

Bracebridge United Church

Annual Report

2024



Minister
Rev. Kathleen Taylor

Music Director
Mary-Ruth Roadhouse

Church Administrator
Avery Pawelek

Chairperson of Executive Council
Judi Brouse

Treasurer
Carolyn Gravelle

Managing Our Money Chair
Bev Webb

Custodian
Dixie Boutin

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Minister's Message

It is no secret that I find writing my annual Minister's report challenging. It is not the report itself, or the writing that always seems a struggle, but the task of summing up a year's worth of activities, ministry, fellowship, and work in just a short page. How do I fully capture the fun, the laughter and the love that graced our activities? How can I reflect the sadness, the grief, and the weight of each other's faith journeys that we shared? How can I describe the dedication, the care, and the effort that went into successfully maintaining our church in a changing world, with fewer bodies and fewer resources? It would take a much greater wordsmith than I to adequately convey these things to you. But, there is a page titled "Minister's Message", and that is me, so here is my best effort!



Fun, laughter, and fellowship were in abundance during the year through wonderful events like our Movie Nights, our Halloween Pot Luck and Trivia evening, our Old School board games night, and our Youth group. We gathered together to welcome our Newcomers with a special lunch and got to know our "Under 60" members with a potluck social. It is always so inspiring to see how welcoming and caring our congregation is and to see many new people joining it this past year.

Balanced against the fun was the reality of walking with each other in times of sadness as we grieved the loss of long term congregation members. Our faith reminds us that we are not alone, that God is with us and that God's love is expressed through our church community's concern and compassion. Sharing each other's "Joys and Concern's" each Sunday in worship, praying through our weekly Prayer Network meeting and email, and offering pastoral care to each other helps us get through challenging times. We also shared in the grief and truth telling of our Indigenous neighbours with a Red Dress Day service, and Orange Shirt day, and our weekly Land Acknowledgements call us to keep doing the hard work of reconciliation and healing.

In the midst of a world that is coping with climate change, political unrest, wars, and financial crisis, healing is much needed. Our world is in turmoil and the anxiety we feel around this turmoil has put pressure on all of us. We have felt it here in our church community and it has required us to be flexible, and to work harder to keep our church the vibrant active place it is, to be a place of hope, of education, and of joy. For every program we run and event we plan, someone is behind it organizing it, running it, cleaning up after it! Our Executive Council, our committee members, and our dedicated volunteers work so hard to make our church what it is. I couldn't even begin to express how many thousands of undocumented hours have been spent over the last year serving meals, mopping floors, setting up tables and chairs, making repairs, running cables, practicing music, making sandwiches, making phone calls, crafting for the Marketplace, teaching Sunday School, creating PowerPoints, shoveling the snow, or raking the gardens. Each and every one of you plays a unique and vital role in our church, including participating in worship and other events and offering your financial support.

Will 2025 be any easier? Nope! Will we get through it with each others' support and love? Yes! Will we have fun? Yes, sometimes despite ourselves! God's love is the constant in our church, and so together in this love, somehow, we will continue to thrive!

In prayer and in blessing,

Rev Kathleen Taylor

Executive Council Report for 2024

The year 2024 was marked by significant activity at Bracebridge United Church. The unwavering dedication of our congregation to support both the church's mission and its outreach initiatives has been truly inspiring. Over the past year, we have observed a steady increase in church attendance and have successfully reduced our deficit in the General Fund. Additionally, our efforts to engage with the community remain robust.

We continue to repair and update our Church building. In January, we installed a new ramp door and later repaired the ramp wall. The Repointing project began in the fall and should be completed by spring. We updated lights in the downstairs auditorium and seminar room to current standards, with additional updates planned for easy maintenance. The major project for 2025 will be replacing the auditorium floor.

I think a highlight of the year was adding projection in the sanctuary. Thanks to Paul Arril for his creativity in using the walls as screens and his hard work to get the projectors mounted and operational. They fit well into the sanctuary and add to our services.

As I write this report the 2024 financial statement has not been completed but I know that we are very close to meeting our budget. We have a significant operating budget to cover every year and we annually rise to the challenge. The cost of salaries, heating and maintaining an old building, keeping the lights on, and paying the insurance continue to rise. I think we can all be proud of ourselves as we continue to recognize those costs and support the life and work of Bracebridge United Church.

A big part of our ability to meet our financial needs is our fundraising. Last year we had a Spring dinner and Silent Auction and a Tourtière dinner. The Christmas Marketplace was a phenomenal success and with a variety of smaller activities we ensured that we beat our fundraising goal of \$22,000 by almost \$6,000. Well done, everyone!

Our church is more than just Sunday morning services, fundraising and budgets. We are a vibrant church that supports outreach programs in our community and abroad. As I write this report, we are getting ready to host the Fire and Ice Warming Centre. There will be cookies, hot chocolate, and lots of activities to keep people warm, busy, and happy.

Our building is in constant use by community organizations including NA and AA, the EarlyOn program, Tai Chi, Scouts, Sole Trainers, Out of the Cold, and more. Unfortunately, we had to stop the "Hi Neighbour" Box due to misuse and vandalism. We continue to support our local outreach needs through our support of the Manna Food Bank and the Out of the Cold Program.

December 2024 will be a year to remember with cold weather and mounds of snow. We had to cancel a service and many volunteers spent hours shovelling. Thanks to everyone for their persistence. Again, this year we offered the Living Nativity and Carol Sing. It's a lovely way to enjoy the Christmas story with friends and family.

I thank all of you who made 2024 a lot of fun and a real success. I will be retiring from the position of Chair in 2025, and I look forward to the leadership that will be provided by David Kent.

~Respectfully submitted by Executive Council Chair Judi Brouse



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2024

Chairperson: Judi Brouse (to 2025)

In Coming Chair: David Kent (to 2027)

Past Chairperson: Paul Arril

Recording Secretary: Anne Noonan (to 2025)

Minister: Rev. Kathleen Taylor

Shining Waters Regional Council Lay Delegates: Martha Wood and Bev Webb

- ◆ *Terms start and finish at the Annual Congregational Meeting*
- ◆ *Underlined name* indicates the Chairperson and therefore also a member of Executive Council.

Information appears
as of
December 31st, 2024

Committees and Members

Living Our Faith

Members: Bonnie Greer, Donna Naylor, Kathy Smith, Pat Best, Joyce MacKay, Judy Snoddon, Jane Caughey, Janice Broadworth, Ken Turner, Peter Wood, Nancy Wilson.

Staff Liaison: Kathleen Taylor

Funeral Catering Coordinator: Janice Broadworth

Worship

Members: Paul Arril, Gary Hammond, Bob Joynt, Sandra Hartill, Martha Wood, Shirley Goyea.

Staff Liaison: Kathleen Taylor, Mary-Ruth Roadhouse

Memorials Representative:

Communion Elements Preparation: Michael Michalski

Scripture Coordinator: Paul Arril

Ushers Coordinator: Kathy Smith

PowerPoint Creation: Amanda Vaughan

Fundraising

Marketplace: Bev Webb, Jim Webb, Judi Brouse

Staff Liaison: Kathleen Taylor

Managing Our Money

Members: Bev Webb, Don MacKay, Kent Phillips, Jane Corbeil.

Staff Liaison: Avery Pawelek

Treasurer: Carolyn Gravelle

Donations Secretary: Lloyd Dunham

Counting Teams Coordinator: Lloyd Dunham

Counting Teams: Jim & Bev Webb, Peter & Kathy Wood, Margie & Michael Michalski, Jodi & Dale Clarke, Marian & Lloyd Dunham, Jane Corbeil

Investments: Bill Caughey, Keith Montgomery, Don MacKay

Special Gifts: Chair of Trustees + Chair of Finance + Chair of Executive Council

Property

Members: Ben Hopkins

Staff Liaison: Avery Pawelek

Kitchen Coordinator: Janice Broadworth

Gardens:

Memorials:

Archivist: Jim Marrin

Fire Safety: Terry Killins

Trustees

Noreen Morrison (1993)

George Reid (1991)

Greg Shea (2015)

Kathy Smith (2017)

Maureen Wylie (2000)

Minister/Staff Liaison: Kathleen Taylor (requirement per The Manual of The United Church of Canada)

Ministry & Personnel

Members: Linda Acton-Riddle, Anne Noonan, John Reynolds, Pat Salter

Staff Liaison: Avery Pawelek

Nominating

Members: Judi Brouse

Minister/ Staff Liaison: Kathleen Taylor

Shining Waters Regional Council - Lay Delegates

Martha Wood, Bev Webb. Representatives

Affirm Committee



A large, stylized, handwritten-style text graphic. The words 'We', 'love', 'our', and 'Volunteers' are written in blue. The word 'love' is written in red, with a red heart symbol integrated into the letter 'o'. The text is arranged in three lines: 'We' on the first line, 'love' on the second line, and 'our' and 'Volunteers' on the third line, all in a fluid, cursive font.

Worship ~ Ministry of Music

Another busy year of leading the congregation in worship through music has come to an end. This marks the end of my 9th year of leadership at BUC. Of course, there have been many others involved in this vital ministry and I would like to acknowledge their contributions over the past year. The choir is faithful and committed, and includes Pamela Rogers, Roberta Parkes, Wendy McKay, Judy Leary, Martha Wood, Nancy Whitty, Bev Webb, Stan Hunter, Jim Webb, Brad Johnston, Greg Shea, Tim Anderson, and Norm Ewing.

Others involved in providing music for our services included John Reynolds, Judy Flemming, Alana Reid, Kathy Smith, the Old Tyme Gospel Band, and the Webb/Brouse Trio. We also saw the resumption of the Bell Choir, now known as Joyful Ringers. What a blessing all of these musicians have been to us as a congregation, as over 1/3 of our congregation are involved in the music ministry in some way.

Some of the highlights of 2024 include: Celtic Music being featured in our March 17 service, Antiphonal Hosanna and Processional for Palm Sunday, combined Bells and Choir on Easter Sunday, singing the Psalms especially on Red Dress Day, more choral readings, "The Time of Jubilee" presented by the women of the choir in July, using different languages on World Communion Sunday, incorporating a Sung Communion Liturgy occasionally, Piano and Organ duet with Choral Introit for Reign of Christ Sunday, and the Choral Cantata "Tidings of Joy" for the 10:15 service on December 15.

The choir was practicing at 4:00 p.m. on Thursdays, but decided to combine Sunday services and practice into one session, and so we practice right after church each Sunday. We thought this a more convenient time, as everyone was already present. New members are always welcome to join us, whether it is each week or occasionally, and all levels of singers and readers are welcome. God is faithful and continues to bless our ministry.

A big addition this year was incorporating and projecting slides in the service. I am responsible for all of the music slides, the hymn and song texts, acknowledging musicians, and doing title slides for anthems and special music. I also report to ONELICENSE, our licensing agency, the titles and publishers of any music used in our services in accordance with Copyright Law.

It is my sincere hope that you as the congregation find the Music Ministry at BUC to be invaluable in drawing you closer to God and in service to God.

~Musically Submitted by Mary-Ruth Roadhouse - Music Director



Worship Committee

2024 was another wonderful year for the dedicated members of the Worship Committee, as, under Rev. Kathleen Taylor's direction, we continued to have excellent services and began to increase our weekly attendance.

In January, we started using a new lectionary which focuses on current events without neglecting the emphasis on traditional key scriptures.

A pew was removed from the front of the sanctuary to make more room for the Baby Grand piano, a gift from Mary Lou Chuter and, as was the case in 2023, the piano was used in the Narthex this Christmas season to delight the congregation with music prior to each service.

One exciting addition to our worship this year was the projection of the services. Instead of purchasing costly and visually distracting motorized screens, it was decided to project directly onto the wall on either side of the cross and also below the large stained glass window at the back of the sanctuary. After a trial period and an extensive survey of the congregation, the system was adopted and weekly projection began in May. Many members of the congregation were very appreciative of the fact that they didn't have to hold the heavy hymn books to sing.

The projection also added to the land acknowledgements with pictures illustrating the weekly theme. Finally, the projection allowed the creation of short videos to accompany children's time.

An Ad Hoc Funeral Committee was formed as sadly, we were faced with an increasing number of memorial events. This committee finalized the duties, fees, and responsibilities involved and unexpectedly provided a benefit that was not foreseen. The families of the bereaved were now able to project pictures and favourite memories onto the wall, a practice that before was restricted to having portable picture stands set up in the narthex.

Despite some terrible weather at times which forced the cancellation of church on one occasion, there were many memorable services. Musical highlights included the Webb/Brouse Trio, the Tyme Gospel Band, the Bell Choir and consistently excellent choral offerings from Mary-Ruth's always innovative and inspired programme. Other perennially popular services, such as Maundy Thursday, Easter and the Blessing of the Animals, were all greatly enjoyed by our church family.

We look forward to 2025 as another banner year, as in an uncertain and increasingly conflicted world we provide a welcoming refuge of peace, love, and compassion.

~Respectfully submitted by Paul Arril, Chair of Worship

A special thanks to Amanda Vaughan for taking over the PowerPoint services and creating the children's videos.

Nominating Committee Report

The goal of the Nominating Committee is to find volunteers to fill vacancies on the various committees that help the church fulfill its many goals. The committee strives to match the skill set of volunteers to the appropriate committee. More information on committees can be found on our webpage at www.bracebridgeunitedchurch.ca

Volunteering on church committees is an excellent way to learn about the work of the church. Each year the job of the nominating committee is to find new committee members to replace those that have retired or resigned. In 2024 most positions were filled, and committees worked well throughout the year. Thank you to all volunteers for supporting our church programs.

Our church community is filled with talented and skilled people, many of whom have served on committees in the past. The work of the church never ends and requires the gifts of those who have experience on committees and those who are joining for the first time. If you see any committee that interests you or if you are approached by a member of the Nominating Committee, please consider participating.

In 2024 we were grateful to all the volunteers that sat on various committees and ensured that the work of the church was carried out.

~Respectfully submitted by Executive Council Chair Judi Brouse

Christmas Eve & Living Nativity

Living Nativity

As was the case with many weather related events in 2024, the Living Nativity had to be rescheduled due to an extreme amount of snow. Originally planned for December 1st, it was eventually run on December 22nd and was well attended with approximately 60 people, many of whom were from the community. The event ran from 5:30 until 7:00 and included a time of carol singing in the sanctuary and cookies and hot apple cider in the Narthex. This year a new station was added with a “Marketplace”, dreamed up by Judy Snoddon and Joyce MacKay. While nothing was actually sold, it offered a glimpse into an Eastern style ‘souk’, or market, and set the tone for the rest of the display. Thank you to everyone who helped make the evening a success including; Judi and Frank Brouse, Bev and Jim Webb, Ellen and Brian Yeo, Jane Corbeil, Sonja Smith, Avery Pawelek, Jane Caughey, Ben Hopkins, Mark and Donna Naylor, Amanda and Joel Vaughan, Janice Broadworth, Kathy Smith, Judy Snoddon, Joyce MacKay, Chris McCormack, and Anne and Dennis Noonan.

Christmas Eve

As we have done in previous years we offered two Christmas Eve services this year, one at 6:00 pm. and one at 8:00 pm. The early service was family themed and featured an interactive story in which the children were encouraged to participate and was very well attended with a full congregation. The later service included communion and while not as busy as the early service, attendance was high with over 100 people present. Our newly revived bell choir, “The Joyful Ringers” were present at both services and provided a wonderful addition to our candlelit “Silent Night”, and the choir shared their music ministry with us at the later service. Thank you to everyone who participated in making these services a blessing to our congregation and community.

Submitted by Rev. Kathleen Taylor



Spirituality Explored

Kayaking and Canoeing Group

For the third year in a row we have meet each Tuesday or Wednesday morning, depending on the weather, and kayaked or canoed in a small group during July. Participants have always provided their own kayaks but this year we were very excited to add the option of canoeing thanks to Shawn Forth! Our group varied in size from four to seven or eight of us and we paddled at several different locations. Over the five weeks we explored the north branch of the Muskoka River and the base of the falls, around McVittie Island, Spence Lake in two different directions and Alport Bay. Anne Noonan very kindly hosted us for lunch when we paddled in Alport Bay, and we had a great time of fellowship. Each session we paddled out for about half an hour, spent time in meditation or reflection together, and then paddled back. We were privileged to see a deer, a blue heron, turtles, ducks, and some beautiful wildflowers on our trips and this only enhanced our meditative time and connection with nature and with each other.

Lenten Movie Study

In previous years we have often had a Lenten book study, but this year we decided to offer an Lenten movie study instead. A new movie was chosen for each week, and as a group we watched the movie, shared popcorn and snacks and then enjoyed a time of discussion regarding the theme of the movie, and how it related to Scripture. We met in the parlour, and about 10-12 people attended each week. The movies we watched included: Pleasantville, Batman Begins, Apollo 13, The Truman Show, and The Secret Life of Walter Mitty. The group had such a good time that this kicked off a monthly movie night that continued for the rest of the year.

Spirituality Explored Continued...

Spirituality Group

The Spirituality Group began in 2020 as a way to stay connected during COVID. Initially we listened to podcasts, and then gathered on ZOOM to discuss them. This continued during our various lockdowns, and then once we were able to meet in person, we transitioned to gathering twice monthly on Monday nights. Over the years we have met, topics have included; Reiki, crystals, tarot cards, chakras, Mediums, nature spirituality, world religions, energy field studies, Shamanism, Indigenous spirituality and spiritual leaders, miracles, healings, pagan religions, and more. Our focus has been to learn, to explore, and to discuss how these forms of spirituality share similarities with Christian practises or how they differ. It is a small group that meets, but our discussions are always lively, our interest keen, and new insights into our own faith and the way faith is expressed by others, are always found.

Prayer Network

The Prayer Network meets faithfully every Tuesday morning throughout the year with very few weeks missed. Meetings are held in the Minister's office and usually last an hour or so. Each person in attendance is given time to share their prayer requests for the day. These can be for anyone or any situation and usually include family, friends, and members of the church and wider community. We also discuss and pray for world and national items of concern, and for our own province, region, and town. If permission has been given, Kathleen will share prayer requests or needs from within the congregation as well. During the meeting a ten-minute time of silent prayer is observed together. After the meeting each week, the prayer request are summarized and shared in a weekly email to those on the Prayer Network email list so that an even wider circle of prayers is enacted. There are prayer request slips available in the Narthex and requests can be left in the concrete hands on the table in the Narthex. Anyone is welcome to join the Prayer Network in person, or via email.

Land Acknowledgements

Including land acknowledgements at the beginning of gatherings, meetings, and worship services are a part of our healing work for Truth and Reconciliation as a nation and as a church. In an effort to make sure our Land Acknowledgements are educational, timely and relevant, Paul Arril has undertaken this ministry and provides us with a new acknowledgement with pictures and text each Sunday morning. Topics have included local Indigenous people who have made a difference in the world via sports, politics, education and service, and Indigenous cuisine and food resources, and Indigenous place names and history. We have also examined how colonialism has impacted Indigenous culture and acknowledged our role in the impact. We are grateful for the opportunity to keep learning about Indigenous issues and how we can offer healing and support to the Indigenous community.

~Submitted by Rev. Kathleen Taylor

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry at Bracebridge United Church is into its 14th year. A small group of volunteer knitters, crocheters and quilters, members and non-members of BUC, have created prayer shawls since the Summer of 2011. Care and love of knitting, crocheting and quilting have been combined into a prayerful ministry of kindness and compassion that has reached out to those in need of comfort and solace within our own faith community and far beyond.

During 2024, approximately 60 prayer shawls were created and blessed. Over 40 shawls were given to individuals within and without our faith community. These gifts of kindness and compassion have been greatly appreciated by the recipients.

Many thanks to those who contribute to this Ministry.

~Submitted by Catherine Caron

Living Our Faith Committee

LOF has had another very busy year. While our mandate is to provide the social aspect of congregational activities, we also oversee M&S, outreach (local, national and international – Ronnie Fund, Dominica), Sunday School and adult education, church membership, baptisms, weddings and funerals, coffee hour, name tags, photo directory, pastoral care, catering, and the BUC library. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of the members of this committee – Janice Broadworth, Joyce MacKay, Donna Naylor, Pat Best, Ken Turner, Peter Wood, Judy Snoddon, Nancy Wilson and Kathy Smith. Jane Caughey and Ellen Yeo stepped down to pursue other commitments but join us when needed. Everyone has been very eager to help out when called upon. We'd also like to thank Nancy Tost and Jane Corbeil for their help with the pancake lunch.

Sunday School appears to be gaining some ground. A big thank you to all of the volunteers who help provide this program to our young congregants.

We provided many dinners throughout the year – Pancake Brunch, Irish Stew Dinner, St. Patrick's Day luncheon, Easter Breakfast, June BBQ, New Member Lunch, and the Tourtiere Lunch. Pizza was provided to volunteers at the Fire & Ice Festival.

Outreach initiatives included providing a warming centre during Fire & Ice, complied bags of hygiene items for dispensing to those in need, the Living Nativity, and Christmas cacti to our shut-ins and grieving families. The Men's Breakfast continues to happen under the direction of Peter Wood.

We have decided to change the Women's Retreat into a one-day affair in the future as the cost of a weekend has become prohibitive.

Kathy Smith has stepped in to help Bonnie Greer with the Chairperson role but we are still in need of someone to be our secretary.

Carnations were given to all of our women on Mothers' Day and Dad's cookies were given to all of the men on Fathers' Day. This seems to be a worthwhile tradition for the future. Gifts of appreciation were given to our Pastoral Care team and our Sunday School volunteers.

Nancy Wilson has been working hard to entice more people to use the BUC library. She reports that there were 49 checkouts during 2024 compared to 18 in 2023. Good work, Nancy! Please check out our library as there are some fantastic titles. It is not just a religious library as the Book Club has discovered.



One baptism was conducted during 2024 along with a blessing for the sibling.

~Respectfully submitted by Bonnie Greer, Co-Chair

Sunday School

This year, our Sunday School program has continued to thrive. Jodi Clarke led the program through until March and then Jeremy Wood and Shawn Forth took over until June. Starting back in September Shawn Forth and Avery Pawelek began to lead the group again. To support our leaders, we asked members of the congregation to assist with classes—this has helped a lot!

Late in the year, we were blessed to incorporate curriculum from the United Church's GO Project. This resource offers a wide range of lesson topics, allowing us to tailor our classes to our children's ages, interests, and personalities. The curriculum lets us adjust each lesson as needed. In November, we began with *The Creation Story* then went into *Advent* as we prepared for the Christmas season.

Attendance is from 2 to 6 children per class. While our numbers are small this has created a more manageable and close class. Most importantly, we are having fun learning about Jesus and growing in faith together!

A heartfelt “**thank you!**” to all the volunteers who have generously given their time and energy to support our Sunday School: **Co-Leader Shawn Forth, Anne Noonan, Judi Brouse, Angela Cartier, Bev Webb, Wendy Schankula, Jeremy Wood, and Jodi Clarke.**

We look forward to another year of learning about our faith!

~Submitted by Avery Pawelek,



Archives

The Archives has had a wonderful year.

Once again there was a big turnout for the two viewings.

Gary Hammond donated two religious books, one that the U.C gave him in 1954. The other was from the Gideons in 1953. The Archives are thankful for Gary's help.

~Submitted by Jim Marrin - Archivist



Mission and Service

Compassion lies at the heart of generosity. From serving a hot meal at a local community kitchen, to visiting a lonely neighbour, to financially supporting those in need in our local communities and around the world, the people of the United Church are committed to turning compassion into action, nationally and globally through the M&S Fund.



Each year churches come together to support the Mission and Service Fund which is the financial vehicle through which the church supports work locally, nationally, and internationally. In 2024, those who attended and supported The M & S Fund, gave over \$24 million to people in need and projects that matter. The Bracebridge United Church M&S Goal for 2024 was \$40,000.

The Mission and Service Fund has three goals:

- to help transform lives
- to inspire meaning and purpose
- to build a better world

In Canada, the Fund helps people by supporting homeless shelters, food banks, community kitchens, and refugee programs. The Fund helps young people on campuses and through camping outreach. The Fund helps people who are sick or at the end of life by supporting addiction, mental health, counselling services, and hospice care.

Globally, the Fund supports people to access clean water, food, and medical care. The Fund supports skills training and economic development. It helps with peace-making and sustainable agriculture efforts. The Fund provides disaster relief and advocates for the rights of those who all too often don't get a say, like children and migrant workers.

Mission and Service also inspires people to live with meaning and purpose by supporting opportunities for people to grow spiritually in all kinds of ways.

In Canada, it supports theological schools and education/retreat centres. The Fund supports events that promote spiritual development and personal reflection and it supports new and innovative ministries, as well as communities of faith that are remote or in need. Globally, the Fund supports church organizations that work with theological schools, and supports places that offer practical training in agriculture and health.

Through the Fund we work in partnership with people and organizations around the world and never impose our solutions, ways of doing things, or belief systems. The United Church aims for long-term solutions over quick fixes because we want to make a lasting difference. At this very moment, the United Church is working alongside 68 partners in 23 countries around the world. We've built many of these relationships over decades. These vital partnerships allow us to maximize generosity in places that desperately need our help and put donations to work quickly and effectively when disaster strikes almost anywhere in the world.

In 2024, Bracebridge United Church donated \$40,000 to the M&S fund. The money was raised through our Easter breakfast, the regular contribution of our congregations, and the generous donation of individuals made in the name of loved-ones.

~Submitted by Judi Brouse, Chair of Executive Council



Syrian Refugee Fund BUC/ Knox Partnership

In 2021, our congregation joined members of Knox Presbyterian Church with the purpose of co-sponsoring the Janbali family (Syrian refugees) to settle in Bracebridge.

For our refugee family, 2024 was a year of encouraging news followed by a long period of waiting. On April 23rd, the Janbalis had their interview with IMO (International Organization for Migration). Since no further information had been forthcoming, our committee contacted Scott Aitchison, M.P. in June. His office confirmed, after speaking with IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), that the sponsorship eligibility has been approved as well as the applicant eligibility. The next steps requiring attention are with regard to the security and criminality portions of the application. Subsequent enquires in recent weeks confirm that the Jambali application is in process, moving towards security approval.

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Each November, IRCC releases immigration figures for the coming year. Thus in 2025, the number of refugees to be accepted under the private sponsorship program (our application) is estimated at 21,000 (22,000 estimated in 2024).

For the Janbali family, the BUC/Knox Refugee Partnership, and our two congregations, any further steps in the approval process are out of our hands. We must wait - a frustrating position for all.

*~Submitted by Margie Michalski
Co-chair, BUC/Knox Refugee Partnership*

Bracebridge Out of the Cold

~ Submitted by Judi Brouse on behalf of the many volunteers

Bracebridge Out of the Cold has been offering hot nutritious meals for those in need since the fall of 2006. The Steering Committee for the program is made up of representatives from Bracebridge United Church, Knox Presbyterian Church, and St. Joseph's Catholic Church. This year the Seventh Day Adventist Church joined the Committee.

In 2024 we began a second evening of meals. Our first Thursday meal was January 11, 2024. This program is spearheaded by a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and draws volunteers from across a wide spectrum of the Bracebridge Community.

This year, we have averaged 150 meals a week, with dinners on both Tuesday and Thursday evening. We deliver about thirty-two (32) meals to people that cannot make it to the church for a meal. These include older people, people with medical conditions, or people with severe anxiety disorders. We also serve about 10 children a week. This fall we have begun to provide a meal to the Getting Ahead program run by the YWCA.

We are grateful to all our volunteers and people who donate to the program. As a completely volunteer run and donation driven program, community support is essential. We would like to thank Big River Bakery for providing bread and desserts from time to time. It is nice to know that our downtown businesses see the need in our community and are happy to help.

The Out of the Cold Program is grateful for the financial and volunteer support they receive from the community and especially, Bracebridge United Church.



2024 update for the BUC Annual Report

2024 Revenue	Donations	
	From District	16,560.25
	Fundraising	0
	HST refunds	4,603.50
	Total	395.70
	21,559.45	
2024 Expenses	Groceries	
	Contribution to Utilities	18,950.83
	Non-Food Purchases	500.00
	Return of District Funding	3,081.60 (take out containers)
	Oven Cleaning	105.72
	Small Kitchen Items	389.93
	Total	181.74
	23,028.08	
	Deficit	
		(1,468.63)



BUC As A Community Hub

A significant and often unseen part of our church is the presence of the vibrant communities that gather here. This space isn't just for worship—it's a hub for connection, hosting everything from events and meetings to celebrations and activities. Whether it's seminars, first aid classes, potlucks, game nights, parent and youth groups, healing sessions, exercise classes, baby showers, birthdays, concerts, recitals, crafting sessions, therapy, or yoga—if you can think of it, we've probably hosted it this year!

When the new public library space opened, there was concern that our rentals might decrease. However, I'm happy to say that we haven't lost any rental income. In fact, the heartfelt feedback and kind compliments we receive suggest that people are drawn to the inviting atmosphere of our church. Renting out our space helps us connect to the community and brings people to us. We are delighted to continue this work into 2025!

~ Submitted by Avery Pawelek, Church Office Administrator



Church Website & Emails

Visits to our website were down slightly from last year, averaging 814 page views per month. Our busiest months were January, February and December. Most users who visited our site viewed our website with a desktop computer (61%), mobile phone (38%) or a tablet (1%). Our most popular page visits were to the "Calendar", "BUC This Week" and "Out of the Cold".

Late in the year many people were not receiving their Eblasts email to their inboxes. The Eblast would go to junk folders or not arrive at all. In today's digital age, where email is a primary communication tool, providers like Google use highly sensitive and advanced AI spam filters to review messages. This is a good thing! It prevents your Inbox from filling up with junk. Unfortunately, our previous emails were not passing these spam tests. Our emails looked like junk! This is frustrating since we rely on Eblasts to share important updates with our community. We also work hard to make them look like they have some personality.

In the new year, we will register a new domain and adopt a new email address that is associated with our newsletter. This should help immensely. Additionally, we've made changes to the format of our Eblast. They will look plainer but hopefully pass these filter tests. We are hoping to redo our website as well.

~ Submitted by the Semi-Technical Church Administrator, Avery Pawelek



Marketplace 2024

13th Annual Christmas Marketplace and On-Line Sales

This year we returned to the once-a-year Christmas Marketplace format, held Saturday, November 16, 2024. The marketplace event supports the work of Bracebridge United Church and our outreach programs. The Summer Marketplace was discontinued in 2024 in favour of a new Spring Dinner & Silent Auction fundraiser.

This year's Christmas Marketplace was a huge success! Once again, BUC members donated lots of wonderful handmade items, home baking and preserved goodies, gently used items and vintage wonders. We had more customers come through the church than we have seen since pre-Covid days. The line up at 9am reached from the front doors out to the street and along the sidewalk. Most of the shoppers left the church with full bags and happy smiles because of the wonderful treasures they found and the friendly volunteers they met inside. As you can see in the chart below, every area did very well and - surprise - Decorator's Corner took the lead. Well done!

There was even a visit from the Jolly old man himself, who took selfies with all his biggest fans.

The receiving of items throughout the lead-up week, and set-up on the Friday, went very smoothly. Then, after the event, all remaining items were cleared out and the church back to its normal state by 3pm. Many, many thanks to the stalwart set-up and clear-out crews and truck drivers that delivered all leftovers to the ReStore, Value Village, and Salvation Army SalMart. A few items were kept for on-line sales through Facebook Marketplace and for the 2025 Spring Dinner & Silent Auction.

Thank you, again, to all the sewers, canners, crafters, knitters, quilters, bakers, donors, café servers, area Coordinators, and sales volunteers. You make our job so much easier and kept us smiling all day. This event's success is YOUR success. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

- Submitted by Beverley and Jim Webb, Marketplace Coordinators



Sales Area	Christmas Market 2024	Christmas Market 2023
Bake Shop	2183	2326
Decorators Corner/Art	2459	1152
Regifting	1177	896
Sewing and Crafts	1712	1654
Christmas Store	517	637
Pantry/Preserves	2122	1603
Jewelry/Scarves	721	697
Quilting	807	1573
Books/CD/DVD/LP	513	392
Toys/Santa & Mrs Claus	746	581
Tourtieres	1125	922
Café	1127	471
Gold/Silver	2240	0
Donations	201	173
Christmas Marketplace Total	17650	13077

Property Standards



Building operation, maintenance and upgrade projects have been numerous and have been relatively costly in 2024.

Property Standards projects undertaken in the past year have included:

Brick Masonry Repair & Restoration on the building exterior (Budget: \$45,000)

Stone Masonry Restoration at the accessible ramp entry (Budget: \$5,000)

Entry Door System Replacement at the accessible entry doors (Budget: \$16,150)

Drip-edge Retrofit at Parapet Wall Caps to prevent freeze-thaw brick damage (Budget: \$3,000)

Backflow Prevention Upgrades to Building Plumbing System (Budget: \$3,300)

Hot Water Heater Repairs & Replacement (Budget: \$3,000)

Thank you for your financial contributions that have made action on these projects possible!

I would like to welcome Don Currie, who has volunteered to take on oversight of fire safety equipment for Bracebridge United Church starting in 2025.

I would like to express sincere thanks for the time, energy and resources contributed by recent Property Standards volunteers, including:

Terry Killins (retired from Property Standards at end of 2024)

Mark Naylor

Janice Broadworth

Don Pace

Volunteers contributing time & sweat equity to Property Standards operations in 2024 have included (among others):

Anne & Dennis Noonan

Judi & Frank Brouse

Bev & Jim Webb

Reverend Kathleen Taylor

Thank you to all who make time to support Bracebridge United Church!

On behalf of our congregation, Property Standards would like to express our appreciation for the service that our caretaker, Dixie Boutin has offered Bracebridge United Church.

Thank you Dixie!

~Respectfully submitted, Ben Hopkins, Property Standards Officer

Ministry & Personnel

The Ministry & Personnel Committee is one of the few mandated committees required in each congregation of the United Church of Canada. The M&P Committee is tasked with the following responsibilities:

- Care for and support the minister and employees.
- Develop appropriate policies and guidelines to ensure a safe and efficient workplace.
- Develop, review, and maintain job descriptions for each staff member.
- Act as liaison between the congregation and staff personnel.
- Conduct an annual review with each staff personnel.
- Review working conditions and remuneration for the staff and make recommendations to the Executive Council.

We continue to carry out those duties and have presented each staff member with cards of appreciation and gift cards a few times a year on behalf of the congregation.

Thank you to the people who helped with cleaning tasks when the custodian was on vacation and when we needed help with special cleaning. Our custodian works late afternoon for a few hours, Monday to Friday only. If you have a suggestion for cleaning, you can leave a note in the binder in the M&P mail box beside the office and I will monitor these.

If you have praise or concern about any BUC employee, please let one of us on the M&P Committee know.

As chair of M&P, I continue to attend seminars via a video link, organized by Shining Waters Regional Council. Attendees are from churches both north and south of the 401. Besides an agenda of important points, we share ideas during the Q&A session. In September we learned about the raise in pay for clergy for 2025. At BUC, we gave all employees the same pay increase.

~Submitted by Chair - Linda Acton-Riddle

(Members include: Anne Noonan, Pat Salter, John Reynolds)



Shining Waters Regional Council



SHINING WATERS
REGIONAL COUNCIL
The United Church of Canada

On June 7-8, 2024, I attended the Shining Waters Regional Meeting. There was an in-person and online option for attending. I chose to attend virtually this year.

The meeting began on Friday morning with worship and a theme presentation on Sanctuary, consisting of a panel of BIPOC women who shared what sanctuary means to them. The business portion discussed several proposals.

Saturday started with worship, then we continued with the business throughout the day. The meeting ended mid-afternoon.

Saturday evening was the Celebration of Ministries service. It was live streamed for those unable to attend in person. This is a service where those in ministry become ordained. It is always nice to see those I know become ordained.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the United Church of Canada. June 10, 1925 The United Church of Canada was formed, an amalgamation of the Methodist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian Churches. Legislation passed on June 27, 1924 regarding the transfer of property rights, and came into effect June 10, 1925. To be able to celebrate 100 years is quite an achievement, while also recognizing that compared to other religious denominations, The United Church is still young. Over the years, The United Church has made a name for itself, and is well known for its work with the Mission and Service Fund.

Here is the website where you can find celebrations across Canada to celebrate this amazing milestone.
<https://united-church.ca/100years>

It is also a General Council year, where a new Moderator will be elected. General Council will be held in Calgary from August 7-11, 2025.

The 2025 Shining Waters Regional meeting date and location has not yet been announced.

~ Respectfully Submitted by Martha Wood; Regional Representative



RONNIE FUND UPDATE FOR BUC

RONNIE FUND UPDATE

A Letter from Ronnie

Respectfully Submitted by Peter and Kathy Wood on Behalf of Ronnie

2024 RONNIE FUND UPDATE FOR BUC

"When much of the world is in turmoil, great things continue happening worldwide we don't hear about. Despite everyday happenings, it has been a great year for The Ronnie Fund, thanks to the continuing support of donors like our friends at BUC. Some of our good news includes addressing people's requests for more information and skills training. This past year Ronnie hosted and led more than 70 workshops. Workshops featured topics including Food Security/Food Systems (focus on organic seeds, seed banks, indigenous trees); Mental Health, Disability/Special Needs Care; Post-maternal Healthcare & Nutrition; and enhancing capabilities of Community Health Volunteers. In August, Isaiah a young village leader, hosted a Ronnie Fund Youth Summit. A great success, it transitioned into intergenerational learning also attracting adults and had to be moved to a local church to accommodate the crowd of over 250 people. To continue to address the need for more educational workshops, construction of the next classroom at Mghongo Eco-Leadership Centre and Demonstration Farm which has become a community hub for intergenerational learning will be undertaken in 2025. We continue to send those with special needs to disability workshops and trainings when we hear of them..

Our Health Clinic continues to be vital to the community, enhancing its capacity serving over 500 people per week. The medical clinics we hosted led by international universities greatly benefited the health of the four villages in Taita.

Through our land legacy program, we've secured crucial environmental locations contributing to the protection of historical sites and the environment. We've complemented these efforts by planting over 10,000 trees in partnership with churches, schools, youth, and women's groups. Many of these trees have been planted in memory of dearly departed Muskoka donors, a living legacy to our valued supporters.

These are only some of our programs and projects including initiatives supporting widows and single mothers, our renovated/properly equipped library improving academic performance of community children, and the procurement and distribution of appropriate tools for women's groups, youth, and institutions including brick-making and oil-pressing machines, solar dryers, handcarts, water pumps, sewing machines and other technologies enhancing livelihoods.

We are so very grateful to our friends at BUC who continue to support this important work through the annual Communion Collection along with gifts from individual donors. Words cannot adequately express our deep gratitude to you for all you are doing to provide a "hand up not a hand out". With your continuing support we look forward to more successful programs to follow in 2025.

Asante-sana (Thank you)

Ronnie Mdawida and Serah Mucha

Kathy & Peter Wood

MEMBERSHIP ROLL ~ Bracebridge United Church

Members ~ Resident Roll

Resident Membership as of December 31, 2023	303
Persons received by Confirmation	0
Persons received by Reaffirmation of Faith	4
Persons received by Certificate or Transfer	2
Persons returned from Non-Resident Roll	0
Total received:	6
Members removed by Death	5
Members removed by Certificate or Transfer	0
Members removed by Congregational Life Team	0
Members removed to Non-Resident Roll	0
Total removed:	5
Resident Membership as at December 31, 2024	304

Members ~ Non-Resident Roll

Non-Resident Membership as at December 31, 2024	10
None had been removed or added for 2024.	
Total Members Resident (304) and Non Resident (10)	314

Adherents *

Adherents added as of December 31, 2024	21
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*In 2024, our membership numbers stayed fairly stable with some transfers and deaths. We did grow in numbers of Adherents with the addition of approximately 21 people.

What is an Adherent in the United Church of Canada? An Adherent refers to someone who actively participates in the church community and attends services regularly, but has not formally become a full member. Are you an Adherent and would like to become a member? Please speak with the office.

TOTAL Membership as at December 31, 2024 : 314



MEMORIAL GIFTS

We thank those individuals and families who have chosen to commemorate the life of a dear friend or family member with a gift to Bracebridge United Church.

In 2024, donations were gratefully received in loving memory of...

Memorial Fund

John Hartill
Gordon Hollingworth
Shirley Hollingworth
Barbara Dawson
Elaine Kaye

General Fund

Barbara Cronier

Mission & Service Fund

Paul and Audrey Danard
Shirley Hollingworth
Gordon Freer

Building Capital Fund

John Hartill
Shirley Hollingworth
Gordon Hollingworth



Stained Glass Windows ~ In Loving Memory

Our church family has a gracious and generous history of memorial remembrance. Our beautiful stained glass windows are a collection of loving tributes to precious family and friends, and those who were an important part of the building of our faith community over many years. You will find more about the special history and story of each window on our church website.

In Memoriam

Bill Snoddon

John Hartill

Gordon Freer

Barbara Dawson

Rev. George James

Gordon Hollingworth

Shirley Hollingworth



Managing Our Money

As I sit here to write this report I am reflecting on the fact that this time last year I had no idea that I would be the chair of the Managing our Money committee. A rather daunting role to take on after Lloyd Dunham managed this portfolio for so many years and did such an excellent job! Thank you, Lloyd for always being there to help me as we transitioned.

I also want to thank the Managing our Money committee (Don MacKay, Kent Phillips, Jane Corbeil, and Carolyn Gravelle) who have been very supportive and have not made me feel bad about not having many meetings or not always having answers. And thank you Lloyd for continuing to coordinate the counting teams and working on the donation tracking system. And also thank you to Avery and Kathleen for working with me over the year on a number of "money" items.

We have much to be thankful for this year. We had a number of successful fundraising events that supported our general fund and exceeded our budget. We also have a great number of organizations who share our space and contribute to our general fund by paying rent.

We have accomplished a lot this year, but that cost us some money. Our capital projects included replacing the front door, repointing bricks in a number of walls of the building and repairing the stone work on the ramp. These projects have depleted our capital fund. We need to continue giving to the capital fund so that we can finish the repointing project and deal with the other needs of our building.

We paid for the equipment and minor renovations to implement the AV system. This did not cost as much as we thought and what a great addition to our worship services. Thank you to Paul Arril for the creative A/V plan and to the worship committee for the successful implementation

Our committees ran lots of programs and events, and stayed within their budgets. Congratulations.

In 2022 and 2023 we had small surpluses in our general fund that helped to pay down the internal debt we had in the accumulated in previous years. In addition, at last year's annual meeting we passed a motion to transfer \$89,186 out of our Special Gifts fund to cover the accumulated internal debt we had. This mean's our special gift fund has decreased substantially; however, our general fund is no longer carrying ongoing debt.

We are very close to living within our means, as has been demonstrated by the very small deficit in 2024 (\$2,123).

Our church again needs to be proud of the support we provide to the Mission and Service Fund. In 2024 we contributed \$40,553 to that fund. We are a church that not only focuses on ourselves, but also actively supports local mission work and the work of United Church appeals, both in Canada and World-wide.

We are presenting the 2025 budget to you that projects a deficit (\$12,939); however, as I mentioned throughout the fall and December, I have faith in our congregation that the budgeted deficit will not materialize and that we will be balanced in 2025 (or at least very close to it!). If we start accumulating a debt this year, we will need to look very carefully as to where we can reduce expenses and explore creative ways of doing the work we currently do.

As I come to the end of my report you may notice I have not mentioned a lot of numbers in my report. That is because the next several pages of financial statements have many numbers in them and they contain many details. As a summary, we are in good shape, but we must not lose sight of the fact that our building and our congregation are aging and both need lots of support and investment. Please keep giving generously so that we can keep our wonderful church community and building vibrant.

~Submitted by Beverley Webb and the Managing your Money Committee