



FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

This is the first and only time our newsletter will begin with the voice of someone other than a minister. But that's because this issue is like no other. For what you are about to read isn't business as usual. In fact, with one exception, you won't find any of our regular features.

The following 14 pages are devoted to celebration, tribute, and welcome. We have just emerged from a 19-month interregnum unlike any in FPC's nearly 200-year history. Smaller in number, true, but stronger in faith and determination. We have benefitted from two pairs of steady hands while we regrouped, and are now ready to accept a challenge few if any of us saw coming.

So it is not only seemly but imperative that we take time to acknowledge what we owe two retired men of the cloth, who surely had better things to do than shepherd our plucky little flock. At the same time, we owe it to ourselves, but mostly to him, to fete the brand-spanking-new pastor from across the pond who's agreed to don the mantle of leadership and face the future with us.

I mentioned an exception, and that is my own pastoral care column. By special request, I have penned Part II of my meditation on the importance of moral responsibility. For certain, none of these gentlemen needs instruction from me, so I have tucked it away at the end.

Before closing, and if I may offer one small bit of advice to us all: Make sure to save this issue. We would do well to look at it from time to time, both to remember this moment and to gauge how well we have risen to its challenge.

Sue Easun, Editor



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

OUR THREE WISE MEN (aka THE THREE MUSKETEERS)

You've heard of the 3 Tenors & of course the 3 blind mice;
But we have 3 Pastors who are much more than nice.
Not Larry, Moe or Curly as you no doubt agree,
But whether here or livestream, they're inspiring you see.
So for our future here at church let's not forget to pray
Because we had these 3 amigos to bring us to this day.
Tim's through with driving back & forth, handling our church dealings;
Paul needs rest from the past 2 years & comfort for future healings.
In closing let us thankful be for all this time with Paul,
He certainly has shown us – to be Godly no need to be tall!
So now we welcome a new young man, Wilson from Cameroon -
We wish you all the best today, our shepherd none too soon.

Because... Good things come in 3's: Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Dick Roe, FPC Poet Laureate



*The Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, 1844, by Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin
(No Christianity and the Arts column this issue)*

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“GREETINGS AND PEACE TO YOU, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST”

My name is Wilson Egbeareng Eyong. I was born on October 31, 1974, and am one of five children born to Frida and Raymond Taku Eyong (both of blessed memories) in Besongabang village, Southwest Region, Cameroon. I am father to five children.

I lived, studied, and briefly worked in Cameroon until I was 26 years old. In 2000, I travelled to the Republic of Ireland. I arrived as an asylum seeker and became a refugee in 2001. I worked as a maths teacher at KEY in Kilkenny, Ireland; completed a pre-nursing course at Ormond College in Kilkenny, graduating with an Honours Certificate in Care; and earned a BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care (ASSSC) from the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) in Waterford, Ireland. I lived and worked in Ireland there for a further 13 years before heeding my “Call to ministry.”



As a result, I relocated to Canada in late 2020 to follow God’s calling and guidance. I earned a Master of Divinity from The Presbyterian College in Montreal (now The Montreal School of Theology) in 2023, as well as a BA in Theology from McGill University.

Since graduating, I have regularly supplied pulpits at St. Edward’s PC, Beauharnois, and Maplewood PC, Chateauguay, and at several congregations within the Montreal Presbytery. Additionally, I have worked four hours a week as the Presbytery’s pulpit supply coordinator for all vacant churches, with or without Interim Moderators, over the past 11 months.

Today, I am most grateful for the brothers and sisters in Christ residing in Chatham-Kent who have discerned with me the “Call” of the Lord upon my life. I look forward to all that the LORD our God has planned for us in this generation and region of the nation.

I am an Irish citizen currently residing and working in Canada on a valid work permit. But to me, ministry is far more than a profession—it is a sacred calling. I am daily inspired by biblical encouragements to be strong and courageous, trusting in God’s guidance (cf. Deut. 31:6–7, 23; Josh. 1:6–9; 2 Sam. 10:12). Though I do not yet have extensive experience as an ordained minister, I possess a deep well of faith, empathy, and resilience, as well as a sincere passion for people, rooted in the promises of Romans 8:31–39.

“Nurturing faith, deepening relationships, and sharing the love of Christ at FPC, Chatham-Kent and beyond will be our focal point... Church is not something you go to; it’s a family you belong to.”

To God be all the glory, who through Jesus Christ and in the comforting power of the Holy Spirit has delivered us from darkness. Amen

Rev. Wilson, welcome to FPC!! We are delighted that you are finally here and now officially our Minister of Word & Sacraments. We look forward to working and learning as a church family, and will surely achieve great things together.

Judi Aitken, Session Elder

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Left to Right: Oscar, Wilson, Maureen, Ed

Oscar Njumba, Ed McLachlin and I were fortunate enough to travel to Montreal the weekend of Jan 31-Feb 2 for the Ordination of Wilson Eyong. Now Reverend Wilson Eyong!

We three travelers experienced splendid driving weather. It was clear & bright and the roads bare & dry all the way to Montreal. Driving home, the weather was great until Kitchener-Waterloo. A gentle snowfall accompanied us the rest of the way home to Chatham.

Once in Montreal, we attended a service presided by Wilson at St Edwards Presbyterian Church at 10 am Sunday morning (Feb 1st). We found the congregation to be small but welcoming, and Wilson's sermon inspiring.

Then, that night at 7 pm, we attended Wilson's Ordination Service. That little church was packed! And the singing of the hymns—by the congregation alone—raised the roof! The Moderator was Rev. Peter Rombeek, with the sermon by Rev. James T. Hurd of Parkwood Church, Ottawa.

A little background: in 1883 a minister was sought out to begin a Scottish kirk in the Seigneurie of Beauharnois, PQ. The church was built in 1884-1885. The construction was sponsored by Mr Lawrence George Brown, Seigniorial Intendant of the Ellice family. The money of Edward Ellice was used—perhaps explaining the name of the church.

Giving the Charge to Wilson was Rev. Francis Owusu, formerly of Town of Mount Royal Presbyterian Church. The service was filled with joy from beginning to end. After all the official portions were finished, a line formed to welcome (read "hug") the newly ordained Rev. Wilson Eyong. There was also a photo op.

Then the congregation gathered in the church hall for a feast of both Canadian and Cameroon foods. It was delicious. The festivities wrapped up around 10:30 pm.

Welcome, Rev Wilson, to Chatham and First Presbyterian Church!

Maureen McLachlin, Session Elder

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St. Edward's Presbyterian Church, Beauharnois Québec



Then he lay down under the tree. And he fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him. The angel said, "Get up and eat." Elijah looked around. Near his head he saw a flat cake of bread. It had been baked over hot coals. A jar of water was also there. So Elijah ate and drank. Then he lay down again. The angel of the LORD came to him a second time. He touched him and said, "Get up and eat. Your journey will be long and hard." So he got up. He ate and drank. The food gave him new strength. He traveled for 40 days and 40 nights. He kept going until he arrived at Horeb. It was the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Kings 19:5-8 (NIRV)

“YOUR JOURNEY TOO WILL BE LONG AND HARD”

Elijah was a faithful and hardworking prophet of God who proclaimed and defended God's name in various ways. He was a prophet who performed many miracles and destroyed the wisdom of men. He defeated the gods of Baal and killed all 450 priests who served it. At this point, he thought everything was done; it was time to rest and celebrate the victory over the enemy.

Then came Jezebel, threatening to kill him as he had killed the gods of Baal. At this point, Elijah was afraid and fled from Jezebel, seeking to hide. Someone who has defeated the gods of Baal now running away because of a woman? Someone who has celebrated victory now says; I can't do it any longer. God take my life?

Rev. Wilson, you and I know what we have been speaking about and what we have been waiting for so long. You used to say, "O Rev. Francis, I want this, and I want that. I want to be ordained. Why is it taking so long? I know if I get ordained, that will be it." And if you recall, any time you said that, I would laugh, and try to calm you down. Do you know why? Because it is not what you think and not as easy as it seems. Getting ordained is not the end, it is the beginning of challenges, troubles, temptations, persecution, and many uncomfortable situations.

In Elijah's mind, defeating the gods of Baal was the end, not knowing he was sending an invitation to Jezebel to come test his faith. So, in your case, being now ordained as a Rev. Minister of the word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church in Canada and as minister-in-charge at First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, is an invitation to

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many problems and adventures. However, do not worry or be afraid, because the One who has called you is faith, and He will be with you always.

Rev. Wilson, the food God gave to Elijah is what I give you today. The bread is a physical food to give you energy, the water is the Holy Spirit and life to sustain you, and the unidentified food is a spiritual food. Do not depart from the word of God:

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:8 NIV).

I charge you, as a minister of God, not to stop eating this food. Eat it day and night, morning, afternoon, and evening.

Rev. Wilson, now that you have been ordained, the long-awaited journey will begin on the day of your installation as a minister at First Presbyterian Church, Chatham. It will be long and very hard, there may be bumps, rough roads, mountains, valleys; but like Elijah, Rev. Wilson Eyong, with the strength of this food and your obedience to God, you will be able to walk through all the storms until you reach your retirement. Before Elijah died, he raised Elisha to succeed him as a prophet of God. Therefore, Rev. Wilson Eyong, I charge you, in your new ministerial position at Chatham, that before you retire, you must raise up a minister of God in the Presbyterian Church in Canada who will take over from you at Chatham. The Lord is with you.

To the congregation of First Presbyterian Church: I have known Rev. Wilson Eyong for years. We have served the Lord in the same Presbytery. I found him to be a man of principles applying the word of God. He is dedicated and committed to whatever is entrusted to him. He is faithful to God and will not compromise anything contrary to His word. Because of his biblical understanding and his preaching, I have used him as a pulpit supply whenever I went on vacation, and my congregation preferred him over anyone else. With this, I can confidently say without a doubt that with the help of God, he will be a good minister for you, and he will be loved by you.

Wishing you all the best, Rev. Wilson. I can't wait to see you and the people of Chatham, especially the Interim Moderator. Peace to you all, and remember, the journey will be long and hard but not without reward.

*The Rev. Francis Owusu, Minister in Charge, The Ghanaian Presbyterian Church, Toronto
Adapted from "The Charge," presented as part of Rev. Wilson's Ordination Service, 1 February 2026*



A New Season of Promise! As First Presbyterian Church, Chatham enters a new and historic chapter in its more than 180- year legacy, we do so with gratitude, faith, and expectation. The call of Rev. Wilson Eyong as our Minister marks not only a transition in leadership but a powerful testimony to God's unfolding purpose for our congregation. As our first-ever Black Minister, his arrival reflects both the faithfulness of our past and the promise of our future.

Throughout the search process, Rev. Wilson's spiritual vitality, clarity of vision, and deep love for Christ stood out unmistakably. His journey speaks of courageous obedience. After more than two decades of faithful service in the secular world, he answered God's call to begin anew in Canada. Leaving stability to follow divine direction mirrors Isaiah's faithful response: "Here am I; send me." Such obedience is not merely admirable; it is inspiring.

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Rev. Wilson brings with him the gift of diversity: cultural, professional, and spiritual. Having lived across continents and cultures, he embodies the Biblical vision of a Church gathered “from every nation, tribe, people and language.” His presence reminds us that the body of Christ is beautifully diverse and gloriously united. At a time when the world often fractures along lines of difference, his leadership stands as a testimony that in Christ we are one. This is not merely symbolic; it is deeply aligned with the Gospel we proclaim.

Our congregation, like many traditional churches in the Western world, faces the urgent challenge of engaging younger generations while honouring the faithfulness of those who have built this church over decades. Rev. Wilson’s background as both an educator and a social worker uniquely equips him to bridge this gap. He understands the questions and concerns of youth while deeply valuing the wisdom of elders. Scripture reminds us that each generation shall commend God’s works to the other. With spiritual maturity and relational insight, he is prepared to nurture this sacred partnership so that our church may flourish across generations.

His professional life has also shaped in him a shepherd’s heart, compassionate, attentive, and committed to the vulnerable. Outreach and discipleship are not secondary matters; they are central to Christ’s commission to the Church. Rev. Wilson’s passion for connecting with people from all walks of life strengthens our mission in Chatham and beyond. Under his leadership, we are positioned not only to preserve what we have but to grow: spiritually, relationally, and numerically.

Yet a minister cannot fulfill a vision alone. The flourishing of First Presbyterian Church will depend on our collective response. Scripture calls us to uphold and support our spiritual leaders, recognizing both the privilege and responsibility of shared ministry. If we believe God has called Rev. Wilson to lead us in this season, then we are invited to stand beside him in prayer, encouragement, and active service. This is a defining moment in our history. We can choose to see this transition merely as a change, or we can recognize it as God’s providential renewal.

So let us embrace the diversity he represents. Let us commit ourselves to strengthening intergenerational faith. Let us renew our passion for outreach and discipleship. Above all, let us move forward united in Christ. The future of First Presbyterian Church is not defined by decline, but by devotion. With Rev. Wilson’s faithful leadership and our wholehearted support, we can step confidently into this new season, trusting that the One who calls us is faithful. May we, as one congregation, say “yes” to God’s work among us and rally together to advance His kingdom in Chatham for generations to come.

Oscar Njumba, Session Elder & Search Team member



*Praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, from the Jesus Mafa series, 1970s.
(No Christianity and the Arts column this issue)*

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“I COMMEND YOU TO GOD”

*The Rev. Paul Shaw, former Pulpit Supply
Adapted from his sermon of 15 February 2026*

Well, friends, this is truly an eventful day, a gala day. We have arrived at last at this incredible juncture in our pilgrimage together.

A minister's last sermon to his congregation was considered such a thing of beauty it came to be known as his swan song. All the others presumably having only amounted to a rather jarring squawk. But in truth, I was never the minister here. I've just been one of you trying to do my part to help hold things together. I was a substitute.

And so we come to the end of this 19-month trek together. It has been my joy to serve you in this way. Someone repeated to me in recent days the old bromide, "Well, all good things come to an end." I didn't really like hearing it, but as I've thought about it, it has given me something to say this morning. Mainly that no good thing is ending today. First Church is here. First Church is strong. And the truly monumental good that is happening today is that we have, sitting among us, a pastor who by the end of this day will be our own.

Nineteen months of prayer, and of the Spirit's leading, and of just plain hard work on the part of our search team, our elders, and our interim moderator have brought us to this wonderful day. And I hope it's good news that I'm still on this side of the sod. So no good thing is ending today.

More than that, the good thing, the best thing, is the good news, the imperishable gospel, which is Jesus Christ, his incarnation, his fully finished work at Calvary, his perfect atonement, his resurrection, the wonderful truth that he lives today, and we will one day together see him as he is. That imperishable gospel does not end.

I have appreciated Rev. Shaw's messages in which he uses background information and historical content especially to help me see the Scriptures in a new and different light, challenging me, by faith, to see the world in a different light, through the eyes of Jesus.

Joan Fletcher, Clerk of Session

On the first Sunday that I mounted this pulpit following Mike Maroney's retirement, following his remarkable 22-year ministry here, I said that I didn't know when I had ever felt more inadequate to a task. And you have been wonderfully patient, tolerant, and encouraging.

I turn now to this passage in Acts 20. It's the story of how St. Paul met the elders of the church at Ephesus at Miletus. He had completed a pastoral tour of the churches in the Asian region, his third missionary journey. And he had boarded a ship in order to try and make a quicker passage back to Judea.

When they put a-shore at Miletus, which in those days was the sea port town which served the mighty city of Ephesus, the schedule was tight. So he sent word to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to come out and meet him, presumably somewhere near the dock or the pier or perhaps even on it.

Rev Paul, "thank you" doesn't seem adequate to express how much we appreciate you and all you have done to see us through the past 19+ months. You have been the glue that has held us together. You have been here for us in good times, times of sorrow, and all the times in between. Bible Studies, guidance in decorating, counsel and, most of all, your messages each Sunday: you have left us fully aware that "Jesus Loves Us!" We are so blessed that you are one of us!

Judi Aitken, Session Elder

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And thus we have the setting for this tender final meeting with the Ephesian Christians. Paul didn't have time to waste words on the pier that day. I chose this text because I feel a kind of kinship with the Apostle Paul today as he bid farewell to these Ephesian Christians. In the main, he wanted to impress three things upon them.

First, he held before them a strong defense of his own ministry and the gospel he preached because he had many critics and even enemies. Second, he charged them to embrace their responsibilities as followers of Christ. And finally, he blessed them, committing them to the care of God.

During these 19 months, I have attempted to preach holiness from this pulpit. For God calls his people to a holiness that involves love for God with all that we are and all that we have, and love for our neighbors as ourselves.

Following this afternoon's solemnities, Reverend Wilson will be your minister and mine, it must be understood that I won't be doing all I've been doing. I won't be here. So don't come to me for weddings or funerals or baptisms or exorcisms or dedications of bridges or dams, aircraft, dogs, hogs or parakeets or anything else unless it would be helpful to him and he requests it. Reverend Wilson Eyong will be our minister. Our includes me. I owe him this professional consideration. And we all owe him our encouragement, our support, and our love.

Paul reminded the Ephesian elders of the glory of the gospel, the good news he preached, and of his diligence in preaching it. He says, "You yourselves know that from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time serving the Lord, I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Paul stepped in to serve in all the ways our church family needed. For that we are beyond thankful.

Capeling, Elder and Search Team member

To the best of my poor ability, I have attempted to do the same.

Woe is me, Paul said to the Corinthians, if I preach not the gospel. Psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and a host of other valuable disciplines are just that. Perhaps I

should say physics as well. They're valuable, but none of them, not even history, is any substitute for this: Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You do not transform the flesh by simply educating it. John told the Christians to whom he wrote, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin."

And so St. Paul charged those elders that day. And it's a charge to the elders of today. Yes, elders, I'm picking on you now. The Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. And with this charge he commended them. He gave them over, handed them over into the hands of the One who at all times loved them best. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Today friends, I take my hands off. Not my love, not my prayers. You will always have those. But I take my hands off. I leave you in the hands of our pastor and of the One who loves us all best of all.

Rev. Shaw assumed the leadership of the Tuesday men's Bible study after Rev. Mulroney retired. He has been an excellent, dedicated leader. His knowledge of the Scriptures and history is truly amazing. Everyone participates and that makes it a lively, enjoyable hour.

Thank you Rev. Shaw

Ross Simpson, Session Elder

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St. Paul's words are my words. I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Amen.

Ruth Walters had been taken from her room in Public General Hospital to ICU. I had received calls from both sons, Brian and Paul Walters. I told Brian that I would be up to the hospital within an hour. I quickly typed off an e-mail to Paul Shaw about Ruth, a dedicated 30-year Elder and her health situation. He had never met Ruth as she had been restricted at home for a few years due to failing health, though I still visited her every couple of weeks. I arrived at the hospital within 45 minutes; and sat with her, holding her hand and quietly speaking to her even though she was in a coma. I hadn't been there 15 minutes when I walked Rev. Paul. Without hesitation, he spoke to her and prayed for her. Despite not knowing any of the Walters, he was there for them. His dedication to ministry shone through his commitment to serving the Lord and His lambs.

Margaret Ellis, Session Elder



Diptych: Scenes from the Passion and Afterlife of Christ, c. 1330–1350.

*Christ's Flagellation and Crucifixion on the left panel; Christ's Resurrection and Appearance to Mary Magdalene
(No Christianity and the Arts column this issue)*

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“LOOK FORWARDS NOT BACKWARDS; LOOK OUTWARDS NOT INWARDS”

The Rev. Tim Reddish, outgoing Interim Moderator.

Adapted from “The Charge,” presented as part of Rev. Wilson’s Induction Service, 15 February 2026

It is my honour to present “The Charge” on this special Occasion, and that confusing term sounds ominous, doesn’t it? Well, it’s a formal exhortation to Reverend Wilson, as the new minister of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, *and* to the whole congregation, including those on-line, in the context of the vows that *you both* have just made. Church, as your outgoing interim moderator, we have got to know each other somewhat over the last 19 months. Wilson, we too have spoken many times throughout this Call process. And so I am speaking to *you both* as one with some personal knowledge of you, rather than as a complete outsider. Consequently, this Charge not only contains words of general exhortation, but my *personal* encouragement and advice.

Throughout the whole search process, I was amazed at how Reverend Tim worked with us as a team. He ensured we came together with our different gifts and talents, and took time to listen to the Spirit as He guided us to the one He already chose to be our next Minister and Shepherd.

Barb Capeling, Elder and Search Team member

Reverend Wilson, I remind you what you were probably told in seminary, namely this: “*The most important thing that you bring to ministry is yourself.*” You may be newly ordained, but you bring a *lifetime* of relevant experience and transferable skills to your ministry. *Don’t forget your past* as you move forward into this new chapter of your life. Bring those secular insights that you have learned from teaching, social work, and management into your leading of this congregation. No past experience—including hardship and suffering—is ever wasted in God’s economy.

Wilson, you also bring international richness to your ministry. You were born and raised in Cameroon and later lived in Ireland for 20 years before coming to Canada six years ago. This cross-cultural heritage will be an asset to your ministry and bring fresh insights that many Canadians don’t have. Your life journey will be *invaluable* in relating to fellow immigrants to this country residing in the Chatham area.¹ However, as an immigrant to Canada myself, allow me to caution you: Canada is *not* Cameroon, nor is it Ireland. Chatham is not Montreal; a rural church is not an urban church, and neither is a downtown church a suburban church. Don’t try to make this church into what it can never be because of cultural context and social location; if you try, you might find it frustrating. Instead, *discern* and *distil* those creative ideas from your past experiences that, by the grace of God, *can be* adapted for *this* congregation and location, and then *gently* introduce them to this church community.

Why did I say “gently” just now? Wilson, you are now the shepherd of this flock. *But a leader can only lead to the extent that others will follow.* That means the congregation first needs to learn to *trust* you, in your character and care, in your decision making, wisdom, and vision. Make that task an initial priority for it takes time to develop. If you do that, it will later reap its own reward in facilitating change because the congregation now *trusts you*. Get to know Chatham and its needs, listen to the congregation’s ideas and passions, recognise their giftedness and talents, and then partner *with* them. Remember, you won’t be able to do everything at once, so *prioritize*. Then, when you want to introduce something new, present a persuasive vision to the congregation and session. And pray and work for a “buy-in” to that new idea or direction. On the matter of priorities: If there’s no crisis, don’t create one and lose invaluable goodwill! You may have a truly inspired idea, which others do not yet recognize. It is, however, wise to at least listen to the naysayers, they may have valid points to consider. And if you hear the phrase, “That’s

¹ Canada is a multicultural country; heaven will be a multicultural place; our churches need to also be multicultural experience too.

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not the way we do things around here,” then ask yourself if it’s the *right* idea but the *wrong* timing; if that’s the case, continue to cast that vision. You should also pause and ask yourself: “Is this a hill to die on?” In other words, choose your battles carefully; don’t squander precious goodwill and energy, instead, *discern, plan, and prioritize* carefully and keep in step with the Holy Spirit. As I said a moment ago, you can only lead to the extent that people will follow. Having said that, and as a wise minister once said to me, you cannot move forward with new ventures at the pace of the *most* enthusiastic folk, but neither can you wait for the *slowest* people to become excited! You have to discover the middle ground and then lead courageously and by example. All the while continuing to pray and work for others to catch the vision and participate too.

Finally, Wilson, you were probably raised, like me, to “respect your elders;” and by that I mean people who are *older* than you rather than ordained elders. Remember, that does *not* mean you have to say “yes” to them, or “to obey” your elders, because tradition has it that they are automatically wiser than you simply by means of their age! You respect your elders by patiently listening to their point of view; but, *if need be*, learn to graciously and fearlessly say “no”! And remember, you are *human* and physically can’t do everything; if you try, you will burn out, therefore also learn to say “no” to protect your physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. Guard your weekly day off; you cannot serve others effectively if you don’t first look after yourself.

Congregation, you have heard this public charge to your new minister. Support him in those tasks and be patient with him, he won’t get everything right first time! Now Wilson gets to hear my charge to *you*!

When a *newly* ordained minister comes to a well-established church, like this one, there is a temptation among some, whether in Session or not, to try and mold them into the minister *they* want them to be! Some see it as an opportunity to try and put the clock back to the so-called “good old days” and may want to re-introduce the *practices* of the distant past, such as in music, liturgy, social events, etc. For others, it’s not the past practices so much as a desire to focus on traditional theological perspectives. The thinking being that if we follow those formulae, the church’s glory days will automatically return and the congregation will be doubled in short order. We need to recognize our culture and context are continually evolving, and changing faster all the time. Consequently, we need to adapt accordingly, bringing the same love of Jesus in ways that our contemporaries can recognize and welcome.² I charge you: *Don’t look backwards, look forwards!*

And may I remind you that when Jesus ascended into heaven, he didn’t leave a manual or a memoir to guide the church, rather he gave his followers the same divine spirit that guided and empowered his own ministry. It was the Holy Spirit who grew the church spiritually and numerically and enabled outward missionary activity that propelled the church from Jerusalem to Rome within 30 years. And in the process, the church began embracing non-Jews as fellow recipients of the gospel, which was totally unthinkable at the outset. In my first contribution to your Newsletter, back in September 2024, I cited Acts 2:42, which says: [The early church] devoted themselves to [four things, namely,] the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Now as then, I exhort you to follow that four-fold practice.³ I also cited Acts 4:32-33, which says: “All the believers were one in heart and

Rev. Tim, we are deeply grateful that you stepped up to serve as our Interim Moderator through our transition of finding a new minister. And a long 19+ months it’s been: putting together the Search Team (who worked like a well-oiled machine), writing our profile, keeping us on track in terms of PCC guidelines, encouraging us through perceived delays and always keeping us informed. Even the added “boiler issue” was handled supportively. We have felt confident through it all because of your guidance. Thank you!

Judi Aitken, Session Elder

² I preached about that on July 6, 2025, when I spoke about the “Harvest being Plentiful.”

³ See Acts 2:42-47, which amplifies and contextualizes v42, and concludes (in v47) with: “And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

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mind... [and] with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was powerfully at work in them all..." This outcome was a genuine, transformative, work of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Going forward, I encourage you to continue building on those important principles. In fact, I urge you to re-read the book of Acts and re-discover some of the priorities the church implemented and the lessons they learned along the way.

One of those lessons was to "*look outwards, not inwards.*" The early church—and this is true of *any* congregation—realised that their minister could spend *all* their time on pastoral work if they were not careful.⁵ Of course, it is right that your spiritual and physical needs be addressed and, where possible, met. But if *all* Wilson's time and energy is spent on that, how will the love of Jesus spread beyond these walls? In the book of Acts, the early church appointed deacons;⁶ in this church you have a Pastoral Care Team which *shares* the responsibility *with* the minister. Let me add that throughout this transition, I have been impressed by your faithfulness to God and to each other within this church family. Even so, I charge you to cherish and strengthen that team; a gifted and effectively functioning Pastoral Care Team is a huge asset for everyone. It will also enable Wilson and others within this church to *look outwards* and serve the Chatham community in new, creative, and life-giving ways, thereby adding to your successful, weekly, Saturday Breakfast program.

Finally, this time a year ago, the church boiler failed catastrophically! I sometimes wonder what would have happened *had* it exploded, reducing this building to rubble. For example, would you—the congregation—have rallied and rebuilt from the ashes, or would this church have folded? We need not spend time on such "what-if" questions, because we are still here, worshipping God in this beautiful building that you all love, with a new boiler that is been paid for by God's provision. Traditional church buildings, like this one, are testaments to the faithfulness of God. But, as you know full well, they are a drain on financial resources. Church, I again exhort you "*Look forwards, not backwards; look outwards not inwards.*" Financial prudence says, "Save for a rainy day." I charge those who have responsibility to manage the church's finances with these words: The next ten years will be critical in the life of this congregation and, consequently, resources need to be made available *now* to grow the church in novel ways. Of course it's important to be sensible, but don't be afraid to take risks for the sake of the gospel.

Speaking of beautiful buildings, I conclude with a reminder from Ephesians 2: You [all] are built on the *foundation* of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the *cornerstone*. In him the whole *building* is *fitted together* and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. You, too, are being built up together, in him, into a place where God will live by the Spirit."⁷ I therefore charge you: *Partner together* with Wilson, your new minister, and with the Holy Spirit; *be those living stones*⁸ for the glory of God. Amen.

"My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love - so you can't know him if you don't love." (1 John 4: 7-8, The Message)

Sue Eason, Elder and Search Team Member

⁴ I preached about that on September 7, 2025, when I spoke about the "Wholehearted Transformation."

⁵ Acts 6:1-7.

⁶ I preached about that on July 7, 2024, when I spoke about "On Christian Leadership and Church Growth."

⁷ Eph 2:20-22.

⁸ 1 Pet 2:4-5.

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The winter air was cold, the sky dark. As we travelled through the narrow streets of Beauharnois, Quebec, we approached a small church resting on a hill - a beacon of light shining through the night air, welcoming us. The small church was filled to capacity as we shared in the ordination of Wilson Eyong, now Rev. Wilson Eyong. It was an honour for Maureen, Oscar and me to participate and share this moment with Wilson in his home congregation. The service was so energetic and joyful that I was glad the church walls were two feet thick and made of stone. Any lesser building would not have withstood the joy within!

In that moment I reflected on how we at FPC had arrived at this point. How did we get here? Rev. Mike Maroney had retired in June 2024. A Search Team had been formed. The Team spent long hours gathering feedback from the congregation, sharing our own vision for FPC, and shaping all of that into a meaningful and cohesive church profile to be shared with candidates. Many applicants were screened and appropriate candidates interviewed. Nineteen months later, we were thrilled to have Rev. Wilson Eyong inducted as our new minister at FPC!

But the question remains... How did we get here? It goes without saying that the task of finding a new minister is a daunting and intimidating one. Search Team members need to have a vision and feel comfortable expressing their views and know they are heard. They need to listen to and understand other points of view. Such dialogues create a respectful appreciation for each other; an understanding of what each of us seeks in a church. With this foundation in place, our Team was ready to begin screening and interviewing candidates, and each candidate we reviewed helped build our confidence in and understanding of what the 'right' candidate would look like.

So how did we get here? My answer is in large part due to the exceptional leadership of Rev. Tim Reddish. On top of the normal interim moderator duties, he also agreed to oversee the Search Team. Everyone can imagine the obvious things that a Search Team needs to do, but so much more happens behind the scenes. To keep this short, I will only mention a couple of qualities that Tim brought that benefitted both the Team and FPC. I know each member can easily add to this list!

– Patience

- for each Team member as we developed into a 'sharing and caring' team.
- for reminding us to wait for the right candidate as the timeline grew long.

– Wisdom

- To develop a Team that would understand the needs of FPC and the matching qualities of the right candidate.
- To permit the Team to drive the direction while providing meaningful boundaries.
- Ask the right questions of the Team to make sure we have fully explored a topic.

– Perseverance

I don't think anyone did more work for the Team than Tim. His duties extended not only to running the Team but also contacting candidates and communicating our progress within our church and local presbytery. He also efficiently handled the extra immigration details with confidence to close the deal.

Finally, I need to mention his humility. When asked how we should address him, Rev. Dr. Tim Reddish (Retired), PhD (Physics, Manchester, UK), MDiv (Knox College, Toronto) replied "My God knows me as Tim", so thank you Tim for your willingness, patience, wisdom, kindness, understanding and perseverance that got us to this point, and to help FPC continue to shine God's love from the corner of Fifth and Wellington Streets.

Ed McLachlin, Session Elder and Search Team member

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T*he role of leadership is to build banks and let the water flow freely.* This quote by Bonnie Brooks beautifully reflects the leadership of our interim moderator, Rev. Dr. Tim Reddish. The Search Team was so blessed to have him at the helm of the process that led us to Rev. Wilson Eyong.

Rev. Tim embodies what it means to serve with strong faith, integrity, focus and heart. Throughout our meetings he ensured that every voice was heard. He encouraged prayer, thoughtful discussion and diverse perspectives. Like banks that guide a river, he created structure and direction while allowing various viewpoints and ideas to flow freely. Rev. Tim was generous with his time and made sure everyone stayed informed through clear communication. His timely updates and transparent decision making kept us engaged and confident that God was leading us on the right path.

On a personal note, I am especially grateful for the time he took to support me as I navigated a recent breast cancer diagnosis. Rev. Tim comforted me through prayer and showed such kindness, empathy and wisdom.

I cannot speak for other members, but I am changed by the experience of serving on the Search Team. Trust, respect, friendships and faith were strengthened under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Tim Reddish. This was more than Team work. It was a meaningful journey.

Julie Collins. Session Elder and Search Team member



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PASTORAL CARE

Hermei: Hey, what do you say we both be independent together, huh?
(Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. 1964. Produced by Arthur Rankin Jr. and Jules Bass.)

Beliefs. Values.

Intention. Consequence. Circumstance.

Moral Responsibility.

I raised a lot of big ideas last time. And yes, I really do spend a lot of my time thinking about these sorts of things. For me, identifying concepts, tracking implications and spotting patterns are an integral part of my inner life, to the extent that for me, thoughts and feelings have become very tightly intertwined. My heart and mind work pretty well together. Perhaps too well.

So when I raise an issue such as moral responsibility, I do so not only philosophically but as a literal call to action. Because when you understand the nature of your beliefs, the values you place upon them, the intentionality you bring to them, the consequences that result from them, and the circumstances that govern them... well, you proceed not only with surer footing but greater odds of success.

Last time, I set before you my belief that moral responsibility must be rooted in awareness and compassion not expectation and deference. This is not something you take on because you're supposed to. This is beyond "faith without works is dead" (James 2: 17). It arises from within, from the realization that you can do better. Not be better. Do better. Not to meet some externally imposed obligation or defer to some notion of God's will. But because you can no longer see the world the way you once did.

All three synoptic gospels relate the story of the Rich Young Ruler, who wants to know what to do to earn eternal life, having faithfully followed (and presumably mastered) all ten commandments. When Jesus informs him all that's left is to pass along everything he owns to those less-well-off and follow Him, he exits the stage in defeat because, or so we're told, he is rich. But in my reading, Jesus never said sell everything, give it all to the poor, and only then follow Me. That rich young ruler could just as well have decided the inability to dispense with all his worldly goods also gave him a pretty good excuse for claiming "well guess I can't follow You then."

From which is derived my notion of moral responsibility. It's too easy to say "I like my stuff; I'll stick to the commandments and a few good works, and maybe that will be enough" and let salvation do the heavy lifting.

I singled out both awareness and compassion as essential elements, but let's focus on the former for now. Because all the compassion in the world is useless if there's nowhere for it to go. And Jesus Himself is practically awareness incarnate. He spots Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree. He notices the Samaritan woman at the well. He senses the bleeding woman touching his robe, though she's behind Him. He picks out the man with the withered hand from among a synagogue full of worshippers. In each instance, He's aware because He's always looking around, and He's aware because He doesn't turn away; He pauses just long enough to discern whether someone is in need.

While I enjoy listening to personal stories from the pulpit, I do not enjoy relating my own. Nonetheless, I know of no better way to illustrate what I'm talking about, while demonstrating that I really do endeavour to practice what I preach. So here are two brief examples:

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- A car collision takes place outside my apartment building. I go downstairs to see if I can help. I don't approach anyone right away; I take in my surroundings. The police and an ambulance are there. No one appears to be dead or seriously injured. A small crowd of people has gathered around one of the vehicles. I then notice a woman off by herself. I immediately guess she must be the person who caused the accident, so I go over and talk to her. She is frightened and shaken. I stay with her during her interview with the police, wait for her while she is checked out in the ambulance, and take her up to my apartment where she finds a cold drink, a quiet place to make her phone calls, and a bathroom. In the end, I arrange for her to get back to Windsor.
- I pop over to Dollarama, as one does when it's across the road. An unseen woman is yelling "get away," yet no one is doing more than stare in her general direction. I wander in the direction of her voice, and see someone in distress attempting to enter one aisle after another without success (but also without visible deterrents). She is positively wild-eyed. All I can think to do is assure her that I will keep watch at my end of the aisle and ensure no one comes near. She grabs an item but still doesn't move. So I continue: "How be I make sure no one comes near you as long as you're here." (I should point out that by this time the other shoppers aren't staring in her direction, they're staring directly at me.) And so we work our way across the store until she's close to the checkout area. At which time, I inform everyone that they need to make themselves scarce until she has paid. I must have looked pretty formidable, as there was no resistance, whereby the shopping experience came to a quick (and quiet) conclusion.

Whether you agree with what I did or didn't do, whether you would behave like me or the other shoppers, isn't my point here. Let's go back to Jesus, He who is aware because He dares to look around and not turn away, who takes the time to discern whether someone is in need. And you? Can you look around, not turn away, and recognize a call for help?

Because this is what it means to follow Him.

So here's my answer to that rich young man. What comes after you've mastered the Ten Commandments? You must shift the paradigm. Instead of assuring God that you've mastered all ten and are ready for more, you start over. It's all very well that *you* honour your parents, that *you* don't commit adultery, kill or steal, covet or bear false witness. But didn't Jesus condense those six commandments into something about loving our neighbours? And if so, can we truly master them through obedience alone? Nope. Like Rudolph and Hermey, who embark on their shared adventure only after they realize the other guy is just as socially handicapped, just as hurt and lonely, and just maybe even more so, love must guide our gaze outside ourselves. I'll even go so far as to put it this way: Do unto others regardless of what you've done or what's been done to you.

Next time: Compassion enters the picture, and I wrap up my argument.

Rudolph: You wouldn't mind my - red nose?

Hermey: Not if you don't mind me being a dentist.

Rudolph: [shaking hands with Hermey] It's a deal!

Sue Easun, Coordinator of Pastoral Care pastoral.care@firstchatham.org

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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; also included are special envelops for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Anniversary Sunday. The first envelop in your box is labeled Initial Offering, which is used to defray the cost of continuing to offer this option. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at 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
- **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; and used Burt's Bees products, including packaging. 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: Bruce Davidson

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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)
 - Sunday School/Nursery: Allison Shaw (Director, Christian Education)
- Coffee Hour: Judi Aitken (Coordinator)
- Decorating: Judy McCarthy (Team Lead)
- Events: Mike Fry (Team Lead) and Oscar Njumba (Session Liaison)
- Historical & Memorial Fund: Sue Easun (Acting Chair)
- Human Resources: Bruce Davidson (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
- Mission & Outreach: Oscar Njumba & Barb Sargent (co-Team Leads & Session Liaisons)
 - Backyard Mission: Oscar Njumba & Barb Sargent
 - Saturday Breakfast Program: Bruce Davidson & Judi Aitken
- Music & Worship: Julie Collins (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
 - Choir: Adam Shaw
 - Praise Team: Adam Shaw
- Newsletter: Sue Easun (Editor)
- Pastoral Care: Sue Easun (Team Lead)
 - Visitation: Sue Easun
 - Prayer Force: Joan Fletcher
 - Prayer Shawls: Judy Goudreau
 - Widows & Widowers: Judy McCarthy
- Property & Finance: Ed McLachlin (Chair & Session Liaison)
 - Events: Michael Fry & Oscar Njumba
 - Health & Safety: Ross Simpson
- Social Media: Sue Easun & Mike James
- Sunday Greeters: Ross Simpson
 - First Time Visitor's Welcome: Cindy Reid
- 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

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 or Sue Easun at 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

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

- Website: www.firstchatham.org / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- YouTube: 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 the quarterly newsletter and special announcements. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at office@firstchatham.org

WHO'S WHO

Minister: Rev. Wilson Eyong (519.352.2313, ex 2)

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

Church Office: Linda Weeks (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)

*Did you find an error or omission?
Please let us know so that we can fix it for next time.*

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