



The United Church of Canada in Elgin and Portland
Our Churches United
Summer News, Views and Notes



June 2016

**Elgin-Portland
Pastoral Charge**

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Wed.: 9 am-1 pm

Thurs.: 9 am-3 pm

Sunday Services:

Portland – 9:15am

Elgin – 11:00 am

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Rev. Takouhi's Reflection

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

Do We Dare to Let Go?

May 15, 2016 I was on my way to Atlanta, GA for the annual Festival of Homiletics, which is an ever nourishing and rejuvenating week-long gathering of ministers and lay leaders of Faith Communities that I look forward to every single year.

On my way there, I was wearing a necklace that was given to me a while ago by a friend that I rarely wear. By the time I arrived in Atlanta, the necklace caused me to develop a skin rash of some sort – as my skin is very sensitive. I told my husband that I am not sure if I want to get rid of it, as I like it so much, even though it is an inexpensive necklace. I did not wear it for the time I was there and my skin recovered.

On my way back home, I wore it, but this time, I put it around my shirt's collar to protect my skin. It worked - until I arrived in Toronto. I was walking from one terminal to the other and my purse's shoulder strap got all mixed up with the necklace and broke it into many pieces. I collected as much as possible and sadly put it in the garbage.

I arrived home, safe and sound and thanked God for a safe arrival as my flight was delayed over four hours.

The next morning, I got up and went to my home office and saw an envelope waiting for me from my sister Ruth in Toronto. It was a small envelope with an awkward look, with hills and valleys. With wonder and excitement, I opened and there it was -a beautiful, hand-made necklace, more beautiful than the one I had, sent as a gift.

I had an AHA moment... Often we want to hold on to what is given to us so dearly, even if it is hurting us, as letting go is very hard to do; without realizing that other gifts are waiting to be discovered.

Beloved, we are going through change every moment of our personal life - religious, political, and much more. Are we ready to let go of what is not working anymore and find new ways of living?

This year the Bay of Quinte's Conference Annual Meeting reminded us of this – "Do We Dare?"

Are we willing to get out of the box that we have created over many centuries and breathe in new life and offer life to all? Are we ready to let go of our control and let God guide our path?

What do you need to let go so that you live FULLY for God's Mission and Service?

Jesus lived so close to the heart of God that he became the Word made Flesh... You and I are called to live in such a way that God's Word lives in us and through us...

Do YOU Dare to Let Go?

It is so worth it, as the new necklace is so much prettier and less irritating than the one I had before... Thanks be to God for all the NEW Gifts that are waiting for us to unwrap and discover.

☺



**The Elgin-Portland
Pastoral Charge is a very
busy, involved and
dynamic community.**

**Some upcoming events
are listed on the scroll to
the right.**

**For a full slate of plans,
goings-on and
inspiration check out our
web site:**

www.eppc-ucc.com

Office phone: 613-272-2002

**A couple of
happenings to note:**

June 19 – Father's Day
Fish Fry @ 5 pm – EUC

June 21 – Four Rivers
Presbytery Plenary &
Covenanting Service at
11 am – PUC (Rev. Takouhi
installed as Chair)

June 26 – EPPC Annual
Celebration & picnic at
Hanna Park Portland 11 am

Stay Tuned – 7th Annual
Vacation Bible School

. . . thoughts of the Official Board Chair



When I first started going to church, after a 20 year hiatus, I started reading a book by Philip Yancey titled, “What’s So Amazing About Grace?”.

I recently picked it up again. I find that each time I read any spiritual text, from the Bible, to the Spirituality of Imperfection, to the Steps We Took, to this particular book I listed, and of course many, many others, it’s like a new lesson every time.

We’re constantly moving, hopefully forward albeit that’s not humanly possible all the time. If we open the door of open-mindedness even a bit, then our outlook on life and our relationship with our God will not be stagnant and we can receive new lessons (and remember old ones).

Anyone else grow up thinking of God having the ultimate set of scales, and believing yourself to not be on the good side?

I don’t fault any Sunday School teacher or my parents, it’s just the way my childhood and teenage mind interpreted things. I then took these interpretations into my adult life. Perhaps more time spent in the Gospels, on my part, would have been beneficial.

As a child, I often heard adults talking about the “new math” being taught at school. Well, there’s a new math in the Gospels and it’s called Grace!

So that’s what I’ve been reading about lately.

Grace – There is nothing we can do to make God love us more.

Grace - There is nothing we can do to make God love us less.

In fact lots of persons listed in both the New and the Old Testaments weren’t the most savoury and yet God loved them and even chose them as leaders. Jacob, David, Paul, Peter – they all had lots of warts in their characters. We all do. I may deserve the opposite of grace, and so what do I get – an invitation to take my place at the table in God’s family!

The physical world might run on the idea of un-grace, that it all depends on what we do, that we need to score the game winning goal. This isn’t how it works in God’s world. It’s Jesus performance that made the difference. He earned God’s acceptance for everyone. We merely need follow Him.

The author of “What’s So Amazing About Grace” then asks, which scene most resembles my spiritual life?

And, I’ve only re-read Part I of the book so far, this is so cool !

Mark Bee

Chair, Official Board, EPPC

Portland Mission Work

Mission

A growing caring Christian community working together, striving to make a difference by God's grace.

Vision

Is a growing and caring Christian community that works together striving to offer people a welcoming space and resources to explore their faith, enrich their lives and empower themselves by God's grace and inclusive love

When comparing these two statements, that guide the Portland United Church(PUC) longer term, with how we operate in the day to day world, it would appear that we ,as a community, are striving to fulfill the Mission and the Vision as laid out by both our actions (Volunteer Time) and dollars (put your money where your mouth is).

PUC does mission work in three major areas **the wider world, the local world** and **congregational renewal**.

Last Year the **wider world missions** included activities to support **Mission and Service** (\$10,000) El Salvador, **Syrian Refugees** (\$8,000) and who can forget the Heifer campaign /Cuban music (\$2100). In total Last Year Portland United Church supported the world wide missions with \$20,000. This year we continue with strong support of the Mission and Service Fund.

Local mission activities are anchored by the **Community Lunch** each month which not only provides a pay by donation lunch for all, it attracts new members to our community and helps The **Dental Issue Group** aid individuals improve their health through dental care. We also impact the local community by supporting the **Food Bank, Cases of Caring, Mission Works** fund and of course the **Benevolent Fund**. This year in addition to these ongoing activities, an additional sponsorship has been started. It is aimed at developing the talents and experiences of the **youth in the community**. A \$1,000 cheque is being given to each of; the Rideau District High School in support of the music department band, the Rideau Centennial Elementary school in support of programs, and the Rideau Lakes Public Library in support of the youth programs at the Elgin and Portland branches. The money for this new program comes directly from our Long Term Investment Fund. Last year the total dollar support of the local missions was \$11,000 and many hours of volunteer time. This year with existing activities and the addition of the **Local Youth Support program** we are again impacting the lives of those around us locally in a manner consistent with the Vision of our church.

If there is a cloud on the horizon, it is in the area of **congregational renewal**. This renewal takes place each Sunday as we gather together spending time building a community of faith, supporting those of us who are hurting and celebrating our members' accomplishments and activities. We cannot under estimate the impact of being able to do this in a manner free of financial worry. Nor can we under estimate how financial worry can turn us from a group focused on spreading God's influence, both locally and in the Wider World, into an inwardly focused group.

Last Year for the first time in many years the church's operating fund increased and we were able to support our Local and Wider World missions with both time and money to an unprecedented level. Encouraged by this success, Council decided, if possible, to forgo support from the Long Term Fund for general operating expenses in 2016. For this endeavor to be successful our giving's needed to increase by 5% and Fundraising needed to remain flat. To date our giving's are roughly flat and fundraising is down by 80 % (\$2,600 in the first 5 months) compared to LY.

Although our operating cash has been depleted we are still in a position to treat the reduced revenue as an early warning signal.

Can we take steps to ensure our congregational renewal takes place without financial worries and our community remains free to search out ways to spread Gods grace? Of Course!!

The year is only half done, if each of us reviews our personnel commitment and finds an additional way to support (effort or money) the mission of congregational renewal, the community of PUC will not only grow but will continue to be in a position to generously impact our local community and the wider World.

**By God's Grace
Duncan Pickard, PUC**



Elgin Days - Elgin UNited

Elgin Days is a fun day of celebration for our little village: yard sales, music, a parade, history, fellowship and did I mention food throughout the village and a FireFighters chicken barbecue.

On July 9, 2016 Elgin United will throw open the Church doors to welcome visitors and showcase many of the ministries which we support or are involved.

Our plans include:

- MasoniChip – Child Identification Program;
- Our various ministries: DIG, Clothing Coop, Food Bank, etc;
- A bake sake
- Cold water refreshment
- Dancing Circle explanation by Pam Hart of our Conference

The Elgin and District Cooperative Nursery School, which is housed in Elgin United, is also planning an information day and toy sale.

At 7 pm all are invited to the Elgin Days Celebration Worship Service hosted in our Sanctuary and lead by Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro, Minister at Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge.



Looking Forward with Reflection

For Pentecost Sunday Rev. Takouhi requested the Council Chairs to share their "Vision" for the church. Both Katy Gibson, PUC and Clinton Halladay, EUC spoke without scripts; however, the following is a close "recollection" of their respective addresses.

Katy's address will appear in our next issue. Please stay tuned and engaged.

Elgin Council Chair – Clinton Halladay

If this was the Miss Universe or Miss America Pageant, I guess this is where I'd say: "well Rev. Takouhi, I hope for World Peace and the elimination of child poverty". Pretty lofty goals for sure, but achievable and realistic, not really except for perhaps a sound bite.

Having a vision is important, but to have a meaningful vision, one must also have reflection. Look around this sanctuary, see the pulpit and communion ware donated by Merton and Evelyn Campbell and family, the entry door by Earl McFadden, the foyer table carved by Sam Hutchings and on and on.

Wait, is that Rev. House or Rev. Harry Seeley delivering their sermon; and back there, before the Fellowship room, do you see Edgar Connell and Murray Shanks teaching Sunday School; what, is that a trumpet, it is, it's Allen Earl playing a piece, and listen, hear the choir, Clifford Smith and Lester Halladay and others offering an anthem under the direction of Irene Guthrie.

These and many others are the forefathers of Elgin United Church, but they were more than Sunday Sermon

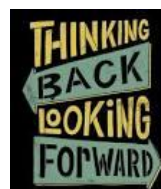
Sitters, they lived their faith in the sanctuary and in the community – their church was the community and their community was the church. They knew their neighbours whether next door or a couple of concessions over. Their friends weren't Facebook likes, they were real people, just like them with their own troubles and pleasures, joys and sorrows. Elgin United has a rich heritage and a true Christian legacy.

Now the demographics are different today, but that's what I see for Elgin United Church, church-community; community – church. We have a terrific journey ahead of us, all the way from yesterday to tomorrow, and I want to be able to say to my son, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren and their children, I have a gift for you. I've never seen it, and I don't know anything about it, but it is yours, it is the future.

Our Pastoral Charge tag line is Growing, Caring, Making a difference and Elgin United's Mission Statement says "a community of caring, compassionate individuals coming together to welcome all God's children". That's what I see for Elgin United, to be the nucleus of the community.

There is an old adage about trees and nuts that can be taken in two different ways. One is "little acorns from giant oak trees fall" the other is "giant oaks from little acorns grow". I want us to be the second little acorn.

Thank you
Clinton Halladay
Chair, Elgin United Church Council



The Irwin Story

From an interview with Peggy Bond
February 2016

Twelve years ago, (2004) Portland United church had lost both our minister, Don McLean had moved on to Ottawa, and our pianist/organist as Janet McKeage had also left. On the same Sunday, PUC greeted Rev. David Spivey as our minister while we went about searching for a permanent replacement, and David Irwin took over the piano and organ benches. Along with David Irwin came a vivacious, red-headed wife, Carol and the two set about to give immeasurably of their time and talents to the church.

David had just recently retired as a school principal and was in the process of building their retirement home on Lower Beverley Lake, just north of Lyndhurst. It just happened to be about the only time in his life when he wasn't playing somewhere. Between Jan Haskin and Joan Kelly he was recruited. He agreed it would be for one year. That one year turned into twelve.

But David gave much more to PUC than just his considerable talents at the various keyboards and directing the choir.

One of the first things he remembers doing is leading a choral workshop for choir members of both Elgin and Portland. It was there he met Jim Earl. Thus began a series of combined choir efforts, both Easter and Christmas cantatas, especially after Margaret Ross took over the music in Elgin. Margaret would accompany and Dave could direct.

Early on he also did a workshop with the Sunday School students during a fun day. Dave would story tell, teach songs and introduce the students to various rhythm instruments.

Over the years, David organized and directed many cantatas, many fundraising concerts and recited a good many Robert Service poems with great inflection. He told many fantastic children's stories especially when the combined choirs led the worship service, the Sundays after both Easter and Christmas. David blew the horn for Taps and Reveille at a good number of Remembrance services each year. He even directed the bell ringers for a short time. He contributed his considerable talents as a singer on many occasions, sometimes as a soloist, sometimes as a duet with Rasa.

David also directed the community choir in Westport several times for the annual Candlelight Service which is presented at the beginning of Advent each year. He is presently helping William French at RDHS with the music program there, especially the stage band.

He is also excellent in the kitchen donating his famous cinnamon buns to many UCW bake sales and his notable T-biscuits to the UCW St. Paddy's dinners. Painting has been a more recent undertaking. Some of those watercolours were donated to silent auctions.

When Dave started with PUC, Fred Sneyd served as organist and choir director during the summer months. That gave Dave and Carol the summers free to enjoy their lake front property, the blended family and grandchildren's visits. When Fred had his own health

issues, Dave agreed to fill the vacancy left behind.

Through the years, Carol has not been a person to just sit and watch all this. She is deeply involved in PUC. As well as adding her voice weekly to the choir, she has ventured forth in so many ways.

As More Voices was introduced to PUC, Carol and Rasa became the rhythm section, with drums and tambourines etc. She co-chaired Outreach with Brontie Smith and Helen Smith (no relation). They cleaned the church regularly to save the church the cost of a caretaker when funds were very scarce. She organized many silent auctions, church yard sales, pot luck suppers with games nights, Oktoberfest dinners, musical evenings, afternoon teas, soup cafes, and even helped Peggy Bond with the Share the Shedding fifty/fifty draw.

When Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley accepted the call to Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge, Carol rounded up a group of volunteers and in conjunction with the Elgin folk, proceeded to rejuvenate the manse.

Carol's energy and enthusiasm is outstanding.

When I asked Dave and Carol to recall some of the fondest memories, there were many tales. However I have recorded some of them.

From Dave:

- A duet sung by Ralph and Vicky Zwiers in the first cantata "Alive".
- The anxiety of adding those rhythm instruments to the church services figuring that some of the older members would not approve but finding out that they were the people who missed it when they were not played.

- many solos and duets with Rasa.
- Watching Brian and Claire French grow up and contribute their talents on piano and flute.
- David is especially fond of the memory of the anonymous gift of the grand piano. He doesn't think he has ever enjoyed playing a piano so much as on that instrument. He also knows the same donor has made several similar donations elsewhere.
- Then there is Captain Jack Sparrow. One day his Golden Retriever, Teddy, brought home, in his mouth, an injured sparrow. The bird had a broken wing. David tended the injured bird. On that lay Sunday after Easter, David brought the bird, in a cage to church and it became the subject of his children's story. The children were able touch and hold the bird. Later that week David released the bird and it flew. A modern true resurrection story.
- Of Yvonne Caldwell giving David a kiss on his bald head on the way out from her pew.
- Of Elsie Goodman tickling the high end keys on the way out of church.
- Of the valley accents of some of the choir members changing "Our souls are fed..." to "arseholes are fed...".
- They found PUC as a welcoming, inclusive church where folks from many various backgrounds feel comfortable and at home.
- Rev. Takouhi with her ministry of love is a gift.

Carols adds some more fond memories.

- Her first impression was of happy smiling faces welcoming her to the church and the choir.
- She felt a warm welcome from an embracing and caring congregation and

has tried to pay that forward for any newcomers.

- She remembers fondly, Sylvia French, who mother-hen like, brought Carol to the soprano section and sang beside her.

- The entire choir loft was a buzz, an incredibly welcoming and spirited group. They were excited to have Dave and even more so that he had a wife who sang.

- Brontie stating that the church had a vacancy for an Outreach chair and Carol asking "What is involved in Outreach?" That little question led to 7 years of service. There were trips to Chateau Montebello, Templeton's Pancake House, Ottawa Tulip festival, spa sessions and more.

- Make Poverty History Coalition meetings led to community luncheons (for the fellowship) and any profits to go to D.I.G. (Dental Issues Group).

- Many, many projects and occasions with the theme in mind "If we aren't having fun, we're not doing it."

- Oktoberfest with Gisela giving German lessons, helping with signs for each dish and decorating The Gathering Place in true Bavarian blue & white colours and lots of beer steins, but no full bodied beer, just some near beer.

- The time the salt and sugar containers were mixed and all the sugar bowls contained salt. Then the face Les Schwartz made as he tasted his coffee.

- Brontie taking lots of notes for Outreach reminders then showing up with her peanut butter or bologna sandwich and an apple.

- Hours spent painting the manse for Rev. Rodney's arrival.

- Helen coated in black Tremclad, having painted the wrought iron railing of the front steps.

- Asking Frank Perrin to make new corner shelves for over the kitchen sink only to discover that Frank was the one who originally built the manse, way back when.

- Learning it was okay to address him as Frank.

- The hilarious bantering dialogue between Ross Andrew, Ken Derraugh and Dave while painting the master bedroom of the manse bright lime green.

- Finding a robin's nest on the master bedroom's window ledge, and later observing the eggs hatching.

- Of meeting and working with Jim Blaine, Paul Simpson, Howard and Sandra Smith.

- Daily hugs from Marion Steacy upon their arrival at the manse.

- That P.U.C. has a great sense of humour.

- Learning that most positions on council have a term of two years, but usually really means until you die.

- You have to be in the choir to learn the insider joke about the church mouse under the organ or Sheila McKeage pointing at her wrist watch.

- Rasa and Carol constantly have to resist singing those "alternative lyrics". Also the urge to wear dark sunglasses and sway like Ray Charles on the gospel songs.

- Katy's infectious laugh, and pitch perfect voice.

- Katy presenting Morley with a pack of Crayola crayons before singing "My Love Colours Outside the Lines:."

- Observing the faces of the congregants, especially the older members, when they introduced those percussion instruments to Sunday morning service. Seeing them join in.

- The enthusiasm and acceptance of a new approach to music with More

Voices. Many of those songs are now new favourites.

- Carolling through Portland sometimes walking, sometimes on a hay wagon, sometimes at Mill Bay Court.
- The very special family that is the choir and that is Portland United Church.
- Dealing with hornets & ladybug infestations and bat poo in the sanctuary.
- Sharing of the many of life's ups and downs.
- The love that is very evident in the congregation.

Dave and Carol originally said they would give it a year and then see how they feel. That year turned into twelve and dedicated service to Portland United Church. They have found many good friends, lost too many along the way, but will remember them in their hearts. Since the age of seven, Dave has been involved with church music, singing in the choir throughout his youth and playing every Sunday since the age of seventeen. It is time to close a big chapter in his life. Retiring once again will give some much needed moments for both Carol and Dave to enjoy family and take care of some health concerns. We wish him well and while we will miss them both, we will always consider them part of our church community.



David played a mighty chord

Portland United gives a warm welcome to **David Hunt** as he takes on the role of Minister of Music at Portland United Church.

David has his Bachelor of Music and is a member of the Royal Canadian College of Organists.

He started as Minister of Music/Music Director/Organist/Choir Director 55 years ago and so comes to us with many years of experience.

Music has been, and continues to be, extremely important to our congregation and we look forward to continuing this tradition!

(And yes, his name IS Dave . . .)

Taste Buds Ready



UCW ANNUAL PIE SALE

Thursday, June 30 Cost: \$10

Choices: Strawberry/Rhubarb, Blueberry, Cherry, or Raisin

Ready to bake or freeze.

Sign-up sheet on bulletin board at PUC or call Connie, 613-272-6747 or Sheila 613-272-3531.

Pre-order by June 27.