

Grace's Chatter – Summer 2026

The Challenge ahead requires creativity

By Chuck Galway, Official Board chair

As we enter the 2026 summer season at Grace United, it is time to reflect on the many successes we have achieved over the past year. Through the dedication of our members and volunteers, we have stabilized our finances and strengthened our presence within the Gananoque community.

By opening our doors to local groups and providing financial support to both organizations and individuals, Grace United has demonstrated a genuine commitment to our town. We should be profoundly proud of our history and our unwavering dedication to the values and teachings of the United Church of Canada. However, we also recognize that our church must be far more than just an income and expense statement.

We must candidly address our ongoing struggle with low attendance at Sunday morning services. While this is a challenge faced by many mainstream denominations, that does not make it any less difficult for us to navigate.

The challenge ahead requires us to think creatively. What "outside of the box" ideas can we introduce to our worship? How can we deepen our relationships with other churches in Gananoque? Most importantly, how can Grace United become more relevant and meaningful to young adults, families, and anyone seeking a spiritual refuge from the struggles of everyday life?

I have faith that, together, we will find these answers.



Don't find fault. Find a remedy.

Henry Ford

Session Seeks to be Invitational

By Colleen and Paul Harding

The Session looked at a “Strengthening Invitation Checklist”, which came from E.O.O.R.C., challenging communities of faith to assess their “invitational quotient”. From the viewpoint of a visitor wanting to attend worship, how do we fare? Throughout the exercise it is apparent that we make assumptions that are not reasonable to expect of a visitor. What time is the service(s)? What door is the front door? What is expected of children? What’s with the two hymn books? Was it easy to find out what time worship takes place?

We have come a long way in this regard at Grace United Church in the last 20 years. It is satisfying to go through the extensive list and be able to say, “Yes – we do that. Yes – we do that. Yes – we try to do that”. But there are areas where our honest response must be “Oops – we don’t do that so well”. Sometimes visitors arrive and are left all on their own without so much as a “Welcome – we’re glad you’re here”. This responsibility falls not only to the ushers, but to each and every member of our church family.

To this end, the Session will undertake to convey “the assumptions” to visitors in a way that is informative and inviting. We’ll start with the two items below.

1. We here at Grace United Church use two hymnals - the large, red book - Voices United - and a smaller, spiral-bound book called More Voices. Voices United has two editions - one is larger and contains the music, but the print is smaller; the other is a smaller book with words only in larger print. Feel free to select your book of choice from a neighbouring hymn book rack.
2. There are various ways you can contribute to the life and work of Grace United Church. There is a wide variety of activities you can become involved in, including singing in the choir, ushering, making pies, helping at our concerts, becoming involved on a church committee (see the back of the bulletin) and many others.

Financial contributions can be made by cheque, to Grace United Church, 120 Pine Street, Gananoque, ON K7G 2B3, by **PreAuthorizedRemittance** (PAR - information on the table at the back), or online through Canada Helps, accessible on the church's web page or using this QR code.



On Sunday mornings, traditional offering plates are available - you may place your offering in a plate when you arrive, when the plates are passed during the service, or after the service.

Ongoing Organ Refurbishing

Thanks to a generous bequest from the Estate of Merna Price, we are able to contemplate some long-needed maintenance items within our marvellous pipe organ. Attention is focused, mainly, on the wind apparatus which gives the instrument its breath. Much of this equipment is 75 years old, and, as such, is overdue for some upkeep, especially in the area of moving parts and fabric components. Our organ tuner/technician, Tate Pumfrey, is preparing a proposal for next steps to restore our instrument to its former glory and make it more suitable for organ recital events.

Grace United Church Choir

Once again, we wrap up a season of service to our church, with leadership in the music of worship. Appealing anthems are presented, along with solos and inspiring instrumental music. The choir will take a much-needed break for July and August, resuming their duties in the Fall. Summer services will feature, as available, visiting soloists. We appreciate the availability of Doug Gifford, our capable supply organist, when our Director of Music is on holiday or otherwise absent. Thank you Doug.

We wrapped up our season with a delicious potluck supper at the home of Julie and Brian Price. Grace United Church Choir does two things well – sing and eat. Always an appealing variety at a potluck and this one didn't disappoint. Following a lovely social time, where the conversation ranged from airline pilots to cemeteries, a wonderful meal was enjoyed by all.



Our motley crew, including co-host Brian Price and choristers emerita, Dianna and Joan.



The breeze turned cool, but, as always, Julie was prepared with a variety of blankets to warm.



Our keyboard-masters, enjoying an evening off.

Livestreaming Continues

For another year we have live-streamed our services to YouTube, with Christina Kaya at the helm of the AV Desk. She is assisted, when necessary, by Julie Price and Colleen Harding. Christina will be taking the summer off. We are looking for one or two more people, familiar with the service, who would be willing to learn the (believe it or not) fairly simple task of operating the livestreaming equipment. Help is always available and tutoring is included in the deal. If you are in any way interested in pursuing this interest, contact Paul Harding.

Continuing Ministry at Carveth and Fox Run

We continue to minister to the residents of Carveth Care Centre and Fox Run by the River through visits to those facilities. Tammy Fergusson and Joan Shaw conduct worship services at Carveth, and Paul Harding and members of the choir (including chorister emeritus Joan Shaw) conduct a monthly hymn sing at Fox Run. To all appearances, these appear to be a highlight of the calendar at these facilities.

Stewards' Concert Series

The next concert in our series is on Tuesday, June 23rd, **FEELIN' GROOVY**, featuring the amazing songbook of Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. Classics such as "The Sound of Silence", "Bridge Over Troubled Water", "The Boxer" and "Mrs. Robinson" will be performed by a quintet of talented musicians, led by our own Cliff Edwards. Cliff joins Jamie Campbell, Scott Burns, Bob Arlidge and Paul Harding for an unforgettable evening of Simon and Garfunkel hits. **FEELIN' GROOVY** – Tuesday, June 23rd at 7:30 pm. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door.

Feelin' Groovy

Songs from Simon & Garfunkel

At Grace United Church, Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 7:30pm

With Cliff Edwards, Jamie Campbell, Scott Burns, Bob Arlidge & Paul Harding



Pride 2026

By Tammy Fergusson LLWL



On May 31, 2025, Grace United had its fourth Pride Service. The theme was about Tryg - a Norwegian word that means that you are safe and that you belong. We started out with a video from the 2025 Pride Alliance in Oslo. It showed subtle ways of sharing the message of safety and belonging through wearing ally bracelets, lanyards and stickers. Through the generous donations of Julie Price, we were all able to have our very own ally pin and wave flags and to see up close all of the Pride Flags relevant to our community.

Brad and Zach were in attendance to share greetings and gratitude from the Gananoque Pride Alliance. The church also thanked the Gananoque Pride Alliance for giving us the opportunity to celebrate this day on behalf of our community. It truly was a collaborative effort as we celebrate the pride of being who we are in God's world.

During the Youth and Young At Heart Time, we took a tour around the Sanctuary that was dressed up for Pride Sunday.

The Rainbow Candles

Each colour represented different parts of the Two-Spirit LGBTQIA+ Community. There is life, healing, sunlight, nature, harmony and Spirit.



The 6 Stripe Pride Flag

The first pride flag debuted on June 25, 1978 at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. It was designed by artist and activist Gilbert Baker at the urging of Harvey Mile who was assassinated for being gay. The first flag had 8 stripes, but there were problems with the design. As a result the flag was changed to 6 stripes in 1979. The stripes are:

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Violet. The 6 Strip Pride Flag is the most popular flag that we all recognize.

The Progressive Pride Flag

The Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ Community is ever-changing and this is reflected in the Pride Flag. In 2018, the non-binary artist and designer Daniel Quasar created a new flag that reflects the widespread diversity of the community and promotes inclusion. On the Progressive Pride Flag, there are white, pink and light blue chevrons representing the Trans community and the black and brown chevrons representing people who are black, indigenous, or persons of colour. The arrow points to the right, symbolizing forward movement and progress.

The Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride Flag is on the Alter

The most up to date Pride flag was designed in 2021 by Valentino Vecchietti who is from the Intersex Equality Rights UK. He merged the Progress Pride Flag, with Australian Activist, Morgan Carpenter's design to make the Intersex-Inclusive Progress Flag. The colours of yellow and purple are traditionally known as gender neutral colours. The symbol of the purple circle is described as unbroken and unornamented. It symbolizes wholeness, completeness and bodily autonomy for intersex people.

Unfortunately, some of the Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ members do not yet feel accepted in our community and they need a subtle way to know we care. That's why there is a

Progressive Pride Flag flying at the Gananoque Town Hall and why we had all 3 Pride flags at the church for Pride Sunday. That's why we are all encouraged to wear the Ally Pins. We want everyone to be welcomed, to be accepted and to feel we are safe. We want Grace United to feel like home. After all, the Bible says that God loves us and accepts every one of us as God's Children.

"Seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world. What you see reflects your thinking. And your thinking but reflects your choice of what you want to see. If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

Helen Schucman

Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council (EOR)

Annual General Meeting Highlights What Happens

Respectfully submitted, Tammy Fergusson

At The Meeting?

Each year, our Regional Council holds an Annual General Meeting somewhere in the Region and this year it was at Trinity United Church in Smith Falls. Representatives from each church are invited to discuss and vote on issues that are important to our area. It is a two day affair that includes business, discussion, worship, friendship and three home cooked meals. All United Church members are welcome to attend, but only the representatives can vote.

Issues of the Day

The Regional Council and the greater United Church are in the process of visioning and strategizing for a better future. The data from 1993 to 2023 was studied to predict what our church will look like in 2035. The Study took into consideration various church trends like membership, givings, attendance, ministry personnel and financial sustainability. From the Study, churches raised questions like: How do churches reach out into the community? How can churches be multigenerational? How can churches connect to other congregations? How can churches find resources to improve? Despite this vulnerability, the Church continues to be called and to bring God's love into the world.

Invitation and Imagination

What Council suggests is not to bring more technology to improve the church, but to generate ideas around invitation and imagination. The church has changed since 1993 and so has Canada. Some people have tried church before while others have not. We are encouraged to think of how to do church differently and to encourage people to come to church through invitation.

What Can We Do?

We can invite our friends to church. We can welcome new people when we see them at church. We can be curious about their thinking and introduce them to others. Someone once opened a space for us and now it is our turn to open a space for others. In deeper conversations, we can talk about God's love. We can explain how our own life of faith has impacted us personally. We can move beyond a simple welcome and move into new ways of being the church by modelling, engaging, and creating environments that honestly reflect the communities that we live in.

Church Resources From Regional Council

Vision Keepers: Churches can ask questions and get connected to the right people with this group of experts from the region. Their email is: growth@unitedchurch.ca

Keeping in Touch Newsletter: Churches can send in their successes and upcoming events to this Regional Newsletter.

Compassionate Ottawa: An Online Support Network for people caring for palliative patients.

Faith Survey Results for Canadians 18 - 35 years old

There are 56% of people that believe in a Higher Power. Most people use private prayer. They read spiritual books, support social events, and use charity to express their faith. What keeps people up at night are debt, mental health, stress, lack of community, lack of purpose and challenges with addiction. In other words, half of these concerns can be helped by the church.

Worship Schedule for July, August and September

All services at 10:30 except as noted

**If you are available as an usher or reader for any of these Sundays
please contact Colleen Harding**

June 28

No service at Grace United Church – **Community Worship at RIBFEST at 11 am**

July

5 Charlotte Hoy

12 Joint Service at St Andrew's, worship at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, at **10 am**

19 Lillian McNamee

26 Elaine Farley

August

2 Paul Whiteley – St. Andrew’s congregation will join with us at Grace

9 Joint Service at St Andrew’s, worship at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, at **10 am**

16 Mike Mundell

23 Lillian McNamee

30 Rev Brenda Reinkeluers – St. Andrew’s congregation will join with us at Grace

September

6 Lillian McNamee

13 Elaine Farley

20 Paul Whiteley

27 Tammy Fergusson (National Day of Truth and Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day)

The Worship Planning Team has been working on the schedule of Worship Leaders and has filled not only the entire 2026 roster, but almost all of the Sundays for 2027. Rev. Erin Burns and Tammy Fergusson LLWL will be conducting the majority of services in 2027.

UCW, Edna’s Café and Kniffy Knitters make a difference

By Denise Wood

Our UCW meets on the 3rd Monday of the month, and new members are always welcome. On May 3rd UCW led the Sunday service. May 3rd was Mental Health Sunday, and our guest speaker was Melanie DeLisle from LLG Addictions and Mental Health. We are looking forward to leading another service in 2027.



UCW, (back row) Linda Brooks, Marilyn Belbin, Denise Wood, (Guest Speaker, Melanie DeLisle) Shirley Clark, Tammy Fergusson. (Front row) Shirley Walker, Diane Nuttall, Marg Worth, Vicki Leakey, Christina Charney, Gerri Heath.

Several members attended the Four Rivers UCW Fall Rally and the AGM held on April 16th at Christ Church, Lyn. I began my term as President at the meeting and Diane Nuttall was installed as Communication Officer.



On May 19th, Shirley Walker, Christina Gordon, Tammy Fergusson and I attended the EOR AGM at Wall Street United Church in Brockville.

Edna's Café continues to be a big success! We held four Cafes at Grace and at Carveth Care Centre. Music and singing are such great medicine and it's so rewarding to see what joy the cafes bring to folks. We plan to continue again in September. A huge thank you to Paul Harding and the staff at Carveth and all our dedicated volunteers.



Joan Shaw, Christina Charney, Marilyn Belbin, Paul Harding, Diane Nuttall, Gerri Heath, and Denise Wood.

Residents of Carveth enjoying Edna's Cafe

The Kniffy Knitters group started at Grace United 14 years ago with 7 members and now has 19 members and counting. We have members from our congregation and many from the Gananoque community. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. and new members are always welcome. **"No Experience Required"**.

We have several members who will be happy to help you learn to knit or crochet. For several years the group has been knitting prayers shawls and Baptismal blankets. We have been focusing on knitting and crocheting hats, mittens, scarves and lap blankets which are airlifted to Moose Factory and other northern communities.

We estimate that we have sent over 200 items to the North. We also supplying Premie hats to the NICU at KGH with the Hugs program. Kniffy Knitters is an example of Grace United's spirit of outreach in Gananoque and beyond.

We also contribute these items to the Soup Kitchen and local schools.

Our last meeting will be a lunch on June 15th at the Cornwallis restaurant in Rockport.

I hope to see more women in the congregation consider joining UCW. Our national UCW will be celebrating it's 65th Anniversary at the Hilton Garden Inn in Ottawa starting on July 19th 2027. Tammy Fergusson is involved with organizing worship at the conference, and I am a member of the planning committee. All are invited to attend and there is some financial assistance available through the National UCW. If you think that you might be interested in attending, please contact me and I will do my best to help you.



Maintenance Team keeps the lights on

By Brian Brooks

- 1) The monthly inspection of the alarm system and emergency Church lighting continues. Any emergency lights that need to be replaced are attended to. During the last reporting period two lights were completely replaced and two had new batteries installed. All lights are now operating properly.
- 2) Replacement of overhead lights throughout the Church continues as needed.
- 3) One of the toilets in the lady's washroom was not operating properly. On occasion, it would not stop running when flushed. It is believed this resulted in a larger than normal water bill. All toilets were tested and no other leaks were found. This problem (we hope) has been corrected. The next water bill will be compared to historical results.
- 4) Recently the maintenance team replaced the backup battery sump pump system located in the large closet where the tables and chairs are stored. This is operated by a large battery should the power fail and the sump hole is near an overflow position. This has happened in the past causing water to flood the church hall.

Relax, but do not forget us

By Vicki Leakey, treasurer

Summertime is to be enjoyed by our congregation as we participate in various community events and we will have Sunday June 28th service outside of our sanctuary as we are invited to join an interdenominational service at RibFest held at the Gananoque Recreational Centre.

All the time and funds that are donated weekly from our church family continue to be appreciated and enable us to stay strong in the community. Our total revenue as of May 31, of \$64,504 was short to cover expenses to date of \$86,850, however, we started the year with a surplus of \$38,539 so we are still in a surplus position of \$16,192 with only a transfer from savings of \$3,200.

Revenues from our Pie Sales, concerts and rentals continue to help cover some monthly costs. Should any member of our congregation wish to assist Stewards as a rental coordinator, please reach out with your ideas for this fall and winter. From our Benevolent Fund we were able to provide bursaries for 2 students from T R Leger and 2

students from GISS, the soup kitchen and assistance for temporary homeless housing individuals in the winter.

As many enjoy time at cottages or on boats with family, we have several Offerings' options available for those that may not attend the Sunday Service but wish to support the many programs Grace United Church continues to provide. Families can sign up for **Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR)** forms which can be sent to you from our church office or **E-transfer** from your on-line bank account is also popular. Just look for "send an e-transfer" on your on-line banking website and send to grace.gan@outlook.com. Just follow the instructions given. **Offerings by mail** is another option – send by mail to Grace Church at 120 Pine St. Gananoque, On K7G 1C7.

Thank you to all that provide the strength and direction to help us follow our mission of working hard to help those in need. Grace United Church has a wonderful community reputation where we can be approached by community groups, for space for their programs, financial assistance etc. Hopefully many can enjoy the summer with family and friends visiting the many community events organized in the area.

Time to Update your Contact Information.

Have you moved, changed your phone number, or email address?

Do you no longer have a land line?

Your Email address is important to have on file as Donations receipts are now emailed to save on postage costs.

Did you know that you can also have the weekly Order of Service sent out to you by email as well.

Please contact Laurie to update your information for our church records.

613-382-2161 or grace.gan@outlook.com

Reminder – the church office will be closed from July 24th at 1:00pm to August 10th at 8:00am for Summer Holiday.



Our Sincere Condolences to all who have lost loved ones, including the families and friends of Ron Garrah, April 12 2026 and Jack Hutcheson May 31, 2026.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." – John 14:27

Celebrations for July, August, September – Happy Birthday or Anniversary to all those who celebrating over the next few months.

Happy Birthday to Brenda L., Dorothy J., Bruce W., Shannon T., Brad C., Dianna G., Linda B., Clarie B., Marilyn B., Elaine D., Michelle D., Dave C., Ron C., Carol C., Darryl W., and Thomas M.

Happy Anniversary to Peter & Catherine M., Tom & Carol C., Denise & Darryl W., Liz & Doug D., and Mel & Mard W.

Congratulations Everyone!!

Contributors for this newsletter: Tammy Fergusson, Vicki Leakey, Denise Wood, Colleen Harding, Paul Harding, Brian Brooks, Chuck Galway, Laurie Cadue, Paul Scott.

September deadline Friday, Sept. 11, 2026.

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