

UPC Fall 2025 Newsletter



**The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God,
had blessed us. May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth reverse him.**

(Psalm 67:6-7)

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From our Interim Moderator

Rev. Joan Masterton

Having enjoyed a particularly spectacular September, weather-wise, we're now moving through October, and so far, "warm and sunny" continues to prevail. We are blessed! I hope you're getting out to walk and breathe in God's creation as often as possible.

Thank you! to those who were able to attend our congregational gathering after worship on September 7th to ponder out loud and together our future as a congregation. You spoke eloquently about cherished memories, current realities and dreams for the future. Session met after that gathering and, following discussion of all that you shared, decided UPC will offer to work more closely with Celebration PC on joint projects.



This has been communicated to CPC, and the next meeting of the joint Campus Board will be held soon. Hopefully, ways in which we can work together, both on mission projects and on other activities related to the building, will be identified and initiated. Joint worship services would also be great!

The warmth and hospitality demonstrated by CPC during our recent (September 14th) joint worship service to commemorate Matthew Loo (a fund-raiser dedicated to specific mission activities) reminded us of what we share in common. It was our first opportunity to meet Johnson Zhang, CPC's new Pastor. Johnson comes from another denomination and will need time to become "Presbyterianized," so to speak. Rev. Peter Ma continues as their Interim Moderator, and will work with Johnson, leading worship, providing pastoral care etc..

We will miss Clare Shields, long-time member of UPC, passionate supporter of healing and reconciliation activities and many other social causes, widely read and always willing to contribute her own astute perspectives. Known for her jewellery, especially beads, Clare may be remembered again soon at an upcoming UPC event! Stay tuned...

The TV series, "The Chosen," depicting the life of Jesus, continues every Tuesday morning at 10:00 am. This "Bible Study" is being held at our home, 17 Carlton Road, so that we can access the program on a large screen. Led by Scott Masterton, this show offers new insights into familiar stories of Jesus; "seeing" is different from "listening" or "reading" the stories. Come for insight, community and coffee!

Other fellowship opportunities (aside from after worship) include Thursday's EnJOY lunches. Come and enjoy!

Soon we will be celebrating Thanksgiving Day and, in a way, that flavour of thanksgiving tends to spread over the entire fall season. The word "thanksgiving" is used throughout both the old (in Hebrew) and new (in Greek) testaments. The Psalms frequently remind us to "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him; bless his name" (Ps. 100:4). The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are to "not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let (our) requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). May gratitude and thanksgiving be the foundation for your lives.

Blessings,

Joan



ENJOY
BBQ at Alison's



Personalized pizza
Made to order



Pizza chefs:
Brent & Urwah

Markham Food Bank

This Fall we are again supporting the MFB with donations of food. Please bring your contributions so we can fill our "Markham Food Bank Wagon". Any money contributions should be clearly marked "Markham Food Bank".

Jean



Message from Session

Thank you to all of you who attended our congregational gathering on Sept. 7. It was great to see such a good group of about 30 of us turn out. There was lots of thoughtful discussion and open sharing, which was encouraging. One of several ideas that came up was that UPC could start to explore different ways to partner with CPC. There are already some ideas coming forward from UPC folks in this regard. Joan has provided a bit more about all of this in here in Minister's Message.

While people miss the presence of a minister, we, as a congregation, have some discerning to do when it comes to what our future will look like. As for the time being, we are continuing with the way we have been 'doing church'. It was expressed, during our Sept. 7 discussion, that UPC people have been enjoying the guest speakers on Sunday mornings. We are also blessed to have the leadership and support of Rev. Joan Masterton during this time. Please feel free to come to Joan or any Session elder if you have any questions, needs or concerns.

While we are in this period of transition, our congregation continues to strive to live out our values of Serving, Inclusion, Love and Kindness. We have seen the arrival of our UPC co-sponsored young Iraqi refugee and our Afghani refugee family, who are all now safely here in Canada. We remembered the harm done by Canada's residential schools on Truth & Reconciliation Sunday. We walked together to honour the children of residential schools on Orange Shirt Day.



**September 30: National Day for
Truth & Reconciliation
(aka Orange Shirt Day)
Too Good Pond Walk**

UPC continues: to support the Markham Food Bank, offering ENJOY lunches, using funds raised at the lunches to strengthen our Deacon's Fund which helps those in need in our immediate community. Weekly Bible Study continues every Tuesday, thanks to Scott. ESL classes are still very active, thanks to John and Nancy. Our partnership with and support of CAYR is still strong. Our gardens and trees that we have planted and improved, thanks to Alison and Lorne, are a gift to our community and helps demonstrate to our neighbours that UPC cares. These are just some of the ways that, with God's grace, even during unusual times, our congregation continues our Vision of "Striving to be defined by the love of Jesus Christ in all that we do."

Thanksgiving Sunday is coming up, and we have much to be thankful for here at UPC. We, on Session, are grateful to each and every one of you who offer your time, talents and treasure to support the ministry that goes on here. We are truly blessed. May you find reason to be thankful in your life, every day.

Wishing Thanksgiving Blessings to you and those you love!

Margaret

Clerk



The UPC-sponsored Afghan refugee family says thank you

At the Sept 28th service, Randy Carr, who has been UPC's point person for the past four years regarding the sponsorship of an Afghan refugee family, introduced the four newcomers to the congregation. The family arrived in Canada three weeks prior.

This family – a father Abass, mother Sosan, son Ali Raze and daughter Zainab – had to leave their family home in Afghanistan 8 years ago, due to deep and personal experiences with violence, trauma, threats, crime and fear. For the past seven years, they have had to live as refugees elsewhere in Central Asia, first in India and then in Tajikistan, where there were severe limitations placed on their daily life. Their lives were on hold – and their future was unknown and uncertain.

Over those 8 years, Abass's two younger sisters in the GTA – Maryam and Fatema – were trying everything they could to get the family accepted by the Canadian government to live here. Four years ago, after many attempts to sponsor the family that had all proved unsuccessful, Maryam learned her next-door neighbours Marg and Randy Carr were members of a local church, and would they consider asking UPC to sponsor the family's refugee application.

The stars aligned. UPC was already in the process of sponsoring a young Iraqi man, Ali, and so a trail had already been blazed. Also, UPC was without a minister at the time, so Joan Masterton was our Interim Moderator. As well as being the minister of St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Joan was also the inspiration and leader of a community group called Stouffville Cares, which was already sponsoring refugees. So she really knew the ropes. One thing led to another and the UPC Session agreed for UPC to be the sponsor organization, with Maryam acting as co-sponsor, and Randy being the lead. And it worked!

So how did this happen? How did the family end up joining us at the service and in Canada?

There were many cogs in the machine to make their arrival happen. Some big, some small, but each one was mission-critical to create success. Every cog had to be successful. And no-one controlled all of the cogs. Indeed, most of them were out of our control. All the cogs had to have faith that the other cogs would do their job.

- UPC, as represented by UPC Session and the congregation, was a cog
- Randy was a cog, as he acted on behalf of UPC
- the Presbyterian Church in Canada was a large cog
- the Refugee Team within the Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) was a large cog
- the Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) department of the Canadian government was a cog
- the Canadian Embassy in Ankara, Turkey, was a cog. They had to investigate rigorously all aspects of the family's application to ensure everything was appropriate.
- the International Office of Migration – a function of the United Nations – was a key cog
- Maryam and her husband Yama were a huge cog
- and the family itself was a cog – staying safe, staying under the radar, trying to maintain patience as the months ticked by with no guarantee of success
- and there was the presence of God watching over the process



But to be sure, it's not as if all of these cogwheels are in place for everybody. It is currently estimated that there are over 120 million people in the world who have been displaced from their homes, and over 40 million of them have had to leave their home countries because of this. You just need to pick up a newspaper to see these terrible stories.

We in Canada, an affluent first-world country, can feel overwhelmed and helpless to stop the violence, the war, the genocide, the poverty, the hunger – to the point of inaction, paralysis. But we CAN act. There are things we CAN do. From a world view, our efforts over the past four years in sponsoring this family might have been small, and the result might have been barely a drop, but to them, we have made a world of difference. Out of the 120 million, we have handed these four – Abass, Sosan, Ali Raze and Zainab – a winning lottery ticket.

Perhaps we can do more. Perhaps we will. The key point is that we're doing something.

You might be wondering about the family's situation now that they're here. It's good. From a legal standpoint, they are permanent residents of Canada. They have a place to live at the moment, with some extended family members in Richmond Hill. They have strong family support to guide them through the Canadian bureaucracy of social insurance numbers so they can work, OHIP applications, driver's licences, education equivalency testing, school opportunities, finding a faith community, making friends, etc. And finding employment, so they can work toward self-sufficiency. It's all going to take time, and it won't be easy. Now that they're here, they'll still need our help.

Randy Carr



September 8, 2025

Toronto Pearson Airport



September 28, 2025

UPC

Community is Heart Calling to Heart

by Henri Nouwen

Friendship, marriage, family, religious life, and every other form of community is solitude greeting solitude, spirit speaking to spirit, and heart calling to heart. It is the grateful recognition of God's call to share life together and the joyful offering of a hospitable space where the re-creating power of God's Spirit can become manifest. Thus all forms of life together can become ways to reveal to each other the real presence of God in our midst.

Community has little to do with mutual compatibility. Similarities in educational background, psychological makeup, or social status can bring us together, but they can never be the basis for community. Community is grounded in God, who calls us together, and not in the attractiveness of people to each other. . . . The mystery of community is precisely that it embraces all people, whatever their individual differences may be, and allows them to live together as brothers and sisters of Christ and sons and daughters of his heavenly Father.

Finance Update

The Finance team is pleased to provide an update on the financial position of the church. The information below is based on results to September 30, 2025, which is 75% of the budget year. When looking at the percentage column, anything at 75% is exactly on budget, below 75 is below budget and above 75 is over.

We are blessed to see that our congregational offerings are right on target, and our rentals are above budget. We expect the fund raising to be below our annual goal as traditionally the Mistletoe Market has been in the last quarter. We are staying tuned to see if a sprint team picks up managing the Market. There are also a couple of frozen food fund raisers in the works.

From an expense standpoint, facilities are above budget. This is due to the team making decisions to undertake much needed repairs at the Manse, knowing that we were projecting a significant surplus without a minister to pay. Utilities for the church itself have been higher than budgeted so a closer look needs to be taken next budget cycle.

Overall, we are tracking at \$34,521 surplus at this point in the year. The Finance team is taking a recommendation to Session to use part of this surplus to pay off the balance owing to the City of Markham for the car park resurfacing. This will leave us in a clear position moving forwards as we make decisions about our future.

Should anyone wish to see a full set of financial information, please request a copy from Julie.

Alison (Finance & Facility Lead)

UPC Operations Financial Position as of September 30, 2025 (75 % of the year)

INCOME:	YTD Actual	% of Budget
Congregational Offering	\$ 62,338	76%
Flow Through Funds	\$ 1,380	83%
Fundraising Income	\$ 3,172	58%
Rental Income	\$ 92,714	90%
HIA support to UPC	\$ 6,374	50%
Total Income	\$ 165,977	80%
EXPENSES		
Administration	\$ 7,361	87%
Community Support Ministry	\$ 58	
Church Facilities	\$ 31,369	91%
Manse Facilities	\$ 11,696	134%
Professional Ministry	\$ 80,519	79%
Flow Through Funds	\$ 452	27%
Total Expenses	\$ 131,456	84%
Surplus	\$ 34,521	70%

A personal message:

I hope that you have been enjoying this prolonged wonderful weather. While it's nice to have such warmth at this time of year, we know that the reason behind it is not so good. The late Dr. Jane Goodall, world renown scientist, conservationist and humanitarian was one of the voices reminding us that we all have a responsibility to this beautiful planet, our only home.

Jane Goodall, whom I have always been in awe of, worked tirelessly throughout her life to raise awareness about threats to wildlife, to promote conservation and inspire a more harmonious sustainable relationship between people, animals and the natural world. Think about it, we are part of planet earth, we are part of nature, we depend on Mother Nature for clean air, clean water, for food, for clothing, for everything. As we destroy one eco system after another, create the world's climate change and destroy its biodiversity, we have to do everything in our power to make a difference for the children alive today and for those who will follow.

I don't mean to put a damper on your enjoyment of this unusually warm weather, but, with the recent death of Jane Goodall, I have been thinking a lot about her and her life-long work, and I felt the need, in my own small way, to give voice to her message.

Thanks for listening,
Margaret