

Living Faith Story for United Churches of Langley

Administration

We currently employ a full time Office Administrator, who co-ordinates and supports all of the office duties. She also co-ordinates advertising of our programs in the community and handles all building rentals. Our Office Administrator is one of the first points of contacts for community members who inquire about programs, weddings, funerals and other functions our church offers. The Office Administrator supports the ministers with their weekly duties, including preparing the weekly bulletin, all of the power point slides for the weekly services and answering telephone inquiries for the ministers. Our church has a website that is kept current with weekly events and contacts. Our sanctuary has an up-to-date audio-visual system that supports live stream. Our weekly services are broadcast on our YouTube channel. Much of the IT equipment is maintained by a team of volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the last few years to keep our equipment up to date so that we can reach as many people as possible. In addition to the Office Administrator, we also have a paid Finance Administrator who works part time and manages the accounting.

United Churches of Langley uses a Board of Governance and a Board of Trustees. The Board of Governance is elected by the congregation and includes a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Past Chair, Chair of Finance, Chair of Ministry and Personnel, Chair of Property and Maintenance, Chair of Stewardship, 3 Pacific Mountain Regional Council Representatives, a representative from the UCW, 3 Members at Large and a representative (non-voting status) from Social Justice and Outreach Team as well as our clergy. Our Board of Trustees are elected from the congregation and usually serve a three year term. There are currently five trustees.

Our Treasurer and Chair of Finance meet regularly to review the financial situation of United Churches of Langley. The Finance team plan the yearly budget and they give monthly reports to the board and provide a yearly review at our Annual Congregational Meeting. This group also co-ordinates with the Finance Administrator.

United Churches of Langley formed January 1, 2012 with the unification of four congregations, Sharon United (Murrayville) Langley United (Langley City), St. Andrew's (Fort Langley) and Jubilee United (Willoughby). With this came three buildings and financial support. The 200th Street Building, which was the home of Langley United, was sold and the proceeds were designated for Social Justice and Outreach. Our Social Justice program is supported by this fund. Jubilee United held a piece of property in the Willoughby area, which was sold and the proceeds were invested in the Willoughby Fund. This investment is designated for "Emerging Spirit" programs and we may only use the interest earned each year.

We continue to maintain two buildings, one in Murrayville and the other in Fort Langley. For the last seven years we have been operating with a significant deficit budget, drawing on our Bequest fund to cover operating costs. We realize we cannot continue to

supplement our yearly budget by relying on our investments. We also know that there are restrictions as to how much of our investments can be used each year and we would like to honor the Bequests by using these funds wisely. Over the next year, we will need to make some important decisions as to how we can continue to serve our community and be financially stable.

United Churches of Langley has many human gifts. Our UCW is able to offer limited support for church events. Our choir enjoy singing together and provide another level of spiritual support during our weekly services. There are many other volunteers in our church community who willingly serve in many capacities.

Sadly, since Covid, we have lost many of our younger members and children. In order for us to grow and be sustainable, we need to nurture this area of our congregation. Our Fort Langley members also require care. Prior to Covid we supported two Sunday morning worship services, one at 9:00 a.m. at the Fort Langley site and the other at 10:30 at the Murrayville site. Since Covid we have only been able to hold one service each week, at the Murrayville site. The Fort Langley members gather in the Fort Langley building and watch the service together using our YouTube channel. Providing spiritual care and worship for the members of the Fort Langley congregation is a concern that we need to address.

Over the last few years, we have also experienced a decline in the number of people willing to share their talents in Board positions. Many of the volunteers have held Board positions for many years and would willingly pass on these positions to other members. Encouraging new members to fill Board positions is a high priority.

The 2023 budget on administration is \$23,461.00

Community Outreach and Social Justice

Following the amalgamation, it was decided to sell the 200th site property. A group called "ADAPT" was formed to initiate conversations within the congregation around what to do with the money following the sale of the property. ADAPT hosted several meetings over a period of months to gain feedback from the congregation. As a result of these meetings, a recommendation was made that the money from the sale of the 200th Street property be used for Social Justice and Outreach in the Langley community. Part of the proposal, that was approved by PMRC, included hiring a Social Justice and Outreach Program Facilitator. In 2020, our first Social Justice and Outreach Program Facilitator was hired to work with the local congregations and inter-faith communities of faith, community committees, and the vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups in Langley. This is a separately funded program and is restricted to social justice work.

Our gifts of time, talent and money have made a difference to many.

The journey is ours, the Mission is God's, and we have been discovering how to be a part of what God is already doing.

We continue to express our faith through action.

We look to Jesus as a model of how to develop a community of inclusion, safety and growth. The modeling of God through Jesus provides ideas, suggestions and in some instances requirements. By participating in community committees, meetings, trainings and events we are able to share personal faith, journeys and concerns. We are also able to share our own interpretations of the gospel in both actions and conversations. One of our original faith communities helped provide the first low barrier Food Bank in Langley. They also provided drop-in locations and events for both Seniors and Youth as these types of Outreach were needed in the community so it was continued within our new community of faith. Then when facilitators were hired, they were able to work within the community to notice other needs and possibilities for sharing volunteer workers, finances and other supports.

The current Social Justice and Outreach Program Facilitator participates on many community committees that work to support the marginalized and vulnerable including the homeless, poverty reduction, Seniors, Children, toxic drug awareness, food security, Indigenous, domestic violence and restorative justice committees and individuals in need that fall within these categories. Within our faith community we support individuals during difficult financial times, those in need of particular supports or material things, and those in declining health. We are also planning for Refugee family support. The UCOL Social Justice and Outreach team is a highly collaborative group within communities of faith and community organizations. We work with local non-profits, national and provincial government organizations and local city/township governments. We also work with local, provincial and national United Church of Canada initiatives. Our community has many unique needs and issues. We are responding by:

Local congregation

Challenges with Communication and Community of Faith issues.

- Provided funds to hire a teacher/trainer for compassionate listening to be taught community members

Challenges with growth of congregation, especially with younger members

- Provided funds, activities and participation in community-based events to promote UCOL within the Langley community

Truth and Reconciliation guidelines

- Provide funds, support, volunteers and other participation in local events that focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other Indigenous-led opportunities.

Community

Food Security

- Starfish Backpack Program
- Nicomekl Breakfast program
- Food Bank support
- Working on creating a Langley Food Security Committee

Gang and gun-related violence

- Restorative Justice – within schools and local governments
- Working with Canadian National funding – committee to meet to build activities and training on issues and policies to support the reduction of gang and run violence

Seniors needs

- Housing
- Whatever it takes program with Langley Memorial Hospital Foundation program to support Seniors transferring from Hospital stays to homes.

Queer Safety

- Langley Pride
- Providing Queer representation on community committees
- Congregational education on Language and Pronouns, Transgender issues

Homelessness

- Provided lunch and learn re: stigma

Our Faith Community's work on social justice activities is evident with:

- Sunday morning Highlights from Social Justice and Outreach Work
- Existence of a large bulletin board in communal spaces
- Website with unique page of information and support given to community

UCOL is well-known in the community as a welcoming place for people and those in need. We are requested to participate in fund-raising, events and public training opportunities.

We are seen as being involved in specific local and community issues as we have volunteers working in the community and our program facilitator is well known by local governments and other communities of faith. Not only do we know and use General Council resources, we participate in national trainings, events and workshops on Climate change, anti-racism, intercultural vision and indigenous justice. We are also working on becoming an Affirming congregation through the Affirm United program. Members of our Social Justice and Outreach committee are invited to participate in local fund-raising and other events and are contacted by local governments for our information and concerns re: local issues. Some funding is donated by the local community of faith and MANY volunteers work in the community in a variety of areas. Also, when material items are required for specific needs, the community of faith rises to the occasion and provides what is requested. None of the local Operating funds are used for the Social Justice and Outreach work that UCOL provides. We are blessed and fortunate to have our own endowment fund for use in our work in the community

and we are even able to provide offsets to UCOL to pay for work that our minister in charge of SJO and the admin assistant and the finance clerk provide.

We did not include a budget for the Social Justice program as it does not pertain to the Operating Budget.

Denomination and Communities

We support the Pacific Mountain Region with three representatives. Our minister supports the programs of the regional council and General Council.

Within our buildings we support the following: • AA meetings- Murrayville- rental- four AA groups currently meet on a weekly basis

- Book Club- Murrayville- lay led- presently over Zoom

- Christmas Hampers- supporting the Langley Christmas Bureau with funds from the Social

 - Justice Fund- lay led

- Faithful Friends- in the Community- lay led

- Friendz at Five Corners Daycare- Murrayville- Oversight by Property Committee, but privately run

- we are exploring an option to include a Before and After School program at Murrayville for

 - local children- Oversight by Property Committee, but privately run by Friendz at Five Corners.

- Holding Hope- Subsidized rental -support group for people who experienced loss due to drug

 - use- meeting every other week.

- Langley Community Chorus- rental at Murrayville

- Langley Sources Food Bank- lay supported by held at a different location

- Langley Garden Club- rental at Murrayville

- Langley Girl Guides- rental at Murrayville

- Men's Breakfast- in the Community- lay led

- Murrayville Academy Montessori School- rental of church hall at Murrayville

- Responsible Drivers Program- rental- 3-4 times a week, one of the most significant renters.

- Starfish Backpack program- lay led, working with the Langley School District Foundation, at

 - Murrayville

- Tai Chi- rental at Murrayville

- United Church Women- Murrayville- lay led

- Yoga- Murrayville- rental at Murrayville

Fort Langley Site

- Art Break Group- lay led at Fort Langley
- Cèilidh- Fort Langley- lay led
- Church of the Sent- rental at Fort Langley
- Farmer's Market- Fort Langley- lay led
- May Day- Fort Langley- lay led
- Preschool program at Fort Langley site- Oversight by the Property Committee, but privately run
- Skeptics Group- lay led at Fort Langley
- Tai Chi- rental- not the same group as at Murrayville- holds sets of 10 weeks twice a year
- Valley Bluegrass group- weekly rental

Faith Formation and Spiritual Development

As people who follow Christ, we know that personal growth and spiritual nurture is important. This intentional work is supported by a variety of gatherings and events. Our congregation's financial support allows these groups to continue to offer spiritual development to our faith communities.

There are several areas where we offer spiritual and leadership development:

- Book Studies, Clubs and discussion groups- Clergy developed and led
- Centering Prayer- Clergy led
- Skeptics – lay led
- Bible Study- lay led
- Salal and Cedar, Watershed Discipleship- Clergy led
- Reconciliation work- Clergy led
- Compassionate Listening- Clergy led

Every Sunday morning, we offer Spirit Academy where children ages 3-14 explore the stories of our faith in fun, creative ways. Spirit Academy is currently under the leadership of the ministerial staff, with the support of a paid staff member. Sadly, many of the children and families that participated in Spirit Academy prior to Covid have not returned to Sunday morning worship. This is an area where we hope to see growth.

Every summer we host Camp Spirit, an amazing experience for people ages 5 to 85 celebrating love for a week of day camp in our church. Camp Spirit is run by Pacific Mountain Region with the support of many lay volunteers from our congregation as well as some clergy support. This program attracts many children from our community and is always well attended

Shift is an emerging ministry for people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. Conversations and planning sessions have taken place regarding Alternative Worship Experience (AWE). We are experimenting with modern Christian music and integrating multimedia into the worship. We are also brainstorming around creating a Podcast Community building

ministry. We believe SHIFT to be an important ministry to explore what it means to be a follower of the Christ in the 21st century. The Shift ministry has been led by the minister of Children and Families. Sadly, many of the core Shift ministry participants have graduated or moved away. Some are engaged in our community -based ministries outside our building including reconciliation activities and community engagement at Langley events. We hope to see growth in this area.

The 2023 budget allocations for faith formation and Spiritual Development. activities is \$2,500.00

Leadership

- support and implementation of Spirit Academy with the help of paid lay staff
- support and supervision of Social Justice Outreach Facilitator
- planning and carrying out of weekly worship services
- co-ordinating with Music Director and pianist for weekly services and special services.

UCoL members look for leadership by example from our ministers. Our congregation values a sense of belonging and inclusivity. We want to worship together, with a theological base and with a sense of openness and that all are welcome. Ministers need to be open to new possibilities and yet respectful of our long history in the community. We expect our ministers to build connections between all ages and foster fellowship between our congregation and our community.

Challenges

Financial concerns are one of the challenges we face today. With less money available for staffing, we need to find a way to meet the needs of all of the congregants.

We have two buildings that we support, but we are not a two-point charge. Some members of the Fort Langley congregation feel they are being underserved.

Following Covid many families simply disappeared. They made other plans for Sunday mornings and no longer found in person Sunday morning church attendance important. As a result, the Spirit Academy enrollment has shrunk to only a few children. The youth group attendance has also declined. We need to rebuild the base of our young families so that we can grow our future youth programs.

With the lack of younger people in the congregation, a bulk of the work is falling on the same people. Many of them are approaching their 70's, 80's and 90's and have worked hard to support the church but are getting tired. If our church is to survive over the next few years, we need to find a way to rebuild the lost generation of 30- to 60 year-olds. We were very pleased to welcome three younger members to our 2023 Board this year.

The 2023 budget allocations for Leadership development for clergy and lay leaders is \$5,000.00

Pastoral Care

Care Ministries

One of the fundamental ways in which we respond to God's call is through outreach in our Care Ministries. Our congregation is widely affected by the love and care of others during the year. This includes a range of ministries and activities including:

- Visitors Ministry- Minister visiting in homes and hospital
- Bear Ministry- with the assistance of the clergy
- Radical Hospitality – Greeting, Ushering, Coffee & Conversation – lay led
- Worship services at Langley Lodge- Clergy led
- Pastoral Care Team- Clergy led
- Outdoor small groups (summer)- Clergy led
- Baby Blankets for Indigenous children entering care- lay led

The 2023 budget for Pastoral Care and Pastoral Care Ministries is \$2,500.00

Self-Care

We hope our minister and lay leaders will set goals for ongoing self-care by maintaining a healthy balance of their own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being to include rest, recreation, and professional development. A strong working relationship with our M&P committee will help to meet these goals. Our congregation is working on bettering our self-care practices to reduce burnout and frustration. We hope to gain better practices around this, so that we can sustain both a healthy balance and growth within our community of faith.

Worship –

We come together to worship as a community to celebrate and praise God's faithfulness. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is integral to our worship. For many of our members, the purpose of United Churches of Langley is to be a place of worship and spiritual practice where we learn from Scripture. Through worship, prayer, music and reflection our faith is strengthened and deepened to help us grow on our individual faith journeys. Our worship services give people hope and are a way to recharge their spiritual energy for another week. Music is an important part in our worship as we can praise God in so many joyful ways. Faith expressed in song can often lift us up and give us another perspective.

Each Sunday there are two in person worship services, as well, the main service is broadcast live on YouTube.

9:00am - Contemplative Service, Sharon Chapel, Murrayville site. The heart of our gathering is a 20 minute, silent meditation. This worship opportunity allows us to simply rest in God and to listen for the Spirit. This is a lay led service.

• **10:30am - Worship Service**, Main Sanctuary, Murrayville site. Children depart partway into the service for the Spirit Academy

Our worship services are designed around a sermon, conducted by our minister and follow an order of service. The worship services and music are filled with spirit and inspiration. Our musical selections are both traditional and contemporary. This is facilitated by our dedicated team of ministers, musicians, an enthusiastic and gifted choir, as well as numerous volunteers. We encourage everyone to join our open table for communion by using inclusive language and making others feel welcome. The statements “Weaving a Faith that Matters”, “You are Not Alone”, and “All are Welcome in the Place” are important to our members. To us, all means all.

This service is broadcast live on our YouTube channel and can be viewed again during the week. The technology to broadcast this service is done by a dedicated group of volunteers. This service is led by clergy staff.

Ceremonies in our buildings include:

• For baptisms and profession of faith in community, we welcome in new or existing families to share in the sacrament of God’s love. This is clergy led.

•Wednesday mornings interested people are invited to gather on Zoom for a time of Centering Prayer, including meditation. This is a clergy led program.

•Wednesdays at our Murrayville site, there is Bible Study where people are invited to share insights and questions about our scripture for the upcoming Sunday morning worship. This is a lay led program.

•We are blessed to host many couples as they join together in marriage. This is clergy led.

• Families are supported and comforted as they grieve and celebrate the lives of loved ones who have died. This is Clergy led.

•once a month we offer an Alternative Worship Experience (AWE), which is connected to the Shift Ministry and Jazz Vespers. This is clergy led with lay participation.

As with many United Churches, our demographics at this time lean heavily towards older (60 years plus) women. We have a few members of different cultural groups and some members who identify as Queer.

Worship Leadership Development for Clergy and Lay Leaders: Our budget does not have line items for this category. However, monies for this category can be taken from other line items in the budget.

The 2023 budget for Worship is \$2,000.00.

Stewardship

Currently we do not have a Stewardship committee. Our goal would be to develop this further.

Talking about money- Our Finance team outlines our financial situation each year at our ACM and gives regular reports to the Board of Governance. However, our financial concerns are not a regular topic of conversation.

The 2023 budget for Stewardship is \$500.00.