



The United Church of Canada in Elgin and Portland  
**Our Churches United**  
Fall, Winter & ADVENT News, Views and Notes



November (ADVENT) 2016

**Elgin-Portland  
Pastoral Charge**

Rev. Takouhi  
Demirdjian-Petro

613-272-8977  
revtakouhi@terrautopia.ca

**Pastoral Charge Secretary:**

Norma Cummings  
613 -272-2002

[epuc@kingston.net](mailto:epuc@kingston.net)  
10 Colborne St.  
P.O. Box 251  
Portland, ON  
K0G 1V0

web site:  
[www.eppc-ucc.com](http://www.eppc-ucc.com)

Office Hours:  
Wed.: 9 am-1 pm  
Thurs.: 9 am-3 pm

Sunday Services:  
Portland – 9:15 am  
Elgin – 11:00 am

**IN THIS EDITION**

An Unexpected Gift.... Page 1  
Food for Thought ..... Page 2  
Portland Furnace ..... Page 3  
God's Mission..... Page 4  
Light of Christ..... Page 5  
Stewardship ..... Page 6  
Hello Everyone ..... Page 6  
Nursery at EUC..... Page 7  
PUC Sunday School ... Page 7  
SCPS & EUC..... Page 7  
EUC Auction ..... Page 8  
Musings ..... Page 8  
Merry Christmas ..... Page 9  
PUC Trustees ..... Page 9  
Blessings..... Page 10



**Rev. Takouhi's Reflection**

*Some think holding on makes us strong, sometimes it's letting go!*

**An Unexpected Gift**

Dear Elgin-Portland Family,

Have you ever received a gift that you never forgot about? I have... When I was about nine or ten years old, around Christmas 1976 or 1977, in Beirut, my parents bought me a small electric piano, so that it can help me start taking piano lessons. They could not afford the full-size piano, and of course there was no place in a one-bedroom apartment where nine individuals lived – Yes, we were a family of nine in a one-bedroom and one-bathroom apartment.

I loved music and I still do, and wanted to learn how to play the piano. Even though the dream of pursuing piano lessons could not flourish for more than six months, because of snipers on the way to the closest conservatory, this gift has been an unforgettable gift, because I knew my parents somehow created abundance out of the scarcity of our lives. This unexpected gift not only gave me hope for a better future, but it also taught me that hard times cannot hold us down.

Today, I am reminded of this gift in time, because I believe that Advent is an intentional time for us to think of God's Future offered to the world. An alternative future that ONLY God can offer.

This year, Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge's Advent Focus is: *Advent: The True Gift that draws us into God's Future...*

This year, when you hear about *HOPE*, on the very First Sunday of Advent, remember that *HOPE* is the password for God's Future. On the Second Sunday of Advent when you hear about *PEACE* remember that God's *PEACE* surpasses all understanding. On the Third Sunday, when you hear about *JOY* know that God's *PEACE* is the foundation of *ALL JOY*. On the fourth Sunday when you hear about *Love* may you be aware that the *Love* of God, holds *HOPE*, *PEACE* and *JOY* within and is revealed to the world, as an unexpected gift that we never imagined would be possible, because of the scarcity of the status quo, just like when I was a young girl in Beirut.

This year, I truly pray that you make time to participate in a community of Faith, Hope and Love, no matter where you are found and unwrap the **Unexpected Gift** of God that is offered to you freely always, not just once a year, at Christmas

time. If you are in this neck of the woods, join us to unwrap God's Gift with us through different events – check out the calendar on our website – [www.eppc-ucc.com](http://www.eppc-ucc.com) – you will be glad you did.

As for now, I would love to leave you with one of my poems, found in my recently published book of poetry, photography and prayers and invite you to be open to accept, embrace and share the True Gift of Christmas in its season and ALWAYS.

**Unexpectedly**

*Unexpectedly you came to us  
God of Love in human form.  
Understanding our shortfalls and strife  
You hold us in Love beyond our regard.*

*Hope is your message  
Peace is your Song  
Joy is the result  
Of your Abundant Love.*

*Unexpectedly wake us up  
God of Love beyond our thoughts.  
May Your Message be our Song  
Your Vision be Our Guide*

*Unexpectedly let us Love  
Through the Ceaseless Love of God'. Amen*



**Some Food for Thought!**

Imagine a Bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. It carries no balance from day to day. Every evening it deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every cent !!! Each of us has such a bank. It is called Time. Every morning we start off with 86,400 seconds; every night the balance is depleted, written off, we have lost forever whatever we failed to invest to good purpose. Each day has a new, full balance; each night it is all gone. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours, there is no going back, there is no drawing against tomorrow. You must live in the present, on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness, and success. Remember, time waits for no one. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift.....that is why it is called the present!

## **New Furnace Fundraising for Portland United**

As many of you know the church's largest single expense line after our Pastoral Charge is Energy at about \$12,000/year of which about \$10,000 is for climate control.

For the last few months, the property group under D. Bond has been looking at this cost with the aim of reducing it. They have looked at extra insulation, solar to replace the energy for lighting and oil and propane as alternates for climate control.

The Cost benefit of alternate forms of heating so outweighs the other projects it rose to the top of the project list.

Most of you are aware that a short number of years ago we converted the old electric furnace to a newer and more efficient model and added the heat pump. The heat pump in particular has been very efficient especially for cooling the sanctuary during the summer and heating the building during the spring and fall when the temperature is cool, not cold. Unfortunately when the temperature becomes cold the heat pump becomes less effective and we revert to an electric furnace. We all know what has happened to our electric bills over the last few years.

In fact over the past 6 years if we had been heating with propane rather than electric it is estimated we would have saved over \$20,000 and run in the black for 3 of the 6 years instead of in the red for all 6 years. The three parts of the project explored were, convert the electric furnace to propane, move the heat pump to the back of the building where it is cooler, and add a supplemental heat to the kitchen area.

On Tuesday night Council approved a conversion of our electric furnace to propane, and to maintain the electric heat pump because it will now be primarily a cooling device but, to move it to the back of the building. The cost for this will be about \$9,000 and it can be completed before the New Year.

To do this conversion we need the congregation's financial support relatively quickly as we would like to have our finances in place to make the conversion prior to the cold weather arriving.

If one person bears the cost it is a \$9,000 donation; however, if each of us makes a special donation of \$150 in the next 3 weeks the project is covered. Please review your position and help the church carry on missions of caring rather than of heating.



*God's Mission all Around Us!*

Portland United Church is a small but vibrant community of faith situated about half way between Kingston and Ottawa.

The congregation numbers between 50 and 100 depending on the time of year and the activities which are being supported. It meets in a 125 yr old, well maintained structure or, for those who are unable to get out, on You Tube, as each service is broadcast.

If the saying "activity breeds activity" is true then the people of Portland United Church are truly blessed

Yes they do support Mission and Service with money totaling over \$12,000 per yr. In this past year their international support rose to over \$20,000 as demand to help refugees find a new home came in as well as other requests.

Yes, in the past year, they supported local charities such as DIG, Food bank and sending children to Camp with cash of over \$12,000. This year they have increased their local support with a fresh mission to help the youth of the community by donating \$3,000 to the libraries and schools of the area.

But they also spend time, not only supporting the above efforts but, developing a strong community of faith. To do this they believe you must support the community not only with money but also with time.

Would you believe that such a small congregation regularly has 15 members of the choir on Sunday? They also have 9 members of the Bell Choir known as the Peelers. Without exaggerating these groups spend over 1600 volunteer hrs preparing each year to help create and support this dynamic community.

Each service is supported by volunteers who decorate, provide technical support, read lessons and Mission and Service information bulletins, greet all comers, provide youth leadership and prepare coffee and count the givings. During special services such as communion additional volunteers step forward or are conscripted to perform the necessary duties

The volunteers are not limited to the adults of the congregation as the youth often take on the above duties and occasionally lead the services. The youth and their leadership are also part of the outreach efforts of the church and during a recent multi week Blast Off series of lessons the youth group attracted young people from the broader community to join in the fun and learning.

As with all communities there are good and bad times but the vibrant Sharing and Caring group consisting of 14 individuals try to visit with all members of the congregation at least twice a year. They use this opportunity to visit, identify looming issues with members, and to distribute the Newsletter, also produced and contributed to by volunteers.

Volunteers also send friendship cards when individuals are ill or in need of a friendly note.

In the event of a death not only are full services provided as one would expect, including a cemetery, yes run by volunteers, but in addition volunteers also acknowledge monetary donations to the memorial fund with a hand written thank-you card.

The community is supported by a full council which meets 6 times a year to help guide and formalize the direction the congregation is taking.

The trustees meet to ensure the assets of the congregation are protected and utilized in a judicious fashion.

The efforts of this community of faith are not all focused on themselves but are also active in helping to improve the quality of life in Rideau Lakes Township.

Each month a community lunch is put on. The volunteers who co ordinate , prepare and serve this luncheon take great pride in the fact that not only do they provide an essential service but to date the contributions collected by this 'Pay by Donation', lunch ,fund the Dental issues group which helps the Country Roads Community Health Center provide dental care to those in need .

The UCW not only supports the congregation's activities but also serves as an outreach arm. At a recent pie making event not only did 20+ members of the congregation come out to help make pies but 5 members of the community were enticed to join in the fun. I am told each of these was approached to join the Bell Choir.

The congregation also gets together occasionally for social events such as trips to plays etc., yes, all coordinated by volunteers.

Even the formal church structure, such as presbytery is supported and lead by members of this community.

To the best of my knowledge no one has ever tried to estimate the # of hrs or the value of the volunteer time but it is not difficult to imagine 4 – 5,000 volunteer hrs over the course of a year. From a small community this is truly a model for the broader church.

And as Rev Takouhi often says "it is not because we do not have alternatives for our time "that Members of PUC decide to participate in the many activities of this vibrant community of faith.

So if you see a member of this community of faith in Eastern Ontario do not be afraid to give them a smile , a hug , a hand shake or a pat on the back as they are bound to be one of the volunteers who are creating this dynamic Community called Portland United Church.

**Duncan Pickard, PUC**



## ***Sharing the Light of Christ***

**6:30 pm**

**Sunday, November 27, 2016**

**ELGIN & AREA RESIDENTS ARE INVITED TO AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION**

**Christmas Carols  
and the telling of the Christmas Story**

***Bring your bells and luminaries!  
We begin at 6:30 pm and walk/ride from  
one location to the next.***

***We will celebrate in order:***

***St. Columbanus Church  
Bethel Tabernacle  
Elgin United Church  
Red Brick School  
Elgin Municipal Complex***

***Hot chocolate & cookies will be served  
Everyone is welcome***

***Please bring your own flashlight***

***Transportation will be available via  
school bus or you are welcome to walk***

***Non-perishable items or cash  
donations for the Food Bank would be  
most appreciated and can be dropped  
off at Bethel Tabernacle during the  
evening.***



## *A Stewardship Message*

I don't know about you, but this is the time of the year when the mail box seems to be full of requests for money from just about every charity in the country. Guilt mounts as I wrestle with which groups I should support this year and what to do responsibly with all the free gifts that come in envelopes of every size and description. It really has become almost the initial ritual in the lead up to Christmas and the year end. One "need" that I never hear from, but always support is my church. The church seldom asks me for donations, but it supports so many worthwhile ministries that I have no problem re-examining what I give and how I can live my faith more fully this year.

This year is a little different. This year I am the asker on behalf of my church. There is some real concern that we won't reach our budget goal this year. In itself that would not be a huge problem, there are always some reserve funds tucked away for a rainy day. But this year, we are down to our last reserves. If we must dig into those reserves we will not be able to build them up again in time to rescue us from the same fate next year. And that is a slippery slope none of us wants to ride. There are a number of reasons we are in this situation. One of them is the increasing cost of utilities that is affecting every family. Hydro is running about \$480 a month for the church building, that's a \$50 increase from last year. Numbers of people giving are down a bit, and we have not been able to generate the amount of fundraising activities of previous

years – we are all getting a little older and a little less able.

My hope is that as you are doing your own year-end evaluations, you will see the value of the work the church family does, here in Elgin, in the region and in the world and that you will consider the church first when you are making those financial decisions. If charity begins at home, please consider a special gift to your church family in the weeks ahead so that the witness of faith in this community grows stronger and our light shines out into the world.

A Stewardship Enthusiast  
Rev. Kathy

## **Hello Everyone**

After prayerful consideration and discussions – we have concluded that it will be best to have two services on December 11, as usual.

Yes, I will be away at the Trinity United Church in Smiths Falls, as their guest speaker (This is not a pulpit exchange), but I will be around to help organize whatever is needed for both services, the weeks ahead.

So, PUC will be led by the Sunday School teachers and Kids and EUC will have a Caroling Sunday Service.

They will all be joyous and AWESOME...

White Gifts for the Food Bank will be received at both church services.

So, mark your calendars...

December 11- White Gifts Sunday

PUC @ 9:15 a.m.

EUC @ 11:00 a.m.

Blessings to you all – Can't wait to see you in a few weeks...Hugs...Rev. T.





The Elgin and District Cooperative Nursery School has called EUC home for many years, making good use of surplus space for a classroom and a recreation area.

A parent board manages the program, addressing young families' desire for early childhood education. We are currently working with the board to consider the potential for expansion to include additional services.

This school is an asset to our community and a valued tenant of Elgin United.

For further information about this program - [ElginNurserySchool.weebly.com](http://ElginNurserySchool.weebly.com) & [edcns@hotmail.com](mailto:edcns@hotmail.com)

Jim Earl  
EUC/EDCNS Liaison



The Portland Sunday School "Blasted Off" to a great start this fall with a Vacation Bible School led by Cathy Ryan and a vibrant group of volunteers. Thank you so much to everyone involved, and to the children and youth for making this such a great worship and learning experience for all.

As we approach Christmas, the Sunday School will again be distributing Christmas gift bags to fill with socks, mittens, hygiene essentials, and small treats for the Food Bank's Christmas hampers.

They will be labelled according to gender / age, and can be placed under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary up until December 11th. This will also be White Gift Sunday, an opportunity to bring in food items to help stock the shelves at the Portland Food Bank.

December 11th will also be a service of carols, drama and readings led by the Sunday School, with a soup and sandwich luncheon to follow. The Sunday School will provide the soup, and we ask that the congregation bring sandwiches or desserts to share as you are able ... but please plan to attend regardless, as there is always plenty to share!

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support as we continue to nurture the children and youth of our congregation. From the Sunday School to you, we pray for blessings of peace this Advent Season and always.

Pauline French  
Portland United Sunday School



### Elgin United & South Crosby Public

On Friday, December 2, 2016 several students of South Crosby Public School will assemble at Elgin United along with Rev. Takouhi, Sandra Smith and other volunteers to pack "goodie bags" for the Elgin Food Bank.

This has become a welcome tradition that both students and helpers look forward to each year.

They are excited to spend time together outside of the classroom, laughing and singing Christmas Carols while doing their part to help the less fortunate in our community.



*“...able alright now, bring out lot number 29, and what am I bid for it..”*

Auctioneer Brian Blowes will be plying his talent at the fundraising auction for Elgin United Church at the Lions Hall on November 22, 2016.

Quality items including a good selection of antiques will be up for bid. A great opportunity to sell possessions you no longer need and/or pick up a few new treasures.

You receive 80% of the selling price with a 20% commission going to Elgin United.

Looking forward to seeing you and your wallet on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

---

**...musings of a muddled mind...**

*Several people have asked me to repeat a story about Christmas and the reason for the season I wrote some time ago. So here is a reprint from way back in 2011. Enjoy.*

**.....’tis the season, or what’s the reason?**

The black and orange of Halloween has again been stored away, poppies adorn the lapels and jackets of those who remember and are remembering, Costco and Walmart have replaced the ordinary with all that is bright, shiny and banglely, and mall sound systems blare canned versions of Jingle Bells and White Christmas as we gear up for the Christmas Season.

A young mother herds her troop of three through the aisles, picking this, putting that back, separating the pushing and shoving, and shushing the yelling, her coat askew off one shoulder and her hair not exactly as neat as when they left the house. Age lines may even be starting to appear.

I pick up the few things I’m after and leave. As I get on the elevator, others already aboard step back to make room, and who should struggle in after me but the young mother, packages in arms, all three charges in tow. The elevator door closes and we start our

descent, when, with a detectable level of frustration and to know one in particular, the young mother muttered, “whomever started Christmas should be shot!”

Then, a voice at the back of the elevator, “we already crucified him”. Silence the rest of the ride.

What a statement! What a comment! What a message! How easy it is to become seized with the hype, to focus on the tinsel pleasures, to search for that perfect present. We have to buy the perfect hors d’ouvres, use the perfect place settings, and serve the perfect selection of wines as we host the perfect party for the perfect guests.

Now I’m really not a curmudgeon, I see nothing wrong with celebrating and enjoying good times with neighbours, friends, and relatives. The issue as I see it is the reason for the celebration. Are we using Christmas as the excuse for our own extravagance and over-indulgence? Do we justify these actions by telling ourselves, “Didn’t the three wise men give baby Jesus expensive gifts? We’re just keeping up the tradition. After all, it’s in the bible!”

Perhaps, but check the motive. Is your giving focused on the recipient or the giver? Are you concerned with the well-being of others, or a



tax receipt? Is your entertaining sharing with the less fortunate, or confirming your social status?

This little article is less than cerebral, certainly not Pulitzer material. It is simply commentary coupled with a two part question. Yours and yours alone to answer as you see fit.

What is Christmas, and does your Christmas turn on and off with the coloured lights?

Other views are welcome.  
Clinton Halladay

## **Christmas**

### **Merry Christmas!**

The Christmas season—or the 12 days of Christmas—starts on Christmas day (December 25) and ends on January 5, the eve of Epiphany, when we celebrate the Magi's visit.

Christmas, in many ways, is about receiving and sharing. But it's not really about receiving and sharing new, exciting, and fun stuff. Christmas is about receiving the amazing news that God is with us. It's about sharing the hope, peace, joy, and love of this good news to the world around us as best we can.

Christmas is a reminder that because God is with us, we can expect a better world. Whatever we may be going through, there is cause for hope.

- What is your understanding of Christmas?
- In a world that can be both wonderful and terrifying, how will you share the gifts of Christmas with others?

*“Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.... You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:10–12)*

Stay in touch with your United Church year round. Check out our Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge web site [www.eppc-ucc.com](http://www.eppc-ucc.com) to follow what is happening, learn more of our history, enjoy the worship services video or make a donation.

*Excerpt from the United Church Web Site plus editor's comments.*



### **News from the Trustees of Portland United**

The Portland Trustees are happy to share, that as a result of generous donations made this past year to the Memorial account, the Portland United Church Council has decided to move \$4,000 to the Long Term Fund.

In addition, the Trustees have moved that Council once again this year withdraw \$7,000 from the Long Term Fund effective anytime after January 1st, 2017.

\$4,000 of this money is to be used in the Church's General Account and the other \$3,000 is to be used toward Youth initiatives in the North Leeds area.

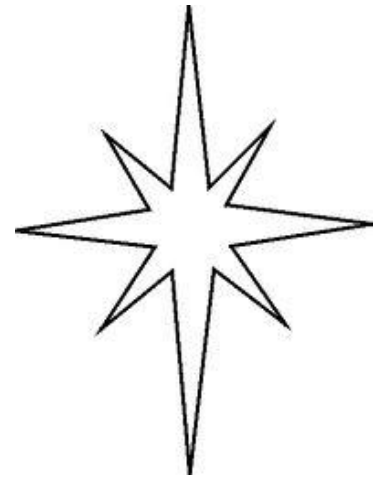
Anyone wishing to make a donation to the Long Term Fund will receive a Charitable Donation receipt. Beginning in 2017, there will be a specific spot on weekly envelopes to identify Givings to the Long Term Fund.

On behalf of the Trustees, many thanks for giving of your time, finances and energy to the Glory of the newborn King.

Merry Christmas,

Will French on behalf of the Portland United Church Trustees

*Jesus*



is the

*Reason*



for the

*Season*

*May you experience the true meaning of Christmas at this time  
and throughout the coming year. Blessings to you, your family and friends.*

*Joyeuse Noel, Feliz Navidad, Merry Christmas.*