meal. The guest list included one of Russell's friends, David Fergusson, who is the Professor of Divinity at New College and on sabbatical leave in Princeton.



Wednesday was a beautifully warm sunny day and after breakfast we had a wonderful tour of the new library. The café was named after the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York and the central atrium named after Professor Iain R Torrance, their last principal and a former Moderator. We saw many ancient treasures and wonderful Scottish archives as well as thousands of books! Our next appointment was at the

Princeton Farminary, the purpose of which was to improve the link between nature, agriculture, the seasons and theology. This is a new venture for Princeton Seminary. We returned to the campus for an outdoor service on the steps of the chapel before the rest of the party went off for other meetings while I played hooky. Margot Fergusson took me out for lunch, al fresco in November, and then showed me around Princeton University including the chapel where Russell graduated with his doctorate. We also saw the building with the alumni plaques on the wall, each with their ivy plant. Dinner was in a very nice restaurant with the minister of Nassau Church in Princeton and his wife. They had had a summer working on Islay and had got a liking for malt whisky! Then back to the library for a reading by an American Poet Laureate, Billy Collins, in the Iain R Torrance Atrium.

Canada

Thursday morning and it was back on the train to Newark airport for our flight to Toronto ('Toronto' means 'the meeting place'). We arrived at Toronto airport earlier than expected. The Principal Clerk, Stephen Kendall, met us and took us out for a bite of lunch before taking us to the Presbyterian Church in Canada offices. Here we met several of the staff and had discussions on shared problems, issues and opportunities. From there we were taken to our hotel - The Park Hyatt - that felt like the lap of luxury. It was very close to the centre of Toronto and so we could walk to most places of interest.



After dinner at a local restaurant we went to The Balcony on the top floor of the hotel for a drink and to enjoy the spectacular view over downtown Toronto with the CN Tower. This is a famous bar where many of the press would hang out during the 70s. (The drinks were exceedingly expensive!)

After breakfast in Flo's Diner, a posh version of Tom's Diner in New York, we met Roger Hunter who has worked in homeless ministry for many years. He is very passionate about his ministry but feels he is failing to inspire or educate others in this area. In the afternoon we went to Evangel House which is a transition house for those who have been homeless. It also has a day centre, a dentist, a candle making room, children's club, supply of clothes and a communal kitchen which can also be used for larger events. This was an extremely well organised and well run facility. In the evening we were guests at a party at Ricky's house. Ricky had spent many years as a missionary in various parts of Africa. There were a wide variety of people from the church and society and a lovely meal.

Saturday, 5 November - Guy Fawkes Night but not in Canada. I had a breakfast that was described as 'healthy light'. This consisted of an enormous bowl of fruit and yogurt with coffee and toast. Terri-Lee Hamilton and Ian Ross Macdonald took us around the Lawrence Market before we met up with Stephen Allan to discuss the truth and reconciliation commission for the indigenous people and Deb Schlichter who has a great deal of knowledge about 'housing first' in Ontario. She feels it is making a difference. This is very helpful for Russell and his argument for such a model to be used in Scotland.



On Sunday, 6 November - Remembrance Sunday in Canada, we were picked up by Glynis Williams and taken to Park Presbyterian Church. When this church was built 60 years ago it was in the country but it is now in the city - how quickly Toronto has grown. The church has flats for people who are disabled connected to it so the church and halls are well set up for disabled access.

Are there any Canadians in Park Presbyterian? Everyone we met either had a Scottish accent or direct links to Scotland, there was a saltire flag in the church and thistles in the flower arrangement! I read the lesson and Russell preached on Zaccheus. Everyone was very friendly. A blind trumpeter played the Last Post and Reveille and a piper played The Flowers of the Forest at the start and Highland Cathedral at the end of the service.



When we returned to our hotel we took the opportunity to wander down past the university to the CN Tower and back.

Monday, our last day in North America, included discussions with the UCC (the United Church of Canada) on women's issues, communications, Advent programmes, Church in the future and youth in the Church. They have a Youth Forum, Youth Pilgrimages and a Go Project. After lunch there were discussions on global partnerships, climate justice and Israeli/Palestine issues. On this vexed issue they had attempted to raise awareness of the issues using a programme on 'Pray, Choose, Speak' and 'Unsettling Goods'.

Home

Then it was time to return to the airport for the return journey to Edinburgh. We were back in Rothesay Terrace by 10 am on Tuesday, 8 November, just as the USA would be going to the polls. From our experiences in the USA we were not surprised by the result. The washing machine was red

hot with use. We kept going until 9 pm and slept like logs for 12 hours. A quiet couple of days for me but Russell still had a lot to prepare.