



The United Church of Canada in Elgin and Portland

# Our Churches United

Spring/Summer News and Notes



June, 2019

## Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge

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### 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...What is Church Good For?

Have you ever asked yourself, why do I go to church? Or if you are not a regular attendee or a full member of a church, have you asked yourself, why do people go to church “religiously”?

On Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, I had the pleasure to go to the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota. It was the day after the Festival of Homiletics had finished and I was flying back home on Sunday morning. Taking advantage of having an extra day of breathing space, between the preaching conference and coming back home to responsibilities, as hanging out with colleagues, is a rare commodity for a minister in accountable ministry. So, two of my colleagues and I decided to spend this extra day together.

We went to this huge shopping center that has over 520 retail stores. The reason we decided to go was because everyone who heard that I was going to Minneapolis, Minnesota for the annual preaching conference mentioned, “You must go to the Mall of America” (MoA). So, literally we went for the sake of curiosity.

As soon as we arrived, the Canadian minister, Rev. Jill Turnbull and I looked for the WiFi Connection link on our cell phone, so that we can have free connectivity to the internet. As a Canadian I do not have unlimited data while in the U.S.A. as the fees are inexplicably expensive. So, we were lucky, there it was, clearly indicated in the list, “Free WiFi MoA” so we connected our cell phones. Now we were connected and had the liberty to be on Facebook, send and receive e-mails, send messages through Messenger, etc. – but most of all, **Be Connected!**

At one point one of our colleagues from Indiana wanted to go and buy some walking shoes, as she is planning a trip to India, in September. As soon as we entered a store, Rev. Jill and I realized we had lost our WiFi Connectivity – we felt lost. But, whenever we left a store and we were back in the main shopping center – the epicenter, we were connected back to the free WiFi automatically.

This made me think of church. Not the building, but the community. Because, CHURCH means Community; some dictionaries say, "a building used for public Christian worship"<sup>1</sup>. However, "the meaning of (church) *ekklesia* in the New Testament... is simply 'assembly,' 'congregation,'"<sup>1</sup>. The CHURCH is the people and not the building as we have come to identify over the years.

So, why think of CHURCH while I am attempting to stay connected on my WiFi? Because, for me the CHURCH keeps me connected with the source of ALL Life, Love, Laughter, Peace, and Hope. All these God given elements that flourish in this Community of Faith we call CHURCH - the Gathered. We gather together because it helps us find our center in the heart of the Creator who shapes us with Love. CHURCH helps us realize that we belong, we are beloved, and we are NOT alone.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&channel=crow&q=What+is+Church> – May 21, 2019

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1500-what-is-the-meaning-of-ekklesia> - May 21, 2019



***The Rideau Lakes Sewers Group meets monthly at the church to build quilts which are donated to palliative care patients at the 2 hospital campuses in Smiths Falls and Perth. These are lap and/or twin sized quilts which come in a wide variety of beautiful patterns and colours.***

***Each month there are approximately 20+ ladies meeting at the church to enjoy time together to complete this work. Some are experienced quilters and others come to learn more about this heritage skill.***

***Year to date the group has donated 17 completed quilts to patients in need of comfort and care.***

***We are beyond grateful to Portland United Church for the generous use of the beautiful space you provide to us and to other community groups - you exemplify the community of God's people.***

***Gail Bury***



***For those who do not recognize the family in the picture, let us introduce Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley, his wife, Suzanne, and his children Anderson, Jacob and Petra. Rev. Rodney served as the Minister of the Elgin-Portland Charge prior to Rev. Takouhi, and in fact, was here when Rev. T. came to us as a student minister. We are pleased to share this update from the Smith-Merkley family:***

We've missed Christmas, New Year's, even Epiphany (the 12th day of Christmas), but freezing rain has cancelled an evening meeting and receiving some of your news has

inspired me to share some of our own!

The Smith-Merkley's are a busy family. The last three weeks have been very eventful, let alone the last three years (which is how long it's been since I've sent one of these)! Anyhow, here is an attempt to catch you up a bit and give you a flavour of our days.

The last Sunday of December finished Rodney's 6 1/2 years of ministry at the Trinity/Providence Churches in Bobcaygeon. Last Sunday was his first day at Wesley United in Buckhorn and the United Church at Curve Lake First Nation. It's been a while since he had 2 church services on a Sunday, but felt pretty energetic after doing a service at 10 and 11:30, and sticking around for a birthday party at Curve Lake! Bobcaygeon sent Rodney off with love and appreciation; Suzanne and the kids will stay connected at Trinity (we continue to live in Bobcaygeon), while travelling the half hour with Rodney to his new churches every now and then. It was a risk to accept this three-quarter time position, but the key to faith is having it! Three months after saying yes to this new opportunity, Rodney has also been hired for a 20% position within the wider united church region, to promote understanding and respectful relationships with indigenous peoples. This work is something Rodney is passionate about.

In the midst of this transition Rodney joined Petra (age 9) in the annual Christmas pantomime at the Lakeview Artsbarn just outside of Bobcaygeon. Both landed major roles in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves": Rodney played the Sultan and Petra was his chief advisor, but she was a double crosser! Lots of lines to learn and 7 or 8 shows to perform over a two week period, but both had a lot of fun in this new experience. Rodney, Petra and other family members have enjoyed skating on the lake with lots of good days so far this year, and some good days last year too. We are blessed to be able to cross country ski and skate just down the street! We continue to love living in Bobcaygeon, where we have also enjoyed making maple syrup and watching foxes play

in our backyard. Canoeing and motor boating are summertime pleasures on the lake, including tubing and fishing. We've always had a little fishing boat, but speedboats have been a new adventure! Rodney and Suzanne watched the first one sink in a windstorm (as we were off to see a Bruce Cockburn concert in Lindsay), but like the Mary Ellen Carter she rose again! That boat was traded for a larger one, a 16 foot Four Winns bowrider with an inboard/outboard engine.

Rodney looks forward to a trip to Bella Bella with Jacob (age 12) and Rodney's good friend Bob Root this summer, after making a trip there with Anderson (who will be 14 in a couple of weeks!) and Bob the summer before last. Canoe trips and summer camps are some of the other things we enjoy in the summer. Kintail, hockey camps, and sailing and music camps right here in Bobcaygeon have all been part of the mix, in addition to the church day camp Suzanne helps coordinate one week each summer. Rodney and Suzanne got a week of honeymooning in on Lake Huron while the kids were at camps! Suzanne has been teaching high school full-time for the last couple of years. She has a permanent position for the second semester at Fleming College in Lindsay. This program is through the School board's alternate education program and high school students do some credit recovery work and get dual high school and college credits. She did a good job of piloting the program last semester, and is about to take it on for the second time. This past fall she has been teaching law and history at a school in Lindsay. Suzanne enjoys playing guitar and folk singing, gardening, home-improvement projects, and has recently enjoyed crocheting. We also enjoyed visits from our families, especially the kids young cousins (Cindy's girls are 6 and 3 in nearby Peterborough, while Lyndsay's boys are 5 and 2 and live in Dundas near Hamilton). Another highlight of the summer was Suzanne's brother Andrew's wedding to Melanie.

Petra continues with ballet, while Jacob (a goalie) and Anderson (a defenseman) enjoy hockey and baseball. All the kids take swimming lessons. The boys have had a paper route, and jobs cutting two lawns this year. Anderson has also umpired baseball, Jacob may get into that this summer. Hard to believe Anderson graduates grade eight this year and will need to decide between Fenelon Falls and Lindsay about where he's going to high school. All the kids have grown so much, but Anderson has really become a young adult!

Lots more news to share, but hope this gives you some idea of what we've been up to. We have enjoyed connecting with some of you, and hope to connect with more of you in the year to come. We are grateful for our many blessings, and pray all is well with you and yours!

The Smith-Merkley Family

## **Portland Pealers**

It's coming into summer. Many handbell choirs do the same thing. We've practised diligently from September and it's now June; it's time to take a break. Wait! Nope! Not this year! Our Portland ringers are so enthusiastic; they've asked their director (i.e. ME!) to continue on for a little bit longer. We do our best to take our bells and chimes into Sunday services several times between September and the end of May, but our summer worshippers rarely get a chance to hear us, thus the decision to continue for a while longer.



Not all ringers are available over the summer months. To work around this, we will pull out a series of music called "Twelve Bells." This means that we do not have to have a full choir (normally eight to eleven ringers); we only need six ringers, ringing two bells (or notes) each. The pieces are a bit simpler, but just as beautiful. The beauty is that we do not have to lug tables or pads, table cloths or risers, and generally the music calls for either bells or chimes, but not both. All we need is our bells and some music stands. It makes it so much easier to travel with the instruments and set up. (Some of you may remember, just a few weeks ago, we played a piece called "Jesus Medley" on a Sunday morning in Portland. That was a sample of a "Twelve Bells" piece.)

We *always* feel welcome when we show up at your door, and so we did not wait for an invitation, rather we have invited *ourselves* to at least one service in both PUC and EUC over the summer! While we are there, if you are at all curious about the bells, please do not hesitate to approach any ringer with your questions. We will even allow you to try them; there's *no better* feeling than ringing that bell!

*Jan Haskin*

## **Musings of a Muddled Mind**

Clinton Halladay

## **The Spirit and the Addict**

.....and the rain was cold, driven by the wind howling through the dark, dirty alley, biting her skin, soaking her ill-fitting cloths. The shallow doorway provided little protection as she huddled, cold, wet and fragile, pulling her knees tightly against her chest for a bit of warmth, but more so for that tenuous feeling of protection.

Anna was only ten when her drug use started...moving to a new town, a new neighbourhood, new school, finding it hard to make friends - just not fitting in. Her mom had been in a bad car accident a few years back and was taking medication for pain and depression. Anna never accepted the move or the rejection from her schoolmates and started sneaking her mom's prescription meds. They helped. Anna began to experience happiness in her otherwise

miserable life. Her mom's legal drugs soon weren't enough and Anna worried about being found out. Other sources were easy to find. She started using consistently—taking a bunch of pills, smoking weed, and drinking a lot. She started to struggle with depression and started abusing *herself* with the drugs, cutting, bulimia, anorexia, and guys. She started acting out like your typical teenage drug addict, stealing and sneaking out at night, but it was all pointless to her happiness.

By age 13 she was living in a shelter. Child Welfare found her there and placed her in a foster home. As it turned out the "faster dad" was very abusive and his drug of choice was uppers, so she started doing a lot of coke, meth, and ecstasy those next three years. Those became her drugs of choice. At age 16 Anna ran away from the foster home. She doesn't remember everything, or how she got here, but she never went back. At that point she didn't have a "drug of choice" anymore—it was just whatever anybody had, whatever was in your hand.

Fast forward a few weeks to the wind, rain and alley. Anna hears a voice, it seems to be miles away, but a hand touches her shoulder. She raises her head slightly and through barely focusing eyes sees the outline of a policeman. The cop helps Anna to her feet, puts her in the cruiser and takes her to the station. Anna asks to use the washroom and that's when she caught her reflection in the mirror and nearly jumped out of her skin. Her eyes were sunken in, she was black and blue, she had cuts all over...she didn't recognize herself. She literally thought it was someone else in the bathroom with her, that's how bad it was, and she was terrified—she now realized that she hadn't looked herself in the eyes since she'd started getting high.

A Family Court Judge considered Juvenile Detention or a psychiatric program. She chose the program. Anna started treatment as an outpatient. She underwent treatment, she relapsed, she got arrested again, this time going to juvie, but her counsellor stayed with her, reassuring her he'd never give up on her. There she was: 16 years old, without any friends or family, and just wanting more than anything to overdose and die.

Anna cannot explain why, but that's when she finally got on her knees and prayed. She isn't sure if she actually said anything, and if she did she doesn't remember it. But she got this overwhelming sense that even though her lawyer, her probation officer, her friends, and her family could all give up on her...God wouldn't. So she wasn't going to give up on herself.

Anna was not a religious person, but for the first time she felt like she actually had a chance. She finally figured out she was an alcoholic and a drug addict! She went back and finished her treatment and participated in a recovery program. Anna has been sober coming on two years.

Anna lost a lot of family and more friends than she can count to this disease of addiction. But at least she hasn't lost herself. Sure, she's had bad moments—nothing's been easy, but recovery is the best thing that's ever happened to her.

She recalls that night, the touch of the policeman, and the never give up attitude of her counsellor. She knows without a doubt that had she continued using, she wouldn't be in trouble, not in jail—*dead*. Anna goes to meetings regularly and works with her sponsors and sponsors other teens. She is only 18; she has a whole life in recovery ahead of her! But she's "like, dude—what great stuff is going to happen next"?

The Holy Spirit moves in strange and mysterious ways, individually to each of us according to our personal circumstances and needs.

Other views are welcome.

## **M&P Committee Update**

We bring you greetings and news from Ministry and Personnel Committee members: Jan Haskin (chair), Larry Cochran, Arie Hoogenboom, Maureen Bee, and Pat Greenhorn.

### 1. E-P Charge Secretary-

As you are aware, Norma Cummings will be retiring at the end of October, 2019. We met and reviewed the job description and contract, and have set a timeline for recruitment and hiring of a new secretary. Ads will be placed in various sites in early September, and interviewing will take place by early October, allowing for a training period mid-October and start date November 1. Norma, we will miss you in your role as secretary, but are so thankful you will still be with us!

### 2. Rev. Takouhi's Upcoming Schedule-

Just to provide you with background information, Rev. Takouhi is currently entitled to annual vacation of 4 weeks/5 Sundays, and annual Life Long Learning Entitlement of 3 weeks/4 Sundays. Continuing education is vital to growth and development in any career, and ministry can be a particularly insular and demanding profession. We fully support Takouhi in her life-long learning activities, and we all benefit from her renewal of spirit, her fresh ideas, and the new connections she has made. We all grow in faith along with her!

The following is a summary of Rev. T.'s vacation and Life Long Learning Entitlement dates (please be aware that these are not carved in stone; there is always the possibility they must be modified.)

Vacation: September 2-15, 2019; November 11-17, 2019; January 5, 2020

Life-Long Learning leave: May 13-29, 2019; June 23, 2019; September 16-22, 2019; January 6-12, 2020

In addition, Rev. T. is preaching at McKay U.C., Ottawa on Wider Church Sunday, July 21 and on June 2, we will welcome Rev. David Spivey on pulpit exchange.

Please feel free to contact an M&P member if you have any questions or concerns (or compliments!)

Earlier this month I was blessed with the opportunity to participate in a week long intensive bible study on the first half of the gospel of Mark with other university students from Manitoba and Saskatchewan in Winnipeg. The camp was run by Intervarsity Christian Fellowship which is an organization that helps facilitate bible study groups on university campuses across North America. Being able to represent my university at this camp was exciting, and I am looking forward to bringing my experiences back to Thunder Bay in the fall. The week was one of creating relationships, studying scripture, spending time in prayer, hearing what God had to share, and seeing Him move in powerful ways. I am so thankful to the UCW and the Church Council for supporting me both prayerfully and financially, which provided me with the opportunity to attend this event.



With Sincere  
Thanks,  
Claire French

### *Cases of Caring*

Our group has been in existence since 2005 and was named by Rev. Rodney when council approved Portland United Church as our sponsor. Originally we were self-funded but this soon proved to be a daunting task. We reached out to various charitable organizations and they have been more than generous. Elgin and Westport Lions clubs, the Westport Legion, the Leeds and Grenville branch of the Retired Teachers of Ontario, the Leeds and Grenville and Lanark branches of the retired Women Teachers of Ontario, the UCW of Portland United Church and the UCW of Bethel United Church in Rideau Ferry have been generous benefactors.

We began with about ten or so faithful members who met at the home of Lynne Evans in Portland once a month excepting the months of July and August. We established a quota of thirty five cases per month which we have faithfully filled and delivered to CHEO. In the summer of Canada 150 we gathered together with other community members to sew 150 cases. Northcott fabrics generously donated two bolts of their especially designed Canada 150 fabrics.

Since Lynne has moved to Perth and the group continues to grow we needed a new workplace. Portland United Church has most generously freed up storage space for both the fabrics and equipment for Cases of Caring and our sister group which sews quilts for Perth and Smith Falls Hospital. We also use the basement facilities for our monthly sewfests. We are most appreciative of their generosity. From an original ten faithful sewers we now have approximately 15 to 20 sewers who appear monthly to cut, pin, iron, sew and label cases for CHEO. The workers vary every month from a much larger list of volunteers.

We have discovered that over the years the supporters of Cases of Caring have made a sizeable donation to CHEO. With 35 cases each month for 10 months over 14 years we have made 4,900 cases. At a cost of approximately \$10 per case the people of Portland, Elgin and Westport have contributed \$49,000 to CHEO. What an achievement!

## Random Acts of Kindness

Casare Pavese has been credited with saying these words: "We do not remember days, we remember moments."

Over the past number of months I have been concentrating on ways I can help my neighbours, my friends, and especially those with whom I may come in contact that might benefit from a friendly act of kindness.

I sometimes struggle with how I can show these acts of kindness. And then I am reminded that all around me is evidence of this - A song at church, a hug from a friend, laughter shared with a grandchild. The list suddenly becomes so long, my awareness reveals itself and it feels like I'm dancing with joy at the amazing life I have.

With summer approaching I want to put out there a few things you and I can do to brighten another's life and encourage the 'pass it on' act of kindness that make this the most beautiful place to be.

1. Every one loves ice cream. The next time you are in line, pay for two extra ice cream to be given to the next person in line.
2. Before you leave to do your grocery shopping, check with your neighbour to see if they need a few things that you could pick up for them.
3. Pick up the mail for your senior neighbour or drive them to the post office.
4. As you walk through the community, and see all the lovely gardens, stop and tell the occupants (or leave a note) and tell them how much pleasure you have received from viewing their garden.
5. Call up your local radio station and ask them to send a thank you to all those people who brightened up the lives of a stranger with their smile.
6. Leave an extra big tip for that waitress that you know struggles with two jobs, trying to make ends meet.
7. Write a note, send a card, make a telephone call.  
As you dive into this 'Act of Kindness' journey, you will change your heart, your life and your corner of the world.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, KINDNESS CANNOT FLOW FROM AN EMPTY CUP. Be kind to yourself, fill your own heart and the overflow will come from a heart brimming with loving kindness and be spread throughout your community.

Blessing to each of you.  
Liz Church

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**UCW Pie Making:** In preparation for the pie sale on June 28<sup>th</sup> we will be making berry pies ahead in the morning of June 10, June 11 and June 13. All hands welcome! Strawberry rhubarb pies will be made the day of the sale – June 28 – beginning at 9:00 a.m.

**Father's Day**

### **FISH FRY**

**Hosted by Elgin United Church**

**Sunday, June 16, 2019**

**From 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.**

**Cod, Fries, Coleslaw and Dessert**

**Adults \$15      Children 12 & under \$5**

Gluten Free & Take-Out Options Available.

**UCW June lunch** will be at **The Galley on Tuesday June 18 at 1:30.** Everyone is welcome to join with the group but please let Connie know if you will attend - 613-272-6747.

### **“Grateful We’re Not Dead”**

**Concert**

**Saturday, June 22 at 7 p.m.**

This Country Party Band with a sense of humour and a social conscience is playing an encore engagement at Portland United Church.

Come out and enjoy their country music and humour.

A free-will offering will be received.

### **UCW ANNUAL PIE SALE, Friday, June 28**

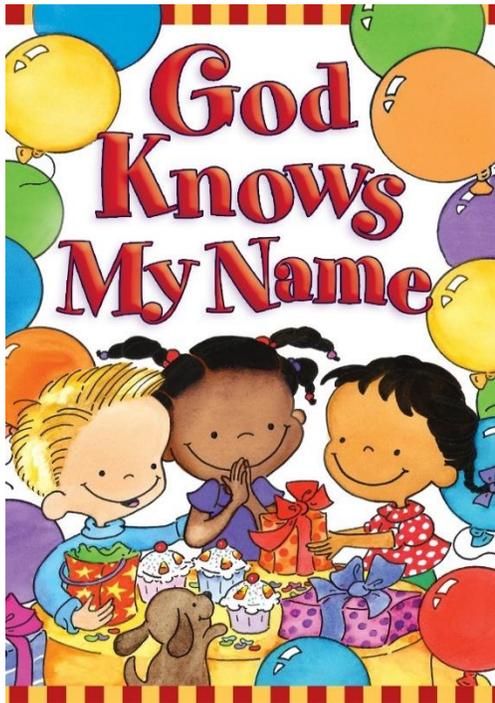
**Choices: Blueberry, Cherry, Raisin or Strawberry/Rhubarb.**

**Ready to bake or freeze. Pre-order by June 24. Cost: \$10**

Sign-up sheet on bulletin board at PUC

or call Connie, 613-272-6747 or Sheila 613-272-3531.

# Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge



WELCOMES ALL YOUTH

AGES 5 -13

10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

**Vacation Bible SCHOOL**

**Tuesday July 2**

To

**Friday July 5, 2019**

**Theme: "GOD KNOWS MY NAME:  
CALLS ME BELOVED"**

Join us for **4 Days of Fun!**

Stories, **Songs**, **Snacks**, Games,  
**Music & Crafts**

**9:15 a.m. to noon @ Portland United Church**

10 Colborne Street – Portland, ON, K0G 1V0

Church Office at: **(613) 272-2002**

OR **[OFFICE@EPPC-UCC.COM](mailto:OFFICE@EPPC-UCC.COM)**

ADMISSION IS FREE

**REGISTRATION WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON**

**ONLINE: [WWW.EPPC-UCC.COM](http://WWW.EPPC-UCC.COM)**

