

RETIREES

The Reverend Daniel Benson

2014 marks the tenth anniversary of my ordination, and in looking back on my years in congregational and intentional interim ministry, a decade at General Council Office as Executive Minister of Communications, and, about the same tenure with the Anglicans as General Manager of Anglican Book Centre, I'm surprised to tally some 30 years working in Churchland. Turning the clock way back (the pun is intentional), my first vocation was as a horologist; the wandering road between tending time and tending sheep gives credence to the clichés that God moves in mysterious ways and has a sense of humour. Along the way, I have found that ministry, whatever form it takes and wherever it takes root, is always rewarding and challenging, is found both in the instant and infinite, is often clearly defined yet frustratingly obscure, and is relentless as the return of the sabbath but as remarkable as the empty tomb.

Gratitude is at the core of my faith: I've often begun a reflection, worship, or a meeting with the words, 'The first and best prayer is always one of gratitude...' Yet, I know I've often fallen short of that ideal: the pressures of ministry, an ever-increasingly complex world, the suffering I see around us and experience within us, paradoxically push gratitude aside even as it becomes more essential to our hearts. So, as I continue in retirement to serve God's church in the world in new ways, I return to gratitude: for the congregations of East End, St. Paul's Scarborough, Glebe Road, Dalston-Crown Hill, and Bloor Street; friends and colleagues at General Council and General Synod; my husband Grant and my family; and for all those who have walked this journey with me. I'm grateful for all of you and all of this: it has been time well-spent. Thanks be to God.

The Reverend Lois Brown

Lois Brown, the youngest of four children, was born on April 25, 1947 in Kirkland Lake, ON. She lived in Kearns until 1956 when the family of one boy and three girls moved to Elliot Lake, a booming uranium mining town. Her father died suddenly in 1968 when she was in first-year Co-Op Chemistry at Waterloo University. Lois continued her education at Toronto Teachers' College and taught Special Education for 32 years while taking night classes at U. of T., graduating with a BSc. She then attended Emmanuel College, graduating in May, 2005 with an M Div.

Her first pastoral charge was 12.5 years at St. Andrew's, Port Loring, and St. Paul's in Golden Valley, ON. Her second charge was 7 years at Unity United in Midland, ON. Lois is the mother of one son, Greg, who is a Superintendent in the Simcoe County District School Board, the grandmother of three grown children and the great grandmother of one. She enjoys doing 'on-call' chaplaincy at the local hospital and spending time snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, boating, swimming and travelling with her family and friends.

The Reverend Dr. James Clubine

I was born into a family that faithfully attended worship at a local Baptist church in what was then a rural part of Ontario. It was there that I learned of our Saviour Jesus Christ and his great love and grew in my faith commitment to him. Through the ministry of that congregation, I sensed a call to ministry and began divinity studies at Central Baptist Seminary. Upon graduation I served a congregation of the Missionary Church of Canada for ten years, four years as youth minister and then six years as senior pastor.

I stepped aside from pastoral ministry and took up leadership development consulting work. During that time my wife and I began worshipping at West Ellesmere United Church in

Scarborough where my seminary preaching professor, Rev. Dr. James Wetherall was pastoring, and he encouraged me to return to pastoral ministry. During the process of seeking credentialing in the United Church of Canada I served, for five years, the congregations of Beverley Hills United Church and Downsview United Church in the west end of Toronto for five years, first as a student minister and then was settled there upon ordination.

In 2003 I accepted a call to Central United Church in Unionville where I have served as minister of worship and pastoral care for just over 20 years. I am grateful for the congregations I have had the joy of serving and for our Lord's faithfulness to me in that work. As I reflect on the almost forty years of pastoral ministry, I can say that there is nothing else I would rather do.

Pastor Patricia James (Designated Lay Minister)

My road to ministry began as a child when I joined in saying the Lord's Prayer at school every morning. We didn't ever attend church (although my parents walked the walk every day of their life) but the prayer became my evening prayer every night since grade one. The wonderful result of this simple introduction to God is that I developed the most loving, childlike relationship with the Holy Spirit. It was that innocent relationship that led me to live Micah 6:8 throughout my life. It led me to work in the social services sector helping others, until I could no longer ignore the call to ministry at 57 years old.

I am exceptionally proud of the DLM stream that I chose to guide me over the past 10 years. Throughout the extensive training, the focus on compassionate, pastoral care and the importance of including justice issues (i.e. Indigenous) in my ministry, enabled me to lead with empathy Indigenous spirituality, a crucial part in the life of the United Church.

It is through the teaching of the DLM Circles that I found ways to grow our church community and family; a family that stayed strong and connected throughout the covid years and one that I pray will be guided to do justice, love kindness, and continue to walk humbly with God.

Thank you, Lord, for your grace upon me.

The Reverend Margaret MacDonald

I am delighted to embrace this new chapter called retirement on life's journey. Thank you to the United Church for your acceptance and the opportunity to live my faith in Jesus Christ through serving Communities of Faith. I am blessed to call Canada my home.

Thank you to my family, friends and colleagues. Most importantly, thank you to all the people I encountered on my journey. Here I met Ken MacDonald. Here I baptized my grandson. Here I learned the significance of coffee fellowship and the mysteries of table conversations. It is a privilege to serve God's people.

In 1993, at my ordination service in Guyana and my admission to the United Church I heard these words: *"You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you asked him in my name."* (John 15:16. NRSV). With heartfelt gratitude: "Love one another!" Thanks be to God!

The Reverend Brian McIntosh

The Reverend Brian McIntosh was ordained by Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada in 1988, has served in Congregations in the Maritimes and herein Toronto, and has served at Bloordale United Church in Etobicoke from 2008 until this year, as he retires at the end of June.

Brian has served in local, regional and national United Church and ecumenical organizations as well as inter-faith and community groups, with a concentration on efforts to seek justice and advocate for equality and human dignity. Brian has served in right relations building with Indigenous peoples for 35 years, and has undertaken community development work throughout his ministry by fostering partnerships and collaboration with others who share similar goals.

Brian was the 1998 recipient of the Fredericton YMCA Peace Medallion, the 2023 Canadian Council of Imams Community Interfaith Award, is the proud father of two adult daughters, Lydia and Sarah, a grandparent of five, and is the happy husband of Debbie.

The Reverend Karen Ptolemy-Stam

When I began to discern a call to ordered ministry many years ago, little did I realize that I was at the beginning of a journey that would lead to 40 years as a minister in the United Church of Canada. The journey has been one of deep meaning. In 1984 I was ordained by Bay of Quinte Conference. I started out as that conference's minister with the Deaf. My feminist and liberation theology were gifts as I learned about the oppression and marginalization of the deaf community both in Canada and around the world. I worked with a deaf congregation, was the Chaplain at Sir James Whitney School with the Deaf and visited deaf people in hospitals and prisons.

I was sent to Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., the only deaf university in the world. There I took advanced sign language training as there was no place in Canada offering this program at that time. After seven years, I was called to Fenelon Falls United Church where I stayed for eleven years. This rural two-point pastoral charge taught me that we can work together to do the work and ministry of Christ. Lives can be changed and spirits nourished. I then served George St. United Church in downtown Peterborough. This congregation taught me to risk. Initiated by lay folk, we offered educational opportunities for people to engage in theology and explore their faith in a more progressive and inclusive way. We found that there was interest outside the church for the opportunities we offered. We hosted events, sometimes for up to 600 people. Questions, doubts and conversations led to new understandings of faith. In 2011 I moved to Toronto Conference (now Shining Waters Regional Council) to St. Paul's United Church in Midland where I have served for almost 13 years. This congregation has taught me to embrace change and new technology. It engages fully in the life of the community as well as globally with its refugee sponsorships.

I am indebted to these congregations for their wisdom, faith and commitment to walk the path of Christ. I am also very grateful to the United Church of Canada whose vision of an inclusive and justice-based faith has broadened my understanding of God. It transformed my understanding on what it means to be a Christian in a multi-faith world. I was privileged to serve on the General Council Executive for six years, and on its sub-Executive for three years. I am also deeply grateful for all of those who have shared this journey with me all these years. In these people I have witnessed the Holy Spirit, the sacred mystery working in us all. Lastly, my spouse, Keith Stam,

has been on this journey since the very beginning. His love and support have never wavered and for that I am truly grateful.

Dr. Barry Rieder (Designated Lay Minister)

Although my theological training was in the Lutheran Church, I found home within The United Church due to its strong roots in the social gospel movement and commitment to justice. I wonder though if we have become a little too inward looking and lost a bit of our salt though. I remember the first few AGMs of Toronto Conference when media would cover the proposals we approved and Stephen Mabee as president of the conference asked all congregations to participate in the Days of Action.

For the last 29 years I have been serving as the Community Minister in Jane and Finch. It has been a great honour and privilege to walk with this low income but culturally rich community. During that time, I was awarded a Social Justice Award for Outstanding Achievement and an Honourary Doctorate for work in the community. However, the greatest award has been the love and respect I received from the community. Working in partnership with the community, building upon its strengths and assets we have tried to raise the economic bar of the community. The community has and still does have its challenges, mainly rooted in systemic racialized poverty. Some of the symptoms of this are the outbreaks of violence and I must admit providing pastoral care to 3-4 fatal shootings a year has been taxing.

I am grateful that through lobbying of fellow community ministers across the country that Community Ministry is now recognized as a Community of Faith and not just seen as the poor cousins on the back porch. Not only does community ministry have much to offer the particular communities they serve, but has much to offer to the wider church. I am grateful that at the last AGM, a proposal to sustain the three Community Ministries in the region was approved. I retire in confidence that the vital community ministry in Jane and Finch will continue and that God is calling the Church to where it needs to be. I leave you with a quote from Proverbs 14:31 “If you oppress poor people, you insult the God who made them; but kindness shown to the poor is an act of worship.”

The Reverend Meriel Simpson

A first generation Canadian, I was born and grew up in Toronto. I gained my B.A. in Modern Languages from Victoria University, U of T and later earned a Business and Computer Programming Certificate from Ryerson. For many years, I worked in the corporate world, initially in the airline industry, then as a computer programmer and finally as a Communication Specialist. My home congregation was Dewi Sant Welsh United Church in Toronto, where I was an active member for 30 years. Between my corporate work and church work, I gained a lot of leadership experience.

Over the years at Dewi Sant, I taught Sunday School, was on Council, assisted the Clerk of Session and did some lay preaching. Like many other people, my call was not a “burning bush” but a slow realization and response to God’s nudges and whisperings, which had never stopped through the years. I studied for the ministry and received my Masters of Divinity degree from Emmanuel College in 2014.

After completing an internship at Westway United Church (U.C), I was ordained in June 2015 and appointed to Cosburn U.C., where I ministered to a small congregation in the throes of deciding to become part of a regional church. In December, 2016, I was delighted to receive a call from Scarborough Bluffs U.C. to be their minister.

The congregation of Scarborough Bluffs welcomed me very warmly and I soon came to know a kind and vital group of people who were devoted to their church. We had seven great years together, however, as in everyone's life, there comes a point when planning for retirement becomes essential. My remaining family lived in BC and my sister was practicing medicine in Michigan. We decided to be with family in Nanaimo. We made the trip across the country at the beginning of May and have just moved into our new home.

The Reverend Linda Wheler

I am grateful to have served in ministry within the United Church for the last 27 years. It has been a great privilege to witness the work of the Holy Spirit within people and congregations throughout my ministry.

I graduated from Emmanuel College with a M. Div. in 1997 and I was settled into a part-time position in ministry with children and youth at King City United Church. At the same time, I started a part time position in pastoral care at Islington United which eventually led to a fulltime position at Islington. I had the joy of serving the people of Islington United Church as Minister of Pastoral Care for 17 years. Then since 2014 I have had the privilege of serving with the people at Trinity United Church in Newmarket for the last ten years.

While in Toronto West Presbytery I served On Education and Students Committee. When I moved to Trinity I became an Educational Supervisor, I had the honour of accompanying three people on their journey toward ministry.

I have also had the opportunity of serving in the ministry of connecting resources and ministry with the Church Development and Leadership Committee at Toronto United Church Council.

This last 27years has been an exciting journey of ministry, learning, growing and serving within this United Church of ours as we continue to faithfully seek creative ways of serving in the mission and ministry of Christ Jesus.

The Reverend Neil Ryerson Young

Neil Young was a candidate out of Woodroffe United Church, Ottawa, and studied at Emmanuel College, Toronto, 1983-86, with 2 summers as an Armed Forces Chaplain Assistant and summer '85 on the Grasslands Pastoral charge in south Saskatchewan: Mankota, McCord, Glentworth, Fir Mountain & Wood Mountain. In 1984-85 he was on field placement at College St. UC, in Toronto.

Ordained at Montral & Ottawa Conference in 1986, he was settled in Borderlands Pastoral Charge, Moose Jaw Presbytery: Coronach, Fife Lake, Rockglen & Killdeer. The next year he married Kate McLarty, who worked candidate supply on the charge until 1989. He took a 2nd settlement in Iron Bridge & Bellingham, Algoma Presbytery, while Kate took the Rydal Bank charge. Thereafter, they worked separate pastoral charges.

He moved to Harriston & Cotswold, Bruce Presbytery, in 1992, then to Erindale in Mississauga, Halton Presbytery, in 1999. In 2015 he moved to St. Andrew's at Yonge & Bloor in Toronto, from

which he now retires. He has served in matters of finance and property at all levels of the church, and was on the council of Emmanuel College and the Board of Regents of Victoria University for 9 years.

His interests have included ancient numismatics and Biblical archaeology. His collections of sermon volumes from the 1800s and pages from pre-King James bibles are now in the collection of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at U. of T. He does historical reenactment, serving as a Grenadier in the King's Royal Regiment of New York (1777-1784) a Loyalist formation from the War of the American Rebellion.

Kate & Neil have three daughters and three grandsons.

The Reverend Janet Smith Zenwirt

Who runs home from school in Grade 1 to teach their teddy bears from their Sunday School books? I was a dancing spirit preaching good news and making sure they were seen, heard, and loved. My childhood was steeped in church life at Queensville United. My family demonstrated the value found in people's full humanity, and I took this approach through my communications, advocacy, and community work in addition to church roles prior to attending Emmanuel College in January 2011. Mid-life provides experiences for understanding the complexities of life and death, essentials for pastoral ministry. I also learned to embrace patience and waiting as I delayed graduation until 2016.

After an internship at St. Andrew's United, Georgetown, I served briefly at Christchurch United, Mississauga before Westway United, Toronto. I am currently savouring ministry at St. Mark's, Toronto. I treasure helping people deepen connections with each other, our broader world, and God through inclusive, spiritually enriching approaches. The vibrancy and tenacity of people has stayed in my heart during these brave days of being the church and living out the inclusive and daring ways of Jesus. It has been a blessing to journey with people in celebration and sorrow as we listen for the Spirit's quiet yet bold presence to lead us.

While I intend to embrace retirement, I will continue to treasure my church, the beautiful people I have met along the way, and my supportive colleagues. The Dancing Spirit will continue to lead me on faith-filled adventures that strive for connection with others and God. I will still demonstrate and utter these words: know that you are seen, heard, and loved just as you are.

**Note: All retirees above have given their consent to be listed here – it may not reflect the actual list of Retirees*

