



Worshipping, Caring, Reaching Out and Learning While Apart Annual Report 2020


First Metropolitan
United Church of Canada
A centre for spiritual growth and community engagement

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Cover Photo: The sanctuary decorated for Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11, 2020. Socks and squash were donated to Our Place.



Gatherings before the pandemic restrictions: (from top) Valentine's Tea for Our Place seniors, Feb 23. Congregational Pancake Dinner, walkers at the Coldest Night of the Year Walk to benefit Our Place on Feb 22.

Mission Statement, Our Values and Guiding Principles

Mission

As a faith-based community, we are committed to including people of all ages, economic circumstances, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and gender identities in the life and work of our ministry. Together we seek transformation, engagement and service for ourselves, our community and our world.

Vision

First Metropolitan is a vibrant, diverse, justice-seeking, faith-based community rooted in downtown Victoria and branching out beyond.

Core Values and Beliefs

- To love one another unconditionally as God loves us and to value each person's uniqueness.
- To value the gifts of community and being an integral part of the wider community.
- To actively care for and live with respect in creation.
- To nurture Christian spirituality and justice-seeking in ways that foster personal growth and creative interaction.
- To acknowledge and respect that we live, work and worship on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish nations.
- To celebrate that ours is an evolving faith, founded on the teachings of Jesus and relevant to our lives today.

Guiding Principles

- Reach out with compassion and respect, seeking justice and healing within our church, our community and beyond.
- Collaborate with others to support the needs of the community.
- Partner with kindred spirits, including those who do not identify as being Christian.
- Be a diverse community in which a range of viewpoints can be honoured.
- Engage the participation of the full congregation in decision making.
- Be transparent in communication practices.
- Seek out opportunities to involve and engage indigenous peoples.
- Encourage collaboration among teams.



In Remembrance

January

OLIVER, Winsome
DUKE, Donald

January 24
January 30

February

MCALISTER, Ann-Louise

February 08

March

TUTTLE, Eunice
MORNINGSTAR, Elsie
HOLE, Thelma
FIELDS, Bob
LANGTON, Marj

March 12
March 13
March 20
March 22
March 26

May

WALKEY, Anne
CLARKE, Patrick

May 11
May 30

June

DEACON, Kate

June 03

July

NICOLSON, Phyllis

July 14

August

PORTER, Paul
OLESEN, Jim
ZILKIE, Dorothy
LANGRAN, Paddy

August 02
August 04
August 07
August 14

September

DYKES, Randle

September 02

October

RAE, Merry

October 24

November

SANDERSON, Jim
RICHARDS, Vern
POTTER, Deirdre

November 05
November 21
November 27

December

ANDERSON, Jim

December 21



"I am the resurrection and the life; all who believe in me, though they die, yet shall they live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." - John 11:25, 26

Statistical Report 2020

Baptisms

Theodore Robinson June 14 by Rev Shelagh MacKinnon
Plus one adult baptism

Church Membership

Members 286

Average number of persons attending Sunday services

9:00 am	15
11:00 am	81

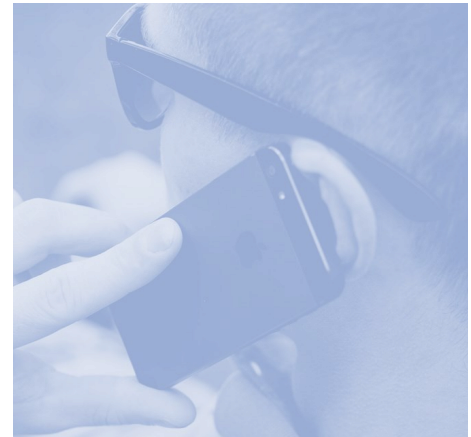
The Hands That Hold Us

This year, we have gained new appreciation for hands, especially those hands that work behind the scenes: the hands that drive delivery trucks, the hands that stock shelves, the hands of police, firefighters and paramedics that keep us safe. The hands that intubate the sick, that hold the cell phone so that goodbyes can be said to families unable to go to the hospital. The hands of street cleaners, parks employees, recycling and garbage collectors, and so many more.

In our own congregation, these hands have included our staff working from home or at the church to continue worship, keep our building safe and clean, communicate with those lacking technology through letters and cards and to keep the workings of the church running. The hands of our volunteers who welcomed visitors to our locked building, who ensured the website and Facebook pages were updated continually, who assisted with worship services, who organized programs and gatherings through zoom, who phoned or wrote those who were housebound.

Truly, these hands fulfilled the promise in St. Teresa of Avila words:

*“No hands but yours to heal the wounded world,
no hands but yours to soothe all its suffering...
Yours is the work to serve with the joy of
compassion.”*



Governance and Teams

Church Board *

Edeana Malcolm, Chair
Anne Carson, Secretary
Liane Clark
Ross Breckon
Jacquie Henderson
Emily MacDonald

Board of Trustees*

Jan Drent, Chair, Investments
Larry Scott, Secretary
Pam Shemilt
Rennie Warburton
Marion Denton
Earl Jenson, Legacy Circle
Ross Breckon, Board rep

Archives and Heritage*

Margery Hadley, Co-leader
Sharron Higgins, Co-leader
Don Bourdon
Anne Carson, Board rep

Christian Spiritual Development and Worship*

Marion Denton, Leader
Leslie Biederman
Gillian Chamberlin
Marg MacQuarrie, flowers
Arlene Anderson, flowers
Technical Resources to W&CSD:
Jim Anderson, (resigned July)
Steve Gray, Sound
John Newhouse, Livestream
Paul Hilton, Lighting
Joan Mason, Visuals
Marg MacQuarrie, Visuals (resigned April)
Edeana Malcolm, Board rep

Communications*

David Bray, Leader
Joan Mason
Edeana Malcolm, Board rep
Janet Gray, Facebook resource

*** Shelagh MacKinnon is the staff partner for all teams indicated with an asterisk.**

Finance and Administration

Liane Clark, Treasurer, Leader, Board rep
Andrew Faulkner, IT Support (on leave)
Jan Drent, Property
Susan Walma
Katya Rummyantseva, Fiona Weber, Staff Partners

Hospitality

Moirra Nasim
Irene Baddeley, Secretary
Anne Carson, Board rep
Susan Walma, Restricted Diets
Alva Jenson
Heather Querengesser
Robin Breckon, Restricted Diets
Vicky Atwell
Janet Gray, soup socials
Edie Faucher
Bruce Davies & Shelagh MacKinnon, staff partners

Library*

Denise Holmen, Leader
David Chamberlin
Gillian Chamberlin
Phyllis Duval
Pat Davey
Clare Lowery
Terry Swan
Anne Carson, Board Rep

Ministry and Personnel

Leanne Prestwich, Chair
Marie McKee
Peter Clugston
Irene Baddeley, Volunteer Coordinator
Liane Clark, Board rep

Music

Mary Byrne, Leader
Gordon Larson
Judi Swanston
Sharon Stennes
Kelly Charlton, Staff Partner
Jacquie Henderson, Board rep

Newcomers Welcoming *

David Prestwich, Leader
Brenda Porter
Lynda Page
Jacquie Henderson, Board Rep

Outreach*

Kathy Cook, Co-leader (on leave)
Janet Gray, Co-leader
Jan Drent, Adult Shelter Liaison
Tom Lane
Hally & Andrea Hofmyer
Penny Bond, Angel Gifts
Forrest Nelson, Mission and Service

Pacific Mountain Regional Representatives

Shelagh MacKinnon, Board Rep
Janet Gray, Lay Delegate

Spiritual Care & Wellness*

Sharron Higgins, Co-leader
Irene Baddeley
Patti Buchanan
Wally Lazaruk
Robert McKay
Betty Anne Dempsey & Shelagh MacKinnon, Staff partners
Emily MacDonald, Board Rep

Redevelopment Task Group*

Ross Breckon, Chair, Board rep
Linden Holmen
Steve Gray
Kathy Cook, on leave
Peter Clugston
David Bray
Bruce Davies & Shelagh MacKinnon, staff partners

Sunday School

Edeana Malcolm, Board rep
Larry Scott
Al Fowler
Mary Byrne
Janet Gray
Leslie Biederman
Micia Kanstrup, Staff Partner

United Church Women*

Joan Dowse & Marie McKee, Co-Presidents, Mildred Mossop Unit
Janet Harper, Corresponding Sec.
Patti Buchanan, President, Unity
Irene Baddeley, Secretary
Pat Davey, Treasurer
Emily MacDonald, Board Rep



Minister's Report

As always, I begin my reflections acknowledging that we meet and work on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples. It is my honour to share part of the COVID-19 story at First Metropolitan United Church in the North Park Community. Worship, Pastoral Care, how we meet, and every other part of church life, developed a new shape and rhythm after March 15, 2020 when everything changed after “lock-down” started. Until that day in Lent, we were increasingly concerned about the global news of what was eventually recognized as a pandemic. Hindsight may cloud our memory of that reality, but all of 2020 was a year of paying close attention to news of the whole world being tragically impacted.

The year 2020 is one that many of us will never forget. One really cannot find the words to describe it: part social disruption, part spiritual challenge, with a level of empathy and community support that were a leaven which impacted all of us. We have been shaped and molded, our lives changed in many ways. But, we are still “a work in progress,” as we journey together to see what new things will be part of our story going forward. In this time of pandemic, we needed the reminders of our faith and the encouragement of Jesus’ message of hope and peace in our changed community perhaps more than ever.

Our community of faith was blessed by a hard working, faithful Board: Edeana Malcolm, Emily MacDonald, Jacquie Henderson, Anne Carson, Ross Breckon and Liane Clarke. They really surged forward in ways of creative and supportive leadership. You will read their reports in this document and I know you will agree that their leadership helped First Met “be the rainbow in someone else’s cloud”. (Dr. Maya Angelou)

Like many communities of faith, we have “pivoted” (a very 2020 word!), innovating and changing as we developed new ways to stay connected and to work and worship together. We have continued livestreaming our services on YouTube each week. Our Chapel service is offered on Zoom, and Zoom is also the platform used by many other groups: from study sessions to the Men’s Water into Wine gatherings. This makes us accessible to all, with the technology, who want to stay in touch with their home church and gives us an ability to share our faith with the wider world.

We have used “snail mail” as much as possible and hundreds of phone calls were made to keep on reaching out to those without email or internet. But real issues of loneliness and loss were felt as a result of the necessary restrictions. We sought to ameliorate that pain of separation as much as possible, but obviously, the toll on spiritual resources and mental health were huge motivators in our responses.

Micia Kanstrup leads the most creative and thoughtful spiritual programming for children and their families. She developed exciting new ways to connect with the families, way beyond more screen time! Her creativity is a huge blessing to our community of faith, and along with her team of volunteers, embodied the love of God in every imaginable way in a pandemic!





From Angel Gifts and visits to unhoused people living in tents, the work of the Evolving church ministry team grew as our outreach in support of those in need in our community. Donations in support of the Our Place families and the homeless in North Park were offered in many ways.

Many volunteers lent their time and caring to the ministry of our church. Their selflessness is most appreciated in these unprecedented times. So too, are the generous hearts of the telephoners! The Ministry Teams keep blessing us all with their focus and sense of mission. So much gratitude and appreciation to all the volunteers! It is impossible to name all the hearts that reached out, sharing time and hope, donating to special programs all over Victoria, but those people made the sun shine on cloudy days. The prayer team held so many in loving spiritual connection: thank you so much!

People found out what we were doing through our excellent website! Thank you to David Bray, Joan Mason, and our Co-op Student, Ryan Lee. We will never forget the Family Christmas Eve service patched together from five different years: it was wonderful!! The banners outside the church were so helpful in telling our story! Some programs had to completely re-invent themselves! The team doing the Live streaming and the ones helping prepare and deliver the worship services are two for special thanks. A special shout out to Kelly Charlton and Mary Byrnes and the choirs from years gone by whose performances were added to 2020 services!

The staff had to work from home as of the middle of March. The building was mostly shut except for Bruce, Building Supervisor, and Katya, Assistant Bookkeeper, who worked behind all those closed doors.

We will get through this together; in reflecting on 2020, we will remember how we continued to find strength in Emmanu-el: God with us. It is such a blessing to be the Lead Minister, and am grateful to walk this path with you all.

Shelagh
(Rev) Shelagh MacKinnon



Pentecost Sunday: pinwheels made by the Sunday School.



Candles lit to mark December 6, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

First Metropolitan United Church Board

In 2020, the First Met United Church Board consisted of Edeana Malcolm, Chair; Anne Carson, secretary; Liane Clark, treasurer; Ross Breckon; Emily Macdonald; and Jacquie Henderson.

Each Board member is assigned to communicate with specific teams. These are:

- Anne Carson: Archives & Heritage, Library, Hospitality
- Edeana Malcolm, Christian Spiritual Development and Worship, Communications, Sunday School
- Liane Clark: Stewardship, Finance & Administration, Ministry & Personnel
- Ross Breckon: Board of Trustees, Property Standing Committee, Redevelopment Task Group
- Jacquie Henderson: Newcomers & Welcoming, Music, Outreach
- Emily Macdonald: United Church Women, Spiritual Care & Wellness, Weird Church



Emily MacDonald, Edeana Malcolm, Liane Clark, Anne Carson, Ross Breckon, Shelagh MacKinnon, Jacquie Henderson.

At our monthly meetings we try to keep a finger on the pulse. Board members send brief reports to Team leaders after meetings to let them know what is going on. Business meetings were held monthly (usually the third Wednesday of the month) on Jan. 22, Feb. 19, March 18, April 15, May 20, June 18, July 29, Aug. 19, Sep. 9, Oct. 21, Nov. 18, and Dec. 16. Our meetings in January and February were in person, but from March to the end of the year, all meetings were held on-line, mainly on Zoom. Other Zoom meetings were held on March 8, May 6, May 26, and June 4 for emerging business, such as staff changes and plumbing issues.

Due to COVID-19, this has been an unusual year. No sooner was the ink dry on our Strategic Plan than we learned we had to become adaptive and resilient in the face of a new reality. A special thanks to our treasurer Liane Clark who wrote the protocols for "Reopening to a New Normal." For a few months, in the early fall, we had Welcome Attendants at the Balmoral door to let in visitors to the church. During the winter, this was discontinued and church doors remain locked.

New programs this year have been the Halo project to find out the value of our service to the broader community, the Age-ing to Sage-ing Course, work on Becoming Affirming, and the use of our Fellowship Hall by North Park Neighbourhood Association for a Grocery Hamper program.

On November 15, we celebrated with Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon her 40th anniversary of ordination. Our thanks to Marion Denton who helped to coordinate that.

We look forward with anticipation to 2021 when our doors may once again be opened!

Edeana Malcolm, Chair

"In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it."

– Marianne Williamson

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

– Coretta Scott King

Strategic Plan Update

Due to the pandemic, we have not kept up with the goals set in our Strategic Plan. If you want to see what those goals entail in more detail, you can check it out on the First Met website. [Go to firstmetvictoria.com and click on Church Board, then click on Strategic Plan]

Here are the goals and the progress that the Board made or did not make on them during 2020:

Goal One: Foster Transformation and Innovation Rooted in Progressive Christian Faith

G.1.1 Design a Sunday School program that reflects our progressive Christian theology.

This goal was not acted on. This is not to say that Micia Kanstrup has not been busy during COVID keeping in touch with the Sunday School children, which has rightly been her priority during this period.

G.1.2 Offer youth programs in collaboration with other churches.

Not done.

G.1.3 Become an Affirming congregation

We did a great deal of work on this goal. Please see my report on Becoming Affirming to learn more.

G.1.4 Design and conduct conversation to develop Evolving Church and progressive theology

Although this goal was not specifically addressed, there were several Zoom study groups during 2020, including “Listening to Ancient and Contemporary Voices in Sexuality and Theology” in relation to Affirming.

G.1.5 Engage with the larger community, including North Park Neighbourhood Association.

Emily MacDonald and the Evolving Church Team were active on this goal. See her report for more details.

G.1.6 Review and update Spiritual Care and Wellness.

Though the Board was not involved, see the Spiritual Care and Wellness Report to know what they have been doing.

G.1.7 Develop and implement mandate and action plan to facilitate reconciliation with First Nations.

Not done.

G.1.8 Develop a plan to work cooperatively with other organizations to support the settlement of refugees.

Not done.

G.1.9 Update and renew worship life.

Not done.

Goal Two: Support a Diverse Team of Volunteers and Staff

G.2.1 Determine essential ministries.

Not done.

G.2.2 Create a position of Coordinator of Volunteers.

Not done.

G.2.3 Support and expand our volunteer base.

Not done.

G.2.4 Determine best practices for welcoming and retaining members.

Not done.

G.2.5 Prepare short-term and long-term succession plan for paid staff and volunteers.

Not done.

Goal 3: Transform the Church through Vibrant Redevelopment and Financial Revitalization

Our third goal relates to the Redevelopment Task Group. Please see Ross Breckon’s report for more details about this.

You can see, though some progress has been made on our first goal, we have a lot of catching up to do on our second goal when we are finally free of this pandemic

In 2021, the Board hopes to meet with every church team by Zoom or in person, as the law allows, to help us to continue to carry out our Strategic Plan.

Edeana Malcolm, Chair

Becoming Affirming

The ad hoc Affirming Team consists of Edeana Malcolm assisted by Shelagh MacKinnon and Kelly Charlton. Our goal is to educate the congregation of First Met on what it means to “become an affirming congregation” and how that differs from being “radically welcoming,” which, of course, is also a good thing.

Besides being welcoming, being affirming means to be an ally of all those who are marginalized or stigmatized for whatever reason, not only for their sexuality or gender. It means to be public, intentional and explicit. We want to let everyone know that we are actively affirming and have it mean more than just words on paper.

This is what we did in 2020 in order to become affirming:

On June 25, we invited local author Robin Stevenson to read her book, *Ghost's Journey: A Refugee Story* and talk with the children in the Sunday School when they were meeting outside. The church library purchased several of her children's books, including *Pride Colors*, *Kid Activists*, *Ghost's Journey*, and *My Body: My Choice*.

On June 30, we met with the Worship and Christian Spiritual Development team, the Communications Team and the minister to write a new Marriage Policy, which was approved by Affirm United. Our Co-op student Ryan Lee worked with Communications to create a wedding brochure.

The Board also rewrote our Mission Statement which was approved by Affirm United.

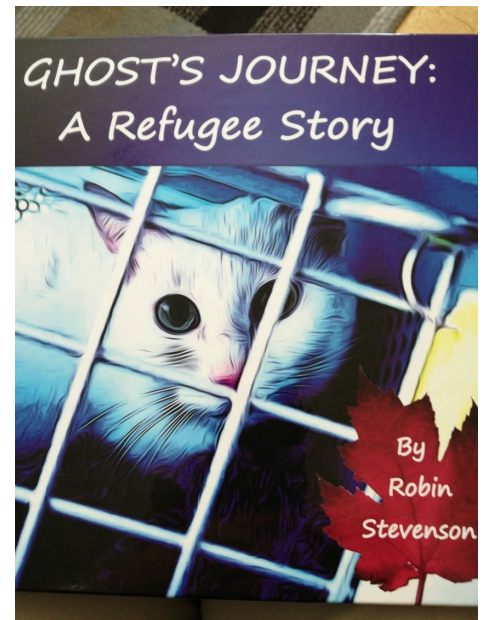
Some Teams took up the challenge to have discussions on becoming Affirming, including the UCW and the Men's “Water into Wine” pub night.

On September 24, we had a Zoom meeting with Anne Manikel from Brechin United in Nanaimo and on October 15, we had another Zoom meeting with Michelle Slater of Oak Bay United to discuss their experiences of becoming affirming.

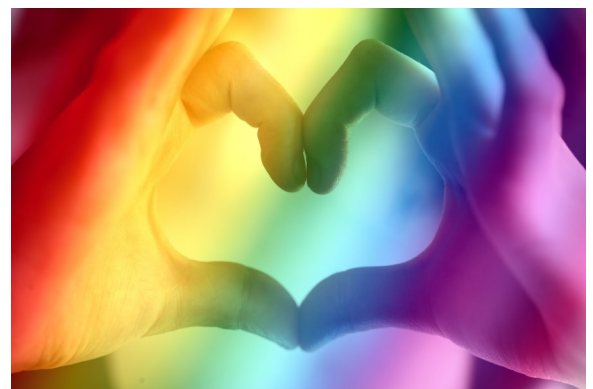
Beginning November 10, Shelagh conducted a 4-week study on Zoom with a session in the morning and one in the evening called “Listening to Ancient and Contemporary Voices on Sexuality and Theology.” We read what the Bible had to say, watched contemporary videos and had lively discussions on the topic.

If you missed any of these activities, don't worry. We hope to have more activities in 2021, culminating in a congregational vote on becoming affirming. After that, we'll create an Action Plan to carry out our intention to be an affirming community.

Edeana Malcolm, Chair



The communion table on Pride Sunday.



Our Pride banner was hung during Pride Week.

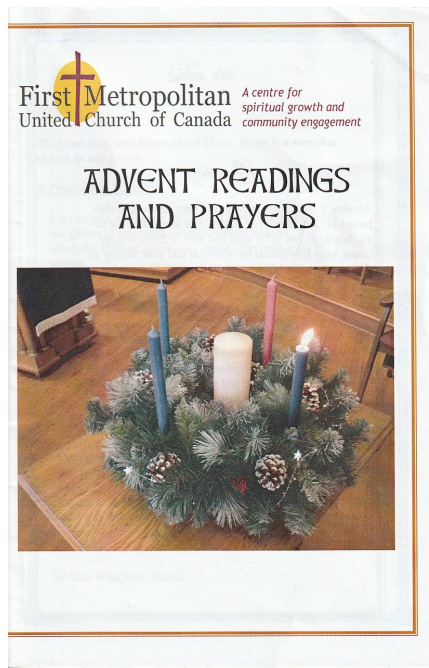
Worship and Christian Spiritual Development



9:00 am worship group on zoom.



Pacific Audio Works technician installing our new cameras and video mixer.



The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting medical health orders made live-streaming of the sanctuary service the only way that worship could take place for most congregants for most of the year. The last service with a full congregation was on March 15 when we welcomed Robert Massoud from Zatoun Olive Oil to offer the reflection at both the 9:00 and 11:00 am services.

Limited in-person attendance at worship services began in September and was suspended again in November when Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonny Henry issued a health order prohibiting in-person church services. Virtual communion was offered at services in June and October. The 9:00 am worship group began meeting weekly on Thursday mornings with Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon for a virtual communion service.

The pandemic also caused three of the volunteers on the technical desk to step away from volunteering due to personal or family health concerns, leaving only one volunteer and one casual employee to stream services from March to June. Joan Mason assumed the responsibilities of team leader from Jim Anderson in April.

Ryan Lee, a cooperative education student, was hired for the periods from June to December to ensure that streaming could continue even if one of the two remaining crew members was ill or otherwise unable to assist with services and to assist with Communication. The church was successful in getting Magnet Student Work Placement Program funding for both the summer and fall semesters.

In late January 2020, new visual and livestreaming computers were purchased as the existing computers could not be updated to Windows 10. Technical problems resulted from this change, requiring support from Total Solutions. New cameras and a video mixer were purchased in early November to replace existing equipment that was already past its typical life span as it became clear that the church would be reliant on livestreamed services for much of 2020 and 2021.

Christian Spiritual Development programs were also affected by the COVID restrictions. The Women Exploring Spirituality began meeting again in the fall via zoom.

Achievements:

- Sunday services were streamed for all 52 Sundays in 2020.
- Two Spiritual Toolbox services were recorded early in the pandemic.
- A booklet of Advent Readings and Prayers was prepared by Marion Denton and Joan Dowse and distributed via mail to those without email or internet and via the church website.

Continued on p.13

Worship and Christian Spiritual Development continued from p. 24

- Three special messages from Shelagh, plus a Christmas Day message, were recorded and posted.
- Home participation in the Nov 1 service was encouraged by preparing gauze bags containing a blessed candle, prayer card and knit prayer square and distributing them to congregants.
- Special virtual services for Family Christmas Eve and Carols in the Candlelight were created using past video footage and newly recorded prayers, reflection and readings.
- Video clips of the sermon and blessing for each Sunday service from late June through December were posted to YouTube, the website and occasionally to Facebook. They attract an average of 20 views each, though it is not possible to determine whether these are new viewers or congregants who wish to review these portions of the service.
- Shelagh's 40th Anniversary of Ordination was celebrated in a special service on Nov. 15th with Rev. Ingrid Brown preaching. Shelagh was presented with many gifts and a beautiful stole made by Dawn Duke.
- Viewership of the services rose dramatically during the early days of the pandemic. After the church was closed to in-person worship, viewership averaged 204 per service between March 22 and June 28, tailing off toward the end of June as other churches began live-streaming or Zoom worship. Of note, the Good Friday service was viewed by 268, and Easter Sunday, 371. Average views per service for the whole year was 140. (Note that a view is one or more persons viewing a service on a computer or other device. This number is greater than that reported in the statistical report because for statistical purposes the church only reports average attendance in October and only views on Sunday were counted.)

Many thanks to Marion Denton and Jim Anderson who stepped down as leaders of the team and audio-visual crew respectively, for their many years of dedicated service.

Joan Mason and Marion Denton



Shelagh speaking to the congregation after receiving her stole at the service celebrating the 40th anniversary of her ordination.



Our sanctuary is empty during our services: we can't wait to have a full congregation again!

Newcomers Welcoming

Up until March 15, our three team members plus 13 greeters:

- Welcomed congregants and visitors to all Sunday services
- Provided greeters and ushers for special events including funerals and celebrations of life.

We look forward to welcoming you to church services when we are able to resume in-person worship.

David Prestwich, Team Leader



Lynda Page, David Prestwich, Brenda Porter

Music



Carter Johnson recital, Feb 2020.

Like so many areas of First-Met's spiritual and worship life, 2020 started according to plan with all areas of music running at full tilt. Choir met weekly for rehearsal and assisted in worship each week. Pringle Bells met weekly. Our Choral Scholars were not only assisting, each and every week, with the choir but were also planning for a series of special music offerings to lift up the worship of the congregation through Lent and Easter. Special instrumentalists were on call for the up-coming Easter season.

In this heady time late February, Music hosted a splendid concert by pianist Carter Johnson. The outstanding young Vancouver Island-born, Victoria-trained musician returned home from his studies and triumphs in New York City to perform at First Met in support of our Choral Bursary program. It was such a joy to hear our Oscar Peterson Steinway piano played with such astounding ease. Then, everything changed!

Mid-March was the last time the choir sang together as a group. Music groups thrive on physical closeness for group work. But choirs were soon designated "Super Spreaders." Choir ceased. Handbells ceased. Concert plans halted. Over night, music closed down, not just at First Met, but across the globe.

In the early days of the pandemic, Kelly worked largely from home as per restrictions on use of public spaces. Certainly, he was on-site for regular organ practice, work with the music library, and contributing music for all the online services.

As the pandemic continued, we settled into a pattern of intense planning via Zoom. Online worship has new possibilities, new demands, new limitations. Music, guided by the Board and Worship, dived in to reimagine worship, making best use of our online streaming capacity, our broad resources, and our collective professional skills to keep worship fresh and vital. During this year, we have needed to use all these.

By late spring, we were able to bring in hymn and music leaders to work with Kelly in support of the live-stream, recorded, and by September limited-capacity in-person services. Many hundreds of hours were spent by Kelly searching through First-Met video archives to find, edit and insert appropriate video clips into services. This was beneficial for Sunday worship but invaluable to the seasonally-important services that are so much of First Met's calendar of events.

Continued on p. 15



Annalysa Tylor singing at the July 6 service.



Amber Dayton playing for the *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* Service Nov 1.

Music continued from p. 14

On November 1st we presented our annual program *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* as the worship service that Sunday morning. This was an enormous undertaking that was only possible through the collaboration and full-investment of intent between Audio-visual, Communications, and Music! Without the work of every one of these team members this would not have happened. Hundreds of hours is not an understatement! Kelly planned and orchestrated a beautiful service of music using archived, newly-recorded, and live music; newly-recorded texts; live candle lighting; and atmospheric decoration and lighting of the sanctuary. Audio-visual and Communications brought everything to full realization. Many congregants wrote words of thanks.

Thanks to previously unknown recordings by the late Jim Anderson, we were able to produce our annual *Carols in the Candlelight* on Christmas Eve. We consider it to have been a great success, despite all the extra work involved to make it online-friendly. Installation of new cameras in the Sanctuary in November was key in this process. Thanks to Joan Mason for all her efforts in this regard.

In the last months of the year, Kelly Charlton, as Director of Music, organized a series of Advent recitals with current and former Choral Scholars. It was a substantial undertaking mentoring these young musicians through the process of programming and preparing a solo recital, as well as the nuances of presenting themselves for a video audience. Annalysa Tylor and Jennifer Turner recorded Advent Recitals with Kelly at the keyboard in November, and Louis Dillon recorded with Kelly in December. Again, Audio-Visual and Communications were instrumental in completing the production of the concerts, ready for our online audiences.

We are thankful to the Board which has been assisting us financially during this period of relative musical-silence. We were only able to mount one fund-raising concert in 2020, that by Carter Johnson. Ordinarily we would be mounting four or five events, plus *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* and *Carols in the Candlelight*. Support from the Board has enabled special contributions of Music to our worship services.

We are indebted to the singers who made themselves available (and continue to do so) to assist as song leaders for worship, in the absence of the Sanctuary choir: Jennifer Turner and Annalysa Tylor; Kelly has asked that I include myself on the list. Pianist Amber Dayton helped during Kelly's holidays.

We conclude with one more round of thanks for the Audio-Visual and Communications teams for contributing the technical assistance needed to keep our music winging! When we can emerge from COVID restrictions, even if only gradually, we trust all musical activities will resume. Choir members and bell ringers greatly miss their fellowship and their participation in worship services. Judging from the many cards and emails received, so does the congregation. It's hard to remain silent! For our part, we can't wait make music again with the congregation.

Mary Byrne, Music Team Leader



Louis Dillon in recital with Kelly on piano.



Communion table at the *Carols in the Candlelight* service.

Children and Youth



Sunday School activities in the Fellowship Hall.



Have a Heart Day



Larry Scott and Bullwinkle at Children's Time.



Children sent in their drawings.
Below: Faith at Home Kits.



Though in mid-March, COVID restrictions began and in-house activities were paused, the Children and Youth Ministry continued with activities throughout the year.

January: Scavenger Hunt through whole church.

February: Pink Shirt Day: we provided shirts and magnets as a gift and by donation as a fundraiser for travel to church events.

Visit to the church library and borrowing books.

Black History month: we made Chin Chin (an African snack) in the kitchen, played African games in the gym, found African animals in the bible, and learned to count in Swahili.

Have a Heart Day: in cooperation with the First Nations Family and Caring Society, the children learned about challenges experienced by Indigenous children today, learned the Have a Heart Day prayer and created a video. They also created paper word-hearts for display and to use for the Valentine's Tea for Our Place.

Micia participated in the Mental Health First Aid course, funded by the Spiritual Care and Wellness Team.

Created "We are all Prophets" poster.

March: As a Mission and Service project, we raised funds for two projects chosen by the children: Keeping Girls in School and Support for Farmers with Disabilities. The families received Lenten calendars and collection boxes, and we created a Lenten rainbow poster.

Children's Communion in the chapel.

Created God's Love in the World posters.

Crafts, treats and Easter gifts (courtesy of Janet Harper).

Visit to legislature to offer scarves and toques (courtesy of First Met knitting group), to support Wet'suwet'en Indigenous youth in protest.

April: Lenten project continued with fundraising including Outdoor Sidewalk Chalk Bible bingo and new games each week, over several weeks.

Regular phone contact with families.

Delivered seed packets and Palm crosses to families.

Outdoor Treasure Hunt with prizes: over the course of several weeks, families were asked to find items outdoors and send in photos.

Delivered Easter bags to families.

Birthday cards mailed to children, and birthday wishes included in weekly newsletter.

Weekly email newsletters to families continued.

May: Mother's Day artwork and family photos on screens for live-streamed service.

Children and families sent postcards and Birthday cards to members of the congregation.

Pentecost balloons and windmills created by families for decorating the sanctuary and offered to passersby in the neighbourhood.

Pentecost kits delivered to families.

Weekly pet show in newsletter: families, staff and congregation sent in photos of their pets, with a few words about how they show God's love in the world.

Continued on p. 17

Children and Youth Ministry continued from p. 16

June: Camp Pringle Congregational Family camp, in separate households, with distancing.
End of year party and first outdoor Sunday school in Quadra garden, with distancing/in household units.
Outdoor Sunday school continued, and included a visit from local author Robin Stevenson, reading from *A Ghost's Journey*. Thanks to Edeana Malcolm and financed by the Refugee Sponsorship Committee.
Several of Robin's books are now in our library.

July and August: Outdoor Sunday school continued until rising COVID numbers necessitated a pause.
Outdoor Treasure Hunt continued.
Bells for Peace with origami cranes: children and youth rang the First Met bells 75 times on Aug 6 and 9.
Pacific Mountain Region First Third Ministry created Faith at Home kits, which we delivered to our families. Included were craft supplies, lessons, stories, crafts and recipes.
Christmas in July: the children thanked their teachers and the congregation by decorating a small tree with Thank You Stars with names on them.

September and October: Blessing of the backpacks service: Backpack tags created by two of our families, then laminated and delivered to families.
New Faith at Home kits delivered to all families, with special kits for Young Adults.
Green church/Season of Creation celebration: Larry Scott helped the children plant tulip bulbs in the Quadra garden, with masks and distancing.
First Met youth created 70 large paper dolls to decorate the sanctuary for the Friendship Club's 70th anniversary service. Youth also created a stop-motion video featuring the history of the club.
Children's Retreat "We are the Church" presented by Pacific Mountain Region online.
First Met youth created Thanksgiving flower bouquets placed on front church steps for passersby.
Sarah Prestwich and her pup Lilibet presented Children's Time and talked about being an Affirming church.

November and December: Family Drumming Workshop with Cheryl Denning.
Remembrance Day with handmade wreath created by Joan Wilkinson and family, and recorded reading of *Flander's Fields* by the Oliver/Breckon family.
First Met families created and presented a paper flower word wreath and word-mug for Reverend Shelagh's 40th anniversary of ministry.
Advent Treasure Hunt with prizes- families received a laminated chart with one item per day to find in their home, with a Christmas/Advent theme.
New Advent Faith at Home kits from PMRC delivered to families.
The Fraser, Biederman, Olivers, Dube and Barnes families video-recorded their words and candle-lighting for the Sunday worship Advent candle wreath, from their homes.
First Met youth rang the church bells at noon on Christmas Day.

Micia Kanstrup, Sunday School Coordinator



LEFT and BELOW: Camp Pringle activities.



Author Robin Stevenson speaking to the children.

BELOW: Planting tulips with Larry Scott.

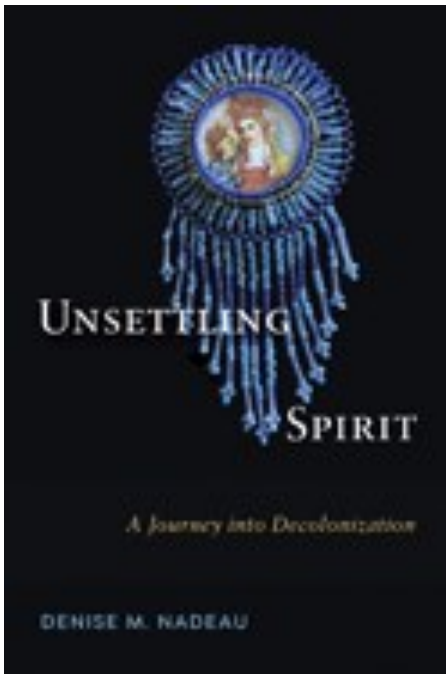


Flower word wreath made by the children for Shelagh's 40th anniversary of ordination.

Outreach



Zatoun olive oil and herbs.



ABOVE: First Met co-sponsored a book launch for *Unsettling Spirit: A Journey into Decolonization* by Denise Nadeau.

BELOW: Prayer flags delivered to Cook-Faulkner family.



The restrictions imposed to combat COVID-19 shut down gatherings and in person meetings in mid-March necessitating a move to online meetings:

- Three Outreach 'gatherings' online (via zoom) took place between March 2020 and December 2020.
- Other email communications were used to encourage First Met members to be involved in Pacific Mountain Region online learning and other opportunities to learn about Indigenous rights and anti-racism.
- Steve Gray continued to meet regularly online with Climate Justice Victoria and Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT); he represents First Met and KAIROS on Climate Justice Victoria and Climate Justice Victoria (and loosely First Met) at GVAT.
- The Mining Justice Action Committee continued to meet monthly on zoom instead of at First Met.
- No new refugee sponsorships were made in 2020; support of past families was ongoing in small ways including visits, support finding work, and English lessons (by phone).

Due to health restrictions, monthly dinners have at Our Place (first Sunday of the month) have not taken place with First Met members since March 2020. Janet Gray worked on Halo Project data collection with Ross Breckon to document outreach activities.

February

Several members of First Met joined the Holy Walkamoly team 'Coldest Night of the Year' walk fundraiser 2020.

Sale of Zaton Olive Oil and Zatar spices to raise awareness about Palestinian farmers, growing of olive trees and youth programs.

March

Robert Massoud was guest speaker at Sunday service March 15th, 2020, speaking about Palestine, Israel and Zaton products.

June/July/August

First Met co-hosted (with KAIROS Victoria) a book launch for Denise Nadeau's *Unsettling Spirit: A Journey into Decolonization* on Zoom on June 29, 2020.

Janet Gray attended two online Leadershift programs: *Faith Leaders in Times Such as These* with Brian Thorpe and Janet Gear in June and July and *Confronting Whiteness* with Anna White in August.

In July 2020, over 60 people from First Met community and beyond put messages of prayerful support on cloth flags for Kathy Cook and her family.

Continued on p. 19

Outreach Continued from p. 18

September

- A KAIROS/Creation Sunday service was recorded by Janet and Steve Gray.
- Janet and Shelagh and a few others from First Met attended an online meeting with the new Executive Director of Our Place, Julian Daly, on Sept 15.

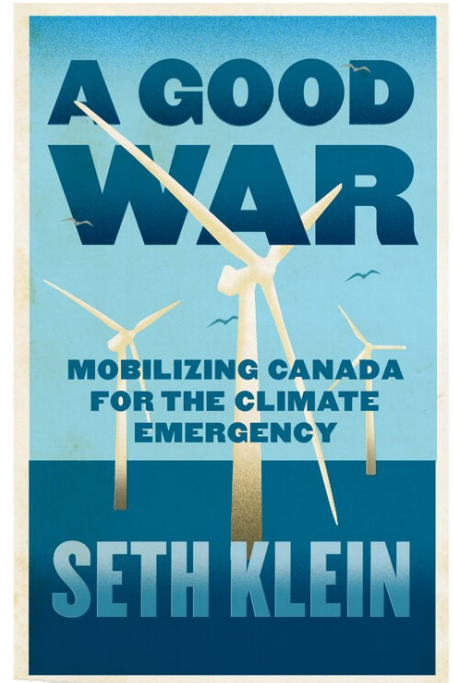
October

- First Met hosted a book launch for Seth Klein's "A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency" on zoom - Oct 6th, 2020: approx. 50 people attended.

November/December

- First Met members, Al Fowler, Kathy Cook and Steve Gray, took part in the Pacific Mountain Regional Consultation on Justice - Nov/Dec 2020.
- Janet Gray attended *Leadershift - 21 Things I didn't know about the Indian Act* with Bobby Joseph online: Nov 15.
- Janet Gray attended *Racism 101* online with Broad View United: Sept - November 2020.
- Donations of socks and blankets made to Our Place Society.

Janet Gray, Outreach Team Leader



Evolving Church Team

The Evolving Church team had a fairly eventful year even though we were dealing with the Pandemic. We continued to meet via Zoom and were able to work on a couple of projects.

Two members of the team made and delivered sandwiches once per week for 6 months for the unhoused at Central Park, with funds from the North Park Neighbourhood Association and personal donations. By January the Red Cedar non-profit restaurant was providing two meals per day to these folks who were moved to Royal Athletic Park.

In December, 4 members of the team filled 40 Gift bags with toques, orange, homemade cookies, candy, a \$10 McDonald's gift certificate and socks and delivered them on Christmas morning.

Another team member has been assisting with the Grocery Hamper program out of our Fellowship Hall. The team has been able to develop a close relationship with the North Park Neighbourhood Association, the area in which First Met is located.

Emily MacDonald, Team Leader



Christmas Gift bags for shelter residents.



RIGHT: Grocery hamper bags being packed in the Fellowship Hall.

Hospitality

Greetings on behalf of the Hospitality Team. It has almost a year since we last gathered for our fellowship time after the service on March 15, 2020. How we have missed seeing you in person and breaking bread together over a cup of tea/coffee.

We have also felt saddened that we have not been able to gather for Celebration of Life services and organize receptions for dear ones who have passed away. That has been especially hard for families of loved ones and congregants.

Some of us have been able to connect over Zoom and that's been lovely; but I have wondered how many others without access to technology have been faring. I am sure it has been difficult even though I know many have reached out with phone calls, cards and, albeit few, perhaps some 'distancing' visits. Certainly, during this time of isolation, we now have a much deeper appreciation for all the many folks in our congregation who have been homebound and alone long before this pandemic took hold.

We look forward to the time when we can gather again in person and express our appreciation for all those who have gone to extra ordinary lengths to 'carry on' the work of the church this past year.

Moir Nasim, Past team leader



Social Groups

Friendship Club

The Friendship Club celebrated its 70th birthday this year with a special virtual service on Sept 27, featuring 70 paper dolls created by the Sunday School and a video interview. Regular luncheon meetings were paused in March when pandemic restrictions came into place. During the summer and fall, the group met for socially distanced picnics in local parks, until poor weather caused cancellation once more. Members keep in touch via an informal telephone network.



Friendship Club members celebrated the anniversary with a socially-distanced pizza party.

Men's Water Into Wine Pub Night

This monthly gathering at the Bent Mast pub went virtual in April and continued to meet via Zoom through the summer and fall. Attendance has been brisk and self-supplied beverages need not be virtual! Thanks to Ross Breckon for organizing the zoom sessions.



"Men's Water Into Wine" virtual pub night.

Men's Luncheon Group

This group that met monthly for lunch and a speaker paused their sessions after their March meeting. Sessions have now resumed via Zoom.

Spiritual Care and Wellness

The Spiritual Care and Wellness Ministry serves to support and enhance spiritual care and wellness of individuals within the First Met community.

Protection of our faith community this year resulted in several cancelled programs. The Zoom communication app was successfully used for bimonthly meetings.

Highlights for 2020:

In February, a popular series was held in partnership with Oak Bay United Church called: “Living Fully As We Contemplate Death” with Rev. Margaret Harper facilitating the sessions.

In August, the Margaret Cameron Trust Fund provided donations to: Cool Aid Society for Sandy Merriman House Shelter for Women, and Our Place’s New Roads Recovery Centre program. Requests for feedback regarding use of the funds established a “partnership” process that has been well received.

Team member, Wally Lazaruk submitted wellness articles to our newsletters: “Micro dosing Mindfulness, Experiencing Awe” and “Stay Positive & Enjoy Life”, “Advance Care Plan Program by Zoom”, “Gratitude” and “Reframing Aging.” He also participated in the pilot of the new Advanced Care Plan workshops by Victoria Hospice & the Yakimovich Wellness Center at Aberdeen Hospital.

Team Leader, Sharron Higgins submitted a program report on behalf of Spiritual Care & Wellness Team for the First Met Halo Project. The completed report is available on the church website: firstmetvictoria.com.

Umbrella Ministries:

The team appreciates and embraces all the Umbrella Group Volunteers as a vital part of First Met’s Spiritual Care and Wellness Ministry.

Care Call/Visitation Ministry

This year, volunteers were limited to phone calls and/or cards to folks who are homebound or reside in care facilities. Over 50 individuals were sent Christmas card blessings.

Care Giver Support Group

The Caregiver Support Group has continued to meet throughout the pandemic, either outdoors in a park at a six-foot distance in a circle, or by Zoom. The group has an average of 10 people attending. Co-facilitator, Heather Querengesser, has entered the group as a participant so is no longer co-facilitating. The group has existed for the past eight years as an independent group of the local Alzheimer’s Society.

Continued on p. 22



Toiletries were donated to Sandy Merriman House.



A donation to the New Roads Recovery Centre provided a computer for resident training.





Elaine Duke leads our yoga sessions.

Spiritual Care and Wellness continued from p. 21

Gentle and Chair Yoga

Gentle and Chair Yoga, led by professional teacher, Elaine Duke was offered as permitted by Provincial Health Officer. They were held in the First Met Quadra Garden and the Fellowship Hall. The average attendance for yoga sessions was between five and seven persons.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi sessions were volunteer led, with the more experienced participants providing leadership. Average was four people per session. The group accepted weekly donations benefitting the Health and Wellness Education Bursary Fund. This year the fund covered the facilitator's fee for the "Living Fully As We Contemplate Death" series

Healing Pathways/Healing Touch and "Stroller" groups could not take place due to the social distancing requirements.

Ramblers

The Ramblers group paused their regular monthly hikes in March, but resumed hikes again in June to November with appropriate social distancing.

Knitting Ministry

The "Adopt a Sweater" project provided funds to purchase yarn to knit up 115 sweaters and toques for the Cridge Daycare Centre, the Children's Health Foundation and the Single Parent Resource Centre. Coordinators, Shirley Chatfield and Joan Mickelson are to be commended for their "hugs" to all those children & families. Shawls, mitts, slippers, and lap robes rounded out their knitting donations too.

Prayer Connections

Ten prayer team members continued to receive prayer phone calls or emails. First Met individuals, volunteers and staff prayed for others both here and around the world as people struggled with many pandemic issues for themselves and their families. Bless you Anne Sikstrom for coordinating this meaningful ministry.



Some of the 117 sweater and toque sets knitted for distribution to the Cridge Centre daycare and other agencies.

The Margaret Cameron Trust Funds Guidelines were updated and approved by the Board in August 2020. In February, the Health and Education Bursary Funds budget line was transferred to "Leadership" training/projects coordinated by Shelagh MacKinnon and Edeana Malcolm.

In conclusion, the Spiritual Care and Wellness Team is in the process of revising the Spiritual Care and Wellness Team Mandate after welcoming back Kyla Morrison Morgan, our First Met Spiritual Care Advocate. The Advocate's role will be clarified soon.

This Spring, we welcome any new members to our lively, Zoom meeting conversations! Guests will be welcomed on Zoom in June, 2021.

Sharron Higgins, Spiritual Care and Wellness Team Leader



United Church Women

2020 was a quiet year for First Met UCW with all our meetings and special events such as the Least Coin Service and our Mission and Service Fundraising meeting cancelled; however we kept in contact with members through phone calls, cards, letters and emails. We missed the fellowship of our annual Day Apart at Camp Pringle.

With the support of Katya, we were able to continue our financial support for "Reach One, Touch One Ministries" (ROTOM), First Met Sunday School, Angel Gifts for Our Place, First Met Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve treats for the Homeless Shelter residents, and Prison Fellowship Canada. Church Staff received calendars and Christmas gifts from the UCW, and we honoured Rev. Shelagh with a gift to celebrate her 40 years in Ministry. We sold Canadian Church calendars and jams and jellies. Knitted Issy dolls and other items were given to the Compassionate Warehouse. Many members continued to make donations to the UCW and a generous bequest from one of our members was received with gratitude.

We congratulated UCW members Joan Dowse and Marion Denton for providing such an inspiring booklet of Advent readings. Many members were delighted to join Irene Baddeley on Zoom to celebrate her 90th birthday (see right).

Marie McKee



Donations to ROTOM helped fund secure drinking water access.



Property

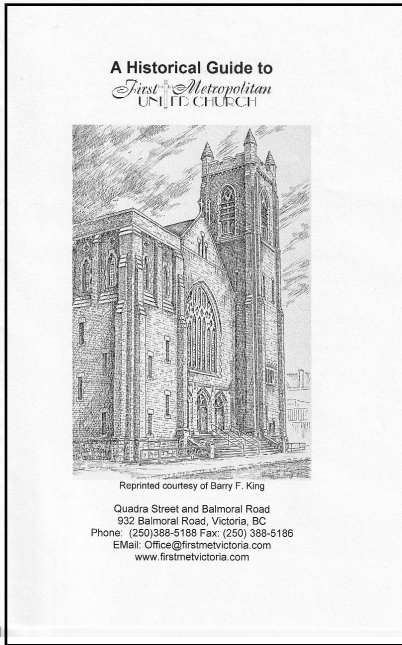
Bruce Davies and Jan Drent continued monthly meetings with Our Place staff to discuss routine issues involved in the Fellowship Hall night shelter operation. Because of Covid 19 the number of people using the shelter has unfortunately had to be reduced to 30. Apart from anticipated maintenance Bruce had to deal with issues in our ageing buildings such as a blocked drainage line from the men's washroom off the Balmoral entrance. This necessitated digging up the parking lot flower beds out to the city line. Small leaks in the Fellowship Hall roof were reminders that its Duroid tiles are now well over 30 years old. The pump system that supplies heat to the Fellowship Hall, part of a system now 70 years old, also required replacement. Plastic barriers at the counter serving the pubic were installed in the Church office as one of the various measures to enhance safety during the Pandemic.



We use seasonal flowers from the church gardens for decorating the sanctuary, when possible. Outside greenery is added and decorated with red bows, for Advent and Christmas. The Quadra yard was used in summer and fall for some outside classes and meetings as well as the ICA childcare program. We have enough scarlet runners growing along the Quadra fence to give beans to neighbours, church staff and passers-by, during summer and fall. Various neighbours stop and comment that they like to see the church providing green space and flowers in North Park. In September we had Bartlett Tree Service do maintenance on our large Spanish Chestnut tree (see photo), which provides shade for the preschool children and a mega food supply for Mr. Squirrel (Ms Squirrel?) We compost garden waste, with the help of Jan Drent, who regularly transports the materials to the City of Victoria's garden recycling centre; Larry Scott continues as our volunteer gardener.

Jan Drent, Property Chair

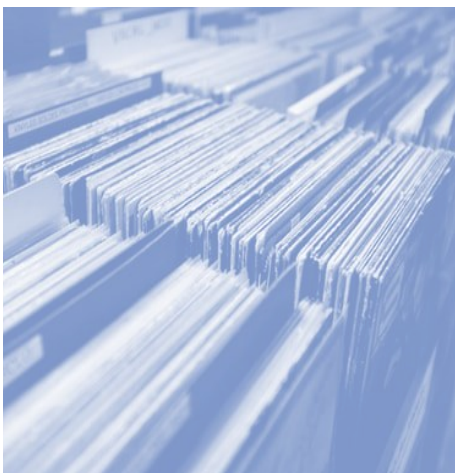
Archives and Heritage



Previous edition of the historical guide.



Sharron Higgins works on the transfer of church records to Vancouver in 2019. (A&H file photograph)



Next year marks the 25th anniversary of the amalgamation of First United Church and Metropolitan United Church. Archives & Heritage proposes the revision, expansion and reprinting of the *Historical Guide to First Metropolitan United Church* as part of the celebration. The historical guide was launched first in 2004 under the care of Joan Mason. We welcome your suggestions, as well as any volunteers who can help out.

Archives & Heritage is sad to acknowledge that Sharron Higgins will not be continuing with the team in 2021. Sharron has been a valued member since 2013 and before that chaired the Sesquicentennial Committee planning church 150th anniversary celebrations in 2012. Please join us in thanking Sharron for all the work she has done at First Met, on this committee and on many others.

The Archives Program at First Met

We would like to remind church members that First Met still has an Archives program. Even though the early church records were transferred to the regional archives in 2019, the records of First Metropolitan United Church, 1997 to date, remain on site and are cared for by the Archives & Heritage team. First Met also has a sizeable collection of artifacts and print material.

As a United Church of Canada congregation, we are responsible for maintaining and preserving all official records of the church until it is time for their transfer to the Pacific Mountain Region Archives. Committees and individuals with church records in their possession are asked to consult Archives & Heritage about their transfer to the Archives collection. It is also important to remember that quality storage space for this material must be an important part of any building redevelopment.

Completed in 2020

The Archives and Heritage team of Don Bourdon, Margery Hadley and Sharron Higgins had work sessions in the church archives vault on Wednesday mornings between January and mid-March. During the first Covid wave, we worked from home, then, in September, Margery and Don resumed work onsite. Work onsite stopped again with new public health orders in November. Significant accomplishments from 2020 include:

- We actively acquired church council and board minutes for 2013 through 2017, minutes that had not been forwarded. Thank you to Lianne Clark, Anne Carson, Larry Scott and Fiona Weber for tracking these down in hidden places.
- We began box and file descriptions for a quantity of *Epiphany Explorations* conference records and memorabilia. Anyone who has official EE records in their possession is asked to contact Don Bourdon at <firstmetarchives@gmail.com> so that we can examine them for possible inclusion in this series.

Continued on p. 25

Archives and Heritage continued from p. 24

- Information and document copies were supplied in response to direct internal and public inquiries, as well as to inquiries in conjunction with the Pacific Mountain Regional Archives. Queries pertained to: John Gardner; Chinese United Church (Victoria); Friendship Club history and photographs; Agnes Dennstedt; artist Edward Goodall; working drawings of Metropolitan Methodist Church; history of First Presbyterian Church. The majority of these requests were from writers or tour guides.
- Submissions to the church newsletter included photographs of the 1913 Congregational dinner at First Presbyterian Church (FUC_2012-012); of Metropolitan Methodist Church congregants posing for a photograph on Quadra Street at the welcoming of Rev. Dr. W. J. Sipprell in 1920 (MUC_2004-0277); and of Friendship Club activities and celebrations. All photographs remind us of a life we could not have during the 2020 pandemic. The Fall 2020 newsletter included an Archives & Heritage article titled "Confronting the 1918 influenza pandemic in Victoria."
- Off-site work included the continuing development of a topical file system for information relating to church history. This resource consists of copies, duplicate records and notes pertaining to our church history and the broader church community in Victoria. It allows quick access to information in response to internal and public requests for information.

Archives and Heritage Initiatives for 2021

We are anxious to get back to working on-site at the church so that we can carry on with the following initiatives (most of which have been moved forward by limitations presented by the pandemic).

- Revise and reprint the *Historical Guide to First Metropolitan United Church* for next year's 25th anniversary of the amalgamated First Metropolitan United Church.
- Adapt and promote United Church of Canada records management strategy and records transfer schedule to First Met church-wide.
- Finalize the Archives' topical file system.
- Add new accessions to First Metropolitan United Church fonds.
- Review artifact holdings and improve storage conditions.
- Add additional heritage content to the Church website and Flickr site. Currently there is digitized content awaiting upload. We are grateful for the Flickr Pro account provided free-of-charge by Flickr in 2020, and again for the coming year. This upgrade provides access to images without the interruption of ads. See: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/firstmetarchives/albums>.

Margery Hadley, Archives and Heritage Team Leader



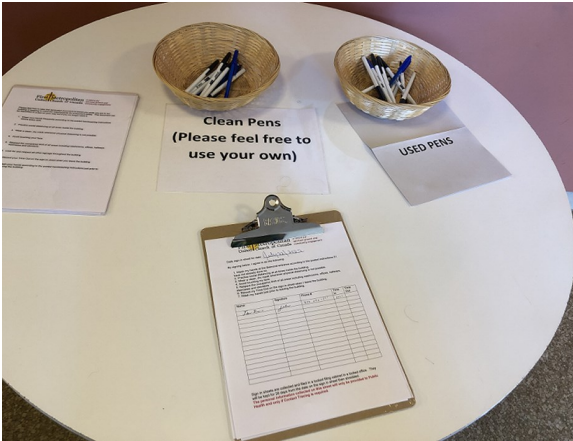
One of the Epiphany Explorations promotional materials



Communications

The year 2020 began for the Communications Team as years usually do. We were looking ahead to a new slate of spring events and programs, such as an innovative Auction of Fine Things with proceeds to the Raise the Roof fund. Then just as signs were designed and purchased and promotion campaigns were ready to launch, the COVID-19 pandemic shut it down.

We were thrown a challenge not faced before: how to keep the lines of communications open when the church was closed, personal contact was on hold, programs were cancelled or postponed and plans put on the shelf. What could we, a team of only two people, do and how would we do it?



COVID protocols: sign in sheets for contact tracing.

We turned to our website, the public face of the church and its virtual front door when the real doors had to be closed. We used the website to outline the church's actions in dealing with COVID-19 and the actions required by public health officials.

On the practical side, we posted material to help congregants and the general community cope with the stress of being locked down: suggestions for home movies, books, games, children's activities, helpful health and wellness information and online yoga workouts when our own were shut down, among other items.

On the spiritual side, we introduced weekly video sermons and blessings by Lead Minister Shelagh MacKinnon to bolster congregants and others feeling alone and isolated, posted prayers from our own First Met Prayer Connections team and carried a series of daily prayers by Minister Emeritus Allan Saunders. We provided links to spiritual websites, video presentations and other material we thought would be inspirational to many and help provide sustenance for the soul.

We highlighted church groups that continued to meet through Zoom, or other online programs, to help keep people in contact with one another.

We doubled our emailed news updates from mid-March, at the start of the lockdown, going from bi-weekly to weekly to keep congregants informed of First Met news, announcements and activities: a total of 49 updates for the year. These continue weekly into 2021.

Continued on p. 27



LEFT: One of the four newsletters published in 2020.



Banner over the Quadra Street entrance April 2020: the building may be closed but we're still active.

Communications continued from p. 26

We expanded the scope of our reach to include the wider church community by including information from the Pacific Mountain Region and national United Church. The message: our building may be closed but we are still active.

Many prayers were said in thanks for an efficient and cost-effective website infrastructure which allowed us to get to work quickly. Our website traffic rose to more than 1,000 page views a week, far higher than previous totals of 1,000 a month. On the flip side of the coin, keeping the site up-to-date and adding news, event and information increased from a few hours a week to several hours a day.

The COVID pandemic also prompted us to increase the use of promotional banners outside the church to let the community know we are still operating. Banners marking Pride Week, Christmas or just carrying simple messages were erected over the church building's Quadra Street entrance. And people paid attention: one passerby stopped while the Pride banner was being installed to remark that, "It's about time a church did something right."

Our Quadra Street signs were also used to post inspirational messages to the city community to help boost morale and spirits, in addition to advertising online Sunday services. We were also able during the year to produce four 24-page seasonal newsletters and update First Met's wedding information and volunteer brochures for the day the church will again be open and back to regular activity.

The Communications Team welcomed Ryan Lee in 2020, a coop student from UVic, as a Communications Technician. Ryan used his technical skills, in working with the audio-visual crew and Music Ministry, to help boost our use of recorded video and enable us to successfully produce the popular *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* service of remembrance online in November 2020. The success of this service resulted in putting together online productions of First Met's annual Christmas Eve family service, Carols in the Candlelight and Shelagh's special online service on Christmas Day.

These online video services involved much digital production and would not have been possible without the coop student position. We thank the Church Board for its ongoing support for that position and its approval of new cameras and digital editing equipment for the audio/visual team, with which Communications works closely. The improved quality of the livestreamed product gives our public profile an added boost.

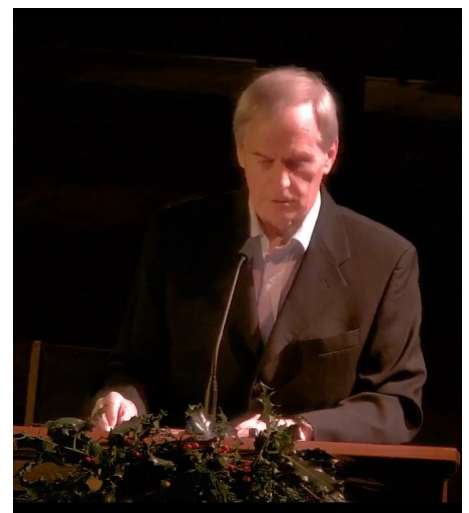
Many thanks to Joan Mason, who wore two 'hats', one as a member of the Communications Team and the other as leader of the audio-visual crew, for her unflagging work and support; to Ryan Lee, our coop student, for his skills and hours of work; and Shelagh, our Lead Minister, for her support and suggestions. Thanks, also, to Building Supervisor Bruce Davies for erecting banners, Katya Rumyantseva and Fiona Weber for their administrative support, Paul Hilton for his work in helping us light the Quadra window during the Christmas season, Archives and Heritage team chair Margery Hadley and everyone else who assisted us through a challenging year.

We gained a new understanding in 2020 of the Chinese proverb, "May you live in interesting times," and hope that 2021 might be less 'interesting' with the promise of vaccines. And, by the way, there is more we could do if we had more hands: you could do it from home (most of the time) if you're looking for a challenge.

David Bray, Communications Team Leader



Our sign carried messages of gratitude and inspiration.



David Bray brought his broadcasting skills into play in our online services.

Ministry and Personnel Committee



Leanne Prestwich, Peter Clugston, Marie McKee.

2020 has been a challenging year for us all in so many respects. With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, our staff did a stellar job of pivoting to change how they worked (including working from home when possible) to meet the accompanying restrictions and workplace requirements. The Ministry and Personnel Committee has done most of our work via email and phone when we needed to meet or consult. We are a small committee for a church our size but are grateful to work alongside such an amazing staff team.

Goodbyes

Betty Anne Dempsey, Supply Pastoral Care Minister, finished her term with us on December 31, 2020.

Hellos

Velid Emin, was welcomed into the Custodian role from his casual position on 29 August 2020.

Ryan Lee joined as a Co-op Communications Technician from June 8 to Dec 24; we were delighted that he is staying on in a casual position.

Our Roles

Ministry and Personnel is the only committee that is mandatory for any church to have. Our main activities are:

- being available to consult and support around staffing matters,
- advising hiring groups (task groups) on personnel matters,
- conducting staff performance reviews as we are able,
- overseeing the relationship of staff with each other and with the congregation,
- reviewing job descriptions and updating as needed,
- working with staff to ensure they make use of continuing education opportunities, and
- updating Human Resource policies.

Leanne Prestwich, Chair, Ministry and Personnel



Betty Anne Dempsey,
Supply Pastoral
Care Minister.

Ryan Lee,
Communications
Technician.



Velid Emin
Custodian



Mountford Library

Collection Development

We ordered 12 new books, catalogued 13 and spent \$286. Reports were downloaded from websites on BC foster youth aging out of care, Indigenous land sovereignty, Affirming Church, and how to have climate change conversations. Five of the purchased books were at the request of our Church Council chair for children & youth on gender diversity by a local author.

Borrowing

A few Library items were borrowed from January to March and returned/reshelved, before the Library was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. When restrictions were briefly lifted and the Church opened, the Library provided signage on room limits (2), separate jars for clean and used pens, quarantine period for returned books, and disinfectant wipes for hands and library materials. A few more items were borrowed before the end of the year.

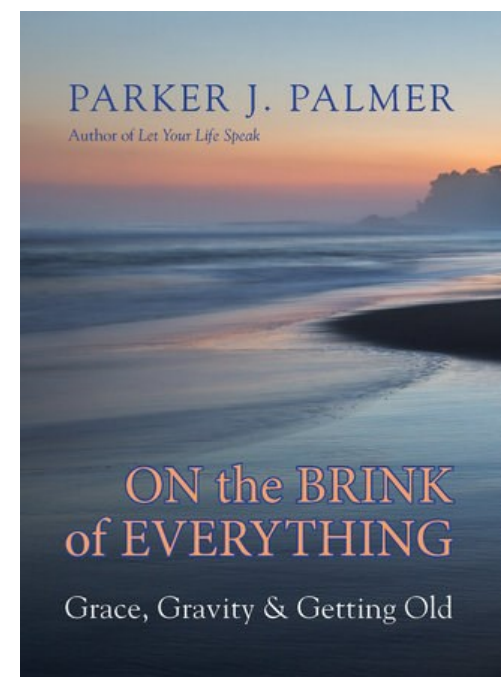
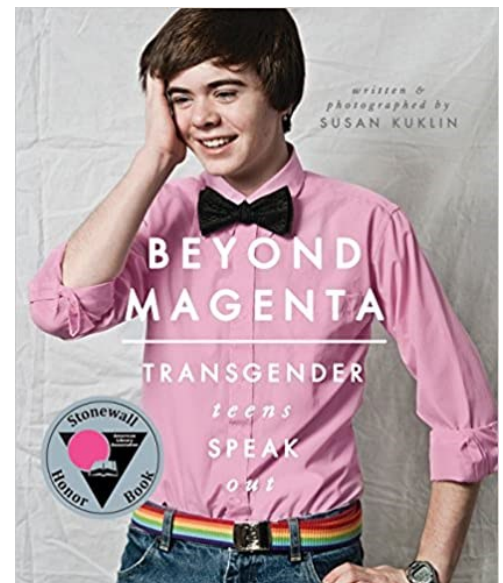
Promotion

The bulletin board outside the Library was changed once before our book display was replaced by notices about Church Covid procedures. Book review columns for two newsletters and several bulletins were submitted. A list of new books, and a list of the Library's LGBTQ2+ books were sent to the Church website.

Administration

We responded to Church Council requests for information for the Halo and Affirming Church projects; attended a zoom meeting on Affirming Congregations; downloaded two documents on LGBTQ2+ vocabularies and usage, and sent them to Library Committee members. Library Committee members were kept informed about COVID-related changes to Library procedures, and Council decisions and requests for information.

Denise Holmen, Mountford Library Team Leader



ABOVE: Two recent books purchased by the Mountford Library.

“Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.” – Charles W. Eliot

Redevelopment Task Group



In summary 2020 was a year of setbacks and delays for First Met's redevelopment project.

At the end of 2019 BC Housing (BCH) had cut off additional pre-development funds for First Met's project until the Property Resource Team (PRT) of the Pacific Mountain Region (PMR) had addressed BCH's issues with the financial models for the First Met project. The PRT was unable to resolve these issues with BCH and concluded that the BCH affordable housing financing program does not align well with the First Met project.



The PRT began to evaluate different project financing options for First Met's project including the use of CMHC funding programs and/or a project partnership with United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC). The UPRC is subsidiary company of the United Church of Canada established to collaborate with faith-based communities and non-profit organizations in Canada to build diverse, inclusive, and sustainable communities through the process of property redevelopment. The UPRC had expressed an interest in playing a role in First Met's redevelopment project.

In June of 2020 there was a change of leadership in the PRT with Don Evans taking over from Terry Harrison. Over the summer months Don worked with his team and the RTG to bring himself up to speed on First Met's project.

In the fall of 2020, the PRT turned its attention to completing its evaluation of the other project financing options for First Met's project and initiated more in-depth discussions with the UPRC concerning its potential involvement in the project.

In December, the UPRC agreed to prepare a proposal for the PRT and RTG outlining what role it could play in the project and a path forward for the project in 2021. This proposal was presented in January 2021 and is now being reviewed by the PRT and RTG.

Ross Breckon, Chair

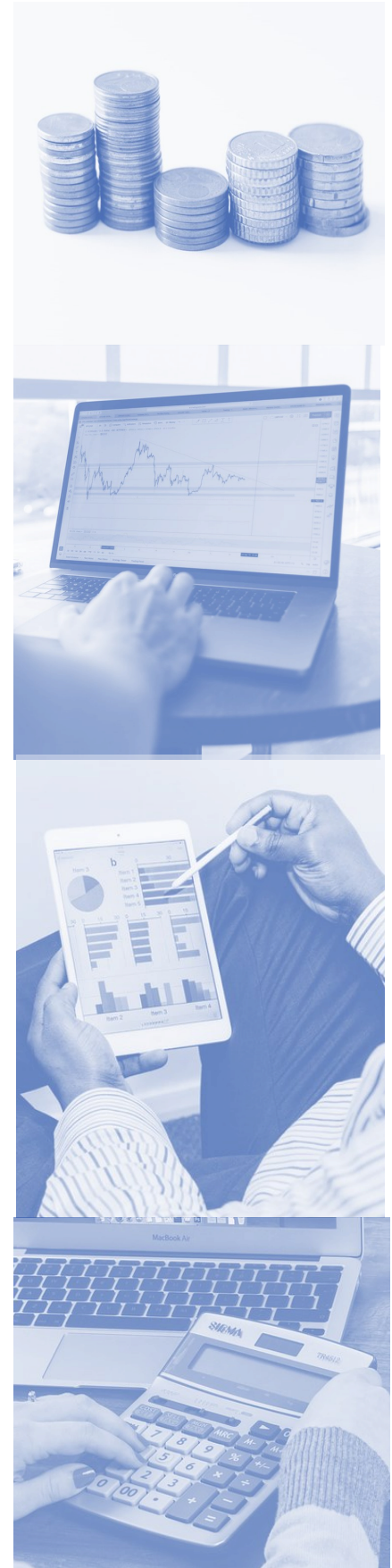
"The value of life is not based on how long we live, but how much we contribute to others in our society."—Buddha

Finance, Administration and Stewardship

The Finance and Administration team coped with the COVID-19 pandemic and carried on by:

- Closely monitoring the church's cashflow and, with the support of the First Met Foundation Board and a generous bequest, not needing to take advantage of any government COVID support programs.
- Arranging, again thanks to a generous bequest, the repayment of both the Raise the Roof and Bathroom loans eliminating all outstanding loans between the church and the Foundation.
- Reducing administrative staffing hours at the request of the impacted staff members.
- Using volunteers to cover administrative staff vacation.
- Supporting smaller tenants by waiving monthly rental fees in months where they could not use our building.
- Managing the parking wait list so that as parking tenants who were now working from home terminated their parking agreements, others would fill those empty spots.
- Managing the administrative aspects of various grants, particularly those received to offset coop student staffing costs.
- Holding a successful Stewardship Campaign of \$185,233 in pledges which represents 97% of the \$190,000 goal: raising an additional \$3,100 towards livestream system improvements.
- Finding a wide variety of speakers both in person and via video for the "Why I give" portion of the Stewardship campaign; the gratitude video for Thanksgiving Sunday was viewed 131 times.
- Developing and implementing (with the assistance of the custodial staff) the church's COVID safety plan mandated by WorkSafe BC.
- Having the information technology support provider install a new router enabling remote access to the church server and setting up every staff member's home computer with that access to enable working from home.
- Moving staff from a server-based email to Outlook webmail as a first step to retiring the 2013 church server.
- Replacing the church wireless network to provide guest wireless access to anyone inside the church building regardless of provider.

Continued on p. 31



Summary slide for Stewardship campaign

Finance and Administration continued from p. 30

Since 2019, the Whole Life Stewardship Ministry Team has consisted of one team member. Despite repeated recruitment drives, the Board has been unable to find another leader for either the team or the annual Stewardship campaign. In 2020, the Board voted to dissolve the Whole Life Stewardship Ministry Team and to transfer its responsibilities to the Finance & Administration Committee. This transfer of responsibilities reflected the reality that the Finance & Administration Committee had been leading the Stewardship Campaign since 2019.

However, this report would not be complete without a big thank you to the last Whole Life Stewardship Ministry Team member, Forrest Nelson, who continued to assist on the Stewardship Campaigns and provided insight and support on the Mission & Service fund.

Liane Clark, Treasurer



First Met Foundation and Trustees

Foundation

The annual general meeting was conducted virtually on June 10, 2020. The trustees appointed by the Congregation automatically become Foundation Directors. All seven Directors including Shelagh MacKinnon, participated along with Liane Clark, Irene Moore and Anne Carson. The Foundation holds two trust funds. We reviewed financial results for 2019 and had a report and discussion with our financial consultant, Richard Dykeman of PI Financial. The annualized return on the foundation holdings in 2019 had been almost 25% whereas the previous year had seen serious losses. The Foundation had supported the Church operating budget by \$223,653 compared with \$276,500 in 2018. Because the Foundation revenue exceeded expenses in 2019 it contributed \$20,000 to the United Church Mission and Service Fund, adding to the \$26,500 contributed out of the FMUC operating budget. Other revenue was reinvested.

The Church received a generous bequest during the year that will be reflected in the 2020 financial records. This was a reminder that a portion of all bequests large and small become part of the Memorial Endowment Fund where these gifts are invested. The future earnings by these contributions can continue to support our downtown ministry in future years.

Trustees

We had a virtual meeting on June 10, 2020. Irene Moore had formally completed her term of service as a trustee as of the Congregational meeting on January 12 when Marion Denton and Earl Jenson were elected as new trustees. Trustees serve for a minimum of three years and normally for a second three-year term. This six-year commitment can be extended to eight years. The annual legacy lunch to recognize donors had to be deferred due to the Pandemic.

Jan Drent, Chair of Board of Trustees



FIRST METROPOLITAN UNITED CHURCH

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2020

	Operating Fund	Restricted Funds (Schedule 1)	2020	2019
ASSETS				
CURRENT				
Cash	\$ 58,376	\$ 36,067	\$ 94,443	\$ 65,484
Accounts receivable	13,054	-	13,054	15,384
GST receivable	6,092	359	6,451	2,883
Due from Foundation (Note 4)	137,840	-	137,840	87,153
Due from Operating Fund	-	577,791	577,791	482,659
Due from Restricted Funds	-	3,855	3,855	-
Prepaid expenses	2,475	-	2,475	21,966
Investments	-	51,339	51,339	65,346
	217,837	669,411	887,248	740,875
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT (Note 5)	-	699,802	699,802	747,826
INTANGIBLE ASSETS (Note 6)	-	20,288	20,288	36,892
	\$ 217,837	\$ 1,389,501	\$ 1,607,338	\$ 1,525,593
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS				
CURRENT				
Bank indebtedness	\$ -	\$ 2,293	\$ 2,293	\$ 1,003
Accounts payable	100,559	13,102	113,661	91,663
Due to Restricted Funds	577,791	3,855	581,646	482,659
Deferred revenue (Note 7)	8,537	-	8,537	4,449
Current portion of deferred contributions (Note 8)	-	1,000	1,000	1,000
Current portion of notes payable (Note 9)	-	-	-	17,772
	686,887	20,250	707,137	598,546
DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS (Note 8)	-	2,000	2,000	3,000
NOTES PAYABLE (Note 9)	-	-	-	44,180
	686,887	22,250	709,137	645,726
NET ASSETS (DEFICIT)				
Internally restricted	-	1,367,251	1,367,251	1,282,901
Unrestricted	(469,050)	-	(469,050)	(403,034)
	(469,050)	1,367,251	898,201	879,867
	\$ 217,837	\$ 1,389,501	\$ 1,607,338	\$ 1,525,593
COMMITMENTS (Note 10)				

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

FIRST METROPOLITAN UNITED CHURCH

Statement of Operations

Year Ended December 31, 2020

	Operating Fund	Restricted Funds (Schedule 2)	2020	2019
REVENUE				
Donations from registered charities	\$ 200,309	\$ 84,494	\$ 284,803	\$ 261,532
Loss on investments	(209)	(244)	(453)	(231)
Givings	258,984	9,769	268,753	314,927
Investment income	1	35	36	656
Letting, net	247,593	-	247,593	307,727
Other income (loss)	2,691	(2,596)	95	4,542
	<u>709,369</u>	<u>91,458</u>	<u>800,827</u>	<u>889,153</u>
EXPENSES				
Administration (Schedule 3)	70,488	94,343	164,831	164,713
Building and grounds (Schedule 4)	212,533	-	212,533	221,647
Staffing costs	365,225	-	365,225	391,979
	<u>648,246</u>	<u>94,343</u>	<u>742,589</u>	<u>778,339</u>
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES BEFORE PROGRAMS				
	61,123	(2,885)	58,238	110,814
Net program deficit (Schedule 5)	<u>(39,904)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(39,904)</u>	<u>(79,191)</u>
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES				
	<u>\$ 21,219</u>	<u>\$ (2,885)</u>	<u>\$ 18,334</u>	<u>\$ 31,623</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

FIRST METROPOLITAN UNITED CHURCH
Statement of Cash Flows
Year Ended December 31, 2020

	Operating Fund	Restricted Funds	2020	2019
OPERATING ACTIVITIES				
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$ 21,219	\$ (2,885)	\$ 18,334	\$ 31,623
Items not affecting cash:				
Amortization of intangible assets	-	16,605	16,605	23,395
Amortization of tangible assets	-	68,358	68,358	58,988
Loss on disposal of assets	-	3,227	3,227	-
	21,219	85,305	106,524	114,006
Changes in non-cash working capital	(19,048)	11,701	(7,347)	(90,454)
Cash flow from operating activities	2,171	97,006	99,177	23,552
INVESTING ACTIVITIES				
Changes in investments, net	-	14,006	14,006	(11,481)
Purchase of tangible assets	-	(23,561)	(23,561)	(6,322)
Purchase of intangible assets	-	-	-	(799)
Interfund cash transfers	7,897	(7,897)	-	-
	7,897	(17,452)	(9,555)	(18,602)
FINANCING ACTIVITY				
Repayment of notes payable	-	(61,953)	(61,953)	(20,700)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH FLOW	10,068	17,601	27,669	(15,750)
Cash - beginning of year	48,308	16,173	64,481	80,231
CASH - END OF YEAR	\$ 58,376	\$ 33,774	\$ 92,150	\$ 64,481
CASH CONSISTS OF:				
Cash	\$ 58,376	\$ 36,067	\$ 94,443	\$ 65,484
Bank indebtedness	-	(2,293)	(2,293)	(1,003)
	\$ 58,376	\$ 33,774	\$ 92,150	\$ 64,481

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

2020 First Met Staff



Shelagh MacKinnon
Lead Minister



Micia Kanstrup
Sunday School Leadership



Kelly Charlton
Director of Music
Ministries.



Kyla Morrison Morgan
Health and Wellness Advocate
(on leave)



Fiona Weber
Church Office/
Letting



Katya Rumyantseva
Assistant Bookkeeper



Velid Emin
Custodian



Bruce Davies
Building Supervisor

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