



Report From Your Board Chair

Thank You West Hill for Your Determination, Commitment, Resilience, and Belief in Our Community

2018 ... what a year! It started with the ongoing challenges of an aging building, a 2018 budget forecasting a deficit of over \$45,000 with cash reserves far short of this number, and the ongoing challenges of the approaching “heresy trial” and, to top it off, a Spring ice storm that resulted in water leaking from the roof. To nobody’s surprise, Gretta required a medical leave. In early fall, the roof no longer leaked, but water was streaming into the building and we had to relocate. Things weren’t looking so good. Any of these issues alone, let alone together, could have stopped us in our tracks ... but they didn’t!!

West Hill United has never shied away from challenges and our determination, commitment and resilience once again came into play. The talents of our membership along with guest speakers resulted in the continuous flow of insightful and spiritual-lead services. We applied for and received grants from PTCC (Presbyteries of Toronto Conference, a UCC body) to start developing our under-used building as a community hub with organizations that share our values and drive for community service. Working with Toronto Southeast Presbytery and Toronto United Church Council we were able to gain access to \$180,000 as a nonperforming second mortgage to repair the roof, mitigate any environmental concerns regarding mould and air quality issues, install new furnaces, and in the Spring install air conditioning. We also experienced significant financial support from members for our increasing building and legal expenditures. I don’t have any year-end numbers at the time of this report. We will close the year in a deficit, but significantly less than the \$45,000 projection, and we still have some cash in the bank.

However, the biggest headline for us was in November when Toronto Conference, Gretta, and West Hill reached a settlement and all legal proceedings came to a close.

WOW ... what a year! So, as we start 2019, we are back to our home, in a warm dry building, with Gretta by our side. With the storm clouds gone we can now dedicate all of our resources to continuing the work of West Hill United.

Thanks again to one and all for your ongoing support, passion and commitment to each other, our community, and the work we do within the United Church of Canada.

Randy Bowes

News From First Nations Study Group

THE LINE THAT BRINGS LIGHT ("Wataynikaneyap" in the Ojji-Cree language)

Excerpts and adaptation from (Nick Purdon/CBC News) Dec. 2, 2018:

The Wataynikaneyap project involves putting poles in the ground for 1,800 km of transmission lines that will connect remote First Nations communities to Ontario's power grid. It will cut the cost of providing electricity to northern communities, and means 260 jobs in the region for people who will build lines and maintain them.

The plan is for 22 First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario to raise equity through their company, Wataynikaneyap Power, and to own 51% of the completed power line. The remaining 49% will be owned by the utility company Fortis Inc. and Wataynikaneyap Power will have the option to take over 100% in the future.

Margaret Kenequanash, who grew up in North Caribou Lake First Nation, is the CEO of Wataynikaneyap Power. She says the project is a blueprint for the future. "Our youth today want employment and want improved living conditions," Kenequanash says. "Not only that, but they want hope."

Training

Trainees from remote First Nations communities across northwestern Ontario take part in a 15-week course designed to teach them how to build a transmission line. In Kingfisher Lake, 29-year-old Nathan Singleton is eager to see the project link his community to the Ontario grid. He's not just anticipating a job – he hopes the project will help fix the housing crisis.

Singleton, who has three kids under the age of six, shares a single-storey house with his sister's family and his mother. "It's kind of hectic and hard too," he says. "You have to separate your stuff. You just can't really do anything when you just live in a small room."

Solving the overcrowding is difficult, because even if new houses are built in many northern communities there's often not enough power to hook them up.

The Root of the Suicide Problem?

For Singleton, the housing shortage is at the root of one of the biggest problems in many communities throughout the North. "The youth don't really have anything to do," he says.

"They've got to have better things to do with their lives. Like, growing up when I was younger in the early 2000s, there were a lot of suicides here – including my brother. He shot himself."

Singleton hopes the transmission project will allow a youth centre to be built in Kingfisher Lake.

"In the community there's nowhere for the youth to hang around. Not even a library," he says.

Living with Diesel Power

Electricity in Kingfisher Lake First Nation comes from a trio of diesel generators.

This is reality for almost all of the First Nations communities that dot an area of northwestern Ontario about the size of France.

An economic study by Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) published in 2014 put the cost of supplying diesel to 21 remote communities in northwestern Ontario at around \$90 million a year. Most of that is paid for by the Federal Government and Ontario's electricity consumers.

The same study makes the case that connecting those communities to the grid would save up to \$1 billion in fuel costs alone over the next 40 years. The IESO states that using diesel to create electricity in remote communities is, on average, the highest-cost electricity resource in Ontario.

Energy poverty

The consequences of living in a community that relies on diesel generators for power permeates almost every aspect of life. For example, when our CBC News crew was in the airport in Sioux Lookout, ON, waiting to fly into Kingfisher Lake, we learned that planes couldn't land in the community of Pikangikum because its generators were down and there were no lights at the airport.

In fact, blackouts are so frequent in Pikangikum that it can take up to an extra year for students to graduate from high school because of the amount of time classrooms are shut down.

With a population of about 2,300 people, Pikangikum is one of the largest First Nations communities in the region and it will be the first to be hooked up to the grid as part of the Wataynikaneyap Power Project.

SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR - Wataynikaneyap plan aims to create skilled jobs in the North

"It would mean to me that I am worth something." That's why Anthony Begg, 24, wants a job on the Wataynikaneyap Power Project. In Kingfisher Lake, ON, Anthony is one of a dozen trainees taking a two-week "work readiness" course there.

Located about 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay with no road access, Kingfisher Lake – population 350 – is as remote a



Nathan Singleton



(Continued on page 8)

The Godness of Rosie DiManno

By Orland French

Toronto Star columnist Rosie DiManno has taken another run at the United Church, claiming, “By swallowing its opposition to the minister who doesn’t believe in God, the United Church shows just how irrelevant it is.” She called it “the nicely nicely church, standing for nothing.”

DiManno is a populist writer who carries a lot of weight with Star readers, but on this topic I believe she showed how out of touch she is.

She seems shocked that the United Church has allowed Rev. Gretta Vosper to continue in her job as minister at West Hill United in Scarborough. Imagine, she huffs. “A United Church minister who doesn’t believe in God.”

Rosie wants a God in the universe. She’s not too specific, but she figures if you’re going to be in the pulpit you gotta believe in God.

If she did some basic research — even as simple as reading letters in the Observer from United Church clergy supporting Vosper — she might learn that there are quite a few UC ministers who don’t believe in the traditional theistic view of God.

DiManno smugly dismisses the United Church as “a church of undemanding theology.” She has portrayed people who attend Vosper’s church as “a cult”. Honest, she wrote that, as if they might next be tossing back poisoned Kool-Aid.

And yet, and yet, in her own writing DiManno reveals that the United Church is a religious and social leader. Mocking the “nothing” church, she says, “it was so easy; [it] demanded almost nothing of its adherents. Abortion was OK, gay was OK, divorce was OK, female ordination was OK, eventually same-sex marriage was OK.”

“Demanded almost nothing of its adherents.” Really? Is DiManno ignorant of how United Church congregations were torn apart over the ordination of gays, of female ordination, of performing same-sex marriages? What church in this day would stand in the way of women in the pulpit, or denying recognition of the loving relationships of gays, of performing the sacred rights so that gays can be married just like heterosexuals? Of supporting divorce as a way out of dissolving miserable marriages? Of providing recognition of equality of the sexes and provision of justice in the ecclesiastical workplace? Really, what church in 2018 would deny that?

Oh, wait. There is one — that famous international sect headquartered in Rome, headed by the Pope.

DiManno doesn’t reveal her current religious preferences, but she does say she was raised in a Roman Catholic household.

She surely knows the Roman Catholic church bars women from the priesthood. It barely tolerates the presence of gays, and only as long as they are abstinent from “the sin”, it certainly doesn’t recognize gay marriages. Brave is the Catholic priest who would openly admit to being homosexual. Divorce, the release from a nasty marriage for men and women alike, is denied.

Is DiManno essentially defending the Roman Catholic Church’s stand on divorce, women’s rights, gay rights, where women are treated as second-class citizens and gays as non-existent. Is that where she really wants to be in her attack on the “nicely, nicely church.”?

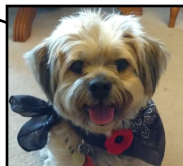
On the other hand, she has inadvertently but effectively pointed out that the United Church is leading the way on many sensitive social issues. Thanks, Rosie. We ARE relevant.

Orland French is a member of the United Church of Canada.



And, by the way, Ms DiManno ...
“Who are you calling a mutt!?”

Scott Kearns

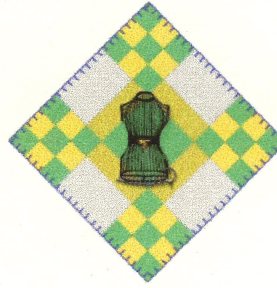


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Watch the film beforehand; join us Sunday mornings, 10:30, for the inspiration.

A Star is Born

January 20th



"A Star Is Born is a remake done right -- and a reminder that some stories can be just as effective in the retelling."
Rotten Tomatoes Critics' Consensus

Roma

January 27th



"Roma finds writer-director Alfonso Cuarón in complete, enthralling command of his visual craft - and telling the most powerfully personal story of his career."
Rotten Tomatoes, Critics' Consensus

Black Panther

February 3rd



"Black Panther beckons to a blackness that is stronger than any of the systems fighting hard to oppress it."
Rotten Tomatoes' Top Critic, Mikey Mason

If Beale Street Could Talk

February 10th



"If Beale Street Could Talk carves a holy place in a hard, hard world.."
Ty Burr, Boston Globe

Green Book

February 17th



"[A]n expertly-acted, perfectly telegraphed message movie that knows the buttons it's pushing, and pushes them all, right on cue.."
Adam Graham, Detroit News

west hill united: church that's out there

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IN THE SPIRIT



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Showtime

photo courtesy of George Oliver

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Helping People Is What We Love To Do!

FOGVA and West Hill were honoured to have Showtime perform their final concert for us in November. We laughed, we cried, we reminisced, and we sang along to some of the best music from decades past. We were delighted by their dancing moves and enchanted by their beautiful voices, and we didn't want the evening to end! We are grateful to Showtime, and especially to our own Alan Ely, for sharing their passion and talents with us, and grateful to all who attended, for your support of FOGVA and of Gretta. In addition to a wonderful evening, we raised \$3235!

submitted by Deb Ellis

The Line That Brings Light (Continued from page 2)

community as there is in this country.

The training course doesn't guarantee Begg work on the \$1.6-billion project, but it brings hope to a **region with an unemployment rate seven times the national average.**

"It's like a second chance to rebuild my life," says Begg, who dropped out of school part-way through Grade 11. "I didn't finish, because in my teenage years I was heavily in my addiction, like drinking and drugs and all that stupid stuff." Begg ended up in jail for assault, but says prison changed him for the better. "I looked around my surroundings and I thought to myself, 'I don't want to be like these people. I want to work.'"



Anthony Begg

In Thunder Bay, ON, there's an extensive training course that's part of the transmission line project.

This is where people from the First Nations all across northwestern Ontario are being taught to actually build the line that will run the power to their communities.

Curtis Rae, 38, of Deer Lake First Nation hopes to land a job on the Wataynikaneyap power project. "I would definitely be proud," he says. "It's something I can tell my kids that dad helped build." (Nick Purdon/CBC)

Rae, 38, moved his family 500 kilometres south from Deer Lake First Nation to Thunder Bay to learn everything he can about building a transmission line.

Every day for the past four months Rae has been focused on one thing – he wants to be one of the people employed putting poles in the ground when the transmission line reaches his community.

Looking forward, training opportunities, jobs and work are bringing a powerful amount of hope to Indigenous People in the far north creating a greater sense of personal and community pride.



Curtis Rae

submitted by Ruth Gill



Mission & Service ~A Vibrant Youth Program~

Our gifts for Mission & Service support programs for children and youth. "The GO Project has taught me so much about faith and social justice, but I didn't even notice I was learning because I never thought you could have that much fun while learning!" Those are the words of a youth who took part in The GO Project youth mission program. For nine years, The GO Project has been offering a vibrant experience of church to youth and children. The first program happened at Islington United Church in Toronto, and it's been an adventure ever since. First offered for youth, GO now also offers summer camp programs for children as well as a young adult intentional community. The GO Project has youth programs in Halifax, Vancouver, Saskatoon, and St. John's, in addition to the Toronto site. The youth live in community and work alongside volunteers at community ministries in the host city. Youth who have participated in The GO Project leave with a strong sense of community and a passion for leadership. Through gifts to M&S, children and youth continue to grow in faith and community, able to offer leadership that can mend the world.

submitted by Dorothy Hirlehey

Upcoming Special Events

| | |
|---|---|
| Sundays January 20 through February 24..... | Inspired by Hollywood ~ Services centred on a selection of 2019 Oscar-nominated movies. See the movie, and then join us at Sunday Service for the inspiration. |
| Saturday, January 26..... | Progressive Dinner ~ \$20 plus an appetizer, veggie or dessert. Sign up at the church or call Annie |
| Fridays February 8 and Friday March 8..... | Treat Night ~ \$10 for a treat, popcorn and drink. Stay to see a movie! (Fundraisers for WHU and refugee family) |
| Sunday, March 3 | Women ROCK! Service followed by Outreach Charity Lunch for Second Harvest |
| Tuesday March 5 | Pancake Supper ~ we need griddles, cooks, and help with set-up/clean up. |
| Sundays April 14 and 21 | Dream Away Series (Service) ~ Easter Re-Imagined; a deep exploration of present-day hardship and hope |
| Sometime This Spring | Trainwreck / Pub Night ~ help is needed for planning and set-up! The Women Rock singing program is yet to |

Regular Services, Meetings and Events

| | | |
|--|--|----------|
| Every Sunday..... | Sunday Service | 10:30 AM |
| First Sunday of every month..... | Visitors' and Travellers' Lunch | 12:00 PM |
| Every other Monday (Jan 7 to April 29) | Men's Spirituality Group | 7:00 PM |
| Last Monday of every month..... | First Nations Study Group Meeting | 1:00 PM |
| Every Tuesday | Labyrinth Walk | 10:30 AM |
| | Holiday Crafting | 1:00 PM |
| Second Tuesday of every month..... | Board Meeting | 7:00 PM |
| Every Thursday..... | Choir Practice | 7:30 PM |
| Every other Friday starting January 18 | Book Study - <i>The Power of Kindness</i> | 7:30 PM |
| Last Friday of every month..... | Dinner with Friends | 5:30 PM |

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