



*Moved by the Winds of God
Bearing Gifts of Faith, Respect
and Peace
Charting a Course for Life*

Rockingham United Church Annual Report



July 2020 – June 2021

12 Flamingo Drive
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3M 1S5

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MINISTER’S REPORT

We, and all the world are caught in liminal time. Liminal time is the transition space between “something that has ended, and something that is not yet ready to begin.”¹ You don’t need to dig too far into the biblical story of God’s people to find that we are not the first to be thrust into a pause. We are not the first to be frustrated at the way things are. We are also not the first to recognize how God is present with us through the “in between.”

We’ve learned so incredibly much this past year. We’ve learned how to do worship in a variety of different ways. Who would have thought a year and a half ago that we would be pivoting between livestreaming, a hybrid of livestream and live congregation, pre-recorded worship from home and the ability to pick up the phone and listen to the previous week’s sermon? I’m grateful

that we have been able to embrace new ways of being together. It's not perfect by any means, but some of you have discovered that worshipping in your pyjamas with a coffee in hand has its advantages.

We've also learned to carry on with the life of the church online. Zoom is less than ideal, but I'm incredibly grateful for it. It has allowed us to hold committee and Council meetings, book studies, talk to each other "face to face" for pastoral care, and socialize together.

There are things that happen during a liminal time. When our normal patterns are disrupted, we are reminded about what truly matters, and what does not. We are reminded how interdependent we are, and that that's a good thing. We are reminded to trust in the Holy Spirit – that unknowable grace that moves us through the disturbing and difficult, bringing new insights along the way. We are given a chance to prayerfully consider who we might be as the people of God when we come out the other side.

I'm so proud to be part of this justice-seeking, compassionate, spiritual, playful, deeply committed group of disciples. A huge shout out to my amazing colleagues. Kathy MacNeil, I can't believe the miracles you've done with music this year. Sylvia Thorne, you have done such incredible work to find us grants and to hold us together. Wendy Hawley, I'm so very grateful for the way you've held the youth in your care. Evan Thorne, you keep us looking good. Ron Shaw, you have jumped into this weird situation with both feet, and I appreciate it. I hope you've learned some things that will serve you well in your ministry. You are such a strong team!

I'm also incredibly thankful to those who have pulled out all the stops this year – Geoff Doane, Rodger Middleton, Dianna Prest, Colleen Rollings, Craig Sutherland, the Pastoral Care Team, Council and committee members and countless others. Thank you to everyone who has pitched in to make worship happen, to fundraise, to serve others, to call someone, to keep us connected and serving God in any way.

A liminal time is incredibly uncomfortable. As we move through these awkward, annoying, fear-filled and often lonely days, know that the God who is love, who is hope, who is all of creation, is still God. A liminal time is also a creative time. Who are we at our very core? Who are we as people of God? And who will we be as faithful followers of Christ when we reach the "promised land" at the end of all this? It's both scary and exciting. One thing I know: We are not alone. We live in God's world. And to that I say a resounding "Thanks be to God."

¹Susan Beaumont *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going*

Rev. Sarah Reburn

COUNCIL REPORT

Members: Ministry: Rev. Sarah Reburn; Chair: Dianna Prest; Chair Designate: Craig Sutherland; Secretary: Nancy Lowery; Treasurer: open position ; Trustees: Gary Wilson; Building & Property: Colleen Rollings; Christian Development & Education: Wendy Bona; Membership Relations: Mary Lou Evans Isaacs; Ministry & Personnel: Gaye Wishart; Outreach: Terri Billard; Pastoral Care: Eleanor King; Stewardship: Sandra Taweel; United Church Women: Sharon Ernst; Worship: Heather McLearn; Region 15 Reps.: John McLearn, Brenda Munro

Through the last year we have found ourselves living through a pandemic that has yo-yoed up, down, up and down on several occasions in our province, our country and across the world. As I was thinking of what to write about, I looked to the bright lights that we were able to accomplish in the last year.

We established an ad hoc COVID-19 committee, led by Mary Lou Evans-Isaacs that gathered to go through the regulations, restrictions and policies to keep us all safe and make the plans for us to gather for in-service worship in the church. The time and talents of Rodger Middleton and Geoff Doane who worked tirelessly over the summer months to get our equipment upgraded and our services live streaming on YouTube. Our summer student, Evan Thorne, measured and roped off pews and put down tape for markers. With all these efforts, we were able to gather with limited in-service worship service in September 2020.

Sadly, we were not able to gather together in the church for our Christmas services as Public Health restrictions increased as the cases increased, but being able to gather with my family bubble on Christmas Eve to watch our service was a blessing I had not had in a long time. So grateful for that connection.

Our fundraising efforts also went virtual with Christmas Sale and Christmas baked good trays being ordered online, thru email and the phone line. We were still able to support our White Gift recipients: AIDS Coalition of NS and Shelter NS as well as our Charlie Murphy Memorial Tree campaign and Pick-up Soup luncheons. Our commitment to the church community and our community outside of the church is a glowing bright light.

We had our solar panels installed and brought online Dec 1st 2020, thanks to the hard work of the Building & Property Committee, led by Colleen Rollings. A literal bright light for our neighbourhood. My grateful thanks to the commitment and dedication of all of our staff, committees, groups and members of the congregation. You all have kept the connections with each other, our youth, our seniors, our community through phone calls, emails, zoom, YouTube and Facetime.

I want to thank the United Church Women for their many years of contribution to Rockingham United Church. The leadership and generosity of the UCW profoundly contributed to the congregation and our community. I look forward to what evolves in the future for the women of RUC. A new light.

In the New Year, we were able to gather again. As things progressed we were able to see a few more voices in the choir loft, safely distanced. Volunteers stepped up to do ushering. After such a long time, reunification of Ghassan with Haifa & Helen was realized. Vaccines started to slowly roll into the province. With each month passing, the promise of a new normal in the near future is on the horizon. Another bright light.

As I finish writing this, we are currently battling through a third wave of variants of COVID- 19 that has spread quicker than ever before in our province. A severe lockdown once again has closed our physical doors. This lockdown bringing hardship to the workers and businesses in our community. Please keep them in your prayers. In such challenging times, I look to our minister, Rev. Sarah Reaburn, as a guiding light of hope and a message that together with our faith in God, we will overcome. I am grateful that we can worship together still online and gather for coffee & conversation through Zoom. I have faith we will make it through the other side of this. God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted, Dianna Prest

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees (BOT) did not formally meet in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions. The BOT follows the checklist outlined in the United Church Trustees Handbook of Accountabilities (2013), particularly checklist items that are relevant to Rockingham United Church (RUC).

All information related to bequests, investments, taxes, insurance, risk assessment, repairs and congregational property and related matters were reviewed on an as needed basis this past year and by email consultation when it was required. The BOT approved the use of an internal loan from the Endowment Fund to pay for some of the Solar Panel project as well as the use of the remainder in the Manse Fund. The loan from the Endowment Fund will be paid back over a period of 5 to 10 years with no interest. The insurance was renewed to reflect the addition of the solar panels to the building so it is adequate for our property. There was also an application, that was subsequently approved, to the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) for a total of \$60,000 to help offset revenue reductions during the pandemic period. We will be required to pay back \$40,000 of the loan and that is in the budget. The revised Region 15 Property Handbook was received and changes will be noted at subsequent meetings.

Respectfully submitted, Gary Wilson

COMMITTEES

BUILDING AND PROPERTY

The Building & Property Committee did not meet this year, but our volunteer committee members continue to complete the tasks required to keep our facility in good working order. It has been an interesting year as the facility operations adapted to the various COVID restrictions and requirements to keep everyone safe.

Sylvia Thorne has been instrumental in identifying for the B&P Committee tasks that are required as many of us are not in attendance at the building frequently at the moment. She also continues to liaise with our tenants to identify any facility issues to be addressed.

A one year lease extension was negotiated with the Atlantic Montessori School (AMS) that will expire in August 31, 2021. We received notice in March 2021 that the AMS will not be requesting an additional term and will be leaving as our tenant this August. B&P has commenced strategizing on how the former AMS space will best serve our congregation in the future with potentially new tenants or other space uses.

The focus last summer was the installation of the 60 kW solar panel array. Installation was commenced in July and completed in October. The cost of the installation was completed at a final cost of \$217,447. The grant money of \$39,000 was received with the remaining \$1,000 from Faithful Footprints to be requested in November 2021. The remainder of the Capital Campaign for the roof replacement was assigned to this project. The project borrowed approximately \$43,000 from the endowment fund which will be reimbursed from annual revenues generated from the solar panels. Solar power production was commenced with export to the

local power grid on December 1, 2020. The revenue generated in the first five months is approximately \$7,000. The projected annual revenue is \$20,000.

The contract cleaning service was providing inadequate service due to staffing inconsistencies so the contract was terminated in November 2020. A part-time staff role has been reinstated with Evan Thorne in the role. Evan is doing a great job of keeping the facility clean and sanitized in accordance with public health guidelines. Evan is also addressing minor repairs as they are identified. There are small budget savings with the implementation of the part time role vs. the cleaning contract.

The Building Fund remains in good shape with over \$40,000.

The members of the B&P Committee include: Garner Hill, John Sutherland, Mark Thornton, Sandy Munro, Doug Redden, Paul Gorman, Chris Bona, Kate Brown

Respectfully submitted, Colleen Rollings, P.Eng., Chair

Technology Sub-Committee

The Committee's Mission: The Technology Sub-Committee of Rockingham United Church will seek to adhere to our church's mission to worship God, share Christ's teachings, welcome all with love, reach out, work for social justice and to care for God's creation. (Paraphrased) This will be done by promoting the use of technology to assist the operations of the church office, provide technological tools for our minister, council and all volunteers which will assist them to communicate with members/adherents, the wider church community and to reach out to the community around us. The committee will support technology in the sanctuary to enhance the worship experience; will support and enhance our church web page and expand the use of social media.

This past year has seen several changes, mainly because of the pandemic. In late August of 2020 we reconfigured the Audio-Visual equipment in the loft to allow us to livestream worship services. That began in September of 2020. Livestreaming open-source software, OBS Studio was downloaded and installed on the loft computer. This software allowed us to bring sound from the sound console, video from our in-house camera and PowerPoint together and have what is displayed on our large screen mirror exactly what we are streaming to our YouTube Channel each Sunday. We also did some prerecording of music by choir members, the Children's Time by our student minister, Ron Shaw or Rev Sarah and scripture readings by various members of the congregation. We learned how to embed the video right in the PowerPoint so we would not have the inconvenience of jumping around during the service. Geoff Doane looked after the audio portion and Rodger Middleton the PowerPoint prep and the flow of the worship from the computer. We have invited a couple of our loft volunteers along to observe, but, with lockdowns and such we have not moved on to the next step of getting others involved. Geoff has done some tweaking of the sound by placing a microphone in the pipe area for our organ and at the back of the piano. This now gives him control of the volume of these instruments. We will be visiting the purchase of more mics and stands and replacing our camera with a new digital model. We would also like to introduce a second camera in the sanctuary, more down at floor level. There is money allotted for these upgrades in the Technology Sub-Committee. Our hope would be to have these upgrades completed over the summer months and ready to be used in the Fall of 2021.

A meeting was held with Shawn Silver, who looks after our server. There is need for memory upgrades and other things, but this is all put on hold until the pandemic is over. A thank you to Don Hailstone who restored the visitor internet connection in our Wi Fi setup. Several people

were asking about this, and, making use of the Wi Fi visitor connection, we watch the YouTube Livestream in the AV Booth on Sundays to make sure it's streaming ok.

I thank the committee members for their continued involvement in this committee:

Geoff Doane	-	Sound Specialist
Don Hailstone	-	Networking, wired & wireless
Shawn Silver	-	Server, Cloud Computing & Computer Maintenance

Respectfully Submitted, Rodger Middleton

COVID-19 Sub-Committee

Committee members are Wendy Bona, Eleanor King, Kathy MacNeil, Heather McLearn, Dianna Prest, Rev. Sarah Reaburn, Sylvia Thorne, Gary Wilson and Mary Lou Evans Isaacs; Chair.

The COVID-19 Committee was formed in the spring of 2020. Our mandate is to ensure that all Public Health directives are followed for the safety of everyone who enters our building. All our meetings have been held via Zoom.

Our first task was to create a comprehensive plan that laid out all the protocols that needed to be followed when we returned to in-person worship. A copy of our plan is posted in the building and the full plan can be viewed on our website. There was a great deal of preparation of the building and sanctuary. We are deeply grateful to Evan Thorne for his help in the preparations. In September we returned to our sanctuary for worship. People registered to attend the services. A committee member checked them in upon arrival. Telephone numbers were given in the event that they would be needed for contact tracing. Although there was no handshaking or hugging allowed, people were happy to see one another, masks and all.

Sadly, we were shut down again in November when there was a spike in cases. We continued to worship online until January. Things went along well and we were able to celebrate Easter in the sanctuary. Within a few weeks cases began rising at an alarming rate and we were once again shut down for everyone's safety.

We are so very fortunate that we have a versatile staff at Rockingham United. Rev. Sarah and Sylvia switched to working remotely. Wendy Hawley has kept in touch with the children and youth and their families. Kathy MacNeil has been tireless in bringing music to the services every week. It has been a challenging time for everyone. We owe our sincere thanks to Geoff Doane and Rodger Middleton who have spent countless hours working to stream the services each week. Thank you to you both and your expanding team for all you have done and continue to do for the congregation of Rockingham United.

Thank you to all the committee members for your dedication to this committee. We have held many good discussions during the year. A member of the congregation recently told me that Rockingham United is the safest place to be. It has been a true team effort. I certainly did not think that COVID-19 would turn into what Dr. Lisa Barrett called "COVID-21" when I volunteered to chair this committee. It has outlasted my time at Rockingham United.

I wish you well in your endeavours to keep our church safe for everyone. We live in hope that someday we will be able to have the pews full of happy people singing praises to God. Until that time, stay safe.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Lou Evans Isaacs

CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Nursery and Sunday School Programs

Sunday school had a very successful year considering the restrictions and limitations that COVID-19 caused. After sending out a short survey to families in the Fall, we discovered that many families were not comfortable returning to in person lessons. The decision was made to continue with weekly At Home Sunday School Lessons and a monthly Zoom Sunday School class.

Even though we were working from home we were able to bring a Christmas pageant together. Children and youth were emailed their parts and parts were recorded at home and then sent to me and Sylvia (office). Then all the videos were put together to form an entire church service! It was a lot of work, but it turned out wonderfully.

After Christmas another survey was sent to families and it had similar results. The majority were not ready to return but a small group was ready, so I made the decision to continue with weekly at home lessons, a monthly Zoom class and add a monthly in person class as well. This way families have a few options and choices to stay connected with the church and Sunday School program. This schedule worked very well. Most Zoom or in-person classes had 6 to 8 children.

In March of 2021 I began to film Sunday School YouTube videos for families to use with their at home lessons. The link was provided in the weekly lesson. In these videos I would read the Bible stories to the children, provide some discussion and questions, and also an introduction to the craft and activities included in the lesson.

Unfortunately, in April of 2021 in person Sunday School was stopped due to raising cases numbers. I am currently working on the Youth Led Service in June where the children/youth typically do the entire service. Like the Christmas pageant participants will be recording their parts at home so they can be put together to form the service. The children love doing these services and are very eager to participate. The theme this year is The Fruit of the Spirit!

Amber Thornton was a great helper for Sunday School this year. She attended the Zoom and in person meetings.

Respectfully submitted, Wendy Hawley

Youth Group

As mentioned above, a survey was sent out in the Fall of 2020 and the Winter of 2021 to gain a feel for family's comfort level in returning to in person Youth Group classes. In the fall the vast majority were not comfortable, so we decided to hold Zoom Youth Group classes. Typically, 6 to 10 youth would attend. Each class was a different theme: baking, games, crafts, etc. Youth group would meet twice a month.

After Christmas and the second survey, I learned that most families were not comfortable meeting in person indoors but if outdoor options were available they were more comfortable. The plan was to continue with Zoom meeting once a month but add an outdoor option when possible.

Unfortunately, our first meeting was cancelled due to poor weather but the second one was a large success. The Youth Group met at the Hemlock Ravine and went for a little hike and searched and found three geocaches. Twelve people attended that meeting! Everyone was happy to see each other after almost a year.

In March a Zoom Paint Night Youth Group took place and it was a great success. Supplies were dropped off to families earlier in the week and then 18 youth came together for a wonderful evening of painting.

Once again in April 2021, COVID-19 restrictions caused a halt in in person Youth Group and a few outdoor events had to be cancelled or postponed. If restrictions lift before the end of June, we will hold our annual Scavenger Hunt with Claude.

In the meantime, we will continue with Zoom Youth Group classes.

Amber Thornton was a great helper with the youth group this year. She attended the in person and Zoom meetings and it was great to have her.

Respectfully submitted, Wendy Hawley

Adult Education

As with last year, we have continued with Zoom meetings due to the COVID restrictions. This continued into the Spring of 2021 which in turn restricted the ways in which we could gather as adults.

In the Fall book talks were scheduled to take place on Wednesdays to discuss the book “ The Skin We’re In”, jointly with Fairview United . This was done with no pre-commitment and was well received.

In the new year the UCC webinar “Thriving Churches during COVID and Beyond” was held on January 27th, February 3rd & 8th. CD&E covered the cost of the webinars. These were also well received & well attended.

The Spirit site “Seeing TED Talks” took place in late February into March and generated good discussions at the reader’s circle.

Confirmation classes were offered. One adult and two youth are interested. The wish is to hold these in person so they have been put on pause during COVID lockdown but will hopefully take place soon once we are able to do so.

Respectfully submitted, Wendy Bona

MEMBERSHIP RELATIONS

Committee Members are Sharon Ernst, Eleanor King, Noelle Murphy, Gaye Wishart and Mary Lou Evans Isaacs, chair. As webmaster and Rockingham Reflections editor Rodger Middleton and Gary Wilson respectively, fall under the umbrella of Membership Relations. Thank you to you both for keeping us informed of all that happens at Rockingham United. We appreciate your work.

With the onset of COVID-19, the activities of our committee have been vastly curtailed. We continued with online worship services until September of 2020. Members of the COVID-19 Committee looked after greeting every Sunday so that registration was taken care of by them. Socializing was not permitted so we did not host Cup and Conversation. Mary Lou did not stand at the door with Rev. Sarah to greet newcomers and give them a candle.

In January we were worshipping in the sanctuary which allowed Mary Lou the opportunity to make a birthday cake for Rev. Sarah. The cake was cut and placed in individual bags for people to pick up as they left the church. In February the same protocols were followed to celebrate Anniversary Sunday with a cupcake. In March Mary Lou hosted Cup and Conversation online. In April Sharon Ernst hosted and in May Noelle Murphy will be hosting.

My term as committee chair comes to an end in June 2021. Claude and I will be moving to British Columbia to be near our family. We will return to Nova Scotia next May to spend the summer. I look forward to being able to see people standing together chatting at Cup and Conversation at that time.

I thank the committee members for your years of dedication to the hospitality ministry at Rockingham United Church.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Lou Evans Isaacs

MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL

Members: Kate Brown, Kaireen Chaytor, Barb Lall, JoAnne Tanton, Gaye Wishart (Chair)

- Kate Brown joined our Committee in September 2020. We are pleased to welcome her as she has a wealth of HR experience.
- The Cleaning contract was terminated and we hired Evan Thorne as Caretaker effective December 1, 2020. He works up to 10 hours/week as required.
- The Minister, the Office Administrator, the Church Organist/Choir Director and Sunday School Youth Group Coordinator all received a 2.2% cost of living adjustment effective January 1, 2021.
- The Office Administrator received an additional salary adjustment in May, retroactive to January 1, to provide a more equitable rate of pay for the expanded role and responsibilities.
- The Minister and staff have successfully managed both the challenges of working from home and the production of quality virtual services.
- Performance reviews will all be completed by the end of June.
- We appreciate the maintenance of high standards that the Minister and staff have been able to consistently deliver given the uncertainty of the work environment over the past year. We are truly blessed.

Respectfully submitted, Gaye Wishart

OUTREACH AND REFUGEE COMMITTEE

There is little doubt that 2021 has been a challenging year for everyone and the Outreach Committee was no exception. COVID-19 caught many off guard and programs that we would normally do in the Spring had to be cancelled due to ongoing restrictions. Despite this challenge, the Committee, like so many others, quickly switched to Zoom meetings and carried on with the view to carrying on with our efforts despite COVID-19. It is with some satisfaction that we were able to maintain many of our programs this year.

The crowning achievement this year was the safe arrival of Ghassan Kaseb and his reunification with his family. It was the final step in a five-and-half-year journey that will allow the family to get together in a safe haven, as all members of the family will be able to travel to Halifax or some

other location for a family reunion. Four members of the family are in Halifax, one more in Malta, one in Switzerland and the daughter and her family in Turkey. It was the work of many people and although not a perfect solution, the family is safe. The Refugee Sponsorship Committee stood down in March 2021 and the duties taken up by the Outreach Committee. The Committee will continue to support other refugee groups through the Provincial Round Table on Private Refugee Sponsorship. Letters of thanks are being sent to folks outside the Congregation for their help and advice during this journey.

The other big success was the Annual White Gift Campaign which had to be modified this year. Due to COVID only cash donations were allowed this year. More than \$2400 were raised for Shelter Nova Scotia and the Aids Coalition of Nova Scotia at a time when the need was greater than normal.

Mission and Service was also very successful with more than \$19,000 being raised by the Congregation. It is an effort that is sponsored by Outreach but is the kindness and generosity of the whole Congregation that makes it possible to support the work of the National Church and their overall programs from the training of clergy to social justice issues to Christian education. It is truly a gift that keeps on giving to the wider world community. This year's Minute for Mission focused on Mission and Service this year to explain United Church programs supported by this effort.

African Heritage Month in February 2021 was also celebrated at the church with a program of presentations and conversation on the issues of race, white privilege, social justice issues and how this affects not only the Black Community but also our Indigenous citizens. This will be an ongoing challenge as the Committee will be looking into best practices and programs by other churches and organizations to better help the Congregation understand the issues and how we may be able to assist and in turn learn how to support social justice issues regarding race.

There were some disappointments this year. These were postponements or modifications to meet the restrictions of COVID related health orders from the Province. The biggest was the delay of the stand up of the Interfaith Round Table organized by Al Rasoul but supported by Bedford United, the Jewish Community, the Quakers and ourselves but it is hoped this will be a much wider community of faith. This was delayed until the participants can meet in person. Earth Day, usually celebrated with Al Rasoul, also was modified this April due to health restrictions. Despite this, the area around the Church and D.J.Butler Park were cleaned up by volunteers from the church and surrounding community.

Respectfully submitted, John McLearn

PASTORAL CARE

Members: Eleanor King (Chair), Heather Coady, Barb Lall, Doreen Martin, Jan Mills, Hazel McLeod, Janet McMurtry, Jean Wentzell, Joan Munro, Lynda Pentz, Ron Tanton, Diane Ward, and Rev Sarah. We miss our valued committee member of many years, Gerry Butler, who passed away. Since Jan, we have met regularly using Zoom.

The Pastoral Care Committee provides support to members of our church community, especially during times of illness and death. Approximately 30 individuals are being contacted regularly. Our hospital, nursing home and home visits have been restricted due to COVID. Cards, notes and telephone calls are an essential part of the support we bring to our church family. We were unable to celebrate at parties with those who are 90 but a gift was delivered. We appreciate any information that helps us to update our birthday and anniversary greeting information. All

Friendly Socials under the leadership of Joan Munro as well as the Worship Services with Rev. Sarah at Shannex, Clayton Park, were cancelled. These activities will be resumed when the COVID restrictions are lifted.

The Committee members purchased Valentine cookies and prepared Easter gift bags for 32 church family members.

We look forward to resume visiting when it is safe.

Respectfully submitted, Eleanor King

UCC ATLANTIC REGION

Regular COVID updates from Executive Minister Rev. Faith March-McQuish have been circulated according to provincial Health Authority and premier guidelines. United Churches have taken direction in this way since the beginning of COVID. Weekly updates from Region 15 are generated and are available to anyone on-line at <https://ucceast.ca/regional-council-15/>

Region 15 and First Dawn Shining Waters have continued to support Outreach Ministries such as Arthur Kidston Memorial Camp, Brunswick Street Mission, Sherbrooke Lake United Church Camp and St. Paul's Family Resource Institute throughout the changes brought on by COVID restrictions. It has been a difficult time for such charitable bodies to continue to serve those who benefit from their programs. However, interesting models have developed to maintain their services differently. Links to their adapted programs can be found on-line at the link above Region 15 / Ministries / Incorporated Ministries. The ability for programs to adapt has been one of the amazing challenges COVID has generated.

The 44th General Council of The United Church of Canada will meet in July 2022, entirely online, for the first time in the history of the United Church. We encourage you to prayerfully consider serving as a General Council commissioner, which provides you a unique opportunity to be part of the wider church and have an impact on the future of General Council meeting and serve as commissioners for 3 years.

Annual Meeting May given Regional Dates for the minutes:

Given there was much uncertainty around when groups will be allowed to gather in large numbers and when a vaccine will be available to the greater population. As a result, a motion was passed at a February 2021 council meeting that the annual meeting of Regional Council 15 be held virtually on May 27-30, 2021.

No ordination of eligible clergy will happen at this meeting as it normally would. Various ordination services will be scheduled on an ad hoc basis, as travel of the Executive Minister allows.

Respectively submitted, Brenda Munro

STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship Committee met on September 24th 2020 to determine the best course of action for fundraising under COVID restrictions. It was decided that all of our meetings would take place online, and our usual church based fundraisers would have to be modified. Our first fundraising event of the year took place on October 16th. It was a "Beans to Go" lunch. We had a good response to this take away and raised \$900.

Our second event was in December. It was the sale of Christmas floral arrangements. These were picked up at the church door or delivered to the purchaser. It generated a profit of \$300. In December the committee also distributed the collection envelopes to people who were not using the PAR system.

In January we once again did some online brainstorming to come up with fundraising, and “fun raising” events that were COVID compatible. We decided to use Valentine’s Day as a theme and sell Valentines cookies. This idea developed into a small gift pack of Valentine card and cookies with a message of your choosing, to be delivered to the person of your choice. This event was hugely popular with a profit of \$800.

In March we held a tried and true fundraiser, a soup luncheon. This was adapted to become a frozen soup take away, to be enjoyed at the purchaser’s leisure. There were several varieties of soup available and once again the response from the congregation was wonderful and we make \$1060.

This year the committee had a booster in the person of Donna Schnare. She made Easter themed COVID masks and donated them to the committee to sell. \$230 was made from this sale. We hope to encourage more people to develop private fundraisers.

This year saw the change of Stewardship month from November to April. This change was made to better highlight Stewardship in month that the church calendar is not so full. A Stewardship appeal letter as well as a narrative budget was distributed to the congregation. Three church services were dedicated to different aspects of Stewardship, mission, spirituality and generosity. April was also the month for Earth Day and the committee continued to support this day by holding an Earth Day clean up and “One bag Challenge”. Despite the bad weather there were 19 participants with 17 garbage bags, 1 blue bag and the RUC green bin filled.

Throughout the year we continued to promote fundscrip as an easy, convenient way to raise money for the church. We had a great response from the congregation and raised an amazing \$2,509.52 by the end of April. We have one more order in May so the year total will be even higher. Excellent work!

We hope to hold one final event for this year, COVID restrictions allowing. It will be a plant sale held early in June. Members of the congregation have been asked to donate plants from their gardens and these will be sold as a yard sale event or on line if that is necessary.

I would like to thank my excellent committee members, Dave Carmichael, Santosh Lall, Beth Wilson, Lynn Knapp and Brenda Munro . They have been excellent supporters in trying times.

Respectfully submitted, Sandra Taweel

WORSHIP

Current membership of the Committee:

Rev Sarah Reaburn (ex-officio), Heather McLearn (chair), David Clare, Anne Forbes, Ann Collinson, Brenda Munro, Terry Shaw, Kathy MacNeil (RUC Music Director)

Temporary/visiting member, ex-officio: Ron Shaw

The Worship Committee met monthly by Zoom, on the first Tuesday of the month from September 2020 to May 2021.

Statistics 2020/21

- We welcomed 8 new members by membership transfer.
- Weddings 0
- Baptisms 0
- Funerals 5

This has been a year of challenges for many of us, both personally and as a congregation. We have had to put some of our plans on hold due to restrictions during the pandemic, including planned renovations to the Narthex area. We resumed in-person worship in September 2020 and were forced to suspend it from late November 2020 until January 2021, and again in April 2021 due to increasing cases of viral infection. Currently, we are streaming totally pre-recorded services via YouTube, in compliance with a recommendation from Region 15. We are thankful indeed for the skill and leadership of our Office Administrator, Sylvia Thorne, and our Audiovisual/tech team, led by Rodger Middleton and Geoff Doane.

It is unclear when in-person services will resume, but we are praying that the situation may improve by early June.

We had no resignations or additions to the Committee in 2020/21.

During the past year, the activities of the committee included planning Sunday Worship under the guidance of Rev. Reaburn, arranging and planning special services, recruiting volunteers for participation in worship services and for tasks related to the maintenance of the Sanctuary and Narthex, and arranging for supply ministerial and music staff.

We would like to acknowledge the many contributions of our committee members:

- David Clare and Sandra Allen for taking care of the duties for our funerals.
- Anne Forbes for looking after our Communion and organizing Communion servers and Scripture readers.
- Kathy MacNeil for performing as our Committee secretary.
- Ann Collinson maintaining the Christ Candle, and organizing hanging of banners in the Sanctuary.
- Kathy MacNeil for “going above and beyond” to provide music in Worship.

Thanks to members of the congregation who have taken on certain duties to maintain and enhance our Sanctuary and our Worship:

- The Audiovisual Team for their work arranging livestreaming and pre-recording Worship.
- All those who have volunteered as ushers, communion servers, and readers, and serve our congregation during Worship.
- The youth of the congregation, who have continued their participation in worship services periodically throughout the past year, greatly enjoyed by the congregation.
- Members of the Committee who participate in decorating the sanctuary for special seasons. We deeply appreciate their gifts of time and talent over the past year.
- Claude and Mary Lou Isaacs, who made a substantial donation for improvements to the chancel area.

Special thanks to Sylvia Thorne for her ongoing assistance and encouragement.

Services and Accomplishments of the Worship Committee during 2019/20:

- Shared services with Fairview United Church for the months of July and August 2020.

- Contributions to special services for Remembrance Day, and to Advent and Christmas Eve online services.
- Revision of the RUC information pamphlet on funerals. Similar revisions are planned for pamphlets on weddings.

Summary

As chair of Worship, I would like to thank the members of the Worship Committee, our wonderful paid staff at RUC, and the congregation for your ongoing support. We are truly blessed to have an abundance of talents within our congregation and are grateful to those who have shared their gifts so generously. Pulling together as a community of faith has never been more important.

Respectfully submitted, Heather McLearn

GROUPS

CHOIRS

It is with the deepest regret I must report that as a result of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the Choirs of Rockingham United Church were unable to meet this church year.

The Senior choir did meet a few times on Thursday evenings before Easter for 30 minutes only, to sing at a distance, with masks on, but due to further restrictions, in April 2021, all choir gatherings stopped. Many recordings and videos of our choirs, ensembles and individuals have been used for special music during the in-person services as well as the on-line streaming services. I was able to sing the hymns live, or pre-recorded since gatherings were permitted from March, 2020 until November, 2020 and again from January, 2021 until April, 2021. During the in-person church worship sessions, two or three choir members were able to join me in the loft each Sunday to assist with hymn singing before the lockdown in April 2021. Our deepest gratitude is extended to Geoff Doane and Rodger Middleton who have both spent countless hours recording, searching for recordings, cutting and pasting, and performing whatever magic was needed to ensure these recordings were well presented. All the singers of RUC eagerly look forward to assembling again to offer music in worship in the nearest future.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy MacNeil, Choir Director

UNITED CHURCH WOMEN (Women's Ministry Network)

President-Sharon Ernst	Vice President-Vacant	Secretary-Heather McLearn
Past President- Joanne Perry	Stewardship-Diane Ward	Church in Society-Eve Tupper
Treasurer-Mary Lou Evans Isaacs	Chair of Finance-Heather McLearn	
Kitchen-Eve Tupper		

Unit Leaders:

Clayton Park - Eve Tupper
 Jean Hogan- Audrey Wade
 Laura Wright- Mary Lou Evans Isaacs

The members of our three units enjoy working alongside one another in our support of Rockingham United Church and our Mission and Service projects.

In 2020, most units were unable to hold their meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to hold meetings, maintaining small gathering size and social distancing, in September and October to plan for our Annual Christmas Sale, and a wrap-up meeting in November following the sale. Due to COVID-19 the Annual Christmas Sale took a much different format in 2020. It was held online starting on Nov 6th with orders placed all week. Pickups of items were arranged for specified times on Nov 14th in order to honor social distancing. Many thanks to Rodger Middleton for all his assistance placing our catalogue on the RUC website. Also many thanks to Sylvia Thorne for her assistance in putting the catalogue together in a PDF and for processing all of the e-transfers and any cheques that arrived in the office. We also took orders for baking trays – squares or shortbreads, with the last day for payment being Nov 22nd. Dates for tray pickup were Nov 28th and Dec 5th with times for pickup also arranged to practice social distancing. We greatly appreciate the support of the congregation in making this a success.

At our Annual General Meeting in January 2020, the decision was made that the Rockingham UCW, as a formal organization reporting to Halifax Presbyterial, would cease to exist at the end of December 2020. With regret, the membership transitioned from Rockingham UCW to a new entity tentatively called Women of Rockingham United Church. We will primarily be a social group within our pastoral charge, although we hope to continue assisting with fundraising. Due to COVID-19 we were unable to gather in the fall to plan our future and we hope we can do this when it is safe to do so.

The UCW used some of their funds to make purchases for the kitchen - a new induction cooktop which was installed in December and a new refrigerator which is still on back order. The remaining UCW funds of \$4023.43 were turned over to the RUC Operating Fund at the end of December. In total, throughout 2020, UCW turned over \$565.25 from the Shrove Tuesday bake sale as well as an additional \$9523.43 to RUC Operating Fund.

In March 2021 Women of Rockingham United Church coordinated the Easter Egg Food Drive. Easter eggs stuffed with food item suggestions were handed out at services on March 14th and 21st with items being returned to church on March 28th. This was a success again this year thanks to the support and generosity of the congregation.

We missed our gatherings this year and hope that in the Fall of 2021 we will be able to gather again and plan what our future will look like.

Respectfully Submitted, Sharon Ernst

UCW Financial Reports January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021

BALANCE FORWARD

		Balance
INCOME		10235.27
AGM Offering	30	
Units	1189.77	

Kitchen Use	0	
Christmas Sale	3982	
Bake Sale	565.25	
TOTAL	<u>5767.02</u>	<u>\$16,002.29</u>
DISBURSEMENTS		
RUC	2000	
	565.25	
	1000	
	2500	
	4023.43	
Presbyterial	108	
	76	
Kitchen Supplies	26.87	
Sale Expenses	25	
Vineyard Christian Fellowship	250	
M&S	1500	
Dal	100	
Camp Kidston	325	
Deaf Ministry	100	
St. Paul's	175	
Brunswick Street	250	
Staff Gifts	200	
Newman Electric	241.88	
Countertop stove & Fridge	2535.86	
TOTAL	<u>16002.29</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>

MEN'S GROUP

The Men of RUC is an opportunity for all men of the congregation to gather, through service to our church, outreach to those in need, and social activities. We focus on the spirit of friendship of men involved in our church. While we have 40+ men on our email distribution list, we typically have 10 – 15 ready and willing to participate in our various activities each year. Our activities came to a grinding halt in March 2020 with the arrival of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

None of our regular social activities took place due to the pandemic.

Outreach Projects:

Monthly Lunch Meetings: While our monthly lunch meetings continued this year, there were times when we could not meet due to the closing of restaurants. The cost of admission is new socks and/or underwear, good quality used winter clothing, gloves, toques and mittens for The **Brunswick Street Mission**. We kept in contact with the mission and fulfilled their need requests of not only the above noted items, but on one occasion a large quantity of toiletries. Coffee Shop Gift Cards were also a part of our

monthly delivery to the mission. We thank all participants of this Outreach project which is also a social activity for the men of RUC. We also thank Freeman's on Dutch Village for their kind hospitality during these monthly events.

Brunswick Street Mission Breakfasts: This Outreach Project was closed due to the Pandemic. The breakfasts were still held but volunteer groups were replaced with staff. The breakfasts are prepared and handed out as take out meals.

Fund Raising Projects:

The Charlie Murphy RUC Memorial Christmas Tree: We were able to carry on with the Memorial Christmas Tree in December. During the Pandemic, the Memorial Christmas Tree realized the largest sale of Ornaments since its inception.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper & Mother's Day Lobster Lunch: Both of these events were cancelled due to the Pandemic.

Oscar: Our **2020 Oscar Campaign** began early in the year and ended on White Gift Sunday in December. It too was a great success, surpassing all other Oscar campaigns since its inception. Our **2021 Oscar Campaign** began on April 11th and will end the Sunday following Thanksgiving. **Oscar** is an acronym for **O**ur **S**pare **C**hange **A**iding **R**ockingham.

Projects around the Church:

Church Property Clean Up: A work party was held to clean up around the church entrance, The John Turner Memorial Garden, the area around the oil tanks and around the perimeter of the parking lot.

Provide support for the Building and Property Committee: The Building and Property Committee continues to rely on support of the men of RUC on an as needed basis for projects around the church facility, inside and out.

Finances:

Men's Group Financial Report July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

Opening Balance July 1, 2020		\$1,408.07
Receipts:		
Oscar 2020	\$5,788.50	
Memorial Tree	\$1,695.00	
Memorial Tree Donation in Memory of C. Murphy*	\$ 280.00	
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper*		
Lobster takeout 2020*	\$9,171.57	
Disbursements:		
Memorial Tree Purchase	\$ 37.83	
Transfer to Church Operating Fund	<u>\$7,800.00</u>	<u>\$7,837.83</u>
Closing Balance May 12, 2021		<u>\$1,333.74</u>

***Accounting Notes:**

- a) Neighbours of Charlie Murphy heard about our memorial tree after the fact and banded together and donated \$280.00. This amount was not recorded in our receipts for last year's memorial tree and was received by the church office on February 23, 2020. We will include it as a part of this year's project.

- b) Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper 2021 and Mother's Day Lobster Take Out 2021 was cancelled due to COVID Restrictions.

Join our Email List: Stay in tune with the happenings of this group, the Men of Rockingham United. Simply send an email to rmiddleton@eastlink.ca requesting your name to be added and we'll keep you up to date on the group's happenings.

Respectfully Submitted, Rodger Middleton for The Men of Rockingham United

WEBSITE – SOCIAL MEDIA

RUC's Website: Rockingham United has had a website for about 18 years. Work is constantly done on the site to make it as informative as possible to both members and adherents of our church as well as folks considering coming to our church. The website is located at www.rockinghamunited.org

Website Contents: Along the left side of the landing page are a number of links to other pages on the site. The **Announcements** and **Order of Service** pages are updated each week by Friday with the bulletin for the coming Sunday. The Announcements page is the most viewed of all the pages on the site. The rest of the buttons on the left provide all sorts of information about various groups in our church, a brief look at our church history, and a look at our physical property. There is a Links Button that provides connection to the wider church community, including Regional Staff Contact information for Regional Council 15 and The United Church of Canada. In addition links are there to Camp Kidston Memorial Camp, The Tatamagouche Training Centre, The Atlantic School of Theology and The Canadian and American Bible Societies. There is a button that is a link to Our Daily Bread, an online Daily Devotional. Just below the photo and to the right on the landing page is another group of buttons. There one can quickly get to our Reflections Newsletter, the Calendar of Events and links to The United Church of Canada's webpage and The United Church You Tube site. Events that are brought to the attention of the Webmaster are highlighted here for easy quick reference. An area just above the photo on the landing page is used to highlight items of importance. Once they see this reference, it is hoped they will seek out more info on those events elsewhere on the website.

Once COVID came along there is no longer a printed bulletin and announcements for everyone on Sunday. The Order of Service gets emailed along with announcements from the church office each Friday. As Webmaster I load the announcements into the Announcements page on the website and the Order of Service is saved on the website and can be accessed by clicking on one of three links to it.

Website Traffic: Over the years the average annual traffic has remained steady. We use Statscounter and Google Tag Manager to track stats on use of the website. Most visits happen on Friday or Saturday of each week and are higher in the Fall to Spring months than in the Summer. Whether or not cookies were placed on the visitor's system when they were on our site depends on whether they have cookies enabled on their computer. Therefore, the First Time Visits and Unique Visits can be higher than Returning Visits.

Social Media: Rockingham United has accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These social media sites are maintained by the church office and Dianna Prest. Dianna looks after Facebook on a weekly basis and events that are occurring at Rockingham United get posted to these programs as well. Facebook has become a popular source for information on happenings at Rockingham United. During the COVID-19 crisis our Facebook account has been used to

livestream worship. During the summer of 2020 one month the services were livestreamed from Rockingham United Church and the other month from Fairview United Church. Just prior to September 2020, our loft configuration was changed allowing us to livestream worship to our YouTube Channel. Our worship services have been a combination of streaming live and recorded videos as well as PowerPoint screens of words for hymns, prayers, etc.

Our website, YouTube Channel and our social media posts serve our congregation well, getting our message out to the church and wider community.

Respectfully Submitted, Rodger Middleton

CO-OP PLAYGROUP

The Rockingham United Church Play group is a group of preschoolers and their caregivers who gather in the church hall on Friday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. We have a collection of ride on toys and other play things which appeal to this age group. We also have story time and singing while playing musical instruments. Special occasions like Hallowe'en, Christmas, Valentines, Easter, and end of the year are celebrated with party food and games.

When the COVID Pandemic arrived in March 2020, we stopped meeting. In September we began meeting again with strict protocols in place. We sanitized all of toys each week and anything made of cloth was packed away. Adults wore masks and distanced ourselves. We did not have story time or singing. This continued into late November when we, again, had to close. When it was announced that we could reopen but with strict small numbers, we made the decision to stay closed because we would have to pick and choose who attended. Only about half the group could have been there weekly.

Hopefully, things will change for the better and we will be able to meet to play in September of 2021.

Respectfully submitted, Karen Middleton

STATISTICS

Year ending December 31, 2020

Households under Pastoral Care – 322
Households Financially Supporting – 199
Number of Baptisms – 0
Number of Funerals – 5
Number of Marriages – 0
Average weekly attendance – 55 in person, 192 online