

Gratitude Report

2024



Islington United Church
Open Hearts Open Minds Open Doors

Gratitude Report 2024
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Message from the Lead Minister



Acknowledging the Land upon which we gather:

"Islington United acknowledges that we are hosted on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat. We recognize the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and the Inuit peoples. We are committed to acts of reconciliation and living into right relations."

Reflecting on my 8th year in ministry with this community that doesn't think, vote, love or pray the same but is trying it's best to follow in the way of Jesus, brings me to these words: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

[\(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18\)](#)

Rejoicing in the experience of gathering on a Sunday morning, the energy of our children and youth, the ways we sing our faith, the technology that keeps us connected, the growth and changes in our neighbourhood, so many meals shared, and the deep spirituality of this community of faith.

Praying for our organizational health, the ways we nurture financial and program sustainability, our commitment to faithful decision-making and clearer communication, the amalgamation with Bloordale United, and the compassion and hope we need to walk the walk of bold discipleship and daring justice.

God continues to place opportunities in front of Islington United as we honour the past and step into the future. We are surrounded by construction sites and new builds that will house newcomers to this neighbourhood. We will welcome new businesses and the chance to build strong relationships and partnerships that make an impact in this community.

Giving Thanks for your abundant generosity, for all those who serve in our many ministries, for the diverse strengths of our lay leaders, for our dedicated and flexible staff team, for those community partners and renters we work alongside, for the sacraments of baptism and communion that show us visible signs of God's invisible grace, for this sacred space and the rituals that help us all navigate ALL the seasons of our lives.

"For all that has been, thanks. For all that will be, Yes!"

Dag Hammarskjold, Second Secretary General of the United Nations, 1953-1961

Reverend Maya Landell

Lead Minister



Rev. Maya Landell and friends at the Pride/Community Celebration BBQ

Message from Church Council



As we moved into a new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, we witnessed clear evidence that things were beginning to shift in our community. Following the World Health Organization's announcement in May 2023 that COVID-19 no longer qualified as a global emergency, an ever-increasing number of familiar faces returned to weekly in-person worship in the Sanctuary. Continuing all the way to the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2024, we were blessed to welcome many new faces and build community within and beyond the walls of the church building. The number of people worshipping online and gathering virtually to participate in meetings and programs also steadily grew.

These developments have collectively brought a new sense of energy to this faith community, a personal experience of the spirit that is clearly palpable when we gather together. We have been privileged to witness the commitment of 35 new members to Islington United Church, with more preparing to take this next step in their own faith journey.

As the Church Council Chair, and on behalf of all Church Council members, I extend to you, the congregation, sincere appreciation for your continued support of the council as we journey together, doing our best to follow in the way of Jesus Christ, our dark-skinned peacemaker.

Here are a few highlights of Church Council work during the 2024 fiscal year:

- we voted to approve contracting a professional consultant on the remediation of the church's leaded and stained-glass windows
- we approved the proposal to hire Catherine Locke as Hospitality Ministry Lead on a two-year contract
- we voted to support the establishment of an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization within the United Church of Canada
- we organized and supported an amalgamation with a neighbouring church, Bloordale United, to become one community of faith
- we instituted governance changes to make room for new members who want to serve on Church Council
- we approved the appointment of Adele Halliday, Anti-Racism Equity Lead at the General Council Office of the United Church of Canada, and candidate on the path for ordination, as Pastoral Care Ministry Student
- we approved the *Tea with the Mad Hatter* fundraiser to help support the many ministries of the church
- we formed the Emergency Preparedness Task Force to create an Emergency Response Plan including a team of trained Emergency Response leads who will assume an initial response in the event of an emergency at the church

We are growing and adapting. We are listening and learning. We are using our time and energy to serve God in our faith community. And it is good.

There is something special happening at Islington United Church. I hope you feel it, too. It is happening because you are here.

Peggy Sheffield

Chair, Church Council

Program Highlights by the Numbers



Hospitality

- 9 memorial celebration
- 10,500 cups of coffee at Coffee Hour
- 1750 dinners served at Thursday night children and youth programs
- 800 dozen cookies donated
- 500 meals served at the Rummage Sale BBQ

In Matthew 25:31-46, the words of Jesus call us to be ready to offer Hospitality; to welcome without judgement or exception; to offer a safe space; to provide nourishment and support. We have been ready. Our Ministry offers thousands of volunteer hours, planning, cooking, cleaning, listening, and praying to support our church and beyond, whether offering meals in church or homes, feeding and spending time with someone in need of benevolent help in our building, or on the street.

2024 Highlights

Staff Updates

In 2024, following a significant bequest to the Hospitality Ministry, we welcomed Catherine Locke on contract for two years as our new Hospitality Ministry Lead. We also ended our working relationship with Laurie Lyle, Manager of Operations after 3.5 years of very significant and hard work to further the ministry of Islington United Church.

Music

Summer Music Camp hosted 58 children and youth for two full weeks in August. The Senior and Junior Choirs continued to grow in numbers, and our four staff singers enjoyed a busy and successful year.

Online Outreach

In 2024, the Communications Ministry saw great results. Facebook and Instagram engagement was up over 90%, with "link clicks" increasing 24% from a mix of organic and paid posts. Our YouTube channel clocked more than 38,000 views, and our subscribers increased by 150 people, reaching viewers in 10 countries.

Faith Formation

Islington continues to be the place for children and youth to grow in faith, with expanded weekly Toddler ministry, Children's Godly Play circles, and events for youth. A major highlight was the February Youth Retreat at Camp Medeba in Muskoka. Ten (10) participated from our church, with a total of 48 from other churches, spending three full days on retreat.

Social Justice

The Right Relations Circle held an Indigenous Blanket exercise and continued work on the Indigenous Mural Project to bring awareness and understanding to Canada's past relationship to Indigenous Peoples. The Mabelle Food Program served 21,608 individuals and families. The Affirm Team held a seminar on the understanding and use of "pronouns" in today's world and held the third annual Pride/Community Celebration BBQ.

2024 Financial Summary

Operating Revenue \$1,260,721

Regular Givings & Appeals	.....	719,604
Fundraising	.....	71,079
Other Income	.....	4,935
Faith Formation	.....	23,681
Worship & Music	.....	45,217
Pastoral Care	.....	18,542
Social Justice	.....	43,442
Hospitality	.....	19,989
Communications	.....	540
Rental Income	.....	306,361
Facilities	.....	7,331

Operating Expenses \$1,347,776

Governance	.....	174,948
Fundraising	.....	16,065
Other	.....	9,729
Faith Formation	.....	19,323
Worship & Music	.....	100,799
Pastoral Care	.....	11,921
Social Justice	.....	41,401
Hospitality	.....	15,475
Facilities	.....	255,115
Communications	.....	39,830
Ministry & Personnel	.....	787,670
Interfund Transfer	.....	(124,500)

Audited Financial Statements prepared by Raskin and Associates, CPA, are available from the Church Office.
October 16, 2024

Message from the Board of Trustees

Rev. Maya Landell, Chair, Ian McPherson, Vice-Chair, Jackie Carter, Joan Hunter, (Oct. - Jun.), Laura Johnston, John Leavitt, Jill Stewart, Paul Summers, (Oct. - Jun.). Honorary Trustees: Fred Leslie, (Oct. - Aug.), Don Hunter, Secretary, (non-voting): Laurie Lyle, (Oct. - May.)

The Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing our financial investments and holding the church property in trust. The Trustees were focused on three topics during the year.

Firstly, Fiera Capital completed one year of managing our investment funds. The investment portfolio performed well during the fiscal period, earning a return of 10.0% in the Balanced Fund and 5.25% in the Short-Term Fixed Income Fund.

Trustees financially supported the general operations of the church. The support included the underwriting of the 2024 operating deficit and a financial bridge to support the hiring of Catherine Locke, prior to the arrival of a large bequest designated for Hospitality initiatives.

In late 2023, **Bloordale United** approached Islington, amongst other congregations, to test its interest in amalgamating. Bloordale was at an inflection point strategically and concluded it would benefit from partnering with a strong congregation. Bloordale's senior Minister, Rev. Brian McIntosh was set to retire on June 30, 2024.

Islington was receptive and formed a task group with representatives from both Church Council and Trustees. Ian McPherson, Vice-Chair was asked to lead the Task Group which included Peggy Sheffield, Jack Grady, Jill Stewart, Jackie Carter with strong involvement from staff (Rev. Maya Landell, Jason Locke, Catherine Locke).

Both congregations voted unanimously to approve the amalgamation at separate meetings and the amalgamation was formally approved by Shining Waters Regional Council in June.

The chosen name for the amalgamated church is Islington United Church. The Islington campus will be the primary location for worship and staff and the Bloordale campus will continue to rent its facilities for the foreseeable future. A Bloordale visioning committee will be formed in late 2024 to evaluate options to optimize the property, our programs, our staff and volunteers, and the historic connection to the Bloordale community going forward.

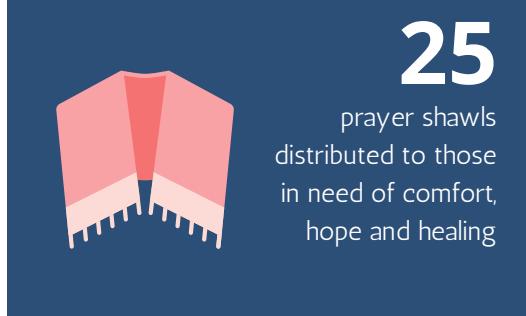
With respect to governance, there is one Church Council and one Board of Trustees member as of July 1, 2024. Patricia Willis-Conway of Bloordale joined Church Council and Julia Stavreff joined the Board of Trustees. All staff employed, on June 30 continued with the new Islington United Church.

It is with regret that we announce the retirement of two longtime Trustees – Paul Summers and Joan Hunter. The Board of Trustees hosted an evening social gathering in June to acknowledge their many decades of service. On a sadder note, the Board of Trustees lost a long time, former honorary trustee, Fred Leslie in August 2024. As a person of deep faith, his support for the ministry programs and his dedicated leadership contributions to many special projects were invaluable. We will miss him greatly.

Ian McPherson

Vice-Chair

Community Care



In Memoriam



*Raymond Adams
Jean Barbour
Fred Barwell
Barrie Cade
Shirley Chrystal
John Derksen*

*William (Bill) Drinnan
Joan Garth
Esther Haines
Larry Leet
Mary McCann
Helen Oldham*

*Joshua Page
Mollyanna Potter
Brad Smith
Edward Tansley
Glendene Tutton
Jean Vanwart*

Legacy of Faith



Carole Bennett, Rev. Maya Landell and Ian McPherson

We are grateful for legacy gifts to Islington. This year the congregation received a **Legacy of Faith** bequest to support the life and work of Islington United Church from:

Estate of Clare Estlick

in support of the Hospitality Ministry – bringing people in from the cold.

Many were remembered at their passing with **Memorial Gifts** from family and friends; these gifts go to where the church needs them most or to designated ministries that were important to the family's loved one:

*Raymond Adams
Fred Aitchison
Fred Barwell
Barrie Cade
John Derksen
William (Bill) Drinnan
Clare Estlick
Don Foster
Joan Garth
Terry Michael Gora
Doris Graham*

*Fred Grandy
Carol Laughton
Larry Leet
Eric McKay
Helen Oldham
Josh Page
Mollyanna Potter
Mary Prentice
Bill Stuart
Ed Tansley
Zachary Van Zant*

A **leadership gift** along with other Memorial Gifts in honour of Dr. John Derksen has created an annual scholarship fund to provide a university-level musician with a \$2,000 grant and the opportunity to participate in the church's musical life during their school year.

We also recognize the families who suggested a gift to Islington in the funeral notice:

*Family of Raymond Adams
Family of Shirley Chrystal
Family of John Derksen*

*Family of William (Bill) Drinnan
Family of Larry Leet*

Celebration Gifts to Islington mark special occasions for special people. This year we received Celebration Gifts in honour of:

Jack Reid

Kelly Willis Green

All these different gifts enable the faith of these women and men to live on in the ministry of this congregation for generations to come as we continue "building community with compassion and hope."

Church Council 2023-2024

Peggy Sheffield, Chair;
Chair, Communications Committee

Reverend Maya Landell, (non-voting),
Lead Minister

Vacant, Secretary

John Leavitt, Treasurer

David Allen, Chair, Ministry and Personnel Committee

Carole Bennett, Past Chair

Isla Grady, Chair, Hospitality Committee
Representative, United Church Women

Jack Grady, Chair, Pastoral Care Committee

Jason Locke, (non-voting), Minister of Music

Randee Marquez, (non-voting),
Communications Ministry Specialist

Catherine McPherson, Chair, Worship
and Music Committee

Jill Stewart, Representative,
Board of Trustees

Sandra Tully, Chair, Faith Formation
Committee

Janet Wells, Chair, Facilities Committee

Deb Bradley, Lead, Social Justice Network

Laurie Lyle, (non-voting), Manager of Operations

Our Staff Team

Maya Landell
Lead Minister

James Aitchison
Pastoral Care Ministry Lead

Jason Locke
Minister of Music

Laurie Lyle
Manager of Operations (until May 2024)

Randee Marquez
Communications Ministry Specialist

Brianna Coutlee
Children, Youth and Young Adult Ministry Lead

Catherine Locke
Hospitality Ministry Lead

Erin Pellow
Finance Coordinator

Scott Robertson
Ministry Support Coordinator

Adele Halliday
Pastoral Care Ministry Student

Voluntary Associate Ministers

Voluntary Associate Ministers are retired ministers or ministers serving in other appointments who are in formal relationship with Islington United Church as volunteers.

Reverend Mark Aitchison – supporting Mabelle Food Program, Stephen Ministry, Preaching

Reverend Janess Binns Landell – supporting Right Relations Circle and Welcome Team

Reverend Amy Crawford – supporting Faith Formation and Worship leadership

Reverend Adam Hanley – supporting Hospitality and Faith Formation

Reverend Roger Landell – supporting Pastoral Care Coverage, Welcome Team, Preaching

Reverend Ruth Noble – supporting Affirm and Worship leadership

Who We Are

As an active presence in the Village of Islington for more than 200 years, we believe we strengthen one another by working together through God's grace for a better world.

We are an intergenerational community of faith that doesn't think the same, vote the same, love the same, pray the same, but we are trying our best to follow in the way of Jesus.

Call

Building Community with Compassion and Hope

Islington United Church reflects the core of our purpose: sharing who we seek to be in this time.



Values

Generosity, Hospitality, Sacred Space

We live these values in our actions: wondering, praying, singing, giving and serving.

Vision

Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality inspiring worship, and daring justice.

Diversity and Equity

We, at Islington United Church, are an Affirming congregation of the United Church of Canada. We are committed to including everyone: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited persons and others (2SLGBTQ+); those who are marginalized for any reason, including race or age; economically disadvantaged; developmentally or physically challenged.





Islington United Church

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