



GRATITUDE, GRACE AND THANKSGIVING

REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION AND COMMUNITY
NOVEMBER 2022 TO OCTOBER 2023

SYMONS VALLEY UNITED CHURCH
YOUR CHURCH, AT THE CENTRE OF THE
COMMUNITY. WELCOME HOME!





WHAT WE BELIEVE

VISION

Your church, at the centre of the community. Welcome Home!

MISSION STATEMENT

We are called to be a vibrant and affirming Christian community, sharing God's love, and engaging ALL through dynamic worship, strong family ministry, and loving hospitality, in service and outreach to the community.

VALUES

AFFIRMING

Symons Valley United Church is an open and Affirming congregation. We believe that all people are sacred in the eyes of God, welcome at God's table, and entitled to full and equal participation in the life of the Church.

DYNAMIC WORSHIP

Worship is central to our community. Each Sunday, we pray and sing together and explore the teachings of Jesus. Worship is our time to connect with our Creator God, called by the spirit and support our ongoing church ministry and beyond.

FAMILY MINISTRY

Symons Valley believes in family and supports families in whatever shape or size in our church and the broader community.

LOVING HOSPITALITY

You are welcome here. We are committed to fostering an environment where all people are welcomed and celebrated regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, mental or physical ability, spiritual beliefs, ethnic or cultural background, marital status, or economic circumstance.

COMMUNITY

We are committed to sharing an inclusive partnership with our neighbours near and far. We live out this commitment to the community through service and outreach and our connection and work with the wider United Church of Canada.



FROM REV VICKI MCPHEE



In the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, it's easy to overlook the profound blessings that surround us. At Symons Valley United Church, we are reminded of the significance of gratitude. It's a theme that resonates deeply with our faith, encapsulating the essence of our beliefs and values.

Gratitude, often seen as the simplest form of prayer, is a powerful force that connects us to the divine and to one another. It is the recognizing of abundance in our lives—whether it is the love of family and friends, the beauty of nature, or the simple joys that often go unnoticed. In our faith, we understand that all good things come from God, and expressing gratitude is how we give thanks for the abundant blessings bestowed upon us.

Gratitude has been an ongoing theme for our church this past year. We are a growing church; it is about acknowledging our blessings and using them to serve and support others. It is about sharing our abundance, both material and spiritual, with those in need. It is through gratitude and the act of giving that we strengthen our faith and exemplify the teachings of love and compassion.

Our journey of gratitude is a testament to the deep-rooted values of Symons Valley United Church. As we move forward, let us carry gratitude with us, embracing the abundance in our lives and sharing the joy of thanksgiving here in our church, community and out into the world.

Rev. Vicki McPhee

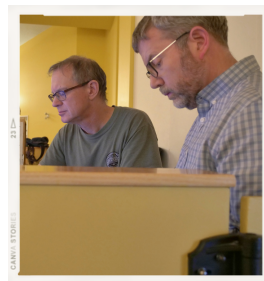
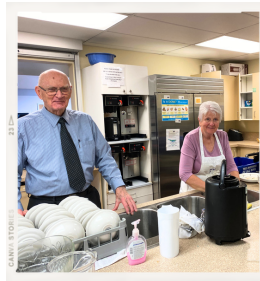
GRATITUDE: VOLUNTEERS

We want to begin by thanking our volunteers.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of our congregation. While there are staff who do specific roles, our volunteers help shape our vibrant Christian Community. Whether a seasoned volunteer or a newcomer, we want to shine a light on the incredible work and thank you.

This work includes:

- **Time and Service:** The most obvious gift is time and service. Volunteers dedicate their precious time to support various church activities, from organizing events and planning, making decisions on the church board, and assisting with worship services to participating in outreach programs.
- **Talents and Skills:** Volunteers bring a wide range of talents and skills to the Church, such as musical abilities, organizational skills, teaching expertise, and technical know-how. These talents enhance SVUC's ability to provide diverse and meaningful experiences to its Community of Faith.
- **Compassion and Support:** Volunteers often serve as a source of comfort and support. They offer a compassionate presence, a listening ear, and a helping hand to those in need, fostering Community and togetherness.



- **Dedication and Commitment:** The commitment of volunteers is a valuable gift. Your unwavering dedication to the Church's mission and vision ensures continuity and helps the SVUC thrive, even during challenging times. This commitment was essential during COVID-19 and beginning again after the pandemic was over.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Volunteers bring fresh ideas, creativity, and innovation to our community. Your perspectives and contributions have led to new and engaging ministry opportunities, programs, outreach initiatives, and ways of worship, keeping SVUC dynamic and relevant.

*Ready to make a difference? Join our
Community of volunteers today!
Contact the office, our ministers or any
member of the Church Board.*

These gifts, offered by dedicated volunteers, contribute to the vitality and growth of our faith community and help create a richer and more fulfilling experience for everyone.



SYMONS VALLEY UNITED CHURCH BOARD

We express our gratitude to the members of the Symons Valley United Church Board.

In recent years, the Board has navigated a journey filled with joys and challenges for our faith community. We appreciate their commitment to transparency and steadfast focus on our Church's ministry and vision.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was significant, leading our quickly growing congregation to transition to exclusively online Livestream worship. As we emerged from the pandemic, we became a smaller but resilient congregation, a trend echoed in churches across Calgary and Canada. Many Canadians hesitated to return to in-person worship, posing new challenges for us.

These challenges did not deter this church from our vision for growth and community outreach. Our faith community's generous contributions of time and financial support enabled the Church to resume in-person worship and embark on a new beginning.

Our church board worked tirelessly to redefine our ministry goals and prepare for the future. This groundwork ensured that our congregation was well-supported in living out God's love. Recognizing the need to strengthen our team, they created new positions, including an Associate Minister for Pastoral Care, Welcoming and Community Engagement, a Family Ministries Coordinator, and a Choral Director. Our Ministry and Personnel Committee and Search Committee invested countless hours in meetings and interviews to assemble this new team, and all were in place by September 1, 2022.

Our church board has also engaged in open and honest discussions regarding our finances. They have diligently reviewed our financial records, contemplating our givings, mission, and aspirations for the future. They have explored various avenues to enhance our stewardship efforts and even initiated conversations with leaders from the Chinook Winds Region and The United Church of Canada.

Our journey has been one of gratitude, transformation and resilience. As we look forward to the future, we acknowledge that this path hasn't been without its challenges. Yet, we are hopeful, knowing that our Church Board, members, and our supportive faith community will continue to lead us toward an inspiring future. Together, we'll overcome obstacles and build a stronger, more vibrant Symons Valley United Church.

WORSHIP: WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME

*Did you know it takes over
30 volunteers to support
worship on a Sunday?*

*These roles include Greeters,
AV Team, Coffee Team, Pastoral
Care, Choir, Kid's Club and youth
Leaders, Snow shovelers, offering
counters and more.*

Worship is central to our Community. Each Sunday, we gather in unity to pray, sing, and delve into the teachings of Jesus. Worship is our sacred time to connect with our Creator God, a calling from the spirit that underpins our ongoing church ministry and extends far beyond.

No matter your age, relationship status, or identity, whether you identify as gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, or beyond, rest assured you are fully and warmly welcome in our Community. At Symons Valley United Church, we firmly believe that every individual is sacred in the eyes of God, welcome at God's table, and entitled to full and equal participation in the life of the Church.

Worship is not just a part of our Community; it is at the core of everything we do. It is our compass for self-discovery, a wellspring of inspiration, and the foundation upon which all our ministry endeavours begin.



DISCOVERING THE HARMONY OF MUSIC MINISTRY

*Did you know that our
Worship Choir sang over
40 anthems this year?*

At Symons Valley United, we're all about the joy of music. It's not just a part of our services; it's part of who we are. We embrace various musical styles, from the classics to contemporary tunes. Music is an essential part of our ministry.

We celebrate our music team: Melanie Cherniwchan, Choral Director, and Donna Williams, Music Ministry Coordinator and Pianist. Together, they breathe life into beautiful anthems and hymns with our Worship Choir. Donna's magic on the piano weaves classical, traditional, and contemporary hymns and even a touch of sanctuary jazz into our services.

Our choir is more than just a group of voices; they are a close-knit, fun-loving musical family. They share in each other's joys and challenges, offering support and harmony through their small group ministry.

This past year, we also enjoyed other special musical moments, including additional recorded pieces shared during worship and online, the creation of our very own 15-song Worship Choir Christmas Playlist on Youtube, solo performances, guest musicians, and, of course, Twelfth Night.

This was our fourth year hosting Twelfth Night, an evening filled with Christmas music and praise, where we united with musicians and choirs from various United Churches in Northwest Calgary. This year, we hosted eight choirs and welcomed a full sanctuary to share in the joy of the evening.

Join us in celebrating the profound connection between music and our ministry. Whether you're an accomplished musician or simply someone who appreciates the magic of melodies, there's a place for you in our musical family at Symons Valley United Church.





Family Ministry

Symons Valley United Church

Welcome to our spirited filled Family Ministry at Symons Valley United Church, where we're here to support and uplift your family. We offer a warm and welcoming space for you and your loved ones to come together and create beautiful memories. There are four core programs to our ministry.

Kids Club: Pre-K to Grade 6, our Kids Club is your exciting destination for adventures and learning every Sunday,

Junior High Program: Grades 4 to 6, prepare for epic fun twice a month on Sundays from 12:00 to 2:00 PM.

Youth Ministry: For fantastic folks in grades 7 to 12,

Family Ministry Programs: Join us for monthly gatherings that offer delicious meals, exciting activities, and quality family time.

Our Family Ministry Coordinator, Ilinca Poon, is here to guide you every step of the way. You can connect with her in person, schedule a chat, or email her at ilinka@symonsvalleyuc.com for more details.

Your family's journey with us is essential, and we're excited to have you on Board!





OUR MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE

The essence of care is interwoven into the fabric of our faith community, represented by five distinct areas, each nurtured by individuals overflowing with compassion. Our focus extends to Hospitality, Welcoming, Caring, Luncheons, and the Prayer Chain. Together, these pillars create a strong foundation of unwavering support for our beloved community.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to the incredible individuals who make up our Pastoral Care team. Your unwavering support and compassion have touched many lives, and your dedication is the cornerstone of our caring community.

Over the past year, our Pastoral Care team has been a source of solace and strength.

- They have sent out over 200 heartfelt prayers through the prayer chain, ensuring that no one walks their journey alone.
- They contacted more than 50 individuals through phone calls and email check-ins, offering a listening ear and a comforting presence.
- Our ministers, Rev. Vicki and Rev. Hillary, have been on the move, making over 60 pastoral care visits.
- Pastoral Care has hosted six special luncheons, including the Fall Harvest Lunch, Christmas Advent Potluck, Annual Meeting Sunday, Summer Lunch, and many more. These gatherings have not only filled our stomachs but also our hearts, creating lasting memories and connections.



MINISTRY WITH ADULTS

Our congregation thrives with a variety of adult programs and events including thought-provoking Bible studies, Women's Spirit gatherings and Contemplative Spirituality. We also successfully hosted the *Bold Witness, Relentless Grace* Conference featuring New York Times Bestselling writer Sarah Bessey as our Keynote speaker. We are delighted to share that this event attracted folks not just from our congregation but from across Calgary, Alberta, BC, and even one enthusiast from Nova Scotia. As a bonus, *Bold Witness, Relentless Grace* raised over \$3,000 for our congregation. These adult-focused initiatives are a testament to our vibrant community, and we can't wait for more exciting adventures ahead!

SEWING A FABRIC OF COMPASSION: QUILTING MINISTRY

Our Quilting Ministry is a welcoming space where seasoned quilters and newcomers are embraced with open arms. You don't need fancy equipment or prior experience; we're all about sharing our skills and tools, making them accessible to everyone. We've joyfully welcomed numerous new quilters, guiding them on their vibrant and colourful quilting journey.

The Quilting Ministry gathers on the first and third Tuesdays from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM and the following Wednesday between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM. The flexible schedule allows you to drop in whenever it suits you on either of these days.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Quilting Ministry for their contributions to our faith community. Working closely with our Ministers and Pastoral Care team, the Quilting Ministry provides comfort and solace through their beautiful quilts. These quilts are lovingly crafted and offered from our congregation to those who may be experiencing significant life changes, illness, or grieving the loss of a loved one. Each quilt carries not only the warmth of its fabric but also the love and support of our entire faith community.





The Symons Valley Players Proudly Present their 25th Production:

Daddy's GIRL

A COMEDY BY GARY RAY STAPP

Join Benard on his hilarious journey to find his long-lost daughter with the help of his deceased wife, a mischievous angel, and the many great patrons at Maudie's Diner.

May 11th to the 14th at Symons Valley United Church
38 Kincora Rise NW, Calgary, AB
Tickets \$25.00 (\$20.00 Early Bird Pricing till April 15th)
Tickets: SymonsValleyUC.com

SYMONS VALLEY PLAYERS: CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THEATRICAL MAGIC!

Symons Valley United Church is immensely grateful to our local Community Theatre Group, the Symons Valley Players. Founded in 1995 by Ann Crawford, this year marked their 25th Production.

We want to extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who joined us in supporting the comedy "Daddy's Girl" by Gary Ray Stapp. Your presence added a touch of magic to every performance.

We want to give a shoutout to the phenomenal cast and crew. Your dedication and talent brought this story to life, filling the stage with unforgettable laughter and joy. Each one of you contributed to the show's success in your unique way, and we are truly grateful.

Our gratitude extends to our Director, Brenda Watt, and our Producer, Ann Crawford. Your leadership, guidance, and tireless efforts made this Production a resounding success. Your passion and commitment are deeply appreciated.

To our audience, we hope you enjoyed the rollercoaster of emotions that "Daddy's Girl" had to offer, from laughter to tears and surprises. Your support meant the world to us, and we can't wait to bring you more incredible performances in the future.

We are thrilled to share that "Daddy's Girl" not only brought joy but also contributed significantly to our community. The Production raised over \$9,000 for Symons Valley United Church. We're incredibly thankful for the Symons Valley Players and their generous gift to our faith community.

Stay tuned for exciting updates on the Symons Valley Players' 26th Production. We eagerly look forward to welcoming you back for more enchanting evenings and theatrical adventures!

Join Us in Spreading Gratitude and Goodness!

Mission and Outreach are central to our core values. These are more than just words; they are the tangible expressions of our Christian faith and how we define ourselves. We're excited to share how you can be a part of this incredible journey of gratitude and service:

Sandwich Making for Calgary Drop-In-

Centre: Once a month, we create approximately 400 sandwiches for those in need. You can join us right after the church to make sandwiches, contribute sandwich supplies, or volunteer to deliver them to the Calgary Drop-In Centre. It's a simple and meaningful way to support our wider community.



Good Food Box:

Our community has been a hub for the Good Food Box Program (GFB). The GFB is an initiative that offers affordable boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables. Keep an eye on our weekly e-news, "At A Glance," for order information or visit our website.



White Gift Project in Support of the SHARP

Foundation: Our White Gift Project brings extra joy to vulnerable adults in Calgary, individuals who would be homeless without the care and support provided by SHARP (www.thesharpfoundation.com).

In 2022, we raised over \$2,500, which went towards residents in Beswick House, Croydon House and Carlyle Common, and essential cookware for Beswick House. Thank you to everyone who supported our annual White Gift Project.

Calgary Alliance for the Common Good

(CACG): The alliance seeks to organize the power of communities to shape a just and compassionate city. You can learn more about our involvement by seeing our October 1, 2023, worship service on our YouTube Channel, which focuses on the CACG. It's an opportunity to be part of something bigger and create positive change in our community.

Join us in these meaningful efforts to spread gratitude and goodness. Your involvement is a vital part of our mission, and together, we can make a profound impact.

DIGITAL MINISTRY: CONNECTING AND GROWING TOGETHER

Our Digital Ministry at Symons Valley United Church is all about extending a warm welcome beyond the walls of our faith community. The main areas of this ministry are our Livestream, AT A GLANCE, newsletters, social media, and our website, symonsvalleyuc.com.



SymonsValleyUnitedChurch
#symonsvalleyunited

Livestream - Over the past year, we've celebrated over 2000 livestream views. We made a big move this year, transitioning from Facebook to YouTube for our broadcasts. We have a regular audience of over fifty livestream viewers each week, including some members who exclusively join us online. The most noteworthy change is in the time people spend with us – our average watch time was 12 minutes on Facebook, and with YouTube, the average view time has soared to 36 minutes. This tells us that our digital community is engaging on a deeper level.



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We want to express our gratitude to everyone involved in Digital Ministry. Thank you to our dedicated volunteer AV Team, the backbone of our sound and Sunday Livestream. Thanks Essie Gaqui-Elefante for coordinating our weekly "AT A GLANCE" and to Brad Lavenne, our Communications Coordinator, for managing our newsletters, social media and website, and to Todd Robertson for updating the website. And thanks to Rev. Hillary Von Spronsen, who oversees our digital ministry.



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Our social networks saw a 30% growth this past year. Our social media posts reached over 95,000 people. Our social media ads reached over 60,000 people. Altogether, we had 4,631 likes, 472 comments, 337 shares and 2,062 website clicks from our social media.



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Website: Our website underwent a complete transformation this past summer. We introduced a new calendar, fresh content, and all-new graphics. We're truly grateful to everyone who contributed updates to their ministries and to Brad and Todd for their work in updating the website.



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Our At A Glance newsletter and related church updates went out over 60 times reaching over 280 emails each time.

Symons Valley United Church: Your Community Hub

Over the past year, Symons Valley United Church served as a central hub for numerous community events, fostering connections with the broader community, sharing our faith, and lifting up our strong community partnerships.



Bold Witness, Relentless Grace (Nov 4-6, 2022):

Symons Valley United hosted this inspiring weekend conference with New York Times best-selling author Sarah Bessey as Keynote, drawing 100+ attendees from across Alberta, BC, and Nova Scotia.

Singing with Sylvia (Jan 28, 2023):

A joyful concert with Sylvia Chave, delighting children and families with her three-decade music career.

Community Easter Egg Hunt (April 2023):

Kincora Community Association and Symons Valley United Church partnered for a family friendly Easter Egg Hunt, captivating over 600 local participants with crafts, games, and more.



Paul Davis Empowers (Sep 16, 2023):

Hosting two community sessions with Paul Davis, the Canadian Social Media and Online Safety Expert, saw 250+ older children, teens, parents and grandparents eager for valuable insights.

Trunk or Treat 2023:

This spooktacular event, co-hosted with Kincora Community Association, welcomed 900+ attendees for a safe and spirited Halloween celebration.



Al-Makkah Prayer Group

We would like express our deep gratitude for our partnership with the Al-Makkah Prayer Group. Their warm invitations to their community for events like the Fall BBQ, Break the Fast, and more have been incredible enriching experiences.