



Tidings

Vol. 33, No. 4, 2023

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY

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Tidings

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Editor's Message



David Wardlaw

You probably never imagined that there would be a story about a turtle in *Tidings*. Then, one day this summer, I was chatting with Steve Elson about summer leisure activities. Steve recounted his experience of finding the pieces of a turtle skeleton while on Portage Island and then painstakingly reconstructing the skeleton, an exercise tantamount to doing a 3D jigsaw puzzle. Read his story to discover the final resting place of this snapping turtle's skeleton.

The ongoing series of Getting-to-Know articles on those who have become members of FSA in 2023 continues: this time it is about Rebecca and Alex Neaves and their family.

At FSA and in the world around us the number of people who explicitly identify their preferred pronouns for themselves is increasing. As a designated Affirming Church, we are committed to inclusivity and celebrating diversity. This commitment includes the use of inclusive and expansive language, thereby altering traditional ways of speaking and writing about, of introducing, and of acknowledging individuals in our midst or in the greater community. Karen Low's article provides an important context for a respectful discussion of this topic and a glimpse of a path that FSA can take to achieve greater inclusivity through the use of 'Well-Chosen Words'.

In October, Bob Peel announced that he was stepping down as the procurer of paid advertising for *Tidings* after 12 years of stalwart and effective service. Every January, Bob secured paid advertisements for the four issues in the calendar year. He successfully expanded the number of paid ad spots from 16 to 19 in 2022. In addition, Bob was a valuable member of the *Tidings* Committee which advises on content and provides suggestions for authors of articles. Bob: we wish you well in your future endeavours and are so grateful for what you have done for *Tidings*.

This being the last issue of *Tidings* published in the calendar year, it is again time to acknowledge the many people who contributed their time and talent in 2023 to make this magazine vibrant and sustainable. First, there is the *Tidings* team as listed on the inside of the front cover. Next, the authors of the articles and reports. Finally, there are the fiscal contributions that make possible a high-quality print copy, namely our paid advertisers and the congregation as a whole by virtue of a line item in the operating budget to assist *Tidings*. To all of you, I express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation for the high quality of your varied and valued contributions to *Tidings*.

The *Tidings* team wishes you a peaceful, joyful, and restorative holiday season. May Advent provide opportunities for reflection, worshipful moments, faith development, and sharing the joy of this season. †



Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence



A SEASONAL PAUSE

It's hard to believe that we are already knocking on the door of solstice celebration. It seems that just yesterday I was making a trip to Lake Huron in my swimming trunks and a short-sleeved shirt. And yet, here we are, bundling up a bit more by the week, preparing ourselves for the deep season of winter. I use the word "deep" here to refer to the hibernating habits of many animals, to some extent even humans. While our homes are far different than the dens of bears, they often serve the same purpose: to keep us warm and adequately sheltered from the bitter cold. And in truth, many of us would rather spend the coldest of days bundled up with a cup of coffee or hot cocoa instead of trudging through snow and ice to perform the vocational duties of the day.

In anticipation of this yearly practice, I have begun to consider the wisdom of spiritual hibernation. I venture to say that we are often on the move, traversing our geographical region with ease due to the technologies at our disposal, packing our planners with as many meetings and tasks as we can fit into one day. And even if we are not physically moving, we often busy ourselves with chores and activities that do not require much mobility but certainly occupy our hearts and minds. In fact, it has been said that we are innately projec-

By leaning into the spiritual practices of our own faith tradition,.... we can rediscover aspects of ourselves that have been pushed down into the depths of our own spiritual dens.

tive creatures, always moving ahead of ourselves in terms of aspiration. This leaves little time for presence or place, and it certainly does not permit hibernation of any sort.

The agrarian wisdom of poets and essayists suggests that we have abandoned the practice of "living with" and have moved into a certain comfort with "living on." This results in an impoverished relationship with our bio-region, our home, and thrusts us into the undesirable position of micro-managers. Do this; tidy up; fix that. The list goes on, propelling us into a frenetic comportment that produces a certain amnesia, namely the loss of "who we are or were created to be," and "whose we are." By leaning into the spiritual practices of our own faith tradition, I suggest that we can rediscover aspects of ourselves that have been pushed down into the depths of our own spiritual dens. And it is only by doing a bit of spiritual hibernation that we can re-learn these parts of our relational selves,

parts that require just as much nurture and attention as anything else in our lives.

This is not to imply that we stop the good work with which we remain engaged. Too many persons, locally and globally, do not have anything close to adequate shelter, which makes spiritual hibernation a luxury. Between the housing crisis of our own country and the violence that permeates this planet, it is necessary that people of faith respond to the needs of others so that we can draw closer to that day promised in the angelic announcements of Christmas. Yet, I want to suggest that unless we bear witness to the spiritual depths of our own lives, discovering who we are beneath the persona structures that we present to the world, our efforts will not be as fruitful as they would otherwise be. So, I invite you to take the pause afforded you by this "deep" season and be at home with yourself and the love you bear for neighbors near and far. †



WELL CHOSEN WORDS: THE USE OF INCLUSIVE AND EXPANSIVE LANGUAGE AT FSA



Rev. Karen Low (she/her)



To be designated as an “Affirming Congregation” within the United Church of Canada, as First-St. Andrew’s was, on June 1, 2014, is an auspicious occasion. Rather than being an isolated event, however, such a designation carries with it a solemn and ongoing responsibility to be constantly aware of how well we are living out our intent to break down barriers and faithfully reflect the radically inclusive nature of the gospel message and of the Christian community in all aspects of our church life.

Using inclusive and expansive language in worship and in our interactions with one another, is one way to acknowledge and celebrate all people, bringing recognition and a sense of belonging to people who have been historically marginalized in the Church and in the wider society. Whether we are speaking about age, physical ability, race, ethnicity and culture, indigenous peoples, socio-economic status, marital and family status, gender and sexuality, words and the images they raise up have enormous power. Our language is a carrier and mirror of culture. It can create a system of insiders and outsiders. Words can wound and oppress; they can also heal and liberate.

In recent years, the topic of pronouns has come to the forefront, as one of many opportunities to create inclusive environments. From email signatures to name tags, job applications and introductions during worship, the offering and respecting of pronouns helps transgender, Two-

Words can wound and oppress; they can also heal and liberate.

Spirit, and nonbinary individuals to feel seen and accepted in a space where they can truly be themselves. By providing opportunity for people to share their pronouns, we show that we are not assuming that gender identity is based upon appearance. Using correct pronouns validates identity, offers respect and dignity, encourages authenticity and builds truly inclusive and supportive communities.

Creating safer, inclusive space by using current, most appropriate terminology is essential to conveying the message that we, at FSA, practice allyship and respectful cross-cultural interaction. We recognize that a commitment to using inclusive and expansive language and images may challenge the Church and some individuals because it is unfamiliar. It may feel safe and more “comfortable” to stick with the known and accustomed. Some people might not feel comfortable sharing their own pronouns for a variety of reasons. Even in the attempt to respect each others’ pronouns, mistakes in use will be made. What is important is that we are trying and that we are patient with one another as we grow. Because if we are serious about being an Affirming Church, about praying for God’s

kin-dom to come and God’s will to be done, we must be open and alert to the movement of God’s Spirit.

This means that, imperfect though we may be, we already contain the seeds of what we can become. God is alive and active within us, sanctifying our efforts in ways we can only imagine. Each time we speak, we have an opportunity to give life by choosing to use language that empowers, that is sensitive to the plight of the oppressed, and that honours all human beings as God’s good creation. Well-chosen words indeed.

During the coming weeks and months, you may begin to see some bulletin inserts, posters and other handouts that will outline some strategies for implementing greater inclusion as we journey together as an “Affirming Congregation” at First-St. Andrew’s. Committed to creating a worshipping community where all people are embraced, regardless of race, age, sexuality, gender identity, ability, economic circumstance, or physical or mental health, we will work together to further God’s beloved kin-dom, where all have a place at the table and all voices can be heard in a language that is both as inclusive and as expansive as God’s love.

†

THE STONES OF FIRST-ST. ANDREW'S



David McKane,
text



David Wake,
photographs

Below: David McKane's stone (celtic goose)



Walk through Victoria Park and admire any of the monuments to those who fought in too many wars or walk through Spring Bank Park and bathe yourself in trees, as the Japanese call it. In both cases, we are experiencing the natural world, its changing nature and its seasons. It is a spiritual experience though many would not call it so.

Many of us do the same with our gardens with a bench or a reflecting pool, a swimming pool or a set of swings. When I retired from FSA, I asked for a piece of stone etched with the wild goose of Iona on it. It was a gift from the staff. The wild goose is an old Celtic symbol for the holy spirit which is also on my calling card. As each member of the team subsequently retired from FSA, they also got a stone etched for their gardens and marking their contributions to FSA. The photos of the stones in place in the gardens of those who received them remind us that we are never alone, that wherever we are in our life journey, God is always with us, as we repeat each Sunday at the beginning of worship.

†

Editor's Note: We were unable to get a photo of Susan Shelstad's stone.



Paul Merritt's stones:
left (songbird) & above
(FSA logo)



Above: Sue Scorgie's stone (clover)



Above: Sue Scarborough's stone (pine)





Steve Elson*

My Snapping Turtle Project



This last summer my wife Carol and I were once again fortunate to rent a cottage on an island in Georgian Bay – one we have been going to for many, many years. It is located in Cognashene on the north shore of Portage Island in a channel called the Freddy Channel.

It's not unusual for us to see all kinds of birds such as loons, herons, terns, turkey buzzards, and, of course, Canada Geese, the seemingly, ever-present cormorants, in addition to chipmunks, frogs and the occasional turtle. Small fish are common, as the area around the cottage is protected and serves as a kind of nursery. Creatures such as otters, beaver, rattlesnakes, and bears are also present, but rarely seen.

This year, close to the dock, I noticed what I did not recognize at first, but later realized was the skeletal remains of a turtle – and by the size I figured it was a common snapping turtle. It was obviously in a state of advanced decay and while there was some soft tissue, most of it can best be described as bits and pieces of bone.

I began to collect the bones and put them on the rocky shore to dry. In large measure the turtle was in pieces and only a small part of the shell was intact. The rest was made up of individual fragments which were confined, thankfully, to a small physical space.

Within a week, I had gathered up all the bones I could find – although each time I thought I had them all, I found

more the next time! I was also able to 'recover' part of the leather-like covering that goes over the shell and a bit of the almost transparent covering on the lower side of the turtle.

By this time, I had decided that I would try and reassemble the turtle. So, I packed up all the pieces and took them home (to London, Ontario). I was able to find a number of pictures of snapping turtle skeletons online – although most were two dimensional pictures – making it challenging to put together a three-dimensional object. There was one three-dimensional video that was very helpful.

Needless to say, I learned a lot about the bones of a turtle on my journey to put it back together. I was able to figure most of it out, but when I ran into a roadblock, I reached out to more informed sources – one of which was an organization called the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (located at the north end of Peterborough, Ontario). I was able to email the veterinarian there and Dr. Sue Carstairs, Executive and Medical Director of the Centre gave me some very useful advice. For more information about the Centre go to: <https://ontarioturtle.ca/>

Through this contact I learned that this Centre provides education about turtles, repairs injured turtles (including surgery), and provides incubators for turtle eggs. The incubators are specifically for the eggs from patient turtles admitted to their hospital who lay their eggs while they are recovering, or patient turtles who pass away and their eggs are harvested. They also provide a nursery for newly hatched turtles. They have a small number of resident education turtles of various kinds who cannot be released. Most turtles are returned to the wild once they have recovered or grow to a sustainable size. Turtles grow up and live in a very specific environment so unless it is known where they came from, they cannot be legally returned elsewhere.

After having the fun and challenge of putting the snapping turtle back together, I decided I'd donate it to the Centre for their



Almost tog



Bits and Pieces

education program and their Education Coordinator, Lisa Browning, was delighted to get it. I look forward to visiting my turtle again at the Centre's new home (they are in the process of building a new facility).

So, what started out as a happen-chance encounter with a dead turtle has turned not only into an educational experience for me, but an opportunity for many others to learn more about Ontario's common snapping turtle. *A final fun fact:* snapping turtles snap because unlike other turtles they cannot pull their feet and head into the safety of their shell (they have a small undercarriage compared to other turtles). So, when they are threatened, they snap to protect themselves. †

**The author is grateful to Lisa Browning (she/her), Education Coordinator, Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre, for assistance in preparing this article.*



Turtles coming out of their shells. All of these turtles will have come from the same female adult.

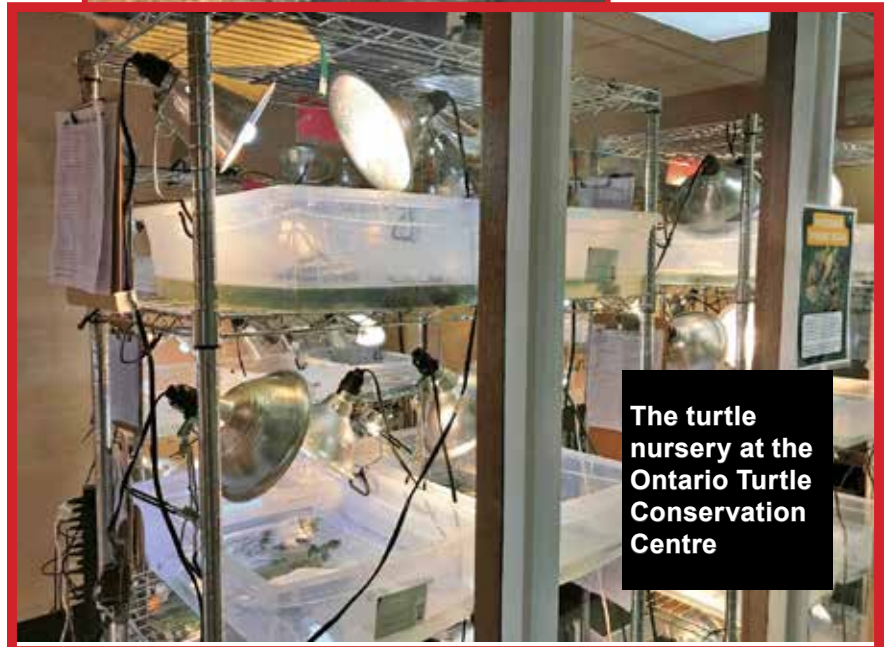
ether. Note the crack in the shell – an injury?



The real thing - a common snapping turtle at the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre. These turtles can live to be 100-years-old and do not reach adulthood until they are about 30-years-old.



The turtle seems to be saying, "I surrender." The final assembly: the only missing piece was part of the pelvis.



The turtle nursery at the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre





Anne Cummings

Rebecca and Alex Neaves and Family

It is with great joy that I introduce you to Rebecca and Alex Neaves who have recently become members at FSA. Both of them grew up in the London area with Rebecca's dad being the pastor of the Lambeth Bible Church. Alex's mom is a church organist while his dad is a chemist and an IT security project manager. Rebecca has a music degree from Kent State University in the United States. She is currently applying to the teaching degree program at Western with the goal of teaching music in the school system. Alex has a philosophy degree from Western and a law degree from Queen's University. Currently, he is a managing partner specializing in civil litigation at the Shillington-McCall law firm. Rebecca and Alex met at First Baptist Church in London and Lynda Kennedy played for their wedding. They recently renovated their lovely home in the Masonville area, just south of Fanshawe Park Rd.

The Neaves have three lovely daughters. Robin is 15, in grade 10 at Lucas and wants to become a veterinarian. Her parents describe her as artistic and a deep thinker who cares about the en-

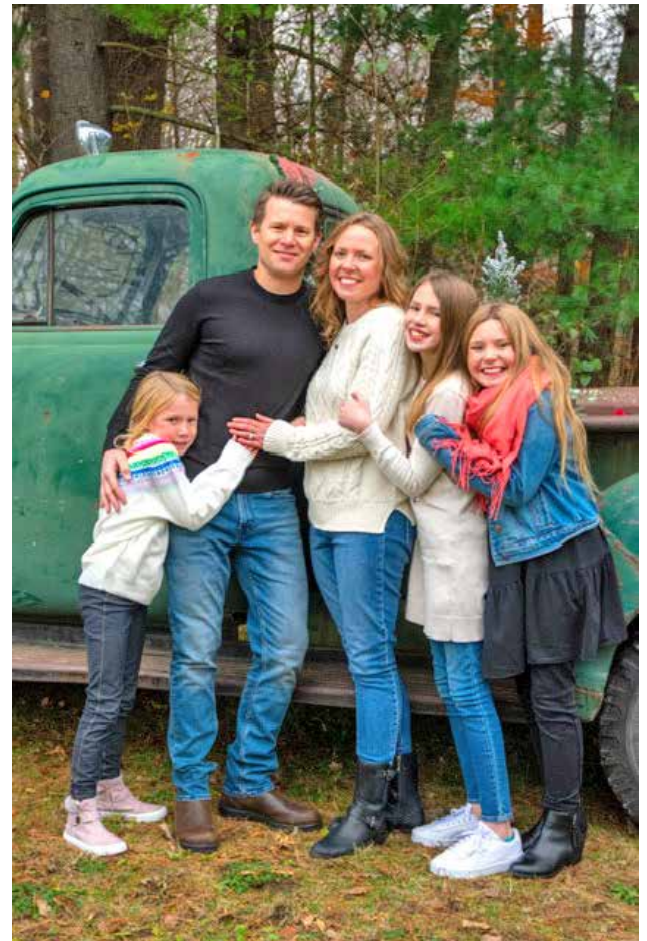
vironment. Bronwyn is 13 and in grade 8 at the Lester B. Pearson School for the Arts. She is a visual artist, plays the violin and loves to sing Broadway music. Callista is 10 and is also at Pearson in grade 5. She is energetic, enthusiastic, and an athlete in gymnastics and soccer. Their family is completed with their German shepherd, Reese.

At FSA, all three girls are in Sunday School and the ReBELLS Bell Choir. Bronwyn and Callista are also part of Joshua's Crew. For fun, the family loves the outdoors and enjoys hiking, going to the beach, playing games, watching movies, and family events. Alex unwinds by playing hockey and squash.

When asked how they got to FSA, Rebecca and Alex said that during Covid, they started looking for a new church family and Alex's mom suggested trying FSA because she knew it had a good music program. Their first Sunday here, Chris Lindsay spotted them before the service, came to talk to them, and got the girls into Sunday School that morning! Rebecca and Alex very much like the liberal theology at FSA, Joshua's preaching, and the choir, which they both have joined as a tenor and a soprano. They are

very happy and thankful that FSA values new people and they look forward to getting to know more of our members.

This is a very accomplished family who are deep, caring and loving people. They have much to offer to the FSA family and we are very fortunate to have them among us. You will enjoy talking with them. We welcome with open arms: Rebecca, Alex, Robin, Bronwyn, and Callista Neaves. †





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Ardath Finnbogason-Hill

Mary Ellen Gustafson August 1940-July 2023

"Singing her song of Peace with its message of Hope and Healing her beautiful voice sent ripples of love into the world and these continue to flow."

On Thursday, July 6, 2023, Mary Ellen Gustafson left this earth, but not our hearts. Our FSA congregation was blessed to have experienced her glorious voice as our soprano soloist for 20 years and for 50 years as an active member/friend/supporter of her faith community.

Our families were friends for 35 years and as we shared time, stories, and meals, we always were aware of her generosity of spirit. As Advent approaches, memories remain of Gustafson hospitality over the season, especially quiet Christmas Eves when we shared a traditional Nordic meal before heading to sing in the choir for the candlelight service.

Flashes of memory appear as I see Mary Ellen coming onto the concert stage, always elegant, performing with other soloists and choir or performing in a more intimate setting with a small ensemble.

Now, on Sunday mornings, with Sonja's voice soaring toward the heavens or blending with the choir, I hear Mary Ellen in her glorious voice.

Mary Ellen grew up in Canton, Ohio in a happy home, with loving parents and seven siblings. She experienced ongoing illness as a child but remained determined to achieve her dream of attending Kent State University where she earned her B.S.E. and developed her love of singing and then teaching.

We, at First-St. Andrew's, were gifted when she and her husband, Roger, each accepted faculty positions at The University of Western Ontario Faculty of Music, where she

taught Voice for several decades, sharing her love of singing with countless students. In London, FSA became the family's church home and Mary Ellen became our soprano soloist. She loved music and musicians and trained her vocal students with a passion to be the best they could be. One year she

had two counter tenors amongst her proteges. Sonja often experiences her mother's former students attending her own performances and speaking to her about their appreciation for Mary Ellen's mentoring and musical nourishment.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) was a diagnosis that changed Mary Ellen's life, but did not define her. As her disease progressed, necessitating taking an early retirement from Western's Faculty of Music and her much loved FSA senior choir, she joined the Laudamus Bells, book club, bridge club, and Knitwits, all within her treasured church community. Her deep faith, sense of self, love of her family and friends, her courage and determination to be as independent as possible were evident. As the need for a motorized

wheelchair and additional daily assistance became necessary, she continued with as many activities as possible.

She was deeply loved, and she loved deeply, as her children Andrew and Sonja and her entire family know well. †



For Christmas, consider transferring to DVD or USB old family films, tapes, slides or audio tapes stored away. Give the old family memories new life!

PEELPRODUCTIONS

Bob Peel 519.203.5000 peelvideo.com info@peelvideo.com



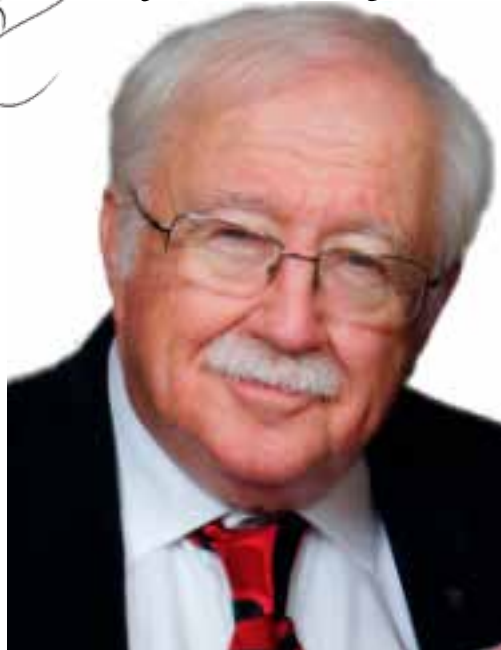


Paul Merritt



Stephen Adams

February 1945-July 2023



“We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” Who more than Stephen Adams could these words of T.S. Eliot possibly refer to. Stephen, a man of probing curiosity and love for everything from literature and music to baseball, adored pets and Jeopardy, shared his interests and gifts with all who were fortunate to call him teacher or friend.

Born in Minneapolis into a musical family, Stephen learned the violin with his father then studied English and music at the University of Minnesota completing his B.A. there in 1966. In that same year, he moved to Canada to continue English literature studies at the University of Toronto until 1970. As Stephen wrote, “My life since then was an extraordinary tale of good luck.” He met and married his beloved Ruth, took his first teaching position at Brescia College in London, completed his PhD thesis and garnered the national prize for the best Canadian thesis in the Humanities in that year. These accomplishments were just the beginning of his tale.

In 1974, Ruth and Stephen became parents to Barbara and in 1977 to Richard. Stephen later said, “The same year that miracle happened, a full-time, tenured position opened on the main campus in my field, Modernism - and I got it!”

Rest assured that a lot more than luck was involved in all those achievements! Books and articles followed and continued throughout his career right to the end with “The Patriot Poets” and

Stephen’s collected poems, his final book that Ruth made available to all at Stephen’s Memorial Service.

As freely as Ruth shares his poems, Stephen shared his talents here at the church. He sang in the choir for over 40 years, composed anthems for our use and played in the FSA Strings until 1999 when physical disability forced him to stop. Perhaps Stephen’s greatest legacy to FSA is that he served on almost every search committee for new ministers and Music Directors since 1983, using his astute insights to help shape the present and future of our church.

Amidst all this brilliance though, Stephen was a humble, self-effacing and kind person. In some ways he was the archetypical

absent-minded professor. Ruth has given me permission to use my favourite story of Stephen and assured me he would be chuckling with the rest of us. Invited to attend his high school class reunion in Minneapolis, Stephen excitedly flew off to enjoy a rare get-together with former classmates. On his return Ruth asked how it went. Sheepishly, Stephen had to admit that he had gone a week too early, so missed the reunion entirely!

Stephen chose all the readings for his memorial service, and it is striking, but so characteristic of him that having so recently experienced the tragic loss of daughter Barbara and facing his own mortality, he wanted to comfort, encourage and send us out with T.S. Eliot’s assurance that “all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.”†

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Margo Christodoulou

Lavender Shortbread Cookies

- 1-1/2 cups softened butter
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup sifted icing sugar
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped lavender
- 1-1/2 tsp. grated lemon zest
- 2-1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup corn starch
- 1/4 tsp. salt



Cream together butter, white sugar and icing sugar in medium bowl until it is light and fluffy.
 Mix in the lavender and lemon zest.
 Combine the flour, corn starch, and salt.
 Mix into the batter until it is well blended.
 Divide the dough into two portions, flatten to about 1", wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm (about 15 minutes).
 Can also roll dough into log shapes, chill and then slice and bake.
 Preheat the oven to 325° F.
 Roll the dough to 1/4" thickness (on a lightly floured base).
 Cut into shapes and place on parchment paper on cookie sheets.
 Bake for 15-18 minutes just until cookies begin to brown at edges. Cool for a few minutes on pan, then transfer to racks to cool completely.

BROWN BAG LUNCH GROUP

Would you like to join our Brown Bag Lunch (BBL) and spend an hour on Zoom each WED. 12 NOON -1 PM, talking about — “whatever”? In recent meetings we have discussed everything from world events to personal problems; from diets to dementia; from the probability of God to the probability of FSA’s survival. If you’d like to join the BBL, contact Don Jones: nodsenoj@gmail.com, and he will send you a Zoom link, usually on Tuesday. Hope to “see” you on Zoom, Wednesdays at 12 noon.

EXCITING STYLE SHOOT PRESENTS FSA AS A WEDDING VENUE FOR LONDONERS

Nancy Johnson and Kathryn Patton, two active members of the FSA Planning Committee, have been working behind the scenes for many months gathering ideas and contacts to promote FSA as a wedding venue to the wider London community. A recent step in developing the concept was a Style Shoot which took place at FSA on Monday, October 16.

Well-known and talented photographer, Richard Bain, shot scenes in a variety of church locations with our models: wedding couple, Sabrina and David Schram. Richard’s professional photographs will be part of a website that is currently in development.

Along with Nancy and Kathryn, Glenda Robinson, Janis Wallace, George Jolink, and Kathryn Skelly, all contributed their time and talent to the day. Thanks as well to Debbie Schram who babysat Sabrina and David’s darling daughter Elsie. Big thanks as well to community businesses:

Collins Clothiers, Ballett’s Bridal, and Orr Cleaners - clear evidence that this project is already enjoying community support!

The “action” shots by Nancy “shooting Richard, shooting Sabrina and David” speak for themselves of the day’s success!



Bulletin Board continued on page 20

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BBB Chamber BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

NOV. 12, 2023 – NEW MEMBERS SUNDAY



*Jeff & Lindsay Robinson
with daughter Zoe*



*Greg & Michelle Beckett
with daughter Marlowe*



*Andrea Paquette &
Matthew Weickert*



Dakota Adams



Karla Peña-Mendez

NOV. 18, 2023 – BOUTIQUE BAZAAR



We are grateful to our fantastic volunteers, donors, artisans, and shoppers, who gave our community a high octane, post-pandemic Boutique Bazaar! Ivana Klouda, our diligent Boutique Bazaar Treasurer, reports that it was a fundraising success! A final figure will be published in the eblast. In addition to building community, the Bazaar generates needed funds for our church operating budget and for UCW-supported charities, such as My Sisters Place

**NOV. 19, 2023
TERRY HEAD MEMORIAL**



OCT. 22, 2023 – STAFF COVENANTING



*Chris
Lindsay*

*Chris
Fischer*

*Kathryn
Skelly*

*Marilyn
Arthur*

*Anne-Louise
Jannaway*

*Karen
Low*



COUNCIL

David Wardlaw

There is much Council news to report from the first two months (Sept. and Oct.) of the 2023-24 church year, so I have selected what I see as the more important items.

A needs assessment study, carried out by a small working group, for facilities maintenance and management, custodial services and information technology support services began in late August and is ongoing. Among other things, the results of the study will guide us on how best to support these areas in terms of paid staff, volunteers, and external service providers.

The boiler system that provides heat for the Sanctuary building and St. Andrew's Hall is well past its anticipated retirement date and its reliability has become problematic beginning last spring, necessitating numerous repairs and, thus, unanticipated expenses. Accordingly, Council approved a formal multiphase project to plan for and then hopefully acquire an energy-efficient, modern heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) system for FSA. The project will be carried out systematically in a set of well-defined phases, with a decision point at the end of each phase. The first step is an engineering study to define the parameters, scope, and cost window for soliciting proposals for supply and installation of a new system. A steering committee to lead the project is being put in place. If we reach the point of acquiring a new system,

a capital campaign will be needed.

A component of the multipoint plan to create a sustainable operating budget for FSA (approved last June) is fundraising events and activities whose proceeds go directly to the operating budget. To this end, a fundraising working group has been established and begun its work. The first fundraiser planned by the group will take place this December – look for announcements. Another component of the multipoint plan is an initiative called “helping to run the church for a day.” Donors are given the option of being recognized for their contribution, and also to include a dedicatory statement in the announcement of the donation. Since the initiative was launched in October, three donations have been received.

At the end of November, a town hall style congregational meeting on the 2024 operating budget was held after the worship service. The purpose was to provide an early opportunity to review and discuss a working draft of next year's budget. Comments and suggestions received at the session will inform further budget drafts and also approaches to dealing with a probable operating deficit in 2024. At the annual congregational meeting at the end of January 2024, a final draft will be presented for approval. †



FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Allyson Watson

As we head into the Advent/Christmas Season please remember that we are having only ONE service this year on Christmas Eve. There will be no Sunday morning service on Dec. 24. The service will be 7:00 pm. At 6:30, we will start with music in the sanctuary and the service will begin at 7:00 with a pageant, communion and there will be candlelight. There will be fellowship afterwards.

The children, youth, and young adults have been busy this fall with programs provided by Marilyn and Christina. Please continue to check the email blast and website for activities offered for these age groups. Sundays are still challenging in having enough adults to support the children; if you are interested in a Sunday, periodically, please contact Christina Lindsay.

There continues to be bible study on Thursday morning as well as Thursday evenings via Zoom.

Please contact me if you have any programming ideas or suggestions for our FSA community.



Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Marilyn Arthur

I continue to feel such gratitude for the amazing young people that I continue to get to know and for their energy, passions and lights that they share. I also give thanks for the opportunities that they have to get to know one another and to our church communities for providing places where they feel a sense of safety, belonging and care within our church communities.



Church sleepovers, game nights, baking cookies for London Cares, breaking bread together around the table over meals and snacks, and meaningful conversations about life, faith and current events have been our focus this Fall as our

high school youth and young adults gather every few weeks.



I thank everyone who helped plan, lead and participate in the October 22 Intergenerational Worship. This meaningful worship brought many generations together to lead worship and share incredible dialogue, text and stories around our different gifts and ministries.

In January, our confirmation program will be full of opportunities for young people to discuss as a group and with their mentors various topics that pertain to the church, their faith, and personal beliefs. We will also be involved with outreach within our communities and participating in activities that allow us to learn more about who we are, our God-given gifts, and other faith traditions.

May the joy of the Christmas season fill you with hope, peace, and love. †

for fixed-income securities, and volatility in the stock market related to various economic and other world factors, e.g., COVID 19, or wars in the Ukraine and Middle East.

Other considerations with regard to our investment portfolio relate to the amount invested in Canada and the amount invested in the United States and Europe. Furthermore, the types of businesses held in equity funds is important, as we want to ensure that our investment portfolio aligns, as much as possible, with our values as a congregation. After our meeting with the BMO Nesbitt Burns team assigned to FSA's portfolio, the Investment Committee was satisfied that the investments have been selected in a very thoughtful manner and are working well. As Co-chairs we can assure the congregation that all of First-St. Andrew's investments are selected with care and attention to many factors. Of course, these include balancing investment choices with high returns, but low risk. In this endeavour, we are ably supported by the advice and expertise of the BMO team and the experience of the Investment Committee.

We wish you all a safe and peaceful Christmas season. †



COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Jim Silcox

C & M is pleased to welcome a new direction for its information mission, that being an enhanced social media presence. We were blessed when a new FSA member, Lorna Gunning Fratschko, stepped up to take the lead in this department. She brings hands-on experience. If you are part of the Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn world, watch for FSA postings of events, ideas, and shout-outs. If you have something you'd like to see posted in this domain, contact Lorna. She will be happy to make it happen.

As part of this new initiative, you may have noticed that C & M has a new "child" that they are calling "Post-Script" or "PS" for short. Each week we capture a video of Pastor Joshua in an informal setting reflecting on his message from the previous Sunday. The videos are about five minutes long, ideal for posting on social media and that is where they will have their home, although for FSA members and those who are not comfortable with social media, the plan is to also provide a link from our weekly Blast.

As we continue with our livestreaming ministry we aspire to do more and to do it better. One of the things that would make the quality of the images you see brighter and better defined would be enhanced lighting in the Sanctuary since our cameras are designed to capture better images with better lighting. We hope that as our current lighting system ages out we will be able to move into something that is more state-of-the-art. Stay tuned. †

TRUSTEES



Jackie Williams



Paul Cooper

On Friday, October 27, 2023, the Investment Committee of the

Board of Trustees, very ably chaired by David Manness, met with our financial advisors at BMO Nesbitt Burns. This was a helpful and enlightening meeting.

The first item of business was to determine if the Trustees require a change in policy with regard to the percent of FSA's portfolio that is invested in equities vs fixed-income securities. Part of that discussion revolved around the difference between investing for yourself and investing as a Trustee. Trustees have a greater responsibility for being prudent than does an individual investor, because they are investing on behalf of an organization for the good of others. Furthermore, Trustees must consider that if we use all the interest generated by our funds, and do not return some to grow the principle, over time the principle—even though not decreased in absolute terms—is decreased in actual buying power due to inflation. The Investment Committee must balance the tension between high inflation that creates fluctuating interest rates



MEMBERSHIP & NURTURE

Heather Locking-Cusolito

Membership and Nurture continues to meet monthly under the new leadership and guidance of Co-Chairs Lillian Reid (lc Reid@rogers.com) and Glenna Hall (glennajhall@gmail.com). As a reminder, if you need to be in touch regarding any Membership and Nurture issues, Glenna and Lillian recommend that you contact them BOTH and preferably by email.

We are pleased to report the following news from M&N:

- On Sunday, October 22, 2023 we trialed a new approach to our Newcomers Friendship Group by holding it before the church service in the Parlour, rather than in the evening in the chapel. We will continue to evaluate this different approach.
- On Sunday, November 12, 2023 we were delighted to welcome eight new adults and three children who formalized their commitment to FSA on New Members Sunday. The chance to meet and begin to get to know our new members was afforded at a reception with cake in Proudfoot Hall after the service.
- On Sunday November 19, 2023 the celebrations continued with our Volunteer Appreciation Sunday (and more cake). Glenna Hall took time during the service to ask people to stand as they were able if they had ever volunteered to help support the important, compassionate work of our faith in action.
- We continue to be thankful for the dedication of the various Council committees in serving Coffee and Conversation, for Glenna Hall's commitment to making certain that supplies are always in place, and more recently, for Jeff Robinson for running the dishwasher, thus allowing us to use mugs instead of disposables.
- Pastoral care continues to play a major part in our committee's responsibilities. Three of our lay teams: Visitation, Caring Callers and the Prayer Chain are currently looking for new volunteers. Gerry Meacham faithfully continues to write her letters of support. Because of the significant need we are so grateful for the support and nurturing ministry of Rev. Annie Jannaway who continues to reach out in very meaningful and attentive ways to our

congregation.

- Planning for a new photo directory will begin in the New Year and will take the combined efforts of a lot of volunteers in the congregation. Stay tuned.

As always, we are thankful for the many ways that all members of FSA nurture and support our community



Archives

Don Jones

The Archives Committee has been active this fall sorting and filing photos and items that have been languishing in the Archives room with little or no plan. Sorting and organizing will prove useful as we approach the 2032 Anniversary of our historic and influential church. As members and others approach us for information contained in the Archives, we have decided that a protocol for searching and borrowing items from the Archives room is necessary. To that end, a protocol has been drafted and will be in effect whenever a person asks to search for information or data in the Collection. You may also access digital lists of items on the FSA website under the link to the Archives section. The protocol is also posted on the FSA website under the Archives Banner.

The Archives Committee received a poem from long-time member, Ross MacDonald, that was written by his mother, Kay MacDonald. As it was received as a photo of the original writing, it has now been stored as a photo in the Archives Room photo collection.

With the fall season, members of the Archives Committee have been rereading and rethinking the requirements of the United Church for the local Archives Collection. To that end, we have scoured the document published by the United Church titled, "What the Archives Wants." The good news is that with the change to the new Archives Room, the team has managed to organize and store what is needed as well as what the document calls "nice to have." This category includes artifacts and memories gifted to the church and items that have been saved over the years by members and staff. The work of the archives team is neverending, but it can slow down somewhat now as we get things more organized.



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Pastoral Care Ministry Report

Rev. Annie Jannaway

I continue to be blessed by visits, phone calls, and emails to FSA individuals and families. Getting to know their life stories, their struggles, and their faith connections with First-St. Andrew's has been a real gift. These connections have been with teens through to the very elderly.

Since beginning my role as Minister of Pastoral Care in June 2023, a number of issues have emerged: treatments for cancer; falls and fall risks; life altering chronic illnesses; need for rides to appointments; deaths of loved family members; loneliness; moving to supportive housing as members become less able to be in their own home; new diagnoses of dementia; mental health issues; slow recovery from illness; waiting on test results; discussions about grief and loss and sources of hope; coping strategies for anxiety; the inability to be as active; the many infirmities of old age; lack of family presence; grief and personal loss; supporting ill partners or family members; broken hearts; and depression.

An interest in MAID has been discussed by several members, which I believe warrants a broader discussion in the church.

In the midst of sadness and ill health, there are also many moments of joy: significant birthday celebrations (the oldest being 97 and 103!); singing familiar hymns with those who have dementia; the love for FSA (the people, the music, the services) expressed by so many I have visited; lunches at Cherry Bulmer's home with two long-time members, Kay Hillier and Mary Vernon; hearing about families and the history of the church from members who have been at FSA for decades; good news received about diagnoses and current situations of health; and learning about the careers and volunteer work of so many.

Recently, I brought a picture of the church to an elderly dementia resident who kept kissing it and stated these goodbye words as I left: "God was surely in the room with us today." †



MUSIC

Merran Neville

The baton has been passed and our new Minister of Music, Chris Fischer, is enthusiastically upholding the legacy of great music at First-St. Andrew's. Chris has taken on the programs for children, youth, and adults, introducing each with new music and new opportunities.

Chris is running a handbell/chime program for a group of young people with the catchy name, ReBELLS. They have performed twice in services this fall and it is a delight to see them and to hear their progress. At present, this group meets

after church on Sundays from noon-1:00 pm.

The Senior Choir is also being introduced to new music and some special opportunities to perform in concert. Chris is a tenor in The Elora Singers and initiated a visit of the Singers to FSA on Saturday, November 4. One hundred people, including members of our choir, attended workshops offered throughout the day by the Singers as well as learning two pieces to sing with The Elora Singers in their concert at night. The day and evening were a resounding success and enjoyed by all who attended. Members of the Music Committee were on hand throughout the day and evening to assist. Our thanks go to Margo Christodoulou who provided the treats – muffins, squares, etc. They were delicious and appreciated by all. The FSA Strings' concert on Wednesday, November 8, under their director, Igor Saika-Voivod, included a bracket of two choral pieces performed by the Choir. These pieces were composed by Dr. Robert Grenier who is from London, ON and attended Western's Faculty of Music.

Advent is upon us and this means beautiful music in services and concerts throughout December. The popular Sing-Along Messiah returns on Saturday, December 9 at 3:00 pm, combining the choirs of London Pro Musica and FSA Senior Choir, FSA Strings, soloists, two pianists, trumpeter, timpanist and Paul Grambo conducting. The Friday Advent Noon Recitals include: Dec. 1 - Lynda Kennedy, piano; Katerina Juraskova, cello; Gary McCumber, clarinet; Dec. 8 - Laudamus Bells, Richard Frank, director; Dec. 15 - Chris Fischer, organ and Ken Baldwin, trumpet.

Christmas Eve will be somewhat different this year. December 24 falls on a Sunday which is also Advent 4. There will be no morning service and ahead of the evening service, there will be carol singing starting at 6:30 pm. The service begins at 7:00 pm, will include a pageant and communion, and the FSA Strings will be playing.

We hope that you can attend some of these concerts and special worship services. †



PROPERTY

George Jolink

As we approach the end of 2023, we look back on a year filled with change and challenge. Managing an aging facility with multiple users and trying to maintain fiscal responsibility continues to be our focus on the Property Committee. Our work has been impacted by the recent retirement of our former Facilities Manager, Tim Miedema. We have felt his absence greatly and look forward to having someone in that role, or a similar role, sometime in the new year. Thanks to some volunteers, we have been able to address small maintenance issues and requests as they arise.

One of our major concerns over the past several months has been boiler operation. Last spring our boiler was malfunctioning.

tioning. The issue could not be diagnosed and corrected until this fall when heating season began in mid-October. After several attempts, we think the issue has been resolved. All of this points to the urgency of considering a new heating system for our building which would have advantages of better heat control, improved comfort level, cost savings, reducing carbon footprint, and possible addition of cooling capabilities. This would be a major capital project. Currently, a small Steering Committee is being developed with the task of researching options, engaging an engineering firm, investigating grant opportunities, and ultimately making a recommendation to Council and the Congregation.

Our second major concern has been around building security. The Atrium door has been unreliable. Originally installed in 1994, it seems some of the mechanical parts have worn out and need replacement. Parts are on order and hopefully this will correct the problem. In the meantime, we are checking the building each night for security purposes.

Rentals continue to be strong with requests coming in regularly. At this point we are close to maximum capacity for available space except for one-off events such as music recitals, concerts, etc.


As always, thanks to the Committee for their ongoing dedication to managing our facility. †



UCW
Nancy Quinn

On Saturday, November 4, the WOW (Western Ontario Waterways) Regional Council held a meeting at Calvary United Church in St. Jacobs, Ontario. The theme was Climate Motivators: The Church at Work. To see videos of the event, with featured church youth speakers on their work as Climate Motivators, please go to <https://wowrucucc.ca/united-church-women/>

On Saturday, November 19, from 9 am to 4 pm, we had a wonderful Boutique Bazaar. Many thanks to Glenda Robinson, our Lead Convenor. We especially appreciate the expert organizing of the visiting Artisan section by Ardath Finnogason-Hill. Thank you to our many volunteers, to our artisan friends, and especially to our enthusiastic shoppers.



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We enjoyed personable hosts, antique treasures, beautiful jewellery, baked goodies, delectable preserves, gorgeous knitwear, carefully stitched delights, hand crafted cards, and music treasures . . . A special shout out to our French Café staff, which included our many energetic and proficient youth helpers, providing scrumptious lunches. Once we have rested, we can't wait to do it all again . . . next year! Funds raised support our beloved FSA and benefits UCW charities such as Anova, My Sisters' Place, L'Arche, and ELUCO.

On Tuesday, November 28 at 1:30 pm, your dedicated UCW Executive met to discuss plans for 2024. Please stay tuned for more details in the New Year. Your UCW Executive are Laurel Kenney (President), Donna Fraleigh (Past President and Treasurer), Helen Guthrie (Secretary), Glenda Robinson Jan Hendry, Millie Bates, Linda Badke, and Nancy Quinn.

Please mail your Green Envelope cheques, made out to "FSA United Church Women," to FSA, Attention: UCW. Your generosity and faithfulness are much appreciated and help our charities endure increasingly challenging times. †



CLIMATE ACTION LONDON
Mary Ann Hodge

What an exciting Autumn! In September we hosted researchers from the GoGreen-Project out of Denmark, investigating collective action on climate change. They were very excited about the work that Climate Action London is doing and we were chosen as the only Canadian group in this international study.

We have been studying under the tutelage of the Tamarack Institute (renown for their work on poverty) on how to effectively work collectively on climate change. We hosted a two-day event in November that brought climate concerned people from across London together for learning and networking at Innovation Works. We were also invited to set up a table at Budweiser Gardens when the band The 1975 performed. This band is an example of how one small group can start change in their own industry.

Our focus is turning to City Council in January, as Council starts deliberating on a new four-year budget. With so many pressures on the city's budget, how do we find the capacity to consider climate change? Watch for conversations about how we can do things differently, starting with community conversations on January 18, 2024. If interested in participating, please reach out to us at ClimateActionLondon@gmail.com for more information.

I invite you to visit our website ClimateActionLondon.ca to CONNECT with our campaign and subscribe to our weekly newsletter which now has over 700 subscribers. (sign up at: <http://eepurl.com/hhK8Ff>)

We look forward to CONNECTING with you. †





OUTREACH

Barb Dalrymple

Grow-A-Row 2023 Campaign

We would like to thank our generous FSA supporters of the annual Grow-a-Row campaign which raises funds for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We run this campaign with St Marys United Church and one of their members grows, harvests, and sells the crop. To date, the two churches have a combined total of \$9797 from donations, proceeds of our FSA corn roast, and St. Marys soup luncheon. We are still waiting on the figures from the sale of the soybean crop.

Thank you also to the many FSA members who joined us on September 17, 2023 for our tasty corn roast and to hear our speaker Nevin McDougall, an Ontario ambassador for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Finally, this corn roast could not have happened without our dedicated volunteers who set up the room, prepared and served the meal, and cleaned up after the event. We are so grateful for your contributions.

ELUCO

East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO), under the expert direction of our full-time Community Outreach Worker, Nancy Howard, has continued to offer group children's programs and teen and adult workshops in addition to much needed individual counselling and food acquisition/

security support.

This fall has been stressful for our Marconi rent-geared-to-income housing community. Nancy Howard has noticed an increase in individuals suffering deep depression. With the support of a 2023 grant from the Westminster College Foundation, Nancy has received training and has been able to offer small group workshops to teens and parents in the Marconi community on grief, addiction, and mental health.

The Marconi families struggle with the high cost of groceries. A high priority this fall was providing assistance with food security through referral to food banks, distribution of grocery gift cards, and access to fresh fruit/vegetables through the Harvest Bucks program. On a weekly basis, Nancy obtained bread from the Abundant Life Community Church and surplus meals from the Welcome Wednesday program to distribute at the ELUCO Marconi site. Many children come to the ELUCO unit to obtain breakfast snacks before leaving for school.

On a positive note, a young adult from the Marconi Community was accepted into the Nursing program at Fanshawe College. How exciting! Through ELUCO's Post-Secondary Education Scholarship Fund, this student received \$500 to help with the cost of tuition and college expenses.

FSA has been a key financial and spiritual supporter, over many years. ELUCO Board of Directors would like to provide a huge THANK YOU, specifically to FSA, who raised \$4330 of the \$9690 raised in total through the ELUCO Walk-a-Thon Fund Raiser in September 2023. Thank you in particular to Linda Badke and Bill Guthrie who collected donations for this event. ELUCO tax receipts will be distributed with your year-end FSA income tax receipts.

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Afghan Refugee Sponsorship Project

Janice Elliott

Thanks to the generosity of you and other Londoners, we have raised over \$86,000! That leaves us with approximately \$4,000 left to reach our goal of \$90,000. In addition to this, we have a \$5,000 grant from the Hope Council which we will receive when our refugee family arrives in Canada.

We plan to raise the remainder of the funds required through additional fundraisers. We have arranged to make and sell bottles of delicious lemon syrup which can be used in lemonade, iced tea, a topping for cake or ice cream and in many other ways. Planning is also underway for an Elvis Presley Impersonator concert on Jan. 26, 2024 at FSA!

All applications were submitted to our Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), Refugee Program, United Church of Canada in April 2023. They have processed these applications and submitted them to the Resettlement Office Centre-Ottawa (ROCO) where they will be processed and assigned a reference number. It can take up to 10 months to get a response from this first stage of processing (ROCO) to get a reference number.

Once ROCO has completed this initial process, we will be able to check on the status of our applications with Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). We will also request that these applications be expedited through the Ministry of Immigration and our local MP's.

Our refugee family's living situation in Pakistan has always been difficult and dangerous, but is now becoming dramatically worse. Many Afghan refugees living in Pakistan are now being deported back to Afghanistan, as you may have heard on the news.

This is extremely frightening for our local family members. The slow progress of our applications is also very frustrating for them, seeing the danger to their family members in Pakistan and feeling so powerless.

Linda Badke and Pastor Joshua recently attended a workshop entitled, 'Setting Immigrants Up for Success', presented by London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership.

Furniture and household goods have been donated for the use of our refugee family on their arrival and are now in storage.

Thank you for your generosity and interest in our refugee family while they endure the long waiting period for their applications to come to Canada to be processed and accepted.

†



FINANCE

Laura Wood

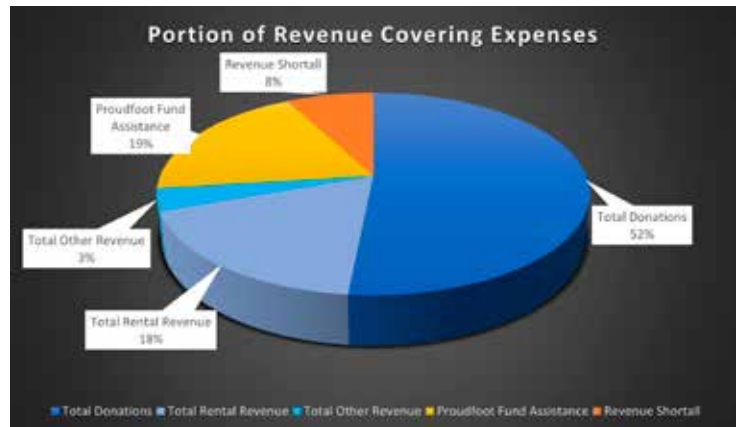
FSA reported a net deficit of \$40,266 as of Oct 31, 2023. A one-time donation of \$20,000 this past summer has allowed us to be on track to meet our budget for donations this year. The accompanying pie chart shows the proportions of overall expenses covered by our various revenue sources for 2023.

Property expenses have been driven by increases in utilities rates, unexpected boiler maintenance and unexpected atrium door repairs. A further challenge has been a 35% increase in insurance expenses starting September 2023.

The cash surplus carried forward from previous years will offset our projected deficit at the end of 2023. As of Oct. 31, the 2023 fiscal year deficit is estimated at \$49K.

FSA strives to be known and recognized as being a church and community meeting place that reaches out by offering a wide range of programs and services that attract different groups and members of the community through programs offered both inside and outside of the church facility and in partnership with other groups and organizations, as appropriate. It is important to note that our investment in staffing, building improvements, and programming has supported this vision. The financial return on this investment cannot be immediate, but we are moving forward with strategies to sustain operations for the future.

†



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Answers to the FSA History Quiz (page 20)

1. (b) Reverend MacGregor
2. (c) 1938
3. (c) 1925 (June 10 to be precise)

SAVE THE DATE

Elvis, aka the Rev. Matt Martin, is coming to FSA on January 26 for a concert in aid of the Afghan Refugee Fund. Do plan to be there.

Milestones

DEATHS:

Barbara Corbet, Sept. 20, 2023

BAPTISMS:

David Weickert, son of Andrea Paquette and Matthew Weickert, Nov. 3, 2023

NEW MEMBERS: NOV. 12, 2023

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Greg & Michelle Beckett
Andrea Paquette & Matthew Weickert
Karla Peña-Mendez
Lindsey & Jeff Robinson

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FSA History Quiz



Judith Walker

A test of your memory....

1. Who was the last minister to preach in Gaelic at St. Andrew's?

- a. The Very Rev. Angus MacQueen (1951-1964)
- b. The Rev. Dr. Donald Campbell MacGregor (1914-1936)
- c. The Rev. John Y. MacKinnon (1938-1951)

2. In what year did First Presbyterian and St. Andrew's join together to become First-St. Andrew's United Church?

- a. 1935
- b. 1940
- c. 1938

3. In what year was The United Church of Canada formed?

- a. 1900
- b. 1930
- c. 1925

Answers on page 19.