

*189th Annual  
Activity Report  
and  
Congregational Meeting  
for 2014 - 2015*



*First United Church  
Port Credit, Mississauga*

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# Annual Activity Report 2014-2015

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FIRST UNITED CHURCH

MINUTES OF THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - PROGRAMS - JUNE 8, 2014

CALL TO ORDER: The Congregational meeting, held in the Sanctuary of First United Church following the morning worship service, was called to order by Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz.

IN MEMORIAM: The following members who passed away since the last spring Congregational meeting were named and remembered in prayer:

George W. Cousins, Jack Donaldson, Margaret Helen Joyce, Lorne Joyce, Russell E. Duckworth, Robert D. Raymond, Alexander (Sandy) Campbell, Bob Passfield, David McLeod, Cathy Stewart, Wilf Rogers, Wally Harrigan, June Ray, Kathryn Dedrick, Art Thompson.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND SECRETARY:

MOTION: Moved by Nancy Brodie, seconded by Andy Choles that Andrew Miller and Carol Wickham be appointed as Chair and Secretary, respectively, for the meeting. CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION: Moved by Andy Choles, seconded by Sandy Skinner that the minutes of the November 4, 2012 Congregational meeting be accepted as printed. CARRIED

MOTION: Moved by Pat Skinner, seconded by Joanne Quennell that the minutes of the June 2, 2013 Congregational meeting be accepted as printed. CARRIED

MOTION: Moved by Cliff Elliott, seconded by Stephen White that the minutes of the June 16, 2013 Congregational meeting be accepted as printed. CARRIED

MOTION: Moved by Stephen White, seconded by Nancy Brodie that the minutes of the October 27, 2013 Congregation meeting be accepted as printed. CARRIED

MOTION: Moved by Ed Mock, seconded by Fred Gotzmann that the minutes of the February 2, 2014 Congregational meeting be accepted as printed. CARRIED

MOTION: Moved by Liz Gotzmann, seconded by Rudy Skarecky that the minutes of the April 27, 2014 Congregational meeting be accepted as printed. CARRIED

CHAIR'S REPORT - Andrew Miller

The next item on the agenda is the 188<sup>th</sup> Annual Activity Report. I hope everyone has had a chance to review the report, which summarizes the life and work of the congregation over the past year.

First is entering a time of transition. In the past year, the Rev. Blair Corcoran left us; Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz joined us; and in a few weeks she will be leaving as well, and Rev. Maryann Skinner will

join us as our new permanent minister. I think Maryann's arrival, and the arrival of our new piano today, herald a time of other new beginnings at First.

Thanks to all who help make First the wonderful place that it is, notably Sandy and Laura for their leadership in our music program, the many volunteer who sit on committees, and everyone who contributes their time and talents.

I would now ask for a motion to approve the 188<sup>th</sup> Annual Activity Report.

MOTION: moved by Mike Miller, seconded by Cliff Elliott that the 188<sup>th</sup> Annual Activity Report be accepted. CARRIED

PRESENTATION OF THE NOMINATING REPORT:

Andrew Miller, Chair of Council reviewed the roster of the Church Council for the period of July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015 as distributed.

MOTION: Moved by Ed Mock, seconded by Nancy Rudderham that the Nomination Report be accepted as printed. CARRIED

OTHER BUSINESS: Sandy Skinner, on behalf of the congregation, thanked Andrew Miller, Chair of Council for a job well done.

MOTION: Moved by Judy Watson, seconded by Karen Caskey that Carol Wickham be thanked for her many years as secretary. CARRIED

BENEDICTION: The closing prayer and benediction was given by Heather Weaver-Orosz.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 11:45a.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. M. Miller", written over a horizontal line.

Andrew Miller, Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Wickham", written over a horizontal line.

Carol Wickham, Secretary

# In Memoriam

MAY 1, 2014 TO APRIL 30, 2015

**“The Souls of the righteous are in the Hands of God”**

*William (Bill) Anderson*

*Robert (Bob) Buckberrough*

*Pat Henry*

*Allen Jackson*

*Betty (Craigie) Johnston*

*Marian McRae*

*Lori Omand*

*Betty Wheeler*

**“I am the resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me will live,  
even though they die;  
and those who live  
and believe in me  
will never die.”**

**Vision Statement:** First United Church is a welcoming, caring inclusive community of Christians striving to enrich the lives of people everywhere, near and far.

**Mission Statement:** First United Church is an inclusive community of God's people growing in faith through:*diversity in worship services,*

- *a variety of educational opportunities,*
- *the development of friendships,*
- *and by intentionally carrying our faith into effective action.*

## Minister's Message

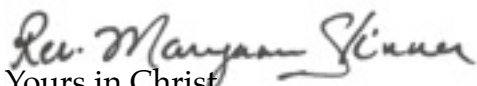
Read the mission statement again... I wonder how it resonates with every cell of your being... with what you feel called to do and be as one of God's children. One could say, "The Mission and Vision Statements of First United Church are appropriately written." One could say so; whereas another could reply, "Either that or the folks of this congregation are really super and blessed by God when it comes to carrying out their mission." Might I suggest that it "goes both ways" and "Thank God!" This is most certainly apparent in the activity report you are holding. Please read it thoroughly and pray for the financial support for all that we do.

It continues to be a gift to minister with you and in your midst. As well as on Sunday mornings and productive group meetings and events, I've enjoyed getting to know many of you in the comfort of your own homes and, in some cases, out and about in the neighbourhood. This is a blessing that I embrace continuing. We truly have a lot for which to be thankful. It is a privilege to worship warmly under one roof, to enjoy the amenities of all the extended building. My time has been filled with regular preparation for weekly worship, the many facets of pastoral care, as well as continuing education, and involvement in Presbytery functions.

Embracing new initiatives such as enhanced visuals during worship; journeying towards becoming an Affirming Congregation; beginning to meet some requirements for being an educational site for student ministers and bolstering aspects of Christian education and outreach for all ages is also an immense joy. Overall, this year I have been intentional about getting to know you in order to work together on building a strategy for widening the reach of faith growth. The fruit of this labour is well underway. One of the initiatives I'm most excited about is an act of Council to name a "Welcoming, Engagement and Communications Group". There are also hopes and plans towards bolstering our Children's and Youth ministries; offering confirmation classes, and a goal of developing a mid-week worship based gathering with the capacity to be interactive and to offer short-term spiritual development opportunities.

Together may God guide us, walk with us; and give us the courage to work to meet future visions; balance our current concerns; and authentically celebrate God's presence. Let us be thankful for this call to be the church; whatever shapes it takes- wherever it leads us.

We have a blessed mission ....God is Good All the Time.



Yours in Christ,

Rev. Maryann Skinner

# Membership Statistics

## FIRST UNITED CHURCH

MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS – MAY 1, 2014 TO APRIL 30, 2015

	<u>People</u>	<u>Families</u>
<b>Total Membership as of May 1, 2014</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Received by Confirmation (under 18)</b>	<b>+ 0</b>	<b>+ 0</b>
<b>Received by Transfer/Re-affirmation</b>	<b>+ 4</b>	<b>+ 3</b>
<b>Re-instated (Inactive Roll/Non Resident)</b>	<b>+ 0</b>	<b>+ 0</b>
<b>Removed by Death</b>	<b>- 10</b>	<b>- 7</b>
<b>Transferred to Other Churches</b>	<b>- 1</b>	<b>- 0</b>
<b>Removed to Inactive Roll</b>	<b>- 0</b>	<b>- 0</b>
<b>Transferred to Non Resident Roll</b>	<b>- 4</b>	<b>- 3</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Membership as of April 30, 2015</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>147</b>

*Prepared by:* Carol Wickham, Roll Clerk  
May 1, 2015

*Prepared for:* Annual General Meeting

# Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees met on May 12, 2015. The meeting started as a joint meeting with the Resource Management Group (RMG). Stephen White presented the details of the church's proposed insurance coverage for the year June 1, 2015 to May 31, 2016. The insurance program, endorsed by the United Church of Canada, is tailored to the needs of First United Church. RMG accepted the recommendations and the Trustees concurred. Thanks are extended to Stephen for his thorough presentation and efforts on behalf of First United Church.

The Board of Trustees met following the joint meeting. With Rev. Maryann Skinner temporarily in the chair, the Board re-elected Barbara Abrams as Chair, Kent Farrow as Vice-chair, and John Anderson as Secretary.

There were no events during the year requiring the action of the Board of Trustees.

The Chair, by reason of Office, was a member of, and attended the meetings of the Church Council for the year.

*Submitted by Barbara Abrams, chair*

# Book Club

The Book Club met on three occasions during the 2014/15 year and discussed three quite different genres of books. Christian Wiman's "My Bright Abyss" was a very personal reflection on sensing the divine and was penned in the rich and intensely challenging style natural to a professional poet.

Our second book "Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life" by the celebrated religious writer Karen Armstrong offered a contrasting subject for discussion. It laid out a broad appeal to all humanity - regardless of faith - to nurture a greater personal and communal sense and practice of daily compassion.

Our last book "Leaving Tomorrow" by David Bergen was our first ever novel and its story -with its undertones of the parable of the prodigal son- provided for a lively, humorous and at times self-reflective discussion for all present.

*Submitted by John Green, Convenor*



# Community Programs Group

The Community Programmes Group is made up of three different groups:

- Organization of Ushers
- Mission and Service and Outreach
- Event Planning: Food preparation and serving of the Over 80s Luncheon (done in conjunction with the Over 80's Planning Committee) as well as overseeing and planning of regularly planned Social Functions.

## **ACTIVITIES OF THE PAST YEAR**

Organization of Ushers

Arranging Speakers for Mission and Service Sundays and Minutes for Mission

Seniors' Luncheons (June, November and February)

Homecoming Dinner

Candlelight Reception

Pancake Supper

Afternoon Tea and Conversation (Sandra Church)

Christmas Craft Bags for the Compass

As part of our work with the Compass, there are dinners hosted here at First United for Compass Clients at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. There are Food Drives several times a year. Again this Christmas we held the very successful craft bag drive for the Compass Client Children.

*Submitted by Nancy Brodie & Joanne Quennell, Co-Chairs*

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# First United Foundation

The First United Foundation was created with Letters Patent dated June 23, 1999. All the members and future members of First United Church became members of the Foundation. The purpose of the Foundation was to help secure the financial future of the ministry and work of First United Church. That purpose has not changed.

The capital of the Foundation is to be invested and the income be turned over to the Church, to be used to:

1. help maintain the physical plant used by the Congregation
2. provide funds for "Outreach" within and beyond the borders of the Port Credit area and
3. provide funds for new initiatives in Outreach work.

The purpose of the First United Foundation Committee is to promote and encourage the donation of gifts that are over and beyond the regular contributions of Congregational members to the life and work of the church. Such gifts may come from but not be limited to such sources as:

- cash or cheques,
- shares of Public Companies, on which no capital gains tax will be payable;
- proceeds of insurance policies or wills governing distributions from estates, in which the "First United Foundation" must be named.

The Committee responsible for the Foundation will be promoting the benefits of gifts to the Foundation to assure the continued presence and influence of this church in the Mississauga area. In 2015, the Foundation transferred \$900 to the church General Fund and \$900 to the Outreach Fund.

*submitted by Merle Zoerb – Chair*

# Memorials and Special Gifts Fund

The purpose of the The Memorials and Special Gifts Fund is to encourage good stewardship by members, adherents and friends of First United Church through financial support of the Church from accumulated resources in addition to the regular ongoing contribution to the local budget and to the Mission and Service Fund. The arrangement offers an opportunity to make monetary gifts to the Church to celebrate births, marriages, anniversaries and memorials without affecting a commitment to the General Fund of the Church. A memorial gift to the Church is also a means of remembering friends and loved ones. All these gifts substantially assist in fulfilling the Fund's mandate of providing financial assistance to First United.

Special gifts are usually made by cheque but payment may be made from other financial resources. If assistance is required to accommodate your particular circumstances, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned or the Fund's Treasurer, Cliff Elliott. Gifts to First United Church may be unrestricted or restricted as to the application of the funds. In order to assist the Church in carrying out its mission, it is preferable to make an unrestricted gift.

During the period under review 72 unrestricted memorial gifts of \$3,910, and 44 restricted gifts totalling \$9,155 to the Piano Project in memory of June Ray, were received for which we are most thankful. Disbursements from the Memorials and Special Gifts Fund were \$9,162 to the Piano Project and \$2,264 to purchase a new computer for the Church office.

*submitted by Don Shuttleworth - Chair*

## Mission and Service

As a congregation, we responded with our usual high sense of commitment to our Mission and Service goal of \$40,000-00 for the 2024 by ending the year with donations tallying \$40,085-00. This was another commendable effort in First United 's long history of supporting the wider work of the United Church of Canada. During the year, we have instituted a monthly insert with the Sunday service bulletin. The insert highlights the variety of domestics and overseas mission work which the United Church implements.

We shall continue with more educational and outreach activities in the 2015 year and look forward to yet again meeting our annual target of \$40,000-00.

*submitted by John Green*

# Ministry & Personnel Committee

Ministry and Personnel is a mandatory committee required by The United Church of Canada in each congregation. Its members are appointed by Council and its work is confidential and consultative, tasked with supporting the staff and pastoral relations of the church.

On Sept 1, 2014 we welcomed Rev. Maryann Skinner as our Minister of Worship, Sacrament and Pastoral Care, following her refreshing August vacation. We have journeyed faithfully together through this time of transition, with Maryann learning about First United and we learning about Maryann and her many gifts.

Spiritual Development group, in consultation with Maryann, hired three energetic young women to provide leadership to the Children's Church programme. We thank Emily, Kelly and Leah for their important contribution to the life of our church. There may be future vacancies in these leadership roles as post-secondary education plans continue to unfold for these bright young people.

Music ministry leadership remains solid and spectacular, with Dr. Laura Fitzpatrick providing choral direction and Sandy Beckett at the organ and piano. We are blessed to have these two very busy professional people still holding First United as a priority in their lives.

In the office Christine Barlow continues to do an excellent job of coordinating the many activities in our church, including building rentals and so capably performing the countless duties so necessary to keep the church running smoothly.

Nursery Hosts Emma Beckett, Adam Choles and Helen Tintpolver provided excellent care to our youngest folk, an important job as we are welcoming new young families into First United.

And a word of thanks to all our Sunday Hosts who keep things running smoothly for all of us. Your 'behind the scenes' work is greatly appreciated.

We believe that First United is well staffed going into a new year, looking forward to whatever it is that God is calling us to encounter in our community.

*Submitted by Carol Hennigar  
Chair, Ministry and Personnel Committee*

## Men's Breakfast

The Men's Breakfast is held on a Saturday morning throughout the year. Originally organized by Blair Corcoran, they are held with no formal agenda other than good fun and fellowship. If you would like to enjoy a marvellous Irish breakfast at the Brogue Inn with good friends and guests from the church, then please come and join us.

*submitted by John Anderson*

# Music Program

This has been an eventful year for the First United music program. To each and every member of our choirs, let me begin by extending my heartfelt thanks on behalf of the entire congregation for your very important contribution to our church services. The Lakeshore Voices, ATC, and Adult Choir have been hard at work this year, exploring a variety of musical genres accompanied by the celebrated organist (and exceedingly patient) Sandy Beckett.

The Lakeshore Voices, consisting of singers in grades 2 through 6, explored many different musical concepts this year. Our focus continues to be developing musical skills including: singing in parts (rounds and harmony); performance experiences as soloists and small groups; musical terms and vocabulary; and vocal/choral techniques. If you know of any young people who might enjoy singing with us, please extend an invitation to them. Our rehearsals will resume in the fall on Thursday evenings.

The 6 members of the ATC, First United's teen choir, have made many appearances - individually and as a group - in our Sunday morning services. These singers explore repertoire in 4-part harmony, which is quite a remarkable thing for young people in grades 7 through 12. In addition to their performances in our Sunday services, they also performed twice in public concerts this year. In March, they were invited to be guest artists with the Liberation Choir at a concert in Brampton. On June 6, they will be giving their own concert as a fundraiser for the Compass here at the church. Whether in the concert context or in a worship service, these exceptional young people have shared their musical gifts in many ways: through singing, of course, but also through playing violin, trombone, bass clarinet, guitar and piano. They have collaborated in the last year with our other choirs in order to accompany them on various instruments, and - on occasion - to sing with them. We rehearse in Peter Jones Hall on Sundays immediately following the service.

Members of our Adult Choir, a dynamic group of approximately 25 singers, have explored a wide variety of musical genres and styles this year. We have performed a diverse collection of anthems during the Sunday morning services here at First, from Classical to Gospel and Jazz. We have enjoyed making music with a variety of guest instrumentalists, including cello, marimba, vibraphone, brass quartet and many more. If you have any ideas for our future musical selections, please let us know. We are also always looking for new members, so if you'd like to drop by one of our Thursday evening rehearsals, please do. New members are always welcome!

*submitted by Laura Fitzpatrick, Choral Director*

# Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Care Team has welcomed Rev. Maryann Skinner to our group of 10 members. We gather to review the health of the congregation and discuss how we can help in their care. This usually includes sending cards, visiting and phone calls. Privacy is always respected and members are discrete.

Various ways we show our concern is by acknowledging first anniversary of the death of a loved one, those over 80 a birthday card, anyone sick or needing a greeting.

There is a Keep In Touch list of members who are unable to attend Church due to various circumstances and this is updated monthly and reviewed. All the group try to visit these members as often as possible.

If anyone needs to inform this team of "health" issues or any concerns, please either contact the office administrator or the minister. This staff team consults the pastoral care team during monthly meetings when the pastoral care team gathers to pray for the pastoral concerns of the congregation and to collaborate on necessary action for reminding one another of God's love in and through Jesus and that "We are not alone."

New members are most heartily welcomed and will help to support this congregation in good times and in bad. If you feel called to this important ministry please make yourself known to Rev. Maryann who will set up a meeting for a conversation about possible next steps.

We always finish our gathering with this prayer:

*"May the Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from the other". Amen.*

The current members of this group:

Rev. Maryann Skinner

Nancy Brodie

Liz Gotzman

Graham Watts

Helen Shuttleworth

Don Shuttleworth

Connie Young

Chris Dowdell

Denise Edmonds

Nancy Rudderham

Tanya Swinbourne

*Respectfully submitted by Tanya Swinburne*

# Presbytery Liaison

The United Church of Canada is made up of 3132 congregations. The congregations, outreach ministries, camps, and chaplaincies of the United Church are divided up, geographically, into 13 Conferences. We are a part of Hamilton Conference, which extends from Mississauga to Hamilton and north up to the top of the Bruce Peninsula.

Each Conference is made up of between four and eight presbyteries. We are a part of Halton Presbytery, which includes Mississauga, Oakville and Burlington. The presbytery meets once a month from September to April. The presbytery is responsible for working with churches to who are searching for new ministers, thinking about making changes to their buildings, and who have students who have experienced a call to ministry. The presbytery is made up of all of the ministers who serve and live in the area and lay representatives from each congregation. First United is represented at presbytery by our minister, Rev. Maryann Skinner, and Wendy Cranston and James Cooper. Carol Hennigar and Sandy Skinner are also members of Halton presbytery; they both serve as members-at-large.

Over the past year, First United has been serving with the presbytery in a number of ways:

- two representatives from presbytery served on our Joint Search Committee to search for a new minister and call Rev. Maryann
- a representative from presbytery came to lead Rev. Maryann's covenanting service when she began her ministry with us at First United
- two representatives from the Education and Students Committee have been appointed to serve on Scott Beckett's discernment for ministry committee

This summer, there is a meeting of the General Council – a meeting of the whole denomination – in Corner Brook Newfoundland from August 8th -12th. Each Conference elects an equal number of ministers and lay people to represent the Conference at the denominational meeting. Carol Hennigar is attending from our congregation. Carolyn Smith, one of the ministry team from Applewood United is attending, as is Dale Skinner, the minister from St. Stephen's on the Hill. Wendy Cranston is attending at General Council Office staff. The biggest issue coming before the denominational meeting is a proposal to restructure the United Church so that we no longer have presbyteries or Conference – but congregations, regional councils, and the denomination. If you are interested in reading more about the changes that are being proposed, please visit the 42nd General Council website: [www.gc42.ca](http://www.gc42.ca) or speak to any of Rev. Maryann, Wendy, James, or Carol.

First United Church is a community of God's people growing in faith, but we are not growing alone. We are a part of a much larger denomination and Christian community who we support and who supports us – through love in action. Thanks be to God.

*Yours in Christ,  
Wendy Cranston*

*First United Church Lay Representative to Halton Presbytery*



# Prayer Shawl Group

Now completing its second year, the Prayer Shawl Ministry has continued to be an active small group and outreach ministry. Since its inception in 2013, more than 80 hand-knitted shawls have been presented to people in our congregation and wider community – both in celebration of events such as baptism, and as comfort in times of need. Shawls are distributed by members of the congregation, and via the Pastoral Care committee, and are readily available through the office. We are so touched by the many thank-you notes we receive, and realize how meaningful this ministry is to many. We also knit small ‘prayer patches’ – items to be tucked into a pocket, or held in one’s hand, as a reminder that God is always with us.

This year, the Prayer Shawl group also enthusiastically supported the ‘Chase the Chill’ project, and created a multitude of beautiful handcrafted scarves.

Many people knit at home, and others gather for fellowship, knitting together twice a month in our parlour. We are very grateful to all those who support this ministry through donations of yarn and funds.

*submitted by Carol Hennigar*

# Quilting Group

The Quilting Group meets every Tuesday from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM on the stage in Peter Jones Hall. A warm welcome is extended to anyone wishing to learn a new skill in a friendly social setting. During the past year, we completed a queen size quilt, plus a crib quilt for the raffle held at the Bites and Bids luncheon on April 30th, 2015. A \$700 donation was made to the Ebola Crisis Fund of the United Church of Canada from the raffle held in May 2014.

We also have two other crib quilts available for purchase:

one has farm animals and the other has jungle animals.

*submitted by Helen Heatley*

# Resource Management Group

The Resource Management Group manages the financial and physical resources of First United Church. The Committee is made up of 9 members from our Congregation and includes the Minister, the Chair of Memorials & Special Gifts Committee and the Treasurer. The Resource Management Group meets monthly between September and June each year.

Each month, the Treasurer prepares financial reports for the review by the Resource Management Group and the Church Council. The Resource Management Group also prepares the Annual Budget, which is reviewed by the Church Council and then presented to the Congregation at the Annual Financial Meeting held early in the calendar year.

The maintenance and repair of our property, building and equipment is another task undertaken by the Resource Management Group. We try to complete minor repairs as soon as possible in order to avoid future higher cost repairs. We ensure our facilities and equipment comply with the appropriate federal, provincial and municipal regulations. This continuous care allows the fullest use of our facilities.

Rental of our facilities by outside groups is overseen by the Resource Management Group. We are a popular location for musical concerts. We have a number of ongoing renters including another faith group, exercise classes, and yoga sessions. Renting our facilities is challenging as we try to maximize the rental revenue but leave ample space and times for our own congregational programs and services.

Stewardship is the life line of our congregation as we could not exist without the donation of time, talent and financial resources. Each year the Resource Management Group encourages our congregation to continue their generosity and step up to overcome our challenges.

First United's Mission is to be a community of God's people growing in faith through worship services, which emphasize preaching and music; providing Christian education and reflection for people of all ages; providing fellowship, friendship and care, for our members and the world; and by putting our faith into action, in Port Credit and beyond.

Your financial offerings provide leadership, worship services, choirs and music, children's church, a well maintained building for our use, a location for many community programs and events, our prayer shawl ministry, over-80s luncheons, Pancake Suppers and other meals, outreach to The Compass and other benevolent needs, and learning programs. With your continued support we can expand our Mission by developing additional programs and events.

*Respectfully submitted, Ed Mock, Convenor*

# Spiritual Development Program Group

First United Church has undergone a transition in spiritual leadership this year and SDPG remains ready and eager to provide support to various programs and varied styles of worship offered to the congregation of the church.

We welcomed Maryann Skinner as our new minister as the summer drew to a close. We look forward to working with a permanent minister and assist in providing for the spiritual needs of First United Church. Already, Maryann is breathing new life into worship and offering a plethora of fresh ideas for spiritual development. The SDPG will continue to work to provide support for these new initiatives and to the spiritual guidance offered through the church

We also welcomed Maryann's daughter, Leah, who has taken on the leadership of the Children's church together with Kelly Mabee. The girls are providing a rich and vibrant experience for the children of First United every Sunday. The girls have led the children in presenting the traditional offerings, such as the White Gift presentation, and have introduced many new activities. One such activity was the Children's Church recently embarked on a M&S stewardship project suggested by Graham Watts. The members of the Children's Church created and sold a variety of crafts to raise funds to support education in the Philippines' mountainous Cordillera region. This was a wonderful opportunity to make a financial contribution to a Mission and Service project and also participate in an intergenerational activity. With much of the hard work done, plans are now in the works for a little bit of relaxation at a year-end picnic.

Children in the Nursery this year have been welcomed Sunday mornings by Emma Beckett and Helen Tintpolver working on alternate Sundays. The 9:00 a.m. drop off time for children of the choir members means that they may attend morning rehearsal prior to the worship service. Helen took advantage of a travel opportunity early in 2015 and Adam Choles was added as a nursery supervisor. We thank all involved for providing this invaluable service.

Some of our student teachers and supervisors will be heading off to post-secondary education in the fall. However, Emily Bowyer, a fill-in teacher in the Children's Church, has agreed to take on the leadership in the fall.

In addition to supporting the traditional Sunday morning worship, the SDPG has offered encouragement to other fellowship groups within the church including the book club, Men's breakfast and Women Connecting. Two mid-week discussion groups, led by Maryann, were offered during Advent (The Characters of Christmas) and Lent ("God's Chisel"). The youth of the church were invited out to an evening of Lasar Tag. The evening went very well as the youth and some, perhaps a little longer in the tooth but still young at heart, really enjoyed themselves.

Special events supported this year by the SDPG included the always popular Craft Dinner and Christmas Tree decorating. Special services such as "bring a friend to church" introduced some new people to our congregation. We plan to continue with similar services in future years. Every once in a while, on special occasions, the SDPG provides cake during coffee hour.

The choirs, under the very capable leadership of Laura Fitzpatrick and assisted by keyboard talents of Sandy Beckett, have provided many inspiring moments of Music. The choirs include the Adult Choir, the Lakeshore Voices, and the ATC. We look forward to a year-end concert of the ATC this June to feature their group's ample talents and also raise some funds and collect food for the Compass.

SDPG would like to thank all members of the staff that have worked tirelessly to ensure that inspiring worship occurs so smoothly each week. Special thanks go to our Children's Church and Nursery leaders. Thank you to all members of the congregation who contributed by reading scripture, serving communion, ushering, participating in book or other discussion groups, maintaining the church library, lighting candles before worship service, serving on committees or in other ways gave of themselves to create a meaningful worship experience. All of your generous contributions of time and talent are certainly appreciated by all.

*Submitted by: Andrew Choles, Chair of Spiritual Development Program Group*

# United Church Women

We have had a very busy and interesting year. We shared the Advent Season with St. Stephen's-on-the-Hill, Christ Church and Sheridan United. Sheridan United were the host church this year.

Our annual Pesbyterial UCW Meeting was held at Erindale UC on Sat. April 11th. We had 11 delegates and 2 Past Presbyterial Presidents attend. The morning speaker was Sarah Beer, an Overseas Personnel serving in Chiclaigo, Peru for 2010-2014. The afternoon speaker was Carol Reist from the DAM. Carol is the executive director. She and her team help the youth living on the streets in Meadowvale and Cooksville.

We had several speakers this year. Kristen Swinborne and her friends spoke on "Adventures in Kenya a project they are involved in, Ruuth Lavery , a young Cancer Breast and Reconstruction Survivor and Kay Cranston on the Ebola Crisis. We are going to the Alton ArtCenter in June. We had to cancel our Bible Study due to cold weather.

We purchased a new microwave for the office kitchen. Our fund raising event Bites and Bids was successful with the help of many hands. We plan our year in Sept. at a Pot Luck Dinner. We may have a Book Review, Bible Study, Games Night, Movie Night, Guest Speaker or an Outing. Thanks to all who made a very successful year.

*submitted by Pat Skinner*

## Women Connecting

The women of First continue to meet periodically throughout the year, as the Spirit moves us, for times of learning, reflection and friendship – exploring the God’s presence in our lives - and in our world through us.

This past year we enjoyed a one day event called “Prayer Buffet” that was held at First United on November 8th with the leadership of Rev. Maryann Skinner and Lisa Hartt-Spillane, Singer Songwriter. The day was filled with laughter, prayer, contemplation, bible study, music, and food. A full agenda enabled us to explore prayer, scripture, meditation, ourselves, and God through musical expression, working with clay, creative beadwork and entering into a sacred time with God and each other.

Although we are an unstructured group, with people taking on different responsibilities when the time is right for them, we give thanks to each other for shared leadership and women’s ministry. All women of First United are welcome to join in gatherings as they unfold and as the Spirit leads us.

*submitted by Donna Pounder*