



# FIRST UNITED CHURCH

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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## Our Council and Staff

### CHAIR OF CHURCH COUNCIL

*(Lisa Nafziger)*

The season of Lent invites us to reflect on what it means to live into the incarnation, to consider what it means for God to become flesh and to think about how God calls us to let the word become flesh in us. Each year, we take time in the spring (and this year, particularly during Lent) to reflect upon the work, priorities, commitments, hopes and collective dreams of First United. Over the past year, Council engaged with the Living Ministry priorities and considered how they call us to deepen and grow the ministries of our community.

In 2019, we continued to focus on our children's programming, with the curriculum development project in the summer, piloting the new material with our three children's programming leaders, Mary Ann, Jessica and Nicki. We also made time for a full day of discernment and retreat on the program in November. As a council, we supported Brian so that he could spend more of his pastoral time with the Journey to Adulthood (J2A) group this winter and spring, as they prepare for their pilgrimage to Mexico.

This was the first full year of implementation of our Duty of Care policy and, while there were a few growing pains, due to the significant work of our Safety Officer Mirelle and the church office, our policies around police records checks and maximizing safety for children and all members of our community are now fully in place and we can reflect on how they function.

I appreciate the ongoing work and leadership of Amelia and the New Ways committee: they continued to push us to consider how we are church together. This included collaborative work to develop and offer forest church as well as a focus on how we communicate who we are as First United, especially in online spaces.

We put a focus on pastoral care this year, and the community come together to establish circles of care to walk with those in difficult times. Moving forward, we will continue to consider how best to meet our pastoral care needs as a community. First came together during 2019 to celebrate the lives and grieve the passing of Garth Mundle, Paul Dewar, Betty Salewicz, Chris Moore, Grace Warkentine, Isabel Black, Stan Hughes, D'thea Webster and Maureen O'Neill. We also celebrated birth and, once again, we had several Baby Jesi in the Christmas pageant.

This year, we celebrated with Jamie Scott who received the Order of Canada for his long career with the United Church leading work to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

I am so very appreciative of the work of the many volunteers in our community who keep First vibrant and who coordinate all the tasks, large and small, that contribute to our ministries. When I look at *First Glance* and see the long list of activities each week and month, from various community gatherings and conversations about mental health and right relations, to our work supporting refugees, I feel blessed to be part of such a gifted and grace-filled community.

We are deeply grateful to our staff—Brian, Marg, Cindy, Paul and John—for their many gifts of time, energy, passion and leadership. I want to thank all the members of Church Council for their commitment to supporting the life and ministries of First United. In particular, I thank the outgoing members of church council who have offered so much leadership over the past years: Peter Farris-Manning and Mary Blakley, as well as Marika Morris and Damien Bonnett-Koene who stepped down earlier this year.

In closing, I share an excerpt from a poem called 'Blessing the Seed' that was part of a Lenten series by Jan Richardson, an artist, author and minister from Florida. I have spent quite a lot of time in the past days and weeks reading her poems and prayers. These are meaningful words.

### **Blessing the Seed**

I should tell you  
at the outset:  
this blessing will require you  
to do some work.

First you must simply  
let this blessing fall  
from your hand,  
as if it were a small thing  
you could easily let slip  
through your fingers,  
as if it were not  
most precious to you,  
as if your life did not  
depend on it.

Next you must trust  
that this blessing knows  
where it is going,  
that it understands  
the ways of the dark,  
that it is wise  
to seasons  
and to times.

Then [...],  
when you are least  
expecting it,  
when you have given up  
your last hope—  
this blessing will rise  
green  
and whole  
and new.

—Jan Richardson

## LIVING MINISTRY PRIORITIES

(Church Council)

In addition to our ongoing work in the six areas of ministry, we pay particular attention to the following in the upcoming year of 2020:

1. Living into what it means to be an intergenerational church, recognizing that people of all ages are an important part of our community and have gifts to bring.
2. Paying attention to pastoral care through continued conversation about the systems and structures we have in place and finding ways we can effectively support the needs in our community and our staff.
3. Paying attention to social and ecological justice, and in particular how we are "being church" in a time of climate crisis.

As a reminder, our living ministry priorities in 2019 were:

1. Continue to support the work of the New Ways Working Committee as we explore areas for growth or change as a congregation.

*The New Ways project continued through 2019 even though the persons hired to lead this project had to leave part way through. This required a shift in our approach.*

2. Review and put focus on our ministry to youth and young adults.

*Throughout the year, Council began efforts at this review as we initiated conversations with past leaders of the J2A and Rite 13 programs and we are still pursuing getting feedback from J2A members. This will continue through 2020 as we consider proposals on how we approach the named priority of supporting an intergenerational culture.*

3. That through the course of the year we have intentional conversations in the following areas of our congregational life.

- a. Pastoral Care. As pastoral care is a high priority, these conversations would consider whether we are satisfied with our present delivery or need to make some changes.

*The pastoral care team explored this question, naming gaps and identifying strengths. Utilizing the time of Paul Whynacht, several pastoral initiatives have been initiated in 2019 and we are looking at how these initiatives can be sustained in 2020 and beyond.*

- b. Social and Ecological Justice. This is a key ministry of First and these conversations with explore whether we are content with encouraging and letting organic interests emerge or do we want to explore ways to collectively choose area(s) of focus as a congregation.

*We are specifically, exploring our efforts at lifting up ecological justice and our engagement as a people of faith in the care of the Earth. The Earth Group is promoting Events on Water Day, supporting workshops “Ecological Grief: A Pathway to Resilience, Self-care, and Earth Care”, and planning an all day vigil for Earth Day. The Council has also supported efforts to support workshops for Front-line workers and established this as a ministry within the framework of First United. We are also supporting an internship with Claire Savage focused on local outreach with other churches (see below).*

- c. Relationship with the United Church of Canada. Given the structural changes, these conversations would consider how we remain connected with and participating in the life of the wider United Church of Canada.

*First United is actively working on ways to “cluster” with other neighbouring United churches, especially in the area of outreach support to our neighbourhoods, Centre 507, and Carlington Community Chaplaincy.*

- d. Curriculum Development (for children’s programming). This project has had a good start over the past year, but more work is required and we need to ensure resources and time for this project

*This project advanced greatly through the efforts of Mikayla Lafortune who was hired in the summer to develop the curriculum. This remains an on-going project.*

## MINISTER

*(Brian Cornelius)*

Over this past year, and even as I write, I have pondered and received inspiration from the “cloud of witnesses” by drawing on the words of the writer of Hebrews who reminds us that “with so many witnesses in a great cloud all around us, we too, then should throw off everything that weights us down and the despair and faults that cling so closely, and with perseverance keep running the race that lies ahead of us”.

As a congregation, we had the deep honour of being present to journey alongside many who joined this “cloud of witnesses” in 2019. Right now I am doing a personal writing project reflecting on all these journeys and receiving the inspiration and all that I learned about life and faith from these dear friends. It is a rich reservoir.

This project has been reminding me, as I near 15 years of being the minister at First United, of many others who make up this wondrous “cloud” and I find their names coming to my lips often and their spirits stirring within my own.

So I imagine all of these dear friends, I imagine them cheering us on in the arena of life as we live our faith, cheering each of us in our own faith development and encouraging each of us to face the challenges of life with a determination to heal and to grow and to relish all the joyous moments we have on this earth.

And I imagine them cheering us on collectively, cheering us as a faith community, encouraging us in our priorities and projects as a community of faith even as they delight in

- the 100+ stories project to help us learn about and from one another;
- our commitment to offer healing pathways;
- the Outreach Ministry project in conjunction with five other United Church congregations that will bring Claire Savage into our mists;
- the retreats for Front Line Workers to support their well-being and self-care;
- the engagement led by our Earth Group and Water Allies on land care and climate change;
- our unrelenting commitment to living in right relations with the First Peoples of Canada;
- our efforts to enhance intergenerational relationships within First;
- our faithfulness in gathering in community as we share faith and song and story and prayer each week;
- the faithful leadership of our children and youth;
- our willingness to continue to be pastorally present to one another;
- and the many other efforts that are valued but go unnamed in this short report, from counting offering to offering hospitality.

It is an honour for me to journey with this community of faith. I am so grateful for the wisdom of our Council as well as the support of colleagues, so grateful for the many one-on-one holy conversations as well as the enthusiasm of our children and youth, so grateful for the vision and ministry and care offered by those who populate our faith community, and so grateful for the “cloud of witnesses” whose spirits continually dance among us.

I am fortunate to work with wonderful colleagues Marg, Cindy, Paul and John as well as having the as a delight to work with Paul Whynacht over these past few months.

Blessings as we journey together in 2020.

Brian

## MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL

*(Lisa Gue, Chair)*

I will begin this short report by thanking our talented and dedicated staff team for all your contributions over the past year!

The Ministry and Personnel Committee (M&P) is responsible for supporting and overseeing ministry personnel and lay staff. In 2019, we focused our efforts on supporting various contracting processes and initiating performance evaluations for all permanent staff.

There were several staffing changes in 2019. Cindy Cherry started as church administrator in January. A Canada Summer Jobs grant enabled us to hire Mikayla Lafortune on a short term contract over the summer. She worked with Brian to develop a customized Sunday school curriculum. In September, the part-time contract position of Sunday school administrator was replaced by three smaller contracts for Sunday school workers, focused on implementing and refining the new curriculum. We thanked Mary Ann Rogers for her many years of service as Sunday school administrator and were grateful that she agreed to continue in the role of Sunday school worker, along with Nikki Nel, and Jessica Ward-King. This interim arrangement has ensured continuity in Sunday school leadership for the youngest classes while Church Council undertook a review of the Sunday school leadership model.

The committee membership also evolved over the past year. I took over from Norman Ball as chair in March. Norman remained on the committee as past-chair for a year to show me the ropes but is now stepping down. Miriam Koene also resigned from the committee. We are delighted that Selma Incesulu has agreed to serve on M&P, joining Jane Ellis, D'Arcy McPherson, Denis Filips and me. I look forward to working with you all in 2020.

## REGIONAL COUNCIL

*(Brian Cornelius and Wendy Snelgrove)*

2019 was the first year of the existence of the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council. Presbyteries and Conferences, after 93 years of existence, were amalgamated into 16 Regional Councils. Regional Councils are still establishing their identities and bringing focus to their ministry.

Presently, the Regional Council meets three times a year to provide governance and inspiration within the Region. The life of the Council is supported by three full time staff Jane Dawson as Minister supporting Communities of Faith, Clusters, and Networks for EOORC, Whit Strong as Pastoral Relations minister for EOORC and Dana Ducette as Youth and Young Adults minister for EOORC. There is also a half time communications staff person, Anita Jansman.

As part of the restructuring, the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council is linked to Conseil régional Nakonha:ka Regional Council to the East and consists primarily of Communities of Faith in Quebec, and the East Central Ontario Regional Council to the west which consists of Communities of Faith in the Kingston, Bay of Quinte, Peterborough areas. With these regions we share additional staff, Rosemary Lambie as Executive Minister, one of three regions she serves, Karen Valley as Office of Vocation Minister, Joe McGill as Community Capacity Development Officer for Indigenous ministries for three regions, Trisha Elliot as a stewardship and gifts.

First United is naming as a priority an intentionality to determine our relationship with the wider United Church and our United Church neighbours as part of this major structural change.

This is being realized in the outreach ministries project that is hiring Claire Savage as an intern to support the outreach ministries of five congregations (First United, Centretown United, Dominion-Chalmers, Glebe St-James, and St.Paul's Eastern) with a particular focus on our relationship with Centre 507 and the Carlington Community Chaplaincy.

## STUDENTS/ CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY

In 2019, we celebrated with three students/candidates for ministry.

1. Colleen Lowrie completed her studies at United Theological College and is now pursuing a vocation in ministry in Southern Ontario. Our prayers are with her as she discerns a pathway forward.
2. Claire Savage continues her formation through the Atlantic School of Theology. Through 2019, Claire has been in a student placement at the Alywin Pastoral Charge in West Quebec and had a contract in palliative care at the Bruyere. We anticipate that Claire will have a self-directed internship in a special outreach ministry launched by six churches, First United, Centretown United, Dominion-Chalmers United, Glebe St. James, and St. Paul's Eastern.

## CONGREGATIONAL STATISTICS

(as at December 31, 2019)

**Membership, December 31, 2019**      **183 (25 non-resident)**

2019 Actions:	Transfer in	0	
	Deaths	(3)	Stanley Hughes Maureen O'Neill Betty Salewicz
	Transfer out	(4)	Susan Chambers Ruth Mooney Jeffrey Smith Joanne Tanner

**Membership December 31, 2019**      176 (26 non-resident)

### Baptisms

Blakley-Swan, Matthias Lyric - child of Mary Blakley and Jason Swan  
Cameron, Morgan and Keegan, twin children of Diane Cameron  
Jones, Ian Alec - child of Shannon Headland and Andrew Jones  
Patal, Ave Burke - child of Cindy Burke and Kushal Patel  
Recoskie, Margo James Reid - child of Steve Recoskie and Amanda Shane  
Smith, William Lawrence Sutton - child of Petra Smith and Patrick Sutton

### Congregational weddings

Melanie Laneville and Robert VanderBerg

### Memorial services

Jerry Beauchamp	Isabel Anne Black
Paul John Dewar	Stanley John Hughes
Christopher Andrew Moore	Garth Irving Mundle
Maureen Anne O'Neill	Alan Rimmer
Elizabeth Salewicz	Grace Edna Warkentine
D'thea Maeve Webster	

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Membership	163	166	168	175	179	183	178
Adherents	189	188	201	208	227	236	233
Adherents (under 18)	107	85	99	103	102	104	107
Total persons under pastoral care	459	439	468	486	508	513	518
Households in pastoral care	232	230	255	262	265	267	272
Identifiable givers	157	145	142	157	154	181	174
Average attendance	139	156	170	170	163	164	164

## TREASURER AND DONATION COORDINATOR'S REPORTS

(Andrew Clark, Treasurer & Chair of Finance Committee)

NB: Please read this report as a complement to the detailed financial statements and budget provided in the Annual Report.

### Operating Fund and Budget

On balance, 2019 was a positive year for First United, with net operating income of \$5,207 instead of a budgeted net loss of \$5,510.

A detailed analysis of our financial statements reveals both positive and negative developments in our operating finances. On the positive side, our planned congregational givings (through envelopes and First Things First) were up almost 4% over the previous year—a generous response to the Fall 2018 Living Room Conversations. Also, our operating expenditures came in only 1.5% above the budget, despite a very busy year of activity in the church.

On the negative side, the Advent Appeal and special donations were down from last year, so overall congregational givings for operations were essentially unchanged from 2018. We were able to turn our 2019 budgeted deficit into a surplus because, alas, memorial givings to the church increased by almost \$10,000. This reflects the loss of too many beloved members of the First family during the year.

For 2020, we are proposing a modest budget increase and projected deficit of \$9,475. We are hoping to increase congregational giving by 3.0% over last year's actual givings and to limit our budgeted expenditure growth to 1.9%, which is primarily due to cost of living increases for staff recommended by the United Church of Canada (UCC).

We are aware that a 3% increase in givings may pose some challenges: some folks may not be able to increase their givings and some may need to decrease them. We hope that those who are able will increase their pledges to *First Things First*, our pre-authorized remittance program. Since many people no longer use cheques, we expect to offer soon the capacity for online donations via our website. (We will refrain for the time being from using debit machines during the collection of the offering).

### Outreach Ministries, Refugee Ministries, and Mission and Service

The First community continued to give generously to our various missions and ministries. Indeed, this year we managed to exceed by over \$4,000 our target of \$33,500 for the Mission and Service Fund (M&S) of the UCC. M&S contributes to the UCC ministries and outreach in Canada and the world. The target was exceeded owing largely to the success of the 'Guess who's coming to dinner!' program which

raised funds specifically for M&S this year. For 2020, we have proposed a target of \$35,000 to build on this success.

First members also supported several outreach ministries with specific donations designated, mostly to the Westboro Food Bank through an event hosted by Joan and Peter Rogers where the residents at the Metropole Condominium raised about \$9,500 over and above the church's regular budgeted gift of \$2000. Our members also contribute many volunteer hours to this vital local ministry.

The church continued to manage a large portfolio of refugee funds, supporting refugees fully sponsored by First United and several other refugee support groups in Ottawa for which we act as financial administrator and on whose behalf we provide charitable receipts. First members donated over \$11,000 to support our own refugees, while receiving gifts of \$64,000 on behalf of other refugee support groups in the city.

### **Bequest and Memorial Givings**

We received memorial givings this year in memory of Stan Hughes, Isabel Black, Paul Dewar, Betty Salewicz, Garth Mundle, Chris Moore, Alan Rimmer, Beth McDonald, D'thea Webster and Maureen O'Neill.

In August, we received the balance of Sharon Hawkins' bequest to our church, in the amount of \$97,000, bringing the total to \$247,000. Sharon, a longstanding and dedicated member of First United passed away in December 2017. The initial installment of \$150,000 in 2018 was allocated by Church Council as follows: \$75,000 to our Building/Legacy Fund, which will contribute to the ongoing operations of First United; \$25,000 to our Refugee Fund, a ministry near and dear to Sharon; and \$50,000 in a Restricted Ministry account, for initiatives arising from our ongoing New Ways project. Council designated \$9,000 of the bequest received this year to help purchase the new, more comfortable chairs for the church hall and will decide soon how to allocate the remaining \$88,000.

### **Capital Improvement Fund and Building Improvement Fund**

As partners in the building we share with All Saints' Anglican Westboro (ASW), we budget \$15,000 for building improvements a year, which is matched by \$15,000 from ASW. We also budget \$20,000 for major capital projects, while \$30,000 is budgeted by ASW. A full accounting of how this money is spent is included in the financial statements. A major capital improvement project was undertaken this year, for new flooring in the church hall and a new nursery space. The major building improvement project was the renovation of the downstairs washrooms.

## Words of thanks

Many people contribute to the Finance Ministry at First. Thanks go to:

- The faithful cheque signers who come into the office regularly to be one of two signatories on all our cheques and to ensure we make prompt payments on our accounts. In addition to myself, they are Jane Ellis, Margaret Maxted, Joan Rogers and Shirley Lanktree.
- The many greeters who collect the offering every Sunday
- Margaret Maxted and Shirley Paton, who organize the weekly counters—Norman Ball, Monique van Schie, Mary-Ellen Harper, Sybil Brake, James Isaac, Wendy Snelgrove, Jane Ellis, Doug Stafford, Carol McMurdo, Dale Walker, Darcy McPherson, Margaux Beland, Ruth Stewart-Verger, Susan Little, Paul Durber, Mary Donaghy and Marti Settle.
- Dale Walker, our Donations Coordinator
- Norman Ball, our church payroll administrator
- Cindy Cherry, our Church Administrator, who keeps the books and tracks donations
- The members of our Internal Review Committee who examined the 2019 books—Susan Little, Monique Van Schie, Marti Settle and Donna Hobson.

Special thanks go to-

- Susan Little, CPA, for her expert accounting advice and for helping to ensure our financial statements make sense
- Brian Cornelius—not only an amazing minister, but also an expert on spreadsheets, Quickbooks and UCC finance—for his considerable contribution to this ministry.

## DONATIONS COORDINATOR'S REPORT

*(Dale Walker and Cindy Cherry)*

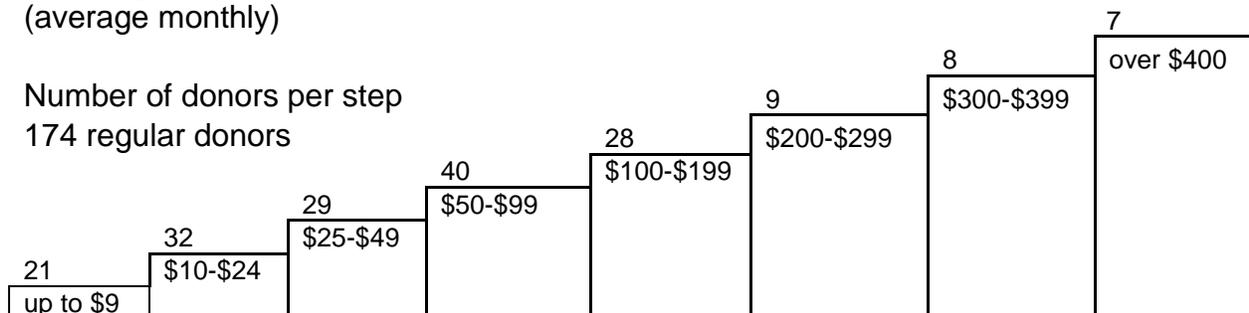
The following information is provided by our Church Office Administrator, Cindy Cherry. All congregational givings are tracked by Cindy and reviewed by our Donations Coordinator, Dale Walker.

We are grateful for the generous support of so many who support First United. In the chart below there is a report on average monthly givings by congregants to First United

If you have any questions about participating in Pre-Authorized Remittance Program or to receive envelopes, please contact the office.

### Offering to First United 2019

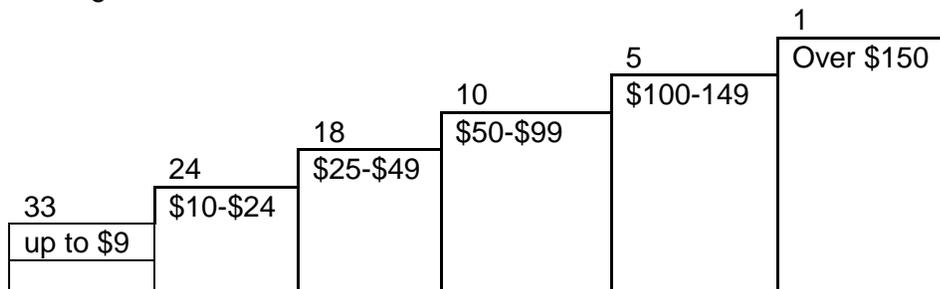
(average monthly)



### Offering to Mission & Service and other mission projects

2019 (average monthly)

Number of donors per step  
91 regular donors



## TRUSTEES' REPORT

### Board of Trustees

Every congregation in the United Church of Canada (UCC) must have a Board of Trustees. 'The Trustees' hold the real property (building and land) as well as cash investments (Building/Legacy Fund) in trust for the congregation and the wider United Church. Since we no longer own any real property, the ongoing responsibility of our Board of Trustees is to ensure the investments in our Building/Legacy Fund are well managed.

### Building/Legacy Fund

The primary purpose of the Building/Legacy Fund is to provide annual income to the General Fund of the congregation in order to offset our building costs since the bulk of this investment comes from the proceeds of the 2007 sale of our Kent Street building.

The original investment in 2007 was \$930,000; at the end of 2019, we had a market value investment of \$1,258,808. Through these years, an annual contribution has been made to the General Fund. Included in this amount is the addition of \$75,000 from the Hawkins bequest in 2018.

As a congregation, we adopted a policy of transferring 4% of the December 31 market value of the Building/Legacy Fund to the General Fund for the following calendar year, allowing the Building/Legacy Fund to both fund our congregational life and experience modest growth in order to offset inflation. Almost every year, the congregation has benefited from a higher transfer amount.

During 2019, we experienced one of the largest gains in our investments, offsetting the loss from 2018. We have only had one loss year over the last ten. In the last five years, our investment returns have been as follows:

2019	12.6%
2018	(2.2%)
2017	9.0%
2016	6.5%
2015	4.7%

This is a 5-year average return of 6.1%. A detailed accounting of the value of the fund is included in Schedule 7 of the Reviewed Financial Statements.

2019 did bring a significant change in our investments. As reported last year, our investment company Feira Capital Funds was sold to Canoe Financial and renamed Frontier Capital Funds. In March 2019, the Trustees of First United worked in conjunction with the Trustees of Grace United to explore opening a joint account

(tracked separately) in order to meet the \$2 million threshold to invest with Fiera Capital Private Wealth the company used by the General Council of UCC.

In considering this change, new investment strategies became available, with an investment cost of only 0.5%. After meeting with representatives of Fiera Capital Private Wealth, the Trustees chose to transfer the investments to Fiera and opted for an investment strategy where 50% is invested in a Balanced Fund and 50% is invested in alternative income sources, such as loans for infrastructure developments and green projects, real estate and other income making investments. The transfer occurred in July 2019.

These alternative income funds provide a predictable return and are not impacted by stock market fluctuations. The Balanced Fund is invested in the stock market and bonds, and is considered a fund with moderate risk. The Balanced Fund can experience growth years, but can also experiences loss years, like 2018. Prior to 2018, 100% of First United investments were in a Balanced Fund, giving us lower return in good years, but a better return in leaner years.

Further, by investing with Fiera Capital Private Wealth, First United continues to benefit from the Socially Responsible guidelines that direct UCC investments with Fiera. At this time, the Trustees continue to feel confident with this investment strategy and do not recommend any changes.

Given market fluctuations and a desire to maintain an ongoing sustainable fund into the future, the trustees recommend-

***the continuation of the policy to transfer 4% of the market value of the Building/Legacy Fund to the General Fund and, therefore, a transfer amount of \$49,660 (an increase of \$3,860 from the \$45,800 transferred in 2019) to the General Fund in 2020, based on a total equity of \$1,241,508.***

The Trustees also recommend-

***that transfers to the General Fund be enacted at the discretion of the Trustees and the Finance Committee, based on congregational cash flow needs and fluctuations in the stock market.***

### **Our investment policy**

As a reminder, at the 2007 Annual Meeting, the congregation approved an investment policy which authorized the Trustees to select a professional manager/firm/foundation to manage the investments in the Building/Legacy fund. It also allowed for investments to be managed with a long-term investment horizon, including investments in equities (for example, a balanced mutual fund). It was pointed out to the congregation that, with such an investment policy, there would be years in which there could be investment losses but, for our investments to grow at a rate greater than the rate of inflation, it was

necessary to invest a portion in equities for the greater returns they bring over the long run.

The congregation also required that the manager be guided by the ethical investment policy of the United Church of Canada. Trustees are obligated to follow the criteria set out in the *Ontario Trustees Act* and must exercise the care, skill, diligence and judgment that a prudent investor would exercise in making investments and they are obligated to follow the terms of the United Church's *Trusts of Model Deed*. In addition, Trustees are not personally liable for losses on investments if they follow the prudent investor approach as asset out by the *Ontario Trustees Act*.

### **Membership**

Should you wish to find out more about our Investments and Investment Policy, please do not hesitate to contact your friendly neighbourhood trustee. Your Board of Trustees consists of Brian Cornelius (ex-officio), Peter Engelmann, Margaret Maxted, Marti Settle and Monique van Schie.

All the Trustees have agreed to be re-elected for another year.

## Our Commitment to Spiritual Nurture in Community

### CHILDREN, NURSERY AND YOUTH MINISTRY

#### **Nursery:**

Once again, we are blessed to welcome into our congregation seven babies born in 2019 in addition to the seven born in 2018.

This year, we completed a long-overdue update to our nursery by transforming the stage area next to the church hall into a nursery. This integrates our youngest members into the middle of our congregational life.

Thank you to all the volunteers who make our nursery so welcoming.

#### **Children's Ministry:**

We continue to be blessed by the presence of many children in our congregation and are "made alive by their enthusiasm". Their weekly presence, is a deep blessing, a blessing highlighted in the annual Christmas Pageant where most of them participate.

One project, still under development, is a "home-grown" curriculum. This past summer we hired Mikayla Lafortune through a Canada Summer Jobs program to advance this project. Since then, the present teachers are adding their insights to the curriculum, and the goal is that over 2020, to have this project complete such that it can be shared with the whole congregation.

We are grateful for all the leadership offered in our children's programming. This year, there was an evolution in our leadership as we identified regular teachers for the three classes from pre-school to grade six. This leadership is offered by Nikki Nel, Jessica Ward-King, and Mary Ann Rogers. We express our thanks to Mary Ann for the leadership she has provided over the past five years.

Our children's programming is also blessed with the presence of many volunteers who regularly offer their giftedness in providing leadership to our children.

Throughout the year, the Church Council has been consulting with the congregation on the best way to support our children's programming and will be finding ways to implement the insights realized through these consultations.

### **Rite 13 Youth Program**

*(Pat Lindsey, Robert VanderBerg and Jillian Buckie)*

This past year, we had 14 amazing young people participate in our fun and dynamic program for youths ages 11 and 12. We began the year with four youth leaders—Jillian Buckie, Robert VanderBerg, Pat Lindsey and Lorena Norwood. Lorena moved to Halifax in the late spring. We continued in the fall with three energetic youth leaders, supported by Brian, our Rite 13 families and members of the congregation. Our Rite 13 group will graduate in June 2020.

2019 highlights included

- a hike to Luskville Falls
- raising funds and participating in the Tulipathon for Multi Faith Housing
- BBQ and Games Night
- Glow in the Dark Mini Golf and football in the snow
- participating in services, including a drama of Zacchaeus' chat with Jesus
- playing the leading parts in our pageant, 'Christmas Counts.'

Themes explored this past year centred on social justice, compassion and values, and Earth care.

We would like to thank our youth, Brian, all the Rite 13 families and members of our congregation for supporting our program.

### **Journey to Adulthood Youth program:**

*(Sebastien Benard, Joelle Morgan and Brian Cornelius)*

The sixth incarnation of the Journey to Adulthood program began in 2018 and will culminate in a pilgrimage to Mexico in the summer of 2020.

Over the two-year program between five and six youth have met regularly with leaders on Sundays and in mid-week activities in order to nurture relationships and spirit. In addition, there have been gatherings to socialize as well as to raise money for the pilgrimage through pumpkin carving and supporting the Westfuse BBQ.

While the pilgrimage will be a key learning time as the youth and leaders expose themselves to the wisdom that will be garnered from the peoples and experiences in Mexico, we continue to engage in our own neighbourhood and church as the youth continue to engage in our faith.

## CHOIR & MUSIC MINISTRY

(Marg Stubington, Music Director)

My job as Music Director here at First United continues to be very rewarding. The congregation values music highly, sings heartily along with us and welcomes the wide variety of styles of music that we bring each Sunday.

SuperChoir (36 on the list, average 26 each Sunday) continues to tackle all kinds of choral music: Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, African-American spirituals, contemporary pop arrangements, gospel, folk, African songs, Shaker tunes and much more. We sing in English, French, Latin, Hebrew, Swahili, Zulu,... We move and groove and have a great time together.

Apart from regular services, the choir had an unusually busy year preparing anthems and hymns for seven memorial services. When our presence was requested SuperChoir members were very quick to respond and to volunteer extra rehearsal time, love and support for family and friends at First, Ottawa and beyond. One service was for Isabel Black, our dear friend and fellow choir member (October 11). A few singers visited Isabel in her room at Amica the week before she died, singing songs we knew she loved and watching her speak the words along with us. We were so grateful for that time with her.

On February 16, we sang for longtime member Garth Mundle's service and finished with an upbeat congregational dance to Celtic fiddle music! We had an augmented choir (+12) for the service for Paul Dewar at Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre just one week later, on February 23. All of these services featured hymns, anthems and songs sung with great care by the choir.

We celebrated the baptisms of Ian and Mathias (Shannon, Andrew, Mary and Jason) on April 28 by singing *Tabula Rasa*, and *We Rise Again*, anthems specifically chosen by both sets of parents. Our Christmas Eve choir was larger than usual this year—a group of 32 singers. We enjoyed singing carols in the Chancel to help set the mood for the service and loved singing *Sure On This Shining Night* by Morten Lauridsen.

On January 21, at our joint ASW/First United Service, the choir of 35 provided leadership with many hymns and other service music as well as two anthems, *I Have Had Singing* and *We Rise Again*.

Several members of First's choir have offered their gifts as instrumentalists and soloists: Krista Brodie, Amelia Buchanan, Roshan Chislett, Cheryl Farris-Manning, Stephen Hayward, Jane Sly, Peter Farris-Manning, Jenn Wiebe, Mike Beauchamp, Elaine Taylor. We have enjoyed having Paul Whyngaught, Candidate for Ministry, in the

bass section when he has the time. A special thank you to Jane Sly who has been our very patient (!) choir librarian.

Other musicians who have led in worship services include Tobi Dumoulin (piano and conducting), Jennifer King (piano), Mary Blakely, Shannon Headland and Andrew Jones (voices: Christmas Eve Family service), Pat Mayberry (voice, guitar), Marti Settle (voice, guitar), Mike Beauchamp (voice, guitar) and Gregory Renaud and Bob Weaver (trumpet).

Weekly worship planning with Brian is always an adventure; we both enjoy the serendipity that often arises with our music choices and themes. I am very grateful for his support and friendship and am still so inspired by his dedication to the life and work of this congregation. Thank you, Cindy, for administrative support along with your sense of humour; D'Arcy for being my Ministry and Personnel Committee rep; and the Sunday Gatherings Committee for many fascinating discussions!

I feel enriched as a staff member and as a worshipper at First United.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The communications strategy for First United is undergoing considerable change as part of the New Ways initiative.

During 2019, we increased our social media presence, developed a plan to overhaul and develop our website, and have been paying close attention to effectively utilizing tools such as First Glance, the use of bulletin boards, and other methodologies we use for telling our story such as the 100+ stories project, where we hope to tell the story of every congregant between 2020 and 2025. 2025 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The United Church of Canada.

## DUTY OF CARE

*(Mirelle Ward King)*

The Church Council of First United appoints a Duty of Care Steward to oversee the implementation of *Duty of Care* policies adopted by First United (the policies are available through the church office) and to implement the process of securing Police Vulnerable Sector Checks (PVSCs).

A PVSC is valid for six months; however, it is not necessary to secure one every six months if volunteers sign an annual declaration form. We do request that updated PVSCs be submitted once every five years. A spreadsheet is maintained by the Office Administrator.

PVSCs were done free of charge until recently. Council has passed a policy to reimburse anyone for costs incurred to get a PVSC. All police checks are kept in a file that is locked and only accessible by those authorized to review them, as outlined in our *Duty of Care* policies.

Anyone wishing to volunteer in the programs named below require a PVSC, which can be completed on line or in person. Support and information on this process is available through the church office.

- **Children and Youth Programming**

While it took some time through the fall months, by the beginning of 2020, 100% of those who currently provide leadership in the children's programming and youth programming have had their police checks. Two people have had them and we are finalizing receipt of their copy: they got them for work and it was not electronic. With the exception of these two, all who needed to sign an Offence Declaration have done so. (Those with recent police checks did not have to sign a declaration).

We do have a number of volunteers on the list who have not completed the process yet, but they are not providing leadership. These people will either be removed from the list or complete the process.

In addition, Mirelle has been checking in the classes to ensure that both scheduled leaders appeared on Sundays. Brian has been making sure two are scheduled each week.

We are preparing to update all Offence Declarations in May so that the files will be up to date and ready for the fall.

- **Healing Pathways**

All those who are actively practicing in Healing Pathways ministry have police checks and completed Offence Declarations, with the exception of one person who is in process. There was a name change which complicated the police check and it had to be done a second time.

- **Church Council and M&P**

As a practice, we do ask all those sitting on Church Council and M&P to also get PVSCs. At this point we still need seven, but these individuals are not providing leadership in Children and Youth or Healing Pathways ministry at this time.

- **Staff**

All staff members' PVSCs and Offence Declarations are up to date.

## GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER!

*(Joan Stafford and Dorothy Naylor)*

Our two evenings of Guess Who's Coming to Dinner! have become a popular community builder. This year, a total of 68 people participated: 18 hosts (including 2 children), 50 guests (47 adults, 3 children), 9 homes. Free will donations raised \$2,200 for the United Church Mission and Service Fund.

## MEDITATION

*(Joyce Hardman, Liz Tyrwhitt)*

On Monday evenings at 5:30 pm, a group meets in the Chapel at First United Church to listen to a short teaching about meditation and to sit in silence for 30 minutes. After our meditation, we can ask questions and have a short discussion about meditation. We have created a space where people feel comfortable discussing their experiences with meditation and what it means to them.

We close with a prayer written by Father Laurence, which includes these words:

May this silence be a power to open the hearts of men and women to the vision of God, and so to each other, in love and peace, justice and human dignity. May the beauty of Divine Life fill this group and the hearts of all who pray here with joyful hope.

Father John Main, a Benedictine monk and priest, started the tradition of meditation within the Christian community in the 1960s. He had learned of meditation when in Malaysia. He was impressed by the spiritual presence of a Hindu holy person he met and asked him about his spiritual life. He learned the holy man meditated twice daily and John Main asked to meditate with him.

When he returned to London, John Main explored the early writings of John Cassian and the Desert Fathers. He found that there was a tradition of silent meditation using a prayer word in early Christianity. He traced its roots through the Middle Ages and into the 20th century. Father Main and Father Laurence Freeman, who followed John Main as Spiritual Director, started meditation groups and teaching at retreats. These activities lead to the formation of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) and the Canadian Christian Meditation Community.

In the past few years, the community has bought a 12th century former Benedictine monastery, Bonnevaux, near Poitiers, France. It has become a headquarters of the WCCM and offers a full range of programs and experiences.

You can learn more about Christian Meditation at the website, [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org), and at the Canadian website, <https://www.wccm-canada.ca>. And, please, ask Joyce and Liz if you have any questions.

## NEW WAYS MINISTRY

*(Amelia Buchanan)*

The goal of the New Ways project was to identify areas of growth at First United and to kick-start creative new ways of being a community of faith that can be maintained in the long run, as well as to update and strengthen present practices. Here are highlights from the past year:

- New direction
  - Discerning that hiring a part-time coordinator was not the best use of resources
  - Using the remaining grant funding (\$13,000) to support projects that align with identified New Ways priorities
  
- Forest Church
  - Partnered with Kitchissippi United and Stittsville United to support a member of Kitchissippi United in their Forest Church grant application and project. This project is about creating community through exploring spirituality in nature and cultivating relationship with the earth
  - Hosted two successful pilot Forest Church gatherings in September 2019, each one attended by 30 people
  - Organized a successful gathering for 15 youth from First, Kitchissippi and Trinity United in February 2020 by partnering with youth leaders from those churches
  - Will support a two-day Ecological Workshop: Grief and Resilience in April 2020
  
- Identified church communication priorities in June 2019
  - Updating the church website
  - Emailing First Glance at noon on Sunday
  - Storytelling by members of First (100+ stories project)
  
- Church website update
  - Hired a contractor internally to coordinate content for the new website
  - Signed up with a company that specifically builds and maintains church websites at a low cost ([Tithe.ly](https://www.tithe.ly))
  
- Facebook and Instagram
  - Content posted weekly
  - Growing recognition within the congregation of the value of social media
  - Ministries occasionally ask for content to be posted
  - Facebook events helped several individuals from the wider community learn about our special events.

## RETREATS

Nineteen women—and three babes-in-arms!—gathered at the beautiful Galilee Centre in Arnprior for the First United Women's Retreat, January 18-20, 2019. Together we ate, sang, prayed, laughed, made crafts and walked on the frozen Ottawa River. Thanks to Joan Stafford and Tanya Middlebro for the co-ordination, and to all workshop leaders.

This year, an effort to put together a congregational retreat in February did not materialize. This remains a goal. If you are interested in initiating such a project, please speak with the chair of Church Council or with Brian

In July, 35 adults and 23 children attended Joy Camp in Gracefield. This was a wonderful time of community building around campfires, swimming, game playing, and enjoying the summer sun. Another Joy Camp is planned for this coming summer.

## WELCOMING MINISTRY

*(Joan Stafford)*

The welcoming team includes Joan and Doug Stafford, Joan Rogers and Peter Cooney, and Linda and Wayne Scarrow. Two members of the Welcoming team greet people at the front door on Sunday mornings and provide a warm welcome, particularly to those new to First United. We can give information about our congregation, including contact details for those wishing to learn about ministries and groups within First United. Teams rotate on a monthly basis so that new people see familiar faces for a few weeks in a row. We will be hosting a luncheon for newcomers in late March 2020.

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

Once a month, the worship committee gathers to provide leadership for our Sunday gatherings. This includes opportunity to evaluate Sunday services as well as discern upcoming directions and themes. In lively conversations, often peppered with laughter and joy, we go about the spirit work of discerning the content for Sunday services by identifying over-arching themes in dialogue with our Scripture tradition. We continue to integrate Choral anthems into the themes of the services and the feedback received indicates that this is appreciated and effective.

Those focused on Sunday gatherings welcome ongoing feedback to any of its members. Committee members include Margaret Ault, Patti Barrett-Robillard, Brian Cornelius, Tara Phillips, Roslyn Richardson, Jane Sly, Kathy Southee, and Marg Stubington. Kathleen Howell moved this year and we were grateful for her contribution over the past few years.

## Our Commitment to Healing

### HEALING PATHWAY MINISTRY

*(Sharon Moon and Howard Clark)*

Dedicated and faithful practitioners spend almost every Tuesday in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, bringing this ministry of wholeness and well-being to many members of the congregation and to folks from the wider community.

The size of our team grew significantly in 2019, with 16 practitioners regularly present. This includes practitioners from Orleans United, Kitchissippi United, Trinity United, All Saints Westboro, and one person from British Columbia who is visiting family in Ottawa for a year. Having more practitioners has meant that we are now able to offer three appointments for each hourly time slot. It also means more opportunity for people to come and experience Healing Pathway for themselves. Give yourself the gift of deep relaxation and healing hands offered in the Spirit for the highest good of mind, body, spirit and emotions.

#### **Sessions at First and elsewhere**

In 2019, at the church, we offered 400 sessions to over 80 different people. Also, practitioners make many visits to homes and hospitals for sessions with people who cannot get there on Tuesdays and, once a month, there is a practice at Centre 507. As well as being one of our team of practitioners, our minister Brian Cornelius often uses Healing Pathway in his pastoral ministry. A highlight of the year was the May 5 Healing Pathway service, during which Laura Bonnett, Doug Stafford and Melanie Laneville openly shared their personal experiences with the Healing Pathway ministry. Many thanks to Pat Lindsey for co-ordinating both the once a month chair sessions after church and the offering of anointing on Communion Sundays.

If you would like a Healing Pathway session, contact us at [HealingPathway2010@gmail.com](mailto:HealingPathway2010@gmail.com). For more about this ministry, check out the website at [Healing Pathway.ca](http://HealingPathway.ca) or speak to one of the practitioners—Ivana Felice, Bev Hellman, Sharon Moon, Doug Stafford, Pat Mayberry, Carol Garceau, Paul Durber, Hugh Robillard, Andrea Prazmowski, Pat Lindsey, Joan Stafford, Julia Gordon, Brian Cornelius, Rosemary Clarke, Hilary Spicer and Howard Clark.

While there is no charge for this ministry, we are thankful for generous donations, which may be used to support persons taking the Healing Pathway courses or for much needed supplies. The next Phase 1 – introductory course is scheduled for April 17 and 18, 2020.

## HOSPITALITY

*(Bev Hellman)*

Being an inclusive and welcoming community of faith is important. Hospitality teams are an important part of our Welcoming Ministry and to creating a healing community.

This ministry is designed to involve as many people as we can and our goals are to:

1. have all who attend our church feel welcome
2. help visitors and newcomers meet some members of our community
3. get to know each other better by working as a member on a team.

The activities include welcoming people as they enter, handing out bulletins, taking up the offering and acting as hosts for the conversation and refreshment gathering following the morning service. Included in the host function is serving beverages and snacks, looking out for people who may be new to the church and remaining after the gathering to help with clean up.

### **The system**

Being part of a team is a way for members to meet and get to know others. Teams serve on a rotational basis. Each team has a turn about once every six weeks between September and May. During the summer months, volunteers are recruited on a weekly basis.

The overall coordination of the teams is done by the Hospitality Coordinator. Starting in September, we have a rotation with six teams. Thank you to every Team Leader for making those calls, sending emails and providing support and encouragement to your team members. The six Hospitality Team Leaders are D'Arcy McPherson, Kathy Southee, Murray Angus, Bev Hellman with Bruce Cameron, Ruth Stewart-Verger, Jo-Anne Harvey and Bertie Mo.

To all the team members, thank you for using your talents, smiles, children and time to be welcoming members of our community! If you who would like an opportunity to provide organization as a leader, I'd love to hear from you. This is a wonderful way to meet people, build community and have an important positive impact on our community of faith. If you are not yet a member of a team, please call the office, speak to me or send me an email at [hellman.bev@gmail.com](mailto:hellman.bev@gmail.com) ([hellman.bev@gmail.com](mailto:hellman.bev@gmail.com)).

## KITCHEN COMMITTEE

*(Dale Walker)*

The kitchen creates space for nourishment and healing and why we consider the kitchen to be part of our ministry of healing. The kitchen is also where we gather to create hospitality and fun for our communities! It is also a place where leaders of community groups can work with their groups to develop shopping and cooking skills, and to provide meals for each other and for others. It is a very busy part of our church's life!

The kitchen committee has met twice this year. We have a very small committee—Gwen Rogers, Susan Garnham and Dale Walker. Others are invited to meetings as needed. Our numbers swell when we plan for a cleaning bee and many volunteers help. Thanks to Bruce Cameron and other kitchen cleaning volunteers. We strive to keep the fridges and stoves in reasonable condition. Unlabeled or undated food and drinks are thrown out as needed. To keep the kitchen free from clutter, we greatly appreciate it when personal belongings, church 'things' and casserole dishes are taken home. Everyone using the stoves must ensure that all burner dials are in the 'off' position before leaving the kitchen. We have placed signs by the stove and exit areas; this has helped to reduce the problem of burners or ovens being left on.

We continue to use the Laundry Cooperative in the St. Laurent and McArthur area for laundering tablecloths, dish towels, dishcloths, etc. This year, Murray Angus has helped with taking dirty laundry from the church at least every two weeks (more frequently when the church is busy with dinners) as well as picking up clean laundry from the Co-op, returning it to the church and replacing it in the linen cupboard and drawers.

The wish list for the kitchen this year includes a set of round tablecloths to replace the navy and wine ones, and a new stove with automatic cleaning feature. We would welcome anyone with sewing skills to make the new round tablecloths!

## PASTORAL CARE NETWORK

*(Joan Stafford)*

Pastoral care happens throughout the congregation as individuals provide caring support to one another based on their relationships, small group ministries and 'noticing and cherishing' one another. Our minister, Brian, makes himself available whenever anyone is seeking support and he takes the initiative to follow up and connect with individuals. As needed, 'Circles of Care' are formed in order to provide special support. Twice a year, those who provide specific care ministries gather to offer support to one another and our ministries, to explore how we are doing and how we can improve, and to identify areas in need of attention.

## TGIF

*(Maryanne MacDonald)*

2019 was a year of sadness and celebration for the T.G.I.F members. Every month, we celebrated birthdays of members of the group. In the summer, we celebrated several birthdays at Shirley Lanktree's, where we enjoyed good food and fellowship and a lovely tour of her wonderful garden. During church renovations, we held a potluck as well as our Christmas luncheon in the Ambleside condo party room.

In the midst of our weekly gatherings and special celebrations, our hearts were saddened deeply by the loss of two regular members. Betty Salewicz was a loyal attendee and organizer of T.G.I.F activities who always looked at the brighter side of life. Stan Hughes, a long standing member and often the only male attendee, brought his quiet humour, broad smile and high intellect to all of the discussions. We also were saddened by the loss of three honorary members-- Garth Mundle, Isabel Black and Wylie Norman. They often attended our potluck picnics or Christmas luncheon and provided great support to other T.G.I.F members in numerous ways. We assisted where able at all of their Celebration of Life services held at the church.

The group continued to collect funds for two charities:

First Nation's Family and Caring Society, to support Shannen's Dream, an organization that is about making sure First Nations children and youth have the same education opportunities as others, but in ways that respect their language and culture, taking into account that they may not be starting from the same place.

- The Laundry Co-Op, an organization that provides a low cost means of having access to affordable laundry services for those on low income, in a safe and supportive environment. The Co-op also offers an opportunity for its members to develop and use their skills to improve their quality of life and contribute to the community.

In 2019, we had some special visitors. In January, Sue Taylor joined us and we continue to maintain contact through FaceTime. In April, we were thrilled to have a follow up visit from the Babies and Moms in the congregation, as part of intergenerational contact. The babies brought many smiles to our faces and it was delightful speaking with the moms.

T.G.I.F members are always learning and this year had informative presentations from OTranspo, the Fire Department and Good Companions. We are all grateful for the opportunity that First United provides us to gather and be in community with one another, to share stories and to glean wisdom about life from those who have lived it.

## Our Commitment to Social and Ecological Justice

### EARTH GROUP

*(Judith Miller & Maryanne MacDonald)*

The Earth Group has merged into the WaterCare Allies, with strong links to the Right Relations group. The Earth Group continues to post events of the wider community in First Glance.

Our primary focus has been sacred activism directed to the health of the Ottawa River watershed. We meet roughly once a month. We have written and supported letters to authorities about the nuclear waste dump at Chalk River, the accumulation of nuclear waste at Chalk River from Quebec and Manitoba, and the lack of a clear policy governing the disposal of nuclear waste in Canada.

We have designed a button—a blue heart on a white background, with the words *Nibi*, *Water* and *L'eau* in white—which promotes love for water and conversations about it. These buttons have been distributed widely and sold to support Indigenous water ceremonies and walks, such as the one in the summer/fall of 2019 from Matane to Ottawa. Several buttons were donated to Grandmother Francine to commemorate the walk or to be sold for financial support. Buttons and small books were sold to raise money for the walk.

Recently, we have decided on a prayer circle for the Ottawa River. It is made up of members of the group at present, but we hope to extend it to a wide community and are planning a vigil for Earth Day.

Maryanne MacDonald has been heavily involved with water issues beyond First United, including the ban of plastic water bottles in City of Ottawa sites and projects of the Ottawa Water Study Action Group. Group members have supported her in this work and in the planning for the World Water Day on March 22 this year, to be held at First United.

Contacts: Sharon Moon, Maryanne MacDonald, Judith Miller, Diana Claire Douglas, Pat Mayberry, Nira Dookeran.

## FIRST CONNECTIONS LUNCHEON

*(Becky Harrison)*

First Connections is the result of a 15+ year partnership of First United Church, Upstream Mental Health Community Support and the Canadian Mental Health Association. First United provides the venue. Upstream and CMHA either bring or send guests to our monthly lunches. Both organizations underwrite the cost of food and any extras as needed. All guests attending First Connections lunches must be on prescribed medication and have an assigned caseworker. Graduates of both Upstream and CMHA may also attend. Some of our guests have illnesses which prevent them from attending the lunches independently, and transportation is provided by their caseworkers; others arrive by bus, Para Transpo, or light rail.

Our guests can interact in a safe, welcoming environment each month. Social interaction has increased, and some friendships have blossomed. First Connections is entirely volunteer driven. Many of our valuable volunteers have been with us since its inception, and most of us are 'of a certain age.' A future goal will be to recruit new volunteers.

Our lunches have traditionally run for eleven months of the year, with Upstream hosting an annual BBQ in August at Andrew Haydon Park, always with a good turnout. Recently, we have noticed a decline in the number of attendees at our lunches. We hope to change our monthly gatherings in September 2020 through July 2021, from the fourth to the third week of each month, to see if this works better. Factors such as illness and bad weather, of course, are beyond our control.

Our aim at First Connections is to provide our guests with a nutritious meal since they are unlikely to cook at home, because of either cost or inclination. Many of our meals may be described as 'comfort food.' Each month's menu includes a delicious main course, garden salad, cheese, buns (when appropriate), hot and cold drinks, and dessert. We are most fortunate to have the talented Gwen Robinson as a volunteer. She sets the varied menus for each month. Nothing goes to waste: leftovers are sent home in containers with our guests. December's turkey or ham may appear in January's tantalizing casserole. As always, a strict eye is kept on the budget, often helped by bulk buying of weekly specials.

Once again, the Christmas lunch is one of the highlights of the year. Rather than the usual buffet style, a full Christmas meal is served to each guest in a beautifully decorated room. Each guest helps decorate the Christmas tree; Santa visits; Tim Horton's gift cards are distributed; and photos are taken. Everyone is delighted to share in the joy of being together, not just during this festive time, but all year long!

## LIVING INTO RIGHT RELATIONS

*(Co-facilitators Diana Claire Douglas and Sharon Moon)*

We continue to foster reconciliation through decolonization (beginning with ourselves), learning, advocacy, relationship-building and increasing awareness of Indigenous knowledge, rights, history and justice. We do this through our e-tree, sharing information on events and opportunities, and through learning opportunities, projects and book study. This year, a highlight has been working with All Saints' Right Relations group.

### **Learning opportunities**

- 4-part Lenten video and discussion series on First Contact (joint leadership with ASW)
- Planning for Lenten Series on Doctrine of Discovery Video (joint leadership with ASW)
- Indigenous Solidarity service, June 23: Grandmother Francine Payer spoke about the Ceremonial Water Walk from Matane to Gatineau. A water ceremony at the service and a water blessing at the Ottawa River afterwards were highlights. Water Care Allies sold buttons to raise over \$800 to support the walk.

### **Projects**

- Support for Birch Bark Coffee, an Indigenous enterprise supporting clean water for reserves. Coffee House in May with Indigenous entertainers (jointly organized with ASW – Full House).
- The Healing Forest project at All Saints/First United Church. Creation of a healing garden with a grandfather rock and ongoing planting of Indigenous flora.
- The Art for Aid project continues to support artists in the north, one art kit at a time. Joanne Harvey is lead on this and welcomes donations.
- The Indigenous Art Fair: Joanne and Bertie Mo organized and are involved.
- Visit to Kumik and to the Indigenous Court where Denise Ann offers ceremony.

## Book study

The book study group includes attendees from ASW and other congregations. We learn and grow together, and deepen our understanding of decolonizing and living in right relations with Indigenous brothers and sisters. In early 2019, we finished studying *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Her poetic Indigenous teachings were profound, impacting our hearts and our understanding of the Land. This was followed by *My Conversations with Canadians* by Lee Maracle, written as an invitation to engage with Canadians for the Canada 150 celebrations in colonial Canada.

Our last book of 2019 was *21 Things You May Not Have Known About the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph. We took three months to complete this in-depth look at the Indian Act with all of its faults and the challenges to eliminate it.

To further our understanding of right relations, several of us attended the Indigenous People's Court proceedings which are conducted twice weekly at the Ontario Courthouse on Elgin. The process is one where the courts attempt to understand individuals' backgrounds and to consider them when sentencing. There are many flaws in the system but it is a start. One of our book study members opens and closes the court with a smudging and teaching.

## Upcoming ideas

We are considering regular coffee houses, continuing the Healing Forest, having blanket exercises, supporting Kairos plans for the fifth anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and holding a workshop on writing ethno-histories.

## PARTNERSHIP MINISTRIES

First United has entered several formal partnerships in order to support our Christian witness and commitment to the just ways promoted in our faith tradition.

**Affirm United:** As an affirming congregation, we are a member of Affirm United. For many years, First United was the only affirming congregation in the city and often walked alone in the Pride Parade. This has changed. This past summer, First United joined with over 12 congregations to march in the pride parade and celebrate as more and more Ottawa area United Churches become affirming. Representatives from First United are often invited to speak at churches in this process. Whenever occasions surface, our minister or representatives to speak on issues of inclusion of GLBTQQ community in spiritual settings.

**Centre 507:** First United maintains a close relationship with the drop-in Centre at 507 Bank Street (where Centretown United Church is located). With the congregation's support, many people – among them the vulnerable and the lonely find community. Each advent, the Centre is grateful for the 120 to 150 “socks” gifted through First United. An outreach project in 2020, we explore ways we can strengthen our connections. Brian Cornelius is the Treasurer on the Board of Directors.

**Community Laundry Co-Operative:** First United Church was a founding member of the Laundry Co-Op in 1999, originally called the Centretown Laundry Co-Op, housed on Bronson Ave. In 2019, First United received the Sharon Moon award in recognition of its role in establishing the Co-Op and for its on-going support over the last twenty years. Presently, CLC is at 404 McArthur Ave. in Vanier. First United and All Saints' Anglican are clients by having our kitchen laundry serviced through the Co-operative. The Co-operative has survived several challenges in recent years but still faces a funding crisis. Marianela Gonzalez has been an inspiration to all the participants, volunteers, staff as she has guided the CLC through these difficult and challenging times. We give her our thanks for a job well done.

**KAIROS:** This ecumenical ministry focuses on Social Justice issues, and in particular has taken an important lead on Truth and Reconciliation. We work to promote their events and many times they offer leadership to educational events here at First. We have formalized our membership as a congregation and pay an annual fee. The United Church of Canada is a main funder through the Mission and Service Fund.

**Multifaith Housing Initiative:** First United is a member of MHI, a coalition of over 40 faith communities and hundreds of individuals committed to helping those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by providing affordable housing. The newest project is Veteran's House, and we will be sharing more information on this project as it gets launched.

## REFUGEE MINISTRY

First United has provided support for refugees through the United Church of Canada, a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with the Government of Canada. Since First United is a constituent part of the United Church, we are able to participate in sponsorships as a congregation as well as work alongside community-based groups to facilitate and support their capacity to sponsor refugees.

Since 2015, First United has been involved in 43 official refugee files either as a congregation or in partnership with Community Sponsorship Groups. Of these 43,

- 20 arrived in 2015 through 2018, and have been welcomed and settled
- 6 families completed their first year of settlement in Canada
- 5 families continue in their settlement processes, which will finish in 2020
- 2 families have arrived in 2020
- 7 families, we hope to receive and welcome later in 2020
- 3 applications are in process.

We are also exploring four new applications through our family reunification processes.

To give you a sense of those involved in settling these families, we list the volunteers (with apologies to any we've forgotten) who have taken leadership roles: Norman Ball, Brian Cornelius, Ibrahim Daibes, Paul DeGiacomo, Mary Donaghy, Paul Durber, Andre Fontaine, Ruth Gray-Beauchamp, Carol McMurdo-Paton, Darcy McPherson, Margaret Maxted, Bertie Mo, Marika Morris, Shirley Paton, Harry Qualman, Bibiana Seaborn, Karen Sigvaldson, Joanna Smith and Ruth Stewart-Verger.

## REMEMBRANCE AND CALL TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ever since 1989, First United has held an annual service to remember the fourteen young women who were murdered at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal, murdered because they were women. This event sparked a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, a day set aside to mourn those killed in gender-based violence, to express solidarity with all those who suffer violence, to encourage survivors of violence, and to provide support for those who work to end violence.

2019 marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary so instead of holding its annual vigil at First United, the congregation supported this significant milestone by attending the outdoor vigil at the human rights monument, gathering in a candlelight march to the National Arts Centre, and attending an indoor vigil and panel discussion about the efforts to end violence against indigenous women. We will resume our annual ritual next year.

## Our Partnership with All Saints' Anglican

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Partnership Management Committee oversees the partnership between First United and All Saints Anglican, a partnership that will soon be 13 years of age. First Representatives on this Committee are our minister, Brian Cornelius, the chair of Church Council, Lisa Nafziger, and the Treasurer/Chair of Finance, Andrew Clark.

We greatly value the partnership, want to strengthen it so that we never find ourselves in a place where we take the partnership for granted.

### JOINT PROPERTY COMMITTEE

*(Lamar Mason, Chair)*

The members of the Joint Property Committee (JPC) in 2019 were Bryan Bonell, Doug Fisher and Lamar Mason from All Saints Westboro and Howard Clark, Doug Stafford and Don Brodie from First United. I would like to thank them for their extensive efforts to ensure completion of numerous major projects and little day-to-day ones throughout 2019. Much of JPC's work is invisible to the congregations at large, but it is essential. We are fortunate to have such dedicated members with the expertise required to do the research needed to make sound decisions, and then to carry out and oversee the projects.

The following major projects were completed during 2019:

- Major renovation of the men's and women's washrooms on the main floor
- Replacement of the flooring in Steacy Hall
- Removal of the stage in Steacy Hall and construction of a new nursery room in its place
- Completion of the replacement of the Chapel doors
- Renewal of the side entrance doors from Richmond Road.

JPC was very fortunate to have Allan School volunteer to act as our on-site supervisor for the first three projects. With his many years of supervisory expertise, he ensured the work was performed according to our specifications. We also had an outstanding contractor, Omni Construction. There is still some work remaining with the nursery but we hope to have it completed in 2020, which will be a quieter year: the focus will be on smaller but necessary projects to ensure the church remains in good repair.

Special thanks go to Peter Nicoll, who took on the sanding, repair and refinishing of the side doors from Richmond Road, and to Peter Newlands, whose crew did an outstanding job reconstructing the historic Chapel doors.

We thank Julie Cross for her continued work in the Courtyard Gardens, making our street presence beautiful and welcoming throughout the year. She could definitely use more volunteers to assist with this valuable mission so please consider putting your green thumb to work at the church!

The day-to-day cleanliness and physical operation of the building depend on the hard work of our custodians Paul Dumais, John McGovern and David McGeachie. We thank them for their dedication to ensuring the sidewalks are clear, the rooms are clean and the heat is on! They are vital to our enjoyment of our worship space.

Two members of the committee, Doug Stafford and Bryan Bonell, are stepping down this year. Doug, representing First United, joined JPC a couple of years ago. He always asked the right questions at the right time and pitched in to help on numerous projects. We are sorry to lose him and thank him for his work.

Over many years, Bryan Bonell has provided valuable advice on so many projects, from recommending contractors to sourcing materials to providing expertise on design and code issues. We are truly grateful for his past contributions and his new 'consulting' role with us.

## WESTBORO FUSE

Once again, First United along with All Saints' Anglican participated in the community street festival of Westfuse. This August weekend offers live music, interesting exhibits and delicious food. A passerby to our courtyard during the weekend could have experienced many diverse and worthwhile attractions – they might have sampled some delicious BBQ, enjoyed some Scottish or country dancing, or some live music from such diverse categories as bluegrass, children's, Caribbean, choral and Irish. Or perhaps they might have learned some important information about GranAid (Fikelela) or Aboriginal issues; they may have invested in some aboriginal artwork, made a donation to the Westboro Food Bank or taken home a pile of books in support of disaster relief.

Thank you to the dozens of volunteers who come together to participate – members of both All Saints' Westboro and First United gave their time to help set up and take down facilities and equipment, mind parking, provide security, play MC, canvas for the food bank, run the BBQs, serve food, provide information, mind the sound system, support the artists and just do whatever needs to be done. It truly shows the wide breadth of talent and support that the congregations provide.

## WESTBORO REGION FOOD BANK AND NEW-TO-YOU-SHOP

### Westboro Regional Food Bank:

*(Lori Crawford, Coordinator)*

The mandate of the Westboro Region Food Bank (WRFB) is to provide three days' worth of emergency food once per month to anyone in need, who lives between the Ottawa River and Dovercourt Avenue and between Broadview Avenue and Island Park Drive. The WRFB is an agency of the Ottawa Food Bank, which supports and, in 2019, provided us with \$186,365 worth of food.

The WRFB is funded by donations from the congregation and the community. In 2019, we covered our weekly shortfalls of essentials (milk, oil and eggs) and distributed more fresh fruit and vegetables, female sanitary products, toothpaste and toothbrushes. We are blessed: many other member agencies cannot keep up with their client load.

Here are some statistics from our busy 2019:

- 1,370 household food hampers, providing nutrition to 3,724 individuals (2,564 adults and 1,160 children under the age of 18)
- 124 new households, in addition to the 170 already registered
- 30 families living temporarily in the Richmond Plaza Motel
- 31 new immigrants who arrived in Canada in the past year
- 58 individuals who self-identified as First Nation, Inuit or Métis
- more than 3,000 volunteer hours

### **Crock Pot Initiative**

In March, the church provided funds to purchase 100 crockpots for distribution to our clients. The program was well received—especially by those with substandard cooking amenities—but, when we surveyed clients about cooking classes, there was not enough interest to run a program. However, the clients did share their enthusiasm and cooking tips with each other in the waiting room for months after the program!

### **WRFB Garden and Wood Park Community Garden**

Under the tireless direction of our new volunteer gardener, Ellen Bobet, we cultivated wonderful produce from our five small plots on the west side of the church, allowing our clients to cook with tomatoes, zucchini, carrots, rhubarb, peppers, peas and fresh herbs. And Wood Park Community garden provided us weekly with freshly grown produce from their community plots and their own garden. We shared their bounty with Britannia Woods Food Pantry, our wonderful Food Bank Agency neighbour.

## **Sharing in Student Success**

For the second year, we partnered with the Caring and Sharing Exchange for their Sharing in Student Success Program. We provided backpacks to approximately 50 students in our neighbourhood.

## **Holiday Hampers**

In 2019, we revamped the Christmas Hamper program to address the diverse requirements of our clients. Rather than issuing a grocery store voucher or preparing a traditional Christmas hamper, this year, the Holiday Hamper was tailored to help each family best celebrate their own unique holiday season from a physical, cultural or nutritional perspective.

Clients registered for Holiday Hampers that included their choice of protein with extras such as dried fruit, cheese, crackers, jam, holiday cookies, hot chocolate or instant coffee. To complement each hamper, a generous Superstore gift card enabled the family to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and other holiday needs. The 'hybrid' voucher/food hamper approach also alleviated the burden of transporting a large heavy load of groceries home from the church and made it easier for our elderly and disabled clients to manage.

We distributed 148 Hampers and are grateful for the generous support of the Church, the Ottawa Food Bank, Ten Thousand Villages, and the West Rotary Club, who encouraged customers to purchase hot chocolate and dried fruit to fill our Hampers.

## **School Programming**

In December, we enjoyed visits from Churchill Alternative and Broadview Avenue Public School students. It was great chatting about the importance of food security and showing them around their community food bank.

Churchill School dropped off over 20 boxes of donated food from their Reverse Advent Calendar Food Drive. They also baked up a storm in our church's kitchen: five dozen muffins for our clients. An army of Broadview Avenue School students came by and whipped up 100 pounds of instant oatmeal packets for our clients. Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers Connie and Ken Davidson and Julie Newlands for coordinating this!

### **Donations in December**

- We received donations from a Reverse Advent Calendar at West Village Church, which supports us throughout the year.
- Our Thursday greeter Rachel's co-workers at PWBSC made a very large donation; it really filled the shelves!
- The generous residents of the Metropole's ninth annual fundraiser raised over \$7,320. We are so grateful to have the continued support of these great neighbours.

The WRFB has one part-time coordinator and 57 volunteers from All Saints' Westboro, First United and the community. We are always looking for new volunteers, in particular for our Thursday evening shift, Thursday morning facility preparation and our management team. Please email Lori Crawford: [westbororegionfoodbank@gmail.com](mailto:westbororegionfoodbank@gmail.com).

We truly appreciate the support of All Saints' Westboro and First United Churches, their staff and congregations.

### **New-to-You Shop**

*(Debbie Gillen and Peter Robertson)*

We thank all the New-To-You Shop's donors for their gifts of good-quality used clothing and household goods. A big shout-out to all the customers who made the environmentally conscious decision to support the shop during 2019. We especially thank all our dedicated volunteers, who have enabled the shop to be open on Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout the year. The New-To-You Shop raised a total of \$20,440.65 during 2019 and supported such community institutions as The Ottawa (Civic) Hospital with regular donations of clothing. See you at the shop in 2020!