



Contact

It's time to be United

It's time to be United! So was the slogan that brought 350 people to the Sanderson Centre in Brantford for a combined worship Service the first Sunday in November! Energetic! Memorable!

It was a wonderful event: orchestra, massed choir, the Moderator - The Right Reverend Gary Paterson, all the area United Church clergy and congregations that chose to be involved.

The idea was born in the '80's, when The Right Rev. Sang Chul Lee was Moderator and repeated in the late '90s when The Right Rev. Bill Phipps was Moderator. Both of these Church leaders had been guest preachers at the Sanderson in a similar event.

Stephen Iverson and Paul Crittenden, both ministers at St Andrew's United in Brantford, decided it was time to have this celebration again. The logistics were interesting! Time was of the essence. The churches in Brantford were being challenged in many ways, as they are across Canada. While the Spirit is always present, spirits were low with falling

attendance, too many churches for the population, and other sensitive factors. It was time to regroup, reenergize and refocus.

To that end, having secured the Sanderson Centre, a major arts centre in Brantford with a seating capacity of some 1100; and the Moderator - the date was set. The first Sunday in November was the target towards which all our energies had to be directed. Now to involve the other congregations! To that end, a meeting was held with a group called United United Churches! Yes, that's their name. The original idea was to close all the area churches and have a morning service in one place. It was soon clear that the afternoon was a better time because of anniversaries and other commitments that were cast in stone. After some discussion, United United Churches enthusiastically gave this project their full support.

Now with a date and a time, after many meetings and shared ideas, the dream became a reality.

An anthem was written by Mr. Greg Walshaw, St.

Andrew's Director of Music; liturgy was devised so communion would be served with dignity yet efficiently, involving all the area clergy; food bank baskets were at the door (we loaded them with 282 pounds of food) and all was ready - we hoped.

The Rev. Iverson was the master of ceremonies, assisted by Robert Lawson. The crowd was ready. The dignitaries, representatives of all levels of government brought greetings, Erie Presbytery and Hamilton Conference brought their greetings. All was in hand! Then the children's story time came. Rev. Iverson sang and played his guitar. Soon the spirit soared and even the Moderator got up and danced with the young people. What a moment! We knew the rest would be ok.

It was more than ok. The singing, the readings and the communion brought us together beautifully.

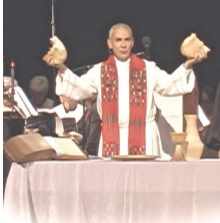
Then the Moderator spoke. His talk ranged from poetry (which we expected) through music theory (how even seemingly dissonant notes



The Right Reverend Gary Paterson

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The Right Reverend
Gary Paterson

can be harmonized with skill) to Churches cooperating one with the other in these changing times. How the congregations' voices soared in the singing of the closing hymn – Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah. Something had changed because of this service.

The comments made afterwards were many and varied, but all had the same theme. "How strong we are together!" "We must do this more often!" "Wow!"

Financially, the event might break even. Presbytery and conference both promised

to help; churches that could, pitched in; some private donors contributed.

The event went far beyond money. The goodwill and the feeling of oneness cannot be overestimated. The Spirit was there! The energy was contagious! Healing, helping and wholeness were in process. In the debriefing afterwards, the recommendation was to do it again when the next Moderator is elected. Sounds like a great idea. Stay tuned.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

By the Rev. Dr. D Paul Crittenden

Comprehensive Review—an Update

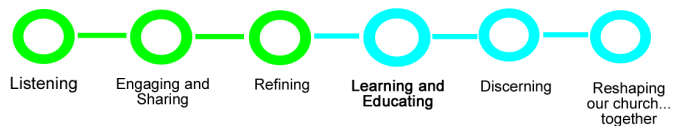
When the 42nd General Council meets in August 2015 in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, there will be significant discussions about the future of the United Church!

The 41st General Council in 2012 directed the General Council Executive to appoint a task group to examine the vision and circumstances of the United Church and to develop a report and recommendations for the 42nd General Council. Through the nomination process a group of eight United Church members from across the country, including our Moderator, Gary Paterson, were appointed to the Comprehensive Task Group. Profiles of the committee members are posted on the General Council Website: <http://www.united-church.ca/general-council/gc41/comp-review/members>.

Almost one year ago, in February 2014, the Task Group released its initial discussion paper, "Fishing on the Other Side," seeking feedback from Presbyteries. In May the Task Group distributed discussion materials in "Trust God; Trust the Body" (borrowing Hamilton Conference's 2014 theme) to Conferences and invited them to "consider how, in a renewed structure, The United Church of Canada could best use the varieties of our gifts, services, and activities to build up the body."

The Comprehensive Review Task Group has heard from *the Body*. Over the summer

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW TIMELINE



and fall it carefully considered the feedback from Presbyteries (see "Wisdom from Presbyteries: <http://www.united-church.ca/files/general-council/gc41/comp-review/wisdom-presbytery.pdf>) and Conferences (see "Wisdom from Conferences: <http://www.united-church.ca/files/general-council/gc41/comp-review/wisdom-conference.pdf>), refined its ideas, and began to prepare a report and recommendations which it anticipates releasing in March 2015. The broad directions the committee intends to recommend are outlined in the news update, "Comprehensive Review Update: November 2014," which can be found on the General Council Website: <http://www.united-church.ca/communications/news/general/141125-0>.

The "Learning and Educating" phase of the process happens this spring. Discerning will be the important task entrusted to Commissioners to the 42nd General Council in August. If General Council decides to make major changes to the United Church *Basis of Union*, remits to congregations and Presbyteries would follow.

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DEADLINES

Oct. issue—Sept. 15
Jan. issue—Dec. 15
Mar. issue—Feb. 15
June issue—May 15

For a PDF version of this document, Conference information and highlights, visit our website at: www.hamconf.org

This document may be copied.

You are encouraged to participate in the online forum *United Future!* Visit: <http://www.unitedfuture.ca/>. Here you'll find videos, discussion forums, and opportunities to share your thoughts as well as information about the

process, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to reports and discussion papers. Watch for the release of the Comprehensive Review report and recommendations later this winter; time will be tight for

Presbyteries to formally respond before General Council meets in August!

*By Barbara Hampson,
Hamilton Conference
Communication Program
Support*

Conference Archives solves your space problems

Are you running out of space in the church office? Are the cupboards, closets and file cabinets full of church registers, record books and files that no one consults? You know that these church records need to be kept, but if there was just some way to find more storage space. . .

Well, there is a solution – send these records to your Conference Archives.

The United Church of Canada Archives, located at 40 Oak Street, Toronto is your Conference Archives. The Archives is the official repository for the historic records of the Central Ontario Conferences – Bay of Quinte, Hamilton, London, Manitou, and Toronto – and their presbyteries and pastoral charges.

Recently constructed in 2013, the Archives offers a permanent, safe, and environmentally-controlled home for your congregation's records. Records sent to the Archives are placed in acid-free folders and containers and then stored in the proper temperature and humidity to ensure their long-term preservation.

By sending your records to the Archives, you are not just clearing space at your

church. The records that your congregation creates, if managed and preserved properly, will provide long-lasting historical evidence of our congregations, our faith, our communities and our country's social fabric.

The United Church of Canada has long understood that the records created as part of the work of the Church have historical and often legal value, and thus has included in the *Manual* that records should be regularly sent to the appropriate Conference Archives to be preserved and made available to researchers – genealogists, local historians, academics, and theologians.

But what should be sent and when?

Archival records include baptismal, marriage and burial registers, membership records, board and committee minutes and correspondence, and church group records, among others. (For a more detailed listing, visit the Resources for Congregations on the Archives website at <http://www.united-church.ca/local/archives/resources>.) These records should be sent to the Archives every seven years or so. By sending records regularly, you are reducing the

risk of loss or damage that may result from pipe leaks, fires, or other unforeseeable events that may unfortunately take place at your church.

The Archives recognizes that it is often difficult to let these records go, even if it will free up storage space. There is a natural tendency to want to keep our histories close to us; however, once your records are held at the Archives, your histories will form part of the larger United Church legacy. Meanwhile, the Archives will provide you with copies of records for church work or celebrations when needed.

So this New Year, clean out those closets and cabinets and help preserve the historical legacy of your church and the United Church of Canada.

If you have any questions about the United Church of Canada Archives or about what records should be sent to the Archives, contact the Archives at archives@united-church.ca or call at 416-644-3140.

*By Erin Greeno,
Central Ontario
Conferences Archivist*



“The Archives offers a permanent, safe, and environmentally-controlled home for your congregation’s records.”

Financial Development Officer Supports Hamilton Conference Congregations



Lisa Di Veto,
Financial
Development Officer,
The United Church of
Canada

**“Your church
may be eligible
to apply to a
variety of
funding sources
to assist with
capital and
program needs.”**

As the United Church's Financial Development Officer for Hamilton Conference, I have the rewarding opportunity to work with congregations in strengthening their sustainability. Approaches we are taking together have contributed to a \$3.75 million increase in revenue, as reported in the 2013 Year Book, over revenue of the prior year. In total, \$49 million was generated by Hamilton Conference congregations, members and United Church Women (UCW) groups. It's exciting to see so many of our congregations increasing revenue and managing their resources effectively as a result of your efforts.

Leadership Meeting

If your congregation is interested in exploring ways to strengthen its financial position, I provide a free two-hour Leadership Meeting with a congregation's minister(s), chairs and others with responsibility for supporting their church. At this meeting, the financial status of the congregation is reviewed, revenue generation opportunities are explored and legacy giving options are discussed. This has proven to be a very helpful initiative for churches seeking new sources of revenue and options for stewardship and fundraising strategies throughout the year. Please contact me to book your 2015 appointment or discuss the many other ways I may assist your congregation.

Legacy Giving

Hamilton Conference members often wish to arrange a gift for their congregation in their wills, purchase annuities or make donations of shares. I'm delighted to assist members with their thoughtful arrangements in support of the church's future. Last year, 66 Hamilton Conference members left over \$2 million to their congregations in bequests. If you would like to promote the benefits of legacy giving to your members, please contact me to arrange a workshop or help establish your congregation's Legacy Giving Pillars. If you're a member wishing to leave a lasting legacy, please call me to discuss your potential gift.

Mission and Service

Hamilton Conference UCW groups, members and congregations generously contribute more than \$3 million annually for Mission and Service. Your contributions advance the Church's mission in Canada and countries around the world. Contact me for resources in support of this vital fund.

Grants for Congregations

Your church may be eligible to apply to a variety of funding sources to assist with capital and program needs. Hamilton Conference congregations have played a leadership role in developing successful grant proposals that have been awarded significant funds for

renovations and program costs. It's a pleasure to welcome congregational leaders and members to our popular grant workshops and advise you on developing your proposals. Please feel free to contact me at any time to explore opportunities available to you.

Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ)

(CSJ) is a federal grant accepting applications until January 30th. Last year, 22 Ontario United Church congregations collectively received approximately \$150,000 in CSJ funds for summer student wages. If your congregation would benefit from student assistance with vacation bible school, camp, fundraising and stewardship initiatives, writing bulletins, compiling mailing lists, implementing special events, building and property maintenance etc., please consider applying. Key points are as follows:

- A maximum of \$7,040 per student is available
- CSJ pays minimum wage of \$11.00 per hour
- Students must be engaged full time: 30-40 hours per week
- Employment must be from 6 to 16 weeks
- The program is for students 15 to 30 years of age who are full time students intending to return to studies the next school year

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The application and guide are online at: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/yi/yep/programs/scppp.shtml>. Your application must reflect local priorities which can be found at: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/yi/yep/programs/csj/index.shtml>.

I hope the information above is helpful and I look forward to working with your congregation in the coming months!

By Lisa Di Veto
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Agenda & Business Committee has new Chair & new location for the Annual Meeting

Leslie MacDonald is the new chair of Agenda and Business for Hamilton Conference. Although a younger member of the Conference, she has attended over 20 annual meetings. Leslie was eight weeks old at her first Conference meeting. At her second Conference meeting (a year later), she learned to walk and also attempted to stop debate in 1988 by unhooking the sound system at Maritime Conference. To date Leslie has lived within the bounds of six Conferences and has lived within the bounds of all of the Presbyteries of Hamilton Conference except Hamilton.

Leslie is currently a member of Wesley United Church in Bruce Presbytery. She has served on the agenda and business committee for the past seven years. Leslie has attended General Council as part of the children's program in 2000 and attended the last general council as a Commissioner from Hamilton Conference.



Leslie is a civil engineer, graduating from the University of Waterloo in 2012. Leslie is currently working on the Keeyask Generating Station Project (on the Nelson River) in Northern Manitoba. (It's a good thing she likes snow). Leslie and her fiancé are planning their wedding for September 2015.

On Friday, November 29th, a group from your Agenda and Business committee and Local Arrangements Committee went for a site visit at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, to start planning the on-site aspects of the 2015 Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference. The group was met by friendly staff and the campus had a lively atmosphere with the campus visits for prospective students, which were also taking place that day. The group toured the gymnasium that will be used for the primary meeting space, the cafeteria where we will have our meals, and the auditorium that we will be using for our Service of New Ministries, as well as various other rooms that we will be using for the meeting.

The Agenda and Business committee has met a couple of times this fall and will continue working through the winter and spring to plan our 2015 Annual Meeting. We are also pleased to have The Very Rev. Dr. Lois Wilson joining us as our speaker at the Service of New Ministries. The Agenda and Business Committee looks forward to seeing all of you at the 2015 Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference, May 29th - 31st at Redeemer University College in Ancaster.

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“We are pleased to have the Very Rev. Dr. Lois Wilson joining us as our speaker at the Service of New Ministries.”

A few notes about this year's annual meeting:

- the Celebration of Ministries Service is being held on Saturday afternoon
- registration for accommodation is earlier than normal due to deadlines set by Redeemer College
- if you require special meals, i.e. diabetic, gluten free, vegetarian, vegan or lactose free; or have food allergies there is an earlier deadline for registration

- accommodation on site is in University style residence, not hotel style accommodation
- billets will be once again available
- meal packages are only available for the entire weekend
- watch the Conference website for registration information available in January

*By Leslie MacDonald, Chair,
Conference Agenda & Business
Committee
and Janet MacDonald, Chair,
Local Arrangements Committee*



**Ted Smith,
Hamilton Conference
President,
2014-2015**

President's Message: Celebrating the light of Epiphany

Happy New Year!!! Where did 2014 go? Another year has come and gone.

As the year 2014 draws to a close and 2015 is born, I remind us that our church calendar doesn't exactly correspond with our secular calendar. We celebrated our new church year at the beginning of Advent; Christmas has passed and I hope and pray that we all experienced Jesus' in-breaking to the world in a deep and profound way, and trust, as we catch our breath, that we will remain alert and ready for the season of Epiphany in which we now find ourselves.

Aha! Epiphany—the realization of who the baby Jesus was by the Magi as told in Matthew's Gospel. I believe the purpose of the story is to present an image of Jesus being known beyond where he was physically, in other words, Jesus made known to the whole world.

Not only were the Magi from away, but they would have been considered pagans (those without faith by Jewish standards). It's important for us to take note of some details in this story. 1) They sought him out... something moved them to seek and find Jesus. 2) They found him and shared with him their gifts, not only the gold frankincense and myrrh. But they also gave the gift of themselves to Jesus. Something must have moved them in his presence.

They bowed down and worshipped him. 3) They were moved and in a dream told to go home a different way, not ratting Jesus out to Herod and thus keeping him safe and available to the whole world.



Lynedoch United Church Nativity

And thus, they had their Epiphany, the realization of who the baby Jesus was, and we try to celebrate our own Epiphanies. The moment or moments in our lives when we finally realize who Jesus is to us. What he means to *our* lives. And so, as we celebrate the secular New Year, I like to imagine that Epiphany is a great way to start this New Year!

“My prayer for all would be that we remain aware of and open to the miracles that Jesus is ready to let loose in our midst.”

Epiphany is from a Greek word, *epiphaneia* which means an experience of sudden and striking realization, or a “coming to light” or “coming into full view.” Epiphany, then, is a celebration of light. And for us, as Christians, we understand the light of our lives to be Jesus Christ. John’s Gospel reveals: *“what has come into being through him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it”*

Even as we understand Jesus as the light of the world it goes beyond that to a call for us to also be the light. (Cont’d)

In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount Jesus says to us: *“You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others.”* In other words, Jesus says let me shine through you, the light of Christ that has come to the world to dwell with us, and within us, for which we are responsible to let shine through us.

Bruce Sanguin shares these words about Jesus as light of the world:

No small wonder that Jesus came to be associated with light, the source of all life, the radiance that reveals the inner beauty of even the most mundane objects, the one who lights our path to the heart of God when we are lost, and the one who pours himself out completely and in awesome abundance in the service of the spiritual evolution of the universe. In the human realm, light is often associated with conscious awareness. When we shine the light of consciousness upon previously unconscious thoughts, beliefs, and worldviews, we experience a kind of spiritual freedom. What was subjectively hidden to us becomes objectively obvious (lf Darwin Prayed. Bruce Sanguin, 2010).

I started these Epiphany ramblings with a Happy New Year, so coming back to that I find my mind wandering to wondering about New Year’s resolutions. Do we or should we make some? Have you made any? Some of us do, some don’t, and if we don’t it might just be because we are skeptical about our past record of keeping our new year’s resolutions. Sometimes we are skeptical and quick to say, “Why bother?”

We resolve to... quit smoking, quit drinking, exercise more, lose some weight, eat a more healthy diet, become more organized, read more, take more personal time.

These things are important to us, but they aren’t really resolutions about WHO WE ARE. So with focus on who we are, New Year’s resolutions and Epiphany, “coming to light” or “in full view,” let’s put ourselves under this light of Epiphany, in full view of ourselves and examine who we are and who we want to be.

Imagine if you resolved this year, not to simply read your Bible more of-

ten, but to live more fully into God’s Word. Imagine if you resolved not to pray each day, but to have an ongoing conversation with God, to build a stronger relationship. Imagine if you resolved to give more of yourself to God’s work or maybe to give more to the M&S fund. Perhaps we could resolve to do more random acts of kindness, resolve to LOVE MY NEIGHBOUR... Really, love my neighbour. These types of resolutions are to me more than just a promise to one self. They are processes, and the process is just as or maybe even more important than the product, yourself, in full view, coming to light.

I’m encouraging us all today, let this Epiphany opportunity be our opportunity in the resolutions we make as the faith community of Hamilton Conference. As our stories unfold and are shared again this year at our annual congregational meetings, my prayer for all would be that we remain aware of and open to the miracles that Jesus is ready to let loose in our midst.

How wonderful and life-giving for us to hold on to this story and carry it with us into 2015. Epiphany is our invitation as church to go public with this news and recognize our identity and respond to God’s call. So here we stand, a fresh new year ahead of us, a light to guide us, a new beginning—good stuff to grab up and carry as we move into the new thing God is doing in 2015.

An Epiphany...

“ARISE, SHINE”, says the prophet Isaiah. The time is now. Don’t think of any more reasons to delay and put off the living that God is calling us to. There is no better time than now. Blessings abundant lie ahead as we journey together from the season of darkness into the season of light.

Yours in Christ... Ted Smith

*By Ted Smith, President,
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We want to hear from you!

Contact, a newsletter for Hamilton Conference, is distributed four times annually through HamPack (HAMilton PACKage). The purpose of *Contact* is to share news throughout the Conference about our life, work, programs, policies and communities. We welcome stories about events or programs that are unique or new; it is helpful to include details that will help another congregation or group if they choose to embark on the same activity.

Please send submissions to Barbara Hampson at bhampson@hamconf.org. Submissions may be edited for length and clarity. Digital photos are welcome; make sure you have **permission to publish** pictures of people, especially photos of children.

DEADLINES:

Oct. Issue - Sept. 15

Jan. Issue - Dec. 15

Mar. Issue - Feb. 15

June Issue - May 15

Hamilton Conference is one of 13 Conferences of the United Church of Canada. It includes 53,000 church members in 230 pastoral charges.

Hamilton Conference provides leadership and support to six Presbyteries (Bruce, Erie, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara and Waterloo) to enable a variety of ministries in the Presbyteries and congregations and to do the work of General Council in the area bounded by Mississauga and Kitchener-Waterloo, and Tobermory and Niagara.