



Annual Report 2023

Tel: 709-753-7286

99 Queen's Rd. St. John's NL A1C 6M6

Email: office@gowerunited.com

Website: gowerunited.com

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OUR VISION, CORE VALUES AND MISSION

Our Vision:

The people of Gower Street United Church are committed to doing right by Jesus' teachings: loving, serving, giving generously in our local, regional, and global communities. We envision a vibrant and evolving community where tradition is honoured, change is embraced, and injustice is challenged. We are dedicated to welcoming and affirming, engaging participation of all, including people of any age, colour, race, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, marital status, family composition, and social or economic circumstances.

Our Core Values:

- Meaningful worship of God and Christian development in a sacred gathering place.
- Compassionate, responsive Outreach.
- Living in a Christian community that is respectful, diverse, and inclusive.
- Music as a cherished part of our worship, Outreach, and church culture.
- Inclusive and Innovative, using new ways to connect with our community where they are, and to expand activities in our church that achieve our mission.

Our Mission:

- To be a visible sign of God's love and caring in our community.
- To nurture Christian Faith through Worship and in ways that are relevant to our world.
- To work collaboratively with other Faith Communities.

OUR CREED

The New Creed (*Voices United*, p. 918)

We are not alone,
We live in God's world.
We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others by the Spirit.
We trust in God.
We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.
We are not alone.
Thanks be to God.

LETTER FROM MINISTER OF WORD, SACRAMENT AND PASTORAL CARE

“Let us build a house where love can dwell...
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.”
(More Voices, #1)

Let us build a house! How often have we sung this hymn from *More Voices* as accompaniment to the changes in our midst, as a supplement to annual and congregational meetings where we talked about our “hopes and dreams and visions,” at Pie Day Worship, as we wrestled with changes on how we use our spaces here at Gower, and particularly our contract with Spirit NL, Canadian Parents for French and Music NL.

Let us build a house! It is a truly positive singing of a creative and faith-filled community! At Gower we used our creative energy to the fullest in 2023! As your minister, it is gratifying and rewarding to be present with you as we embraced the most challenging of times as a congregation, especially financially, as we discerned the restructuring of the many spaces we call our church home. We knew it would happen—we waited and waited and in good Spirit we were patient beyond belief. The good news is that it did happen with the rental of our lecture hall and other church spaces. Yet, it held before us many changes.

The Gower Board, supported by the congregation, developed some really good ideas to help us adapt to the restructuring of spaces within our building and prepare ourselves for radical change. We guided ourselves, with faith, an abundance of hard work and unwavering determination to that final season of our rentals sharing our space. It was not without immense hiccups. However, we journeyed together as pilgrims. We acknowledged the challenges we were facing and yet embraced the knowledge that change would not only bring new life to our community but also give us much needed revenue. I wish to acknowledge the faithful work of Ken Peters and Patrick Griffin who spent an inordinate amount of time, management and skill to make this dream come to fruition.

We have so much to be thankful for: our ministries and outreach! All our visioning together along with the echoes of memories continue to reveal the strength of Gower’s community of faith—stronger even than bricks and mortar. We celebrate the life of the building we now have, with all its historic beauty and the nuances of deeper daily hustle and bustle.

And so, we turn to the future. There is a profound energy and vitality that is found within our walls. Numbers in worship continue to increase. We are seeing new members and families amongst us. Groups such as the Gower Service and Social Club continue to grow in numbers along with the music excellence that is found within the Senior Choir, the Young People's Choir, the Bell Choir and the Gower Community Band.

Our expanded Open Doors program supported financially by the United Church of Canada Foundation, brings an international awareness as visitors toured our historic building over the past months. Gower Learners and Gower Youth are active and have new, inspiring projects on the horizon. The UCW and Prayer Shawl Ministry continue to work to bring God's word of love, care, and grace to those in our midst and neighbors near and far.

The Holy Spirit is working in and through us and this can be felt and seen in all aspects of the Gower faith community. Coffee hour is a hive of conversation and fellowship. How great it feels to be so alive again! We have indeed proved to be an innovative, determined, hard- working, community of faith.

As an Affirming Ministry we continue to be creative as we infuse Spirit-filled connections through love of neighbor. Our hopes, dreams and visions are clear. We continue to work together with **Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Arms!** The vibrancy and strength of Gower's trust in the Spirit is driving our creative ministry!

This report would not be complete without acknowledging with sadness the passing of our dear colleague, Rev. Ettie-Gordon Murray. Ettie and I have worked closely together for over 20 years, in various capacities and at various faith communities. The void of her presence is deeply noticeable amongst us, especially the ministry team and other staff. Her detail and unwavering care of others through the Pastoral Care Ministry at Gower has been and continues to be a deep passion and skill that we will surely miss.

On that note I want to thank you all for your support: all staff, the Gower Board, congregational members, and many dedicated volunteers. I am a team player. You have and continue to be an inspiring team to lead!

As 2023 gives way to 2024,

“Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone.
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace;
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome in this place.”

Let Gower Street United be the church and the community of faith we are called to be!

Yours in service and faith,
Rev. Pamela

LETTER FROM CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG FAMILIES MINISTER

Respectfully submitted by The Rev. Rebecca Pike.

It never fails to amaze me how fast a year can go by. The saying is true: "A day feels like a lifetime. A lifetime feels like a day." In this case, we can use the same saying for a year. We have entered the time for us all to reflect on what has been happening in our faithful community at Gower this past year and to help us look forward to what God will continue to do through us as we walk faithfully together.

I am thankful for the many ways Gower has grown in 2023. We are open to sharing our space with organizations in our community, even with growing pains. There is also interest and support in offering new programming for our community. Our young people are excited to be a part of Gower Youth, Gower Learners, and Gower Young People's Choir.

Under the leadership of Meghan McKibbon, the Chair of Children, Education and Families, is a beautiful group of dreamers looking forward to more ways to grow in faith and education in our community for all ages. Thanks to Clay Tuck, Brian Butt and Christina Wells for your commitment, openness, and never-ending ideas. I am excited about all the things to come from this community. We would also love to welcome others to join us in dreaming and planning programs for all ages at Gower.

This fall, we saw some changes in leadership as we welcomed Justin Goulding and Megan Barnes as our new directors of the Young People's Choir, and Dana Collins moved into the role of director of the Handbell Choir. It is a privilege to work with this community's young people as they explore faith and relationships.

Also, we sadly said a sudden, unexpected goodbye to Rev. Ettie Gordon-Murray this fall. During her time at Gower, Rev. Ettie was a constant presence, support, and friend to many in the congregation. I dearly miss her presence in the office or our weekly, sometimes daily, phone call check-ins. Rev. Ettie was one of a kind, and Gower and I are lucky to have gotten to share in her life.

This coming August, I will have been working in this community, for I have had many roles in five years and look forward to continuing together. I am honoured to work in this community. I look forward to growing and deepening our relationships with each other and in faith. My door and ears are always open if you want to chat, share an idea, or have feedback.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

To the congregation of Gower Street United Church,

I am honoured to submit our annual report for 2023, covering another rich and active year of service, ministry and fellowship at our church. I have been lucky to serve as the Board Chair for several years, through the 'before, during and after' period with COVID. What a community we are! The church never ceases to amaze me, in its ability to grasp the situation we are in, reflect on this in the context of our history and shared values, and chart a path forward together.

The significant evolution of Gower this year was, of course, our collective effort to use our spaces in new ways and welcome those users into the life at Gower. These efforts were driven by a recognition of service and outreach to the broader St. John's community, and also by an intentional action to improve our long-term financial health.

I believe those efforts are working, in three key ways. First, the people. Not long ago, new users and tenants at Gower were strangers to Gower. What a difference a year makes, as we are no longer disparate groups of people but becoming a single community which does an incredible number of things, in one shared space. Second, our building. The Gower building is well over 100 years old and needs ongoing care and attention to keep it strong for another 100+. I think it is looking better than ever, with countless ongoing or proposed projects from bathrooms to heating. Last, our financial health. Gower has made great progress this year in using some under-utilized space to welcome new, paying events and tenants, and it is showing in our financial health.

These efforts started here, in congregational meetings where we discussed and debated our space. That led to a way forward, lots of volunteer hours, and chats over tea on what is working and not. I look forward to seeing where this goes in 2024 and beyond.

Patrick Griffin, Chair

MINUTES OF 2023 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Gower Street United Church Annual Congregational Meeting March 19, 2023

Welcome: Rev. Pamela welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with a prayer.

(2) It was moved by Jonathan Stevenson, seconded by Marion Pardy, that Patrick Griffin is appointed as Chair and Linda Nickerson as Recording Secretary. Carried.

(3) Adoption of the agenda. Item 4 specifies the minutes of the 2020 ACM. It was moved by Judi Somers, seconded by Ken Peters, to adopt the amended year of 2021 in the agenda. Carried

(4) Ruth Francis presented the minutes of the 2021 ACM. It was moved by Jonathan Stevenson, seconded by Daryl Pullman, that the minutes be approved. Carried.

(5) **Report from the Chair**: Patrick welcomed everyone; and gave an overview of current events.

- Over the past year there has been an energetic effort to embrace the challenges faced by Gower. Clergy and many members of the congregation have worked diligently to meet those challenges, which have led to an optimistic view for the future. Grateful thanks are extended to all.

The financial overview was poor in the fall. The expectations of people and the efforts required by the congregation/staff to meet the financial requirements were not sustainable. Efforts were made to explore all possible options to rectify the situation. Very positive things have been happening in the last few weeks.

-There was a good response to the fund-raising concert for Bridges to Hope. An estimated \$20,000.00 was raised.

-The AV system is well utilized and working well.

-Insurance has doubled in the past 5 years. The projection for this year is \$40,000.00. This is an ongoing challenge that requires a great deal of consideration.

-Furnace-energy consumption: The furnace no longer meets the needs of Gower. The cost of oil has made it very expensive to heat the church and will not be sustainable if oil continues to rise. Options are being investigated.

(6) Ministerial Report: Rev. Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald: report circulated.

(7) In Memoriam: Rev. Pamela paid tribute to all deceased members of Gower who passed away in 2022.

(8) Reports of Committees and Groups: As all committees and groups had provided written reports- it was moved by David Norris, seconded by Roy West, that all reports be accepted as submitted. Carried.

(9) Financial Report: Fred Earle: full report circulated.

(a) Overview:

Long term liabilities: \$161,000.00

Operating Fund: Endowment Fund increased in 2022.

Offerings have decreased.

Fund-raising has significantly increased.

Year-end deficit: \$106,991.00

The endowment fund should generate increased income in 2023 due to higher interest rates.

Question: If we increase rentals, will it also increase the cost of utilities?

Answer: No increase is anticipated in fuel consumption. The contract with Spirit of NL would be a two-year contract with a fixed income.

In 2021, during COVID, we received a CERB grant of \$60,000.00. At the end of 2023, \$40,000.00 will have to be paid back.

Q: Will an increase in rentals increase the demands on office staff?

A: The office will not have any involvement in the administrative aspects of Spirit of NL or Music NL

Discussion: The 2023 budget includes a 20 hour /week position for the office, but at this time we are only utilizing 12 hours per week. The Board needs to revisit the entire subject re: staffing and salaries.

It was suggested that M & P should look at other churches and compare salaries, hours etc. It is difficult to find someone qualified and willing to work only 12 hours a week. There needs to be better organization by September. It is likely that we will have last year's student returning this summer, which is a subsidized position.

Q: What constitutes the expenses in Repairs & Maintenance for 2022?

A: Most of the expenses are related to furnace repairs & maintenance,

It was moved by Peter Nell, seconded by Lorne LeDrew that the 2022 financial statements be accepted. Carried.

(b) 2023 Budget:

It was moved by Marion Parady, seconded by Marie Beth Wright, that the 2023 budget be approved with consideration being given to accommodate adequate support for administrative and office staff services and salaries.

Discussion:

-There is an estimated shortfall of \$10,500 in salaries /benefits predicted for 2023.

-We will need to increase our givings.

Q: What do we consider adequate? Is it to be determined by M & P? There is an element of discretion required.

Amendment (1): The 2023 budget is approved with due process being given to accommodate appropriate salary amounts for administrative and office staff and services.

Amendment (2) The 2023 budget is approved with due process being given to accommodate appropriate salary amounts for administrative and office staff and services: with salary line subject to review by Board in consultation with M & P and appropriate administrative resources by August 30, 2023. Carried. 2023 Budget is approved.

(10) Nominations Report: Gail Wideman: full report circulated.

Appreciation and thanks were extended to all retiring Board members.

Motion: Moved by Marion Parady, seconded by Judi Somers: That the Ministry & Personnel Committee be co-chaired by Roberta Gill & Marie Beth Wright. Carried.

Motion: Moved by Lorne LeDrew, seconded by Judi Somers that the following people be elected to the Board:

Chair, Worship & Sacrament: Ken Slaney

Chair, Heritage & Archives: Rob Pitt (re-elected)

Board Composition for 2023:

Chair	Patrick Griffin
Vice Chair	Jonathan Stevenson
Secretary	Linda Nickerson
Treasurer	Fred Earle
Finance	Ken Peters
Co-Chair Ministry & Personnel:	Marie-Beth Wright/ Roberta Gill
Worship & Sacraments	Ken Slaney
Pastoral Care	Tony Chadwick
Children, Family & Education	Megan McGibbon
Stewardship	Lorne LeDrew
Communications	Dave Robbins
Property	Ed Moores
Heritage & Archives	Rob Pitt

Non-Board Committees:

Chair, Nominations Committee: Gail Wideman

Chair, Affirm Committee: Gail Wideman

Chair, Outreach: Lorne LeDrew

Chair, Board of Trustees: David Norris

Coordinator, Gower Seniors Club: Tony Chadwick

Gower Representative to Bridges to Hope: Doug Moody

Gower Representative to the General Protestant Cemetery Board: Carl Wright

Regional Council Representative: Roy West.

Note: the 2nd position has not been filled at this time.

Thanks and appreciation were extended to Patrick Griffin and members of the Official Board for their many hours of work and dedication this past year and thanks and appreciation to Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Ettie for their continued support.

(11) Mission & Service Objective 2023: On a motion by Lorne LeDrew, seconded by Roy West, it was suggested that the Mission & Service target for 2023 be \$30,000.00. Carried.

Motion for Adjournment: Moved by Dave Robbins, seconded by Ken Peters. Carried

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Nickerson
Secretary

HERITAGE AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

Heritage and Archives Committee

Respectfully submitted by Robert Pitt, Chair

Heritage and Archives has continued several previous initiatives in 2023 as well as taking part in several new opportunities.

1. Re-housing the Archives. In early March 2023, the move was completed of Gower's physical archival holdings from the space off the Lecture Hall to the newly-created room in Gower's Annex area. The move allowed the former space to be rented and generate income for Gower. The new space is sufficient to house our hard-copy records, and a work area with a computer, printer and scanner. As noted in last year's report, the increasing use of digital formats for Church records has meant that the space should be sufficient for many years.
2. Access to Holdings. As in previous years, H&A continues to respond to requests for archival / historical information, particularly responding to requests for records of marriages and baptisms. With most of these records now in digital form in the Archives holdings, access is usually straightforward.
3. Ecclesiastical District Promotion and Preservation. Gower (via H&A) continues to work with representatives of the other churches in the Ecclesiastical District National Historic Site of Canada (St. Andrew's Kirk, the Anglican Cathedral, and the Roman Catholic Basilica Heritage Foundation) on interpretation and promotion of the area's heritage, faith and cultural significance, primarily through tours and other joint events (see <https://www.facebook.com/DistrictToursNL>). At Gower, these efforts have been tied closely to our Open Doors program (detailed below). In addition, the Ecclesiastical District Working Group has continued to discuss and explore District

heritage opportunities with both private-sector and government entities, including Parks Canada in particular.

4. Landmark Church Initiative. In March, Gower was invited to participate in discussions hosted by the United Church of Canada Foundation, as a congregation that opens its doors to visitors and the community. They noted that “through this outreach, those churches become symbols of the United Church both in their own communities and for tourists”. The purpose was to consider a new initiative to identify and support opportunities for enhancing the reputation of our own churches and of the United Church more widely within and across communities, consistent with the Church’s new Call. Gower was subsequently selected as one the United Church of Canada’s first “Landmark Churches”, along with St. James United in downtown Montreal. This designation recognizes and celebrates the significance of Gower’s heritage, our living spiritual and social values, and our continuing openness and commitment within and beyond our community. See <https://landmarkchurches.ca>.
5. Open Doors Program. Thanks to a grant from the United Church of Canada Foundation, we were able to hire four part-time guides and open the church to local visitors and others from around the globe on many weekdays and weekends from August through November 2023. Foundation funding also allowed for the purchase of key promotional materials, including the sidewalk sign outside the church, other signage, and information brochures.

This support, together with the participation of Gower volunteers and staff (for drop-in visitors at other times), allowed us to make our sanctuary accessible to many more visitors than has been usually possible, to hear about our congregation’s history, heritage and faith.

A specific objective in 2023 was to coordinate with the many cruise ship visits to the Port of St. John’s in late summer and fall. This was also assisted by the City’s Department of Community Services, and in May approximately 20 members of the City’s cruise ship Ambassador Program attended an information session at Gower and in the other three District churches. Cruise ship visitor access proved to be a welcome addition to the international visitor experience, based on comments we and others have received.

In the sanctuary, a looped slide presentation about our history was shown on the large screen, accompanied by recordings of Gower choirs and organ music; our guides answered questions and showed the visitors around. While some visitors dropped in for a brief look around, most stayed and watched the repeating slide show, talked with guides, or stopped for a few minutes of meditation. Visitors were invited to climb the stairs to explore the sanctuary’s three levels.

The availability of the visitor guides also allowed us to continue our Ecclesiastical District group tours and other special events undertaken jointly with our neighbouring churches, noted above. This included our partnering with author Helen C. Escott and the other three District churches to offer “Operation Masonic” tours, playing to her mystery novel by that name, which is set in the District. These paid tours (all proceeds divided among the churches), proved to be very popular, especially for the first two events, which each brought in audiences of 70 - 80 people.

Another new joint event – with our guides in attendance – was a “by request” special group tour, a type of event that we hope to expand in 2024. The philanthropic Schroeder Family Foundation commissioned the District churches to hold an event for visiting Foundation friends. It consisted of a narrated walking tour, church visits with our guides, an afternoon tea hosted by the Basilica Parish, and live music to finish.

The numbers: To the end of November, we had opened our doors to visitors on 40 days through the Open Doors program, to more than 1,200 visitors, from 45 provinces, states or foreign countries.

6. Other Heritage Promotion. In addition to printed material for visitors, this included updating Gower’s listing in the Province’s 2023 Travel Guide (online). The listing now includes several photographs (by K. Butt and R. Pitt); the update was also placed with the Province for the 2024 Travel Guide (online and printed). See <https://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/plan-and-book/attractions/211322>).

H&A Committee Members: Robert Pitt (Chair), Ken Peters, Dr. James Hiller, Linda White

MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Ministry & Personnel Committee serves in a consultative and supportive capacity for the staff of the Pastoral Charge, and as a liaison with the congregation on staff related matters. As such, M&P addresses human resource issues related to working conditions, remuneration, continuing education and position descriptions for our various staff.

Firstly, the Ministry and Personnel Committee wishes to acknowledge the considerable contribution made by past chair, Daryl Pullman, who continues to host all of our Webex meetings. The five members of the M&P Committee are Pamela Snow who has served

for 27 years, Daryl Pullman, Roy West, Marie Beth Wright and Roberta Gill, the two having served as co-chairs since March 2023. Many thanks to the members of the committee for their outstanding dedication during the past year. We acknowledge as well, the efforts of our board chair, Patrick Griffin, our treasurer, Fred Earle, and Ken Peters, Chair of Finance, for their ongoing assistance with staff-related matters. We are sorry to report that Roy West, a long-time member of the committee, will retire from M&P at this year's AGM.

2023 marked the departure of Nancy McCarthy, our office administrator, who was shared with George Street UC and who had been on Long Term Disability. In the spring, the church advertised for another office administrator to work for 20 hours per week. After a few unsuccessful attempts to fill the position, SuAn Randell kindly agreed to help us out for 6 hours a week. (The hours were later expanded to 12). As well, several volunteers agreed to cover a large portion of financial and administrative tasks which could not be covered in 12 hours. This situation continues to the present time but is laying great responsibilities on Rev. Rebecca who carries out the lion's share of our online ministry as well as much of the clerical work. This is in addition to Rebecca's dedicated service as Children Youth and Young Families Minister as well as coordinator of the Gower Learners program and communication with the Gower congregation. Now, extra duties in Pastoral Care have been added to her workload as both she and Rev. Pamela, in collaboration with the Pastoral Care committee, seek the most effective way to cover our pastoral care needs.

During the summer months of June, July and August, several students were hired through provincial and federal government grants: Haley Collins, in the office, Caleb Butt assisting David Noseworthy, and a number of tour guides hired through the Heritage and Archives committee by a new UCC partnership grant.

In June, our choir director, Dr. Douglas Dunsmore, retired after 40 years of dedicated service in the church loft. We also acknowledge the musical contribution of Grace Dunsmore who joins Doug to enjoy a much-deserved retirement.

In September, the music program was entrusted to Carl Goulding in a merged organist/choir director role. Other musicians regularly join Carl and the choir in the loft, notably Megan Barnes and Justin Goulding who direct the Gower Young Peoples' Choir. The Bell Choir continues to ring under the capable hands of Dana Collins. As well, the GCB regularly enhances our worship services under the baton of Ron Collins.

Gower Street congregation is saddened to hear of the recent passing of Dr. Edsel Bonnell, the founder and dedicated long time director of the Gower Community Band, formerly known as The Gower Youth Band (GYB).

In the fall of 2023, the Gower congregation was shocked and saddened by the unexpected passing of our devoted Pastoral Care minister, Rev. Ettie Gordon-Murray. The task of filling this vital ministry falls to the M&P Committee in collaboration with the church board. In this respect, following the recommendation of M&P and with permission from the Regional District, First Dawn Eastern Edge (FDEE), our Official Board has extended Rev. Rebecca Pike's hours to full time to assist with Pastoral Care duties.

When a vacancy in a pastoral charge occurs in this manner, a congregation must seek the advice of the regional district. Hence, FDEE has assigned Rev. Ian March-MacCuish to help guide us as we attempt to reorganize the workload of our two fulltime clergy. The goal is to cover our congregation's ministerial needs while adhering to the revised MAP (Mission Articulation Plan) of 2022. In this respect M&P has sought contributions to this effort from various committees and groups of our church. These latter deliberations have been the focus of M&P's ongoing work in recent months.

In closing we wish to thank our ministers, Rev. Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald and Rev. Rebecca Pike, our custodian, David Noseworthy, our Office Administrator SuAn Randell, our Organist/Choir Director, Carl Goulding, other musicians, all volunteers, and the congregation as a whole for keeping the faith as our journey continues.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Ministry & Personnel Committee,
Marie-Beth Wright, Roberta Gill (Co-chairs)

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The Outreach Committee continued to pursue relationships with various groups resulting from feedback received from the community survey conducted in 2022. We provided support to Quadrennial by, among other things, providing space for them to hold their Sunday Tea's until they obtained their own space.

In addition, we had investigated the concept of hosting a weekly Playgroup at the Church as well as an "Open Door Service". After some investigation it was decided to shelve the Playgroup idea at the present time due to the uncertainty of an appropriate space and the lack of feedback re support and need. The "Open Door Service" concept continues to be explored. A broader discussion with an inclusive group within the church is planned. This service would be a regular "alternate service" for individuals

who may require a non-traditional service to meet their spiritual needs. The goal is to ensure that we develop a service that meets this specific requirement. We will collaborate with both those delivering such services as well as those who would be attending to make sure it will be a meaningful experience. Hopefully this will occur during 2024.

We had planned to have ongoing film nights, however, the only group that took advantage of it so far was the Palestinian Solidarity Group. We are seeking ideas for films to attract future audiences. If you have any ideas, please contact any member of the Outreach Committee.

It may appear that the Outreach Committee did not accomplish a lot during the year, however, that does not mean that things were not happening. The following table shows many of the Outreach activities conducted by, and through, Gower Street United Church during 2023:

Initiative	Target Group	Initiated by:
1. Providing Service via live stream for those unable to attend in person	Community	Communications Committee
2. Service and Social club services at nursing home, monthly dinners with speakers and donations to various charities.	Members of Congregation, friends of Gower and Seniors	Gower Service and Social Club
3. Seniors Club dinners	Community Seniors	Seniors Club
4. Yoga program	Local Community	Staff
5. Affirm collaborated with St. James, Quadrangle and others, Pride Sunday service, participating in Pride Parade, social justice letter writing and educational events. Pie Day and contributions to various social action groups	LBGTQSB+ Community plus Community at large.	Affirm Committee & Ministry Team
6. Prayer Shawl Ministry	Congregation and friends	Prayer Shawl Group
7. Interdenominational activities	Community at Large	Ministry Team

8. Support Bridges to Hope through regular food donations and the Benefit Concert	Community	Outreach Committee & Ministry team
9. "Coldest Night" involvement and contributions to various organizations	Community	Ministry Team
10. "Sock it to Me" contributions to various organizations (Stella's Circle, Choices for Youth etc.)	Community Groups	Ministry Team
11. Communications: social media, Facebook, invitations for prayer to recognize various issues/ causes/ anniversaries throughout the year	Community at Large	Ministry team
12. White Gift Sunday: contributions to under-served individuals	Local Community	Ministry Team
13. Mission and Service: individual contributions (\$20,940) and dissemination of information on helping others throughout the world	Community at Large	Outreach Committee & Ministry Team
14. Rev Pam's involvement in community as representative for Gower as well as providing individual support to individuals in the community	Local Community	Ministry team
15. Annual Ecclesiastical district picnic serving the community (Block Party)	Local Community	Ad hoc Committee
16. "Open Doors"- inviting people in	Community	Heritage & Archives
17. Benevolent assistance to individuals in need	Local Community	Ministry team
18. Outreach Committee reaching out to various organizations seeking ways to help (last year initiative)	Charitable Organizations	Outreach Committee

19. Sharing our space with others without charge. (e.g. Palestinian Support Group)	Social Justice Organizations etc.	Outreach Committee
20. Music: student outreach	Music Students	Senior Choir
21. Community Band performances in Seniors Homes and Pops Concerts	Local Community	Gower Community Band

In closing we acknowledge and thank all those who have been involved in delivering Outreach to our community. We would also like to thank all members of the Congregation who contributed a total of \$20,490 to the Mission and Service Fund. Appreciation is also expressed to the members of the Committee and in particular Stephen Gray who is stepping down from the Committee. If you would like to help us out, please let us know.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracy Sullivan, Larry Kelly, Stephen Gray and Lorne LeDrew (Chair)

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

I am pleased to report that the congregation continued to support our Stewardship initiatives again this year. The two main major fundraising initiatives raised just under \$11,000 (The Online Auction netted \$7,425 and the Dessert Party \$3,475). Thanks for your support!

During the past year we participated in a pilot initiated by the National Office, of a system to process all online donations. This system also enables us to accept Text to Donate, Scan to Donate (e.g. QR code on our Bulletins) as well as Tap to Donate. At the end of the pilot, we decided to adopt it on a permanent basis and to phase out the use of Canada Helps.

As you may recall in last year’s report, we suggested that if we all increased our weekly givings by just \$5.00 we could make a significant contribution to the bottom line. In all 44 people accepted the challenge and increased their givings by at least that amount – Thank YOU! However, in all our total has remained approximately the same as previous years. Please see the following Table which outlines the giving pattern of our

congregation. We ask that you see where you are and consider increasing your level of giving again by \$5.00 per week.

Total Annual donations		No. Givers	No. Givers	No. Givers
		2023	2022	2021
Less than \$500		71	66	71
\$501-\$1000		43	50	40
\$1001-\$1500		30	33	32
\$1501-\$2000		7	11	16
\$2001-\$2500		12	10	9
\$2500-\$3000		7	7	4
Over \$3000		9	9	12
Total Givers		183	186	185
Total	\$ 185,068		\$195,492	\$205,288
Plus OnLine	\$ 19,300	19*		
Total	\$ 204,368	202		
Average*	\$1,011.30		\$1,051.00	\$1,115.00
*Average weekly	\$20.25		\$20.21	\$21.44

*There were 60 Online Givers but only 19 are considered as donors for the purpose of this calculation.

84 people are now making their donations via monthly deductions from either their bank account (PAR) or credit card (Online). This represents roughly half of all givers. So, we encourage anyone who is not giving this way to register for PAR or go to the Donate Now button on our Web Site - you may even earn points on your credit card!!

Respectfully submitted.

Lorne LeDrew, Ruth Francis, Tony Chadwick, Ken Peters and Rev. Pamela

SENIORS' GROUP

The group has continued to offer a number of activities, besides the main outreach event of the Gower Seniors` Gala, held on the last Tuesday of November. Under the guidance of SuAn Randall, we have offered pop-up sessions in gentle exercise, yoga, and meditation. We are now using the label Peace of Mind to identify upcoming sessions in meditation, and, in the spring, weekly yoga if there is sufficient interest.

The Seniors Christmas Gala, held on November 28th was a great success again this year. The ticket price was raised to \$25 this year, to allow available funds to cover expenses over and above the meal cost; and ensure we had a break-even budget. (*see attached budget) Burton Catering was hired again this year. They proved to be very efficient, cost and time effective in providing a delicious hot turkey dinner with all the trimmings. The Walsh Family returned, as they have for many years, to provide lively musical entertainment to a very enthusiastic and appreciative audience. As with every year, they play pro bono and as a thank you, the committee provides their dinners and gives each of them a small, token gift. During the evening, there is a donation basket for Bridges to Hope. This year we collected \$175.00 on behalf of the Seniors Group.

The committee extends a sincere thank you to Joyce Power for her continued support for this event. She assists with table decorations, organizing the gift basket and door prizes; as well as offering many helpful suggestions along the way.

Financial Report, Seniors Christmas Gala, November 28, 2023

Income:

Ticket sales: 93 tickets sold @ \$25.00 each	\$2,325.00
Christmas Basket Sales:	\$ 330.00
Total Income:	<u>\$2,655.00</u>

Expenses:

Caterer: 97 dinners x \$20 each plus gratuity (includes 4 free dinners for band members)	\$2,225.00
Gift cards for the band (4 x \$25.00 each)	\$ 100.00
Miscellaneous expenses (Items for gift basket, cranberry juice, candies for table, door prize)	\$ 175.00
Total Expenses:	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
Surplus:	\$ 155.00

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Chadwick, Linda Nickerson, JoAnna Bennett

BRIDGES TO HOPE

Once again, the Staff, Volunteers and Board of Directors would like to express our sincere thanks for the ongoing support of Bridges to Hope by our founding and supporting congregations. The importance of our core mission, *to reduce the effects of poverty on individuals and families through access to essential food, and other programs that help empower our clients*, has unfortunately grown within 2023.

Operations: For the most part, 2023 has seen us operating under post-pandemic conditions, with volunteer levels at pre-COVID levels and clients re-entering the waiting area. Our dedicated volunteers are performing yeoman service again in the pantry as well as the kitchen, and over the year we have added some additional volunteers and increased our food preparation activities.

Staff: Our new staff structure has been carried through 2023, with Jody Williams as our Executive Director, Lesley Burgess as our Operations Manager, Raylene Roche as Intake Coordinator, and Emily Noel as Food Support Worker. We have a wonderful core team. We had an addition to the team mid-year, with Federal grant money providing one-year funding for a dedicated Fund Development Coordinator. Sashika Dilshan has proven to be a great asset in building public and corporate awareness of our organization and its mission.

Demand: 2023 saw continued increases in the number of clients coming to Bridges to Hope. We believe that this is primarily as a result of rises in the cost of living from inflation, but we are also seeing increased numbers of new Canadians and international students. We provided support to over 13,100 people in 2023, including 3448 children and 2214 Seniors. This is almost a 20% bump in the number of clients over 2022. The Wednesday evening openings that we commenced in 2022 are ongoing, no surprise in light of present socio-economic conditions.

We continue to be open and supportive of all, regardless of religion, race, status or location.

Programs: Again in 2023, Bridges to Hope managed to offer valuable and essential programs and services to our clients. In addition to normal food support services, we had our Bags to School program in late summer, which distributed 468 Back Packs full of quality curriculum based, age appropriate, school supplies to students of all grades. We distributed Smart Snack Kits with healthy after-school snacks for school-age children, and through our annual Christmas program, funded by Rotary, we distributed \$75 gift cards for groceries from Colemans to 315 of our client families, supporting 662 individuals.

Support: Bridges to Hope remains very grateful for support from our founding churches during universally challenging times. We remain an Outreach Ministry of the United Church of Canada, with financial assistance from First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council of the United Church, as well as the Presbyterian Synod of the Atlantic Provinces. And of course, donations and volunteerism from congregational members remain crucial to our ongoing mission.

Individual and corporate donations remain a critical part of our funding, in addition to grants and funding from community service groups. It is remarkable how much the caring people of our province have supported our mission, even as their own costs of living increase. In 2023 Bridges to Hope continued to add to our Sustainers Circle core of monthly donors, which provides a level of core funding through the year.

It is important to note that congregational supporters who join the Sustainers Circle as regular monthly donors can have their donations reported as part of your Church's annual support of Bridges to Hope. Please contact Jody Williams (j.williams@bridgestohope.ca) to arrange.

Food drives continued in 2023, with a gradual post-COVID increase. We had a major fundraiser in the form of our Songwriter's Circle event in March with Music NL, at Gower Street United Church, as well as numerous other events in support of Bridges to Hope. We are blessed with a talented and dedicated community underpinning us all.

The Future: Bridges to Hope has continued to advance the milestones in our 3-to-5-year strategic planning exercise conducted in 2022. We strive to build upon and enhance our core mission offerings, while adding new services and elements. We are building collaborative relationships with similarly minded groups.

Submitted by:

Ewan Cumming

Board Chair, Member from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Report for the Year ended 31 December 2023

Respectfully submitted by David Norris, Chair, 13 February 2024

1. Gower Street Church's Trustees are responsible for the safekeeping and management of the Congregation's real property and its Endowment and other funds held in trust. This report describes our activities during 2023.
2. The Board of Trustees was created by statute law, and specifically – in the context of Newfoundland and Labrador – *the United Church of Canada (Newfoundland) Act*. [Statutes of Newfoundland, 1926, c. 5; as amended by Statutes of Newfoundland, 1961, c. 8 and 1982, c. 36.] The Trustees are also governed by the detailed provisions of the United Church Manual, which require that they be elected by the Congregation and that they report to the Official Board as is necessary and appropriate. Gower Street's Trustees are elected for a term of three years and may be elected for successive terms.
3. Thirteen members of our Congregation served as Trustees during 2023. They were Fred Earle, Eric Hodder, Diane Hogan, Lorne LeDrew, Doug Moody, Suzanne Orsborn, Ken Peters, Dan Simmons, Tracy Sullivan, Roy West, Linda White and myself. Our Minister, the Reverend Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald, is a Trustee by virtue of her office. I was elected Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Annual Congregational Meeting held March 20, 2022.

THE ASSETS MANAGED BY THE TRUSTEES

4. The principal responsibility of the Trustees is to manage Gower's Endowment Fund. The fund is a legacy which has been built up by members of Gower Street's Congregation over many years, and it generates a significant portion of Gower's operational revenue.
5. In addition to the Endowment Fund, Gower Street continues to benefit substantially from the Bequests made to it by the late Gordon Butler and the late Audrey March. Those responsible for the administration of these two Estates made payments to Gower Street again this year in accordance with their Wills. These payments do not become part of the

Endowment Fund, but are transferred immediately to the Official Board, and used to support the day-to-day operation of the Congregation.

THE 2023 PERFORMANCE OF GOWER'S ASSETS:

6. Gower's financial investments are held by Scotia Wealth Management and CIBC Wood Gundy, through their St. John's offices. Dean Hong at Scotia Wealth Management, and John Mahoney at CIBC Wood Gundy are our two principal advisors.

7. In reviewing 2023, we want to highlight, that following the most generous bequest to the Endowment Fund by the Estate of Edward Roberts in December of 2022, the Church received a further substantial incremental gift of \$220,000 from Mr. Roberts' Estate in the closing days of 2023. We will return to this wonderful contribution later in the report.

8. First of all, in assessing the status of our investment portfolio and its performance in 2023, it is relevant to review the position of the Endowment Fund, exclusive of this most recent bequest. On this basis, the total combined market value of the Endowment Fund at the 2023 yearend was \$1,147,366, up from \$1,130,447 at the close of 2022 – an increase of 1.5% compared with the decline of 11.3% recorded in 2022. Volatility persisted in the financial markets throughout 2023 with wide swings in equity values (and accordingly, wide swings in the value of our portfolio during the year). This volatility reflected continuing global uncertainty related to such factors as: high inflation, burdensome interest rates, lingering supply chain issues and recessionary fears, augmented by concerns related to troublesome conflicts in the Ukraine and the Middle East. Many of these concerns are still present.

9. In accordance with our long-established practice, all the income realized from the Endowment Fund each year is transferred to the Board of Gower Street United Church to help fund the ongoing operating costs of the Church. During 2023 the Endowment Fund earned interest and dividend income of \$50,188, up from \$35,726 in the prior year - a realized return of 4.4% in 2023, compared with 4.1% during 2022. While all the earnings are ultimately transferred to the operating fund of the church, it is noted that due to the timing of actual interest and dividend payments, the cash transfer for a portion of these earnings does not take place until 2024.

10. As of 31 December 2023, the portion of our portfolio held by Scotia Wealth Management was valued at \$746,418 (exclusive of the December 2023 bequest) and it earned income of \$34,982 (4.8%) during the year. We note this component of our portfolio reflects the \$350,000 bequest from the Estate of Edward Roberts in 2022 which was invested in Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs) early in 2023 at interest rates in the 4.1% to 4.4% range.

11. The Funds held by CIBC/Wood Gundy were valued at \$400,948 at the end of 2023 and generated investment income of \$15,206 (3.8%) during the year. We note that a component of this portfolio, approximately \$190,000, which had been invested for some time in a mutual fund, has in more recent times recorded a disappointing performance. Given the significantly improved interest rate environment for GICs in the summer of 2023, the Trustees divested this holding in August and redeployed those funds in GICs at the then prevailing interest rates in the 5.0% to 5.5% range.

12. The attached table summarizes the value of our investment holdings by component on 31 December 2023, compared with the previous year.

EDWARD ROBERTS BEQUESTS

13. Clearly, the combined bequests of \$570,000 over two years from the Estate of the late Edward Roberts, is a remarkable milestone of financial support for the future sustainability of Gower. It is difficult to find adequate words to express our immense gratitude for Edward's unfailing loyalty and enduring commitment to Gower.

14. It is most important to point out that the final gift from the Roberts' Estate in late December 2023 brought the total value of the Gower Endowment Fund to \$1,367,366, up from \$1,130,447 at the end of 2022.

BUTLER, MARCH & GLADYS L. ROBERTS' BEQUESTS:

15. The Gordon Butler Estate, which is managed by the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, paid \$42,581 to Gower during 2023, while the bequest from Audrey March's Estate, managed by the United Church of Canada Foundation, yielded \$20,236 for a combined total of \$62,817 in 2023 (compared with \$51,358 in 2022).

16. The other bequest managed by the Gower Trustees is the fund in memory of Gladys L. Roberts, a life-long member of our Congregation. The fund is part of the portfolio managed by Scotia Wealth Management. It was valued at \$27,738 on 31 December 2023, compared with \$26,351 on 31 December 2022. The income it generates is divided equally each year between the Gower Community Band (as successor to the Gower Youth Band) and the Minister's Discretionary Fund. This income amounted to \$1,105, a yield of 4.2% during 2023.

ONGOING INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

17. The ongoing day-to-day affairs of the Trustees are managed by our Investment Committee, consisting of Suzanne Orsborn, Ken Peters, and me. The Committee monitors the monthly reports for our portfolios and the market swings on an ongoing basis. It also addresses investment decisions as required throughout the course of the year.

18. Looking back to the commencement of the COVID era, interest rates on Guaranteed Income Certificates (GICs) were quite low, in the 1% to 2% range. Investors, including Gower, who were seeking a meaningful and reliable annual income stream, had little choice but to focus more equity investments and the related dividend opportunities to bolster their regular revenue requirements. That type of investment approach of course, brought with it the increased volatility and risk of the equity markets.

19. The interest rate environment changed somewhat in the last 18 months or so, such that we have seen GIC rates recover to the 4% to 5% range. With this recovery in earnings potential from "risk-free" financial instruments, and the additional capital in our portfolio, in the last several months we have focused on new GIC investments to provide a secure and enhanced annual revenue stream to support the Church's operating activities. The incremental funds from the Roberts' Estate have been invested in GICs along with the redeployed funds from the underperforming mutual fund as noted previously.

20. In September 2023 the Trustees conducted its regular review of Gower's Investment Guideline Framework in the context of this evolving market environment. In updating these guidelines, the principal change was to allow for an increased proportion of fixed-income asset investments (GICs). The revised guideline provides a target range for our investment portfolio of 50% to 75% to be held in fixed income securities and 25% to 50%

in equity investments. In essence, this is targeting a balanced, relatively conservative, low risk portfolio with a steady income stream. While the relative proportions will fluctuate to a degree with market movements, at present our asset mix is in the order of 71% fixed-income investments (GICs) with roughly 29% equities (compared with 60% and 40% respectively, a year ago).

21. Finally, as an unrelated matter, we would point out that in October 2023 the Board of Trustees approved a resolution to request the consent of First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council to complete building renovations required to accommodate the Church's various rental arrangements. This resolution was necessary to facilitate the financing of these renovations.

THE ENDOWMENT IS A LEGACY:

22. Gower's Endowment Fund holds assets accumulated over many years. It earns a substantial income for Gower Street each year, all of which is paid over to the Board of the Church to help to defray its expenses. The Fund is a legacy to those who have gone before and should be treasured and respected because of that. Today's Trustees are as equally dedicated to preserving the funds as were all those who have served as Trustees over many years. (See next page for a more-detailed break-down of the Endowment Fund assets)

Gower Street United Church Endowment Fund
Market Value - Investment Assets

31 December 2023 vs. 31 December 2022

Investment Portfolio	31-Dec-23	31-Dec-22
Scotia Wealth Management*		
...Cash & Accrued Income	16,581	3,115
...GICs	375,000	375,000
...Preferred Shares	113,260	111,820
...Equity	241,577	236,513
Total Scotia Wealth Management*	746,418	726,448
CIBC Wood Gundy		
...Cash & Accrued Income	5,796	11,167
...GICs	304,998	115,000
...Fixed Income Balanced Funds	0	189,489
...Equity	90,154	87,914
Total CIBC Wood Gundy	400,948	403,570
Other	0	429
Endowment Fund (before the undernoted)	1,147,366	1,130,447
Roberts Estate Contribution received at 2023 yearend	220,000	
Total Endowment Fund	1,367,366	1,130,447

**Gladys Roberts bequest is included in the SWM
portfolio
(31 Dec 2023 =\$27,738 vs. 31 Dec 2022 = \$26,351)*

WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS COMMITTEE

The Worship and Sacraments Committee meets on a monthly basis to review worship services of the recent past to see if anything needs to change, to plan worship services going forward to ensure they meet the spiritual needs of the congregation, and to continually attempt to improve worship and the delivery of the sacraments in a spiritual and meaningful way.

Following the Seasons of the Church in planning services is always the main focus of the committee. The work could not be accomplished without the constant input and guidance from our Clergy who sit as ex-officio members of the committee. The committee also has the responsibility to recruit, train and organize people to assist the clergy at the service of Holy Communion, support the clergy in the organization and conduct of Baptism, and also approve Confirmation and marriages. Angeline, Gwen, and Bert do the work necessary in getting the elements ready for Communion Sundays. The Worship and Sacraments committee plans how the sacraments will be dispersed and members help with the serving as people come forward.

Worship Services are delivered spiritually in a number of ways. First of all, there's the main Sanctuary of Gower Street United Church. When services are conducted, they are done after planning the Liturgy that is linked to the doctrine of the season which we are in. The committee not only supports the ministers' planning on an ongoing basis but works to provide an order of service that people understand, enjoy, and feel spiritually enriched from. Over the past months, the service was changed by removing the announcements of hymns which resulted in an improved flow led by music and the choir. To carry services further and wider, the Audio-Visual setup allows for airing services live through the internet.

Then there's Outreach. Worship and Sacraments delivery often occurs in places outside the church building to people who are shut in and cannot attend the service in the main church building. The Mission Articulation Plan recognizes services as conducted through Outreach as a form of worship that falls under the auspices of the worship and sacraments committee. Congregational members who are in hospital or are shut-in in their homes for whatever reason can receive worship and sacraments as well through the auspices of the Pastoral Care Minister. Likewise, the MAP points out that services, as conducted through Pastoral Care, are part of the mandate of the Worship and

Sacraments committee. The late Rev. Ettie used to provide an invaluable service as part-time Pastoral Care Minister, and this important area of congregational care was indeed well looked after. She was loved and will be deeply missed in her role and many more roles at Gower. Rev. Rebecca Pike has taken on extra duties as Pastoral Care Minister and we wish her well.

The committee works hand in hand with the choir director and music leaders. Gower has always been renowned for its music and the worship and sacraments committee aims to keep music an integral part of worship. The director (Carl Goulding) sits on the committee and is greatly involved with the service planning involving the Gower Community Band, the Hand Bell Choir, the Youth Choir and the Senior Choir. Carl has a keen interest in doing what it takes to strengthen the quality of services for the congregation through his leadership and his liaison with the other choir and band leaders.

Gower is also a very social church. After Sunday services we gather for coffee/tea while encouraging all to take part. Attendance is good and over coffee and a snack, the conversation often centers around what's happening in the Church. The "What's Up At Gower" weekly posting also helps keep the congregation informed. People feel engaged in what is happening and are quite willing to help and support Gower in various capacities. Karen Tuck and Anne Lambert coordinate the people who help with getting Coffee and Treats ready for after service each and every Sunday. When approached, church committees and groups do step up and staff the kitchen on whichever Sundays they choose. Help is always available, and the Worship and Sacraments Committee wants to thank you all for your support so willingly given.

I wish to thank the members of the Worship and Sacraments Committee for their dedication to the ongoing work that they do. Experienced members know what needs to be done through each and every season and their knowledge and commitment is invaluable and so appreciated. Special thanks go out to our ministers, Rev. Pamela Jones Fitzgerald and Rev. Rebecca Pike. We are so Blessed to have you both leading worship at Gower. Your guidance is always there, and, amidst your busy schedules, you keep us focused on our Worship and Sacraments Committee mandate. Members of the Worship and Sacraments Committee at present are Ken Slaney (Chair), Gwen Alcock, Angeline

Anstey, Karen Tuck, Bert Riggs, Carl Goulding, Lima Spurrell, Rev. Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald and Rev. Rebecca Pike. The committee wishes to extend special thanks to:

- all who volunteered to assist in worship by reading scripture and prayers;
- all who assisted in serving Holy Communion;
- the Outreach Committee for their regular Minutes of Mission, Birthday and Anniversary Sundays and Food Bank promotions;
- the Property Committee for their continuing maintenance of a safe sanctuary;
- Karen Tuck and Anne Lambert, who coordinates our weekly Fellowship Time; - -
- Bert Riggs for lining up the readers for each Sunday;
- all the committees and groups who host and provide refreshments each Sunday
- Nick Decker, Nicholas Lim and Ken Butt, who ensure that our sound and broadcast systems are ready and working for airing Sunday worship.

We are also indebted to Carl Wright and his Sunday ushering teams, to Doug Peters and the funeral ushering team, to our custodian David Noseworthy for his support and assistance, and we thank all most sincerely. If we have inadvertently overlooked anyone, please accept our apologies.....our heartfelt gratitude to you as well.

The following is a record of the Marriages, Baptisms, and Burials conducted at Gower for the year of 2023:

Baptisms:

- Benjamin Robert Saunders (Adam & Tiffany)
- Luke Arthur Price (Colin & Lacey)
- Chev Raphael Noble Kyeremeh (Noble & Inna)
- Elijah James Pitt (David & Catherine)
- Harrison James Kenneth Folkes (Kenneth & Stephanie)
- Owen Nicholas Robert Dunsmore (Andrew & Emily)

Marriages:

- Colten Alexander Murray & Erin Margaret Dunsmore
- Andrew Gerald Hurley & Andrea Nicole Williams
- Bradley Eric Jones & Katelyn Ann Nolan

Burials (with date of death):

- James Churchill (December 24, 2022)
- Sybil Mae Sears Driscoll (January 04)
- Audrey Pauline Nell (January 13)
- Myrtle Lorene Tuck (March 06)
- Muriel Vardy (March 15)
- Oio Hi Fong (April 10)
- David Riche (April 18)
- Edison King (April 27)
- Joan Conway (May 10)
- John Owen Bursey (May 27)
- Eileen Garland (August 05)
- Shirley Grace Abbott (September 04)
- James Roger Pearson (October 14)
- Viorene Hoyles (October 21)
- Yeordis Stokes (October 27)
- Anderson Abbott (November 02)
- Glenn William Abbott (November 27)
- Robin Jeannine Rodgers (December 05)
- Arthur Roland Hillyard (December 16)
- Helen June Milley (December 29)
- Pamela Butler (January 04, 2024)

May God Bless Gower United,
Ken Slaney (Chair), Worship and Sacraments Committee

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE**Pastoral Care Committee Annual Report 2023-24**

Under the leadership of Rev. Ettie, the pastoral care committee sent out Easter and Pentecost cards to our community members along with cards for other occasions. Rev. Ettie was slowly starting to resume home visits while keeping in contact with community members via phone and email as well. As always, Rose Bowls were distributed to those celebrating milestone birthdays or special life events. Ettie also continued to connect the community in spirituality and education weekly with our Pause for Prayer.

The work of the Pastoral Care Committee was interrupted by the sudden passing of Rev. Ettie. Unfortunately, no plans had been made to ensure that Rev. Ettie's Visitation List had been transferred to the office computer. Rev. Ettie's records were up to date and significantly detailed but were housed on her personal computer. Rev. Rebecca has temporarily assumed the ten hours of the Pastoral Care Ministry position, until the situation can be regularized. A final recommendation will come from Ministry and Personnel through the Board at the Annual Meeting for approval by the congregation. The appointment will need to be approved by the Region. Rev. Rebecca has spent an inordinate amount of time combing through Rev. Ettie's voluminous emails to recreate basic contact information – email address, home address, phone number – and is now building a more complete information set concerning birthdays and wedding anniversaries, so that significant milestones can be recognized with a Rose Bowl and a card. This situation should remind all committee chairs to maintain complete records of minutes, correspondence, and contact information, to ensure a smooth transition when a chair's term comes to an end.

Again, thanks to Rev. Rebecca's prompt assumption of some of the Pastoral Care functions, Gower was able to assemble and distribute Christmas bags to almost fifty seniors in our faith community. In addition, Christmas cards were mailed to a further eighty members. Rev. Pamela continues to provide pastoral visits and counseling on the occasion of grief, funeral follow-up and other life circumstances such as major life decisions: divorce, trauma, moving, death. Rev. Rebecca has already begun making phone and email contact with some members of the Gower Pastoral Visitation list for sick and shut in members, as well as home visits, and the weekly Pause for Prayer. Rev. Pamela continues to attend to emergency calls on the occasion of bereavement, hospitalization, or a family request for a prayer session as well as taking on the responsibility of the Gower's Emergency Pastoral Care Phone.

The Committee will help with the signing and sending of cards for Easter. Our committee has only three members. Please consider joining us to help with this important outreach!

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Chadwick (Chair), Maude Peach, Raynor Lamb

UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Gower Street United Church Women Annual Report 2023

The UCW has continued to maintain a membership of 14 members with 8-10 members actively involved in planned activities. We also have 4-5 members with whom we maintain contact via phone calls, emails or visitation. During the year we lost 3 members: Shirley Abbott and Phyllis Piercey, who were long-standing UCW members and Rev. Ettie, who joined us several years ago.

We met monthly during February to June and September to December. At our February meeting, as the result of the online auction; we had the pleasure of partaking in a Valentines luncheon, prepared by Rev. Pamela and her mother. It was such a treat!! In March we had a guest speaker, who volunteers with the Association of New Canadians. As a result, three of our members attended the seniors' group at the ANC and engaged in various activities with the group. In October we had a short presentation by one of our members on The Benefits of Exercise for Aging.

During the course of the year, we held three fund raising events. We had two bake sales-both in conjunction with other events: Pie Day in March and the Congregational Christmas dinner in December; and a Bring & Buy among our group in November. We are grateful that we have had the opportunity to continue fundraising within the scope of our membership abilities. The funds raised enabled us to donate to the Operating Fund, the Mission & Service Fund, Burry Heights and several community programs.

December was a busy month for the group. The UCW was responsible for coffee time for December. The Bake Sale was held on December 5th and we held our traditional Pottle Center Luncheon on December 7th. The event was well attended this year and each guest received socks and a personal Christmas gift. This is our major outreach event each year and we look forward to continuing for the foreseeable future. Our Christmas meeting was held on December 12th at the home of Dorothy Moore. This was reminiscent of UCW meetings for many years, when meetings were held in our homes.

Karen Tuck attended the UCW East District AGM in April and is a member of the executive.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Nickerson
President

GOWER SERVICE AND SOCIAL CLUB

GOWER SERVICE AND SOCIAL CLUB

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

The past year, 2023, was a momentous one: what began the year as the Gower Men's Club, reconstituted itself in February as the Gower Service and Social Club, although it continued to operate under the Executive that was already in place until the election of a new Executive in September.

The Gower Men's Club has been a faithful servant of Gower Street United Church for the last fifty years or so, contributing financially and spiritually to the operations of the church. However, a substantial number of members had died in the past decade and others were infirm and unable to attend meetings. The average age of those who were able to attend meetings was over 70, with average attendance at dinner meetings ranging from 20 to 25 individuals, down from 50+ in the closing decades of the 20th century. Consequently, it was felt by most of the active members that change was inevitable if we were going to survive.

The result was the creation of the Gower Service and Social Club, which arose fully formed on the solid foundation that had been the Gower Men's Club. Necessary changes involved amending the constitution and by-laws of the club to accommodate anyone and everyone, regardless of gender and religious affiliation, who wished to become a member. Membership has seen a dramatic rise, with an average of 40 to 50 people attending dinner meetings in the latter part of the year.

During the first half of 2023, this restructuring took up a great deal of time in both Executive and Dinner Meetings. However, other aspects of our work did not suffer and actually improved over the slowdown lingering with us since the advent of COVID-19. In January, we agreed to a joint request from the Finance and Property Committees that we contribute to the cost of materials to effect the renovations to the Common Room to turn it into office space. A maximum amount of \$6,500 was approved for this project but was later adjusted to \$3,300 as that proved to be enough to cover the total amount required.

The other major project undertaken in the first half of the year was a take-out flipper dinner, which was held on Saturday, May 27. Two hundred and ten (210) dinners were sold, and people came to the Lecture Hall to pick them up. Ticket sales amounted to \$5,277; expenses were \$1,917; income to the club: \$3,360.

Another club tradition that continued in 2023, on July 02, was responsibility for the church service on that Sunday. Bert Riggs presided, with a group from the club forming a choir and Karen and Ken Butt reading the Scripture lessons. This is the first time women had taken part in this service as readers and as choir members.

The club, under the leadership of Lloyd and Roberta Gill for the first half of the year and the leadership of Tony Chadwick since September, continued to offer regular services at Cambridge Estates on the third Tuesday of each month (excluding July and August). Volunteers are always welcome to assist with these services, as we reach out to members of our faith community who reside at that facility.

Our major undertaking in the Fall was to partner once again with the Stewardship Committee in an On-line Auction. Held over several weeks in November, this project realized approximately \$7,000 after expenses, of which half will be turned over to the Service and Social Club for church projects.

Our dinner meetings continued throughout the year occurring January to June and September to November. These dinner meetings began with a period of devotions and were followed by a sumptuous meal, prepared by our own excellent cooks, led by Roy West. These meals included Jiggs Dinner, roast pork, Mediterranean Baked Cod, shepherd's pie, cold plate, baked ham and poached salmon. In December we sponsored the Annual Congregational Christmas Dinner, with more than 200 people in attendance. A turkey dinner with all the trimmings, including plum pudding and hard sauce, was much appreciated by those in attendance. Entertainment was provided by a brass quintet from the Gower Community Band, and by Carl Goulding, who played the piano for a carol sing.

All but one of the Dinner Meetings was addressed by a guest speaker. In January, the Rev. Guy Matthews took us through his experiences in undergoing a heart transplant from waiting for a donor to the trials and tribulations that accompanied his new heart to his successful and fulfilling life today. In February, Rhoda Tulk-Lane, the Chief Executive Officer of MUSIC NL, which is renting office space in the former Common Room, enlightened us on that organization and the work that it does. March's speaker was Dr. A. J. Shawyer, a retired professor from Memorial University's Department of Geography, who together with retired professor Dr. Christopher Sharp, has written a book on the development of Churchill Park, the first planned subdivision in Canada. She gave us an overview of that project and the people who were involved in its genesis.

We invited one of our members, Ken Butt, to speak to us in April about his and his wife Karen's exploits in traveling around the province and creating panorama photographs of communities and scenic vistas. Club President Bert Riggs filled in for our planned speaker who was unable to make the May meeting, with presentation on the life of Gertrude Pitts Ayre (1857-1927), a member of the Gower congregation, whose two sons were killed at the opening day of the Battle of the Somme on July 1, 1916.

With the beginning of a new Club year in September, the Gower Service and Social Club elected the first female member to its Executive in the person of Karen Butt, who succeeded Lloyd Gill as Secretary, a role he had held for longer than anyone could remember. She was later joined by Janet Howells who became a Director-at-Large. The other members of the Executive elected at that time were Bert Riggs (President and Program Co-ordinator); Lester Barbour (Treasurer and Team A Captain); Douglas Peters (Team B Captain and Visitation Co-ordinator); Bruce Nickerson (Team C Captain); David Robbins (Devotions Co-ordinator); Roy West (Membership and Nominations Co-ordinator); Tony Chadwick (Cambridge Estates Co-ordinator); Peter Nell (Past President).

We led off September with a very informative presentation from Dr. John FitzGerald, Executive Director of the Roman Catholic Basilica of St. John the Baptist Heritage Foundation, on the transition of the Basilica from ownership by the Roman Catholic Church to ownership by the Basilica Heritage Foundation. October's after-dinner speaker was Ian Gillies, a periodicals clerk at the Queen Elizabeth II Library, who has turned what began as a hobby into a very important aspect of heritage preservation involving blacksmithing and sculpture. Our final speaker in 2023 was Dr. Margot Duley, retired academic administrator and professor of History, whose November talk concerned the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Newfoundland and the important role of Gower Street Methodist Church and especially Rose Emma Peters (1839-1913) in making that happen. Dr. Duley argued that the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Newfoundland was the forerunner for the many social justice advances that we have seen develop here in the 20th and early 21st centuries. After-dinner speakers add greatly to our dinner meetings, and we are committed to continuing to have speakers of the highest quality in the years ahead.

On the financial side, 2023 was a stable year for the Club, especially when one considers that we are no longer able to carry out some of the fundraising ventures that brought us significant monies in past years. The year-end report presented by our Treasurer, Lester Barbour, follows:

FINANCIAL REPORT

January 01, 2023 – December 31, 2023

REVENUE:

Dinner Meetings	\$ 5,335
Donations	170
Auction	4,311
Christmas Dinner	2,500
Flipper Dinner	5,277
Miscellaneous	<u>411</u>
	\$18,004

EXPENSES:

Dinner Meetings	\$ 4,348
Donations	500
Auction	00
Christmas Dinner	1,346
Flipper Dinner	1,917
Projects	3,113
Bank Charges	110
Kitchen	387
Luncheons	130
Miscellaneous	<u>516</u>
	\$12,367
SURPLUS:	\$ 5,637

The newly constituted Gower Service and Social Club is off to a very successful start, building on the firm foundation bequeathed by its predecessor, the Gower Men's Club. We look forward to many, many years of growth, of fellowship, of eating and learning together, and of service to Gower Street United Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Bert Riggs (President)

SENIOR CHOIR

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH CHOIR ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Gower Street United Church Choir had a very successful year in 2023, and experienced significant change. The year began under the choral direction of Dr. Douglas Dunsmore, a position that he had held for forty years. Upon his retirement in June, his significant service as choir director was acknowledged and celebrated during the evening of June 1st, with a catered dinner in the Lecture Hall, attended by friends, choir members, clergy, members of the congregation, and Doug's and Grace's family. The evening of good food, music, speeches, fun and reflection was enjoyed by all present. We hope that Doug and Grace enjoy much relaxation using the retirement gift of Adirondack chairs.

During the month of January, members of the church choir sang during the funeral service of former choir member, Jim Churchill, and for the funeral service of Audrey Nell, the wife of choir member, Peter, and mother of former choir member, Karen. In December, Fred Wilson passed away, and a celebration of Fred's life is planned for July of 2024.

The church choir members hosted the congregation in the Lecture Hall following Sunday morning services during the month of February, providing food and drink during the hour of fellowship.

With significant changes in place for the use of the church building, the choir rehearsal space was vacated in the spring to make the room available for long-term rental. The choir is now housed in the Tait-Osmond Room, and rehearses in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

The university choral scholarship program choristers Estefania, Aidan, Hayley, and Nicholas sang from January to April, and Lia, Hayley, Juliette, and Leah, sang from September to December. The singers in the choral scholarship program sing with the church choir from September to May.

The church choir executive committee members are Karen Butt, Roberta Gill and Marilyn Peters. These hardworking volunteers organize social activities and provide caring continuity for the benefit of current and past church choir members. The committee reports that on December 31st, 2023, the special account balance was \$2925.44, with \$649.50 in the chequing account.

The choir summer break began with a BBQ at the home of Karen and Ken Butt, a wonderful beginning to the summer, as well as a choir party to congratulate Doug on the occasion of his retirement. It was a lovely evening, sharing with friends some great food, music, poems and longtime memories.

During the choir summer break, teachers from The Music Studios of Etcetera Productions sang during the month of July, and soloists from the church choir sang in August and early September.

In September, Carl Goulding began his newly appointed role as Choir Director and Organist. The church choir welcomed new members, and although not yet filling the fifty available choir robes, as was Carl's wish, the choir now has twenty-eight singers when everyone is able to be present.

During 2023, choir members were very involved during special church occasions. Such events included Easter, Remembrance Day, Celebrating the Environment – Lorax Sunday, Christmas Eve, and introduced to the congregation the new hymn, "We All Gather Here" (tune – Gower United)*. The Gower Community Band, the Gower Street Church Handbell Choir, the Young People's Choir and guest Instrumentalists joined the choir in musical celebration periodically throughout the year. Gower Street United Church continues its musically rich heritage, with continued involvement from the very youngest members of the congregation to those not so young!

The Young People's Choir, from January to May, was under the direction of Dana Collins. The choir members sang on special occasions during the winter and spring. In the fall of 2023, music teachers Justin Goulding and Megan Barnes took over as choral directors. Rehearsals are now held during Sunday morning services, from 11:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and take place in the Music Studios of Etcetera Productions. The Young People's Choir enjoys weekly fellowship, while developing musical ability through singing, activities and games.

The well attended annual Choir Christmas party, hosted by Rosanne Lake, was a wonderfully festive evening of great food, fellowship, and singing. Carl accompanied the traditional Christmas Carol Sing-along on keyboards with the Ken Band playing guitars. A great time was had by all, once again organized and facilitated by the leadership of the choir committee, Karen, Marilyn, Roberta and hostess Rosanne.

Submitted by Carl Goulding

*This hymn was written by Carl Goulding.

(To follow) Communications Committee

(To follow) Gower Community Band

(To follow) General Protestant Cemetery Committee

(To follow) Prayer Shawl Committee

(To follow) Property Committee

(To follow) Gower Affirm Advisory Group

(Provided separately) Finance Reports