

# **Bells Corners United Church 2023 Annual Report**



**Bells Corners United Church**

**REJOICE, RENEW, RESPOND, REACH OUT**

# 2023 Annual Report

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## Office Information Bells Corners United Church

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### 2023 CHURCH BOARD

Minister	Rev. Kim Vidal
Minister	Rev. Lorrie Lowes
Chair	Rotating
Past Chair	Jordan Berard
Chair Elect	
Secretary	Will Wightman
Ministry & Personnel	David Stafford
Treasurer	Ross Mutton
Members at Large	Norm Pound Ellen Boynton Susan Young
EOORC	Nicole Beaudry Desna Sulway
Youth Consultation	
Young Adult Consultation	Rev. Lorrie Lowes

## Sunday Worship Services

Worship Service at 10:00 am with Youth Group, Sunday school programs and Crib Nursery.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Crib Nursery:	0, 2 year olds
Preschool:	3, 4 year olds
Beginners:	5, 6 year olds
Primary:	Grades 2, 3
Junior/Intermediate:	Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Youth Group:	Grade 9 & higher; confirmation & post-confirmation

## Sacraments and Other Special Services

**Communion:** 4 to 5 times per year.

**Baptism:** Held during Sunday service. The Minister meets with the families involved and an orientation session is held.

**Joining the Church:** Joining the Church family is accomplished by the following methods: Transfer of Membership on profession of faith, after attendance at confirmation classes or discussion with the Minister or, in the case of inactive membership, by Profession of faith.

**Weddings:** Couples will meet with the Minister twice during the period of preparation.

**Celebration of Life:** Families may have funerals or memorial services in the church or the Minister will conduct the service in the Funeral Home.

**Pastoral & Spiritual Care:** Visitation of members and friends of the church, in hospital, retirement homes and long-term care facilities or home by the Ministers and Friendly Visitors.

**Pastoral Counseling:** The Ministers may offer pastoral counseling as required.

**Youth Confirmation:** One of the high points in the worship life of our congregation is Confirmation Sunday, when the new members publicly confess their faith and are welcomed to the fellowship of our church. Confirmands meet to explore issues of faith and church life as background to their decision. For more info please speak to the Ministers.

## Church Groups

### Choirs:

- **Christian Generation Singers (CGS):** Kindergarten - Grade 5, Thursday evenings at 6:00 pm
- **Bell Canto:** Grade 6 and up, Thursday - 6:40 pm
- **Choir:** Thursday - 7:15 pm
- **Men's Chorus:** Sunday mornings from time to time

### United Church Women (UCW)

- **Unit 2:** Leader - Ellen Boynton (828-3820); Meet the second Monday of each month, 2:00 pm in the homes of members.
- **Unit 3:** Leader - Jean Watson (829-3463); Meet the second Monday of each month, 7:30 pm in the homes of members.
- **Unit 4:** Leader – Desna Sulway (828-7628)/Alison Bridgewater (726-9099) Meet the second Monday of each month in the homes of members.

**Adult Learning:** A variety of groups announced throughout the year which meet to develop fellowship and biblical awareness and social concerns. This includes a weekly lectionary group, adult membership class, advent & lent studies.

**Adult Dancing Spirit:** Liturgical dance group meets monthly on Sunday evenings at the church.

**Coffee & Friends:** Thursdays 9:15 - 11:15 am. Fall & Winter sessions are held, each eight weeks long. It offers a varied program to help you meet some new friends, learn some new skills, resolve some problems, belong to a group of caring people.

**Men's Club:** Meets once a week for coffee mornings and from time to time for an evening meal and guest speaker.

**Book Club:** Meets on the third Wednesday afternoon of each month.

**Victoria's Quilts:** Meet on the last Wednesday of the month in the evening and every second Monday of the month in the afternoon.

## Minister's Message

Dear friends at BCUC,

As a congregation, we started and finished 2023 with new enthusiasms and hopeful initiatives. 2023 has been a whirlwind of activity as always at Bells Corners United Church, which includes many highlights.

One of my personal highlights was my sabbatical leave from mid-May until the end of August. The sabbatical time gave me the space needed for self-rest, self-care and self-engagement in rich and meaningful ways. It also gave me the opportunity to reflect on my role as BCUC's minister with a refreshed way of looking at my vocational call. It made me intentionally conscious of self-care and wellness. I viewed the sabbatical period as pulling off into a "rest area"— a time to pause and stop for a while as we continue the journey of our ministry together--a journey that has now continued for ten years and counting.

During my sabbatical leave, I attended the Festival of Homiletics online in the second week of May. The Festival of Homiletics is a week-long annual preaching conference that brings together clergy and lay participants to listen and be inspired by a wide variety of outstanding preachers, theologians and seminary professors. The theme for last year's festival was "Preaching Hope for A Weary World", responding to the challenges and hardships during the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic plus the many protests, the ongoing wars, gun violence, climate change and the political world. Through the Festival, my faith was renewed, and my soul refreshed, and I hope to continue to share my renewed enthusiasm with you all.

In June, I attended the reVITALize Conference in Halifax, NS. This is an annual gathering for ministry leaders and lay people to get together, to be refreshed, to learn some new things, to be supported, to build a stronger community of faith and to get inspired. In the same month, I co-organized with the Rev. Jenni Leslie a Day Clergy Retreat with the theme, Healing Connections, held at Kitchissippi United Church. The program included worship and music, reflections, embodied prayers, conversations, a meal and a guided forest meditation.

From the final days of July to the first week of August, Ken and I had the privilege of attending the Clergy Renewal Week at Chautauqua Institution in New York State. Chautauqua Institution is a not-for-profit, 750-acre community on Chautauqua Lake in southwestern New York State, 45 minutes from Buffalo and two hours from Rochester. The institution is dedicated to the exploration of the best in human values and the enrichment of life through a program that explores the important religious, social and political issues of our times; stimulates provocative, thoughtful involvement of individuals and families in creative response to such issues; and promotes excellence and creativity in the appreciation, performance and teaching of the arts. The Clergy Renewal Week was held from July 29-August 5 and hosted by the Christian organization, International Order of King's Daughters and Sons (IOKDS). The theme of the week was "Life of Literature." I attended several lectures and worship services and evening performances. It was a wonderful experience for me and Ken!

Visiting other churches during my sabbatical leave gave me the opportunity to sit in the pew as a worshiper outside BCUC. It also gave me the opportunity to learn what ministries each church was doing that were different from BCUC. I attended worship services at Riverside, Emmanuel, Knox and Stittsville.

Traveling time with family was a highlight as well. We visited family and friends in Southern California and Florida and a quick visit to Boston, MA. Most valuable of all was simply the chance to slow down and rest and listen/feel for God's presence in myriad ways. I had rich and unrushed times of prayer, morning devotions, readings, some writing and focusing on daily health & wellness through gardening, walking, running on the treadmill, Tai-Chi and a daily napping time!

While I was away during my sabbatical leave, the life and ministry of BCUC were under the able leadership of Rev. Lorrie Lowes and the many volunteers who stepped up to help in a number of ways. Upon my return in September, the highlights of my sabbatical leave were shared with the congregation through an Asian Dinner on September 25 with about 80 attendees who came to enjoy a meal prepared by the Vidal sisters.

The ministry of worship remains an integral part of the life of BCUC. I am so blessed to be part of a faith community that provides a myriad of worship experiences which are nurturing, inspiring, engaging and intergenerational. Thanks to the many volunteers, young and old alike, who offered their gifts of time, talent and treasures that have made each worship service faith-filled, creative and stimulating.

Christian Education was very much alive at BCUC in 2023! Our Sunday School is thriving, thanks to the leadership of Rev. Lorrie and many volunteers. The UP Group was revived through the assistance and support of Rev. Tamara Connors, Dana Ducette and Kael Fowler. In October, Progressive Learning Circle hosted a learning event and invited two speakers, the Rev. Teresa Burnett-Cole and the Rev. Tony Snow who engaged their listeners around indigenous issues. Thanks to the members of the PLC Team, the event was a success. In spring, the Seekers Group studied and discussed the book by Elaine Pagels, 'Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas'. In November and early December, the group gathered again and discussed the book by co-authors Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, 'Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of this World to Crucifixion and Empire'. In addition, The Lectionary Group continued to meet on a regular basis every Tuesday and to discuss the biblical

passages of the upcoming Sunday sermon. This group provides me and Rev. Lorrie's insights, illustrations and the diverse interpretations of scripture which have helped in crafting our Sunday sermons.

The Pastoral & Spiritual Care Team continued to offer visits through phone calls, emails, short personal friendly visits and by sending cards. The team held simultaneous Wednesday prayer circles at 8 pm in the comfort of their homes lifting prayers for those who requested prayers and those in long-term care. The team also participated in a series of Zoom Learning Events about Care for the Aging and co-organized a Healing Service during Advent.

The Stewardship Campaign was held in midwinter and fall in 2023. It provided an opportunity for all of us to be reminded of our responsibility as faithful stewards of our time, talents and treasures and the whole of creation. Although the overall results of the campaign fell short compared to other years, we were able to move on and closed the year with financial stability. Thanks to all the givers, volunteers and supporters.

We also continued to support the faith bridge-building relationship with the Jami Omar, St. Martin de Porres and Christ Church Anglican. We enjoyed two gatherings at the Jami Omar mosque in the fall with a sumptuous dinner and inspiring speakers.

Despite the sad reality that we had a number of deaths in 2023, namely Helen Jol, Bridget MacNeill, Betty Bentley, Alan MacDonald, June McLean, Jan Mitchell, Bill Wilson, Marg Creates, Ida Blackwell, Doug Noble, Doug MacKechnie and Marg Smith, we had the pleasure of welcoming into the BCUC family four adults who transferred their membership and three infants who were baptized.

Finally, I will not have been able to accomplish my visions and goals in 2023 without the support, prayers, care and friendship of Rev. Lorrie, Ruth, Ellen and Abe. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the hardworking members of the board, the different committees and every member and adherent, young and old, who continue to work hard and nurture one another.

As your minister, I am truly moved and inspired to journey with you in your continuing desire to be faithful followers of Jesus so that we may practice both our religious faith with integrity and at the same time be deeply spiritual. To practice both can be daunting at times, but it always leads to something new, something meaningful and transformational. Following and living out the teachings and examples of Jesus and making a commitment to a caring faith community demands a passionate discipline and lives of thanksgiving and generosity. Let us aim to be grace-filled seekers, abundant stewards, radical learners, caring listeners and welcoming hosts.

I can't thank you enough for all your support, your love and friendship that you extend to me and my family: Ken, Justin and Jacob. I look forward to our ministry together as we seek new adventures and explore creative ways of being faithful to our mission as a Christian community. May God's blessings continue to be with us as we journey together in faith.

In the name of the One who makes all things new,  
Rev. Kim

## Diaconal Minister

Another busy year has come and gone! When I look through my 2023 calendar at the highlights and events that have taken place at BCUC, I am amazed at how much one congregation can accomplish in a year. The fact that so many of the activities we have undertaken together are things that reach out to the community – locally, nationally, and globally – it fills me with pride to be working with such a caring group of people. My call to Diaconal Ministry is easy to follow when the congregation I work with is already deeply committed to outreach, justice, and social action.

This year we have accomplished so many wonderful acts of service. You will read about them throughout this Annual Report. Here are a few highlights that come to mind for me today:

SOSA's involvement with FAMSAC, Multifith Housing, Refuge NOW, and the Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy...

The interfaith work being done by West Ottawa Interfaith Bridge, a joint effort amongst BCUC, Jami Omar Mosque, St. Martin de Porres Roman Catholic Church, and Christ Church Bells Corners Anglican. They have held joint dinners, educational events, and a winter clothing drive for unhoused people in Ottawa.

The Zambia Partnership is one way we reach out in a global way to the small village of Chipembi, Zambia. Along with our partners at Emmanuel United Church we have completed the building of a church office and multi-use facility that will allow for many community activities, and we have participated in the funding and leadership for a week-long day camp for 125 children in the Chipembi area. The young adults from BCUC who took part were able to build relationships with young adults there, a wonderful way to build global understanding that goes well beyond reading about a faraway place and culture.

BCUC is also a faithful and generous supporter of the UCC Mission and Service Ministry.

Work is always being done to bring light and understanding to social justice issues such as the provision of a Guaranteed Liveable Income, or ways we can use our property or resources to help with affordable housing in our area, or educational events such as the Progressive Learning Circle's conference on right relations, "Two Canoes, One River".

In addition to reaching out beyond the walls of our church, there are many activities to support the well-being and social needs of our congregation:

The Pastoral and Spiritual Care Committee provides support through visits, phone calls, and cards for those in our congregation who are facing illness, grief, or loneliness, as well as community events such as the Healing Tea and contemplative "Blue Christmas" service and educational events like the evening on Compassionate Listening.

The weekly Men's Club and "Coffee and Friends", along with our UCW units help to keep us all connected – beyond the nod or handshake on Sunday mornings. And our Sunday morning Fellowship Time is a great way to connect with friends over a cup of coffee or tea and catch up with the "family" news.

The building itself is a place where the Bells Corners community feels welcome. Every single day is filled with the voices and activities of nursery school children, martial arts and music lessons, choirs, quilters, drummers, community meetings and organizations, day camps, and celebrations.

I could go on and on, but I think you get the idea. This is a place that is full of life, the kind of life that Jesus imagined for his followers. We are not a congregation that only meets for an hour each Sunday morning.

It has been a busy and fulfilling year for me. My ministry here fills my soul in so many ways. I value you all as family. When I needed to take a medical leave in the fall, I was overwhelmed by the official support of BCUC, and the personal messages of love and understanding from so many of you.

As we embark on a brand-new year, I am filled with the hope and confidence that Bells Corners United Church is a living example of following the teachings of Jesus. May we continue to bless each other and the world around us.

Wishing you every blessing,  
Rev. Lorrie Lowes

## Church Board

Thankfully, 2023 saw a return to nearly normal activities in the congregation's life. Sunday services continued to have more in attendance, new families were welcomed, Sunday School returned to normal and rentals were almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

As well as regular Committee work, extra fundraising events were held, including Spring and Christmas Concerts, the Spring Garage Sale and Christmas Bazaar, all occasions to welcome the community into our church. Progressive Learning Circle hosted a successful October weekend 'Two Canoes, One River' to explore indigenous issues. And a mid December Vendor's Market raised funds to support our outreach mission work in Chipembi, Zambia.

Committee meetings began to be held onsite, although the Board continued to meet by Zoom until their December meeting for a potluck dinner and meeting at the dining room table. Unfortunately Mark McDonald was not able to assume the role of Board Chair so a rotation of Board members chairing meetings continued through the year and decision making continued as usual.

Implementation of Plan to Protect policies continued. Work was done on examining a Draft Abuse Policy. Having these 'care' policies in place improves insurance rates, so it is important for many reasons to ensure that we follow safety procedures.

The March AGM agreed to fundraising for an electronic outdoor sign. Fundraising was successful but the sign installation has been held up by Ottawa City Hall approval issues.

In April the Board agreed to begin work on BCUC becoming an 'Affirming' congregation following a document 'Open Hearts'. Since then Susan Young has been chairing a committee called 'Affirming Circle' who meet regularly to examine the details of necessary changes to prepare for a congregational vote some time in the future.

It was agreed that the Board would send a letter to local Councillor, Laine Johnson, asking that she promote GLI (Guaranteed Livable Income) at the City level.

Bob Ferguson came to the Board in the spring with a request to conduct a survey of the congregation to determine interest in looking at possible use of some church land for developing affordable housing and related uses. It was approved and a survey indicated that enough interest existed to proceed with formation of a committee to explore possibilities. By year end the committee had held several meetings and exploration of options was continuing. Thanks to Bob Ferguson for taking this initiative in a time when affordable housing is at such a premium.

National UCC is conducting a Remit asking congregations to vote on an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within the United Church of Canada. Through the latter months the Board became educated about the already existing national indigenous organization and reality of approving this change to the church structure by making it autonomous. Voting was planned for early in 2024 with March 31 being the deadline.

An ongoing frustration through much of the year was the lack of a Youth Leader. By spring Rev. Tamara Connors was hired, but she had to move to a position in the Anglican Church by September. At that time, Dana Ducette agreed to mentor Kael Fowler who has been contracted to lead the UP group and a way forward has been found.

Our thanks to Ross Mutton for his conscientious work on managing church finances. It is expected that the year will end with a small deficit despite rental revenue and events providing much needed financial support. Our thanks to committees who operate conscientiously within their budgets. It seems that some constraints such as ever increasing insurance rates and national church assessment put extra stress on the church budget in a way that is beyond our control.

We are happy to report that we got through the year despite having Rev. Kim on sabbatical over the summer, then Rev. Lorrie being off work for a time in the late fall. Many stepped up to take over duties which allowed us to spend very little for extra help. Thank you to everyone who took on extra duties! It is a tribute to our congregation.

Looking ahead to 2024 there will be work on updating policies and the BCUC Handbook, as well as Long Range Planning, all things that a healthy congregation needs to do to remain current. We proved we could manage regular duties with rotating Board Chairs for meetings and also approve some new initiatives. But we do still badly need to find a named Chair for the Board.

We are blessed with a vibrant clergy and music team who stimulate us with Sunday worship and support for ongoing activities through the week. Active members of the congregation provide the lay leadership and energy to fulfill the church mission. Let's look forward to more good work in the year ahead!

Ellen Boynton, BCUC Board Member-at-large

## Worship/Christian Education Committee

2023 continued to be a year of transition back to former patterns for committee meetings, Sunday services and other events in our church life.

Through the year committee meetings transitioned from Zoom to hybrid to onsite, respecting that Erin could stay one hour and ensuring that her business was dealt with early in our meetings.

Sunday worship services continued as livestream with the welcome addition of Linda Ward as slide person making a commitment for the year and Neil Lowes as broadcast person responsible for the livestream camera and sound duties. It has gone very well and at least 20 views are recorded week by week. People need to be reminded that the service becomes a YouTube and can be watched any time by clicking on the weekly link sent out on Fridays.

With Rev. Kim having her three month sabbatical and vacation from mid May – beginning of September, it was fortunate to have Rev. Lorrie take leadership through the time to keep continuity of Sunday services and other pastoral duties.

Communion transitioned through the year from ‘come forward’ with juice glasses and bread to passed communion by December. Gluten free bread is now used to accommodate special needs. And by fall we returned to adding a Responsive Psalm to the order of service.

Celebration Hymn Sing revenue went to fund the June 11 Outdoor labyrinth Service and BBQ picnic and games that followed. Sunday School teachers were honoured during the service.

The May 28 Pentecost Service for this year was provided by Youth and was very well received. Anniversary Sunday we had a congregational photo taken once again to celebrate no more pandemic! It was decided to not return to passed offering plates. Angela Starchuk designed a leaflet for options of how to give. Copies were placed in the pews and it is part of each Sunday’s announcements. Some special moments in the worship year included a November ukulele Sunday when Angela provided practice sessions in weeks prior, then led young and old in playing their ukuleles during the service. It was well received. Good Friday and Easter Sunday services became challenging when a power outage left us with no way to project anything and no heat in the Sanctuary. The congregation survived and services were held with adaptations!

This year Christmas Eve was a Sunday so services were offered in morning (a well received pageant from UCC sources) and a Communion Christmas Eve evening service. December 31 service was held with Kanata and Glen Cairn congregations invited since it was our turn to host. Two baptisms were celebrated and some from St. Paul’s Carp also joined us to welcome Miranda Martin.

Choir resumed practicing in the Music/Discovery Room in the fall. We still rehearse Sunday morning anthems onsite (usually two/week) and wear gowns most of the time. We wore advent colours during December and we do not wear gowns all-ages service Sundays.

Abe coordinates the ‘Band’ from time to time. A spring concert with revenue going to support funding the electronic sign, as well as a December concert with revenue for church operation, were held and very successful. Concerts were livestreamed, a benefit for those unable to come out at night.

Erin Berard has faithfully led the CGS and Bell Canto children’s choirs for the year. Her enthusiastic dedication is such a bonus for engaging children in the life of BCUC! And thanks to son Noah who now

accompanies the CGS on Sundays they sing on their own. One of the choirs sings each Sunday through much of the year.

Christian Education needs presented challenges. The need for Sunday School teachers was great. As the year went along a few more teachers were added and a stable program could be offered for the children. Thanks to Sue Morrison and Erin Berard for their 'above and beyond' support for CE needs. Lent and Advent packages were prepared for families to use. Some attention was paid to rules for children enjoying the gym after church on Sunday mornings and the need for adult supervision has been sorted out.

A year long effort to secure leadership for the UP youth was challenging. Lorrie tried every method of advertising to no avail. By spring she secured leadership from Rev. Tamara Connors, an Anglican friend who was hired from May – September, but she had to move on to duties in her own church. Dana Ducette came forward to work with Kael Fowler as a 'learner' towards becoming UP leader. By year end Kael had been contracted for a defined number of hours to provide the position on his own. He is representing BCUC with planning monthly youth activities among five local United Churches through the coming year. UP members participated in a Family Fun event in mid December following Sunday worship. Youth participated in the December Vendor Market to raise funds for a local outreach project. A well attended family fun Cribbage event was organized twice in the year by Tamara & Dickon Glanville. An initiative to educate church members about eventually voting on BCUC becoming an Affirming Ministry was begun during the year. The Church Board approved the formation of a committee (Affirming Circle) to initiate the process which began in May with Susan Young as Chair. Committees and groups will be visited to describe the work and all the time that is needed will be provided before a vote is taken.

Plan to Protect implementation continued through the year. This has insurance implications and is an important part of the church life.

Seekers groups led by Rev. Kim met for a Lenten study of 'Beyond Belief: the Secret Gospel of Thomas' and a fall study of 'Seeking Paradise' with good attendance at both sessions. Kim and Lorrie continue to provide a weekly Lectionary study group and Kim offers regular worship services at Stillwater Creek Retirement Home and Harmer House.

Fundraising went on through the first half of the year to enable Rev. Lorrie and Wendy Morrell, along with Kael Fowler and Alex Price, to travel to Zambia and work with Camp Chipembi in August. The trip and the camp were both very successful. Plans for support of the Camp for 2024, working with Emmanuel United, are ongoing.

Progressive Learning Circle began planning in March for an October 13/14 event focusing on indigenous issues with the theme 'Two Canoes, One River'. Guest speakers were Rev. Theresa Burnett-Cole from Glebe St. James UC and Rev. Tony Snow from Alberta. About 55 attendees from the area were educated over the time which concluded with a well-attended Blanket Exercise.

Camp Awesome was held at BCUC July 10-14. Tamara Glanville, who has been the BCUC coordinator, announced her retirement after 15 years in the role. We owe her a big debt of gratitude for her faithful guidance of the summer camp enjoyed by so many children over all those years!

Our thanks must go to Rev. Kim and Rev. Lorrie, who, along with the talented music support of Abe Te Grotenhuis, provide our church with strong leadership. We are blessed!  
Ellen Boynton, Secretary

## Music Director



**Our YouTube Channel has been active nearly four years** (since Apr 1 2020)

Our most viewed hymn video “It Only Takes a Spark”, continues to forge ahead gaining over 10,000 views from last year to over 26,600!! A curious top 3 performer is “Jesus Tempted in the Desert” which grows by about 1,500 views each Easter season (*yellow spikes below*).

The channel has now surpassed 104,000 views and subscribers increased by 100 to 373.

“Draw the Circle Wide” is no longer top 10 but no worries, Erin and Noah are still the top performer!

### Monthly and lifetime totals for top videos over channel lifetime as of Jan 28, 2024



\* Note that a view/click is counted by YouTube regardless if the video was watched in whole or in part

- Neil Lowes has become our main broadcast operator and Linda Ward our projector operator. Thank you both!
- We finally had Spring and Christmas concerts again and they were fantastic. Some are still reeling ☺
- The band was a regular participant in the first half of the year but only gathered for 1 service in the fall.
- Angela Starchuk was key in organizing a very well received Ukulele Sunday with about 30 stringed instruments!
- Much thanks to Sandra, Erin, Sally and musical guests for covering my summer vacation time

2023 was pretty much a back to normal year. I'm absolutely blessed to work with this wonderful ministry team, singers and musicians. Particular thanks to Erin, for all her work around the children's music+! Blessings to you all.

Musically submitted, *Abe TeGrotenhuis, Bells Corners United Music*

## **Music for Children and Youth**

We are blessed to have a dedicated group of young people who share their voices, energy, and enthusiasm at rehearsal and in church services!

The Christian Generation Singers (CGS), for JK-Gr.4, gathered from 6-6:45pm on Thursdays, and the Bell Canto joined them for the last 15 minutes to rehearse children's hymns and combined anthems. The Bell Canto Singers, for Gr. 5 and up, continued on until 7:15pm. The groups took turns providing an anthem nearly every week for services, either on their own or both choirs performing together. For fun, we held a PJ party during a Thursday evening rehearsal time, and to celebrate the end of the choir year, the choir members and their families gathered at Mini-Golf Gardens for golf and pizza in June.

After a break for the summer, we continued with the schedule established in the winter and spring. In the CGS group, we had eight choristers in regular attendance, and Bell Canto had six consistent participants. Noah Berard took on the role of accompanist for the CGS group in September. Throughout October-December, the choirs performed nearly every week for services. Both groups participated in the Christmas concert. We enjoyed a costume party and snacks together for Halloween.

I am thankful for the dedicated young people that make up our choirs, faithfully coming rehearsals and to worship services when they are scheduled to sing. Many thanks, too, to those who provide financial donations and encouragement.

Respectfully submitted,  
Erin Berard

## **The BCUC Choir**

As the year went on choir practice and choir activity became more and more normal. Rehearsing in the Sanctuary continued until summer and by fall we returned to being all together on Thursday evenings in the Music/Discovery Room. Sunday morning rehearsals still took place in the choir loft prior to service time. For most of the year we sang two anthems each Sunday. From time to time the Band provided special music to give choir a Sunday off. And in the summer Abe arranged for special music from choir members or others.

We were able to present a spring concert in early May with a variety of musical offerings besides choir, featuring the talents of young and older members of the congregation. A special tribute was paid to Canadian icon, Gordon Lightfoot, who had died recently. Revenue went to the electronic sign fund. And in early December we enjoyed presenting seasonal music for a fun evening with revenue to the BCUC Operating Fund. We also provided choir support for funerals through the year when requested.

A December joint concert at St. Stephen's Anglican Church to support OWECC never happened due to sickness and bad weather.

Our numbers have remained strong. We said goodbye to Jeremy Gollain at the end of the school year when he moved to BC. Victor Lujetic accepted a preaching position which made him not available for Sunday services. Vicki Martin left by June and when she had baby Miranda in early October she made a plan to return to choir in January. And we welcomed Roz Turk to the alto section late in the fall. Abe continues to inspire us with his leadership and choice of music using traditional anthems along with upbeat modern pieces of music. He enjoys the special qualities each of the two pianos offers. Or he may add a keyboard on top of a piano for an extra special effect. During his summer vacation we were blessed to have Sandra Dean as our musician when she was able to play organ or piano as she chose. And many times in the year Erin Berard shared her talent for playing the flute or Leslie Wade accompanied on violin to enrich our anthems. Thanks to all our talented musicians at BCUC!

Ellen Boynton

## Service, Outreach and Social Action Committee (SOSA)

Purpose: To promote the work and needs of the Mission and Service Fund; to coordinate and participate in programs that proclaim the mission of BCUC and the wider Church through service and outreach; and to inform and recommend action to the congregation on issues of human rights, social justice and care of God's creation occurring locally, nationally and internationally. In support of this purpose, the SOSA committee:

- Publicizes the work of the Mission and Service Fund on a regular basis and takes action on any appeals issued by the national church either for money or action;
- Keeps informed on local community needs and plans, coordinates and participates in local outreach programs through designated resource people on the committee;
- Publicizes and supports human rights, social justice and care of God's creation events and workshops held in the community;
- Presents all three aspects of Service, Outreach and Social Action to the congregation through regular Minutes for Mission, Minutes for Action, the Bell Ringer, the SOSA noticeboard, on the TV at church and announcements of meetings in the Sunday bulletin. SOSA provides support, financial and otherwise, to various outreach and service ministries including FAMSAC, Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy (OWECC), Refuge NOW, Interfaith Bridge Building (IFBB), Mission and Service (M&S), Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI).

### **Projects carrying over from 2022 include:**

#### **Family Services Association Bells Corners Food Bank (FAMSAC) (excerpts from official FAMSAC report)**

This was a truly transformative year for FAMSAC Food Cupboard as we finally moved into our new permanent location at Hollyer House in the spring. We also began our new relationship with the Ottawa Food Bank at the same time, dramatically changing our approach to gathering food. Finally, we were once again confronted with a surge in client demand as the rising cost of living resulted in more requests for assistance than ever before.

#### **Client Demand**

The recent trend of demand sharply rising year over year continued in 2023 as increasing food and housing costs fueled requests for emergency food assistance. In addition, the transfer this past fall of a group of families housed in the City of Ottawa's Shelter Services to a local hotel placed additional pressure on our services. In 2023, we provided 1,884 emergency food orders to 474 different households, an increase of 18.6% over last year's record high of 1,588 orders and 51% higher than in 2021. Meeting this demand has meant increasing the number of clients per shift, increasing the number

of shifts per week and no longer closing one week out of each month. This has put additional strain on our volunteer base, notably those who do client intake and those who manage our food inventory.

### **Christmas Campaign**

Registrations for our Christmas program also increased by 12.9% to 342 from last year's record high of 303. FAMSAC distributed over \$37,000 worth of grocery store gift cards in mid-December, a number that could have been higher had we been less strict about the registration deadline. Many thanks to the members of the Christmas Campaign organizing committee and to the other volunteers who contributed.

Many churches, businesses and schools held food drives to help replenish our shelves during this busy time of year, to the point where we had to defer receipt of certain donations until January because of our limited shelf space.

Fundraising efforts related to the joint capital fundraising campaign continued though we remain about \$500,000 below the \$1.6 million goal. FAMSAC held its virtual annual general meeting in September and bid farewell to several directors whose terms expired.

### **Conclusion**

While this was, in many ways, a turbulent year due to multiple moves, access challenges, a shift to working with the Ottawa Food Bank and another significant increase in demand; it was also the year in which we were finally able to position ourselves for a more stable future. Because of the dedication of our volunteers and generous support from the community, FAMSAC continued to provide its vital services to our neighbours.

**SOSA Resource Contact is John MacFarlane**

**Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy (OWECC):** There were many changes during the past year, including new board of directors, new website and a new logo. New board members include representation from Regina Towers. Rev. Lorrie Lowes and Rev. Tamara Connors, the two part-time reverends, are working with the residents of Regina Towers and Morrison Gardens, in the Pinecrest Queensway area. Rev. Tamara Connors has spoken at several supporting congregations including Kanata United, Britannia United, Barrhaven United and Bethany Baptist. OWECC was supportive in several community projects with Regina Towers, including a spaghetti dinner for the residents at which 65 dinners were served.

OWECC's draft budget for 2024 has planned expenses of \$38,600 and income of \$33,500. The budget is to be presented at the AGM scheduled for Sunday afternoon April 21<sup>st</sup>.

The Board of OWECC would like to thank Bells Corners United Church for their very generous and continued support. Financial support can be made through SOSA (budget line for OWECC).

**SOSA Contact is Dave Power-Fardy**

**Nepean Ottawa West Refugee Committee (Refuge NOW)** Refuge NOW Annual Report for 2023:

Refuge NOW has experienced a particularly busy year through 2023. In 2022 Refuge NOW's sponsorship of a family of four from Afghanistan was approved as a Blended Visa Office Referral (BVOR) which means they were pre-approved by Canada and are jointly supported by Canada and Refuge NOW. Normally the family would have arrived quickly in 2022 but their arrival was delayed until 18 January 2023. At that point, Refuge NOW was already waiting for a family of five from Syria in a joint sponsorship with their relatives here as approved in Sept 2021. The Afghan family's arrival on 20 June 2023 gave Refuge NOW two families to support simultaneously ... a busy load for 2023.

The Afghan family moved into their rental three-bedroom house with furniture and household goods provided by our five congregations. The language barrier was somewhat of a problem as we speak

neither Dari nor Persian, but fortunately the 18 year old son had reasonable English and could help us. The parents started English classes, the son started school at Woodroffe High School and the daughter started Grade 7 at Broadview Public School. Both father and son have found part time work. Some medical issues have surfaced, but contact has been established with medical and dental services. The sponsorship of the Mohammadi family comes to its (one-year) conclusion in mid-January. With increases in the cost of living (food and housing) finances will be tight going forward, but with the coaching they have received and the acquisition of part-time work we hope they will succeed.

The joint sponsorship of the Syrian family is a family reunification, so the family came to a strong network that has given them a great deal of support. That support certainly helped the family and also helped Refuge NOW, even though we also handled a lot of practicalities – SINs, OHIP, banking, schools, language tests, bus passes, internet, phones, computers, etc. In this family English language skills were stronger, and the father found part-time employment quite quickly. The children are attending school. There were delays starting ESL classes for the adults, but the mother was able to start in November. Refuge NOW's work is made more difficult by the uncertainty in timing of arrivals. Since these two families arrived in close succession, 2023 was more demanding than ever for Refuge NOW. We appreciate the ongoing support of our five congregations. Thank you to the congregations of Bells Corners United Church, Christ Church Bells Corners, St Stephens Anglican, Julian of Norwich Anglican, and Knox United - for their continued support of this important work.

**SOSA Contact is Beverly Graham**

**Interfaith Bridge Building with the Jami Omar Mosque (IFBB)** West Ottawa Interfaith Bridge (Formerly known as Interfaith Bridge Building Committee) It is the intention of the committee to have two educational activities and an interfaith dinner each year. In 2023 we managed one educational activity and the interfaith dinner. Death, funerals and bereavement support – Interfaith Perspectives at Jami Omar on October 27, 2023 was a panel discussion with Rev Kim Vidal from Bells Corners United Church, Rev Margo Whittaker from Christ Church Bells Corners, Father Titus from St Martin de Porres and Imam Owais from Jami Omar. The annual dinner took place on September 30 at Jami Omar and was a great success. We did not do a second educational activity. In 2024 we hope to have planned visits to each of the places of worship of the committee members with an opportunity to tour the buildings and discover how the leaders were trained. We also try to help the community in various ways by collecting clothing for the winter or donating to FAMSAC. We are working on the preparation of a covenant and the objectives for the committee to be completed by March 2024. **Respectfully submitted by Alison Bridgewater. Committee members are rev Lorrie Lowes, Alison Bridgewater (BCUC), Colleen Mayo (CCBC), Ralph Mayer (St Martin do Porres), Sr. Fariha Shoaib, Br, Anwar Ul Haq, Imam Owais (Jami Omar)**

**Mission and Service (M&S) Bells Corners United Church (BCUC)**

The Advent Project for 2023 was support for the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church. It had recently been announced that the grants from the M&S fund to the regions of the church including our local EOORC region would be reduced by 30% in the coming year. This will significantly affect the ability of EOORC to support some key local programs in our area such as the Ottawa West End Community Chaplaincy, the Carlington Chaplaincy, Centre 507 and three summer camps including the Camp Awesome leadership training program. Although it is often thought that this Fund is for support of partners overseas, in 2022, 69% of the funds were spent within Canada. So it was decided that support for the Mission and Service Fund would be the Advent project with \$4,680 being raised.

**SOSA Resource/Contact is Ellie Topp**

**Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI)**

Multifaith Housing Initiative, a not for profit charitable organization in Ottawa, was established in 2002. It is a coalition of faith groups working with businesses, municipal, provincial and federal governments

to build affordable housing in our communities. This partnering has created homes for over 400 people. MHI owns and operates 139 units in four locations, The Haven being the largest with 98 units ranging from 1-4 bedroom homes. Veterans House, the Andy Carswell building, a former project of MHI is now under the ownership of Veterans Canada. On January 20, 2022 the NCC announced Dream LeBreton, a partnership between Dream group members Dream Asset Management Corporation and Dream Impact Master LP and MHI. MHI will own and operate 130 of the affordable units. The population to be served will be from the Algonquin and other indigenous peoples, veterans, recent immigrants, women and children and adults with cognitive disabilities. MHI is launching the Dream LeBreton Capital Campaign with a goal of \$1.5 m. SOSA's Lenten Project in 2024 will be in support of this new development. MHI is also partnering with The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa and Julian of Norwich Anglican Church to create a collaborative neighbourhood called The Anchor. This will provide about 75 units of affordable housing. For more information on either of these projects, refer to the MHI website: [www.multifaithhousing.ca](http://www.multifaithhousing.ca) During the past year, members of BCUC attended the annual meeting of MHI, National Housing Day Event, participated in the MHI Tulipathon walk to support affordable housing, and provided gifts and cookies for the Childrens' Christmas Party at The Haven.

**SOSA Resource/Contact is Barbara Bole Stafford.**

**Zambia Chipembi Project Zambia Partnership** BCUC is partnered with Emmanuel United Church here in Ottawa and the Chipembi Congregation of the United Church of Zambia, a five-year covenant that began in 2021. Two exciting accomplishments to highlight this year are the completion of the new building, and the participation of young adults from Canada in Camp Chipembi! In August Rev. Lorrie, Wendy Morrell, Kael Fowler, and Alex Price made the long trip to coincide with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Camp Chipembi. Due to the Covid pandemic, it was the first time since 2019 that young adults from here have been able to take part in this wonderful global experience. For the first 3 days, the Zambian Young Adult leaders (11 of them) moved in with us at Makumba Farm to plan for the week-long day camp for local children. It was a time of working together and building important cross-cultural relationships. The camp was planned to accommodate 105 children, but more than 200 registered! In the end, about 120 children attended the camp. This meant that more food for the daily lunches, more t-shirts, and more equipment were required urgently. Rev. Lorrie and Wendy made the day-long journey to Lusaka and back, with Naomi Bula, to purchase the extra supplies on the first day of the camp. Other highlights of the time spent in Chipembi were delivering medical supplies (donated by "Not Just Tourists" and the IDA Pharmacy in Carleton Place) to the Medical Centre, a very formal visit to the local Tribal Chief Chamuka, meetings with the local partnership committee members, and the celebration to open the new building. We were also able to attend church on the two Sundays we were there, which is an incredible experience. Rev. Lorrie was even asked to preach! She and Wendy also led a private family service in memory of Omega Bula, a true matriarch of the area and a world leader in her own right. Our current projects include relationship building among the three congregations, and supporting the annual Camp Chipembi, both financially and with Young Adult Leadership. In December, a generous donation was made by a congregant at Emmanuel UC to be used toward another huge priority in this small rural community: the repair and upgrade of the local Medical Centre. The \$15,000 donation will certainly go a long way but doesn't quite cover the expected budget for the much-needed work. Emmanuel UC and BCUC will be looking for ways to fundraise the remaining amount required. At first estimates, we need about \$1,000 more but, as we found with the construction of the building over the past few years, the cost and availability of materials continue to rise, so more may be required. The continued love and generosity of BCUC is so greatly appreciated. You are truly making a difference in the lives of the people of Chipembi. In return, the opportunity to break down walls that separate us - both by distance and by culture - is having a wonderful influence on the people who take part, young and old.

**SOSA Resource/Contact is Rev. Lorrie Lowe**

### **SOSA Social Action Ministry**

SOSA Social Action Ministry continues to encourage political action to mitigate the high level of poverty that still is evident in Canada. For the last few years SOSA has been supporting action and projects that promote a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income. Ellie and Clarke Topp, on behalf of Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council (EOORC), continue to participate with the UCC Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) network. This year the Network which meets monthly has been working to push city councils to pass resolutions requesting the provincial and federal governments to set up a plan to implement a guaranteed livable basic income across Canada. A number of Atlantic cities and several in Ontario have passed such resolutions and the GLI proponents in Ottawa have been working with Basic Income Ottawa to encourage the Ottawa city council to do the same.

**SOSA Resource/Contacts: Ellie and Clarke Topp**

## **Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team**

At BCUC, we are blessed to have a Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team of trained and dedicated volunteers who work in partnership with our ministers, Rev. Kim Vidal and Rev. Lorrie Lowes. In 2023, Ronald Knox, Nancy Power-Fardy, Beth Sharp and Susan Young volunteered their time and talents to support Pastoral and Spiritual Care. We owe our gratitude to many informal volunteers who have assisted with Pastoral and Spiritual Care events and supported the congregation and community by staying in touch with friends and neighbours.

### **Ministry of Presence**

The Team has continued to offer a ministry of presence for members and adherents through phone calls and emails as well as informal chats during fellowship time after worship services and at church events. Rev. Lorrie Lowes and Rev. Kim Vidal have visited people in hospital and in their homes on request.

### **Cards**

We are grateful for the assistance of Ronalie Abbey and Judy Mann who have sent out many cards this year to express empathetic thoughts, sympathies, well wishes and congratulations on behalf of the congregation.

### **Prayers**

The prayers of the people have been offered during Sunday worship services. Prayer requests are received in the prayer chalice on Sundays and in the prayer box during the week. Prayer requests can also be made by contacting the church office or a minister. The Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team continues to offer prayers during an at-home prayer circle on Wednesday evenings.

### **Worship in Retirement Homes**

Rev. Kim Vidal offered occasional mid-week worship services at Stillwater Creek Retirement Home and Harmer House. Residents of local retirement homes were encouraged to join the BCUC virtual worship service offered on YouTube. A written text of the Sunday service and announcements was emailed to Stillwater Creek each week.

### **Celebration of Life and Memorial Services**

The ministers led celebrations of life and memorial services at the church, in funeral homes and at other off-site locations. On September 17, Rev. Kim Vidal led the annual Joint Memorial Service in the chapel at the Bells Corners Union Cemetery and Abe TeGrotenhuis provided beautiful music. About forty people attended.

### **Team Training**

In early February, Rev. Lorrie Lowes led a two and a half-hour "Plan to Protect" workshop for all Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team members. This abuse-prevention training is a new requirement for all BCUC volunteers who work with vulnerable people.

### **Death Café**

A Death Café was hosted by Team on the evening of May 9. Seventeen people from BCUC and the wider community participated in a wide-ranging, open discussion about death. Subsequent to the event, Susan Young was interviewed for an article that appeared in the June 2023 issue of "Beyond", the online magazine of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.

### **Compassionate Listening Workshop**

On September 26, Rev. Lorrie Lowes led an interactive workshop designed to help participants offer a compassionate and supportive presence to those in need. The session included a PowerPoint presentation, group discussion and opportunities to practice compassionate listening skills. The workshop was attended by eight participants from BCUC and one from Kanata United Church.

### **Healing Tea & Service of Healing, Hope and Renewal**

On December 13, the Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team hosted a Healing Tea for people grieving the loss of loved ones. The evening began with a light meal and conversation. Unfortunately our guest speaker, Judith Campbell, was ill and unable to attend. In her place, Susan Young offered a scripture reading and a guided meditation adapted from meditations by Rev. Sharon Moon (Returning to the Healing Oasis: Meditations for Body, Mind and Spirit, United Church Publishing House, 2013.)

Following the tea, Rev. Kim Vidal, Lorrie Lowes and music director, Abe TeGrotenhuis offered a meaningful service of Healing, Hope and Renewal in the Shalom Room. About twenty people attended the service. Afterwards, a dozen participants chose to walk the candle-lit labyrinth. Labyrinth keeper, Jan Pound, offered guidance and information for the walkers, including several who were new to this meditative practice.

### **We are a Caring Community**

The Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team encourages everyone to contact the church office, one of the ministers or any member of the Team when there is a need for Pastoral Care. Your request will be treated confidentially and promptly relayed to the appropriate person for follow up. Thank you to everyone who helps make BCUC such a caring and supportive community.

- Susan Young, Pastoral and Spiritual Care Coordinator

## **Property Management Committee**

In addition to the regular activities such as managing the cleaning contract, arranging for furnace and fire equipment inspections, approving utility bills, etc., a number of planned and unplanned activities were completed, the most significant of which are listed below:

1. Three windows in the entranceway were replaced.
2. A gate was added to the Crib Nursery door.
3. Our rental policy was reviewed and a number of changes were made:
  - some rates were increased 5% to 10%
  - renter event liability insurance is required

- a refundable deposit is required except for regular renters
- parking spots are available for \$40/month. At the end of the year, we had four renters.
- 4. A water back-flow preventer was installed to comply with city requirements.
- 5. The courtyard sump pump was replaced.
- 6. The carpet in the main aisle of the Sanctuary was replaced.
- 7. The video cameras system was expanded to cover the gym, nursery room and outside areas not previously covered.
- 8. Several large tree branches that came down during a severe summer storm were removed.

## Communications

The Communications Committee facilitates how BCUC makes its presence and programs known. Office supply costs are covered by this budget.

The Weekly BCUC Happenings email messages, BCUC website, and FaceBook page have continued to be important methods of communication both within our Church community and outside the church family. Staff have been diligent and competent in keeping everyone informed in these ways. Worship Committee's continuing use of digital communication methods has been key to reaching congregants and the broader community. Corridor screens are kept current with the office posting pictures and Abe posting Sunday service announcements.

Our thanks to Connie Davidson who continues to offer her professional skills to support the office with website maintenance and to Hazel Smith for her work with FaceBook. Also thanks goes to Bill McGee who has been faithful in posting messages on the exterior church sign. The installation of an electronic sign, which will have messages posted by the office, is imminent. Other thanks need to go to Nancy Meyers who desktop publishes our *BellRinger* newsletter, one issue published in the spring this past year. Thank you also to Tamara Glanville who posts upcoming community events on Bells Corners Rocks FaceBook page.

## Men's Club

**Purpose:** The Men's Club is a group operating within the bounds of Bells Corners United Church with the intent on promoting fellowship among the men of the church by providing an opportunity to get to know each other on an informal basis. Activities usually consist of either morning coffee time, a dinner with a topical speaker, or a planned outing. The group is managed by an executive, which currently consists of David Stafford (President), Dale Jarvis (Past-President), Bob Boynton (Technology), Doug Jones (Treasurer), Norm Pound (Communications), Ian Howes (At Large), and Neil Lowes and Ross Mutton (Events). The Club appreciates individuals helping on an ad-hoc basis. The group is self-sufficient with no financial encumbrance to BCUC.

### Activities 2023

During 2023, the Club met on every Friday of the year, including the summer months, at either 9:30 or beginning in September, at 10:00. Most meetings concluded at 11:00, although on many occasions, people stayed to continue conversations. While the number of attendees was relatively small at the beginning of the year, the average attendance steadily grew to a regular participation of 20 men. Our

highest attendance of 25 was reached on several occasions - possibly because it became known that mincemeat muffins were to be served!

During 2023, two decisions were made: the first was an agreement to support the Ottawa-west end Community Chaplaincy (OWECC) in its summer camp program to Camp Otterdale, to which the Club contributed \$1000 to augment camp fees that allowed several families to attend; the second was a community meeting with the new Nepean Councilor, Laine Johnson, to hear about local initiatives and to discuss possibilities of using parts of the BCUC property for affordable housing. The club hosted the meeting, and all enjoyed strudel with coffee and tea provided at the club's expense of \$100. Many thanks to Cathy Berger of Camp Otterdale for her baking contribution!

**Finances:**

In the past, the Club has held many dinners in support of Church activities. Recently, this has diminished, and the club has relied on the generous contributions of the attendees who pay a dollar or more each week they attend. On January 1, 2023, the Club carried \$1050.04 over from 2022 and acquired an additional \$635.46 from coffee funding and expended \$1000 in support of OWECC and \$100 for strudel, \$23.40 in Bank fees for a total profit of \$526.64. As of December 31, 2023, the Club Bank Balance was \$526.64.

Respectfully submitted, David Stafford, President

**Membership**

In 2023 congregational life seemed to have settled into our “new normal”. A good number of us have again involved ourselves in many of our familiar in-person meetings, social activities, and worship services. These interactions help to strengthen our community of faith, adding to our well-being through this fellowship.

Bev Wilcox continues the important role of welcoming new members and the freshly baptized during our worship services. It is rewarding to be a part of these new beginnings with these newcomers among us.

As there are beginnings there are endings. Whether it be by departure, health, or death we feel the loss of those no longer with us. Their faces, their names, our personal experiences with them will remain with each of us.

In early 2024 a review of all families and individuals contained in our database will be undertaken. The purpose is to update our awareness of changes that have affected members and adherents over these past few years, especially those who have not returned to in-person activities. The intent is to contact as many people as possible through a phone call or visit. Everyone's participation would be greatly appreciated.

The tables below provide insight into several aspects of the congregation's status. The data does not differentiate between members and adherents unless indicated. A thank you to Ellen for this information.

*Table 1 Membership Statistics*

Statistic	2023	2022	2021
Baptisms	3	2	3
Confirmations	0	2	1
Marriages <sup>1</sup>	5	6	2
Deaths	11	13	11
Funerals/Memorial Services <sup>1</sup>	12	17	8
Member Transfer In	4	4	5
Member Transfer Out	2	1	0
Households	290	330	Not Available

1. Performed by clergy but not necessarily at BCUC.

*Table 2: Baptisms*

Emilia Morris, daughter of Conor Morris & Elizabeth (Elly) Crow Abigail Kemp, daughter of Matthew & Aarika Kemp Miranda Martin, daughter of Vicki Martin
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*Table 3: Membership Transfers*

<b>Transfer In</b>	<b>Transfer Out</b>
Chris Brown Wayne Digby Dana Ducette Maggie McGugan	Brian Hicks Joan Hicks

*Table 4: Marriages*

Thomas Crow & Valerie Weber (February 2023) David McKenzie & Gillian McKellar (September 2023) Precious Oviedo & Julie Dinh (October 2023) Marcus Esnard & Victoria Verbruggen (October 2023) Stephen Thomson & Alicia Hudon (December 2023)
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*Table 5: Funerals/Memorial Services - BCUC Members*

Betty Bentley Ida Blackwell Alan MacDonald Doug MacKechnie June McLean Bridget McNeill	Jan Mitchell Gerry Okolowsky Margaret Smith Jim Walker Bill Wilson
<b>Non-Member</b> David Webster	

*Table 6: Deaths of BCUC Members, Adherents and Friends*

Betty Bentley Ida Blackwell Marg Creates Helen Jol Doug MacKechnie June McLean	Bridget McNeill Doug Noble Margaret Smith Jim Walker Bill Wilson
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*Table 7: Memorial Gift Donations*

Beth Begbie	Bridget McNeill
Betty Bentley	Jan Mitchell
Ida Blackwell	Doug Noble
Marg Creates	Gerry Okolowsky
Helen Jol	Estate of Marion Routledge
Mary Kerslake	Dorothy Ryan
Marilyn Lauer	Margaret Smith
Doug MacKechnie	Kathy Stubbs
Alan McDonald	Bonnie Subject
June McLean	Jim Walker

Larry Ryan, Chair of Membership  
 Bev Wilcox, New Member Services

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14.27

## **Affirming Circle**

Bells Corners United Church welcomes everyone and that warm welcome includes people of all genders and sexual orientations. We display the rainbow flag by the front door and we have an equal marriage policy that is visible to the public on our church website. There is no doubt that we are welcoming and that we strive to be inclusive. However, we are not yet an officially "Affirming Ministry".

An Affirming Ministry is one that publicly declares its commitment to inclusion and justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. These ministries declare, in words and actions, that God loves and accepts people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender and they call upon the rest of the church and society to do the same.

To become an Affirming Ministry in the United Church, a congregation must go through the Affirming Process. This cooperative and collaborative process includes education, reflection and discernment and the development of the following documents: an inclusive mission or vision statement, an inclusive marriage policy and a long-term plan that demonstrates an ongoing commitment to inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ and other marginalized people. These documents are subject to approval by the church board, the congregation and by Affirm United, a partner of the United Church of Canada that supports congregations working towards becoming Affirming Ministries. When these three documents have received all of the required approvals, a congregational vote can be held on whether to commit to becoming an Affirming Ministry. Then, if the results of the vote are 75% or more in favour, the congregation holds a celebration at which it receives a certificate and is declared an Affirming Ministry by Affirm United.

With the support of the BCUC Board, a working group called the Affirming Circle was formed in the fall of 2023 to lead the congregation through the Affirming Process. Active members of the Affirming Circle are: Jordan Berard, Barbara Bole, Tamara Glanville, Rev. Lorrie Lowes, Griz Morrison, Desna Sulway, Rev. Kim Vidal, Mya Wightman and Susan Young. Dana Ducette was able to join the group for a short time and we thank her for her contributions. Erin Berard has kindly offered to serve as a resource person, as needed.

The Affirming Circle has met monthly since September. We have informed ourselves about the Affirming Process and sought the guidance and support of Affirm United. We report monthly to the BCUC Board. The Worship and CE Committee is also updated monthly.

We have been communicating with the congregation through occasional in-person announcements during Sunday worship and the "Affirmation Station" section of the written announcements. Representatives of the Affirming Circle have begun to visit the committees and groups at BCUC to introduce the Affirming Process, answer questions and receive comments. In 2024 the "Affirmation Station" will continue to appear in the weekly announcements and will feature 2SLGBTQIA+ vocabulary and other information. The Affirming Circle, assisted by members of the UP group, will prepare an information display for the Stewardship Committee Fair to be held on February 4.

The Affirming Circle is working on various plans for engaging and educating the congregation. Some ideas are outlined in our 2024 Activity Plan. We encourage the congregation to "stay tuned" for news of upcoming activities and discussions. Everyone is invited to participate as we continue the Affirming Process.

Susan Young on behalf of the Affirming Circle

## Board of Trustees

TRUSTEES: Jan Pound, Denis Watson, Ross Mutton, Ruth Howes (retiring), Keith Bailey, Mary Schmieder (to be confirmed at AGM)

The principal function of the Board of Trustees, mandated by the United Church of Canada (UCC), is to hold the BCUC property in trust for the UCC. Embodied in this function is the encouragement of risk management measures to minimize the likelihood of incidents that could result in damage to property or harm to persons, and the possible legal actions arising therefrom. Where such risk management measures prove not sufficient to prevent loss, Trustees obtain appropriate insurance coverage for the buildings and contents as well as coverage for accidents and behavioural issues such as possible allegations of abuse against vulnerable persons.

The Trustees also operate the Memorial Endowment Fund, and the Board of Trustees is the linkage between BCUC and the Union Cemetery.

During 2023 the Trustees:

- (a) Provided oversight to the Memorial Endowment Fund,
- (b) Made a payout from the Endowment Fund to the Board of \$11,000 for 2023,
- (c) Monitored investment performance of the Fiera Capital Funds we hold,
- (d) Consulted with our insurance broker, as required, and reviewed the various provisions of our insurance coverage,

- (e) Investigated alternative insurance provider (with the United Church of Canada), subsequently renewed annual insurance with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Company,
- (f) Liaised with Christ Church Anglican in managing the Union Cemetery,
- (g) Mitigated risk through the ongoing application of the BCUC Risk Management Plan, and the Covenant of Care form,
- (h) Participated in the Plan to Protect training webinar,
- (i) Updated the inventory of BCUC property for insurance purposes,
- (j) Submitted a Budget to the BCUC Board.

Resources needed in 2024:

Liability and Abuse Insurance for renewal of Policy on November 29, 2024 of approximately \$ 22,000.

## Ministry and Personnel Committee

### Purpose:

The Ministry and Personnel Committee functions around three roles, which are the consultative and supportive role, the healthy relationships role, and the supervisory role. We provide resources and support for the staff (including ministry personnel and lay employees) and the congregation with respect to any issue affecting the staff and their work at Bells Corners United Church. The committee works to build positive and trusting relationships between staff and members and adherents of the congregation.

The M&P committee consists of the following members: Members: Johanna Burrows, Richard Morrison, Daniel Lanoue, Mary Schmieder (Secretary), and David Stafford, (Chair).

During 2023, the Committee managed the approved budget of \$290,355, that includes salaries for two ministers, the Organist/Choir Director and two part-time administrators, for a total of five staff.

Also included was funding for Visiting Ministers. BCUC engaged a licensed lay minister in January and the Rev Brian Copeland in the summer. The Rev Don Maclean followed in the fall at no charge.

The Rev. Kim Vidal took her second Sabbatical during the months of May, June, July, and August, combined with some vacation. She presented a thorough report to the Committee and to the Congregation in September. In the meantime, the Rev Lorrie Lowes increased her time from 30 to 40 hours per week to cover the extra duties of weekly sermons, lectionary studies, and pastoral care.

Most of the Committee attended a Regional sponsored ZOOM meeting to prepare for the annual Staff review. It was determined that BCUC is particularly successful in that function.

It was determined that the annual review of Police Records was not required for M&P volunteers.

Deferred to 2024. Ministers make a written declaration via email.

A review of job descriptions for Rev. Lorrie and Abe was deferred to 2024.

Staff were hosted at a Christmas lunch in December by M&P. M&P members paid for themselves.

Last year we reported that 2024 would be a Sabbatical year for Rev. Lorrie Lowes. This was an error since she is not eligible until 2025. BCUC is obligated to allow her three months with pay for this purpose. Since Rev. Lorrie is ¾ time, some additional support will be sought for Rev. Kim during the sabbatical period and M&P will engage an appropriately trained person to provide back up for worship, Christian Education, and pastoral care activities. Ministers are obliged to return from Sabbatical for at

least one year before resigning or accepting a new Call. Given the length of time the Rev. Lorrie has spent with BCUC, we have the option of waiving this requirement, subject to Congregation approval, which will be brought forward at the AGM in 2025.

Respectfully submitted, David Stafford

## Finance

The Financial Management Committee (FMC) is responsible for the management of the Church's finances on behalf of the Church Board in accordance with the overall objectives of the Congregation.

The year marked the second full year of operation since the retirement of Bill Johnson in October 2021. The committee does not have a chair, and Ross Mutton is Treasurer and also sits on the Board. The functions of a Treasurer of a United Church are well-defined by the United Church, and Canada Revenue Agency has strict and sometimes complicated rules for a church to maintain its charitable status.

Managing the ongoing financial responsibilities in 2023 included the following activities with the need to adapt to the changes required by the COVID 19 pandemic:

- managing the annual financial planning cycle by preparing an annual general budget including operating, directed and capital funds for approval by the Board and the Congregation;
- managing banking and bookkeeping services to meet church financial requirements including adding a new e-transfer service and use of Canada Helps as a way to donate to BCUC during the pandemic;
- tracking, recording and safeguarding the financial transactions (income and expenses) throughout the year for the operating, directed and capital funds;
- organizing and presenting regular reports to the Church Board;
- issuing tax receipts for eligible donations; initiating the annual financial audit by Frouin Group of Ottawa; preparing the annual C R A charity tax return, oversight of invested funds and coordinating with stewardship campaigns.

Tracking and recording the multitude of BCUC financial transactions involves many volunteers backed up by a professional bookkeeper (Carolyn Whitley) who keeps a computerized record in the Sage 50 system that is vital to an effective year-end audit review, and compliance with BCUC and United Church policies and regulations, and CRA requirements, and filing the CRA Charity reports. The volunteers include the Sunday tellers (organized by office staff); the event treasurers (example Pierre Dugas), the Directed Fund Coordinator (Bob Boynton), the envelope secretary (Linda Ward) who keeps track of all donations for tax receipt purposes using ChurchWatch, the PAR Coordinator (Ross Mutton), the Securities Coordinator (Brian Durno), the Gift Certificate Program Coordinators (office staff).

Linda Ward had her first full year as Envelope Steward, and sent out the CRA Receipts electronically and by mail. Thank you Linda.

We thank the volunteer members of the FMC who contributed their time and effort to the committee in 2023, and the members of the Congregation for continuing their strong financial support of BCUC, and the Office Administrators for their ongoing assistance.

Ross Mutton, Treasurer

## **Fundraising in 2023**

2023 was a good year for fun and fundraising at BCUC.

Early in the year the Celebration Hymn Sing was held with requests as part of Sunday services over several weeks. Donations were used to fund the Sunday outdoor service and lunch held in June. The Gift Card Program continued to be supported by a faithful number of congregants. Cards for Sobeys, Metro and Loblaws are sold through the office with % rebate ranging from 3 to 5%. Thanks to all who continue to purchase these cards for groceries and gifts. New customers are always welcome and a volunteer willing to sell cards Sunday mornings during fellowship time would add significantly to this fundraiser revenue.

The February Pancake Supper raised nearly \$600.

It was a joy to provide the congregation and community with two choir concerts. A May 7 spring concert earned \$1,100 for the Operating Fund. And a December 10 Christmas Concert earned another \$800 for the Operating Fund.

Thanks to Ross Mutton for help with Easter and Christmas Memorial Flower programs so that beautiful plants could be placed in the Sanctuary for services. According to policy, revenue above \$1,000 in the account at year end is moved to the Operating Fund. For 2023 it was \$844.

The Spring Garage Sale was organized by the Boyntons and held on May 13. At day's end about \$4,240. was raised to help with the BCUC Operating Fund. And people enjoyed selling and shopping as we welcomed the neighbourhood to our church.

The Fall Bazaar was held on November 18. With capable Chairing by Chris Brown details were put in place and those who offered a wide variety of sales areas were pleased with the day's outcome. A sum of \$14,311 was raised for the Operating Fund and a joyful spirit prevailed through the day. Mid December the Vendor's Market raised funds of \$3,500. for Zambia Partnership.

## **UCW (United Church Women)**

The UCW calendar is improving carefully. The viruses are still limiting the numbers of members who are physically participating. This does create a challenge when we have many events in a short space of time.

Funeral Receptions continue to be offered. We have changed a few ways we handle the receptions, as we have fewer ladies able and willing to help. Sandwiches are made on site to provide consistency. We have been complimented on our professionalism.

In January 2023, Ruth Howes and crew made 717 turkey pies with crews of five. The turkey pies are much appreciated by the church folks. This is our main fundraiser for the UCW.

In May, we provided for the break and a good lunch for the UCW EOORC.

In Sept, we held our Potluck with a greater number attending. Alison Bridgewater spoke of her trip to the World Dragonboat Racing event in Australia in the spring. An excellent presentation. I was pleasantly surprised to be presented with a Life Membership Pin.

It was BCUC's turn to host the Annual Union Cemetery Memorial Service with the UCW looking after the reception.

Rev Kim and family hosted an Asian Dinner with the UCW assisting.

To Celebrate Rev Kim's years of ministering, a reception lunch was held at the beginning of Oct.

Also, in November, everyone was excited for the Christmas Bazaar. The community was thrilled, with a profitable result. The UCW makes most of the fruit pies, jams, pickles, and turkey pies for the Bazaar. We also have two units working together to make plates of squares and bags of cookies.

Our executive meets regularly. UCW can provide substantial funds for church needs as well as making annual donations to the United Church Mission & Service Fund and a chosen list of charities. Thanks to Christine Holstead for her steady hand on the finances.

Each of the three units has their own activity to raise money and the recipient of these monies is a unit group decision which has nothing to do with UCW as a whole or BCUC. Their donation decision was made via email or phone.

There are two units which meet in the daytime and one unit meets in the evening, so our availability suits almost all women in the congregation. Please remember that all women in the United Church are technically members of the UCW and are welcome.

Marion Dugas  
UCW President

## Bells Corners Union Cemetery Board

The Cemetery, founded in 1853, is a joint responsibility of Christ Church Bells Corners (Anglican) and Bells Corners United Church. It is a heritage property and a registered charitable organization, operated by the Bells Corners Union Cemetery Board under the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act 2002 of Ontario.

The Board consists of Keith Bailey (Co-Chair), Trevor Morrison and Pierre Dugas of the United Church and Cathy Ginn (Co-Chair), Bill Irwin (Treasurer), and Colin Franklin representing the Anglican Church. The Ministers from the two churches are ex-officio members of the board. The Ven. Kathryn Otley of the Anglican Church has been reassigned with Rev. Margo Whittaker as Interim Priest-in-Charge for the remainder of 2023 and Ven. Monique Stone replacing her on Jan 16, 2024. Rev Kim Vidal represents the United Church. The Board met once in 2023 by Zoom. Other business was conducted by e-mail and phone.

Revenue in 2023 (compared to 2022) was \$7,165 (\$8,968) with expenses of \$6,236 (\$4,955). There was one interment of cremated remains in 2023.

Revenue		Expenses	
Donations	\$3,110	Grounds	\$3,790
Interment Fees	500	Hedge trim	1,895
Investments	<u>3,555</u>	Administration	<u>551</u>
	<u>\$7,165</u>		<u>\$6,236</u>

The Memorial Service was held on September 17 in the Chapel at Christ Church Bells Corners. The Reverend Kim Vidal performed the Service, with about 35 people attending.

The Board has been continuing the planning for the installation of a Columbarium. We have made the decision to install one 32-unit Columbarium unit initially, with the option to install up to two other units at a later date. We are now working on the logistics and financials for the purchase and installation of this initial unit. We are working to have this completed as soon as possible in 2024.

New entrance signs were installed in the fall on each of the gates. In addition, an updated and more accurate map was placed in the Kiosk. The signs and the map include a QR code which allows visitors to see the detailed maps showing the location of their loved ones.

The grounds were well-kept by Glen Soubliere, sub-contractor for Kare-Mor Ent. Co. Ltd.

Pierre Dugas' help with the interment was much appreciated.

Thanks to our Treasurer Bill Irwin who prepares our Annual Financial Report and reports to Revenue Canada and the Registrar of Cemeteries in Ontario.

Keith Bailey and Catherine Ginn  
Co-Chairs

January 2024

Email: [bellscorners.unioncemetery@gmail.com](mailto:bellscorners.unioncemetery@gmail.com)

## Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee concentrated its activities on the annual Stewardship Campaign. This year there was one campaign, in the Fall.

As part of the campaign, the printed material for the campaign is reviewed for changes. There were limited changes in the Time and Talent listing, but the coloured brochure also needed an annual update. We used a draft Budget form from the United Church in the brochure this year. The church database CHURCHWATCH is accessed for member and adherent mailing information, and current activities. We do not use and we do not have access to financial information.

There was a Committee Fair in February this year and we also prepared a document highlighting activities of the various committees. SOSA contributed examples of the work that BCUC supports in the Ottawa area. Other Committees also highlighted their work. We did host our usual Soup & Sandwiches event in February 2023. It is planned to have the Committee Fair and Soup and Sandwiches in February 2024, the S&S one week after the Committee Fair.

This year we continued being mainly electronic. Every family with an email address obtained the Stewardship message electronically. For those without email, individualized mailing envelopes, return envelopes, financial pledge and Time and Talent forms are printed, and as well as the listing of activities on the Time and Talent. The folks in the Church Office print the colour brochure. This material was mailed. Many of our members do not have accessible (to us) mailboxes in apartments and those that have a community mailbox may not examine their own mailbox, if they still have one.

There were presentations made at Church Services and the online services to explain the campaigns for the year.

The Stewardship returns were tabulated by Larry Ryan and may be used by the Financial Management people for budgeting, and the Time and Talent forms are used to update the ChurchWatch database.

There were about 50 mailed envelopes, and 260 emailed packages.

Committee members were Bob Boynton and Larry Ryan, with help from minister Rev Kim Vidal, as well as the capable office administrators Ruth and Ellen.

The members and adherents of Bells Corners United Church continued their generous support for the Ministry of this Congregation this year.

- Bill McGee, Member, Stewardship Committee

Here is a summary of the campaigns of this and some previous years, as prepared by Larry Ryan. In previous years we counted as received pledges PAR participants who did not change their pledge, thus inflating the numbers compared with 2023, which counted only forms actually returned.

	Returns	
	Financial Pledges Received	Pledge Amounts
Spring 2022	116	\$224,644
Fall 2022	57 (actual returns)	\$167,932
Fall 2023	55 (actual returns)	\$148,284

Here is a Summary of the 2023 Returns.

	PAR	Envelope
No Change	12	13
Changes	24	7
Increases	20	5
Decreases	4	2
New	3	2
Securities		1