



YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE THE JOURNEY.

The Sunday Plus

Parkminster United Church
Newsletter – March 2016

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Photos courtesy of Lee Osborne unless otherwise indicated.

Notes from the Chair

One of the goals established by our transition team and interim minister was to look at our governance structure to be sure that it serves our community well. The Congregational Development Team report of 2013 had identified our governance structure as being in need of revision.

Currently we have 15 formal committees which do the lay work of the church and do it well. Each of these committees has had a chairperson and a designated elder that are invited to all council meetings. Also invited to council have been the presbytery reps, treasurer, chair, vice chair, secretary, men's and women's rep. There can be as many as 30 people at the table. In fact, usually only 12 to 14 are usually present. In the past, much of the meeting time has centered on business issues with little time available for visioning and planning purposes. Many decisions made by committees are duplicated by council.

A committee was struck by council in October 2015 to look at alternate ways of governing ourselves. Our mission is to find a structure that is smaller, more agile in the event of a crisis, and can devote more time to visioning and planning long term. This committee has met regularly and has some ideas that will be presented to council and were brought to a conversation café meeting with the congregation on April 10, 2016.

The committee will present our findings and receive the input of the congregation. In May, we will have a congregational meeting to present our new proposed structure and to vote on that proposal.

We would like to leave the committees pretty much as they are but allow them to make decisions without council approval as long as they are within their budgets and mandate. We would like to change how they report to council perhaps by a more informal arrangement. Council would then be populated by the leadership structure of chair, past chair, secretary, treasurer, and ministry rep. It would also include several representatives who can act for some of the committees and who are good at looking to the future and also have a handle on the present.

Over the last month our pastoral care minister Rev. Louise Rutledge has been off on a restorative leave. Luckily, Rev. Elaine Beattie has agreed to fill in for the interim. We are hoping that Louise's return to good health is smooth and she will return to us with renewed energy and spirit.

–Barb Leask Wynne, Chair of Council

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A conversation with Iso McGregor, climate change activist

Iso McGregor grew up camping with her parents, participating in Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) and active in church. **At age 65, Iso attended an Earth Literacy workshop where her eyes were opened to the fragility of our earth. In the last few years, climate change has transformed Iso into an activist.** Sitting down with Iso was a chance to discuss her thoughts about this important work.

Judy: Was there a moment or an event that galvanized you?

Iso: I've always been a nature lover and a "faith without works is dead" kind of person. Bill McKibben's documentary, *Do the Math*, which I saw at Parkminster in 2013, was the catalyst that helped me see the urgent need to drastically reduce the use of fossil fuels since they are the primary driver of human caused climate change.

You have participated in a number of marches organized to bring attention to climate change. Why did you go? What did you get out of marching?

McKibben's documentary made me realize that to influence politicians and people to change, we need to use "the power of the people" in the form of big public marches. I heard about the People's Climate March (New York City, September 2014) and decided that it was one thing I could *do* to draw attention to the climate crisis that governments have ignored or denied for 30 years. I wasn't good at talking but I could walk, and more importantly, I had friends in Judy, Nicole and Laura from Parkminster who were willing to shepherd me there, during, and back from New York City. The benefit was seeing over 400,000 people from all walks of life, marching peacefully and joyfully. It gave me hope.

What has been your most significant learning? What is your biggest frustration?

I learned that global warming is human caused and our only hope of alleviating it is by personal and political action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I am frustrated by the slowness of churches to "Be the change we wish to see in the world." It is nice to talk about the 'integrity of creation', but what are we *doing* to keep it from unraveling?

What is the source of your passion and energy?

[My source is] compassion for the underdog, and my Christian calling to be my brother/sister's keeper. I try to make the world a better place. I think about the people in the Global south most affected by climate change.

You attend Parkminster United Church and Grand River Unitarian. What do you feel is the role of the church in addressing climate justice?

Be prophetic! Dare to speak truth to power. Challenge politicians and church leaders and congregations to do the right thing for the survival of the planet. Churches have enormous political power. Jesus challenged the power structures of his day, both religious and secular. This path involves personal sacrifice and some risk. Do we have the courage to follow Jesus?

Naomi Klein, author of This Changes Everything, sees climate change as an opportunity to remake the world into something more just, equitable, and sustainable. What needs to be done to remake the world?

I believe, like Naomi Klein, that the whole economic-political system has to change from 'what's best' for me', to 'what's best for the common good'. Al Gore says we can:

- Get Smart: get educated
- Get Noisy: tell people the facts and listen respectfully - don't be the silent majority, afraid to offend
- Get Active: reduce personal use of fossil fuels e.g., car, plane, electricity; eat less meat

Through his work, Al Gore demonstrated that climate justice does not conflict with a prosperous economy. But, we also need to get political:

- Talk to your MP, MPP, mayor
- Write letters, sign petitions
- March if you are able
- Give money to organizations such as the Sierra Club of Canada, and the David Suzuki Foundation

It's easy to become cynical, especially when the pace of change seems too slow. How do you sustain hope?

One needs a community of believers to sustain hope. My eco groups give me hope because they are willing to get involved. Books, such as *Active Hope*, inspire me to go on. Doing something positive, gives me hope. David Orr says, "Hope is a verb, with its sleeves rolled up" and "Despair is a waste of energy" (Al Gore).

What can we reflect upon as we continue our Lenten journey?

- What wasteful habits can we give up so future generations can have a decent life?
- What practical actions will we do personally and as a church to reduce green house gas emissions (i.e., use solar panels?)
- Let's be a model for our community by practicing the spiritual disciplines of less consumption, simpler living, and compassion for people and animals suffering from the impact of climate change

Iso's challenge:

The resurrection of our beautiful life-giving earth is in *our* hands now, not God's. We have the tools. Do we have the faith, courage and will to use them in time?

Judy Paul, Adult Education Committee



Faith in action

Ari Ariaratnam – Honouree 2016 Mayor's Dinner



Ari Ariaratnam has been chosen as an honouree at this year's Mayor's Dinner on Saturday, April 2. Ari was the founding member; the very reason *Focus for Ethnic Women* exists (edited from FEW's website). Ari became its long-time Executive Director helping the organization become a place that welcomes and shares new cultures while offering skills training, supports and mentorship to women settling in Waterloo Region.

Ari's work with new Canadian women has been recognized by a Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, a Citizenship and Culture Volunteer Service Award, and the KW Oktoberfest Women of the Year.

Bud Adams – 2015 Sertoma Service to Mankind Award

Bud is a familiar face around our church, where he has been on the property committee for over 20 years. Many of you may not know how involved Bud is in the community. He recently received The Sertoma Service to Mankind Award that recognized his involvement in many community organizations.



To give you an idea of what Bud is up to here is his yearly calendar of activities.

He works from May to September for Habitat for Humanity. For 27 years he has been involved with building homes. During the last five years or so he has worked 35-40 hours per week

From October to January, Bud works with Operation Christmas Child. He has volunteered there for about 17 years. Bud works around 40 hours per week, mainly in shipping and receiving, including operating the fork lift.

From February to April, Bud works at Ontario Christian Gleaners. He has been a volunteer there for several years, working about 30 hours a week. He operates the fork lift and helps run the warehouse side of the facility.

He has been involved with the Scouting movement for about 40 years, Child Witness Centre, House of Friendship Potato Drive, Sleeping Children Around the World.

We are fortunate to have such models as Ari and Bud of 'faith in action' in our congregation.

FOOD TRUCK FRENZIE is coming to PUC*

Many of you may have heard references or rumours of food trucks coming to Parkminster this summer. Well, it's true. Although some details still need to be worked out, here is how it will work.

Every Wednesday from mid May until September from 4pm – 8pm, four to five food trucks will use our site to set up and sell their food to passersby, neighbours, families going to soccer games, T-Ball, etc.

There are 17 food trucks in this initiative. Trucks will rotate each week to ensure a variety.

Each Wednesday a mobile / towed coloured sign will be placed near our church sign. We will also have a few temporary signs on the

hydro poles along Erb Street before the curve approaching our driveway. There is also a plan to send flyers about our neighbourhood.

Parkminster will provide access to washrooms, garbage and recycling containers, tables and chairs. A volunteer team of six people will be required each week to help with set up, take down and security in the church. In return for hosting the trucks, Parkminster will receive 10% of gross sales each week.

Joe and Jenny Sheldon are the leaders for the 'Pop up Food Truck Committee.' **They are looking for teams of six people.** Each team would take responsibility for a week each month.

Stay tuned for further information.



Photo courtesy of www.rotarywhitby.org

*PUC stands for Parkminster United Church

Happy Anniversary



This is a banner year for Parkminster United Church—a rainbow banner year. It was 10 years ago that the congregation voted to become an affirming congregation.

After a time of study and conversation, Parkminster claimed the identity as an inclusive congregation. It was a landmark day.

The goal of an affirming congregation is to be a safe and welcome place for the lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer community (LGBTQ).

We understand that no matter whom we love, we can be full participants in this church. All can openly give, receive, take leadership, and show compassion. As an affirming church, we are following Jesus' path of welcome for all people.

So, this is a celebration year. The Inclusive Committee is making plans for several different ways of rejoicing over this landmark decision.

There will be an anniversary service in November to mark the occasion and other special events throughout 2016-2017. Watch for them!

As we begin our second decade as an out affirming congregation, we are thinking of the many ways we can become more inclusive.

We began with a focus on sexual orientation, and will, of course, keep that focus. But we are thinking about other barriers to full participation: age, ability, ethnicity, and income level.

Hopefully we can draw our circle of inclusion wide and be the church where no one stands alone, because we are standing side by side. (Reference to Common Cup's song, "Draw the Circle Wide.")

Happy Anniversary, Parkminster! Here's to welcome and acceptance.

Meet Sheila Rule



Sheila and her husband John came to Parkminster in January 1998. The Rules provide an excellent example of how to join into a new community. They didn't wait for folks to reach out to them, but instead began hosting dinners with different members of the congregation. This was their way to get to know people. It is a tradition that they brought with them from former congregations and it helps them get to know people quickly.

From her years of volunteering, Sheila has a method of keeping herself from getting overwhelmed. She signs up for a committee for two or three years and then takes a year off to regroup before she joins another one. Sheila has just stepped down from Pastoral Care where she has been an active member.

She is part of the 2X2 visiting teams and she has buddied up with one of our members who she drives if it works for both of them. In the past Sheila was part of Membership and also an organizer for 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.'

A recent outreach that Sheila has taken on is with the Klingenberg family. Sheila realized that Clare, the young mother, who was pregnant with their third child, was not well. Sheila started visiting that family once a week to give Clare a break. Now since the third baby is here Sheila has continued to visit and everyone in the house is excited when Sheila comes over.

Currently both John and Sheila are part of the Syrian Refugee Committee. They also volunteer to be in the Family Worship Space / Toddler Room to be with the babies and toddlers once a month.

Sheila and John have two children. Their daughter lives near Bobcageon with her wife and their son and granddaughter live in Paris, France. This means that the Rules travel to Paris three times a year to see their granddaughter and son. The Rules are busy people and yet, Sheila still finds time to be involved in her church community.



Shooting for PAR

No, it has nothing to do with your golf score! PAR stands for Pre-Authorized Remittance and it's an easy way to make your donation to Parkminster. If you've ever scrambled to find your offering envelopes at home, or have frantically written a cheque before the offering plate gets to you on Sunday morning, then PAR is an easy answer. No more fuss!

Being enrolled in PAR allows you to maintain your level of giving even when you're away.

Every month, your donation is automatically deposited into Parkminster's account – whether you're at church or not. Having consistent income throughout the year helps our finance committee budget appropriately and keeps us from going into overdraft, saving us bank fees.

Signing up is simple: just fill out the form in one of the PAR brochures found at the Welcome Table, indicating the amount you would like to give each month and provide a VOID cheque. Voila! You're on your way.

You can also find an online form to fill out and print at home (http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/form_par-authorization.pdf).

Just drop the completed form in the offering plate or drop off at the church office.

Right now, we have approximately one third of our 241 families using PAR. We'd like to increase that number to at least half of our families. Please consider PAR and enrol today.

What great soup!

Thanks to Laura Hamilton, Judy Paul, Marilyn Hill and the Youth, who made the three kinds of delicious soup for the Plett Meal Centre soup lunch. Thanks also to Rob Vanderlinden for setting up the tables.



Winter photo highlights



You've been caught...

... doing something inclusive!

At the rehearsal of The Longest Night Service it became apparent that the original plan to do parts of the service both up in the chancel and then down at pew level would be a challenge for one of the members taking part in the service. Everyone rallied around and discussed different options and the group then ran an effective service which was presented all from one level.

Pastoral Care you've been caught being inclusive.

Nuts!! It appears they have been sneaking into the church!

Please remember that Parkminster is a nut free environment.