



FROM OUR MINISTER

My Dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm welcome you have extended to me as your new pastor. Your kindness, prayers, encouragement, and loving support have made me feel at home among you, and I thank God for the privilege of serving this congregation.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"* (Philippians 1:3). These words reflect my own feelings as I begin this journey of ministry with you. I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to worship, grow, and serve alongside such a faithful community of believers.

As we move forward together, I pray that we will be united in Christ, growing in faith, hope, and love. Scripture reminds us that *"we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another"* (Romans 12:5). May God strengthen our fellowship and guide us in fulfilling His mission.

I am encouraged by the promise found in Jeremiah 3:15: *"And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."* It is my sincere desire to serve faithfully, preach God's Word, and walk alongside you and our community of faith here in every season of life.

Thank you once again for your gracious welcome. May the LORD God bless each of you abundantly, and may His peace and love continue to abound in our congregation.



Reading: The Redeemer of Israel – plus you and I.

Isaiah 43:1-2 *But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."*

Reflections: Let us anchor our journey ahead in the truth before us in the Prophet's words: *"... Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you..."* Both verses should provide a deeply comforting rhythm for our journey together:

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The Claim: God calls us by our names and claims us as His own. Our ultimate identity is secure in Him.

The Promise: The storms and fires of life are inevitable, but God says "**when you pass through,**" not "**if**". The focus is entirely on His promise to be right there with us in the middle of it.

Those of us devoted to God feared He might abandon us. We are indeed warned about a judgment coming upon the nation. However, amid these concerns, God wanted us, His faithful, to understand that He loved and cared for us. He addresses His people as both Jacob and Israel. So we are.



Pray with me: LORD, thank You for the peace that comes from knowing I am Yours. As I begin this new journey, I will not let its challenges fill me with fear. Help me trust that no matter which waters or fires I shall confront, You will be with me and will not let me be overwhelmed.

Blessings: *"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 15:13). Amen.

With gratitude and prayers,

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Wilson E. Eyong



*Bryan Halls. Jesus in the Shroud. 12x24 inches. 2026. Acrylic on canvas.
With permission of the artist.*

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EMBRACING CHANGE AND DIVERSITY IN TODAY'S CHURCH

For more than 180 years, First Presbyterian Church of Chatham has stood as a place of worship, fellowship, and spiritual guidance. Through generations, it has experienced seasons of joy, challenge, growth, and transition. Today, we find ourselves in another important season of change.

For the first time in our long history, we have welcomed a Minister who comes from a different culture and background. Naturally, this adjustment may feel unfamiliar to some members of the congregation. Differences in preaching style, energy, accent, worship leadership, and even the length of time spent in the pulpit can leave some feeling uncomfortable or disappointed. Others may quietly wonder whether this is truly the direction God intended for our church.

Yet throughout Scripture, God often works through change, diversity, and unexpected leadership to strengthen His people. The modern church is becoming increasingly multicultural, reflecting the beautiful diversity of God's creation. While this brings many blessings, it also presents challenges that congregations everywhere must learn to navigate with grace and maturity. Some of the challenges of multiculturalism in today's church include:

Differences in Communication Styles. Cultural backgrounds influence how people speak, preach, express emotion, and connect with others. What feels passionate and engaging to one person may feel unfamiliar to another.

Different Worship Expectations. Congregations often become comfortable with long-standing traditions and routines. New leadership may introduce fresh perspectives, approaches, or energy that can feel unsettling at first.

Misunderstanding and Assumptions. Accents, cultural expressions, or unfamiliar habits can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or unfair judgments before relationships have had time to grow.

Resistance to Change. Churches with long histories naturally treasure their traditions. However, growth often requires openness to new ideas, new voices, and new ways of reaching future generations.

As believers, we are called to support our spiritual leaders with prayer, encouragement, patience, and understanding. Leadership is never easy, especially when serving in a new cultural environment while also carrying the responsibility of shepherding God's people faithfully.

We must remember that God does not always send leaders who look, sound, or lead exactly as we expect. Sometimes, He sends leaders who challenge us to grow spiritually, broaden our understanding, and prepare His church for a changing world.

Let us therefore encourage First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, to remain patient and open-hearted as this new vision unfolds. Meaningful relationships and mutual understanding take time to develop. Rather than focusing only on differences, could we focus instead on our shared faith in Christ and our common mission as His church?

As the church evolves, so too should its leaders and so should we. May we move forward together in unity, humility, and love, trusting that God continues to guide First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, into its next chapter. Thank you!

Elder Oscar Njumba

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DEVOTIONAL

It is almost Summer! The lawnmowers are buzzing. The cash registers in the greenhouses are ringing. Flip flops and sunglasses trundle merrily up the sidewalks. Dust rises from a thousand fields as farmers operate great planters. The backyard deck is inviting once again after supper. Spring advances. The earth lives again in all its vibrant colour and energy.

As I write this, I realize that in only a few weeks, the summer solstice will be here and it will be officially Summer. (It already feels like it to me!)

We have just passed Pentecost, which, after Easter and Christmas, constitutes the most important observance of the Church Universal. In the immortal words of the Muppets, (and I *do* know they were singing about Christmas) *"...it is the season of the Spirit; the lesson, if we hear it, is make it last all year."* Just as Summer brings to us the warmth and full energy of all the life around us, so God sent the Holy Spirit to inflame His people's hearts with the joy, the warmth, the fullness of life that is ours in Christ.

When I was a student at U.W.O. many years ago, Malcolm Muggeridge came to London to spend a year as guest faculty at the School of Journalism there. Muggeridge, of course, had been one of the most famous journalists in Britain, indeed in the western world, but late in life had surrendered his life to Christ. He became one of Christianity's most compelling voices in the 20th century. During that year at Western, I attended absolutely everything on campus or in the city where Muggeridge would be speaking. It was marvelous! I got to shake his hand one evening and speak with him for a couple of minutes. I found him warm and genuine.



Giotto di Bondone. Meeting at the Golden Gate.
1304-06. Fresco.

I remember attending one meeting somewhere on the university one evening, where Malcolm Muggeridge shared with us a passage of scripture that he said was a kind of touchstone for him. It is from St. Paul's letter to the Romans: *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."* (Ro. 8:6).

He reminded us that his own autobiography had been entitled **Chronicles of Wasted Time**. He shared his own conviction that the Spirit of God liberates us, imparting the freedom to live joyfully and to do what is right, freedoms we never fully have outside of Christ.

So, as summer approaches, let us embrace the truth that we are the people of the Spirit, free to live with joy and with integrity.

Rev. Paul D. Shaw

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Many years ago, my father who had been a scout leader and United Church superintendent, left the shelter of that denomination. He became involved with the Unitarian Church, where his belief in God was greatly reduced. Dad was also the photographer/editor for the Experimental Aircraft Association in Windsor; and whenever a pilot had built a plane, he would grab his camera and off they'd fly.

By the time he passed away, he denied the existence of a loving God who would allow war, disasters & suffering to continue. In the meantime of course I prayed, as did my faithful Baptist Godparents, that he would nonetheless be heaven-bound. I even had the audacity to be like Gideon: I asked God for a sign that Dad was with Him. As the funeral procession moved along Walker Road near the Windsor Airport, a plane came in for a landing, and seemed to almost touch the roof of the hearse. One pilot commented later that even an experienced Air Traffic Controller could not have arranged such an air show as a sign that all was well.

A coincidence you say? I don't think so! Prayer answered!!

Dick Roe

My maternal grandmother was blind. My grandfather was a minister and they retired in Blenheim. Grandmother managed quite well in their home as she knew how many steps to different rooms. When grandfather passed away, she moved into the local nursing home. Grandmother had a room at the back of the home and she could guess from the sound of our footsteps who was visiting. She also had a budgie in her room that she enjoyed talking to, so all in all she was content with her life.

Grandmother had 23 grandchildren and always remembered us at our birthdays and at Christmas. Her faith was very strong. She was always cheerful and never complained about being blind or having to move to a home. She lived into her later 90's.

Here at First Church, several of the congregants have health issues. Invariably they are regulars every Sunday at church. They never complain and are always positive. They are the nicest people to be around. They are a great example for all of us.

Ross Simpson



Leonardo Da Vinci. The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne.
c. 1503 - c. 1519. Oil on Panel.

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE ARTS

Christianity has inspired the arts for two millennia, beginning with the simple drawing of a fish. At one point, its symbolism was as recognizable to the people of its day as emojis are to us.

When I went looking for images of parental figures in the Bible, I kept coming across references to Anna Selbdritt, whom I assumed was an artist. Instead, she turned out to be a wooden sculpture of St Anne with Mary and Jesus (where “Selbdritt” means “depicted together with the other two.”) It was made in Franconia, Germany circa 1480. I then discovered that while the statue (see below right) bore this particular name, it was actually a devotional motif, first popularized in Jacobus de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend* in the thirteenth century, and the likely inspiration for both Anna Selbdritt and her first major depiction several decades earlier: “*Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*,” a collaboration between Italian Renaissance masters Masolino and Masaccio circa 1424 (see p.7).

In fact, Anne had been already been an object of devotion, as saints were in those days (and still are in the Catholic, Orthodox and high Anglican traditions). While not appearing in scripture, she and Mary’s father Joachim were given their names in the second-century *Protevangelium of James* and repackaged approximately eleven centuries later by de Voragine to reach a wider Western audience. Most notably, de Voragine not the *Protevangelium* drove the message of an Immaculate Conception, in turn raising the profiles of both Anne and Joachim from patron saints of grandparents to integral elements of the Christ story in the eyes of the public. Artists too. Theologians, not so much.

As the story goes, Anne and Joachim had been married twenty years but remained childless, so they decide to appeal directly to God while in Jerusalem. Joachim entered the Temple but was kicked out on the grounds that their barrenness was a curse; he complied, albeit confused, and was soon visited by an angel who reminded him that lots of his ancestors bore children at impossible ages. The angel then paid a visit to Anne. The couple meet at the golden gate of Jerusalem—where one day their grandson will enter on the back of a donkey—and kiss, wherein Mary is conceived.



If this sounds a lot like Elizabeth and Zechariah, you’re not wrong. It was very likely deliberate, ensuring Mary’s birth story was as miraculous, divinely orchestrated and thematically resonant as John the Baptist’s. But here’s the takeaway. Zechariah expressed doubt; and whatever quickening of the womb took place appears to have happened the normal way. Between Anna and Joachim, however, is true tenderness, a deliberate attempt to portray a loving relationship, to drive home the point that Mary steeped in it from the beginning. This moment is captured by Giotto in “The Meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate” (see p.4). They’re happy. Look at them, leaning into one another; zoom in and you’ll see they’re actually making eye contact. Even their halos intersect. And those around them are happy too... well, all except the woman in black. She seems to know something the rest of them don’t.

Arguably the most famous depiction of Anna Selbdritt is Leonardo DaVinci’s “The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne”, created two hundred years after “The Meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate.” It depicts in Mary seated on the lap of her mother, leaning towards her son. Anne is depicted as a grounding figure, and so anchors the

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composition; in a word, she's essential. Her gaze is directed downwards towards the others. Mary is focused on Jesus, who is depicted as a lively child looking up at them both while engaging with a lamb (symbolizing his future sacrifice). In this moment, the women are relaxed; they have done their duty, and the lamb has not yet commanded center stage. Personally, I think Anne looks a lot like the Mona Lisa!

I went down quite the rabbit hole following Anne. She not only appears with Joachim, Mary and Jesus—sometimes all three at once—there are depictions of her with Elizabeth (her niece), John the Baptist and even Joseph. (I did not find any with Zechariah, but that doesn't mean there isn't one.) What apparently doesn't exist are depictions of her on her own. She may not be real, but it's easy to wish she were.

PASTORAL CARE

Compassion is the basis of morality.
(Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, 1839)

Last time, I focused on awareness, as one of moral responsibility's two essential elements. As I wrap up my thoughts, let's spend some time on the second: compassion.

In his translation of the New Testament from Greek to Latin, Jerome chose *caritas* (*agape* in the original Greek) over *amor* as he considered the latter too sensual for such a sacred concept. Early English translations gravitated towards *charity* which in those days—as with *agape* and *caritas*—meant selfless, unconditional benevolence. The replacement of *charity* with *love* began in the 19th century, due to the former's growing association with almsgiving.



Masaccio and Masolino da Panicale.
Virgin and Child with Saint Anne.
c. 1424–1425. Tempera on panel.

Personally, I have always preferred charity. Love has always seemed too nebulous, too overdone, to properly convey the richness of *caritas*. To say Jesus loved everyone, in 21st century parlance, is to reduce His message to a platitude. Study the man as well as the message, and you'll see His aim was a bit higher than that. The Greeks had it right: there are too many types of love to be contained in a single word.

At the same time, moral responsibility has little (if anything) to do with almsgiving. I'd be the last person to say that money can't help a body out; far too often, it's the only thing that will help. But simply throwing money at a problem misses a myriad of painful underlying issues. Some societal, all most assuredly personal. And that is where compassion comes in.

Psalm 145:8 puts it this way: The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. It's true; slow to anger and rich in love is the way to go, and I appreciate that about Him. But compassion in service to moral responsibility is not primarily about God's character; it is about our own. For starters, compassion doesn't just happen. Pity, yes, but compassion is not pity. It can't be reduced to something you happen to feel in the face of some

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tragedy or injustice. In words attributed to memoirist Glennon Doyle Melton, “it’s a viewpoint, a way of life, a perspective, a habit that becomes a discipline—and more than anything else, a choice we make that love is more important than comfort or convenience.” If awareness reveals the situation, compassion governs the nature of your response.

Compassion is also predicated on the surety that the other person is no better or worse than yourself, neither more nor less important, and in fact fundamentally the same. It doesn’t matter if you like them or whether legal obligations or familial ties exist between you. You are compelled to respond. Put another way, if awareness is the catalyst for moral responsibility, compassion is its inspiration.

I enjoy dipping into the early Church Fathers (and Mothers) on occasion. They’re earnest, and devout, and so very studious. This time, quite inadvertently, I found myself in the company of Chrysostom the greatest of the Greek Fathers and Augustine the greatest of the Latin Fathers.

John Chrysostom clearly states that we should withhold judgment because otherwise “we would have compassion on no one.” and considers daily life a “season of kindness, not of strict inquiry”. Compassion then has nothing to do with who deserves help; in fact, it is incumbent upon us to seek out those we would normally criticize. Moral responsibility in turn is rooted in both the practical and the communal.

For Augustine, moral responsibility is grounded in *caritas*, justice, and community, in that we are called to care for the well-being—both spiritual and material—of others as well as contribute to the common good. He doesn’t mind a little judgment; and while he too sees compassion as motivational, it is possible only through divine grace.

Finally, let’s skip ahead several centuries. With Protestantism came the view that we are uniquely responsible for strangers and “unlovable” others, whatever the situation in which they find themselves; and that whether or not we judge, consequences and circumstances matter. In *Ethics* and *The Cost of Discipleship*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer refers to it as “costly obedience,” because even when it is inconvenient or distasteful, we’re obligated to act.



I wrote this trilogy of columns for me and one other reader. Though I confess, I would love everyone to take this particular section to heart.

Pretty well everything I’ve said up until now has been about one-off encounters and people in general. But my version of moral responsibility is not only one-on-one, it’s potentially long-term. In other words, the Good Samaritan stays in touch. He takes the time to learn why the man was carrying so much wealth with him, and why he was walking alone on such a dangerous road. Perhaps the man is permanently damaged, physically or mentally, from the attack. Very likely, the innkeeper isn’t particularly interested in making friends and, despite the payment, will be just as happy when he moves on; who else is there? Of course, the Samaritan doesn’t have to care about any of this nor do we (Chrysostom, Augustine and Bonhoeffer notwithstanding). What I’m saying is that it’s the next step in his, and our, spiritual evolution. In a sense, it’s following Him by following him.

When Jesus talks about loving your enemy, it’s easy to lump it in with loving your neighbour. But there’s a big difference!! By definition, enemies are people we don’t want to associate with, think fondly of, or acknowledge at the grocery store. Especially if they’ve hurt or angered us—deliberately or not—it’s usually easiest, and most expedient, to avoid them at all costs and wait for someone nice.

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But if you look deeply enough into your anger, you'll see that your so-called enemy is also suffering. Sit with that long enough, and you may discover your capacity for compassion is already there waiting for you to notice. Remember, compassion is not pity, and more than wanting to help someone less fortunate. It's recognizing a kinship that transcends hurt, anger, dislike, and distance.

Finally, let's review the three dimensions of moral responsibility, in view of all the above:

- Intention, whereby you accept another's need as mandatory rather than optional, not because you like them but because their need creates a claim on you.
- Circumstance, where the type and degree of need increase the moral weight of your responsibility, which in turn is shaped by the boundaries, capacity, and other obligations you bear.
- Consequence, which requires that you carefully consider the likeliest outcomes of your (in)action

Putting it all together, compassion (in pastoral care and beyond) is a moral imperative: the intentional acceptance of another's need, shaped by circumstance and consequence, grounded in the recognition of kinship, and practiced as a disciplined choice that love is more important than comfort or convenience.



By special request, my one reader has asked that I parse the statement "I believe in God and trust in Him." This is definitely a statement of belief, due to its use of the word "in", and as such a description of the world in which the believer resides. That is, one where belief in God takes the form of trust. Which begs the intriguing question, can one believe in God and not trust Him? If the statement had been "I believe in God and believe that I can trust Him," then we'd have a belief statement with a value statement tacked on; and we could then debate whether He can be trusted in all things, what that trust entails, and so forth.

But making trust a precondition of belief challenges the nature of belief itself.

So here's my answer, Yes, belief can exist independently of trust. Belief is unidirectional; trust implies a relationship; and so one can believe in the existence of a Higher Power without believing that Higher Power will deign to interact with them. The binding tie, I propose, is faith, a concept that encompasses both belief in God and trust in Him. "I have faith in God" is declarative of both.

Sue Easun, Coordinator of Pastoral Care

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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 Burts 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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