

# Tidings

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**LENT/EASTER**

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David Wardlaw

You will notice a major change in the content organization of *Tidings* beginning with this issue. The Committee Report section which contained activity reports from Committees, Subcommittees, recognized Groups, and several FSA Ministries has been replaced by a Ministry Report section containing reports from all ministerial areas plus a Governance Report section with reports from FSA's two governing bodies: Leadership Council and the Board of Trustees. Committees, Subcommittees, and recognized Groups will be the subject of an ongoing series of Behind the Scene articles (1-2 articles per issue beginning here with Faith Formation and the Brown Bag Lunch group). Each article in the series will feature one of these bodies, providing an opportunity to explain its purpose, role, and functioning in support of FSA's overall mission and in support of our three pillars: Faith, Service, and the Arts. These Behind the Scene articles are not activity reports. The focus is on (re)educating the FSA community about the volunteer organizational structure which underpins FSA and enables so much of our operation as a community of faith, while at the same time (hopefully) peaking the interest of latent volunteers.

The feature article is the first in a series entitled "The Future of Church." At least two more articles are planned, possibly a fourth, for subsequent issues. The editor is currently identifying and securing commitments from authors with requisite expertise in this subject area. This series was conceived last fall by the editor and endorsed by the *Tidings* Committee. The context is obvious. Mainline denominations in Canada, the U.S., Europe, and possibly elsewhere have been and continue to be in significant decline in terms of membership, participation rate, and ability to raise sufficient revenue to maintain operations at previous levels and to maintain traditional church buildings. FSA is no exception. The intention of the series is to provide readers with an informed and insightful assessment of this reality in a broader context than our own situation. And to introduce possible general pathways, some involving radical change, for churches to adapt, stay relevant and functional, and even to enhance their mission and their societal impact. The lead article in the series is by none other than our Minister of Worship and Congregational Life, Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence. Joshua's article beautifully introduces this series with both its substance and its call to adapt to changing circumstances.

The Getting-to-Know series on members who joined FSA in 2023 continues, this time featuring Isabelle Webb. It is also beneficial to continue to get to know our sister churches in London - check out the Our Neighbours article on the history of Calvary United Church by Rev. Kerry Stover. †

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Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence



"PUTTING OUR FAITH IN TWO INCHES OF HUMUS"

**T**hough still on its way, we can all feel Spring showing up—perhaps unexpectedly and always intermittently in the North. Writing from the perspective of a native Texan, whose experience in cold weather has been quite limited, I can still say that this Winter has been very tame by comparison to what I know has been common in Southwest Ontario. And while we could certainly fret about the environmental implications of this phenomenon, I propose that we simply live and work with what is given to us. In no way does this diminish our responsibilities as stewards of the Earth, placed here to care and cultivate, to live in covenant with all creation. But it also refuses to fall into a kind of “futilitarianism.” This word, as some can tell immediately, is a riff on the philosophical ethic of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism argues that one’s actions—and by extension the actions of a community—should always focus on the maximization of happiness. As problematic as the word “happy” is, I think we all get the point. Discern what contributes to the greatest happiness, and do it! Futilitarianism suggests that we are beyond hope, beyond mitigation of any kind, and the best thing we can do is usher in the inevitable demise of our world. Not exactly an attractive program, but if one were to spend a bit of time perusing the

**I am proposing that we consider....how we can live in covenant with all our relations....because it is the good and right thing to do.**

various news outlets, I suspect you would come away thinking that this “ideology” actually holds sway in our world.

Therefore, I am proposing that we consider what we can do and how we can live in covenant with all our relations, not because we subscribe to the problematic “white/liberal saviorism” so prevalent throughout the world, but rather, because it is the good and right thing to do. In the words of an older generation, covenant care is the “Lord’s work.” And that is the business we are all called to “be about.” Let me be clear. The world is in crisis, as it has been for quite some time. We have engaged in what ecologists call a massive overshoot, exhausting our resources and degrading our land base swiftly and without regard to future generations of life on Earth. And so, we will keep doing what we are called to do, even when our efforts don’t seem to have the impact we so desire. We will, in the words of Wendell Berry, “do something that won’t compute. Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing. Take all that [we] have and be poor... Say that our main crop is the forest that [we] did not plant, that [we] will not live to harvest... Put our faith in the two inches of humus that will build under the trees every thousand years... Practice resurrection.” †



Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence



In 1925, the United Church of Canada could count approximately 6% of the Canadian population as members. Today, that figure is less than 1%, and while the general population has quadrupled, the United Church has been slowly disappearing from the social landscape [1]. This is not to imply that our church has no role to play going forward but it bears mention that we—as United Church folk—must look squarely and soberly at the situation, not attribute it to premature purging of rolls or exaggerated media reports.

By exhorting us to truthfully examine the situation, I am not suggesting that church leaders and scholars have not attempted to address the growing decline. In various ways, the United Church has attempted to position itself advantageously for years to come. And, more importantly, it has continued to be a boldly prophetic voice in relation to historically underserved communities and those forcibly moved to the margins. As someone who was raised in a cultural environment that still actively campaigns against all efforts towards a just peace, I came to the United Church precisely because of its commitment to the truth-telling, table-turning rabbi from Nazareth.

Well, why aren't people joining with us then, you might reasonably ask? If our social justice commitments appeal to many in the country, and if our theology is informed by scientific and philosophically sound analyses, what gives? We don't believe in a punitive sky god that arbitrarily pun-

ishes people and whimsically brings destruction on the earth. We don't accept the exclusionary practices of some faith communities that refuse to confer wholly beloved status to all persons, regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, or gender identification. So why aren't more people becoming part of United Church communities? In what follows, I am not attempting an exhaustive answer to this question. My reflections stem from the work of certain scholars that have spent considerably more time investigating community formation and breakdown, specifically the ritual communities that have experienced the largest declines in membership.

The first proposal involves a redefinition of religious community. Church scholars will typically cite Biblical injunction and thus, religious necessity. And while I find the work of ecclesiologists important for a fuller understanding of our past, present, and future, I also believe that adopting other analytical tools is essential for an effective response to our situation as the Church [2]. Therefore, my reflection draws on evolutionary theories of religion, specifically the use of modelling and simulation to better understand collective human responses to circumstantial changes and pressures of various sorts. In their article, "Simulating Religions as Adaptive Systems," Connor Wood and Richard Sosis construct a system dynamics model (SDM) of a generic religious organization to effectively analyze

why some religious communities (RC) break down while others appear to avoid this fate [3]. In their treatment of RCs as complex adaptive systems (CAS), the authors are highlighting the openness of these communities to continual perturbations in their environments. As many of us would conclude, some RCs are more adaptive in their responses than others. Wood and Sosis suggest that those communities with "increasing social flexibility in response to crises of legitimacy may contribute to the resilience of certain types of social, including religious, systems." [4]. Unfortunately, many RCs feel uncertain as to whether they are divinely permitted to be socially flexible or whether their flexibility in some way dishonors the work of past practitioners.

To reframe this argument in Sunday morning language, our churches can keep being churches to the extent that they can adapt to their changing circumstances—culturally, theologically, technologically, and logistically. Wood and Sosis also point out that certain communities in their SDM exhibited greater longevity if the "Charisma parameter was maximized." [5]. That word, "charisma," has a range of historical meanings, but in contemporary usage it refers to a certain quality that allows for great impact in a given situation. In early Christian communities, it referred to spiritual gifts. Wood and Sosis employ the term in the way of German sociologist, Max Weber, for whom charisma "is a source of



# FUTURE OF THE CHURCH SERIES:

## "A CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY"

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**...our churches can keep being churches to the extent that they can adapt to their changing circumstances.**

authority that does not depend on coercion or bureaucratic infrastructure; it is spontaneous, personality-driven, and intrinsically emotionally compelling." [6]. In a world where religious communities no longer possess the moral and intellectual authority they once did, charisma might have the

final word. That is why I have titled this article, "A Crisis of Legitimacy."

Unfortunately, we mainline Protestant members of the faith are quite suspicious of charisma. The United Church of Canada is known for many good things—charisma isn't one of them. But why not? We have much to celebrate. So many reasons to dance and give thanks—as David does in 2 Samuel, and without much attire! What gives? Why aren't we known for our dancing and emoting? The answer might very well be on display in this brief reflection I have attempted. We are thinkers, composers, who much prefer a carefully ordered process to spontaneous emergence thank you very much! But what does that mean for our future? Are we destined for breakdown because we just don't know what to do when the rules get stretched if not completely discarded?

The short answer is NO. And I will take this opportunity to remind everyone that there is far more flexibility in our individual and collective bodies than we care to admit. And perhaps we are being called on at this very hour to do some stretching. We are also gifted with energy and power, which when put to the service of those in need can work wonders in our world. These United Church "charisms" don't get discussed often, but they should! And I think it would go a long way if we saw our particular actions as impassioned spiritual practices rather than simply "good deeds." As many of you know, I have problems

with the word "good," largely for the same reason Jesus did. "Who is good but God" indeed! (Mark 10:18). And let me reiterate that we are all inclined to help people who look like us, think like us, and talk like us. It takes a bit of "charisma" to enter new places, new relationships, new ways of worshipping and living. While it can't happen all at once, I want to encourage each person who reads this to take on a practice that feels uncomfortable at first. If you prefer sitting meditation, adopt a spiritual practice that is NOT sitting down, being quiet. It will be quite difficult at first. But growth isn't easy. In fact, it's always painful, but it is why we are here. Fortunately, we don't do anything alone. We are never abandoned, even in our fear of the future: the future of the church, the planet, all our relations. Perhaps our willingness to open ourselves further will be the deciding factor in how effective we are as a community and as individuals. Where we have lost our legitimacy in the eyes of many, we ask for charisma to connect and relate in new ways, not solely dependent on the precedents of yesteryear but the gifts of the Spirit here and now. †

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*Editor's note: The numbers in square brackets in the text refer to items in the article's bibliography which is provided separately on p. 19.*



Rev. Kerry Stover



# CALVARY UNITED CHURCH

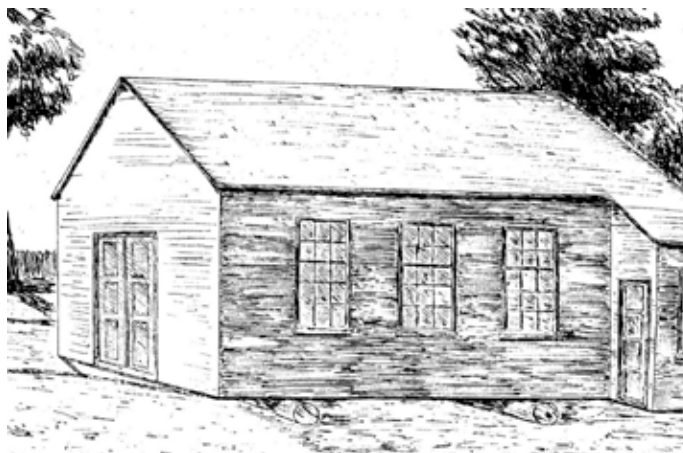
## A JOURNEY OF FAITH

**C**alvary United Church's humble beginnings began in 1890 as an outreach mission of Wellington St. Methodist Church (renamed Wellington St. United in 1925). Methodists that lived on the south side of the Thames River, not part of the City of London until 1912, would gather for bible study, worship, and fellowship in the home of a family on Emery Street. As Methodists gathered in this home, their numbers grew and the "Board of Control" at Wellington St. Methodist Church decided that it was time to build a small log Mission church that would seat 150. They located the Mission church near the corner of High and Emery Streets. The wooden Mission church would hold two services on Sundays, community suppers, fundraisers, and many youth activities. As the membership continued to grow at the turn of the century, it was decided by the Methodist board of Southwestern Ontario and the sponsorship of Wellington St. that an Ordained Minister would be called to serve the growing congregation and the Mission Church congregation could go on their own. It was an ordained minister, the Reverend William Butt, that had the vision of growing the congregation as the population was growing in the Old South area in this new part of London. The trustees procured two parcels of land at the corner of Ridout and Garfield Streets and in 1912 the wooden Mission church was moved to the new location. Moving the wooden church took teams of oxen and a capstan system, rolling the building along wooden logs that were placed under the structure. Shortly after moving the original Mission church building, Rev. Butt decided it was time to build a permanent brick structure. The new church building was to seat 300 with room to expand. Plans were drawn up and building began in late 1912 with the cornerstone placed

in 1914. Rev. Butt never saw completion of the new church as he died a year prior to its completion.

The Ridout Methodist Church, as it was then renamed in 1914, then renamed again after church union in 1925 to Calvary United Church. The legacy of the Methodist Mission has continued over the years with the ministry and mission focus of outreach, social justice, and community involvement. Calvary currently supports London Community Chaplaincy, Life-Spin, Atlohsa, Greening Sacred spaces, and many other not for profit organizations.

Since 1914, a Sunday School addition was added in 1939 to the east side of the church, and in 1957 a Christian Education wing, south side, was built. In 1972 the member role listed 1,673 names, with an additional 300 names of children or youth who were active in the Sunday school or youth groups. Three services were held in the sanctuary on Sundays in the 1970's and 80's, and many youth programs throughout the week.



Sketch of mission church log building near High and Emory Streets, the original home of what is now Calvary United Church

Over the years the congregation has added an outdoor wheelchair entry ramp to the lower hall, an elevator with access to all floors of the building, an expanded up-to-date kitchen, and a live-stream audio visual projection system.

Music has played an important part in the life of Calvary, from the first pump organ to the renewed Casavant Freres 3 manual organ that accompanies choral and congregational singing. To learn more about your friends at Calvary UC, and about Calvary's stained glass windows, visit Calvary's website at [calvaryuc.ca](http://calvaryuc.ca)

†



Nancy Quinn

## AN UPLIFTING DAY WITH THEOLOGIAN DIANA BUTLER BASS



**O**n November 11, 2023, Siloam United Church hosted a one-day, retreat with Diana Butler Bass. The title for the event was *A Day of Freeing Jesus*, celebrating her 2021 book, *Freeing Jesus*, which Wesley Knox, Siloam, and FSA had jointly studied together the previous spring. “I was at the kneeling rail at Washington National Cathedral and Jesus said three times to me: “Get me out of here.” Not normally given to mystic experiences, Bass realized that Jesus needs to be freed in our personal stories, our cultural stories, and freed from limited conceptions of dogma. Calling her book, *Memoir Theology*, she challenges each of us to make a “hero’s journey into our own story of Christianity,” thereby taking back our spiritual authority. For Bass, the gentle Methodist Sunday School picture of “Jesus is my friend” is what she keeps coming back to. She also claims Jesus as “Teacher” and as “Saviour” -- from the Latin “salvus,” which means to heal.

Hebrews 13:8 states “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever.” Bass argues strongly against this Scripture because for Jesus “to be immutable and unchangeable would make him different from us.” The Jesus of the Gospels is: “the suffering son” (Mark); “the Rabbi and Messiah” (Matthew); “the Universal Saviour” (John); and “Divine Wisdom” (John). She states that “Paul’s writings and the gnostic gospels give us an even greater diversity of images.”

In the final presentation of the one-day symposium, Bass gave a version of her now viral July 2022 “Wild Goose Festival Sermon.” Bass discussed scholar, Elizabeth Schrader’s findings around Papyrus 66, written around 200 AD. Discovered in 1952, this document was recently scanned and is now available to study online in ancient Greek. Schrader found that in John 11 (Lazarus raised from the dead), the names have been “fiddled with,” in what may have been an early Church editor’s attempt to harmonize the story with that of the sisters, Mary and Martha in Luke 10: 38-42. In her *Harvard Theological Review* article, Schrader demonstrates that one can see where Martha has been added in ink over the original name of Maria. Schrader argues that there was only one sister of Lazarus, not two, and that was Mary Magdalene.

As further evidence of an original narrative with only one sister there is a sermon by Tertullian (an early church father) in which it is Mary (not Martha) who goes out to meet Lazarus. Deirdre Good, Schrader’s supervising professor, has done extensive and intriguing research on Mary Magdalene. Bass joins with a group of feminist theologians in arguing that there has been a dilution of the magnitude of Mary of Magdalene’s role in the formation of the Christian Church. Bass concluded her time with us by sharing that *Magdala*, believed to be the birth place of Mary Magdalene, means “tower,” (even “watch tower”) which could be used as an honourific. “Imagine if we had had a church for two thousand years built on both the rock (Peter) and the tower (Mary) – foundation and proclamation.”†

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*Author’s note: More information about Diana Butler Bass and research on Mary Magdalene and her role in the early church can be found in the following online resources: <https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/>; <https://broadview.org/podcasts/mary-magdalone-podcast/>; and <https://stbarts.org/sermon/deirdre-good-mary-magdalone-and-jesus-in-the-garden/>.*



Anne Cummings

## Isabelle Webb

It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you a new member at FSA, Isabelle Webb. Isabelle is a local woman who grew up on a 200-acre farm in the Strathroy area. Her dad grew crops, raised cows, had chickens and she, of course, learned to help. She has one brother who lives in Michigan. As a young woman, she actually attended FSA for awhile.

After graduating from school, she worked for Ford in St. Thomas in labour relations. It was during her work at Ford that she met her husband who had come from the Ford plant in Oakville. They moved to Waterdown near Burlington where she got a job in labour relations at Toyota. They later moved to the West Coast in the Victoria area for three years before returning to Ontario and settling in London. Unfortunately, her husband died at the age of 72 from Alzheimer's disease. Isabelle continued to work for temporary agencies until the age of 70.

Isabelle loves to travel and has had interesting trips to France, Scotland, Ireland, and England. She enjoys golf, dogs,

and cats and considers herself to be a people person. She has recently moved into Windermere on the Mount retirement community, has a beautiful apartment there, and has become involved in their activities. She is very happy to be back at FSA and is grateful that her lifelong friend, Barb Plante, is driving her to church. Barb describes Isabelle as an incredibly loyal friend who is kind, gentle, generous, has a flair for fashion and for decorating with flowers. We are most happy to welcome this lovely woman to FSA! †



## REMEMBERING



(L TO R)  
Heather Vouvalidis  
Geoffrey Corbet  
Ann Corbet

## Barbara Jean Corbet February 1933 – September 2023

First-St. Andrew's saved Barbara Smith from Hurricane Hazel – not the former Mississauga Mayor, but the devastating hurricane which hit Toronto in October 1954. Barb was attending teacher's college in Toronto at the time but came home to London hours before the hurricane arrived in order to teach Sunday School at her home church of First-St. Andrew's and to see her boyfriend, Gene Corbet, a student at Western.

Barbara Smith attended First-St. Andrew's throughout her childhood with her two sisters Kathryn and Ruth, her parents, and her maternal grandparents. Prior to starting a family, Barb and Gene taught Sunday School at FSA. Barb and Gene became parents in 1962 when Heather came along, followed by Ann, and then Geoffrey. Years later, Barb's grandchildren, the 5th generation at FSA, joined the family pew.

Barb was a charter member of the United Church Women's group at FSA, joining that first year in 1962. For decades Barb was part of the Tuesday Evening Unit. She was never one to

take on leadership roles, but certainly was an active member doing practical things such as writing correspondence, recording minutes, and serving refreshments as well as baking numerous pecan pies for fund-

raisers. Barb also visited many shut-ins on behalf of FSA, namely at Marion Villa. For two decades she helped with the monthly birthday parties at McCormick Home. She read textbooks to two mature blind students at King's College. Barb did not sing in the church choir. She knew her limits and was the first to admit she could not carry a tune. She was, however, an enthusiastic supporter of the church's music





program and a lover of classical music and opera. Barb attended Thursday morning Bible Study up to the time she felt the onset of dementia.

Barb attended the FSA UCW's 55th anniversary service and luncheon in 2017. Although in mid-stage Alzheimer's Disease at that time, she still enjoyed the special occasion. In 2021, she received a Proudfoot Legacy certificate in recognition of her role on the executive of the UCW.

In later years, the hymn, "Will Your Anchor Hold?" was a favourite of Barb's. She proved to be an anchor for her family and left a legacy of "Rules to Live By"; a few of which are

listed here:

- Walk, Walk, Walk, and walk some more!
- Give of Yourself Generously
- Be a Steadfast Supportive Friend
- Enjoy Your Leisure
- Learn to Laugh
- Timing is Everything

In the second last year of her life, she would often ask others, "What church do you go to?" Whenever she heard the reply, "First-St. Andrew's," she would respond with a large smile and say, "That's my church too!" †

## TRIBUTE



Ann MacPhail

## Ron White

Does the name Ron White or the photo in the corner of this article look familiar to you? If it doesn't, that is understandable as Ron is a pretty private, low-key, quiet person. However, for the past 30 years he has attended FSA! My main association with Ron has been the proximity of our seating during church services - always sitting in the pews under the balcony. For most of those 30 years, conversations were never extensive. A smile, a "good morning," "I haven't seen you for a while. Have you been away?" was frequently the extent of our conversations. But over 30 years, one gradually obtains tidbits of information. I would notice that Ron would be away for four-five months each year. Upon his return, I would mention that I had noticed his absence only to discover that he had been teaching in Thailand! He would occasionally mention his mother and I formed the impression he was a wonderful support to her. However, it wasn't until the last two years, when Ron and I spent many evenings making beds at FSA for the Ark Aid Mission homeless initiative, that I got to know Ron better.

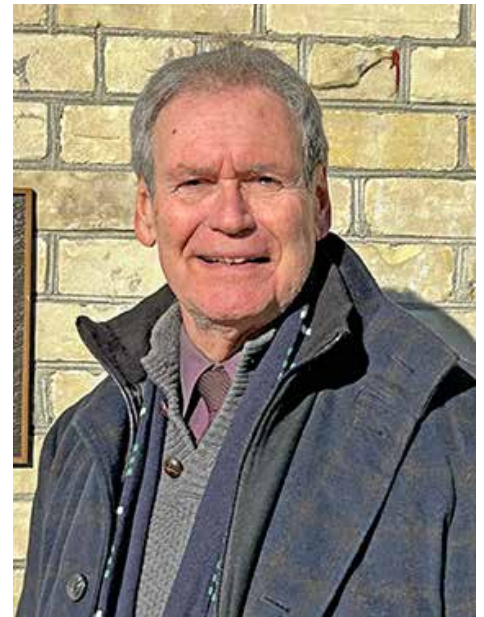
Born in Brantford Ontario, Ron attended Sunday School at Fairview United Church. His family moved to London in the early sixties where Ron attended Evelyn Harrison Public and Lucas Secondary Schools. His family attended Grove United Church (a joint charge with Siloam United) where he was confirmed. He completed a BSc in Biology at UWO and Dip. in Education at Althouse College after which he spent two and a half years (with CUSO) in Sabah (Borneo), Malaysia teaching Science & English. He considers this one of the greatest experiences of his life! Returning to London in 1981, he spent 21 years teaching at Fanshaw College in the Health Technology Division, was married (has an adopted

stepdaughter), divorced, then after early retirement (2001), taught four-five months a year in Thailand, (2003-2013).

So, what brought Ron to FSA? While looking for a church home in 1995, Ron heard Rev. Frank Meadows speak and he was inspired to hear more. He was warmly welcomed at FSA by Bob and Louise Slater and Jean Wright. And what has kept Ron at FSA? He replied, "Where can one go for great music and stimulating/philosophical sermons all rolled into one? FSA truly lives up to its motto, 'where liberal theology meets the best of tradition,' which inspires one to seek justice, love, kindness and walk humbly with your God."

How has being a Christian impacted his life? Ron finds it hard to put his faith into words, like many of us. However, he has been influenced by the teachings of the church particularly in the area of social justice. Both earlier in his life working for CUSO, later working in Thailand, and more recently making beds at FSA and serving dinners for Ark Aid. In general, he would rather spend two hours making beds than sitting on a church committee! Although he recognizes that both are important!

When asked what he is looking forward to for 2024? Doing more volunteer work in the area of social justice with Ark Aid! †





Heather Locking-Cusollito

## REV. KAREN LOW

**R**ev. Karen Low and I met by phone on a snowy January afternoon in preparation for this article. Karen tells us that she was born in London, but after frequent moves related to her father's work, they settled in Burlington where she and her two sisters (one older and one younger) went to school. Her family life growing up was happy, loving, safe, and a "soft place to fall". Her parents passionately believed in her and her sisters, watched them grow, provided them with opportunities, stressed the significance of education, and emphasized the importance of family which continues to this day. Karen remains very close with her sisters, one of whom lives in Richmond Hill and the other in Alberta.

Although Karen and her family were active in their church growing up, Karen's first career was not the ordained ministry. Following her Diploma in Graphic Arts from Sheridan College she worked as a graphic artist with the Halton Board of Education providing various art and graphic services for their employees, teachers and administrators. During a discussion with a friend at the Board, Karen had an ah-ha moment where she considered the possibility of a role in Christian education. But after "chasing it down," came to the conclusion that she needed to pursue ordination. She completed a B.A. in Religious Studies at McMaster followed by an M.Div. at Emmanuel College. It was during her time at Emmanuel that Karen was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Not surprisingly, she viewed the diagnosis as a challenge and found herself wondering if she had made the right decision. Despite her diagnosis, she notes that "doors have continued to open" for her and that her condition helps her to understand the situation of others facing health challenges and to accompany them as they face their own challenges.

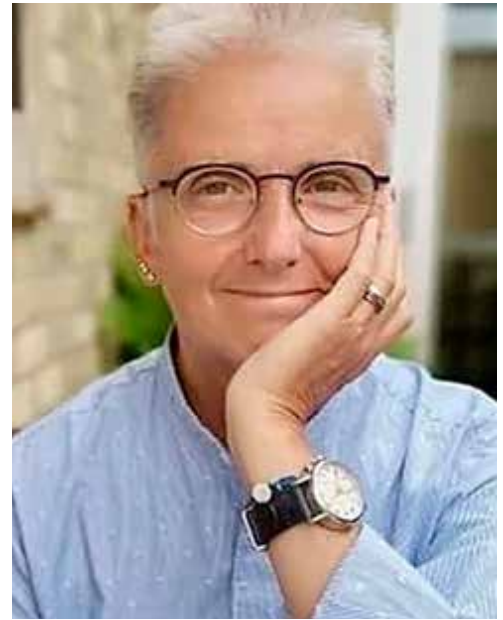
Although Karen has ministered in a variety of pastoral settings, her nine years in Muskoka remain a highlight. She describes her affection for members of her flock who, despite their significant economic constraints, generously brought her moose steaks, arrived with a handcrafted bird feeder on Christmas Eve, and shoveled out her driveway without accepting payment.

Another highlight for Karen was her Ministry as a United Church Chaplain at Western University. She believes that the fact she was affiliated with the United Church made her seem safer and more approachable to students. Walking through the campus with her dog, River'Song, she could have 16 different conversations with students she might never have otherwise met along the way. She considered

it a privilege to meet people at critical times of need. One heartbreaking aspect of her work occurred when students committed suicide and she met with friends and family afterwards to help them bear their grief.

In her time as a Volunteer Associate Minister at FSA (since June 2022), Karen has been called upon regularly to preach sermons and adores the craft of immersing herself in Biblical texts in preparation for writing her sermon. She has found the community of faith at FSA very gracious and affirming. She is always especially grateful when we comment on her sermons since that tells her we have been listening. Her time with us has also been notable for her enthusiastic and knowledgeable revitalization of the Affirm Committee.

In addition to her special gifts as a Minister, Karen has many other interests, some of which she shares with her wife Rev. Annie Jannaway. Of particular note are the care of their two cats and dog, furniture restoration, renovating their 125-year-old house, writing, hiking, creative art/photography, exploring queer spirituality and the needs of queer seniors, and rowing. Every morning Karen rows 12 km on her rowing machine. Her goal is to figuratively row across Canada from the starting point of Vancouver Island. As of our chat she had reached Gull Lake, Saskatchewan! Thank you, Karen, for the many gifts you bless us with so freely at FSA. †



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Allyson Watson

## faith formation

**F**aith Formation is the melding of two exciting committees: Worship and Christian Education. We have been working together for the past two years and, as of January 2024, have officially become one team. What does the committee do you may be wondering?

The committee meets monthly; we try to meet in person, although sometimes we use Zoom. We are supported by Pastor Joshua, Chris Fischer, Marilyn Arthur, and Christina Lindsay, both at meetings and in various undertakings under the committee's purview. Faith Formation makes decisions surrounding the worship service. The staff plans the content of services. Faith Formation provides, via Coordinators, volunteers to support and participate in the weekly services. The Co-ordinator positions are: Greeters (Carol Riddell-Elson); Scripture Readers (Anne Cunningham);

and Communion (Jan Hendry). We are currently looking for a small subgroup to be Bread and Wine Coordinators – contact us if you could help. Some decisions are easy and others are much more complex, requiring extensive discussion and reflection. An example of the latter would be the use of pronouns in the worship service, e.g., when introducing oneself before reading a scripture. This is, of course, a voluntary option. We worked with the Affirm Committee to ensure that FSA is being as welcoming as possible to all. Among other things, we want those who have visual restrictions to know who is reading the scripture.

The list of responsibilities for Faith Formation is large. Some examples of such responsibilities follows. When Pastor Joshua is not available for a given Sunday, we invite a guest preacher. The committee assists with the coordination of special services at different times in the year. It also supports new and ongo-

ing initiatives that support faith formation in the FSA community. This includes, but is not limited to, bible study, guest speakers (other than guest preachers), small lecture series, and book club.

In addition to worship services, Faith Formation supports and leads all church school, youth, young adult, and adult education programs. In partnership with the Ministry of Music, the committee supports, along with staff persons Christina Lindsay and Marilyn Arthur, the Treblemakers choral group for children and youth. Pastor Joshua leads the weekly bible study group.

We are always ready to hear new ideas that would help FSA become a stronger community of faith. Jo Ann Silcox and Allyson Watson co-chair this committee with astounding support from Anne Cunningham, Carol Riddell-Elson, Michael Feeney, Katie Glaves, Jan Hendry, Susan and David McKane, Katheryn Skelly, and Jean Wright. †



Don Jones

## BROWN BAG LUNCH GROUP

**W**hat is it that draws members of the Brown Bag Lunch (BBL) group to a one hour meeting every Wednesday of the year, rain or shine, winter or summer, 52 weeks in the year? For over 20 years! Attendees know that something important will be discussed. There is always something to learn and it is a place and time for a full discussion of the various aspects of any topic.

There is no agenda, there is no leader, there are no rules. Each member will bring a perspective and the small

community will discuss what they know of a proposed topic ..... and the learning begins. There is real depth in the group when it comes to things like music, science, health and sociology or for that matter many other areas of discussion. This group was founded by our Minister Emeritus David McKane. He attends regularly and we are constantly reminded of his deep knowledge in the area of human and religious understanding.

As to contributions to the life of the church, the members past and present have been widely involved in the activities, progress, and projects of the

church. Most recently, the initial discussion around live streaming was enhanced by BBL group discussions, and subsequently the financial contributions of BBL members provided the fiscal catalyst to implement this technology. Another project supported and worked on by the BBL group was a then new sound system in the sanctuary. A few years ago the BBL group organized and hosted a lecture series called Mining the Mystery – Science and Religion. The group has hosted a number of Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers in Proudfoot Hall.

Current and past members of the BBL have held important roles in the life of the church. David Flynn was editor of the Tidings for years; Don Jones was the Tidings graphic artist for many years; and the late Bob Slater was involved with Tidings. Other positions and responsibilities held by BBL

members include, Chair or member of committees, such as Music, Christian Education, Audio Visual, Ministry and Personnel, Choir, FSA Strings, Clerk of Session, and other groups.

If you are a person with an enquiring mind and want to participate in a group that focusses on a wide variety of topics

even without an agenda, you will want to consider tuning in on any Wednesday for exactly one hour (12 noon to 1 pm) to broaden your own perspective on the many topics that are presented by members every week of the year. A Zoom link can be received by contacting Don Jones. †

**THIS WAS US**

(DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2024)

**UCW Notes**



*Kathy Eddington of Life\*Spin presenting at February meeting*



*Laurel Kennedy enjoying pizza at the UCW Annual General Meeting in January*



*(L to R): Donna Fraleigh (retiring treasurer), Helen Mahabir, (new recording secretary, and new treasurer as of June, 2024), Helen Guthrie (retiring recording secretary)*



**Confirmand Session in February**



**Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Supper**



Karen Low

## Recipe for Old Fashioned Sugar Cookies

These delectable sugar cookies will be available from the FSA's Kitchen Sales crew in March with an Easter-themed decoration.

### Ingredients:

(makes about 3 dozen)

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- Royal Icing to decorate (recipe follows)

### Procedure:

1. Cream the butter and sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer. Beat in the eggs and the vanilla.
2. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt in a second large bowl and mix well.

3. Stir the flour mixture into the butter mixture 1 cup at a time.
4. Chill the dough for 3-4 hours.
5. Preheat oven to 350° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
6. Roll out the dough and cut into shapes with knife or cookie cutters and place on prepared cookie sheets.
7. Bake until the edges are just beginning to brown (10 – 15 minutes, depending on the size of the cookies)
8. Remove cookies to a rack to cool completely.
9. Decorate cookies as desired.



### Royal Icing

#### Ingredients:

(makes 3½ cups)

- 2 lbs confectioner's sugar
- ½ cup + 2 Tbsp meringue powder
- Food colouring as desired

#### Procedure:

1. Combine the confectioner's sugar, meringue powder and ¾ cup water in a large bowl. Mix slowly with an electric mixer until stiff enough to form peaks (the icing should be pure white & thick but not fluffy and bubbly). If the frosting is overbeaten it will be hard to work with – if this happens, let the frosting settle, then use a rubber spatula to vigorously beat and smooth out the frosting.
2. Divide and add desired food colouring, mixing with a rubber spatula until the colour is uniform (gel colours are best with Royal Icing).
3. Decorate cookies as desired.
4. Store any extra icing at room temperature, covered, with plastic wrap on the surface.

Note: Instead of making your own Royal Icing, it is simpler to buy Royal Icing mix from the Bulk Barn. †



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## MUSIC

Chris Fischer

### “The Future Is Now!”

In this, my first regular column in *Tidings*, I want to celebrate our reborn children’s and youth music ministry, as well as the amazing creativity and overflowing energy and resourcefulness of my colleague, Children’s Program Coordinator Christina Lindsay (she/her) – or Chris, as the kids know her (not to be confused with yours truly!).

Christina continues to be invaluable as we begin this exciting venture and watch it sprout and blossom: I cannot lead these wonderful kids without her. “Treblemakers” (a group for ages five(ish) and up that sings, moves and acts – thanks, Laura Wood, for the name!) launched this past January. After debuting our vocal and rhythmic abilities in worship this February, we will be working hard on a production based on a story in the Hebrew Scriptures’ Book of Daniel, “It’s Cool in the Furnace!” in the morning service on Sunday, May 12.

A second musical group for youth ages eight and up, the “ReBELLS” handbell choir (again, thank you, Laura!), has already been meeting since September and has rung both bells and chimes in church four times. This ensemble has been learning so much, so fast, and it is a joy to conduct them.

Both groups have been running since January 8 on Monday evenings. A dedicated group of adult volunteers has been helping to prepare and serve food, help with registration and in the kitchen, and we are all incredibly grateful for their commitment to caring for our children. After having dinner together at 5:00 pm each Monday, we head to Treblemakers in the Fireside Room for songs, movement and more until 6:15, and then ReBELLS rehearses in the Sanctuary from 6:15 until 7:00 pm.

Our church family has had music-making at the heart of its identity since its earliest days, and it is fantastic to see so many faces of all ages at FSA eager to share in the gift of music as we grow in faith and service to London and beyond. Thank you all for supporting us in this ministry! †



## YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

Marilyn Arthur

I hope that all of you have a beautiful Easter that is full of new life and hope as we approach the season of spring.

The Shared Youth and Young Adult Ministry has been preparing for upcoming gatherings and events. Thank you to the church staff and the volunteers at each

congregation who have helped brainstorm ideas and put these opportunities together for our youth and young adults to gather for community building, faith development, outreach and fun!

I ask that you continue to hold in your prayers our five youth who are in the confirmation program this year. Confirmation will be celebrated in worship on Sunday, June 16. We also continue to give thanks and pray for each young person’s mentor who is supporting, listening and getting to know each of their confirmands during their time together once or twice a month and during our confirmation gatherings twice a month. The topics that we are exploring include the Trinity, the Bible, worship, the United Church of Canada, and other denominations and religions, death and dying, social justice, and more. Our youth will have the opportunity to gather with each of the lead ministers at FSA, Met and Siloam for the opportunity to learn from each of them and, in turn, for them to learn from our confirmands.

Youth in Grade 5 and older are excited about our upcoming youth retreat May 31-June 2nd at Camp Kee-Mo-Kee. On Saturday-Sunday, people of all ages are invited to gather for the day or overnight for our family camp. The youth are selling mint smoothies to help cover the cost of the camp rental. These yummy treats will be sold at Coffee & Conversation or may be purchased by contacting me directly.

I have applied for the Canada Summer Jobs grant to hire one team leader and six youth coordinators this summer to lead camps at FSA, Siloam and Metropolitan. FSA is leading two weeks of camp July 22-26 and August 6-9. This team of people will also have the opportunity in their employment to lead other children’s and youth programming throughout the summer, along with the preparation and planning that accompanies this work.

Our youth in high school have been gathering a few times a month for games, themed discussions, and community building, and our young adults are doing the same. †



## CHILDREN

Chris Lindsay

2024 got off to an exciting start with the Saidat Show! It returned on Jan. 27 for an energetic time to reconnect and think about how we can accept some social responsibility in our interactions with our friends. Loud music, pizza, an in-door snowball fight, and a dance party were a great way to welcome 20 new faces to Joshua’s C.R.E.W. (stands for Caring, Resilient, Energetic Witnesses) and to FSA.

This is just one of the things that has kept our children busy these last couple of months. Treblemakers and ReBELLS were reborn on Monday evenings with great success so far! This program is a joint effort between the FSA music and children’s ministries, and the collaboration is going well. We

have welcomed several new families into making music and having fun with us. Recently we started learning the music for a musical to present to the congregation in May on the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

FSA's church mice, Charity and Charlie, have made letters to the children their focus for February, reaching out to the children by writing letters to the kids. The letters focus on the themes being presented in Sunday school. Happily, a few letters have been written back to Charity and Charlie.

The children continue to have meaningful experiences in Sunday School each week. We appreciate all the people who have given their time and talents to lead conversations and spend time with our kids each week. As we gear up for Lent and the Easter season, great things await us!! †



### PASTORAL CARE

*Rev. Annie Jannaway*

At some point in life, everyone travels a difficult journey or situation. Whether it be grief, depression, loss, sickness, loneliness or more, there are those who will take this journey alone, not having anyone they feel they can turn to. At such a time, pastoral care can help those who feel they have no one to turn to. Even if someone is hurting and is unable to attend worship; even if they haven't been to church in a while; even if they feel like they've neglected their faith: pastoral care can help guide and heal their suffering. Pastoral care is most

fundamentally a relationship – a ministry of compassionate presence.

January was a busy month for visits and support, with 40 visits, 25 phone calls/emails, and 4 meetings. I made several visits to Long Term Care and Retirement Residences as well as to homes. I also made visits to other members of the congregation in order to get to know them better. This has been very satisfying for all of us.

Chronic illness, poor health, mobility issues, dementia, adjustment to new living spaces, and discussions regarding cremation vs. burial, and MAID have been some of the topics of discussion.

Some of the concerns that arose out of significant conversations were: emergency surgeries, loneliness and loss of friends due to distance, concern over family members, three deaths, sorrow over losing a friend or family member, the illness of a child, the loneliness of losing a life partner, struggles with mental health, concerns about cancer and future diagnoses, and caregiver burnout.

Some of the joys of visits this month have been: recovery from surgeries, life reviews and learning about the joys and passages through life, learning about faith journeys and the spiritual life of individuals, faith conversation with a 103 year old!, the joy of living in the same home until old age, gratefulness for a full life, the worship service at Richmond Woods, the strength and blessing of prayer, great improvement in health, and shut-ins expressing how meaningful it is to listen to the FSA services each Sunday. †

## GOVERNANCE REPORTS



### COUNCIL

*David Wardlaw*

The budget presentations at the town hall meetings on Nov. 26 and Jan. 7 and at the congregational meeting on Jan. 28 make clear that we must continue to focus attention on stewardship, fundraising, and sustainable revenue generation in 2024. The multiyear, multipoint plan for a sustainable operating budget which was approved by Council in June 2023 provides a blueprint for achieving this goal. Implementation of this plan began in earnest in Sept. 2023 and continues unabated in 2024. The multipoint plan is a living document. The most recent version, including progress to date, is posted on the FSA website, [https://www.fsaunited.com/\\_files/ugd/25fec5\\_ad2151e83cf54a43a22271fab1510d75.pdf](https://www.fsaunited.com/_files/ugd/25fec5_ad2151e83cf54a43a22271fab1510d75.pdf)

In December 2023, FSA renewed its ongoing partnership with Ark Aid Mission. For the winter of 2023-24, FSA will provide emergency "coldest night" overnight shelter for 20-25

homeless people whenever a cold weather alert is issued by the London Middlesex Health Unit.

At its January meeting, Council formally approved the creation of the Faith Formation Committee which is the union of the Worship and the Christian Development Committees. These committees had been meeting jointly for over a year as a pilot project. The Co-Chairs of Faith Formation are Allyson Watson and Jo Ann Silcox. See *Behind the Scene* article on p. 11 to learn more.

FSA's Information Technology (IT) infrastructure (computer hardware, software, internet) and how it is managed had become increasingly problematic over recent years. There was a dire need for equipment replacement and a coherent management paradigm. FSA member Terry Peters undertook a very thorough audit in the period November 2023 to January 2024 and prepared a comprehensive action plan based on his findings. After approval by the Executive, the action plan

is now being implemented. Thank you, Terry!

At its January meeting, Council was briefed on initial exploratory meetings between a small working group and an organization called Kindred Works (KW). Kindred Works and the affiliated United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC) are “two individual, complementary organizations united by one vision and founded by the United Church of Canada.” KW acts as UPRC’s development and asset manager—developing and managing land on behalf of The United Church of Canada, communities of faith, and ecumenical partners. KW has a systematic, step-wise process for working with a church on potential redevelopment of its property, with a well-defined set of go/no-go decision points. One of the goals of property redevelopment is to create a revenue stream for the church. The first tangible step in this process is for KW to produce a feasibility study on redevelopment possibilities; there is no cost for this study and no commitment is implied for the church in having the study done. At the time of writing, Council is waiting to receive this study. Stay tuned for updates.

Thanks to everyone who is volunteering to serve as officers of FSA, committee chairs (and thus members of Council), and members of subcommittees, teams and groups working under the auspices of a committee or Council – you are essential to the successful operation of FSA. Council welcomes Linda Badke as the first incumbent of the Associate Chair of Council position whose role is to assist the Chair with a variety of tasks and to facilitate the administration of Council business. This position is not intended to replace the Chair-elect position which continues to remain vacant. †

## TRUSTEES



Jackie Williams



Paul Cooper

As Easter approaches, there is much reason for optimism. After a difficult two years, stock markets are now more stable and are even surging in certain areas (at least at the time of writing!) The Investment Committee has been rewarded for its patience through 2022 and 2023 by staying invested and using interest and dividends to pay for approved expenses as much as possible.

Investment growth in 2023, mostly during November and December, was more than the investment losses in 2022. One of the major strategies approved by the Trustees over the past few years has been to increase the percentage of holdings in equities, rather than fixed investments, which takes advantage of the growth in the stock markets. The problem with “safer” fixed income investments lies in their typically lower rates of

return. Once inflation is factored into the returns, this can be an overly cautious approach to investments. It is equivalent to the biblical servant who buried his master’s talents in the ground for safe keeping!

The Housing Task Group’s recommendation to purchase a house for our Lead Minister in 2023 was fully supported by the Trustees. The Terms of Reference for Trust Funds allows for investment in real estate and house prices had fallen at that time. The property is leased to our Minister at market rates. When eligible under federal and provincial regulations concerning foreign ownership of real estate, Joshua and his family have the option to purchase it from the church. The current rental revenue allows for the same averaged rate of return as other investments within the Trust Funds.

An upcoming expense will be a major upgrade to the computer systems within the church. The current systems are very old, and most of the hardware and software is now obsolete and some unworkable. We would like to thank Terry Peters, who volunteered his time to assess the current systems, and produce a report and action plan on the best way forward. The action plan has been approved by the Executive and is being implemented. This will greatly improve the functional and cost efficiency of the administrative operation within the church.

We wish all of you a joyous Easter in 2024. †

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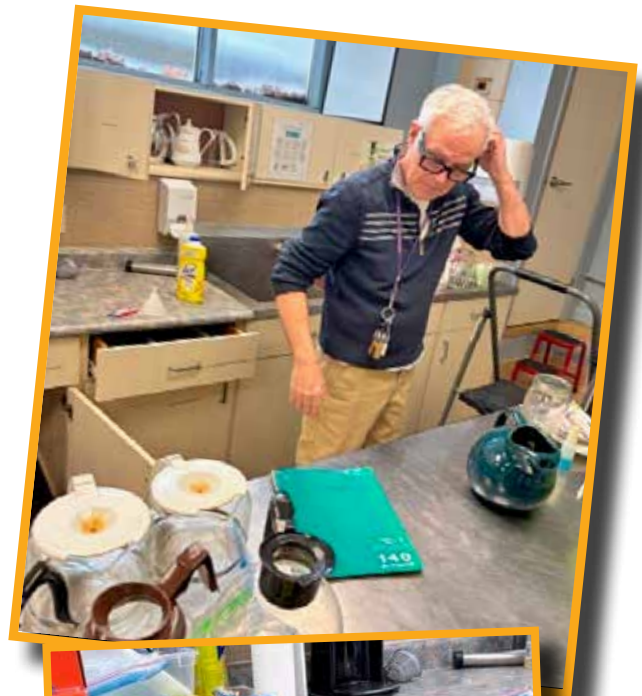
## EVENT REPORT

### WINTER WORKDAYS AT FSA

In the second half of January and early February, volunteer crews tackled two major improvement projects.

#### Kitchen Cleaning

A crew consisting of Margo Christodoulou, George Jolink, Heather Vouvalidis, and Margaret Wardlaw undertook a long overdue deep cleaning of the FSA Kitchen mid-January. In early February, the same crew did a deep cleaning of the kitchen adjacent to the Fireside Room.



## Fireside Room Reflooring

In early January, reflooring of the Fireside Room and adjacent kitchen was approved and contracted to Flooring Canada of London. To reduce the installation cost, a work crew was assembled to remove the old carpet (Fireside) and linoleum (kitchen). The various phases of the carpet removal as undertaken by Ron Bradley, Steve Elson, George Jolink, Paul Merritt, Al Salmoni, David Wardlaw, and Jeff Watson are depicted in the photos. Not shown are Paul Merritt and David Wardlaw (photographer). A week later the new vinyl

flooring was installed by Kab Installations, a company working as a subcontractor to Flooring Canada. Shown are Kristina Bellamy (left), the owner of Kab, and her workmate Amanda Richardson.

Thanks to all who donated their time and talent to these projects; a special thanks to Margo and George, for organizing the kitchen cleanings and the Fireside reflooring preparation, respectively. †



**CALLING ALL SENIORS**

Faith Formation is excited to announce that there is a new initiative which is hot off the presses. First-St. Andrew's United Church is starting a **Seniors Social Club (SSC)**. It will be a weekly group for our members to get together to share a meal, enhance friendships, learn new skills, and receive emotional and spiritual support in a faith-based program. We are looking for people who are interested in helping develop and lead this new program which is open to all seniors regardless of gender or gender identity. Please fill in the survey that will soon be available to provide feedback, interest, and creativity. We are hoping for a "soft launch" in May.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Considering Matthew Shepard**

Craig Hella Johnson  
 Sunday, April 21, 2024, 3:00pm  
 FSA Senior Choir, soloists, and chamber orchestra

**FRIENDS OF MUSIC ANNUAL APPEAL**

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3. c  
 2. b & c  
 1. a & b

**Answers to the FSA History Quiz (page 20)**

**DEATHS:**

- Russell Allen Gonder - Dec. 8, 2023
- Nancy Hutchinson - Dec. 12, 2023
- Reta Catherine "Kay" Hillier - Dec. 30, 2023
- Jim Hendry - Feb. 16, 2024
- Judith Ann Barker - Feb. 19, 2024

**MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS (OUT):**

- Catherine "Gayle" (Ratcliffe) Smith to Port Hope United Church, Port Hope, Ontario, February 2024
- Mason Robichaud to Beacon United Church, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, February 2024



*Judith Walker*

Look up, look way up. Have you ever taken time to observe or study the many religious symbols painted on our ceiling. They tell quite a story and honour our Christian life. In this Quiz we are working our way from the Chancel down

the middle aisle.

1. This question is about the Descending Dove in Crown. It is a beautiful piece and is the symbol of the Holy Spirit and Christ triumphant. Where do you see it?

- a) the ceiling of the Chancel
- b) somewhere in the carpet

2. In one of the circular ceiling artworks you will see the letters 'ihc.' What do these three letters represent?

- a) in his care
- b) they are English letter representations of the Greek letters iota, eta, and sigma
- c) the Greek letters in (b) are an abbreviation of the Greek word for Jesus

3. This question is about the Winged Man. Matthew's Gospel lays out the human genealogy of Jesus. Where did it begin?

- a) Jacob
- b) Jesse
- c) Abraham

To learn more about these fascinating symbols please check the FSA website: <https://www.fsaunited.com/archive-sanctuary>

**Answers on page 19.**

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