

# January - December 2023



## ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual Reports Package Containing:  
The working groups of  
The Central Okanagan United Church

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Land Acknowledgment & Welcome.....	3
2023 COUC Annual Report from the Co-Chairs of the Board .....	5
M&P Committee Annual Report 2023 .....	8
Property and Maintenance Team Annual Report 2023 .....	9
Investments Team Annual Report 2023.....	11
Ministry and Facilities Planning Team Report 2023 .....	13
Intergenerational Ministry Annual Report 2023 .....	14
Pastoral Care Lead Minister Annual Report 2023 .....	18
Pastoral Care Team Report 2023 .....	21
Community Ministry Annual Report 2023.....	23
Central Okanagan Refugee Committee Annual Report 2023.....	30
El Salvador Sister Community Annual Report 2023.....	32
Worship and Music Committee Annual Report 2023.....	34
Alleluia Ringers Annual Report 2023 .....	36
Music Annual Report 2023.....	37
Technology Team Annual Report 2023.....	38
Student Minister Report .....	39
Thrift Store Annual Report .....	40
Blanche Simpson Church Library Annual Report.....	40
Clerk of Session Annual Report .....	41
Finance Committee Annual Report Package .....	43

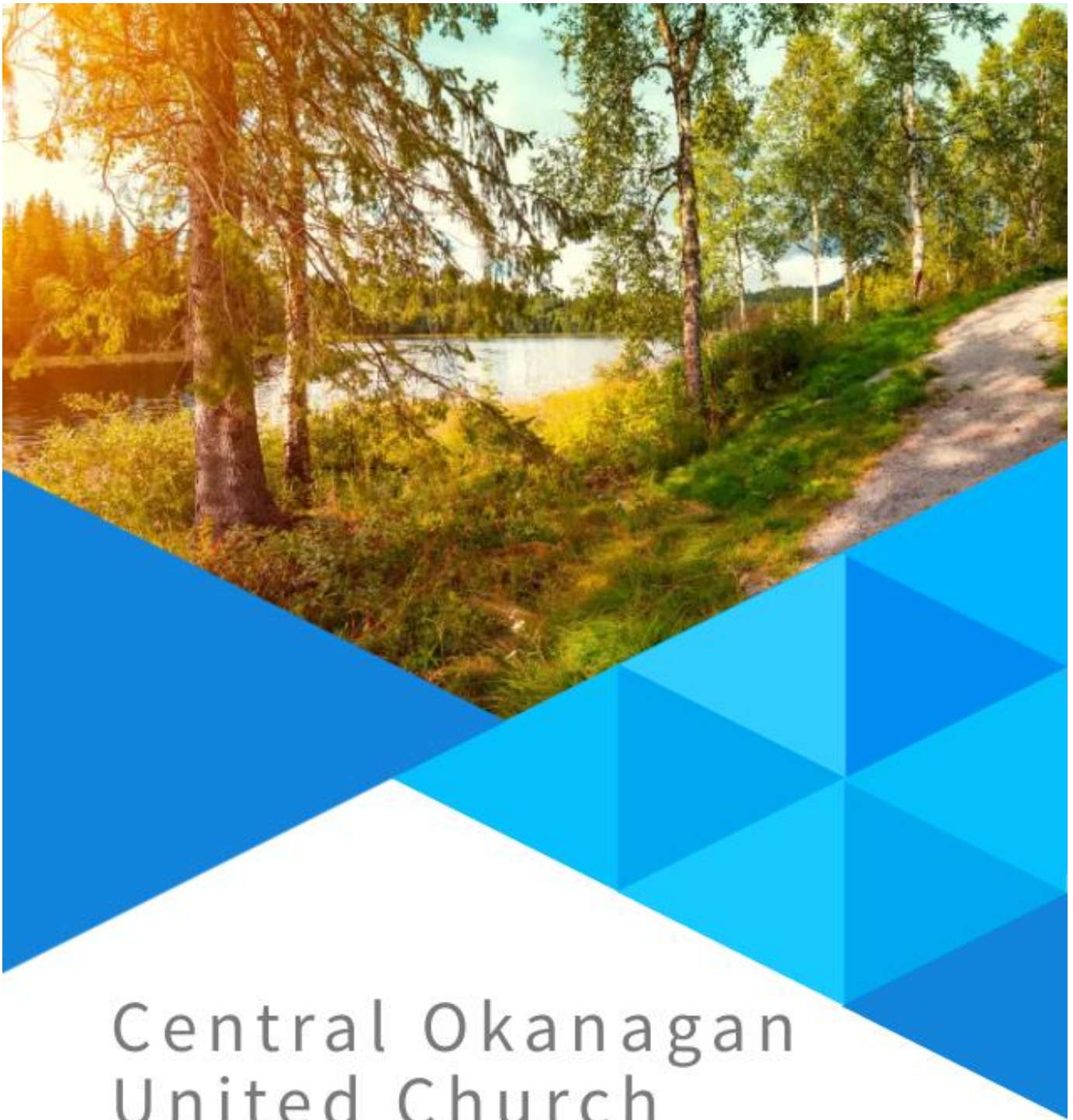
## Land Acknowledgment & Welcome

Welcome to the Central Okanagan United Church Annual Report.

The Central Okanagan United Church respectfully acknowledges that our Kelowna churches are located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx People.

The Syilx Okanagan peoples have taken care of their homelands for thousands of years. Central Okanagan United Church is respectful of the Syilx Okanagan peoples, their knowledge, language, and history, as well as their ongoing relationship to the land and natural world.

Enclosed in this package you will find reports from COUC from January - December 2023, concluding with financial information. Thank you to the staff, Church Board, teams, working groups, volunteers, financial committee and all of the individuals involved for helping to provide these reports for our records.



# Central Okanagan United Church

## 2023

Reports Package  
January - December



## 2023 COUC Annual Report from the Co-Chairs of the Board

2023 marked the second full year of operation for our amalgamated Central Okanagan United Church, and also the opportunity to welcome the congregation of Westbank United Church to become part of our Central Okanagan United Church family.

The year commenced with a series of congregational and community planning meetings facilitated by a private consulting group. This work was foundational to the development of a Ministry Plan for our church. A formal Ministry Plan is a requirement of the United Church of Canada and forms the basis for other decisions that the national Church makes with and for our congregation. The Plan was brought forward to the congregation in September and approved at a congregational meeting on October 1st.

With the adoption of the Ministry Plan, the Planning Team appointed by the Board was integrated with the Facilities Planning Team to develop options for the future use of our facilities. While the primary consideration for our properties is how they can best support the delivery of our ministries, engagement with community partners is also vital - not only to be partners in ministry but also to be partners in supporting facility management and costs. The Planning Team has been tasked to undertake a number of meetings with current and potential community partners, as well as to continue consultations with UCC Pacific Mountain Regional staff. The Team will be reporting back to the congregation in early spring.

Another ongoing area of focus for the Board is to continue to develop a portfolio of internal governance policies. In 2023 the Board established explicit policies related to conflict of interest, delegated spending authorities, income generation, criminal records checks and board operations, as well as guidelines and terms of reference for the functioning of committees and task teams. An Employee Compensation Task Team studied and developed a policy to ensure that all our employees will be treated fairly and equitably.

Other Board actions and decisions were related to Ministry & Personnel and to Finance and are covered in those committees' respective reports contained elsewhere in this Annual Report.

We want to acknowledge and recognize the support and leadership of our talented staff team. Central Okanagan United Church is blessed to have an amazing level of knowledge,

experience and skill that all of our staff bring to their positions. Even more important, theirs is a daily demonstration of faith-filled service in action, and we are supremely grateful for their vital, Spirit-centered work.

We wish also to thank our fellow board members for sharing the journey through the past year. Your diligence, thoughtful analyses and insights are an ongoing source of inspiration and example. We also extend our deep appreciation to all the leaders and volunteers whose passion and skills are truly the 'hands and feet of Christ' in service to our congregation and community. You are all unfailing in bringing Gospel-centered words and actions to the dynamic and growing urban centers of Kelowna and West Kelowna. We know that Central Okanagan United Church is needed now more than ever.

As has been the pattern in recent years, the year ahead will no doubt bring more challenges, opportunities, plans and decisions. As we travel together our confidence remains in God's faithfulness, and in the love of God that is made manifest each day in the life of our congregation.

In faithfulness,  
Gary Dickinson and Terry Welsh, Board Co-Chairs

*"You are the light of the world....let your light so shine before the world that all may see your good works and glorify God..."*

## A Report from Your Ministry Team 2023

*Every time I think of you, I thank God for you. I have joy in my heart every time I ask God to help you. I thank God for the joy we share in telling the good news from the very first day until now. Phil. 1: 3-5*

As I reflect on this past year and on the work of the congregation of Central Okanagan United, I am taken aback by your commitment, joy, and passion for the ministries we engage in. None of it would be possible without you!

A quick browse through this Annual Report, compiled by our many teams and committees, gives us all a glimpse into the ways in which we are being called to serve both within and beyond the walls of our congregation and buildings. Both of our sites are constantly active, accommodating space for Daycares, other faith communities, community groups, support groups, community choirs, dance companies, and more.

Congregationally, we have participated in monthly potlucks, five weekly choirs, Jr. and Sr. Youth groups, Men's breakfast, labyrinth walks, women's retreats, fundraisers, thrift store, weekly and annual community meals, book and video studies, support for Zatoun products, weddings, memorial services, and of course, our weekly 8am and 10 am worship services, a steady attendance at Wild Church, along with special services throughout the seasons of Advent, Christmas and Lent/Easter.

Behind the scenes of each and every one of these ministries is a plethora of hard-working volunteers, supported by our incredible, beyond capable, staffing team; which this year included our student minister, Phillip Breden, who has been a gift and support, as he develops his leadership skills in Inter-generational, Pastoral Care and Worship ministries. It has been a delight to watch him grow into his own confident leadership style.

And of course, there are our tremendous leadership teams and sub-committees that serve faithfully to keep the congregation functioning at an exceptionally high level, while looking always to our future and working to create a sustainable model for our properties and ongoing financial stability. To those who are stepping down from formal leadership roles this year, please accept our deep gratitude for all you have offered.

Thank you all, in whatever way you volunteer your time, talents and grace, for your commitment and willingness to serve. A church is only as effective as its leaders. May we move confidently into the future God has planned for us!

Yours in Christ,

Ivy Thomas

Keith Simmonds

Cheryl Perry (in absentia)

## M&P Committee Annual Report 2023

The Ministry & Personnel (M&P) Committee had a good year in 2023. The committee was very pleased to welcome Susan Sullivan at the 2022 AGM, bringing the size of the team to five members.

There were minimal changes in support personnel in 2023. Darian Kont was hired to the audio/visual technician position with the music ministry at the beginning of the year. Darian subsequently had to reduce his hours with COUC at the end of the year because he was hired to a full-time position that offered to sponsor his training as a nurse, his chosen career path. Darian will continue to work Sunday mornings at COUC, and his weekday responsibilities have now been assumed by Saibun Hasibuan following Saibun's increased availability with the closure of Westbank United Church.

The ministry staff were also very busy in 2023, doing a great job of sharing their workloads and covering for each other where needed. This was especially important during Ivy's sabbatical in the summer. Fortunately, an opportunity arose to hire Phillip Breden, student minister, to help with the workload. It has proven to be a rewarding experience for both Phillip and COUC!

Major announcements by Ivy and Cheryl this past fall will mean that the ministers will continue to be challenged in 2024 to help cover all of their duties. Ivy will be retiring at the end of July, 2024, and Cheryl will be on a Leave of Absence January 22, 2024 to June 30, 2024. As a result, a Ministry and Profile Search Committee (MPS) was struck to call a Lead Worship Minister, and there was already an MPS committee working to call a Lead Intergenerational Minister for the church. If all goes well, we will be able to celebrate a ministerial staff of four later in 2024!!

The COUC staff continue to perform admirably despite the many challenges with which they are faced on an ongoing basis. Their hard work and positive attitudes bode very well for the future of COUC. The M&P team looks forward to working with and supporting the COUC staff through all of the blessings and challenges that 2024 may present!

Tanya Burke, Janet Watson, Susan Sullivan, John Whitehead, Carl Stef



# Property and Maintenance Team Annual Report 2023

## Team Members:

Ted Basisty; Ross Hyatt; Drew Irvine; Ernie Park; Evans Premachuk; Clive Saunders; Murray White; Tom Cole, (Chair)

## Ministry Personnel: Keith Simmonds: Property Administrator: Saibun Hasibuan

Another year has passed in the life of Central Okanagan United Church, bringing with it new challenges and accomplishments. That said, the Team's primary purpose is to ensure that all properties are well maintained and in good repair to create a healthy, safe environment for all who work, attend, visit. To fulfil this duty of care has required due diligence, prudence, and an eye to cost effectiveness.

Increased cost of repairs, maintenance, replacement parts; lack of contractor availability; uncertainty of the future status of the two facilities have often been deterrents in completing projects in a cost effective, timely manner. Despite this, the Maintenance Team continues to work diligently on a best-efforts basis to maintain, and keep the properties in good condition. Even though maintenance and repairs expenditures are increasing, it must be bourn in mind that monitory value cannot be placed on congregational health and safety.

Each site being unique has posed different challenges, and concerns. Any and all repairs and maintenance considered a priority have been done in consultation with, and approval from the Board of Trustees. The Team offers the following highlights of completed, and pending maintenance costs intended to illustrate the nature and extent of the Team's work in fulfilling its duty of care.

### *Summary of facilities' upgrades, repairs and maintenance*

- Kitchen upgrades
- HVAC maintenance services and repairs (furnaces)
- Roof and eavestrough repairs and cleanout
- Plumbing repairs and installations (toilets, faucets, et al)
- Fire Alarms and Sprinkler System (inspections, new control panel installation, and deficiencies corrected)
- Telecommunications upgrades, electrical repairs
- Security systems (new control panel installation, electrical components repairs)
- Emergency lighting (inspections, repairs, bulb and fixture replacements)
- Carpet cleaning, floor stripping, resurfacing, waxing
- Irrigation Systems startup, winterizing, repairs and maintenance

- Yard maintenance (mowing, cleanup, planters care etc.)
- Monthly Pest control treatments, and monitoring
- Parking lots, (infill, designated handicap signage, electronic signage repairs)

**721 Bernard Avenue Site: \$15,450: Fitzpatrick Site: \$9,910: Subtotal: \$25,360**

**Major Projects approved and scheduled for April/May 2024. Subtotal: \$38,540**

1. (\$13,800): Conversion to LED lighting (Fitzpatrick Site)
2. (\$5428): Sanctuary Painting: (Bernard Avenue Site)
3. (\$9437): Sanctuary carpet installation: (Bernard Avenue Site)
4. (\$9875): Alcove Gate installation: (Bernard Avenue Site)

**Grand Total: \$63,900**

**Projects pending approval:**

1. Because of recent burner outages, and age (24 years) of the main hot water tank at the Fitzpatrick Site, steady hot water supply to the kitchen and bathrooms is uncertain. Inspection and temporary repairs have been done. To ensure energy efficiency, and constancy of hot water, two options have been presented: Option #1 (\$16,400): a new hot water tank: Option #2 (\$6,500) tankless hot water system.
2. (\$3000): Conversion to LED lighting system: Sanctuary, Offices, and meeting Room #14 (Bernard Avenue Site)
3. (\$600 original quote): Bernard Avenue Site Parking lot line painting

Hopefully, this annual report offers some insight into the challenges and continuous effort involved to keep both facilities operable, safe, and in good repair. Unfortunately, expenditures have increased appreciably and will continue to do so in the future.

To the Team, a heart felt thanks for your advice, dedication to the cause, and support throughout the year.

**NOTE: 2022 Estimated Expenditures: \$41,192: 2023 Estimated Expenditures: \$63.900 (exclusive of projects pending approval)**

Respectfully Submitted;

On behalf of the Property Maintenance Team

Tom Cole, Chair

# Investments Team Annual Report 2023

**Members:** Margaret Sichello, Tom Cole;  
**Advisor:** Jayne Brooks, Finance Committee Chair

**Funds Management:** Connor Clark and Lunn Private Capital Inc.

**Representatives:** Steve Gibson, Vice Chair; Daniel Wong, Portfolio Manager

The capital markets have been volatile and somewhat unpredictable, but signals are that 2024 may see a rebound, and more stability. That said, Central Okanagan United Church portfolio of funds has reflected this market uncertainty and downward trends during the year. For the purpose of this report, below is a Quarter-by-Quarter summary showing relevant Portfolio details specific to the combined totals of the General Operating Funds and Capital Campaign Funds: **(Source Connor Clark & Lunn Private Capital Inc.)**

**Q1: March 31, 2023: Total Market Value: 3,386,490:**

*(General Operating Funds (GOF): 2,824,914 +\* Capital Campaign Funds (CCF) 561,576)*

Withdrawals: -75,000: interest/dividends/distributions: 19,910: Management Fees: -5,624

**Q2: June 30, 2023: Total Market Value: 3,368,061:**

*(GOF: 2,797,323 + CCF: 570,738)*

Withdrawals: -75,000: Management Fees: -5,548: Interest/ Dividends/ Distributions: 19,943

**Q3: September 30, 2023: Total Market Value: 3,244,452:**

*(GOF: 2,681,391 + CCF: 563,061)*

Withdrawals: -75,000: Management Fees: -5,466: Interest/Dividends/Distributions: 19,436

**Q4: December 31, 2023: Total Market Value: 3,393,258:**

*(GOF: 2,790,848 + CCF: 602,410)*

Withdrawals: -75,000: Management Fees: -5,441: Interest/Dividends/Distributions: 105,335

**Rate of return:** since inception December 22, 2016: 6.3% (Q4 Report)

**Risk Tolerance:** low/moderate, this is a conservative investment strategy designed for preservation of capital generally with an overweight on fixed income, and hedge strategies to mitigate risk.

**Time Horizon:** 10 years

**Portfolio Review:** Annually

\*Capital Campaign Fund is designated as a restricted fund.

**Please note:** The numbers cited represent only one aspect of Church finances, and should not be interpreted otherwise. For a comprehensive, in-depth analysis, refer to the Finance Committee Annual Report.

---

It is important to note that returns are impacted by Annual Withdrawals: (-300,000); and Management Fees: (- 22,079), and that total Interest/dividends/distributions: 164,624 fell short of meeting this outlay. This suggests negative implications, and is cause for concern going forward.

RE: Westbank United Church funds (\$1,116,273) held in trust by Pacific Mountain Region has been transferred into Central Okanagan United Church investments Portfolio general operating account.

The board of Trustees has scheduled a Zoom meeting with Connor, Clark & Lunn Private Capital Inc. representative, Daniel Wong Saturday, March 16, 2024 10:30 AM. The purpose of this meeting is to review and discuss Portfolio aspects such as Statement of Investment Policy, Asset Mix, Performance, Risk Tolerance, Alternative Investing Strategies, et al.

Two of the current portfolio signatories, Margaret Sichelto, and Tom Cole have resigned from the Board of Trustees; consequently, to expedite future transactions, names of two new Trustee appointees will need to be submitted to the Investment Manager, Connor Clark & Lunn Private Capital Inc. Since both persons currently comprise the Investments Committee, the Board of Trustees will need to appoint a new Investments Committee to ensure a smooth transition for future investment transactions, and policy.

Respectfully;

Margaret Sichelto, Tom Cole

## Ministry and Facilities Planning Team Report 2023

We have spent a very productive year developing and submitting our Ministry Plan for approval by the congregation and Pacific Mountain Region. That work guides our decisions around facilities and the partnerships necessary to build and retain facilities appropriate to our needs. In the meantime, our Facilities Planning team short listed our available options from four to two and a half - to focus on either site (Rutland or downtown) or some combination of both. The board then (fall of 2023) combined the teams with the mandate to develop proposals and partnerships for our consideration.

The joint Ministry and Facilities Planning Team went over the ministry plan and drafted a list of 'must haves', 'should haves' and 'could haves', to help us in conversations with potential partners. That led to a series of conversations in early 2024. Members of the combined team met with potential partners (five to this point) to consider whether their needs and our needs are compatible with our Ministry Plan. All conversations have gone very well, some may translate into joint facilities, while others will not.

It has been a long and involved process, but one that needed to be undertaken, both to meet the needs of the Regional church and to help ensure that the outcomes, partnerships in facilities and programs meet the needs identified in our ministry plan. Thank you for your patience and stay tuned for more to come.

Submitted by:

Keith Simmonds on behalf of the Planning Team.

## Intergenerational Ministry Annual Report 2023

We continued throughout 2023 without someone with specific leadership responsibilities for intergenerational ministry. Instead, that work is shared by our team of three ministers: Ivy, Cheryl and Keith. In September 2023 we were also joined by Phillip Breden, our student minister, whose responsibilities have included some work with children and youth programming.

As it was identified in the Amalgamation Working Group's final report, intergenerational ministry work has three focuses:

- 1. Develops and implements educational, worship and other activities and programs to support the integration of families and diverse age groups into the life of the congregation.**

To that end we offered:

- Intergenerational worship—opportunities for all ages to worship together for the whole hour on Sunday morning especially on high holy or feast days such as Epiphany, Easter, Outdoor Worship & Picnic Sunday (June), Setting Out Sunday (September), Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve
- Intergenerational activities such as Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper & worship, Maundy Thursday Taize worship and potluck, potluck lunches after worship once a month
- Opportunities for all ages to participate in worship regularly by lighting candles, participating in rituals, reading scripture, sharing musical gifts, helping with Tech Team, taking part in worship through drama including a Christmas pageant in December
- Sunday morning program for 3-18 year olds

## 2. Supports core values of connection, belonging, community, faith formation, and sharing our spiritual journeys.

To that end we offered:

- Weekly Word for All Ages time in worship provides an opportunity for children's ministry to and with us
- Sunday School weekly - using a lectionary-based curriculum that connects worship to learning; teacher training provided at the beginning of each unit to help equip, train and encourage leaders who are learners along with the children
- Youth Inquiry Class for youth aged 12 & up - led by Suki Vernet, Phillip Breden and Cheryl Perry from September 17-November 26 and a one-day Confirmation Retreat on January 6. This was an opportunity to explore faith questions and beliefs about God, Jesus and the Bible and learn more about what makes the United Church of Canada unique as a denomination. It included 'field trips' to attend worship in some other churches including St. Michael and All Angels Anglican, Metro Community Church, Trinity Baptist Church and a Ukrainian Catholic Church.
- Wonderlust - a group that meets bi-weekly on the second Wednesday of the month, online and the third Thursday of the month in-person to explore questions and curiosities presented by the participants. It is an open and safe environment where people are free to share their views and vulnerabilities in a variety of topic areas. Over the past year we have explored questions of faith, spirituality, politics, health and wellness. The attendance ranges from 5-20, depending on the topic and availability of participants.
- A One Day Women's Retreat "It is Good: Remembering the Sabbath" was held in early March at the Fitzpatrick site with 24 women attending. Facilitated by Cheryl Perry, Jessica Crawford and others from the congregation: Karen Kranabetter, Heather Macdonald, Laurel Walton, Janet Watson, Joa Lazarus, and Tanya Pritchard who led sabbath practices in the afternoon. (continued)

Rachel Tomlin catered lunch. In the morning our guests were Marcia Turner and Barb Finkleman from the Beth Shalom Synagogue who explored the theme of sabbath with us and shared their experience as Jewish women.

- A weekend retreat for women in October at Sorrento Centre, “Patterns: Faith Across Decades” was facilitated by Allison Rennie. 22 women attended this in-person retreat.
- Monthly youth activities for youth in Grades 8-12 led by Keith and Cheryl that included tubing at Big White, board games night, Chopped Challenge cooking night, clean up of Guisachan Road Adopt-a-Road, and an end of the year retreat at the Perry family cottage on Mabel Lake in June
- A new Jr. Youth Group for Grades 5-8 started in September that is led by Cheryl and Phillip. It meets twice a month after worship and this Fall has focused on getting acquainted and group-building activities. We started our year with a combined activity for both youth groups, a pool party at the home of Bill and Lori Hetland!
- Vacation Adventure program “Taste and See: Exploring Stories about Meals and Food in the Bible” for children aged 5-12 held in August at our Bernard site. Each day the children prepared food together in the Milk & Honey Cooking School and learned about life and customs in biblical times, and the Bible stories that inspired the dishes they made which included hummus, lentil stew, and a dessert inspired by the story of the Hebrews’ escape from Egypt! 38 children and youth leaders participated and a number of adult volunteers helped lead, and provide, prep and serve snacks. The week wrapped up with a lunch for the participants and their families.
- Book study - In October, a group of 25 people gathered on a weekly basis to discuss Brian McLaren’s book *Faith After Doubt*.

There was rich conversation as we reflected on how our faith beliefs have shifted over the years and what we have learned in the process. We are continuing to consider next steps that will support, encourage and enrich our faith journeys.



### **3. Intergenerational Ministry works to ensure that all ages are respected, honoured, and welcome.**

To that end we offered:

- Opportunities for congregants to participate in worship and other activities via Zoom or through online streaming who cannot attend in-person
- Name tags made available and encouraged for all ages including children
- Collaboration on activities such as a Twinkle Tour, fundraisers and other special events of the congregation, to ensure all ages are included/welcome
- Birthday/sympathy/get well cards mailed to congregants of all ages
- Recognition of milestones and life events such as high school and post-secondary graduation, presenting Bibles to children entering Grade 4, annual candlelighting service on All Saints' Day

As Intergenerational Ministry has been a shared responsibility it has not had the dedicated staff required to provide vision, creativity and time to fulfill this function. We hope the hiring of a fourth minister to take specific lead responsibility for this important area of ministry will encourage growth, energy and excitement in the area of intergenerational ministry.

Submitted by,

Keith Simmonds

Cheryl Perry

Ivy Thomas

Phillip Breden

## Pastoral Care Lead Minister Annual Report 2023

What comes to mind when you hear the term “pastoral care”? For many it is the work of hospital visiting, caring for the sick, funerals and aftercare. But in the broadest sense pastoral ministry may include outreach, encouragement, support, counseling and other care for members and friends of the congregation.

The term *apostle* means “one sent out.” Those who had been known as Jesus’ disciples, after his death and resurrection, became known as apostles because Jesus had commissioned them to carry on his work—to “baptize” and to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:18), to serve others (John 13:15) and to “feed my lambs” (John 21:17). So it is the work of all of us who are Christ’s followers to engage in this work we call ‘pastoral care.’

While I have the title of Lead Minister for Pastoral Care, the work of pastoral care is not only mine but the work of the Pastoral Care Team (see their report elsewhere), the staff and ministers, and of all the members of the congregation who care for one another in many, many ways. It is my privilege to oversee this—and to support and encourage pastoral care--which this year has included:

**Monthly potlucks**, held on the last Sunday of the month, offering important opportunities for people to connect and come to know one another.

**Worship services for seniors in care homes and retirement residences**, offered monthly. In May we began offering a monthly Communion service at Hawthorn Park where the largest number of our congregants live. This provides an opportunity for our congregation members who live there, as well as others, to gather in person for worship. And when we amalgamated with the congregation of Westbank United we also took over providing services once a month in two care homes on the Westside: Lakeview Lodge and Brookhaven. These services have been led by myself, Keith, or Ivy and since September our student minister Phillip Breden has also provided leadership. Music is such an important part of these services and this has been provided by Sylvia Clerke, Pat Totton, Linda Langevin, and Islene Vernet.

**Twinkle Tour annual event**, that includes a social time at the church followed by a tour of the city to see Christmas lights, was offered in December. 48 participants including drivers took part in this fun event which coincided with a first snowfall in Kelowna on December 10!

Magical!

**Pastoral visitor training**, offered In April. We co-hosted a training session with hospital chaplain Zach Hair. People from Westbank United, Central Okanagan United as well as St. Michaels & All Angels, St Andrews, and St. George's Anglican in Westbank attended.

**World Café in November** on the theme of hope, led by Tom Kemp. This one-day event was well-attended and the Pastoral Care Committee is looking forward to offering a four week conversation series in January called "A Good Ending" to delve more deeply into a topic that was touched on at this event.

**Weekly worship is offered online** through Zoom and Facebook Live in addition to in-person worship, Sunday School and other programs for those who connect in those ways. We are more aware than ever at how critical technology has become to our ability to stay connected and we are especially grateful for all the work that is done by our staff and volunteers on the Tech Team including Frances Chiasson, Mike Chiasson, John Whitehead, Lorraine Hladik, Tanya Burke, Ailie Bertetic, William Campbell, Sophia Chiasson, Noah Chiasson, Carol Drury, Kim Ducs, Jan Goss, Tanya Prichard, John Shippit, Yota Shiozaki, Jim Rogers, Charlotte Seethaler, Sumi Shiozaki, Pat Totton, Benita Worley, and Linda Vensland.

**In-person activities and groups resumed** in 2023 that help people to connect on a regular basis include:

- Scrabble (which meets Tues 1:30)
- Friday Night Women's Group (last Friday of the month)
- Choirs (Alleluia Voices, Women's Chorus, Gospel Praise, Men's chorus, Alleluia Ringers bell choir)
- Songshine (Mondays 1pm)
- Wonderlust (meets online 2nd wed 7pm and in person 4th Thurs 1pm)
- United Church Women coffee group (2nd Tues monthly 2pm).

**Celebration of life and memorial services**, helping families mark the passages of loved ones, is an important role of the pastoral care minister and all three of our ministers can and do provide these services. Again, with deep gratitude for the Tech Team, services held in our sanctuary were able to be livestreamed and family members unable to be in attendance were able to share in services in meaningful ways such as reading scripture, pre-recorded or live eulogies on Zoom, and watching via livestream.

**Blue Christmas Service**, planned and led by our student minister Phillip Breden was held in December, for those who have experienced a loss or who are finding Christmas a difficult time. And a service on **All Saints Sunday** included lighting candles in memory of those who had died in the past year.

The work of pastoral care to celebrate life events also included an annual celebration of graduates on **“Threshold” Sunday** in June, weddings, and baptisms. **Greeting cards** are also written and mailed to mark birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions, as well as sympathy cards and get well cards for those who have been on our Prayer List. These cards are written and sent by members of Pastoral Care, Joan Grahl and Rose Hoffman.

I particularly want to thank Pat Totton, who is concluding her work as Chair of the Pastoral Care Team, and who is also filling in for me during my five month leave of absence, and the members of the Pastoral Care Team, for their faithful work: Rose Hoffman, Tanya Pritchard, Pat Totton, Joan Grahl, Donna Fletcher, Jan Goss, Benita Worley, Carol Brooks, Loraine Kemp, Phillip Breden.

Submitted by

Cheryl Perry

## Pastoral Care Team Report 2023

The COUC Pastoral Care team consisted of Beryl Baldeo, Donna Fletcher, Joan Grahl, Jan Gross, Rose Hoffman, Loraine Kemp, Lorainne McLarty, Joyce Philpot, Pat Witter, Benita Worley, and Pat Totton. Rev. Cheryl Perry and Tanya Pritchard provided leadership and staff support. Due to changing life circumstances Beryl Baldeo, Lorainne McLarty, Joyce Philpot, and Pat Witter were not able to complete the year with the team. We owe them a great deal of thanks for the many years that they provided pastoral care in the various congregations they are belonged to. You have been great mentors for those of us following in your footsteps.

A big part of the work of this committee is to help Tanya Prichard maintain the ever-changing congregation and residential care lists. We reviewed and updated the “Family Registration Form”. In February, we conducted a phone survey to those who can no longer attend services to determine how the church can continue to meet their needs. This team is the group of smiling faces that sit at the Welcome Table each week, welcoming newcomers and regular attendees, providing information on upcoming events and helping newcomers find the sanctuary and the facilities. In the fall, we reinstated the monthly potlucks and birthday celebrations. Our ministerial staff have started monthly services at Hawthorn Park in Kelowna and Brookhaven and Lakeshore Place in West Kelowna. A special thanks to Joan Grahl for remembering all our birthdays with a card as well as the Think of You cards which she sends to congregants during difficult challenges in their lives.

In addition to these regular activities, the Pastoral Care team arranged a number of special functions for the congregation. An 8 week Fall session of Walk and Talk was offered. Thank you, Tom Kemp, for your leadership. April 18, we offered an education session for volunteers interested in providing hospital visiting to our congregants. The session was led by the hospital chaplain, Zach Hair. Fifteen of our volunteers attended. Volunteers from the Lutheran congregations attended as well. The Team provided the refreshments following the Good Friday Service. (continued)

On November 4, twelve congregants attended a World Café event led by Tom Kemp, entitled, "Living with Hope". Thank you, Tom, for your leadership for this event. The final event of the year was the annual Sparkle Tour, held on December the 9th. Thank you to the staff and volunteers who provided and served the refreshments and to the volunteer drivers who drove the seniors to view the Christmas light displays around the city.

Pastoral Care is a vital and busy team. We are always welcoming new team members as well as volunteers who would like to help with our special events.

Respectfully Submitted

Pat Totton

# Community Ministry Annual Report 2023

## Community Ministry

Following the amalgamation agreement between First United, St. Paul's United, Rutland United and, subsequently, West Bank United, Community Ministry at Central Okanagan United Church has, as its primary focus, the elimination of barriers between living beings and God's abundant love. We seek to address this through Service, or Outreach, Education, or learning with/from one another and Justice or seeking to actively remove impediments to safety, equity and the rights of the person/being. It is only in compiling our annual report that we begin to realize just how much of our collective energies are put to the use of Community Ministry. We hope the following tidbits will tantalize you and draw your energies to them. To find out more or to help us focus on other important issues like the becoming an anti-racist society, the environment, minimum annual income, or housing, to name a few of our gaps, please contact your Community Minister and you will be connected, supported and maybe even equipped!

## Service/Outreach

### **Tuesday Mornings - from Jayne Brooks**

Every Tuesday morning we offer meals and groceries to members of the community who are struggling with food insecurity. Special events such as the New Year's Day Dinner on January 1, 2023, and special meals on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas during regular Tuesday mornings supplement our program. In 2023, we handed out over 2,000 bags of groceries, purchased in bulk out of our budget or donated from the generosity of members of the congregation, and served about 2,400 meals. We have about 45 regular guests and 20 - 30 more who change over time. We are grateful for the support of the Lake Country Food Bank for produce, bread and other items. Augmented in 2023 by produce from our own garden. We are also extremely grateful for the volunteers who make this service available: cooks, bakers, sandwich makers, kitchen helpers, dishwashers, servers, shoppers, grocery packers, greeters, etc. and all the congregation members who contribute in their own way.

2023 saw us begin a gift card program, generously funded by congregation members who purchased cards at local grocery stores, coffee shops and restaurants. Over fifty cards were purchased and continue to make a huge difference in the lives of the people receiving them. Thank you so much!

In total, 1750 volunteer hours were devoted to Tuesday Morning programs in 2023.

## **Free Tax Prep Sessions - from Jayne Brooks**

The Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) allows volunteers to prepare tax returns for low-income taxpayers so they can claim any refunds or rebates they are entitled to. Many of these individuals cannot afford to pay someone to prepare their tax returns. This Federal program trains volunteers to do the tax filing for free. COUC is lucky to have five volunteers who split their time between two locations: COUC at the Bernard site every Thursday morning and the Rutland Seniors Centre every Monday morning throughout March and April. In 2023, the volunteers completed returns for 338 individuals who were very happy to be receiving refunds. In total, 224 volunteer hours were devoted to this in 2023.

## **Food Garden**

Thanks to the inspirational leadership and efforts of Courtenay Genge, a dedicated group of volunteers constructed, planted, tended and harvested a garden patch in the church courtyard at the Bernard site. All manner of vegetables were harvested, including tomatoes, peppers, beans, peas, carrots and lettuce. Our Tuesday morning guests were happy to receive the fruits of their labour. We hope to expand the project this year.

## **Willowbridge - from Jayne Brooks**

The 40 residents in the Willowbridge transitional housing operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association receive two frozen meals a day. A small breakfast serving and a larger dinner/lunch offering that can be warmed up in their microwaves. Our volunteers bring a community meal complete with juice and dessert, once a month. Around 20-25 residents share the meal prepared and served by COUC volunteers who also visit with the residents during the evening. Enough is left behind to feed those who are, perhaps, more comfortable in social isolation. The event provides a sense of community engagement and a healthy meal option. In total, 108 volunteer hours were devoted to this in 2023.

## **West Kelowna**

We are continuing Westbank United Church's community outreach program, making monthly donations to the Westbank Food Bank and BGC (formerly Boys & Girls Club) Westbank. One of our ministers also continues our presence at a monthly coffee time gathering in Westbank. We look for more opportunities to offer service and care as time goes on.

## **Benevolent Fund**

This fund is used to help community members who are in urgent need of financial assistance to avoid homelessness or to pay their utilities or medical bills. Our Community Minister oversees this fund and in 2023 we were able to help prevent eviction, utilities disconnects, participate in dental care and help temporarily house dozens of very grateful community members in their time of need.



## **SongShine - from Jayne Brooks**

SongShine continued weekly sessions throughout 2023 with about 15 regular participants joining in person or on Zoom. This program is for anyone who wants to strengthen their voice, especially for those with Parkinson's Disease or stroke victims or the aged who have diminished or trembling voices. The program includes exercises to improve breath control and strengthen voices through speaking and singing. Sylvia Clerke, a certified SongShine instructor provides leadership for this program. The group is very grateful to have the support of an extension to their ProVision grant and a new three-year grant from the Central Okanagan Foundation. In total, 100 volunteer hours were devoted to this in 2023.

## **Education/learning together**

This area of Community Ministry offers programs and events to educate COUC and other members of the community on many specific topics. In 2023, these events included:

- Book study with Rev. Donald Schmidt on Homosexuality and the Bible for Progressive Christians.
- After service discussions about the Affirming process and what it means to be inclusive
- answering questions and talking to people on potluck Sundays about the various areas within Community Ministry, especially the Palestinian issue this year.
- Cohosting workshops and relationship building for community members advocating for Palestine.
- Hosting and cohosting workshops on the Roots of Conflict in Palestine and Israel.
- cohosting 'Stitching Palestine', a documentary film telling the stories of Palestinian women. Attended by over 100 women from a wide, multi cultural, multi faith, multi age spectrum of the Okanagan.
- Sponsoring and attending community workshops on Homelessness and poverty in Kelowna.
- A series of workshops on reconciliation based on Chief Robert Joseph's book, Namwayut.
- A 'fact finding' trip to the West Kelowna Indigenous Museum.
- Supporting and sponsoring Ki Low Na Friendship Society's wearable art program after church on three Sundays.
- Supporting a workshop and fundraiser for BGC's Upstream project
- Participating in and offering Leadership for Trans death awareness Day worship service

## **Reconciliation**

Under Gerry Hewitts guidance and leadership and with Debbie Hubbard's community connections and activities with the National Church, we continue to grow and learn more about the effects of Colonization, while learning from Indigenous members of the Syilx community and the Ki Low Na Friendship Society. Members of our church have participated in book studies, museum tours and community events. We have supported activities of the Friendship Society by participating and purchasing products produced by their youth. Opportunities to learn more and continue to develop relationship will continue over the coming year. All are Welcome!

## **Peace by Chocolate - from Debbie Hubbard**

Through purchases of [chocolate bars](#) by members of the congregation and at our table at the November craft fair we were able to raise \$1000.00 to support the [Mission and Service](#) of the United Church of Canada and [Broadview magazine](#). Our sales also supported [Peace by Chocolate](#), a Canadian business that was established by a Syrian refugee family in Nova Scotia.

## **Palestine Education/support activities**

### **Vigils, Community Gatherings, Petition Campaigns, Workshops, MP Meetings**

Thanks in large part to the leadership of Debbie Hubbard and Dean Reidt, members of our church participated in and supported the efforts of hundreds of community members who are engaged in raising awareness about and finding support for a peaceful resolution to the patterns of colonization being lived out in Israel and Palestine in our time. We hope and pray for peace even as we campaign against our country's support for war and genocide.

### **Zatoun Sales - from Debbie Hubbard**

We served as a depot for selling and distributing Zatoun olive oil, soap, Za'atar and dates from the West Bank of Palestine again this year. We distributed and sold almost \$12,000 worth of product with all proceeds going to support farmers and their families who are living under a brutal occupation.

### **Palestinian Olive Wood Carving and Glass Globe Sales**

We ordered and sold about \$1400.00 worth of artisan crafts from Bethlehem and Hebron, making a great difference in the lives of Palestinians who are very limited in ways to earn a living at this time. Every item sold takes a story of occupation and resilience home with it. We are grateful for the support of those purchasing and sharing the stories.

**EI Salvador - From Pat McPhee - See separate report.**

## **BGC Upstream education and fundraising event**

**Celebration of Youth Resiliency from Haida Gwaii to Kelowna** - Members of COUC partnered with BGC's Upstream Project to raise awareness and funds for the Upstream Project. Upstream is a preventative program with the goals of improving students' well-being, increasing school engagement and attendance, and ultimately decreasing youth homelessness. Youth are identified in grade eight through a self-assessment tool, and then supports are provided. Other agencies such as Canadian Mental Health's Foundry program and Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society are key partners in this work. The funds enabled Upstream to save the position of a key staff person.

## **Peace Poppies**

We joined a 90 year old 'Peace Poppy' campaign (begun in the UK in the early 1930s) in 2022 and continued selling white Peace Poppies in 2023. The Peace Poppy campaign does not wish to denigrate red poppies (commemorating the sacrifice of folk who served in the military during the wars), but rather to place non-combatant deaths and woundings along side them. Recent numbers from Gaza, for instance, indicate more than 100,000 residents of the Gaza strip, mostly women, children and non-combatant men are missing, wounded or dead.

## **Social Justice**

COUC volunteers are engaged with community groups as well as national and international organizations that are working toward social justice including the Interfaith Collective, the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Amnesty International Okanagan, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, the United Network For Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel. Activities of Justice seeking people within COUC include but are not limited to:

### **Affirm - from Kendra Berg**

In early 2023, Central Okanagan United Church formed an Affirm Steering Committee, which was tasked with shepherding our amalgamated church through the process of attaining Affirm United status. Affirm Steering Committee members were: Keith Simmonds (ministry personnel); Liz and Ted Basisty; Kendra Berg; Jan Goss; Beryl Itani, and Jocelyn Smith with help from Sue Sullivan, Pat McPhee; Reverend LeAnn Blackert and Reverend Doctor Donald Schmit.

This group had multiple meetings, consulted with the church board and congregation about several aspects of becoming an Affirm United Church, planned services, held workshops, book studies and other information sessions, leading to our vote in 2024 to become an Affirming United Church with 100% support (no abstentions). (continued)

Central Okanogan United Church submitted all of the required information to Affirm United before the end of 2023. We were provided with our official Affirm United Certificate on February 18, 2024. We pledged to support, defend and protect all members of the LGBTQ2SAI+Q community. Then we celebrated, danced, and ate cake. It was great fun! For more fun and to help plan it, please contact Keith Simmonds or Kendra Berg.

### **Interfaith Collective**

The Interfaith Collective grew out of a community consultation on responses to homelessness with a particular focus on Faith Communities and their participation. Shirley Piedt, of our congregation has been one of the sustaining members of the group. While many faith communities in Kelowna reach out and help in countless ways, the hope of the collective was for a coordinated response to need as identified by Journey Home, the backbone organization for addressing homelessness in our area. Participation in the collective dwindled over the years, and the work of Journey Home was taken over by the City of Kelowna.

Under the new and invigorated leadership of Alberto De Feo, the Interfaith Collective is reconsidering its role. There is great interest in bringing people of different faiths together to learn from one another and to combine efforts on matters of common interest. More to come.

**Central Okanagan Refugee Committee (CORC)** - See separate report.

### **Palestine Advocacy and Support**

Debbie Hubbard and Dean Reidt continue their work with Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, assisting in getting the word out about various efforts to raise awareness in the Okanagan and in organizing vigils, workshops, women's conversations, letter writing campaigns, petition drives, Member of Parliament meetings and other initiatives to help bring the news about what is happening in Palestine and Israel to the attention of Okanagan residents.

Kamloops United Church partnered with Central Okanagan United Church to host a series of workshops on the roots of conflict in Palestine and Israel, while COUC hosted an information session and vigil for victims of the conflict in October of 2023.

### **Amnesty International Write In**

COUC hosted and participated in this event in 2023. Dozens of people took part, writing letters to prisoners and those who imprison them.

### **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Curriculum Rallies**

COUC staff and volunteers attended both pro and anti SOGI rallies in Kelowna. Providing support for folk who were targeted in the anti SOGI rally and were part of a large turnout in support of the SOGI curriculum.

## **Pride Day in the Park**

COUC volunteers staffed a 'booth' in the park on Pride Day, providing balloon animals, stickers, water and positive information about a welcoming church that surprised many who attended the celebration.

### **Community Ministry is currently participating with:**

**University of British Columbia Okanagan - responses to homelessness**

**Central Okanagan Food Bank - funding food security in West Kelowna**

**Lake Country Food Bank - produce and other food items to our Tuesday morning programs**

**BGC - supplying financial resources for programs in Kelowna and West Kelowna**

**Ki Low Na Friendship Society - marketing art items, supporting residents, participating in reconciliation efforts**

**Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East - providing space, time and other supports**

**Winfield United Church - Refugee sponsorship**

**Canadian Mental Health Association - providing food and community**

**Advocacy Canada - support on 2SLGBTQQA+**

**Kelowna Pride - booth and presence at Pride Day**

Report respectfully submitted by Keith Simmonds, Community Minister

For more information or to get involved or to start something new, please contact Keith Simmonds, our Community Minister at [keiths@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com](mailto:keiths@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com) or by text to 236 970 9000

## Central Okanagan Refugee Committee Annual Report 2023

2023 was a year spent working with a Syrian family that was co-sponsored by The Well Church.

The family had spent over a decade in a UNHCR refugee camp in Northern Lebanon before their application was approved by Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Our wait had been long, having to deal with reluctance of the children's father to sign consent for them to come to Canada with their mother, plus the virtual shut down of Embassies during COVID. It was a year of numerous challenges, from medical and dental crises to technicality obstacles in getting enrolments completed to challenges of coordinating efforts with volunteers from The Well. In retrospect, we are very thankful that by the end of the sponsorship year we can say that the family is generally managing on their own and has gained confidence in their ability to do so. Volunteers from The Well gladly assumed a number of responsibilities and created a series of special supper gatherings with the family and their friends and relatives to promote community and urge practicing English.

Schooling for 10 y/o Mohammed was a huge challenge initially, following a traumatic attempt to start his schooling while in Lebanon. We are grateful that he began the current school year eager to see his friends (treated as enemies previously) and to learn with his peers. He is progressing as well as can be expected for a student who began schooling in the fourth grade. The elder son (Said, 24 y/o) arrived with serious ophthalmological needs for which we were able to schedule quickly. A year later, he is still being treated for a hidden serious threat to his vision in preparation to be able to surgically treat his known threat. All of the family had major dental emergencies, especially middle son Ayham (22 y/o), most of which were treated except for Mohammed's extensive needs requiring a specialized pediatric dental surgeon.

(continued)

The two older sons began employment last summer, but Said was injured and is currently exploring a different type of job possibility with WorkBC. Ayham continues working with a local roofing firm on a steady basis.

The principal applicant for this sponsorship is Souad, the mother of these three sons. She has struggled with English yet has shown her strength for keeping her family together and learning to live in a new culture, being undeterred by whatever setbacks have arisen. She constantly shows her gratitude for being in Canada and for having a safe environment with opportunities for a happier life for her children, and she has an amazing ability to live positively with limited income. Souad has wished to find employment, but her doctor has certified her as disabled due to a work injury while in Lebanon for which little medical assistance was provided.

CORC is now in waiting mode. An Iraqi household of 6 has been in processing for over 3 years by IRCC, a young Syrian gay man has been in processing for over a year, and this year we committed to sponsorship of two Afghani families. All are in unwelcoming settings where they daily struggle for safety and basic needs. We invite your prayers that these applicants will be able to live among us without extensively long delays. Thanks to remarkably sensitive work by Terry Welsh, CORC now has a clearly documented niche as a ministry of the congregation.

Submitted by Tom Kemp,  
Committee Chairperson

## El Salvador Sister Community Annual Report 2023

Since 2009, COUC (First United) has had a Sister Community in the tiny rural community of El Triunfo, about a 45 drive from the capital of San Salvador. This relationship has been facilitated in partnership with FUNDAHMER, an NGO that supports CEB's (Ecclesial Christian Base Communities).

Over the past 15 years, fifteen travelers ( '*viajeros*' ) from First United journeyed to El Salvador to visit our brothers and sisters in El Triunfo, participating in workshops and international conferences (along with the United Church of Canada), and, from our position of privilege, have had the opportunity of learning about the realities of life in a developing country in the Global South. We had our 'eyes opened wide' to witness the injustices and waste of human potential that we have encountered on these visits.

From our sister community relationship, we have received many life lessons and have a better appreciation for the value of community and extended family. One of the most impactful lessons was about accepting one's own reality, but having the will to work towards changing what can be changed.

One of the on-going projects to which the church committed, has been providing scholarships to young people from our sister community so that they can attend high school and university. (The government provides schooling up to Grade 9.) Since 2009, educational support has been provided for 18 young people from El Triunfo, benefitting their families, their community and future generations.

For the 2023 school year (January to November), COUC provided financial assistance to Katya Alejandra Gonzales and Fatima Flores.

However, it was decided about 3 years ago, not to sponsor any additional students due to the long-term commitment involved. (At the least, it would require two years of support for high school, but upon graduating, the commitment could be a further 5 years to complete university.)

Therefore, 2024 is the final year of our congregation's commitment to the scholarship project as Katya completed high school in November of 2023 and Fatima is just finishing up her requirements for her Social Work degree. The final funds for Fatima's education were remitted in December, 2023. (continued)



However, we will continue to be in communication with FUNDAHMER, with the students, and with our brothers and sisters in El Triunfo. And we thank you for your kind support and interest over the years. MUCHAS GRACIAS!

In “The Beatitudes for Progressive Christians” by Donald Schmidt, he quotes from one of our scholarship students who he met in our delegation’s 2017 visit to our sister community:

*‘Narciso is a leader of the youth group in El Triunfo, a group that tries to live the gospel while being challenged regularly by local gangs, who would much rather the members of the church youth group join them. In a recent newsletter, Narciso wrote, “We have to be a light of hope between so much darkness and social uncertainty, especially with children, single mothers, and the elderly, because they are the most vulnerable. This is a factor that is extremely important for the construction of society.’*

Respectfully Submitted By:

Pat McPhee



ES STUDENTS 2019



ADONAY, ISMAEL, LAURA



2010 SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS (WITH MARILYN)



2009 MARCH RUTILIO GRANDE

## Worship and Music Committee Annual Report 2023

Central Okanogan United Church (COUC) is extremely fortunate to have a strong ministry and music team. Ivy Thomas, Cheryl Perry, and Keith Simmonds, Frances Chiasson, Sylvia Clerke, Nicki Attwell, and Jessica Crawford work hard to anticipate the needs and wishes of the congregation for worship service.

In 2023 the Worship and Music committee identified three ongoing areas of activity:

- Mechanics - i.e. communion setup and carry through, service flow, sanctuary dressing for specific occasions, budget
- Policy - Recommending to the Board policies pertinent to Worship and Music i.e. Affirming church policy for marriage, baptism, etc.
- Creativity - Designing and discussing implementation of various worship experiences

Activities during 2023:

- A special acknowledgment to Karen Kranabetter for her continued excellence in dressing our sanctuary.
- Initiated volunteer communion teams and documented procedures for setup and serving. Thank you to Tanya Pritchard for administrative help in coordinating activities.
- Provided music for worship service under the direction of Frances Chiasson, Sylvia Clerke, Nikki Attwell, and Jessica Crawford. Thank you everyone. You are amazing.
- The Ministry team continued to explore alternate forms of worship:
  - Wild Church is a sacred nature-based experience to awaken deep love for self, earth and all living beings for the survival and healing of the planet.
  - The “Sharing Circle”, offered at 8:00am on Sunday, is an opportunity for interactive worship and conversation on the readings and theme of the day, including prayer and singing.
  - The focus of Taizé worship is the music. A few words or phrases sung over and over again give the singing a meditative character. The songs are not meant to be sung as hymns but, rather, as a series of prayers and do not require any singing talent or experience. The repetition allows the words to become a prayer of the heart.

- COUC continued to focus on meaningful Intergenerational worship. Intergenerational worship takes seriously the idea that people of all ages are part of the worshipping congregation.
- We provided guest speakers so that the congregation would experience varied points of view.
- We continued to engage with multiple platforms, including in-person, ZOOM, Facebook and YouTube, providing as many opportunities as possible for people to join us for worship service.
- The technical team continued to provide their expertise for our services. Thank you to all the volunteers. A special thank you to Mike and Frances Chiasson and Darian for all the extra hours of work.

Submitted by Linda Hutchinson

## Alleluia Ringers Annual Report 2023

Finally, after being cancelled in 2020, 2021 and 2022, the BC Guild of English Handbell Ringers' provincial festival, "Spring Ring," took place in Nanaimo on May 5 & 6. Attending it was definitely a highlight of 2023 for the Alleluia Ringers. This was the first time members of BCGEHR had gathered in person for an event since 2018, and it was absolutely wonderful to see our ringing friends and colleagues and make music and learn together again.

At home, the Alleluia Ringers continue to contribute to worship services monthly, September through May, and we send a particular Thank You to the Pastoral Care group, who gives us a "pass" on the congregational potluck lunches. As they coincide with our regular performance week (the last Sunday of the month), it is difficult for us to contribute to the pot-luck as we have bells in hand, warming up for the service, by 9:00am. Not only that, but we are allowed to be first up to the serving tables, and are first to dash away from the Hall for our noon rehearsal.

It was a joy again to be part of the Christmas concert in December 2023, along with the vocal choirs. We have also continued our biannual chicken sales and are grateful for a lengthy list of regular customers who support our fundraising efforts. We are also grateful for the numerous musicians, from within the congregation and without, who collaborate with us, including several "spare" ringers who fill in when necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikki Attwell  
Director, Alleluia

## Music Annual Report 2023

We are definitely a singing congregation! As I was helping to lead singing in worship this weekend, I was struck by what a 'joyful noise' our congregation makes. We are gifted by having many choirs (vocal and bell) and many musicians (volunteer and paid staff), and we also have lots of congregational members who are not shy about raising their voices. How blessed are we.

Much that I wrote about in my 2022 has remained the same over the past while. Though our membership of folks involved in musical leadership has changed slightly over the past year, our ensembles have carried on, under the consistent leadership of Sylvia, Jessica, Nikki, and myself. How blessed are we.

We mourn the loss of musical volunteers within our community - especially Bob Baturin and Elenore Wieler. How blessed were we to join our voices with theirs.

We continue to offer several choirs at COUC. Rehearsing weekly are Gospel Praise, Women's Chorus, Men's Chorus, Alleluia Singers, Alleluia Ringers, and periodically we have children and/or youth who gather to sing together. Other groups that meet weekly with Sylvia are the Breathing Group and SongShine. How blessed are we.

We have several dedicated congregational members who volunteer their musical leadership skills by playing the piano for the services that we lead at local senior's homes. This ministry could not happen without their assistance. And periodically over the past year we have had guest musicians as part of our Sunday services or offering their gifts in alternative worship. How blessed are we.

I recently read a quote about how music accompanies all parts of our lives:

"We celebrate with music. We mourn with music. We party with music. We reflect with music. We learn with music. We comfort with music. We excite with music. We dance with music. We dream with music. We connect with music. We express with music. So much of life is done with music." Vaughan Fleischfresser (continued)

How true this feels and how blessed are we that our church prioritizes music as a ministry within our community.

Respectfully submitted - Frances Chiasson

## Technology Team Annual Report 2023

Our tech team continues to be an important part of the life of the Central Okanagan United Church community. The congregation has committed to Zooming or livestreaming all Sunday worship services, plus many of our extra services, meetings, events, etc. We are continually having conversations about how to improve the experience for those of you who are viewing our services online, while also still wanting to improve the in-person experience for those in the room. All of this is not a small task and it doesn't happen without financial resources (mostly through the Worship & Music Committee), and the time and dedication of many volunteers.

Darian Kont was hired to help us with our technical needs early in 2023 and he has been our consistent tech staff on Sunday mornings, helping to run our Zoom connection, live stream, projection, overseeing sound, etc. Because of his other work and now schooling, Darian's work with us is mostly limited to Sunday mornings, so I have continued to take up the other tech tasks as required (volunteer coordination, weekly script editing, projection creation, etc.). Mike Chiasson has continued to be the lead volunteer on trouble shooting, repairing, and generally keeping our system in the Bernard sanctuary running.

Mostly, we're so, so, so grateful for the assistance of many volunteers: Ailie Bertetic, Tanya Burke, William Campbell, Mike Chiasson, Noah Chiasson, Sophia Chiasson, Kim Ducs, Carol Drury, Jan Goss, Lorraine Hladik, Tanya Prichard, Jim Rogers, Charlotte Seethaler, Yota Shiozaki, Sumi Shiozaki, Clive Saunders, Linda Vensland, John Whitehead, and Benita Whorley. We, truly, could not keep the show on the road without your help.

Respectfully submitted: Frances Chiasson

## Student Minister Report

My time with COUC since last September has been a great learning experience, but also a blessed time of relationship building and holy moments. During Autumn, I had the honour to walk with the youth as they underwent questions of faith in their Confirmation class. In helping them listen to their hearts and follow their path, I was reminded of my own questions and journey. Even though the Confirmation class has ended, I have been blessed to continue to build relationships with the youth through fun activities during the Junior Youth Group events twice monthly.

On the other end of the age spectrum, I participated in Tom Kemp's "Walk & Talk" once a week, and helped first Cheryl then Ivy with the care home services twice a month. These gave me experiences to enter into dialogue and relationship with people who have journeyed far in their faith, but still have lots of questions and adventure. My introduction to the care home services was more assistant in the beginning, but as I got experience and my confidence grew, I was given more leadership and freedom in creating the liturgy. My time with the elderly in the care homes has been wonderful, and I cannot say that I have not benefited from experiencing additional days to worship!

Finally, I have grown in the areas of participating in Sunday worship and meetings. It has been a great joy to worship with COUC, and both the congregation and the worship leaders have taught me so much. Every month I feel more comfortable and confident. Everyone has been so kind and supportive that growth in this setting is as natural as it is joyful. I can honestly say that even in staff, pastoral, and worship meetings my participation and confidence are growing. Where I was, at first, fairly quiet and overloaded by the sheer amount to learn, now I feel so much more fully engaged via taking notes, taking my turn at chairing, and offering my own input.

With all that I have learned and all the people I have had the pleasure of talking to, I could not have asked for a better place to learn, serve, and grow. Whatever the future holds, the relationships and learning I have experienced here I will take with me into my future journeys. Thank you, Central Okanagan United, for being the wonderful people you are.

Respectfully Submitted By: Phillip Breden

## **Thrift Store Annual Report**

Our Thrift Store is open every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is run by a very dedicated group of approximately 20 volunteers. We stock a good array men's and women's clothing, including coats, shoes, boots, accessories, jewelry as well as a few "boutique" items. There is a limited amount of children's clothing. Also on our shelves are puzzles, games, kitchen/household items, dishes, glass ware, small appliances, bedding, linen, and a fun supply of "knickknacks" to browse through. We welcome all donations to help fill our constantly changing stock.

Submitted By: Linda Gilmour

## **Blanche Simpson Church Library Annual Report**

It was a privilege to work in the Library and it is with sadness that I am leaving the position of Church Librarian as other activities take more of my time.

Few new materials have been added to the collection in the past 4 years but there remains a core collection of books by "progressive Christian writers" such as Spong, Crossan and others. There are many books on grieving for adults, children and teens, as well books on LBGQT issues. As both these subjects are found in several areas of the collection, Grief ones have blue tape on the top of the spine and the LBGQT ones have orange tape. Easy to spot, so check them out. There are other books related to Indigenous concerns scattered throughout the collection and have green tape on the top of the spine as well as the Dewey Decimal Number.

The children's collection has been given broad subject headings to make it easier to find a book. Please drop in and browse the collection and maybe borrow a book or two. If the library is closed, ask the office volunteer for the key, and write out the title you borrow on the Sign-out Sheet.

Small groups needing a quiet place to meet often find this in the library.

As space is always at a minimum for the church, the library has the pleasure of sharing our space with the Music Minister.

Submitted by, Lorraine Hladik



# Clerk of Session Annual Report

Clerk of Session Annual Report

Central Okanagan United Church Membership roll since January 1, 2023

**Received by Baptism: 1**

Harlon Gray Bensler-Auch

**Received by Confirmation: 0**

**Received by Transfer: 3**

Lisa Michelle Taylor

Jan Goss

Laurel Walton

**Removed by Transfer: 0**

**Removed by Death: 15**

Evelyn Nicholson

Margaret Norman January 11, 2023

Jim Hamilton January 30, 2023

Nina Anderson April, 2023

Lisa Michelle (Miki) Taylor May 7, 2023

Don Ritchie June 16, 2023

Edna Rennie July 6, 2023

Jake Martens July 24, 2023

Deanna Peck August 21, 2023

Paul Might August 28, 2023

Bob Baturin October 21, 2023

Regina Birt October 31, 2023

Audrey Mussellam November 17, 2023

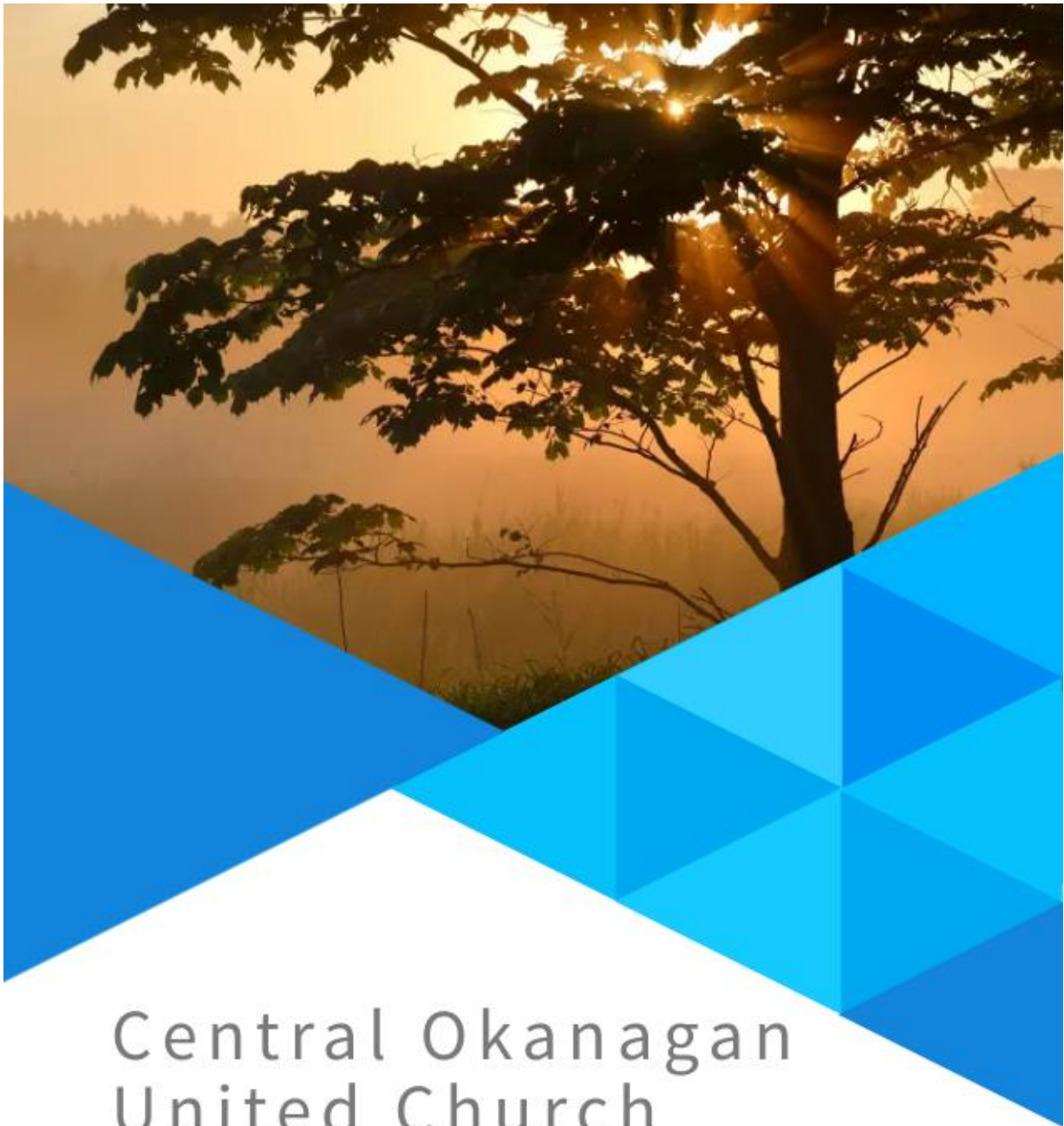
David Scott December 7, 2023

Win Langham December 20, 2023

**Removed by Board Action/Inactive: 0**

**Total members on Historic Roll of Central Okanagan United Church: 302**

Submitted By: Tanya Pritchard



# Central Okanagan United Church 2023

Financial Reports Package



# Finance Committee Annual Report Package

## Regular Committee Work

The Finance Committee met monthly in 2023, to discuss and make recommendations on the financial operations of the church, develop and comment on policies that had financial implications, and determine the appropriate presentation of financial reporting.

In 2023, the meetings included:

- reviewing monthly financial statements
- ensuring cash flows are sufficient to cover expenses
- developing and ensuring cash and asset control and security
- reviewing and renewing the contract for the bookkeepers
- contracting with a new external accountant
- reviewing the financial statements as prepared by the external accountant
- preparing the budget for the 2024 year
- assisting with the development of the proposed Development Fund for 2024-2026
- working on the various financial aspects related to the amalgamation of Westbank United Church (WUC) with COUC including reviewing the Memorandum of Agreement; requesting CRA approval for the amalgamation; working with the United Church of Canada to complete transfer of Mission & Service Funds, Payroll & Benefits, Assessments, and Pre-Authorized Remittances (PAR); transferring the assets from WUC to COUC; combining the financial results for 2023; and noting ongoing WUC obligations to be continued by COUC
- reviewing policies and proposals prepared by others from a financial perspective (Criminal Record Check Policy, Employee Compensation Policy, Policy on Spending Authorities, Policy on Generating Income, Stewardship Policy, Ministry Plan)
- setting policies and procedures specific to finances such as:
  - establishing a Capital Expenditure Policy with a limit of \$5,000 (expensing any asset purchases under \$5,000 and capitalizing any asset purchases of \$5,000 or higher)
  - confirming a procedure for dealing with Honorariums for Employees
  - setting a Reimbursement Policy for COUC Representatives Attending UCC Regional or National Meetings
- discussing several ways of receiving donations of shares with the United Church of Canada Foundation being better financially for COUC than Canada Helps
- working with various committees such as Ministry & Personnel and Stewardship to assist with their work, including creating a separate email for the Steward of Contributions
- reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Central Okanagan Refugee Committee (CORC) as related to the handling of finances
- sorting, filing and storing of financial information from all four founding churches
- initiating development of the Terms of Reference and Duties of the Finance Committee

In total, volunteers devoted 336 hours to this work in 2023.

## **2023 Financial Statements**

The 2023 Financial Statements are included in this Annual Report package and were prepared by our new external accountant, Jackie Gidda of Leda CPAs Inc.

As this was her first year of working with COUC, she had questions for the Finance Committee, which allowed the Committee to clarify the policies and practices used in COUC financial reporting and the overall financial statement presentation.

As Westbank United Church amalgamated with COUC on October 1, 2023, there were discussions on how the various financial components should come together.

Regarding the WUC/COUC amalgamation, special thanks must go to Saibun Hasibuan for all his work on the WUC books and for answering our many questions.

## **Budget 2024**

The proposed 2024 budget is included in the ACM Agenda package.

Work on the budget started in October 2023, when the Finance Committee provided past financial results to the various committees and ministries and asked them to estimate their budgets for the 2024 year. The Finance Committee reviewed these budget submissions and, after consultation, made any necessary revisions.

The final budget is not as positive as the Committee might have wished but the committee recognizes that COUC is still in the development stage and that until the work outlined in the Ministry Plan is complete and until the facility issues are finalized, reaching a balanced budget will be difficult.

## **Appreciation**

Thank you to Marg Brooks and Jodine Duacs for looking after all contributions throughout the year and for issuing all tax receipts at year end for COUC; and the same thank you to Saibun Hasibuan for looking after WUC.

Thank you to the members of the Stewardship and Fundraising Committees for their work throughout the year.

And a big thank you to all the volunteers and to all contributors who helped to make the ministry of COUC a reality in 2023.

And a special thank you from me to the members of the Finance Committee for sharing their time and expertise on behalf of the congregation.

Jayne

## **Members of the Finance Committee**

Jayne Brooks, Chair

Mike Chiasson

Gary Dickinson

Michel Marentette, Treasurer

Sharon Pendleton

Terry Welsh

Carl Stef, M&P

Jim Rogers

Rev. Ivy Thomas

# Central Okanagan United Church

---

Financial Statements

December 31, 2023

# Central Okanagan United Church

December 31, 2023

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Financial Statements	
Compilation Engagement Report	1
Balance Sheet	2
Statement of Income and Retained Earnings	3
Notes to the Financial Statements	4

---

## Compilation Engagement Report

---

To Management of Central Okanagan United Church

On the basis of information provided by management, we have compiled the balance sheet of Central Okanagan United Church as at December 31, 2023, the statement of income and retained earnings for the year then ended, and Note 1, which describes the basis of accounting applied in the preparation of the compiled financial information ("financial information").

Management is responsible for the accompanying financial information, including the accuracy and completeness of the underlying information used to compile it and the selection of the basis of accounting.

We performed this engagement in accordance with Canadian Standard on Related Services (CSRS) 4200, Compilation Engagements, which requires us to comply with relevant ethical requirements. Our responsibility is to assist management in the preparation of the financial information.

We did not perform an audit engagement or a review engagement, nor were we required to perform procedures to verify the accuracy or completeness of the information provided by management. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion or a review conclusion, or provide any form of assurance on the financial information.

Readers are cautioned that the financial information may not be appropriate for their purposes.

The financial statements of Central Okanagan United Church for the year ended December 31, 2022 were prepared by another practitioner.

**Leda CPAs Inc.**

Chartered Professional Accountants

Kelowna, BC  
April 07, 2024

SALMON ARM 778.824.1233 | KELOWNA 778.824.1230  
2-680 Marine Park Drive NE, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 3L4 | 202-1502 Sutherland Ave, Kelowna, BC V1Y 5Y6

LEDACPA.CA

1

# Central Okanagan United Church

Balance Sheet  
December 31, 2023

	2023	2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 143,908	\$ 148,658
Short term investments (Note 2)	3,716,969	2,855,338
Accounts receivables	5,574	3,331
GST rebate	2,273	2,400
	<u>3,868,724</u>	<u>3,009,727</u>
RESTRICTED LONG TERM INVESTMENTS (Note 3) PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 4)	569,096	544,151
	<u>708,564</u>	<u>747,224</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 5,146,384</b>	<b>\$ 4,301,102</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 22,148	\$ 22,248
Designated funds (Note 5)	103,998	101,815
	<u>126,146</u>	<u>124,063</u>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
NET ASSETS	5,020,238	4,177,03
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>\$ 5,146,384</b>	<b>\$ 4,301,102</b>

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE DIRECTORS:

-----  
--- ,  
-----,

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.



# Central Okanagan United Church

Statement of Income and Retained Earnings  
For the Year Ended December 31, 2023

	2023	2022
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Contributions	\$ 403,042	\$ 368,227
Fundraising	7,652	13,743
Investment income	150,383	218,633
Rental income	175,217	160,135
Programming revenue	20,454	15,762
Other revenue	17,145	20,752
	<b>773,893</b>	<b>797,252</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Ministry & Personnel	69,6834	527,041
Properties/Trustees	124,456	159,955
Fees, Accounting and Legal	52,660	50,840
Administration/Office/Communications	50,273	36,420
<b>National Church</b>		
Mission & Service	35,676	33,000
UCC Assessment	45,02	31,993
<b>Ministries</b>		
Community Ministry	38,798	32,336
Intergenerational Ministry	7,568	15,331
Pastoral Care	998	788
Worship & Music	8,659	9,445
	<b>1,060,949</b>	<b>897,149</b>
<b>LOSS FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b>(287,056)</b>	<b>(99,897)</b>
<b>NON OPERATING INCOME (EXPENSES)</b>		
Amortization	38,659	39,345
Unrealized loss on investments	-	234,631
<b>NET LOSS</b>	<b>(325,715)</b>	<b>(373,873)</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>4,177,039</b>	<b>4,550,912</b>
<b>WESTBANK UNITED CHURCH NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>1,168,914</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 5,020,238</b>	<b>\$ 4,177,039</b>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

# Central Okanagan United Church

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the Year Ended December 31, 2023

## 1. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

### a. Amalgamation of Two Churches

Westbank United Church and Central Okanagan United Church amalgamated as Central Okanagan United Church effective October 1, 2023. The statement of income reflects a full-year, twelve months, of operations of both Central Okanagan United Church and Westbank United Church.

### b. Basis of Accounting

The basis of accounting applied in the preparation of the balance sheet as at December 31, 2023 and income statement for the year then ended, is on a historical cost basis and reflects cash transactions with the addition of:

- Accounts receivable
- Investments recorded at cost
- Property and equipment are amortized in accordance with Note 1(c)
- Accounts payable and accrued liabilities
  - Designated funds are contribution received for a specific purpose are deferred and recognized when funds are used

### c. Property and equipment

Property and equipment are recorded at cost. Depreciation is provided using the following methods and annual rates:

	Method	Rate
Land		Nil
Buildings	Declining	4%
Computer equipment	balance	55%
Furniture and fixtures	Declining	20%
Other machinery and equipment	balance	20%
Asphalt and parking areas	Declining	8%

## 2. SHORT TERM INVESTMENTS

Investments are recorded at cost as of December 31, 2023 and consist of the following:

	Declining balance	2023	2022
Bank of Nova Scotia	\$		- \$ 59,008
Connor, Clark & Lunn		2,613,644	2,796,044
Pacific Mountain Region		1,103,325	-
Accrued interest			-286
	\$	3,716,969	\$ 2,855,338

4

# Central Okanagan United Church

Notes to the Financial Statements  
For the Year Ended December 31, 2023

### 3. RESTRICTED LONG TERM INVESTMENT

Restricted long term investments have been set aside by the Board of Directors for capital expenditures.

### 4. PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

Property and equipment is net of accumulated amortization consists of the following:

			2023	2022
	Cost	Accumulated Amortization	Net Book Value	Net Book Value
Land	\$ 17,042	\$ -	\$ 17,042	\$ 17,042
Buildings	1,194,945	532,867	662,078	689,665
Computer equipment	70,904	66,346	4,558	10,127
Furniture and fixtures	207,326	188,818	18,508	23,137
Other machinery and equipment	19,736	17,767	1,969	2,461
Asphalt and parking areas	5,209	800	4,409	4,792
	\$ 1,515,162	\$ 806,598	\$ 708,564	\$ 747,224

### 5. DESIGNATED FUNDS

	2023	2022
Designated Funds		
Memorial Fund	\$ 5,060	\$ 7,440
Restricted Designated Funds		
Rising to the Challenge	-	19,739
Bell Chior	2,815	3,956
Women's Retreat	(224)	497
Retreat Congregational	3,816	3,816
El Salvador Project	3,787	3,483
SongShine	-	(589)
Palestine	(266)	-
Central Okanagan Refugee Committee Fund	38,640	63,473
Discretionary Fund	50,370	-
	\$ 103,998	\$ 101,815

# Central Okanagan United Church

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the Year Ended December 31, 2023

## 6. COMPARATIVE FIGURES

The financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2022 were prepared by another practitioner. Certain comparative figures have been changed in order to conform to the financial presentation for the current year.

The basis of accounting for investments has been changed for the year ending December 31, 2023 and this change will be applied in the current year and moving forward. Investments held will be recorded at cost and any realized gains or losses on those investments will be recorded through the statement of income in the year they are received.