

First Met News

Summer 2023 Newsletter



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On May 28, the choir was recognized as members went on their summer break.



First Met Hours of Operation

SUMMER HOURS APPLY
June 25–September 5

BUILDING HOURS
Monday–Thursday
9:00 am–3:30 pm
Closed Friday and Saturday
No evening hours

OFFICE HOURS
Monday–Friday
10:00 am–2:00 pm

SUNDAY HOURS
8:30 am–2:00 pm

Building and office closed
on July 3, August 7 and
September 4.

Office Contact Information
Phone: 250-388-5188

Need pastoral care?

Please call the church at
(250) 388-5188, press 4,
then wait on the line.

March Issue of Broadview

The July/August issue of Broadview is out!. Here's a peek at some of the stories:

- **Test of Faith:** These best friends and Amazing Race Canada winners lean on God to help them through life's greatest challenges.
- **Sun Dancer, Matriarch, Priest:** Rev. Vivian Seegers was all of these and more.
- **Not Welcome:** Migrants are being held in Canadian jails. Advocates are fighting to change that.
- **Why We Need Climate Reparations:** The world's wealthiest nations must open their wallets.



You can check out some of these stories and some online articles at <https://broadview.org/magazine/march-2023/>

Schedule for Upcoming Newsletters

The deadlines for submissions for upcoming newsletters are:

- Fall 2023: August 4 (published by August 28)
- Winter 2023: TBA

Sunday Services

Weekly in-person services at 11:00 am

Chapel Communion service: First Sunday of the month at 9:00 am
Masks and vaccination against COVID-19 are strongly recommended

Virtual church services: firstmetvictoria.com/pages/live-stream

Live streaming of regular Sunday Service is FREE. However, we welcome donations from our online community.



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[firstmetvictoria](https://www.facebook.com/firstmetvictoria)



Follow us on Instagram
[@firstmetvictoria](https://www.instagram.com/firstmetvictoria)

Shelagh's Message

Thank you for reading this newsletter! It is full of articles and information from your friends at First-Met! Joan Mason and Vanessa Whyte are the editors and many people are the contributors: to them all much gratitude is owed!



This will not be a summer as usual here Balmoral and **QUADRA. THE NEW MONTHLY BBQ'S HAVE STARTED! I INVITE** you to join in one if possible! Kyla and Kathy and the fabulous volunteers have made the tremendously successful Lunch Club into an outdoor BBQ for the summer. A second big change will start in a few weeks: In August the congregation of Broad View United will be joining us for worship! More details will be shared as soon as we get them. If you have a name tag, it would be very helpful if you would wear them.

I chose the image of two beach chairs as an invitation to set aside some time to review this newsletter. As a community of faith, we have been focused and diligent in our meetings and Zoom calls all winter and spring. Now, I pray, is a season of rest and family /friendly visits. We need to take the down time, as well as the working time! This newsletter is a bit of both! For the members of the Negotiating Team and the Board many more hours are required. Thank you so much for making this time available. We have had Board members Zoom in from their vacations!

The flowers in Victoria's gardens are a feast for the eye and a balm for our spirits. I hope you are able to get out to inhale the sweet perfume of roses and watch the growth of beans and other veggies. Huge thanks to all the gardeners out there.



Happy Reading! Blessings, Shelagh

There are wonderful opportunities to connect with Indigenous Celebrations in the Victoria area this summer: check out the cool video Vanessa prepared. You find it on our website and on our YouTube Channel.

Report from the Board Chair

"We've just been on a journey - a journey with a purpose. My husband David and I drove to Ottawa to visit his father and sell his father's house. His father had moved into a seniors' home because he could no longer live in the house he'd called home for almost 70 years. It was a bitter-sweet trip. After selling the house, he will never again be able to visit it. And because his father is in ill health and 103 years old, it is unlikely that David will ever see his father alive again. (Although his dad has consistently beaten the odds in the past.) It was a difficult but necessary journey.

After achieving the first leg of our journey, David and I went to Quebec City for a short vacation before we began the long drive back home. We both lived in Quebec for many years and it was where we first met. There we visited many of the places that were special to us. We took a break from the work and shared some precious memories.

Here at First Met, we are on a similar journey. We have just completed the first momentous step. This last Sunday, June 11, we, along with the congregants of Broad View United, voted overwhelmingly to amalgamate.

Ours is a journey with a purpose as well. Our intention is to serve the people of our congregation with love. We need to move; we can no longer afford the "house" we live in. We need to husband the limited time and resources available to us. We still want to serve, but many of us need to be served as well. This is a bitter-sweet reality.

The vote was only the first step in our journey and we still have a long way to go yet. Let's take a little break and enjoy what we have accomplished before we begin the long drive homeward. We may have to leave our house behind soon, but let us bring our memories with us as we go into an unknown future with hope and love.

Edeana Malcolm, Chair of the Board



Introducing Vanessa Whyte



Vanessa Whyte is our co-op student for the May to August semester. She is a third year Music and Computer Science student who completed a work term last summer with St. John the Divine Anglican Church doing very similar work to that of our Communications Technician. She has quickly adapted to our environment. You have already seen her video creations for the Emerge worship series and for the National Indigenous Day of Prayer on June 18.

A major project for her work term will be completing a video outlining the legacy of First Metropolitan United Church as a commemoration as we prepare to amalgamate with Broad View United Church.

Finance and Administration Report

First Quarter Financial Results

The Treasurer has reported at the May 17, 2023, Board meeting that First Met's financial results for the first quarter of 2023 are tracking very closely to the recently approved 2023 Budget. A comparison of our results for 2023 with the same period in 2022 is highlighted below.

- Operating revenue (including member contributions) is down approximately \$1,000 or 2%
- Letting revenue is down approximately \$31,000 or 46% (due to no lower level tenant in 2023 to replace first quarter ICA revenue in 2022)
- Program revenue is down approximately \$1,400 or 15%
- Letting expenses are down approximately \$855 or 66%
- Program expenses are up by approximately \$593 or 5%
- Staffing expenses are up by approximately \$15,225 or 13% (salary increases in 2023 plus there were several staff vacancies during the first quarter of 2022)
- Administrative expenses are up by approximately \$500 or 3%
- Building and Grounds expenses are up by approximately \$8,200 or 9%. (100% of this is due to the processing of a 2022 repair invoice.)

The First Met Board is concerned that due to the age of our buildings there will be an increasing demand for unplanned (unbudgeted) building maintenance and repair and has directed that any expenditures on building maintenance and repair must be sponsored by the Leads for Property Team and Property Management Task Group and authorized by the Board.

F&A Staffing Changes

During June 2023, First Met will be saying goodbye to two staff members, Katya Rummyantseva and Lauren Paterson. After Katya and Lauren declined an opportunity to apply for available positions with Broad View United Church they have accepted exciting new career opportunities with employers they will join in June.

Lauren resigned First Met on June 8, 2023, just about 10 months after joining us in August 2022. Lauren did a remarkable job during her time with First Met in her multi-faceted role as Office Administrator. Of note are her successes in securing many new tenants for our vacant space and her warm and welcoming presence in the front office.

Katya will be resigning her role as Bookkeeper on June 23, 2023. Katya has been with First Met since 2012 and has become the face of the finance office for the First Met family. Her role as Bookkeeper for First Met involved the preparation and posting of financial transactions and acting as the liaison with First Met's bookkeeping firm in the regular production of cheques and distribution of monthly financial statements to the Board and Teams. Katya was responsible for preparing and running the bi-weekly payroll for First Met staff, and she assisted our congregants with setting up and managing their PAR contributions. Every year Katya provided support for First Met's budgeting process and Stewardship campaigns. We have come to know Katya for her thoroughness and careful attention to detail (a real asset in any finance office) and as a helpful colleague and friend to one and to all. We will miss her presence among us and wish her the very best in her new job and future endeavours.

I am pleased to announce that Liane Clark has agreed to a contract to perform Finance Office work and Power church database maintenance. First Met has also contracted with Better Choice Staffing to bring on a new Office Administrator Linda Mack.



Ross Breckon, Treasurer

Thanking Kelly and the Sanctuary Choir

On May 28, our First Metropolitan Sanctuary Choir completed another year of music leadership and virtuosity. Earlier, choral scholars: Annalysa Tylor, soprano; Amber Dayton, alto (and piano); Nathan Corpus, bass; Neil Cardew-Fanning, bass; and Louis Dillon, bass completed their time with our choir. Neil Cardew-Fanning continued on a voluntary basis with the choir and recently played the organ for the Celebration of Life for Dr. Robin Krause.

On behalf of the congregation, Jacquie Henderson and Marion Denton thanked Kelly Charlton, our Director of Music Ministry, and the choir for their gift of music. Individually painted rocks and flowers were presented to the choir from the Sunday School. Jacquie and Marion spoke of how sorely missed choral music was during the initial days of the pandemic and how delighted the whole congregation was to have the choir back again. For much of the past year, our choir performed masked, making beautiful music despite the masks worn during practices and Sunday services. Music enriches our worship experience and enhances our learning of scripture through the many hymns that incorporate scripture passages in their lyrics. The hymns we sing are indeed embedded in our memories.



The choir as the tributes were being read.

Following the service, two delicious cakes were served in the Doreene McLeod Rm where congregants could express their own appreciation for the gift of music.

Len and Diana Jenks wrote this message which captures the feelings of the entire congregation: "Arriving in Victoria in 1990 and searching for a church home where Music and Message were key ingredients, we "discovered" Metropolitan United Church. Excellence in both fields has been maintained throughout the years, including the period of amalgamation with First United to form First Metropolitan United Church. This congregation has been blessed with beautiful artistic support, including accomplished choral, organ, piano, hand-bells, and other special music performances.

It is therefore timely and appropriate to recognize our Director of Music Ministry, Kelly Charlton, and members of the Sanctuary Choir, for their dedication and skill, not only during the past year, but for many years; for some, it has been decades of generous service!

Although we are not able to be with you on this occasion, we extend our sincere appreciation for the individual and collective talents of Kelly and Choir. The music and words of Voices United #716 "My Life Flows On" would apply nicely at this special time!"

How indeed can we keep from singing?



Kelly with the gluten-free cake.

Sharron Higgins: Community Changemaker and Volunteer

Sharron Higgins' roots at First Met run deep. In fact, they go right back to her grandfather David McCall, who came from Lethbridge Alberta in 1923 to settle in Victoria. He established the McCall Brothers Funeral Home. He served as a very active member of First United, as did his sons Graham and Torrey McCall. Sharron was baptized at First United and has many fond memories of attending Sunday school and participating in CGIT programs. As a young lady she met her husband, Glendon the Minister's Son, through First United Young People's group. And in 1964 they were married at First United. The church has always been a cornerstone in Sharron's life.

Sharron pursued an education in nursing and graduated from the Royal Jubilee Hospital School of Nursing in 1963. In 1978 she joined the Home Care Nursing Early Hospital Discharge program and enjoyed this specialized area of nursing. Sharron continued her nursing education by completing her BScN in 1982 at the University of Victoria, with a keen interest in family health development.

Later Sharron worked as a School Nurse at Victoria High School in Fernwood serving youth. During this time, she encountered many young moms who needed daycare for their infants in order to complete their high school education. She helped lead an initiative from 1990-2000, with grant funding from the BC Ministry of Health and the City of Victoria to establish a full-time day-care program to support these young parents. This work marks a significant highlight of Sharron's career.

In retirement from Public Health Nursing, Sharron led a Healthy Schools Initiative for School District #61, that matched the health promotion and education principles of the district. It was during this period that Sharron also had more time to explore volunteer options at First Met. She became interested in what was then called the Parish Nurse position and the work of the Spiritual Care and Wellness Ministry. Sharron joined the Spiritual Care and Wellness Team as a volunteer member in the winter of 2016 and sat on the hiring committee when First Met recruited our current Health and Wellness Advocate Kyla Morrison Morgan.

In 2018 Sharron stepped into the role of Team Leader, along with her co-chair Vreny Mathis. Together they worked for a period leading the group of dedicated volunteers through developing a new strategic plan. A highlight from this period is the workshop offerings led by Dr. Wally Lazaruk the SC&W team sponsored, featuring Mindfulness and Self-Compassion. Sharron went on to lead the Team on her own and continues to present day. Sharron is dedicated, she brings warmth, a smile and faith to every meeting. She has been steadfast in her commitment to the task of administering the Margret Cameron Trust, in accordance with the principles and values held by Mrs. Cameron to uphold the most vulnerable in our community. Sharron's contributions to the community and the church through her work and her volunteerism, have made an undeniable impact. We are truly blessed to have Sharron as part of our First Met church family!

Kyla Morrison Morgan FMUC H&W Advocate



Sharron standing behind the communion table donated by the McCall family.



The Lunch Club

Thanks to everyone who came to help out and enjoy our first Lunch Club BBQ on June 13. It was a great success! We had many friends from the community and Church attend for some delicious BBQ burgers and hotdogs (with veggie/gluten-free options), lemonade and watermelon. And our famous TLC hospitality. Our summer BBQs continue the success of our Lunch Club hospitality with a twist on the menu from nourishing, hot soups or bunwiches to a more appropriate summer menu.

Please join us for lunch from 12 pm-1 pm in the Balmoral Courtyard at 932 Balmoral Rd. This will be a time to gather, share friendship, conversation and connection with those within our community and from the surrounding neighbourhood. All are welcome! Upcoming Summer BBQ dates are July 11 and August 22. This is a drop-in program, and no registration is required.

This program is offered by the First Met Health and Wellness Ministry, thanks to funding received through a Pro-Vision grant from the United Church of Canada.

We are seeking volunteers to assist with set up and clean-up. If you are able to volunteer for a date, please contact the Health and Wellness Advocate or call the church office at (250) 388-5188 for more information.

Kyla Morrison Morgan

Photos from the June 13th BBQ.



The Lunch Club
Invites you to



Summer BBQs

12 pm to 1 pm

June 13th
July 11th
August 22nd

for community & connection

Drop in and by donation
Veggie and GF options available

First Met

First Metropolitan United Church
932 Balmoral Road Victoria, BC
Phone: 250-388-5188 ext. 226
firstmetvictoria.com



Prayer Requests

Prayer Connections Team members are committed to praying during their personal prayer time for requests from the congregation and staff. Prayers can be for yourself or those you care about regarding anything that concerns you including illness, bereavement, family issues, financial worries, etc. Private information is kept strictly confidential. Make a request:

- By emailing prayer@firstmetvictoria.com
- Completing a prayer request form and dropping it in the donation baskets at Sunday services or at the office
- Asking a staff member to relay your request.



Visitation Ministry: Expressing Our Gratitude

The first Cuban mission exposure trip was planned for senior high youth at First Met. One day, a congregation member approached me. "Megumi, we wonder if we can sponsor a youth who might need financial support." They pointed out the person they had in mind. I was surprised and moved by their Christian love and compassion.

This anonymous gift made a difference. Years later, the donor husband was dying. I couldn't maintain his anonymity anymore. I told the recipient who had been given the chance to make this trip possible. He and I hurried to the house of the donors. There, he could say "Thank you". Both men were in tears hugging: a now grown young man and a very vulnerable fragile old gentleman. The young man will never forget this generosity.



Visitation Team members

Visitation ministry reminds me that all those visited were once very active in the life of the church: A great healing touch practitioner, who was so gentle helping people. A social justice advocate who helped Balmoral Garden residents. A very dedicated Sunday School teacher and caregiver to children whenever that was needed. A wonderful pianist/ organist who could play both by ear or sheet music for many church occasions. An engineer, involved in church property maintenance, choir, Bible study, and as a confirmation sponsor. A very gifted and artistic leader for musical events and pageants. A compassionate UCW leader and great craft person for children's and camp ministry. A retired minister, who shared her talent of pottery making. An advocate for youth and young adults, who supported this ministry and even offered her house for a young adults' retreat. A retired lawyer, who used all his talents of music, philanthropy, and faith for stewardship campaigns with his deep theological conviction. A trusted retired minister, who was willing to help and support anything. A beautiful soprano soloist: her solo was a highlight of Easter worship. A cheerful Sunday school piano player. A remarkable church supporter who was always encouraging and donated to the children's ministry. A faithful Sunday worshiper, who enjoyed study groups. A social activist who has amazing spirit and still leads the new way. An agent of God, along with her minister husband, who dedicated her entire life for a ministry of caring, helping and supporting churches. A remarkable centurion educator, who never stops reading.

Their situations have changed and now they are homebound. We cannot remember all their contribution to the church, but God remembers. How can we express our gratitude? That is the reason our visitation ministry thrives. We can visit in person or by phone, bringing prayers, communion and church news along with our gratitude. Our gratitude to the homebound congregation is also gratitude to our generous God, evident in these persons' lives and leading us to our next way, our future. Thanks, God, for leading us to our unknown future holding our hands tightly.

Megumi Matsuo Saunders

*"Everything we do should be a result of our gratitude
for what God has done for us."*

-Lauryn Hill

Clubhouse at Connections Place

This photo of Leo Webster and Kyla Morrison Morgan is from the grand opening of his new Club House at Connections Place. Congregation member Leo volunteers several times a week. Connections Place provides people with mental illness a community centre for gaining respect, hope and opportunity to access the same world of friendship, education and employment as the rest of our community. The centre is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:00pm. It offers unique programming focused on wellness, employment, and education.

For more information, visit <https://connectionsplace.org/>



Kyla and Leo Webster at the opening of Connections Place.

BELOW: Volunteers Sheila Anderson and Wilda Cottam serve bunwiches at the Lunch Club in May.

RIGHT: Lunch Club volunteer Sherri Cooknell was presented with a birthday cake provided by Lynda Page,



United for Old Growth Rally



First Met participants in the Rally for Old Growth on February 25, 2023. Some carried banners and signs made the previous Sunday following worship.



Larry Scott and Don Hodgson Honoured



Larry Scott was installed as Chieftain of the 150th Victoria Highland Games and Celtic Festival by the Victoria Highland Games Association on May 19th, the eve of the Games. The VHGA wanted to recognize his dedication in promoting activities of the Scottish community through the Scottish Newsletter and by his other organizing efforts and involvements in promoting and preserving the Scottish community. He is shown receiving his Chieftain pin from VHGA President Jim Maxwell.



Don Hodgson, a member of our First Met Sanctuary Choir, was one of the first ten 10 inductees to the Manitoba Opera Chorus Hall of Fame! These passionate and dedicated choristers have each performed in 50 or more operas. Don was acknowledged at a concert in Winnipeg on Saturday, February 27th and received a framed photograph of his 50th production at the post-concert reception. Don first performed in Aida in 1975, had his 50th performance in La Bohème in 1998 and most recently performed in Lucia de Lammermoor in 2003. Congratulations Don!

Children and Youth Ministry Update



So much change, but so much we can still count on! Each Sunday the children gather upstairs in their beautiful new classroom for candle-lighting, scripture, prayer and a story. Then science experiments, art, learning, and running and playing in their church home follow.

In February we learned about friendship, anger and loyalty, and what Matthew 5 teaches us. We made hearts for the Lunch Club, and were joined by youth from the Evolving Church service. Later we climbed “mountains” and built tents on Transfiguration Sunday.

In March we walked a purple silk path lined with stones which turned into bread (and rice crackers!), and talked about what it means to let go of fears and worries during Lent, with scripture including Matthew 4. We read *What is God Like*, by Rachel Held Evans, and explored the teachings of the Seven Sacred Laws—as the Tenebrae candles were extinguished, the children lit a new candle as part of a community that encourages the spiritual teachings, based on the Seven Grandfather teachings of First Nations elders. Youth Group met twice—for laser tag then pizza at the church, and later for a games day in the church and garden.

April and May brought a return of our lovely flowering Easter cross, and a party in the garden. We were thrilled to receive a generous financial gift from the UCW—many thanks for this support. We provided Children and Youth programming and childminding for the Resurrect Event, along with Sarah Prestwich, Children, Youth and Families coordinator at Duncan United, and Margaret Krawciw, one of our long-time members, now a young adult! Youth Group was indoors and outdoors at the church, with mystery games and yummy food. Scripture exploration included Luke 14 along with a messy science experiment, and we learned about safety at church including a fire drill.

We look forward to Trinity Sunday and Pride Sunday in June, walking in the Pride parade July 9th, and Camp Pringle Family Camp, June 30th to July 2nd.

Many thanks for your continued support of this active and joyful community. thanks to all for your support of this important ministry.

Micia Kanstrup

Photos from top: The purple silk path; Sunday School activities; decorating the Easter cross.

Evolving Church Team News

The Evolving Church Team has been working on an event to support families of persons who have succumbed to a toxic drug. The “Mothers Stop The Harm” organization has been observing this event over the past several years by having a gathering at the Legislature on August 31st which is International Overdose Awareness Day.

This year, due to their tireless efforts, their exhaustion and the lack of progress in seeing things change, this small group will not be holding this event. The Evolving Church team had planned to join with “Mothers Stop the Harm” to help with this event, but now we are planning to observe this date by holding a gathering in the Chapel here at First Met on August 31st. We see it as a Healing Service, open to the community. So far, Adam Olsen has agreed to be a speaker, and we hope to have special music and candle lighting. We look forward to your support as we continue our planning.

As the end of school year is on the horizon, we have purchased healthy packages of “Freezies” for the children of families in the Hamper program. Jacquie Henderson, one of our team, has been helping pack the hampers on Thursday mornings, and Penny Bond is part of the delivery team. Feedback from families is very positive, as they have expressed their appreciation for these unexpected little gifts. We thank those who have donated money for these purchases, including congregation members and the Spiritual Care and Wellness Team through the Margaret Cameron Fund.

Emily MacDonald, Team Leader



Joan Mickelson and Leslie Biederman preparing Easter treats for children of families receiving food hampers from the North Park Neighbourhood Association's Hamper Program.

First Met Video Project

We want to hear from you about your favourite memories from First Met! We are creating a video about the legacy of First Met, highlighting the people, ministries, and events that have helped build this community of faith over the years. The survey is anonymous, and every question is optional so you may choose to answer every question or choose to leave some blank. Feel free to write as much or as little as you would like; all responses will be incredibly helpful for this project. [Click here](#) for the survey.

We are also looking for people to be filmed for this project! If you are interested, please check "yes" at the end of the survey and enter your contact info. We will then contact you to arrange a time to film. For more information, contact Joan Mason at jhmason@telus.net or Vanessa Whyte at vanessa.whyte@firstmetvictoria.com.



The Summer Newsletter and Mailout

This Summer 2022 Newsletter is one of the last newsletters that will be sent out from First Metropolitan United Church. It will be mailed out in late June to all of those who do not have email along with a summer reflection guide and a prayer card.

The reflection guide was originally developed to accompany the "Emerge: A Metamorphosis Moment" worship series on which we, at First Met, based our worship from April 23 to June 11, 2023. However, we continue to go through transformations throughout our lives. Some of them we initiate ourselves, such as leaving home for the first time to go to college and embarking on a new career or vocation. Others result from external events such as the death of a beloved spouse or parent. Some we undergo with relative ease, while other transformations are hard won after much struggle and heart ache. Some of our transformations are individual, while others, such as the transformation we are undergoing as a congregation, are done as a group. As we embark on the process of amalgamation with Broad View United Church, this guide may help us find our way at this critical juncture.

The prayer card, adapted from "A Prayer for Autumn Days" by Joyce Rupp, also focuses on change and growth and of preparation for seasons that lie beyond.

For those with computers, the newsletter, prayer card, and reflection guide can be downloaded from our website or copies can be picked up at the church on Sundays.

God of the seasons, there is a time for everything; there is a time for birth, a time for dying and a time for rising. We need your grace and courage to enter into the conversion process.

In Summer, the trees are bearing fruit, fulfilling the promise of Spring. We, too, have our moments of fruition.

Like fallen leaves that lay in colored patterns upon the ground in Autumn, our lives have their own particular pattern of growth and surrender, with all their insecurity and risk-taking. Help us to let go.

There is always the dimension of mystery and wonder in our lives, always the need to recognize your power-filled mystery.

There are many gifts of growth within the season of surrender. Harvest must be waited for in faith and hope. Grant us patience when we do not see the blessings.

It is wisdom which enables us to know what needs to be left behind and what needs to be carried into the future. We yearn for insight and vision.

God of graciousness, you believe in us, you enrich us, you entrust us with the freedom to choose life. For all this we are grateful.

As we experience this season, may we allow it to speak to us of necessary change and growth and of preparation for seasons that lie beyond. Grant us an openness to the continuous process of letting go and moving on, which is part of our human condition. We know that you are our faithful companion on this journey. Your presence is blessing enough. Amen.

Adapted from A Prayer for Autumn Days by Sister Joyce Rupp, OSM

*"If you want to fly, you have to give up
what weighs you down."*

- Roy T. Bennett

Flatlanders Walking Group

Members of the Flatlanders Walking Group are enjoying walking together on the first Saturday of the month. Volunteer leaders choose and lead enjoyable walks. In April, Vicky Attwell organized a walk along Bowker Creek. In April, Earl and Alva Jenson led a walk in Fairfield to see the cherry blossoms. On May 6th, Sharron Higgins took us around Turkey Head in Oak Bay and on June 10th we toured the gardens at Government house with Wally and Trudie Lazaruk. Please call the office or check the church website for information on upcoming walks.

Congregation members are invited to join the Flatlanders for a picnic at Beacon Hill Park on July 1 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm to celebrate Canada Day. Bring a picnic lunch, beverages, a folding chair and a sweater or wrap in case of cooler weather. Meet at the watering can off Douglas Street at 1 pm.

For more information, check the First Met website or contact Vicky Attwell at 778-433-6061 or Alva Jenson at 778-265-4198.

Photos from the Turkey Head and Government House walks.



Our Fellowship Hall was transformed into a show venue for the Drag Race All Stars Red Carpet Viewing Party presented by the House of Jimbo on May 27.



A Letter from Rwanda



Linda Hallet, a long-time member of our congregation now living in Nova Scotia, wrote this letter to friends at First Met. Linda was a member of Grandmothers for Africa and organized the collection of nursing supplies for a hospital in Uganda where she has frequently volunteered.

Here at last. What a beautiful country Rwanda is. It was a long and challenging journey with three flights and no sleep for 26 hours. Once I had a good nights sleep, the exploring began.

Today I visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial. Even though I have been told the history many times over the last 28+ years, nothing prepares you. The genocide occurred in April 1994. Over one million Tutsi were massacred in 100 days.

At this beautiful memorial they have buried 250,000 victims. So many others were never found.

I implore you to read the history and to know how the colonizers planted hate where neighbours lived once in harmony. They created two groups. They said if you had 10 cows you were Tutsi; if not, then you were Hutu. Tutsis were believed to be smarter and better. This created such hatred and helped create unthinkable horror, beyond my comprehension. Sadly, this is happening even today in other parts of the world.

What Rwanda has done is remarkable. Together with the international Criminal Court Tribunal, they vowed to prosecute high level organizers of the genocide, bringing the leaders to justice. Many of the leaders who committed the atrocities were arrested and sent to prison. Then the labels of Tutsi and Hutu were removed, so now everyone is Rwandan.

They have created a country of forgiveness, where children are taught at school to be proud to be Rwandan and never forget the reasons for what caused the horrors of 1994.



Continued on p. 17

A Letter from Rwanda continued from p. 16

Prisoners who caused unforgivable horror asked those they caused so much pain to for forgiveness and were made to rebuild the country, one house and one road at a time.

Once a month on a Saturday, every Rwandan works side-by-side with their neighbours to make their community clean and help build a better place. Sometimes they volunteer alongside someone who destroyed their family. This is Umu-ganda day.

Three million orphans were left behind. Some families were completely wiped out. This impacted the surrounding countries with over two million refugees fleeing to Uganda, Tanzania and Congo. Burundi, which had it's own genocide in 1993 of over half a million Tutsis sadly never dealt with this atrocity to bring justice through the international courts.

Every year in the month of April the whole country remembers and honours those gone. Rwanda is now a beautiful oasis.

We live in a world so full of anger and hate right now. Send out loving thoughts, hug your family. Smile at a stranger. Bring kindness into that void. We can change things one act of kindness at a time.

As I shed tears at the memorial, a woman next to me cried too. She lost family in the Holocaust. We hugged and wept together.

Linda Hallet



ABOVE: Some of the victims of the genocide were little children.



Photos of the victims are posted on the memorial plaques.



Campus United distributed more than 500 pounds of potatoes donated by First Met and other United Churches to UVic students. Rising costs of housing and food have led many students to “dumpster-dive” or visit food banks.



Tulips were planted by Larry Scott and the Sunday School in the fall and bloomed in April.



Cake presented to the choir on May 28.

Kyla with Gloria Stott and family; she came to First Met on her birthday.





In Memoriam



Elaine Reedhead
Died March 15, 2023



Dorothy Friedrick
Died May 5, 2023



Gloria Maedel
Died May 10, 2023

“Resurrect” Learning Party sponsored by FM and AbbeyChurch



First Met Spring 2023 Pictures



Photos clockwise from top left: The 'waterfall' created for the "Let Justice Roll Down" Lenten series, Shelagh and Kyla with the Easter cross decorated by the children, Kyla and Joan redid the ribbons on our steps for the day honouring missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, the communion table with butterfly wings for our Eastertide series "Emerge: A metamorphosis Moment".



Parking Options

Week Days

- Balmoral Road
- 949 Balmoral Rd parking lot in spots indicated with a First Met sign. Register vehicle on the list by office

Observe the one hour and two hour parking limits when using street parking on Balmoral, Quadra and North Park Streets.

Sundays

- Balmoral Road - Angle Parking
- 949 Balmoral Rd parking lot in spots indicated with a First Met sign. Register vehicle on the list by office

First Metropolitan
United Church of Canada

*A centre for
spiritual growth and
community engagement*

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