



# UNITED CHURCHES OF LANGLEY

WEAVING A FAITH THAT MATTERS

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## Living Faith Story

### Mission Statement

United Churches of Langley is a *thriving* congregation who is *vital* to the community.

We are *alive* as followers of Jesus the Christ, and *sustainable* for the future.

*We are Weaving a Faith that Matters*

We have journeyed for the past 3 years with our ministers to lean into what our mission statement really means. We continue to challenge ourselves to reflect on and act from our Mission.

Learning and growing in faith is a dynamic, life-long adventure. At United Churches of Langley, we think of faith as a verb—we celebrate “faith-ing.” Good work is being accomplished through United Churches of Langley; we have made life-changing contributions to the lives of people in Langley and throughout the Fraser Valley. With the arrival of a legacy fund from the sale of property, social justice and outreach ministry is able to expand within our community and beyond.

We seek to create safe spaces to explore, ask questions, listen to ourselves and to others, and to engage with scripture, tradition and the contemporary world. We offer opportunities to learn together as a whole community and in small groups; we offer diverse opportunities to help meet the needs of different ages, stages and styles of learning. Our focus is accompanying one another on the journey to discover faith that matters—a faith that helps us understand ourselves, deepens our relationship with God, and helps us engage in acts of love and justice in our families, our communities and our world.

## **Social Justice and Outreach**

OutReach is one of our core values and is at the heart of our faith. Our gifts of time, talent and money have made a difference to many. The journey is ours, the Mission is God's, and we have been discovering how to be a part of what God is already doing. We continue to express our faith through action.

Over the years, we have continued to participate in and support several Outreach Ministries.

- Walk in Reconciliation
- Remembrance Day
- Christmas Hampers
- Langley Sources Food Bank
- Nicomekl Breakfast Program
- Starfish Back Pack Program
- Mittens and Gloves for Christmas
- Stations of the Cross

### **Comment on Nicomekl Breakfast Program**

*"The support of the church is greatly appreciated, not only by the children but by the principal and teachers at Nicomekl. Thank you!"*

### **Comment on Starfish Pack Program**

*"...The work you have done with students, their level of compassion and empathy has grown, and I don't think, without this opportunity of giving back on a weekly basis, it would have happened. They have learned to appreciate their own family more and what mom/dad is providing and have learned more about social responsibility and what community really means..."*

We look forward to becoming an Affirming Ministry and understand we will need help throughout the process. We are dedicated in continuing our work towards the creation of our new OutReach ministry which will increase our capacity for outreach initiatives.

We desire to deepen our current relationships in the wider community and strive to respond to more needs at a local, national, and international level. We want our community of all ages to reach out and express our values of compassion, inclusivity, social justice and respect for creation in the wider society.

We want to continue to learn and grow our knowledge of social justice as a congregation. Our building is open to many groups for events and educational programs to encourage the work of reconciliation, integrity and community building.

### **Wider Community Building & Engagement**

We see participation in community events and programs as essential to our development as a faith community. We will continue to learn ways in which our presence can reach diverse communities to strengthen other spiritual beliefs and faiths, along with our own.

- United Church Women
- Art Break
- Cèilidh
- Social Lunch
- Book Club
- Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?
- Faithful Friends
- Men's Breakfast
- Farmer's Market
- May Day
- Cranberry Festival

We consider ourselves to be a welcoming, loving, and inclusive congregation. We have a desire to increase the diversity of our Church community with regards to age, gender, lifestyle, sexual orientation, ethnicity, abilities, faiths and so on. We are conscious of our

aging population and have an expressed interest in serving the next generation of Christians. Nevertheless, maintaining service and support for our present congregation is imperative to our church. We want this community to be a place of belonging, spiritual growth, and learning for all ages.

Comment from Congregation Survey

*"More young people! Better still... make us all young again, or at least keep us young at heart!"*

**Leadership**

Our organizational structure is permission giving, not permission seeking, and we have a strong group of active leaders spread throughout our different ministries. Our ministers work in tandem; one with Adults, Outreach and Pastoral Care, the other with Youth, Young Adults, Children and Families and our new *SHIFT!* Ministries (for people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s)."

We understand the importance of lay leadership and encourage members of our congregation to participate in and even lead worship on various occasions. We encourage the development of leadership skills and recognize talent and gifts in others. We also provide mentorship to help people grow into new roles.

Our leadership is made up of:

- Board of Governance
- Finance
- Stewardship
- Property Maintenance
- Trustees
- Volunteers
- Ministry & Personnel (two ordained ministers, three children and youth leaders, Choir Director, Church Musician, Lay Worship, one Office Administrator, one Finance Administrator)

We hope to continue our leadership growth by having new faces join our committees and ministry teams. We are encouraging existing and newer congregants to share their ideas and inspirations with us to keep our church on the path of God's call.

### Comment on the Ministry of Church

*"I feel welcome, but especially my kids have found a community and mentors who are so important to them, that they drag me to church instead of the other way around. Thanks so much to everyone who participates in making this church what it is."*

## **Care Ministries**

One of the fundamental ways in which we respond to God's call is through outreach in our Care Ministries. Our congregation is widely affected by the love and care of others during the year. This includes a diverse range of ministries and activities including:

- Pastoral Care
- Prayer Shawl
- Stephen Ministries
- Visitors Ministry
- Bear Ministry
- Worship Services in Seniors' Facilities
- Radical Hospitality – Greeting, Ushering, Coffee & Conversation

### Comments on different Programs

Prayer Shawl Program *"About five years ago when Mum was in the hospital, she received a lovely pink shawl from the UCW. She adored that shawl and was laid to rest with it."*

Our main goal for our care ministries is to maintain connection with our congregation and build meaningful relationships in order to continue spreading God's message of caring for one another.

## **Worship, Music, Sacraments and Ceremonies**

In worship, we come together in community to celebrate and praise God's faithfulness with music, reflection, prayer, sacraments and scripture.

Each Sunday there are three worship services. They are:

- **9:00am - Traditional Service**, St. Andrew's Chapel, Fort Langley site
- **9:00am - Contemplative Service**, Sharon Chapel, Murrayville site. The worship is lay led, and includes short readings, prayers, chants and a 20-minute silent meditation. This worship opportunity allows us to simply rest in God and to listen for the Spirit
- **10:30am - Family Worship Service**, Main Sanctuary, Murrayville site. Children and youth depart partway into the service for Spirit Academy

Our traditional and family services are designed around the same scripture, sermon and order of service. The worship services and music are filled with spirit and inspiration. This is facilitated by our dedicated team of ministers, musicians, an enthusiastic and gifted choir, as well as numerous volunteers. We encourage everyone to join our open table for Communion by using inclusive language and making all feel welcome. To us, all means All.

During the week there are additional worship opportunities such as:

- Wednesday mornings people gather at the Fort Langley site for a time of Centering Prayer and meditation.
- Wednesdays at our Murrayville site, there is Bible Study where people are invited to share insights and questions about our scripture for the upcoming Sunday worship.
- Jazz Vespers monthly services as of January 2020.
- Also in 2020, once a month we will be offering an alternative worship experience in place of our family worship service led by the *SHIFT!* Ministries team.

Ceremonies in our buildings include:

- Through baptisms and profession of faith in community, we welcome in new or existing families to share in the sacrament of God's love.
- We are blessed to host many couples as they celebrate the holy sacrament of marriage.
- Families are supported and comforted as they grieve and celebrate the lives of loved ones who have died.

## **Adult Spiritual & Leadership Development**

As people who follow Christ, we know that personal growth and spiritual nurture is important. This intentional work is supported by a variety of gatherings and events. Our congregation's financial support allows these groups to continue to offer spiritual development to our faith communities.

There are several areas where we offer spiritual and leadership development:

- Book Studies, Clubs and discussion groups
- Centering Prayer
- Skeptics
- Lectionary Bible Study
- Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (VST Academy)
- Board and congregational leadership and wider community development

Our goal is to continue to encourage and explore the different ways of worship and spiritual exploration for the congregation.

## **Children, Youth, Younger Adults and Families**

We offer vibrant programs for children, youth and their families. The following programs are offered:

- Every Sunday morning, we offer Spirit Academy where children ages 3-14 explore the stories of our faith in fun, creative ways.
- Senior Youth (ages 15-20) meet bi-weekly on Sundays to explore seasonal worship themes, and engage relevant topics through videos, stories, and conversation.
- Families are supported with counselling, home visits, and periodic all-family activities and gatherings.
- Every year we host Camp Spirit, an amazing experience for people ages 5 to 85 celebrating love for a week of day camp in our church.
- The Minster of Children, Youth, Young Adults & Families offers counselling and mentoring to youth and young adults as they explore their faith and discern what it means to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- **SHIFT!** is an emerging ministry for people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s including Alternative Worship Experiences (AWE) with modern Christian music and integrating multimedia into the worship. We are also launching a Podcast Community building ministry. We believe *SHIFT!* to be an important ministry to explore what it means to be a follower of the Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.