

# Grace's Chatter

August 2020 Edition

## Grace United welcomes Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro

By Paul Scott

It's unanimous!

At the Congregational Meeting held on Wednesday, August 5, Grace United Church members and adherents unanimously voted to accept the report of the Search Committee and extend a Call to Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro as the new minister at Grace. The vote was by secret ballot.

Accounting for the required 90 day notice period, Rev. Takouhi (pronounced Ta-Koo-Hee) is expected to start her position with Grace United on November 10, 2020.

Being born and raised in Beirut Lebanon, Rev. Takouhi has an interesting life story which took her through Syria to Los Angeles and then through Vermont to Canada.

Her family was originally from Armenia and her father who was born in Bursa, was an infant survivor of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Her mother was born in Beirut into an Armenian family who had escaped the genocide from Marash. Both towns are located in present day Turkey.

In the early 1980's she made her way through the mountainous roads of Lebanon into Syria. From Damascus she found her way to Los Angeles where she lived with her eldest sister and where she graduated from high school in 1986. On August 22, 1986, Takouhi entered Canada via Vermont, U.S.A. and is proud to call Canada her home.

In September of 2000, she and Gary Steven Petro were married and that is when life started to take a different turn. In 2002 she says she started receiving messages through various "people of God" to go into ministry, but she admits, "I fought this call for a good two years."

She enrolled into university in 2005 where her six year educational journey began. Having completed her Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Theology and Master of Divinity, in May 2011 Rev. Takouhi became the first Armenian woman minister to be ordained in the United Church of Canada.

She served for two and a half years at the Ayer's Cliff-Magog-Georgeville Pastoral Charge in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. However, living apart from her husband and the political landscape in Quebec proved difficult.



In February 2013, she and husband Gary moved to Portland, Ontario where Rev. Takouhi has served the Elgin-Portland Charge for the past 7 years. Currently she is President-Elect of the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council.

In introducing Rev. Takouhi's credentials to the Congregational meeting, Barbara Jenkins related, "Rev. Takouhi loves bringing people together from all backgrounds. She serves God by serving all of God's people. She is a firm believer in lifelong learning and brings strong interpersonal, organizational and language skills with her."

Official Board chair Brian Brooks chaired the Congregational Meeting. He and past chair Marg Worth thanked the Search and Profile Committees for their tireless work over the past 11 months. Search Committee members included Brian Brooks, Elaine Davidson, Shirley Clark, Elaine Davidson, Tammy Fergusson, Colleen Harding, Pam Shea and Barb Jenkins. The Profile committee included Linda Brooks, Angus Fergusson, Paul Harding, Diane Kirkby, Paul Scott, Raymond Shea, and Joan Simpson.



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## **But I can save this one!**

*By David Charles*

When Paul Scott asked me to reflect on why I became enthusiastic about Mission and Service, I quickly remembered my participation in a Cursillo weekend (pronounced ker-see-oh) in Sarnia Ontario as a member of Grace United Church (Sarnia version). I said I would participate without understanding the life changing aspects of this weekend.

Cursillo is a Spanish word meaning "short course in Christianity" mostly conducted at Catholic churches. To put in context, I was a lost person in the early 1990's very successful in my career but feeling empty after the loss of my father to liver cancer at the age of 59. During this weekend I heard many moving testimonies of



young ambitious men like myself seeking meaning to their existence. They shared how they found contentment and purpose in serving the less fortunate in their communities and in devastated countries like Haiti.



As John Wesley revealed, his heart was changed through his mission work at Aldersgate (the name of my church when Joan and I lived in Michigan). From that point on I threw myself into my work of the church leading Sunday School, chairing Christian Development Committee, and serving many hours at the Open Door soup kitchen. I learned quickly that a life without service is a life unfulfilled.

As far as where Grace United Church can best serve, I believe that keeping it near home with the food bank, Salvation Army soup kitchen, and refugee settlement are causes still close to my heart. But M&S means taking care of one another especially during Covid 19.

I had a wonderful chat with our incoming minister Rev Takouhi about Mission and Service. She described her very personal situation of a sister in Beirut who, having suffered a stroke, was recently struck by the explosion of the ammonium nitrate storage facility rendering her 6-storey apartment complex virtually useless.

How can we cope with so much tragedy?

I think of the story of the boy tossing the beached starfish back into the sea. "I cannot save all of them, but at least I can save this one" he said.

Yours in love and service, Dave.

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## Notice - Pies For God's Sake to make an encore soon!

With social distancing, masks and the other Covid 19 protocols in place, the Pie Makers have made and frozen pies on June 29, July 13, 27, August 10 and again on August 24 at which time there will be about 200 pies ready to sell at \$12.00 each.

Varieties available - Apple Crumble, Apple, Raisin, Raspberry, Bumbleberry, Rhubarb, Peach, Strawberry, Strawberry Rhubarb, Strawberry Rhubarb Crumble and Cherry.

The dates are Thursday and Friday, Aug. 27 and 28, from 3 to 6 p.m. **Pre-orders can be placed up to August 21<sup>st</sup> by calling Betty at 613-382-3315.** Please use the Stone St. entrance for pick up. Social distancing and masks are required. Payment is by cash, cheque, or e-transfer.

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## Our reach, by the numbers is encouraging

*By Paul Scott*

As a church, we were catapulted into the future in March when Covid 19 started to sweep across Canada and church buildings were forced to close down. But, with each challenge comes opportunity and on March 29 we sat in front of our TV's, iPads etc. and were amazed at the talents of Paul Harding, Donna Norman and a host of volunteers as they guided us through our first ever online worship experience at Grace United.

To date there have been 17 Sunday online services for which numbers are available. As you know, for the summer months of July and August we joined with St. Andrew's Presbyterian church producing services on alternating Sundays.

So what about the numbers? Are folks tuning in or out? A word of clarity first. We do not know how many folks tune in for the whole service. Youtube provides Number of Views and Total View Time Hours. But what we can say is that our online experience has been very positive, the worship experience gets better each week and people are watching!

Grace United's number of views has been between a high of 283 and a low of 129. The average number of views for the 17 Sundays for which we have figures stands at 195.

Total view time is a range of 54 hours for a high and a low of 38 hours. The average number of viewing hours for the 17 Sundays is 45.

Although the numbers are not definitive, what they do show is that we have a core group of folks who are fairly consistently viewing and participating in the online worship experience.

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## **Pulling together continues to be the future**

*By Vicki Leakey*

At this time, due to well deserved vacations, I do not have current financials to report on, however; to ensure enough funds to offset operating expenses, we have completed another transfer from our trust funds of \$20,000. We have maintained a strong support that has enabled us to cover general operating costs. That said; unexpected costs will be necessary to prepare the church building for any activity that might be permitted in the future.

As we prepare to welcome new ministerial leadership into the Grace family, we want to thank all of you for the continued offerings via the various means we continue to mention each week.

Our church family has definitely pulled together during these challenging times and we continue to look for and find ways that our church can be of assistance in our community, while completing a lengthy search for new leadership. Meanwhile, another group of very dedicated members have been working hard to ensure we have quality weekly services available to view. This gives support and guidance to all of us.

Again, I will mention that the options for you so that offerings can be made via use of the e-transfer from your on-line bank account. Just look for "send an e-transfer" and send to [grace.gan@outlook.com](mailto:grace.gan@outlook.com) and follow the instructions given. Also, if convenient you may drop an envelope in the mail box at the Pine St. choir door on Thursdays before 1:00 pm that day as Laurie will be at the church office and will make sure contributions are safely received. Payment can also be mailed to the church at 120 Pine St. Gananoque, ON. K7G 1C7.

We are soon to enter a new, very exciting experience for our church family. We will work hard to ensure we keep our church members safe and we look forward to more personal conversations with each and everyone. Peace be with you all!

Vicki Leakey, Treasurer

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## **Some Church Humour**

*"The church is glad to have with us today as our guest minister the Rev. Harold Green, who has Mrs. Green with him. After the service, we request that all remain in the sanctuary for the Hanging of the Greens."*



# Pigeon Patrol ready to chime in

By Paul Scott

Choir director, music director, video editor and now on pigeon patrol?

Yup! We left because of Covid 19, so the pigeons took over.

Some churches may have bats in the belfry, but at Grace, we have pigeons on the steeple.

It seems that over the summer, perhaps with the intense heat, our cooing pigeons that used to spend a lot of time on the peak of the church roof have moved down to a ledge high over the Tower door. Watch where you're walking!

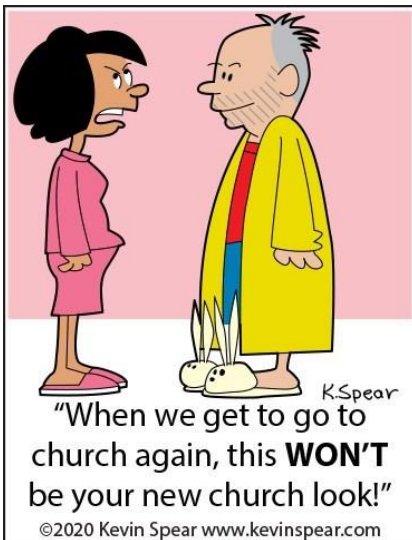
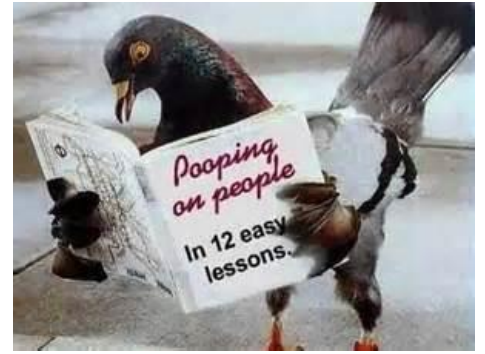
Music director Paul Harding hopes that pigeons do not like chimes.

Contacting Mr. Harding, he related, "Last week I set music to play five bell tolls at 8:30, 9:00, 9:30 and 10 p.m. I was unable to achieve the same volume from the device I was using that we have when we play chimes from the steeple and the pigeons didn't ever stir, let alone leave."

One bystander admitted that the pigeons simply "looked heavenward!"

Mr. Harding says he will now devote time to creating some "heavy metal bell music" to see if that works.

So if you pass the church in the evenings and hear some "discords" from the steeple, it is just our music director on Pigeon Patrol.



## Re-opening Committee

At this point, we still do not know when we will be re-opening for regular church services, but Official Board Chair Brian Brooks advises that a Re-opening Committee has been formed.

The Committee includes Bruce Wilson, Colleen Harding, Marg Worth and Christina Gordon-Charney.

## Some Church Humour

*"The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the Congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday."*



# Weekly talent search is most gratifying

By Paul Scott with Paul Harding

"Our experience in gathering special music from YouTube artists has been interesting and most gratifying", affirms our Music Director Paul Harding.

He has been scouring the internet for special music to share in our services. To a person, these artists, whether strangers or friends, have generously agreed to allow us to share their music without cost with our congregation as a part of our service.

From YouTube, we have thus far shared the music of Kristen Dubenion-Smith, alto soloist at Washington Cathedral, Washington D.C., Nayeli Abrego and her brother Tonatiuh, in a video shared with us by the Petrolia Playhouse, Jason Germain (a former student at Gananoque Secondary School and founding member of the Christian rock group Downhere. Michael Eldridge, an Indiana pharmacist with a YouTube catalogue the size of Frank Sinatra's, has graciously agreed to share, free of charge, any of his library for online worship.

Closer to home, the inspiring song "You'll Never Walk Alone" from the musical *Carousel* was recorded by Gananoque's David Tompkins in 1968 and included in one of our services. With the addition of distance-mixed solos with Alison MacDonald, Maryanne Wainman, Cliff Edwards, Gillian MacDonald and Kate Harding-Smith, the Ministry of Music in our services has been rounded out.

As well, we have the good fortune to have a recording of Grace Church's own Senior Choir, made in 2003 at a concert to raise funds for the Guatemala Stove Project. So we have the opportunity to hear our own choir, singing familiar anthems with which we can sing along. We look forward to once again hearing the voices of our own choir and the sounds of our organ, whenever that may be safely begin.

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## Celebrations for the month of August

Birthdays for August are, Linda Brooks, Claire Bass, Marilyn Belbin, Elaine Davidson, Gabriel Chatelain, Jack Petch, Art Page, Martin Hawley and Dave Charles.

Anniversaries in August are Dick & Nancy Abrams, 57 years August 17<sup>th</sup>, Murray & Rhea Roantree, 53 years on August 26<sup>th</sup> and Jack & Gloria Petch celebrate 64 years of marriage on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Congratulations everyone.



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## Contacts

Church Contact: Laurie Cadue 613-382-2161 [grace.gan@outlook.com](mailto:grace.gan@outlook.com)

Emergent Pastoral Care & Funerals: Rev. Jolyn Campbell 613-929-7195

Education & Pastoral Care Coordinator: Donna Norman 613-970-0128

Church Boards: Official Board – Brian Brooks 613-2385

Session – Paul Scott 613-382-4386

Board of Stewards – Carolyn Scott 613-382-4386/ Vicki Leakey 613-382-4015

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## Grace's Chatter published monthly.

Editor – Paul Scott, Managing Editor – Laurie Cadue

Contributors this month are; Rev. Takouhi, Vicki Leakey, David Charles, Paul Harding, Laurie Cadue Brian Brooks and Paul Scott.

Next deadline is Monday, Sept. 14.