

Our Evolving History **1950 - 2025**



ST. PAUL'S
UNITED CHURCH • AJAX
—✚ the church with the open arms ✚—

***Compiled on the occasion of the
church's 75th anniversary
March 2, 2025***

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PREFACE

On March 2, 2025, we celebrate St. Paul's 75th anniversary. As you read this booklet, take some time to reflect on all that has happened since we first opened our doors in 1950. We have built a strong foundation, and our journey is always continuing.

This booklet starts with content from an earlier document published for the 40th Anniversary of St. Paul's United Church Ajax in 1990. "On This I Will Build" chronicled the "years of development and spiritual growth" of St. Paul's and itself built on an earlier publication that covered the first 25 years of our history. In 1999, the 2000 Celebration Committee created an addendum chronicling the years 1990 to 2010 and recently Jennifer Cree and Katie Cronin-Wood partnered to document the years 2011 to 2025 based on information contained in our Annual Reports and with input and guidance from many others.

Thank you to all those who contributed to documenting our history including:

- Evelyn Pike, Ruth Gray and Jim Wilson
- Rev. H.A. Batstone, Mike Peleschak, Karen Smart, Louise Johnson, Bernice Anthony, Doug Gregy, Susan Hogg and Mary Neefjes
- Tom and Bernie Rosebush, Karen Smart, Louise Johnson, Rev. Glen Eagle, Karen Smart, Wilma Brown and Trish Sherwin
- Jennifer Cree and Katie Cronin-Wood

If you would like to add to this booklet with any text or pictures, please contact the church office at office@stpaulsajax.org.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.”
Ecclesiastes 3:1

The history of St. Paul's United Church has seen it live through many seasons. From its origins in the Interdenominational Church that formed such an important part of the lives of the employees of the Defence Industries Limited plant and their families, through the post war boom, the cultural changes of the '60s, '70s and '80s, and the massive changes in technology since the '90s, St. Paul's has sought to live as the faithful people of God.

As we celebrate 75 years together as a Community of Faith, we are being called to live into a new season, seeking to be the Church in a changing world.

In these pages you will read the stories of our congregation's life together. You will find stories of challenges and successes, beginnings and endings. They are a call to all of us to live boldly, as people of faith, as we enter the next 75 years.

Blessing to you all in the name of Christ.

Rev. Cordelia Karpenko

CHAPTER 1 - IN THE BEGINNING

In the early days of World War II, Britain realized how vulnerable its factories and towns were to enemy air attacks. Consequently, it went beyond its borders for a source of arms to supply its war machine.

Canada became the logical place to supply that need. In 1940 the Defense Department of the Dominion of Canada looked around for a suitable site to build an ammunition factory. Its choice focused on several farms located just east of Toronto on a point of land jutting out into Lake Ontario. The farms were expropriated, and by 1941 a huge shell-filling plant had been erected by Defense Industries Limited (DIL). A call went out to all parts of Canada, and soon thousands of people came to work and live in what was later to become Ajax. Most of the workers were married with families, and young women.

North of what is now Highway 401, a community of six hundred houses was quickly built and then administered by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. These houses became homes for the families. Within the borders of the plant itself, barrack-like structures were built to accommodate the unmarried women and men who came to work in the factory.

In those days when so many cherished traditions were being threatened, many people who had been recruited to this complex felt the need for spiritual strength and support. After some preliminary work by representative of several denominations, organized Christian worship began.

The first services were held in the community hall which was located on what is now Kings Crescent. Ministers from neighbouring churches of the major denominations alternated in conducting evening services. Among these were: Rev. M Jenkinson of the United Church in Pickering, Rev. E. G. Robinson of the Anglican Church in Pickering, Rev. D. Marshall of the Presbyterian Church in Whitby, Rev. E. Green of the Baptist Church in Whitby, and Rev. Father Kyte of the Roman Catholic Church in Pickering.

The need became apparent for some kind of real home for this fledgling congregation. Because no land was available within the boundaries of the Corporation, a site was finally obtained from Mr. W. T. Heron, a neighbouring farmer. It was rented from him for one dollar a year. A provisional committee consisting of Major S.D. Dunn, Anglican; Mr. R. McRae, Presbyterian; Mr. George Schell, United; and Mr. G. Munns, Baptist, was set up. They met for the first time on December 10, 1942. Among the representative ministers who attended, Rev. M. Jenkinson was appointed Chairman, and Major S. D. Dunn was appointed Secretary-Treasurer.

A portable church was acquired from the Home Mission Board of the United Church and moved to the site, located near Glynn Road, in November 1942. The building was not insulated, and two iron box stoves were required to ward off the bitter cold of the Lake Ontario winter winds. Because it was outside of the Corporation jurisdiction there were

no utility services, so water had to be carried in pails from nearby houses. Toilet facilities were provided by the “pail-a -day” method.



Ajax Interdenominational Church 1942 – 1950

The community still did not have an official name. Unofficially it was sometimes referred to as DILville. In 1939, several British warships had been involved in the famous Battle of the River Plate in the South Atlantic. One of the ships which had been involved in this engagement was the battle cruiser Ajax. At that time, the name Ajax was being applied casually to the community. Because a post office was necessary, a name was required, and the business manager of the Corporation chose the famous name Ajax. The new congregation therefore came to be called Ajax Interdenominational Church.

As time went on and the congregation grew, it was necessary to add extra rooms to the building. One of these rooms was a kitchen. Furnishings for the church were for the most part donated, although some equipment was purchased. A pulpit Bible was donated by Mr. and Mrs. John Mills in memory of their son, Private John Mills, who had died at Dieppe on August 19, 1942.

The first interdenominational service was held in the new building on the second Sunday of January in 1943. It was conducted by local clergy with Rev. M. Jenkinson delivering the message. Representatives of the United Church Home Mission Council brought greetings. Mrs. Lillian Muggah was organist and choir director.

On February 9, 1943, a provisional church committee was formed. Mr. B. Dalby was appointed to head the Sunday School, Miss Dalby the Young People's Union, Mr. George

Munn the Men's Club, and Mr. H. Berndt and Mr. J. Mills the ushers. The communion service was conducted in that same month by Rev. D. Marshall.

Also, in February of 1943, nine ladies met in the church to organize the Women's Auxiliary of the Ajax Community Church. Officers selected were Mrs. George Schell, President; Mrs. E.H. Peever, First Vice-President; Mrs. Frank Simons, Second Vice-President; Mrs. E. W. Montgomery, Secretary; Mrs. W. Gray, Treasurer; Mrs. H. Berndt, Visiting Committee; Mrs. S.D. Dunn, Ways and Means Committee. The charter members were Mesdames Schell, Peeve, Simons, Montgomery, Gray, Berndt, Dunn, McCormack, and McRae.

Since the church continued to grow, a fulltime resident minister was now required. Rev. A. W. Jones, a United Church minister from Port Dalhousie, Ontario, was called and began his duties in September of 1943. A house on Glynn Road was rented to serve as a manse.

The first bazaar was held in Lord Elgin Public School on Saturday, October 23, 1943, and the first Anniversary was celebrated on February 6, 1944.

During the short life of the Interdenominational Church, several ministers came to serve, Rev. A. W. Jones was succeeded in August 1945 by Rev. R. Inglis, an ex-navy chaplain. Rev. R.N. Norton of the Baptist church became minister in September 1946 and was inducted on October 18th.

With the end of World War II in August 1945, it was inevitable that changes would take place. The shell filling plant ceased production. Originally it had been planned that all the houses would be torn down along with the factories and related buildings, and the land returned to its original use. Instead, with the great need of housing for returning veterans and for those who worked for several years at the factory, it was decided that the community could remain.

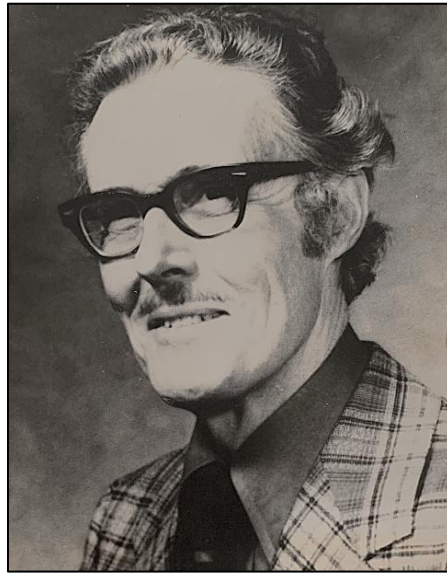
Some of the facilities in the gatehouse area were leased to the University of Toronto for their Engineering Faculty for returning veterans. Thus, while the people in the congregation changed, it now seemed as if the community of Ajax would continue.

In September 1947, the Home Mission Board of the United Church of Canada purchased the land on which the portable church stood. Plans were now being made for an industrial town with accompanying homes and facilities. The various denominations were also making plans to serve the planned community in their respective ways. The last interdenominational communion was held in February 1950. It was conducted by Rev. W. Ira MacDonald who had become interim minister.

The United Church of Canada owned the portable church. Consequently, on March 1, 1950 the Ajax United Church was constituted. The congregation was welcomed by Dr. T. Leng and became the thirtieth congregation of Oshawa Presbytery. The Church Committee of the interdenominational church had been empowered, at a congregational meeting, to carry on the work of the new Ajax United Church until the end of year.

However, in March 1950 a new Committee of Stewards was formed, and their first meeting was held on March 14th. The members of the committee were Chairman, Bob Rahmer; Vice-Chairman, R. McRae; Secretary, D.J. Reid; Treasurer, H. McCullough; and Property Committee, G. Schell. Other members of the Committee were Messrs. G. Smith, G. Pinkney, G. Greer, G. Hood, W. Edwards, J. Freed, D. Kemp, J. McWalters and S. Moore.

In May 1950, Rev. A.H. McLauchlan was called to be the first minister of Ajax United Church. He was inducted in August 1950.



Rev. A.H. McLauchlan 1950 - 1955

Following the evening service on November 12th, a congregational meeting was held to organize according to the Constitution and Procedures of the United Church of Canada. Six members were elected to the Session. They were Messrs. R. McRae, G. Schell, J. McIntyre, G. Pinkney, R. Rahmer, and D. Reid who became the first Clerk of the Session. Messrs. McRae, Schell and Like were elected as Trustees.

In March 1951, the congregation cut its ties with the Home Mission Council and became a self-supporting congregation. At the same time, it was suggested that a new name be chosen for the congregation. Several names were submitted and by majority vote the name St. Paul's was chosen.

In January 1952, with the encouragement of the Home Mission Council, the congregation gave approval for a committee to look for a new church site and to plan for the subsequent building of a new church.

A site on Kings Crescent was chosen and acquired. A building committee of Messrs., Laycock, Edwards, Jenkins, Sanderson, Lawrence and Simpson were elected to make

preliminary plans for a new church. Late in 1953 the Wells Organization was called in to conduct an intensive plan for pledges to a building fund. An objective of \$80,000.00 was set. The success of the Wells Organization's campaign indicated the practicality of proceeding with a new church.

In May 1954 construction was inaugurated with a sod turning ceremony. On October 9th a cornerstone, presented by Mr. S.J. Haslam, then treasurer of the Committee of Stewards, was laid. The stone was set in place by Mr. George Schell, Chairman of Trustees; Mr. C.W. Laycock, Chairman of the Building Committee; Mr. C.R. McRae, a Trustee, and Mr. J. Carroll, President of Carroll Construction Company Limited.

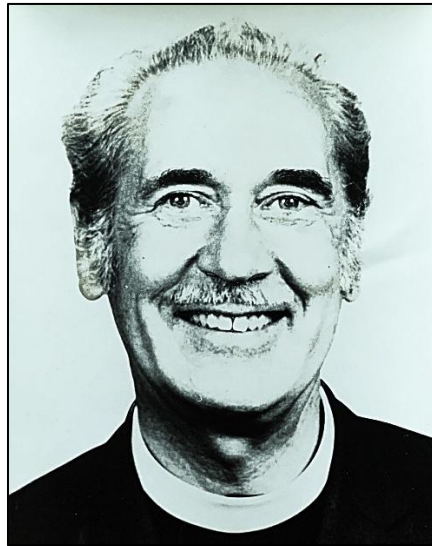
At three o'clock on Thanksgiving Sunday October 10, 1954, the dream of a group of determined Christians became a reality when the new St. Paul's Church was dedicated. The debt on the new church was \$89,768.00.



St. Paul's United Church, 1954

The old property off Glynn Road was sold to the Pentecostal Church for the sum \$2600.00 and the proceeds applied to the purchase of a lot for new manse. In the meantime, a house for the minister and his family had been rented at 2 Parry Road.

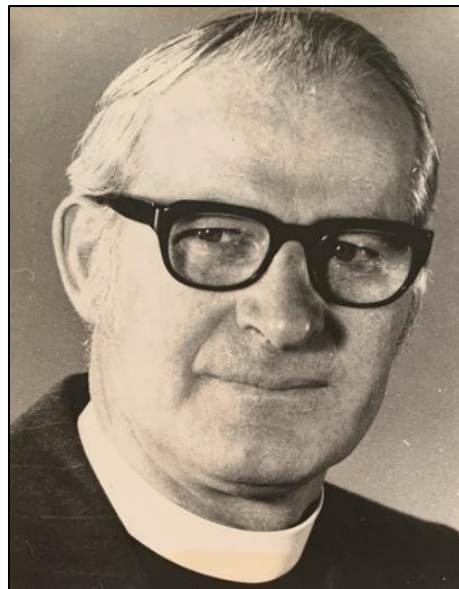
Rev McLachlan was succeeded as minister in June 1955, by Rev. A.M. Butler.



Rev. A.M. Butler 1955 - 1958

Rev. Butler lived with his wife and three children – Michael, Alison and Eric – on Parry Road. During the ministry of Rev. Butler, plans were made for a new manse. A site was acquired at 35 Churchill Road and a contract was let to Mr. F. Simons and Son.

Rev. Butler's ministry finished three years later in March, and he was succeeded by Rev. T. R. Norman in July.



Rev. T. R. Norman 1958 - 1967

The official opening of the manse took place on the afternoon of September 28, 1958. Mr. H. M. Smith accepted the keys from the contractor and Mr. George Schell, on behalf of the Trustees, presented them to Rev. and Mrs. Norman, who became the first ministerial family to occupy the new manse.

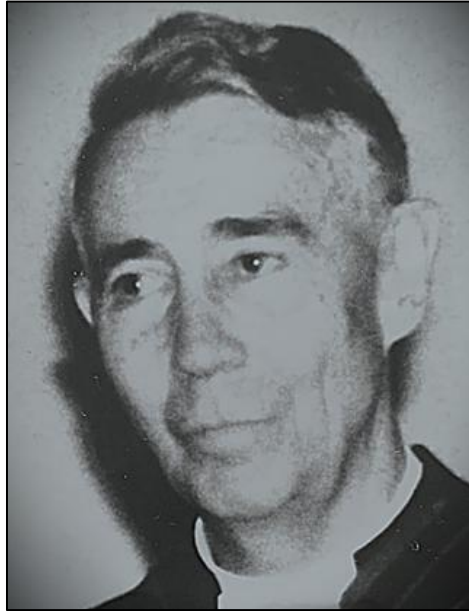


Manse 1960

By this time, it was becoming evident that more space was needed at the church. The current building consisted of a sanctuary with a basement, a kitchen, and a couple of small rooms including an office. There was a great need for space to carry out Christian Education Programs. Plans were made and construction of a three-story extension was begun in the fall of 1965.

The new wing was dedicated on March 6, 1966, on the 16th anniversary of the congregation. It included a larger kitchen, an office for the minister, an office for a secretary, classrooms, a common area on the first two floors, a large fellowship room, as well as classrooms and storage space on the third floor. With this addition St. Paul's now had a suitable home which would be adequate for some years to come.

In September 1967, Rev. T.R. Norman was succeeded by Rev. C.G. Higginson, who continued as minister until his retirement in 1974.



Rev. C.G. Higginson 1967 - 1974

The years between 1967 and 1974 were among the most difficult for the church at large. Aroused by the “God is Dead” theology from across the border, and the emphasis on secular man advocated by Man and His World in Expo year, the church was described by its critics as “shuffling chairs on the deck of the Titanic.” There was a reaction against everything which was establishment, and the church became one of the main targets. Many people drifted away and ministers too, opted for other fields. Much credit must be given to ministers like Rev. Higginson, who helped the church through the difficult time and to those congregation members who welcomed new members including John and Nancy Gutsell, who immediately joined the choir.

In 1974, Rev H. A. Batstone was called from Ste. Genevieve United Church, Montreal, and became our minister on Canada's birthday that year.



Rev H. A. Batstone 1974 - 1987

One of the first events during the ministry of Rev. Batstone was the 25th Anniversary of the congregation in 1975. The whole year was set apart to celebrate not only the 25th year of St. Paul's but also the 50th year of the United Church of Canada, and the congregation chose to call this double event Antioch in Ajax. Those who were there will fondly remember the mobiles which graced our ceilings - dozens of silver and gold fish!

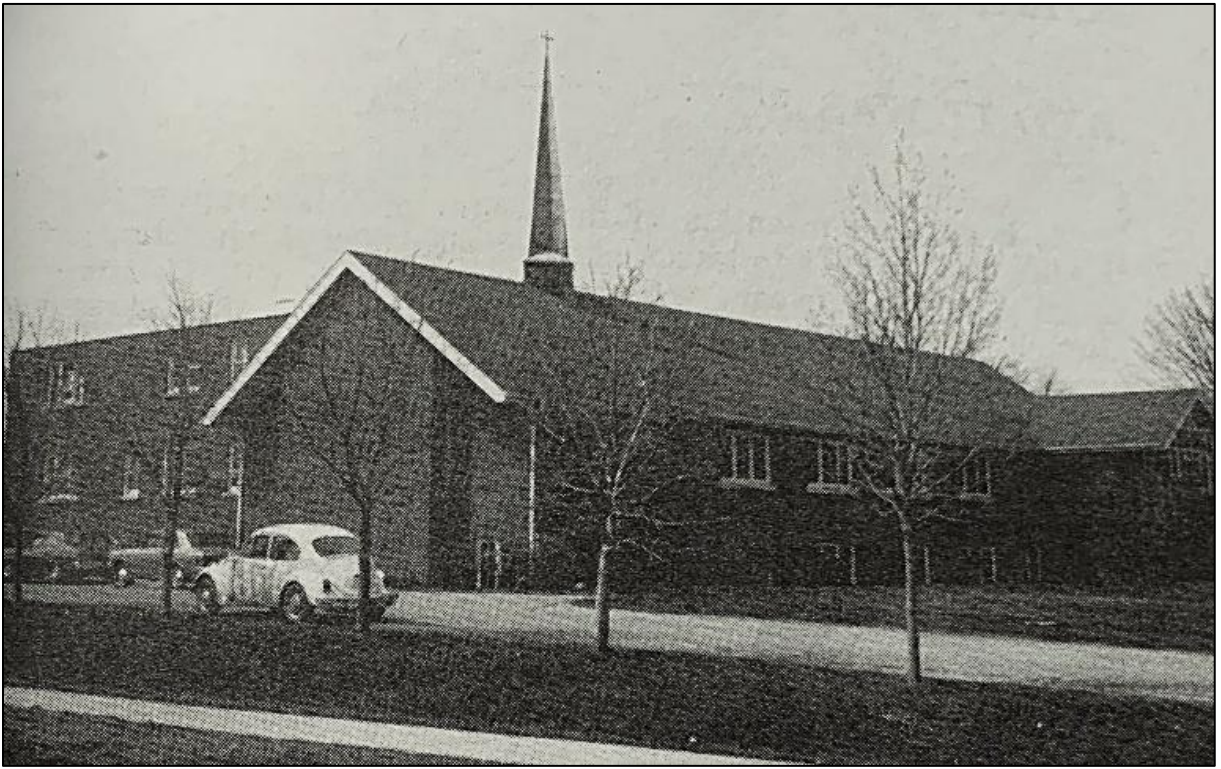
Also, part of that celebration was the preparation of a booklet covering the history of St. Paul's from 1950 to 1975. Evelyn Pike, Ruth Gray and Jim Wilson were responsible for that booklet.

We end this chapter with the exact closing words of that 1975 booklet:

"The history of a church is not a matter of bricks, benches, and Bibles. The church is people with faith and dedication. St. Paul's has been blessed with people who have given unstintingly of their times and talents. For many years the population of this town was of a transient nature. With the vast housing developments, the work of the pastoral charge was a constant challenge. Over the years there have been a multitude of people who have given leadership on the church boards, in the Sunday School, the United Church Women, Canadian Girls in Training,

Scouts, Messengers, Explorers, the Choir and AOTS. There have been times of success and elation, and frequently times of discouragement and frustration. But always there has been the knowledge that the Church and Christianity hold the key to a better world. We must grow in its strength and pass its teachings on to others. With God's help and

guidance St. Paul's United Church can be a force of good, its people, in the community that it serves, and in the church it represents."



St. Paul's United Church, 1975

CHAPTER 2 – AND IT WAS SO

It is not the intention of the writer of this chapter in the life of St. Paul's to give a chronological list of what happened from 1975 to 1990. Rather, it will be an attempt to describe most of the highlights, and at the same time to touch on some of the ongoing events which made life at St. Paul's interesting and fruitful.

At the end of 1975, the silver and gold decorations around St. Paul's were finally taken down. The congregation, forgetting those things which were behind, bravely set out to face the future.

The 15 years which had elapsed since 1975 were years of continued growth. The many new homes being built in and around Ajax were reflected in the number of people who made St. Paul's their church home. From 1976 to 1988 some 593 new members were received. During the same period 151 members moved and transferred out of the congregation. During the same time 718 baptisms were performed, providing a growing base for St. Paul's of the future. A significant baptism occurred on May 14, 1978, when Darlene Anne Percival, born on December 13, 1977, daughter of Edward and Sylvia Percival, became the one thousandth baptism performed by Rev. Batstone, the minister at the time.

Several changes and innovations took place between 1975 and 1990.

In 1976 Asta Ballstadt retired as Organist and was replaced by Alan Hunter as Organist and Sheena Hunter as Choir Director.



Alan and Sheena Hunter, Alayna and Alex

A whole chapter could be written on the musical contribution made under the leadership of the Hunters during those years which included many memorable musical presentations in the Trafalgar Castle School Chapel where Alan played the pipe organ.

About the same time, a new young people's singing group was formed under the direction of Cindy Smith and accompanied by Bill Miller. They called themselves Dedication. Shortly thereafter, Carolyn Boyce organized a younger children's singing group The Promises, and over the years they made their contribution to the worship services. One of their most memorable productions was *Cool in the Furnace* presented on November 25, 1984.

In the autumn of 1976, the need for some kind of drop-in program was recognized to provide a place for mothers and pre-school children. Under the direction of a committee and with the help of the Durham Y, the St Paul's Drop-in program was instituted. After the first year of operation the group continued without any support from the Y.

St. Paul's home on Kings Crescent had now been bustling since 1954 and parts of it were showing signs of wear and deterioration. Consequently, in 1977 two major capital projects were undertaken.

One was the complete rebuilding of the front entrance. Much of the original wooden material was removed and replaced with stone, and new doors installed. Additionally, the comfort of the Christian Education wing was improved by the installation of storm windows and screens.

It was in this year that one of the older groups, The Sunshine Club, experienced the loss of their leader when Marie Pickell passed away suddenly in May. Because there were now various community groups for seniors, this group eventually brought its long years of activity to an end.

As 1977 was ending, another one of the great souls in the history of St. Paul's went to his reward. Roy McRae died in December. The following spring his family planted a memorial tree on the front lawn.

In 1978, the Sunshine Club was replaced by another group at the opposite end of the age scale. Mary Peleschak and Greta Holmes, determined to create a new approach to Intermediate youth, formed a Breakfast Club, which began meeting on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m.; it was a resounding success. It was reported nationally in *The Observer* and in the '90s, one still discovered Breakfast Clubs in other churches across Canada.

Philip and Carolyn Boyce took over the leadership of the group and after a couple of years the group had grown so big, with a such a large age spread, that the high school age membership was transformed into SPYs (St. Paul's Youth). With Phil and Carolyn and succeeding leaders, those two groups became a tremendous force for good among the youth of St. Paul's. However, the group came face to face with stark reality of life's frailty when Philip died in April of 1987.

By the end of 1979 the congregation, in fact the whole world, became aware of the tragedy involving South Viet Nam. Many people were forced to leave their homeland and take their chances in the South China Sea. A call went out to the world to help provide a home for as many of these people as possible. A committee was formed to look into the adoption of a South Vietnamese family. The response by St. Paul's congregation was overwhelming and plans moved very quickly, so that by March 1980 everything was in place to welcome a family.

On April 25th three teenagers – Ying, Lan and Won, a brother, sister and a female cousin - arrived in Ajax.

While St. Paul's had arranged an apartment for the new arrivals, it was felt that there was a need for some acclimatization before they could start on their own. Mrs. Joyce Lew became a translator for the group and for several weeks Keith and Marnie Lowe took Ying and Lan into their home, while Peter and Suzanne Clendinneng hosted Wan. In the meantime, several other people had volunteered to teach these new Canadians what they required in English, and classes were organized. Very soon they were able to move into an apartment at 55 Falby Court.

Within a year each of them had a job and they were able to move to Toronto and continue on their own. The whole project became one of tremendous satisfaction for the people of St. Paul's and many of our congregation followed the success of this family through the years.



Won and Ying, Niagara Falls 1981



Lan, Vi Minh and Jennifer, Christmas 1983

The year 1980 was memorable, particularly in the Church School. Under the direction of Brian Quin, the superintendent, many events were held to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of founding of Sunday Schools by Robert Raikes.

On December 13th, to mark this event, a special Christmas Concert, the play *Christmas 2001* was presented. It featured The Promises along with the senior children of the Church School, under the direction of Carolyn Boyce, accompanied by Mabel Spencer and Bill Miller. To round out the program, the Primary Singers, under Elsie Dobson sang a special arrangement of Christmas hymns and songs. A memorable event!

By this time, the windows in the sanctuary were beyond repair, so large double-pane windows were installed. With the rise in world oil prices, the cost of heating the church was becoming prohibitive. In 1981 a decision was made to switch to natural gas as a fuel, and the necessary conversion was budgeted for and made.

For some years, our Memorial Fund had been growing, and at the Annual Meeting in 1981 a decision was made to buy a piano. Over the next months many people came forward with extra memorial donations so that on September 27th, a new grand piano was dedicated. Mr. Brian Hammond was guest pianist, and the moving service is fondly remembered by all who were present, as the combined music of the organ and the piano lifted the congregation to a new dimension of worship.

In 1982 a generous donation was received from the estate of Mrs. Florence Churchill. The official Board decided that one of the rooms on the third floor of the church should be equipped as a board room. From this decision the Flo Churchill Memorial Room was established. It still serves as a special meeting place for smaller groups.

The combined debt for St. Paul's, which had stood at nearly \$50,000.00 in 1975, was gradually being eliminated. By 1983 the manse mortgage was retired, and on June 17, 1984 at a special gathering at 35 Churchill Road, the mortgage was symbolically burned by Elwyn Smyth, Chairman of the Manse Committee.

In the meantime, St. Paul's had picked up the Ventures in Mission challenge of the United Church of Canada. Under the leadership of Mike Peleschak, through part of 1983 and 1984, a vigorous campaign was carried out. When the final returns were tallied on August 30, 1985, St Paul's had given or pledged the sum of \$98,056.00. For this outstanding effort, the congregation of St. Paul's received the special commendation of the Moderator, Dr. Clarke MacDonald, and the National Director of the Campaign, Rev. John J. Towers.

In 1984, a Task Force was set up with Maurice Hlady as Chairman. Its mandate was to study the future of St. Paul's over the next five or ten years. Their report, submitted in the spring of 1985, spelled out very concisely what St. Paul's could expect and its challenge for the future. Several committees were recommended to emphasize areas of interest. One committee which arose out of that report was The Greeting and New Member Assimilation Committee (GANMAC).

At the Annual Meeting of 1985, a decision was made to dedicate the Memorial Fund toward a new organ. By the fall, the campaign to raise the funds was so successful that a new digital electronic organ was installed at a cost of \$45,000.00.



Organist Alan Hunter is observed by Rev. Batstone

It was played for the first time on October 27th and formally dedicated on January 26, 1986. The new organ permitted a wider range of music and more versatility for the organist.

At Christmas, 1985, the choir gave one of their most ambitious programs when they presented a very stirring performance of *Night of Miracles*. This presentation has been reprised a number of times since then.

At the Annual Meeting in 1986, Rev Batstone announced his decision to retire at the end of June 1987. A Pastoral Relations Committee was elected to look for a new minister.

In 1986, a new system of emergency lighting was installed in the church and the following year, in accordance with new regulations from the Fire Marshall's Office of Ontario, a fire alarm system was installed which, in the event of an emergency, automatically calls the local Fire Department.

For some time, many people had become acutely aware that St. Paul's Church comprised four floors, three and a half of them above the ground level. Some kind of unlimited accessibility was deemed to be necessary.

In January 1987, an Accessibility Committee was organized to investigate every aspect of making each floor accessible to the handicapped, as well as to the increasing number

who found climbing stairs a problem. That committee persevered and dreamed of installing some kind of lift or an elevator.

By June 1987, a call had been extended to Rev. Glenn Jackson, of Port Perry.



Rev. Glenn Jackson 1988 - 1996

Rev. Jackson chose to begin his ministry at the beginning of 1988; therefore Rev. Batstone was asked to supply until the end of the year. In accordance with the current practice, Rev Jackson was given the option to live in the manse or buy his own house. He chose the second option. The manse at 35 Churchill Road was first rented, and then sold in the summer of 1988; it had sheltered our ministers and their families for exactly three decades.

On Anniversary Sunday, March 6, 1988 a new sound system was dedicated. Some of the wireless equipment used in the new system had been acquired in 1981 with a donation from the estate of Mrs. Isabel Mackness.

The year 1988 proved to be a challenging one, not only for St. Paul's but for every congregation in the United Church. With the General Council's decision on the *Membership, Ministry and Human Sexuality Report* in August, a considerable amount of consternation developed in congregations. St. Paul's was able, with inner strength and quality of its leadership, to weather the storm raised by this report.

The dream of having some kind of elevating device in place during 1989 was put on hold when an application for a government grant was turned down.

On April 25th, the Church School along with the whole congregation marked a singular event. Jim Barrie, who had served the Church School for thirty-five years as a teacher and Superintendent, chose to retire.

For some time, the outside sign at St. Paul's was falling into disrepair. Successive attempts to prolong its life were becoming futile. Finally, in May 1989 an attractive new sign was installed, a gift from Ben and Jean Severs and family. A special service, with the congregation gathered outside, marked its dedication.



New Sign May 1989

Through all its history St. Paul's, like many churches, carried a heavy burden of debt. Each year saw that debt reduced little by little until in 1989 we rejoiced that it was finally been paid. On December 3rd, a special ceremony marked this achievement.

Early in 1989 Oshawa Presbytery had asked each congregation to prepare a 'Mission Statement' indicating how its people saw their role in the community. In June, the Official Board approved the following Mission Statement:

In obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord, and in keeping with the doctrine and practice of the United Church of Canada, St. Paul's United Church, Ajax, with arms wide open to the community at large, is committed to welcome and nurture all persons who seek to follow Christ. We undertake faithfully to teach and to promote the love of God and Christian virtues, using the talents and resources of all members and challenging and enabling persons in Christian commitment.

In an introduction to 1988 Annual Report, Rev. Glenn Jackson had said,

"Behind the words, statistics, and figures...are many, many people -volunteers and staff - who have given unstintingly of themselves in the service of God and of his human family...Beneath the surface of these pages are the care and dedication of countless

people whose commitment through St. Paul's makes us a vibrant faith community - The Church with the Open Arms."

The same sentiment can be expressed in trying to write about all that has happened at St. Paul's from 1950 to 1990. Who can estimate the contribution made by the United Church Women, whose story is a chapter in itself? Like leaven in bread, they were there to provide both spiritual and financial support to the congregation! How can one estimate the value of the lessons learned through the Church School, the Explorers, the CGIT, the Messengers, the SPYs, or the Scouting program? Can we adequately measure the depth of the involvement in the study groups at various times, or the uplifting message of the many special works performed by the choir? Can we put on paper the feelings so many experienced as they heard, for the first time, the sound of new organ? Could any print capture the exhilarating experience of the Carlo Curley concert on June 9, 1987? How can we measure the outreach effected by *The Epistle* as it's pages touched families with what happened at St. Paul's?

To write a complete chapter on the life of St. Paul's from 1975 to 1990 would be to write everyone's personal history. The church relates to people in different ways. To some, its memorable movements are ones over which to rejoice as two people pledge their love for each other; to others, it may be as the "shelter of a rock in a weary land" when they say a final farewell to someone they loved; to others, it may be moment of reflection as they are called upon to dedicate a new life to the family of God. Added to all of this are the moments of devotion and meditation represented by a worshipping congregation as they gather together on Sunday or on special occasions.

CHAPTER 3 - WE CONTINUED

Like chapter 2, it is not the intention of the writer of this chapter, to give a chronological list of what happened between 1990 and 1999. However, it will be an attempt to describe once again the events, some large and some not so large, that made up the everyday life of St. Paul's in Ajax.

With approval in September for a Government of Ontario Grant through the Office for Disabled Persons, 1990 rapidly turned, into "The Year of the Lift". This, together with extra workload joyously undertaken by so many through the COMMPAC program, meant that the autumn of 1990 was a time of flourishing activity around St. Paul's.

COMMPAC, a planned program for an "Every Family Visitation" saw significant gains for time, talent and financial commitment to take us into 1991. To facilitate the many ongoing administrative tasks that kept a modern church current with the times, an Office Automation project was launched - a photocopier, computer and printer, along with new furniture were purchased. The unpaved portion of the parking lot was upgraded with limestone chips and the south sidewalk was replaced with interlocking bricks.

In keeping with our plan to provide full accessibility to the public, the second-floor washroom was made larger to accommodate wheelchairs and a new washbasin with a lever type faucet was installed.

But perhaps the most significant change to come to St. Paul's in many years was the commencement of construction in December, 1990 of the lift, when completed in June of 1991, provided full accessibility to all levels of the building and by December of 1991 was declared "Paid in Full" thanks to many donations and fundraising projects.



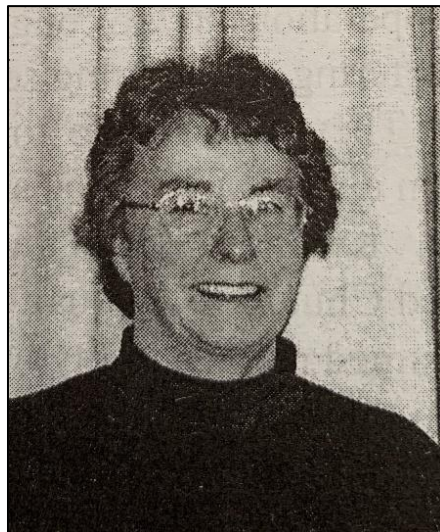
An exterior view of the Lift from the parking lot

As a direct result of COMMPAC responses received, the Outreach and Social Action Committee (OSAC) was established by the Official Board early in 1991. OSAC's mandate was to highlight the Mission and Service (M&S) Fund and its operations to the congregation through regular updates of the M&S offering and to bring selected appeals to the congregation's attention. They were also to consider other social issues for discussion/action as they arose; one such event was the February 1992 visit by Rev. Kwong Il Lee, a missionary from South Korea, as part of the United Church's Mutuality in Mission project. OSAC also assumed responsibility for the Minute for Mission speakers, who to this day bring to the congregation current projects of the United Church of Canada's Mission and Service Fund activities, both at home here in Canada and around the world, through short and to the point essays.

Closer to home, OSAC reviewed a Bay of Quinte Conference call for funds to rejuvenate and upgrade the various camping venues (eg. Camp Quin-Mo-Lac), know as Quinte CAN (Come Alive Now) and recommended St. Paul's set a target of \$1,000 per year for a ten-year period. This recommendation was accepted by the congregation at the 1991 Annual Meeting and by the end of 1999 we had raised a total of \$7,688.85, just slightly down from our target for year eight.

The early 1990s brought many changes to the life of St. Paul's as witnessed by the formation of OSAC and it many faceted undertakings. With the changing focus of the congregation came a new alignment in our paid Ministry.

An Administrative Pastoral Assistant's position was created in 1991. This was a dual role position, part Secretarial and part Administrative/Pastoral. Mary Peleschak, who had been ably providing secretarial duties undertook to add to her duties; new responsibilities associated with visitation, calling on seniors and shut-ins and following up with new members and families of children who had been baptized. In addition, assisting with the Sunday service also became part of her routine. Mary continued in this position until the end of June 1993.



Mary Peleschak

This position was then subdivided into distinct staff appointments, Secretary - Sharon Eagleson and Administrative Pastoral Assistant – Karen Smart.



Sharon Eagleson and Karen Smart

With all the extra activity surrounding the church during this time, a need became apparent to study the physical structure of our building to determine if it would meet our needs in coming years. Thus, a SPACE committee brought forth a plan for renovation and expansion that was presented to the congregation in November of 1992. Much discussion evolved around these plans for they carried what appeared to be a hefty price tag considering many households were faced with unemployment either as a fact or a threat as the Canadian economy took a very steep decline. Consequently, a motion to proceed with an expansion at the 1992 annual meeting was defeated and the SPACE committee disbanded.

In its place a Mission Redefinition Committee was formed to examine the feasibility of a building to accommodate our vision for the next decade. This committee sought outside leadership from Rev. David Iverson, Executive Secretary of the Bay of Quinte Conference. Three Congregation Fora (forum) sessions were held during 1993 that resulted in Rev. Iverson presenting to the Official Board a report with seven proposals for the redefinition of our mission as a Church.

Our parking lot, only partially paved and properly drained, was surveyed to determine what improvements were required to provide proper drainage, repave all driveways and to fully pave the parking area. A plan was presented to the Annual Congregational Meeting in January 1994 where approval was obtained to proceed, subject to obtaining 25 per cent of the required funds.

An inspection by the Town of Ajax Fire Department resulted in a failed report of the premises to comply with the Fire Regulations and we had to undertake an expensive retrofit just when we were starting to climb out of our debt position. However, it was very hard to oppose fire upgrades when the very lives of our members were at stake, so

February 1996 saw the start on the installing of 17 new fire doors and associated walls. These improvements augmented a previously installed security system that resulted from three separate break-ins in 1994.

Throughout the mid '90s, St Paul's came under increased pressure to maintain adequate funding to meet our budget requirements.

"Social Fund Raising" became a catch phrase covering activities of a social nature whose purpose was to raise money for ongoing endeavours of the congregation. A complete list of these activities would make for very dull reading, but some are notable in that they ran for an extended time or are still with us today and became part of St Paul's culture.

Fun & Fitness, an exercise class administered by Cath Miller until 1998 not only helped with our finances but toned up our physical beings as well. Pancake Suppers, Italian Suppers, Roast Beef Dinners, Steak BBQs, Garage/Rummage sales, Christmas Craft sales, Spring Geranium and December Poinsettias sales all helped to keep our operating deficit under control.

A Talent Auction held each October was one of our dominant projects and contributed to at least two mythical traditions in our cultural make-up. Louise Johnson's Pickled Beets were unsurpassed in quality and price per quart and the Wilkins' Euchre Parties, a twice-yearly event elicited much conniving on the part of bidders to obtain winning hands. Eventually a Ways and Means Committee was established to coordinate funding raising events. This was largely responsible for the elimination our deficit in 1999.

The mid '90s were also watershed years for our congregation when our longtime organist/choir director team of Alan and Sheena Hunter resigned to follow Alan's new employment in Florida and Alec Rice, a Volunteer Associate Minister celebrated his 50th year of Ordination.



Alec Rice Celebration

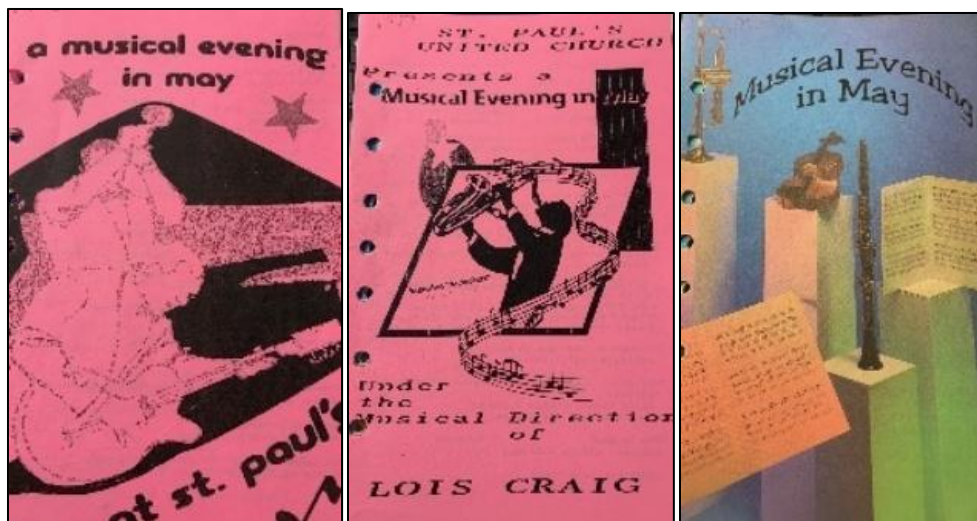
For the first time the congregation elected a lay person, Tom Smart, as Chair of the Official Board. Increased debt forced our overdraft protection with the bank to be deemed inadequate and required a loan to be secured from the Trustees account for the ongoing operation of the church.

An extended search for suitable candidate to fill the Music Director vacancy came to a happy conclusion with the hiring of Lois Craig in 1995.



Lois Craig 1995 - 2021

Under her able direction we saw the formation of a Junior Choir while the Senior Choir continued to provide a rich diversity of music to our Worship services. In addition, a new annual tradition was established with a *Musical Evening in May* program.



Some Musical Evening in May programs

The evening featured performances from the roughly polished to the very accomplished, using both vocal and instrumental pieces and provided a venue for local talent to showcase their accomplishments.

It was during 1995 that Karen Smart felt called to begin the Inquiry Process to seek acceptance into Ordained Ministry. Thus, at the Annual meeting in January 1996 the congregation joyfully endorsed Karen as a candidate for Ordained Ministry.

Also, under the direction of Karen Smart, Awesome Adventures - Coached by God, our first Vacation Bible school in many years, commenced. Two new communities of faith – St. Mark's Coptic Church and the B'Nai Shalom V'Tikvah Synagogue – also came to share our space and in so doing helped to ease our burden of debt.

A Lay Visitor Team was formed with the mandate to extend the Opens Arms of St. Paul's to those people who were shut-ins either on a long term or short-term basis, and to visit them as often as mutually feasible. This very worthwhile endeavor has flourished over the years and is still very active with our church community.

Another project was the reformation of GANMAC (Greeting and New Member Assimilation Committee) established to greet new worshippers and to follow-up with new members to see that they were introduced to the elders and to leaders of midweek groups.

As we approached the third quarter of the decade, St. Paul's experienced an epoch of change. Late in 1996, Rev. Glenn Jackson, after negotiations with the Ministry and Personnel Committee elected for early retirement. Our strong Lay Leadership, coordinated by Staff Associate Karen Smart, showed their true strength by carrying the congregation through to July of 1997 when Rev. David Smith commenced a two-year Intentional Interim Ministry that would end in June 1999.



Rev. David Smith 1997 - 1999

This Intentional Interim Ministry was a time of healing and restructuring in preparation for the arrival of Rev. Glen Eagle in August of 1999.

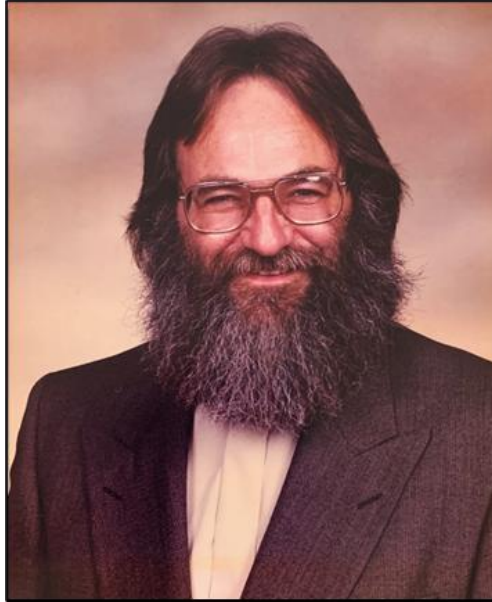
It was during this time of turbulence that the Official Board accepted with regret the resignation of the members of the Board of Trustees. Under provisions of the UCC Manual, the Trustees of St. Paul's were replaced by members of Oshawa Presbytery until a new Board from St. Paul's was elected at the Annual meeting in January 1998.

However, several significant positive events also occurred to testify to the true strength of a congregation challenged to continue in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

A Brain Tumor Support Group was formed to provide an opportunity for people with brain tumors and their loved ones to share experiences, address personal issues and gain emotional support in a safe and relaxed atmosphere. The parking lot was paved, and new exterior lighting was installed to make the transition of moving from a late-night meeting to our autos a much safer occurrence. And, through the Intentional Interim Ministry of David Smith, our congregation proceeded to accentuate the positive and build for the future.

Two committees were especially prominent through this period; the Structures Group, to examine the make-up of our congregational government and an Interim Minister's Steering Committee to work with David as we endeavored to discover who we were as a community of faith and what we hoped to grow to be. Focusing on a vision for the congregation derived from the Rev. David Iverson's report, the Steering Committee acted as a sounding board for future activities and was instrumental in our acceptance of a Church Council organization to replace the existing board system that had been in place since our founding in 1950.

A fulltime ordained ministry can not be achieved without a needs assessment being completed and a Joint Search Committee being elected. Both activities were accomplished as part of the interim ministry of David Smith. Our needs assessment resulted in a comprehensive outline that was accepted by Oshawa Presbytery and provided the backbone document that allowed the Joint Search Committee to recommend to the congregation that Rev. Glen Eagle be called as St. Paul's seventh ordained minister.



Rev. Glen Eagle 1999 – 2007

Rev. Eagle began his ministry with us on August 1, 1999 and with a Covenanting Service on September 23, 1999, we formally welcomed him into St. Paul's Community of Faith.

With the commencement of Rev. Eagle's ministry at St. Paul's, we approach the end of this chapter in our narrative. However, this narration would not be complete without conveying what is perhaps the true strength of a congregation – it's everyday people who continued to perform the tasks that bound us together between all the history making events that get recorded in a writing like this.

Throughout the 1990s, our mid week groups continued to flourish, albeit not all survived. Our Breakfast Club and SPY (St. Paul's Youth) groups enjoyed several years of activity, but eventually became dormant, like the Couples Club that disappeared earlier in the '80s. During the '90s we also had a group for the high school age youth, proving once again that time and circumstance will provide a door if someone is willing to open that door and lead.

Our Church School remained a steady platform for the continued teaching of the stories of the Bible and was strengthened by the introduction in 1995 of the Vacation Bible School, held each August.

One group of people, the United Church Women continued to be a driving force within our congregation. What would a church year be without a UCW Bazaar, or a funeral tea without the compassionate understanding and the can-do attitude of the UCW Ladies?

In closing this chapter on the life of St. Paul's, the writer acknowledges that events chronicled here may not necessarily be perceived by readers in the same matter. The

church relates to people in different ways. The '90s were not an easy decade for our congregation.

However, as we once again started a new decade in the history of St. Paul's we rejoiced in the fact that our attendance was growing, and a new vibrancy seemed to be taking us forward into the new Millennium.

CHAPTER 4 – SHARING OUR FAITH

At the beginning of 2000 Rev. Eagle was minister of the church and the congregation looked forward to a period of order knowing that God was faithful and would carry us forward in hope and trust into the new millennium.

The start of the decade held the promise of optimism for the future, but it was guarded optimism. Many events showed us the fragility of our world. On September 11, 2001, things seemed to change overnight as vulnerability to terrorism was revealed when the United States came under attack. Canada was soon drawn into the war effort in the Middle East and we struggled with what that meant to us.

Later in the decade we also struggled with the imminent threat of global economic collapse and the onset of recession. Many families in our community were affected by job loss. But as was so often the case, times of trial also called forth in people great kindness and compassion. St Paul's continued to be the church with open arms willing to share in word and in deed God's love with all people.

Throughout the 2000s, SPUC continued to gather in community to praise and worship God. Our Sunday morning services reflected the vibrancy and diversity of gifts we shared as a congregation.

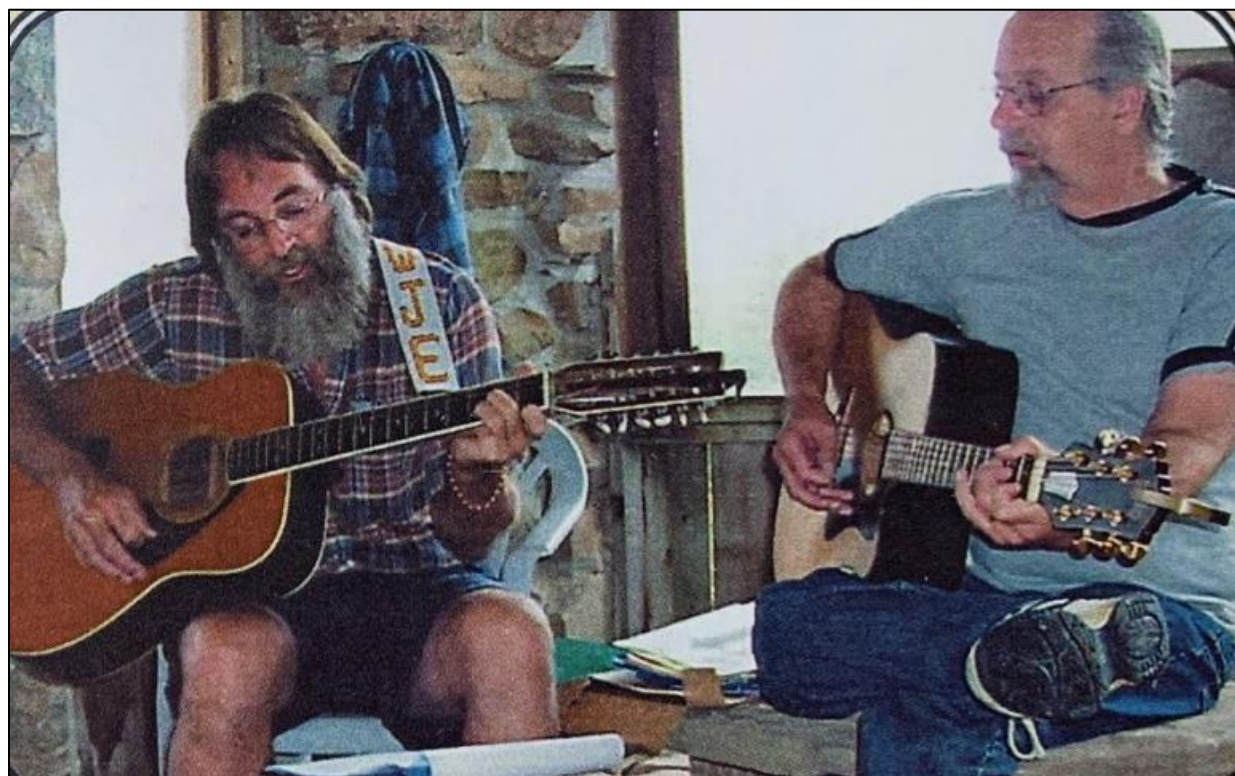
The ministry of music at SPUC, under the talented leadership of Lois Craig, continued to be an inspiration, and truly enhanced our worship life.



Lois leads the choir

Life at SPUC included meaningful traditional-style worship services, youth-led services, UCW-led services, special anniversary celebrations, Easter Sunrise services at the lake, Christmas Eve Pageants and late-night Communion services, a Pet Blessing service, Taize Worship, Remembrance Day Legion Services, cantatas by our choirs, guest speakers, preachers and musicians, and the wonderful leadership of our lay people.

Our June 2001 church picnic was held at Pickering Museum Village. Lois was allowed to use the old pump organ during the worship service and afterwards the congregation moved across the road to the Greenwood Community Centre for food, fun and games.



Rev. Eagle and Bill Miller

Sharing his love for music with others was a joy for Rev. Eagle. On Mondays nights he, Bill Miller and Bill Schwartz would meet at the church for a jam session, sometimes joined by Neil Booker and his cousin Rick.

Known for wearing sandals throughout the year and riding to the church on his motorcycle, Rev. Eagle would sometimes assume the persona of his alter ego "Fred" who would preach the sermon when a Sunday fell on a long weekend. Fred is remembered for "saying things that nobody else dared to say."

Rev. Eagle would often invite congregants to his farm in Creemore for corn roasts and during Christmas would drive choristers around Ajax in his truck to sing carols for the local residents.

Children and youth were especially drawn to Rev. Eagle. During his time at St. Paul's approximately 75 children were registered in Church School and an average of 40 students attended each week.

To draw attention to the ongoing issue of child poverty in Canada, Rev. Eagle even climbed onto the roof of the church and rang a bell when Canada failed to meet the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000.

In 2002, on the occasion of the church's 52nd anniversary, Rev. Eagle and the Worship and Music Committee created a service to remember. The pews in the front half of the church were turned around to face the back to create the outline of a cross in the centre of the sanctuary. Rev. Bert Batstone was the guest speaker and preached an excellent sermon entitled "Parish or Perish". Carol Flewelling created a hand-made banner of a celtic cross which was hung from the ceiling. Many have memories of becoming part of a "living" cross at the end of the service.

No strangers to supporting refugees, St. Paul's involvement with the Azimi family started in 2001, when we were asked by the inter-faith group, Working Group for Refugee Resettlement, to co-sponsor a refugee family from Afghanistan consisting of Nazifa Azimi, a trained nurse and her seven children.

OSAC was keen and soon had the support of the congregation to complete a formal agreement with the United Church of Canada, the Government of Canada, and Meliha Azimi, the sister of Nazifa. The contract legally bound St. Paul's to provide all manner of support, including financial support, for Nazifa and her seven children for a period of one year.

All along Meliha had insisted that this was a mere formality: she and her family would completely take care of the refugees. She said all we needed to do was sign the papers which would allow her to free Nazifa and her children from five years of horror in a Pakistani refugee camp.

What followed was three years of bureaucratic red tape where we were involved in a lot of letter writing that was vital to getting the family out Pakistan.

It was May 19, 2004, when the family finally arrived in Canada and took up residence at Meliha's home in Ajax. Even though Meliha had repeatedly said that she would be responsible for their care, our congregation was enthusiastic about helping, providing a fruit basket welcoming gift, gift vouchers to Loblaws/No Frills/Bulk Barn, money for school supplies and rent and Christmas gifts.

In addition to financial assistance, a team of volunteers taught English to the children throughout the summer, and Helen Martin continued to tutor some of the children for several months after that.

The family joined us at the church picnic in June despite the fact they could speak very little English. The youngsters enjoyed playing soccer and eating ice cream!

By the end of 2004, the family were about to move into their own apartment, White Oaks, in Whitby. Nazifa was working 35 per week at Country Style Donuts, and the two eldest boys were working part time at fast food outlets. The children were all thriving and enjoying school.

The family participated in a worship service in 2005 where Meliha talked to us, despite not being comfortable with public speaking. She did a fantastic job recounting the family's life in Afghanistan before Taliban rule, their five-year period as refugees, and "their dream come true" of coming to Canada. They were emotionally appreciative of our support, and the congregation was thrilled to see the progress that had been made.

In this decade we received 64 people into membership through Confirmation, 338 people through Baptism, held 138 weddings and 76 funerals.

Our mission statement highlights the importance of faith in action. In response to God's love in Jesus Christ we endeavoured to live as disciples of Christ, and according to his Word in part, through the many and varied ministries at SPUC in the early 2000s. These included ministries of fellowship, faith formation, and service.

A new Prayer Shawl Ministry was established, a dedicated group who continue to this day to gather for fellowship, prayer, and to knit blessings into prayer shawls which are then distributed to those who would appreciate them in difficult times.

A new Prayer Group came together in the beginning of the 2000s to pray for the needs in our community and the world each month and a committed group of volunteers began giving their gift of time to share God's love through the Healthy Snack Program at Bolton C. Falby Public School.

A monthly Blood Pressure Clinic was held at SPUC, and the congregation began contributing to the Salvation Army Food Bank, filling boxes with Christmas dinners for families in need, brightening Christmas for members of our community through the White Gift Service, and learning about God's love through fun and fellowship at Vacation Bible School.

The pews were refinished again in the summer of 2004. Refinishing the pews was where Karen Strong first met Diane Fleming and they are now great friends.



Jim Bond dealt with the ever-present dust.

SPUC continued to generously support the work of the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church of Canada, contributing approximately \$227,000 over the decade.

Throughout the decade many individuals helped nurture young people in their faith journey.

Janelle and Cathy Shaw created GAPP (God's Awesome People Place), our amazing church school program, and Wendy Mason, Ann Dobinson, Graham Oswald, Karen Smart, Glen and Wendy Eagle led the Youth Group.

SPUC donated \$1000 to support Camp Quin-Mo-Lac and continues to give generously to support this congregation's ministry to those in need through the Benevolent Fund.

We all celebrated when Karen Smart was ordained into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament by the Bay of Quinte Conference in May of 2005, and settled to Greenwood-Mount Zion Pastoral Charge.

In 2007 Rev. Eagle left St. Paul's to accept a two-point charge in Churchill, Ontario. While the congregation recognized that the move allowed him to be closer to his farm in Creemore, it was a very emotional time and many mourned his departure.



CGIT says goodbye in 2007

Rev. Linda Saffrey, who was ordained in 1992 and served the United Church of Canada in many capacities and multiple congregations over the course of her ministry, became our Interim Minister after Rev. Eagle's departure while we looked for a new fulltime Minister.



Rev. Linda Saffrey 2007 – 2008

Later in 2008, Rev. Cathy Dilts, who had previously served at Islington United Church as Minister of Congregational Development for three years, joined St. Paul's.



Rev. Cathy Dilts 2008 – 2011

Prior to her studies in the Master of Divinity program at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, Rev. Dilts had been a high school teacher with the York Region District School Board.

Moved by a similar spirit to follow a calling, in 2008 Kim Lawrance entered, as an Inquirer, into the Discernment Process.

Rev. Dilts led some memorable services while at St. Paul's. Many remember when live animals were included in the 2008 Christmas pageant and when a Blessing of the Animals service was held on the front lawn.

Rev. Dilts was also interested in opportunities to expand the reach of St. Paul's and had made enquiries about purchasing the former Parkside School property to build a seniors' residence.

Diane Fleming remembers how compassionate Rev. Dilts was in supporting the congregation. When Diane's husband was hospitalized Rev. Dilts came to the hospital every day to pray with the family.

In March 2009, the church was filled to capacity when we said goodbye to Terry Wilkins, a stalwart member of St. Paul's United Church. Terry gave selflessly of his time and talent to the ministry of Christ's church. He acted as Envelope Steward, and was a faithful member of the choir, for many years.

In 2009 long time congregant Marie Pos, mother of Cath Miller, was presented with the 2008 Ajax Senior of the Year Award for her volunteer work in the community. Marie also received the 2009 Ontario Senior of the Year Award.

In April 2009 Gladys Snelling received, on behalf of SPUC, a Volunteer Service Award in appreciation of 10 years service to the community through the Canadian Blood Services Blood Donor Clinic.

Many opportunities to connect with others and create lasting friendships were also present in the 2000s.

The Welcoming Committee helped to make all people feel at home in God's house through the hospitality of our ushers and greeters. The Connecting Hands Committee, set up by Isobel Bond, kept us connected through a phone call to say "hello" or by sending a card. The Lay Visitors Team visited members of the congregation who were unable to attend church and shared with them Communion and news of the church.

There were also many opportunities to learn and grow in faith. Bible Study met weekly for prayer, fun, and reflection on the scriptures. Lenten Study groups offered opportunities to draw closer to God through study and discussion. The Christian Education Committee worked hard to oversee the faith formation of the church.

And we also lived out our call to discipleship through the Outreach and Social Committee (OSAC), visiting and worshipping with residents of Ballycliffe, and sharing the good news of God's love with the community.

St. Paul's UCW continued to be deeply involved in many church and community activities participating in Connecting Hands, Bible Study, Lay Visitation, and greeting before church. They were also involved in ushering, reading scripture in Sunday Worship, and serving coffee after the service once a month, catering many church activities, knitting in the Prayer Shawl Ministry, and making crafts on Tuesdays for the Bazaar.



Susan Weaver, Karen Strong and Laura Gunn serving lunch at the October 2004 Bazaar

Additionally, they volunteered at the Blood Donor Clinic, volunteered at the hospital, helped at Distress Centre Durham, our neighbourhood Youth Shelter, Ajax Women's Shelter, at the monthly Bridge Night and prepared snacks for the Healthy Snack Program.



Healthy Snack program volunteers

SPUC continued to offer a home to a number of community groups in Ajax -Cubs and Beavers, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Brain Tumour Support Group, the Ajax Garden Club, an Osteoporosis Group, and our wonderful friends in B'Nai Shalom V'Tikvah congregation.

CHAPTER 5 – MOVING FORWARD

From 2010 to 2020, the United Church of Canada saw much controversy, complaint, and reorganization in its struggle to remain a major influence in the life of its congregants and society as a whole. The history of those ten years can be easily traced by looking at the decade's three General Councils.

The first one held in 2012 told a sad tale of where the United Church of Canada had come over the previous twenty years. The number of congregations had shrunk by 21% to 3196. Worse though, was the fact that Membership and Mission and Service givings had been halved, by nearly 48%. Financially the Church was in some straights and was having troubles with its obligations.

To this end the General Council voted to have a comprehensive review of the status of the United Church of Canada. This review would look into all facets of the Church including spiritual, financial and governance. This was the start of a process that would see the UCC through the next decade on how we would function as a Church.

The 2012 General Council's one major point of discussion was the ongoing dispute in Israel and the West Bank. The Council wanted to put forward a blueprint on how the Church could help in the dispute. Basically, the United Church of Canada asked that all settlements by Israel in the West Bank be dismantled and the members of the United Church refrain from buying products produced in the West Bank. There were many other recommendations involving this motion and I urge the reader to review the motion GS3 to view the whole scope of it. Sadly, this motion put relationships between the United Church and Jewish groups in flux.

On the more positive and historic side, this General Council elected the first openly gay minister as Moderator, the Rev. Gary Patterson.

The next General Council #42 (2015) saw discussion of the Comprehensive Review (that had been authorized by the previous General Council). The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation committee was submitted and the full communion with the United Church of Christ (USA) was formalized.

The Comprehensive review brought about a few changes to the way of governance in the United Church of Canada. The review addressed areas of concern such as the College of Ministers, the three-court model and financing of the Church's programs. The College of Ministers looked at how ministers of the Church were disciplined. The three-court model proposed the removal of Presbytery and the reorganization of Conferences. Financially the review looked at how the Church could continue its programs. All the Comprehensive review proposals were put to a vote by all congregations, presbyteries, and conferences by remit over the next three years.

The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation committee set the United Church of Canada on the path of right relations with First Nations peoples. The Church celebrated

full communion with the United Church of Christ in the USA. This meant that both churches were in line with each other's philosophies and would in the future work together as one. Both churches would pursue with intentional ways of expressing the unity of the Church. This included a commitment to mutually recognizing ordained ministers of each partner church as truly ministers of word and sacrament and ways of manifesting the common mission of witness and service.

In another historic moment for the Church, this Council elected for the first openly gay female Moderator, Rev. Jordan Cantwell.

Between the 2015 General Council and the next in 2018, all congregations, presbyteries and Conferences were asked to vote on the proposals forwarded from the 2015 General Council. There were several of them but the most important were about the reorganization of the Church and its funding.

In an overwhelming positive vote, the members of the United Church of Canada voted for the reorganization of the church and a new funding model. These remits were sent to the 43rd General Council (2018) for confirmation.

The next General Council in 2018 was held in Oshawa, in our own Lakeridge Presbytery. As always, many proposals were addressed. The two main issues were the reorganization of the United Church of Canada and its funding.

The reorganization of the Church was based on the three-court model. As you may know a court is a congregation, presbytery, conference, and General Council. The three-court model would turn that around into a community of faith, region, and denominational council. This meant the loss of Presbytery. A community of faith is a group of people, not just a congregation that agrees to the oversight of the region (e.g. a home faith group). In the reorganization, Conferences were remade so that they each contained similar number of communities of faith and employed fewer people throughout the country. The General Council (denominational council) remained the same except for the number of people on the executive. With the loss of Presbytery, communities of faith received a measure of more independence under the guidance of the region.

The United Church of Canada changed its funding format with the closure of the General Council.

Our system used to be based on the congregation paying its dues to presbytery and thence to conference. Mission and Service funds were sent separately but a part was used as payment for administrative purposes.

With the new system, communities of faith now sent in their dues to the national church where they are disbursed to the regions and United Church of Canada for administrative needs. All Mission and Service donations are used for programs and none now are used for administrative purposes.

During this General Council, the United Church of Canada joined in full communion with the Disciples of Christ faith in the United States. Rev. Dr. Richard Bott became the new Moderator.

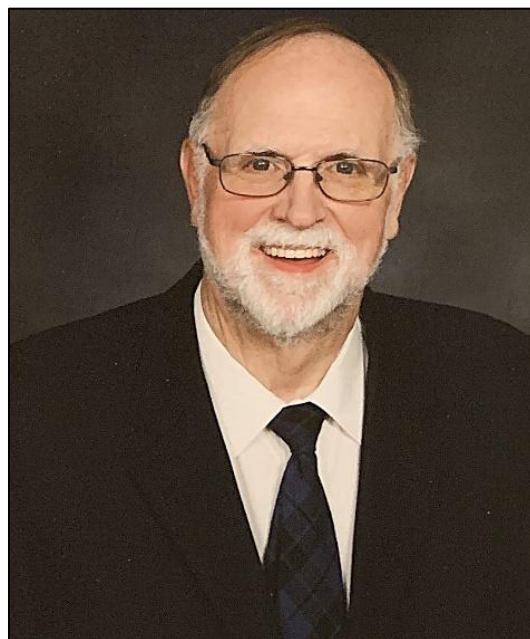
All of the above information was taken from the minutes of the General Councils #41, #42, #43. Those that are interested in the hard work of the Commissioners that attended are encouraged to review them.

Here at St. Paul's, we celebrated our 60th Anniversary celebration in March 2010 with guest speaker Dr Paul Wilson from Emmanuel College.

Shortly afterward the congregation dealt with another change in spiritual leadership. In the spring of 2011, Cathy Dilts informed the congregation that she would be leaving St. Paul's in September.

This was a hard time for the congregation with no minister in residence from September to March. In late September, Karen Smart was appointed our supervising minister. Karen provided the leadership and expertise to guide us in the right direction. Karen was available for sacraments and continuity. The Worship Committee used Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to steer our services.

Rev. Bill Service came to St. Paul's in 2012 as our interim minister and, along with his wife Kathy, embraced the congregation wholeheartedly. Rev. Service and Kathy sang in the choir, visited among the members on a Sunday morning, and Kathy ran a craft group during the week. Rev. Service provided a calm presence during our search process for a fulltime Minister.



Rev. Bill Service 2012

A new St. Paul's United Church Men's Group was launched in 2010. It was and continues to be a social group where the men of the congregation meet and greet and get to know each other in an informal setting. Breakfast gatherings are held on the second Saturday morning of the month. Each group member donates \$5.00 for breakfast – bacon and eggs, pancakes and waffles, coffee, tea, fruit and juice – prepared by the volunteer cooks. The only mandate of the group is friendship.



Mike Morrison, Chair of the Men's Group

In 2012, the UCW celebrated its 50th anniversary and participated in a project to support the Morogoro Women's Training Centre in Tanzania. Nationally, the project raised over \$268,000 to train more than 600 women in maternity health care.

The UCW also reorganized the format for its bazaar in 2012. The White Elephant area was replaced by a separate Garage Sale in the spring. This proved to be highly successful.

In 2012 the Mission and Service Committee (formerly called Outreach and Social Action Committee) hosted a screening of the documentary "The Economics of Happiness", a film about the spiritual, social, and ecological consequences of constant economic growth and consumerism.

Over the years the Mission and Service Committee frequently held a Farmers' Market in September. Durham Region vegetable farmers and meat producers, as well as local bakers, took part.

Along with collecting donations each month for the Food Bank, the Committee also continued to collect gifts on White Gift Sunday every December, and to distribute them to local shelters for women and children, youth and men.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry, which was started in 2009 by June Reubens (now Martin), grew from its original membership of five people to over 23 knitters or crocheters over the 2010 – 2020 time period. The members of the prayer shawl ministry continue to come together once a month in fellowship and prayer while they make shawls and lap robes to be given to people in time of need or for a special occasion. Between 2010 and 2020, the prayer shawl group has supplied over 300 prayer shawls or lap robes to members of St. Paul's congregation, the surrounding community or to friends or relatives of our church family in times of grief and illness, to celebrate the birth and graduation of our young people and to say welcome or good-bye as people move through our church and our lives. As well the group partners with Ajax/Pickering Hospital providing lap robes, premie blankets and prayer shawls. The gift of a blessed prayer shawl provides support to all who need comfort and a reminder of God's love.

Rev. Cordelia Karpenko was hired as our full-time minister and arrived in January 2013.



Rev. Cordelia Karpenko 2013 - present

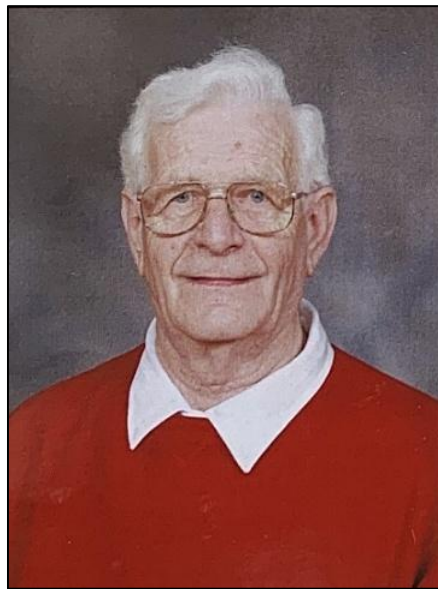
She surprised us all her first week by addressing us from the steps during her sermon, not from the pulpit. She did not refer to any notes and spoke from her heart. She wanted the choir to sit with the congregation, not in the choir loft, making them feel a vital part of her message. Coming from a church in rural Saskatchewan, she enjoyed settling into her new apartment in Pickering and learning all about life in Durham Region.

The worship service underwent few changes initially, but she was eager to introduce some new practices. Communion remained much the same, using two methods alternating monthly. Baptism was held monthly, and a gift of a knitted teddy and a book were presented to each family. Volunteers were encouraged to read the passages of

scripture each week. Minute for Mission became a monthly focus on the world beyond our doors.

Rev. Karpenko spoke about issues surrounding social justice and current affairs, always relating back to the word of the Lord. She introduced the Ash Wednesday service during Lent, which was very meaningful. In 2014 she also provided a Saturday afternoon service for those who wanted to attend a smaller, quieter service with prayers and meditation. During Easter week, a Saturday night vigil service was introduced. Members met in the dark and listened to readings and prayers. Lights came on at the end to signal the end of the service and the members exited quietly.

At the end of March 2013, long time custodian Lorne Alexander retired. Lorne had served as custodian for over 50 years and was a fixture at the church, cleaning and maintaining the property so that it was always ready for worship or church activities. Lorne also supported weddings and funerals and guided volunteers during the annual clean ups and when the pews were refurbished.



Lorne Alexander

Jennifer DeVocht became the new Fee for Service Contractor when Lorne retired with church volunteers taking on added responsibility for some of the work Lorne had done in the past.

Sharon Eagleson, long time Office Administrator also retired in 2013, and Catharine Ottaway became the new Office Administrator in August of that year.



Catharine Ottaway

In January 2014 Jennifer advised that she was no longer able to provide cleaning services at the church so a new Fee for Service Contractor – Cleaning Services was recruited, and we welcomed Gord Ottaway to the role in February.

In 2014 the exterior of the church building was enhanced with a new cross and a beautiful new garden planted by Sharon and Renzo Castellarin.



St. Paul's United Church 2014

On March 1st, 2015, SPUC's Senior Choir was honoured to present the North American premiere of Donald Patriquin's *Caribbean Mass* to mark the church's 65th Anniversary. The 2015 premiere was extremely well received by our congregation.



Steel Pan Musician Joy Lapps-Lewis, Percussionist AJ Fisico, Flute player Zuzana Zacharova, Guest Conductor Anna-Lynn Murphy, Director of Music Lois Craig, Composer Donald Patriquin, 2015

This joyful choral mass included the Kyrie, the Great Amen, Sanctus & Benedictus, Agnus Dei, Christ has Died, the Gloria, The New Creed and the Lord's Prayer written for soprano, alto, tenor and bass. The musical score also included piano, flute, steel drum and percussion.

Managing the church's financial health continued to be a challenge in the first half of this decade. In 2010, St Paul's income was greater than its expenses and we finished the year in a surplus position, but in the years following, the church began running a deficit each year and by 2015 that surplus was gone.

St Paul's was not alone in this challenge. The United Church of Canada had been conducting a Comprehensive Review since 2012 to look at similar challenges across the country and how congregations might faithfully respond to them as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Council recommended that the congregation endorse the proposed deficit budget in 2015 and immediately set up a Budget Task. A group of congregation members were charged

with the responsibility of communicating to the St. Paul's congregation the need for their support in reaching a Defeat the Deficit goal of \$17,500.

The communication strategy that was implemented to *Defeat the Deficit* resulted in an overwhelming support by the members of St. Paul's and at the end of May, the goal was reached. The support continued through out the summer and by the end of August our total was \$20,095.

In September 2015, SPUC council, under Rev. Karpenko's spiritual guidance embarked on a process to look at the future of our congregation. The council began looking for leaders and disciples who would join them in developing a plan for a Discernment Process including the timeline, to *Hear God's Call* amidst declining membership and challenged finances.

The goal was to work with the congregation and other stakeholders to see where we were going and how to actively work to make sure that our congregation had a future together in the rapidly growing Town of Ajax.

Based on a study by the Region of Durham Health Department, we knew that St. Paul's was located in the Downtown Ajax neighbourhood, one of 50 Health Neighbourhoods that were defined by the Region in order to monitor indicators tracking the health and wellbeing of local residents.

According to that report, Downtown Ajax had a higher population of people aged 65+, higher number of recent immigrants, lower after-tax household income, higher rate of teen pregnancy, more people in vulnerable housing situations, and higher rates of social isolation than other Durham Region neighbourhoods.

We knew we had indicators that compelled us to ask God for guidance and fortitude on how we could stay viable to support the congregation and our fellow residents.

After the Discernment Process was completed, there were three key recommendations:

- **Revitalize Our Church Life** – Increase our spiritual focus in all aspects of church life. We needed to keep God as the center of everything we do. We needed to redevelop our governance structure to become less committee oriented. We needed to actively become an invitational congregation and in doing so share the good news as Christians. We needed to provide a quiet contemplative service.
- **Repurposing our property** – We needed to conduct a feasibility study with the objectives of repurposing our property to enhance our community outreach. We needed to commit to the funding of a new lift. We needed to investigate the ability of our building to commit to environmental and energy efficiencies. We needed to engage the services of a structural engineer. We needed to review our rental application to simplify the process and gain new tenants.
- **Enhance our Community Outreach** – Investigate our ability and with the Town of Ajax and other necessary agencies institute: Programs for seniors and youth; seniors housing and affordable housing.

Council began steps to implement the recommendations from the Discernment committee.

A Lead Environment Assessment and Partnering (LEAP) was created to spearhead the beginning of the Property recommendations. The committee pulled together a list and began the process of working through that list.

The UCW were strong contributors to these projects through their own labour and the provision of funds supporting the painting and decorating of the Fellowship Room and upstairs kitchen, providing new fridges for both kitchens, redecorating the Minister's office, the Choir Room, The Peter Pos Resource Centre, the former kindergarten room, and the Narthex.

Larger capital projects, some planned, some made necessary by forces beyond our control were also completed between 2010 and 2020.

After removing the church steeple, redoing the church roof was a tremendous undertaking at a cost of \$19,000.00. The church received a loan which had to be paid back by April 2021.

Financed through a loan that needed to be paid back in five years, a "Raise the Roof Campaign" was developed which enabled congregation members to "buy" a bundle of roofing tiles for \$60.00 to pay off the loan. A painting by Gary Faulkner of the church's exterior tracked our progress and by the 2020 the loan was nearly paid off.

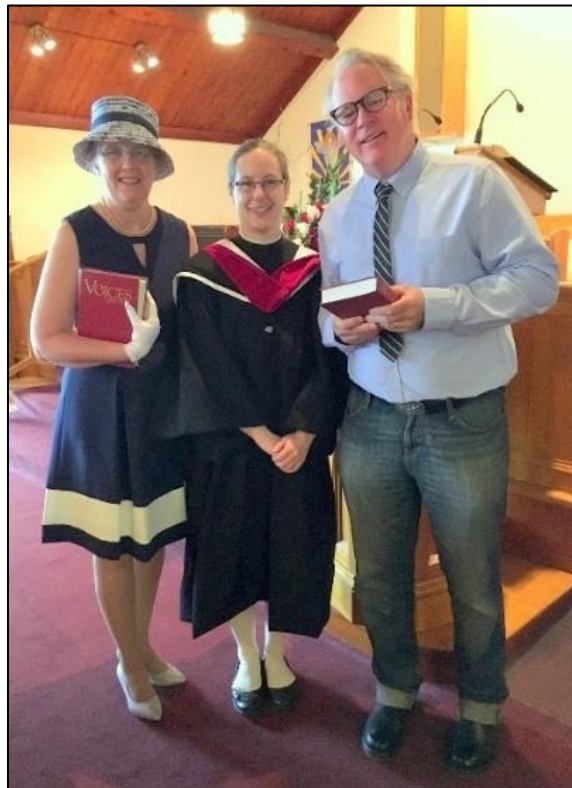
Water was the next major challenge that the church had to solve. After a lot of investigation, it was determined that the storm drains on the property had never been connected to Town lines at the back of the parking lot. Not really a problem until new housing was built on the south side of the church, in 2019 water began ponding around the building which then backed up into the church causing flooding in the basement with every major rainfall. The church received funds from church extension council and a donation from the property developer who had built houses to the south of the church to pay for the \$57,000 project to reconned the lines and efforts continue into the early 2020s to pay back the loan.

In February 2015, the St. Paul's Action and Recognition Committee (SPARC) was established to bring a little oomph to the St. Paul's congregation. SPARC's mission was to celebrate St. Paul's by planning fellowship events and recognizing the outstanding contributions of the many volunteers within the congregation. The SPARC committee met every three months to plan events for the following three months. SPARC has provided over 50 activities for members of the congregation to get together to have fun including themed games nights, line-dancing, pub nights, lunches, outings to hockey games and theatre productions, as well as time to just meet and enjoy each other's company over tea or a special after service coffee hour since they were formed. Activities were designed to be for old and young, singles and couples, families and extended families. All were welcomed.

Through the recognition perspective, SPARC celebrated the contributions of members of the congregation including members of the various church committees, community support members, former members of our church congregation and long-time members of the congregation through our Minute for Members Program.

The Christian song says that 'It only takes a spark to get a fire going and soon all those around will warm up to its glowing'. The image of people being bathed in the light and warmth of a fire continues to be the concept behind the St. Paul's Action and Recognition Committee. Together, the SPARC committee has provided the spark and the opportunities for people to come together and to be surrounded by the light of Christian fellowship and the warmth of St. Paul's friendship.

In 2017 the congregation marked Canada's 150th Anniversary by holding a series of worship services based on different decade that blended Canada's history with the history of the United Church of Canada.



Katie Cronin-Wood, Rev Cordelia and Jeff Wood mark the 50s.

Other 150th Anniversary celebrations included a High Tea in April, the Quintessential Canadian Concert in May, a Hard Times Party in June which included a buffet dinner and the fiddle music of Michael Jack and the Senior Moments, a Canadian Movie Night hosted by the Exercise Group in September, a Cowboy Steak Dinner and Square Dance hosted

by the Men's Group and the Stewardship Committee in October and a St. Paul's Great Canadian Butterscotch Contest by the SPARC group that same month, a Wreath Making workshop in November and a concert by the Young Singers followed by cider and cookies in December.



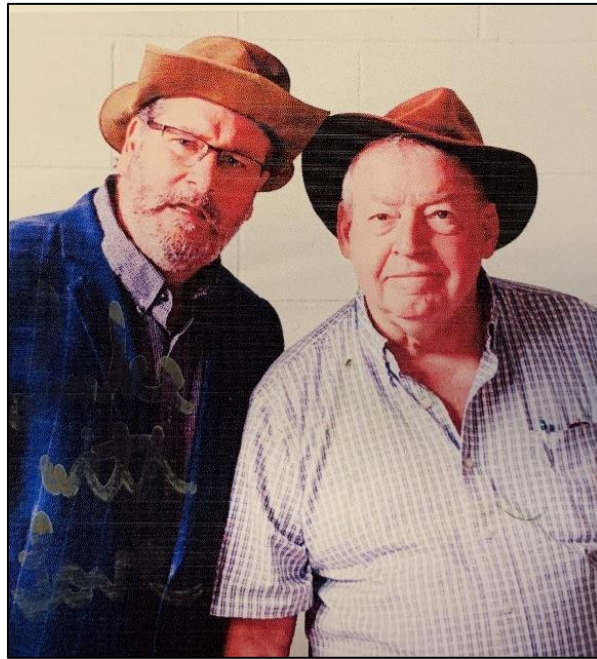
John and Nancy Gutsell, Deborah Faulkner, Dave Eagleson, Nancy Longworth and Brad Sherwin enjoy their ice cream

In addition, we also planted a new maple tree on the front lawn with the generous support of Mabel Spencer.



Steve Barrett, Renzo Castellarin, Stuart McLean, Jeff Wood and Rolly Grant plant the tree.

During the fall of 2018, Rev. Karpenko went on a sabbatical to Great Britain. Susan Reed stepped into the role of worship leader. She introduced us to two children, Nancy and Billy, and their various adventures during the story time. Her messages each Sunday morning were thought-provoking and often based on personal experience.



Stuart McLean and Michael Morrison played John and Luke, Biblical Detectives in many Gospel Player productions.

Susan also found the time to write three plays for the Gospel Hour players which were hugely popular. During this same time, Kim Lawrance provided spiritual support and guidance to our members.

The music program, under the leadership of Lois Craig, introduced a new fundraising initiative called Soups, Songs and Sweets during this decade. An annual event, it was held after worship to raise money for our local food bank.

St. Paul's strengthened its focus on communicating with the congregation and with the wider community between 2010 and 2020. A communication committee worked hard to spread the news about everything that was taking place at St. Paul's in order to retain congregants and attract new members.

This included:

- Refreshing the Epistle newsletter and sharing it via email to those with internet access.
- Launching a new website in 2018 and setting up social media channels for St. Paul's including Facebook, Twitter (X) and a dedicated YouTube channel where we posted audio and video recordings of our services.
- Developing a new logo for the church which graces all of SPUC communication materials. The logo – which includes a cross set in a teal globe, encircled by two hands with diversely coloured fingers – includes the name of the church and our tagline “The Church with the Open Arms.

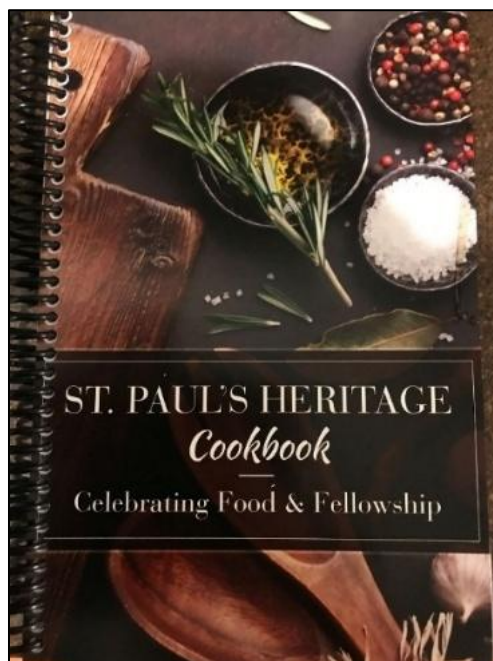


- A new information hub was developed in the Chapel space next to the sanctuary. The room was rechristened the Peter Pos Christian Resource Centre. The space has message boards, mailboxes, plus space for collecting milk bags, items for Open Cupboard, a library area, and a library area for the B’Nai Shalom community.
- With the leadership of Robert Hunt, four monitors were installed in the sanctuary which, when connected to a computer, could be used to share announcements, words of welcome, hymn text and graphics to enhance the worship service.

SPUC continued to maintain a variety of partnerships with local community groups who rented space in the church. During this decade this included the 4th Ajax Scouts, Alcohol Anonymous (AA), Ajax Garden Club, B’Nai Shalom V’Tikvah Synagogue, Brain Tumour Support Group, Durham West Probus Garden Club, Osteoporosis Support Group Ajax/Pickering and Sunshine Nursery.

Janelle Shaw was ordained in May 2017.

The UCW produced a new St. Paul's Cookbook in 2018 entitled *Celebrating Food and Fellowship*. It included recipes and tributes to current and past UCW members and the congregation and some enjoyable stories.



In the fall of 2018, members of the St. Paul's congregation noticed an increase in the number of homeless people gathering outside businesses on Harwood Road. The question was asked 'What could St. Paul's do?' and the conversation began informally during fellowship time, in UCW meetings and in the parking lot. At the same time, members of St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church began asking the same question.

In response to a Town of Ajax Council call for interested participants in a homeless task force designed to meet the direct needs of a growing number of people in Ajax facing poverty and dislocation. St. Paul's sent a representative, Karen Strong. Discussions with our local church gave us insight into what other churches were providing and what St. Paul's could do for the group of people.

In May 2019, a proposal to begin an Open Cupboard was made to council and then presented to the congregation. The premise of the Open Cupboard was to provide personal hygiene products, such as soap, toothbrushes, razors etc. and other items that would not be found at a food bank or a clothing thrift store. Both groups gave approval in principle. The Open Cupboard opened in February 2020. We had a few visitors and we were confident that it would continue to grow going forward.

Also in May 2019, recognizing that SPUC needed to prioritize its activities, Council held a retreat to help facilitate the initial draft of a Strategic plan.

The Strategic Plan consisted of three streams:

- **Spiritual Life** – Where is God Calling Us?
- **Programs and Activities** -What programs and Services are available to the congregation and the wider community?
- **Financial and Environmental Health** – What plans are we implementing to improve our financial and environmental?

Over the years St. Paul's Christian Education program was made up of many group leaders and congregation members who believed that it was important to continue learning about God, no matter what the age. It was a dedicated group of leaders who graciously donated their time and resources so that SPUC could continue to offer opportunities for learning and growth for all ages.

At the beginning of the decade, St. Paul's had several groups that made up this program: 4th Ajax Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, Messengers, Explorer, CGIT, GAPP, Nursery and Vacation Bible School. By the end of the decade, numbers had dropped in all the groups, and it was hard to find leaders, so the groups were disbanded.

At the end of this decade approached we had hosted 95 baptisms and 26 weddings.

We celebrated our 70th anniversary on March 1, 2020, with Rev. Karen Smart as our guest speaker.



Rev. Cordelia, Ajax Councillor Rob Tyler-Morin and Rev. Karen Smart

The service was followed by a buffet luncheon with an opportunity to visit with members past and present.



A lovely buffet lunch to mark our 70th anniversary

Two weeks later we went into lockdown as the church building closed its doors due to COVID-19.

Our worship committee quickly discussed several options for worship and settled on the Zoom platform. This enabled our members to join us each Sunday morning remotely via telephone or computer.



The sign was changed to alert people to our online services.

Maintaining our church community was especially important, and we enjoyed the ability to visit with friends and neighbours following the service in breakout rooms.



Rev. Cordelia leads a service on Zoom

During that time, the choir had to be creative as well. They still meet weekly, but rehearsed with microphones turned off, all alone in their homes. Lois led the choir through the warm-ups, played the hymn on her piano and sent out recordings each week with which to practice.



Thursday night choir practice on Zoom

Then each person in the choir recorded their own voice on an audio file, sent it to Pam George in her home in London, Ontario where she magically transferred those files to one recording which was played back into the service on Sunday morning.

SPUC's innovative responses to not being able to gather in person continued to be demonstrated when members of the UCW reached out asking if people wanted to share the baking and crafts they had been doing in lockdown at an online market. Bids came in through the telephone and then were safely delivered by volunteers.

Rev. Cordelia hosted weekly Drop in Chats via Zoom and we celebrated special events – including our end of year New Year's Celebration – by toasting each other through our computer screens.

Council meetings also moved online, and a new eblast/NewsFlash was introduced with the Office Administrator sending out informative emails to congregation members to keep them updated on our shared COVID-19 response and the impact on church activities. With everyone “locked down” and staying in their own social bubbles, volunteers stepped up to make weekly phone calls to everyone to check in and share a friendly conversation.

SPUC’s community partners who had been using our space were also impacted by the pandemic. With the building closed they were unable to hold their meetings or run their businesses.

After 40 years, Sunshine Nursery School closed its doors in September 2020. Sunshine Nursery and staff had been part of family for decades and it was sad to see them go.

The COVID-19 pandemic was something that we had never dealt with before. At the close of the decade, we were unsure what the next decade would bring.

CHAPTER 6 – RISE UP

The impact of the pandemic continued into 2021. Worship services, church groups and Council continued to meet online and telephone outreach to congregation members was well received.

The UCW quickly adapted to becoming virtual holding a “Love is in the Air” online market in February.

By March 2021 Council began planning for a September reopening of the church building and a Reopening Group was established.

In early May Lois Craig shared the bittersweet news that she would be retiring as of August 29th after 26 years as the Director of Music at SPUC. The Ministry and Personnel Committee began recruiting her replacement.



Lois left a legacy.

SPUC partnered with the Town of Ajax to celebrate Louise Johnson’s 100th birthday in June. The Town created the Louise Johnson Parkette, just north of the 401 on the east side of Harwood. Rev. Cordelia attended the celebration and presented a plaque to Louise to mark the event.



Louise Johnson's 100th birthday celebration

Also, in June conversations began on a partnering opportunity with St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church (STPC). Prior to this, St. Timothy's had their own church building at 97 Burcher Rd. but due to a declining membership, increased costs and Covid, the congregation had decided to sell their church building and seek out a new place to worship. It became very apparent when seeking out a new location, that St. Timothy's already had an existing relationship with St. Paul's that went back many decades with shared summer services and shared services at Easter along with the former Anglican church, Holy Trinity. Dave Eagleson and Catharine Ottaway took the lead in conversations with STPC.

At the same time a new tenant called Impact Village expressed interest in renting the lower level of the church for the summer. Impact Village, an organization that supports interactions between small groups of therapists and children with difficult behaviours, continues to be a tenant to this day.

By September the church began to open to staff and some church groups.

Jennifer Cree was now the Fee for Service Contractor – Cleaning Services after Gord Ottaway retired earlier in the year and she, Catharine Ottaway, Sharon Castellarin and Dave Eagleson led the Purge/Cleaning Committee which saw volunteers conduct an extensive cleaning of the building and the removal of long-kept items that were no longer in use. Extensive upgrades were also done to the basement washrooms and the hallway outside the kitchen.

In preparation for hosting hybrid worship services in the new year – in person and online – the church’s WiFi system was upgraded and volunteers from SPUC and STPC began working together to create an integrated audio and video system that could support the livestreaming of worship services.

The Finance Committee kept track of the impact of the pandemic on our budget. A technology grant from the federal government helped to offset the purchase of new equipment to support our online activities and the COVID Emergency Relief Wage Subsidy program resulted in a small surplus at the end of the year.

In January 2022 Ministry and Personnel announced the successful recruitment of Michael Morgan as our new Director of Music.



Michael Morgan arrived in February 2022.

By February 2022 STPC had started holding their services at 65 Kings Crescent and the timing of worship services changed with SPUC starting our service at 9:30 a.m. and STPC starting at 11:30 a.m. STPC’s leadership has said that the move has been a blessing for the congregation as they have been able to continue their ministry and support of the church community in south Ajax. They add that the congregation is deeply grateful for the hospitality and cooperation of the people and minister of St. Paul’s United church. “You have made us feel very welcome.”

In March the choir resumed in person choir practices, fully masked, in preparation for our own first hybrid worship service on March 27th.



In person choir practices resume.

The hybrid services were well received. People returned safely in person and others from the congregation choose to join via Zoom which allowed them to see and hear what was happening in the sanctuary.

The SPUC/STPC Audio Visual and Information Technology team quickly learned how to run a new digital sound board and cameras to share the service while it was happening and then upload it to the church's YouTube channel for people to view afterwards.

With the arrival of STPC, we were also able to share in the responsibility for the summer schedule with Rev. Karpenko and Michael Morgan leading services in July and Rev. Jeffreys and Nick Reynolds leading services in August.

In the fall of 2022 Rev. Cordelia began a restorative leave and Worship and Music worked hard to schedule supply ministers which included Susan Reed and Cathy Shaw.

The UCW was able to resume their in-person Christmas Market in 2022 and the attendance was overwhelming.

In November SPUC and STPC held a joint fundraising event. "Music Unites" saw STPC's Music Director Nick Reynolds and his band provide a well received rock and roll concert, followed by a dinner hosted by SPUC.

Music Unites!

St Timothy's and St. Paul's come together
for a night of Fun, Food and Music

Featuring:
Midnight Council



With Special Performances by:
David Rector & Don Macleod
AND
Frances Townend

Saturday November 19th
Supper: 5pm (Doors open at 4:45)
Concert: 7pm (Doors open at 6:30)

Supper: \$15 each
Concert: \$15 each

Prize Draw tickets will be available for \$20 each at the door

Join us at St. Paul's United Church
65 King's Crescent, Ajax

Tickets available every Sunday or by
contacting the church at
905-683-4740
or Nick Reynolds at 905-431-9204





Hear the Angel Voices

Script by Susan Reed

Sunday, December 11th
9:30 am

St. Paul's United Church
65 Kings Crescent
Ajax, ON
905.683.4740

Join the Choir and Congregation
of St. Paul's United Church, Ajax
for this dramatic twist on a
traditional Service of Lessons
and Carols.

On December 11th, SPUC held a special service called *Hear the Angel Voices*. Written by Susan Reed, it was a dramatic twist on the traditional Service of Lessons and Carols. We had angels, we had music, we had costumes and heavenly clouds and people were able to attend in person and online.

Our Christmas Services were held in partnership with STPC, a tradition that was long standing over the Easter season and now was supported by STPC's use of the building at 65 Kings Crescent.

As Rev. Karpenko's Restorative Leave continued, the Ministry and Personnel Committee under the leadership of Marie Nesbitt worked to secure additional support which saw Rev Li Armstrong provide pastoral care and Rev. Duncan Jeffrey from STPC help out when he could.

Rev. Kim Lawrance agreed to act as SPUC's Volunteer Associate Minister to lead weddings and funerals and provide coverage for Rev. Karpenko when needed and our Field Placement Student Susan Sheremeta, from the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto, helped coordinate and conduct in person and phone visits with the Lay Visitors Team and led Bible Study.



Rev. Kim Lawrance



Grace Sheaves, Grace Muzala and Susan Sheremeta at Bible Study

The masking policy in place during the height of COVID was gradually rescinded from mandatory to encouraged.

Building improvements continued with a much-needed upgrade to the north stairwell again with a generous donation from Mabel Spencer, the installation of a new shed in the parking lot, repairs to the furnace and the exterior lighting.

In 2023, the Dinner Ladies held three dinners to raise funds for different repair projects in the church.

An evening of music to support the Mission and Service Fund was coordinated by Michael Morgan in the fall. The evening was a musical tribute to Broadway and featured Joshua Clemenger and his accompanist Ivan Jovanovic.

A number of congregation members passed on in 2023 including Gladys Snelling (May 18th), Robert Hunt (September 9th) and Bill Miller (September 18th). They and so many others made significant contributions to the life of SPUC and they are missed.

SPARC organized many events throughout the year including a trip to the Capital Theatre in Port Hope in August to see *The Little Shop of Horrors*.

The combined choirs of SPUC and STPC presented *Heaven Rejoices* in December. A luncheon hosted by the Worship and Music Committee followed the service and 140 people were in attendance.

Setting up The Gathering Place for functions was made much easier in 2024 with the purchase of new plastic folding tables. A new large flat screen TV and rolling table were purchased for The Gathering Place so events could also be livestreamed downstairs or better supported with slides.

In the summer of 2024, Rev. Karpenko had to take an extended leave to respond to a family medical crisis. Thankfully the medical crisis and her Restorative Leave were both resolved in late in 2024 and she was able to return to her full-time role at St. Paul's in November.

Renzo and Sharon Castellarin renovated the kitchen, and the bathroom on the sanctuary level as well as the bathroom upstairs to make our space more inviting. Dave Eagleson, Jennifer Cree and Catharine Ottaway continued to work together on supporting our tenants and Dave Eagleson also oversaw a number of building upgrades related to lighting and security.

The SPARC group was active in 2024 hosting a sequence afternoon and pizza dinner in May, providing muffins for the congregation meeting in June, an ice cream treat after a worship service in July, a trip to the Capital Theatre in July, recognizing Bill Sheaves for all his regional work in September and SPARC'ing the whole congregation with treats in December.

Doris Tietze worked with B'Nai and STPC to create a Community of Faith alcove in the narthex. It highlights the faith partnerships between our three congregations. Catharine Ottaway also partnered with Rev. Barbara Duguid from STPC to produce a joint photo directory which included photos and contact information for both congregations so we can get to know each other a little better.

Food insecurity in our community and around the world continued to be a challenge. Through Mission and Service, SPUC again supported the Salvation Army Food Bank on Kings Crescent. Food donations were collected at St. Paul's on the third Sunday of every month and then delivered to the Food Bank. In 2024, Mission and Service also highlighted the work of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a partnership of 15 Canadian churches and

agencies working together to end global hunger. The United Church of Canada has an account at the Foodgrains Bank that they draw from to provide food assistance during emergencies around the world.

Fall also saw the introduction of a new online database and church management system called Breeze which allows for easy planning of worship services by all those involved, integrates the giving and membership databases into one system, and simplifies the sending out mass e-mails. Rev. Karpenko, Dorothy Wilkens and Catharine Ottaway worked hard to install and learn the new software and are continuing to onboard new users.

Music continued to be an important part of our life at SPUC in 2024 and a large number of people, congregants and new visitors alike, attended our December *Night of Miracles* Christmas cantata at the end of the year.

SPUC also had some other fantastic fund-raising activities throughout the year. The Purdy's Chocolate campaign was a huge success. And the UCW hosted another very successful Christmas Market which received very high praise from both vendors and those who attended. The Dig Down Deep campaign continued to receive generous support throughout the year as well, as we continued paying off our sewer loan. In fact, we raised almost as much as we paid in principal and interest on the sewer loan throughout the year, which is a real testament to the faithfulness of St. Paul's. And, as we mark our 75th anniversary, we are well on track to having that loan paid off by early 2026.

CONCLUSION

We have come through a lot as a church and a congregation.

We were founded by a community of believers who came to Ajax to support the war effort, we shared what we could with refugees from Vietnam and Afghanistan, we quickly adapted to new and innovative ways to stay together during COVID and now we are collectively navigating our way through the uncertainty created by political change in countries around the world and here at home.

We have been blessed with the teachings from many ministers, the support and talent of invaluable staff and dedicated volunteers and leaders. Hundreds of people – young and old – have attended our church and have created the memories that we treasure to this day.

Whether it was their time, talent or treasure, we are richer for all those who have or still call SPUC their home.

The story of SPUC is not static, it is always evolving. We are a place of worship, a place of learning and a place of friendship.

“With God’s help and guidance St. Paul’s United Church can be a force of good, its people, in the community that it serves, and in the church it represents.”