



**Cedar Park
United Church**
of the United Church of Canada

More than a century of faith, family and community service

The History of Cedar Park United Church

By Jeannie Walbridge Blevins



In 1893, founder of Cedar Park, Otto Lilly, bought the Perrier farm in Pointe Claire. The land stretched from the St. Lawrence River north to the Grand Trunk Railway tracks. The Lillys lived in the 200-year-old homestead at the corner of Lakeshore Road and the present Cedar Avenue. Otto, originally from Sweden, and his Canadian wife Mary, had a vision: to build a permanent community with a school and a church. He named it Cedar Park because of the abundance of cedar trees, and built Cedar Avenue, a macadamized road that he lined with apple trees, a wooden sidewalk, and residential lots for family homes. He convinced the railway to build a station at the north end of the avenue.

Next came the school. In order to establish a Protestant school board, Cedar Park needed to "secede" from the Roman Catholic parish of Pointe Claire. Lilly undertook this procedure and also funded the building of Cedar Park School, a white wooden one/two room structure, which opened in 1895.

Worship services and Sunday School for the children were held in the Lilly's home during winter, and in the school house during summer. By April 1899, Pointe Claire Presbyterian Mission was an official entity – our church was born. With a school and a church available, summer residents became permanent, and the community began to grow. Otto Lilly died in 1913, but the seeds he had planted flourished into the vibrant community of Cedar Park.

Between 1913 and 1920, four church elders governed the congregation, which was chaired by Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Lachine, the Rev. A. G. McKinnon. By 1920, the Ladies Aid Society of Pointe Claire started raising funds towards the cost of a church building and a full-time minister. The first fundraiser took place on the Cedar Avenue "circle" across the street from the old school house, and 4 red brick classrooms.



The congregation's first minister was Rev. William Shearer, Doctor of Divinity. By 1922, enough money had been raised to build a dark brown brick church in the Cedar Avenue circle. It was named Lilly Memorial Presbyterian Church, and opened its doors in 1923. The following year, Rev. Shearer retired and Rev. N.D. Keith took his place.

Although the congregation's name was Presbyterian, there were many Christian Protestant denominations represented by its members. In 1925 when the United Church of Canada was formed, the congregation easily became Lilly Memorial United Church.

However, it was a disappointing year for Rev. Keith. After a series of controversial sermons, the congregation voted to exchange Keith for Rev. D. A. McCuaig. Under McCuaig's leadership, the first Committee of Stewards was created, the Young People's Society was formed, and the Ladies Aid Society (renamed Women's Association in 1933) continued to be very active.

The next minister was Rev. Albert Hinton in 1933, about whom there are many stories related by his daughter, Muriel Cliff. (See Centennial Stories of CPUC)

In 1939, Rev. Victor Rose, a member of the first class of ministers ordained by the United Church of Canada, became Lilly Memorial Church's first minister called by the congregation (vs. Presbytery appointed.). He was our leader for 25 years. He saw us through the years of World War II.

With the post-war baby boom, the congregation grew until it no longer fit in the little brown church on Cedar Avenue. By 1953, the Women's Association had 145 members, there were 400 Sunday school students, and 637 families totalled 1610 members. Larger church buildings were a must.



On September 18, 1954, the corner stone was laid on Lakeview Avenue, and the congregation became Cedar Park United Church.

The doors were opened in June 1955. The next year, the original white school house, which had been used as a Scout Shack, had to be demolished. But in the new church buildings around the corner on Lakeview, there were new groups, new activities and new members reflecting the dynamism that was the start of CPUC. There were two worship services every Sunday morning, with a marvellous Musical Director, Margaret Douglas. Eventually, the work took its toll on Rev. Rose, who became ill. Rev. Lindsay King was brought in from 1958 - 61 as an assistant.



It was in December 1959 that artist Hazel Henry painted the creche figures that still grace the church lawn every Christmas.

In 1962, Christian Education Director, Kay McIntosh, took over Sunday School and Youth groups. This was also the year the church received carillon bells in the tower, a donation in memory of long-time elder George Henderson by his family.

Times were changing. In 1965 the names of two lady elders finally appeared in the Session Minutes. Rev. Jacques Beaudon of Eglise St. Jean spoke on "Some aspects of separatism in Quebec."



Rev. Rose retired in 1964, replaced by Rev. Lorne Brown from Toronto. It was the '60s: bell bottoms, tie dye, Expo '67, drop-outs and love-ins, Coffee Houses and everything was groovy. At church there were 928 active members and 120 adherents. Music Director Boyd Pellow introduced folk mass music. Sister Rita Patenaude, the singing nun of Montreal, presented the "Ballad of the Word" with her guitar. Alcoholics Anonymous and Spira (drug rehab) were invited to hold their meetings in the church hall. Meals-on-wheels was launched with the help of the minister's wife, Eleanor Brown.

Two of the United Church Women's groups dwindled to almost no one. However, an enthusiastic Outreach Committee organized numerous activities helping both the congregation and the community. In 1973 Rev. Brown was ill for 6 months. Lay leadership helped out with preaching, Pastoral care, etc., until he recovered. In 1975 Rev. Brown accepted a call to Milton, Ontario. On their departure, Eleanor Brown said, "I have fond memories of a caring, creative congregation and staff whose gracious and generous ways supported...us with their friendship, love and prayers."



Cedar Park United Church's seventh minister was Rev. Jack Nield, preacher par excellence. He brought with him lots of new ideas about Sunday School programs, Stewardship pledge campaigns, Easter sunrise services. Easter 1978 saw the installation of a new stained-glass window in the sanctuary donated in memory of Barbara Anne Browne. In October the congregation was stunned by the news of Rev. Lorne Brown's death in a car accident. A bursary fund in Lorne's name was set up at the Montreal Theological College.

On a happier note, this was when Marian Siminski became Cedar Park United Church's musical director. Innovative worship services made 1982 - 84 interesting years with guest speakers followed by discussions in the main hall. The theme: "Beyond Ourselves." Easter service featured a liturgical dance, and in November there was a pulpit drama (with Jack Nield and actor Phil Spensley) on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's death. The Country Fair was revitalized. The Sunday School began sponsoring a foster child and a refugee family from El Salvador, while the Outreach committee sent money to the Ethiopia famine relief.



Another significant event was the granting of sanctuary to "Julio" in November 1984, a Chilean refugee under threat of deportation. Church families cooked for Julio who stayed within the church. Thanks to the efforts of the congregation, and particularly Chair of the Congregational Board, Bruce Munro, after 3 months Julio was granted refugee status.

Family Life Center, short-term counselling referrals, was born in 1987. The C.A.R.E. apartment project was launched in 1988, food was collected for St. Columba House's food bank in Montreal, and more refugee families were sponsored. The church office obtained its first computer. Then in September 1989 came the sad news that Rev. Dr. Victor Rose, our Minister Emeritus, had died. The following March, Rev. Jack Nield announced his call to a church in Ottawa.



In September 1990, Supply Minister Rev. Paul Evans arrived. By April he was our permanent minister. His tenure was marked by a youthful vigor and enthusiasm: more theatre and shows, Sunday School musicals, dinners (with wine!), new repairs, the launching of Dix Mille Villages (international fair trade craft store), a new Mission Statement, and a grand party to celebrate the Centennial of Cedar Park United congregation in 1999. But this is one of the toughest jobs around, and Paul succumbed to the punishing demands and took a leave of absence. Later, he announced that he would not be returning.

On December 1, 2000, Supply Minister Rev. Brenda Bell arrived. She took good care of the congregation while Paul was on sick leave for six months, then for a year while we went through the process of finding a new minister. During that time, CPUC established its first web site. In June 2001, a Joint Needs Assessment Committee was struck to determine what kind of minister was desired. Their report was accepted by the congregation in November 2001, and a Joint Search Committee was formed to find a new minister who fit the report's description.



That minister was Rev. Sharon Moon, who was called to Cedar Park in April 2002. Her first worship service with us was on September 1st. Her eight years with us were truly full of marvels. A Wednesday Morning Connections fellowship group began under the leadership of Margie Ann MacDonald in 2003. That year also marked the beginning of a chapter of Free the Children, Youth in Action group, under the leadership of young Lisa LeRoy. They went on to raise thousands of dollars over the years for Outreach projects in

Africa, and third world countries on other continents. 2004 initiated the Healing Pathways treatments, involving non-invasive therapeutic touch. This service was a kindred spirit to Sharon's guided meditations CD and book "Healing Oasis," and later "Returning to Healing Oasis."

In 2005 – newcomer Norman Jones started a Men's Group; Friday evening Coffee Houses were renewed from the 1960s; and the 80th anniversary of the United Church of Canada was celebrated on the theme "Dare to be United."



Meanwhile Elizabeth Chown had been admirably filling the role of Office Administrator since December 2002. Her title was later changed to the more appropriate "Church Administrator."

The Grandmothers to Grandmothers group was started in 2007 to help African grandmothers bring up their grandchildren since their children had died of AIDS. Covenant for Harmony was created to help us communicate with each other more effectively.

In June 2007 Douglas Knight became CPUC's new Music Ministry Director. The following year, he started the popular community choir "Voices for Hope."



In 2008 a Covenant with Creation (Green Church policy) was instituted, and CPUC became an Affirming Ministry (supporting gays). This was followed by a new Identity & Values Statement in 2009.

By the end of 2009, Cedar Park Church had a much-needed new green 50-year roof on the sanctuary. The roof of the Christian Education building was completed the following spring. Rev. Sharon Moon retired in June 2010.



While we worked to find a new permanent minister, Supply Minister Rev. Ron Coughlin, storyteller par excellence, spiced up our year with courses like Christianity 101, and Lyrics of The Messiah. Rev. Ron also helped the congregation's baby boomers with Pastoral Care and memorial services for their beloved parents. A beautiful new organ was donated and installed by Christmas 2010. We bid Rev. Ron a fond farewell in June 2011.

In August 2011, we welcomed our new permanent minister, Rev. Elisabeth Jones. She was already a familiar part of our congregation, while she was Director of Studies at the United Theological College in Montreal. We are delighted to have her with us in her new role.



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