

Annual Report

2008 - 2009



Love Grows Here

*998 Indian Road,
Mississauga, ON*

L5H1R5

(905) 278-9245

(905) 278-9772 (fax)

e-mail: ststephens@cn.aibn.com

www.ststephensuc.ca

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A. MINISTER'S REPORT

Some years ago when I was considering the path to ordination in the United Church of Canada, I went through a process of discernment. For more than a year, I met with a group of church women and men to consider and pray and meditate upon my suitability for ministry. It was a time of listening. We prayed and listened to what the Spirit was revealing to me as an individual and to us as a group.

The word discernment comes from two words that mean “to sift away” or “separate apart.” The realization is that there are many different spirits at work in our world and we need to discern what is of God. It is like answering the question that God asked Adam and Eve in the garden: “Where are you?” God wondered if they knew where they were in relation to the divine intention for their lives. It’s a question I ask myself and others each day as I explore what it means to be faithful and to walk closer with God. I pray about things like what books to read; what hymns to sing in worship; what to preach; who needs a phone call or a visit; what meetings should I attend; what Presbytery and Conference committee am I best equipped to serve; are we as a church reaching the people I need to reach? To me each of these questions and dozens more like them are questions of ongoing discernment. They are a big part of my spiritual growth and fostering a sense of Christian mission.

Here at St. Stephen’s on-the-Hill, in spite of the challenges we have had with our building over the past year, we are stronger than a lot of United Church congregations tend to be these days. We do a lot both as a congregation, and as individuals, on and off the hill. There are numerous groups and activities that fill the rooms of our church building. We have a vibrant children’s ministry. We remain committed to youth and young people. We are active in areas of outreach and mission on levels that are global and local. We are blessed with a fine music ministry. And our UCW continues to be a source of strength. Yet, the power of change is at work all around us, and it is good to take some time to reflect on where we are in the midst of the change. Following all of the activity of our 50th anniversary year, now is a good time for us as a congregation to consider the question of “where are you?” both individually and collectively.

At a council meeting in March, it was decided that we at St. Stephen’s on-the-Hill spend some time in discernment, learning where it is that God is leading us as a community of faith. The point of this activity isn’t to produce grand dreams or long range plans. The point is to learn a little more about ourselves and about the story we find ourselves in as a church. I hope this will be done by networking the members of an initial group that will meet over this summer with others in the church over the next year. The invitation for each of us is one of spiritual growth, sharing stories and growing trust. It’s the same invitation we receive from Jesus Christ.

It is a privilege to share this ministry with you and the mission of St. Stephens on-the-Hill United Church. The generosity, work and witness of so many people in this church continues to be a source of inspiration for me each day.

May God’s blessing be upon us and our life together.

Your brother in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Dale Skinner

B. CHAIRPERSON, CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT

It is amazing how time goes by. It has been a year since I became Chair of Congregational Council, with little experience. However, I would like to record the kind co-operation and understanding of everyone, and particularly from Susanne Sweatman, the past Chair. I don't think that Susanne has been properly thanked for her two years as Chair, and let me do so now. I recognize that Susanne fulfilled her duties with dedication and skillfulness that would be hard to match, and particularly through the period of our new minister, and a number of projects related to our 50th anniversary in 2008. I have found that Susanne is always available to help, and supremely interested in the welfare of the church and its activities. Thank you Susanne for a job well done.

This has been an exciting year! There have been many activities related to the 50th anniversary that were started during Susanne's tenure, and completed in my first year. I therefore take no credit for these, but would simply like to note that they took place during my first year, and to give credit to our many volunteers.

Most of these activities, if not all, took place around the 50th anniversary, which was held on Sunday, May 11, 2008. They involved many volunteers, all of whom I give credit, but whom I do not wish to specifically name as I may leave someone out. These activities include the new courtyard, the labyrinth, and related landscaping. I would like however to give special credit to the designer of the new courtyard, our own Paul Hawn, with good input from the Stewards Committee, and the Anniversary Committee. I would give specific credit also to Karen Pensney, Chair of the Anniversary Committee, and her wonderful committee who did such dedicated work throughout the year.

The 50th anniversary Sunday on May 11 was well attended, and included in the audience were former ministers Jim Perry, Bruce McLeod, Albion Wright, Deanna and Paul Wilson, as well as our current minister, Dale Skinner. Our guest speaker was Bruce McLeod, the former Moderator of the United Church of Canada. Also attending were many former members, and it was wonderful to re-acquaint with them.

This was also the year of the roof, as extensive repairs were required, initially to the area of the office, where mold due to leaking was noted, as well as in the Narthex area. This leaking was further detected in the Sanctuary roof, and finally in the rear area over the Common Room. This has resulted in expensive and costly repairs, the cost of which has been approved to be paid for from the Manse Fund. We are fortunate to have these funds available, and the repairs have been permanent, and intended to last many years. Thanks to Stew Smith and his committee for the extensive work they have carried out to have this work completed.

As noted last year by Susanne, I too found it exciting to get to know our new minister, Dale Skinner, and share in weekly events with him. I would also like to congratulate Dale, on behalf of all of us, for his recent achievement in obtaining his doctorate degree in theology. We can now address him as the Rev. Dr. Skinner, at least on formal occasions, but I suspect that he prefers Dale.

A change that was made this year that should be noted is that Dale expressed the desire to serve as a youth leader, along with Carla Ward, and we therefore employed Dale's spouse, Maryann, also an ordained minister, to assist in the pastoral care requirements of our church. Maryann is making an excellent effort to get to know all of our congregation and we trust that this arrangement is working out and will continue to do so in the future.

I would also like to recognize and thank the U.C.W. under the chairmanship of Gwen Laing, for their dedicated and extensive participation in all of the happenings in the church.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of Council for their kind understanding of their new Chair, and for their dual involvement not only with Council but their own committee work. Your dedication is outstanding and very much appreciated. New members are needed and it is hoped that others will step up to this rewarding work.

Respectfully submitted

Pat Falby, Chair

C. TRUSTEES REPORT

Trustees report directly to the congregation as a whole, and hold legal title, in trust, to the church building and property, on behalf of the congregation as part of the United Church of Canada. In addition, Trustees administer all “trust funds”, particularly the Manse Fund, the General Memorials Fund, the Special Gifts Fund and the Sid Chapman Youth Fund. The Trustees are responsible for the investment of these funds in accordance with guidelines established by the United Church of Canada. The financial details of these funds can be found in the annual financial statements of our Church.

On behalf of the congregation, Trustees sign, when necessary, mortgages and loans, and oversee insurance coverage. After routine re-examination of church titles and deeds, as well as insurance coverage, the Trustees are pleased to report that all is in good order.

Your Trustees have been diligent, on your behalf, helping to ensure that we continue to grow on a firm foundation and that change is managed responsibly and with respect to the traditions of our Christian community. In order of length of service your Trustees are Bill Lowry, Loretta Phinney, Bob Lepp, Tom Leishman and Beth Taylor. I would like to thank Bill, Loretta, Tom, and Beth for their contribution and service as your Trustees in the past year.

It is also appropriate to sincerely thank all the members of the three Standing Sub-Committees of Trustees which are the Memorial Committee, the Archives Committee and the Special Gifts Committee. Members of the Memorials Committee are: Leslie Bentley, Jane Brown, Bob Brown, Brian Hare, Darlene Lepp, Bob Lepp, Joan Sumsion, Bud Sumsion, Dale Skinner (ex-officio), Doreen Zaharuk (Chair) and Peter Zaharuk. Members of the Archives Committee are Nancy Lee, Terry McClintock (Chair), Doreen Zaharuk, Deanna Wilson (ex-officio). Members of the Special Gifts Committee are Bob Ogg, Don Nelson and Bud Wesley (Chair). These sub-committees work diligently in their respective areas of concern.

The church is a participant in The General Insurance Plan for The United Church of Canada, which is approved by the Financial Services Unit of The United Church of Canada. To assist the Trustees in establishing adequate insurance coverage, arrangements were made in 2007 for the appraisal of the church building and contents, which is expected to be completed in 2008.

The Trustees believe that our Church is continuing to grow on a firm foundation, and we are all fortunate to be members of the caring community of faith at St. Stephen's-on-the-Hill.

Respectfully submitted

Bob Lepp,

Chair

D. MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

As you know, the Memorial Fund exists to receive gifts given in memory of a friend or loved one that have died. Some non-memorial gifts are also received, especially when there is a special need, such as the Sanctuary chairs. The accumulated funds are held in trust and invested in G.I.C.'s.

Funds received from planned givings i.e. from estates such as bequests and church annuities etc. do not come into the Memorial Fund but rather into the Special Gifts Fund, which is administered under a separate set of guidelines.

Some gifts to the Memorial Fund are designated for a specific purpose e.g. Gifts to the Piano Fund or the Sanctuary Chair project, or the Memorial Garden.

Other gifts are undesignated and these accumulate over time enabling the Memorial Fund to help fund a congregational project as need arises. This year our main contribution was to the Celebration Courtyard project, honoring the 50th Anniversary of our congregation.

All major initiatives proposed by the Memorial Committee must be approved by the Congregational Council.

Your generous gifts have helped make our church more beautiful and functional and our outdoor sacred spaces,--Memorial Garden, Celebration Courtyard and Labyrinth are a wonderful addition to our church home. We are constantly reminded of our history and of our "saints" who have contributed so much to our personal lives and the life of our congregation.

The committee members are: Leslie Bentley, Judith and Peter Barkla, Jane and Bob Brown, Brian Hare, Darlene and Bob Lepp, Joan and Bud Sumsion, Doreen and Peter Zaharuk, and Dale Skinner [ex officio]

Respectfully submitted

Doreen Zaharuk,

MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Memorial Garden, located under the Memorial Window, on the west side of the Church was established in 1997 and dedicated on our 45th Anniversary Sunday, April 1998.

Its use and care are the responsibility of the Memorial Committee and the labour and expenses of gardening are shared with the Flower Committee. We are especially indebted to Bob and Darlene Lepp, Bud and Joan Sumsion, and to Sharon Bagley.

The purpose of the garden is to be a place of beauty for the interment of the ashes of our loved ones. It is open to the community. The names of those whose ashes rest here are recorded in the Book of Remembrance and are as follows:

Linda Webber	1924 – 1996
Helen Margaret Cameron	1912 - 1998
Annie May South	1916 – 1998
Adrian (Art) F. Sietses	1921 – 1999
Howard Sweezie	1921 – 1999
Marion Bernice Parr	1913 – 1999
Isabel Telfer	1910 – 1999
Malcolm (Mac) Norris	1916 – 1990
Marienne (Izsak) Norris	1916 – 1994
Pamela Maye Patricia Bagley	1983 – 2001
William George Ross	1915 – 1993
Dorothy Katharine Ross	1915 – 2002
Jack William Higman	1923 – 2002
The Rev. Donald Clifford Wilson	1921 – 2002
Donald Fraser Malcolm	1944 – 2001
Sheila Jean (Parker) Hare	1943 – 2001
Mary Miles	1905 – 2002
Arni Ragnar Swanson	1921--2004
Austin Edgar (Pat) Pattison	1914 – 2003
Grace Lenore Westcott Pattison	1916 – 2003
John Deans Telfer	1920 – 2005
Nicholas Krook	1922 - 2006
Audrey Louise McMurray	1920 - 2007
Hung Book Koh	1916 - 2008
Leslie Christopher Parr	1921 - 2009

Respectfully submitted

Doreen Zaharuk

E. SPECIAL GIFTS COMMITTEE

The Special Gifts Committee, comprised of Bob Ogg, Allan Kirkham and Bud Wesley, Chair met several times through the past year. Our main objective for the year was to run a campaign to encourage members of the congregation to take advantage of the significant income tax breaks that is available to those who make charitable contributions to the church. We prepared a presentation for those interested in learning more about this opportunity, with the intent of sharing the information in late November, unfortunately the participation from the congregation was disappointing.

The Special Gifts Committee supplied funds through the four areas that the fund is responsible for, Local Administration, Local Outreach, Worship and Christian Education, and Canada and The World. We supported the following organizations; Habitant for Humanity; Compass; Belarus (children for the summer); the Honduras trip.

Respectfully submitted

Bud Wesley,

Chair

F. MINISTRY & PERSONNEL REPORT

The responsibilities and duties of the M&P committee, as outlined by the United Church of Canada Manual are to:

- provide a consultative and supportive agency for staff and members of the congregation;
- review working conditions and remuneration for staff and make appropriate recommendations to Council;
- oversee the relationship of the staff to members of the congregation and others;
- oversee the relationship between and among different members of the staff with respect to their responsibility and authority;
- consult with all members of staff about their plans for continuing education;
- review and evaluate annually the effectiveness of the staff as those persons and positions relate to the mission of the church as defined by Council;
- maintain close liaison with Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee; and
- review regularly the responsibilities of all staff and revise position descriptions when required or requested.

The M&P Committee has been very actively involved in each area of responsibility and duties as outlined above. Our first and most significant “assignment” of the past year was to ensure that the Youth of SSOTH continued to be well served, in view of the departure of Casey Barton in June. In response to this, a new Youth Ministry Proposal (put forward by Dale Skinner), as well as a team ministry model for Pastoral Care were implemented. This approach, in which Dale would serve as Youth Leader and which was envisioned to require eight hours of his time weekly, was embraced and approved by Council on a transitional basis. This required the addition of a part-time Pastoral Care Minister. After a thoughtful search of available candidates, this part-time contract position was accepted by Maryann Skinner. As a result of this, the roles of certain members of M&P were amended and our total number was expanded. We welcomed Susanne Sweatman, who graciously agreed to join M&P to represent Maryann. As well, Paul Hawn (who previously represented Casey Barton) agreed to remain as the M&P Youth Ministry representative, which involved representation of Youth Ministry issues relating to either Dale Skinner or Carla Ward. Bryan Howard continued to represent Dale on all matters, except those relating to Youth Ministry.

The members of the M&P Committee for 2008/2009 were:

Bryan Howard	liaison for Dale Skinner
Susanne Sweatman	liaison for Maryann Skinner
Paul Hawn	liaison for Carla Ward and Dale Skinner in matters related to Youth Ministry
Jane Brown	liaison for Jennifer Auty
Leslie Bentley	liaison for Sunju Koh
Cecilia Conlin	liaison for Pat Smith and Chair
Robin Walker	liaison for Edwin Valladares

Each year seems to be one of transition; however, this year has also definitely been one of embracing opportunities for openness and change. We are very thankful for our wonderful staff and the good work of the liaisons for each of our staff members.

Respectfully submitted,

Cecilia Conlin,
Chair

G. STEWARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

2008/9 was a busy year with several significant projects completed or continued. (Gee, this sounds just like last years report!)

On the positive side;

The furnace is in good shape and doesn't represent an imminent threat to either our comfort or our finances.

Rental of the facility has improved with the addition of the "Sportball" group that teaches interpersonal relationships, team work and sportsmanship to children between the ages of 18 months and 8 years.

The delightful and colourful banners in the sanctuary are *still* being cycled by Bud and Stew *who are still looking forward to some one else stepping in* to take on the job. (Y'know, you don't have to be a Steward to do this! Just someone who loves the church and is willing to spend a little time to participate in the beauty of the sanctuary.)

The fall cleanup went well and the spring cleanup is scheduled for May 2nd. As always there is room for more help. It's not that more people make the job go faster as much as it means we can get more things done.

Pat's patience with being displaced from her office during the renovations has been remarkable. Being tucked away in the Youth Office (Ha! And she thought a leaky office was bad) and sharing it with the Sunday Teller has been a real test of her endurance and sense of humour but has not affected her ability to perform her daily tasks. Pat is now back in her "new" office and is always on top of her need for signatures and immediately draws our attention to problems like sticky doors, leaks in the roof and provides direct guidance to Edwin for his work. Pat has personally handled renting of the facility to outside groups like the movie companies that has resulted in much needed wind fall income.

On the somewhat less positive side:

We had a minor flood in the basement confined to the furnace room, the short hall and the small storage room. This was immediately taken care of by Strone Restoration, thanks be to the Blinco's, and covered by our insurance less our \$500.00 deductible. On the good side we now have new carpet down the stairs and in the hall and new paint on the walls.

Remember the comment from last year's report "Pat's office has suffered yet another leak....." (Good grief!). After reviewing five estimates to repair the roof and interviewing the applicants we selected Denross Construction. Keith Seaman has known Dennis, the owner and site supervisor, as a competent, reliable and creative contractor for many years. As we got into the job, details of neglect and decay became increasingly obvious until the task ultimately expanded from a roof patch to a complete re roofing of the church. The flat roof over the Sunday School is the only remaining major task and is in the process of being completed as you read this report. The type of enhancements that Dennis is including in the work, such as roof drains in the low spots, will help prolong the life into the coming decades.

Quite a bit of the exterior woodwork that was needing attention has been replaced by the roofer as a necessary part of that job. Dennis has trimmed the tree branches that surrounded and overhung the church and the incoming power lines thus removing the hazards and long term problems associated with them.

The much longed for hand rail has once again slipped through the cracks. (Where do these awful puns keep coming from?) We have had some interest shown by one outside contractor but nothing has materialized at this time.

The relationship with the church staff has been excellent as usual. Edwin still has issues with the details of his job description. A resolution of this problem will have to be dealt with.

Once again we have had a flood in the lower basement and are now on our third and hopefully last sump pump. There was no insurance claim this time since the problem was caught quickly and the flooring dried out with a rented room dryer/dehumidifier.

The exterior of the building is still showing signs of needing attention. We will assess the degree of work required and produce a plan to correct the problem.

The church sign is still in limbo. It is continuing to deteriorate and no longer lights at all. Since this is the face we present to the street I feel that it is important to come up with an appropriate solution. Perhaps it will become part of the five year plan.

Cathy Lago has taken on the job of cutting the lawns this year and has expressed interest in clearing the snow next winter. It's good to see the fee stay in the church family.

Once again, with a little help from our friends we will continue to maintain and improve.

Respectfully submitted

Stewart Smith,

Chair

H. ELDERS COMMITTEE

Our Elders Committee is a diverse group of members who choose to serve others. We are responsible for identifying the needs of our congregation and ensuring that they receive the appropriate support. The Elders led by example as we welcome and care for our church family.

One of our concerns this year was our ability to respond to any health crisis at our Church. With the guidance of Flo Williams, we received and revised/simplified our “Emergency Response Protocol”. It is now published in our Elders Book (under the Hall table) and displayed on the wall above the first aid kit. Again thanks to Flo, the first aid kit has been replaced with up-to-date supplies. Please note – in the case of any emergency the Greeting Elder on Duty is in charge. Please respect their direction and only help if requested. We very much appreciate your cooperation during any episode.

We have endeavoured to serve communion once a month and have listened to your concerns. Thanks to Jayne Cook for continuing to prepare the elements.

We have used the whole congregation phone lists to maintain contact with everyone. They are also a valuable tool in the case of an emergency for quick contact. Thanks to Cathy Lago for maintaining these lists.

Pastoral Care is very important part of our mandate. We thankfully, welcomed Rev. Mayann Skinner to be a very supportive member of this team. The Elders, along with some other members of our congregation, do an admirable job of keeping in touch with members who we feel need our support. At any given time, we have contact with and concern for 20-25 members of our church family. We offer a special thanks to those who carry out this very vital ministry.

Our mandate also includes the following committees: Christian Development – Cathy Lago, Chair. Mandate includes direction of religious education of Sunday School, Youth and Adults. Worship – Jamie Laws, Chair. Mandate: direction of worship and music. Outreach – Lynda Appleby, Chair. Mandate: social action “Off the Hill”. Pastoral Care – whole committee; mandate confidential care and support of all our members. Card Ministry – Linda Wesley – mandate – sending appropriate messages to those who would benefit from them.

You’re dedicated Elders are: Victor Inbarajah, Vice-Chair, Phyllis Good, Secretary, Judith Barkla, Jamie Laws, Cathy Lago, Linda Wesley, Bill Fluhmann, Charmaine Kumar, Cathryn Laws, Ron Ormiston, Mary Stricker, Sachi Shimo-Takahara, Marj Swanson, John Tate, Don Whiteley, Flo Williams. Special thanks to Judith Barkla and John Tate who are retiring after years of faithful service.

It has been my joy to work with this very committed group. I thank them for their faith in me to be their leader and for their love and support to help me fulfill our mandate. I am delighted to pass this leadership role on to the extremely capable Susanne Sweetman.

Respectfully submitted
Anne Harrison,
Chair

I. PASTORAL CARE REPORT

A message from Rev. Maryann Skinner -

Assistant in Pastoral Care

It was in October of 2008 that I began working in your midst assisting with pastoral care. I have enjoyed continuing to meet you and getting to know many of you through various church events, scheduled meetings, luncheons, special services and a range of visits. Please feel free to introduce yourself to me if we haven't yet met.

I grew up near the North Shore of rural Nova Scotia- (near where one would get the Ferry-boat to PEI). I remember in grade seven, when my classmates and I were asked to write a descriptive paragraph about the place where we *live*. In so doing, I captured my *romance with home* in the little ditty I wrote called, "The Pastoral Serenity of Sundridge".

In keeping with alliteration and meaning - I sense a parallel to this serenity at St. Stephen's on-the-Hill. "The Pastoral Serenity at St. Stephen's on-the-Hill" is a gift that comes coupled with knowing that it is a place where we *live*. As the house of God, this is a place where we live in relationship with God and with one another. It is a place that nourishes and comforts us in body, mind and spirit - so that when we go out from our *lively* home to engage the world and to share God's good news ~our sails are filled and there is love *living* in our hearts.

Love grows here not only in what we see in the flower beds, the vestige of an orchard, the greenery, the trees, and the big lawn - but in what can be felt and known deep in our hearts. I've noticed that people at St. Stephen's on-the-Hill are seasoned in caring for one another. Over all, God's peace is good. The task of assisting with Pastoral Care in your midst continues to be my pleasure and is a blessing to the extent that I can say, amidst the burdens we bear- we are not alone, there is Pastoral Serenity at St. Stephen's on-the-Hill. God's peace is good. Thanks be to God for this blessing. ☺

Respectfully submitted,

Maryann Skinner,



J CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Christian Development has had another busy and enriching year. All levels of education have been successfully run by their leaders and teachers; a big thank-you goes out to all who have enriched so many members of our congregation.

Church School

Jennifer led the children through another fantastic year and obtained great attendance throughout. The support the children gave to the Honduras mission was lead by Jennifer as she taught them the meaning of helping others less fortunate. The Christmas Pageant was once again well received and worth the effort put in by Jennifer, teachers, children and parents. Midway through this year it was decided to change children's story time during the service. By omitting it some weeks Jennifer is able to teach more in depth lessons. Jennifer has brought to the attention of the committee that a big recruit for teachers will begin enabling her support for next season. And finally Easter was well received as Jennifer once again made special Easter eggs beginning on Palm Sunday and the children receiving them on Easter Sunday.

Junior Youth

Junior Youth has been led by Heike Reck and Marilyn Hawn throughout this year. They decided that food inspired attendance early on in the season and consequently fed muffins and drinks to the youth. They have experienced some attendance issues with junior youth members having to alternate parental houses and therefore not regularly in attendance. Junior Youth have also done extra activities throughout the year including a bake sale to raise funds for vitamins for Honduras and other social outings.

Youth Group

Dale Skinner and Carla Ward have led this group Sunday evenings throughout the year. They've all got to know each other well with many social events in the fall. They started with a pool party, then went to Canada's Wonderland, had a Hallowe'en party and worked together executing Santa's Brunch. They went to Muskoka Woods on Retreat in February. They have one more weekend planned for April to include a 30 hour famine.

Confirmation Class

Dale has led this small group of confirmands with meetings once a month throughout the year. Confirmation will be the beginning of May.

Nursery

Brenda Blinco successfully scheduled a roster of 6 volunteers to man the nursery. This usually worked with the exception of days when there were fussy babies and a toilet trainer needing to use the washroom. They are now working on more seating, possibly a picnic table for the toddlers.

Adult Programming

Dale has led a few different groups throughout the year. A study of Genesis took place in the fall. In February he led both an on-line and at-church group discussion of the book 'The Five Love Languages'. Now the adults are preparing for another discussion group on the book 'The Shack'.

Other Events

CD spear headed the Shrove Tuesday celebrations. A good time was had by all in attendance as they ate a pancake dinner, did some Mardi Gras dancing and then quietly took part in an Ash Wednesday service.

We as a committee continue to work hard to enrich and develop spiritual awareness and education at all levels within the congregation. We expect another full year of activities to come and I thank everyone involved for their dedication to this effort.

Cathy Lago

Chair

K. CHURCH SCHOOL REPORT

What a great year in Church School at St. Stephen's!

Each week we see a steady stream of young people gather on the steps at the front for a time with the Minister. Many of the kids are here almost every week and so naturally the friendships are growing. As we head out through the side doors, I am excited and relieved to have such talented and dedicated teachers to help share the stories of God's love and Jesus with the kids.

Highlights:

Our story schedule for the Fall and Advent, introduces us to some great characters of the Old Testament (Adam & Eve, Noah, David and Goliath, Moses, Daniel and more!). After Christmas, it is ALL about JESUS!! Stories about the shepherds and Maji, disciples, and other friends. The parables and miracles (even a lame man healed!) and all the lessons Jesus taught in between. We have spent time looking closely at the Bible, learned to be good disciples, held a Palm Parade and Journeyed to Jerusalem (following a map of Jesus' last days).

This year we have continued to successfully support our foster child Daba and her family in Africa with our weekly offerings, and have made a significant contribution to the 'Run the Dream'. We were also able to contribute dozens of containers of vitamins for the Honduran medical mission. Including the children in such wonderful outreach projects is important, to bring a sense of accomplishment, teamwork and to help grow a giving heart.

Sharing communion as a family in Church has become a lovely tradition and a meaningful experience for all ages at St. Stephen's.

In both Oct. and Feb. we celebrated 'Bring a Friend to Church' and had a great time greeting guests and making new friends.

During Advent, Church School is a festive place with crafts, movies, decorating, special snacks, carols and tons of fun! The 'Live Nativity', held on Dec. 14th was a success (even in the rain!), and we met several new families. I would encourage everyone to join us next year to help greet our neighbors at this calm and warm family evening!

To contribute to the Christmas worship time, the children were proud to produce a pageant telling the story of Jesus' birth, to the congregation on Dec. 21st.

After a relative 'study' of the events of Holy week, and the 'alleluias' of the resurrection, our Easter celebration was complete with treats, games and decorated Easter eggs.

We shared a great experience of 'Food's of the Bible' and the customs related to sharing a meal in Jesus' time. Teachers and children alike had a wonderful day, reclining and tasting foods made from traditional recipes.

In the weeks to come we look forward to welcoming Lynda Appleby to class to teach about our beautiful new labyrinth, and also Jonathan Howard will be coming to share stories from his run across Canada. Other topics coming up are the 'beauty of the earth', Pentecost, 'Putting God 1st!', Random kindness and friendship.

During these warmer spring/summer days we will enjoy our beautiful church grounds and have some outdoor lessons and fun play.

This year we offer heartfelt thanks to John Richardson, Joy Sieg, Allan Kirkham, and Lindsay Pfiffer, for sharing their many talents and for their dedication to children's programming at St. Stephen's. Special thanks also to Heike Reck for her continued support of the Junior Youth (grade 7 & 8) Sunday morning programming and social outings, throughout the year. We are truly blessed to have such wonderful, committed teachers among us.

Junior Youth:

Each Sunday morning the grade 7 & 8's at St. Stephen's, know that they can come to church, and be greeted by Heike and friends and share in a bible chat, a game and participate in what has become known as 'The Breakfast Club'. It is tough, at that age to get up so 'early' and we recognize the need for *fuel* when they arrive!!

Lately, the focus has been on Religions around the world. The Junior Youth have continued their support of Jonathan and his goals for Autism research and assisted with the packaging of vitamins for the Honduran Medical mission.

We have had several social outing this year for Junior Youth and are still planning for at least 2 more events. Still to come; is an afternoon of Go-Kart racing and a Christian Rock Concert and afternoon at Wonderland (June 27th)!

This year has been a successful one, in children's ministry, with the many hands and hearts who generously give of their time and talents each week. Attendance has been great, and we are grateful to the parents for their commitment to our programming and we feel blessed to have such wonderful children in our midst. Thanks to the congregation and to the Christian Development Committee, for their ongoing encouragement. Special thanks to Rev. Skinner for his continued support and guidance.

Respectfully submitted

Jennifer Auty,
Staff Associate

L. YOUTH GROUP REPORT

The past year was a time of transition for the Youth Ministry of St. Stephen's on-the-Hill as we bid farewell to Casey Barton and Rev. Skinner and Carla Ward shared the leadership of the youth group. Initially the group met on Sunday evenings at 7p.m. but it has since been determined that as we move into the next year, that the group may try meeting at another time. Lately the group has been meeting on Sunday afternoons with an average attendance of 8-10.

Over the past year, the youth group engaged in a number of events and activities. There was a welcome back barbecue and pool party in September and a trip to Canada's Wonderland in October. November included a trip to Laser Quest and the annual occasion of Santa's Brunch. I would like to extend a big "Thank You" to Carla Ward for all of her efforts to make it a success. In January a group of youth went to the Blizzard 2009 retreat at Muskoka Woods. In February the youth group made Valentine's gifts for the senior members of the congregation. In March we gathered to watch the "Gospel of John" movie, while April brought with it the 30 Hour Famine and our "Hunger Awareness Weekend." The expectation isn't that the youth group will be able to attend every event, but that during the course of the year, they will find something in which they can participate.

As we continue to be dedicated to the Youth Ministry of SSOTH, it is important to offer a regular youth program on Sunday mornings during worship. As families both old and new come to our church, it is important that we offer a youth program that encourages families to come to worship at the same time. We at St. Stephen's are well aware that our youth these days, need to balance the commitments of school, work, family and other activities with church life. So outside of the dedicated Sunday morning time, in the future our youth ministry shall focus on offering one or two other quality activities each month.

With the many challenges that face our Canadian youth in the early part of the 21st century, continue to pray for our youth and the work of our youth ministry. The work we do requires a vision beyond what we can see.

Respectfully submitted

Rev. Dale Skinner

M. WORSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

St. Stephen's-on-the-Hill is a church in transition and renewal. The 2008-2009 year marks some significant changes in the life of the church community. The Worship Committee has worked to assist the Minister and worship leaders during this period of transition and renewal. My thanks to the members of the Worship Committee: Sandra Blinco, Linda Lillak, and Brian Hare. The staff members of the committee include Sunju Koh, our Music Director and our Minister Rev. Dale Skinner. The purpose of the Worship Committee is to support the ministers and staff as they preside over our worship services and to provide an opportunity for members of the congregation to give feedback and suggestions for the enhancement of the worship experience of our church community.

This year saw Rev. Dale Skinner complete his first year as our Pastor. Dale has provided leadership in introducing change in the way that we worship. There have been and will be changes in both format and content of the worship services. At the same time there is reassurance that essential elements of worship and our purpose for coming together as a Christian community remain steadfast. The introduction of the power point presentations and the screen are helpful to the youth as well as the congregation at large. Changes in the frequency of celebrating the sacrament of communion and how we do it have been greeted with positive feedback. Dale has become more involved in the youth worship and ministry over the past year. We are grateful for Dale's energy and enthusiasm as our preacher.

Once again we called on the inspired talent of our own congregation to provide leadership for our summer services. I want to thank the Chancel Choir, Rick Landers, Brendan Cunningham, Jonathan Howard and Susanne Sweatman. I also want to thank our piano accompanists: Ruth Hopkins, Carolyn Piitz and Guy Carleton. We are grateful for your message and your music on Sunday during the summer.

We are grateful for worship leadership when Dale has to be absent on an assignment with the Youth Group or elsewhere. Some of our guest preachers this year have included: The Rev. Dr. Jim Campbell on December 28, 2008; Emmanuel College Theology student Carmen Palmer on February 1; the St. Stephen's Mission Team to Honduras on February 22; the Outreach Committee; the Habitat for Humanity Group; Jonathan Howard for Awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Rick Landers preaches on May 17 whilst Rev. Dale and Rev. Maryann Skinner attend the Doctoral Convocation ceremonies at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. Rev. Dale will return to us as Rev. Dr. Dale Skinner on May 24. Congratulations to Dale, Maryann and Leah on this very significant achievement.

On May 3, 2009, we celebrated the 51st anniversary as a church community within the United Church of Canada. Our special guest preacher was the Rev. Dr. Peter Wyatt, former Principal of Emmanuel College and church historian. He is our expert on the life of John Calvin, who was here 500 years ago in 1509. He preached on the relevance of John Calvin's work in 2009. We also dedicated the new labyrinth and courtyard to the glory of God and in gratitude for our 50th anniversary.

As a congregation, we benefit from the leadership of Rev. Dale Skinner, our Staff Associate Jennifer Auty and Sunju Koh, our Music Director. Unseen in our worship services is the work of Rev. Maryann Skinner, our Pastoral Care Minister; Pat Smith our Office Administrator; and Edwin Valladares our Church Officer, who play an important role in supporting each and every worship service. We also benefit from the members of the congregation who take part in the worship services by reading the scripture, by serving communion, by leading the children's story, by doing the duties on the duty roster, by bringing us announcements and by worshipping with us every Sunday. Thank you to all you all for being part of the worship community.

The Worship Committee usually meets on the first Tuesday of each month from September to June. We regularly review the recent church services and plan for the future. Your feedback is important to us. If you have comments for us, please speak to a member of the committee. We encourage you our members, as well as the Elders, Congregational Council and our staff and minister to give us guidance.

Rev. Dale Skinner is a minister who has already demonstrated his priorities of feeding the faithful, reaching out to the new "seekers", of a faith community, supporting the music ministry and reaching out in community and mission service. Dale has put a high priority on excellence in the worship experience. The Worship Committee is committed to supporting the minister and the congregation and by the grace of God, we will do our best.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Laws,

Chair

N. OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Once again this year the Outreach Ministry Committee has been busy with projects and educating the congregation about the needs in our City and the wider world. The Compass continues to be our major local outreach project. The congregational budget allocates \$4,000 for our commitment to support the Compass. Another \$500 comes out of the Special Gift Fund. Food, brought in by members of the congregation, and placed in the blue plastic bin in the narthex, is taken to the Compass for the food bank that the Compass operates. This year we have decided to focus the last Sunday of the month for people to bring in food donations for the Compass. Jyll Norris continues to be on the Board of Directors of the Compass. The CBC Christmas program was a huge success, bringing people into our church, and raising funds for the Compass.

This past year we have been serving Fair Trade coffee at our coffee hour and church functions. The Outreach Ministry purchases the coffee from a United Church supplier. As the St. Stephen's UCW has bought the coffee hour coffee, for many years, they now make an annual contribution to our funds to assist with the cost of "coffee hour" after church. This winter we began to buy coffee from the Creemore Coffee Company. They have designed a private label for us so the coffee we sell after church, on some Sundays, has our own St. Stephen's label on it. We sell it for just a bit above cost as we feel it helps us to promote the purchase of fair trade coffee and all the benefits the coffee workers gain when they are paid a fair wage for their work.

The Norris/Cunningham family hosted a youth from Belarus. This respite visit helps the youth, or child, who comes to Canada, breathe our fresh Canadian air and eat food that has not been contaminated by the nuclear disaster, even though the disaster was many years ago. The Council at St. Stephen's has committed \$1,000 a year to any family that brings a child here for this respite care. This program may not continue as some family in the USA attempted to keep their child so the Government of Belarus has terminated the program.

The Outreach Ministry continues to financially support the Medical Mission to Honduras. This past November four members of St. Stephen's registered with Medical Ministry International for the mission. This year we sent \$1,000 from the Special Gifts Fund, ahead of the four women that volunteered for the mission. This money helps the Honduran Director to buy medicine, and supplies, to be used during the 8 ½ days that the clinic sees patients. The women, from St. Stephen's, who went on the 2008 November medical mission, were Jane Falby, Leslie Bentley, Susanne Sweatman and Lynda Appleby. These women led a service this past winter with pictures and stories to share their experiences with the congregation that was very warmly received.

Habitat for Humanity has been on the agenda for our meetings each time we meet. The donated land, here in Mississauga, was finally secured and the home is being built this spring. \$1,000 was contributed by this congregation toward the cost of the build. Many folks have volunteered to help out with the build on Saturday on June 13th and others will be making lunch for the volunteers on several days as well.

We continue to befriend the Azizi family and their seven children. The father is from Afghanistan and has been attending English classes with the hope of getting a job in the near future. We sent a cheque for \$250 just before school started in September to assist them with back to school needs. They are very grateful for all that we have done for them.

At the House Tour in September the Outreach Ministry handed out pine seedlings to those who came to the tea room. The hope was that people would plant them and remember our congregation's gift to them. Don Blenkarn helped us to get the trees at a very reasonable cost. Our future letterhead has a small tree on it with the words "Love Grows Here" under the tree so our gift ties into that.

The White Gift offerings went to The Open Door once again. The Open Door is a Christian drop in center at Square One. They have a Christmas dinner each year and appreciate our White Gifts, when they make up their gift bags for those who attend.

The Christmas Special Offering, for the second year, went to the Stephen Lewis Grandmothers Campaign. The funds raised are used to support the many, many grandmothers who are left to raise their grandchildren as the parents have died from Aids. Once again our congregation gave from their hearts and we sent a cheque for \$1,850 to this cause.

A group went out singing their Christmas Carol-O-Grams again this year. Not only is this a fun event for both the singers and the recipients but the money raised went to the Benevolent Fund.

In February this year Brendan Cunningham returned to a Habitat for Humanity build in New Orleans. We gave him \$300 to help cover his costs. He wrote us a thank you letter when he returned expressing his appreciation for our financial help and telling us how the outreach done was so personally rewarding and thanks us on behalf of the residents of Bon Jovi Boulevard where the homes were built.

A new program that we decided to support is a Breakfast program at a school in south eastern Mississauga. Joy Sieg has co-ordinated this initiative. She has three volunteers helping her to serve breakfast to 30 children who are registered for the program. They volunteer two mornings each week. We began our commitment by sending the school \$250 to assist with the purchase of food for these children.

At the end of last year we sent a donation to Interim Place, a donation to the Elizabeth Fry Society, and a donation to Food Path.

It sure seems like we had a busy year, as I make up this report, but the committee members are enthusiastic and there are many needs when we get "Off the Hill". Watch out for the new tee shirts we have had made for when we are "Off the Hill". After all we are the Outreach Ministry and we want people to know what wonderful people there are at St. Stephen's on-the-Hill! As I write this we are preparing our yearly Outreach Ministry Sunday service with a topic of food, or the lack of it for so many.

Submitted by Lynda Appleby, Chair, Jyll Norris, Secretary, and members Barry Tatchell, Joy Sieg, John Rutter, John Tate and our enthusiastic minister Rev. Dale, soon to be Dr. Dale.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda Appleby,

Chair

O. CHURCH ROLL

(Dates taken from May 28, 2008 to May 3, 2009)

THOSE RECEIVED BY THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Abigail Dziedzic

Christopher Dziedzic

Emma Joan Maria Noltie

Janna Charlotte Grace Noltie

Sadie Susan Deborah Schnarr

Nathan Grant Williamson

THOSE AFFIRMING THEIR INFANT BAPTISM (CONFIRMATION)

Matthew Kenneth Kumar

Megan Alexa Pfiffer

Krista Leigh Carleton Smith

THOSE JOINING BY TRANSFER, PROFESSION OF FAITH, RE-AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Barbara McMurray

Harry McMurray

Deborah Schnarr

Kimberly Schnarr

MARRIAGES

Abner Kashingola/Selma Sakaria

Scott Maxwell/Jamie Morin

DEATHS

James Fasken Brydon

Francis Gordon Coyle

Hung Bok Koh

Patricia Helen Nelson

Leslie Christopher Parr

Total households under pastoral care: 178

Total membership: 288

Number Received by Profession of Faith, (including Confirmation), Re-affirmation:7

Number removed (death, transfer, other):6

P. PRESBYTERY REPORT

St. Stephen's had four members of Halton Presbytery this year. Rev. Dale Skinner, as active clergy, Lynda Appleby, as retired diaconal minister and Jennifer Auty, as Staff Associate, are automatically members. Dale serves on the Candidacy and Vocations Committee; I have served as web master, and as chair of the Mission Support Committee. In those roles I also serve on the Presbytery Executive. We are entitled to one additional lay representative, but have not found anyone to fill that position this year.

This year our chair, Rev. Morar Murray-Hayes, has worked to make meetings more useful, interesting, and – perhaps most challenging – short! She has continued the trend of moving administrative items to the executive, eliminating them from the full court meetings, and using the full meetings for speakers, educational opportunities and discussions that really need and deserve full participation.

We also introduced a new program called “4th at 4” - a series of speakers and dinners arranged starting at 4:00p.m., before each Presbytery meeting. Clergy and their families were provided free dinners, and other arrangements such as baby-sitting and homework supervision, to allow as many as possible to participate. The intent was to try to address some of the feelings of isolation that many clergy report as one of the main problems they encounter in their work. (Non-clergy, including non-presbytery members, are also welcome to attend.) The sessions were quite well attended, and will probably be continued.

Our search for a Mission Development Officer finally was completed successfully, and we covenanted with Rev. Peter Hoyle this fall. Peter was minister at Appleby United in Burlington, and recently spent a few years working in Guatemala. Since starting as MDO Peter has been very active pursuing a variety of areas of mission growth in our presbytery. This has included monitoring the major population development that is being pursued in north Oakville, addressing ways that our congregations can pursue growth more effectively, and investigating ways of strengthening child and youth programs in our presbytery.

Our Strategic Mission Development Committee has recently proposed that we contract with a consultant to investigate improving communications within the presbytery. There is a feeling that there is a great deal of work, and many interesting programs, happening in various congregations and in presbytery, that should be better known both within the church, and in the general population beyond the church.

Susanne Sweatman and I participated in several meetings of the South Mississauga Church group, in which four churches in our area investigated ways to co-operate. Some programs were pursued, but ultimately it was decided that the meetings were not effective, and have been discontinued.

In 2008 St. Stephen's contributed \$50,573 to the Mission and Stewardship fund – the seventh largest contributor in the presbytery. Thanks to everyone for supporting this important fund within our church. The 2008 national total was about \$29.7 million – somewhat less than the object of \$31.5M. The target for 2009 is \$32.5M. It will be very challenging to meet this goal, and everyone's support is welcome and encouraged.

In June I will take on the role of Chair Elect of Presbytery, and if all goes as planned, I will become Chair in June, 2010. This will be a great challenge, and I ask for you support and prayers.

Thank you for the privilege of being one of your Presbytery representatives.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Curran

Q. UNITED CHURCH WOMEN'S REPORT

Our sixty five UCW members have had a wonderful year celebrating the 50th anniversary of St. Stephen's. We have participated in all the fundraising events, and contributed to our goals of landscaping and a courtyard patio. Our UCW "On the Hill" outreach included: a cabinet in the Narthex, craft sale, a potluck dinner, seniors' luncheon, dessert bridge, Sunday refreshments, kitchen and flower budget, patio donation, 50th anniversary donation, roof donation.

The Fidelios hosted their annual Dessert Bridge on the 3rd Wednesday in April. This is always a sold-out event where everyone enjoys delicious home-made desserts, card games, and fellowship. A gracious donation from this event is given to fund our UCW.

In May, our Genesis ladies sold beautiful Hydrangeas which they distributed May 11, and donated the profits to the anniversary project.

Between the practice and the concert May 4, Nightlights served dinner to all choir members, and refreshments were also served in the Common Room following the wonderful music. Thanks especially to Karen Pensenev, who lead the Anniversary Committee, and to Terry McClintock and Marilyn Fourie who supplied us with amazing archives, pictures and a 50th anniversary newsletter.

In June, the UCW celebrated our anniversary year with an olde-fashioned potluck dinner. This was very well attended and everyone enjoyed the plentiful buffet. After dinner, we had games, like matching an old picture to a current member, and searching through purses to find certain items. Our entertainment after the June 11 dinner was our own St. Stephen's Washboard Hillbilly Band. About eight women from the congregation dressed up like hillbillies and played instruments, singing their own brand of music. Lots of fun and lots of laughs! We also were entertained by our Friendship Group who reminisced about their memories of UCW events from the past. Many other women joined in with their humorous and touching stories as well. It was a great evening of fellowship and remembrances of past members.

In October, four of our members went to Honduras again on a medical mission trip for two weeks. The Nightlights packaged vitamins for both Honduran adults and children during one of their meetings. Other groups supported our missionaries with donations of money and supplies. We were grateful for their safe return, and these four women have been invited to speak about their experience at many other meetings throughout the year.

Our 50th Anniversary wound up with a Gala Dinner/Dance Celebration hosted by the Genesis ladies and held at Credit Valley Golf Club. About 130 attended the wonderful evening and really enjoyed socializing outside of church and meeting new people from the congregation.

An annual event, our Seniors' Lunch was again held on December 4 and hosted by Genesis to honour all our senior members in the congregation.

They were served a wonderful meal and enjoyed carol singing as well as fellowship. At Santa's Brunch, our Sew 'n Sews ladies sold their beautiful crafts that they work so hard making throughout the year. A gracious donation was given to UCW funds. This group also donated a lovely glass display case to the church, which is in the Narthex in honour of the 50th anniversary. It is used by any group to display a book, a handmade item or promote a church event.

Within our five UCW groups who usually meet once a month, are a few smaller groups: Kitchen: who weekly clean and replenish supplies, Flower: who supply all of us with beautiful arrangements around the cross, and decorations throughout the year, and Reception: who organize refreshments and support to those families mourning a loss.

Our St. Stephen's UCW continues to combine with the Outreach Committee to serve Fair Trade Coffee on Sundays in support of local growers. This year our "Off the Hill" donations were: Community Church Volunteers, Interim Place, Ian Anderson House, Armagh House, Honduras, Autism Society, God's Golden Acres (Africa), and to Presbytery (we hosted the Annual Presbytery Meeting and Dinner on Tuesday, March 24), as well as needy families within our community.

Many of the women at St. Stephen's volunteer to help with church activities and are wonderful ladies who provide a very caring support system to each other and many others within the church.

My thanks to the UCW Executive: Marj Swanson (Friendship), Flo Williams and Barb Sinclair (Fidelios), Anne Carleton (Sew 'n Sews), Carol Pauptit and Sharon Allum (Genesis), Karen Pensenev (Nightlights), Sharon Bagley (Flowers), Flo Williams (Reception), Kitchen (Sheila Smith/Jan Barclay), Joy Sieg (amazing secretary) and Karen McCreight (amazing treasurer). You give me so much support and encouragement.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gwen Laing,

President

R. 50TH ANNIVERSARY

This is a follow-on report to last year's Annual Report which detailed our initial planning and early events. 2008 saw the fulfillment of the celebration of our 50 years through; events that reached out to the community, events that celebrated our congregational life and a separate project to build something permanent to remind our congregation of our longevity and commitment to St. Stephen's. Our theme was; *"From roots of faith to seeds of hope; God's love grows here"*.

Herein a brief record of everything that happened during our anniversary year:

December 2007

Opening ceremony – banners kindly donated by Carl Pauptit and installed by Stew Smith and Bud Sumsion.

April '08

A spring sale of hydrangea plants by the Genesis group raised money for the Anniversary Project.

May '08

The Anniversary Concert – the concert that outdid all expectations! With former choir members plus our own choir we grew to 50 voices. Sunju planned a magnificent program with several guest soloists. Nightlights catered a special dinner for everyone in the Common Room between practice and performance and all enjoyed a time of relaxation and friendship. This event took tremendous support from the choir, the Nightlights and countless others who helped with organization, set-up, seating, refreshments etc.

The Anniversary Sunday Service - this event took more planning than a state visit – but it was worth it! Invitations went out to all former members and our past ministers. We had a full-house on a beautiful May Sunday morning. People gathered on the front lawn for coffee and chats – they were escorted into the service, beautiful music flowed throughout, with guest appearances by Christie Han and Jason Lee, communion was served by all our past and present ministers; Albion Wright, Deanna & Paul Wilson, Jim Perry, Bruce McLeod, Dale Skinner. It would never have been possible without direction and guidance from Susanne Sweatman and all who helped with the welcome coffee & greeting, ushering, stunning flowers, pictures, lunch reception & cleanup, hydrangea pickup, anniversary picture/note sales, video photography, sound system and taping, invitation support and bulletin, invitations, limited edition prints and notes.

Icing on the cake came from the Special Addition Anniversary Newsletter. Thanks to our dynamic editing duo of Marilyn Fourie & Terry McClintock – a newsletter was provided to all attendees. It contained wonderful pictures, stories and history gathered from the archives of St. Stephen's.

Out of these 2 wonderful events a special DVD edition was created. This wonderful memento was the brainchild of Kathryn Howard – edited, produced and distributed entirely by the Howard family as a fund-raiser for the Anniversary Project.

June '08

UCW Old Fashioned Pot Luck Supper was the contribution from the UCW Executive towards the anniversary. This was spearheaded by Gwen Laing and her UCW Executive. It was a delightful event – attended by over 60 ladies who enjoyed a wonderful summer evening of good food, friendship and laughter. Entertainment was entirely home-grown with a guest appearance by the resurrected "Gut-bucket Band" and wonderful stories from our UCW ladies.

September '08

The Welcome Back Service – our new church year opened with a rousing service, music provided by the “Bracebridge Old Fashioned Gospel Band”. This was spearheaded by Sharon Allum and a hot dog lunch was provided that allowed everyone to mingle in the Common Room for conversation and fellowship.

November '08

50th Anniversary Gala Dinner/Dance was held at the Credit Valley Golf Club. It was enthusiastically supported by the congregation and everyone felt it was a great way to wrap up our year. All elements of the event (location, tickets, food, decorations and music) were coordinated by a team from Genesis, which included Carol Paupit, Sharon Alum, Jennifer Auty, Sharon Bagley, Phyllis Good, along with support from many others in the congregation.

December '08

The CBC Christmas Carol was a new event for St. Stephen's. We approached the CBC, emails went back and forth and an event was born. We requested help with production, auditioning for readers, lighting and sound, refreshments, tickets and advertising and once again our congregation stepped forward. We were grateful for the support of Judy Darragh, Outreach Committee, Sunju and the choir, Marilyn Fourie, Bob Cunningham and our very own prime time players; Dale Skinner, Rick Landers, Luke Penseny, Ruth Hopkins and Mary Wiens from CBC. It was a great event and raised \$1200 for the Compass.

Project Thinspace – the building of our Courtyard

This project grew out of a sermon Dale gave in 2007 on “thin space”. It inspired several people in the congregation to want to create our very own thin space here at St. Stephen's. Initial meetings were held with interested members of the congregation. As the planning progressed we took an initial draft forward to Council for approval. Another round of meetings took place in the spring to move the draft to a clear plan. A survey was provided to the congregation for their input, this was tabulated and went into the final version of the plan presented and approved at the Congregational meeting in June '08. Work was initiated in the summer and completed in September. It is with great thanks to Paul Hawn for his vision, drive and expertise, to all who played critical roles through the life of this project (especially Stu and Bud for the countless hours they put in) and all the participants in the meetings and the survey.

Special mention needs to be made for the generous support from the congregation through the purchase of “bricks”, a “specific component” of the Courtyard (these gifts have been recorded in the Memorial Book), purchases of prints, note paper, hydrangeas and DVDs.

I am grateful to the members of the anniversary committee for their support and guidance; Alan Kirkham, Susanne Sweatman, Brian Hare, Leslie Bentley, Sheila Smith, Carolyn Piitz, Marilyn Fourie, Terry McClintock, Dale Skinner.

So many people contributed to this Anniversary year – more than can ever be individually mentioned (please forgive any omissions). I was privileged to work with individuals both on and Off the Hill and to help create a small legacy for the next 50 years.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Penseny