

Tidings

Vol 26, No 1 – Lent/Easter 2016

Enid & Paul Merritt
A Retirement Tribute
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Tidings

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EDITORIAL

David McKane

With the Flynns off travelling at the time of writing, I was asked to write the editorial for this issue of *Tidings*. Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection, a time to remember that as Christians we are an Easter people. It is also a season of celebrating new life; new life in creation, new life in our communities, new life in our church and in ourselves.

In this issue you will find much evidence of new life within our church as we celebrate with Donna Spencer one hundred Easters past, and think of all the stones, real and figurative, that have been rolled aside over those one hundred years; as we rejoice in new members who have joined us with their giftedness on the journey and those growing up within the family circle. We are also invited to reflect on life passages we have experienced as we travel with the Bates to Brazil, home of the legendary Pelé, whom I once met in Toronto, or to India and Nepal with Mary McKim McKenzie and reflect on how our M&S dollars are spent, or to Nicaragua with the youth as they connect with outreach projects and put their faith into action. You will also wish to read the article on the Merritts and their significant contributions to the fabric of FSA over their years among us.

In each and in all you will recognize the signs of resurrection, of new life growing out of the old, of new threads being added to the quilt of our being, of new seeds of hope being planted in the rich garden that is FSA. Christ is risen! Alleluia! 




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The Rev. Michelle Down

The 40 days of Lent are to remind us of the need to let go of the burdens that trouble us; to deny the temptations that constantly present themselves to us, and to prepare ourselves for the resurrection of new faith within us. As Christians we are blessed to be known as Easter people. People who are called to experience the resurrection, and then live it!

In Luke 24 we read of the women and the disciples coming to the tomb to find the stone rolled away. This is an emblem of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that they were about to discover. And for us today, it is an emblem of opportunity, restoration, and new life that is being offered to each of us.

When we remove the stones and

boulders that are preventing us from faithful servanthood, harmonious relationships, or genuine discipleship, then we too can experience the new life that Jesus is offering to us. When we roll away the stones in our lives, then we can receive the resurrection of hope, the resurrection of joy, and the resurrection of possibilities.

As Easter People we are called to profess the blessings of the Risen Christ. As Treaty People we are called to live out our actions as established with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As Mission People we are called to share our rich resources. As Faithful People we are called to eradicate the plight of those who are marginalized. As First-St. Andrew's People we are called to spiritual growth through Worship, Friendship, Learning and Action. *(Cont'd. on page 19)*

Notes from Michelle



LIFE PASSAGES

Steve Elson

Life is full of passages—literally moving from one place or situation to another. Birth, death, marriage, starting school, graduation, first job, retiring, are all different forms of life passages we acknowledge and celebrate, not only personally but as a community and family.

And while these life passages or milestones are very familiar to all of us, the experience of them is always very individual and personal. What life passages have in common is that they represent a significant change, with a new door opening to a future that will be different from the past. Significant passages can change one's world outlook.

While some life passages are of our own making, others are thrust upon us or change us in ways that we would not have expected. The movement of displaced Syrians to Canada represents such a passage; it's not of their choosing and it will undoubtedly change their future and life view. The experience of

war by Canadian soldiers has changed them forever.

There is also a world of difference between being a witness to someone else's life passage and going through one as part of one's own life journey. It often involves taking a risk—emotionally, physically and spiritually—not knowing what the outcome will be but having the conviction that it's important enough to do regardless. This takes not only conviction but also faith, faith in oneself and faith that the path being followed is the right one. It takes courage to act. It may not feel like courage but something one is drawn to or feels compelled to do.

Our spiritual journey can be like this. It can be marked by formal and shared ceremonies—a first communion, a funeral, a wedding. It can also be marked by very personal experiences that touch us deeply and profoundly. But for this to happen we need to be open to new experiences from which we can grow and thereby discover that which lies deep within us.

At least that's how I see things from the pew. †

View from the Pew



Profile



HEATHER LOCKING-CUSOLITO
Barbara Dalrymple

You notice Heather Locking-Cusolito right away with her sparkling smile, sunny personality and welcoming ways. She is a perfect ambassador for the Welcoming Committee she chairs, under the banner of Membership & Nurture.

Heather was born in Montreal, and completed her undergraduate degree at the University of New Brunswick, following in the footsteps of her mother, grandmother and great-aunts.



Kingston and Toronto were her homes before she moved to London 33 years ago.

After graduation, Heather first worked with people who were undergoing dialysis and renal transplantation, after that as a staff

nurse at Toronto General Hospital, and then as head nurse of the Renal Intensive Care Unit. She returned to school to complete her Master of Science in nursing at U

of T. After moving to London she became a clinical nurse specialist—nurse practitioner, working at all three campuses of London Health Sciences in a job she always found to be fulfilling and satisfying.

Before coming to London, Heather attended Timothy Eaton United Church and heard of a welcoming church in London—FSA. After moving here, she met her husband-to-be, John. They looked for a church in which to be married and she's been here ever since. The tradition of excellent preaching, magnificent music and the beautiful sanctuary appeal to her. She has also experienced great support and encouragement in times of trouble.

At FSA she is a very active and astute participant in Thursday morning Bible Study and attends worship, concerts and congregational activities regularly. This feeds her spiritually, along with a daily e-mail from a minister of a small church outside of Toronto.

In her spare time Heather enjoys reading, movies, music (especially opera), knitting, gardening, travel and entertaining friends and family.

As Chair of the Welcoming Committee that was established in 2014, Heather has worked tirelessly and productively in making FSA a more welcoming church. She puts smiles on people's faces and exudes enthusiasm. Her wish is for everyone in our church to think about how they can personally help to make FSA a welcoming and spiritually nurturing church community.

Each and every one of us can follow Heather's lead and be as welcoming as she is. †

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GOODBYES ARE OFTEN DIFFICULT
Barbara Plante

The goodbye we as a congregation will be saying in June will be extremely difficult, as we say farewell and thank you to our beloved director of music; a man who has been not only our musical genius, but an integral part of our congregation and a much-loved friend.

As Paul Merritt leaves us, he has much to be proud of: he took an already excellent programme to quite heady heights in terms of its depth and complexity, the degree of excellence, and his ability to attract and keep high calibre, experienced musicians. Our programme grew into the finest in the area—once called the best United Church programme in Canada—and the envy of other churches. When asked, Paul declined to lay claim to being overly proud. But then, his modesty is one of his charms.

Paul has demonstrated his ability to attract gifted musicians. He instituted and supported the First-St. Andrew's Strings; he has run successful children's programmes, including *Gone Fishin'*, and numerous children's choirs; he gave great support to the handbell choir, and for the past 2½ years, directed it, and the Lenten and Advent noon recitals are popular annual offerings to the community. To the delight of London audiences, Paul has invited other professionals such as the internationally renowned *St. Lawrence String Quartet*, which has performed here eight times! And our vast collection of music and musical instruments has benefited from his professional care and oversight. The Friends of Music programme has also grown, Paul carefully managing the funds that have been donated so that

they fully support this second-to-none concert series.

Our senior choir, the most accomplished in the area, comprises 50–60 talented and experienced musicians. The reason for this lies in Paul's ability to provide challenging music and to train singers to perform it to a high degree of excellence. His rehearsals combine great teaching skills, extreme attention to detail (i.e. getting it RIGHT), and a great sense of humour. (*Cont'd. on page*



WILL TODD, SONJA GUSTAFSON, AND PAUL



PAUL WITH BOB CHILCOTT



PART TWO
Mary McKim

The Northern Himalayas and Southern Nilgiris provide Hill Stations; respite from summer heat. Woodstock School and Missionary bungalows were located in Mussoorie. A seven-hour drive concluded with a climb of seven thousand feet. Hiking to language school gave panoramic views of



snow peaks. "Oakville" (summer home of indigo planters,) afforded clear views over the valley. We enjoyed our stay but struggled to dry diapers during monsoon. Woodstock school, a twenty-minute hike along narrow paths, offered concerts and plays, and a community centre provided tea and gossip. Vendors delivered meat, vegetables and buffalo milk to our door; herders' shacks visible across the valley. (Cows were "sacred," not a resource.) Children returned to "boarding" in September.

En route to Mission meetings in Indore we visited Delhi and Jaipur, taking a horse carriage to Rambagh Palace Hotel. We restrained Douglas, two, from swimming in reflecting pools!

Summer heat is extreme in Punjab. Rivers dry up with crops watered by canals from the Bhakra Dam, built with Canadian aid. Siestas were essential, (we cherished our air conditioner). One could not walk before five so the boys played in a tub of cold water on the veranda. Families had cots on rooftops or in gardens.

Sikh men wear colourful turbans over uncut hair, washed at corner taps. Women in "salvar-kameez" toss scarves across their shoulders. Amritzer's Golden Temple is their place of pilgrimage.

A World Council of Churches, Delhi, meeting brought distinguished guests: Ernest Marshall Howse, sometime moderator, and Floyd Honey, head of overseas missions. A delightful Dutch cleric had spent decades in Indonesia.

Peace Corps volunteers arrived and were entertained at Christmas. One married a Punjabi girl and we wondered how she would adjust in the US. Two Canadian women CUSO volunteers visited.

Delhi, Agra and Jaipur are delightful with Moorish buildings: the Red Fort, Taj and Jaipur Fort, (approached by steep incline on the back of an elephant!). We flew to Kathmandu to visit the United Mission to Nepal hospital. Displaying a collection of Himalayan birds (butterflies?) convinced the Prince Regent to allow the hospital, with strict rules against "proselytising"! Views of the Himalayan range from the plane were spectacular. †

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DONNA SPENCER

June McKay

Visiting friends in retirement homes is always rewarding, but visiting Donna Spencer at Horizon Place is a special experience.

Donna is usually sitting in her lovely antique armchair, dressed in matching blouse and skirt and co-ordinated jewellery, with her hand-knitted shawl draped over her knees. Always gracious, Donna extends a warm welcome, and the heartfelt “Thank you for coming to see me.”

Donna recently celebrated her 100th birthday, marked by a celebration with family and a few close friends, which was hosted by her equally gracious daughters Pat Martin from Sudbury, and Jan Hendry, who with her husband Jim, are long-time members of FSA. Both Pat and Jan share Donna’s love and artistic flair for sewing, knitting and cooking.

Donna Decker was born January 20th, 1916, in Edmonton, Alberta, and came to London in 1935 to study art at Alma College, living with her aunts Edith and Nell on Piccadilly Street. Donna’s mother, Mary, was an occasional soloist at FSA, but Donna says “the voice gene passed me by.” Her aunt, Luta Durst, was contralto soloist at FSA, and uncle Bob was the custodian.

Donna’s life took a different turn with her decision to study at Alma College. Her parents did not want her to stay in Ontario, and neither did a young man from Alberta who expected to marry her. However, Arnold Spencer, from Peterborough, a teacher at Beal Tech.,

lived across the street, and Donna says that she “came to study art but ended up studying Arn!” They married in 1936, at which time Arn also joined FSA, played violin for many services, and was an elder and clerk of Session.

Donna joined Delta Rho, and contributed to the cookbook *Our Best*, which was a huge success. When the washrooms at the church needed fresh paint and wallpaper, Donna took it upon herself to do the job. She baked and (as



JAN, DONNA AND PAT



recently as last year) knitted for the bazaars, contributing many beautiful Christmas items.

Always a wonderful cook and hostess, among her many dinner guests she included Dr. Angus and Netta MacQueen, Alex Farquhar and Tony Gazzard.

CONGRATULATIONS Donna; 100 years young! You are special to all of us, and we admire you. †

OUR TOUR OF BRAZIL

Millie & Verne Bates

Our first stop was Rio de Janeiro, a city built upon a series of mountains, the highest dominated by the statue of Christ. Sugar Loaf was accessed by cable cars and produced

were taken as far as possible by canoes and then trekked through the jungle; very hot and humid, (32°C. vs. 32°F. in London). Baggage followed by wheelbarrow! The free woolly monkeys were especially entertaining, as were the turtles and birds. Salvador, a coastal city, was next, the first Portuguese settled area and the first capital; steep narrow streets, many vendors, often in traditional dress.

The next flight took us to Iguazu Falls, the highlight of the tour. The Iguazu River forms some 274 cataracts with fifteen major falls, bordering three countries: Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, and is a World Heritage Site. First view was from the Brazilian side following the mile-long walkways, stopping frequently to take a multitude of pictures. These walkways went right over the falls, consequently we got very wet from the spray, but it was fun. Next day was from the Argentine side, the path leading to the mighty Devils Throat, supplying a spectacular view. The Falls are some 20-metres higher than Niagara. A surprise for us was the bird sanctuary, in a natural setting surrounded by the most colourful display of tropical birds. We didn't know there were so many different kinds of Macaws.

The final day was in Sao Paulo, the third largest city in the world; then a night flight home. Brazil, like Canada, is a vast country, fifth largest in the world. We only got a glimpse of it, but we enjoyed the good hotels, food, and made new friends along the way. †



a marvellous view of the city below. Our hotel overlooked the famous Cococabana Beach. Then we were off to Manaus, where the Amazon and Negro Rivers meet; the mixing of one with its muddy waters and the other very clear, made a distinct line between them. The rivers were very low, so to reach the Eco Lodge we

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JORDAN AND ANDREW WOOD

Jane Dockrill

Meet Jordan and Andrew Wood! You've likely seen them around the church.

Both are in the Youth Group on Friday nights and attend God Squad regularly on Sunday mornings. Both also were in the confirmation class in 2015 with their mentors, Kerry Stover and Chris Lindsay. These dynamic sibs are the kids of Laura and Chris Wood, both active FSA members.

Andrew is tall and has great hair. He's the oldest, is in grade 10 at Beal S.S. He loves the downtown school and its uniqueness and diversity, and the fact that it has a pool. Andrew plays baritone saxophone in the jazz and senior bands and enjoys most of his classes too. He says he would like to be a politician as he likes to help people and he's a good listener. He enjoys all kinds of games and sports, shooting hoops, karate and video games.

Andrew is becoming quite a cook. He and his dad take on Sunday evening meals together each week. They research a recipe and get to work. His favourites are steak and stuffed potatoes, pastries and fruit pies.

What feeds Andrew's spirit? He enjoyed being a camp counsellor at Forest Cliff Camp last summer, and he loves to be with family and friends and attending church events. When I asked Andrew what he would like people to know about him he was quick to say that he is easy to approach. He loves basketball (we should get hoops at FSA), and he is always willing to try new things! Andrew is planning to go to Nicaragua with other FSA youth this summer! Fantástico!

Jordan is in grade nine this year at Beal. She is a budding artist and an art fan—so Beal suits her well. Jordan

loves all animals, and one day hopes to be a veterinarian. She is on the swim team, has her bronze cross already. She likes hanging out with friends, watching Youtube videos, and her favourite foods include ... all food and any shape of pasta with butter. She loves chocolate and for a treat she would go for poutine!

When I asked Jordan what feeds her "spiritually" she answered easily: rock climbing. Rock and tree climbing give Jordan a sense of peace. She hopes to do more of it!

Jordan feels quite involved at the church. She



attends God Squad on Sunday mornings, youth group on Fridays and has volunteered with many events, including the Bazaar, community meals and babysitting. She's been helping with fundraising for the Nicaragua trip too. When I asked Jordan what she likes about FSA she said, the people, the community she feels here and the choir.

Jordan doesn't like to be bored; she's quick to help out with events and is a quiet presence until you get to know her.

Make sure you say "Hi" next time you see Jordan and Andrew in the halls of FSA. They are keen Mint Chocolate Smoothie sellers in Proudfoot Hall, and may have been to your house during our last bottle drive! †

Remembering



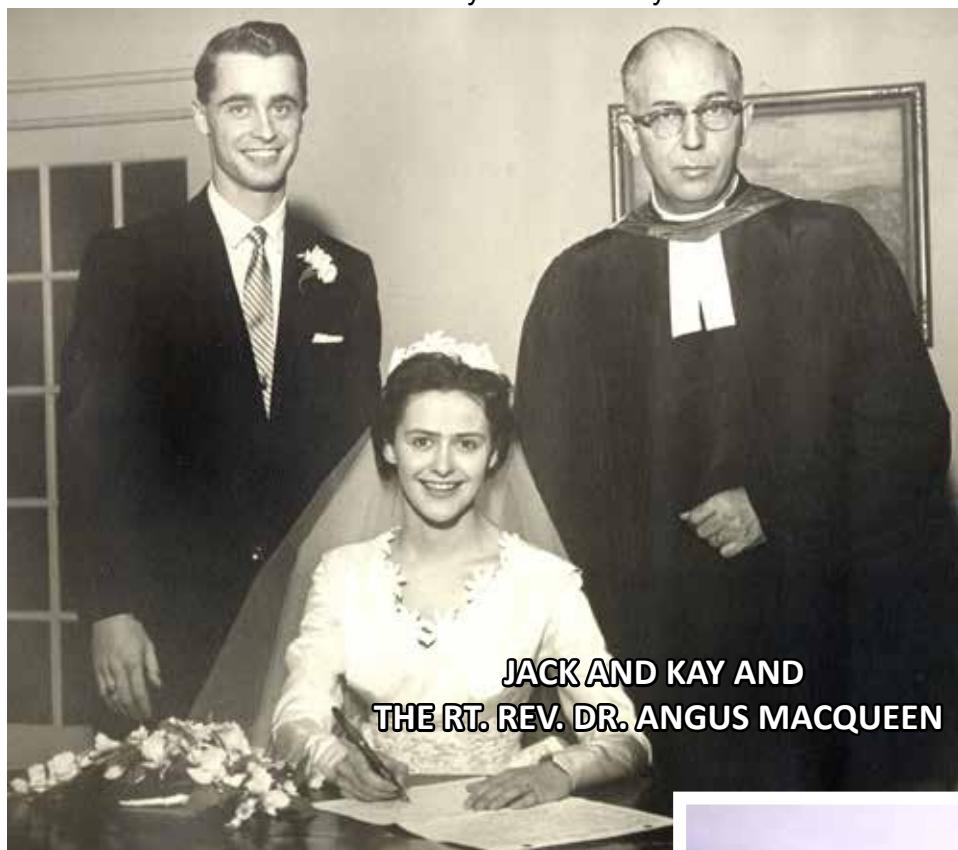
JACK HILLIER
David McKane

Every once in a while you encounter someone who leaves an imprint on your life for the better. Such a man was Jack

Hillier. Raised on Huron Street, he met Kay, his wife-to-be, as a teenager when her family moved nearby to Patricia Street.

New Jersey, Dallas, Montreal, Edmonton, Hamilton and Toronto. Upon retirement in 1993 they moved back to London and to First-St. Andrew's.

A lover of sports, Jack excelled at golf and fishing and had some wonderful fish stories to tell, though daughter Karen was the "Pike Princess." Music was also a big part of his life. Having completed his grade 8 piano, he "volunteered" for a time as organist in Beaconsville, PQ. Throughout his struggle with dementia Faust's *Soldiers' Chorus* remained with him to the end. A born salesman, Jack Hillier was a warm, hospitable, gregarious human being filled with creativity and vision, one of those remarkable individuals who could see the "big picture" and find ways to access it. When I arrived at FSA Jack was involved in marketing and long-range planning; he and his committee had hired Ted Kosteci to assist with local outreach. The Downtown Ministers' Association, Open Doors London, flyers in pizza delivery boxes, targeted radio spots, newspaper ads, access to downtown apartment buildings, ELUCO and *Tidings* were all part of the creative mix of FSA. Jack's welcoming smile and friendship made my entry into



**JACK AND KAY AND
THE RT. REV. DR. ANGUS MACQUEEN**

Their families attended Robinson United, where Jack and Kay volunteered teaching Sunday School and began dating. They were married in FSA by Angus MacQueen. Jack worked for Bell Telephone before switching to AT&T and relocating the family to New Jersey. His career in sales saw him move back to Bell Canada and then to Nortel, the company from which he retired as vice-president of sales. Kay says that they made 14 corporate moves with their daughter Karen and sons Jeff and Tom to places such as



FSA effortless and successful. He never sang the last verse of the last hymn, electing instead to stand with eyes closed and allow the music to feed his spirit and flood his soul. A dear friend and most remarkable man. †



MASON ROBICHAUD

Pat McGregor

When asked the usual first question about what brought him to FSA, I wasn't prepared for the insightful, thoughtful response that Mason gave. I will quote verbatim, because it says a great deal about this young man:

"I had to develop my faith on my own as my family isn't Christian, and I first looked for help at my school's Christian Club, which was led by my favourite teacher. Eventually, I started looking for churches and doing research on them and First-St. Andrew's seemed almost perfect. It took me 11 months to finally walk up those steps and be welcomed into a loving and caring community, where I hope to spend many decades."

Mason tells me that he loves almost everything about FSA, particularly "the happy atmosphere, the inclusiveness, the absolutely beautiful sanctuary, and much more."

Born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Mason lived there until he was six-years-old. He then moved to Goderich with his family, living there until 2008, after which they moved to London, "where I hope to be for a very long time."

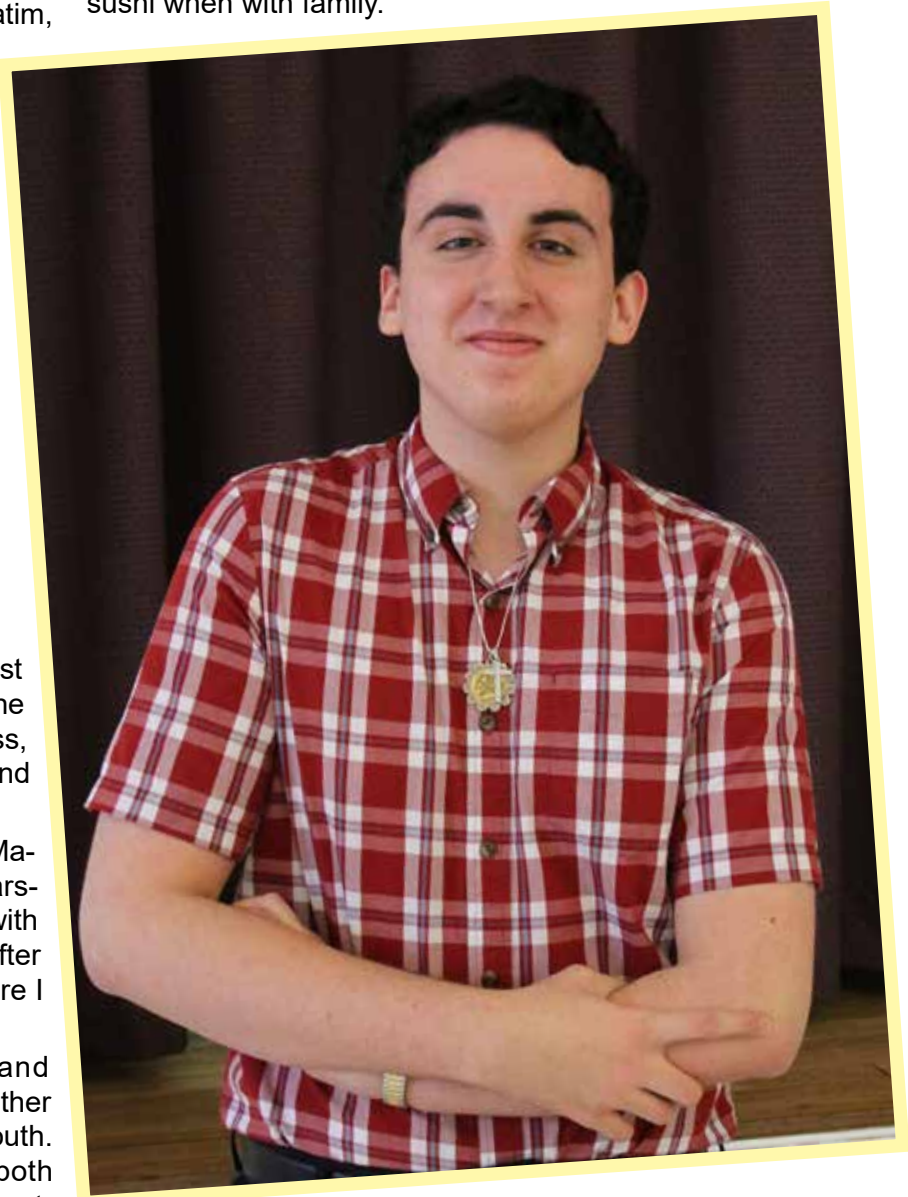
Mason lives with his father and stepmother, with his biological mother and extended family back in Yarmouth. He has sets of grandparents in both Yarmouth and London, with one great-grandmother.

Currently in secondary school, Mason is hoping to acquire his first job this summer, thinking of working part-time in a bookstore. However, he is hoping to fulfil his mandatory 40 hours of volunteer work first which would allow him to graduate.

It's hard to ask a young student what books they have read recently, because what else do they do but read books! But

he is working through *Pride and Prejudice* as his first English project, hoping to complete it "in the very near future."

And now food! Mason surely must be a rarity within his generation because he says he doesn't like fast food! He likes a variety of vegetables and fruit, and eats sushi when with family.



For fun Mason likes all the usual things, reading, watching TV, but mentions doing the dishes after Coffee & Conversation—that surely must be a first!

The question we always like to ask in these interviews is: "If you had the last question, what would it be?" Not always easy to answer, but Mason, as I now have come to expect, was equal to the occasion: (*Cont'd. on page 19*)



**RUTH THOMPSON
REMEMBERS US**
Bob Slater

“**W**OW!” is often heard from visitors entering our sanctuary for the first time. They see the spectacular organ, ceiling, and the stained glass windows depicting stories from the Bible. If they walk under the gallery, they will see the two windows, one on each side, showing Jesus healing the sick. They were given in memory of Dr. Septimus Thompson and

his wife Shirley Louise. Dr. Thompson was an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist in London and Western Ontario. His wife was a president of the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS), a forerunner of our UCW. They were the parents of Dr. Charlie Thompson, Ruth Stewart Thompson and Shirley Louise Goodman.

The Healing Windows were donated by Charlie Thompson, himself a well-known ophthalmologist who, for many years, in addition to his extensive London area practice, “provided expert professional eye care to native people in Arctic communities and remote parts of Newfoundland, Labrador and Northern Ontario.” And now, Charlie’s sister, Ruth, has left a generous legacy to FSA in her will.

Ruth was a university graduate who trained as a dietician. For many years she worked with a psychiatrist at Victoria Hospital on South Street. She was an expert golfer, winning top honours at the Hunt Club.

On Sunday, May 1st, immediately after the benediction and postlude, the congregation will be invited to follow the family and friends of Ruth to the Atrium, where Ruth’s generosity will be recognized during a brief ceremony by the placing of an inscribed leaf on the Proudfoot Legacy Tree. †



Above:
East Thompson Window



Right:
West Thompson Window



**Three Thompson Siblings:
Shirley, Charlie and Ruth**



UNDER THE RADAR: GET-TOGETHERS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Bob Swartman

I have been organizing monthly get-togethers for international students over the past six months. They were intended as a welcome for the wave of students arriving in London in September to attend Western and Fanshawe, but have evolved into gatherings for former students that have been in London for a year or more! I tried to keep the activity under the radar because it was intended as a pilot and the format is changing.

We have had a good mix of backgrounds: engineering, geography, economics, music, computer science, and now quite a number of former students looking for jobs. It would be very beneficial to the international students if more Canadians joined in; perhaps we can attract more students who are not interested in the bar scene on Richmond St. but want to socialize. A similar programme, After Hours, is

being organized in early March to attract young people between eighteen and thirty years and, hopefully, will be the start of a more extensive programme for young people at FSA. Both programmes are pilot activities sponsored by the Christian Development Committee.

We have been meeting since last July on Saturday evenings in the Fireside Room, usually once a month with an appropriate theme, starting with a potluck supper and finishing about 8:30 pm. We had an Oktoberfest party in early October, a Hallowe'en party at the end of October and a Christmas theme in December. We sang Christmas carols and I read *The Night Before Christmas* and *Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus*.

We usually have a potluck meal and everyone brings tasty food, (have you ever tried pigs' ears?), and then we have various activities. Sometimes we have discussions about Canada or what is happening in other parts of the world, or play games (a favourite is Musical Chairs), or sing campfire songs (one of the students plays the piano). We welcome new people to London and offer a social outreach to help them fit into Canadian society. †

COMMITTEE REPORTS

COUNCIL

Bob Swartman

This is being written even before I become Chair of Council on February 21st, 2016. But looking ahead, I feel honoured to be nominated and duly elected to this position for the next two years, and promise I will do my best. Our Council depends on the hard work of all the committees, and we have to thank them for their continued devotion. And many thanks to Jo Ann Silcox for her dedication and leadership. She has served for three years through trying times and has done a fabulous job.

A particular challenge in the past year was reported by Chair of Finance at last year's AGM, that our expenses would exceed our income for 2015–16. Harold Jackson and David Manness then chaired a task force that reviewed the ideas from the Town Hall meeting on May 19th and produced the "11-Point Plan." This plan was approved by Council and implemented but did not get much publicity. Sufficient money was saved and, with a contribution of \$100,000 from the Trustees, we managed to end up with a small surplus. We do not balance

the budget with current givings; the difference between expenses and revenue comes from the Trust Fund.

The issue for Finance this year is cutting back on M&S givings from that of previous years; we have been a top giver in the United Church of Canada for many years, but our congregation is gradually shrinking, and it is difficult to maintain the building and support all the operations. Last year we contributed 18% of givings to M&S, and the Finance Committee has suggested this be reduced to 12% for the coming year (only for 2016–17) to balance the budget. It reminds me of the warning on an airliner prior to takeoff, that if there is an emergency and the oxygen masks drop, fit your own mask first, then help those around you. You will know by the time you read this what we decided at the AGM.

I hope to learn everyone's name, so if I come up with the wrong one please correct me and I'll try to get it right next time.

We keep welcoming new people at FSA and need to reach out to the surrounding community and welcome them too. I hope to see you at church with a friend. †



PROPERTY

George Jolink

The Property Committee has been busy in the early part of this year setting goals and priorities. We are trying to balance ongoing maintenance needs, improvements and Avis recommendations over the course of the year while we continue to operate within budget constraints.

The heating system has been quite reliable over this past season, with some small distribution issues which are corrected as they arise. Other deficiencies will be addressed over the summer. Our goal is to extend the life of our current system as long as possible.

Projects under consideration for 2016 are:

- Interior paint/wall repairs—Narthex entries, Fireside room;
- Exterior low-level painting—looking for volunteer support;
- Exterior wood trim repairs;
- Lightning protection—Avis recommendation;
- Fireside Room upgrades—flooring, ceiling;
- Glass inserts for exterior entrance doors.

The Property Committee has also been actively in-

involved in conversations around improving technology at FSA. At present we have approval for upgrades to our sound system management (software, mics, laptop). We are in the process of seeking replacement of our obsolete non-functioning dimmer system for Sanctuary lighting. This will allow for retrofitting to LED lighting in the future (cost savings). We are also looking at replacement of the lawn signage (Queens/Waterloo) to a full colour LED computerized display board (increase visibility and decrease labour). Finally, we are exploring projection options in the Sanctuary and other meeting rooms.

The Property Committee continues to build relationships with our long- and short-term rental clients who provide us with a much needed revenue stream. We are actively engaged in finding new clients who offer a good fit with our own community, and who will help to build our profile in the community outside our walls.

Thanks to all those who serve on the committee and to those who volunteer to both maintain and improve our church home. If you wish to get involved in one of our projects please contact the church office. As may be expected, there are always jobs to do in an aging building. †



MUSIC

Paul Cooper

Mark your calendars now for the last weekend in May. On Saturday, May 28th at 7:30pm the senior choir, accompanied by orchestra, will be presenting a concert, in the Sanctuary, titled

Memories: From Bach to Rutter to honour Paul Merritt's retirement as director of music. Honours will continue with the Sunday service on May 29th at 10:30am, which will feature organ, trumpet, senior choir, Joyful Singers, Laudamus Bells and FSA Strings—all thanking Paul for his wonderful 32 years of leadership and service to the congregation, and to music at First-St. Andrew's. Following the service there will be a Meet-and-Greet at the Lamplighter Inn from 12 noon to 1:00pm then a chicken luncheon (\$35 per person) from 1:00–2:30 pm, followed by a programme to honour Paul from 2:30–3:30 pm—MC'd by David McKane and Bob Schram. Please join us for this opportunity to thank Paul for his service and wish him well in his retirement. Tickets will be on sale in April at Coffee and Conversation and in the church office.



Paul Merritt

First-St. Andrew's is fortunate to be hosting the eighth visit by the world-renowned ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET on MONDAY, APRIL 11th, 2016 at 7:30pm.

Our relationship with the quartet began with a 'phone call from John and Suzanne Nuttall, wondering if we would consider sponsoring a SLSQ concert. Since the Nuttalls are FSA members with musical roots here, (Suzanne played in the bell choir, daughter Jennie accompanied our teen choir, and son, Geoff, is the quartet's first violinist, and they had played in services and concerts here), it seemed like a perfect fit. The group, winners of the first Banff String Quartet Competition, attracted a full house in 1994 and have remained highly anticipated performers ever since. †





FINANCE
2015 In Review and 2016 Going Forward
Harold Jackson

The financial support received from local church revenue sources and trust fund transfers has allowed First-St. Andrew's United Church (FSA) to meet original 2015 plans. **Utilization of local revenues to pay expenses yielded a deficit of \$159,371, which included a one-time expense of \$53,670 for organ pipe repairs. However, transfer of \$175,287 from trust funds allowed a small surplus of \$15,916 to ultimately be realized.** The Operating Fund in the Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet) has been increased to reflect this outcome. Complete financial details can be found in the **Review Engagement Report** of our auditor, Gary E. Mason, chartered accountant, contained in the 2015 Annual Report. The following table serves to present 2015 results compared to 2014.

	<u>Actual</u> <u>2015</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>2014</u>		<u>Actual</u> <u>2015</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>2014</u>
<u>LOCAL REVENUE</u>			<u>LOCAL EXPENSE</u>		
Givings	\$454,587	\$474,461	Personnel	\$366,111	\$389,300
Rentals	\$82,099	\$77,918	Operations	\$239,368	\$171,036
Designated Income	\$39,012	\$42,567	Outreach	\$79,419	\$81,721
Special Projects	\$10,271	\$12,217	Programmes/Services	\$87,146	\$104,688
Miscellaneous	\$22,680	\$10,547	Total	\$772,044	\$746,745
Gift Cards	\$4,024	\$3,836			
Total	\$612,673	\$621,546	<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</u>	(\$159,371)	(\$125,199)
<u>TRUST FUND ASSISTANCE</u>			<u>CAPITAL RESERVE FUND TRANSFER</u>	0	(\$5,500)
Unrestricted	\$153,670	\$95,000	<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) with ASSISTANCE</u>	\$15,916	(\$21,719)
Restricted	\$21,617	\$13,980			
Total	\$175,287	\$108,980			

The 2016 budget forecast has been prepared to carefully identify sources of revenue available and forecasted expense plans. With the agreement of Council, a balanced budget forecast has been developed for presentation to the 2016 Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM). Income estimates have used local income experience from 2015, along with trust funds support at 2015 levels. Programme expenses have used estimates submitted by spending committees, while other expense estimates reflect 2015 experience. An ad hoc Committee of Church Council has been struck to bring forward recommendation to the 2017 AGM for a realistic approach to budget M&S Fund contribution, while respecting FSA history. For 2016, a one-time M&S Fund contribution at 12% of givings to church operations has been proposed.

Your continued support and generosity will assure that this great congregation continues to deliver the promise of being "At the Heart." ✝

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OPEN HANDS UNITED TAKES FSA YOUTH TO NICARAGUA

Jane Dockrill

This coming August, six youth from FSA will embark on an adventure. They are heading to Nicaragua! This mission/exposure trip, led by Pat MacDonald of Open Hands United, will undoubtedly challenge our youth in new ways, opening their hearts, hands and minds to a community so very different from our own.

The youth: Riley Langley, Hanna Patterson, Joseph and Rudy Pin, Bronwyn Tufts and Andrew Wood, accompanied by Jane Dockrill and George Jolink, will spend twelve days in Nicaragua starting in Managua, visiting Los Quinchos School for Street Children. We will see first-hand the community and how our donations have helped the children attending the school. We will then spend a week on the east coast of Nicaragua with the Moravian Church community in Waspam. Since 1970, the United Church has been working in harmony with partners in Nicaragua who focus on various issues: social development, intercultural community building, pastoral care, and education for marginalized youth.

We have been invited to take part in an outreach programme in the community of Kisalaya, which offers a hot lunch to children in the area. Our part will include helping to prepare and serve the food, then offering programmes like sports, games and/or music to the children. We will be taking sports equipment—soccer balls, baseballs, skipping ropes, frisbees—and our sing-

ing voices with us.

We also have an opportunity to spend some time with about fifty young children (kindergarten–grade one) and will need to bring crafts and beads and lots of stickers!

In all of the areas we will visit, the people are extremely poor and life is very different than it is here at home. I imagine it will only take a day, after the initial shock wears off, for our young people to discover the riches in the people and their communities. I understand from past travellers that we will take away as many gifts as we leave behind from this adventure. In sharing our trip with friends, family and the folks at church, the ripple effect of understanding, justice, and love will undoubtedly help

to form new habits and new ideas/missions to help with the challenges of poverty, not only in our own communities but all around the world.

Open Hands United is grounded in the teachings of Micah 6:8. *“What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”* So we pack our bags and pray for guidance, good weather, strength, courage, and tons of love and energy to share. I’m

sure you will hear more about our preparations in the coming months!

Time to hit the Spanish books! We have a lot of work to do before August! Hasta la vista! (see you later!)

Note: *Open Hands United is a ministry of Burton Avenue United Church, Barrie, ON, and Living Waters Presbytery, Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada. Since 2007, it has been bringing Nicaraguans and Canadians together in relationship-based mission that strengthens the lives and faith of those involved.*



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MEMBERSHIP & NURTURE

Welcoming

Heather Locking-Cusolito

The Welcoming subcommittee of Membership and Nurture has undergone an organizational change. Two of the task teams — We are Families and General Welcoming Practices — have joined to form one Welcoming Committee. The LGBT group will continue to meet on their own to focus on issues of their concern, but we are happy to report that Amanda Williams, who sits on both committees, will provide a communication bridge. Although we have not met recently, work behind the scenes continues.

- Deanne Pederson, Jean Wright and Heather Locking-Cusolito have been working with Rev. Michelle and Ashley Dwyer, our administrative assistant, to refresh and enhance the way we welcome new members who are transferring their membership to FSA. Some of the ideas

were put into place at our new members' service on January 31st, when we welcomed Jack Lewis and Joyce Payne.

- Together with Membership and Nurture we are also helping to collect revised membership profiles. The purpose of the profiles is twofold — first to make certain our Membership Roll is up-to-date and accurate; second to lay the groundwork for a membership photo directory to provide contact information for use by the church community.
- We are giving consideration to the development of a registry of drivers willing to drive people to church services and events.
- As always, we remind you that we are all members of the FSA Welcoming Committee. Might we suggest that when you see someone you do not know at church, try saying, "I don't think we have met before. My name is.... What's yours?" If any member of the Welcoming Committee can help you welcome a new member please ask. †



WORSHIP

Jane Westmorland

"Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again."

As we enter the season of Easter, we hear these words, the foundation of our Christian Church. We have been through the dark days of Lent and Good Friday, and are entering the time of resurrection and new life.

At First-St. Andrew's, we observed Lent with an Ash Wednesday service; communion on the first Sunday of Lent; a Mission, Outreach and Environment service with Glen Pearson from the London Food Bank preaching; Black History Month, with spirituals sung by the choir; a service on Truth and Reconciliation; and Palm Sunday. The Good Friday service was held at First-St. Andrew's, with members from Metropolitan United attending.

Now we celebrate the season of resurrection and new

life and can experience the hope and joy which goes hand in hand with that. We begin with communion on Easter Sunday. Then, April 17th is the Greening of the Cross. April 24th is the Joyful Singers' musical, and May 1st is Legacy Sunday.

Following the Easter season, the Christian Development Committee has planned a service at Camp Kee-Mo-Kee. What better way to worship God, than to be in a place surrounded by trees, grass, animals, soft winds and sunshine ... all created by God, and a reminder of His love for us. In consultation with the CD Committee, we have decided to hold just that one service at Kee-Mo-Kee. We are assured that washrooms are accessible; there is a concrete pad for those who cannot navigate grass, and CD is working on ensuring transportation for those who require it.

As always, the Worship Committee is interested in your feedback. Please talk to a member of the committee or Michelle if you have thoughts on worship, or drop us a note in our Worship Committee mail slot. †

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UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Laurel Kenny

SAVE THE DATES

- On March 16th we invite everyone, adults and children alike, to attend an environmental afternoon at 1:30 in the Chapel to hear a presentation by the Salthaven Rehabilitation and Education Centre in Mt. Brydges, a programme which connects people with nature and their work to help sick, injured and orphaned wild creatures. Some of these animals and birds will be our guests as well. Refreshment and discussion to follow.
- Keep June 19th open after church when we honour Paul and Enid Merritt at a strawberry social.

Kudos to all UCW who created poverty dolls at two workshops, under the expert direction of Ann Stokes from Wesley Knox UCW, this being a combined project of both the UCC and the UCW. Each doll represents a child in poverty in London—over 10,000. Doll pins are for sale for \$2 to show your support for this project.

Our Middlesex UCW Presbyterial was held Feb. 4th at Riverside United Church. The Rev. Larry Schneider of Dorchester was the special speaker, with entertainment by “Elvis.” The theme was “Friendship in the Neighbourhood.”

On March 4th, we participated in the Women’s World Day of Prayer at the Community Church of Christ. The service was written by women of Cuba. †

HAVE YOU HEARD?



announcements

from Christian Development

- April 24th: Big Circle Breakfast
- June 3rd–5th: Kee-Mo-Kee Weekend
- July 11th–15th: Vacation Bible Camp
- August 15th–19th: Peace Camp

From Membership & Nurture

- March 8th, Apr. 12th, May 10th: The Lunch Bunch

From C & M

- March 11th and 12th: *Love Letters*
- April 3rd: Mining the Mystery

from Worship

- March 27th: Easter Communion
- April 17th: Greening of the Cross

From UCW

- April 30th: Rummage Sale

From MOE

- June 11th: White Squirrel Golf Tournament

From Music

- April 11th: St. Lawrence String Quartet
- May 28th and 29th: Farewell Weekend for Paul Merritt

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>>Notes from Michelle (Cont'd. from page 3)

The scriptures record the disciples on the Road to Emmaus right after the resurrection, and they did not recognize Jesus, until he spoke with them, shared story, bread and wine with them. We too can recognize Jesus in the simple acts of life all around us. This is our time on the road to Emmaus. Our journey is not over, but instead we are revitalized and ready for this new thing that God is doing within us.

Let us ready our hearts to welcome and experience the Risen Christ in ways we cannot yet imagine. Easter Blessings to you. ☩

>>Tribute (Cont'd. from page 5)

Thursday evenings are challenging and fun, and the concerts provide the singers with a sense of exhilaration and accomplishment. Few musicians can resist such an experience.

Perhaps Paul's greatest legacy has been his work with the children, dozens of whom have benefited from singing in his choirs. All have been encouraged to participate. A great many have been given the opportunity to perform solo numbers, and many have then gone on to careers in music. Paul and Enid encouraged each singer, giving them confidence in themselves and a joy of singing.

In all of this, Paul's focus has been on enhancing the worship experience of the congregation. While the concert series is an important community outreach, Sunday services are the reason for the choirs and their offerings. Paul's first priority with children and adults alike has been to present music to fit the liturgy of the day and enhance the service. We all love it when the children sing—they love it too. And in developing their musical ability, he has also contributed to their spiritual growth and understanding. The congregation has been the fortunate recipient of Paul's fundamental understanding of the liturgical year and of theology. His dedication to working with the ministers

to make each service a meaningful experience is remarkable.

We must not forget Enid, for she has worked tirelessly alongside Paul. She has contributed to the success of the programme in countless ways, including her assistance in directing the children's choirs, and the beautiful and imaginative publicity posters she has made for our concerts. She saved the Lenten and Advent noon recitals from being cancelled by contacting Thames School and having the students in the culinary courses provide the lunches; a win-win situation for us and for the students.

In having these two dedicated folk for the past 32 years we are probably the luckiest church in the world. We will indeed miss them, but we respect their desire to retire and spend more time together. We wish them well. All the best, Paul and Enid, and know that you go with our thanks, and our love. ☩

>>Getting to Know (Cont'd. from page 11)

"How do I see my future? My answer would be that I plan on graduating secondary school and starting university at UWO, where I may spend 11 years studying if I want to become an anthropologist (my career goals are changing a lot, lately). I hope to be married and have two children. If I become a cultural anthropologist, I will be doing a lot of travelling around the world, which is something that I've always wanted to do. I hope to retire when I reach my 60s-70s and live the rest of my life peacefully."

Amen to that. How fortunate we are at FSA that this amazing young man chose to walk up our front steps last year. If you haven't met him yet please introduce yourself and let him know that we consider ourselves blessed to have him with us. ☩

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JAN. 31ST, HOOTENANNY



FEB. 21ST, MOE SERVICE WITH GLEN PEARSON

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Minister, Pastoral Care
The Rev. Tom Hiscock (Ext. 3)

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Jo Ann Silcox

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Paul Merritt (Ext. 5)

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Barry Tiffin

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

First-St. Andrew's United Church is an inclusive Christian family encouraging spiritual growth through worship, friendship, learning and action.