

Zooming with West Hill

Please join us for our virtual ZOOM gatherings. If you don't have a computer, you can simply access ZOOM by TELEPHONE to listen/participate. Contact the office to get the phone and meeting identification numbers.

Sunday Morning Service/Perspective(s) at 10:30

Log in anytime after 10:00 for pre-service greetings and conversations

January 24th ~ Perspective by Dennis Augustine. Guest performers: Spoken word poet, Randell Adjei, and comedian, DeeCee

January 31st ~ Reflections On The Journey (Perspectives by Congregation) and New Member Welcoming

February 7th ~ Perspective by Rick Miller (BOOM YX Presentation)

February 7th ~ Annual General Meeting following the service.

February 14th ~ Perspective by Christopher New, Minister and Music Director, Southminster Steinhauer UC, Edmonton

February 21 ~ Perspective by Carrah Quigley, International Speaker and Spiritual Humanist

February 28th ~ Reflections on the Words of Commitment

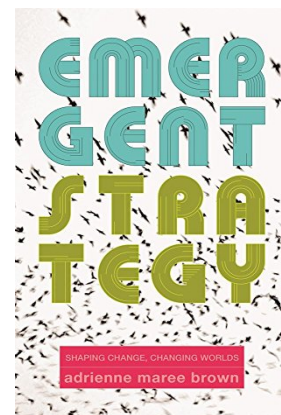
March 7th ~ Women ROCK!

Tuesday Afternoon Wellness Gathering from 2 to 3



Thursday Morning Coffee from 10 to 11

Thursday Evening Book Study from 7 to 9



Board Meeting ~ Second Tuesday of each month, 7 PM

West Hill United Board of Directors 2021

Board Chair: Michael Lawrie

Finance Chair: John McKechnie (interim)

Property Chair: Gary Megson

Communications and Marketing: Dennis Augustine

Friendship and Hospitality: Anita DesRosiers

Education and Growth: Debbie Ellis

Community Care: Babette Oliveira

Corresponding Member, Governance Review: Jean Skillman

Region Reps: Annemarie Leepel, Louise Lawrie

Members at Large: Ellen Dinerman, Emily Trivers, Peter Thomas, Donna Hall,

Minister: Rev. Gretta Vosper (on medical leave of absence)

Supply Minister: Rev. Sarah Miller

Vacant positions include:

Celebrating

Ministry and Personnel

West Hill United

A warm place to find yourself

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news
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westhill

Winter 2021

Report From Your Board Chair

Welcome to 2021. As the new year begins, we look forward to new opportunities for growth and recovery. Many folks in our community have become accustomed to the virtual gatherings for our Sunday programs, special events and our Board and committee activities. We enjoyed our traditional Singing The Season and Longest Night events virtually. Many thanks to Scott and Babette for their leadership and words and music. In the midst of the pandemic, now in its eleventh month, we have adapted to virtual Sunday "ungatherings," Tuesday afternoon Wellness Meetings, Thursday Morning Coffee, and Thursday Night Book Study.

I know we all hold Gretta in our hearts and minds as she continues on a medical leave of absence that began in October. It is so much appreciated that Scott has been able to give us weekly updates and convey our love and best wishes to her. We have been grateful to Rev. Martha Martin who has served as our Pastoral Charge Supervisor and attended our Board and congregational meetings. She was appointed by the Shining Waters Region and is the minister at Kingston Road United Church. Rev. Martin is now stepping aside, as Rev. Sarah Miller has been appointed to assume the clergy role as pulpit supply as well as support for our In Touch Teams led by Anita DesRosiers. Members in need of pastoral care can present themselves on request or referral and, where appropriate, Sarah will be able to assist. I know all of you are hoping that Gretta will be able to return to us soon, but that decision must be made by her physicians. In the meantime, the Board, clergy appointees, and administrative staff will do their best to keep West Hill healthy, viable and functioning.

A brief word now about church business and the Board. With the help of John McKechnie, an accountant from Scotland, who joins us weekly via Zoom, the Finance Committee is preparing the budget for 2021, which we looked at during our Board meeting on Tuesday, January 12th. Please note that guests are welcome to attend and speak at all Board meetings via Zoom. As we prepare for our Annual General Meeting in early February, we are hoping to fill some of the vacant positions on the Board. We are welcoming the following new members to the Board: Anita DesRosiers (Friendship and Hospitality), Ellen Dinerman (Member at large), Babette Oliveira (Community Care Director), and Jean Skillman who will lead our governance review as a corresponding member. Jan Garvey is stepping down as Chair of Ministry and Personnel and we thank her for her dedication and many years of service.

The renovations of the church are nearing completion. The gathering hall (formerly called the sanctuary) will have a different look with new flooring, lighting, stage and fresh paint. Our office space has been shifted to the west side of the building and has been reconfigured.

We will be continuing the conversation regarding the severance option, in particular whether we wish to proceed to accomplish the purchase of the Labyrinth Area (aka 'the hockey stick') for \$200,000. If we choose to pursue this option, we would need to present a plan as to what we would do with the property and get approval from the municipality. The Board has authorized an expense of up to \$10,000 to spell out the steps in the severance process and how to accomplish the approvals from our neighbours and the municipality. We need to continue to get facts and discuss possible uses of the property while seeking advice from professionals with skills and experience in this area.

At the Board meeting on January 12th, the Board authorized Florence Soknacki to gather information from the relevant supporting agencies regarding this option. These groups include Trinity Centres Foundation (TCF), United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC), Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) and the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough (BGCES). Florence will report back to us at the Annual Congregational Meeting, when we can address whether we wish to further explore the severance option. I ask that you participate in this very important conversation and decision.

Other important decisions were made at that meeting. We amended our Investment Policy giving guidelines to the Trustees regarding our investments. A budget was approved – that will be presented to the AGM for approval on February 7th. We are very grateful to John McKechnie from Scotland. The report of the Nomination Committee will be presented at that meeting at which time the new Board will be appointed.

PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AFTER THE SUNDAY GATHERING ON FEBRUARY 7TH

Travelling the journey together, may love abound.

Michael Lawrie, Board Chair

You are invited
to
West Hill United's
2021 Winter Book Study!

emergent strategy by adrienne maree brown

5 Thursday evenings, 7-9pm

First meeting: Thursday, Jan 21
Read: Pages 1-50



Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds

Emergent Strategy is radical self-help, society-help, and planet-help designed to shape the futures we want to live.

Please join us for West Hill's annual winter book study, presented via Zoom! Grab your favourite beverage, settle into a cozy spot, and join us for conversation, connection, challenge, and chuckles!

Everyone is welcome to any or all of the sessions, whether you have completed the readings or not. Please invite anyone you think would enjoy this great opportunity for learning and growth.

Session Dates	Pages
January 21	1-50
February 4	51-102
February 18	103-150
March 4	51-211
March 18	213-275

Outreach News

New Opportunities for Community Outreach

West Hill United has a new opportunity to play a special role in our community outreach as it shares space with the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club. Please consider joining West Hill United's Outreach Committee as our exciting future unfolds! All are welcome as well as those from afar, as Zoom will continue to be an important part of our outreach opportunities.

Support of Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities

In November 2020, The Outreach Committee asked the congregation to support seasonal initiatives of the Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities. The congregation was very generous and West Hill United presented a cheque for \$1470 and donated gift cards to the SCHC Wishes for the Holidays campaign, and \$490 to the Food Bank. Thank you!

Continuing Needs in our Community

With the Christmas season behind us, it is important to remember that the need for food and seasonal clothing in our community has not abated. Please continue to drop off your donations to the local food bank (nonperishable food items and monetary donations) and clothing bank at 4100 Lawrence Ave East.



Soup Lunch and Second Harvest

The Outreach Committee traditionally hosts a Soup Lunch in March in support of Second Harvest. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the luncheon cannot take place. However, the need in our community for food security continues. Therefore, in February, the Outreach Committee will begin a campaign to raise funds for Second Harvest. Maybe there will be some soup to share!

respectfully submitted by Barb Russell on behalf of the Outreach Committee

Third Space

Third Space Community Arts is a new arts non-profit incorporated in late 2020. The organization was inspired by the shared vision of several West Hill and Scarborough arts community members to leverage the arts as a vehicle for bringing people together around our shared human stories, virtues, and values. As an independent arts organization, Third Space offers a new and exciting forum for engaging with the broader community in Scarborough and beyond.

West Hill Legacy Project, Produced by Dwayne Morgan



Third Space has begun to create the West Hill Legacy Project, produced by Third Space artist and Scarborough Walk of Fame inductee, Dwayne Morgan, and financed in part by arts funding from the City of Toronto. The project will feature five Toronto spoken word artists telling the stories of ten West Hill United members with deep connections to the congregation, community and the building at 62 Orchard Park Drive. The project will culminate in an exhibition at the Scarborough Town Centre, featuring spoken word performances, photography and multimedia video, before coming home for an event at West Hill. This project has profound significance for us, given the changes our congregation is going through, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to Dwayne Morgan and the other artists involved for their work. We will certainly look forward to this event, which will take place when it is safe for us all to be together.

BOOM YZ with Rick Miller

On Sunday, February 7th, we're in for a treat as Third Space artist Rick Miller presents an excerpt from his show BOOM YZ. The show examines 75 years at the intersection of history, politics, culture, and technology through intergenerational storytelling. Rick will perform a segment covering the last five years, 2015-2020, playing various characters, with multimedia integrated into the performance. Don't miss it, and be sure to invite your friends and family.



Call for Artists:

Are you a performer, artist, or writer who desires to help build vibrant and united communities through the arts? Do you know artists whose work and values align with that vision? Third Space is making an open call to artists from Toronto and beyond who would join our collective. Artists will have the opportunity to have their work featured in online and future in-person events and may be awarded commissions for upcoming projects. Please have artists in your network complete the Third Space Artists Registration Form available online here: <https://share.hsforms.com/1X6rpiVuTRFSsovLw6Zl8zQ53nth>



Dennis Augustine Joins West Hill Board as MarCom Director

West Hill is pleased to welcome Dennis Augustine to the Board as our new MarCom (Marketing and Communications) Director. Dennis is a technology entrepreneur and digital strategist with over two decades of industry experience and is passionate about the WHUC vision.

"I believe that West Hill offers what people need now more than ever – a sense of belonging and a framework for living a values-driven and purposeful life. I'm excited at the prospect of using my experience in the digital space to help further the West Hill mission, broaden our reach, and to combat the divisive messages that we've seen online in recent times." ~ Dennis Augustine

Dennis will be sharing a perspective in an upcoming Sunday Non-Gathering on January 24th along with spoken word poet and founder of R.I.S.E. Edutainment, Randell Adjei, and comedian, DeeCee (a.k.a. "Singapore Black Guy #5").

AUTO TECHNIQUES

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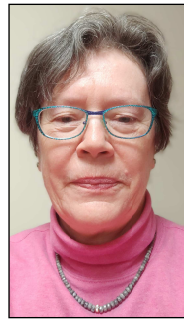
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dave@johnscarpet.com johnscarpet.com



Staying In Touch

My name is Anita DesRosiers and I have agreed to sit on the board of directors of West Hill United Church in the position of Chair of the Friendship and Hospitality Committee. I am new to the church, but will try my very best to be a helpful member of this committee and the board.



As part of the committee we have reinstated the In Touch Team. Members include myself, June Dickson, Ruth Gill, Betty Henderson, Wendy Hyland, Velda Jones, Barb Russell, and Linda Strange.

Together, we have identified the members of the congregation who are not participating in the Zoom gatherings and have checked in on them to make sure they are well and that they feel connected to the church during this difficult time.

The women on the In Touch Team are amazing and had been calling many on our list all along, but now they are also calling as representatives of the church. This connection is vital in any organization in the middle of a pandemic, when people are feeling isolated, and the calls have been very well received.

As we call and find any concerns we will let Gretta or our supply minister, Sarah Miller, know and bring their pastoral care in to give support.

We welcome input from anyone in the congregation with respect to members who may need help, whether now in our Zooming-time or when we return to in-person gatherings. If you have also been calling, or would like to call, and would like to join our team we would welcome you warmly.

Thank you so much.

~ Anita

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IN THE SPIRIT

Yoga Studio & Wine Lounge



REMINDER — YOGA CLASSES (SENIORS DISCOUNT). We still offer special seniors classes (yoga in chairs and for those with mobility issues) Mondays at 10:15-11:15 a.m. and Thursdays 9:00-10:00 a.m. (\$15/class includes tea/coffee & cookies). (Highland Creek Plaza, 376 Old Kingston Road)

We have many more options for all ages. Please check out our website for our class schedule, rates and more information (647-352-4879): www.inthespirtityoga.com, email letsconnect@inthespirtityoga.com

First Nations Study Group

“We want awareness. Not anger.” Chris Kulak

From APTN (Aboriginal People’s Television Network): ‘It makes me sick’: Parent reacts to criticism of daughter wearing ribbon skirt

Teacher’s aide told 10-year-old her dress wasn’t appropriate
by Kathleen Martens, December 22, 2020

Formal Day at Bella Kulak’s school was the perfect opportunity to wear a ribbon skirt and celebrate her Indigenous ancestry. Instead, a non-Indigenous teacher’s aide criticized the 10-year-old’s clothing and angered thousands on social media. It happened in Kamsack, Sask., last week, but her father Chris Kulak still has trouble talking about it.

“It makes me sick,” he said, breaking down several times. “You tell my daughter her traditional wear isn’t good enough and point at someone with a Walmart outfit on, like it’s something special. It is not.”

Kulak has seven daughters with his wife Lana, a member of nearby Cote First Nation. He said they are proud of their Indigenous heritage and culture. “My daughter’s doing okay; she’s just a little bit overwhelmed,” he added via phone. “She’s got people from Germany and Kansas and all over the world sending her money and sending her ribbon skirts.”

The Good Spirit School Division is looking into the incident, which has also sparked an investigation by its human resources department.

Kulak said an aide in the Grade 5 classroom pulled Bella aside and chastised her for not wearing the right thing. “She said to the effect that, ‘Well, what you’re wearing doesn’t even match. And you should try and dress – this is not formal attire – you should dress more formal like these girls, and pointed out some white girls in their store-bought dresses.’”

Her father said Bella was wearing a ribbon skirt gifted by an auntie and that all the other Indigenous girls in the school agreed in advance to wear their ribbon skirts on Formal Day. “She’s shy and she likes to wear sweatpants and trap rabbits with her dad,” Kulak explained. “She doesn’t want to wear dresses and everything. She feels like she’s on the spot. But we told her to be brave and wear her ribbon skirt.”

‘Shamed’

The aide “shamed” and “belittled” his daughter, Kulak said, noting Bella rushed home after school to take the skirt off right away.

“Just like the colonists did with ‘This is how you’re supposed to look, this is how you’re supposed to live’ – all these kinds of attitudes,” said the dad who self-identifies as Indigenous. “This was the same attitude.”

Kulak said he was angry when he called to “scold” the teacher, but division officials apologized – as did the aide and teacher – and want the family to be part of the solution going forward.

The way it was handled helped smooth out the bad feelings, Kulak added.

“I don’t want the hate to come out; we have to live here, and I don’t want any hurt to come to this teacher or her family. They don’t understand what they don’t know.”



Bella Kulak strikes a warrior pose in her back yard while wearing her ribbon skirt



Lana Kulak, her daughter Bella, and husband Chris



Ribbon skirts are historical and traditional clothing that honour First Nations heritage and help represent causes like missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. They are considered an expression of history, resilience and character, but aren’t necessarily only for ceremonies like powwows, events and funerals.

On Facebook:

It was his sister-in-law who posted about what happened on Facebook – a thread that has been shared thousands of times. Commenters were upset, but many were supportive, too. All across the Prairies, women responded by posting photos of themselves wearing ribbon skirts in support of their culture and traditions. Some men even shared photos of themselves in their ribbon shirts. Bella’s maternal grandmother, an Anishinaabe Elder, said she cried when she learned her granddaughter had her feelings hurt. “She went to school very proud and came home sad,” she said in an interview.

Like Kulak, Pelly wants to see this negative turned into a positive. “Things happen for a reason,” she added. “Maybe they need to be educated.”

Bella’s parents agree. “Reconciliation happens with dialogue,” said Kulak, who asked his wife and daughters to wear ribbon skirts and pose for photos he shared with APTN News. “We want awareness. Not anger.”

Note: Bella’s maternal grandmother, Stella Pelly, said she has made presentations to division officials and students in the past. She confirmed a rally is planned for the first day back to school after the Christmas break with a drum group and women wearing ribbon skirts.

“It’s going to open a lot of eyes. I’m glad my granddaughter has a lot of support,” she said, noting meetings are also planned with school officials to discuss how to respect First Nations culture.



A close-up look at Sarah Dawn Smokeyday’s ribbon skirt (Facebook)

submitted by Ruth Gill

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UPDATE ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO MERCURY POISONING IN GRASSY NARROWS AND WABASEEMOONG FIRST NATIONS

The First Nations of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong in Northern Ontario have now received monies from the Federal Government in the amount of \$19.5 million each in order to build on-reserve care homes for those suffering the effects of mercury poisoning. Those of their people affected have been suffering from one or more of the following: impaired peripheral vision, muscle weakness, impaired speech, hearing and cognitive function, and numbness or stinging pain in the extremities and mouth due to mercury in their drinking water from a 1960s paper mill that dumped 9,000 kilos of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River system on which the Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong Peoples depend for food and drink.

Chief Randy Fobister of Grassy Narrows dreams that the treatment centres will provide hope, if not for this generation, then future ones.

submitted by Ruth Gill