



June 2011

News Update

Silver Wheaton Golf for the Homeless Community a resounding success

320 East Hastings St
Vancouver, BC
V6A 1P4
Tel: 604-681-8365
Fax: 604-681-8928

The News Update is produced by the Ministry Leadership Team and edited by Nina Matthews 604-681-8365 ext.108

If you would like to receive a regular Update, please send an e-mail to nina.matthews@firstunited.ca.

www.firstunited.ca

This year's First United Golf tournament raised over \$75,000 and registration was sold out prior to the event. The 148 golfers enjoyed a great day of golfing and were treated to fabulous homemade cookies along the way that the Barnes family had made especially for this day! Mayor Gregor Robertson joined the 180 guests for a barbeque dinner emceed by CBC's Rick Cluff. Mario Lima, a community member shared some life experiences and expressed what First

United means to him. Rev. Ric Matthews moved the dinner guests with his comments on community and said, "People who live at the margins are not confined to geographic areas: they are in our homes and our neighbour's homes. It is not about a 'them' it is about an 'us'." He ended by saying that, "Fifty years ago the Freedom Riders took on the system to change how we live together. Today by being here, you are getting onto a bus that will help redefine the way we live with



The Peter Barnes party at the Silver Wheaton Golf for the Homeless Community event on May 30th.

each other in Vancouver – right there in the neighbourhood where the city was born."

First United Celebrates 125 years

Thanks to grants from the City of Vancouver and Heritage Canada, a celebration was held in MacLean Park in the historic Strathcona neighbourhood that brought diverse communities of Vancouverites together for an afternoon of fun, music, hot dogs and a slice of birthday cake. Layton Peck, coordinator of the event put together a line up of diverse musicians and performers including the marimba-playing Brockton World Music Ensemble, The Sunshine Choir singing traditional Chinese pieces, the Vancouver Niska dancers, the Scow Band,

the Deet Street Band, Dalannah Gail Bowen, Marianne Grittani and the Red Fox Drummers. Children of all ages were treated to a number of fun activities by Red Fox Recreation. The Carnival Band moved through the park with their own special brand of entertainment and initiated a jamming session with the Djembe drummers that included young and old. Deputy Executive Minister, Sandra Severs in a Facebook post noted, "The group playing the djembes was made up of an interesting collection of local folk who took up the offer to try it out. I saw African children, Caucasians,



Aboriginals, Asians and East Indian folk who were joining in and playing their own drums. Such a wonderful collection of people joined together in music."

Inside this issue:

- Learning Centre News **2**
- Greening Kitchens **2**
- From my perspective **3**
- Fundraising news **4**
- Thank You **4**
- Kitchen Equipment **4**



Gladys Lee and her daughter Stephanie

Learning Centre News

The VCC Adult Learning Centre based at First United has been operating for 31 years. It serves more than 15 dedicated students of diverse backgrounds and needs and who are all members of the Downtown Eastside community. This May one of the students, Gladys Lee, graduated from the UBC Humanities Writing 101 program. Her instructors, Linda and Jane, attended the graduation ceremony at the Museum of Anthropology. Other students from the class hope to follow in her footsteps.

Now that the church is a place of refuge, many people want to borrow books and ask questions about programs in the Downtown Eastside. Linda Rider says, "As one of the founding members of the Downtown Eastside Literacy Roundtable, it is a real privilege for the class to continue to meet a very real need in the heart of this vibrant community". An invitation has been extended to visitors to visit the class at First United Church.

You are invited to a Grand Pentecost Celebration for the United Church

Sunday, June 12th,
7-8:30 pm,
St. Andrew's-Wesley
United Church
(c/o Burrard & Nelson)
(free underground parking
via lane)

Singing our way through
the church year into
Pentecost
Celebrating the 3 winners
of the Easter Hymn
Competition
Two Massed Choirs, Brass
Ensemble, Organ and a
Band
Concluding with a great
PENTECOST HYMN
SING

Proceeds from offering will
go to

**FIRST UNITED
CHURCH**

Greening Kitchens on the Downtown Eastside

Colleen Kimmett, free-lance journalist for vancouver.open file.ca on May 4th wrote:

It's mid-morning at [First United Church](#) and relatively quiet in this vital service hub in the Downtown Eastside community. About a dozen people linger outside, and a few sit in the large gymnasium that serves as a dining hall. During mealtimes, between 800 and 1,000 people file through here every day. This is just a fraction of the millions of free or low-cost meals that are served each year at kitchens in the Downtown Eastside. Recently, 11 of these kitchens -- which estimate they serve a total of 1.5 million meals a year -- came together to see how they could reduce waste, save energy and lower costs as they try to provide the most basic needs to area residents.

The impetus for the meeting was Amy Robinson, executive director of an organization called [LoCoBC](#), which received \$25,000 from the city to look at how to improve sustainability in the Downtown Eastside. The goal, says Robinson, was to identify key business issues for these kitchens and help them work together on solutions.

April Pringle, Food Services Manager for First United, says the first meeting, held in February, was "so beneficial." She was able to share her organization's experience composting kitchen waste, and address concerns that composting might take up too much space (it doesn't) or smell bad

(it's barely noticeable). Before First United started in the summer, "we had two garbage bins picked up every day," says Pringle. "Now, we have two garbage bins picked up three times a week." The meeting allowed Pringle to connect with two other kitchens in the neighbourhood that were interested in composting but didn't have enough volume to pay for pick-up service. Now, First United has agreed to accept food waste from Mission Possible and the Lookout Society's Livingroom drop-in centre.

Robinson says they are looking at other ways to reduce costs of going green by working together -- purchasing large volumes of biodegradable containers instead of Styrofoam, for example, or ordering more local produce in bulk.

"1.5 million meals is a lot of food," says Robinson. "That's why we think there is power in this group procurement."

William Oksanen is the manager of the Living Room. He says simply having the opportunity to sit down and share information about what works and what doesn't has been helpful. "As well as the personal aspect of getting to know the people in your community," he says. "It's actually quite fun."

"It's about not having to reinvent the wheel," agrees Pringle. "I find we do not work closely enough down here. We're all trying to have less of an impact on the environment, and we're trying to bring more healthy food down here."

From my perspective....

Sandra Severs, Deputy Executive Minister writes

I was reading a blog post recently by United Church of Canada Moderator Mardi Tindal written in response to an article entitled “The Split in the United Church” published a couple of weeks ago in The National Post by writer Charles Taylor. Taylor describes the United Church as in the “midst of a breathtaking erosion in its membership” and attributed a large part of the problem not only to the United Church’s engagement with the secular world but with Tindal’s reluctance to define what elements of Christian doctrine are essential to membership in the United Church.

Tindal’s response is quite measured and humorous, and one I appreciate. She starts out by saying that while she is pleased that The National Post still has a religions writer and that the writer is curious about the United Church, she didn’t think the writer actually understood The United Church of Canada. Judging by the responses to the article on the National Post website, it is obvious that a lot of people writing in don’t get us either. I am not sure that this is because Tindal didn’t explain herself well. It may be because the paradigm out of which this denomination, and Tindal, operates is not the same paradigm out of which the writer and his readers operate. When there is cognitive dissonance between paradigms, sometimes it doesn’t matter how clearly you explain something. Generally something else has to shift before the “ah hah!” moment happens and the person struggling with the experience of confronting the different paradigm says, “Finally! I get it!” Of course, they might get it and not agree, but that is a far easier conversation to have than simply confronting puzzlement at a belief level.

One of the key points of “not getting it” came in response to the writer’s question of what was the minimum that a person interested in the United Church should believe before becoming a part of the denomination. According to Taylor, Tindal seemed reluctant to come up with a specific doctrinal answer. For Tindal, her reluctance to answer was a result of a

different way of seeing faith and church. She writes in response:

I thought, briefly, about the affirmations we ask people to make in our membership liturgies. Strictly speaking, I suppose, naming those would have been the “correct” answer to the question. I decided not to go there. How could I possibly reduce belonging and community to the recitation of a few words?

I thought, at somewhat greater length, of many good and faithful United Church people I know:

** young adults who have come for community and stayed to grow in faith*

** Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and people of other faiths who, for whatever reason, find from time to time a place of safety or nurture in our pews and join us in building the realm of God*

** people I think of sometimes, not flippantly but affectionately, as “the walking wounded”: people whose capacities do not fit them for success in the world but who are cared for in community, and in that same community are enabled to contribute—sometimes by setting up tables and chairs, sometimes by helping me to remember that we are all, at times, among the walking wounded. These people have “entered” the faith. They belong. Why would we ever subject them to a test?*

To me, the minimum requirement for “entry” into the United Church is a desire to follow the way of Jesus, to “do justice, show kindness, and walk humbly with God.” As evidence of that desire, I don’t need a recitation. I’ll take showing up, and living one’s faith. As First United moves forward in its quest to be recognized as a church in this denomination, Tindal’s words about what it takes to have membership in The United Church of Canada offer a challenge to any who would hold the doors closed to those who participate in our life. Membership is not simply about affirmation of doctrinal beliefs. It’s about the much harder task of living out those beliefs in the building of an inclusive community where all find a welcome. That is the Way of Jesus.



Run/Walk a great fundraising event

On a bright sunny Sunday in April, 80 runners and walkers including a number of children and community members gathered early to participate in Run/Walk for the Homeless and also to raise money for Health and Healing programs at First United by gathering pledges. The team placed 9th overall in the 'non-corporate teams or running clubs' category. First United would like to thank all who walked, ran, wheeled and collected pledges and for being involved in this fantastic fundraising event that helps build community. With a few pledges still outstanding, over \$36,000 was raised.



First United wishes to thank.....

Run/Walk for the Homeless

The nine United Churches in the Lower Mainland who collected pledges on behalf of community members and to the five organizations that participated: DMCL, Haywood Securities, Fortis BC, the City of Vancouver and Connor, Clark & Lunn.

Artex Screen Printers, BMO, Raymond James, Walter Francl, Intact Insurance, Haywood Securities, Connor Clark and Lunn, Salman Partners, John Keelyside & Co, Harper Grey, Derpak White Spencer LLP, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Platinum Group Metals, Deloitte, Gold Corp and Mountain West Electric.

Silver Wheaton Golf for the Homeless Community

The Silent Auction was the most successful one to date and offered numerous sought-after services and products. Thank you to the organizers and the following sponsors for their support: *Silver Wheaton, Canaccord Genuity, Scotia Capital, Cambria Geoscience, The Family of Jack Shaver, Peter Barnes Family,*

125th Anniversary Party in the Park

Ron Suzuki and the Strathcona Community Centre, Sandy MacKeigan at Oppenheimer Park, Rica, Dan and Bob at the Carnegie Centre, Sharon Kravitz at the DTES Arts Centre, Kathy Walker and St James Music Academy, Dr Bruce Harding & Evensong Music and several DTES artists, carvers, weavers and poets. Thanks also go to Grimm's Fine Foods, Costco, Safeway and Sysco.



Kitchen Equipment is needed to carry on essential work

For decades at First United, shared meals have been the beginning of community, friendship, healing and hope. First United is focusing its efforts on raising \$38,000 towards urgently-needed kitchen equipment to better serve the needs of the community.

Currently the kitchen is antiquated, inefficient, and being used vastly beyond its intended capacity. The equipment First United hopes to acquire will not only help the community now, but will be transferable to the proposed new building. *"I've been staying at the church for three months. The food is excellent... there's nothing I wouldn't eat. If I couldn't eat here, I'd be standing in line for a sandwich somewhere."* – Don, community member.

"I'm sleeping here right now. The staff and volunteers are very nice. Good quality and quantity of food... I'd love more healthy food." – Chris, community member.

First United aims to do more to improve the meals' nutritional content, the speed, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and hospitality of food service, and the sense of joy and community that should always accompany sharing a meal. To learn more, make a donation or to view a short video about First United's food service, please visit www.firstunited.ca or call Natalie, Mgr of Donor Relations, at 604-681-8365 x104.