



Seeds of Curiosity

Annual Report

2025

990 Cathcart Blvd.

Sarnia, ON N7S 2H2

519-542-1203

office@graceucsarnia.com

www.graceucsarnia.com

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LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Message from Kenji...

Can you believe that it's been five years since I arrived as a minister for Grace? Indeed, our time has been fruitful and fulfilling (at least from my side of the pulpit). I'm grateful to work with my colleagues on the staff team: Pat, Kathy, Curtis, and Marque – truly teamwork makes the dream work!

This past year navigated changes and new ventures, as we remained open and curious to the ways we might to live into our core values of being an intergenerational community partner in Sarnia-Lambton in 2025. I value all of the collaborative efforts we share with agencies such as Rayjon Sharecare, Women's Interval Home, PFLAG, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Inn of the Good Shepherd, Lambton Centre, Connect Sarnia, Indwell, and many other partners, including the ongoing efforts to address the crisis of the unhoused.

Our "In the Spirit of Jazz" worship series provided a freer, out-of-the-box, worship experience that emphasized live (jazz) music. Clearly, this meets a need in the community, as these services have become a self-sustaining ministry of worship that draws from a diverse pool of interested attendees. I am grateful for the support of the Worship Committee, Marque's immense musical talent, and the generous provision of reception food and drink by Karen Cooke.

With regard to the wider United Church, my three-year term of preparation and planning as the Business Coordinator for General Council 45, the denomination's triennial business meeting, culminated in August, in Calgary AB, where a new moderator was elected and multiple presentations and proposals charted a course for the United Church for the decade to come. I will

continue to serve in this capacity for the annual, online, meetings of the General Council for the duration of the coming triennium. In doing so, I will continue to accrue favours from senior church officials and will judiciously leverage them for Grace's benefit!

Closer to home, I've adjusted to our family's relocation to Camlachie. I've been able to connect with neighbours and identify the services and providers that allowed me to feel rooted in my new place (in no particular order): barber, pharmacy, gym, chiropractor, massage therapist, coffee roaster, and of course, provider of my beloved macarons – thanks, CakeBook Café! We're still intensively investigating which public beach access point suits our needs best...

Even though I've only recently moved into the neighbourhood, can you believe that it's been five years since I arrived as a minister for Grace? In accordance with church policy, I will be taking advantage of the provision of a 3-month sabbatical and look forward to that time of reading, writing, attending and presenting at conferences from August to October. Combined with vacation and study leave allowances, I will be away from July to November of this coming year. But provisions for coverage and care are already well in-hand and while I'll miss being with you, I'm looking forward to the time of sabbath and renewal.

Blessings of God's great love,
Kenji

Message from Pat...

There is a growing group of folks at Grace who have attached themselves to 'belonging' as our watchword.

Rather than the extensive exercise of developing congregational statements of mission, purpose, values, and strategy, Andy Root introduces the idea of a watchword; a phrase or slogan that serves as a handle for the congregation's larger shared story. A watchword emerges as the congregation listens to each other narrating where God is experienced. It is not manufactured by human strategic planning or engineering. Moreover, it helps the congregation focus beyond human effort and metrics of success. The watchword focuses the congregation on experiences of God's continued presence and God's continued action.

There is a grand story playing out among us. It is narrated as a story of belonging, often phrased as deepest belonging. People of all ages are confessing a sense of belonging as they share life alongside each other here at Grace, even in the raw, unpolished messiness of our real lives. The Grace narrative is rich with stories of lives lived with each other, for each other. And it is from this sense of deep belonging that people are confessing experiences of a living God at work here among us, even in this day. As I hear the people of Grace narrate the moments of their week, I hear the story of belonging—belonging to something bigger than ourselves and belonging to a grand narrative that precedes us, succeeds us, and includes us.

As we continue to choose to share life with each other, gathering around the reality of this God to whom we belong, I invite your continued curiosity, listening for when belonging is confessed, and narrating your own experiences of belonging, adding it to the ever-growing narrative of belongingness at Grace.

Message from Tory (Outgoing Council Chair)...

I would like to start with a thank you to the entire congregation for trusting me to guide us through another year as a congregation who seeks belonging with God. I have done my best to uphold the Grace values and approach the role with the dignity and respect it deserves. The year has been filled with curiosity, connection, transformation and is a year that I wouldn't trade for all the others.

Over the year I have had the privilege to see our committees in action and gain a deeper understanding of the work and dedication that has gone into each facet of ministry that Grace provides. Whether the ministry be big events like the fall fair or small acts like offering someone a phone number as a connection point, I have seen it all at Grace! I have certainly been struck by what is revealed when an open posture of curiosity is held.

These small acts of revelation have transformed my thinking in the role of executive chair from one of certainty in direction to one of shepherding what comes. I have sought to embrace the identity of Grace while allowing for natural change and connection to occur. I have had tremendous guidance from the leaders at Grace that have helped me grow through tradition and fostered things in me that I didn't know I had. I have been afforded patience, kindness and, most of all, Grace. These Grace leaders have created a space where all voices can be heard and challenged, ensuring a healthy shepherding of our congregation. On a congregational note, I have been delighted by fresh connections with new faces, a plethora of community involvement and beautiful moments of revelation through our children's eyes as they learn the word of God from Pat in front of the congregation each Sunday. We have had the chance to experience beautiful and moving music week in and week out and have seen the beauty when Marque works with choirs, individuals

and small groups bringing to life their passion and faith on a stage for the whole congregation. We have been privileged to have Kenji's sermons lead us in understanding how Grace not only fits in the context of our community, but also a lens to interpret our Christian values as a whole on a global scale. We truly are blessed to have the Pastoral team we do.

On a final note, I would like to give thanks. Thanks to our Staff team at Grace for managing all of the thousands of pieces that I rarely get the chance to think about. Thanks to our committee leaders and members for their commitment and support of the congregation. Thanks to the Pastoral team that quietly provides more developmental nutrients than we could ever know of.

Thanks to the congregation for seeking God and living our values that bring us ever closer to one another. Finally, thanks to God for bringing me to a moment in time where I had the privilege to experience true connection, belonging and faith over a year that was like no other.

As Daniella takes us forward through another year, I will wish everyone the best and can't wait to see what the next year holds for Grace.

Message from Daniella (Incoming Council Chair)...

I would like to start by providing a brief background about myself. My name is Daniella D'Andrea, and I was born and raised in Sarnia, Ontario. Amongst many things, I am a wife, an aunt, a daughter, a sister, an educator, an athlete, and for the last 5 years I have been a member of the congregation at Grace United Church; now stepping into the role as Chair of Council. Grace United Church has been where I continued my faith journey, but in recent years, has become more of a second home. I have had the opportunity to meet new people, who now feel like extended family, and participate on committees, alongside some wonderfully dedicated individuals. Through these committees,

worship, and opportunities to connect, I have had the pleasure of deepening my understanding of how many hands and voices can make change and a true sense of belonging.

I want to thank Tory for his hard work over the last year. He has planted seeds of curiosity, and his thought-provoking approach to scripture has truly been a welcomed time of reflection. As we enter different roles in the Church, I look forward to continuing our connection and learning, both from and with each other.

When I think about the Church and what it means to be a Christian, I find myself turning to the Gospels in the Bible. When I read the Gospels, the epitome of Jesus is radiating off the pages. He demonstrates what it means to love one's neighbour, to help those in need, to stand up to wrongdoing, even when it is unpopular, and to welcome all to the table, no matter how many seats society says there is. The Gospels are rich with verbs that call us to action, with an emphasis on practicing, and not merely professing. The story of Jesus is told through deeds as much as words. Tory's theme of seeds of curiosity allowed me to sit in these thoughts, to reflect and to try and answer the question, "What is God trying to tell me?" With this, I believe that my seed of curiosity has led me to focus on the gospels in action. Looking at the beautiful work Grace does in our community, how we embrace each other on Sunday worship, how Marque blesses us with music to lift us up, and how Pat and Kenji speak to our souls and help us navigate the world we live in; always keeping faith at the forefront. It is in this that I was drawn to the idea that although the gospels are read and taught, they are meant to be lived. Jesus' example is intended to be followed, so with this in mind, I have chosen the theme "Growing in Christ: The Gospels in Action." As our seeds of curiosity have been planted, and continue to be planted, we nourish them so they may grow into lives that reflect the actions and love of Jesus.

In the next year, I ask the congregation to join me in being mindful of where their seeds are growing. How are you nourishing them to plant deeper roots? Where are they bearing fruit? Where are you finding yourself being called to act? It is not lost on me the action we already do. Soup luncheons to support local organizations, fundraising, and various amounts of volunteer work to better our congregation and our community. As we continue over this next year, where will our action continue to take us? All of our seeds are different; each one of us bearing different fruit, but with a variety, we will continue to have what we need. This year, where will actions, no matter the size, bring us individually and as a congregation?

I look forward to figuring it out together!

Thank you,
Daniella

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

GRACE UNITED CHURCH

SUNDAY March 8, 2026

12:00 pm in the Sanctuary after soup luncheon

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86578843100>

AGENDA

Opening Prayer

Constitution of the Annual Congregational Meeting

Motion to allow adherents to vote on financial and administrative matters

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of Annual congregational Meeting held March 8, 2026

Approval of 2025 Annual Reports of Council, Committees, Groups, and of the Financial Review Committee, excluding Finance and Nominating Committees

Approval of Financial Committee Reports:

Review and approval of 2025 Financial Report

Review and approval of 2026 Budget Proposal

Nomination Committee Report:

Appointment of Financial Review Committee for 2026

Election of Officers

Election of Governing Body

Election of Nomination Committee

New Business:

Amendment to Constitution, Duties of the Finance Committee

Introduction of Incoming Chair

Appreciations

Adjournment

Closing Prayer

Minutes Annual Congregational Meeting...

Minutes Annual Congregational Meeting

Grace United Church

Sunday March 2, 2025

The Meeting was held at Grace United Church in the Sanctuary and via Zoom. Having achieved a quorum, the Meeting began at 12:00 pm.

Chairperson: Marion Staples, Chair of Council.

Secretary: Cecily Chiles absent /Leslie Veldman coverage

Opening Prayer- was shifted to a closing prayer

Constitution of the Annual Congregational Meeting.

There were 35 in person and 1 participants on Zoom screen, with quorum. A procedure was described for casting a personal vote on Zoom.

Motion to allow adherents to vote on all matters.

As no adherents of Grace United Church identified themselves, no motion was made.

Approval of the Agenda.

MOTION to approve the agenda as printed in the 2024 Annual Report [moved by Nicole Walco/seconded by David Murray].

Discussion: - None

- Motion carried

Approval of the Minutes

Minutes of the Annual congregational Meetings held on Sunday, February 11, 2024 and April 7, 2024

MOTION to approve the minutes from February 11, 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting. [moved by Vernan Chiles / John Cooke]

Discussion: none

- Motion carried

MOTION to approve the minutes from April 7, 2024
Congregational Meeting [moved by Bryce McGarvy / Joanne
Catterson]

Discussion: none

- Motion carried

Approval of the 2024 Annual Reports of Council, Committees,
Groups and of the Financial Review Committee, excluding
Finance and Nominating Committees.

MOTION to receive the 2024 reports. [Gord Walking / Nicole
Walco]

Discussion: None.

- Motion carried

MOTION to approve the 2024 reports, excluding Finance and
Nominating Committee. [Al McLean/Bryce McGarvey]

Discussion: Correction required to page 21 – Planning committee
was missed

- Motion carried

Approval of Finance Committee Reports

Review and approval of the 2024 Financial Report

Paul Cooper reviewed the financial report; there was some
discrepancy regarding page numbers in the annual report. It was a
good news budget – with a balance budget. Thanks to Bob
Newman, for his years as Assistant Treasurer.

MOTION to approve the 2024 financial report as presented at
the meeting. [Ian Adamson / Bruce Davies]

Discussion:

Q. How do we come up with fair value for the manse?

A: Rent is not based on a fair value, it is less than fair value.
– Motion carried

Review and approval of the 2025 Budget Proposal
2025 Budget Proposal, presented by Paul Cooper

Highlights:

Summary of 2025 operating budget:

Proposed deficit of \$11K

Built in some rental increase with a proposed rental rate increase in the fall

M&S target remains the same

MOTION to approve the 2025 budget as presented with proposed deficit of approximately \$11,000. [David Murray / Bryce McGarvey]

Discussion:

Re: Rentals – does the proposed rental increases include the manse?

There is no planned increase on the manse

Q. \$2000 increase for special events, what encompasses that increase?

A. Fall fair accounts for that as well as additional hopeful special events.

Comments – transfers from legacy fund, only happens if needed to balance the budget – let's try not to draw on that fund

Comments – If there is an increased deficit, budget would have to come back to the congregation. We have approved \$11K, any significant deviations from budget would have to come to council.

– Motion carried

Nominating Committee Report

Removal and Election of Trustees

The removal and election of Trustees require congregational approval. In 2024 Grace United church had 2 Trustees resign.

MOTION to approve the removal of the following trustees: Pete Melanson and Ray Phillips by resignation. [Pete Melanson / Nicole Walco].

Discussion: Chair of trustees thanked Pete and Ray.

- Motion carried

MOTION to approve the addition of Dave Ashdown to the Board of Trustees [Jim Wicks/ Daphne Murray]

Discussion: None

- Motion carried

Election of Officers

Leslie Veldman, chair of Nominating committee, thanked everyone who contributes their time and efforts to the running of Grace United Church. Leslie presented the new year roster:

Council Chair: Tory Walko

Council Vice-Chair: Daniella

Secretary: Cecily Chiles

Trustees: Joanna Catterson, Bruce Davies, Dave Ashdown, Neil Holloway, Kenji Marui, Pat Morrison.

Regional Representatives: Marilyn Barros

Treasurer: Wayne Pease (he has agreed to stay on for a few more months while we continue to look for a replacement)

Assistant Treasurer – Marion Staples

Financial Reviewers: Laura Black, Gord Walkling

Further nominations? None

MOTION that nominations be closed. [Gord Walkling / Bruce Davies]

Discussion: None

- Motion carried

MOTION to approve the slate of nominated candidates for office, as presented. [and granting Council power to add as needed until the next Congregational Meeting] [John Cooke/ Nicole Walko].

Discussion: Page 21 of annual report – correction required – states 2025 and should read 2024

- Motion carried

Election of Governing Body

2025 Council and Council Committee members are listed in the Annual Report 2024.

MOTION that the elected 2025 Council and Council Committee members be those names printed in the 2024 annual report as listed with each committee report, empowering committees to adjust throughout the year [Chris Cooke / Bryce McGarvey]

Discussion: There was some confusion for this motion, as not all members of the committees were listed. John Baxter is leaving worship. Next year, ensure to communicate to committees to list their members.

- Motion carried

Election of Nominations Committee

As the Nominations Committee is an Ad Hoc committee of Council, its membership requires annual appointment.

MOTION to approve the slate of candidates Pat Morrison and Marion Staples and granting Council power to add as needed until the next Congregational Meeting [Bryce McGarvey / Nicole Walko]

Discussion: none

- Motion carried

New Business:

No new business was brought forward

Introduction of Incoming Chair

Tory Walko provided a vision for his year as chair, and provided an outline of this year's theme, **Seeds of Curiosity**.

Appreciations:

Marion and Tory expressed thanks to the congregation, volunteers, choir, and all of us that continue to share our time and talents with each other.

Committee leads were asked to come forward, to receive our appreciation.

Closing Prayer – Pat Morrison

Meeting closed 13:05

Council Structure 2025...

Past Chair	Marion Staples	519 333 7762
Chair	Tory Walko	709 749 4124
Vice Chair	Daniella D'Andrea	519 381 5203
Secretary	Cecily Chiles	519 331 1008
Treasurer	Wayne Pease	519 541 1360
Assistant Treasurer	Marion Staples	519 333 7762
Christian Development	C&R Shirley Willis	519 491 1460
Communications	C&R Chris Cooke	519 381 0211
Congregational Care & Growth	C&R Bev Walkling	519 542 9872
Finance	C&R Paul Cooper	519 542 9237
Ministry & Personnel	C John Cooke	519 869 2908
Planning	R Laura Black	519 541 1332
Outreach	C&R Jim Wicks	519 542 8621
Property	C&R Paul Cooper	519 542 9237
Special Events	C&R John Cooke	519 869 2908
Trustees	C&R Bev Walkling	519 542 9872
	C Joanna Catterson	519 328 1545
	R Bruce Davies	519 402 0060
Worship	C Bryce McGarvey	519 542 1542
Nominating Cttee	Marion Staples	519 333 7762
A.O.T.S.	Paul Cooper	519 542 9237
	John Cooke	519 869 2908
Ministers	Rev. Dr. Kenji Marui	519 542 1203
	Rev. Pat Morrison	226 402 2292

Council Structure 2026...

Past Chair	Tory Walko	709 749 4124
Chair	Daniella D'Andrea	519 381 5203
Vice Chair	Joe Chan	519 328 7608
Secretary	Cecily Chiles	519 331 1008
Treasurer	Paul Cooper	519 542 9237
Assistant Treasurer	Marion Staples	519 333 7762
Christian Development	C&R Shirley Willis	519 491 1460
Communications	C&R Chris Cooke	519 381 0211
Congregational Care & Growth	C&R Bev Walkling	519 542 9872
Finance	C&R Paul Cooper	519 542 9237
Ministry & Personnel	C John Cooke	519 869 2908
Personnel	R Laura Black	519 541 1332
Planning	C&R Jim Wicks	519 542 8621
Outreach	C&R Paul Cooper	519 542 9237
Property	C&R John Cooke	519 869 2908
Special Events	C&R Bev Walkling	519 542 9872
Trustees	C Joanna Catterson	519 328 1545
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	John Cooke	519 869 2908
Ministers	Rev. Dr. Kenji Marui	519 542 1203
	Rev. Pat Morrison	226 402 2292

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Worship Committee...

The Worship Committee works with the pastoral team to organize and coordinate the weekly worship services, as well as special services, as required. We review and approve requests for use of the sanctuary for non-routine worship and non-worship events that serve our congregation and/or our community.

Weekly worship services are offered in-person, and in on-line formats. In 2025, a change was made from Zoom to You Tube Live for the live broadcast and in a YouTube recorded format. Thanks are extended to audio video volunteers who facilitated the in-service management and recording of the services in 2025: Gord Walkling, Chris Cooke and Ben Parkinson.

Throughout the year, there were Sundays when both Pat and Kenji were unavailable and Grace was fortunate to have several ministers come to Grace to preach. Thanks are extended to Debra McGill, Marilyn Townsend-Smith, Tom Rodger, and Bob Gibson. Appreciation is also extended to worship committee members who assisted with introductory announcements and the liturgy.

In 2025, Bryce McGarvey served as the primary representative to Grace Council, with fill-in support from Gord Walkling and Daniella D'Andrea.

Marque Smith is the Grace Music Director and leads the Choir, Starlight Singers (Junior Choir) and arranges for guest musicians and vocalists whose musical offerings are all warmly appreciated by the congregation. Thanks are extended to Jim Wicks, Dave Ashdown and Brian Eagleson for additional music leadership support and to Valerie Schmidt and David Nichols for providing

outstanding interim music leadership for the periods when Marque was unavailable.

The jazz worship service initiative that was started in late 2024 continued through the winter, spring and fall in the sanctuary on Sunday afternoons. The frequency is approximately monthly, and Kenji and Marque are thanked for spearheading the services that includes guest musicians and welcomes all from the community.

Throughout the year, the committee supported the initiative to update the Grace website with documentation related to weekly services. The committee continues to support the preparation of video clips to include on the website.

Members of the Sanctuary Guild support the Worship Committee and are responsible for decorating the sanctuary to reflect changing liturgical seasons and funding of sanctuary-related activities. The members of the Worship Committee would like to acknowledge and thank the Sanctuary Guild members (Karen Cooke, Karen and Jim Rutledge, and Jim Wicks) for their work in decorating the sanctuary with liturgical seasonally themed wall banners and items throughout the church. Sharon and Pete Melanson have stepped down from the Guild, and are thanked for their many years of service.

The committee expresses our gratitude to Kathy Dodkin for her support of the worship services through the year. Kathy many support roles include preparing the libretto for the minister and tech team, compiling and distributes the weekly emails to the congregation, and many additional behind-the-scenes tasks that keep the worship services moving smoothly.

Marianne Nichols was welcomed to the committee in 2025.

If you wish to participate or learn more about becoming a member of the **Worship committee** or volunteering in a specific area, such as being a **Sunday morning greeter**, part of the **Sanctuary Guild**, etc. please contact one of us.

The 2025 **Committee** members were: **Daniella D'Andrea**, **Tessa Hall**, **Bryce McGarvey**, **Marianne Nichols**, **Sheila Scott**, **Marque Smith**, **Gord Walkling**, and the **Pastoral Team (ex officio)**.

Submitted by: Bryce McGarvey, Chair

Sanctuary Guild...

The **sanctuary Guild** is a subset of the **Worship Committee**. We place accoutrements for visual enhancement of worship according to the church seasons.

We also design and make items as the need arises in conjunction with the ministry team.

If you have any interest in this area of service, please reach out to any of our members.

Presently serving: **Karen Cooke**, **Karen and Jim Rutledge** and **Jim Wicks**.

Submitted by: Karen Cooke

Music Ministry at Grace...

2025 was a wonderful year to say the least!

I collaborate with a sensational staff. Thanks so much to **Kenji Marui**, **Pat Morrison**, **Kathy Dodkin** and **Curtis Dixon** for all that you do.

I have so much fun on **Thursday afternoons** rehearsing with **The Grace Choir** and on **Sunday mornings** just before worship. They

are a great group. Thanks so much to them for sharing their beautiful singing voices.

The Starlight Singers participate in worship several times a year and they are absolutely amazing. Thanks so much to them and to Cecily Chiles for assisting me. Thanks so much to the parents and guardians who bring them to rehearsals and worship.

Our Grace band is outstanding. Thanks so much to Dave Ashdown, Jim Wicks, Brian Eagleson and Rob Larose for making musical magic in our worship. They give so much of themselves to the congregation and we are so happy and joyful.

Whenever I am on vacation, David Nichols and Valerie Schmidt have filled in for me. Thanks so much to the both of them. They are phenomenal pianists and I am abundantly blessed for all they do.

We have vocalists and instrumentalists from the congregation that participate in worship throughout the year providing music for prelude and postlude. Thanks so much to Al Shaw, Andy Shaw, Marianne Clift, Illiana Mestancik, Maia Mestancik, Nevaeh Walko, Cecily Chiles, Anika Austin Chiles, Anne Eastman, Brian Eagleson, Bev Warkling, Stella Siklosi, Rick McGregor, Dar-c Keane, Catherine Soulliere and Denise Pelley for sharing their musical gifts with us throughout the year.

We started the “In The Spirit of Jazz” worship series in December 2024 and it has been a fantastic experience to say the least. Thanks so much to Kenji Marui for starting the conversation with me so that we could launch this together. Thanks so much to musicians Rob Weatherstone, Rob Larose, Paul Stevenson, Joshua Presley, Harlin Braichet, Greg Mainprize, Frank Brennan, Denise Pelley, Charmain Bailey and Brian McHugh for your phenomenal

performances.

Thanks so much to all of the Grace committee who work behind the scenes to ensure that things at the church run smoothly. I cannot wait to see what 2026 has in store for us!

Love and Hugs,
Marque Smith
Music Director, Grace United Church (Sarnia)

INREACH MINISTRIES

Congregational Care and Growth Committee...

The Congregational Care and Growth Committee traditionally meets on the third Wednesday morning of the month. In 2025, most of our meetings were in person with access to Zoom as needed. The committee oversaw the approval for persons requesting baptism, confirmation, profession of faith, transfer of membership, and weddings, as well as maintained an up-to-date membership roll. It monitored the Benevolent Fund that is used to help people in need. We also sponsored groups as needed for physical use of the church. This changed somewhat for the Fall season as new rental policies have been put in place.

In January we organized a drop in games afternoon which was well received. We also discussed plans for Pie Day and had Grace buttons made to reflect our affirming status.

This past year we sent letters once again in February to Grace students attending college or university away from home to let them know we were thinking of them. Letters were written by committee and congregational members, and each one had a Tim Horton's gift card included as well as the message that they are not forgotten while away from us. We plan to do this again in

2026 and will be looking for letter writers and perhaps donations towards gift cards and postage given the increase in postal rates.

In March, Pat Morrison came to meet with us and discuss resonance and his work at Grace, particularly as it involves youth. We joined in planning for Pie Day which included a joint trivia night with other congregations but held at Grace. We discovered that there is an annual fee to be paid to Affirm United which should fall under our committees' auspices. We have added that to our budget for this year.

In April, 2 new events began. One was started by Elaine Roach with the idea that it would provide mutual support among those who have faced loss. It has morphed over time to be an open group for any seniors who wish to join for coffee, friendship and conversation. It meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 2 pm. The second group to start was a Euchre group which meets monthly on a Monday afternoon at 1:30 in the friendship room.

Flowers were sent to members celebrating special birthdays and anniversaries. We appreciate it if you know of one that you can let the office know. Carol Holmes has done this faithfully for years and while she has stepped down from our monthly meetings is still happy to keep this project going. Easter flowers were delivered to members who had experienced a close bereavement in the past year and those in long term care and includes those who live on their own but have difficulties attending in person. This year the flowers were delivered to the church where they were picked up by the committee members.

Under the co-ordination of Sylvia Rose a team of church members has continued to stay in contact with all members of the congregation to assess how people were doing and whether there were any urgent pastoral needs that had to be met. For

many this involved a single telephone call but for others, calls are being made on an ongoing basis. More volunteers would be lovely to ensure we can reach out especially to those who do not have computer access. The congregation is encouraged to continue to stay in touch with other church members by phone or email – especially with those in more isolated situations. We placed a box of cards in the Narthex that people are welcome to access and use to send a note to other congregational members or friends beyond our membership. Children are also encouraged to access these cards as needed. Many thanks to all those who help in these areas.

In October our committee arranged a volunteer/ pastor recognition Sunday where cake was served, and Chair Tory Walko spoke on behalf of council to thank everyone in the congregation who help in so many different ways to be the hands and feet of Christ in our community.

We will continue to promote a quiet Christmas service to remember losses over the past year but this year the service was held during regular Advent worship on December 7th.

In 2026, the Congregational Care and Growth Committee will continue to promote spiritual growth and Christian care and fellowship within the congregation. Committee members for 2026 will be Sylvia Rose, Bev Walkling, Diane Werezak, and the Pastoral Team (ex officio). Carol Holmes continues to be the point person for delivering cards and plants to those with special celebrations. We thank her so much for her contributions to our team and continued care for those in our congregation. We also wish to thank Marg Cameron for her many years of service at Grace both on our committee and in other ways as well. We will miss her on our committee. New members are always welcome so if you have an interest feel free to speak to Kenji or any member of the team. Many thanks to Sylvia Rose for taking on

secretarial duties & Marg Cameron for subbing in when needed. The committee thanks Kathy Dodkin for providing a membership report for each meeting and for being a resource to the committee.

Respectfully submitted by Bev Walkling

2025 Records...

Membership as of December 31, 2024

Resident members	329
Non-Resident Members	70
Total Membership	399

Changes Impacting 2025 Roll Records **Received** **Removed**

Members received by Profession of Faith	3
Members received by certificate or transfer	0
Members added by returning	1
Members added by returning to resident status	0
Total Received	4

Members removed by death	3
Members removed by transfer	1
Members removed by other	0
Total Removed	4

Membership as of December 31, 2025

Resident Members	329
Non-Resident Members	70
Total Membership	399

Number of Baptisms	2
Number of Marriages	0
Number of Funerals	3

Submitted by: Jim Wicks, Roll Clerk

A.O.T.S. (As One That Serves) Men's Club...

AOTS administers and contributes to the Ken Plumley Award that is presented to graduating secondary school students. The 2025 recipients were Benjamin Parkinson and Kristopher Dodkin. The fund received generous memorial donations from Church members and others in 2025, and we offer our sincere thank you for the contributions and support to graduating secondary school students. The AOTS Men's Club did not resume activities in 2025. AOTS Executive members are Paul Cooper and John Cooke.

Submitted by: John Cooke

Mens Club...

We are a group of senior men, stout of heart and keen of mind (mostly), who gather together at Grace each Wednesday morning for coffee, fellowship and discussion. We meet in either the Friendship Room or the Chapel from 9 am. to 11 a.m. – Our non-judgemental opinions are offered on a wide variety of local, regional and worldwide events. – Advice gleaned over a lifetime is offered to those of us seeking help with individual concerns (e.g. how do I renew my passport, my dentist just retired, whom do you suggest?). We try to laugh a lot yet support each other during times and events that challenge one or more of us.

Newcomers are welcome!

Bill Palmer, Kirk Wilson, Brian Eagleson, Bernie Hendrickson, Mahesh Juthani, Joe Simon, Al McLean, Vernon Chiles, David Nichols.

Helen McKay Group...

The Helen McKay group continue to meet in the church lounge at 1:30 on the 3rd Monday of the month.

Our small group collected socks for the INN. Our Least Coin collection was substantial enough to purchase toys and needs for children at Pathways.

We enjoyed writing and mailing letters to children in one of the Sunday School classes.

Anyone who would like to join us for casual times of fellowship would be very welcome.

Submitted by: Barb Kilburn

Outreach Committee...

The Outreach Committee has a mandate to engage the Grace United congregation in:

- a) local outreach activities (usually in partnership with a local organization)
- b) providing a focal point for the United Church Mission and Service Fund
- c) communicating other international initiatives (e.g. disaster relief response), and
- d) sponsoring community groups who wish to use the Grace Church facilities

Lambton Refugee Committee Our Syrian families continue to take on the challenges associated with their new community. It seems amazing that it was in 2016 when Jaber and his family arrived and 2021 when Hussain and his family arrived. In 2025, Jaber and Houda bought a house. Jaber is continuing his job as a school bus driver. The 3 older children are all in high school. Hiba is in grade one. The baby, Adam, despite his early birth and shaky start in life, is doing well. Hussain and his family have also

moved. Hussain and his mom are dealing with some health issues. Their children are all thriving. We are grateful for the support of the Grace congregation as well as other local community members.

Community Living – Sarnia Lambton (CL–SL) continues to occupy and maintain the Grace United Church Manse as a respite residence for their clients. The CL dances at the Church gym are supported by the Grace youth.

Canadian Food Grains Bank Sadly, 2025 saw the end of the Brigden United Church “Forget–Me–Not” grow project. We can all be proud of the contribution made over the 11 years of the project. A total of over \$600K was raised including the 4:1 matching by CEDA. We were grateful for the opportunity to partner with them over the years. We are now partnering with and supporting the Bluewater Growing project, a local organization that is supporting the Canadian Food Grains Bank. A soup luncheon fund raiser was held in 2025, and we hope to repeat this in 2026.

The Grace Congregation continued to support the **United Church Mission and Service Fund**. In 2025, M&S funding continued to be part of our unified budget. We also hold 3 special offerings: at Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas each year. Funds raised at these appeals are over and above our budget commitments.

Circles We sponsored a meal on one of the group meeting nights in May. Grace supports the great work being done to lift people out of poverty. Thanks to those who sponsored with money or food items and to those who helped serve the meal.

Outreach continued to sponsor a significant number of community groups that use our facilities. 2025 was an outstanding year for both returning as well as new groups.

Soup Luncheons We had an active slate in 2025. We supported the following organizations: Canadian Food Grains Bank (with Bluewater Grow Project), Rayjon, Lambton Center, Indwell (working for supportive housing in Sarnia), River City Vineyard.

We are very grateful for the wonderful soup makers in our congregation and for other members of the congregation who help with the setup and cleanup associated with the soup luncheons.

Patricia Aldrey	Joel Eagleson	Daphne Murray	Lindsay Smith
Marilyn Barros	Marilyn Graham	Marianne Nichols	Marion Staples
Margaret Billings	Maureen Grimwood	Kyna Patterson	Leslie Veldman
Carrie Brescia	Jane Janes	Joyce Rawson	Yvonne Vanderbeld & Bill Yates
Carolyn Callaghan	Debbie Kafford	Maggie Rochon	Bev Walkling
Betty Carson	Ruth Kreibich	Jane Rogers	Nicole Walko
Joanna Catterson	Jan Leckie- Fraser	Lynda Ruston	Brian White
Cecily Chiles	Diana McClure	Karen Rutledge	Sue Wicks

Karen	Colette	Valerie Schmidt	Shirley Willis
Cooke	McGarvey		
Lorna	Peter Melanson	Kathy Shailer	
Cooper			
Pamela	Alice Minty	Eleanore Sich	
Eagleson			

Inn of the Good Shepherd (IOGS)

We were able to maintain our monthly meal support thanks to many volunteers helping with meal preparation at Grace and meal serving at the Inn. In 2025, we served, on average, over 100 clients with a peak of 137 in October.

The congregation continues to bring food supplies for the Inn on the first Sunday of each month. Over 1000 pounds was donated in 2025.

We also supported the Inn financially in 2025 with a cash donation of \$2500.

We are grateful to the many people who help with these activities as well as those who make donations to help pay for the food used in meal preparation.

IOGS Volunteers

Sylvia Rose

Colette, Bryce, Celine
& Simone McGarvey

Joanna Catterson

Bill & Betty Carson

Maggie Rochon

Mary Mellon

Paul & Lorna Cooper

Barb Kilburn

Karen Rutledge

Kirk Wilson

Gord Walkling

Ingrid McFarlane

Kenji Marui

Jane Janes

Deb Kafford

Cecily Chiles

Nadyne Dell

David & Daphne Murray

Joyce & Dennis Rawson

Wanda

Terry (the dish washer)

Cathy Rose

Karen Green

Lynda Ruston

Salad Preparation

Desserts

Karen Cooke

Barb Kilburn

Cecily Chiles and Andris Evans

We welcome new volunteers. It is a great way to get to know others in the congregation. We serve one meal each month on the fourth Wednesday. Meal preparation is normally done from 9 AM to noon at Grace with serving of the meal done from noon to 2.30 PM at the Inn.

If you wish to help prepare meals or work at the Inn, please contact Maggie Rochon or leave your name with the office.

The Outreach Committee recognizes that many members of the congregation and other committees are involved with significant outreach activities. This is an active demonstration of the involvement by Grace United church people in the community around us. We hope to continue to learn about and help publicize these activities.

Members of the **Outreach committee** in 2026 will be:

Karen Rutledge	Paul Cooper
Lynda Ruston	Maggie Rochon
Colette McGarvey	Sue Wicks
Deb Kafford	Joyce Rawson

The **Outreach Committee** welcomes new members who may feel called to participate in this rewarding activity at **Grace**. You are welcome to participate in the activities or to initiate a new **Outreach** activity to energize the congregation. Please approach any member of the committee for more information.

Submitted by: Paul Cooper, Chair

Christian Development Committee ...

It has been a great year at **Grace** as we continued our programs in this changing time. The **Committee** has continued to be faithful and strong in our commitment to fulfil our baptism promise.

Our **Sunday morning** programs; **Nursery, Kinder Worship, Children's Worship, SPLAT!, and High School** programming continued to focus on biblical literacy through age-appropriate exposure to the historical-critical method. We have very faithful and competent leaders for these programs and we appreciate the time and care they give to our young people.

Our two-year confirmation class, with the guidance of **Pat Morrison and Gord Walkling**, continues to challenge **Grace** youth and arm them with the tools they need to discern their relationship with **God**. It challenges them to go deeper in their own personal journey. The second-year participants are partnered with mentors, connecting them further into trusting relationships

with the congregation as they wrestle with their relationship with God.

Sunday night Youth group affords high school students' space for recreation, fellowship and service. Pointedly, this program allows young people a safe and caring space to really be honest about the things that are going on in their lives, grooming vulnerability and deep listening.

Jolt Nite continued monthly with high school youth planning and delivering the program and children grades 4 to 8 participating in the fun. Jolt allows Grace kids to invite friends to the church for a positive, comfortable experience within the walls of the church.

Community Living Dances, attended by Community Living clients from across Lambton County and led by Grace youth, animates Grace's vision of being a community partner. Under the leadership of Seamus White and Kari Rent, Grace youth interact with the clients of community living and enjoy themselves while doing this.

Summer Campfires continue to bring together generations for outdoor fun through a shared meal and laughs around the campfire. Weekly attendance was strong and feedback suggests that Campfires are an effective multi-generational program.

A new program, Price of Admission, began as an event for men and male teens to share a meal and personal stories of hardship endured. This birthed a similar event for women and female teens who gathered to share a meal and personal stories that were then embroidered into prayer shawls that are now available to congregants. Both gatherings will be repeated in 2026.

The Bell Ritual was developed by Pat and four Grace teens after they studied cultural shifts that disconnect youth from necessary developmental needs. This ritual, led by youth, has been named as an integral part of Sunday morning, opening space for respectful and honest listening, discerning God's movement, and a deep sense of belonging.

There are many things going on at the church that are successful because of Pat's leadership. His ability to connect with and understand young people and his openness to creative and new ways of thinking have helped keep us current. We also appreciate the many faithful volunteers that we count on to lead programming. It is evident Grace cares for its young people.

Committee membership for 2026: Pat Morrison (ex officio), Kenji Marui (ex officio), Shirley Willis (Chair), Marilyn Barros, and Margaret Billings.

Submitted by: Shirley Willis, Chair

Proclamation and Special Events Committee ...

We remain a small committee, officially consisting of Bev Walkling and Yvonne Vanderbeld, though we engage the invaluable help of Bill Yates for creating graphics, posters, mass email reminders, database and spreadsheet organization that is necessary to collect information and keep it all straight. Bev is the chairperson of our committee and represents us at Council meetings. She provides experiential insight and helps to organize events. Bev is the social media expert who spreads the word through Facebook and other forms of print media utilizing her many contacts. In the office, Kathy is a vital asset to collect and record order forms and monies that are processed through the office and posting the innumerable updates that I forward to her for weekly announcements.

The work of this committee cannot run without the help of volunteers, and we invite members of the congregation to join our committee so that we can better utilize the talents to organize, fundraise and host special events. We are grateful for the volunteers who generously and willingly give their time for the events that we do plan at Grace. Many hands make light work, but it takes more hands to do larger events.

In 2025, we focussed on Fundraising, though there are endless possibilities to engage the congregation and community for Proclamation through Special Events. This year, the fundraising involved Food, Fall Fair and Flowers.

FOOD – After last year’s success, we booked the ever-popular Pasta Fest for April 30th, 2025, taking meal orders from April 4–27th. There are limited days that the Dante Club hosts this event and we had to consider that family plans around Easter might limit the desire to order pasta. Each meal features a generous portion of penne pasta, two large meatballs and focaccia bread. Meals are ordered for a pre-determined half-hour pick-up time slot, as they are prepared and packed fresh every half hour by the Dante Club volunteers, ready for when customers pick up their orders at the Club. This year we expanded to four time slots from 4:30 to 6:30, with 5:00 to 5:30 pm being the most popular time to order pasta meals.

We received 86 orders for meals @ \$15.00 each, plus a \$10 donation for a fundraising total of \$571.15 for this event, with this amount added to Grace’s General Fund.

FALL FAIR – Grace United Church hosted a Fall Fair this year on Saturday, October 18, 2025 between 9:00 am –1:00 pm. It was a large undertaking, coordinated by Bev Walkling and Yvonne Vanderbeld, but with the help of many hands. Planning started

immediately after last year's fair with the booking of dates for 2025 so that church facilities would be available, and volunteers could begin to offer ideas, items and commitments for the event. During the summer, containers for soups and chili were purchased along with bulk ingredients to make the chili. Volunteer sheets were available on several Sundays in September, and many people signed up to help. Bev was able to secure a donation of ground beef to make the chili from the Lambton Cattlemen's Association.

There were many work sessions at the church for apple dumplings, bruschetta and chili, often led by Karen Cooke prior to the fair. 41 soup kits were assembled and distributed to volunteers who made the soup which was then frozen and stored in the freezers ready for sale on Fair Day. Soups offered this year were Turkey Vegetable, Pea w/ Ham, Hearty Hamburger, Lentil w/Beef and Barley, Mulligatawny and a new offering of Vegetarian Harvest Vegetable. Canning jars and jewellery were generously donated and collected long before the big day.

Because storage was at a premium, books, puzzles, hardware items such as tools, sports and hobby items, along with silent auction donations could not be collected till closer to the day of sale. Much was happening 'behind the scenes' for months. We also secured volunteers from Northern Collegiate this year for both the set-up day and the Fair day.

Our Grace barbecue needed to be replaced, and with generous individual donations, plus Bev's online sale of Pampered Chef products, it more than covered the cost of a new BBQ, making the offering of BBQ foods possible for the fair.

This year, these are the events that were held:

Vendors (13)

Preserves, Jams, Jellies, and more

Frozen Soups
Frozen Chili
Baking
Books, puzzles, CD's, DVD's
Hardware
Silent Auction
Children's Activities
Jewellery
BBQ
Tea Room
Popcorn
Handmade Greeting Cards
Handmade aprons

We also added a greeting and security detail to the fair.

To be sure, though the Fall Fair is one day, there was much to be done in the months and days previous, with Hardware and Books set up early in the week previous and a very busy set up day on Friday, October 17th for the remaining events. This involves convenors for each event, (some who were volunteered) donors, pricers, sellers, organizers, plus the invaluable shoppers and everyone who spread the word. We had a great turnout!

Then comes the inevitable cleanup – packing, cleaning, sorting and hauling! –a hug job! We continued to sell remaining soups (they were a sell-out), some items from Silent Auction, Books, Baking and many Preserves after the Fall Fair, all adding to our fair total. In the week following, remaining books, puzzles and hardware were delivered and donated to five different charities and a school, as well as unsold camping equipment to the Scout Troop that meets at Grace.

Thanks to all of you for generously donating and volunteering your time, talent and treasure to this event. It was a success. After expenses, the Fall Fair 2025 was able to raise \$7331.22 that will go to Grace United Church's budget for 2025.

FLOWERS – Again this year, Grace United Church participated in Prail's Greenhouse Christmas Poinsettia fundraiser. The cost was \$15.99 for a single 6" foil-wrapped poinsettia pot, or \$14.99 each if you ordered three. Prail's filled their greenhouse with 5000 poinsettias, each with leaves of various colours and nature's designs. Only 1000 plants were strictly dedicated for this online fundraising event for groups participating. It ran from November 1st to 20th, then extended to the 27th before poinsettias were offered to the general public. It was a very easy fundraiser, as everything could be done online on Prail's website, including payment. And Prail's was willing to offer help at the greenhouse to create orders for non-computer users who wished to order. Buyers also received a personal email from Prail's to pick up their plant when the fundraiser ended so that they could get first pick from the thousands of poinsettias available. The feedback was very positive as to the variety and the quality of plants available. For this fundraiser we were able to raise \$205.00. We sold 21 poinsettias that raised \$105.00, and the extra \$100 was an outright donation from Prail's. They are not only a valued and respected greenhouse business, but a generous community partner to Grace.

Plans have already begun for 2026 with a Giresi Pizza Kit fundraiser and a scheduled public meeting inviting you to brainstorm your ideas for fundraising or special events. Your input and participation are encouraged and appreciated. Bring your skills and passion to our committee so that we can continue to support the work of Grace United Church.

Submitted by: Yvonne Vanderbeld for the P&SE Committee

GOVERNANCE & SUPPORT MINISTRIES

Trustees ...

The Trustees hold the congregational property in trust for the congregation as part of The United Church of Canada and are responsible for ensuring proper use and maintenance of the property, adequate insurance, and that congregational funds are properly invested. They are also responsible for any transactions of property such as leases or sale of land/buildings.

One of the main areas of focus this year was doing an in-depth examination of our insurance coverage and exploring possible options. We worked with our current broker to find alternatives and also made an application to the UCC Connect Program. After receiving three quotes, we determined that our existing policy was the best option. During the process of making applications, it became clear that adjustments to the Grace Rental Policy were required. We partnered with the Property Committee to ensure that our practices aligned with the policy expectations. Also, at the request of the Finance Committee, Trustees also reviewed the investment plan for securities coming due, as per the requirement of the position.

Upcoming projects include continuing to explore partnerships with community organizations for ways that Grace can support and live out its mission as an Inclusive, Intergenerational, Community Partner.

The Trustees for 2026 are Joanna Catterson (Chair), Bruce Davies, Neil Holloway, Dave Ashdown.

Submitted by: Joanna Catterson, Chair

Communications Committee...

In 2025, the Committee was pleased to roll out an updated website. It encourages church shoppers to “Join us Sunday”, offers an opportunity to “Connect with Us” (ex. sign-up for our newsletter), and highlights how members can become more involved in our community.

Other committee activities included:

A new sit/stand desk, side desk and office chair were purchased for the Main Office (\$3,233). A sit/stand desk is now common in office settings and allows the Office Administrator to alternate sitting and standing, promoting better posture and reducing the health risks of prolonged sitting.

The Personal Information Privacy Policy was revised and approved by Council. It is based on a template provided by the Region. The related Guidelines for Handling Personal Information were revised.

Developed a video introducing the GUC Constitution to new members of Council and Committees.

New Respiratory Illness posters were created and installed at entrance doors.

Did you know the church offers several devices to support meetings and gatherings at the church? The volunteer laptop is available as a loaner. Please contact the office to make arrangements. A basic sound system (speakers and microphone) is available in the gym stage closet (indoor key). Its suitable for speeches or music in the gym. Room 9 includes a television suitable for meetings or movies. Watch from the comfy couch or table and chairs. Stream YouTube or Pluto TV for free OR connect your laptop or mobile device via Android screen sharing,

Apple AirPlay or the provided HDMI cable. The Friendship Room includes a projector and screen suitable for meetings or movies. Connect your laptop via the HDMI cable. The chairs or couches can be arranged for viewing. A portable projector with speaker is available in the Friendship Room closet (indoor key). It can either be projected on to the gym wall or to screens mounted in Room 1, the Chapel, Room 10 or gym stage. Highspeed “Wifi” internet is available throughout the church (SSID = graceuc_guest, password = love&faith). Anyone entering our building is welcome to connect.

Thank you to: Kathy Dodkin for her great work as Office Administrator throughout 2025, Curtis Dixon for maintaining the outdoor sign, Bev Walkling for her dedication in keeping the Facebook page up-to-date. Marianne Nichols for maintaining the photo boards found in the hallway outside the Friendship Room. It’s a lovely reminder of the ways in which GUC has come together as a community in recent months.

The Communications Initiatives Fund supports activities of the Committee. 2025 expenses included: Main Office furniture (\$1,000).

The Committee membership for 2025 is Christopher Cooke (Chair), Marianne Nichols and Bev Walkling.

Submitted by: Chris Cooke, Chair

Ministry & Personnel Committee...

The Ministry and Personnel Committee at Grace meets on the third Tuesday of each month. We are responsible for staff contracts, salaries and benefits, approving vacation time, staff appraisals, and acting as a liaison and confidential sounding board for staff. We work in conjunction with other committees,

such as the Worship Committee and the Property Committee, to ensure there is staffing coverage during those times our permanent staff is absent due to vacation or illness. For example, we supported our custodian, Curtis, when he was on an extended medical leave this past year and arranged for supply custodians to cover his duties.

Part of our role is to celebrate and support our staff, which we do yearly through our Christmas lunch and gifts, as well as acknowledging important milestones in their lives.

Members for 2026 are Jane Allen, Laura Black, Joanna Catterson, John Cooke, John Scott.

Submitted by: Joanna Catterson

Property Committee...

The Property Committee offers our sincere thank you to:

- Curtis for his attentive work and quick response to building & property issues.
- Kathy for her administration of the rental policy and improving building utilization by user groups.
- John Scott for his support to Curtis and his willingness to help when needed.
- Danny Knight and Pam Eagleson for custodian coverage while Curtis was on leave.
- Brian Eagleson, Jim Wicks, and Dave Veldman who assisted with repairs and projects.
- Sally Jenkins for cleaning kitchen linens.
- Cecily Chiles for planning and coordinating landscape maintenance/improvement.
- Kristopher Dodkin for yard clean up and assistance to Cecily.

- Ben Parkinson and Danny Knight for weekend snow shoveling.
- Leslie Veldman for her participation on the Committee.
- John Cooke for the leadership and dedication to maintaining this place where people gather.
- Contributors to the Capital Replacement Fund.

Property activities are focused on essential maintenance and strategic improvements. 2025 initiatives and projects included:

- The Rental Policy and supporting documents were revised and rental rates were increased effective Sep 1/25. Rental Groups must now obtain liability insurance.
- We closed 2 locations where raccoons were entering the Sanctuary eaves. We hope the “critter war” is over.
- The Sanctuary soffit is prone to blowing off in high winds. Some repairs were completed although the contractor recommends further work in 2026 to stabilize the supporting lumber.
- The Sanctuary Roof Top HVAC units suffered 6 incidents of part failures. We will continue to repair these units while parts are available.
- A gas leak on the Main Kitchen stove resulted in a small fire. The stove was repaired to ensure safe operation and will be inspected regularly.
- The hot water tank that serves the Narthex washrooms was replaced.
- Carpets were professionally cleaned throughout the building.
- A failed control board on #1 boiler was replaced.
- We supported the Communications Committee to replace Kathy’s desk and chair.

The Committee spent ~\$40,500 on utilities, routine maintenance and supplies. Non-routine costs totaling ~\$20,000 were paid

from the Capital Replacement Fund. The Fund received ~\$6,000 in generous donations to partially offset the costs.

The Committee invites new members to join the committee or volunteer time to help with projects.

The 2026 committee members will be John Cooke, Cecily Chiles and Brian Eagleson.

Submitted by: John Cooke, Chair

Planning Committee ...

The role of the Planning Committee is to “*keep aware of, and challenge Grace United Church to respond to, changes in direction occurring in the church at large*”. With declining attendance at churches and other pressures on churches, Grace faces many opportunities to continue to thrive as a United Church serving our diverse and active congregation.

The 2025 Planning Committee membership included: Cecily Chiles, Regan Pfaff –MacDonald, Marion Staples, Daniella D’Andrea, Lorna Cooper, Marilyn Barros and Jim Wicks (Chair).

The Focus of the Planning Committee in 2025

Planning recognized in 2025 the opportunity to better inform and engage the congregation in the Resonance efforts led by Kenji and Pat. As well, we wanted to find ways for “deeper belonging” and “making real connections with real people”.

To address this opportunity, the Planning Committee organized and hosted on May 15, 2025, a Resonance-focused evening session. The goal was to learn more as a leadership group at Grace about Resonance plus provide an opportunity for us to get to know on a deeper level other individuals in our faith

community while we gain a better appreciation what this Resonance stuff is all about.

- Members of Council and all Grace committees were invited
- Pat and Kenji provided insights into the Resonance efforts to date
- Small discussion groups were formed, each with a facilitator, to provide “soak time” and by using prompting questions, get to know each other better.
- The session was well attended and well received and prompted plans for a future session with broader invitation to the congregation
- Planning turned over plans for future, similar events to Congregational Care and Growth

As Chair of the Planning Committee, I would like to thank all members for their persistence and efforts throughout 2025 as we wrestled with the future of the Grace faith community. I would especially like to thank Kenji Marui who, as minister, is an ex officio member, who has tirelessly, patiently and regularly supported our efforts this past year.

The Future Focus of the Planning Committee in 2026

In 2026, the Planning Committee will be shifting its focus back toward the mandate as outlined in our constitution. These topics include:

- Visioning our future
- Gather ideas to improve the church community
- Provide forum for congregation and staff to exchange viewpoints
- Forward-looking to carry out our vision
- Address subjects brought forward by Council
- Formal Stewardship initiatives
- Review and rank project proposals

The 2026 Planning Committee membership will be: Cecily Chiles, Regan Pfaff –MacDonald, Marion Staples, Lorna Cooper, Jim Wicks (Chair) and Vice Chair of Council (TBN)

Submitted by: Jim Wicks, Chair of Planning Committee

Finance Committee...

The Finance Committee is responsible to effectively manage the Church Finances, to regularly provide updates to the Congregation and to communicate issues and proposed resolutions to Council.

2025 was a very positive year financially for Grace. We ended the year with a surplus of \$15K. Givings exceeded plan. Rental income continues to grow as many community groups are using the Grace facilities. Thanks again to Kathy Dodkin and John Cooke for all the work done with these groups and the rental policy. More people are using stock donations to reduce any capital gains taxes. As a Church, we remain debt free.

The congregation also made significant financial contributions to a number of Outreach initiatives (see the summary in the Annual Report). Contributions were also made to specific funds that support the ministries of the Church.

At the end of 2024, the market value of Grace UC funds at the Sarnia Community Foundation (SCF) was \$72,120.25. No withdrawals were made in 2025.

SCF funds support the following:

- Support for youth initiatives (Tom Murray and Gwen Hopper funds)
- Ken Plumley Youth Scholarship
- Tom and Donna Moore and Grace General Fund

The Legacy Fund was re-invested in GIC's in November 2025 with rates around 3%. This was lower than the previous rates realized. Interest from the GICs was used to support the operating budget in 2025 and is required again in 2026.

The proposed 2026 operating budget predicts a deficit of about \$15K which would be covered by the Reserve Fund. Our operating costs will increase by about 6% in 2026 versus 2025. Some additional focus (like special events, FUNDSCRIP, etc.) is required to generate additional income to offset the increased cost challenge. We hope the congregation will continue to support these activities.

Sadly, we lost Ian McGuess in November 2025. Ian had served in many finance roles over many years and will be sorely missed by the Grace community. Also, in September 2025, Wayne Pease retired as Treasurer. Thank-you to Wayne for his years of service. Proposed Finance Committee members for 2026 are; Bob Newman, Paul Cooper and Marion Staples. Bob continues to provide wise advice for finance issues. We welcome new members. It's a great way to learn more about Church finances.

Finally, thank you to all members of the congregation who have contributed financially to the operating budget, specific funds, and outreach initiatives in 2025. Without your generosity, Grace could not sustain the ministries that support both the local and international communities around us.

Submitted by: Paul Cooper, Treasurer

Financial Statements...

	2024	2025 BUDGET	2025	2026 BUDGET
Givings for Operating	350,787.66	354,000.00	364,380.90	370,300.00
Designated M&S Givings	5,511.92	3,500.00	5,073.28	5,300.00
TOTAL GIVINGS - UNIFIED BUDGET	356,299.58	357,500.00	369,454.18	375,600.00
OTHER INCOME				
Rental	55,991.50	58,000.00	69,280.61	69,000.00
Donations	3,230.85	3,500.00	300.00	2,500.00
Interest	23,538.38	20,000.00	19,725.80	12,000.00
Special Events	5,770.68	7,000.00	11,396.62	8,000.00
Other Income	399.50	2,000.00	1,792.00	2,000.00
TOTAL REVENUE	445,230.49	448,000.00	471,949.21	469,100.00
COMMITTEE EXPENDITURES				
Congregational Care & Growth Outreach	537.55	1,160.00	437.36	1,260.00
Christian Development	1,865.70	2,200.00	1,593.04	2,200.00
Worship	2,276.99	2,500.00	2,165.48	2,550.00
Communications	7,071.60	8,000.00	8,393.20	8,000.00
Ministry & Personnel	354,583.48	365,000.00	362,920.11	381,800.00
Trustees	12,426.19	12,950.00	12,557.53	14,460.00
Property	37,565.51	39,680.00	39,352.54	40,000.00
Finance	3,303.10	3,500.00	3,934.19	4,000.00
Region 7 Assessment	19,340.18	17,604.00	17,604.00	22,915.00
Council	341.86		0.00	
M&S	7,000.00	7,000.00	7,000.00	7,000.00
Special Events			341.59	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	446,312.16	459,594.00	456,299.04	484,185.00
NET INCOME VS EXPENDITURES	-1,081.67	-11,594.00	15,650.17	-15,085.00
Transfer to Reserve Fund			15,650.17	15085
Transfer from Reserve Fund	1,081.67	2000		
Transfer from Legacy Fund		9995		
			0.00	-30,170.00
Reserve Fund Balance	42,286.24	30,291.24	57,936.41	42,851.41
Legacy Fund Balance	315909.26	315909.26	315909.26	315909.26

Reserve fund minimum
=40K(15+25)

	2024	2025
ASSETS		
Royal Bank Cheque	20,349.79	42,271.86
RBC/Money Mart	77,173.14	65,956.32
Scotiabank Cashable GIC	71,400.54	71,323.32
Scotiabank LT GIC 3 Year		100,276.16
Scotiabank GIC 2 Year		100,286.03
Scotiabank GIC 13 Months		100,276.16
Scotiabank LR GIC	301,824.71	
Petty Cash	258.41	315.14
Accounts Receivable	4,018.63	4,727.13
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>475,025.22</u>	<u>485,432.12</u>
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Accounts Payable	<u>838.14</u>	<u>0.00</u>
CHURCH FUNDS		
Affirming	147.18	0.00
Reserve	42,286.24	57,936.41
Youth Initiative	7,390.05	7,509.63
Lunches for Learning	12,379.81	12,379.81
Imn of the Good Shepherd	1,837.95	2,146.47

	2024	2025
Youth Worship	2,532.48	2,726.48
Benevolent Fund	1,437.37	346.43
Communications Initiative Fund	3,044.68	3,794.68
TOTAL CHURCH FUNDS	71,055.76	86,839.91
SEGREGATED FUNDS		
Memorial Funds	14,779.00	30,144.59
Ken Plumley Fund	11,656.02	12,231.02
Resonance Project	2,924.52	1,061.14
Inspiration Fund	8,995.64	10,036.29
Leadership Development Fund	7,000.59	5,000.59
Capital Replacement Fund	30,282.77	12,625.80
Legacy Fund	315,909.26	315,909.26
TOTAL SEGREGATED FUNDS	391,547.80	387,008.69
GENERAL FUNDS		
General Fund	11,583.52	11,583.52
TOTAL GENERAL FUNDS	11,583.52	11,583.52
TOTAL EQUITY	474,187.08	485,432.12
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	475,025.22	485,432.12
SCHEDULE OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE		
Church Key Deposit	260	0
VISA	578.14	0
TOTAL	838.14	0
SCHEDULE OF ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE		
HST	4,018.63	4,727.13

2025 OUTREACH REPORT**UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MISSIONARY AND SERVICE**

Givings from unified Budget
 Easter M&S
 Thanksgiving M&S
 Christmas M&S

SUBTOTAL

7,000.00
 210.00
 150.00
 860.00
8,220.00

SOUP LUNCHEONS

Blewwater Grow Project
 Raydon
 Lambton Centre
 Indwell
 River City Vineyard

SUBTOTAL

2,110.00
 2,082.70
 1,933.00
 2,345.45
 1,792.40
10,263.55

OTHER DONATIONS

Inn of the Good Shepherd
 Circles
 Women's Interval Home Walk a Mile in her Shoes
 Sexual Assault Centre
 Lambton Centre -sponsor camper
 Social Services
 Victim Services
 Alvin Dixon Memorial Run for Indigenous Post Secondary Education Fund

SUBTOTAL

2,500.00
 40.00
 3,530.00
 50.00
 542.40
 50.00
 50.00
 4,331.00
11,093.40

Fair Market Rental Manse

13,365.00

Region Representative ...

[Marilyn Barros serves as the Grace United Church representative to the Antler River Watershed (ARW) Regional Council.]

Antler River Watershed Spring Meeting – May 30 and 31, 2025 online and in person, at Grace United Church, Sarnia with theme: Holding and Encouraging Communities of Faith. Richard Auckland is the new President of Antler River Watershed region. The guest speaker, Gail Barker helped us reflect on how we can continue to be transformed in faith practice through small group interactions.

100th Anniversary of United Church of Canada – submitted a brief one-page history of Grace United Church, with help from Chris Cooke.

June 24, 2025 – attended online Recognizing Misinformation and Disinformation and What to Do About It – webinar hosted by Therese Samuel, from ARW and Sara Speicher, World Association for Christian Communication (50minutes)

https://youtu.be/AUNoMWuuCL0?si=EIBdPjVrwW0M_B6C

The 45th General Council (GC45) of The United Church of Canada took place in Calgary, AB in August with Kenji attending (and working). An apology from the church to the 2S and LGBTQIA community took place at this General Council. News article: <https://united-church.ca/news/apology-offered-today-united-church-2s-and-lgbtqia-communities>

Antler River Regional Council Fall Meeting – attended virtually Friday, Oct. 3 and Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025.

Please find further Antler River Watershed information in the newsletter

Submitted by: Marilyn Barros

Nomination Committee ...

The **Grace Nomination Committee** is responsible for overseeing the process that ensures that all congregation members are appropriately represented on the **Church Council**. At this time, the committee is currently contacting members of the congregation in order to fill the various open **Council** positions. As of the date of printing of the annual report, the committee is still in the recruitment phase. It is our hope that a full slate of candidates will be presented for the congregation's approval at the **Annual Meeting** in **March**. It has been my pleasure to serve the congregation. I look forward to seeing the gifts of the future members of council. **Best regards.**

Submitted by: Marion Staples, past chair

CHURCH STAFF

PASTORAL TEAM: Kenji Marui,
B. Sc. H. , M. Div. , D. Min.
Patrick Morrison,
B. Math, DLM.

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC: Marque Smith

CUSTODIAN: Curtis Dixon

**OFFICE
ADMINISTRATOR:** Kathy Dodkin

IN MEMORIAM (2025)

Don Smith	June 25, 2025
Ian McGuiness	November 7, 2025
Glendene Gray	Nov 17, 2025
Bruce Houck	December 10, 2025