



2023 Annual Report

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OUR VISION

We are seeking to be a safe and inclusive faith community for people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, marital status, family configuration, abilities, ages, races, ethnicities, faiths, and socio-economic circumstances, who will be encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of the life and work of our ministry, thereby enriching us all.

OUR MISSION

CONNECT – ENGAGE – TRANSFORM

Thanks be to God.

These are the names of those individuals who passed away in 2023 and who were included in St. Paul's Church membership records at the time of their passing.

We celebrate and give thanks for their lives and for the lasting impact they have had upon us.

We trust them to God's eternal care.

Marjorie Batchelor
Freida Beauchamp
Ronald Brown (Ron)
Shirley Brown
Leonard Charabin (Kash)
Shirley McConnell
Joan McEwen
Margaret Stanley (Marg)
Robert Watson

BOARD AND TEAM MEMBERSHIP

Board Members

Chair of the Board	Kent Palmer
Vice-Chair of the Board	Candace Allen
Leadership Team	Jeff Kargus
Spiritual Leadership Team	Allyson Neufeld
Management Team	Harold DeVenne
Secretary	Jennifer Gunter

Finance Chair Judy DeMone

Ministers Deborah Laforet
Carolyn Smith

Board of Trustees

Kent Palmer
Brad Neufeld
Frank O’Byrne
Bev Phillips

Finance Team

Judy DeMone
Grace Choeun Jeong
Ron Shermet

Gardens

Harold DeVenne
Judy DeVenne
Jackie O’Byrne
Janis Fournier
Judy DeMone
Carol Anne Hunt

Night Security

Erny Neufeld
Bert Fonseca
Frank O’Byrne

Tom Allen

Harold DeVenne

Ministry & Personnel

Pat Freedman
Candace Allen
Darlene Cox
Elizabeth Phillips

Nurturing Care

Carilyn McNaught
Judy DeVenne
Jackie O’Byrne
BJ Young

Grass Cutting Care

Rob Phillips
Tom Allen
Bryan MacMillan
Jeff Kargus
Will Fennema
Darren and Jack Pinette
Jeff Laforet
Doug Francis
Sue MacDonald
Marc Therrien

Communication (eNews)

Candace Allen

Property Maintenance Tasks

Tom Allen
Rob Phillips
Harold DeVenne
Bert Fonseca
Jay Smith

Church Opening

Harold DeVenne
Tom Allen
Erny Neufeld
Sue MacDonald

NOTES:

We gratefully acknowledge both *Deborah Laforet* and *Carolyn Smith* for their direct INVOLVEMENT with, and support of, many of these teams.

We recognize and thank any teams or team members who are not listed or may have been missed above for their time, energy and dedication in supporting the ongoing work of St. Paul’s

LEAD MINISTER - Deborah Laforet

What do you get with one Town Hall meeting, one UCW commemoration, an act of vandalization, one pride festival, two sabbaticals, three potential community partnerships, five offers to buy property, and five new volunteers creating a core team? Just a glimpse of the exciting year that was 2023.

Coming out of 2022, the congregation had determined that whatever way the church moved forward, the most important thing was that the community stay together. It was an expression of the value of the people in the community rather than where the community met. It took some time until the vote in July of 2023, when St. Paul's decided in favour of the Board's proposal to sell the building, but that mindset going into 2023 helped to create an open environment for the Board to build relationships with community partners and imagine a space that might accommodate all our needs and wants.

I will always remember the synchronicity that happened at our Town Hall meeting in January or 2023 when the grandmothers from Grandmother's Voice were offered Prayer Bears from Carilyn McNaught and the announcement that the grandmothers were from the bear clan. Over the year, there were a few meetings with Grandmother's Voice, Halton Black Voices, and Pflag, as we wondered how we might work together. Over the year, there have been several invitations from Grandmother's Voice to attend events, Whit from Pflag shared in a sermon as we celebrated our 3rd anniversary as an Affirming ministry, and there have been smaller but important connections with Gennile Thomas with Halton Black Voices. St. Paul's also joined others in Pflag's first Halton PrideFest.

It's also been a year of growing relationships with the other Oakville United churches. All eight churches are now coming together monthly. We are planning events together, including an Oakville choir performance in April and a second church picnic in June. We are doing outreach together, including raising awareness of human trafficking and raising money for Nancy's house that supports survivors of trafficking. We also have a newsletter that advertises all the events occurring in our different spaces (if you'd like to receive this newsletter, let me know). We also take time to share our struggles, our celebrations, our concerns, and our achievements. We hope this is just the beginning of a community of churches who will support and collaborate with one another.

Amidst all this visioning and strategic planning, the staff of St. Paul's keep doing their daily tasks, staying connected with the congregation and the community, and, with the Board and now the Core Team, imagining what might be next for us. It brings me joy to be part of a community that is thinking about its future and what church needs to be in Oakville. A lot has changed in 68 years, and St. Paul's wants to create a space that includes other community partners, where together we provide the resources that are needed by the people in Oakville, especially the most vulnerable, and especially by those who struggle to find a space that values them and their needs. I am looking forward to the next steps in this journey.

Blessings,
Deborah

PASTORAL CARE MINISTER - Carolyn Smith

As on my return from sabbatical last year, the reflection of *“Take the best, leave the rest”* still resonates now. This has been a tumultuous year, thriving with our gifts and ensuring a future together sharing our unique message of God's justice-seeking call with a light heart.

Deborah & I spelled each other off with sabbaticals to refresh our energy after the pandemic. It felt entirely like pastoral care for all in this time of worry, hope, sparks of energy that needed nurturing, frustration, good memories, and sense of loss. Even in the episode of vandalism that shocked us all, it was an honour to support such a determined Congregation as we raised the flag again, surer than ever of the importance of our message of God's affirming love. And unique to St. Paul's as well, the lively presence of families, young adults and teens who make their home here is invigorating, and I've been glad to pitch in with youth group.

I am ever grateful for the Nurturing Care team who loves and serves the people here. We've encouraged each other in ebbs and flows, and supported a wide circle - some who can't be here in person anymore. The many phone calls help us notice the needs for visits, for messages, shawls, and treats, and when more was needed, visits in hospital, bereavement. The Funeral Reception team also come to mind, in this post-pandemic time of different expectations, distant families, and changing needs. Something that comes to my mind is that when you recall a family you miss, reach out, connect with them, spark up the relationships and update us here if something important can be shared. We've seen it surprise and comfort families very much to know they aren't forgotten!

It demands saying out loud – we have a wonderful Staff team, M&P and Board who work together with a sense of trust, reliability, and generosity, navigating life together without suspicion or negativity. Questions are asked of one another, the ages and stages and diversity we bring is a great strength, and we challenge and cheer each other on. What a gift that is, compared to many congregations and workplaces. It helps us all level up our knowledge, skills, and teamwork because I think we all realize how good we have it and how great it can be! I think of Darlene and Kent as they step down from their positions, and how I've appreciated their deep love of this congregation.

Jay & I both are grateful to be part of this circle, sharing this community together as a couple and finding ways to share. Despite some concerns about the future together, the St. Paul's family is where we were called to be through thick and thin. It has been a blessing to be here.

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC - Catherine Arcand-Pinette, Mmus

2023 has been another busy year of music at St. Paul's, From the Variety Show in April 2023, to the return of the December Carol sing and Concert, there is always something happening at the church. Our Adult Choir has grown to 17 members and, as always, all are welcome! We have a range of ages and abilities in our choir and we always work to find the right spot for new singers in a fun and comfortable atmosphere. Thursday choir practice is always full of beautiful singing and lots of laughter!

This year we are working towards another variety show in May as well as a combined choir event in April showcasing all the United Church choirs in Oakville in support of Nancy's House. In December, we sang with a guest flutist from T.A. Blakelock, which was very special. It is wonderful to include youth from the community. The choir continues to sing live as well as record special anthems to be presented with an image slideshow, as people have expressed that they appreciate the combination of the music and the imagery.

Our worship band continues to take part in special services, and we welcomed a bass player to our ranks who has made a big difference in complementing our sound. At Christmas we presented "Every Star Shall Sing a Carol" arranged by our music director Catherine Arcand-Pinette that was enthusiastically received.

We look forward to a busy year of music ahead, building friendships and sharing joy as we create beautiful sounds together.

Catherine Arcand-Pinette Director
of Music.

JOYFUL NOISE – Director, Bev Phillips

The Joyful Noise is lively group of young singers from ages 4 to 12 years old. We meet Sunday mornings at 9:15am from September to May.

From January to June, we had up to 14 singers in our group. We sang for three Sunday services, including Easter. We were also excited to join with the adult choir on Anniversary Sunday and to participate in Music, Mirth and Mayhem, our very successful variety show which took place in May. In September our numbers dropped due to conflicting schedules. We still have six enthusiastic participants with beautiful voices. We sang for a Sunday service in the fall and twice joined together with the adult choir – including for the Christmas concert in December. We also sang for the service on Christmas Eve.

New members are always welcome to join us on any Sunday morning at 9:15 in Room 10.
Submitted by Bev Phillips

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING – Developer, Tracy Mitchell

Children's Programming (JK-grade 6)

2023 was a busy year for the children of St. Paul's! We continue to meet every Sunday morning for stories, games, and crafts. Some of my favourite moments every year come from our interesting discussions. Depending on the week, I can have anywhere from 4 to 14 children present.

Our Lent and Easter season was busy with the preparations for our Easter play about all of the animals of the forest arguing over which animal best represented Easter. In March we enjoyed pie on Pie Day and in June we enjoyed Sundaes on Pride Sunday.

Vacation Bible School had the theme of Hero Hotline this year. Each morning, our team of heroes (the campers), would spring into action and explore the ultimate Hero Handbook -the Bible- to discover how all heroes can follow the examples set by a cast of supporting Bible Heroes in stories from the Old and New Testaments. As campers experienced these stories through music, drama and storytelling, games, arts and crafts, and science, they learned that Heroes are called to Follow Jesus, Help Others, Work Together, Listen to God, and Show Grace! Although we only ran VBS once this year, we had around 40 campers in JK to grade 6 in attendance, and we grew our youth volunteer group to around 30 fabulous leaders! Into the new school year many of the youth maintained strong connections and continue to gather occasionally under the guidance of Carolyn and Deborah.

In September we enjoyed a wonderful Welcome Back event. Instead of going to a park this year we celebrated Halloween in October with a Spooky Spaghetti Dinner and pumpkin carving at the church. There were also some fun games, blacklights and of course....candy! Over the Christmas season a few of our Sunday School children helped wrap gifts at the Bazaar and made handy Christmas gift bags to raise money for the Sunday School. Sixteen children worked very hard on their Christmas pageant; another original story by Deborah which invited lesser known characters from the Christmas story to join the nativity scene.

The children love being involved and actively participating in church services and events. Throughout 2024, we intend to keep bringing the energy to St Paul's!

Blessings! Tracy Mitchell

BOARD OF TRUSTEES – Chair, Kent Palmer

The role of the Trustee will morph soon into something new. The manse is now vacant. Our role as landlord is over. The trustees have worked well together this past year securing a peaceful and agreeable ending of our tenancy. I would like to thank Frank O'Bryne, Brad Neufeld, Bev Phillips and Jennifer Pham-MacMillan for their time and patience through this transition, as well as our ministerial staff of Deborah and Carolyn.

The Trustees will now begin to look forward, with the investment of sale money for our future sustainability. I personally have found my time as a trustee very rewarding and fulfilling. I wish the Board all the best moving forward with new faces and new challenges.

CHURCH BOARD - Chair, Kent Palmer

Hello to all.

While this may be my last time addressing you as Chair of the Board it will not be the last time you hear from me. This congregation continues to be a beating part of my heart.

Another year has passed, and as I look back, I see so many changes but as I look forward, I can picture so many rewards.

The Board has been working diligently for you. We have been looking into our past to bring us a brighter future. We knew this year was not going to be an easy one, but I think we were all surprised by how arduous it has proven to be. I would not want to embark on this journey without the A-Team of Judy DeMone, Harold DeVenne, Jeff Kargus, Allyson Neufeld, Candace Allen, and Jennifer Gunter, along with our passionate and inspiring ministerial staff of Deborah and Carolyn.

The Board continues its work to secure a sale of the property, while continuing to listen and respond to your concerns and questions.

We are deeply grateful for all of you who have chosen to take this journey with us. Onward and Upward!

LEADERSHIP TEAM – Chair, Jeff Kargus

The Leadership Team at St. Paul's wishes to extend its most sincere thanks and gratitude to all those who volunteered their time, energy, and efforts in bringing St. Paul's to life in 2023! Once again, we are reminded that this community, OUR community, would cease to exist without your time and tireless dedication. We never take that for granted.

On the Ministry & Personnel (M&P) side, our small but mighty team continues to work with and support our ministerial and lay staff, for whom we are also extremely grateful.

2023 saw us bid farewell to two longstanding members of the St. Paul's staff. Our long time Office Administrator, Jeanne Kho, left us in February to pursue other opportunities. After spending 10+ years with us, she decided she needed a change, and we sent her off with a well-deserved celebration in the Spring. Additionally, after spending 4+ years working in the Nursery, Linden Sheridan-Jonah stepped down in December to focus her attention elsewhere. We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to both Jeanne and Linden for their years of service with St. Paul's.

Their departures have allowed us to welcome both Tracy Chippendale and Zach Scott to the staff at St. Paul's. Tracy can be found in the office Monday through Friday keeping things organized, while Zach has joined us in the Nursery on Sunday mornings, and we couldn't be happier to have them both on board! Alongside Deborah, Carolyn, Catherine, Tracy M. and Grace, this team works tirelessly to ensure we continue grow and THRIVE as a congregation of all ages, while Maria and Will from DutchMuch Cleaning Services continue to keep our facilities clean and ready for use by congregants and renters alike.

A special THANKS to each and every one of you on behalf of M&P and the St. Paul's Leadership Team!
And a special thanks as well to Candace Allen, who continues to spearhead the bi-weekly 'Candy Gram' –
St.

Paul's unofficial Newsletter – keeping everyone up-to-date and informed of the many events and activities around the Church.

“Don't ever question the value of volunteers. Noah's Ark was built by volunteers; the Titanic was built by professionals.” ~ Dave Glynn

NB: We continue to have many needs around the Church and there is ample room for more volunteers! If you feel called to get more involved, feel free to reach out to Jeff Kargus at jeffkargus@outlook.com.

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP TEAM – Chair, Allyson Neufeld

The primary goal of the Spiritual Leadership Team is to support the various committees (such as Nurturing Care; Worship; Youth Ministry; Outreach; Affirming) and people of St. Paul's with their worship needs and to connect, engage and transform St. Paul's in accordance with the mission of the church.

We started the beginning of the year with Baptism Sunday and have been worshipping both in person and online. For the first Sunday of Lent we had guest speakers Jennifer Baillie-Rouse and Rashed Afif from Wesley Ministries in Hamilton, followed by a lunch, and learn after the service. The third Sunday of Lent was PIE (Public. Intentional. Explicit.) Day. We celebrated Easter the second Sunday of April followed by Earth day.

We shared Worship with other United Churches in Oakville, such as Trinity United and St. John's United and Glen Abbey United, over the summer months and our minister Carolyn Smith, along with some congregants Candy Allen/Kent Palmer and Judy DeMone/Bert Fonseca lead worship while our minister Deborah Laforet was on sabbatical.

We started off in September with Welcome back Sunday where the members of the men's group Pubs and Pews hosted a lunch for returning congregants. We had another minister and congregant, Judith Oliver, lead worship for Communion Sunday. In November we celebrated our 3rd year as an Affirming Ministry in the United Church of Canada. December saw our annual Christmas pageant and Christmas Eve services, always well attended. The Christmas offering was split between Kerr Street Ministries and Fair Share Food Bank. We were invited to worship with other United churches for the December 24 service and the December 31st service.

We thank all those who support the work the worship of spiritual growth and development, those who lead our mission work, like Outreach and Affirm, those who support faith development through children and youth programs, workshops, and book studies, and those who support our worship ministry, those who schedule greeters, ushers, and readers, tech support; and the others who keep banners, decorations, and flowers in season.

MANAGEMENT TEAM – Chair, Harold DeVenne

2023 was a busy year, even though we didn't have any major repairs. Here are some of the activities that took place to keep the facility in reasonable condition and make it look appealing.

Gardens

The footprint of the side gardens was reduced again this year by Judy and Harold DeVenne and the congregation donated funds and flowers to make the gardens look fantastic. Carol-Anne Hunt took the garden next to the gym doors as a project and made them look great. We organized a garden party for June 10th and many showed up to weed the front gardens.



We installed three small planters (provided free of charge by Halton Environmental Network) and Judy DeMone and Bert planted and tended these vegetable gardens and took the produce to the foodbank.

they were installed at four downspouts to help with watering the gardens.



We also received free rain barrels and



Halton Environmental Network also worked one evening with volunteers to remove invasive plants from our front gardens and planted many natural species instead.

Two new benches were given in memory of Norma Kirkpatrick by the family, and they now reside in the area next to the gym wall where people can sit during lemonade on the lawn or any other time they wish.



Faithful Footsteps Grant

The refrigerators were purchased and installed in January, while the lighting work was completed in February. The "Let There Be Light" campaign quickly raised the funds necessary to cover the 1/3 of the total project costs, while the Faithful Footsteps Program covered the balance.

Fire Safety

Sanctuary fire safety devices have been rearranged to give better coverage at the front of the sanctuary where candles are used, and the narthex extinguisher was moved to increase visibility and accessibility if needed. New emergency lights were installed in the sanctuary on the side isles to facilitate movement if the power goes out.

**Hate Motivated Vandalism**

On September 23rd at 3:42 am the church property was the object of Hate vandalism. The individual spray-painted hate words on the front sign and the walkway to the front door as well as spraying the Pride flag. Two windowpanes in the front doors were etched with hate words as well. The damage was repaired at a cost of just under \$5,000. Our insurance has a \$5,000 deductible. The individual was arrested and charged by the police with help from the camera footage from the front door camera. He has since been convicted. A big thanks to all who jumped into action that Sunday morning to reduce the impact on the rest of the congregation.

Thanks to those who faithfully took care of the property during 2023.**Grass cutters**

This team cut the grass faithfully when required, to keep our property looking cared for. If you would like to be part of this team, please contact Rob Phillips. The team is led by Rob Phillips and includes Tom Allen, Bryan MacMillan, Will Fennema, Darren and Jack Pinette, Marc Therrien, Jeff Kargus, Jeff Laforet, Doug Francis, Sue MacDonald.

Night security team

The night security team is a group of people who do a walk through the building in the evening to ensure that all windows are closed, outside doors are locked and closed properly, inside doors are locked if required and make sure all the lights are off. We have some renters who stay later than others and they usually do a good job of closing up the area they are using, so it isn't necessary to do the check much later than 9pm. Saturday evening requires that the baseboard heaters in the sanctuary be set higher in the evening, and Sunday evening they are set back down. Thanks to Erny Neufeld, Bert Fonseca, Frank O'Byrne, Tom Allen and Harold DeVenne for doing the night security during 2023. Could still use 2-3 more people for the team. If you want more information, please speak to Harold DeVenne.

Morning opening Team

Thanks to those who open the Church facility on Sunday mornings before 9am. Erny Neufeld, Bryan MacMillan, Sue McDonald, Tom Allen and Harold DeVenne. We also need 2 more volunteers to complete the team, so we only need to open the facility once every 6 weeks. This involves unlocking the outside

doors, some inside doors, and potentially turning on the extra heat in the winter and shutting down the exhaust fan in the summer. Contact Harold DeVenne if this service is of interest to you.

Repair team

Thanks to Bert Fonseca, Tom Allen, and Rob Phillips who have routinely been available to complete minor repairs and maintenance around the site. A big thanks to our advisor Jay Smith as he is willing to share his expertise with us when we need it.

Rentals

Rentals is a busy activity with groups using most of the spaces within the facility on evenings and weekends.

A list of our regular renters is as follows: Oakville Pentecostal Apostolic Church, Air Cadets, Zumba, Volleyball Teams, AA, Intrada Brass, TAI CHI, four Girl Guide groups, three Scouting groups, Halton Badminton Club, Little Kickers, Special Olympics and the Canadian Croatian Choir.

MISSION – Chair, Harold DeVenne

The Future – Our Vision and Our Journey

We as a congregation have been on a new journey since early 2022 to find a new home and a new vision of how we will interact with our community, both aimed at providing a path to long term sustainability for the congregation. It is worth listing the steps we have taken along the way as a refresher.

- We started with a sanctuary renovation project in 2016.
- Manse was rezoned in April 2021.
- Severance of manse began Sept 2021.
- Severance approved by Town with conditions. Deadline passed without conditions being met.
- Engaged URCD in March 2022 to prepare a proposal for the property, which was declined as it failed to meet our parameters.
- Engaged Trinity Centres Foundation (TCF) in April 2022 to help us determine our future.
- Had discussions with Horseshoe Falls Regional staff about our journey.
- During 2022 the Board engaged the congregation in discussions about our future and what role the current property played in our future vision.
- January 2023 was the timing for a Town Hall meeting with invited potential partners who might be part of our future journey.

During 2023 the Board has actively engaged the congregation in determining what our vision of the future looks like and what role the current property would play in our future. As a congregation, we felt that the community of people was the key to our future and not the property. This was and continues to be a hard decision to make as we plan to leave a sanctuary where many of us grew up along with our families. We have so many great memories and it is a beautiful space, but it does not support our future.

In May 2023 the Board looked at several different options including Joint Ventures that could possibly redevelop the site. We reviewed and assessed the options and determined that selling the property and moving to a new location would be the most reasonable path forward. In July 2023 the congregation approved the Board to proceed with the sale. We informed Horseshoe Falls of our direction to sell the property.

The Board set up a process that invited selected developers and other organizations to put in an offer to purchase the property. Five offers were received and the Board selected Fernbrook Homes. We then notified Horseshoe Falls Region of the congregational meeting planned for October 1, 2023, to review and approve the offer. The congregation did approve the sale. Since then, we have been working with Horseshoe Falls Region to get to a final sale agreement, but that has been unsuccessful. Since the beginning of 2024, we have lost the Fernbrook offer due to the selling price demanded by the Regional Commission, began the Judicial Appeal process with General Council, and proposed a mediation process running parallel with the appeal process.

The Board has also developed a draft Vision Statement for St. Paul's which will be finalized after we receive more input from the congregation. The **draft** vision statement is below.

Vision of Our Future

We are and will continue to be:

- An Affirming congregation.
- Welcoming to **ALL** in our community.

We will be:

- An equity and justice seeking congregation, engaging the community in events and programs that raise awareness of injustices and disadvantages in our community and beyond.
- Financially self-sustaining as a community of faith.
- Engaging and supportive to people of all ages and from all backgrounds through varied programs and technologies, creating a space where all can belong and engage in the life of this faith community in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Partnering with equality and justice seeking groups in a facility which the congregation may have a large financial interest in, however, we will share equally in the operation and use of the facility.
- Learning together with our potential partners to create a centre where different groups understand and accept each other and demonstrate how we can grow together for the betterment of all.

FINANCE TEAM – Chair, Judy DeMone

Our finance team is small, but the work of the team is important. Many thanks to Grace Jeong, the Treasurer for St. Paul's. She makes sure that all our books are in order and takes care of the staff payroll

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processing with ADP. As Treasurer, Grace is our representative with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), an important role.

And thanks to Ron Shermet for keeping an eye on our account with RICOH Canada. Ron has looked after our count teams and the software used for bank deposits for years and I am grateful for his support. Ever since the start of the pandemic we have not been able to find members for weekly count teams, so we have changed the process. Tracy Chippendale, our Office Administrator now does the data entry for the offerings, usually on Monday, with the help of a volunteer. Those people helping are Jackie and Frank O'Byrne, Gary Davis, Judy DeMone and more recently Ron Shermet and each person comes in once a month. The job is not difficult, and no technical skills are required! If you're willing to spare an hour on a Monday or Tuesday morning, I would like some more volunteers. Just let me know if you can help out.

2023 was again a challenging year financially, and we ended the year with a \$77,101 deficit. However, we had projected \$96,930, so this is better than we hoped. The main reason the deficit was less than planned was because lay staff expenses were \$17,338 less than budgeted, in large part because it took us time to fill the vacancy in Office Admin and we also had overbudgeted some costs.

Building operations were over budget, with increased maintenance costs. This was offset by generous donations in offerings in December and by rental income that was \$12,592 more than planned.

2023 will be equally challenging and we are projecting a \$139,434 deficit. There will be a full review of the financial statements at the annual meeting on March 24th. Questions are welcome.

NURTURING CARE – Chair, Carilyn McNaught

The Nurturing Care Committee (Carolyn Smith, Judy DeVenne, Jackie O'Byrne, BJ Young, Carilyn McNaught) serve St. Paul's throughout the year by providing various ministries and helping support others. We are grateful to the many people who extend a helping hand by knitting Prayer Shawls or Squares and prepare delicious casseroles, soup, muffins, and cookies.

Throughout the year we visit people in Long Term Care Residences and in the hospital. At Christmas we delivered 15 wooden Christmas Trees to these members. We remind YOU to CALL the office, ministers, or Nurturing Care members to let us know if someone is in the hospital or at home who needs a visit, card, etc.

Greeting cards plus the creative cards made by St. Paul's Sunday School and Vacation Bible School children, under the leadership of Tracy Mitchell were sent. Seven Prayer Bears were given with a tag letting people know they are being held in prayer and love. They are a source of comfort for those who are lonely or need a hug! A total of seven Prayer Shawls made by the church ladies were given to those who needed to feel the "love of God". Families going through some difficult times received a casserole, soup, cookies, or squares.

Some of our phone ministry which was started during the pandemic has been continued. It helps church members to feel "connected" to the St. Paul's family. If you would like to be on a calling list or willing to make phone calls a few times of the year, please telephone Carilyn McNaught 905-827-1828.

In September, Coffee Time at Mo's Restaurant was started. We meet the LAST THURSDAY of the month enjoying a cup of coffee or a breakfast meal with a lovely mixture of people enjoying the fellowship and laughter. There are usually 9-11 of us. Everyone is WELCOME! Bring a friend with you.

On the afternoon of December 14th, in the Sanctuary, we were blessed with the voices of 45 Morden School Children accompanied on the piano by a young student. A cellist and two violinists played also. The JustUs Band played the second half of this concert with the Morden Choir enjoying their music. At intermission, cookies made by the Nurturing Care and friends, drinks supplied and were served by Rob Phillips. This event was open to everyone, but it was mostly the parents of the Morden School Choir who attended.

On December 18th, "The Longest Night" service was held with St. John's United Church joining our ministers and Nurturing Care. Catherine Arcand-Pinette sang O Holy Night. It was a very meaningful service with 16 attending which was the most we have ever had at this service.

I am grateful to those on this committee who give so much of their time and their love!

We have been blessed by God and pray we may be a blessing to others.

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP – Co Chairs, Pat Mason, Bev Phillips

During 2023, the Refugee team was composed of Pat Mason and Bev Phillips as co-chairs. Deborah Laforet was also involved as our Lead Minister and UCC liaison. This has been a long-standing committee, with the current sponsorship applications being started in the fall of 2017.

The first four members of the family arrived in May 2019. They have worked diligently and are completely self-supporting. In 2023, Juleet, her daughter Mariam and her brother Salam all succeeded in completing their Canadian citizenship requirements and are now Canadian citizens. In addition to her full-time job, Mariam is currently working on completing her high school certificate. Unfortunately, Juleet has had some serious health challenges in 2023 which are causing additional concern to her family.

We are still awaiting the arrival of Juleet's daughter Suzan, her husband Anas and their two sons Tonee (15) and Dani (12) who remain in Lebanon. Dani continues to attend the "volunteer school" where Suzan also works. Tonee has now completed the program at the volunteer school and is not eligible to attend school anywhere else due to his lack of status in Lebanon.

During 2023 we have been working diligently with an immigration lawyer as well the office of Anita Anand, MP for Oakville to bring them to Canada. In July 2023 a follow-up interview took place in Lebanon, and it was determined that Anas was inadmissible due to an act which occurred in 2003 when the US forces invaded Iraq. Because it is one application for the whole family, this means the entire family is inadmissible. Attempts to intervene by Anita Anand's office were fruitless. In October 2023 it was decided to pursue an application to the Canadian government for criminal rehabilitation so that the record could be cleared. Council executive approved an additional expense of \$3500.00 from the refugee fund to cover a portion of the lawyer's fee for this application.

The family remains in Lebanon which is becoming more dangerous with the changing political climate. We are hoping that this latest application will be successful, and we will be able to move forward. Submitted by Bev Phillips

OUTREACH – Shirley-Anne Cooper Maimot

Over the past year all seven United churches from Oakville have met on a monthly basis to collaborate and support ongoing and new initiatives.

During the year we accomplished and supported several outreach projects. We were successful in raising money for 4ONE Oakville and Nancy House which supports young women transitioning out of trafficking.

The committee thought it would be a wonderful idea to collaborate and have all the united churches get together for a picnic. The picnic was held in June at Glenn Abbey United Church. There was beautiful music, games for the children and cake. So nice to see many come out and participate.

Deborah is a part of the Interfaith Council of Halton. Last February, St. Paul's was invited to a Black History month event at Shaarei-Beth El Congregation, and Deborah joined other members of the Interfaith Council in talking with Anita Anand, MP, and Pam Damhoff, MP about student walkouts and how we promote peace and harmony during this time of divide over the struggle in Palestine and Israel.

St. Paul's Anniversary Offering went to Wesley and we had special guests join us for worship to share the exciting new programs happening there. During the Christmas Holiday season St. Paul's supported Wesley by giving gifts for adults and children to their Holiday store.

Our Thanksgiving offering went to Fare Share food bank.

Deborah led two book studies this year, one homelessness and the other on human trafficking. St' Paul's congregation along with the other United Churches of Oakville were invited to hear from Jennifer Potter to learn more about human trafficking and how it presents in Halton.

St. Paul's is also connected to the Neighbour Care Network at Kerr Street Missions. Four people from St. Paul's walk with Clients of Kerr Street Missions, encouraging them and walking alongside them as they

work on a plan to help them through their struggles. St. Paul's has also gathered food and made donations to Kerr Street Missions food program.

St. Paul's continues to be active in supporting our community. Keep up the good work.

HOLIDAY JINGLE BAZAAR – Shirley-Anne Cooper Maimot

Wow what another amazing year at the Holiday Jingle Bazaar. Many come out to support the church tables and local vendors. Wonderful to see so many come out to socialize, have a bite to eat and shop. This year Grandmothers Voice joined our bazaar. There were vendors, residential school survivors from Mohawk Village Memorial Park. There was also delicious food and a Community Sacred Fire.

Our popular Country Store was a huge hit. Thank you to Catherine for all your hard work in organizing. Volunteers were asked to make soup, fudge/candy, tortillas, shepherd's pie and preserves. Great job! Our bake table had many wonderful sweets to choose from. Volunteers were asked to bake, package and work the table. Thank you, Bev, for your hard work. Job well done!

The silent auction was a success! Several nice items donated by members of the church. These included gift baskets, gift cards, local art and many items. Thank you to Ron and Gayle Shermet who volunteered to help.

Many enjoyed a bite to eat at Santa's Snack Shack. Thank you to Candy and Judy for all your hard work. The knitting table did well. Many volunteers knitted and donated several items. Day of the bazaar volunteers were on hand to sort, set up and organize the tables. Thank you to all!

We had some of our vendors return and we had several new vendors. So nice to see many familiar vendors. There were about 28 artisans.

Our net proceeds were about \$6500 for the church operating fund. Well done!

Thank you to all who organized and the countless number of volunteers who helped make St. Paul's Holiday Jingle Bazaar a success. JAZZ HANDS!

Thank you, St. Paul's, for all of your support. We look forward to seeing you at the 2024 Holiday Jingle!

PUBS & PEWS – Representative, Jeff Laforet

- We didn't bring in enough money to cover our expenses.
- Income was ~\$10,000 per month while expenses were ~\$20,000 per month
- Motion to continue contributing 10% of envelope offerings plus 10% of loose offerings plus the Lenten Offering to the M&S Fund:

MOTION: Judy DeMone SECOND: Frank O'Byrne CARRIED

- 2023 Budget Presentation:
- Income will be the same as last year
- We were receiving a donation each year from the Estate of Natalie Wilson of \$1,000 per month. This will be cashed in to receive a lump sum payment of \$27,000 in total this year.
- This is a realistic budget for 2023
- Salaries, building costs and maintenance take the majority of our income.

Motion to approve 2023 budget:

MOTION: Judy DeMone SECOND: Doug Francis CARRIED

10. Motion to allocate Anniversary offering for 2023. Allyson Mitchell Neufled
 I motion is to use the Anniversary offering for Wesley. Wesley is a nonprofit organization in Hamilton focused on offering support to people experiencing poverty and homelessness in the Hamilton community.

MOTION: Allyson Mitchell Neufled SECOND: Judy DeVenne CARRIED

11. New Business

Trinity Centre Foundation Update – Introducing Potential Partners

Deborah Laforet, Kent Palmer

Kent: We are in a learning curve and it is an emotional ride. We do have options and we are exploring everything.

Deborah: The Board is working hard on our new vision. ○ There are partners interested in sharing our space

- Grandmother's Voice: Indigenous Group
- Halton Black Voices: Local black community
- Home of Dulce: Spiritual Brazilian Group
- PFlag- Support group for LGBTQ youth ○ The conscience at this time seems to be stay on this property and reimagine this space. ○ These potential

partners do not have space currently to do their work. ○ We are “one of the spokes” on the wheel, not the centre hub

○ We will continue to be St. Paul's United Church, but the building will have another name.

12. Adjourn Called: 12:45 pm

13 Benediction : Deborah sang us home with a blessing to close the meeting.