



First United Church

News Update

Centre for Alignment and Integration to begin work

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In response to our own concerns about possible duplication or gaps in service in the Downtown Eastside, we have created a new Centre for Alignment and Integration. Staffed by Graham Bullen with support from AmBit Consulting, the Centre will build relationships between organizations in the DTES and with city and provincial government. Our goal is to build off the Share the Gold initiative to achieve a comprehensive and integrated approach that will ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in our use of funds and other resources. To date our consultation with other agencies and key stakeholders has confirmed the need and the support for such an initiative. Graham combines over twenty years spe-

cialist experience in organizational development, change management and facilitation, with extensive project management experience. He has worked on projects on four continents and in a wide range of public, private and not-for-profit organizations as well as in higher education. He has a particular interest in diversity and social justice issues and is passionate about helping organizations achieve sustainable change.



Graham Bullen

Host a "First Supper"

First United is celebrating 125 years of service in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community. Rev Sandra Severs point out "This is an exciting opportunity for all of us to mark the occasion by connecting our home and neighbourhood with the community at First United and at the same time, in the course of one evening, help to raise significant funds for work it does". It is hoped that during October there will be many anniversary celebrations across the country in individual homes. Sandra says "As a friend of First we invite you to host an October dinner in your home. Invite your friends and family to an evening of fun, food, and fundraising for First United. We will provide you with a kit

that contains a DVD with a short overview of our work and an invitation from Ric Matthews, Executive Minister to help support the work of First United". The kit also contains helpful information & ideas, invitations, donation envelopes, and cards containing interesting topics for conversation. If you're interested in hosting a "First Supper" and would like more information, please contact Isabelle Pecqueur at 604-681-8365 (x 121), or email ipecqueur@firstunited.ca, or sign up online at www.firstunited.ca.



FIRST SUPPER

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Robert Milton

Robert Milton to play in Homeless World Cup

Community member, Robert Milton has been chosen to represent Canada at the Homeless Soccer World Cup to be held in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil in September. As a four-year-member of the Downtown Eastside “Dream Catchers” team, he has played in the national tournament twice and been undefeated. Being able to play in the World Cup event is a dream come true for Robert and he says that the chance to represent his country is a great honour for him. He leaves for Rio on September 19th. Robert has loved the

game of soccer since he was very young and he looks forward to the opportunity to give back to the community by coaching soccer and encouraging young people. It is therefore no surprise that he has indicated a willingness to help with First United’s soccer team (Strathcona United Football Club) as it explores partnering with Strathcona Community Centre, Soccer for Hope and the Whitecaps. Conversations are currently underway for using the club and the partnership to build community across social divides.



Tote Storage Facility

Tote Story... your vote is needed!

The storage facility opened a few months ago has been a much-needed and well-patronized service. Start-up funding was received from the City of Vancouver but further funding is needed in order to keep this facility open. It currently provides storage of personal belongings for just over 200 people and the facility has created employment for seven Downtown Eastside residents.

With the help of documentary film-maker, Billy Wong, a short video was made and posted on YouTube as part of a competition to win a \$25,000 grant. The winner of the competition will be the entry that receives the most votes from the public over a two month period. Voting starts on September 1st and ends on October 31st. Isabelle Pecqueur explains how you can help:

“Go to <http://www.refresheverything.ca/login> And then go to <http://www.refresheverything.ca/firstunitedchurch>

Click on the ‘Vote for this idea’ button. You will hear the sound of a pop can opening and your vote will be counted. Please vote every day for the next 2 months (as the winner will be the idea with the most votes by October 31st”). Isabelle asks “Tell everyone you know! Send emails to friends and family. Post the link on your Facebook page. Tweet about it. Invite everyone to vote and vote and vote!”



Volunteering: much to give and much to receive

The First United community is grateful for all who volunteer to help in so many vital ways to keep the wheels turning. Ric Matthews Executive Minister says “We recognize and affirm their commitment to this work and to the community as a whole. Exciting implications are emerging as we explore and integrate the invaluable legacy of volunteer support with the shift from Charity to an Inclusive Community. We need to distinguish between thinking of ‘volunteer’ as a noun indicating status and position and thinking of ‘volunteer’ as a verb indicating the act of stepping in to help. We value expertise and help from all and ide-

ally would like those who offer to volunteer their services to do so as active participants and members of the community. It involves entering into relationships of mutuality and interdependence recognising that we all have much to give to others and much that we need from others. This shift has been happening over the last few months and it is encouraging to see that this philosophy is being embraced more and more by all involved. As we go further, there will be some visible changes in name tags and possible shifts in the way things are done. As always, we value input and suggestions.”



With Appreciation

Plans for redevelopment at First United could not go forward without the contribution of many people including those who have contributed not only their time but their specialized skills. First United acknowledges and thanks Barbara Stearns of BI Builders, Paul Sullivan of Sullivan Media Consulting, Holly Alyea now of Cornerstone Planning Group and Russ Anthony of Stantec Inc. for their generosity in providing consulting time and support.

The changing face of First United

With the addition of a grant from the Law Foundation of British Columbia, First United has increased its complement of advocates to the equivalent of five full-time staff. Advocacy at First United has a long and distinguished history in the Downtown Eastside, providing low income people help with issues ranging from landlord tenant disputes, to WCB claims, immigration, CPP, welfare, and EI among others. Advocates have also enabled people to get bus tickets to go home to funerals or attend job interviews, to fill prescriptions at a local pharmacy, to buy work boots and hard hats when they have secured work. First United Church advocates provide education to staff in other agencies, teach on-line training courses and have worked on policy development for key social issues.

Sandra Severs describes some of the changes: “As Stephen Gray’s responsibilities shift to focus more sharply on policy research and development, we are pleased to welcome Cheryl McKittrick,

Didi Dufresne, Kirsty MacKenzie (part-time) and Scott Waters (part-time) who join Susan Henry and Janet Berry as part of our advocacy team. All of our additions to the team possess a law degree and valuable work experience in the area of poverty law and we feel fortunate to have them join the staff of First United.” Advocacy will continue to operate out of 320 East Hastings for the next couple of months as construction of a new advocacy clinic takes place at one of the social housing buildings, Jenny Pentland Place.

First United also recently announced that Bradley Steyn and Carol Williams have been appointed Refuge Shift Managers and Lori Gabrielson, moves into the position as Manager of Community Work. It also expressed deep appreciation to Vancouver School of Theology student Michael Politano Bowles for his important contribution to the life and work of First United in his role as chaplain to the community.

“It involves entering into a relationship of mutuality and interdependence. We all have much to give to others and much that we need from others”.

Community Picnic at Deep Cove

Jennifer Dame writes: “Our community Picnic was highly anticipated by our community members, as we were right in the middle of a summer heat wave. Our excursion could not have come any sooner and we were all so excited to take a day trip out to Panorama Park in beautiful Deep Cove. With beach towels flapping in the wind and the sounds of laughing kiddo’s splashing in the water, our day had begun. Taking turns, we played

in canoes and cheered on our new friends as races emerged! Everyone worked up an appetite and ate a wonderful lunch that was in part provided by the lovely ladies at Mt. Seymour United Church. Overall it was a wonderful day and we are still reminiscing about our good times and new friendships gained. On August 5th, life was a beach!”



First United...who are we?

We are a Church, not a social agency or a community ministry. We are church in a way that integrates community with social justice-in which mission is at the core of our life.

Being Church means living out the marks of the Church:

Kerygma (proclaiming and encountering the Sacred),
Didache (teaching, learning and growth)
Koinonia (fellowship and community)
Diakonia (service, compassion, social justice)
Leiturgia (order/ritual of the work of the people)

Comments from recent visitors to First

Rev. Alan Storey from Cape Town, South Africa :

“Faith is what you give your heart to. Anything else is idolatry.”

“Every human speaks from a faith perspective – since we all give our heart to something.”

“Jesus does not call us to believe in him, but to believe in the things he believed in.”

“Apartheid was about letting our leaders do the sinning for us.”

“Good preaching is truthful speak”

“Truth tellers are the means through which God swings open the doors of history.”

Visitors from University United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas after a week at First United:

“It’s amazing how your staff know everyone by name”

“The tote storage is an outstanding ministry”

“Your advocates and reception desk people are incredible and know their jobs very well”

“The food quality and the cooks in general are absolutely great”

“Weekends need more activities”

“Don’t rush people during meals”

*Purchase
your tickets
today!*

*The Sacred
Music of
Duke
Ellington*

*co-presented by
First United
and
Coastal Jazz*

*November
19th, 2010
At 8:00pm*

*St Andrew’s
Wesley
United
Church*

*Tickets available
at
www.firstunited.ca*