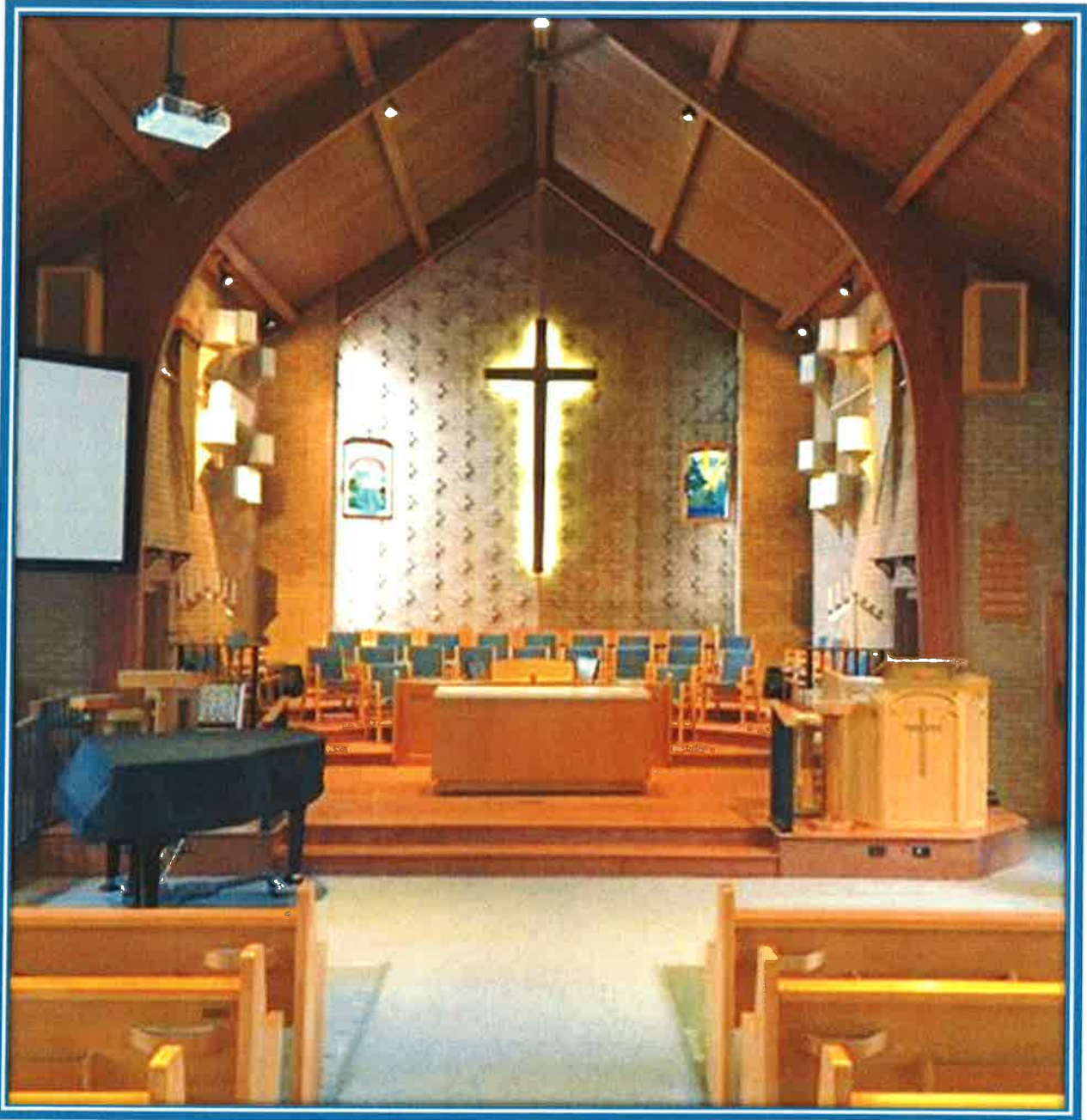


ROWNTREE MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH



**ANNUAL REPORT
2024**

Rowntree Memorial United Church Annual Report

2024

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Antler River Watershed Regional Council	12
Board Members	2
Budget - 2025	41
Choir Report	35
Christmas Hamper Report	22
Co-Chair's Message	11
Communications Committee Report	16
Congregational Annual Meeting - February 11th, 2024	4
ELUCO Board Report	25
Financial Statement as of December, 2024	40
Forest City Singers Note	20
Fundraising Committee Report	16
Hospitality Meal Report	22
Hospitality Meal Statistics	24
In Memoriam	3
Knit Happens	28
Little Kickers	29
London Vietnamese Alliance Church	11
Memorial Fund Statement - 2024	39
Minister's Message	9
Ministry & Personnel Committee Report	21
Mission & Service Fund	39
Outreach & Social Justice Committee Report	21
Pastoral Care Committee Report	27
Pickleball	28
Property Committee Report	32
Spirituality Committee Report	34
Staff	2
Statistics	3
TOPS Reports	30
Trustees' Report & Investments	14
United Church Women (UCW) Report	37
United Church Women (UCW) Financial Statement	38
Victorian Order of Nurses	30
Visioning Committee	36

Rowntree Memorial United Church

2024

Official Board

Minister	Rev. Wendy Noble
Co-Chairs of Official Board	Phyllis Brady, Brian Kominek & Brad McMurray
Co-Treasurers	Frieda Owen & Brian Kominek
Secretary	Joanne Hamilton

Committee Representatives

Communications Chair	Brad McMurray
Finance & Stewardship Chair	Bob Brown
Fundraising Co-Chairs	Julie Baertsoen & Maryjane Jolliffe
Ministry & Personnel Chair	Lynn Patterson
Outreach & Social Justice Co-Chairs	Jessie Morrice & Frieda Owen
Pastoral Care Chair	Phyllis Brady
Property Co-Chairs	Murray Currah & David Watson
Trustees Chair	Phyllis Brady
United Church Women President	Vacant
Spirituality Chair	Rev. Wendy Noble
Roll Clerk	Phyllis Brady
Envelope Secretary	Sylvia Brettrager
Antler River Watershed Region Reps.	Brad McMurray & Rev. Wendy Noble
Member at Large	Judy White
Privacy Officer	Glen Thompson
Nominations	Phyllis Brady, Brian Kominek & Brad McMurray

Staff Members

Music Director & Organist	Ryan Baxter
Administrative Assistant	Laura Wilkes
Custodian	Dirk Van Vrouwerff

In Memoriam
"Gone but not forgotten"



Dorothy Joan Mitchell - January 12th, 2024

Keith William Lindsay - February 12th, 2024

Kimberly Anne Hill - March 27th, 2024

Laurie Eileen Van Vrouwerff - April 7th, 2024

Stanley Meredith Toal - October 18th, 2024

Bryan Smith - November 15th, 2024

Jean Thomson - November 20th, 2024

Jay William Whistlecraft - December 3rd, 2024

STATISTICS

Marriages - 0

Baptisms - 0

Funerals - 6

Worship Attendance

Weekly Average – 39 people (in person and on Zoom)

Membership Numbers

94 members

**ROWNTREE MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH
IN PERSON AND ZOOM ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
Sunday, February 11th, 2024**

1. Reverend Wendy Noble opened our Zoom Annual Congregational Meeting at the beginning of our worship service at 9:30 a.m.

Reverend Wendy asked for nominations for Chair of the Annual Meeting.

***MOTION:** Maryjane Jolliffe; Glen Thompson

THAT Phyllis Brady be elected as Chair of the Annual Meeting.

- there were no further nominations - Phyllis Brady accepted the nomination and was acclaimed as the Chair of the Annual Meeting.

- the next order of business is to elect a Secretary to take notes of the meeting

***MOTION:** Debbie Thomas; Judy White;

THAT Joanne Hamilton be elected as Recording Secretary of the Annual Meeting.

- there were no further nominations - Joanne Hamilton accepted the nomination and was acclaimed as the Recording Secretary of the Annual Meeting.

- the Annual Congregational Meeting was declared open for any business that comes before it and the meeting was turned over to Chair Phyllis Brady

2. - the Agenda for the Annual Meeting was included in the Order of Service for today's worship service

***MOTION:** Maryjane Jolliffe; Ruth Kanu

THAT the Agenda as printed in the Order of Service be adopted.

CARRIED

3. ***MOTION:** Glen Thompson; Debbie Thomas

THAT we allow adherents to vote on financial and administrative matters.

CARRIED

- the worship service proceeded as usual

- after the presentation of the Offering, the Annual Meeting continued

4. ***MOTION:** Glen Thompson; Debbie Thomas

THAT the minutes of the Annual Meeting of February 12th, 2023 be approved as printed in the Annual Report.

CARRIED

5. - Brad provided a PowerPoint presentation of the year 2023 in pictures which was enjoyed by everyone

6. - we lost a number of folks this past year and the In Memoriam, with pictures, was presented as a PowerPoint while Rev. Wendy read out their names and we remembered them:

Peggy Joan Laberee - January 7th, 2023

Rev. Doreen Doyle Canavan - January 11th, 2023

Helen Frances Sarah Woodcock - January 12th, 2023

Irene Jean Thompson - May 14th, 2023

Joan Betty Newman - July 22nd, 2023

William (Bill) George Dunbar - July 29, 2023

William (Bill) Ainsworth - August 2, 2023

Marion Amelia Isaac - October 12th, 2023

- Rev. Wendy offered a prayer for those we have lost - Phyllis expressed our thanks to Brad and Wendy for the presentation and prayer

7. ***Annual Report Comments*** from Co-Chair Phyllis Brady

- Phyllis thanked Joanne for putting the 2023 Annual Report together and photocopying it so it could be circulated prior to the meeting

- thanks to everyone who volunteered to be on the Board and the Committees - we have a mighty Board and accomplished a lot this past year - we are grateful for each person and the work that has been accomplished

- the 3 Co-Chairs share the workload - it works for them and they hope it works for you - if you have any concerns, please let them know

- our association with the London Vietnamese Alliance Church (LVAC) has been a great partnership - they bring a lot of energy and enthusiasm to anything they undertake

- the Trustees are always aware of what is happening in the church

- Communication - thank you to Brad McMurray and Lynn Patterson for the newsletters and to Brad and Brian Kominek for managing the audio-visual system

- Fundraising exceeded their budget this past year - thanks to Maryjane Jolliffe for taking on that burden and thanks to all of the volunteers who helped
- Ministry & Personnel - thanks to Lynn Patterson for taking on the Chair position - we are all grateful that it was a calm year in terms of staffing
- Outreach & Social Justice - the Indigenous studies programme we presented was well received - we learned a lot and there is more information available - see Phyllis if you would like to see some of the material that has been gathered
- Christmas hampers - we are grateful to all who contributed to making the hampers happen again this year
- Hospitality Meal - thanks to Joanne Hamilton and all the volunteers for continuing with the meal programme
- Pastoral Care - we are grateful that we are finally able to go and see folks and they are grateful to hear news of the church
- Knit Happens - the knitters, crocheters and crafters responded to an appeal for hats for infants in the NICU unit at the hospital - 60 hats have already been donated and Wendy advised that there is another bag ready to go
- VON - the programme has grown since their exercise class started in June - they now offer an exercise programme on Tuesdays, and Thursdays, as well as a blood pressure clinic and social time on Thursdays
- Property - thanks to Murray Currah and Brad McMurray who have stepped up to operate the Committee during Dave Watson's absence - the new commercial dishwasher was installed this past week, which will be a big relief to the meal programmes that operate in the building
- Spirituality - thanks to Rev. Wendy who took on the Chair position and the Committee members for making sure we have meaningful worship services every week - we are also so grateful to our Music Director and Organist, Ryan Baxter, for his presence and incredible talent
- United Church Women (UCW) - the UCW has been inactive since COVID and we are not sure what is happening this year, but there are some options listed in the report

***MOTION:** Glen Thompson; Meryl Northam

THAT we approve the reports as printed in the 2023 Annual Report.

CARRIED

8. **Financial** - Frieda Owen

- Co-Treasurer Brian Kominek wasn't feeling well and Frieda presented the Financial reports on his behalf

(a) - the 2023 Financial report is set out on page 41 of the Annual Report - Frieda asked if there were any questions and none were forthcoming

***MOTION:** Frieda Owen; Murray Currah

THAT the 2023 Financial report be approved as printed in the Annual Report.

CARRIED

(b) - the 2024 budget is found on page 42 - as in the past, the Trustees again transferred funds from our investments to top up the General Fund in 2023 - they have also passed a motion to transfer further funds to the General Fund in the spring if required

***MOTION:** Frieda Owen; Jessie Morrice

THAT the 2024 Budget be approved as printed in the Annual Report.

CARRIED

(c) - we did not reach our Mission and Service Fund objective this year - the goal was \$14,000.00 and we collected \$10,000.00

***MOTION:** Frieda Owen; Glen Thompson

THAT our Mission and Service Fund objective for 2024 be \$10,000.00.

CARRIED

(d) - Dave Watson and Phyllis Brady have examined the financial records in the past - they are both willing to serve in that role again

***MOTION:** Frieda Owen; Debbie Thomas

THAT Dave Watson and Phyllis Brady continue to check our financial records and present their findings at the 2024 Annual Meeting.

CARRIED

- Frieda thanked everyone for still contributing to the church, both in person and through PAR and e-transfers - it has kept us going but with all of our basic expenses increasing, it would be helpful if we could consider whether we could increase our givings

(e) - thanks was expressed to Brian Kominek, Frieda Owen and our Envelope Secretary Sylvia Brettrager for keeping us organized with our finances - Sylvia also tracks and sends notes to folks

- thanks to Bob Brown for serving as the Chair of the Finance Committee and for keeping them in line

9. ***Nominations*** - Phyllis Brady

(a) - we are lucky this year because everyone who was Chairing a Committee or who was sitting on a Committee agreed to stay on in their positions - if anyone is interested in joining a Committee, please let Phyllis, Brian and/or Brad know

Official Board - 2024

Minister
Co-Chairs of Official Board

Rev. Wendy Noble
Phyllis Brady, Brian Kominek & Brad McMurray

Co-Treasurers
Secretary

Frieda Owen & Brian Kominek
Joanne Hamilton

Committee Representatives

Communications Chair
Finance & Stewardship Chair
Fundraising Co-Chairs
Ministry & Personnel Chair
Outreach & Social Justice Co-Chairs
Pastoral Care Chair
Property Co-Chairs
Trustees Chair
United Church Women President
Spirituality Chair

Brad McMurray
Bob Brown
Julie Baertsoen & Maryjane Jolliffe
Lynn Patterson
Jessie Morrice & Frieda Owen
Phyllis Brady
Murray Currah & David Watson
Phyllis Brady
Mary Dame
Rev. Wendy Noble

Roll Clerk
Envelope Secretary
Antler River Watershed Region Reps.
Member at Large
Privacy Officer
Nominations

Phyllis Brady
Sylvia Brettrager
Brad McMurray & Rev. Wendy Noble
Judy White
Glen Thompson
Phyllis Brady, Brian Kominek & Brad McMurray

(b) - we are entitled to have another representative at the Antler River Watershed Region - the Region meets twice a year in various locations, but the meeting is also available on Zoom - the spring meeting will be held in Port Elgin for all three Regions
- if you are interested and would like more information, please get in touch with Brad or Rev. Wendy, our current representatives

(c) **Ad Hoc Committees**

- we usually set up an Ad Hoc Committee for our fall gathering in September - it was decided to ask for volunteers when the time gets closer
- Frieda Owen and Phyllis Brady have indicated they are willing to head up the Christmas hamper project again in 2024

10. **Business Arising from the Minutes**

- none

11. **Minister and Staff Recognition**

- thank you to Reverend Wendy Noble for her support and thoughtful and meaningful worship services;
- thank you to our Music Director and Organist Ryan Baxter for his musicality, talent and enthusiasm
- thank you to our Administrative Assistant Laura Wilkes for her beautiful and accurate information in our Sunday bulletins and Zoom PowerPoint presentations

- thank you to our custodian Dirk Van Vrouwerff for managing our building - it is being used a great deal now

12. ***New Business***

(a) United Church of Canada Remit - this past fall the United Church of Canada (UCC) provided the Board with information regarding a Remit pertaining to the National Indigenous Organization of the UCC - the Organization was seeking more autonomy in making their own decisions regarding their Organization and spiritual practices within the confines of the UCC

- the Board reviewed the material and voted in favour of supporting the Remit - the results of all of the votes of all of the governing bodies of the UCC will go forward to General Council to be voted on this summer

13. ***Adjournment***

***MOTION:** Murray Currah; Glen Thompson

THAT we adjourn

CARRIED

Adjourned - 11:09 a.m.

- the worship service continued with the singing of the final hymn, the Blessing, Commissioning and Postlude

- we then moved downstairs to the Friendship Hall to enjoy a time of coffee and conversation

“Phyllis Brady”
Chair - Phyllis Brady

“Joanne Hamilton”
Secretary - Joanne Hamilton

From the Minister’s Desk

“The beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wisdom is awe.” - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Do you know those moments in life that suddenly take your breath away? Moments when time slows, and you're overcome with awe, gratitude, and love? This morning, as I went through my usual routine - letting the dog out, making tea, preparing breakfast - I glanced out the window and saw something so ordinary, yet extraordinary, that it stopped me in my tracks. My Westie, Ilka, tail wagging and face grinning, was frolicking in the snow in the backyard, her joy radiating against the stark beauty of the bare winter trees, the frosty white ground and the blue sky. She had just finished her morning perimeter check of our backyard. She was coming in to report that all was well.

I confess, I love this dog more than is reasonable. It was the combination of my love for her and my joy in seeing her joy that caught me. But for just a moment, time felt suspended. The simplicity of it all - the quiet morning, the crisp air, Ilka's uncontainable happiness - washed over me. I felt the kind of awe that brings tears, the kind that makes you whisper, Thank you.



Moments like these remind us that life is sacred, even in its most ordinary rhythms. Philosopher and theologian Howard Thurman once wrote, "Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace." Awe opens us to that trailing beauty - to the presence of Sacred Love woven into the fabric of the everyday.

So much in our world can feel chaotic and uncertain, but awe has a way of re-centering us. It reminds us that beauty is still here, joy is still possible, and God's presence can be found in the smallest, most unexpected places. Perhaps this is why so many spiritual traditions speak of wonder as the gateway to transformation. When we pause long enough to notice life's beauty, we make space for God to move. Awe softens our hearts, expands our spirits, and reminds us that life is both fragile and extraordinary. As we move through our days, may we not rush past these holy moments. May we let them stop us, surprise us, and remind us of the gift of being alive.

As we reflect on all that has been a part of our community of faith's richness over the past year, may we celebrate those moments of life's beauty. As we have lived and breathed and had our being in the Spirit, may we look at the present and beyond that to the future. May we also continue to nurture our faith and live into our mission and ministry with awe, wonder, love and grace.

Blessings,

Wendy

Rev. Wendy Noble

Report from the Co-Chairs of the Board

2024 has been another busy year for Rev. Wendy Noble, Laura Wilkes, Dirk Van Vrouwerff and Ryan Baxter, as well as the many volunteers of Rowntree Memorial United Church. Time seems to fly by as we move through the seasons in our worship, prepare for and hold fundraising and outreach projects, and celebrate milestones. Our Annual Meeting is the perfect opportunity to pause to say **thank you** to Rev. Wendy, Laura, Dirk, Ryan, all the volunteers and the financial donors who make the good works sponsored by Rowntree possible.

We are grateful for our relationship with the London Vietnamese Alliance Church (LVAC) congregation. They help us financially, as well as with their delicious food, technical expertise and person power. An example of their help is the changing of the lighting in the gymnasium from fluorescent to LED bulbs - working with scaffolding and electricity. Thank you members of LVAC.

We are grateful for our relationship with ELUCO as we work with other congregations to provide the Welcome Wednesday meals and the Food Cupboard. They are so much appreciated by the clients.

We are grateful for our relationship with the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) in the provision of fitness classes, social times and healthy living advice. Many persons from the neighbourhood and other parts of the city regularly attend the VON classes.

Our building is well used for a variety of other programmes - Scouting, Guiding, pickleball, Taking Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS), and the Forest City Choir.

When Rowntree participates in neighbourhood events, such as the Block Party in July and the fall Garage sale, our neighbours praise the people of Rowntree for their ongoing efforts since 1948. We hear stories of their time in scouting or their marriage or Sunday School.

Rowntree is a remarkable community of dedicated members supporting each other through difficult times and celebrating joyous occasions. Stay tuned as we plan the 100th anniversary of the United Church of Canada in 2025.

*Submitted by Brian Kominek, Brad McMurray and Phyllis Brady
Co-Chairs*

London Vietnamese Alliance Church (LVAC)

The past year at LVAC Church has been a testament to God's faithfulness and a journey marked by significant growth, both spiritually and numerically.

We began the year with a powerful New Year's service, setting our hearts and minds towards God's will for the coming months. Throughout the year, we celebrated the vital roles of parents with special services for both Father's Day and Mother's Day, honouring their love and dedication within our families and the church community.

The annual summer camping trip proved to be a particularly fruitful time, culminating in joyful baptisms that showcased the transformative power of the Gospel in the lives of our brothers and sisters. We also came together for fellowship and fun at our annual BBQ, strengthening our bonds as a church family.

Each event, from solemn worship to joyous gatherings, was intentionally designed to glorify God and spread His love to our community and beyond. We are immensely grateful for His guidance and provision, and eagerly anticipate all that He has in store for LVAC Church in the year ahead.

Submitted by David Ebert, Elder of LVAC



LVAC congregation

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

The Antler River Watershed Regional Council of the United Church serves and supports our church and most of the Southern Ontario area.

Spring Tri-Region Council Meeting – my notes

Antler River usually has 2 meetings a year for their area - the one in the spring of 2024 was actually 3 Councils and was in Port Elgin and online (that's how I attended). The United Church Moderator, Dr. Carmen Lansdowne (pictured) attended and spoke about Frederik Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor who was ultimately hanged by the Nazis in 1944. Bonhoeffer believed churches needed a physical presence and should be grounded in discipleship. He stressed Christians relationships with



each other in a Christian community. In some ways the church must also resist the world, not follow its trends. The Christian community itself is sacramental. Bonhoeffer wrote his book "Life Together" based on his strong bonding with his fellow seminarians.

Lansdowne then went on to question the depth of relationships within our communities asking: how well do you know your neighbour? And do we hold our neighbours as important as the sacraments?

Commissions of Antler River

Discipleship and Justice Commission

Over the past six months, the Discipleship and Justice (D & J) Commission of the Antler River Watershed (ARW) Regional Council has worked to carefully attend to the priorities established by the Council, which include: Affirm Mandate, Right Relations, Youth and Young Adults, and Camping.

Congregational Support Commission

The role of the Congregational Support Commission is to work with communities of faith to maintain vital and healthy congregations, and to assist in a variety of ways in times of transition.

Human Resources Commission

The Human Resources Commission carries responsibility for:

- the formation and nurturing of healthy pastoral relationships;
- the equipping and licensing of lay worship leaders; and
- the oversight of liaisons, as resources to Search Committees

Ideas from the meeting on how to celebrate our 100th Anniversary

Have a picnic within your church or between churches;
Go to a United Church camp;
Do a Box Social from 1924 – where people make up box lunches then auction them off;
Ring Church Bells;
On June 9th ? Michael Blair is speaking;
Sing a hymn from 1924;
Car rally;
Collect 100 items for a food bank; etc.

Antler River Representative needed

I have been a rep for Rowntree on the former Presbytery Region and for the Antler River Region for more than 10 years and it's time for me to move on. This is a rewarding position. You can see much of the work that goes on in the greater church, and there is a lot happening. New churches are springing up all across this country; immigrants from

Zimbabwe starting a church in Edmonton, from the Philippines in Winnipeg and many more. Please consider representing Rowntree at these meetings. If you need more info please contact me at 519-439-4000.

More info can be found on the Antler River Council web site at <https://arwrcucc.ca/about-arwrc>.

Submitted by Brad McMurray

Trustees

The Board of Trustees holds the legal title of all of the property of the congregation for its use and benefit. According to the Constitution of Rowntree Memorial United Church the Board consists of between 3 and 7 members elected by the membership to serve for a renewable five-year term. The Minister is also a member of the Trustees.

The main responsibilities are:

- To ensure that adequate insurance is maintained for the church and its varied ministries;
- To educate and encourage the Membership to participate in programmes of Planned Giving;
- To invest monies directed to them by the Board

The Trustees met via Zoom in January and dealt with two matters via email in June and August.

- A transfer of \$40,000.00 from Investments to the General Fund was approved in January and another transfer for \$30,000.00 was approved in June;
- In August a transfer of \$30,000.00 to cover the costs of renovations to the Brampton Street entrance was approved.

The Board of Trustees is composed of:

Phyllis Brady – Chair
Kathy Barber – Secretary
Frieda Owen
Brian Kominek
Bob Brown
Rev. Wendy Noble

Submitted by Kathy Barber

Trustees' Investment Holdings Summary as of Dec 31, 2024

BMO Nesbitt Burns

Your Investment Report

▶ Account Summary

This table provides an overview of your account; including the opening and closing balance for the reporting period.

Your Investments	Opening Value Dec 1, 2024	Closing Value Dec 31, 2024	Balance on Dec 31, 2024 (CAD\$)
Canadian Dollar Investments			
Cash Account	43,123.68	43,245.63	43,245.63
	43,123.68	43,245.63	43,245.63
Grand Total (CAD\$)			43,245.63
		Last Statement Nov 30, 2024	43,123.68

Frontier investment info

ROWNTREE MEMORIAL UNITED CHUR... (337315001)

NON-REGISTERED

Holdings Transactions

As of

All Funds Preferred Currency:

FUND	CLASS	CURRENCY	UNITS	LATEST NAV DATE	NAV	FUND CUR MKT VALUE	ADJUSTED COST
GOC3000 ⓘ	Series UC	CAD	2,380.5936	31/12/2024	15.4666	36,819.69	26,805.40
GOC3100 ⓘ	Series UC	CAD	11,570.8873	31/12/2024	11.2742	130,452.50	106,450.86
GOC6000 ⓘ	Series UC	CAD	0.0000	31/12/2024	8.1491	0.00	0.00

Total for ROWNTREE MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH (337315001):

For valuations, the price used is the Net Asset Value applicable as at that date.
This valuation includes information on outstanding deals.
For Foreign Exchange purposes, data is sourced from WM/Reuters Closing Spot rates.

Committee Reports

Communications

The Communications Committee for 2024 consisted of Lynn Patterson, Brian Kominek and Brad McMurray, with help from many others.



There are 3 main ongoing endeavours of the Communications group; producing the Acorn newsletter; running the weekly audio/visual & Zoom for the Sunday service; and helping keep our website and calendar up-to-date. Communicating can take many forms; verbal, visual, and written. The picture here is a very personal, visual form of telling our community who we are – this was our east parking lot during the Brampton Street block party this past summer.

Our website <https://rowntreechurch.ca/> is a huge, up-to-date resource for info on our church; our history, the major parts of the last 4 Sunday services (audio clips of readings, the Reflection, and Prayers of the People), our Mission and Vision Statements, fundraising info, who we support, a link to our calendar, a spot to donate, links to our region and the national United Church of Canada website and much more.

Our 'Acorn' newsletter is published 3 times a year and has stories and pictures of recent or upcoming events, people, and fundraisers, as well as a message from Rev. Wendy.

Our usual 9:30 Sunday service requires many hands to produce; Laura Wilkes, our secretary, makes up the Power Point; Rev. Wendy Noble is usually the Worship Leader; and Ryan Baxter and our Choir provide the beautiful music. Our job, as far as Communications goes, is to enable our in-person and Zoom members to hear and see (for those on Zoom) the best possible version of our service.

We are always open to add volunteers who would like to learn new skills, such as being creative with our website or running our Audio/Visual equipment. Call or text Brad at 519-439-4000.

*Submitted by Brad McMurray
wbmcmurray55@hotmail.com*

Fundraising

The Forest City Singers once again opened and closed Rowntree's fundraising year with their Spring and Christmas Concerts. 2024 also marked the return of our Ham & Strawberry Dinner ... the first since 2019.

Ham & Strawberry Dinner

On Saturday, June 15th, we celebrated the return of our ham and strawberry dinner. The interest in this event far exceeded our expectations and the dinner was declared “Sold Out” when we reached 90 in ticket sales. Thanks to Chris Hodgins for sharing his culinary skills once again and to the many volunteers who helped make this event a success.

Fall Fling Sale

Our 3rd annual Fall Fling “Yard & Bake Sale” took place on Saturday, September 7th from 9:00 a.m. to noon as part of the Carling Neighbourhood Yard Sale. Thankfully, the Brampton entrance was complete, allowing access to the lift and the gym. While it was a very rainy morning, we were fortunate to be dry inside. Again, this event would not have been possible without the contributions of yard sale items, books, baking and the support of all our wonderful volunteers.

Poinsettia Bazaar



Greeter - Rev. Wendy Noble

The bazaar was moved to a slightly later time slot this year, closing out the month of November on Saturday, November 30th. This year we made use of the whole building with the bake and deli table in the Friendship Hall with the lunchroom, and the books down the hall in the Kindergarten Room. Crafts, treasures, and the Toonie Table easily filled the space in the gym upstairs. We happily welcomed the return of the Lindsays (aka Lois, Pam and Sheila) with their craft table, as well as a new vendor this year, Rowntree pickleball friend Gloria Leckie with her jewellery.



Gym Activity

Several jam sessions were held from June to November in order to stock the deli table. The surprise big seller for 2024 was our new Merry Christmas Jam ... a sweet, tart and zesty combination of strawberry, cranberry and orange.



Friendship Hall Activity

Thanks again to all of the volunteers who helped make this event a success including Joanne Hamilton for her soup/hot dog lunch, Phyllis Brady for heading up the jam sessions, and Glen Thompson for his festive music.

Forest City Singers Spring & Christmas Concerts

On Friday, April 19th, the *Forest City Singers* presented “*Songs from Stage & Screen*”. The evening performance drew an audience just shy of 70 music lovers. With a medley of well-known *Andrew Lloyd Webber* Broadway numbers and the *Winds of the ‘60s* selection of

pop songs and other musical favourites, sandwiched between *Lullaby of Broadway* and *You've Got a Friend in Me* from *Toy Story*, there was something for everyone.

Despite the wintry weather, dicey road conditions, and a snow-clogged parking lot, the *Forest City Singers* present "*Christmas Songbook*" drew over 60 music-lovers to the concert on Friday, December 6th at 7:00 p.m. Following the performance, refreshments were served in the gym, where there was a little more elbow room for people to mingle. All considered, it was a successful evening with 60% of the tickets being sold at the door.

As always, a big thank you to Michelle Brown, Allison O'Connor and the choir members. We are blessed indeed that the *Forest City Singers* continue to call Rowntree their rehearsal home.

In Summary

With five major events, we were able to achieve and surpass our goal of \$5,000 for the year, as indicated in the chart below. With optimism, we look forward to another great year of FUNdraising and increase our goal for 2025 to \$7,000.

5-year summary with our main events for Rowntree

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GOAL	\$12,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
RAISED	\$5,621.00	\$1,618.80	\$5,971.00	\$7,209.15	\$8,284.32
<i>Consists of</i>					
Pop Cans				\$116.00	\$73.45
Jam Sales	N/A	N/A	\$170.00	\$360.00	Included in Bazaar
Ham & Strawberry Dinner	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$1,331.20
Fall Fling Sale	N/A	N/A	\$1,146.00	\$1,200.15	\$1,152.00
Poinsettia Bazaar	\$3,164.50	\$1,448.00	\$2,245.00	\$3,088.00	\$4,000.02
Forest City Singers	\$ 535.00 (Donation)	N/A	\$2,410.00 (1 concert)	\$2,445.00 (2 concerts)	\$1,727.65 (2 concerts)

Total amount raised for the 5 years = \$ 28,704.27

As always, fundraising at Rowntree is truly a group effort. We are forever grateful to all who generously offer their time, talents, and treasures to make these events possible.

Submitted by Maryjane Jolliffe

🎵 *from Forest City Singers*

Our strength as a choir comes with the comradery we share, and our commitment of joining voices together to create beautiful choral sounds. We are grateful for the support that Rowntree Memorial United Church has shown for more than 20 years by offering the sanctuary as our rehearsal space and giving us a home.

In April and December, we perform concerts for both Rowntree Memorial United Church, and Siloam United Church. This year, our spring concert showcased songs from stage and screen, with arrangements from *Les Misérables*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Casablanca*, just to name a few.

Our Christmas concert included a lovely and moving cantata, *Follow the Star*, along with several holiday favourites.



These concerts provide the churches with fundraising opportunities, as well as sustaining the choir's budget.

Forest City Singers is open to individuals of all ages and singing experience. Our motto is "Singing for Fun," and we do not require any of our members to audition. You will hear us on Tuesday evenings from September through April rehearsing in the sanctuary under the guidance of our Music Director, Michelle Brown, and our accompanist, Allison O'Connor.

We always welcome new members!

We encourage anyone who would like to learn more about our choir to contact us at forestcitysingers@outlook.com, or join us for a practice and hear the joyful music our choir creates.

Submitted by Jo-Anne Psiuk-Rodgers, Choir member

Ministry & Personnel



Just as the quote states...Rowntree has a plan.

We have our positive leadership with Rev. Wendy Noble. We have our Music Director, Ryan Baxter, master of the organ and piano. We have the office running smoothly with Laura Wilkes and we have Dirk Van Vrouwerff cleaning the facility.

Rowntree is grateful for the gifts of our talented and highly skilled Minister and staff.

They have all committed to the year 2025.....how lucky we are at Rowntree. Thank you everyone.

Submitted by Lynn Patterson

Outreach & Social Justice

Canadian Food Grains donation
L.U.S.O. - Donation for Summer Camp snacks
Rowntree Hospitality Tuesday meal
ELUCO - Welcome Wednesday meal
ELUCO - Food Cupboard
ELUCO Back to School backpacks
ELUCO - Annual donation
Christmas 2023 Hamper Project
United Church of Canada Mission & Service Fund

During the year 2024, the above programmes were supported by Rowntree with the help of donations from our generous congregation members. Many non-members also donated to help the food programmes continue.

We gathered up backpacks starting in June for students supported through the East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO).

The Welcome Wednesday Lunch programme continued throughout the year with indoor meals. The Tuesday Night Meal programme also continued in 2024.

The Outreach budget allowed for a monthly donation to ELUCO, along with an extra \$75 per month to support the Food Cupboard.

We were again able to offer Christmas Food Hampers to 41 area families. Thanks to Phyllis Brady and her team for their help with the Hampers

We thank everyone who contributed to the Mission and Service Fund, as well as the other Outreach projects.

Outreach & Social Justice Committee - Frieda Owen, Jessie Morrice, Ruth Campbell, Ruth Kanu, and Judy White.

Submitted by Frieda Owen

Christmas Hampers

With the generous donations given by congregation members, we were able to provide Christmas gifts for 67 adults and 20 children who live in our neighbourhood. Recipients registered in November and received their gifts in mid-December. The gifts included grocery and Walmart cards for groceries and children's gifts, so that the families are able to purchase the items they need/want. We were able to include hand knitted items, treats and calendars in the 40 hampers given.

Sincere thanks to the many donors, knitters and volunteers who helped with this annual project supported by the recipients. They are VERY grateful for our contributions to their Christmas celebrations.

*Submitted by Frieda Owen and Phyllis Brady, Co-Chairs
Christmas Hamper Committee*

Hospitality Meal



Then the sheep are going to say, "Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you; homeless and give you a room; shivering and give you clothes?" And he will say, "I'm telling the solemn truth -whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me - you did it to me." Matthew 25

On December 14th, 2010, Rowntree opened its doors on Tuesday evenings to provide a hot meal to anyone who needed it, a continuation of the meal that was started at Robinson

Memorial United Church on March 5, 1996 until it closed in the latter part of 2010. We have served meals at Rowntree on nearly every Tuesday evening since 2010.

We provide our hamburger bean soup, chicken noodle soup or vegetarian soup, along with crackers, celery sticks, carrot sticks, apple, cookies, and a hot and cold drink in the Friendship Hall. On June 18th we switched to serving a choice of sandwiches - egg salad, chicken salad, or ham & cheese on white or whole wheat bread instead of soup as a take out. On November 5th, we switched back to serving soup full time inside.

As you will see from the statistics page that follows, we were able to assist 1,717 guests in 2024. The cost of providing the meal for the year was \$5,518.58, which when divided by 1,717 guests equals \$3.21 per guest, or \$112.35 per week based on an average of 35 guests. These numbers also include the extra costs involved in buying the take-out containers for each meal.

The funding for the programme comes from funds provided through your donations on the offering plate to the Hospitality Meal, which is supplemented by funds transferred from the church account each month. The church has also received donations from members of the neighbourhood who have supported the Hospitality Meal for a couple of years.

You can specify a donation to help offset the cost of the meal by including it with your weekly or monthly offering and just marking "Hospitality Meal" on your envelope, to have it credited towards the Tuesday meal and your yearly givings.

On December 17th we were able to distribute a gift bag to our guests at our last meal before Christmas. Murray, Barb and I made up the gift bags on the night before. Each bag had 2 clementines, 10 Werther's candies, a candy cane, a granola bar and a pocket packet of Kleenex. Each of our guests received a gift bag and either a piece of apple pie or pumpkin pie along with their meal that night.

A **HUGE** vote of thanks goes out once again to our dedicated volunteers, **Murray Currah, Barb Caves, Sylvia Brettrager** and **Martha Jones** ☺. Thanks also to **Maryjane Jolliffe, Brad McMurray,** and **Dirk Van Vrouwerff** who have filled in when one of our regulars couldn't make it.

We could not continue with offering the meal each week without the help of the volunteers or the monetary support of the congregation and others. Thank you all for allowing this much needed outreach to continue.

Submitted by Joanne Hamilton, Co-ordinator

ROWNTREE HOSPITALITY MEAL STATISTICS

Number of people assisted by our outreach programme since December 14, 2010

	MEAL GUESTS										
	/14	/15	/16	/17	/18	/19	/20	/21	/22	/23	/24
Jan.	247/4	272/4	215/4	187/5	185/5	176/4	238/4	112/4	111/4	131/5	168/5
Feb.	277/4	225/4	223/4	167/4	161/4	182/4	217/4	115/4	109/4	117/4	154/4
Mar.	298/4	314/5	329/5	230/4	198/4	191/4	181/5	172/5	149/5	115/4	163/4
Apr.	340/5	264/4	260/4	235/4	170/4	195/5	103/4	196/4	142/4	136/4	153/5
May.	357/4	286/4	293/5	279/5	231/5	234/4	130/4	153/4	179/5	146/5	166/4
June	304/4	381/5	164/3	217/4	217/4	227/4	147/5	207/5	166/4	173/4	155/4
July	318/4	273/4	234/4	205/4	216/5	268/5	101/4	147/4	150/4	133/4	180/5
Aug.	365/4	270/4	278/5	284/5	182/4	217/4	114/4	173/5	202/5	203/5	139/4
Sept.	432/5	269/5	265/4	224/4	176/4	207/4	169/5	133/4	170/4	228/4	135/4
Oct.	380/4	228/4	216/4	256/5	220/5	280/5	138/4	151/4	165/4	222/5	156/5
Nov.	324/4	266/4	273/5	186/4	143/4	211/4	161/4	159/5	130/5	156/4	110/4
Dec.	313/5	257/5	141/3	102/3	105/3	143/3	128/5	119/4	92/3	130/3	38/3
TOTAL	3,955	3,305	2,891	2,572	2,204	2,531	1,827	1,837	1,765	1,890	1,717

NOTE: The numbers following the / above are the number of Tuesdays in the month that we served.

guests served from Dec 14/10 (3 wks only)	131
guests served in 2011	3,456
guests served in 2012 (closed 3 wks)	3,981
guests served in 2013 (closed 3 wks)	3,709
guests served in 2014 (closed 1 wk)	3,955
guests served in 2015	3,305
guests served in 2016 (closed 2 wks)	2,891
guests served in 2017 (closed 1 wk)	2,572
guests served in 2018 (closed 1 wk)	2,204
guests served in 2019 (closed 2 wks)	2,531
guests served in 2020 during COVID	1,827
guests served in 2021 during COVID	1,837
guests served in 2022 (during COVID and closed 1 wk)	1,765
guests served in 2023 (closed 1 wk)	1,890
guests served in 2024 (closed 2 wks)	<u>1,717</u>

TOTAL **37,771 guests served since moving to Rowntree**

TOTAL GUESTS SERVED since the outreach began at Robinson Memorial United Church on **March 5, 1996** is 49,106 + 37,771 = 86,877. **THANK YOU** to all of our volunteers and supporters who have made this outreach possible.



ELUCO Board

As we move into this New Year and the challenges we face, it is important to recap the many blessings that God bestowed on us this past year. With the dawn of 2024 we celebrated our 40th year of work in East London. It is a bittersweet celebration however. 40 years ago a group of like-minded individuals, led by Rev. Mary Weir, felt compelled to address the issue of poverty in East London, and 40 years later the need and challenges continue to escalate. Food security, housing, employment equity and social systems are lacking or failing. As a result, mental health issues, addictions and violence are mushrooming in our communities. We would like to work ourselves out of a job, but that does not look imminent.

Nancy Howard, our community worker continues to support and advocate for our families and individuals in the Marconi community. Nancy tells us that she cannot plan what her day will look like when she leaves for work in the morning. Flexibility is key, so she can meet whatever needs arise. Some of the most common requests would include assistance with filling out applications for Geared-to-income Housing or documentation for Social Assistance or Court Proceedings. Protocols for maintaining these services can be overwhelming for individuals and often she is asked to support and advocate for their rights at meetings. This is especially true with the education system where she attends team meetings to determine school accommodations. She will advocate for the students because parents find it extremely intimidating and don't know what they should be asking for. Families face many challenges and often come for counselling services or just a listening ear and/or validation. Many are faced with serious health issues, and if asked, she will accompany them to medical appointments to provide moral support, and an extra set of ears, or in some cases advocate for the individual. She is also able to provide resources to help manage mental health and addictions.

Continuing education and annual agency training on Social Assistance, Housing and Employment keep Nancey current on these subjects. As well this past year she attended workshops on ODSP Appeals, Attending Court without a Lawyer, Child Custody, applying for ID, CPP Disability and Landlord Tenant Mediation. She completed certified training through Sick Kids Children's Mental Health Learning Institute on Supporting Neurodivergent Children and Youth, as well as a United Church refresher training course on Racial Justice.

As well as hosting daily Breakfast Snacks and weekly School Lunch Programmes, she provides seasonal crafts (Valentine's, Easter, Mother's Day etc.) and a Literacy programme with books to give away. A family trip to the farm was a very popular event this summer as well as camp attendance. Once again, the busy Christmas Share programme was a resounding success. She also shared our story at the Anniversary Service of Rowntree United, the Ladies Parlour group at Strathroy United and the Forest City-London Kiwanis Club. We are so thankful for Nancy's love and devotion to the Marconi community.

The ELUCO Board once again held a Voices of Broadway Fundraiser at Siloam United Church. We are so grateful to Siloam for providing this beautiful venue. To celebrate our

40th Anniversary, we provided a special cake which was ceremoniously cut by Helen Picard, a founding member of the ELUCO Board. We sold Rheo Thompson Mint Smoothie chocolates to raise funds and these delicious treats were well received. Some of our volunteers hosted a bingo night with another organization to support the work of ELUCO. Our Annual Walk and Roll for Families was held at the end of September in Springbank Park and was our most successful to date.

In early June the Board set up a five-year planning committee to look into our dwindling finances and make recommendations on how to deal with it. After prayerful consideration at the Board level, it was decided to accept the proposal to cut Nancy's position to half time. This was not an easy decision to reach given the current level of need in the community. When Nancy started, she was half time and we are hopeful that we can return her position to full time.

Welcome Wednesday

This weekly lunch programme runs from September to June and is based at Rowntree Memorial United Church. We are blessed to have a slate of dedicated ecumenical volunteers who prepare and serve lunches to our clientele. We are grateful for the fresh food and groceries which are given to us by the Food Coalition. After the preparation of the meal, extra food items are given to the attendees and then any that are left over, go to Nancy for the Marconi community. A turkey dinner was provided at Christmas and a special picnic was provided at the end of June. Special thanks to all our volunteers, the clients who assist with cleanup and Rowntree for hosting.



Some Welcome Wednesday volunteers

ELUCO Foodbank

Every Wednesday and Friday from 9:30 to noon our Foodbank at Gethsemane Gardens Housing complex is open to those in the area who require food assistance. We are thankful for the loyal, dedicated group of volunteers who see that each family or individual's needs are met. There has been a steady increase in demand this year and it has been extremely expensive to keep the shelves stocked. We are grateful for the generosity of the Sisters of

St. Joseph and the Harvest Bucks programme. We would be hard-pressed to do it without you. Special thanks to our churches and individuals who provide groceries or money.

The Foodbank provided food for: 467 families - adults 826, children 355,
babies 6 **in 2023**;

635 families - adults 1,125, children 519,
babies 12 **in 2024**.

ELUCO's mandate to work with and advocate for the most vulnerable in our society has not changed in the last 40 years. We have been so blessed to receive funding from the UCC's Mission and Services Fund, our partner churches, other churches in ARWR, UCWs, May Court Club of London, Sisters of St. Joseph, Harvest Bucks, Middlesex Health Unit, London Foodbank and our many generous individual donors. A huge shout out to our plethora of volunteers. Thank you, you are always there for us!

Together let us work for a just and equitable society for all!

All submitted by Carol Langford

Pastoral Care

The Committee members are as follows:

Phyllis Brady (Chair)
Brad McMurray
Frieda Owen
Rev. Wendy Noble
Janice Barber (Secretary)

We thank Rev. Wendy Noble for meeting with us and giving us guidance.

We met twice in 2024. All meetings were via Zoom.

We visit or call Rowntree's members who can't get out to the Sunday services. This includes members who are in Long Term Care Homes or their own homes. These visits and calls are much appreciated, as some people might not have any family near by.

Frieda Owen faithfully sends sympathy cards, as well as cards to those who are celebrating special birthdays or are recuperating from illnesses or injuries.

During the past year Committee members connected with people supported by the Pastoral Care Committee by making deliveries of the church newsletter.

We encourage all members to communicate changes of address or phone numbers to any Committee member and/or the church office. We also welcome any suggestions and offers of assistance in order to better serve the Rowntree community.

Submitted by Janice Barber

Knit Happens

“Knit Happens” is an online meet up of knitters, crocheters, crafters and conversationalists on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm. Through the magic of Zoom, we are transported into one another’s homes for an evening of shared crafting and good fellowship. Newcomers are always welcome!

"The only difference between an experienced knitter and new knitter is that the experienced knitter makes bigger mistakes faster."

- Dorothy Day

"I am a knitting fool. It's a quiet pastime, and a productive one".

-Elizabeth Zimmermann

Throughout the year the “Knit Happens” folks have worked on personal projects – a knitted Queen Elizabeth, socks, pillows, sweaters and hats. And speaking of hats! There have been over 300 little hats donated by the “Knit Happens” crafters and friends. The hats go to the Family Birthing Center for newborns, or smaller hats go to the Neonatal Unit and larger ones go to the Pediatric Critical Care Unit. Beyond that, knitters in the congregation have contributed to items for the Christmas outreach project.

"Knitting: where creativity clicks"

This past year our crafters made over 300 little hearts that were distributed to our congregations at worship and through home visits, as well as to our neighbours at the Block Party and Poinsettia Bazaar. Our “heart felt” thanks to Laura Wilkes and Sheila Kominek for their dedication to the heart project. A goal for this year is to make some hearts to distribute at the Pride Parade. Anyone interested in “having a heart” and making some would be appreciated. Speak to Rev. Wendy, Laura or Sheila for some directions.

The yarn box in the sanctuary has some interesting yarn available for crafters. Help yourself to some any Sunday. The box is located by the side table and has a sheep on the front of it. Straight knitting needles and some crochet hooks are also available if needed.

"Knitting: it's a stitchin' good time!"

Submitted by Rev. Wendy Noble

Pickleball....it's a BIG DILL

For those of you who may not know about the great sport Pickleball ... a **PICKLE** is when you and your partner, throughout your game, did not score a point.

Well ... we have all had our turn being pickled, but it always ends with a good laugh and a smile.

The players meet Wednesday morning for drop in play from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.; also open for play is Wednesday evening 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday evenings 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. The cost to play for each session is \$5.00 and right now we are supported with 16 to 18 players.

All of these time frames are open for new players. If you or someone you know is interested in taking part, please let them know to come and join us. We are always looking for new faces to put a smile on!

Keep calm and play Pickleball.

Submitted by Lynn Patterson



Little Kickers®

We are happy to once again be able to offer our programme during the winter months at Rowntree Memorial United Church. Little Kickers is a year-round programme that offers children aged 18 months to 7 years old, fun soccer classes in a pressure-free environment. The programme was developed in the United Kingdom by a group of FA qualified coaches and early childhood developmental experts, including nursery school teachers. Together they created a programme that delivers high quality soccer skills combined with important preschool learning concepts, such as colour and number recognition, sharing, using imagination, etc. Little Kickers develops children's agility, co-ordination and balance while providing them with an overall positive introduction to sport.

Submitted by Clark Webster

Email: cwebster@littlekickers.ca **Tel:** 226-980-8909

Web: www.littlekickers.ca

TOPS Ontario Chapter #2718

TOPS 2718 meets each Thursday.

TOPS stands for 'Taking Off Pounds Sensibly'. We are the only day time chapter in the city. We currently have 14 members with an average of 10 coming each week. Weigh in starts at 11:15 and when everyone is ready, we start our meeting which is usually around 12 noon.

Since we are a non-profit group we charge \$2.00 per week which helps to cover rent to the church, supplies, copying, prizes and pins etc. for the members. There is also an annual fee which includes our TopsNews magazine.

Anyone who wants to come and see what we are all about is most welcome. The first meeting is free. We are friendly and welcoming.

Submitted by Doris Tutt, Leader

TOPS Ontario Chapter #5465

We are a TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) group. We pride ourselves on being a supportive, uplifting community. Each of us is on our own path to better health.

We meet on Monday evening at 5 p.m. We have awards night, guest speakers, and contests.

Submitted by Teresa Fyfe, Leader

Victorian Order of Nurses (VON)

The VON (Victorian Order of Nurses) continues to offer a weekly free blood pressure clinic and social hour for seniors 55 and over at Rowntree, as well as VON SMART (Seniors Maintaining Active Roles Together) exercise classes.

Rowntree is pleased to offer a home to VON's programmes benefitting seniors in our community and across the city. For anyone who has not attended VON SMART classes, pre-registration is required by calling the VON offices at 519-659-2273.

Blood Pressure Clinic (Thursday 10 a.m.-11 a.m.) & Social Hour (Thursday Noon-1:00 p.m.)

Julie McConnell-Goulbourne continues to be the programme coordinator for both the blood pressure clinic and the social hour. Following the interests of participants, Julie prepares a monthly calendar of events with fun games of bingo and a monthly lunch, which is offered at a minimal charge.

Recent lunches have included Make Your Own pizza or tacos; club sandwiches; ham and scalloped potato casserole (very brave as it was Julie's first time preparing scalloped

potatoes from scratch); lasagna/Caesar salad/garlic bread; and chicken, broccoli and rice casserole. All meals are \$6 or less per person and are becoming very popular.

Julie “appreciates being able to use the church/space and enjoys seeing how the programme makes people happy”.

VON SMART Celebrates 30th Anniversary at BMO Centre

The VON SMART Exercise and Fall Prevention Programme celebrated its 30th anniversary this year. In celebration, all participants in the London area were invited to take part in a joint exercise class at the BMO Centre on Rectory Street on Thursday, October 17th. Other celebrations in our area took place in St. Thomas and Strathroy. Their goal was to set a new record for the number of individuals participating in SMART classes at one time across Ontario. The celebration included swag giveaways and cake! Several of us from Rowntree were able to participate and it was a fun time.

VON SMART Exercise Programme (Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 a.m.-noon, except select dates for summer breaks & Christmas holidays)

Since June 2023, VON SMART exercise classes have been offered at Rowntree. SMART is a specialized exercise programme for Seniors 55 and over -- as well as adults living with a disability -- who wish to improve their strength, balance, and mobility through low impact exercise. Rowntree’s classes are a medium to high-intensity work-out, but most exercises can be adapted to suit your skill level.

Classes at Rowntree continue to attract upwards of 30 participants on a good day. Thursday’s classes are very popular with upbeat and energetic Gloria Pickering leading the classes. We always look forward to her corny joke of the day – our reward for completing the cardio portion of the programme??? Tuesdays have seen a variety of instructors, the most recent being nursing student Naythra who said goodbye to us when we entered the Christmas break.

During the summer months this year, we were also able to offer temporary space to VON’s Stroke & Parkinson exercise classes on Mondays and Wednesdays.

All SMART classes are led by VON-trained exercise instructors, be they employees or volunteers. VON is always looking for new instructors so if you know of anyone who might be interested, please pass the word along.

NEW FOR 2024

VON/EarlyON Baking - New for this year was a project in conjunction with the Early ON Child & Family Centre operated by Service Ontario. Regular attendees from Julie’s social hour were invited to pair up with a parent and child (under 6 years old) to practice their baking skills in Rowntree’s kitchen. At two sessions this year, the groups baked cookies and muffins, some of which were left as treats to munch on while playing bingo. Further dates have been tentatively scheduled for early 2025.

Caregiver Support Group – In October, Ashlynn Aspden returned to Rowntree in her new role as co-ordinator of a Caregiver Support Group where people are invited to “share, listen, and connect with others on (their) caregiving journey”. Participation is free, does not require pre-registration, and is held on the last Thursday each month from 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Submitted by Maryjane Jolliffe

Property

Members: Murray Currah, Brad McMurray,
(Ross Taylor, David Watsonlimited availability)

Project work completed include:

(a) Heating System: system start-up and operation passed inspection, however, an issue in the Brampton Street entrance still requires resolution. Two of the hot water loops still need to have more flow to evenly distribute heat.

(b) Energy efficiency received a significant boost when the east entrance area renovation was completed. A new, more efficient door system and proper insulation of the roof/ceiling structure, appropriate ventilation through the gable walls and repair of the ongoing leak at the lift chase, will reduce heat loss in that area. While the cost was significantly higher than expected, problems with mold and water infiltration have now been resolved. We are receiving about \$18,500 funding from the United Church of Canada's Faithful Footprints programme, which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of churches.

(c) The water heater in the kitchen was replaced (January, 2025)

(d) Migration to LED lighting is ongoing throughout the church as available and needed.

(e) Rowntree has received approval for a grant from the Ontario government to address anti-hate and security issues. This is now (January 2025) in play. Planning for better 24/7 security needs connects to the new year. (More information to come.)

(f) Community use of the building continues unabated and has continued to increase over the year:

(i) Mid-week groups resumed meetings and activities. These include a combined Cub and Scouting group, Girl Guides, 3 TOPS groups and two community meal programmes that are operational Tuesday evening, under the leadership of Joanne Hamilton, as well as the Welcome Wednesday noon-hour programme shared by partner United Churches;

(ii) Victorian Order of Nurses NGO has extended its programme focusing on health and nutrition. Beside the healthy lifestyle component, exercise and co-operative lunches are available on occasion; and

- (iii) Pickleball groups continue to use the facilities in the gym (Tuesday evening, Wednesday morning, Wednesday evening, and Friday evening). This continues to be a significant revenue source for the church.

Future Directions:

1. The gate valve feed to the north outside water faucet needs to be rebuilt.
2. Office air conditioning units need proper winterization to mitigate air leakage during the winter and security of the building. An insulated aluminium-skinned panel would best fit this need.
3. The east parking area shows a need to install an additional curb stop to prevent a car parking too close to the southern perimeter.

In order to keep costs reasonable, much work completed was accomplished in-house, thanks to the efforts of our ‘volunteers’ (Brad McMurray and Murray Currah), who spend considerable time behind the scenes keeping our building in good condition.

*Submitted by Murray Currah and David Watson
Co-Chairs - Property Committee*

Introducing Project GREEN (ROWN)TREE

Inspired by our tentative new Vision Statement of being respectful of the environment and tree oriented, we are asking for your support for our renovation of the Brampton entrance that was completed in late 2024 by Dyna-Build. The work began with the aim of reducing our carbon footprint/natural gas usage. Unfortunately, once the job began, we came across some serious issues - no insulation of the lift (elevator) shaft, no attic ventilation, roof leaks and mold. See pic on left. So the job went from \$27,600 to \$43,800. of which the United Church/Faithful Footprints Programme is funding \$18,400 – 2/3 of the original estimate.



done, roof is fixed and our building is now much greener, more comfortable and our gas usage should be significantly lower.

If you can help with this project, either donate by cash, cheque or E-transfer, but mention “GREEN (ROWN)TREE” so it’s designated to the correct programme.

We carried on, the work is



Submitted by the Property Committee

Rowntree's Garden

We have a long tradition of growing and donating produce to either the London Food Bank or the ELUCO Food Cupboard. 2024 was no exception, but we were saddened to hear of Jay Whistlecraft's passing this past year. Jay was a huge source of knowledge and help with the garden.

Last year we planted green and yellow beans and squash. We harvested a total of 23 lbs of beans and 4 lbs of squash that went to the ELUCO Food Cupboard. Unfortunately, the squirrels got most of the squash.



Dirk working in the garden

Submitted by Brad McMurray

Spirituality

During the year we celebrated worship each Sunday in the sanctuary and over Zoom under the worship leadership of Rev. Wendy Noble and the musical leadership of Ryan Baxter and the choir. We celebrated communion four times this year. A "Blue Christmas" service on a Wednesday evening was added for people who may find the hustle and bustle of the season of Christmas to be difficult. Through our shared worship services with Dundas Street Centre, the choir has been blessed with choir members from each congregation. The Good Friday and Remembrance Day services alternate between Rowntree and Dundas Street Centre so that one service is held in each church during the calendar year.

Our services have been gifted by the Rowntree Choir and the musical leadership of Ryan Baxter, as well as with the many folks who serve as lay liturgists each Sunday. The dedicated work of the Spirituality Committee members: Maryjane Jolliffe, Margaret Thompson, Ryan Baxter and honorary member Glen Thompson, as well as the Zoom team of Brad McMurray and Power Point work of Laura Wilkes, contribute to the weekly worship experience. Many thanks and deep appreciation for all that you offer to the Rowntree Memorial Community of Faith!

These are some of the highlights of our church year:

- January 7th - Epiphany
- January 14th – Baptism of Jesus
- January 21st – Rowntree Anniversary Service – Guest Speaker Nancy Howard, and Dundas Street Centre Invited to attend.
- February - Black history month – stories of Viola Desmond and Laurence Hill were shared

- February 11 – Transfiguration Sunday (Rowntree's AGM)
- February 18th - Lent One – Communion
- March 24th - Palm Sunday
- March 29th - Good Friday – Shared service at Dundas Street Centre
- April 1st - Easter Sunday
- May 19th - Pentecost – Communion
- May 26th - Antler River Watershed Tri- Regional Meeting - Guest Speaker at Rowntree was Mark Richardson
- June 16th - Indigenous Day of Prayer
- June 23rd - Pride Sunday
- June 24th – July 30th – shared worship at Dundas Street Centre with Rev. Bruce Lee
- August 1st – September 8th (extra Sunday) shared worship at Rowntree
- Welcome back lunch following service on September 8th
- September 22nd - Blessing of the Pets – Ilka the Westie
- September 29th - Truth and Reconciliation Sunday
- October 6th - World Communion Sunday
- October 13th - Thanksgiving Sunday
- October 20th - Dundas Street Centre Anniversary Service – Rev. Matthew Penny and Rowntree invited to attend
- November 10th - Remembrance Service – shared service at Rowntree. Fraser Gibson guest piper and Steve Davidson playing his baritone horn
- December 1st - Advent One – Communion
- December 18th - Blue Christmas Service 7pm
- December 24th - Christmas Eve 7pm
- December 29th - Café style worship

Submitted by Rev. Wendy Noble

Choir Report

2024 had both sad times and happy times for Rowntree's choir. Longtime members Laurie Van Vrouwerff, Stan Toal, and Jay Whistlecraft passed away, and the Lindsay family lost their patriarch, Keith. All are greatly missed and remembered with love.

If you have been able to attend live church services, you will have noticed that in the fall we welcomed back Dirk Van Vrouwerff, Beth Brown, and Judy and Dave Watson, increasing our ranks to fourteen singers. We are grateful to God for the health of all our members, and for the community we share as a choir.

We began 2024 with our annual post-Christmas get together, where we have a short practice and then gather to eat and socialize in the Mills room. In June, we had our year-end choir party at Phyllis Brady's house – thank you to Phyllis for inviting us to her home for this event. Evidently, we caused such a ruckus that she had to sell her house and move soon after!

October marked two years since Ryan's arrival at Rowntree, and we are certainly blessed with his presence and talent at Rowntree. In early December, five members of the choir

participated in the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO) London Centre's annual carol service, held at Metropolitan United downtown. This event requires learning a lot of extra music, but it is fun! In mid-December, Rowntree held a Blue Christmas service for our community, for which the choir sang a meaningful anthem.

Our Thursday evening choir practices (7:30-9:00) continue to be fun and lively. We are always looking for people to join in our making of joyful noise – all are welcome, even for short periods of time. As always, we would like to thank Ryan for his commitment and skills. His patience while we learn new music is amazing. We just marvel at his preludes and postludes, and nothing makes the choir smile more than when we see Glen Thompson heading to the piano to play a hymn with Ryan.

We offer thanks to:

- Glen Thompson and Mitch Rowat for substituting during Ryan's vacation weeks.
- Glen Thompson for regularly contributing his talents to our worship services.
- Our musical friends from Dundas St. Centre for collaborating with us for our shared services at both churches.
- Steve Davidson for playing his baritone horn at our Remembrance Day service.
- Dave Watson for continuing to keep our organ in great repair.
- Joanne Hamilton for keeping our choir library in excellent, alphabetical order.
- Rev. Wendy Noble for her spiritual leadership, and Laura Wilkes for keeping us organized.
- Everyone else who contributed their musical talents throughout the year by performing solos, duets, and trios.

Our choir account had an opening balance for 2024 of \$597.23, expenses of \$368.05, and deposits of \$512.00, leaving a closing balance of \$741.18. Deposits come from the weekly collection. Expenses are for cards, gifts, flowers for our members, and supplies for our social gatherings. This year, we also purchased 2,500 Thai Baht, currency for Ryan's trip to Thailand, which was much appreciated and very useful upon his arrival there!

*Submitted by Sheila Kominek, Treasurer &
Ryan Baxter, Music Director & Organist*

Visioning

A few years ago an ad hoc Visioning Committee was created to provide an opportunity for thinking about the future of Rowntree Memorial United Church. Rev. Wendy Noble, Brad McMurray, Brian Kominek, David Watson, Maryjane Jolliffe and I have been meeting to discuss Rowntree's role in the neighbourhood, increasing membership, continuing relevance and more.

Some of the **outcomes** of our work are:

The pamphlets prepared three times per year are provided to attendees of the many services, programmes and activities held at Rowntree.

The **Mission Statement** for Rowntree was adopted:

“Seek Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly with God” - from Micah 6:8

The organizing of additional programmes at Rowntree (e.g. pickleball, VON classes, increased involvement with the Carling Heights Neighbourhood Association and more).

Work In Progress

Offering to host a meeting of representatives and clergy of the United Churches of London to discuss the future of United Churches in London. The event is planned for later in March and has the support of Antler River Watershed Regional Council.

Drafting a **Vision Statement** for Rowntree - At the January RMUC Board Meeting, the Board endorsed the draft vision statement

“Rooted and grounded in God’s Love, we strive to be a relevant, respectful, resilient and resourceful community of faith, serving one another, our neighbours and our world” - from Ephesians 3:17.

(The vision Statement will be shown with a graphic during the Annual Congregational Meeting.)

Background information - As a first step, we discussed and agreed upon four words (characteristics) which represent what Rowntree, as a community of faith, aspires to be: those words being **RELEVANT, RESPECTFUL, RESILIENT** and **RESOURCEFUL**.

Next, those words were incorporated into a statement describing our goals as a community of faith. It was suggested that adding a graphic component to our vision would make it more recognizable and memorable.

The idea of a tree as a background was inspired by the origins of the family name “Rowntree” for which our church is named. Simply, it is thought that the family probably lived near a tree ... specifically a rowan tree. In Old English folklore, the rowan tree symbolized wisdom, courage, and protection. In Celtic Mythology, the rowan is known as The Tree of Life. Lastly, using further symbolism of the tree, we drew from Ephesians 3:17 ... “Rooted and grounded in love”.

Submitted by Phyllis Brady, Chair



United Church Women (UCW)

The Rowntree UCW never rebounded following COVID. Richards Memorial United Church UCW contacted us and invited us to attend their meetings. They usually meet at 1 pm on the first Tuesday of the month. Three to five ladies from Rowntree normally attend.

They have been most welcoming and it is great to be able to attend their meetings. They have a guest speaker and then a short worship time followed by good food.

You would be welcome to join us any time for fun and fellowship.

Submitted by Judy White

ROWNTREE MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

FINANCIAL STATEMENT - 2024

BALANCE - January 1 st , 2024		\$533.75
<u>DEBITS</u>		
<u>Operating</u>		
Bank service charges	<u>\$30.00</u>	
TOTAL DEBITS	\$30.00	<u>\$ 30.00</u>
BALANCE December 31 st , 2024		<u>\$503.75</u>

Rowntree Memorial United Church

Memorial Fund - 2024

Contributions Received in Memory of:

Joan Mitchell
Peter Denny
Keith Lindsay
Stan Toal
Andrew Ludziejewski
Laurie Van Vrouwerff
Kim Hill
Bryan Smith
Jay Whistlecraft

Also received: \$ 5,000. Grant from City of London to offset part of the dishwasher cost.

Disbursements from Memorial Fund

- Replace Dishwasher in the Kitchen
- Computer and Zoom updates
- Bank service charges

BALANCE of Memorial Fund as of December 31, 2024 \$6,324.00

Mission & Service Fund

The United Church of Canada Mission and Service Fund goal for the year 2024 was \$10,000. A total of **\$9,520** was reached by the congregation.

Rowntree Memorial United Church - 2025 Budget

	Budget 2024	Actual 2024	Budget 2025		Budget 2024	Actual 2024	Budget 2025
Donations				Ministry & Personnel			
Envelopes	43,000.	40,834.	43,000.	Salaries & Benefits	107,000.	99,428.	107,000.
PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)	18,500.	17,526.	17,500.	Con Ed & Life Long Learning	500.	-	850.
Loose & Other	2,000.	2,535.	2,500.	Travel	200.	-	400.
Initial	10.	-	10.	Honorarium	800.	-	200.
Fundraising	5,000.	8,888.	7,000.	WSIB	220.	165.	220.
Total Donations	68,510.	69,783.	70,010.	Total Ministry & Personnel	108,720.	99,593.	108,670.
Other Income				Property			
HST Rebate	2,000.	9,175.	9,000.	Fire Equip Maintenance	400.	-	400.
Use of Building (Rent)	20,000.	21,975.	22,000.	Heating & A/C Maintenance	3,000.	1,013.	3,000.
Other-Zoom receipts from DSCUC	1,000.	892.	1,000.	Lift Inspection & Maintenance	2,500.	4,633.	2,500.
Total Other Income	23,000.	32,042.	32,000.	Electricity & Water	5,000.	5,332.	5,000.
TOTAL INFLOWS	91,510.	101,825.	102,010.	Enbridge (Union Gas)	8,000.	4,878.	8,000.
				Snow Removal	3,200.	1,853.	3,200.
				General Maintenance	5,500.	2,274.	6,500.
				Total Property	27,600.	19,983.	28,600.
Expenses				Administration			
Spirituality				Bank charges	175.	105.	175.
Copyright Licenses - Music	325.	275.	325.	Telephone & Internet	1,300.	1,418.	1,400.
Flowers/Decorations	75.	38.	75.	Copier	800.	1,303.	300.
Guest Musicians	150.	-	200.	Offering Expense	100.	66.	100.
Organ/Piano Maintenance	800.	562.	800.	Church Assessment	5,500.	4,967.	5,500.
Pulpit Supply	500.	741.	750.	Supplies & Postage	275.	279.	300.
Worship Supplies	100.	-	100.	Insurance	7,900.	8,393.	9,240.
Celebration Events	200.	37.	200.	Regional Events & Travel	50.	-	100.
Choir Music	250.-	-	250.	Miscellaneous	900.	520.	800.
Total Spirituality	2,400.	1,653.	2,700.	Total Administration	17,000.	17,051.	17,915.
Communications				Outreach & Social Justice			
Go Daddy.com website host	780.	822.	850.	Supplies	100.	-	100.
Zoom payment (shared with DSCUC)	1,644.	1,644.	1,644.	Educational Opportunities	-	-	-
Miscellaneous repairs	250.	75.	250.	Total Outreach & Social Justice	100.	-	100.
Total Communications	2,674.	2,541.	2,744.				
Pastoral Care Committee	100	-	100	TOTAL EXPENSES	159,094.	141,537.	161,529.
Fundraising Expenses	500.	603.	700.				
Faith Formation Supplies	-	113.	-	SURPLUS/DEFICIT	(67,584.)	(39,712.)	(59,519.)