



**CHRISTFIRST**  
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



**Spiritually  
Engaged**

**Community  
Focused**

**Caring &  
Connected**

***Annual Report***

*June, 2023*

***Growing Together!***

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## CHAIR OF CHURCH COUNCIL

**Richard Cranston**

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Hello friends of Christ First,

A lot has happened since our Summer Spring Semi-annual Congregational meeting. We have much to be thankful for as we continue to explore ways to be spiritually engaged, community focused, and caring and connected.

COVID is still around but is now just another part of our new normal and we continue to adapt. In-person services are the norm, Zoom meetings are plan B, and we relish the opportunities to sit together at table as a congregation.

The past year has seen some important staff changes. Rev. Heather joined us last May and we have been so grateful for her ministry. Ashley Fanourgiakis joined us as our new Program and Administration Support Manager and Emily Adamson is our new Director of Audio-Visual Production.

All of our committees and their chairs worked hard fulfilling their mandates this past year. Just take a look at their reports to see just how much has happened. Many thanks to the chairs and all their committee volunteers.

We are so grateful for the gifts of Reverend Heather, our music directors, choirs, musicians, the band and the bell ringers for their part in our engaging worship services.

Our office staff and sextons keep our church and church building humming as it buzzes with activity during the week. If you had any doubt that we are a community hub, simply drop by to see what is going on during any weekday.

Thank you all for everything that you do to make this the Church that God would have us be.

Peace and grace,  
Richard Cranston



## LEAD MINISTER

## The Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz

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June 2023

Dear Friends,

I know I have said to some of you – and perhaps already to all of you – that a couple of years ago I started a pattern of hybrid reading, so to speak. At a time when I had all but given up on time for leisure reading, I finally accepted the gift of audio books. It didn't quite alleviate my longing for books in my hands and on my shelves (books feel like art, after all), but listening to text quickly became easy and anticipated accompaniment on commutes, or long travel east on the 401 to see our most beloved. The hybrid part is that I still often carry the book itself, stealing any time that I can to read traditionally, with the audio simultaneously in my ear, letting the narration slow my often too-hurried intake. The combined absorption seems to help me savour the words, following along at that spoken pace, which takes the necessary time to speak language into being.

One of the elements I've come to appreciate most, about all of the above, is the way that every segment of a text is honoured in audio form. Every syllable of a title, subtitle, acknowledgements, and more are offered in every recording. Pieces I might otherwise turn past are spoken, as part of the whole. It is unabridged. Sometimes even that is said out loud. It is the whole story, the full edition, the complete narration.

I know we won't have an audio version of this Annual Report, but I am very mindful, very grateful that, cover to cover, this is another edition of our congregational story. We use that language of telling in plenty of contexts – or at least I find myself drawn to it – because it is most accurate to our ongoing narrative. With God's great encouragement and generous strength, Christ First continues to accept, graciously, the holy authorship of the most honouring, most true Love. Unabashedly committed to living with mercy and compassion for all God's people, together we're doing the good and brave work of articulating inclusive community. Ours is a calling to unabridged welcome; for all and for each... and every facet of this Report speaks to that pursuit.

Whether you are named individually or part of the beautiful collective, may you know and celebrate your place in this congregational update. In serving, in supporting, in saying yes and speaking hope, your presence is invaluable. Your voice is irreplaceable. You and me and all of us, as Christian community here and now, are learning daily what it means to live and share as followers of Jesus – in every beautiful way that we can. Let us continue to say yes, with possibility and promise, to every expression of our next chapter.

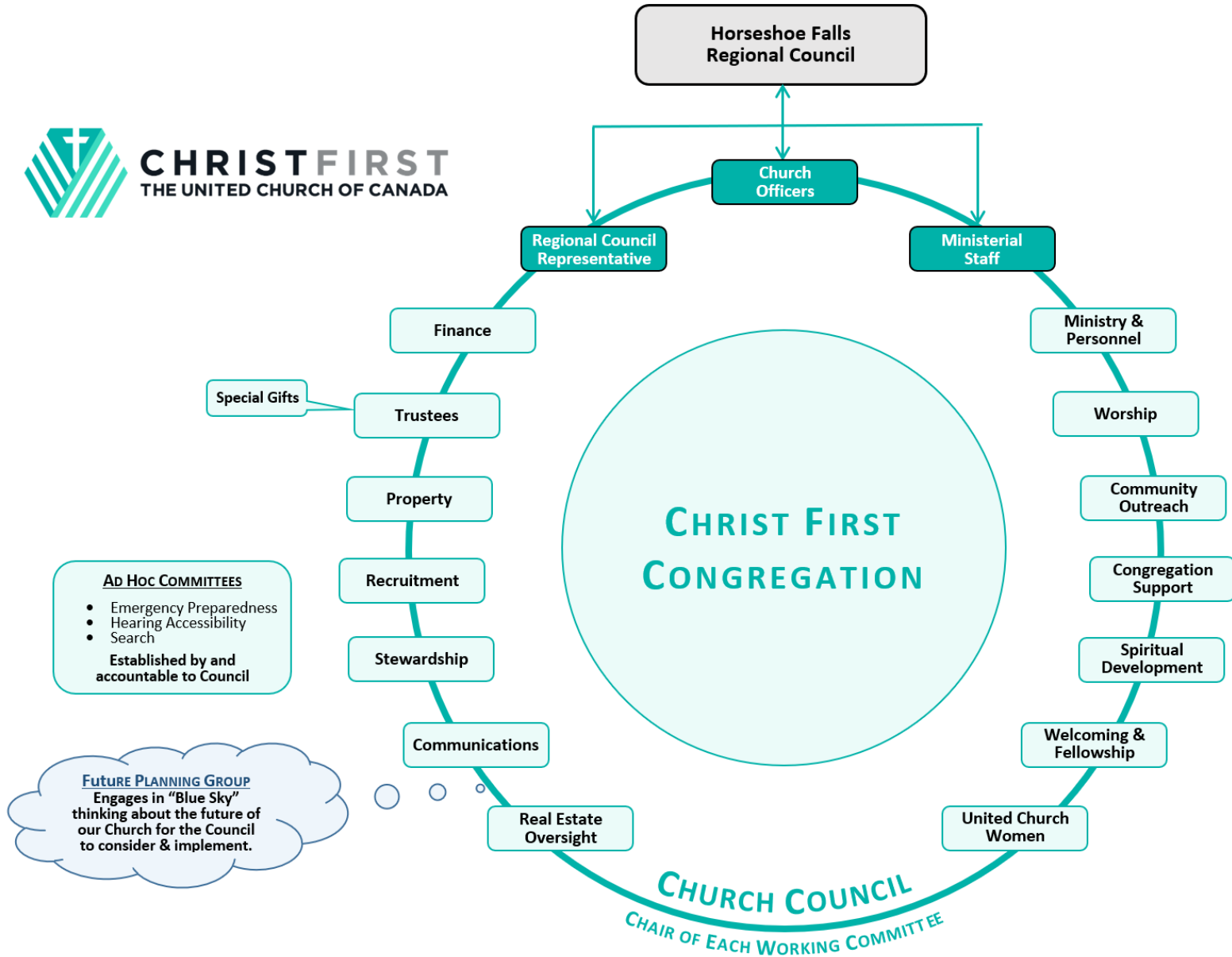
Grace and peace, always,  
Heather



# GOVERNANCE MODEL



**CHRIST FIRST**  
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA





## CHRIST FIRST COUNCIL

2022 - 2023

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### Ministerial Staff

Lead Minister *	The Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz
Youth & Family Ministry & Community Engagement Coordinator	Victoria Keane

### Church Officers

Chair of Council	Richard Cranston
Vice Chair	Vacant
Past Chair	Steve Shaver
Secretary	Carol Wilson
Treasurer	Dana Bryant-Giguere

<b>Regional Council Representative</b>	Shawn Bausch
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### Committee Chairs

Board of Trustees	Rick Donaldson
Finance	Clarke Grice
Ministry & Personnel	Sue Gittings & Heather McGillis
Property	David Wheeler
Worship	Andy Choles
Communications	Al Hubbard
Community Outreach	Christine Whiting
Congregational Support	John Anderson
Real Estate Oversight	Steve Shaver
Recruitment	Vacant
Spiritual Development	Teresa Madeira
Stewardship	Louise Sinclair
Welcoming & Fellowship	Joanne Quennell & Elisabeth Evans
United Church Women	Pat Skinner
Future Planning Group	Shawn Bausch

\*Is Ex-Officio member for all committees except Ministry and Personnel



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

2022 - 2023

Committee	Chair/Co Chair (Sub Committee:)	Members	
Board of Trustees	Rick Donaldson	Barb Abrams Martti Ahonen Leslie Fagan Joan Cobbold Claude Lewis	John McGillis Donna Pounder Steve Shaver Joe Reid
	<i>First United Foundation:</i>	Barb Abrams Mike Pounder	Christing Whiting Merle Zoerb
	<i>Special Gifts:</i>	Joan Cobbold Leslie Fagan Janis Cowie Daphne Donaldson	Pat Skinner Christine Whiting
	<i>Archivists:</i>	Charlie Black	Kathie Black
Finance	Clarke Grice	Dana Bryant-Giguere (Treasurer) Ian MacDonald	Doug Mills Christine Whiting
Ministry & Personnel	Sue Gittings Heather McGillis	Ron Kucharski Charles Holtmann Mary Dowding-Paré	Jill Robinson John Williams
Property	David Wheeler	Martti Ahonen John Dymond Paul Fagan Janis Cowie	John McGillis Stephen White Jessie Kennedy
Worship	Andy Choles	Rev. Heather Victoria Keane Janis Cowie Greg McCausland Leanne Piller	Christina Gorgeous Karin Stangenberg Marilyn Young Ruth Collins Christine Barlow
Communications	Al Hubbard	Jennifer D'Agostino Mary Dowding-Paré Ashley Fanourgiakis	MaryEllen Hern Victoria Keane Robert Raymond
Congregation Support	John Anderson	Susan Eggleton (Roll Clerk) Carol Wickham Marg Shaver Marion Grossman	Marg Joyce Nancy Rudderham Ashley Fanourgiakis
Community Outreach	Christine Whiting	Mike Giguere Joanne Quennell Barb Lewis Gail McDiarmid	Penny McKean Victoria Keane Linda King Shawn Bausch
Real Estate Oversight	Steve Shaver	Barb Abrams Rick Donaldson Dave Gittings Jeff Sinclair	Rev. Heather Carol Wilson
Amalgamation	Steve Shaver	Mary Dowding-Paré Barb Abrams Louise Sinclair	Joan Cobbold Rick Cranston Shawn Bausch
Recruitment	Vacant		



Committee	Chair/Co Chair (Sub Committee:)	Members	
Spiritual Development	Teresa Madeira	Sandra Gittings-Keane Nancy Jessup	Victoria Keane
Stewardship	Louise Sinclair		
Welcoming & Fellowship	Joanne Quennell Elisabeth Evans	Kathie Black Marg Joyce Jessie Kennedy John McGillis	Chris Kerr Nancy Jessup Nancy Rudderham
United Church Women	Pat Skinner	Marg Shaver Tanya Swinbourne Christine Whiting	Marilyn Watters Chris Kerr
Future Planning Group	Shawn Bausch	Richard Cranston Teresa Madeira Heather McGillis	John McGillis Virginia Warren
Emergency Preparedness	Heather McGillis Kay Cranston	Ruth Collins Mary Dowding-Paré	Nancy Hori
Hearing Accessibility	Carol Wilson	John Dymond David Gittings	Ed Mock





## HORSESHOE FALLS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Shawn Bausch

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### **Mandate:**

Represent CF at the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council meetings. Report back to Council on new initiatives, areas of interest, and general news from Regional Council. Provide guidance for the responsibilities of CF as a member of the Region and opportunities for engagement with the Region.

While individual churches continue to struggle with financial and people issues, National and Regional initiatives are booming.

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council's purpose is to "Support, Connect, and Empower Communities of Faith". These words were chosen by Regional Council as a reminder of its commitment to be in partnership with communities of faith.

### **Rural Connect/"Hub & Spoke" Ministry**

Christ First's and Faith United's status as the first Hub & Spoke Ministry in Horseshoe Falls has been confirmed by the Congregational Support Commission of Horseshoe Falls, with gratitude for our work. By undertaking this mission, Christ First is able to provide worship to the 40+ congregants of Faith United in Milton.

### **Spring Regional Council Gathering**

June 8<sup>th</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup> will be the Horseshoe Falls Regional Spring Gathering. The gathering will be both online and in person. Individual sessions will include: [Affirming Church Status](#), [Anti-Racism](#), [Camp & Retreats](#), [Children & Youth](#), [Climate Change](#), [Community](#), [Events](#), [Funds & Grants](#), [Global Community](#), [Indigenous Justice](#), [Learning Opportunity](#), [LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people](#), Mission & Services, News, Regional Council, Resources, Social Justice, Staff, Stewardship, The United Church of Canada, UCW, Volunteers.

Regional Council is supporting and disseminating several programs to live out this purpose which give communities of faith access to direct support and/or money as well as opportunities to gather for the sharing of faith:

New Horizons for Seniors Program

<https://hfrucc.ca/new-horizons-for-seniors-program/>

Refugee Advisory Network Gathering

<https://hfrucc.ca/event/refugee-advisory-network/>

Anti-hate Program Grants

[Call for Applications – Ontario Grant - Horseshoe Falls Regional Council \(hfrucc.ca\)](#)

Multi-faith Solidarity

[Multi-faith Statement of Solidarity - Horseshoe Falls Regional Council \(hfrucc.ca\)](#)



My Main Street Community Activator Program

<https://hfrucc.ca/applications-open-for-the-my-main-street-community-activator-program-year-two/>

Music Ministry Gathering Program

<https://hfrucc.ca/music-ministry-gathering-in-2022/>

### Newsletters

To read past newsletters of the Horseshoe Falls Region, they can be accessed here:

<https://hfrucc.ca/newsletters/>

### Examples of articles include:

Church leaders urge MPs for stronger advocacy in Palestine and Israel

<https://united-church.ca/news/church-leaders-urge-mps-stronger-advocacy-palestine-and-israel>

The United Church of Canada shows marked progress in climate actions

<https://united-church.ca/news/united-church-canada-shows-marked-progress-climate-actions>

United Church of Canada grants to align with the Call and Vision

<https://united-church.ca/news/united-church-canada-grants-align-call-and-vision>

### United Church of Canada News and National Church Initiatives

2022/2023 has been a year of significant developments within the United Church of Canada. Please read below regarding the New Call, the Strategic Plan, and the remit to create a National Indigenous Church.

### Strategic Plan

In January, 2023, the United Church of Canada launched a three-year strategic plan designed to re-energize the church. The plan includes a New Call" for the church which is: Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice.

The New Call is accompanied by a Vision, which is articulated as:

“Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a gold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in **deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.**”

The intent of the strategic plan is to position the national church for long-term sustainability. This will include support for congregations whose energies are declining as well as the **opening of more than 100 churches nationwide**. New churches will primarily be opened in communities which have not previously had a United church.

The Strategic Plan seeks to return to core values for which the United Church has become known worldwide: emboldening justice and invigorating individual leadership, with a clear focus on the common good.



For more information, please find a copy of the plan summary here, or reach out to Shawn Bausch for more information:

[https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2022-12/strategic-plan-final\\_nov-2022.pdf](https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2022-12/strategic-plan-final_nov-2022.pdf)

### **Indigenous United Church**

Based on decisions of the 44th General Council, the United Church is holding a remit to approve the question and educational resources for an amendment to the Basis of Union that would establish an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada. The proposal is that an Indigenous Church Organization will have its own mechanisms for process and structure, enabled to make changes itself rather than return to a remit process. It is intended to acknowledge the autonomy of the indigenous church as a group. The remit was made available in March, and the period of study will be 12 months. During this period, the governing councils of all churches nation-wide will submit the results of their community's response to the General Council, for announcement of the results in 2024.

This is a key step in the process of the Indigenous Pathways with the United Church of Canada. As expressed by the Chair of National Indigenous Council, Rev. John Thompson:

“We stressed in dialogue with the wider Church that the Indigenous Church is not separating or breaking away from the Settler Church, but we are moving forward on a Nation-to-Nation basis. We are moving away from ‘Indian Missions’ to being Partners in Gods’ Call to the Earth... As we move forward, we need to identify all the moving parts of Indigenous Ministries across the whole Church and bring them together so we can journey into the future as one, acknowledging differences, but working in a unified way.”



## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Heather McGillis

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### **Mandate:**

The Christ First Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC) continued to meet occasionally during the fall of 2022 and to date in 2023 with the mandate to assist Christ First with the on-going return to a post pandemic reality. EPC gives guidance for special events re COVID protection especially in the serving of refreshments or where vulnerable people may be attending a service or event.

### **Achievements This Year:**

- The EPC continued to monitor for any changes provided by Peel Public Health
- The Health & Safety Manual *Edition 2* – remains available for use or updating if required
- Congregants and attendees at any gathering at the church may be requested to wear masks when vulnerable people are known to be attending and supplies will be available for visitors.
- Access for community partners to our buildings has fully returned to pre pandemic levels but supplies may be requested and are kept on hand.

### **Looking Ahead:**

EPC will remain available, as a team, if required to review special situations and will support other Committees, when requested, with any Health and Safety Concerns or equipment in the buildings.

Meetings will only be held at the call of the chair.



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Rick Donaldson**

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### **The Mandate:**

The Board of Trustees mandate is “to hold all real and personal property of Christ First in trust and safekeeping for the congregation. Trustees are responsible for all legal matters arising out of the holding and administration of such real and personal property”.

Trustees are also responsible for the disposition of funds of Christ First. The funds are: (as of March 31, 2023)

- Capital Improvements Fund \$4,926.54
- E. Eddy Library Fund \$14,549.85
- Endowment Fund \$257,321.14
- First United Fund \$69,576.42
- Manse Trust Fund \$182,428.11
- Special Gifts Fund \$44,429.97

Other Members of the Board of Trustees are: Barb Abrams, Vice Chair, Martti Ahonen, Leslie Fagan, Joan Cobbold, Claude Lewis, John McGillis, Donna Pounder, Joe Reid, Steve Shaver and Rev. Heather as ex-officio member.

The Special Gifts Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees with the following members: Joan Cobbold, Chair, Leslie Fagan, Janis Cowie, Daphne Donaldson, Pat Skinner and Christine Whiting. Our Christ First Archivists are Charlie and Kathie Black.

### **Achievements This Year:**

The Board of Trustees, together with members of the Property Committee, carried out the required annual inspections of both our campuses in October, 2022.

As has been identified in previous reports, our properties and buildings are aged and the mechanicals must be continuously monitored. Several major items were identified and quickly addressed, thanks to David Wheeler and his Property Committee. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge his team’s constant commitment to resolving the identified tasks in a timely manner. Also, thanks to the members of Sip and Serve for their work.

In February, Trustees agreed to purchase 12 copies of Robert Schnase’s book Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations. Rev. Heather has referenced this book for use by Church Council and members of the congregation. Funds were approved from the Library Fund.

### **Looking Ahead:**

As outgoing Chair, I want to sincerely thank Trustees for their time and talent contributions to the life work of Christ First. They have been a real support to me in the years I have been Chair.

**FINANCE****Clarke Grice****Mandate:**

Manages the financial affairs of Christ First and oversees the Treasurer. Ensures appropriate control and recording of all financial transactions within established guidelines.

Prepares financials including annual budgets for approval by Church Council and the congregation as necessary.

**Achievements This Year:**

Provided ongoing assistance in dealing with and managing the increased financial demands on Christ First, attributed in part to the continuing Covid 19 pandemic, plus the forecasted deficit in the annual budget report. Only essential expenses and capital expenditures were approved and the Policy on Expenditure Control was updated as well.

**Looking Ahead:**

With the possibility of arranging an amalgamation with St Stephen's on-the-Hill now on hold for the time being, the work of the Real Estate Oversight Committee has resumed. It will likely be some time before they are able to present a concrete recommendation as to how Christ First should proceed forward from a financial perspective. Regardless, continued management of all aspects of the financial affairs of Christ Church is essential, ensuring that all fiscal controls are in place and maintained.

Our search for a church member to assume all the responsibilities of the Treasurer's position to replace the current incumbent, was not successful. This has resulted in the hiring of a part time bookkeeper to assume certain accounting duties.

**Financial Summary****As of April 30, 2023****NB:** All amounts are in thousands (000).

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>YTD Actual</b>	<b>YTD Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>2022 Budget</b>
<b>Identified Givings:</b>	138	144	(6)	394
<b>Fund Raising:</b>	0	0	0	10
<b>M &amp; S Givings:</b>	5	4	1	13
<b>Community Tenancies - Rent:</b>	116	68	48	240
<b>Other:</b>	9	6	3	33
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>690</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
<b>Outreach:</b>	31	26	5	102
<b>Personnel:</b>	120	128	(8)	383
<b>Ministry Programs:</b>	7	9	(2)	27
<b>Property:</b>	100	82	18	212
<b>Admin/Operating:</b>	10	10	0	31
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>755</b>
<b>Position</b>				
<b>Surplus/(Deficit):</b>	0	(33)	33	(65)
<b>Extra Ord. /inc/(exp):</b>	(8)	(4)	(4)	0
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit):</b>	<b>(8)</b>	<b>(37)</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>(65)</b>



## MINISTRY & PERSONNEL

## Heather McGillis & Sue Gittings

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### Mandate:

- To support the work of Christ First's staff team, facilitating communication between staff members, and the congregation.
- To continue to provide assistance and support to our ministry and staff team with changes to their roles as Christ First grows and transitions.
- Network with United Church of Canada, Horseshoe Falls and other United Church Ministry and Personnel Committees to ensure high standards for budget, personnel support and best practices.
- Manage the complexity of the various staff contracts, roles and responsibilities

### Achievements This Year:

- Provided support to Rev. Heather Weaver - Orosz in her first year at Christ First through an orientation package and activities, meetings, a staff retreat and information sharing
- Provided M&P support for all staff members with ongoing needs and questions.
- Supported our staff team to continue to adapt in innovative and flexible ways to changing roles and responsibilities from the pandemic to post-pandemic in-person worship.
- Facilitated a retreat for staff for team building and to develop a common vision away from the busyness of their roles.
- Several of our committee members attended a workshop from Horseshoe Falls on best practices for M&P Committees.
- Continued to be actively involved in the hiring and on-boarding of staff.
- Involved in planning for Guest Preachers to support Christ First during Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz' Study Leaves.
- Hired and supported a new Administration and Program Support Manager, Director of Audio- Visual Production and a part time Bookkeeper.
- Supported and monitored the additional human resource requirements of the Hub and Spoke project.
- Refined a process to update Terms of Engagement and Role Descriptions.

### Looking Ahead:

- Aid staff with ongoing concerns with a vision to improving climate and work conditions.
- Provide purposeful support for our new Director of Audio-Visual Production to aid her in her new role at Christ First.
- Promote the development of strong lines of communication with other committees and chairs.
- Continue to develop ideas based on the fall visioning sessions.
- Raise the profile of staff through internal communications, signage and staff photos.



## PROPERTY

David Wheeler

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### **Mandate:**

Oversee the daily management of both our Congregation and Community Tenant use of our physical buildings, endeavoring to ensure accessibility, safety, and security.

Protect and maintain the structure and operational integrity of both the Port Credit and Clarkson Campus Buildings in the most cost-effective way without compromising the health and safety of our Congregation and Community Tenancies.

### **Achievements This Year:**

- Upgrade of Clarkson Campus Sanctuary projectors and technology
- Archiving and decluttering of the Port Credit Campus records
- Accessibility projects completed at the Clarkson Campus 1) narrowing of stairwell railings at Administration Entrance 2) Washroom on 2nd floor of Oliver wing now Handicap Accessible
- Replacement of 2 furnaces at Port Credit Campus and installation of individually controlled heaters for 2 washrooms
- Clarkson Campus Apartment Occupancy Agreement extended for another year to assist Refugee Family from Angola, Africa
- Definitional change in “Rent” to “Community tenancies” to reflect our actual Church Mission Statement in support of all the Not-For-Profit Community Groups sharing our facilities with our Congregation at discounted rental rates allowing them to exist.
- First Aid Certification for 7 members of our Staff/Congregation and upgrade of all First Aid Kits in both Port Credit/Clarkson Campus’s
- Upgrade WIFI at Clarkson Campus to alleviate Community Tenant connection issues.

### **Looking Ahead:**

- Painting of Port Credit Sanctuary once roof leaks have been rectified.
- Replacement of Port Credit Sanctuary carpets
- Replacement and update of all Clarkson Campus internal directional/room signage
- Replacement of Administration Entrance Eavestrough at Clarkson Campus to correct water leakage into lower-level storage room.
- Future Planning to accommodate the “Inn from the Cold” Program at our Port Credit Campus for “people of no fixed address” for the 2023/2024 winter season.





## WORSHIP

Andy Choles

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### **Mandate:**

The Worship Committee works to enable people to follow a spiritual journey, growing in their knowledge and love of God in Jesus Christ through worship. The Committee works to facilitate meaningful worship experiences to ensure full involvement of the congregation in celebrative worship according to the liturgy of the United Church of Canada.

### **Achievements this year:**

- With COVID behind us (hopefully, permanently) we finally returned to in-person worship.
- The live stream broadcast of our worship services continues on YouTube and now, using Rural Connect, we have extended our 10:30 worship service to include Faith United in Milton.
- We were very blessed with the presence of Live Musicians joining us for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Many members expressed their appreciation.
- Very recently, we were sad to see Evan Hoffman leave his position as AV Technician, but we wish him well as he pursues his career in the film industry.
- We were very happy to welcome Emily Adamson as our new AV Technician. We look forward to working with Emily in the Future.

### **Looking Ahead:**

- Wonderful worship experiences are planned to take us to the summer break and into joint worship with St. Stephen's on-the-Hill.
- The fall has many worship activities planned plus a concert of the Metropolitan Silver band to be held at the Port Credit campus.



## SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Teresa Madeira

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### **Mandate:**

To enable people to take a spiritual journey, growing in their knowledge, faith and love of God through learning and the expression of Christian values. It is a responsibility of the Spiritual Development Committee to enable and encourage people to grow and develop in their personal faith journey through involvement in and commitment to learning through programs appropriate at every life stage.

### **Achievements This Year:**

- Sunday School Programing
- Music Camp
- Vacation Bible School Camp
- Advent Series
- Explorers After School Program
- Book Club
- Mohawk Residential School Virtual Tour
- Messy Church Service to honour Orange Shirt Day
- Ted Lutz Bible Study

### **Looking Ahead:**

- July Music Camp
- August Vacation Bible School Camp
- Book Club
- Children & family programs

### **Committee Members:**

- Victoria Keane
- Sandra Gittings Keane
- Nancy Jessup



## CONGREGATION SUPPORT

John Anderson

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The Congregation Support Committee members and Church Callers (formerly Church Visitors) learn of a need within the congregation and try to act on it with a call, an email, delivery of soup and perhaps, a visit. It is usually through the church office that a concern is passed on to the minister, Church Callers and/or committee members.

Particular attention is paid to congregants who are part of a "Keeping in Touch" group, mainly members unable to be 'out and about' nor attend church in person.

The Roll Clerk, Prayer Group, as well as the many Church Callers come under the umbrella of this committee.

The committee met by ZOOM during the pandemic and now meet monthly once again in person to share confidentially, what needs there are to be addressed.

There is a continued need for more members to take on a list (approximately 10 names) to keep in touch with by calling and emailing as a friendly and informative connection to the church. This is a gratifying task as everyone appreciates someone thinking of them! These connections have been invaluable as so many felt isolated during the pandemic and we were unable to meet in person for events and services.

This small group would welcome additional members to join the Congregation Support Committee.

**Committee Members** - this past year are: Marg Joyce, Nancy Rudderham, John Fargey, Carol Wickham, Marg Shaver. Ashley Fanourgiakis, from the Church Office and Rev. Heather also attend and are invaluable contributors. John Fargey is sorely missed. Roll Clerk is Susan Eggleton, who does an exemplary job of keeping the church official roll up-to-date, with the help of Ashley in the church office. I thank each sincerely.

Thank-you to Rev. Heather for calling and chairing the committee meetings in the months prior to my taking over the task.

And, as always, each Christ First member deserves our gratitude for the role they have taken on.



## **WELCOMING & FELLOWSHIP**

**Elisabeth Evans & Joanne Quennell**

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### **Mandate:**

The purpose of this committee is to welcome all to the joy and fellowship of the congregation. The committee plans, co-ordinates, and hosts various fellowship events.

### **Achievements This Year:**

The year started with the chicken BBQ on September 11. We served at tables as well as take-out, as some people were still uncomfortable eating in a group due to Covid. In total we served approximately 75 lunches and we felt the event was quite successful.

On November 27, Advent 1, we hosted an intergenerational family gathering serving a pizza lunch with coleslaw and dessert. Some craft activities, Christmas photo taking and a family carol sing rounded out the event which was enjoyed by all.

The season of lent started with the customary Pancake Supper on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2023. Four pancake flippers provided lovely pancakes and many volunteers served delicious additions of sausages, apple sauce and blueberries to a group of about 60.

### **Looking Ahead:**

Mothers' Day- May 14<sup>th</sup> carnations were handed out to all women, and Explorers baked "Muffins for Mums" with extra help from special volunteers.

Fathers' Day- June 11<sup>th</sup> Explorer group bakers will be busy again baking cookies for all men at the service that day.

Church Picnic: We'll close out the year with our church picnic on June 25<sup>th</sup> with games and songs, hot dogs and ice cream.



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Christine Whiting

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### **Mandate:**

Promotes knowledge of and support for the United Church Mission and Service Fund. Recommends involvement in and support for local outreach initiatives. Considers social justice issues of national church interest plus others of local interest and provides recommendations on those considered priorities for Christ First. Monitors those outreach programs where Christ First provides financial support.

### **Achievements This Year:**

The Compass: Now regularly seeing 1,650 clients a week and distributing 20,000 lbs of food. A year ago the compass was seeing 900/1,000 clients a week and distributing 15,000 lbs of food.

In From The Cold was open 7 days a week during the winter at the Lakeshore campus and regularly saw 25-27 people each night. During the few months that the doors were open two lives were saved as the individuals who had overdosed would have died if they had gone back out into the cold, according to the paramedics who attended to them.

Community Ministry: The success and growth of the ministry is amazing with a growing number of attendees at the breakfast meetings and request to speak at the meetings. Our on line presence is also growing, all thanks to the hard work of Victoria Keane.

### **Looking Ahead:**

We continue with our annual collections of mittens and hats, toonies, scarves for Chase the Chill and prayer shawls and baptismal shawls for the Prayer Shawl ministry. We also continue to support the Open Door and Church Community Volunteers.



## COMMUNICATIONS

Al Hubbard

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### Mandate:

- Support the Church Council and its Committees on communications matters.
- Coordinate, plan, and produce effective, timely communications material, in partnership with all Committees, that will nurture and inform the Congregation and, when applicable, the community at large.
- Maintain digital media presence for Christ First.

### Achievements This Year:

- Started a newsletter, Joyful Noise, to help communicate with our members and adherents.
- Continued exploration of social media to further establish our presence in the electronic space.
- Maintained our website as a repository of information for our members and the general community.
- Assisted, as required, to maintain and promote our branding and image across all communications emanating from Christ First.

### Looking Ahead:

- Explore the creation of a photo directory for the new Christ First congregation.
- Continue helping committees to use a consistent look and feel in our messaging.

## STEWARDSHIP

Louise Sinclair

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### Mandate:

The Stewardship Committee's mandate is to develop and implement a yearly stewardship program in the church. The program invites our congregation to renew and celebrate their spiritual and financial commitment to the church. Everyone on our mailing list is invited to submit their estimated givings for the next year which will form the basis for determining the annual church budget. The Committee also promotes the sharing of time & talents through occasional surveys of the congregation.

### Achievements This Year:

In 2022, the stewardship committee conducted a Time & Talent survey asking the congregation to indicate new areas where they would like to participate and contribute to church life. Thank you for responding! We celebrated the conclusion of the fall 2022 stewardship campaign with a luncheon on our anniversary Sunday.

### Looking Ahead:

This committee needs help! We welcome new committee members - anyone with ideas and energy to contribute to this important part of our church life. Planning for the 2023 fall campaign will begin in the summer.



## REAL ESTATE OVERSIGHT

Steve Shaver

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### **Mandate:**

REOC's mandate is to identify and evaluate all financially sound options for the use of Christ First's abundance of real estate. The ultimate determinations must be guided by our three pillars (Spiritually Engaged, Community Focused, Caring and Connected) and be based upon financial feasibility and building sustainability and accessibility.

### **Achievements This Year:**

- A lot of interesting and creative work was undertaken by REOC members Jeff Sinclair, Barb Abrams, Rick Donaldson, David Gittings and Carol Wilson.
- In keeping with its guiding principles REOC embarked on a plan to identify development opportunities, at both our Lakeshore and Mazo campuses. In addition, we explored the pros and cons of selling one or both of our properties.
- While we were prepared to proceed on a path to vigorously examine and then recommend a course of action for our real estate portfolio initially to Council and secondarily to the congregation, we decided in June of 2022 the prudent course of action would be to halt all REOC related activities while amalgamation discussions with St. Stephens on-the-Hill were taking place.

### **Looking ahead:**

When REOC was established, we agreed that the decision-making process would be consultative in nature and would encourage input from the congregation. As such REOC will continue to follow two parallel tracks. The first is that we will continue to identify and analyze options regarding the future of our real estate portfolio and, the second, is through the use of a visioning session where we hope to learn from the congregation what type of ministries are in keeping with our vision and hence should be supported.



## AMALGAMATION COMMITTEE

Steve Shaver

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### **Mandate:**

Amalgamation Committee's mandate was to make a recommendation about whether or not to proceed to amalgamation with St. Stephen's on-the-Hill.

### **Composition of committee**

The committee was comprised of Mary Dowding-Paré, Barb Abrams, Louise Sinclair, Joan Cobbold, Rick Cranston and Shawn Bausch.

### **Achievements This Year:**

Much due diligence was performed in order to identify relevant areas of interest and or concern pertaining to amalgamation, including but not limited to property, human resources, finance, music and worship, technology, governance, and outreach.

### **Looking ahead:**

- Over the November 2022 to March 2023 period both churches spent considerable time discussing a myriad of issues that were of significant importance to both churches. Unfortunately, we had a difficult time coming to an agreement in some areas, particularly when it came to where we would worship.
- We both concluded the best course of action for the time being would be to take a temporary hiatus of a year or so as the timing, simply stated, was not right.





## FUTURE PLANNING GROUP

Shawn Bausch

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### **Mandate**

To perform “blue-sky”, “out of the box” thinking about the future direction of the church. FPG does not implement anything. The FPG brain-storms, researches, and considers ideas. The FPG defines projects and develops concrete project implementation plans which it recommends to council. With Council’s approval, FPG hands off project plans to existing church committees or new groups of volunteers to be put into action.

### **Achievements This Year:**

We are called to be together to draw closer to God by serving others. We are called to work for justice and to live with respect. The activities of church are undertaken with the specific purpose of living God’s mission. The Constitution of Christ First says that our purpose is:

- To celebrate God’s presence,
- To live with respect in Creation,
- To love and serve others,
- To seek justice and resist evil,
- To proclaim Jesus, our judge and our hope

### **Hub & Spoke Ministry is Operating**

Last year, Future Planning announced the undertaking and schedule for the launch of its first major initiative since the discernment of our three-pillars vision. With the help of many people in our congregation, in 2022, that became a reality.

In our 2022/2023 year, we have received and integrated equipment loaned to us by the United Church of Canada and provided ten services thus far to Faith United, sharing in worship with them. The Worship team now integrates Faith United in their routine weekly planning of Sunday service. Our service with Rev. Dr. John Ambrose in May was particularly meaningful for Faith: like us, Rev. Dr. Ambrose has played a key role in their spiritual health and well being as a community as well.

By the end of June, 2023, we will have shared thirteen services with Faith United. Faith United is a community of just over 40 people whose congregation is extremely active in outreach: over 50% of their annual budget goes out each year in outreach. As well, 95% of their congregants are involved in organizing some aspect of the church. By undertaking the mission of Hub & Spoke Ministry, Christ First has enabled Faith to continue its church work with the spiritual support of regular Sunday worship. We feel that Christ First should be proud of this Christian work.

Overtures from Faith and Christ First have already been made which would see us collaborate on Outreach projects together, as well as to share in a Welcoming and Fellowship in-person gathering. Our spiritual connections are expanding.



At this time, our internet connection has limited our capacity to the handling of one Spoke church on any given Sunday. Thanks to the hard work of Property and Worship, investigations are ongoing to improve our internet connection which would allow us to include up to two other churches with us in Sunday worship.

Christ First is the first church in the Horseshoe Falls Region to serve as a Hub church in this program ! This milestone has been recognized by the Congregational Support Commission of Horseshoe Falls, with gratitude for our work. Horseshoe Falls remains committed to supporting us in this endeavor.

The Hub & Spoke Ministry program is an initiative of the United Church of Canada to bring worship services to communities of faith who have none. Of the 142 pastoral charges in Horseshoe Falls Region, 84 of them cannot afford a full-time minister. More than a dozen communities of faith are in some form of shared ministry and there are churches in Ontario with no minister at all. Congratulations, and a huge thank you to all those people who have worked tirelessly to make it happen.

Thank you to Rev. Heather Weaver-Oroz, Worship, Outreach, Property, the Christ First Office, Finance, Council, and the members of the Future Planning Group.

#### **Looking ahead:**

In 2021, FPG defined a process by which CF can better access grants and support programs. This was defined and has been subsequently implemented by the CF office. A Grants Database is now available through the CF office. Through this database, all committee chairs and project leaders can access our database of known grants and previous grant applications for use as templates. To compliment this, the Consultants System.

FPG has been approached by members of our congregation recently about assistance in defining and analysing potential programs for the church. If you have an idea for a project or a way in which our community can live out the three pillars of our creed and don't know where to begin, contact the CF office or Shawn Bausch directly and ask to speak with a Consultant. They will help you work through your idea. Spiritually Engaged, Community Focused.

Get in touch with the Future Planning Group to hear more about plans to further develop Community, strengthen ties with Members, and enable Spiritual Development.



## UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

**Pat Skinner**

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The UCW of Christ First has an executive President, Secretary, Treasurer and one member at large. There are 3 Units with approximately 50 women. The unit leaders are Marilyn Watters, Tanya Swinborne and Marg Shaver. We have a Mission and Service Fund. We have an Annual Meeting at all levels of church life.

On Dec. 7, 2022 we had an Advent Worship Service. We invited St Stephen's-on-the-Hill and Sheridan UC. Marilyn Watters wrote the service. The participants for the service were Helen Smith, Christine Whiting, Victoria Keane, and The Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz. The collection taken was given to the Compass. Refreshments were shared in the Merigold Room. The event was well attended.



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