



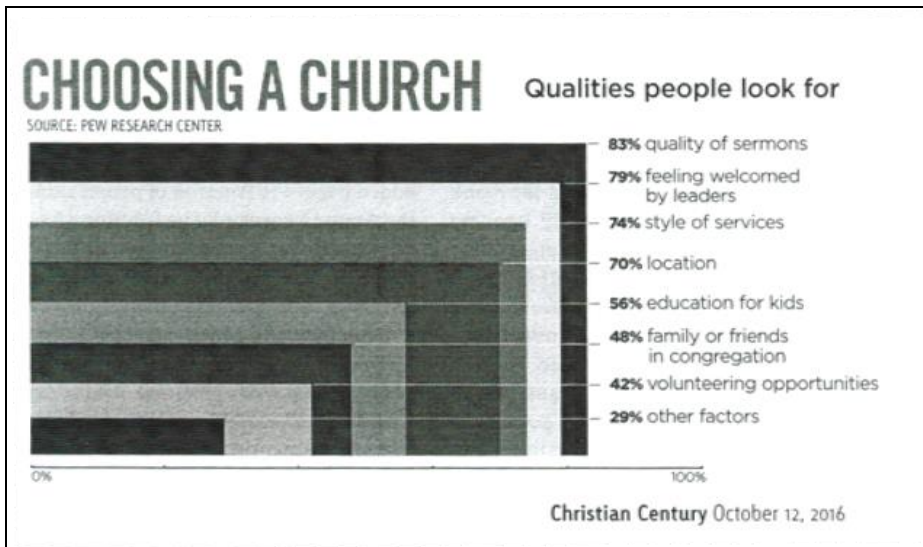
Upcoming Christmas Season Services and Events

Nov. 30	2:00 pm	Lessons, Carols & Cookies Service
Dec. 2	7:30 pm	Wassail Party at Fenwick United
Dec. 4	7:00 pm	Joint Choir Carol Sing at Fonthill United
Dec. 7	7:00 pm	Service of Hope for the Bereaved at Glad Tidings Church
Dec. 18	9:30 am	Fonthill United Choir Cantata
Dec. 24	7:00 pm	Family Service at Fenwick
	9:00 pm	Candlelight Communion at Fonthill
Dec. 25	10:00 am	Joint Service at Fenwick
Jan. 1	9:30 am	Joint Service at Fonthill

*Grapevine
Advent 2016*



What do people look for when choosing a church?



FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH

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From the Minister

Pastoral Care:

In the fall issue of The Grapevine I wrote about the ministry of pastoral care at Fonthill United. I said that I would propose the formation of a Pastoral Care Committee to help extend the ministry of pastoral care more widely. In September I made that proposal to Council. Council discussed it at length and approved it. Since then, the formation of the Pastoral Care Committee has generated much more conversation than I ever expected. Not everyone talked directly to me about it but from what has been reported to Council, people have at least these three questions on their minds so I will begin by answering them.

Question 1: Is the Pastoral Care Committee going to replace the minister's visiting? In other words, is the minister going to stop visiting and ask the Pastoral Care Committee to do his job for him?

Answer: No. The Pastoral Care Committee will not be asked to do the minister's job. I intend to continue visiting in hospitals and homes, and to be available to the people who need pastoral care.

Question 2: We have a team of Shepherd Visitors. Isn't that enough?

Answer: No. The Shepherd Visitors do a valuable ministry on our behalf but there are fewer of them than before, therefore needs go unmet.

Question 3: Why does Fonthill United need a Pastoral Care Committee?

Answer: As people get older the pastoral needs of a congregation increase, and Fonthill United includes many older people. One minister cannot meet all those needs and also attend to the other aspects of congregational ministry.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding, please help us by sharing the answers to the questions people are asking. As people may be asking other questions, I'll do my best to anticipate them and provide answers.

Pastoral Care and Shepherd Visitors

A Pastoral Care Committee is different from a "Shepherd Visitors" group in several ways. Most of the Shepherd Visitors group have from one to four people they visit regularly and two members of the Shepherd Visitors Group, Paul Owen and Peggy Palmer, have done most of the work, each of them visiting 40 or 50 people. We hope they will continue to do that.

To my knowledge, the Shepherd Visitors has not met as a group in several years and reports to Council have been infrequent. As part of its mandate, the Shepherd Visitors were not asked to visit people whose church attendance has declined, or people who are new to the congregation. The Pastoral Care Committee intends to reach out to them. The Shepherd Visitors have often given practical help such as driving people to appointments, and running errands for them but the Pastoral Care Committee will not be asked to do this. The Shepherd Visitors have hosted a twice a year communion tea party and the Pastoral Care Committee plans to support this. For the past year, the Shepherd Visitors have not had a chairperson to lead them.

Marleene Kretchman is a Shepherd Visitor. She will also be chairperson of the new Pastoral Care Committee. She has contacted all the Shepherd Visitors and, without exception, they have told her they think the new Pastoral Care Committee is a great idea. They are looking forward to working with the Committee. A joint meeting is being planned for December 7 so we can clarify the relationship between the two groups. Think of the Pastoral Care Committee members as the people who visit and come to monthly meetings, and Shepherd Visitors as people who continue to visit and to help the people they are helping now, but who don't have to come to meetings.

What is Being Proposed?

Although Fonthill United has not had a Pastoral Care Committee, it's been common knowledge that the most effective United Church congregations do have one. Typically the members of the committee will take some training, make one or two visits a week, meet with the minister once a month, report monthly to Council on their activities and provide the church with a Vulnerable Sector Report. It may be too ambitious but we hope that every member of the congregation will get a visit every year. This is the model I would like us to follow.

A Pastoral Care Committee requires people who are willing to visit people they may never have met on behalf of the congregation. Five people have offered to do this for us: Marleene Kretchman will serve as chairperson and make reports to Council. Sharon Middleton, Sheila Laundry, Joan Rigg and Joyce Teather have offered to serve. They have all joined Fonthill United in recent years and come from other United Churches with great experience to enrich our ministry. The Committee was appointed by Council in September and Council may add to their number as time goes on. We could really use a man or two on the Committee.

The members of our Committee have been taking a course in Spiritual and Religious Care offered by the Niagara Health System. The Rev Bob Bond, who has been the Spiritual Care provider at the Welland Hospital for 26 years is teaching it. The course is 8 weeks long and covers these topics: Healing Illness and Curing Disease; Grieving Loss in Sickness and Death; Communication: Active Listening; Theological Reflection; Communication: Pastoral Responses; Hospital Orientation and An Assignment (case study); Review and Critique of the Assignment; and Graduation. Bob has taught this course to hundreds of people during the past 18 years. This year's class includes pastoral visitors from several denominations in the area and even two ordained priests! Bob's enthusiasm for Pastoral Care is contagious. By the time you read this, the committee will have completed the course. They have all applied for their Vulnerable Sector Report.

What makes a visit Pastoral Care?

A Friendly Visit – Sometimes a pastoral care visit is not much different from the kind of visit friends or neighbours have. People get together and chat about the weather, the daily news on TV or about family and friends. Better still, they may tell their life story and really get to know one another.

An Expression of Concern – When someone is experiencing a difficult time in life, a pastoral visit expresses understanding and concern. It is a way for the visitor to represent the congregation and to say on its behalf, "You are not alone."

An Exploration of Meaning – When things happen in life it can raise profound questions. In church we call them theological questions, such as: 'Why is this happening to me? What is the right thing to do? Does God care about what happens to me? Can I trust that I will be okay in the end? Have I lived a good life? What can I hope for or pray for?' The way most people explore these questions is by talking about them. After a good pastoral visit a person feels understood, and some of the things that had been confusing might seem clearer.

Words of Comfort - Sometimes people are too upset to pray and sometimes they have forgotten how to pray. Having someone say a prayer on your behalf can be very reassuring. Sharing a Bible reading can also bring comfort in a time of distress.

It Helps To Talk About It – We do our best thinking out loud but not everyone wants to listen to what we have on our minds. Pastoral visitors try to be the best listeners they can be and they do their best to be non-judgemental. Pastoral visitors will also promise to maintain

confidentiality so you can say what you need to and not have to worry that other people will know your secrets.

What Can I Expect?

Before anyone visits you, they will phone to arrange a good time for the visit. If you do not want a visit from the Pastoral Care Committee, you are free to say, "No thank you." Visits are typically for about an hour but if the visit is going well and you have lots to talk about, then it can be a bit longer. You do not need to provide your visitor with refreshments but you can if you want to. At the end of the visit, you can tell your visitor whether you'd like them to come back. The committee will have a long list to get through but if you would like a visit sooner, please call the church to ask for one and we'll arrange to have a visitor contact you right away.

How is a Minister's Visit Different?

Ministers typically have more training in pastoral care than lay visitors and if they have been in ministry for many years, they will have the wisdom of experience and be better able to understand complex issues. Some people feel more confident talking to a minister than they would to a lay pastoral care visitor. The differences, however, between one kind of visit or another may be smaller than you would think. The nature of the visit depends mostly on the person receiving the visit - which is the way it should be.

The Minister's Visit

A minister's visit is usually prompted by a significant occasion or a life changing event. At any given time I may have up to a dozen people on my pastoral list. I give top priority to visit those who are facing the most serious issues and to visit prospective new members. When there has been a death I drop everything to be available to the family. I try to see everyone who is admitted to hospital. When I know that something serious is happening such as a change in health or a death in the family, I will either call or arrange for a visit. Several times a week people will come to visit me in the church office to talk about what is going on in their lives and everyone is welcome to do that. In the Sunday bulletin each week there is the statement, "If you would like the minister to call on you, please contact the church office." I try never to refuse an invitation for a visit.

I do not have direct knowledge to know who is in need of a visit and who is doing okay. I wish God would whisper the names into my ear when I am praying, but that hardly ever happens. It is disappointing to me when someone wants a visit, and instead of calling the church to invite me, they tell their friends and then I hear about it second or third hand, perhaps even from several sources. Sometimes I hear that someone is angry because I did not know enough to visit when something important happened in their life. How would I have known?

The congregation can help me to become more effective in offering pastoral care in three common sense ways:

1. If you want or need a visit, please call to invite me for a visit. I will do my best to arrange a time to see you.
2. If you want to suggest someone who you think would benefit from my visit, please check with that person first to make sure that they'd like a visit before you suggest I go see them. That saves us the embarrassment of having a visit with people who don't really care to have me there.
3. If we are having a visit and you have something you want to talk about, please mention it early in the visit so we can give it the time it deserves.

Together, with the Pastoral Care Committee, the Shepherd Visitors and the support of the congregation, I believe we can work together to form a network of pastoral care so that everyone feels included. That is why I proposed the formation of this Committee. I suggest we try it for a year. If, after that, the consensus is that Pastoral Care visitors are not needed or wanted, then we will withdraw the proposal. I would hate to see the ministry of pastoral care become a cause for division.

Discussion Group

I would like to resume the after-church discussion group in February. In past years I have always been able to find a new and interesting video series but it seems that we have done them all and nothing new has come out recently. Some of the series we did years ago before many of the people started coming to these discussions, so one option is to repeat one of them. But I have three other options to suggest.

A second option is to explore the theory and practice of meditation. During my sabbatical I explored the theory and practice of meditation and when I came back I reported on what I had learned. Several people spoke to me afterward saying they were interested in learning more about it. If you ever wanted to learn how to meditate, this might be for you.

A third option is to "Read the Bible Together." In the United Church we say we believe in "the primacy of scripture." We call the Bible the "foundation" on which Christian lives are built. Yet, the only occasion on which most Christians hear the Bible read is in worship on Sunday morning. The Bible is a hard book to read by yourself and those who try, often give up because they don't 'get it'. In this option we would read it together, choose a book of the Bible, read sections of it to one another, and discuss what its message is for us today.

A fourth option is to do a book study. Many great books are being published by Christian authors and the group could meet weekly to discuss a chapter. In order to get the most out of this discussion, people would have to commit themselves to reading a chapter during the week.

I would like to hear what options you are interested in exploring, so please talk about it among yourselves and to me. I hope that we can agree on something so we can begin on February 5.

Remits

This fall, the discussion group met to consider the changes that the United Church of Canada has proposed through the remit process. Many people took part in the discussions and Council took direction from them to vote on these remits at the October and November meetings. Council members expressed appreciation for a process that made the decision whether or not to support these remits very clear.

Revision to the Membership Roll

In October, Council made a long overdue revision to the membership roll of Fonthill United by removing the names of those who have moved away, or who have stopped supporting and attending for several years. A total of 64 names were removed from the roll and you will see that reported again at the annual meeting.

Annual Meeting with Lunch?

The Annual Meeting is scheduled to take place on January 29 after worship. It has been our custom to meet and then have a simple soup and bread lunch. We are hoping that someone will come forward to offer to prepare it for us this year. If you can help, please mention it to me.

Garry van Bruchem

From the Worship & Membership Committee

Anyone interested in joining the Worship & Membership Committee would be very welcome, or if you know of someone we could invite to join us, please let a committee member know. Our committee would like to give special thanks to the choir, choir director and all who participate in the services.

Janet Hamilton, Worship & Membership Committee Chair

175 and counting – In 2017, Fonthill United Church will celebrate its 175th anniversary. We were established as Fonthill Methodist Church in 1842 and became Fonthill United Church in 1925. Our anniversary service and lunch is planned for April 30, 2017. The guest preacher will be the Rev. Dr. Gordon Crossfield who served the congregation from 1988-1994. We would like to send invitations to former members and friends. The church secretary is generating a list of names and addresses. If you can think of anyone we should invite, please give the information to her.



The 13th annual “***Homes for the Holidays***” Christmas House Tour was held November 12. Once again our Church was the centre of activity in the days leading up to the big event and on the actual day!

The organizing committee, consisting of Virginia Haun, Sharron Bradley, Patrice Walker and Carolyn van der Sluis, relied on many, many volunteers to make the event successful.

To give you an idea of how many people are required to bring this year’s house tour to fruition, on the actual day there are 85 shifts/jobs that need to be filled. 53 congregational members participated and the rest of the shifts were filled by students working for community service hours. These shifts include hosts/hostesses in the homes, volunteers in the kitchen, at the bake table, in the Narthex and in the refreshment area.

And prior to this, there were numerous other tasks including posting of flyers locally and throughout the region, purchasing ingredients for and the baking of the scones, calling congregational members to encourage donations to the bake table, sorting baked goods prior to the sale, decorating the Church, etc. And then there are the bakers, many of whom were very generous when asked to provide baked goods.

I guess I just want to convey to you that this is not just a four person committee endeavour, but a real Church and external community affair, and that your participation is such an essential ingredient. We rely heavily on you volunteering and on that of students who require community service hours.

While this **IS** a successful fund raising event for Fonthill United, it is only successful because of all of you. We all give and do what we can, but when the requests go out from our committee, you all respond positively and unequivocally and therefore ensure the success of the tour.

We extend a note of appreciation to the home owners who willingly opened their homes to the decorators and to the over 400 visitors and volunteers; to the designer decorators and to the sponsors of the house tour. We would ask that you support these businesses, as in reality, there would be no house tour without their participation!

The Bake Table once again was very profitable. Proceeds generated from the bake sale: \$1,859.50

Actual number of tickets sold totaled 402. Proceeds generated from ticket sales: \$8,040.00

All combined receipts for the 13th annual “***Homes for the Holidays***” Christmas House Tour: \$10,086.50

The organizing committee thanks you all for your tremendous support!

Submitted by Carolyn van der Sluis and Virginia Haun, Co-chairs

The Observer magazine has won 41 church press awards and has been nominated for two National Magazine Awards for works published in 2015. The winners’ list included First Place for denominational magazines in the Associated Church Press competition. It was the third year in a row that *The Observer* was named the ACP’s best magazine. Magazine renewals are due by February and if you are a current subscriber, an *Observer* envelope will be tucked inside your annual supply of offering envelopes in December. If you would like to start a new subscription, contact the church office. Annual cost is \$25.00 for 11 issues. It really is worth it!

Finance and Property Report

A detailed financial report was provided at the end of September and for information purposes, it was as follows:

“At the end of September, the deficit in the Operating Fund amounted to \$24,093 compared to a deficit of \$21,560 last year. On a positive note, the deficit is \$5,000 lower than our budget. Several reasons for this position include:

- Envelope givings are \$1,600 below 2015.
- Maintenance costs are \$1,000 over budget and last year because of higher costs to repair locks on the front and side doors.
- Interest income is down by \$1,700 because of lower rates.

Assuming we have a similar contribution from the house tour as last year, and considering proceeds from a recent Extension Council Grant, we project a year-end deficit in the \$15-\$16,000 range.

While this amount is below budget, it is significant. We maintain costs are kept to a minimum and the only way to reduce the deficit is to increase revenue. With this in mind, we request you keep Fonthill United in mind when you consider additional year-end gifts and in asking this, we know similar requests are received daily from a variety of charitable organizations. We do need your support.

The 2017 budget process begins in November and if anyone has any thoughts or views, please do not hesitate to speak to any member of the Finance Committee. We would also appreciate knowing if you are aware of any organization who may be looking for space to rent.

We are pleased to report we were approved for a grant of approximately \$16,100 by the Extension Council of Niagara Presbytery. These funds represented a 50% refund on qualifying capital expenditures completed since June 2015 along with \$8,400 to cover a quote held to complete additional roof repairs. The balance of \$7,700 will be allocated to both the Operating and Capital Funds.

In late August, we added two more handicap parking spots and last week you will observe the Town had the large tree on Canboro Road cut down at our request. It was rotten and posed some risk to our property. One of the three trees in the parking lot is in rough shape and we will have it removed shortly.”

During the month of October, members’ monthly givings increased by \$7,000 which, combined with \$4,200 from the Extension Council Grant, reduced our accumulated year to date deficit to \$15,197 from \$24,000 at the end of September. Very impressive to say the least!!

Thanks to Carolyn and her committee, and all those who volunteered, the House Tour this year was another tremendous success and we do expect roughly \$7,000 will be directed to the Operating Fund. With this in mind, we are projecting a year-end deficit in the \$10,000 range. Can you help us reduce that amount?

We should mention, from the House Tour proceeds we are making a contribution of \$500 to Pelham Cares and \$500 to the Syrian Refugee Fund which speaks well for the community involvement.

As mentioned previously, we are well into the budget process now and any ideas on revenue generation or on-going processes and programs would be appreciated.

Several property projects are underway as follows:

Roof Repairs - the roof has leaked in several areas for many years. We have a quote for \$8,800 to cover repairs to the two flat sections and work was to start last week. In a very detailed examination, the contractor feels part of the problem might be the tower which was constructed and secured by inserting steel rods/supports through the roof. This is now being looked at and you will see workmen on site for a few days. Funds to cover the original repairs were provided through the Extension Council grant.

Sanctuary Lighting - One reworked fixture has been installed and we welcome any comments. A final decision will be made in two weeks and if all are in agreement, a schedule to have all fixtures rewired will be worked out.

In conclusion, if you have any questions on our financial position or property issues do not hesitate to speak to any member of the committee.

Thank you for your continuing support of Fonthill United.

Jim Bradley, Chair of Finance and Property Committee

The Stewardship Committee

Over the past eleven years we have worked to build a year-round Stewardship Program at Fonthill United Church. It has become a way of life for us. Sometimes the focus is on time and talent when we look to our members to serve on Council, on a particular committee or ask for help with a special project. Sometimes we focus on an Outreach Project like the Syrian Refugee appeal or for funds for Cave Springs or Pelham Cares. About once a month we listen to a Minute for Stewardship that highlights a project that is supported through our donations to the United Church Mission and Service Fund where our money is combined with all United Church donations to support critical needs in the world. The gifts of our time, talents and treasure join with the gifts of others to bring life, nourishment and hope to those in need.

The committee would like to extend a special thank you to Marvin Myhre who shared a very personal and emotional testimony with us. His testimony was inspirational and encouraging and the congregation was blessed by his courage in sharing his faith story.

This year we delivered 119 Intention Forms and as of this date, 64 have been returned. This is a 54% response, just shy of our goal of 56% but up 8% from last year. In addition, 20 contributors increased their intentions over 2016. If you have not yet returned your Intention Form, it is not too late. You can either put it in the offering plate on Sunday morning or deliver it to our church secretary. It is important even if you do not intend on changing your givings that you complete the form. It provides helpful information for the budget process.

Thank you to our Church Council and Committee Members for your leadership and support. We are very pleased to report that 93% of our leadership group returned their Intention Form. That is outstanding, congratulations! Another special thank you goes out to the 81% of our PAR contributors who returned their Intention Form. Thank you all for your support!

Finally, we wish to thank you all for consistently and generously sharing your gifts of spirituality and community.

Lyn Taylor, Stewardship Committee Chair

Pelham Community Food Drive is set to go on Saturday, December 3 starting at 9:30 am. Residents in the urban areas of Pelham are asked to put out non-perishable food on their porch. Volunteers from the Fenwick and Fonthill Lions will pick up the food door-to-door. For those living in rural areas, food can be dropped off after December 3 at the Pelham Cares office on Highway 20.

Year-End Contributions – Our books will remain open until Thursday, January 5, 2017 to accept contributions for 2016. All cheques for 2016 donations must be dated before December 31, 2016.

*“Into this world, this demented inn
in which there is absolutely no room for him at all,
Christ comes uninvited.”*

- Thomas Merton