

## **Life Is an Advent Season**

Life is a constant Advent season: we are continually waiting to become, to discover, to complete, to fulfill. Hope, struggle, fear, expectation and fulfillment are all part of our Advent experience.

The world is not as just, not as loving, not as whole as we know it can and should be. But the coming of Christ and his presence among us—as one of us—give us reason to live in hope: that light will shatter the darkness, that we can be liberated from our fears and prejudices, that we are never alone or abandoned.

May this Advent season be a time for bringing hope, transformation and fulfillment into the Advent of our lives.

- *CONNECTIONS, 11-28-93*



## **FONTHILL UNITED CHURCH**

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### ***From the Minister***

The last Sunday of another church year has passed. The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new church year, holding out the promise of new beginnings for Fonthill United Church.

I'm also experiencing some last things: This is the last article that I will write for the Grapevine. Three times a year, this newsletter has helped keep the congregation informed about what's happening in our life together. Last week I conducted my last service at the Shorthills Villa. We have had a small worshipping community and I've always felt appreciated by the people who gathered for it. This Sunday we will hold the last discussion group in the current series. These sessions have been one of the high points of my ministry but it will be the last one. And now we are coming up to my last Christmas in your pulpit. My ministry with you is coming to its conclusion. As I let go a little with each last thing, life feels a little different.

You are, however, already seeing the signs of new beginnings. When I gave notice that I intended to retire, the congregation's task in 2019 was to find your next minister. By the end of October, the Search Committee recommended a call to the Rev Robert Lawson and the congregation approved it unanimously. Robert will begin his ministry in February. Knowing that you have a qualified minister to lead you is making it much easier for me to retire. You should be grateful to have a minister because there is currently a shortage of ministers in the United Church and several strong congregations have not been able to call someone. Congregations tend to do better when ministers stay longer and my hope is that Robert will have a long, prosperous and happy ministry among you.

In the Fall Grapevine I wrote about the United Church disengagement policy for continuing involvement for retired ministers and this bears repetition. It is that retired ministers *do not attend the community of faith in which they have just served for a specific length of time, at least one year, to allow the new minister to be settled into the life of the church.* As I stated in September, I believe this to be a wise policy and I intend to observe it. As I will continue to live in Fonthill I expect to see you around town and in social situations but since I will not be your minister, our relationships may feel different than they do now.

Plans are in the works to mark my retirement with a lunch following worship on January 19 and I hope everyone (who has not gone south for the winter) will come to it. Since I am not moving anywhere it's not a good-bye but it will be an occasion for me to express my gratitude to you for all the ways you have enriched my life and ministry. On the following Sunday, January 26<sup>th</sup> I plan to celebrate communion with you for the last time, and on the Sunday after that, Robert will lead his first service. A new ministry will begin.

Please mark the February 23 date on your calendars. That's the date for the annual meeting and plans are in the works to hold Robert's covenanting service that day. It also happens to be his birthday.

Endings are always followed by new beginnings, and I am confident that the God who has guided and inspired us in these years now past, will guide and inspire you in the years ahead.

*Your minister,  
Garry van Bruchem*

<b><i>Upcoming Christmas Services and Events</i></b>		
Dec. 4	2:00 pm	Lessons, Carols & Cookies Service
Dec. 8	7:00 pm	Community Carol Sing at Fenwick United Church with combined choirs of 4 United churches
Dec. 15	9:30 am	Fonthill Choir Christmas Cantata
<b>Dec. 24</b>	<b>9:00 pm</b>	<b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion at Fonthill – Invite your family and friends to join us in worship at this beautiful candlelight service</b>
Dec. 29	9:30 am	Regular Service at Fonthill United
Jan. 19	9:30 am	Worship Service and Lunch for Garry
Jan. 26	9:30 am	Garry's last Worship Service with Communion
Feb. 2	9:30 am	Worship Service – we welcome Pastor Robert Lawson

***From the Pastoral Care Committee***

It will be four years since the Pastoral Care Committee became an active part of this congregation. I extend thanks to Sheila Laundry and Joan Rigg, and welcome Trudy Pickersgill. Thanks for your ongoing commitment to pastoral care, and to Aileen Grantham for your time with us.

We continue to meet the first Wednesday of each month with Garry to share pastoral concerns. Our time with Garry is coming rapidly to a close and I take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to him for his leadership, openness and care. We will greatly miss his presence at our meetings and the seamless way that we have worked together in the past years. God bless you, Garry!

I also wish, once again, to comment on the general concern and care that goes on weekly in this congregation. Many are visiting on their own and often express this, and also let us know if a visit is needed or ask about anyone who has been absent several Sundays.

We also look forward to getting to know Rev Robert Lawson. It seems he has a passion for pastoral care and is pleased to learn that we have an active Pastoral Care Committee here at Fonthill United!

*Marleene Kretchman, Committee Chair*



And the sun came up and the sky was blue!

I find it difficult to find adequate words to express my appreciation for YOUR involvement in the Christmas House Tour. My appreciation to each and all members who have stepped up to make the 16<sup>th</sup> annual ***“Homes for the Holidays”*** project a success has no bounds. Several of you have not been able to participate in the past and I am deeply appreciative that you stepped forward this year.

Carolyn van der Sluis didn't plan to pass the torch to me, but when we chatted at Hotel Dieu-Shaver, I think I said, “I think I can.” Thank you for your guidance, your resourcefulness, and your encouragement. I am happy to have stood on your shoulders!

Virginia, you held my hand and guided me through nuisances of this project. And you and Heather Jesik prepared the church with all the Christmas charm that our guests love.

Patrice, who so bravely took on an old teacher as opposed to a professional banker, I am very grateful. Indeed, you deposited and tabulated to the eleventh hour.

Dora, and your team of scone bakers, cookie makers, and kitchen staff. You have become a well oiled machine!

Thank you to the many gracious members of the congregation who delivered posters from Grimsby to Port Colborne. And not to forget our creative decorators, generous sponsors, hospitable home owners and resourceful student volunteers - you have all made a difference.

This was not the work of a committee but the work of an entire congregation. I am in awe of every one of you!

How did WE, the congregation, do? How do you like the sound of 452 tickets sold, and over \$2,000 in baked goods sold, with total proceeds of over \$13,000.00?

Thank you, Team, one and all!

*Marian McDonald*

***Year-End Contributions*** – Our books will remain open until Tuesday, January 7, 2020 to accept contributions for 2019. All cheques for 2019 donations must be dated before December 31, 2019.

### ***Finance & Property Report***

The October 31<sup>st</sup> statement highlighted in this communication indicates a year to date deficit in the operating fund of \$20,383. This is \$2,939 lower than the budget and \$1,717 less than the corresponding period last year. While a deficit is still evident and unplanned expenses of roughly \$2,000 were incurred in early November, we are pleased with the current position.

These numbers do not include any monies from the House Tour. As you are aware, the House Tour was a tremendous success and we do expect the contribution towards the operating fund will be reflected in the November statement. While the final number is not yet known, we are confident there will be a significant reduction in the year to date operating fund deficit.

We expect to complete the budget for 2020 by mid-December and by that time we also hope to have a clear estimate for the 2019 deficit. As in the past, we will review surplus funds available in the memorial fund, etc.

Included in this newsletter you will find information received from the United Church Foundation explaining the benefits of making annual contributions to the church by gifting shares of publicly traded companies. There are considerable tax benefits available under this program, particularly where there has been a capital gain in the share value. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to speak to any member of the Finance Committee.

As we move towards year end, our focus will be on the following:

- finalize snow removal contract which has been complicated by insurance company requirements
- determine if a new leak has developed in the roof
- follow up with Extension Council re: new grant to help with the cost of painting the Narthex
- ensure the above mentioned painting is completed as per plans
- complete all 2019 year end reports
- complete 2020 budget
- complete review of duties performed by cleaning staff
- continue to explore all storage and rental options in the building.

Thank you for your continuing support of Fonthill United. Please consider the deficit in the operating fund if you are considering any one-time year-end gifts for tax purposes.

*The Finance Committee*

### **OPERATING FUND FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

Year-to-date ending October 31, 2019

	Actual	Budget
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Contributions	143,441.73	146,667
Fundraising	-178.61	0
UCW	5,500.00	5,000
Church rentals	6,495.00	6,667
Solar Panel Generation	7,649.21	8,750
Interest earned	6,737.69	4,833
Other receipts	1,036.11	560
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>170,681.13</b>	172,477
<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>		
Salaries & Benefits	124,732.29	126,560
Christian Education	471.95	417
Worship & Membership	3,297.73	4,667
General Council Assessment	4,547.25	4,547
Property	37,615.70	38,867
Administration	6,334.03	7,133
M&S Fund Contribution	13,108.30	13,108
Search Committee	494.79	0
Fellowship Committees	462.22	500
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>191,064.26</b>	195,799
<b>NET RECEIPTS / DEFICIT</b>	<b>-20,383.13</b>	<b>-23,322</b>