



The Sunday Plus

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. COME SHARE
IN OUR JOURNEY.

Message from our Chair

Theme: Building Community

As we move into a new season together, I have been reflecting on the many ways our Parkminster community continues to grow, adapt, and strengthen its connections. Recently, Council passed our new **Covenant**, which emphasizes communication, connection, honouring differences, and engaging with challenges with compassion and courage. This Covenant will guide how we work, speak, and care for one another as we continue building a healthy, faithful community.

It has now been **one year since Montessori** joined us in our shared space. We are learning how to live well together, how to listen, and how to honour each other's needs. This journey is stretching us in good ways and helping us deepen our understanding of what true community looks like.

Council also received an update on our **Children and Youth Ministry**, and it is heartening to see how much it has grown. A special thank-you goes to **Bethany McMullen**, our Sunday School Coordinator, and to the **Christian Education Committee** and all the dedicated volunteers who serve as role models for our young people. Your commitment is shaping the next generation of faith and compassion.

Next month, in **February**, Council will hear from the **Pastoral Care Committee**, along with **Lisa Leffler**, about this important ministry and how it continues to support the spiritual and emotional well-being of our congregation.

The **Living into Right Relations working group** continues to challenge all of us to think beyond ourselves and to look to our Indigenous neighbours as teachers and partners. Their leadership invites us to find new ways to walk a path of reconciliation.

Please continue to pray for the **Search Committee** as they discern and reach out to find our next Minister of Spiritual Care. Their work is thoughtful, careful, and deeply grounded in faith.

And finally, I invite you to keep praying for **our church and the good people who make up this community**. Each of us carries struggles that may not be visible, but we are reminded daily that we do not walk alone. It is a blessing to know that others share our faith, support us in times of need, and celebrate with us in times of joy. Parkminster is a community where grace, compassion, and connection take root—and where we continue to build something faithful together.

With gratitude and hope,

Debra Brown, Chair of Council

Message from our Minister

Dear friends,

Each new year invites us to pause between what has been and what is becoming. This pause can stir up a mixture of feelings — hope and hesitation, gratitude and grief, longing and fatigue. For some, the new year opens like a blank page waiting for ink. For others, it arrives like a weight: another reminder of dreams deferred, of healing unfinished, of time moving forward when our hearts have not yet caught up.

One verse that often comes to mind at this time of year is from **Isaiah 43:19**:
“See, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth — do you not perceive it?”

These words were spoken to a people in exile — weary, uncertain, far from home. If you’re blessed enough that your personal life doesn’t engender these feelings, then it’s hard to escape their grasp as a person of faith reflecting on the state of the world. So, if you enter this new year feeling disoriented, or more exhausted than inspired, know this: you are not out of place in the story of faith—these words are for us as well. They were not offered as a command to “cheer up,” but as a quiet assurance: God is at work even here, even now, even in the dry and weary places. The “new thing” does not depend on our optimism; it depends on God’s faithfulness and our willingness and ability to perceive it and cooperate with it.

Sometimes we can sense this renewal stirring within and around us — in a moment of beauty, in an unexpected kindness, in the courage to keep showing up. Other times, we cannot perceive it at all. And yet the promise holds: God’s work of renewal continues, even beneath the surface, even when all we can do is wait and trust.

As this new year unfolds, may we enter it gently — with honesty about what we carry, and curiosity about what God might yet be doing in the soil of our lives. May we walk together with compassion for one another’s realities, knowing that holiness often reveals itself not in

fireworks or resolutions, but in the slow blooming of grace that comes from consistently showing up in love.

With peace for the road ahead and gratitude for the journey we share.

Rev. Joe Gaspar, Minister

“GO Grow” - support for Children and Youth Ministry at Parkminster

Meet Rev. Alana Martin. She is the Minister to The GO Project, which is an incorporated ministry of the United Church, focussed on children and youth. Among other initiatives they produce a Sunday School curriculum, which we use.



Alana has spent close to 20 years working in ministry with children, youth, and young adults in The United Church of Canada through camps, Youth Forums, leadership training, curriculum design, local Sunday school and youth group leadership. She has designed national programs like The Climate Motivators, Leadership Animators, and the 2015 and 2018 Youth Forum Pilgrimages.

In 2016 she stepped into the role of Student Minister to The GO Project, and in 2021, she was commissioned and called as the Minister to The GO Project. She is deeply committed to ensuring local, regional, and national ministry with young people stays relevant, meaningful, and spiritually nourishing.

GO is launching a new ministry called “GO Grow” which we at Parkminster were selected to help pilot. “GO Grow” is a children and youth ministry audit which aspires to help churches grow and deepen their ministry with young people. GO staff work with communities of faith to help them prioritize young people’s spiritual nourishment, equip committees and leaders with resources, and strengthen intergenerational connections.

Alana began working directly with the Christian Education committee at Parkminster in December. She will visit our church to meet us and get to know our programs and space. She’s happy to meet in person or online with parents, children and various members who have knowledge about or experience with Christian Education. Later this year she will provide a detailed assessment of current strengths and areas of growth, offering detailed suggested actions on how to grow into the future.

Parkminster is privileged to be testing this initiative out with GO, and we look forward to working together! If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Dykstra, chair of Christian Education.

Christian Education Committee

Retirement Living



This article follows one in the last newsletter about aging and decision-making when it comes to leaving one's home and moving to other accommodations. Should you sell your house and move closer to children, what medical services might be required...to a rental apartment or condo...or to a retirement residence. And what would that be like??

Here we learn about two different choices than the ones described in the November newsletter...continued condo living, and a life lease at Luther Village.

Ruth Farley grew up in Owen Sound during the war years, which meant rationing for the family...with ration coupon books provided according to family size to purchase things like gas, sugar, butter, meat, etc. Families sometimes traded coupons with other families, depending on what they needed and didn't need. By today's standards, times were tough, but she says it didn't seem so at the time.

After grade 13, Ruth headed off for a year at Normal School in Stratford, so named because it was a place where teachers were educated to teach 'norms' as far as education was concerned. Ruth took a position in Hamilton, married a fellow teacher, they moved to Kitchener, raised her family, and completed her career as a teacher.

Now 93, Ruth hasn't yet made the move to a retirement home. Years ago, when to sell her home was on her mind a lot. She was living alone, visited several retirement places, and made the decision instead to sell her home. I thought Ruth would tell me that she had moved to a rental apartment or condo, but it turned out to be a co-ownership property, i.e. Ruth owns 1/105th of the building, which gives her one vote at meetings. They're trying to make it a condo, but it's not happening yet. It means, however, that there is no outside work for Ruth, underground parking is available, and she has a very active circle of friends in the building. As to when she will move to a retirement residence, it'll happen when health issues require it. In the meantime she has sold her car (they have a taxi arrangement at their building), and her kids help her with shopping needs.

Ruth would tell you that retired life has been good. Time with family, dinners and bridge games with friends, a very active social circle where she lives, and travel (including cruises and many trips to Portugal with other Parkminsterites).



Isobel Field was born in Toronto, worked for Bell Canada there for some years, and then moved to Waterloo in 1965 with her husband Jim. He had taken a position as an Electrical Engineering Professor at the University of Waterloo. When Jim passed away some years later, Isobel remained in her 4-bedroom home and provided boarding accommodation for university students. In 2014, Isobel's son gently suggested that maybe the house was getting a little big for her. That got her thinking and got her moving. After talking to a friend who lived at Luther Village, and having done Parkminster pastoral care visits with people there, she decided that was the place for her. She didn't want to be in an apartment building, especially with five cats that all went outside.

With her son's help, she made the move and says it is delightful living there in a life lease unit ...where you buy the unit and must sell it back to Lutherwood when you leave. Units vary in size and include both apartments and townhouses. She lives independently, prepares her own meals, maintains her own premises, has a front and back garden area for which she is responsible. Luther Village has quite outstanding amenities...a library, restaurant, fitness room, a chapel and multiple meeting rooms, both large and small. There are a variety of fitness activities from Yoga to Zumba, community garden plots, a multitude of resident-run activities, a wellness centre, and a workshop complete with tools. And when the time comes that less work and more care is needed, she can remain at Luther Village, but in a different type of accommodation.

Isobel, at age 87, continues to serve on the Parkminster Pastoral Care/Membership Committee and plays the piano for Sunday services at Parkwood Manor. Wouldn't it be great if we all had that vitality.

Jack Reynolds

Lucy Demsey

On behalf of all at Parkminster, we want to express heartfelt gratitude for an immensely generous legacy gift from the late Lucy Demsey, a long time, cherished member at Parkminster. Lucy passed away at age 91 on June 18, 2025, having lived for many years at Luther Village. She spent her final year at Cambridge Country Manor in Cambridge.

Her gift has been placed in a Lucy Demsey Fund and will have lasting impact for years to come. We deeply appreciate Lucy's vision, her philanthropy, her desire for Parkminster to continue to do its valuable work and remain the wonderfully caring place that it was for her, and because of her.



Lucy was one of six children, and herself raised seven children...Mark, Lynn, Jan, Sheila, Barbara, Phil and Brian. Phil is a member at Parkminster, as was Mark before his death in 2023. She was predeceased by her husband Ira in 1988.

Lucy grew up on an orchard near Tillsonburg. She completed nursing training at The Hospital for Sick Children, which began a family legacy that continues to the latest generation. Daughters, daughter-in-law, grandson and granddaughter have followed in her nursing footsteps. Lucy gave up nursing professionally when she married and started a family. She was the best homecare nurse ever when any of the kids were sick.

While raising her seven children, Lucy loved spending time at the family cottage at Red Bay watching the Lake Huron sunsets through the trees or from the sandy beach. On summer Sunday mornings, she could be found at the Red Bay Community Church. The rest of the year, Sunday mornings were spent at Parkminster, where she made coffee and spent far too long catching up with other congregation members, according to her children who have since changed their opinion!! Christmas bake sales, UCW work, Salad Supper, providing a warm welcome for newcomers at the Welcome Table, and performing in a group that did dramatizations of gospel stories were a few of the things that Lucy poured her energy into throughout the years.

In her later years, Lucy enjoyed travelling to Australia, England, Jerusalem, Portugal and the US. For an introverted bookworm, she was a fearless traveler, flying alone to meet up with relatives to travel together in other countries. She was brave, strong, kind and quiet. She supported women's rights and LGBTQ rights. She supported many charities, including homeless shelters and soup kitchens. She was a role model, a cheerleader, a good friend and a loving mother. Alzheimer Disease slowly took her from her family and friends, but her loving legacy lives on.

Jack Reynolds

Mix n Mingle

Membership and Pastoral Care hosted a Mix n Mingle on December 2nd.

Approximately 32 attended and the gym was filled with the sound of wonderful voices singing Christmas carols. Some choir members joined and we so appreciated their tuned voices. It was a special treat to have some Montessori children join us in the gym for a few songs also.





Bob Hudgins impressed us all with his skills on the keyboard and played any song request by heart! and Mary Reynolds kept us all on track taking song requests and wore her big smile the whole afternoon.

Thanks to committee members for bringing delicious treats for all to enjoy.

Membership and Pastoral Care