

CHURCHPOST

RIDEAU PARK UNITED CHURCH



Minister's Message

Coming Out of the Pandemic

“Exhausted? You’re not alone” is the title of a recent column in *The Globe and Mail*. The writer echoes what may be heard in conversations and felt in families and communities. We are tired. The article identifies the cause of this collective exhaustion and discouragement as the pandemic; the last two and half years are causing a world weariness that people can’t shake.

We have moved through a lot of emotional stages in the pandemic:

- ◆ coming to terms with the scope and impact of a global pandemic.
- ◆ living with the fear of threat and uncertainty for ourselves and the people we love.
- ◆ going into overdrive to make the lockdown work.
- ◆ grieving the loss of milestones left uncelebrated.
- ◆ living with isolation and the loss of connection.
- ◆ witnessing the cultural and political polarization that has been accelerated in these traumatic times.
- ◆ making constant adjustments as we have been continually adapting to new variants and protocols.
- ◆ living into a new space where the old practices and patterns no longer work.
- ◆ emerging now into a new world without a clear map of where we are or of what lies ahead.

We have been through a lot. Of course we are tired. It would be strange if we were not exhausted after living through the rolling traumas of the last few years.

And now that we are coming out of the pandemic, we may begin to really feel the effects of what we have been through. Dr. Laura Limsky writes: “When [people] finally get a chance to exhale, their breaths may emerge as sighs. People put their heads down and do what they have to do, but suddenly, when there’s an opening, all these feelings come up.”

So, what now?

- ◆ We can recognize our fatigue. It is not a sign of failure. It just reminds us of what we have been through together.
- ◆ We can be kind to ourselves. Psychologist David Rock writes: “Self-compassion through adversity is linked to more stable resilience and is a predictor of well-being.”

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UNITED | ENSEMBLE

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Note: Check the website after the Annual Congregational Meeting on February 26 to see the new Council members and Committee Chairs.

RIDEAU PARK UNITED CHURCH

Worship: 10:00am
Coffee Hour: 11:00am
Sunday School: 10:00am

OUR HEARTS REMEMBER

We hold in our thoughts and prayers the families and loved ones of these Rideau Park friends who have passed away:

Stanley Parkhouse December 8, 2022
Roberta Atchison December 29, 2022
Gordon Weedmark February 5, 2023



I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

John 11:25-26

Canada Summer Job Grant

Rideau Park has applied for a summer job grant. It will be a few months before we know the status of our application, but we hope we'll be able to offer a student position this summer.

Minister's Message (continued from page 1)

- ◆ We can remember that others have also been through the pandemic's trauma and so we can be kind and patient with others, too.
- ◆ We can turn to the gift of community. The pandemic took community from us and community is a place of support and consolation. Our congregation may be a place of healing connection in this time.
- ◆ We can turn to God. The loss of any sense of control and certainty was a big stressor in the pandemic. So, we might turn to the certainty and steadfast constancy of God.

Isaiah writes: *But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

May your strength be renewed in God.

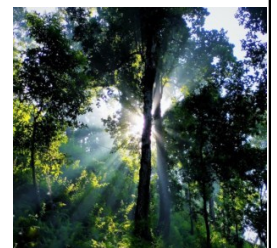
Blessings,
Steve Clifton



Forest Church

Sunday, February 19 at 4pm

Come and join us as we take time for prayer with all God's creatures in Cunningham Forest. We meet in front of the church – dress warmly!



Next ChurchPost Submission

Due: 12pm, Friday, May 5, 2023
Pick-up: Sunday, May 14, 2023

Submissions to *ChurchPost* should be emailed to:

nmcperson@rogers.com

Please include the name and phone number of the author(s).



Coffee Hour Appeal

These folks have kindly given their time to host since mid-October 2022, when Coffee Hour resumed. Thank you all very much. You contributed to us feeling like a community again.

Karen Lamb, Mark Shulist, John Durkee, Ron MacPherson, Gretchen Conrad, Merina Shulist, Carolyn Scollick, Nancy McPherson, Vanessa Luks, Keith Falkes, Percy Falkes, August Falkes, Ken Tong, Dipty Tong, Christel Kurz, Karen Ott, Bruce Dixon, Judy Paré, Nancy Begg-Durkee, Karen Humphries, Rob Blake, Stephanie Bailey, Michael Bailey, Judith Srna, Marlene Hutchison, Helen Beck, Marian McGahern, Margo Roden, Bob Roden, Mary Lynne Holton, Joanne Rodgers.



As the saying goes, "no good deed goes unpunished!" Please consider an offer to host during April, May and June.

Sign-up sheets are in Beecroft Hall on the bulletin board to the immediate right as you enter. Thank you for your consideration. People like having an opportunity to chat after the service and it is a pleasant time for the hosts, as well.

Thank you to Debi Brown and Geoff Scollick for taking care of the dishwasher at coffee hour.

Cozy up with a good book...

These books are recommended by the avid readers of UCW Unit 3.

The Sleeping Car Porter, Suzette Mayr

The Lost Century, Larissa Lai

Precious Little, Camille Fouillard

The Opportunist, Elyse Friedman

The Tragedy of Eva Mott, David Adams Richards

Becoming, Michelle Obama

The Painted Drum, Louise Erdrich

The Thursday Murder Club series, Richard Osman

Little Bee, Chris Cleave

World of Curiosities, Louise Penny, and the *Three Pines* series, overall. Also, *State of Terror*, Louise Penny and Hillary Clinton

All the Seas of the World, Guy Gavriel Kay

The Personal Librarian, Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

Kelly Armstrong crime series, set in the Yukon

Coffee Self-Talk, Kristen Helmstetter

The Imposter Bride, Nancy Richler

Anything by Daniel Silva, Jodi Picoult, Clive Cussler, Patricia Cornwell (the Kay Scarpetta series).



Harmony Club News

We are ready to welcome back Harmony Club for our 2023 spring events. Similar to last fall, the first two events will be social events with coffee, treats, an opportunity to chat and a short program. The last one in May will be a nice lunch.

You are invited to a coffee/tea social and music, 10am-11:30am on March 29 in the church parlour.

This event is open to everyone over the age of 60 and not limited to church members, so if you have family or friends that would enjoy the event, please bring them along. We look forward to seeing everyone and catching up on March 29.

Upcoming Events...Mark Your Calendars!

February 14, 1:30pm: **Valentine's Day Coffee Party**

February 19, 10am: **Scout Sunday**

February 19, 4pm: **Forest Church**

February 20: **Family Day** – Office closed

February 21, 5:30pm-7pm: **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper**

February 22, 4pm-8pm: **Ash Wednesday Encarna**

February 22, 7pm: **Ash Wednesday Service**

February 26, 10am: **Lent 1 Service with Communion**

February 26, 11:30am: **Annual Congregational Meeting**

March 1,8,15,22,29 at 7pm: **Lenten Journeys** (by Zoom)

March 17-26 (9am to 4pm weekdays/Sunday mornings):
Labyrinth Journeys

For more info on these events, see the [website calendar](#).

Quilting

Thursdays, 9:30am-12pm, ladies meet in the Parlour to enjoy fellowship and make beautiful quilts.

Knitting

Join other knitters on Mondays, 1pm-3:30pm in the Parlour. For information, contact Doreen Hamilton at ucw@rideaupark.ca.



What do you think? – National anthem in worship

by Sharon Sanderson

On Reign of Christ/Christ the King Sunday, Steve’s sermon mentioned Christian Nationalism. That got me thinking about a question I have considered for many years. Is it appropriate to sing the national anthem in a Christian worship service? At this point, my answer would be “no”. I have no trouble singing the national anthem in secular situations. But when I am in the congregation on Remembrance and Canada Day Sundays, I do not stand for the anthem nor do I sing it. When I lead worship on those Sundays, I don’t have that option. I try not to lead worship on those Sundays.

So what bothers me about singing the national anthem in church? Country borders are determined by us. There is nothing sacred about them. They have been the cause of millions and millions of lives lost in battle over their location, in a lack of relief aid because we don’t trust their leadership. “God keep our land glorious and free!” It doesn’t seem Christian to ask God to keep our borders secure. Shouldn’t we be asking for every land to be glorious and free? “True patriot love in all of us command” – I thought that our allegiance, our love, was for God alone. Canada does not have the power to command our love. “O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.” How is it that we, as Christians, should stand on guard?

When I consider Jesus’ life, teachings and death, it seems to me that the words and sentiment in “O Canada” are much too narrow to be sung in church. In the *Song of Faith*, we find:

We offer worship

as an outpouring of gratitude and awe
and a practice of opening ourselves
to God’s still, small voice of comfort,
to God’s rushing whirlwind of challenge.



Through word, music, art, and sacrament,
in community and in solitude,
God changes our lives, our relationships, and our world.

We sing with trust.

Congregational singing and music within worship should help achieve this. For me, “O Canada” does not help us achieve this.

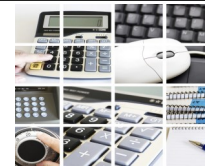
The Lord’s Day activities of the local church focuses on worship. What brings the people to the building on that day is their desire to worship. To have patriotic elements thrown into worship creates a link between church and state which, I think, is nationalistic and improper.

But, that’s just what I think. What do you think?

Camp Awesome

Rideau Park will be hosting Camp Awesome from August 14-18. Registration will be opening soon. For more info, go to their website: <https://camp-awesome.ca/summer-camp/>

Finance Committee Update



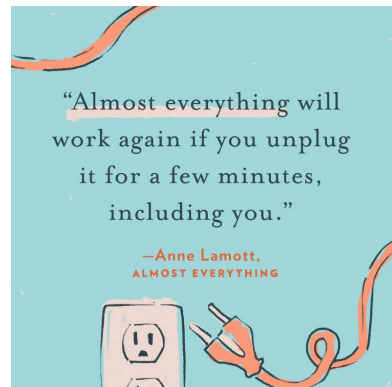
Year 2022 still presented challenges, despite the easing of pandemic related restrictions. While restrictions were lifted early in the year, increased activities didn’t really get underway until September. Even then, things weren’t as before with many people opting for continued social distancing and masking. As a result, normal fundraising activities were negatively impacted. Added to this, government assistance programs ceased. Offsetting these difficulties was the fact that we continue to receive strong support from the congregation through donations. The end result was a deficit of approximately \$17,500 in the Church’s Operating Fund for the year. On a more positive note, we were able to expand the Christmas Cheer and the Shoebox programs and to fulfill our Mission and Service commitments to the national church.

As we continue to navigate the aftermath of the pandemic, the Committee would like to thank members of the congregation, staff and volunteers for helping make 2022 a good year under difficult circumstances. We look forward to your continued support in 2023.

Rideau Park Finance Committee

Meditation Group Online

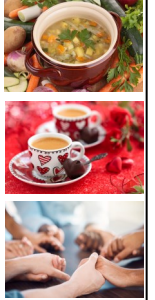
The Meditation Group meets weekly on Thursdays at 10am. Meditation is not difficult. You can’t be bad at it. It is just sitting in silence with intention in the presence of God. And its benefits are many. Come join in and give meditation a try. Contact [Steve Clifton](#) for the Zoom link. [Click here](#) to learn more about Christian meditation or check out the videos on our [YouTube channel](#).



UCW News

In the coming months, the UCW is holding or participating in the following events.

- ◆ **February 12 “Souper Bowl” Sunday:** Purchase some frozen soup on Super Bowl after the Sunday service. Cost is \$5 for a 2-cup serving.
- ◆ **Tuesday, February 14 from 1:30pm to 3pm: Valentine’s Day Coffee Party** in Beecroft Hall. Space is limited. Please call Sandra Weedmark at 613-731-6447 to book a spot. Freewill offering.
- ◆ **Friday, March 3: World Day of Prayer** (2023 service written by the country of Taiwan) – We hope to be participating in this event but details are yet to come.
- ◆ **Early March – Turkey pies** and other frozen deli items will be available. Details to come.
- ◆ **Sunday, March 26 – Bake Sale** after the Sunday service.



Easter Cards – A Memorial Project



As an Easter Memorial project, the UCW will be sending handmade cards to families who have experienced the loss of a loved one this past year, as well as to members of Rideau Park who continue to be shut-in, either at home or in retirement and/or long-term care homes.

An Easter Memorial list, remembering those we have loved and lost, will be published as a special Easter congregational e-mail. Please forward the wording you wish to include in the Easter Memorial List to rpuceaster@gmail.com no later than Wednesday, March 29, 2023.

How to Donate to the UCW Easter Project: To support this Easter Memorial Card project, the UCW will accept your donations in memory of family and friends. You may donate:

- **By e-transfer** through your online bank account, send your e-transfer to "ucwfinance@rideaupark.ca", which is registered for "auto-deposit". In the message section, please indicate UCW Easter Project.
- **By cheque** made payable to "Rideau Park UCW". In the memo line, please indicate UCW Easter Project. Mail to: Rideau Park United Church, Attn: UCW Treasurer, 2203 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, ON K1H 7L9.
- **By credit card or Interac** through the Rideau Park website: rideaupark.ca. On the main page, choose the **DONATE NOW** tab, then through the CanadaHelps.org link, and under FUND, drop down to Option 4 (United Church Women). In the message section, please indicate UCW Easter Project. Note that you will immediately receive an email tax receipt from CanadaHelps.org. Tax receipts for donations made directly to the UCW by e-transfer or cheque will be issued at the end of the year.

Nearly New Sale (pre-loved, good quality clothing) and Book Sale – Friday, April 21 and Saturday, April 22



Drop-off dates at the church: Thursday, April 20, 9am to 4pm and 6pm to 8pm AND Friday, April 21, 9am to 12pm. Please donate *gently used, good quality clothing and recent fiction paperbacks*. Storage space is limited – donations will be accepted beginning in April.

Sale times: Friday, April 21 from 6pm to 8pm AND Saturday, April 22 from 9am to 11:30am.

Contact: Marlene Hutchison, 613-731-2159.

Nancy Begg-Durkee, Acting UCW President

A thank you from (now past) UCW President

It's old news by now, but I've stepped down from my duties as UCW President and leader of Unit 3. I just wanted to express my appreciation for the opportunity to serve at Rideau Park, and to interact and work alongside wonderful, committed women (and some very fine husbands, too). It was a bit peculiar to hold this role during the pandemic, not at all what I anticipated, but that was also an interesting challenge. Thank you to those who have been so supportive to me and my husband as we deal with another type of challenge. God bless.

Nancy McPherson

Annual Easter Bake Sale

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, March 26**, as Unit 7 is holding their Annual Easter Bake Sale, following the church service. There will be loads of home baking, so we hope to see everyone there.



The Refugee Program at Rideau Park

by Lynn Sherwood



The Refugee Program at Rideau Park is under the mandate of the Social Action and Outreach Committee. Our Refugee Program has a profound and, indeed, life-changing impact on the lives of the folks we support. While this program generally has a low profile within the congregation, and really has no impact on our church finances, the amount of money we are administering, as well as the level of administrative effort involved, is truly eye-watering, and therefore concerns many people. This article is an attempt to clarify, as much as possible, what we are doing and why and how we are doing it.

According to the Statista Research Department, March 4, 2022:

“A refugee is someone living outside his or her home country that is unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of a justifiable fear of persecution. Canada’s refugee system offers three pathways for resettlement of refugees from outside of Canada: government assistance, private sponsorship, and the blended visa office-referred program. All three paths offer permanent resident status.”

In 2019, the last year for which I can find statistics, Canada admitted 9,951 government-sponsored refugees, 19,143 privately sponsored refugees and 993 blended visa office-referred refugees. In 2021, refugees represented 14.74% of all permanent resident holders in Canada.

According to the United Church website:

“The General Council of The United Church of Canada is a refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). Under that agreement, entities of the United Church such as Conferences, presbyteries, and congregations are considered constituent groups (CGs). Constituent groups are organizations on the ground doing the day-to-day work of refugee sponsorship and support.”

Rideau Park has a long history of involvement with refugee sponsorship, beginning with Project 4000 back in the ‘70s, when Evelyn Henderson spearheaded a group which sponsored a few families from Vietnam. In the ‘90s, we collaborated with five churches to sponsor several families and, since 2012, we have acted as private sponsors for several refugees, including Uba, who, with her husband, provided a wonderful thank you luncheon for Rideau Park members a few years ago. Our current initiative is a bit different. We are not directly sponsoring and fundraising for a refugee family, but are acting as advisors – we are a constituent group.

The United Church of Canada has entered into a Sponsorship Agreement with Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC), working with congregations across Canada to assist churches in refugee sponsorship. Rideau Park is one of these congregations. Private sponsors provide funding, in the amount of \$25,000 per person, and about \$40,000 per family, to support their family members when they arrive. This money is held for them by Rideau Park, in a separate account under our sponsorship agreement, and paid out as needed. Needless to say, assembling the funds required and entrusting them to us at Rideau Park to hold in an account for these prospective refugees, represents a significant sacrifice for families who are themselves just getting established in Canada, while attempting to bring their loved ones to safety. We are exceptionally fortunate at Rideau Park to have the expertise of Marilyn Law, who has retired from her career as a legal secretary. She handles both the administration of these funds and the extraordinary amount of paperwork involved.

Marilyn is currently managing about 40 cases, families as well as individuals, who are being sponsored privately by family members. Since the immigration system did not function during the pandemic, Council at Rideau Park decided, a year ago, that we could not handle any more applications until some folks on our list had arrived. Marilyn reports that she regularly receives inquiries from the families of people living in desperate conditions in refugee camps, searching for a way forward, whom she is unable to assist.

Marilyn has provided a report of her current work, as follows.

“Now that the pandemic is mostly finished, Immigration has finally begun reviewing files and since September, five families have arrived. To protect these newcomers to Canada, they have not been named, and their countries of origin have not been identified. Hopefully, at some point, once they are settled and truly feel safe, we may be able to have them at the church for a lunch or tea.

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The Refugee Program at Rideau Park (continued from page 6)

Our first newcomer, a young man, arrived in Ottawa on September 29 at 10:30pm, after a long flight with a stopover in Toronto. I went to the airport to meet him, along with his cousin who lives in Ottawa. This cousin took him home with her and spent the next few days getting him set up for life in Canada. She got a bachelor apartment for him on Metcalfe Street, took him to the bank, got him set up for English classes which start in February and her husband got him a job. He seems to be doing quite well.

October 27 was a busy day, with two families, unknown to each other, arriving in Ottawa. One family came in at 2pm and the other at 11pm. This meant that I had two trips to the airport. Both groups had families in Ottawa, who met them with me and took them to their homes. They quickly located houses for both families and our Administrator, Debi Brown, arranged with TD Bank to receive funds for the first and last month of rent. Bob Roden arranges for funds to be paid to each of the families each month, for their expenses.

On December 19, another family arrived in Ottawa. Their family in Ottawa quickly arranged for a house that they could rent and again we supplied funds for their first and last month, as well as some furniture that they wanted to purchase. Again, we also arranged for funds to be forwarded to them each month to look after their monthly needs.

On January 17, another young man arrived in Ottawa at midnight. His cousin was there, as well as me, and his cousin took him to his home. This man had a wife who died suddenly about two years ago. They had two children, and an aunt has been looking after them in Ethiopia. Immigration is aware of this situation and it appears that the aunt and the children will soon be coming to Canada. In the meantime, this young man's cousin will get him an apartment and again we will arrange for his first and last month's rent, as well as funds each month.

I must thank our Administrator, Debi Brown. At the beginning of the pandemic, I started to work with people in Ottawa who wanted to bring families here. They just kept coming and I kept working with them. Eventually, I had to stop but, as things are opening up, Debi has taken on the task of looking after the funds we are holding in trust, and I really appreciate what she does.

I am hoping that Immigration will continue working through their backlog as quickly and efficiently as possible so that we can continue assisting newcomers to Canada."

We tend to hear about refugees from only a few countries as attention shifts, according to various world crises. For instance, we are now most aware of Ukrainian refugees and, before them, the Syrians. In 2021, 68% of all refugees originated from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar.

At Rideau Park, we have had a lot of inquiries from the Eritrean community. Apparently, there is a great deal of persecution of Christian Eritreans – something of which we are largely unaware here – and many people are attempting to escape or are housed in refugee camps in South Sudan.

Our refugees have been waiting, often for several years, in "a safe third country" – huge chaotic refugee camps. A former refugee, now a volunteer at Heron Emergency Food Centre, once told me that he and his family had waited for 10 years in a refugee camp in Africa before being accepted in Canada. He said that the conditions there were very challenging, with constant violence and chaos. Because there was no clean drinking water, he would go into the jungle, scrape a hole in the ground and wait for water to seep into the hole so he could scoop it up and filter it through a rag before taking it back to camp. He said he had to sit and guard his hole, or someone else would take the water. Needless to say, he is now an enthusiastic Canadian citizen.

Canada is internationally renowned for our success in integrating newcomers into Canadian society, largely because so many are privately sponsored and have the support of a community. It is hard to imagine how it must be to arrive here, after a flight of 20 hours or so, knowing no one, on a cold January day after having spent many years in a sprawling and dangerous refugee camp in an arid and hostile country. Additionally, these folks may have difficulty communicating in English and/or French, and do not have any experience of authorities being helpful or supportive. Refugees who arrive here are proven survivors, people of resilience, courage, intelligence and fortitude who have managed to escape from very difficult situations. Seventy-five per cent of these folks are fully employed within five years of their arrival in Canada.

On a personal note, as I learn more about the refugee project, I think of my own heritage. My ancestors came to North America as refugees back in the 17th century – fleeing constant wars between small European states, as well as grinding poverty – for the new world. Then they lost their homes again in the American Revolution, fled to Canada, and started over. They were the United Empire Loyalists, and they helped to craft the political structure of Canada as the nation we live in today. We are, all of us, refugees at one point in history.