

# Fonthill United Church



*150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year*

1842 – 1992

HISTORY

## FOREWARD

Three generations have passed since the founding of Fonthill United Church, which began as a small, hopeful and faithful band of Methodists in 1842. They were without a building and a resident pastor, and in all humility we might wonder if they were better off. People met wherever they could because they wanted to, and they all exercised ministry to one another.

One hundred years passed. Fonthill United Church's congregation was larger and had a full-time pastor, Rev. W.A. Monteith. He wrote at the celebration of that milestone, "No one needs to be reminded that we are living in a troubled time – near the end of three critical years of war – when even the church herself is rocking on a stormy sea that threatens all we hold worthwhile." For many these words apply today as our denomination debates issues of sexuality and the "Interpretation and Authority of Scripture."

We here in Fonthill believe as we did fifty years ago, "God is not through with the church...God made the church to be the organ of His redemptive purpose in Jesus Christ. It is easy to detect the weaknesses of the organ, but let us not fail to take hope for the success of her mission."

Fifty years later we have built on that hope with expanded facilities and staff, and a fresh commitment to reach out into our community with the Good News. We believe, too, that although fewer people are committed to the institutional church and that Christianity is one of many religions in the Canadian mosaic, still we share with concerned Canadians the basic values that are essential to a healthy, balanced society and country. These values are simply, clearly and lovingly laid out in the Old and New Testament and are visible in the life of Jesus Christ.

In the words of my predecessor W.A. Monteith, "We desire to be worthy successors of those whose faith, courage and vision began the work of the Lord here, so we want to be sure that by a big faith, a strong courage and a great love we are going to make the world a better and happier place for those who will do the building after us."

Gordon Crossfield, Pastor  
Fonthill United Church

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It must be said that no one who compiles a history book can claim authorship. This history was written by the thousands of people who have gone before us in this congregation, and was compiled from the records and fond memories of many individuals. The highest role to which I can aspire is that of scribe. Special acknowledgement must be given, however, to three people, without whom this book would never have been printed.

Long before I arrived on the scene at Fonthill United Church, Betty Wicks and Barbara Rooke were busy compiling archives, with the view to publishing a history of this church. The records which they had gathered, the notes and the pictures, form the bones of this book. The enthusiasm and zeal for accuracy Betty and Barbara brought to this project are the spirit of the document.

Certainly no less important in her contribution is Elaine Champagne, who offered me technical assistance and moral support. Without her mediation between me and a recalcitrant computer, the writing would have ceased almost before it was begun.

For all of you who choose to read this book, my hope is that it will rekindle warm memories of people and times gone by. We are a composite of all that has gone on before, and with that in mind we must foresee a bright future for this congregation.

Jackie Crow,  
Staff Associate

## THE CHURCH ON THE HILL

One hundred years ago this year  
As records clearly show,  
This Church was founded on this hill  
God's blessings to bestow.

One hundred years, we lightly say,  
Nor pause to scan the change  
Which passing years have always brought  
To man's domain and range.

What kindly thoughts we now do have  
Of the days and years of yore,  
What cherished memories we still hold  
Of friends now gone before.

'Twas here we brought our dear betrothed  
In the hey-day of our life,  
To ask the faithful man of God  
To make us man and wife.

'Twas to this Church we brought our babes  
Before they learned of sin,  
"Else ye become as one of these  
Ye cannot enter in."

'Twas here we brought our sainted dead  
And watched them laid at rest,  
Free from all pain, all grief and death  
In the mansions of the blest.

Long may this Church still stand and shine  
As a light-house evermore,  
To pilot man's frail feeble barque  
On toward the Heavenly Shore.

(Excerpts from a poem by Robert Miller in 1942 for the Church's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.)

## MINISTERS OF FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH

1842 – 1992

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1842	Rev. John Ryerson	1870	Rev. Thos. Cardus
1842	Rev. Reuben Tupper	1871	Rev. John S. Clark
1842	Rev. George Sanderson	1871	Rev. Walter Rigsby
1843	Rev. Charles Lavell	1875-77	Rev. Walter Rigsby
1844	Rev. E.B. Harper		Rev. John Ridley
1845	Rev. Thos. Demorest	1877-79	Rev. E.A. Chown
1845	Rev. Thos. Rattray	1880-83	Rev. Walter Rigsby
1846	Rev. Lewis Warner	1883	Rev. W. Walsh
1847-48	Rev. John Law	1883-87	Rev. J.H.Hazelwood
1847	Rev. Lachlin Taylor	1887-90	Rev. Wray R. Smith
1849-50	Rev. Wm. Price	1890-91	Rev. Samuel Wilson
1849	Rev. Wm. Ames	1891-94	Rev. D.H. Taylor
1850	Rev. Isaac Barber	1894-96	Rev. J.H. Kennedy
1850-51	Rev. John S. Evans	1896-99	Rev. J.F. Crowle
1851-52	Rev. Claudius Byrne	1899-00	Rev. J.S. Corcoran
1852	Rev. W.S. Griffin	1900-04	Rev. W.B. Smith
1853	Rev. Geo. Goodwin	1904-08	Rev. H. Caldwell
1853	Rev. Richard Clark	1908-09	Rev. R.M. Teeple
1854-55	Rev. Thos. Bevitt	1909-13	Rev. J.G. Foote
1854	Rev. E.H. Dewart	1913-17	Rev. W.E. Stafford
1855	Rev. R.J. Foreman	1917-18	Rev. G.T. Watts
1856-58	Rev. John G. Laird	1918-22	Rev. R.E. Zimmerman
1856	Rev. Thos. Cobb	1922-26	Rev. T.B. Edmonds
1857-58	Rev. James Goodwin	1926-34	Rev. J.A. Dilts
1859-60	Rev. Samuel Rose	1934-40	Rev. J.L. Guinn
1858-60	Rev. John Potts	1940-47	Rev. W.A. Monteith
1861-62	Rev. Alex Sutherland		Rev. J.W. Hedley
1862	Rev. Daniel Perrin	1947-48	Rev. G.E. Evans
1862-65	Rev. John Wakefield	1948-49	Rev. W.D. Spence
1863	Rev. W.F. Campbell	1949-57	Rev. G. Cox
1864-65	Rev. E.R. Young	1957-62	Rev. Harold Penner
1866-68	Rev. J.H. Starr	1962-75	Rev. Douglas Dunlop
1866-67	Rev. R.H. Waddell	1975-81	Rev. Arthur Steed
1868	Rev. B.B. Keefer	1981-87	Rev. Keith F. Tudor
1869-70	Rev. Lewis Warner	1988	Rev. Peggy Ridout
1869	Rev. R.W. Woodsworth	1988	Rev. Gordon Crossfield

### ASSOCIATE PASTORS

1880-81	Rev. D.W. Snider	1896-97	Rev. F.E. Nelson
1881-82	Rev. W.H. Cooper	1897-98	Rev. A.W. Stepperson
1891-92	Rev. C.M. Marshall	1898-00	Rev. C.P. Holmes
1892-93	Rev. C.G. Swinnerton	1900-01	Rev. J.M. Copeland
1893-94	Rev. J.F. Kaye	1901-02	Rev. W.G. Buell
1894-95	Rev. G.W. Down	1902-03	Rev. G.S. Cassmore
1895-96	Rev. J.M. Haith		

## FONTHILL WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH

### IN THE BEGINNING:

Pelham Township began to be settled about 1790. United Empire Loyalists, unhappy with the new order in the United States sought the opportunity to pursue their agrarian lifestyle under British rule. It was a hard life in this wilderness place, with virgin forests, harsh winter weather and wild animals to be overcome. The Village of Fonthill grew in response to the needs of the surrounding farm community, providing general merchants, blacksmith services and mill facilities. Records show a settlement as far back as 1829, though it was not called Fonthill at that time. Various sources give different information regarding the original name of the village. The area was apparently designated as the "Short Hills," following which the settlement was called "Osborn's Corners." Circa 1842, the name "Temperanceville" was bandied about, but there is no conclusive evidence that this name was ever agreed upon. Most sources claim that the name "Fonthill" was assigned because of the area's resemblance to Fonthill Abbey in England, but in a letter from Henry Giles to his brother John, he stated, "There is a large Temperance Hotel at the top of the hill to which they are about to conduct a stream of water, and construct a fountain. This being the case, I have proposed the name of Fonthill..."

When the basic issues of food, shelter and protection were resolved, the early settlers turned their thoughts to worshipping God in their new community. Many of the Loyalist settlers had their roots in the Scholharie Valley in New York State, where the Society of Friends (Quakers) were dominant. The Quakers were the first to organize in the area. Methodist services were held in the area as early as 1820, led by local preachers, in the homes of the faithful. A congregation of Baptists organized in 1844, meeting wherever opportunity afforded. It was said of the faith communities:

From time to time small churches were erected in various parts of the sparsely settled counties, where was preached those words of truth to the humble pioneers which showed them the way to eternal life; but before churches were erected worship was held in the humble log house of some one of the settlers who professed Christianity. Notice of these meetings would be given out for weeks prior to the time they were to be held, in order that the settlers might become informed of the theme. When the Sunday came on which the meeting was to be held the people, clad in their home-spun clothes, gathered to hear those truths which are at the foundation of all good, and when the service was over a general hand shaking would take place between the "neighbours" who generally lived several miles from each other – and then they would wend their way homewards. Oftentimes the congregation did not number more than ten or fifteen persons, some of whom had walked many miles through the forests or over the unbroken roads in order to be at the meeting.

### OUR METHODIST ROOTS

The Methodist Church in Upper Canada had its roots in British Methodism, and traveled to this area with those fleeing the American Revolution and settling in this new land. We are told that a church building was not needed in these early days, since the followers went to "Class Meetings" of 12 to 15 members, meeting in the homes of the faithful. These meetings were led by Exhorters and Local Preachers, whose duties were to hold or assist in simple services as frequently as possible. The Exhorter's duty was to earnestly admonish the Class to commit their lives to Christ. Exhorters were licensed annually to carry out their duties. After two years' experience, an Exhorter could be granted a Local Preacher's licence. After two further years of experience, he could be granted a Deacon's licence, permitting him to baptize and to bury the dead in the absence of an Ordained Minister. Some Local Preachers went on

to become Ordained Ministers – a training by experience rather than study – but some continued to serve faithfully as Local Preachers for many years. A Local Elder (ordained) oversaw the ministrations of the Exhorters and Local Preachers.

The Classes were supported by visits from a Circuit Preacher, who traveled on horseback from settlement to settlement, providing the link between isolated communities. The first Circuit Preacher to visit Fonthill was the Reverend John Ryerson, brother of the more famous Egerton Ryerson. We are told:

The pouches of the saddle-bag preacher contained more than his Bible and Hymn Book. They held also, the books of John and Charles Wesley that had been printed together with pamphlets to sell to members of the Methodist Classes to whom the rider was to preach and offer his spiritual guidance. These bags would also carry the notes for his sermons. The preacher had much time to contemplate as he made his way along crude roads and pathways through the bush.

With the advent of circuit preachers, the Methodist community began to meet in a local school building, which later became known as Hansler's Schoolhouse. In addition to the aforesaid Mr. Ryerson, the Reverend Messrs. Reuben Tupper and George Sanderson offered leadership to the congregation in Fonthill.

In 1858, during the time that the Reverend J.G. Laird was preacher, the congregation purchased property on which was a partially completed building begun by the Universalists. In a composition written in 1921 by Miss Mary Webster, outlining her reminiscences of Fonthill, it is stated:

I also recollect the Methodist Church being built, which had been commenced by the Universalists. My father heard a superannuated Methodist minister predict that they never would be permitted to finish the building and teach their erroneous doctrine, which proved true.

It was not clear whether the intervention expected would be divine or human, or just what events or revelations led to the demise of the Universalists, but their loss was certainly a gain for the Methodists. The purchase consisted of two parcels of land. The first parcel was a triangle of land, one sixth of an acre in size, on the crest of the hill at the junction of Canboro Road and Church Street. This was the parcel on which the building was situated. The second parcel, being one fifth of an acre, abutted the first parcel to the west. The Trustees for the Wesleyan Methodist Church were Robert D. Cassleman, James G. Smith, John W. Blagborne, William Blagborne, John Street, Robert Collins and John Johnson.

The church building was completed, and Fonthill Wesleyan Methodist Church held its first service there on May 16, 1858.

### THE WHITE CHURCH ERA

And so the little congregation began life in its new home. The first official records bear the date, September 17, 1860. The preoccupation of the first few years was with finances: how to pay for and maintain the new church building. Pew rentals were a source of revenue: corner pews cost \$5.00 per annum, the five centre pews brought \$3.00 each and the side pews cost \$2.00 a year. Money was also raised from members of the congregation by subscription.

### THE CIRCUIT:

Fonthill Wesleyan Methodist Church did not stand alone; it was part of a Circuit, the composition of which changed from time to time. In 1842 the circuit was comprised of Thorold, Beavertams, Allanburg, Port Robinson, St. Catharines and Fonthill. It was this large Circuit to which the Reverend John Ryerson came in 1842. From 1854 to 1872, Thorold was the head of the Circuit.

In 1872, the Circuit changed, and Fonthill was made the head of the pastoral charge with Port Robinson and St. Johns. In 1880, Beavertams and Allanburg were added to the Fonthill Circuit.

The Union of the Wesleyan Methodists and the Episcopal Methodists in 1883 necessitated another change, leaving Fonthill, Allanburg and St. Johns together. In 1890, Bethel was added. Bethel Church was closed circa 1900, and soon afterwards St. Johns Church was closed as well, leaving Fonthill and Allanburg as a two-point charge.

Churches in a Circuit shared the cost of the minister's salary, and the expenses of the parsonage. The negotiation of each church's fair share was an ongoing concern and from time to time, one church or the other would fall in arrears, to the consternation of the other partners.

#### ADDITIONS AND CHANGES:

On October 27, 1863 the Reverend J. Wakefield and Mr. W.G. Church were commissioned to purchase a church bell. This purchase was made from Meneely's of West Troy, New York that same year, for \$110.24 in Canadian funds. Cast of bronze (80% copper and 20% pure tin), it is twenty-four inches in diameter, weighs 300 pounds and rings in the key of E (second E above middle C.) This bell has graced our bell tower through many building changes, a resounding link to our past.

Twenty-six years after its opening, it was necessary to enlarge the church. Subscriptions were solicited from the congregation, and representatives of the Ladies' Aid were summoned to assist with fundraising for the building project. Extensive repairs were again made in 1902.

Electricity came to Fonthill in 1909 and the church hooked up in October of that year. A motion of the Board of Trustees on November 1, 1917 approved the installation of gas. When the women had water services connected in 1924, the church was fully equipped for the twentieth century.

In May of 1911, a contract in the amount of \$1,300.00 was let to Harvey McCombs, for raising the church and putting a basement underneath. It was noted on January 23, 1921 that a metallic ceiling would replace the old ceiling in the church entrance, and the basement floor would be repaired. The electrical system and the belfry were repaired in 1924, and plans were proposed for a new stairway from the basement to the sanctuary. This stairway was completed by the summer of that year.

#### THE FIRST AND SECOND PARSONAGES:

No record has been preserved of the acquisition of the first parsonage, on North Pelham Street. It is reasonable to assume that the purchase was made shortly after Fonthill was made head of the Circuit, in 1872. The first mention of a parsonage was in the Trustees' minutes of January 1, 1875. Many entries deal with the repair and maintenance of this building. Electricity was connected in 1909, at the same time as the church, and a telephone was installed for the convenience of the minister, in 1918.

In 1925, a move was afoot to sell the old parsonage and build a new one. The Trustees accepted an offer of land on Canboro Road, and the beautiful new home was built at a cost of \$6,700.00 by Fred Klager, and completed in 1926. This building was paid for in part by the proceeds from the old parsonage, \$3,000.00, which was sold to Mr. Harold Abell. The debt was retired quickly, and the mortgage burned at the annual congregational meeting on January 15, 1931.

#### THE MINISTERS:

The ministers of this era had a tenuous arrangement at best. Each year, the Circuit Board voted to renew or terminate incumbency for a total term of four years, at which time the minister and his family moved on. The Pastor was not always invited to remain for the full four years. In 1918, the term was increased to eight years, at the pleasure of the Board.

Salary for the minister in 1908 was \$810.00 a year. In 1919 it had risen to the princely sum of \$1,200.00, with \$150.00 for horse keep. By 1925, the salary had risen to only \$1,500.00, with \$200.00 for conveyance (a car by this time, we suppose) and by 1930, to \$2,000.00. Hard times hit in the early 1930's and the pastor's salary was reduced three times, to a low of \$1,600.00 in 1934.

In 1926, following the death of the incumbent minister, Mr. Edmonds, the Reverend Mr. Leadley was hired as interim for the balance of Conference year. He was paid \$10.00 per Sunday for worship services, and was also expected to visit each church family as part of the bargain.

It was noted on November 18, 1921 that the Canadian Methodist Church was discussing admitting women to the ministry. Fonthill Circuit went on record as being opposed to this move.

A complete list of the clergy who served the Fonthill Circuit so faithfully is included at the front of this book.

#### UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA:

The union of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists in 1925 caused hardly a ripple in this church community. Those who remember that time agree that it was not an issue of great concern here, since the Methodists lost little in the transition. The only note in the official minutes is on September 11, 1925 when it was noted that the sign should be changed from "Methodist" to "United."

#### AND SO WE GREW

#### THE BRICK CHURCH:

In 1935, discussions began regarding the expansion or replacement of the white church. Early in 1936, a committee consisting of J. Mawhinney, Alden Barron and J.F. Louck was appointed to "... look into the matter of a new church." This project moved slowly. It was suggested in October of 1936, by an architect

who had been consulted, that the white church be moved back, and used as part of a new building of frame and stucco construction. Later that month, the building committee added Fred Klager, J.A. Morris, Roy Barron, Harry Haist and Chris Crowe, and this enlarged committee was empowered to get plans and costs of fixing the old church and building a new one.

The building committee traveled to several churches in the area, to determine what style and plan would be best for this community. Mr. Timms, Mr. Beamer and Mr. Klager were asked to submit plans, based on the information the committee gave them. Mr. Timms submitted plans for a church without a tower, at a tender price of \$12,375.00, and Mr. Beamer's plans, with tower, were submitted at a tender price of \$12,434.12. Mr. Klager's plans were for renovating the existing church, and the changes carried a price of \$4,500.00 for brick veneer or \$3,700.00 for stucco. The architect with whom Mr. Klager consulted assured that the building was in a very good state and that the building, as old as it was, constituted a landmark.

After lengthy discussion, the Board decided to recommend to the congregation, at its annual meeting on the night of January 12, 1937, that Mr. Beamer's plans, with some moderation to the entrance, and the tender price, be accepted. The plans were exhibited to the congregation at this meeting, and the congregation accepted the recommendation of the Board. The brick church was on its way from dream to reality.

It was decided to sell the old white church, including the blocks in the basement and the furnace, for \$500.00. The building was eventually sold, moved, and divided in two to form the basis for two houses.

Thanks to the generosity of the Church of God congregation, their facilities were used by the Fonthill United Church congregation during the time that the new church was being built. The target date for completion of construction was September 15, 1937, according to Mr. Beamer.

The Official Board met on May 13, 1937 for the purpose of looking over designs and arrangements of choir seating and communion table and pulpit. Ultimately, the Reverend Mr. Guinn canvassed his relatives in Toronto, and they donated a communion table and pulpit.

On Saturday, June 19, 1937, at 2:30 in the afternoon, a special service was held for the laying of the corner stone of the new brick church. On Sunday, November 14, 1937, the new building was dedicated with great pomp and ceremony.

### THE GRAND CENTENNIAL:

A grand Centennial Celebration was planned for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of this congregation. On Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, the guest preacher at the 11:30 a.m. worship service was the Reverend George A. Little of Toronto. The speaker that evening was Mr. John Frid of Hamilton.

Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> was "Old Home Week," with the Reverend W.B. Smith of Islington and the Reverend W.E. Stafford of Hamilton preaching at the morning and evening services, respectively. Mr. Smith and Mr. Stafford were both formerly ministers of this congregation.

The Sunday School and Young People arranged services on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. The Reverend James A. Gale of Caledonia preached at the morning service and the evening service was a "Sacred Musicale," directed by Mrs. Wm. H. Kadwill of St. Catharines.

Social events for the anniversary celebrations included a concert by Ralph Gordon of Toronto, on Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>; a "birthday party," including cake, greetings, an exhibit and a pageant, on Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>; and a turkey supper prepared and served by the Women's Association on Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>.

### THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BUILDING:

The baby boom of the 1950's was chiefly responsible for the next step in the growth of the physical plant of Fonthill United Church. The congregation grew along with the population and children abounded. The Sunday School taught classes in every nook and cranny, including the kitchen. The building was bursting at the seams, and with the need for more mid-week activities to nourish congregational life, the decision was made to construct a Christian Education building.

Fundraising began in 1955 and continued through 1957. The dedication service for the new Christian Education building was held on Sunday, October 19, 1958. It was noted in the dedication booklet that it was expected that the debt would be retired in short time.

With this expansion came other changes. In order to accommodate the entire congregation at worship services, it was necessary to have two Sunday morning services. This began on October 19, 1958, the same date as the dedication and continued for a number of years. At that time, Fonthill and Allanburg severed their connection and Fonthill became a one-point charge.

### THE THIRD AND FOURTH MANSES:

The property that was purchased to the west of the church property for expansion, included a house. The parsonage (manse) which had been built in 1926 was sold, and the minister and his family moved into the smaller house, also on Canboro Road.

In 1962, a new manse (our present manse) on Highland Avenue, just a short block from the church, was purchased. The house west of the church was rented for several years and in 1985 it was demolished, and a parking lot established.

## THE 1991 CHURCH:

In 1958, when two worship services were established, it was clear that an expanded sanctuary would be required in the not too distant future. Discussions arose from time to time over the years, and several plans of action were considered.

Finally, at the annual meeting of the congregation in 1991, approval was given for expansion. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Worship services were held in the gymnasium (upper hall) of the Christian Education building for several months, as the Sanctuary was expanded and turned so that the congregation faces east instead of west. With this new project came new offices for the church staff, and a grand narthex (entrance) to welcome one and all.

The first service in the new sanctuary was held on Palm Sunday, April 12, 1992 and the official dedication service was held on Sunday, November 1, 1992 with the Reverend Jim Liles, Chair of Niagara Presbytery presiding, and the Reverend Orville James, Past Chair preaching.

## THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

The contribution of the women of Fonthill United Church deserves special attention in these annals. Whether it was under the name of the Ladies' Aid, the Women's Missionary Society, Women's Federation or United Church Women, the untiring efforts must be lauded.

### LADIES' AID:

The earliest official records of the Ladies' Aid (later to be called the Women's Association) in this congregation begin in June of 1917, but an entry in the Official Board records of April 2, 1884 show that this group was in existence earlier. This entry indicated that the Ladies' Aid Society was invited to attend a meeting of the Official Board, to discuss the raising of funds needed for church repairs.

This was a harbinger of things to come, as the focus of this group was often fundraising to enable repairs to the church building and the parsonage. In June of 1917 the ladies inspected the parsonage "as a body." In July of that year, all ladies who were able were requested to go to the parsonage to tear off the old wallpaper and put on new, in the kitchen. In September the ladies authorized payment for the installation of gas in the parsonage. In December, a new dining room table was purchased for the Parsonage, and the old table taken for use in the church basement. It seems that the parsonage was available to the minister and his family, fully furnished. In addition to concerns for the parsonage, the L.A. bought new hymn books, arranged to hire and pay the salary of a caretaker, and purchased light bulbs for the church, not an inexpensive item at that time. They purchased a Communion set and baskets for collection and also contributed to the minister's salary when the church funds were deficient. In 1920 there was some difficulty in finding a caretaker, and the ladies took turns doing the weekly cleaning of the church. Dwight Hodgkins agreed to do the furnace work for \$10.00 a month, with the ushers responsible for ventilating the church on Sundays, as Mr. Hodgkins was in the choir, and otherwise occupied. The ladies continued to sweep and dust the church. In December of 1924, in response to the extreme inconvenience under which they had been forced to work, the Ladies' Aid decided to have water put in the church kitchen, a major undertaking. Approval was sought from the Board of Trustees and to ensure their assent, the ladies agreed to be responsible for the cost of installation and all future expenses incurred in connection therewith. The U.C.W., to this day, continues to pay the water bill, in keeping with this agreement. In 1925 a septic tank was installed to receive waste from the new kitchen sink, and a toilet. (As an aside, one would hope that any mid-week activities at the church were of a very short duration, since a subsequent motion of the Ladies' Aid directed "... that the toilet in the church be kept locked except on Sunday.") When the brick church was built in 1937, the women donated \$1000.00, an incredible sum for the times.

Aside from assisting with the parsonage and church needs, the ladies were concerned with the needs of the community. Over the years, many instances were recorded of response to specific needs within the congregation and beyond: food, clothing, eye glasses and the like. In 1917 there is record of them paying \$1.00 towards Christmas dinner at the Welland Children's Shelter, an orphanage. A committee was formed in 1924 to visit the sick and take flowers to them from the church. This ministry has continued, uninterrupted, to this day and the U.C.W. retains its social consciousness in many areas where there is need.

War-time records showed that the ladies were concerned for the war effort, as it was noted that anyone offering any more than bread and butter and tea as refreshments for their meetings would be fined. In January of 1918 the issue came to the forefront again, with the ladies moving to dispense with refreshments at regular monthly meetings. (However, in February it was noted that the hostess served a light lunch, in defiance of the edict, it seems.)

The first fundraising event recorded was a Garden Party on July 24, 1917. Gate receipts (35 cents for adults, 15 cents for children) were \$120.65 and expenditures were \$60.88, leaving a profit of \$59.77. This Garden Party became a yearly fundraising event, though it was not always a fiscal success. In 1922, the profit was \$1.80. In 1929 it was decided that this annual event should be discontinued, since it showed insufficient returns for the work required.

In 1921 the Anniversary Supper netted \$69.85, but Government bureaucracy reared its ugly head in September of 1925 and threatened to cancel this annual event. It seems that laws regarding amusement tax would have made it necessary for a permit to be obtained for the supper. After receiving notice of the church's exemption from these regulations, the supper was held, and a profit of \$86.39 realized.

Quilting has been a tradition of the women of this church for many years, though it seems that only in more recent memory has a reasonable value been placed on this time-intensive craft. In 1928 the price received for a quilt was recorded as \$5.00. That same year, 420 names were collected for an autograph quilt, for which the usual \$5.00 was received. This autograph quilt project has been repeated by our present Quilters' Group in 1992, our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

When planning began for the building of a new church, the women of the church were in the forefront of fundraising for this ambitious project. In July 1932, \$25.00 was dedicated to start a building fund. It was suggested at the November meeting of 1936 that "... ladies be divided into groups and make money in what way they like." (This was the beginning of the geographically divided Units – Central, Hilltop, Northern, Eastern and Western – an arrangement which, with modification, continues to the present.) In 1937 the "Cent-a-Day" boxes were instituted by the Women's Association as an ongoing fundraising plan.

#### WOMAN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY:

In the Methodist Church the W.M.S. was established in 1880, at a meeting in Hamilton, Ontario. The women had their own budget, sent and supported women missionaries independently, and administered their funds very responsibly. They also published two magazines, "The Missionary Monthly," and the children's magazine, "World Friends," up until the end of 1961. These activities were amalgamated with general missions under the Mission and Service Fund, upon formation of the United Church Women, which combined W.M.S. and W.A.

In Fonthill a W.M.S. Auxiliary was organized on May 3, 1905. This was later named the "Josephine Hodgkins Afternoon Auxiliary" for a local woman who promoted missions. In 1935 the "Pearl McNeil Evening Auxiliary" was begun, named for a Fonthill woman serving in China. This group grew largely out of members of the Sunshine Class of the Sunday School, under the leadership of Mrs. J.H. Griffin.

The focus of the Woman's Missionary Society was quite different from that of the Ladies' Aid. The W.M.S. took responsibility for mission education, and sponsored the Baby Band, Mission Band, Messengers, Explorers and C.G.I.T. by providing leaders, program materials, parties, mother and daughter banquets and camp sponsorships. Since all W.M.S. donated funds had to be sent to the general (national) W.M.S., many fundraising projects were undertaken, from white elephant auctions to blossom tea parties and bake sales. The W.M.S. also sent new and used items for bales for overseas use, paying for transportation.

Late in 1958 preparations were made to join the W.M.S. and the W.A. into a Women's Federation, three years ahead of the proposed change across the whole church to the "unified budget" and formation of the United Church Women. In Fonthill the move was prompted by difficulty in finding leaders for two Woman's Missionary Society auxiliaries, seven Woman's Association groups, as well as the general meetings of the Woman's Association. Also many women were finding that two or three monthly meetings were too much.

The new Federation had a third Vice-President for Missions, whose responsibility was to ensure the mission programs were available and used, in keeping with the ministry of the W.M.S. A Youth Work convenor ensured the continued sponsorship of youth mission education.

#### WOMEN'S FEDERATION 1959 to 1961:

The transition to a combined group proceeded fairly smoothly, under Gladys (Mrs. A.R.B.) Fraser as president. The Christian Education Wing had just been completed, and was used for general meetings and fundraising banquets and bazaars. Groups still met in members' homes, and continued to follow the geographic division of the W.A. groups. In 1955 the Woman's Association had expanded to seven, numbered groups, three meeting in the afternoon and four in the evening. The general meetings alternated between afternoon and evening. Not until the end of 1963 were the Unites scrambled, so there was no geographic arrangement.

In 1958 the old church basement was partitioned to make a parlour and choir room, nursery and kindergarten. The Women's Federation and Choir shared costs of the parlour which included choir gown cupboards and a vanity at one end. The W.F. purchased the draperies and furniture. The undertaking was completed in 1959 and the parlour was named the Friendship Room. Small group meetings were, and continue to be, held in this room.

#### UNITED CHURCH WOMEN:

In January 1962 the whole United Church changed to a unified Mission Fund, "Missionary and Maintenance," later renamed "Mission and Service." All women's groups across the country became "United Church Women." The transition was easy for Fonthill, since the groundwork had been done. Ethel Tabbert was the first president, and the U.C.W. continued the functions of all the women's work and the sponsorship of youth groups. The Baby Band was amalgamated with the Cradle Roll of the Sunday School. Mission Band discontinued but Messengers, Explorers and C.G.I.T. had mission studies. The women's units followed the Mission Study guides for about half of their programs. The women's missionary magazines were replaced by "Mandate."

After the opening of the new Christian Education Building and the undertaking of the parlour project, a great deal of catering was done to help pay for furnishings and equipment. In keeping with their outreach ministry, the women undertook a program for senior citizens: an afternoon of games, singing and food, in the church, later with other churches taking turns and finally moving to the Legion Hall which was more accessible. This program was discontinued in 1988.

As the roles of women have changed, leaving fewer available to attend meetings, the number of units has decreased to three. Many women choose to help on short term projects, when they are unable to make long-term commitments. The U.C.W. still studies and supports missions and local causes such as Women's Crisis Centres. It forms the steering committee for the annual Pioneer Market and spring Flea Market. Also the women arrange one church service each summer

during the minister's holidays. The tradition of service and fellowship, study and worship continues.

#### BAZAARS, TEAS AND PIONEER MARKET:

Before 1958 dinners, teas, cooking schools and bazaars were held regularly, limited only by the space in the old church basement. The fall bazaar was a midweek afternoon tea event, with sale of a variety of goods. It involved only women, and only those free to come in the daytime. A fishpond game was set up for any preschoolers attending.

In 1970 and 1971 our church put on a Mission Fair, a weekend of displays, demonstrations and movies involving every group, young and old, in the church. The Reverend Douglas and Mrs. Dunlop had souvenirs of their visit to their missionary daughter in Japan. The Hi-C researched and presented the history of our own church, Scouts had campcraft, and so on. These events created a lot of enthusiasm.

In 1972, on the suggestion of three youth group leaders, the first Saturday money-raising event was convened, late in November. Every group took part, and besides U.C.W. sales items, there were rental booths for craft people. Cider was pressed outdoors, lunch served indoors. The annual event had many names including "Candy Cane Capers" (1972) and "Golden Harvest Market" (1975). The 1973 title, "Pioneer Market," has endured the test of time. After two or three years, the church's own groups filled the space, and rented booths were discontinued. Units or individuals were in charge of lunch, bake sale, crafts, produce, and much more. The U.C.W. remained the steering committee. By the mid-1980's the little white elephant table had overgrown its stall, and after 1985 a giant Flea Market was held on a separate date, usually in the spring. Both of these events involve everyone who wants to volunteer (and some who don't), and are an important part of our fellowship.

#### MUSIC...MUSIC...MUSIC

It has been said, "He who sings, prays twice." Music plays an important part in our communal worship and the history of music in this church community is one of which we can be justifiably proud.

#### THE CHOIR:

We are grateful to Harold Saylor for his remembrances of the choir here early in the twentieth century. Earliest recollections are of a strong choir of sixteen to twenty members, faithful in their attendance, with some good soloists and an excellent male quartet. Two selections were given each Sunday morning: a formal anthem and a special offertory number (solo, duet or male quartet.) The choir also provided leadership and an anthem for the evening service. About 1918 the choir began a tradition of performing an Easter Cantata on the evening of Good Friday, and at other times for the community at large. Mrs. Ethel Crowe was the choir leader during this time, retiring in 1937. Lorne Haist was the organist from 1905 to 1915, followed by Effie Haist in 1915, Alice Brown (McIntosh) in 1925 and Roy Barron in 1931.

For the opening of the new church in 1937, the choir formally robed for the first time. Under the direction of Ron Damude, accompanied by Mrs. Basel Damude, the choir continued their fine tradition in the new church era. When Mr. and Mrs. Damude moved from the area, Zillah Allan (Dean) assumed the duties of organist in 1939, and records show that Viola Crysler and William Thornton accepted the position of choir leader at different times during 1940. The next organist of record was Mrs. Sandercock, who began her incumbency in 1944. Miriam Mathers was employed as church organist from 1950 to 1976; Harold Saylor accepted an interim position until Eleanor Jolliffe was hired as organist in 1977, a position she holds until this writing. Graham Masecar directed the choir from 1977 until 1983, when Mrs. Jolliffe assumed the combined role of organist and choir director. Mention must also be made of the contribution of Mrs. Myrtle Stirtzinger, who acted as gown mistress for the choir for seventeen years, from 1953 to 1970.

With encouragement from the choir, the young people of the church formed a Junior Choir in the late 1950's, at about the time that two morning services were necessary to accommodate the congregation. From 1964, Betty Winmill directed this choir, accompanied by Ruth Furtney or Barbara Barrett on piano. Mary Ann Brandt assumed the role of director in 1978, Helen Wismer in 1980 and in 1982, Eleanor Jolliffe took over duties as both director and accompanist for this young group. The Junior Choir led the singing at the 9:30 am service, and for special occasions, including the early service on Christmas Eve. The junior choir was disbanded in 1990 when it became difficult to recruit young people to participate.

The choir assumed a leadership role in instigating the maintenance and improvement of the church organ and took an active part in fundraising for same. For several years they sponsored concerts by the Treblaires, in this group's fledgling years, and also used their own talents to raise money for the organ projects. The most notable was a production in 1966 called "Round the World In Music," a collection of international songs and dances performed by the Senior and Junior Choirs. As a community outreach, a shorter version of this production was performed for residents of Sunset Haven. In the 1950's and 1960's a Christmas Cantata and Pageant was an annual event, using the talents of the Senior Choir, Senior Girls' Choir, Junior Choir and soloists.

The choir met for more than just singing. Monthly choir socials were enjoyed for many years, with the program consisting of a short business meeting, entertainment and refreshments. Crokinole tournaments were the choice of entertainment in the 1930's and '40's. Later, speakers, musical entertainments and slide presentations became popular with the group. By 1977 reports indicated that the monthly socials were becoming difficult, and the present choir meets socially several times a year for special occasions.

## THE ORGAN:

In the minutes of the Board of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, October 27, 1863, the Reverend John Wakefield and Mr. W.G. Church were authorized to purchase a suitable musical instrument for the church. An organ was purchased in Buffalo for the sum of \$89.33 in Canadian funds. This organ served the church until about 1920, and was described as a Karn reed organ which could be operated either by foot-pump by the organist, or by a person operating a bellows pump from the side.

Following the demise of the first organ, piano accompaniment was used for worship services, pending the purchase of a new organ. This new organ was purchased from the Methodist Church in Hanover, Ontario in 1937. It was a four-rank Tracker organ, built by Henry Lye and Sons, Organ Builders of Woodstock, Ontario in 1871. It had exceptional tone and versatility, having seventy-three pipes in each rank, instead of the customary sixty-one. In 1950 R.S. Denton and Son of Hamilton installed a new electric console, and eight years later, they added three more ranks of pipes, with the stop list increased accordingly. In 1966 two more ranks were added. In 1978 the organ was completely refurbished, three more ranks added, along with twelve new stops, new pistons, and a set of Maas-Rowe tubular chimes, all installed by the Keates Organ Company of Acton, Ontario. The original ranks were now over one hundred years old. With the latest church renovation in 1991, the organ was again updated, this time by Dodington & Dodington of Aylmer, Ontario. This renovation included replacement of the console mechanisms by solid state electronic equipment. Without a doubt, our church boasts one of the finest small pipe organs in the Region of Niagara.

## OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

### SUNDAY SCHOOL:

The Sunday School has always been an important part of Fonthill United Church. Records, unfortunately, are not complete. We do know that the Sunday School was run as a financially independent operation, and that officers were elected to manage it and to report directly to the Board of Trustees.

Missions and Temperance were given much emphasis in the Sunday School program and awards given for attendance required perfect attendance, punctuality and memory work. The annual picnic was one of the highlights of the year, and the Christmas party was carefully planned and joyfully anticipated each December.

Classes were offered from primary children to adults and two of the adult classes, the Sunshine Class and the Keystones, continued for many years with their tradition of study and service.

Attendance rose from an average of 95 each Sunday in 1935, to a peak in 1960 of an average of 168, when the total number of children registered was in excess of three hundred. The highest single attendance, recorded in 1962, was 228. Our present registration is approximately ninety, with an average attendance of 45. The baby boom is over!

When the Christian Education building was under construction in 1958, Sunday School classes were farmed out to homes and borrowed space around the community. Teachers and young people weathered the inconvenience, and when the new Christian Education building was completed, there was no doubt it was worth the wait.

Present Sunday School teachers would understand many entries in the Sunday School minutes, asking for assistance to keep younger children in line during opening and closing exercises, and when they went as a group to worship services. Our Sunday School has been blessed, and continues to be blessed, with dedicated and faithful teachers who have given of their time and themselves freely and gladly to the Christian education of our young people.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS:

A Young People's League is first mentioned in the church records on November 16, 1922, though no details are given of this group.

In 1934, minutes of the Young People's Society showed Mac Saylor as president, replaced by Ted Hart in 1935, Viola Crysler in 1936, and Eleanor Guinn in 1937. Here the records end. The group enjoyed music, speakers and social events such as skating parties.

A Young People's Group of fifteen members met on Sunday evenings in 1954. The group was revived again in 1958 and once more in 1963, when it was known as Hi-C. The meetings were divided into three parts: devotional, business and recreation. This group was responsible for the Easter Sunrise Services and the following breakfast for many years. The Klager family later took over the arrangements for the breakfast, and of late these duties have been undertaken by the Men's Club.

The Young People's Group waxed and waned through the '70's and '80's and at present we have an active group of more than twenty members, from Junior High to High School age.

#### C.G.I.T. and EXPLORERS:

Originally Canadian Girls in Training, the C.G.I.T. was sponsored by the W.M.S. of the church. Their focus was mission, study and service and for many years this group was active in the church. In 1972, the name was changed to Canadian Girls Involved Today, and the program was updated. C.G.I.T. met here until 1991 when reduced numbers made it difficult to form a group.

Explorers, also sponsored by the W.M.S., was a junior group of girls, also with mission as their focus. Girls graduated from Explorers into C.G.I.T. Records indicate the presence of this group in the church from the 1950's until 1987.

#### BABY BAND and MISSION BAND:

Children at Fonthill United Church were encouraged early to take part in Christian Education in the world.

Infants were placed on the Cradle Roll of the church. They were sent birthday cards, and their parents were telephoned and visited to encourage the participation of the children in the life of the church.

All children on the Cradle Roll were invited to Baby Band parties and events. The purpose of Baby Band was to "... help parents to teach world friendship to small children in the home."

The children graduated from Baby Band to Mission Band, where activities with a strong mission theme were continued.

Mission Band evolved into a Messengers group for young boys and girls, also a group with a mission focus. Messengers formed in 1963 and disbanded in 1970.

#### OTHER CHURCH GROUPS

Over the years, many church groups have come and gone, serving the needs of the congregation in their time. Some have come and stayed, perhaps in a different form.

#### THE CHAS. EWING GROUP:

During the ministry of the Reverend Graydon Cox, in the late 1940's, a Couples' Club was formed from the Chas. Ewing Sunday School Class. The purpose of this group was educational, cultural, recreational, social, Christian action and worship. Members met on the fourth Friday of the month, when guest speakers were occasionally invited to attend. The name of the group was later changed to the Chas. Ewing Fellowship Group and as such, existed until 1957.

#### THE COUPLES' CLUB:

In 1967 a Couples' Club was reformed, in response to the needs of young couples in the church. Fellowship and social activities have brought the members of this group together. For a

time, the group was called the Friendship Group, in order that unattached adults would not feel discouraged from attending. In 1992, a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated, and many former members returned for a special weekend of activities.

#### THE KEYSTONES:

Formed from the Keystone Sunday School class of the 1930's, the Keystones gave many years of service to Fonthill United Church. The group was founded in 1939 with a purpose of study and service. They offered financial assistance to the Choir, the Scouts and the Sunday School. The Reverend James Bright offered spiritual guidance to the group for many years, until 1953. The Keystones stopped meeting in 1989, but many reminders of their dedication and service can be found in the church today.

#### DRAMA CLUB:

Many members of Fonthill United Church congregations have exhibited latent dramatic talent over the years. Most of it was done informally and spontaneously to meet particular occasions. In 1959, Unit 7 of the Women's Auxiliary sponsored a Drama Club to develop dramatic talent and to raise funds for the church parlour. It is recorded that this group put on at least three plays for that purpose, two comedies and one mystery.

#### MELODY AND MIRTH:

In the fine tradition of the Drama Club and the thespian and musical events which pre- and postdated it, a production called Melody and Mirth has graced the stage at Fonthill United annually since 1990. The three annual productions have been spearheaded by Bob Laing, and many groups and individuals have sung and performed outrageous skits for the enjoyment of very receptive audiences.

MOTHERS' GROUP:

A group of young mothers came together in the mid-1950's for support and fellowship. Children were entertained while their mothers shared and socialized. The group met on Wednesday mornings at the homes of members in its early days. The group continues to meet on Wednesdays, in the Friendship Room of the church. Fundraising efforts have provided many toys for our church nursery.

AND MANY MORE:

Because records have not always been kept well, it is likely that groups which should have been mentioned have been overlooked. Many came together in response to need, and faded out when the need no longer existed. To all who have participated over the one hundred and fifty years of our history, in any church group or organization or activity, the church and all of its present congregation owe a debt of gratitude.

**ADDENDA 1992 – 2006 to  
The FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH HISTORY**

(originally published in 1992)

1992 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fonthill United Church. In 2006, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the village of Fonthill, this supplement brings the book up to date.

MINISTERS OF FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH

Since 1992

1988	1994	Rev. Dr. Gordon Crossfield
1994	1995	Rev. Dr. Philip Cline (interim)
1995	2004	Rev. Frank Walker
2004	2006	Rev. Dr. Paul Owen (interim)
2006	2020	Rev. Dr. Garry van Bruchem
2020	-	Rev. Robert Lawson

“AND SO WE GREW”

The congregation has had 14 years of enjoyment of the renovated building. The accessibility feature has been well used. The most recent improvement has been the installation of handrails for the chancel steps, in 2006, removable for special occasions. An illuminated changeable church sign was installed in 1993. Belfry improvements were made in 1996, and a utility shed was built in 1995. In 1999 the frame house and property west of the church were purchased for more parking space. The paving was completed in 2001. The wide shaded boulevard between the sections is ideal for outdoor events (barbeques and strawberry socials) and Vacation Bible School classes.

## “THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH”

The UCW reflects the situation of working mothers, and consists of mostly retirement-aged women. They reorganized into one unit in 2004, making guest speaker programmes more worthwhile. The quilters still meet weekly, and besides custom orders, make quilts for seniors’ homes and charities for sick children.

After 32 years, “Pioneer Market” was changed in 2005 to “FOOD FAIR-PLUS.” Cooking bees were held in advance at the church to prepare foods to be sold frozen. The spring Flea Market has continued since 1986, and since 1994 has been held in conjunction with a Friday Spaghetti Supper, prepared by the Men’s Club.

An important function of the UCW has been providing receptions for happy or sad celebrations, a much appreciated service. Many women, who cannot attend meetings, donate food to these events.

## “MUSIC...MUSIC...MUSIC”

The choir, with 30 voices in 2006, continues to enjoy a good reputation, attracting new members. Eleanor Jolliffe has been the organist since 1977, and choir director since 1983. Her talents are much appreciated by both choir and congregation. The choir occasionally sponsors guest choir concerts to raise funds. They have also received memorial gifts. These funds are mostly used for purchasing cantatas for Christmas and Easter.

A junior choir, from the Sunday School, sings in church on special Sundays. Our contemporary worship team grew up and moved away, and we are hoping for another to develop.

## “OUR YOUNG PEOPLE”

A succession of very capable part-time paid youth workers (Jackie Crow, editor of this booklet in 1992, was the first) have worked with lay teachers and leaders since 1989. One of these

workers in 2000-2001 was a theology student intern. With lay teachers and leaders Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Youth Groups (junior and senior) and Contemporary worship have flourished. An outstanding event in 2004 was the Mexico Mission house-building trip in the March break. Sponsored “starvathons” and walkathons raised substantial contributions to World Vision and other charities. The youth have looked after the children’s section of the Flea Market since 2004.

The Sunday School library was supplemented in 2000 by bringing the books from the unused Upper Hall library and installing them in the Lower Hall. The adult library is being phased out, to leave space for the junior books and teaching reference materials. The Upper Hall cupboards now house a large Biblical costume collection, two sections for Archives and two for UCW storage.

## “OTHER CHURCH GROUPS”

A newer “Social Group” was formed among the younger parents for relaxation and friendship in 2004. And “Friendship Group” is the new name of the former “Couples Club,” welcoming singles too.

## PROJECT COMMITTEES

### OUTREACH:

Designated envelope givings support United Church Mission and Service projects, and World Development and Relief.

### LOCAL SPECIAL NEEDS GROUPS:

Financial and in-kind donations are provided to many charitable facilities in our Region. Our church takes turns in providing meals for the disadvantaged and the “Out of the Cold” projects. Collections are delivered to the food banks, and our “Operation” projects for Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas provide hampers for needy families.

FUNDRAISING 1992 – 2005:

A very lively committee has been busy since our 1992 building project, and the 1999-2001 parking lot expansion. Besides strawberry socials and barbeques, there have been the February “Melody and Mirth” concerts since 1990, the “Chili Challenge,” roast beef dinners and sponsored concerts. Also a very popular project is the pre-Christmas “Homes for the Holidays” professionally-decorated homes tour.

MORE “END NOTES”

As this “goes to press” we want to mention that this has always been a welcoming church. With a new minister in 2006 and a rejuvenated membership committee, we are ready to welcome newcomers or anyone looking for a friendly church home.

Barbara Rooke  
(member since 1953)