

Spring Grapevine 2024



Minister's Meanderings

The fluctuations of this Spring are kind of a metaphor for our current church life.

When the temperature hits the mark at what we think it should be, I rush out and mow the lawn and prune the stuff that I didn't in the Fall. The temperature plummets and I hunker back down to the basement to my trains that run at any temperature. As the tulips bravely open up in the brief warmth and close up in the cold, I look out and wonder where all the tulips are that I'm sure I planted last fall.

First, I would thank everyone who participated in the table discussions on Sunday April 21. There was a mix of reality, hopes and dreams and suggestions that fluctuated throughout the comments in Lyn's masterful summary compilation.

Wednesday evening I joined a group of 5 congregations in the Port Colborne area who were doing the same thing around a collaboration proposal based on one ordained minister working with a team of LLWLs (Licenced Lay Worship Leaders) and retired supplies. Each congregation could continue to hold their services and retain their unique identity. Shades of our Methodist heritage. Four were very enthusiastic and one dropped out to continue the way they are.

So, you see that there is no magic bullet to solve our dilemmas, but those who love the Church will continue to suggest options.

Paul Miller, who led the discussion, began by handing out John 15:1-11. He suggested that this passage was a great image for the church. You might remember it from our Lenten "I Am" series. Jesus says to His disciples (and to us), "I am the vine and you are the branches." Paul observed that Jesus says nothing about buildings, or numbers, or money. It is all about 'connectedness', pruning and bearing fruit.

Pruning non-productive branches could mean getting rid of stuff that is no longer useful or helpful or holding things back. Pruning productive branches as any gardener knows, increases production. Trials and challenges (and we have had a few) enhance character, creativity, and energy. Bearing fruit means growing in our spiritual life, our love of Jesus, the scriptures, each other and our community.

Thinking we have to "save" the church all on our own means that we have forgotten that the only reason we exist is to be the visible Body of Christ and that He is the vine from which we draw our strength to do anything.

In closing, I think that some of your suggestions really deserve further discussion and could really be fruitful in us blooming where we are planted.

Spring is coming. Amen?

Gordon Crossfield

From the Worship & Membership Committee

UPCOMING SERVICES

Pentecost – Silver Lake Country leading worship	May 19
Joint Summer services in Fonthill UC at 10 a.m.	June 30 and July 7, 14, 21, 28
Joint Summer services in Fenwick UC at 10 a.m.	Aug 4, 11, 18, 25 and Sept. 1
Worship at 9:30 am resumes in Fonthill	Sept. 8

Presently serving on the Committee:

Heather Jesik (Chair), Judith Crysler, George Dewar, Bill Outred, Beryl West, Helen Wismer, Rev. Gordon Crossfield.

Thank you to all those who support this Committee in various roles. It is wonderful to work with such a committed team who is always willing to help, using your skills and talents that God gave you.

*Sincerely, Heather Jesik,
Chair of Worship and Membership*

Church Office Hours

The church office is normally open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9:00 am to noon. The office secretary is available to contact Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm by email to fonthilu@vaxxine.com or by leaving a phone message at 905 892-6433.

From the Chair of Council

In January of this year, it was determined that an amalgamation with Fenwick was not a feasible option. So where do we go from here?

Let's begin with some good news...Rev. Dr. Gordon Crossfield has agreed to extend his contract with us to the end of February which will give us some needed stability and support. Gordon's strong leadership and his vast experience combined with his care and compassion are a real blessing to our congregation.

We are also blessed with a diverse and strong Council who have been working hard to find a way forward. Jim Bradley, Gail DeKoning, Betty Garner, Janet Hamilton, Sandra Harding, Heather Jesik, Sheila Laundry, Rich Miller, Alvin Penner, Diane Rawsthorn and Joan Rigg are a very dedicated and committed group of people who deserve our thanks and gratitude. Since the decision was made not to amalgamate, the Council has been grappling with what options we have in view of our current financial position and volunteer capacity. While amalgamation with Fenwick did not provide the solutions either congregation were hoping for, there is an openness to continue to work together. We held a joint Council meeting in April to grapple with how this might work moving forward. While no decisions were made at this meeting, the door remains open.

The Council recognizes that we do not have all the answers, so we reached out to each member of the congregation asking you to participate in roundtable discussions about our future. We gave you the same questions the Council has been grappling with. I am happy to report that 32 people participated in person, we received 4 email responses, and so combined with the council we have input from 45 members. Thank you to everyone who participated. Some ideas and suggestions can be implemented quickly, and some will need further discussion and development. The following is an overview of the feedback.

So how do we see the Future?

There is an overwhelming desire to continue our ministry at Fonthill United Church. Members believe we have many gifts and programs worth continuing. Caring for each other, music, worship services and outreach were all highlighted as important. While traditions were seen as important, there is a willingness to try a few new things to help us move forward. There is a strong belief that God still has a purpose for us to fulfill and that we can continue to make a difference and build our legacy. There is a belief that if we work at it, we can grow our church community. There is a strong desire to keep our rental incomes and a willingness to explore building utilization options that will be sustainable well into the future and aligns with our values. There was a belief that we should remain open to future amalgamation opportunities although an acknowledgement that we need to have hope and move forward now.

What ideas did you have for ministry moving forward?

There was a desire to have our own dedicated minister. There is a willingness to accept a part-time minister. Some attributes you would like to see are: approachable, empathy, young with energy, leadership. Some expressed a desire for sermons that are thought provoking and aimed at helping us grow in our faith. Some felt sermons should include moral teachings but not be political.

Given the feedback we have received, it seems clear that we have support to move forward with a search for a new minister. We must decide if it will be part-time, full-time or a shared resource. There are some new models currently being employed elsewhere that may be worth exploring. I will be contacting the Horseshoe Region Congregational Support Minister for some direction and input. We have the Pastoral Relations Guidelines for Search and Selection printed and Council is meeting on May 13 to review and to begin the preliminary work. Before the search process can begin, we need to complete a faith profile, position description and financial viability review which all must be filed on ChurchHub and be approved by the regional council. The faith profile has been recently updated so we just have the remaining two documents to complete. There will be challenges however we decide to proceed, and patience will be required. Once we have the preliminary work completed, we will be forming a Search Committee. The Regional Human Resources Commission will appoint a liaison to support us in the search process. We will keep you updated every step of the way.

Some other suggestions were:

1. Advertising
2. Screens at the front of the church
3. Evening services to attract younger people
4. Discussion groups
5. Advertising office times
6. Building space/usage
7. Fundraising

Some of these are easy and can be implemented quickly but others will take time to explore further and develop. We will need to prioritize carefully as funds and volunteers become available.

In closing, thank you for supporting our church financially and with your time and talents. Together with God's help we will find the best path forward!

Submitted by Lyn Taylor, Council Chair

From the UCW

The Fonthill UCW continues to meet every second Wednesday of the month in the Friendship Room at 1:30 pm. As always, we invite all the ladies of the church, whether to our monthly meetings, or an occasional visit. We hope you will join us.

We have continued to average 17 to 20 women at each meeting and have a small devotional, speaker, visitor, craft or just a visit. It's nice to catch up on all the news we have. Hugs, smiles, laughs, prayers and support of each other is also an important part of the UCW mission as well. Of course, sweets and a cup of hot tea is always appreciated. Occasionally the group heads out for lunch at a different location.

While the UCW is no longer able to fundraise or handle funeral lunches as in the past, we have been willing and able to help Council when they are called upon to provide this service. Our church as a whole has continued to support this when called to help out. We thank all of you for this.

In previous years, the UCW has been able to financially help many causes dear to us. This year we have been able to support Hope Centre, Open Arms Mission, Cave Springs Camp, gift cards to refugees, and Birchway Niagara (Women's Place.) Our bakers helped supply cookies and muffins for the Harvest Suppers.

While our numbers remain constant, our years are creeping up on us, and we welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Betty Garner, UCW secretary

Who's in the Kitchen?

The Kitchen Committee was formed after the UCW decided that they would no longer cater funerals. We are grateful for their years of dedicated service. Countless families have benefited from their gracious hospitality at a crisis point in their lives.

After some discussion, it was decided that a few people who were able to cater would form a Kitchen Committee. The people on the committee are Wendy Audette, Dora Drennan, Betty Garner, Janet Hamilton, Sheila Laundry and Diane Rawsthorn. Richard Miller's help has been invaluable setting up and taking down tables. The physical layout is different from the past, in that we really can only handle catering for 50-60 people as we would prefer not to set up in the lower hall. Physically, there are fewer people to handle a large group set up and realistically we needed to find an easier way of serving our congregation. Therefore, we have increased our space in the Friendship room with the removal of some of the furniture, and we can now use both the Friendship room and the Board room.

Several people in our congregation respond generously when asked to contribute sandwiches and squares and we are grateful for their response. If you are willing to contribute to a funeral and have not been asked, please speak to someone on the committee.

From the Ministry & Personnel Committee

Some Good News and Some ... Other News

Reverend Doctor Gordon Crossfield has agreed to continue on in his position with Fonthill United Church until the end of February 2025. We looking forward to seeing Reverend Gordon until then.

After 21 years with Fonthill United Church, Patrice Walker has decided to retire from her position as Office Administrator at the end of November 2024. Sadly, we will miss Patrice. Information regarding our farewells/goodbyes/best wishes will be provided at a later date.

Sandra Harding, Chair, M&P Committee

Finance & Property Committee Update

There is no question “The Hold” on the potential amalgamation with Fenwick will eventually create some additional financial challenges. The fact is, however, there is confidence the members and congregation of Fonthill United Church can and will respond to address each issue as it may arise.

I will start this report by thanking Ron Kretchman for presenting the financial report at the annual meeting. I also want to, once again, say Thanks to Rich Miller for all the work he does around the property. It is difficult to measure in actual dollars, however I can assure you, based on some recent bills from repair companies, it is significant.

Operating fund revenue for the three months ending March 31 amounted to \$49,166 which is \$2,509 above budget but \$4,514 below the corresponding period last year. The increase in the budget is due to higher member contributions and rental income. The decrease from last year is due to members who have passed.

The year-to-date deficit is \$5,914 which is \$5,073 below budget and \$2,390 below last year. We are seeing some savings to budget in several areas but did incur higher expenses in the following:

- Snow removal is \$757 over budget. This seems unusual considering the lower snow fall but results from higher salting costs. With the fluctuating temperatures, salt was required to cover icing which formed overnight. This matter is very much safety related.
- General maintenance is \$1,428 above budget. We had one-time costs of \$500 to repair the outside sign and \$619 for an electrical contractor to complete a temporary fix to the main electrical panel due to a water leak. A permanent solution will be needed once Hydro determines the next step.

Property:

We have a request before us from the Montessori School to rent more space. While we continue to work with the school, we are cognizant of the fact that any additional rental can and will impact church operations as it limits space for meetings, etc. The view is how can we refigure what they rent to accommodate additional needs. We also realize, no matter what we do, there will be some complaints, but be assured we feel the benefit of the rental income outweighs the necessary changes to traditional practices.

The Scouts will be doing the annual spring clean up shortly and the Pelham Garden Club will start their work once weather permits.

As mentioned above, there were some one-time expenses incurred in this quarter. As we review our future direction, some additional repairs and/or renovations are being considered and we will keep you informed.

Jim Bradley, Chair, Finance and Property Committee

Gardening News

The Pelham Garden Club's Annual Plant Sale will be held at Fonthill United Church on Saturday May 18 from 8 am to noon. Come for an amazing selection of plants for sale, plus baking and lawn sale. Cash only.

A thank you to whomever planted the daffodils around the church signboard. They are a delight to behold. MUCH THANKS! - George Dewar

GERANIUMS supporting 3rd Fonthill Scouting:

The 3rd Fonthill Scouting Group is selling *locally grown* GERANIUMS to brighten up your garden. With the ability to thrive in any space, these geraniums will be a welcome addition to your Spring planting.

ORDERS DUE BY: May 12.

Pick-up will be Friday, May 17 in the parking lot of the Lions Hall on Highway 20, Fonthill.

Delivery is available for a fee (if you live in the Region of Pelham), and will take place the weekend of May 17-19.

To order plants, call Alison Moore at 905 570-3971 (Hamilton) or toll-free at 1-866-464-9757.

To access the geranium sale online, go to:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/f4a6e0d6-8cf8-41f0-b1e4-ff1ca7880e25>

Proceeds assist 3rd Fonthill Scouting in providing programming opportunities for our youth.

From age 5 and up, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers, and Rovers all provide Pelham with their service, and in turn are learning to make positive contributions to society.

The various Scouting groups meet weekly at Fonthill United Church.

Upcoming Concert at Fonthill United Church

**A CAPPELLA NIAGARA PRESENTS
JOY TO THE WORLD**

WITH ACN's OWN:


Dan, Howard, Kerry and Jym

**JUST ANOTHER
QUARTET - JAQ**
doowop to pop and
rock to barbershop


Jim, Jym, Bob and Jim
EASY STREET



The Little Strummer Boys


Don and Rob
songs from the '20s
up through the '90s

**Featuring
Vocalist:
Melissa-Marie
Shriner**

**Versatile Performer
in recitals and
concerts**



SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2024 AT 2:00 PM
FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH, 42 CHURCH HILL, FONTHILL
Tickets: Adults \$15.00-Children 12 and under Free

To order tickets: Phone 905 341 3415