



News Update

Advocacy Services expand in response to major grant

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First United had been given a grant by the Law Foundation of British Columbia that will double the size of its advocacy program. Acknowledging the long history of advocacy provided at First United and the skills of its current staff, the Law Foundation approached leaders earlier this spring with a request that First United apply for funding. "We are very pleased that the work we are currently doing has been recognized and excited about the possibility of expanding that work significantly," Said Ric Matthews, Executive Minister "Advocates at First United respond to a wide range of issues in the community including helping people secure identification, access disability benefits, EI, welfare, nutritional supplements and

sort out WCB claims and landlord/tenancy disputes. Our advocates see people not only from the Downtown Eastside but from the Lower Mainland who come for help."

Given the limited space at First United, advocacy will be relocating to a ground floor set of offices currently under construction at First United Church Housing Society's Jennie Pentland Place. The expanded program will provide additional much needed services in the Downtown Eastside and will be open at the beginning of August. Until that time, it will continue to operate out of First United. We will need some additional help to fund this construction. All donations would be gratefully appreciated.

Prayer Room opens with Smudging Ceremony

First United Church's Prayer Room was officially opened by First Nations elders with a smudging ceremony. The Prayer Room, located on the second floor off the Hastings Street entrance, is a small



quiet space available to members of the community who wish to take time out to pray and reflect or to sit in conversation with

the summer chaplain, Michael Politano-Bowles. Decorated with Tracy's quilt, the room is intended to be a welcoming space for people of all faiths or of no particular faith. Michael says "It's a sign of First United's continuing commitment to be a place where spiritual needs are met and spiritual values are honoured".



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Hoarding and Housing Conference Meets Need in Lower Mainland

“We hope that this day’s event will be the first in a series of initiatives by First United to help mental health and housing workers find the resources they need to deal with this issue,”

Don Collett

A Hoarding and Housing Conference, organized by First United Church and held at the Coast Coal Harbour Hotel, was a great success and exceeded expectations. “We originally thought we would do well if we had fifty people participate,” said Deputy Executive Minister Sandra Severs. “When we hit 85 and had to create a waiting list, we knew that we had tapped a need among mental health and housing providers.” The overwhelming demand for the event meant that staff at First United Church were scrambling in the last week to change venues to one large enough to hold all those who wanted to participate. The final total for the event approached 125 participants with one participant flying in from Calgary for the workshop.

The issue of the hoarding of possessions such that individuals are often evicted because of the health and safety hazard they pose to themselves and to others has gone largely unrecognized by the academic

community. Its effects are known only too well by those mental health and housing providers who must deal with the issue on the ground. Case studies presented by mental health workers Keely Hale (First United Church) and Kara Douglas (Portland Hotel) outlined the challenges workers must deal with on a daily basis.

Dr. Christiana Bratiotis of Boston University, one of a small number of researchers looking at this issue, provided participants with valuable information about the latest research. First United Church therapists Don Collett and Maria Watson who have piloted a treatment plan for a small group of hoarders in the Downtown Eastside provided examples of local experience and the offer of ongoing support. “We hope that this day’s event will be the first in a series of initiatives by First United to help mental health and housing workers find the resources they need to deal with this issue,” commented Don Collett.



Michael Politano-Bowles, Danielle Wilson-Brown, Rachelle Paquette and Kelly Pollock (seated). Summer Students at First United this year.

Summer Staff at First United

First United Staff are supplemented each summer by students who provide much needed support for covering staff holidays. Gillian Rhodes, Director of Operations points out that “Students benefit from the opportunity to work among other skilled staff strengthening their own skills and gaining valuable work experience”. She added “This year we are pleased to welcome Kelly Pollock, second year law student at UBC, who has joined the advocacy team at First United for the summer months.

Danielle Wilson-Brown, Psychology student at Langara, and Rachelle Paquette, UBC Psychology student, who join the team of community workers”.

Vancouver School of Theology student Michael Politano-Bowles is working this summer as a chaplain providing on-the-floor support to community members dealing with issues related to spirituality, and assisting with Monday to Friday morning devotionals and Wednesday Celebrations.

Sharing the South African Experience

Rev Alan Storey will be visiting First United Church for five days in July. Alan serves a multiracial congregation at Central Methodist Mission in Cape Town, South Africa. His experience during apartheid and in a post-apartheid society has shaped his social justice ministry. Rev Ric Matthews points out that “Alan brings valuable lessons and perspectives from the context in which he works: Africa vibrates with worship that has unbelievable energy and colour while at the same time, its faith communities are entrenched in visible social action - both in ending apartheid and challenging ongoing systemic injustice *and* in meeting dramatic levels of need on the ground;

and like Vancouver in its experience of the 2010 Olympics, South Africa is currently dealing with the impacts of hosting the 2010 Soccer World Cup”.

There will be a number of opportunities to meet with Alan who is known within and beyond South Africa for his engaging manner of teaching and his gift for inviting others to dive more deeply into their spiritual lives. Alan has shared his experience and insights with groups across the world from Seattle to the Sudan. It is Ric’s belief that “Alan offers us an opportunity to see ourselves through a different lens – to experience new comforts and challenges in our own work and in our own city”.



Rev. Alan Storey

Rev. Alan Storey will be in Vancouver from July 5th to July 8th 2010.

You are invited to any or all of these upcoming events

Monday July 5th at 7pm

Exploring our ‘Theology of Mission’

Alan will share his thoughts on where and how mission fits with everyday church life, with individual Christian faith. Together we will be able to discuss our differing perspectives and the contrasts between approaches to mission in South Africa, the USA and Canada.

Wednesday July 7th at 6pm

Alan will speak at the Wednesday evening Celebration Service on “**the gift within us all – lessons from SA**”. He will very intentionally explore the gifts we all bring across and within our

whether we are homeless, from affluent neighbourhoods, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, or atheists.

Thursday July 8th at 8am

A conversation over breakfast

Open to whatever the group wants to explore, but Alan will be prepared to discuss “The gap/connection between the Church in Africa and the Church in North America” or “Lessons for the Church from the SA experience pre and post Apartheid”, or “African/South African views on the Church in North America” or “Impacts of the Soccer World cup on Justice and healing”.

Call 604-681-8365 ext 117 or e-mail nina.matthews@firstunited.ca to let us know you’re coming.

*Mark your
Calendar*

*The Sacred
Music of Duke
Ellington*

*November
19th, 2010*

*St Andrew’s
Wesley
United
Church*

*more
information
soon*

More Franchises: A Second Cup

Toronto was host recently not only to the G20 Conference but to a gathering of church leaders interested in the changing nature of ministry within the United Church. Called “More Franchises: A Second Cup” the event gathered together over five hundred participants from across Canada for a four day series of workshops and presentations exploring best practices in ministry, emerging forms of new ministry setting these conversations within keynote addresses on the Canadian and global contexts from such intercultural and interfaith diversity speakers as Raheel Raza, author of *Their Jihad...Not My Jihad!*”

Sandra Severs, Deputy Executive Minister, presented a workshop of the building of inclusive community at First United. Sandra commented, “The event was a good opportunity to see what new ministries are emerging across the church and to feel a sense of optimism that is slowly beginning to build. After years of decline it seems like there is a new openness to move away from models that aren’t working and to try new things. We don’t know whether we will succeed as a denomination but at least we seem willing to risk making mistakes. That’s the only way we’ll learn.”

Pilot Project in Dental Care ready to begin this Summer

A \$100,000 grant given to UBC Dentistry and First United will provide the seed money necessary for the creation of a dental clinic on-site. Focusing on pain management, UBC Dentistry will set up a dental clinic in the area formerly used for Advocacy and provide a rotation of dental residents who will begin treating patients at First United beginning in August. Vancouver General Hospital will provide a mobile dental clinic that can be sterilized and transported to First in the back of a van, set up and

Used and then packed up and returned to VGH for reesterization. Community workers will be able to identify individuals in need of care and support them through their treatment plan. In addition to treating patients, the project will access the overall needs of the community with regard to oral hygiene. This project is the first step in a longer term plan to have a permanent clinic set up as part of First United’s redevelopment plan.

Fund Development News

A very successful Run/Walk fund raising event was held on May 9th as part of the Vancouver Sun Run. The total raised in pledges to date is \$31, 150.27. John Cashore raise the highest total in pledges overall and Frank Battista and Joy Tullos both earned a \$50 gift certificate to the Cactus Club.

April Pringle raised the highest total amount among the staff members that participated. Well done John and Frank, Joy and April. “Golf Fore the Homeless” tournament held on May 3rd raised over \$35,000. Thank you to all who supported both these events. Your participation is greatly appreciated.