



*First Presbyterian Church  
Fall 2024 Newsletter*



*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42.*

*All the believers were one in heart and mind... With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all...*

*Acts 4:32-33.*



Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church Chatham (FPC),

The story of how the followers of Jesus responded in the days following his crucifixion is fascinating. The whole Jesus-movement could have collapsed at that critical moment. *But it didn't!* The book of Acts is Luke's account of the life of the early church, beginning with the disciples' confusion over what was to happen next (Acts 1:6) and ending with the gospel message reaching Rome – the political center of their world (Acts 28:30-31). How did that transformation happen? Three things come to my mind: (a) They were convinced of Jesus' bodily resurrection – that Jesus was truly alive again (Acts 1:3); (b) they were empowered by the Holy Spirit – the same divine spirit that empowered Jesus (Acts 2; Luke 3:21-22); (c) the early church devoted themselves to *four* very important things: the apostles' teaching, building community, sharing hospitality (including Holy Communion), and prayer (Acts 2:42). That devotion resulted in unity, and the works of God became evident among them (Acts 4:32-33).

During this vacancy I encourage you to reflect again on those foundations and priorities of the early church. At the moment things may seem confusing, but as in the early church, things will gradually take shape. One that note: Session has formally asked the Presbytery (at its Sept 24<sup>th</sup> meeting) for permission to start the search process for a new minister. Once approved, Session will be creating a Search Team (led by me), which will then start the process of writing a "profile" of FPC – a complete description of the church, its mission and vision. While the Search Team's work is confidential, you will be regularly updated on its progress. *Pray for FPC, its Session and Search Team.*

I have been most heartened this summer with your ongoing activities, including the Backyard Mission and the Saturday Breakfast programs, and that church attendance (and giving) continues to be good following Rev. Mike Maroney's retirement. We are blessed to have Rev. Paul's ministry and the tireless work of *many* volunteers. Thank you for your service and commitment, something we acknowledge on Anniversary Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup>. I am excited by the prospects ahead and to be sharing this journey with you. May God's grace be powerfully at work among us.

Blessings,  
Rev. Tim Reddish,<sup>1</sup>  
Interim Moderator

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<sup>1</sup> I can be contacted through Rev. Paul Shaw or Joan M. Fletcher (Clerk of Session).

*Where contact information is not provided,  
phone/email Linda in the Church Office and she will forward your request.*

## DEVOTIONAL

Many of you know that I did my graduate theological work in the beautiful State of Oregon. And while I was there, I met many of the most wonderful people I have ever known – almost as wonderful as *here!* And, of course, I ended up marrying one of them.

But, one year, as I was preparing to come back to Ontario for the summer to make a little money on the farm, I was called by the minister of a church in the city. They had learned that I was heading east, and that I didn't have a car at that point, and asked if I would consider driving an older lady across the country, as she was moving back to her hometown in New York state. I ended up driving her car, and pulling a trailer, loaded with her furniture, from Portland, Oregon to some small town not far outside Buffalo. The lady was, I suppose, about the same age I am now, and I was about 24 at the time, so she seemed ancient to me. She was a pleasant Christian lady named Sophia, an Italian American, and she chatted merrily to me all the way across the United States.

When we arrived in the town – and the name of it escapes me – I was not prepared for the reception. It was like something out of that movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Only, these were Italians. People filled the front yard and part of the street. I was a hero. I had brought their precious Sophia home. I was hugged to death, especially by the elderly matriarch of the family, Sophia's mother. Then, everyone was ushered into the house, where there was a celebratory feast. I never saw so much food in my life! That evening, everyone was going over to her sister, Maria's house. I don't know how many people crowded into this little house. Once again, I was hailed as a hero. Once again, there were these tables sagging under the weight of the spaghetti, and lasagna, and cannelloni, and Italian bread, and I don't know what all else.

The next morning, I went to Church with them (interesting point – these Italians weren't Catholic; they were Wesleyans), and after church, Sophia and her brother and sister-in-law were to drive me across the Peace Bridge to meet my folks who were to rendezvous with me in Fort Erie. But, before we left, we just had to stop at cousin Rocco's, where, once again – big crowd – hero – incredible quantities of food – celebration. I worried for the supports under the Peace Bridge as we crossed.

But, I have never forgotten the simple, genuine, open-hearted generosity of that wonderful Christian family, and how they shared with me so freely and so beautifully, only knowing me for a day.

St. Paul had never met the Colossian Christians, to whom he wrote one of his most endearing letters. He says to them, ***“We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints.”*** (Col. 1:3-4).

The Colossians had found Christ through the faithful ministry of one of their own, a disciple named Epaphras. He had informed Paul of their existence. And Paul loved them, even though he didn't know them. This is love in the Spirit. This is true community. Life in Christ's Kingdom is most naturally a celebration. So, rejoice!

Blessings,  
Rev. Paul Shaw,  
Pulpit Supply

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## UPCOMING SERVICES

6 October: Poured Out (Rev. Paul Shaw) / Holy Communion  
13 October: The Font of Joy (Rev. Paul Shaw) / Thanksgiving  
20 October: Old Salts (Rev. Paul Shaw) / Anniversary Sunday  
27 October: TBA (Rev. Tim Reddish)  
3 November: TBA (Rev. Paul Shaw)  
10 November: TBA (Rev. Paul Shaw) / Remembrance Day Service  
17 November: TBA (Rev. Paul Shaw)  
24 November: TBA (Rev. Paul Shaw)



## BIBLE STUDIES

In Exodus 18:5-12, we find the wonderful story of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, coming to meet Moses after the people of Israel had come out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and finally arrived at Mount Sinai. It says that Moses told Jethro about all that the Lord had done for them, delivering them from Pharaoh, saving them from the sea, and leading them through the wilderness. *(Now, for the eagle-eyed Bible students here, I want you to know I am aware that Jethro was "priest of Midian." Considering the Midianites' later behaviour and idolatry, that's not really a resounding endorsement of his credentials. Their belief system was, at best, rather dodgy).*

But our text records Jethro's words: **"Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods..."**. It's an important passage, friends. This is the earliest incident, recorded in the Bible, of someone coming to faith in the living God **through hearing an inspired account** of God's activity.

Paul asked the Roman Christians, **"What advantage then has a Jew?"** He answered his own question, **"Chiefly, that they have the very words of God."** (Ro. 3:1-2 NIV).



Presbyterians are a blessed people. Our heritage is long and deep. We were present on the very cutting edge of the Reformation, that titanic movement of five centuries ago that would place the Bible, our greatest earthly treasure, in the hands of ordinary Christians in Scotland and across the world.

To hold it in our hands, to read it, to study it, to let it transform us, remains our marvellous privilege.

Join us in Bible Study. Men's Bible Study is on Tuesday mornings at 10 am (coffee begins at 9:30) here in the church. Zoom Bible Study occurs on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm; to join in this study, we only need your e-mail address and consent to use it. Our times together are informative, challenging, inspiring, and really quite fun. And, who knows? You too may come away thinking **"Now I know that the Lord is greater...!"**

Blessings,  
Rev. Paul Shaw,  
Pulpit Supply

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# PASTORAL CARE

*Don't be in any rush to be a teacher, my friends...  
We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths.  
(James 3:1-2, The Message.)*

Believe it or not, I spend about as much time deciding which quotes will bookend my remarks as I do writing the remarks themselves. That's because I take words seriously, both as a writer and as an editor. Deep down, every author hopes to win critical acceptance and an enthusiastic readership; and deep down, I'm no different. So before continuing, I'll give you a moment to decide whether (a) I'm "headed for a black hole in hell [as] a loudmouth filled with hot air" (2 Peter 2:17-18), (b) an unabashed scriptural cherry picker, or (c) an apostatic wolf in sheep's clothing, "never really part of us" (1 John 2:19).

(Because if your answer to any (or all) of these questions is yes, you should probably give my writings a wide berth. I'm serious.)

I like Eugene Peterson. He's a plainspoken guy and not afraid to paraphrase, which opens the door to fresh interpretations and emboldens me to do likewise. I can't credit him with my views on pastoral care, but I am indebted to him for reminding me that Biblical meaning can reside on multiple levels. Imagine then my pleasure at coming across this little gem: "Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don't impose it on others" (Romans 14:22.) All of the Epistles are rife with advice on how to live and what to believe and what to do and not do, not to mention remonstrations aplenty for self-professed sceptics like me. But with Peterson's phrasing, this verse leapt off the page affirming my entire approach to Christianity... despite the irony of continuing to pen epistles of my own exhorting us all to do better.

I can honestly say that I'm completely on board when it comes to going my own way and can be downright fiery if I find that way is blocked. When I have a vision for something, I don't change course lightly. And so, after more than a decade in my current role, I'm finally going to share my personal vision statement for the Pastoral Care Team: Where Jesus Himself would feel right at home.

Like Him, I take an expansionist view of who is considered part of the First Church family. Whether someone regularly attends Sunday service or tithes doesn't interest me in terms of visitation. If they identify in any way with First Church, and there's a Team member willing and at hand, that's all I need to know. As a result, we've picked up more than a few strays over the years, but we're also brought others back into the fold. (When you haven't darkened the church door in ages, it's easy to believe your old congregation stopped caring about you long ago.)

Still, I expect more of myself, and my Team, than that. If you're part of my regular readership, you've surely figured out that I don't consider pastoral care the exclusive purview of a minister. All of us can and should be prepared to extend kindness, the bedrock on which it rests. There's a but, though, and a really important one at that: Not everyone is cut out to be a Pastoral Care Team member, just as not every Christian is cut out to be a pastor. To be a member of the First Church Pastoral Care Team, you must be prepared to extend a lot more than kindness.

Yes, the Bible has lots to say about friendship, mostly good, some bad; in terms of quotes, "...the very best way to love [is to] put your life on the line for your friends" (John 15:13) is probably the most familiar. Of course, it's wonderful when Team members become close to those they visit. But when Jesus says "you are my friends" (John 15:14), He's talking to His disciples not the world at large. He doesn't say anything about being friends with the world, only to love it. And he sure doesn't say anything about only loving your friends.

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In short, our calling is not to make friends. It's not to keep tabs on our favourites. It is not to treasure compatibility. It's to connect with people who may not have any friends, let alone family. The forgotten ones, those Lost Sheep whom scripture tells us we need to find and who may need a little time before they're willing to expose their soft underbellies. It is our calling to say "I don't know you and I may not like you very much. But I can set aside a few hours over the course of a year to remind you that love can take many forms." Or in pithier terms, to:

Show up.  
Be present.  
Make sure you return.

I alone cannot convince anyone to join my Team; you'll likely need a nudge from the Friend (John 16), which is what Peterson calls the Spirit, a callback to Jesus' own relationship to The Twelve. However, I can assure you that all it will cost you to find out is an email message and a chat. After that, we'll know soon enough if you'd be a good fit. Besides, there's always the delightful possibility that we're exactly what each other needs.

For what it's worth, I'm also a lot more plainspoken in person.

Sue Easun, Coordinator of Pastoral Care  
[pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

*Choose seven men from among you whom everyone trusts,  
men full of the Holy Spirit and good sense, and we'll assign them this task.*  
(Acts 6:3, The Message)

## IT WILL SOON BE THANKSGIVING. NOTHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR?



That's probably not true; there are few situations where things couldn't be worse. But you may feel that way, and for good reason. In which case, maybe it's time to let others feel thankful on your behalf. Our Prayer Force exists for just this reason. Send your concerns to [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org), and let us employ the power of prayer on your behalf.

## FEATURED TEAM

In future, this section of the newsletter will feature an interview with or article from one of our Team leads. It will be a way for you to meet some impressive people and, along the way, learn what it takes to hold a congregation together. Each and every one of them will welcome you, so don't feel you need to wait until we get to the Team you're most interested in to volunteer!

For a complete list of Teams, see Become Involved on page 9.

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL

*“God loves me. Focus on Him.” ~ Teens!*

Our teens are finishing the renovations on the teen room: half the room is for them, the other half for Sunday School supply storage. They love working together to serve Jesus, our church and each other. A special thank you to Mike and Emily James for guiding them as they paint! Once done, they will continue their artistic walk through the Bible, in addition to a special new Bible study to be held the first Sunday of each month.



*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” ~ Proverbs 3:5*

The Sunday school children experience a different Bible story each week. They are in a fun whirlwind of stories and activities. Their eyes light up when it comes time to choose from the prize table. A special thank you to Judy Aiken and friends who donate McDonald’s books and toys. The kids love them!

*“Learning to trust, play and love Jesus.”*

Our giggly happy little one is loving the nursery/toddler room; the chalkboard, the blocks and colouring are favourites. The Nursery is open on the first and third Sundays of the month. We would love more volunteers.

Many thanks to those already helping out in the nursery/toddler room, as well as with Sunday School and Teens.

NOVEMBER: Time to start practicing for the Christmas program! Let me know if you’d like to be involved in any way.

Allison Shaw, Christian Education Coordinator  
519.352.2313, ex 3

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Socktober



Our Sunday School is collecting socks for our Saturday Breakfast guests. (Word to the wise: they may be more expensive, but wool socks last the longest and are best at repelling moisture and preserving foot health.)

### Anniversary Sunday



It’s once again time to recognize longtime members (of 50+ years) and to remember those who have died over the past year. And yes, as in the photo, there will be cake during coffee hour.

### Bryan Halls Exhibit



Called Beatitudes, this series of black & white paintings depicts the 8 blessings from the Sermon on the Mount. Runs 18 Sept-16 Nov. 16 at Artspace (165 1/5 King St W)

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## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

The insurance company is still looking at options to either repair or replace our office air conditioner. We have no timeline for when this item will be resolved.

Two major projects approved in the 2024 budget are complete: the resurfacing of the parking lot; and the replacement of the stairs to the basement. A third project to replace the stairs exiting onto Fifth Street is scheduled to start soon. A big thank-you to Bruce Davidson for spearheading these efforts.

We have engaged Roof Tile Management to repair two known leaks in the roof. Work should be starting this fall. The cost estimate for these repairs is around \$75,000. However, total cost may exceed this amount if additional repairs are required.

Overall givings to the church as of Aug 31 totaled \$126,262.87 compared to \$130,191.87 this time last year. For now, our budget is in fairly good shape. However, this will change noticeably once the above projects have been completed, putting us in a significant deficit position. Please, if you are in a position to do so, consider increasing your donations to the church in order to help keep our finances in the best possible condition.

Ed McLachlin, Chair  
Property & Finance Committee

P.S. The Presbyterian Church of Canada requires that we show we can afford a minister before it will allow us to extend a call. That means fiscal health is especially important this year.



## FUNDRAISING



We are in the process of upgrading our **Sound and Livestream Equipment** to enhance our worship in the sanctuary and the clarity of our livestream. If you enjoy our services (on site or from home), please consider donating toward the cost of these upgrades. CONTACT: Ed McLachlin

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## HOW TO DONATE

- **Weekly Envelops.** If you attend most Sunday services and would like to pay by cash or cheque, you can request a box of envelops'; there are also special envelops for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Anniversary Sunday. The first envelop in your box is labeled Initial Offering; please consider helping us defray the cost of continuing to offer this option. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)
- **PAR.** If you would like to support us on a monthly basis and prefer the convenience of automatic withdrawal, you can sign up for PAR. This is the most cost-effective option, from the church's point of view. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)
- **Occasional, Fundraising or Memorial Donations.** If you are in the sanctuary on Sunday morning, you can use one of the spare envelops in your pew. You can also drop by during office hours, or mail it in (cheques only).

We can provide tax receipts for any amount, if you give us your full name and contact information.

## OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Of course, your tithes and offerings are essential to ensure the smooth running of our building, programs and activities. And without volunteers, none of those programs and activities would be possible. However, no contribution is too small.

- **Stamps:** The Canadian Bible Society accepts used stamps, selling them to collectors and vendors and using the revenue to purchase bibles for the Canadian prison ministry. Ten pounds of stamps = approximately 6 bibles for distribution. While it takes a lot of stamps to equal 10 pounds, every little bit helps! CONTACT: Cindy Reid
- **Recycling:** Terracycle Canada will accept the following items: used Brita filters/broken pitchers; used Crest dental products, including packaging; used Burts Bees products, including packaging. Details will be provided in the next issue. CONTACT: Sue Easun
- **Outreach for Hunger:** Our Session regularly sends a financial donation. However, you can help by donating in non-perishable food items and toiletries.
- **Saturday Breakfast Program:** In addition to a good meal, our guests can choose from among a variety of toiletries & hygiene items, pantry staples, and new/gently used clothing & blankets. CONTACT: Rebecca Ladd

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# BECOME INVOLVED

- Audio Visual: Barb Capeling (Team Lead)
- Bible Studies: Rev. Paul Shaw (Pulpit Supply)
- Christian Education: Maureen McLachlin (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
- Coffee Hour: Judi Aitken (Coordinator)
- Decorating: Judy McCarthy (Team Lead)
- Mission & Outreach: Oscar Njumba (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
  - Backyard Mission: TBA
  - Saturday Breakfast Program: Bruce Davidson & Rebecca Ladd (co-Team Leads)
- Music & Worship: Julie Collins (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
  - Choir: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)
  - Praise Team: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)
- Pastoral Care: Sue Easun (Team Lead, [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org))
  - Visitation
  - Prayer Force: Joan Fletcher ([pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org))
- Property & Finance: Ed McLachlin (Chair & Session Liaison)
  - Health & Safety: Ross Simpson
- Social Media: Sue Easun
- Sunday Greeters: Mike Bennett
- Sunday Livestream: Mike Fry & Ed McLachlin

Each of these Teams is short one member: You!! Please give prayerful consideration to giving a little (more) of your time.

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## STAY IN TOUCH

Do keep us informed of births, deaths, and anniversaries. We will only include them in the Bulletin with your permission. CONTACT Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)

Do let us know if you or someone you know is in hospital, sick or in need of comfort, we will only share this information with designated pastoral folk: Rev. Reddish, Rev. Shaw, and/or Sue Easun. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org) or Sue Easun at [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

In need of prayer? For yourself or someone else, our Prayer Force is near at hand. CONTACT Joan Fletcher at [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

Wondering what's going on? There are lots of options!

- Website: [www.firstchatham.org](http://www.firstchatham.org) / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham](https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham) / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- YouTube: [www.youtube.com/@fpcchatham9093](https://www.youtube.com/@fpcchatham9093) / livestream every Sunday morning

The Office also maintains an email distribution list that sends out the Bulletin and livestream link every Friday, as well as special announcements. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)

## WHO'S WHO

Interim Moderator: Rev. Tim Reddish

Pulpit Supply/Hospital Visitation/Bible Studies: Rev. Paul Shaw

Christian Education Coordinator: Allison Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 3)

Church Office: Linda Weeks ([office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org), 519.352.2313, ex 1)

Custodian: Benson Tarrant

Music Director: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)

Clerk of Session: Joan Fletcher

Roll Clerk: Ernie Koehler

Pastoral Care Coordinator: Sue Easun ([pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org))

*Did you find an error or omission? (We didn't mean to...)  
Please let us know so that we can fix it for next time.*

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