



# CONNEXIONS

FEBRUARY/MARCH EDITION



# ST. ANDREW'S

GROWING. LIFE. TOGETHER. WITH GOD





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# The Minister You Can't Get Rid Of.....although what I do will change

From Rev. Peter Coutts



It is very hard to believe that I have been your interim minister now for 11 months! Yikes! How time flies.

It has been a productive time in my work with St. Andrew's, and very meaningful to me as well. Thanks for the opportunity to serve this great congregation once again. I find myself about to leave my interim minister post almost ten years to the day since I moved on from St. Andrew's the first time. Indeed time flies.

As of March 1, I will be concluding my contract as interim minister, but not quite gone. I will continue as your "interim moderator." What that means is, I will be the Presbytery rep here supporting our congregation through its ongoing vacancy. The main elements of my work will be: resourcing and "staffing" the search team, acting as Moderator of Session, helping Geoffrey with pastoral care, and making sure the organizational life of St. Andrew's keeps spinning well. I will also be ensuring that we have worship leaders who are ministers each Sunday. You will continue to see me and Geoffrey once per month each, with the addition of Rev. Fiona Swanson (who we know well!) and Rev. Clay Kuhn (who has retired from St. Paul's in Banff and now makes his home in the city). I am looking forward to wrapping up my interim ministry work. In part, it will free up so much of my time, so I can focus more pointedly on the search team's work to call our next minister.

"Our"? The weirdness of my place within this congregation arises from the fact that I am officially a member of St. Andrew's! Back when I retired the first time, our denomination's rules say that retired ministers are to become "ministers in association" with a congregation. So I became that here two years ago. So even though I will no longer be your interim minister... and when we call our new minister I will no longer be the interim moderator... I will still be a member. As a member, I anticipate being involved in our ministry and mission like you are. In particular, I am interested in continuing on with our growing business of being "woven into the neighbourhood." That includes doing my shifts in our Food Bank (where my wife is my boss).

So you are not rid of me yet! On March 1 my role will shift, and sometime later it will shift again. But no matter what I am called or what I am doing, it's still about the service of God. As it is for us all.

Blessings!

Rev. Peter Coutts







# Session Highlights by Debby Dorcas



## **Annual Congregational Meeting**

Your voice is important! Please plan to attend our Annual Congregational Meeting **Sunday, March 12th at 11:00 am**, either in-person or by zoom. Stay tuned for details, including info about refreshments prior to the meeting. You KNOW there is going to be food involved in a big Presbyterian gathering!!

Mark your calendars – **Easter is coming!**

Make sure these dates are in your calendar:

- **Wednesday, February 22: Congregational Supper at 6:00 pm, followed by an Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 pm**
- **Thursday, April 6: Maundy Thursday Service at 7:00 pm**
- **Friday, April 7: Good Friday Service at 10:00 am**
- **Sunday, April 9: Easter Sunday Service at 10:00 am**

Session Highlights January 2023:

- Five of our six new elders joined us for their first Session meeting. They brought enthusiasm, energy, and wisdom to our meeting and we are blessed to have them on Session – and in our faith family.
- Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held March 12 @ 11:00 am – watch for details in our weekly email and Sunday announcements.
- On Sunday, March 5 the Finance Team will provide an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have about the 2022 Financials at a Deep Dive meeting in the Upper Room at 11:15 am. Questions about the 2023 budget can be submitted in writing or verbally to a team member, but will not be addressed at the Deep Drive Forum; rather 2023 budget questions will be addressed at the Congregational Meeting on March 12 so everyone hears the responses.
- The Finance Team joined us to discuss the proposed 2023 Budget, which was approved by Session and will be presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- Session agreed to support looking into two new initiatives this year:
  - Indigenous Relations: holding a Pow Wow in conjunction with the Kingsland Community Center.
  - After School Youth Drop-In Program: working with other churches/groups towards providing this outreach program to youth in our community.



# Minute of Appreciation for Retiring Elders & Ordination of New Elders By Judie Coleman & Barb English

On Sunday, January 15, nine serving elders on our Session resigned to help St. Andrew's session shift from traditional Life Service to Term Service (6 years). These elders are Ed Braun, Elaine Cantlon, Bill Judd, Sheila Kirkland, Kevin MacFarlane, Hugh McFadzean, David Platt, Janet Ridsdale and Annette Shaw. They represent 227 years of time, commitment, discipline, and planning in their service to St. Andrew's. They responded to the call to eldership from God and the congregation, as have the newly ordained elders.

## **Ordination of Elders at St. Andrew's**

Our six new elders have been ordained as elders of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and not just as elders of St. Andrew's. Through the laying of hands by the minister and other elders, they are blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit and sent out to fulfill their task. Elders are ordained for life whether they are currently serving on the Session or not. Sheri Coutts, Desiree Henrichsen, Lauren Nolette, Stephanie Werle and Derek Wilkinson will be bringing their voices and their strengths to our current Session. Judy Bridgemohan will be ordained at a later date.

***Through the office of ruling elder men and women are ordained to share with the minister in the leadership, pastoral care, and oversight of the congregation.***

**Living Faith 7.2.4**

St. Andrew's Session

Audrey Cole, Judie Coleman, Debby Dorcas (clerk) Dolly Forcade, Lynn Judd, Loran McVittie, Cathy Millar, Craig Murray, Inge Murray, Christine Pepper, Mark Rowe and Rhonda Wishart, plus the newly ordained elders listed above.



# Spiritual Moments with Judy McKearney

As I am putting words on paper I feel God's loving presence.

I believe that we should live our lives with an open heart and soul for others. We can be that beacon of light and hope to another person's struggles!

We lost our beloved daughter nine years ago. My family and I were surrounded with fervent prayers, love and support. I also felt enveloped in God's loving arms! My faith understood that our God as a parent had lost His only child, our Savior Jesus Christ. That deep-felt awareness became very real and a great comfort to me. I remember hearing someone say during the 9-11 tragedy that "God Cries First"! Those simple words have stayed with me, and got me through some very difficult times in my grief.

When adversity strikes in our lives, we turn for strength to our loving God to weather the storms. We are never alone! He is right beside us, and he knows every thought even before we utter it. It's okay to be angry with God! He knows our broken heart. That loving and personal relationship grows stronger and deeper with each passing day.

The realization that God keeps putting people in my life who have shared similar heart-wrenching experiences has had a profound effect on my healing, and has strengthened my faith. Over these last nine years I have met or sat beside strangers, and our initial conversations have led them to share their own personal stories. These individuals have opened up about losing a beloved son or daughter. I sit in awe listening to their accounts, and feeling and sharing their pain and sorrow. I believe it is God who has put us together, so that we can share our innermost feelings of grief and despair. These are truly God moments! Strangers have now become kindred spirits through that deep connection that was God-inspired.

We are never alone on this faith journey, and being open to God's mercy and faith has led me to a deeper, profound understanding of grabbing onto something so true and sustaining, when everything else around you doesn't make sense.

May Peace Be With You  
Thanks Be To God





# ● You Are Special by Lauren Nolette, Youth Leader ★

I have been trying to think, for weeks, about what message I wanted to share with the youth, or about the youth to the congregation as we begin 2023, and somehow nothing, until now, seemed to be the right thing. The only thing I feel is right, at least right now, is simply to remind the youth how important they are. Matt and I, when planning what topics we wanted to cover with the youth this year, decided at youth group we're going to talk about how our mental health matters, but especially in today's times, it is even more vital to talk about. In an age where social media rules our lives, especially for those who are young, it is so easy to get lost in comparing yourself to others.

You Are Special written by Max Lucado, tells of a story about Punchinello, a little wooden Wemmick who lived in a town where other Wemmick's opinions mattered. They expressed this by placing gray dots or gold star stickers on each other to let them know that they were either beautiful or ugly. I remember reading this book when I was a little girl. My mother thought that it was an important message, but I didn't understand why until much later in my life. Punchinello only ever received gray dot stickers, which meant that other Wemmicks didn't think he was worthy, that he was ugly. He was the only Wemmick in the town that only had dots stuck to him. He would walk around town feeling sad that no one saw any value to him. One day, he saw another Wemmick, Lucia, who had no dots or even stars on her. And he asked her how it was possible to not have any, not even stars, and she replied, "I go see Eli every day, and I sit with him. Go to him." So Punchinello went. He got to the wood carver, and before he could say a word, Eli said "Punchinello! It's good to see you!" Punchinello was surprised. "You know my name?" he asked, and Eli responded "Of course I do! I made you!"

If only I had remembered the story when I was 13, I probably could've saved myself from a lot of heartbreak. I feel like I wasted years feeling like I was never good enough in any of my peers' eyes, when really, the only opinions that mattered were those of my family, who knew I was beautiful the way I was (and am) and especially God, who's image I was created in.

Psalm 139 says "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We were all created in God's image, no matter what we look like, what we like, or who we love.

So to our youth, hold on to the knowledge that no matter what other people say, God loves you, and your family and your church family love you beyond comprehension. Knowing that no matter what I looked like, what I wore, or what my classmates thought of me, St. Andrew's was a safe place to be myself completely. This is something I have cherished and has gotten me through some really hard times.

My biggest piece of advice as we enter this new year is to be kind to yourselves, it's okay to not be "okay", but it's important to reach out if you're struggling with your mental health.

Matt and I are so proud of the really awesome people you're becoming. You're beautiful people, inside and out. We're always here for you if you need anything. Always remember how special you are.



Eli smiled. "You will, but it will take time.  
You've got a lot of marks,  
For now, just come to see me every day  
and let me remind you how much I care."  
Eli lifted Punchinello off the bench and set him on the ground.  
"Remember,"  
Eli said as the Wemmick walked out the door,  
"you are special because I made you.  
And I don't make mistakes."  
Punchinello didn't stop, but in his heart he thought,  
*I think he really means it.*  
And when he did, a dot fell to the ground.

# Journaling – Is it Worthwhile For Me?

Submitted on behalf of the Wellness Team by Alice Williams



The first recorded diaries, according to research, were written in the 10th century by ladies of the Royal Japanese court. These records took the form of pillow books, so called because they were tucked under their respective pillows at night. In the 15th century in Italy, diaries were used for accounting purposes, but gradually the focus shifted from recorded public life to reflections of private life. Today with technology at our fingertips, it has become much easier to record our daily thoughts with the availability of so many digital options.

## How will this affect my health?

"Journaling can be a smart pressure-releasing valve when we feel overwhelmed or simply have a lot going on internally." (Amy Hoyt, Founder, Mending Trauma.) Journaling on a daily basis allows us to express feelings and emotions, which in turn helps to reduce stress and blood pressure. A 2013 study group in New Zealand found that 76 percent of adults who spent 15-20 minutes writing about their thoughts and feelings for three consecutive days two weeks prior to a medically necessary biopsy, were fully healed 11 days post-op. This compared to 58 percent of the non-journaling control group, whose biopsy site had not healed after the same surgery.

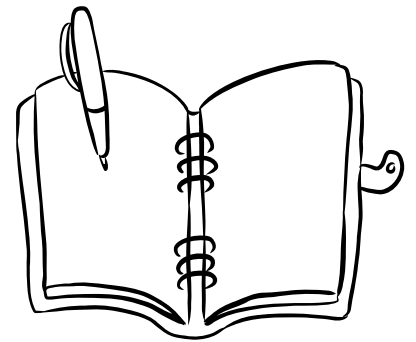
Keeping a journal allows us to track patterns, trends and improvements over time. We can look back on previous resolved situations and learn from them. Journaling can improve problem-solving skills by removing that situation from the mind. Writing it down encourages us to look at things from a different angle, and brain storm solutions in a more organized manner.

## How to get started:

Researchers state that journaling for at least 15 minutes a day, three times a week can significantly improve physical and mental health. If this is a new venture for you, find a safe place, pick a time when you will not be disturbed and just start writing.

## Here are a few ideas if you are unsure of what to write about:

- Personal vision for the New Year
- A current challenge and possible solution
- Important event
- A grief journey – making sense of the pain in order to move forward
- Two things you are grateful for today and why
- Something you did and are proud of
- Four things that you wish people knew about you
- An encouraging personal note to yourself
- A positive note to someone with whom you cannot forgive for a past issue
- Health record of milestone immunizations
- Food record



There is no right or wrong approach to journaling. It is up to you. The simple act of taking time to get in touch with your mind, body and spirit is what is truly important.



# Changing our Mind

By Jari-Lynn Eckert and Margaret Bruhjell-Holmes

Jari-Lynn Eckert and Margaret Bruhjell-Holmes are offering a 16-chapter book study on Changing Our Mind (third edition) for those interested in how to be affirming of LGBTQ+ Christians.

The study is for 5 weeks and begins Wednesday January 25 and runs to February 22 from 1:30pm to 3pm in the lower fireside room and by Zoom.

Please buy or order your book/ e-book from Amazon.

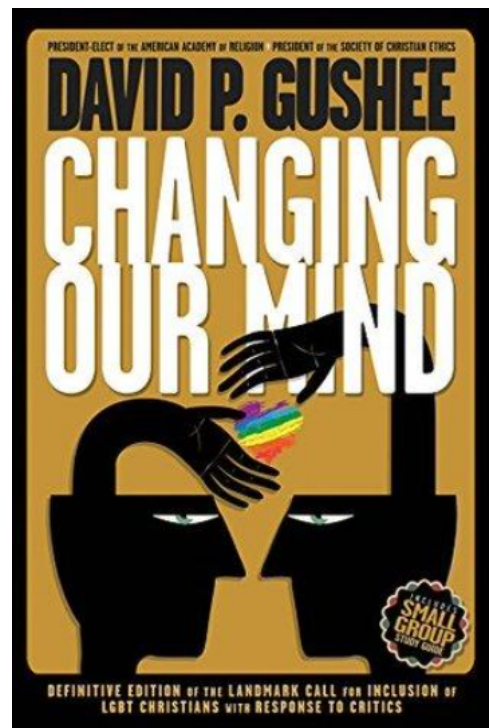
Pre-reading is essential.

1st week reading requirement is Chap. 1-4 (28 pgs).

We will limit this session to 15 people and we can offer again.

Thanks!

Please register with Margaret via email: [marmicvic@shaw.ca](mailto:marmicvic@shaw.ca)



## New Ukrainian Refugee Families By Jari-Lynn Eckert

Suggestions for donations to New Ukrainian Refugee Families:

- Bunk beds with mattresses, plus bedding sets
- Queen-sized bed & frame, Dresser drawers for 2 bedrooms
- Living room furniture: couch, chairs, side tables, coffee tables, lamps
- TV & stand, DVD player so kids can watch and learn English
- Rugs for living room and 2 bedrooms, entryway mat, mats for shoes
- New set of towels, plastic garbage can, soap holder/ dispenser
- Gift cards for IKEA, Walmart, Superstore, Safeway, Co-op, Calgary Transit passes, family passes for Telus Spark, The Zoo, Heritage Park
- Suggestions or offers for work appreciated

Donate items in good condition by contacting Jari-Lynn Eckert, cell phone 403 850-9856 and daughter Jocelyn Ramirez at 403 619-2909 Please provide a detailed message with a picture of item(s) to be donated. Arrangements will be made for pickup of items by Jocelyn.



# Words of Appreciation from the Gratitude and Generosity Team



By Kevin MacFarlane, on behalf of the team



As a new year commences, the members of St. Andrew's Gratitude and Generosity Team would like to express our appreciation for the many ways our congregation lived out its Mission statement in December and throughout the past year. We have also received loving and heartfelt responses to our requests for various teams to offer Gratitude and Generosity Moments each month in 2022. Those presentations have reflected examples of the Mission and Ministry of St. Andrew's being supported by those teams. However, December reflected the commitment of our whole congregation through examples like the following:

1. The spectacular congregational response to the issuance of the "unsolicited" \$25,000 matching challenge by a generous undisclosed couple in December.
2. Our children's generosity expressed in their 12-year sponsorship of a 6-year-old girl named "Joud" from Haiti through "Compassion Canada." The children in the Sunday School have all been busy doing chores at home in exchange for money to put into a fund for a Christmas gift for Joud.
3. Support from the congregation for the residents of Claire House at weekly "Coffee Times" and with Christmas Gift Cards (donations for which also exceeded the suggested \$2,600 goal).

While these examples highlight those identified during our celebration of the birth of Jesus, there are so many others which we have not identified here. Collectively, God has given us the capacity to do His will and we have clearly done it well! Thank You.



Joud







# Legacy Fund News by Derek Wilkinson



The St. Andrew's Legacy Fund will soon be 10 years old!

The Legacy Fund is an endowment-style fund, where we use the interest earned by the fund to support Church projects. The principal monies stay invested year after year, with the intention being that principal sum will grow over time, thus producing more and more interest to support the Church. Only using the interest from the fund in this way is the main difference between the Legacy Fund and other Church funds such as the Memorial Fund or Flower Fund. The Legacy Fund is intended to be used to support projects above and beyond the day-to-day expenses of running the Church. Monies in the Legacy Fund are split into three sub-funds: Mission, Facilities, and Worship & Ministry, and are used to support projects which fall into these areas. The Fund is administered by a volunteer group of trustees appointed by the St. Andrew's Session.

## **Some Numbers**

The Legacy Fund was started in April 2013, with an initial endowment of \$510,000. Since that time, it has grown from additional donations totaling \$73,900 plus reinvested interest, and has paid out \$239,931, supporting a wide variety of St. Andrew's projects. As of our last financial statement in October 2022, the Legacy Fund was valued at \$870,599. In 2022, interest from the Legacy Fund made \$41,021 available to Church teams and members to support projects.

## **Where Next?**

Because we aren't spending any of the principal, the Legacy Fund is a fantastic way to support St. Andrew's in a way that will continue forever. And while we have had tremendous growth thus far, our challenge for this second decade is to try and bring additional donations to the Legacy Fund so that we can increase the principal even further and thus increase the on-going support it provides. Please contact the office and ask to speak with the Legacy Fund trustees if you are interested in making a contribution; we would be happy to discuss all the various ways to support the Legacy Fund with you.



For God

so loved the world  
that He gave His  
only  
begotten



Son so  
that whosoever  
believes

in Him shall not  
perish but have  
eternal life.




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John 3:16

### An Irish Blessing

May the road rise to meet you,  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
The rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.





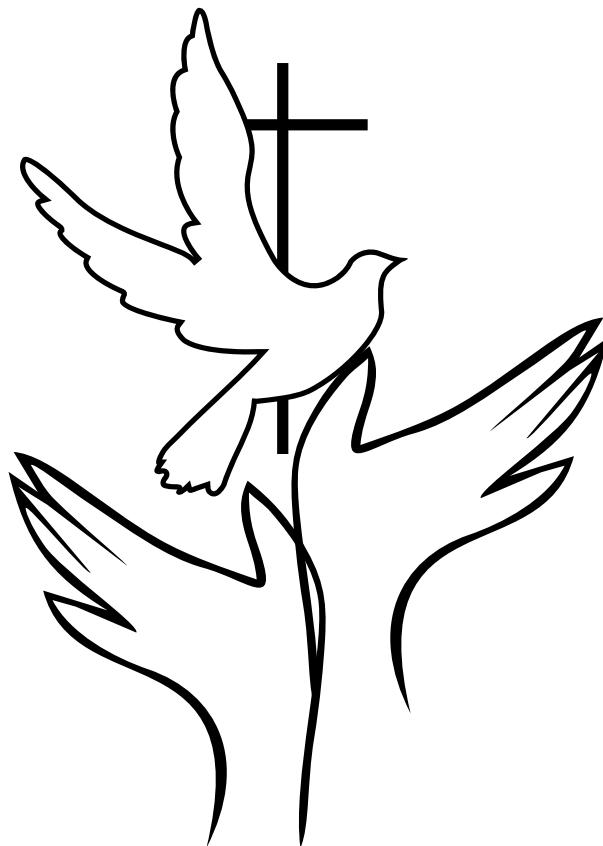
## Search Team Update by Lorna Andronikou on behalf of the team

**Current State:** As outlined by the Rev. Peter Coutts in a recent letter and sermon, the Session of St. Andrew's, in consultation with the Finance Team, has commissioned the Search Team to search for a sole minister for St. Andrew's, instead of two. This is our task, and we are moving forward in this direction with faithfulness, prayerfulness, and with hope.

**What We Are Up To:** The St. Andrew's Search Team is continuing its work of searching for our new minister. Our Congregational Profile was finalized just prior to Christmas. It can be located on both the St. Andrew's website and The Presbyterian Church in Canada's website. Having finalized the profile, we are proactively looking at potential candidates and will be able to move towards the interview phase in the coming weeks.

**What You Can Do Now:** If you know of a minister you think St. Andrew's should approach, please talk to Rev. Peter. He would love to have input from members of the congregation. In addition to any suggestions you might have, the Search Team is asking all members of the congregation to continue to pray for our ongoing discernment throughout this process.

**Coming Soon:** In the coming weeks we will be sharing a "What We Heard" report to the congregation after we compile the findings from our recent engagement session with the congregation around what attributes you want to see in your new minister. We look forward to sharing this with you.





# Joy and Wonder by the Faith Formation Team

The Faith Formation team was so blessed to have had the opportunity to welcome everyone to our Family Christmas Eve Service: *Joy and Wonder*. We had an excellent turnout for the service, which included carol singing and crafts prior to the formal service. The worship service included the Christmas story, scripture readings and prayer, as well as enthusiastic singing, which was accompanied by the children's instruments, chosen as they entered the sanctuary. Everyone enjoyed a fully interactive and participatory Christmas pageant! This service would not have been possible without the support of many who helped make it such a success:

- The Millar, McLaughlin and Barrett families for assisting with our craft tables
- Evan Mounce and Derek Wilkinson for leading the foyer carol singing
- Phyllis Duncan for helping with the pageant costumes
- Revs. Peter and Geoffrey, for their support in delivering the message of Joy and Wonder
- Willem van der Merwe for the beautiful rendition of 'O Holy Night'
- Everyone who participated

The Joy and Wonder of Jesus' birth was experienced fully by our Faith Formation families on Christmas Eve!



Church school continues to be available to our children ages 3-13 during the service. The following faith stories will be delivered in the month of February:

- Jesus and the Children – Mark 10: 13-16
- The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin – Luke 15: 3-10
- The Forgiving Father – Luke 15: 11-32
- The Widow's Coins – Luke 21: 1-4

Our Up-High Schedule continues on the third week of each month for junior high classes. The Up-High class will meet on February 19th and March 19th.

How do you define love?



There are many examples of Jesus' love for us in the Bible. Write down some examples of how he showed his love for us and the world in the hearts.

# Men's Fellowship by Loran McVittie

**SAVE THE DATE!** The newly formed St. Andrew's Men's Group will meet again **March 11th**. More details to follow - we hope you can make it!



Facilities Team says Thank You from Don Koch,  
Facilities Team Convenor

Facilities team would like to recognize and thank the following persons who helped take down and store the nativity, angels, and lighting from the front lawn on Saturday, January 7. Thank you to Elly de Nooij, Otto de Nooij, Don Koch, Flemming Nielsen, Mark Rowe, and Brent Werle. Your help was greatly appreciated.



## **GREETERS/USHERS/COFFEE CAPTAINS**

Please consider welcoming people by greeting, ushering, or making coffee on Sunday mornings. The sign-up sheets can be found in the foyer.

*Together  
We Can!*





# COVID-19 UPDATE

The congregation has been following safe COVID-19 practices which have allowed our most vulnerable members to safely worship with us. The province has relaxed its COVID-19 restrictions, and the Calgary COVID-19 count has dropped but COVID-19 is still with us.

To maintain a COVID-19 safe place for worship, we suggest the following:

- If you are not feeling well, please follow AHS protocols and do not come to church
- The use of hand sanitizer is encouraged upon entry into the church
- Masking is not required at worship, but feel free to wear one if that is more comfortable for you
- Vaccination is strongly encouraged but not required

It is our desire to create a welcoming environment that is helpful and encouraging for all. In this small way, we express Christ's care. Thank you!



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Team Member: Barb English  
Team Member: Lauren Nolette

**DEADLINE FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE:** Wednesday March 15, 2023