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Tidings

Vol. 31, No. 1, 2021
LENT/EASTER

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Tidings

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Printed by:
 Sterling Marking Products

Four issues are published yearly: the first Sunday in December, March, and June; and the second Sunday in September. Submissions are due three weeks before the publication dates. Unsolicited submissions are accepted only from members, adherents, and staff of First-St. Andrew's (FSA) and from affiliated organizations. The editor reserves the right to edit, limit the length, or reject submissions. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of Council or the staff of First-St. Andrew's United Church. The print version of Tidings is made possible by the paid advertisements found in each issue in tandem with an annual allotment from the FSA operating budget.



David Wardlaw

This is the fourth issue of *Tidings* to be published during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first such issue (Pentecost/Summer 2020, released last June) was a special issue focussed directly on the impact of the pandemic and published in electronic form only. Subsequent issues have been published in the usual fashion (hard copy and electronic) and the plan for 2021 is to continue with both formats. It has been interesting to observe that the pandemic's influence on articles and reports in the last two issues of 2020 (released in September and December) became secondary or tangential and, for some articles, the word "pandemic" is absent. This pattern continues in the current issue. It is as if the pandemic provisions, precautions, and the "new normal" are increasingly, albeit sometimes begrudgingly, a part of the everyday life and work of FSA and its people. It demonstrates to me how adaptable people are and the robust strength of our commitment and faith as a group of congregants.

There is no "feature" article per se in this issue but instead a number of items that I want to feature in my message. The Our Neighbours article describes the legend surrounding London's Meeting Tree and its deep significance to the African-Canadian community. Publication of this article at this time of year was chosen to align with Black History Month (February). The Spiritual Dimensions article explores the joy, spirituality and health benefits of singing, giving the congregation and all the choirs inspiration to look hopefully forward to the end of COVID-19 restrictions on this aspect of worship. The Mission and Service article explores how a businesswoman and entrepreneur named Lydia who lived in Philippi and interacted with the disciple Paul would thrive in today's world as a leader of Mission & Service Fund projects and activities. The new Proudfoot Society concept is described in the Introducing article and an update on the Los Quinchos school in Nicaragua is found in a letter to the editor.

You will notice a limited number of larger ads in this issue. Thanks to the initiative of Bob Peel, who procures paid advertising for *Tidings*, advertisers were given for the first time the option of a double or quadruple business-card-sized ad. This was immediately successful and the advertising revenue has increased compared to previous years. Well done Bob!†



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David McKane

A lot has happened since I suffered a stroke on December 4th, having had a stent inserted in my left carotid artery to prevent such a thing occurring. In the ensuing nine weeks I have experienced a lot of medical care, physiotherapy, communal care and family care. I have begun to return slowly to work and am so grateful for the care I am receiving from FSA and Parkwood Hospital.

Lent was formalized in the early church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 (the Nicæan Creed). It is a period of reflection and preparation for Easter beginning on Ash Wednesday. In many denominations it has been practised in a variety of ways: retreats, protest marches, choral concerts, spiritual hill climbs such as the ascent up Croagh Patrick, Patrick's holy mountain and done by some on bare feet. In my own life, my health crisis has been my own resurrection. It could have so easily gone the other way, so it is my turn to roll aside stones, both physical and cognitive, as I return a wounded body and a wounded mind to health.

COVID will have much to teach us if we choose to pay attention and change our ways. Lent is a good time to reflect on our faith and as Marty Haugen, the hymn writer, reminds us: "Christ, you lead and we shall follow, stumbling though our steps may be, one with you in joy and sorrow, we the river, you the sea. God of all our fear and sorrow, God who lives beyond our death, hold us close through each tomorrow, love as near as every breath" (Voices United 121).

It has been an incredible time. As a community of faith we have suffered so much loss and so much change, but with the hope of a vaccine, our strength as a community and the significant gifts of so many, we will emerge – changed but alive in faith. †



Nancy Quinn

THE MEETING TREE: CELEBRATING AN AFRICAN-CANADIAN MONUMENT

In 2012 the Province and the City of London honoured this ancient white oak tree, located in south London's Westminster Ponds, by naming it a Heritage Tree. London's African-Canadian community and supporters have met here annually since 2013 in order to celebrate Emancipation Day. Legend has it that this tree is 700 years old and served as part of the Underground Railroad, offering refuge to slaves escaping from the American South during the mid-1800s. This towering 100-foot giant was a refuge for the escaped slaves who made shelters nearby. In celebrating the importance of this tree, people often join hands to circle its mighty girth of approximately 20 feet.

You can find this gentle giant behind Parkwood Hospital (801 Commissioners Road East), in Westminster Ponds Environmentally Significant Area. It is clearly marked by a plaque on the split-rail fence fronting the tree. If you would like to make a virtual pilgrimage to this natural monument you can take an eight-minute video hike, which includes two minutes of on-site videography (see details in byline*).

In July 2017, CBC reporter, Hala Ghonaim, interviewed Justine Turner, co-organizer of Black History Month in London. Turner has brought back Emancipation Day (August 1st) celebrations to London, after a nearly 30-year break. Celebrations are held during either August or September, according to the needs of the community. In the CBC interview Turner reflected on the connection she feels with the Meeting Tree. The following is a series of quotes from that interview: *"I feel love around the tree. I feel happiness and joy. I want to cry, I feel the pain that the tree has endured and what it has seen. It was here to help, I can picture our brothers and sisters sitting by the tree around the fire and talking. They would have built caves and hid for safety. They would have used the tree as a watch tower."*

Turner went on to observe that many escaped slaves hid in carts, pianos, or coffins as they sought safety in Canada. This tree was ideally hidden in the forest. In a separate 2017 history pamphlet, Justine Turner relates that what drove the former slaves to Canada was largely *The Fugitive Slave Act*, passed by the United States Congress on September 18, 1850. A very controversial part of the *Compromise of 1850*, this Act required that all escaped slaves were, upon capture, even in free American states, to be returned to their masters. Only in Canada (Britain outlawed slavery in 1833) was a former slave truly free. The United States finally repealed the "Bloodhound Law" in 1864. Some of the escaped slaves went on to settle in London, where they lived mainly in the area now known as Soho, near the venerable Beth Emanuel Church.

In literature prepared for the 2017 Emancipation Day celebrations, Justine Turner gives the London history for the celebration. For 38 years, starting in 1948, there was an Emancipation Day picnic in Springbank Park, organized by Turner's great-grandparents, Christine (Jenkins) Howson and Frank Howson. With the event's rebirth in 2013, the event moved to the Meeting Tree in Westminster Ponds.

The actual age of the Meeting Tree is unknown but there can be no doubt that this

mature tree is ancient (the life span of white oak is 300-600 years) and worthy of being a natural history monument. Kaitlin Richardson, ReForest London's manager, in 2017 told CBC's Ghonaim that the Meeting Tree is in good health and should live many more years. This beautiful tree still gives life and inspiration to the African-Canadian community and to us all, as we embrace our diverse origin stories. †

**A video about the Meeting Tree entitled "Adventure Series – Westminster Ponds – The Meeting Tree" is found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2U1N3JwJBI The 2017 CBC article/interview with Justine Turner is found at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/london-s-oldest-tree-has-deep-roots-for-black-community-1.4219549>*





Linda Badke

What is Antler River Watershed Region?

Antler River Watershed Regional Council (ARWRC) is a decision-making body responsible for serving and supporting communities of faith or churches within its bounds as well as providing necessary oversight. FSA is one of those churches. The tagline of ARWRC is “Holding and encouraging communities of faith”. This statement is both a communication tool and a standard against which to measure the work of the regional council. This statement was shaped by Oneida Elder, Rev. Grafton Antone, recalling the Haudenosaunee creation story of Turtle Island (the Indigenous name for North America).

The ARWRC is composed of all ministry personnel within its geographic bounds; ministers of denominations within mutual recognition agreements while under appointment or call; and lay members elected by the communities of faith, respecting the balance of lay and ministry personnel where possible. The ARWRC encompasses the counties of Elgin, Essex, Kent, Lambton, Middlesex and Oxford and serves alongside the Indigenous ministries of Kettle Point United Church, Moraviantown United Church, Oneida United Church, St. Clair United Church and Walpole Island United Church. The regional council’s priorities are governance and shared services and for mission and ministry.

ARWRC has an office in Carlisle, not far from Hamilton. The building was owned by the former Hamilton Conference. The Region has a number of staff many of whom are shared with neighbouring regions.

Cheryl-Ann Stedelbauer-Sampa is the executive minister for Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways, and Horseshoe Falls regional councils. She is responsible for overseeing, supporting and guiding the regions in governance and administration.

Lynne Allin looks after congregational support and mission for Antler River Watershed and Horseshoe Falls regional councils. Lynne comes with a passion for helping congregations identify and celebrate their current ministry, while also discerning where the Spirit is leading them.

Diane Blanchard looks after pastoral relations for Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways and Horseshoe Falls regional councils. She provides

staff support for the work of the Human Resources Commission in the area of pastoral relations including support for Ministry and Personnel committees, support for a new pastoral relationship with the United Fresh Start program, and appointment of ministers for short-term needs.

Kathy Douglas is the faith-formation minister for Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways and Horseshoe Falls regional councils. Kathy works with children, youth and young adults, supporting them in various programs and faith-forming events. Many youth are nurtured into leadership roles. She also works with camps and United Church Women’s groups.

Kevin Steeper is the pastoral support person for Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways and Horseshoe Falls regional councils. He is responsible for fostering and encouraging clergy support networks for the purpose of mutual care and support. Kevin is also available to offer pastoral care to individual clergy and their families in times of crisis.

David Jagger is a member of the General Council Philanthropy Unit, deployed in the Region. He consults with congregations and individuals around all areas of stewardship and generosity including congregational giving programs, Mission & Service, planned legacy giving and the United Church Foundation.

The Region also has a handful of administrative assistants.

FSA’s three lay reps to ARWRC are Jo Ann Silcox, Debbie Schram and Linda Badke. Jo Ann has been actively involved in working with congregations experiencing difficulty. Linda has recently joined the Mission and Discipleship Commission as well as the region’s Social Justice Ministry. Feel free to ask any of us questions in order to learn more about the Region that we represent.



†

Some of the information in this article was drawn directly from the Antler River Watershed Regional Council website, arwrcucc.ca



Robyn Marie Butt
Writer-in-Residence

Author's note: These sonnets were inspired by two of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary of First-St. Andrew's (designated by FSA as 'Crucifixion-East 3' and 'Jerusalem-East 4'). They're part of a collection of 29 sonnets on FSA's windows, a recently-completed manuscript now moving towards book form.

Crucifixion – East 3

It's told in bits: four scenes out of order
as if a tale too manifestly sad
for visiting straight out. See in the border
of Christ's most plundered hour the dozing heads
of his best friends, to whom he'd offered all.
In front of him the thorns; in angel's cup
Betrayal's bleeding yet to come, a call
through Solitude's resplendent dark. Look up
to where full darkness took him. Faithfuller friends
crowd close dismayed, helplessly still yearning
for God to disappear the cross. But ends
were drawing tight, the dull pace of our learning
left Him no other choice. So we're led deep:
into Gethsemane's interrupted sleep.



Poetry for Passion and Easter

Stained glass window East 3 in sanctuary at FSA depicting the Crucifixion. The following inscription appears at its base:

In memory of the Reverend John Y. MacKinnon,
minister of this church 1936 - 1951
PRESENTED IN 1955 BY A.E. SILVERWOOD
A MEMBER ASSOCIATED WITH THIS CHURCH
FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS



Jerusalem – East 4

Still, the window's full of green, while blue
deep as Promise notches out the sky
at leaf and arch, suggesting spring is due
despite our human failures. God wipes the lie
invoked by this sad drama. Nature's power
does revive the dead. Green shoots poke up
to mark hell's fruitless victories, and the cup
of sunrise in Christ's cloak awaits that hour
when sun will bloom. Tints carefully endorse
such moods we can feel sure of: when we leave
hate's toxic day, and ego's run its course,
always joy returns, dreams reweave
what violence has torn; and Love's sweet race
resumes its shining course to save our place.

Stained glass window East 4 in sanctuary at FSA depicting Christ in Jerusalem. The following inscription appears at its base:

In appreciation of the ministers who served 1903-1937
in First (PRESBYTERIAN) United Church
THE REV. W.J. CLARK, DD. 1890-1907
THE REV. J.G. INKSTER, 1908-1913
THE REV. W.J. KNOX, M.S. 1913-1921
THE REV. WM. BEATTIE, DD 1921-1932
THE REV. M.A.J. WATERS, B.D. 1933-1937
PRESENTED IN 1955 BY A.E. SILVERWOOD
A MEMBER ASSOCIATED WITH THIS CHURCH
FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS



Anne Cummings

HOW CAN I KEEP FROM *Singing?*

What do I miss most in this past year of social isolation? Singing in the FSA Choir. Singing in a church choir has always been my spiritual home throughout my life. Yes, I can sing at home, and do so, but it does not feel the same. That difference sent me on a search to understand what makes singing in a group so uplifting.

I soon discovered that there has been interesting research on the psychology and physiology of singing by Oxford University experimental psychology professors, Jacques Launay and Eiluned Pearce. They discovered that people had a greater sense of wellbeing after singing and that the relatively rapid social bonding that occurs in choirs appeared to increase a sense of belonging and community in the singers. This experience was beautifully captured by Muriel Barbery in her novel, *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*: “When the choir begins to sing, everyday life vanishes into song; you are suddenly overcome with a feeling of brotherhood, of deep solidarity, even love. I’m no longer myself, I am just one part of a sublime whole.”

In addition to these social benefits, singing also has physiological effects as it stimulates the brain, improves oxygen flow from the deep breathing that is required, and increases muscle tension. In addition, it releases the neurochemicals of B-endorphin and dopamine, which are responsible for the high that comes after intense exercise. This explains how I can arrive at choir rehearsal feeling tired after a day of activities and leave the rehearsal two hours later feeling great.

All of these benefits of singing in a group apply to congregational singing as well as choral singing. Humans have been singing in all cultural groups for millennia. It is speculated that singing evolved for creating community cohesion, which is certainly true for congregational singing. However, our congregational singing is about more than receiving its physical benefits and social benefits. The beautiful hymns that we sing as one entity also help us to strengthen our community of faith through both their words and their music.

There are times when I am singing that I experience chills in my body. This can happen to me on Easter Sunday when all of us are singing full voice accompanied by the brass quartet, and it can also happen during a very soft passage of beautiful music. I experience these chills as the Holy Spirit entering my body and my soul. It is when I feel most at one with God. Some people will express this sensation as “feeling moved” by a piece of music, by its ability to touch our souls in ways that words do not. If you have not experienced this sensation recently, I encourage you to attend the next community Sing Along Messiah at FSA. Besides having a combined choir of community singers on the chancel steps, the sanctuary is also filled with other singers who sing all of the choruses. The surround sound is both bodily spine-tingling and spiritually Glorious to God!

†



Elizabeth Stewart

Programming for Children and Youth during the Pandemic



If you walked around the church on Sunday mornings during autumn, you would have seen a group of children with adult volunteers gathered around tables or actually running around having lively conversations and laughing on the lawn. Why? Well, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that church school would be held outside on the lawn no matter the weather. What better environment to celebrate God's presence than in the great outdoors!

Using "Faithful Celebrations – Making Time for God in Autumn" as a resource, on Sunday, September 20th we kicked off church school with a welcome back and "Blessing of Backpacks". In addition, we focused on St. Francis of Assisi, All Saints' Day, and Remembrance Day. We also spent two Sundays focusing on the curriculum "Psalms for Kids". Later in autumn we used the Illustrated Children's Ministry curriculum entitled "An Illustrated Compassion – Learning to Love Like God".

November 15th – "Jesus' Compassion" (Matthew 9:35-28)

November 22nd – "Lord, When Was It?" (Matthew 25:31-40)

November 29th – "Compassion That Heals" (Luke 7:11-17)

December 6th – "Jesus Heals on the Sabbath" (John 5:1-9)

December 13th – "The One Who Had Compassion" (Luke 10:25-37)

We thank the church family for supporting the church school's Mint Smoothie fundraiser for ELUCO in December. The box of 200 smoothies went quickly!

Our intention to present "A Pandemic Christmas" pageant for Christmas Eve had to be scratched due to new pandemic restrictions. Once again, we pivoted and were able to offer a Family Christmas Eve service virtually.

The God Squad and the Junior Youth Group met in person as well as virtually during autumn. Our gatherings cen-

tered on building community, playing games and eating.

Many thanks to the God Squad who took leadership roles in planning and executing a Halloween fun-filled, energetic Saturday afternoon for all children and youth in October. Members of the two youth groups also took part in worship during the Remembrance Day service, the Lessons and Carols service on Sunday, November 29th, and during the Sunday, December 13th service.

Church school and youth group gatherings are made possible through the support and encouragement of the Christian Development Committee and specifically through the dedication, enthusiasm and creativity offered by many volunteers. Many thanks are extended to our church school volunteers – Allyson Watson, Susan McKane, Linda Badke, Kes Sebborn and our youth group volunteers, Chris Lindsay, Christine Koustrup and Jenn Cull. †



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WHY A FIRST CENTURY BUSINESSWOMAN WOULD SUPPORT THE MISSION AND SERVICE FUND



Ann Corbet

Several years ago, the United Church of Canada came up with a fantastic idea — The Gifts of Vision catalogue. I have been a proud supporter of the Mission and Service (M&S) Fund for over 20 years, trusting that my monthly donations would be dispersed according to need, but the Gifts of Vision catalogue enables donors to contribute to a particular cause.

As I scanned this year's copy of the catalogue, one particular project caught my interest. The nation of Sri Lanka has struggled, not only with the pandemic but also with sectarian violence and the violation of human rights. At the fringes of society are rural women whose potential as businesspeople has traditionally been ignored. Thanks to a Loan Fund, supported by M&S, the women of rural Sri Lanka are being given opportunities to become entrepreneurs.

As I contemplate these businesswomen, I am reminded of another entrepreneur. Her name is Lydia, and we discover her in the book of Acts. She lives in Philippi, a cosmopolitan community, located within the boundaries of what we now know as Europe. St. Paul and his entourage, galvanized by their mission to bring Christ to the world, arrive in Philippi and come upon a group of women eager to hear the good news of Christ. Among them is a businesswoman named Lydia.

Lydia is a “dealer in purple cloth”. Since purple fabric is reserved for the elite, we know that Lydia must be a successful businesswoman. Secondly, as there is no mention of a husband, we know that she is independently wealthy. Wealthy or not, Lydia is hungry for the gospel. Overwhelmed by grace, she quickly consents to baptism not only her own baptism, but the baptism of her entire household.

Being a woman of means, blessed with the gift of hospi-

ality, Lydia insists on hosting Paul and his entourage in her home. Paul concedes. When he has completed his mission in Philippi, Paul and his entourage depart. In the home of Lydia, the mission for Christ in Europe has begun.

As an entrepreneur, a seasoned host, and the co-founder of the Christian mission in Europe, I can't help but think that Lydia, if transported into the 21st century, would throw herself wholeheartedly into the work of the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church of Canada.

In her spirit as an entrepreneur, I see Lydia moving around, not only encouraging the craftswomen of Sri Lanka, but also

galvanizing new Canadians in Montreal, as they toil at their sewing machines at the City Mission, churning out masks by the hundreds, which serve to protect us from COVID.

In her spirit as the ultimate host, I see her at the Jimmy Pratt Memorial Outreach Centre in St. John's, serving up hot and hearty meals. I see her offering a hug in a safe space in Kenya, where youth across the spectrum of gender and sexuality are offered safety, security and love. And Lydia would, of

course, be sitting at the table with the Board of Directors at ELUCO, challenging, animating and applauding.

In these difficult days I give thanks for the Spirit who drives our Mission and Service Fund, the self-same Spirit who energized our spiritual ancestor Lydia. How might we respond to the Spirit? We respond by giving our best. †



This article is based on the sermon delivered by the author on Mission and Service Sunday in January 2021. The Gifts of Vision catalogue can be found on the United Church of Canada website.



The Proudfoot Society

The Trustees

Most members and adherents of First-St. Andrew's (FSA) probably know something of William Proudfoot and are certainly aware of the name through Proudfoot Hall, the Proudfoot Legacy Trust, and the Proudfoot Legacy Tree. Now we can add the "Proudfoot Society" to the list. This concept, created by the Trustees and approved by Council December 15th, 2020, will have its congregational rollout inaugural celebration in Proudfoot Month, May 2021.

William Proudfoot, regarded as the founding minister of FSA, was minister of the 1833 congregation that became First Presbyterian. One hundred and five years later First United and St. Andrew's United merged to create FSA in 1938 (both were Presbyterian churches until church union in 1925). Proudfoot's legacy permeates FSA. The early Proudfoot adherents provide a backdrop for our modern Proudfoot Society. Our founder left an indelible mark on that small community.

The Proudfoot Legacy Trust Fund has grown under the guidance of the Trustees. It now provides over \$100,000 per year for FSA's operating and capital projects. The money supports the congregation by offsetting the shortfall between annual givings and fundraising, and the annual operating cost of the church. Recently this shortfall has been increasing and is projected to continue to grow. Clearly, the sustainability of FSA in the coming years depends on growth of the principal of the Proudfoot Legacy Trust Fund to provide increasing contributions to FSA's annual expenses. Enter the Proudfoot Society!

The purpose of the Proudfoot Society is threefold:

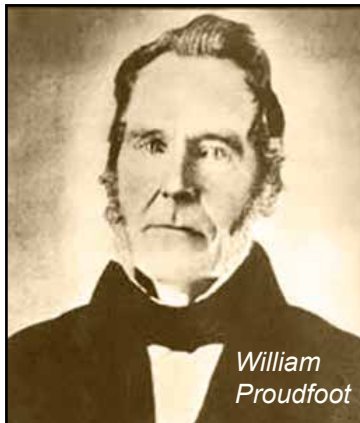
- to raise awareness of the Proudfoot Legacy Trust Fund and its crucial role;
- to increase the value of the Fund by encouraging donations and promises for future gifts; and

- to recognize, in a tiered fashion, those who contribute to the Fund or, alternatively, longstanding members who have made significant leadership contributions to FSA.

Until now, the vast majority of contributions to the Trust Fund have come from estates of FSA members and adherents. Distinctive features of the new Society concept are the encouragement and formal recognition of contributions of \$10,000 or more (beyond annual stewardship pledges), and the pledge of end-of-life bequests from living donors.

The tag line of a well-known credit card is 'Membership has its privileges'. For the Proudfoot Society, membership is not about privileges but rather recognition for contributions and promises made. On a personal level the reward is an enduring contribution that will benefit both current and future congregants. On the congregational level the reward is a larger Proudfoot Fund to enhance the operational wellbeing of FSA, enabling it to continue its mission of Faith, Service, and the Arts. On the community level, the reward is a healthy FSA providing support and championing social justice.

The history and traditions brought to us by William Proudfoot live on. Church activities continue to take place in Proudfoot Hall below our historic sanctuary. Our Board of Trustees is committed to continuing these traditions by offering opportunities to contribute to that legacy through membership in the Proudfoot Society. †



Further details on the Proudfoot Society are available on the church website, in a brochure mailed to congregants in February 2021, or from one of the Trustees.



Laurel Kenney

“B ut it’s not just the same!” How many times have you heard that phrase repeated in this last year? I contemplate my past years in four different churches in four different cities including over 50 years in the choir at First-St. Andrew’s. I feel this experience has been challenging – musically, spiritually and now physically. Yet it has brought a certain fulfillment and joy.

Despite the many blessings that I have received through the above, I now find it difficult and unsettling to worship God from the warmth and security of my home. I can listen or sing along with the anthems and hymns at my leisure. I can even enjoy my coffee while doing so. Perhaps, although I don’t like to admit it, this way of worship is a bit lonely while I know many in the congregation are experiencing the same emotion.

But I recall the message of the preacher, Rev. Tom (Hiscock) on that morning in January (2021). He read the scripture story of how Jesus commanded Andrew and Simon to leave their nets and follow him. They didn’t stop to consider where their next meal was coming from or the possible danger they might confront if they left their secure home and followed Jesus. They just placed their complete trust in his words and followed.

This is what I had been missing. I need to affirm my early words of my confirmation – the challenge that now presents itself in one small way. Worship need not be the same as 20 years ago. I need to trust as the disciples did.

The chance for new opportunities for change can be part of my everyday living and in my life in our church, however that might be! Thank goodness! †



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Judi Barker

Friendship, I think, is one of life's treasured gifts, and I have to thank FSA for introducing me to Beth Bailey. I have some of my memories of Beth to share with you.

I came to London in the early 70s and was attending FSA when I met Beth. We both participated in the bake sales, rummage sales, bazaars and sometimes helped out at Sunday school. As time went on we got to know each other, to laugh, to talk, and to share our thoughts on life. I remember in those early years our children would go to Sunday school during the church service and Beth and I would share a pew to worship together. After the service we both so enjoyed the music and we would sit and then talk until our children found us in our pew.

Our friendship grew and over the years my husband Grant and I and our girls would travel with Beth and Stew and their boys. We all loved skiing and we went to Utah, Vermont, Quebec and Collingwood over the years. My daughters loved Beth. She, having boys, was interested in Sarah and Laura, their activities, school, and their other interests. She



Beth Bailey
1946-2020

genuinely cared and I know she loved them.

Another way FSA contributed to our friendship was at Christmas. In the early years our children would participate in the children's Christmas pageant, after which the Baileys would come to the Barkers for dinner. As the children grew older, our plans changed and the Baileys would come for dinner in the early evening and then together our families attended the candlelight service at FSA. It was a wonderful tradition that went on for many years, and to this day the Bailey boys, Chris, Pat and Paul, and the Barker girls always mention how they treasured those times together.

Beth Bailey was a portrait in dignity and grace. She so cared for others and her gorgeous smile and laugh just made you feel better. Her kindness and support were quietly given to whomever needed them. Beth was committed and passionate about her causes; she was a true humanitarian.

It was particularly during the last two years when, with courage and bravery, Beth demonstrated who she was,

maintaining her sense of humour, the beautiful smile and a heart full of love for all the caring she received.

Thank you FSA for introducing me to Beth; perhaps someone in heaven had a hand in this wonderful gift of friendship. The following words are not mine, but I wish to share them with you now. "Breath takes the body, our minds hold the memories, our hearts keep the love, our faith will let us know we will meet again."

Till then Beth, I will always cherish you. †



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Council Report
Steve Elson

I'd like to begin this report by noting the hard work and dedication of all those who brought us our Advent and Christmas services. Even though we were not able to meet in person, we all shared this special time through the excellent online services.

Both Rev. Ann Corbet and Rev. Tom Hiscock have been able to step in and cover while Rev. Dr. David McKane is recovering from his stroke, and he is already looking forward to getting back to work as FSA's Supply Minister. Meanwhile the Search Committee for a new minister is hard at work and making progress. I think everyone will agree that Erich Knapp has made the adjustment to living in Canada and is providing FSA with the high quality of music we have come to expect. In addition, Rev. Elizabeth Stewart – along with our strong cadre of volunteer leaders – has been able to bring support and leadership to the children's services and programs, on-line of course! All of this illustrates that we have been able to adapt to change – even changes not of our own making.

As for Council itself, we have undertaken a self-assessment of our meetings and the results were largely positive – with several constructive suggestions being made. Plans are

currently underway to ask the congregation what they know about and think of Council; this will help Council to determine what changes, if any, it needs to make to improve.

As Council moves forward into 2021, it will be paying particular attention to several developments: changes to the COVID rules and how we can come together; the selection and welcoming of a new minister to FSA; the creation of more specific redevelopment plans for St. Andrew's Hall in particular; and, participation in the United Church's United Fresh Start program – for more information go to: <https://www.unitedfreshstart.ca/>

In addition to the Council members from 2020 who will continue to serve FSA, we have welcomed two new members: Allyson Watson as Chair of the Christian Development Committee and David Wardlaw as Chair-Elect of Council. David will serve one year in this role and will then take on the role of Council Chair for two years. At the end of this year, I will become Past Chair, a role currently held by George Jolink.

As we move into an uncertain future, may we all give thanks for having each other for support and friendship †



Christian Development
Allyson Watson

We were able to enjoy the children and provide church school outside for the fall. We have begun to offer Zoom church school again as we head into fewer restrictions and hopefully we will be able to gather together once the weather is warmer. The children sold Mint Smoothie chocolates in December to support the ELUCO Christmas Share; thank you for your support – it was a sell-out. Keep your eyes open for another sale of chocolates once we can gather together!

The Committee is pursuing an adult education series fo-

cussed on the environment, most likely in the fall. As always we are interested in knowing what you might like to see, so send your suggestions to Allyson Watson.

The youth group will be meeting online again until we can meet in person.

Finally, a confirmation group is planned to begin in September. If you know someone who will be in grade 9 or 10 in the fall and who is interested in participating in the confirmation journey, please let us know. †

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Music
Merran Neville

Flexibility is a most important quality to possess these days of the pandemic. Advent services on November 29th, December 6th and 13th were still in person (with videos available) until December 14th, when London moved into the red zone. The in-person services stopped and the third Friday Advent Noon Recital, to be given by the Laudamus Bells, was cancelled. The first two recitals were recorded and are available on the FSA YouTube channel with the service videos. On December 20th, two services were recorded – the morning service for release on Sunday, December 27th and, later that day, the Christmas Eve service. By this time, some singers from the Chamber Choir had left town and three members of the Senior Choir were invited to participate. As well, Shaw Atherton, teenage son of alto soloist, Francesca Ranalli, joined Bill Guthrie on the bass part. This service featured four choruses from *Messiah*, and the FSA Strings directed by Igor Saika-Voivod performed.

On December 26th, London went into lockdown and this demanded even further adjustments to services for Erich to make as the choir dropped to five singers. Since late January, the Chamber Choir singers have been Natalie Nelson and Hillary Tufford – sopranos, Camila Montefusco – mezzo

soprano, Owen Spicer – tenor and Alastair Smyth – bass. The numbers allowed in the church during January and February required this. Erich has adjusted his plans by choosing music for the smaller ensemble and delighting us all with stirring prelude and postlude organ gems. Perhaps March will allow us to go back to the larger chamber ensemble. Erich, however, has a Plan A and a Plan B to meet all eventualities leading up to and including Easter services.

Natalie and Camila, our Eberhard Vocal Scholars, who have been attending Western’s Faculty of Music, will be completing their Masters program in Music Literature and Performance (Voice) and graduating in May. They will be moving away from London and we will be sorry to see them go but wish them every success in their future careers. Natalie’s graduation recital is Saturday, March 27th and Camila’s is Monday, April 26th. These recitals will be live-streamed and details about where to watch will be provided in the email eblast. Camila recently competed in the Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions – Buffalo/Toronto District, at which she was awarded the *Encouragement Award*, which is granted to singers “who show great promise.” She received a monetary prize and special recognition for her performance. Congratulations to both Natalie and Camila on their upcoming graduation. †



Membership & Nurture
Heather Locking-Cusolito

As we approach the first anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic our committee is eternally grateful for the pastoral care ministry of Dr. Jo Ann Silcox and for the recovery to health of Rev. Dr. David McKane as he resumes his pastoral care responsibilities. During David’s recent illness Rev. Tom Hiscock stepped into the breach caused by his absence. Thank you, Tom, for pitching in so ably.

Because of the isolation caused by the lockdown, our Prayer Chain and the Caring Callers both coordinated by Annabelle Logan, and the Lay Visitation Team have all done yeoman’s service reaching out to members of the congregation. We know that we are not alone in this endeavour and are thankful for the many ways that everyone is looking out for one another. If you know of anyone who needs additional contact with FSA or if you are experiencing that need yourself, please do not hesitate to contact either Jo Ann Silcox (silcox3@sympatico.ca) or Heather Locking-Cusolito (johncusolito009@sympatico.ca).

In the absence of social gatherings in the church, Heather Locking-Cusolito and Jan Hendry are planning to trial a Zoom

social hour to replace the camaraderie we can no longer experience at Coffee and Conversation. The details of how to join will be profiled in the weekly eblast. Stay tuned. And like all of you we look forward to meeting together in person once it is safe to do so.

We are delighted to report that Erich Knapp has agreed to take on leadership of the Affirm Committee. If you or anyone you know is interested in the important work of this committee, I know Erich would be pleased to hear from you. †

Jim Deacon
President

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United Church Women
Nancy Quinn

RETROSPECTIVE

Your UCW executive met December 7th, 2020 and discussed the 2021 budget. Jeane Stewardson, correspondence secretary, continues to send notes of encouragement, celebration and condolence. General meetings (after February 2020) and the November 2020 Boutique Bazaar were cancelled due to COVID-19. We are excited that the following projects (Fall 2020) raised over \$3,524:

- Colourful masks sewn by Jan Hendry and Deanne Pederson
- Unique batik bookmarks created by Glenda Robinson
- Delicious jams, jellies, and relishes made by Laurel Kenney, Nancy Quinn, Linda Badke, and Helen Guthrie
- Beautiful cards hand-crafted by Jane Glaves
- Fine cherry trays and charcuterie boards crafted by Ted Hallberg and sold by Anne Cummings

Thank you to our industrious donors and enthusiastic buyers, who supported UCW charities including ELUCO, Rotholme Women’s and Family Centre, My Sister’s Place, L’Arche, Anova, and St. Paul’s Social Services.

FSA UCW representatives enjoyed the Internet presentation, “A Step Towards Diversity,” Saturday, February 20th, when the Tri-Regional UCW met.

UCW Phantom Tea, 2021

*Again it is our Phantom Tea time
And I need to come up with a new rhyme.
Things have been on hold for almost a year
And the latest orders are very clear.
Stay in your home; stay out of a crowd.
We got the message, clear and loud.
No rummage sale in the spring, no bazaar in November.
Never happened before as long as I can remember.
Still – bills to be paid – we don’t have to look far.
We already know what those needs are.
My Sister’s Place, ELUCO, to name only two
Many more charities that, thanks to you.
We can “Do unto Others” as we should
And pray for brighter days in the neighbourhood.*

You can still support the Phantom Tea. Make cheques out to "First-St. Andrew’s UCW," and mail or place in FSA’s atrium wall mailbox, with envelope labelled “Attention: UCW”. Thank you to all donors. A special thank you to UCW poet-in-residence, Millie Bates.

UPCOMING

- World Day of Prayer, March 5th, focused on Vanuatu. <https://wicc.org/world-day-of-prayer/how-to-participate/>
- Laurel Kenney is cooking up delicious marmalade. To

order: 519-439-9300.

- There is no April rummage sale.
- UCW members: please mail your Green Envelope donation cheques (care of FSA; Attention: UCW).

We look forward to seeing you again, when it is safe. †



Jelly-makers at work
(photos, courtesy of Erich Knapp)

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Mission & Outreach Barbara Dalrymple

Mission and Service Fund

On January 31 we celebrated the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church with Ann Corbet preaching. Her very first three-point charge in Labrador was supported by the M&S Fund. Thank you to all FSA members whose donations to M&S totaled close to \$48,000 in 2020. In these times M&S needs our continued support.

Indwell

Locally we initiated our Lenten focus, Indwell affordable housing. It will continue until Easter.

East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO)

People in the Marconi community in east London are feeling additional stress at this time as are many others. Tensions are building in that community with difficulty in maintaining a balance and healthy coping mechanisms. Addiction, crime and violence, depression and anxiety are at an all-time high. Our Community Outreach Worker, Nancy Howard, is present in the community, offering a listening ear and providing counselling outdoors or by phone, which is much appreciated by these families. Unfortunately, we know many are being missed as fewer people catch Nancy walking by because they are inside with the colder temperatures.

Christmas Share was a great success this year. First-St. Andrew's did an online campaign to collect money for their gift card program with tax receipts provided to individual donors. ELUCO received \$5100 worth of grocery gift cards. The church school sold chocolates and donated the pro-

ceeds, which we turned into \$125 worth of Indigo gift cards. Individual donations were used to purchase \$500 worth of Indigo, Winners and Shoppers' gift cards. Families were very grateful for gifts received. Some were quite emotional when Nancy delivered gifts to their home. Love prayers are sent to ELUCO's very generous sponsors with heartfelt gratitude for bringing hope, peace, joy and love to these families.

St. Paul's Social Services (from the director Barbara Symington)

Our foodbank has continued to remain open but with contactless handing out of hampers from our parking lot door. We continue to provide fresh produce, eggs, milk powder and bread with our hampers. We have seen many first-time users and many who have not looked for help in several years.

The Fellowship Centre has been open but intermittently, depending on lockdowns and restrictions on numbers permitted indoors and out. We hand out food at the door when we are allowed by the current conditions. We managed a wonderful Curbside Christmas, in which we provided gifts of warm knitted goods, socks, gloves and toiletries to guests, as well as custom-made hot drinks and a full takeout Christmas meal! We served 70+.

It is thanks to the generous and steadfast support of the people of First-St. Andrew's United Church and others like you that we have been able to carry on our work throughout 2020! On behalf of everyone here at St. Paul's Social Services, bless you all for your support.

Grow-a-Row

During May we will launch our Grow-a-Row campaign for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Stay tuned to the eblast for more information. †



Communications & Marketing Jim Silcox

Our email blast, *This Week at First-St. Andrew's*, has proven itself to be an effective and popular communication tool that knits us together as a church family in a timely and relevant fashion each week, especially during the COVID lockdown. So it was with a little dismay that we found that the Church's email-sending software refused to send it out one bleak Thursday in January. So many people had subscribed that we had exceeded its spam limit!

Undaunted, after some quick investigation, we found that our website host, Wix, offered us another way to get the word out. The transition provided an opportunity to make some other changes as well. Since March of 2020 we had been sending out a second blast each week on Saturday evening with the link to the online video service posted on YouTube. We have elected to combine the two blasts, one with weekly info and one with the link, into a single mailing and to send

it out on Saturday evening. This new blast mechanism has also made it possible to change the format of the blast so that it more resembles the stylish mailings that you get from other sources on a regular basis. In particular, we can include more graphics and images, but you now have the option of downloading the images – or not – when you open your blast.

We wonder what William Proudfoot would say about the communication challenges that come along as the years go by. †

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Property
George Jolink

I think we can all agree that 2020 was an unusual year and that the early part of 2021, although optimistic, continues to impact how we do business and use our facility at First-St. Andrew's. The Property Committee has continued to maintain the facility with a focus on function and cleanliness for our staff and tenants.

In December 2020 and January 2021, we experienced significant issues with our heating system, which required approximately \$15,000 worth of repairs. Our current boiler system is roughly 50–60 years old, with steam piping, etc. considerably older. A study done in 1998 suggested 5–10 more years of service life for the boiler. The Avis report of 2008 indicated at that time that replacement of our heating system would be necessary in the near future. Through regular annual maintenance and repairs, we have extended the life of this system but that cannot continue indefinitely.

The Property Committee along with the Planning Committee are working now to discern whether or not we have reached the point where we must undertake the design and

installation of a new heating system. There are several things to consider: the age of our current system, the ability to switch to more efficient and environmentally friendly solutions and the costs involved. This would represent a significant capital project, which might be implemented in stages and which would require Trustee support and a Capital Campaign to raise some of the funds. As we envision the future of FSA and how we use our facility – our greatest capital asset – we must also consider how we keep it functional for the long term.

Other Property projects planned for 2021:

- dry well improvements on the west lawn to better handle roof drain water in heavy downpour situations
- security gates in the south narthex entrance (completed)
- completion of stain glass repair
- completion of installation of heat trace cables on rear west roof †



Trustees
Doug Jones (left)
Jackie Williams (right)



The Board of Trustees is bound by the FSA Statement of Policies and Procedures, and the Model Trust Deed of the United Church of Canada, as well as legal obligations to the City of London, the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Trustees have regularly been meeting remotely to ensure that the Trust Funds are performing optimally, and that any funds for necessary repairs and improvements within the church and Farquhar House are approved and available. Trustees work closely with the Finance and Property committees to budget for expected repairs, but also for those unexpected and unwelcome events!

Trustees take responsibility for FSA's Trust Funds very seriously and avoid the spending of capital in order to protect the future operation of our historic church and congregation. This pandemic year has seen great volatility in the markets, but, due to the conservative nature of our portfolio, the Trust Funds are recovering. We expect they will generate sufficient revenue to support FSA's needs during 2021.

The Long-Term Giving Committee of the Trustees has contributed a special article to this edition of *Tidings*, informing the congregation of the newly approved Benefactor Program at FSA and its Proudfoot Society. To start this new

initiative, FSA Council recently approved a motion by the Trustees that the month of May be designated Proudfoot Month, its launch scheduled for Legacy Sunday, May 2nd, 2021. Besides bequests left in people's wills, the Proudfoot Society also recognizes contributions to the Trust Funds from living donors, as well as members of the congregation who have made life-time contributions to FSA through continuous membership of at least 40 years, and who have held executive positions at FSA.

The Trustees warmly welcome Jean Wright and Kay Hillier, who were approved as Trustees during the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 31st, 2021. Kay will add her expertise to the Memorials Committee within the Board, while Jean has become the Board's secretary and also joins its Investment Committee. †



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Archives
Don Jones

At our January meeting, the archives team decided to locate and record the whereabouts and status of the archival material that is required in the 2019 revamping of the United Church from Conference organization to Regional organization. To this end, a spreadsheet has been started in which each category will be named, and the location of materials will be recorded along with the status of each item.

At the same meeting, which took place virtually, pictures were shown of the archives room indicating how bulletins and minutes, etc. have been stored over the years. These pictures gave us some sense of the work that is ahead of us. Some of the committee members have not been in the archives room, because of the pandemic lockdown.

A decision was made to store some of the materials in the main office and in the storeroom for easier access by staff when items such as records of births or burials are requested through the main office. It was also decided that, since the

FSA website is easily accessible, materials that are not of a confidential nature could be stored on the expansive web server for easier access by individuals.

The archives collection around our music and arts events is an area that the committee has decided needs attention. The Arts have been so important to our church and church members over the years. Any articles, photos, or items that church members have on hand could be copied or stored and added to the archives with thanks from our committee.

Ahead of the committee lies the tasks of digitizing the church rolls and making sure staff members and others have full knowledge of the location of each aspect of the archives. A new large hard drive has been purchased to store the digital records for posterity.

Finally, it was decided that "Nuggets" from our history at FSA should be a regular part of the email blast each week. Look for these bits of information. We think you will find them interesting. †



Climate Action London
Mary Ann Hodge

Climate Action London continues to gain momentum. We now have about 150 subscribers to our weekly environment message. We promote a variety of opportunities and actions individuals can take to engage with the climate emergency, and we continually look for opportunities to engage with other organizations.

Climate Action London was recently successful in obtaining a grant from the London Environmental Network to create a bike-share program at Indwell's Woodfield Gate location, to encourage healthy and zero-emission transportation options. We are currently working with ReForest London, among other groups, to host an online native plant sale this spring to help combat the decline in biodiversity in London.

We are excited to engage with a new national ecumenical organization, For the Love of Creation, which the Antler River Watershed Region is also highlighting. This program echoes

our views that addressing climate change is a manifestation of faith. We have started to host these climate conversations with small groups of eight people who are seeking ways to further learn and engage with the climate emergency in an atmosphere of non-judgement and curiosity.

Another ecumenical organization, Faith and the Common Good, has a longer history of working to promote environmental action within communities of faith. We are exploring ways that we can highlight their programs to faith communities in London. Their signature program, *Faithful Footprints*, awards grants of up to \$30,000 to congregations for work that reduces their carbon footprints.

These are exciting times. Join us the 3rd Monday of every month on Zoom (when not in the Fireside Room). To receive notifications of these meetings, sign up as a "Member" at: <http://eepurl.com/hhK8Ff> †



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The following email letter provides an update to the special report on the United Church of Canada's Latin America & Caribbean Partnership Program (which includes Los Quinchos) that was published in the Pentecost/Fall 2020 issue of Tidings (Vol. 30, No. 3).

February 2, 2021

Hi David,

I am writing to follow up on correspondence you had with Patti Talbot this summer (2020) about Los Quinchos. At that time, we were working to resolve acute challenges that Los Quinchos was experiencing as a result of banking restrictions that prevented Los Quinchos from receiving funds from outside Nicaragua. We have since been able to resolve those issues and Los Quinchos received a transfer that included the special gift from FSA in October.

We have received an initial report about the use of the funds including video and pictures which I would be happy to share with First-St. Andrew's and I expect to receive further information soon. Please let me know what the best way would be to share this information with FSA.

Hoping you are well in the midst of these strange times.

Regards,

*Christie Neufeldt
Regional Coordinator — Latin America & Caribbean
The United Church of Canada / L'Église Unie du Canada*

MILESTONES

DEATHS

- Doris Strickland, Nov. 30th, 2020
- Alyce Reed, Dec. 13th, 2020
- Paul Wenn, Jan. 12th, 2021
- Lorraine MacDonald, Feb. 5th, 2021

CHURCH STAFF

- **Pastoral Charge Supervisor, Supply Minister, Minister Emeritus & Minister of Visitation:** The Rev. Dr. David McKane (Ext.1)
- **Director of Music:** Erich Knapp (Ext. 3)
- **Youth & Young Family Co-ordinator:** Jane Dockrill/ Elizabeth Stewart (Ext. 4)
- **Church Administrator:** Heather Vouvalidis (Ext. 5)
- **Administrative Assistant:** Kathryn Skelly (Ext. 0)
- **Facility & Maintenance Coordinator:** Tim Miedema (Ext. 6)
- **Designated Pastoral Care Volunteer:** Jo Ann Silcox
- **Part-Time Custodian:** George Jolink
- **Organist Emeritus:** Paul Merritt

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