



St. Paul's

Herald

December 2023

Curtains Up – A Joyous Production

By *Hélène Ellison*

A 2020 article in Psychology Today, written by Graham C. L. Davey, states in its opening paragraph, "It's not surprising that there is (also) growing evidence that negative news can affect our mental health, notably in the form of increased anxiety, depression and acute stress reactions."

Most of us will acknowledge the validity of the above statement, but my job is not to dwell on negative vibes, but rather to celebrate and praise the efforts of a group of individuals, mostly St. Paul's members, who gave us the perfect tonic to escape the bleaker side of life for almost two hours on Sunday, November 5, with the joyous production of Curtains Up!

Curtains Up was the brain child of Wendy Hodgkins, who shared that the idea of this production came to her about a year ago. Beginning in June, potential acts were vetted for suitability, and Wendy continued to use her formidable powers of persuasion (she calls it "gentle nudging") to bolster the number of performers and to add variety to the offerings.



The result was a delightful and varied talented cast ranging in age from a seven-year-old granddaughter of a member to a 95-year-old congregant, both of whom blew us away with their performances.

Who knew such a young person could be so confident in sharing her beautiful voice, or that an older person would be able to carry off reciting from memory the whole of *The Legend of Sam McGee*?



A terrific opening number, *Hymn for a Sunday Evening*, a nod to the Ed Sullivan variety show format performed by an age diverse quartet, set the upbeat tone for the afternoon. Next up was a bag piper who set our toes a-tapping, followed by concert pieces, classical music, folk music,

popular music, show tunes and more, either sung or played on a variety of instruments. Poetry recitation and some monologues were thrown into the mix for good measure, and kept the audience enthralled and impressed. One piece, performed by the Kelso Trio, even had some members of the audience up and dancing.

Attendance was very good, and what better way to invite the community at large into our church space? The comments this writer heard at the end were all so positive, with one person remarking on our good fortune to be able to spend a blissful afternoon in such a beautiful, peaceful place, listening, and I mean, really listening, to the lyrics of What A Wonderful World.

Prior to the all cast closing number, "I'm So Glad We Had This Time Together", Wendy acknowledged and thanked the many people who made Curtains Up a reality and a success. Thank you, Wendy, for coming up with the idea,

coordinating the production with such attention to detail, and for being such a gregarious and enthusiastic emcee.

All I can say is **wow!** Oh, and

you might want to get the organ tuner in after Judy put the instrument through its paces with Variations On Ode To Joy.



And from the producer...

Working with the performers and crew was extremely rewarding for me. To see the individual parts actually gel together to become a whole was so satisfying. I had a *blast!* And if that wasn't enough, although it was never anticipated that Curtains Up! would be a money-maker, we actually garnered \$1466.00 in free-will offerings. Wendy



St. Paul's Begins 2024 Planning

By John Challinor

Church Council, the Board of Trustees and the committee leadership of St. Paul's United Church gathered early on a recent Saturday morning to review the major activities of 2023 and begin the planning process for 2024.

About 20 Council, Board and committee members convened at the church to share 2023 activities, so far, and discuss current plans for 2024.

Current planning supports three key matters identified by Church Council Chairman John Challinor II during his remarks at the 2023 Annual General Meeting of the church in April:

1. The leadership of St. Paul's must be focused on recruiting more members to the church;
2. The church's leadership must continue to exercise fiscal responsibility, with particular emphasis on stewardship in 2023 and 2024; and
3. The church's leadership must encourage volunteerism by its members that is in balance with their personal and professional lives.

Future planning will have consideration for three key directions established during the 2023 church planning session in May. They are, as follows:

1. Deploying the historic Sanctuary as a concert space for the regular presentation of affordable music

- events and other entertainment for the benefit of church members and the larger local community;
2. The development and implementation of a Sunday School program; and
3. Affirmation by the church that gender and sexuality are gifts of God and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome.

Church Treasurer Werner Anders kicked off the meeting presentations with a financial update and a proposed stewardship plan that will begin in December 2023 and continue through 2024. As of the end of October, at the current run rate, revenues were forecast to be \$88 000 behind the annualized budget for the year. Donations are expected to increase substantially in December and, through a stewardship initiative that month, the church leadership remains hopeful that members will respond, in terms of end-of-year givings, and close the gap.

Assisted by Rev. Brenna Baker, who attends St. Paul's and works in stewardship at the United Church of Canada, Werner discussed stewardship and its three key components: inspire, invite and thank. The church's program will begin in December and continue for the foreseeable future, founded on these three principles.

Werner and the Finance Committee will be preparing the 2024 budget in late December and presenting it for approval by Church Council in January 2024. Werner asked all committee chairs to forward their financial requirements to him by the beginning of December.



Worship Chair Jo McDuffe shared her team's current and future plans, including a

recommendation that the Annex services end before the year ends and, further, that Elijah Calara's musical skills be included in the 11 a.m. service, and specifically in support of children. Jo highlighted the work that is being done in the area of pastoral care as well as support by the church more generally in the community.

Membership Chair Glenda Calara discussed the now updated membership list and plans for Easter Messy Church in 2024 as well as participation with Milton Downtown Business Association and Milton Chamber of Commerce in those Main Street events next year that will raise the profile of the church with the community.

Property Chair Brent Tyrer reviewed the repairs and improvements that were made to the church in 2023. Brent and John will be updating the SPUC Capital Projects Report in December for distribution and review by Church Council and the Board of Trustees in January 2024. The Rose Window project will be included in that review and will be the major capital project undertaken by the church in 2024.

FET Chair Kristi Rowe talked about 2024 plans associated with bringing music and other entertainment performers back to the church on at least three occasions, so far. The FET team also plans to host music activities on the front lawn of the church during the Farmers' Market downtown next summer while also hosting an information booth at the market.

Mission & Outreach Chair Peter Anderson discussed the continued donation of \$6 100 annually to those previously identified organizations in need in the community. Peter requested that there be regular communications to members about filling the food donation baskets at the church now and during the Christmas season to assist those families in need locally.

M&P Chair Shelley Doucet highlighted the quality and commitment being demonstrated every day by the church's employees, who are responsible for administration, custodial duties,

music, rentals and the spiritual leadership at St. Paul's.

Communications Chair John Challinor II discussed the various communications vehicles used by the church to reach out to its members and the larger community. He said the teams responsible for the Bulletin, the Herald, Facebook, the website and community media outreach are doing a very good job, but they require more content. He urged all committee chairs to reach out to the communications team whenever they have information they wish to share publicly. John is going to work with Brent and Stephen Hurley to get audio recordings of the Sunday services on all of the church's communications platforms, where applicable.

Choir Chair Karen Davidson updated all present about the latest and future activities of the choir, including preparation for the Christmas season and recognition of retiring choir members. Brent offered to investigate how the church's sound technology could be improved in support of the needs of the choir.

UCW Chair Carol Kerr shared the current and future plans of United Church Women, including its improving attendance at monthly meetings, its successful fundraising activities and future community donation plans.

The next church planning session will take place on Saturday May 18, 2024, at 9 a.m. in the community hall.



A delicious Pot Luck lunch was enjoyed following the World Wide Communion service on October 1.

Christian Education is Open to Everyone

By *Hélène Ellison*

Anyone who is under the impression that Christian Education is solely associated with Sunday School and children's programs has not been paying attention to the variety of adult education opportunities that have been offered since Rev. Christina began her Ministry at St. Paul's, Milton in September 2022.

We have been exposed to an Angel workshop, a prayer study, weekly ongoing bible study of the lectionary gospel reading, a guided meditation series, and the now completed introductory three-week Ethical Wills workshop. These were conducted either in person, via Zoom or offered in both formats depending on participants' preferences. Some happened early morning, mid-morning, or in the early evening, so there was no lack of opportunity to take advantage of these beneficial and thought-provoking exercises. What a gift to all who seek to broaden their faith and to understand more clearly the messages contained in bible passages! Rev. Christina has nurtured our spirits and minds with these educational opportunities, and for this, we thank her.

The most recent three-week Ethical wills workshop was based on a book titled Ethical Wills: Putting Your Values on Paper, by Barry K. Baines M.D. Sharon Pyle assisted Christina as the Program Coordinator, and Rev. Christina was the Facilitator. We met on three consecutive Thursday mornings to learn about ethical wills.

By now, you are probably wondering what an ethical will is. "Ethical wills are a way of passing on personal values, beliefs, blessings, and advice to future generations, future blessings, moral directives, and burial instructions, and to impart information of a personal and historic nature." This description sounds pretty personal, revealing and scary, but the sensitive and

careful nature in which the workshop objectives were planned, along with the variety of sharing methods and "holy manners" we were encouraged to practise, soon had the participants actively and confidently engaging in the exercises.

We used reflection, journaling with topic prompts, reading relevant biblical and other passages, one-on-one discussion, building a group chart and sharing a quote or saying which held particular meaning to us. We were encouraged to reflect on our lives, what we value most, our beliefs, people and events in our lives that were impactful, and our hopes for the future for our children, grandchildren, or others close to us. Now that we have some basic knowledge and guidance, it is up to us to decide how we wish to address our thoughts and ideas; perhaps an individual letter to one or several family members, or a directive outlining our thoughts and wishes.

It's a work in progress, and I can only speak for myself about how powerful and positive the workshop was. When more study opportunities are offered in the future, consider taking part. You may be surprised by your response, by the way you become engaged and more comfortable with sharing and actively participating. The key is that we, as the engaged learners, are thinking and participating, rather than just letting words and facts flow around us.





When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us. So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.” (Luke 2:15, 16)

Dear Friends of Christmas,

“Christmas is coming!” The message of advent rings out in the streets and online! It has been tweeted, posted, and pinned. It can be heard on music playlists, in holiday movies, in classrooms, and here at St. Paul’s! This is the message the people in Jesus’ time gathered to hear. For some, that message came to them gathered on a hill under a clear starry-night sky illuminated by legions of heavenly angels singing, “good news of great joy.” Some who hear the news about God’s birth into humanity react with fear and tribulation, while others with joy and elation. Sometimes a bit of both. Sometimes, people hear the message with a sense of indifference or annoyance. Imagine what you would be like if the love of Jesus had never been born in your life!

The Babe of Bethlehem, the Christ Child, is the most precious gift any of us can ever receive. Jesus’ gift of eternal life is one that can never be

matched, only graciously and joyously accepted. And in our acceptance of the message, we mirror God’s light and Love to others, so that those living in darkness may come to know Jesus as their friend and saviour.

Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to begin anew your prayerful relationship with Jesus and with your church community. I extend to all of you an open, grateful heart of welcome this season and always! Together, let us go with the haste of the shepherds towards the promise of hope fulfilled in a life lived in faith of Christ’s coming.

May the Holy Child, born in Bethlehem, bless each one of you at this blessed time of promise! Merry Christmas!

In hope, peace, joy, and love,

Rev. Christina Crawford

Advent and Christmas Eve services

- Advent 1 December 3** Intergenerational service with communion, White Gift Sunday
- Advent 2 December 10** Community Christmas Pageant – everyone gets a part! Costumes provided
- Advent 3 December 17** 11 am – A service of music featuring St. Paul’s Choir
3 pm – Christmas Carol sing along. Join Milton Concert Band and Milton community for a time of joyful carolling.
- Advent 4 December 24** 11 am - Family Christmas Eve service featuring music with the St. Paul’s Choir and the Brass Ensemble
6 pm - traditional Christmas Eve service with communion

Lord's Prayer

(paraphrase written by the Annex worshippers October 2023)

Loving Guardian, who is watching over us. Let Your Name be whispered in the breathless awe. We pray for the time when all live as You taught us to. In God's perfect time. In this life and in the after- life. Give us strength throughout the day. Let us not step on others. As we bow down before the humanity of others. Help us to resist the urge to live only for ourselves. Help us stay on the right path. The love, patience, and kindness are yours to the end.

St. Paul's Receives Additional Provincial Grant

St. Paul's United Church will complete the installation of its new security system by the end of November as a result of a \$7500 Province of Ontario Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant it recently received.

The church was notified of its successful application in early November by provincial officials. The church had received a \$10 000 grant in 2022 through the provincial program to begin the work.

Church property committee chairman Brent Tyrer will work with a local supplier to complete the work, which includes the installation of additional security

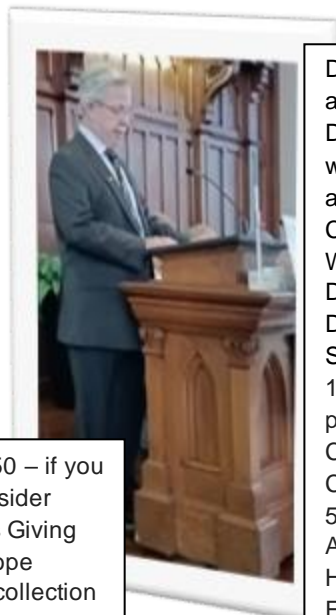
cameras and updated security software and hardware.

Special thanks to Brent for identifying the need and obtaining a quote for the work, to John Challinor II for making application to the province of Ontario, to the staff at the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Multiculturalism for their great assistance, and to Andrea Boyke for coordinating letters of support from the leadership of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Church of Christ and Milton Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Ontario Cabinet Minister and Milton Member of Provincial Parliament, the Honourable Parm Gill, will join with the membership of St. Paul's at an upcoming post-church service coffee to review the new security system, once the installation is complete.



150 envelopes with amounts from \$1 to \$150 – if you have a little extra change/cash, please consider donating it to St. Paul's in the Spontaneous Giving Box. Just write your name or church envelope number on the outside and place it on the collection plate.



Don Meads read an article that his father, Don Meads, had written and presented at Brechin United Church in 2009 on What Remembrance Day Means to Me. Don Meads Senior served from 1941-1945 as a private with the Royal Canadian Signal Corp. attached to the 5th. Canadian Armoured Division. He served in Italy, France, Belgium and Holland.



The Sunday School group showed their creativity on Sunday, October 29.



At the Grace Anglican Fall Fayre on October 14, several members of the UCW sold books and puzzles as well as delicious homemade pickles and preserves generously donated by Wendy Hodgkins.



Meat Pie Sale – another fundraiser of the UCW.



Taylor Henderson spoke on the Food for Life program at the October meeting of the UCW.

At the November meeting of the UCW, Carol Kerr thanked Sue Butson for the many ways she has supported our group over the years. We all wish Sue happiness as she returns to her home in Mitchell. Thanks to the success of the tables at Grace Anglican Fall Fayre and the sale of meat pies, the UCW was able to make year-end monetary donations to the Townsend Smith Foundation, Food for Life, and The Salvation Army Food Bank as well as a donation of gift cards to St. Paul's Benevolent Fund.



The 167th Anniversary of St. Paul's United was celebrated on October 29.



St. Paul's Worship committee led the service at Birkdale Retirement Home on November 15. Stephen Hurley was the pianist and he has also agreed to be on the rotation of speakers at the bi-weekly chapel services.



St. Paul's said a fond farewell (with sandwiches and cake, of course) to Sue Butson following the service on October 29. Sue has been a welcoming and important presence at St. Paul's for many years, singing in the choir and serving on or chairing most of our committees, including being Chair of Council. She also personally delivered the Herald to many who were unable to attend services and did not have access to a computer.

A fabulous St. Paul's team prepared and served the meal at the November 2nd Community Dinner. This is hosted by Grace Anglican Church on the first Thursday of every month and is open to everyone in the community. The food is provided by Food for Life and the free will offering taken at the dinners are then donated back to Food for Life.

