

First-St Andrew's
UNITED CHURCH
Where liberal theology meets the best of tradition

Tidings

Vol. 31, No. 3, 2021
PENTECOST/FALL

**FSA WELCOMES
REV. DR. JOSHUA LAWRENCE
AND FAMILY
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Tidings

EDITOR'S MESSAGE



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This is the sixth issue of *Tidings* to be published during the COVID-19 pandemic. Societies around the world are crawling back to normalcy, largely through an uncharted domain, and with incumbent, sporadic setbacks.

For the majority of the pandemic, FSA has been without a permanent minister of worship and congregational life. By the time this issue is released, that will have changed with the formal arrival of Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence in early September. Joshua leads his first worship service on Sunday, Sept. 12th, the day this issue is released in hardcopy. I direct you to the feature article (by Kerry Hill), which introduces Joshua and his family to the readers. As our new minister he also becomes the author of the Minister's Message (page 3), taking the pen ably wielded by David McKane. Joshua's message offers a breadth of food for thought and stimulates one to reflect on matters of faith. He invites us to join him on a pilgrimage that expands and enriches our individual and collective faith. I was particularly struck by the following sentence, which I have been intellectually digesting ever since I first read it: "Otherwise, we would too easily slip into the comfortable bondage of economic existence – a kind of preoccupation with transactional life." I encourage you to read the Minister's Message. I think you will find it inspirational.

There is a pair of articles on experiencing spirituality in nature. One might be viewed as theory and the other as practice. These two pieces were not planned as a complementary pair; this emerged fortuitously. The theory piece is the Spiritual Dimensions article by David McKane (there is no rest for a skilled writer) that discusses, among other things, the connection between the body's physiological response to being in the peaceful surrounds of the natural world and our receptiveness to spiritual experiences. The practical piece is a first-hand description, provided by David Flynn, of a recent nature walk by the Men's Brown Bag Lunch group. This outing is also noteworthy as an event that was considered normal pre-pandemic. It reinforces the great benefits of being able to share time and conversation in person in a group setting. Let's hope that our planned in-person worship services, church school, and youth programming will proceed without interruption in the 2021–22 church year. †



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Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence

Called, Displaced, Challenged, Comforted, Called

This five-word series of observations pretty much sums up the life of faith. Notwithstanding the relatively infrequent periods of stability, faith is essential for the labyrinthine construction of abundant life. Without some *impossibly derived and irrationally profound* trust, we wouldn't make it. Not one of us.

As many of you know, I have been honoured with the call to serve you as Congregational Minister of First-St. Andrew's. Actually, I was honored a few months ago, but there were steps required (see the five-word series above). Since then, life has proven to be nothing short of exciting and exhausting, rife with transnational perplexity and emotional volatility. But I am certainly in good company in these uncertain times, brought together with faithful sisters and brothers inhabiting a land whose soil I only recently touched. And I wish to reiterate my excitement over being a fellow sojourner in these strange times, a partner of those wishing to get into "good trouble," to borrow a phrase from the late Civil Rights icon and United States Representative, John Lewis.

One way I have chosen to contextualize this journey is through the spiritual practice of pilgrimage. As Christians, our sacred stories are saturated with intentional travel through which the protagonist gains a new perspective, one necessary for the life to which s/he has been called. Sometimes begrudgingly but always inevitably, the one called and sent – an apostle – discovers a whole world on the other side of fear and discomfort. Pilgrimages represent one way that we can participate in a certain displacement intimately tied to God's infinitely creative evolution/revelation. Otherwise, we would too easily slip into the comfortable bondage of economic existence – a kind of preoccupation with transactional life. Not to dismiss the importance of this necessary feature of human existence, but if we only deal with what we can manage and translate, then we fail to be surprised by the utter mystery of life itself. We thereby rob ourselves of "thin places," the phrase adopted by Celtic Christians to announce sacred spaces of encounter. Pilgrimages let us see the world as radiant, divinely imprinted.

As I continue this journey with each of you, I believe the Holy One/Many is calling us into yet another pilgrimage, one in which still more truth and light have yet to shine forth! May we all step into this path focused on the urgent cries for justice, mercy, and repentance! May we be the body of Christ for a world in great need! Amen. †





Kerry Hill

WELCOME

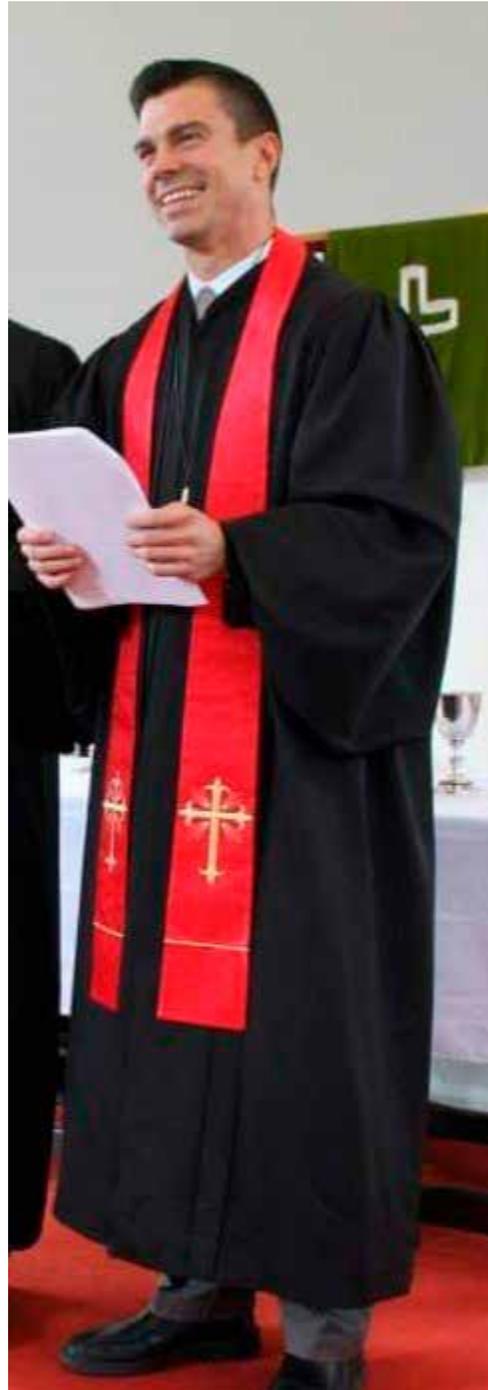
First-St. Andrew's has begun a new chapter in its rich history of ministry. The Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence became our Minister of Worship and Congregational Life on September 1st. In early August, Joshua and his family visited London for six days to find a home and take the first steps to permanent residency in Canada. Joshua, his partner Amariee Collins, Elijah (14), Aaron (11), Luke (2½) and Amariee's mother, Ila Riley, were warmly welcomed to London by members of the Search Committee and the McKanes. They are a wonderful family.

Joshua reported that their processing at Canadian Immigration (Sarnia) went very smoothly, although it took about four hours of paperwork and testing. The agents were very friendly and helpful – a good first impression of Canada.

A little background on the family – mostly in Joshua's own words:

Joshua was born in the timber town of Silsbee, TX, in the heart of the "Piney Woods." He was brought up in Pinecrest Baptist Church, where he developed both a fascination with and a reverence for the Christian stories. As a child, his favorite activities were fishing trips with his father and baseball. Both continue to exercise a strong hold on him, though he admits to having less time in recent years to enjoy either. He hopes to find opportunities to enjoy both in Canada.

Joshua graduated from University of Houston with a degree in Philosophy. During his undergraduate years, he discovered the United Church of



Christ (UCChrist) – a pivotal moment in his life. For some time, he had felt alienated from most expressions of Christianity, but in the UCChrist he found a space where his "heterodox" beliefs were welcomed! From Houston, Joshua moved to the Boston area, where he began studies at Andover Newton Theological School (now a seminary at Yale).

Since obtaining his Master of Divinity in 2008, Joshua has pastored two communities of faith (one as an interim), taught, held administrative positions in the UCChrist, been a hospital chaplain, acted as a writing consultant, and been engaged in volunteer social justice activities.

This year he completed a doctorate in Religious and Theological Studies at University of Denver-Illiff School of Theology (joint program).

Amariee Collins was born in Kansas City, Missouri, but spent most of her early life in Wichita. There she excelled in school and sports, competing in gymnastics and track. Her favourite subjects have always been math and science. She has always wanted to deliver babies – which is why she is currently engaged in a midwifery training program.

After graduating high school, Amariee enlisted in the United States Air Force, where she worked in the Finance Department. Upon completion of her term, she began studies at the University of Houston, majoring in Biology. During her time at UH, Amariee joined Theta Nu Xi, a multi-cultural sorority. As usual, Amariee assumed leadership responsibilities here and

FSA WELCOMES REV. DR. JOSHUA LAWRENCE AND FAMILY

elsewhere throughout her time at UH.

Following her graduation, Amariee engaged in advocacy through involvement with AmeriCorps, as a VISTA intern. This work led to her enrolment in a Master of Public Administration program at Texas Southern University, a historically black university located in Houston. This period of study granted her additional opportunities to grow as an organizer and policy advocate. After being awarded her Master's degree, Amariee worked with the US Department of Treasury.

Not one to slow down in her pursuit of justice, Amariee transitioned into work

for Texas Impact, an organizing group dedicated to just policies in the state of Texas. Those who met Amariee in London will attest that she, like Joshua, is a dynamic, going concern and will offer much to FSA and the London community.

Amariee currently works as a sonograph technician north of Houston. Work commitments kept her there until September.

Joshua loves coffee, so it is not surprising that he met Amariee in a coffee shop. He hasn't said whether the meeting was planned or accidental; however, it led to their marriage in 2017. Together,

on behalf of the UCChrist, they coordinated relief efforts in the Houston area following Hurricane Harvey.

Amariee's mother, Ila, who is moving to London to live with the family, also spent time in the military and is now a special education teacher. She is hoping to continue her career in London. She is a delightful person.

Joshua says he cannot imagine a better community in which to grow and follow God's call than First-St. Andrew's United Church and London, Ontario. We enthusiastically agree! I think it's fair to say that the congregation will have to keep up or get out of the way! †



Pictured left to right: Joshua, Elijah, Aaron, Luke and Amariee



Barb Plante

BILL WATSON
1927-2021



Bill Watson was a dedicated member of FSA for many years. He died on March 4, 2021, at McGarrell Place, here in London. He was 93 years old, and had lived with Alzheimer's disease for many years.

Bill was born in Tollcross, Glasgow, Scotland, in 1927. He attended Allan Glen's Boys School, where he excelled academically and musically. During the war, he was evacuated to the countryside town of Lanark where he was billeted with a schoolmaster and his wife. Here he learned to fish, and to do cryptic crossword puzzles – a pastime he loved all his life.

Bill attended Glasgow University Medical School, where he planned to become a cardiologist. However, he switched to internal medicine. During this time, he met Elspeth whom he once told me he “fell in love with at first sight.” They enjoyed many happy years together, and eventually had four children: Claire, Lesley, Moray, and Hilary.

After graduation, Bill enrolled in the British Army Medical Corps, under National Service, and was stationed in Hong Kong during the Korean War. After his discharge, he returned to Glasgow, married Elspeth, and joined the staff of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, where he completed a PhD in medicine, re-



searching the positive effects of beets on the digestive system! Bill was invited to take up a postdoctoral fellowship in Bethesda, Maryland, where he and the family enjoyed a wonderful year.

After returning to Glasgow, Bill continued his career at the Royal Infirmary, until a group of doctors and technicians was recruited to travel to Kenya to es-

("Remembering" continued on page 19)



Pat Pettit



Margo Christodoulou

Barry Tiffin
1946-2021



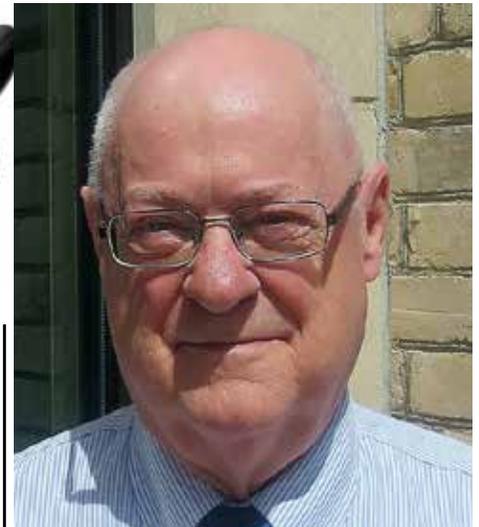
Barry's welcoming presence will be missed by his friends at FSA. As a greeter on Sunday mornings and at mid-weekly events, he knew everyone by name and met people with a smile. He died at Huron Hospice (a place he called “Heaven on Earth”) on May 30, 2021. Barry was pre-deceased by his beloved partner, Chuck St. Pierre, in November 2009.

Barry was born in Wingham and raised in the Whitechurch/Teeswater area. He worked as a security guard for many years. He enjoyed music of every genre, worked as a DJ in Toronto and was a member of the Canadian Disc Jockey Association. According to his

nephew, Rhys, he had about 2000 records in his apartment. Barry loved family celebrations, especially Christmas, when he was famous for his Christmas pudding made with his mother's recipe. The Toronto Maple Leafs were his favourite team. He liked living in London, enjoyed the residents in his apartment building and his many friends at FSA.

Barry was diagnosed in 2014 and demonstrated unwavering determination and strength on his cancer journey. He often defied the odds as he embraced each new treatment offered. His willingness to consider these treatments will have lasting benefits for future patients.

A letter written by his sister, Joyce, was read by Rev. Dr. David McKane at



Barry's private family funeral service. When Joyce broke her foot, Barry, in his typical fashion, helped her to do tasks she couldn't accomplish herself. Joyce confirmed that her brother was an inspiration to all of us to persevere.

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others” (Pericles). †



David Flynn

Brown Bag Lunch Nature Walk

For over a year, like many groups at FSA, the Men's Brown Bag Lunch (BBL) group has met at the usual time, Wednesdays at noon, but via Zoom. That was okay – we were able to watch the hair of members grow longer – and longer. We learned what the inside of people's homes looked like, or at least one room. We learned that if more than one person spoke at the same time, the result was a blur of sound, so maybe we learned to be more polite.

But how we missed meeting in person, slapping each other on the back, punching shoulders – all those ways men show affection. We missed picking up our church mail before or after the meeting, maybe spending a quiet time in the sanctuary, or continuing our discussions in the parking lot.

Well, on August 4th, 15 of us (including some significant others) actually met in person, not in our usual location, the church parlour, but at Westminster Ponds. The amazing Dave Wake and his good wife Winnie guided us down the trail starting near the former veterans' rehabilitation buildings beside Saunders Pond. These buildings were all once part of the Westminster Veterans Hospital, built after the Second World War for returning soldiers. The responsibility for care of veterans was turned over to Parkwood Hospital in the 1980s, and the new Parkwood facility was constructed at that time. Four of the 11 original veterans' pavilions remain, now part of

Westminster Ponds Centre, an environmental sustainability organization. All that remains of the other original buildings is empty foundations and sagging chimneys. The area is now called Westminster Ponds Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) and, at 300 hectares, the largest of the city's ESAs, managed by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

Even on our short walk from above Saunders Pond down to Spettigues Pond, we saw a varied topography, reflected in several tree species, ranging from Carolinian Forest trees such as oaks on the ridges, down to swamp-dwelling tamaracs. The varied terrain is the result of glaciers retreating after the Ice Age, leaving moraine ridges and kettles (the ponds). The understorey growth also varies: from beautiful (maybe poisonous?) orange mushrooms, to ferns and mosses, to Touch-Me-Nots, whose leaves are good for mosquito bites – although on this day, there were almost no mosquitoes. We didn't see many of the 211 species of birds that have been reported either – maybe four or five heard – but the Wakes have seen many species here at different seasons, including a fairly rare Pileated Woodpecker. We also saw one big frog.

It was a bright, sunshiny day, but shady and cool under the several kinds of towering maples. We chatted quietly, except when Dave or Winnie were sharing their apparently limitless knowledge. Who needs Google?

It was so good to see each other in person, to be outside enjoying the best of nature, after surviving a year and a half of nature's deadly COVID-19 virus. Of course, we were all double vaccinated more than two weeks previously, but we still tried to keep a respectful distance from each other.

The BBL (although without the lunch) ended as usual a bit after one. We returned to our homes, inspired by the persistence of the natural world over millennia. If a tree can survive, so can we. †

*Back row: (from left to right) Mike Bancroft, Don Jones, David Flynn, Pat Flynn, Bob Kennedy, Winnie Wake, Dave Wake
Front row: Joan Bancroft, Deanne Pederson, David Pederson, David McKane, Marilyn Beach, David Beach, Jan Richardson, Bruce Richardson.*





Anne Cummings

HOW IS OUR ORGAN TUNED?

All of us have had the experience of watching an instrumental group tune their instruments in the short time before a performance. In contrast, tuning the 88 keys on our pianos takes about 2–3 hours. However, how long does it take to tune 2628 pipes in our organ? If you are surprised by this large number of pipes, it is because most of our pipes are hidden behind the tall, visible pipes and in a large cabinet by the organ console.

To discover the answers to how our organ is tuned, I visited our retired organ tuners, Linda and Ross Dodington, at their home and large workshop for Dodington and Dodington Pipe Organ Services, Inc. near Aylmer. My first question was, “Why do organs go out of tune?” Ross explained that the pipes are affected by changes in temperature and humidity. While the optimum conditions for our organ are 23° C and 50% humidity, the temperature in our sanctuary fluctuates between 21° and 32° C with wide variation in humidity, which creates serious problems for maintaining good pitch. Therefore, before starting to tune, Ross consults a thermostat behind the organ console and tries to start when it is close to 23° C.

Ross begins the organ tuning with the reed pipes (ones that sound like oboes or trumpets) because they are the first pipes to go out of tune and then become misaligned with the pitch of the flue pipes. To change the pitch of a pipe, he uses a long hook to make miniscule changes on an adjustable part of each pipe. He has always tuned by ear beginning with the note A at 440 vibrations per second. Interestingly, there is now a phone app that provides improved accuracy in tuning. His son uses this app as he continues to service our organ. Our pipes are organized into 54 ranks (sections) that correspond in different ways to the stops on the organ; it takes about one hour to tune four ranks. Typically, the organ is tuned three times a year: the end of summer, before Christmas and Easter, and sometimes before an organ concert.

However, tuning an organ cannot be done by only one person. While the tuner is in the very cramped space behind our large pipes (see photo), a second person needs to be at the organ console holding down each note while the tuner adjusts the pitch of the corresponding pipe. This has been Linda’s job for many years. I have great empathy for Linda, because as a daughter of a church organist, I (and my siblings), also, had the job of holding down keys as my father tuned sections of his organ in between professional tunings.

I asked the Dodingtons about unusual events that had occurred with our organ over the years, and they replied that it was not fun to remove a dead bat from among the pipes! They also had an interesting experience with a live bird in one of the chambers. I remember one Sunday when a key stuck during the service, which caused the note to continue playing. Ross had to free up the key and adjust the alignment pin. We were all quite glad that we had Ross to the rescue that day!

We are all very grateful for the 36 years of excellent service and expertise that Linda and Ross have provided for our organ. We are also grateful that their son, daughter, and grandson are continuing to care for our organ. Oh, yes, it takes two days to tune 2628 pipes!

†



View of the cramped quarters in the organ pipe enclosure at the back of the choir loft



Julie Ryan*

INDWELL

CREATING 250 SUPPORTIVE AFFORDABLE HOMES BY 2024

Two years ago, Indwell opened its first London community at 356 Dundas Street. Woodfield Gate is just a block from First-St. Andrew's, and we have been grateful for FSA's warm welcome to the community. Rev. Michelle Down wrote a welcome letter for all our new tenants as they moved in, and FSA graciously allowed us to use your fellowship room for our Christmas party in 2019.

Seventy tenants living at Woodfield Gate have had a safe place to ride out the pandemic. Our staff have worked creatively to continue to support our tenants over the past 18 months, holding events outdoors (including FSA's front yard), organizing small group gatherings, and making phone calls to check in.



The upgraded commercial kitchen at Indwell's Woodfield Gate residence on Dundas Street, one block from FSA. Pictured is Louise Flemington, Food Security Worker at Indwell.

Indwell's commercial kitchen got a big boost this spring with a \$30,000 gift from FSA. This gift supports the renovation that was done as we opened the building. Each day, 30 tenants receive a hot healthy meal prepared in the kitchen. In addition, we hold food security classes in the kitchen and elsewhere in the building, sharing information about food budgeting, creative ways to use spices, and food preservation. Additional gifts from FSA members supported other projects and programs in London.

Indwell has bold plans for London, committing to create 250 deeply affordable, supportive housing units by 2024. These units will be in four buildings:

- Woodfield Gate offers 66 units of housing with onsite supports including nursing, food security, and addictions support.
- Opening in spring 2022, Embassy Commons at 744 Dundas Street will offer 72 one- and two-bedroom apartments.
- At the former Victoria Hospital grounds in the SoHo neighbourhood, Indwell will create 110 units of supportive housing in two heritage buildings. (Learn more about this project at visionsoho.ca.)

Indwell's values of dignity, love, and hope reflect our Christian approach to serving some of the most marginalized members of our community. We are grateful for the partnership and support of First-St. Andrew's, and look forward to discovering new ways for us to work together as we emerge from the pandemic. Thank you for showing Christ's love to our tenants and for being a welcoming neighbour. †

**Julie Ryan is the Community Engagement Coordinator for Indwell. This report is a follow-up to an introductory article on Indwell by the same author in 2019 (Vol. 29, No. 3). In the spring of 2021 FSA donated \$30,000 to Indwell in support of installation of a commercial kitchen.*



Rev. Dr. David McKane

Spirituality in the Natural World

Some people consider spirituality daunting, like a series of exercises designed by Fit-4-Life for the soul. It does not have to be. During the pandemic many people have rediscovered the healing capacity of nature and a new interest in spirituality. Many folks who do not regard themselves as religious often have a keen interest in nature. Some people, such as the Merritts, the Wakes, and the Flynns, among others, are keen bird watchers and have been for decades. Others possess a green thumb and have a magical way with plants. For them the garden and the act of gardening both feed them spiritually and, if you'll forgive the pun, keep them rooted or grounded, like the Pederson's who enjoy their back garden pergola and their garden in the heart of the city. For yet others, a connection with nature is found in an escape from the city to the cottage or walking the beach or canoeing one of Ontario's many lakes and rivers.

Some feed their spirituality in the rhythmic melody of bread making or of jam making. There is something deeply satisfying about baking, the texture of it, the feel of your hands in the dough, or the fruit in the mixing process, not to mention the smell of the finished product that permeates the house and satisfies your very soul. I am reminded of Brother Lawrence, a 17th century Carmelite friar, who said that he met God among the pots and pans in the daily round of methodical and mundane tasks. Once, deep in winter, Brother Lawrence noted a barren tree stripped of leaves and fruit, waiting patiently for the promise of spring. It reminded Brother Lawrence of the many people who were like that barren tree in his own time. "Who knows what conversations the soul has with God as we go about our daily tasks?" Many people during the pandemic can identify with that.

Studies suggest that being in nature activates our parasympathetic nervous system, which slows the heart rate and induces feelings of calm, contentment, and safety. The psalms remind us that the heavens declare the glory of God, which means that all we have to do is stand under a star-filled sky and ponder. Or Psalm 65, which reminds us how God visits the earth and waters it and greatly enriches it with fruits and with grains, with minerals and with forests upon which we and the earth depend.

Parasympathetic activity balances our sympathetic nervous system, which stimulates the fight or flight mode under stress, while the smell of earth and trees after rain triggers brain activity linked with calmness and relaxation. We are more connected to God and to nature than we think, which Henry David Thoreau reminded us of almost two centuries ago in his book, *Walden*. Who knows but what, as we move out of the pandemic, such simple things as baking, bird watching or what the Japanese call forest bathing, might restore to our wounded and thirsty souls.

†



Merran Neville

The 2021-2022 Eberhard Vocal Scholars: Emma Battel and Ellita Gagner



In September, we are joined by our two new Eberhard vocal scholars who are generously supported by the Eberhard Music Scholarship Fund. Details about the Fund are on the FSA website in the Music Ministry section. Since 1988, the scholarship has enabled the director of music to bring vocal scholars from the Don Wright Faculty of Music to join the senior choir. In this time of the pandemic, our Eberhard vocal scholars are members of the chamber choir.

Emma Battel and Ellita Gagner graduated from Western University in June, both receiving a B.Mus. with Honours in Voice Performance. Once more Professor Patricia Green, to whom we are indebted, has recommended singers to us. Both Emma and Ellita will continue to take lessons with Professor Green this year while they prepare for entry into an M.Mus. degree program. In the words of Professor Green: "Their goal is to continue to mature as humans and singers and build upon their skills before returning to Master's degree studies."

Emma Battel

Emma is a soprano from Kingston, ON. Prior to university, Emma was for seven years a chorister in the Cantabile Choirs of Kingston, sang annually in the Kiwanis Festival and immersed herself in performance through piano, flute, and musical theatre.



Emma has performed many roles, such as Vivienne in *Legally Blonde* and Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*. Emma also enjoys plays and appeared in a compelling two-person piece *Come Away, Come Away*, advancing to the provincial level of the Sears Ontario Drama Festival in 2017. While at Western, she has performed in *Catch Me If You Can* and in an online version of *Little Women* in May

2021 with the King's Players. Emma performed the roles of Lauretta in UWOpera's 2021 production of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Oberto in 2017 in the Halifax Summer Opera Festival's production of Handel's *Alcina*. She also participated in *The Wizard of Oz* with Theatre Western, sadly not staged because of the pandemic. Emma won her division in the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) last fall. Upon graduation, Emma was awarded the Western University Gold Medal in Music for Honours Performance Voice.

Ellita Gagner

Ellita is a mezzo soprano and was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her music education began at age 13 in Chatham, ON with teachers Christine and Jim Prosser. Ellita has always loved singing and comes by it honestly. Her great uncle is an east coast folk music performer, and she grew up listening to Stan Rogers and the Barra MacNeils. While in grade 11 at high school in Chatham, Ellita sang in the grade 7 category in the Kiwanis Festival just for fun and won the all-Ontario award for this category. Professor Torin Chiles was the adjudicator and suggested that she look into music at the post-secondary level. It was this encouragement that led to Ellita auditioning and being accepted at Western.



Ellita has been successful in winning various awards while at Western. In 2018 she won the 2018 London Community Orchestra's Young Artist Competition and sang "La Captive" and "Villanelle" (Berlioz), and "Faites-lui mes aveux" from *Faust* (Gounod) with this orchestra in its winter season. She captured first place in the 2020 NATS competition and in the 2021 voice competition of the Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto division of the Ontario Music Festivals Association. She has performed as a quartet member in Little London Opera's *Dido and Aeneas*, as Peep Bo in UWOpera's production of *The Mikado*, and Dorabella in both BrottOpera (Summer 2021) and UWOpera's production of *Così fan tutte*. Prior to studying opera, Ellita performed the Narrator in Studio Black's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* and Kurt in *The Sound of Music*. Ellita has a passion for the music of contemporary Canadian and female composers, as well as for bringing classical music to communities with reduced access.

Ellita has co-founded an artist collaboration called The Can of Soup Collective to put on multiple small productions and community events in London, Ontario in the coming season. Their first concert was at the Springbank Park bandshell on August 28.

Emma and Ellita have prepared two annual spring recitals and enjoy performing together. We are blessed to have these two very talented singers joining us and welcome them to FSA and the choir. †

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NOTEWORTHY

Farewell to Erich Knapp

It is with heavy hearts that the congregation recently bid farewell to our Director of Music, Erich Knapp, who has accepted the position of Director of Congregational Worship and Music at First English Lutheran Church in Appleton, Wisconsin. This move will allow him to be nearer to his family and to lead a musical ministry in a 2500-member congregation located on two campuses with four Sunday worship services. In addition to many music-related responsibilities, he will be presiding at the console of the largest mechanical action pipe organ in Wisconsin.

Perhaps the chair of Council, Steve Elson, expressed our thoughts most eloquently in his open letter to Erich when he said, “[T]hank you for having been an important part of First-St. Andrew’s for the last year and for sharing your personality, your talents and your creativity with us.” We wish him well as he begins a new chapter in his life.

Congratulations to Shirley Savigny

We take pleasure in wishing Shirley Savigny the happiest of birthdays. She celebrated number one hundred on July 22nd. †

MILESTONES

Deaths

- Barry Tiffin, May 30, 2021
- John McClure, July 24, 2021

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COUNCIL
Steve Elson

One traditionally associates summer with having down time, a chance to recharge batteries at a cottage, in the back yard, at a local park, or swimming pool. Alas, like last summer when Council members and Bruce Moor, in particular, worked diligently to facilitate Erich Knapp's arrival in London – and afterwards, as many people supported Erich through his two weeks of quarantine and settlement in a new home – this summer has been uncharacteristically busy too.

- A Search Committee has been formed under the leadership of Chris Wood to search for, and recruit, a new director of music.
- Steps have been taken to ensure we have music coverage until a new director is hired and Organist Emeritus Paul Merritt has graciously agreed to undertake this role, with Lynda Kennedy as a very capable back-up. Viki Meredith will once again be serving FSA as interim chamber choir/senior choir director.
- Steps have been taken to facilitate Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence and his family's arrival in Canada and settlement in London (sound familiar?). The Search Committee that led the recruitment process is taking a leadership role

in this regard. Kerry Hill has been doing a lot of behind-the-scenes work in this regard. Thanks Kerry!

- We have had to say goodbye to Heather Vouvalidis who has retired as church administrator. Although a more formal thanks will occur this fall, the occasion was marked in several ways including a "Congratulations" on the notice sign on the front lawn of FSA.
- We have had the opportunity to expand Kathryn Skelly's role at FSA. She is now the office manager and is employed on a full-time basis – congratulations Kathryn!
- The Finance Committee is actively looking at how to best address the future bookkeeping needs of FSA.

A task group of Council members has been meeting to plan a full-day retreat for volunteer leaders and staff of FSA. It will be held on October 27th at the Lamplighter Inn.

Throughout these developments, your Executive Committee has been actively engaged, Council has been kept informed, and eblast messages have been sent out as needed.

Many thanks to everyone who is donating their time and talents to FSA as we move through these important transitions in our life as a community of faith. †



TRUSTEES
Jackie Williams &
Paul Cooper



Hopefully, by the time this edition of *Tidings* is published, we will be meeting in person as a congregation, and welcoming our new minister, Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence and his family! We have had a tumultuous year due to the pandemic, and it will be a huge relief to get back to a semblance of normal life.

Sadly, this month our congregation is saying goodbye to Doug Jones, who is moving to BC for a well-deserved (and overdue!) retirement. Doug has been such a mainstay of this congregation for 44 years, serving as chair of Council as well as more recently an invaluable co-chair of Trustees. I am indebted to him for mentoring me as his fellow co-chair during this past year in what was, for me, a steep learning curve. Doug will be greatly missed by many in the congregation.

However, I am delighted that Paul Cooper has agreed to serve as my fellow co-chair of Trustees. This reinforces Benjamin Franklin's words "If you want something done, ask a busy person!" Welcome Paul!

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Trustees have been

meeting remotely to ensure that the Trust Funds are performing optimally, and to approve any funds for necessary repairs and improvements within the church and manse. Despite the volatility in the markets, our Trust Fund assets are still growing, thanks to careful management by the Trustee's Investment Committee led by David Manness.

There were fewer calls on operating funds this year, enabling Council to approve donations of \$30,000 to Indwell Housing, and \$10,000 to the Wright Clinic, which were disbursed by Trustees in July. Indwell builds affordable housing in London and will use this donation to equip a communal kitchen at the Woodfield Gate Apartments (see page 9). The Wright Clinic was conceived and created by our own Ken Wright, and provides free dental care for low-income families in London (see Vol. 31, No. 2). There is a tremendous need for these services, as those having acute dental pain who cannot afford a dentist go to physicians' offices or Emergency Departments, neither of which is equipped for dentistry.

Hoping you had a relaxing summer! †



MUSIC
Merran Neville

Here we are 17 months into the pandemic! Throughout that time, since the last regular service of worship on March 15, 2020, there has been music in all services, initially from the archive collection, then live music from fall 2020 with the chamber choir under Erich Knapp's direction until June 2021. In July and August 2021, Paul Merritt, Organist Emeritus, played for services with one of the chamber choir soloists singing the anthems and hymns. Lynda Kennedy also played for two services in August.

Erich announced his departure in July to take up a new position at First English Lutheran Church in Appleton, Wisconsin. While there was great disappointment at this news, we have been blessed once more to have Paul and Dr. Victoria (Viki) Meredith returning to lead the music in worship; Paul on the organ/piano and Viki directing our chamber choir. We are fortunate that Richard Frank, a retired high school music teacher, will be directing the Laudamus Bells. He is also the conductor of the Railway City Wind Ensemble in St. Thomas. Richard and his wife Kathy are members of the senior choir.

Sunday, September 12th will see us back in person and welcoming our new Minister of Worship, Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence. We will also welcome back the chamber choir members – staff soloists Sonja Gustafson – soprano, Francesca Ranalli – mezzo soprano, Chris Wood – tenor, and Alastair Smyth – bass; Eberhard vocal scholars – Emma Batel – soprano and Ellita Gagner – mezzo soprano; additional soloists Hillary Tufford – mezzo soprano and Christopher Pitre-McBride – bass. Emma and Ellita are introduced in the article on page 11. We are so blessed to have such amazing talent in our midst!

The search committee for a director of music had its first meeting in July. The job description and advertisement are on the FSA website, www.fsaunited.com, under Info Depot. The deadline for applications is October 15th, 2021. Members of the Search Committee are Dr. Stephen Adams, Sonja Gustafson, Lynda Kennedy, Bruce Moor, Merran Neville, and Chris Wood (chair). If you have a suggestion for a candidate(s), we welcome your input. †



MEMBERSHIP & NURTURE
Heather Locking-Cusolito

During the summer our committee has been enjoying a more relaxed pace. Our pastoral care responsibilities continue, however, with the Caring Callers and the Prayer Chain under the dedicated leadership of Annabelle Logan.

Dr. Jo Ann Silcox continues her faithful outreach both through pastoral calls and her daily pastoral care letter. We are also so very thankful for the ongoing pastoral ministry of Rev. Dr. David McKane who retired from this position at the end of August. We are so grateful, David, for your many years of faithful pastoral care.

Over the summer we have initiated an Open Sanctuary on Wednesday mornings from 10:30–11:30. Turnout has been modest, but it has been such a positive experience to spend quiet, reflective time in our lovely sanctuary.

The Affirm Committee, which was about to be revitalized

by the leadership of Erich Knapp, is now sadly leaderless. Three willing and enthusiastic people are looking for a new leader. If this role is something that you would be interested in, please contact Heather Locking-Cusolito (johnncusolito009@sympatico.ca).

As we look forward to reopening First-St. Andrew's for in-person worship, we are planning a reception on the lawn following the first service with our new minister, Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence, on September 12th. We are also looking forward to our first in-person meeting as a committee since November 2020. At this meeting we will welcome Dr. Mary Mattar, who has agreed to join the committee and to gradually take on the role of coordinating the lay visitation team. I know that Mary would welcome any volunteers to become members of this team. †



CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT
Allyson Watson

The Christian Development Committee is really looking forward to seeing everyone in September. The youth group held a pool party at the Richardsons' (thank you for hosting!) to start our in-person connection. We will be starting church school outside on September 12th. The youth will be having a retreat at Camp Kee Mo Kee the weekend of September

17–19th; the theme will be God's Grace. Christian Development is reworking the confirmation curriculum. Susan McKane and Elizabeth Stewart will be leading our young people through their confirmation journey beginning in September. Keep your eyes open for adult education opportunities coming this fall. †



UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Nancy Quinn

Your UCW executive met on Monday, August 30th to percolate ideas for safely engaging in our Second Annual Fall Series of UCW Charity Sales. We need your help in order to support our many charities, such as My Sisters Place, Anova, and L'Arche. We plan to sell canned preserves, jams, jellies, relishes, a wide variety of knitted delights, and other, unique craft items. We invite all UCW members and FSAers to contribute products and/or purchase. More details will follow in the FSA weekly email blasts during the fall. With COVID safety concerns, we are not planning general UCW meetings at this time.

If you need jars for making preserves for the UCW sales, please take a box of 12 (initial limit), or fewer, from the UCW-labelled cart in the Atrium (by the mailboxes). Also available, as needed, are new sealing lids and rings.

We are sad to announce that an important highlight of the Advent Season, ably led by Glenda Robinson, and always avidly awaited by the London community, the UCW's Boutique Bazaar will not be occurring this year, due to COVID-19. We look forward to resuming this important fundraising event in safer times.

Some FSA UCW members gathered with the UCW regions

of Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways, and Horseshoe Falls for a virtual Canada Day morning vigil, Every Child Matters: Together in Prayer. The First Nations speakers told us of their grief over the ongoing discoveries of the residential school graves of their ancestors. An important resource for learning about the residential school tragedy is the award-winning book, *Five Little Indians*, by Michelle Good.

Do you enjoy travelling and meeting new people with a common love of the UCW mission? Consider signing up for the 60th Anniversary of the UCW: Continuing in Hope Conference, to be held in Sydney, Nova Scotia, July 11–15, 2022. For more information: A comprehensive information package on pages 3 and 4 of Issue #2 (June, 2021) of *Keeping in Touch: The UCW National Newsletter* at <https://nakhakauc.ca/programs/ucw/>. The website <https://ucceast.ca/fslwdw-and-region-15-ucw/ucws-60th-anniversary-news/> has hotel pictures, etc.

UCW members, please help us to help the less fortunate, who are feeling the pandemic effects most keenly. Thank you for the cheques received earlier this year. We would appreciate your mailing your “green envelope” donation cheques to FSA, Attention: UCW. †



ARCHIVES

Don Jones

The pandemic has slowed, and the vaccination rates have improved. The Archives Committee has been able to have a short work bee in the archives room to reorganize the materials. The United Church mandates certain material for storing as Archives of the United Church. That work bee took place on Tuesday, July 20th. Some of the furniture was moved to allow full access to the shelving. The collecting of like materials such as *Tidings*, annual reports, etc. was started. The next

step will be to establish a schematic of the room to make it easier to find archival material that is stored there.

The committee meets once each month and has been doing so on Zoom during the pandemic, but with vaccination rates improving we are considering meeting in person in the fall when church resumes in-person gatherings.

The work is not hard but sometimes detailed. The topics and material that we encounter from the history of FSA are always fascinating. If there are others who share an interest in the history of our great church, the committee is welcoming new members. Please contact the church office or email Don Jones, chair of the committee at nodsenoj@gmail.com. †



COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Jim Silcox

Our conversion to a more graphic and, we hope, user-friendly version of FSA's weekly email blast (eblast) has been largely successful. We still have occasional “drop-outs” in the mailing list, which seems to happen at random.

If you experience a “drop-out” and fail to get the eblast when you know you are on our list, please let Kathryn know and she will send you a special delivery.

As part of our on-going development of the eblast, we

are doing a little experiment with paid advertising. We have always included, for free, fundraising announcements as well as notices of events that we think you might be interested in that are occurring outside the church. These we place under the “Neighbourly News” banner. Soon we will be dipping our toe into so-called sponsor content by including paid advertisements at the end of some of the eblast mail-outs. This has the potential to be a new revenue line for the church. Please be patient with us while we pursue this idea on a trial basis. †



MISSION & OUTREACH

Barbara Dalrymple

Local Ministries

St. Paul's Social Services continues to feed the vulnerable downtown population on a daily basis. Please donate non-perishable goods to the atrium shopping cart.

We also collect used wearable walking/running shoes for the London Intercommunity Health Centre.

Mission & Service Fund

Thank you for your support to the United Church Mission & Service Fund. Our Haitian partners are actively engaged with the recent earthquake devastation. Other partners in various countries are distributing PPE (personal protective equipment) and supporting COVID programs.

East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO)

The longer this pandemic continues, the more people's well-being is affected. So many individuals in the Marconi community feel isolated and do not have a personal support system. Nancy Howard, our ELUCO Community Support Worker, continues to meet with individuals and families outside. More often than email or phone conversations, people just call her over when they see her. Being present to listen and offer support is most appreciated by individuals. Anxiety and depression are of great concern, as we know there are not enough supports available for mental health care. Nancy has recently completed more courses in dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues.

Food distribution continues as always. Nancy distributed Harvest Bucks to purchase local fresh fruits and vegetables at the market. While Welcome Wednesday is taking a break for the summer, a volunteer from Valleyview Church has been delivering rescued food for us to sort and deliver to Marconi families. Rowntree has been able to share five food boxes provided by London Urban Services Organization (LUSO) to distribute in Marconi.

Children have been able to register and participate in an outdoor afternoon day camp with the Boys and Girls Club at the Marconi complex. Together with the London Public Library Outreach, Nancy hosted a workshop one morning with stories, activities, and crafts. Younger children were especially thrilled to be able to participate because they cannot join the day camp.

Grow-a-Row 2021 Update

FSA's Canadian Foodgrains Bank campaign, which we call Grow-a-Row, continues with St. Marys United until November. Donations are gratefully accepted through St. Marys United Church. The balance as of the end of July is \$3700. First-St. Andrew's accounts for \$2900 and St. Marys United \$800. Perth County has had lots of rain and sun this summer,

so the crops are doing well. We are looking forward to our October 17th service with Helen Keenlside speaking on the Foodgrains program.



White Squirrel Golf Tournament

Pat Pettit

The White Squirrel Golf Tournament Committee is delighted again this year with the results of our second COVID virtual tournament. FSA members and 17 hole sponsors helped us reach our goal with generous donations. The total donated was \$8625. Beneficiaries of these donations are the families who depend on East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO), St. Paul's Food Bank London, and child street vendors in Nicaragua who attend Los Quinchos school in Managua. Sincere thanks go to Allyson Watson, David Manness, Jim Silcox, Heather Vouvalidis, Kathryn Skelly, and members of the Mission & Outreach Committee. †

HOLE SPONSORS 2021

- gejolink property services (George Jolink)
- In Memory of Jean Knowles (Donna Fraleigh)
- In Memory of Jean Knowles (Bill Knowles)
- Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario
- Desjardins Insurance (Jane Hill)
- Janitis Wealth Management/RBC Dominion Securities (Eric Janitis)
- Jeffery B. Hayward Wealth Management/ RBC Dominion Securities
- Judi & Grant Barker
- Kelland Portfolio Management/Scotia Wealth Management (Rob Kelland)
- BMO Nesbitt Burns (Paul Creighton)
- BMO Nesbitt Burns (Brian Dunn)
- Remark Fresh Markets (Gerry Remark)
- RLM Professional Corporation (Rebecca Briley)
- The McGorman Investment Team, CIBC Wood Gundy (Brian McGorman)
- Zavitz Insurance & Wealth Inc. (Terry Zavitz)
- Ian Cousins
- CIBC Wood Gundy (Brenda Finch)

Walk and Roll

The Walk and Roll for Families will take place on the last Sunday in September, September 26th. Please contact Janice Elliott (janiceliott04@gmail.com) if you would like to join the walkathon or sponsor a walker. This is ELUCO's major fundraiser for the year and your support is greatly needed!

Interfaith Tree Planting

The Interfaith Tree Planting Event is planned for Sunday, September 26th. Groups from a variety of faiths will meet to plant trees from 2:30 – 5:30. Save the date and watch for more information in early September!



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WORSHIP

Jo Ann Silcox

The Worship Committee joins me in giving thanks to the congregation for their incredible patience through these many months in which we have been without a full-time minister.

At the same time, all of us want to express our extreme gratitude to the Rev. Dr. David McKane for his selfless willingness to function as the Regionally appointed Pastoral Charge Supervisor on top of his pastoral care duties. David has given unstintingly even through inter-current health issues.

On the average of twice a month we have been blessed with pulpit supply by guest preachers – Rev. Ann Corbet and Rev. Karen Low – who brought not only their preaching but

also their pastoral skills to lift us up again and again.

The Music Ministry was conducted by Erich Knapp and a chamber choir during these many months, and we are profoundly grateful for those gifts, even as we bid Erich a fond goodbye as he returns to the USA.

Each Sunday, services have been video-taped, for viewing later in the following week, by the able team of Merran Neville, Jim Silcox, and Kathryn Skelly.

We look forward to a resumption of worship in the sanctuary in September, COVID permitting. That return will be highlighted by the arrival of our new Minister of Worship and Congregational Life – Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence. †



CLIMATE ACTION LONDON

Mary Ann Hodge

Climate Action London has been working to increase its profile this summer.

Climate Action London was successful in an application for a summer student for eight weeks, which has allowed us to improve our digital infrastructure. Check out our new website at ClimateActionLondon.ca to see how we can help you engage in the climate emergency. FSA graciously handled the administrative functions for this position.

A young London native who has spent time on the front-lines of the Fairy Creek Old Growth protest in British Columbia was in London for a visit and wanted to increase awareness of the continuing old-growth logging issue. To support this initiative, Climate Action London held a rally on July 30th at Victoria Park and collected 150 signatures to be sent to the Environment Minister and local MPs. Both Climate Action London and Old Growth Forests received media coverage from CBC London and CTV News.

On Saturday, September 11th, we had the opportunity to partner with Western University's Orientation week. Twenty

students walked the neighbourhoods of Western with Mike Bancroft and Terry Peters, distributing 1,500 flyers inviting households to be a "Climate Action DOER."

Climate Action London is now the contact organization in London for Greening Sacred Spaces (London). We will officially launch the London Chapter on September 21st with a Fall Equinox event at Victoria Park. Join us in a guided ceremony by Traci Whiteye, who will lead a walk around the perimeter of the park.

On Sunday September 26th, from 2:30–5:30 pm, Climate Action London will be co-hosting the Interfaith Tree Planting day with ReForest London. We hope to see many FSA members there to show our support for the many faith groups in London.

We continue to pursue grants to help us reach more Londoners to inspire and advocate for greater climate action.

You can email us at climateactionlondon@gmail.com, subscribe to receive our weekly Environment Message at <http://eepurl.com/hhK8Ff>, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. †



FINANCE

Kerry Hill

FSA's finances remain steady in these uncertain times. We are still benefiting from the faithfulness of our congregation; members are continuing to honour their pledges. We are also grateful for the Federal Government pandemic support programs. The salary support was nearly \$20,000 as of the January 2021 reporting period, with more likely to come. And, as you may remember, we have also received \$20,000 as the grant portion of a Federal loan program.

On the expense side, costs have been reduced a little

because of the building closure. But, of course, total rental income is down. We are fortunate that Meals on Wheels is an essential service and allowed to remain open throughout all the pandemic lockdowns. The rental income from their use of Farquhar House and the Fireside Room is substantial.

Also on the expense side, we face a significant expenditure to assist our new minister with his moving expenses. If anyone feels so "moved," an extra donation to help with the relocation costs would be happily received. †



PLANNING

Steve Elson

The FSA Planning Committee, under the leadership of Kerry Hill, continues to explore optional uses for FSA space that will provide a revenue source to assist with the financial sustainability of FSA.

A recent development that has caught our attention is the work of the United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC) – a corporation of the United Church of Canada that has been established to support congregations across Canada in finding alternative uses for their property – with a particular, but not exclusive, focus on building new affordable housing units. For more information go to: <https://uprc.ca/>.

We have had several meetings with staff members from the UPRC to date, and AJ Wray from Western University, who has been supporting the committee for several years now, is also involved. We do not know where this will take us yet, but we see ourselves as benefiting from having the skills and perceptions of external people with expertise in property development to assess our situation and identify opportunities.

The Planning Committee continues to look for viable options to repurpose our spaces, including working with our current long-term tenants, to find mutually beneficial partnerships. †



PROPERTY

George Jolink

It has been an unusual time at FSA over the course of the pandemic. With minimal use of the building and keeping budgets in mind, the Property Committee has not undertaken any major projects over the last 12 months.

As always, the building is monitored, and maintenance is ongoing when issues arise. Many thanks are extended to Tim Miedema for his ongoing commitment to FSA and the operation of our facility.

We have seen an uptick in homeless activity on the property, largely due to the weather and the fact that there is very little other activity onsite. Additional security measures have been and will be installed to prevent unwanted access.

We are pleased to have completed the signage for the Meditation Garden and to see regular community use of our garden. I have been approached by neighbours commending us for our commitment to the neighbourhood and the environment.

From a rental perspective, we have seen a drop in outside rentals over the last 18 months but are pleased to report that

requests are now starting to come in and we look forward to sharing our facility with the community. We encourage these partnerships even though it sometimes means we have to be flexible.

The Planning Committee, with Property Committee involvement and in consultation with long-term tenants, continues to hold discussions and explorations about making better use of our building to serve both our needs and those of the larger community.

Lastly, from our committee we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Willis Buckingham, who has recently moved to Nova Scotia, for his years of dedicated service. Willis brought a wealth of expertise and insight into the operation of our building. With his departure, we now have a vacancy on our Committee to fill.

We would also like to extend our thanks to volunteer David Beach for his years of dedicated service.

We look forward to the arrival of Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence and the resumption of activities at First-St. Andrew's United Church. †

Remembering Bill Watson (Cont'd from Page 6)

establish a new Medical School at the University of Nairobi. Bill eagerly joined this endeavour, and the family spent another wonderful year abroad. During this time Bill worked extensively with the Flying Doctor Service. He travelled to remote places and dealt with whatever medical treatment was needed, including everything from waterborne diseases to crocodile bites. Elspeth became very ill during this time and had to be sent home

for brain surgery. Fortunately, she survived and rejoined the family in Kenya.

In about 1966 Bill and Elspeth moved the family to London, ON, where Bill took up the position of Senior Gastroenterologist at Victoria Hospital, where he remained for the rest of his career.

Bill loved playing Bridge, and the violin. He was an amateur actor and performed several times at the Palace Theatre with the London Community Players. He and

Elspeth were both committed Christians and were actively involved in the life of FSA, serving on many committees, and Bill served a term as chair of Council. He was also an ordained Lay Preacher.

He was a remarkable man and led a remarkable life. His children have many fond memories and expressed them at his memorial service. He and Elspeth certainly left a positive mark on First-St. Andrew's. †



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CHURCH STAFF

- **Minister of Worship & Congregational Life:** Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence
- **Interim Choir Director:** Viki Meredith
- **Minister Emeritus:** Rev. Dr. David McKane
- **Youth & Young Family Coordinator:** Jane Dockrill/Elizabeth Stewart
- **Office Manager:** Kathryn Skelly
- **Facility & Maintenance Coordinator:** Tim Miedema
- **Designated Pastoral Care Volunteer:** Jo Ann Silcox
- **Part-Time Custodian:** George Jolink
- **Organist Emeritus:** Paul Merritt

