

**GILMORE PARK UNITED CHURCH
MINISTER'S REPORT – 2004
REV. ANNA CHRISTIE**

Global Ministry Policy:

People at every stage of their lives will experience the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and will commit to a life of discipleship.

Report:

This Ministry Policy was developed by the Council and passed at the September, 2004 meeting. From January – September my ministry was more self-directed, as I personally discerned the call of God in the lives of the people gathered here at Gilmore Park. This report will nevertheless address the ministry of the entire year 2004 in terms of this global policy.

“People at every stage of their lives...”

Children

Our children's ministry has been entirely under the care of our Staff Associate, Kerry Child. Participation in children's ministry programs on both Sunday mornings and mid-week has been on a steady increase in 2004. Please refer to Kerry's report on children's ministry, attached.

Youth/Teens

Kerry Child has also organized programs for youth, as noted in her attached report. Most remarkable is the youth mentoring leadership program that Kerry ran for 6 months at the beginning of the year. Since that time, youth who have been through the program have been actively engaged in their faith, and their own sense of calling to ministry in Christ's name.

Young Adults (The “Millennials”)

The emphasis this year for young adults has been more one of preparation for future ministry, in 2005, than on present programs. In August Kerry and I hosted a barbeque at the church and invited 100 young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 – all of whom are associated with our congregation. A core group of about 20 showed up, shared a time of fellowship and hopes and dreams for Project 21. In late fall a Project 21 Steering Committee was formed, mainly of young adults. From this committee a number of ministry teams developed such as worship team, coffee house team, pastoral care team.

Adults (“Generation X” and “Baby Boomers”)

The programming for adults at Gilmore Park aimed at preparing people for discipleship is extensive. There are small groups, leadership classes and

several outreach and social justice projects to participate in. About 60 people have participated in small groups, and 50 others (with some overlap) in leadership classes. In January, our student intern, Amanda Barnes, ran a “Beginnings” class as an introduction to the Christian faith, and there were 8 participants. Participation in discipleship programs includes almost 2/3 of our average weekly worship attendance (150), and about 1/3 of our active congregation (300). This is remarkable for a United Church in our age.

Ministry to Seniors (The “Builder” Generation)

Our ministry to seniors at Gilmore Park is extensive. Through our pastoral care and congregational life efforts senior adults can “experience the transforming love of God.” Our discipleship and outreach programs provide opportunities for senior adults to continue to “commit to a life of discipleship”. Our **designated “Minister of Congregational Life (All Ages)”**, Kerry Child, has specific oversight of the ministry to senior adults – as well as to children and youth.

There are several programs and opportunities for seniors to participate in here at Gilmore Park. This year we have seen a few more folks who are residents at Gilmore Gardens join us for **Sunday morning worship**. Seniors are active on Sundays greeting, ushering, making coffee. My thanks goes out to Ellen Bampton for coordinating ushers this year.

On Easter Sunday we conducted a “**worship survey**” and asked a number of questions about what people thought of our worship service. A large majority of the “builder generation” (80% of respondents) was very satisfied with our current worship service, music and approach to the liturgy. Only 4.5% of the congregation noted a desire to return to more traditional worship, and this number included people from several generations.

Our **retirees’ tea**, held on the second Monday of the month has an average attendance of 15-20, and about 30 people who come if they were all there at once. We have a time of discussion, devotions and singing of favorite hymns followed by tea and fellowship. Kerry Child and I take time to visit with each person in attendance.

Each month Carol Warner and Dorothy Dawson lead two **Gilmore Gardens worship services** on Sunday afternoons – one is a hymn sing, another more devotional time.

In addition, Amy Stephen, and I conduct worship several times a year at **nursing homes/seniors care facilities** such as Courtyard Gardens, Rosewood and Lions Manor.

Sally Houston leads a **discipleship small group** for anyone who is interested every second Thursday morning at the church. The participants are for the most part retired women, and the group is growing. Many seniors also participate in other small groups throughout the week.

Also held every second Thursday is a **book group** where various theological books are studied and discussed. This is also currently lay-led.

Several seniors participate in the **leadership classes** and greatly enrich the groups.

As for pastoral care, there are several of our congregation who regularly **visit shut-ins**, usually weekly – taking them a bulletin and checking in. My thanks to Dorothy Dawson for her unfailing pastoral care both in the name of our church and also as a hospice volunteer at the hospital. Loreen Robertson, Moira Anderson, Freda Walker and Rob Ogden also take regular care to help seniors in need.

Any senior person or shut-in who is in crisis or would like to speak to me about spiritual matters, may contact me at anytime and I am happy to **visit with them in their homes**. I conducted several of these visits in 2004. I do not visit people “routinely”, however, nor do I initiate visitations on the recommendation of others. (An exception to this would be visiting someone in hospital or who is otherwise unable to speak to me on the phone.)

This year, I have continued my volunteer **hospital ministry** every Tuesday morning at Richmond hospital. Although I volunteer on 2S medical ward, I always check on anyone else in the hospital who may be associated with our congregation. I have asked the nurse at Gilmore Gardens to contact me by pager on Mondays and let me know if anyone there is in the hospital, so I might go and visit them on Tuesday. I have only been contacted once in this regard over the last year.

Jeanne Stradling continues to conduct a **greeting cards ministry** – sending a card of sympathy, “get well”, care or thanks to people in the congregation who are in need of it. If anyone knows of a person who is ill or in any kind of need, they simply need to let the office know, and our pastoral care program (cards, visits, prayer) will fall into place.

Seniors at Gilmore Park are very involved in our **outreach programs** such as sandwich making, Project Linus, the Dream Auction and other programs.

This fall, Kerry Child conducted a **community check-in** where she phoned every person in the congregation in the month of November! It was an amazing ministry. Kerry asked how people were doing, what programs they participate in, if their needs were being met, and if they had any suggestions. After looking at the results we feel very confident that people are participating as much as they are interested in, and that the needs of a majority of our seniors (and others) are being met. There were a variety of “small detail” suggestions, but no suggestions about our overall direction, mission, or ministry.

Kerry and I also sent **Christmas cards** to every family in the church this year – each with a thoughtful, personal note. All the seniors in the congregation were visited by the youth with **Christmas caroling** and a treat. Kerry called each senior ahead of time and prepared them for the visit.

In 2005 our plans are for the launching of a designated **pastoral care team**. The team will take responsibility for overall coordination of and administration of pastoral care to seniors and shut-ins, as well as become a support group for one another in this ministry.

“will experience the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ”

It is difficult to measure if or how people experience this love of God – it is a) specifically, a love that is revealed in Jesus Christ, and b) transformational. My interpretation of this policy is that it is the Council’s goal that the love of God we proclaim here is specifically the Good News of Jesus Christ. This principle is evident in all of my preaching, teaching, small groups and pastoral care ministry.

Preaching

My preaching ministry continues to emphasize the concept of following Jesus. Although many times I will preach on the Old Testament, and the texts for the day speak to me God’s Word in other themes, the majority of my sermons are discipleship-focused. Again, how does one measure success? I see transformation in peoples’ lives, although I do not know how much of that is related to preaching. I usually receive good feedback about my preaching ministry, but compliments on Sunday are really irrelevant: what strikes me as more important is how many times in the year people bring up something I have said in a sermon, and use it to shed light on a current discussion. This happens often, and it is very encouraging.

Teaching

The evidence for transformation of people is most apparent through my teaching ministry of “leadership for discipleship” classes. Enrollment in

the classes continues to astound both me and most of the United Church of Canada! As well, graduates each year share their theological reflection in written papers, snippets of which are read aloud in worship. These written papers demonstrate clearly the transformation in peoples' lives.

Another aspect of the teaching ministry here at Gilmore Park is our commitment to being a teaching site for theological students. In 2004 we were pleased to have Amanda Barnes with us until April. Amanda learned a great deal from me and from this congregation that will eventually lead to a ministry of transformation elsewhere in the United Church in the future. My thanks to Rhona Panton, Sally Houston, Rob Ogden, Glenn Stutt and Marnie Cherry who formed the lay supervisory team for Amanda.

We also had a lay pastoral minister in training observing our congregation. Ken Robinson partook of the leadership class on Mondays for two years, and now serves as a lay pastoral minister in our denomination. Our blessings go out to Ken and his new wife, Diane.

Spiritual Retreat

This retreat (held October 1-3) is a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit in peoples' lives. Spending a weekend in prayer, fellowship, and singing while learning to pray, and experiencing the healing service has an incredible effect. Many of the leadership "graduates" wrote about their experience with prayer in their lives since the time of the retreat.

Small Group Ministry

Our small group ministry was launched in March of 2004 with approximately 10 small groups, that quickly grew to 12. They include discipleship groups, a book group, the retirees tea group, and youth groups. During the first part of the year Brenda Miller also led the "Women at the Well" group, but that has since dissolved itself into other groups. Kerry Child ran a 6-month youth mentoring (leadership) program this year. Out of this several leaders of youth groups, and youth small groups have emerged for 2005. In 2004, approximately 60 adults participated in small groups, and another 50 attended the leadership program, which has a small group ministry emphasis in its second year.

It is in small groups that people are best able to experience the transforming love of God in Christ. In their encounter with Scripture they meet Christ and apply faith to their daily lives. Through spiritual friendships, members love and care for one another. People learn to pray, pray for others, and are prayed for each week. This prayer ministry alone is transformational. My deepest thanks to a committed team of lay pastors: Patricia Lynn, Bob Poole, Sally Houston, John Yap, Charlie Bois, Ivor Barnbrook, Bill Wallace, Maggie Wallace and Nenita Bonifacio. These lay pastors daily and weekly demonstrate a true discipleship life –

of faith, commitment and unconditional love. It is through ministry such as theirs that the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ truly transforms others.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care of all Christians is one way in which people may experience the transforming love of God in Christ. Again, it is difficult to assess how much transformation in peoples' lives is due to pastoral care alone. My belief is that simply caring for people without offering and challenging them to anything else would not be enough to bring about transformation and a life of discipleship. So pastoral care is important, but it is important also to balance and integrate it with other calls to discipleship.

My style of pastoral care is mainly "reactive" rather than "proactive". This is important for the congregation to know, as I don't try to guess who may need pastoral care at any time. However, I keep several hours per week open for appointments in my office, and occasionally I will "make house calls". People may make an appointment with me for any reason at all: counseling, a spiritual question, a question or concern about the church, even a criticism of my ministry – I am very open to this.

In the past year, I have provided counseling on a weekly or bi-weekly basis for as little as 6 hours to as many as 50 hours for 29 individuals or families in 2004. This number does not include one-time crisis appointments, nor bereavement. As a Christian minister, all counseling that I do has a component of spiritual direction. Counseling is therefore more than just "care" (although it certainly involves care). It is a presentation of the transforming power of God in peoples' lives, and a challenge to grow spiritually in and through the painful emotional problems in life. I see incredible transformation in the counselees who commit to the process and work hard in counseling.

In 2005 I will become an official clinical intern with Living Systems (Counseling Centre), and will be able to provide couples and family counseling. All my counseling has been, and will continue to be free of charge. 6 of the 29 counselees I saw in 2004 were not members of this congregation – they had been referred to me by a member of the church, or someone at the hospital.

I volunteer one morning a week (Tuesdays) at Richmond hospital as an associate chaplain. I concentrate my work on 2 South medical ward, which has about 30 beds, and palliative care which has 10 beds. If anyone from our church is on another ward (and I know about it) I make every effort to see them. This work is very rewarding for me personally, and helps the hospital chaplain a great deal. In a sense, it is also a ministry of yours, as you "loan me" to the hospital for this half-day. Many,

many people each week experience the transforming love of God as they are supported spiritually and emotionally through my bedside visits. (I try to visit every new admission on 2S each week – although this is not always possible.)

Pastoral care is ultimately the responsibility of every member of the congregation, and it is my responsibility to equip you all for it. Our small groups are the most efficient and caring way to provide pastoral care. In small groups, members can care for one another, lend a helping hand or a listening ear, and support one another with prayer. It is only if the trained lay leaders feel they need advice from a theologian, or spiritual direction, that I need to be called in. Please refer to the section above on Seniors' ministry for more details about the pastoral care provided to the congregation.

“...and will commit to a life of discipleship.”

Discipleship is further defined by the Council in terms of Michael Foss's landmark book “Power Surge: six marks of discipleship for a changing church”. The six marks are: daily prayer, Bible study, weekly worship, service, proportional giving, spiritual friendships. My report as to the commitment of the congregation to these six marks is as follows:

1. **Prayer.** Through sermons on prayer, leadership classes, small group ministries and the spiritual retreat, the prayer life of people at Gilmore Park has been incredibly evident. I have personally witnessed people much more comfortable with prayer over the last year. Many have told me that the most powerful part of their small group experience is having someone pray for them. I was amazed at how the youth in Kerry's mentoring group looked forward to the prayer triads together.
2. **Bible study.** With leadership classes, small groups, youth programs and children's worship there are approximately 150 people reading the Bible on an ongoing basis. Those in leadership classes commit to read the whole Bible over two years (in 2005, over 1 year). I am surprised at how far the Biblical literacy level in the congregation has risen over the past few years...I can see it on an understanding in peoples' faces and body language during the sermon, in particular. It is also evident through the way the congregation can theologically reflect in meetings and other groups.
3. **Weekly worship.** This is an ongoing struggle at Gilmore Park, as it is with many other congregations. ***I cannot report compliance to the Ministry Policy*** in this regard. Our worship attendance is about half of our worshipping congregation, sometimes less. Nothing seems to be wrong with worship, and we certainly keep

asking. Other ministers report to me that their Sunday attendance is about 1/3 of their membership, so we should be proud! Perhaps with the beginning of Project 21, adding this second service will help somewhat. Those away on a Sunday morning or involved in sports, etc. can attend in the evening. It may simply be a reality of our time that the most committed of disciples are not able to commit to weekly worship.

4. **Service.** The incredible response to outreach programs, especially the Dream Auction is proof-in-the-pudding of our congregation's commitment to a life of serving others. It is noteworthy that we still have a "new ministry initiatives" fund of \$25,000 available for anyone with an idea for a project. There's some scuttlebutt that the youth may be planning a mission trip (perhaps for a Tsunami rebuilding project?) in 2006. Stay tuned!
5. **Proportional Giving.** This mark of discipleship is where the rubber hits the road. Those who are committed to a life of discipleship will freely give their money away, and will give it to God's mission in the church. Giving as a committed disciple is different than giving out of guilt or obligation, giving because the church needs the money, giving because the project is a good one, or participating in a fundraising activity – where one receives something in return for the money.

2004 has been a year of celebration in this regard. Our envelope. givings alone are up by over \$11,000. That's an increase of 7%. According to a detailed analysis done by BC Conference of the United Church, stable and flourishing United Churches in BC are growing in givings by an average of 4.8%/year. WOW! We're really doing great! We are pleased to see that the number of people who have committed to Pre-Authorized Remittance has also greatly increased. PAR helps the congregation manage through the summer months and at other times when the attendance is low.

6. **Spiritual Friendships.** There was a time in the church (not just our church) when the only time we Christians got together for conversation was during coffee hour, or a fellowship event. The exception would be a few people in a Bible Study group of some kind. Today, at Gilmore Park, over 100 adults and youth meet twice-monthly in groups where they can support one another, care for one another, discuss how the Bible and their daily lives relate, and uphold one another in prayer. These are truly "spiritual" friendships – and are the essence of that Spirit which changes the culture of our congregation, making it a true community of faith.

APPENDIX I

“The freedom to experience and commit”

There is only one way in which laypeople can be freed up from “running the church”, so that they can do the more important work of being equipped for their ministry in the world, and that is with a competent and adequate staff who run the day-to-day operation of the church. We are very fortunate at Gilmore Park to have such a staff.

It has been an interesting experience not to have committees running the church, and fewer routine decisions made by committees or groups. One thing I discovered, especially as I work closely with another congregation (in a “traditional” model) through my presbytery work, is that a lot of what we have traditionally spent our time and energy on is not necessary. Gail can decide which company to buy coffee from in about half an hour (cost to the congregation about \$7.50) – we don’t need a committee of eight people to discuss it for an hour (16 volunteer hours) and then Council to discuss it for another fifteen minutes (2 more volunteer hours). The cost is too great. The cost is that those 18 volunteer hours could have been spent growing in faith, or reaching out into the world with acts of love and charity, working for social justice or peace in Christ’s name.

Gail and Betty have been not only incredibly faithful, hard-working, efficient and fully competent for this role in 2004, they have both gone “the extra mile”. The church has been run well – it is clean (thanks to Hans!), well-maintained, inviting, safe, and beautiful. The staff is great at calling volunteer (“property guys”) to help whenever possible, and making wise decisions about when to pay for a professional. Our facilities budget was well-managed, the church was kept from chaos, and most importantly, lay people were free to answer the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, and do ministry in the world in his name.

Thank you, Gail and Betty, for this wonderful ministry.

APPENDIX III COMMUNICATION AT GILMORE PARK

I am pleased that we have increased the avenues of communication at Gilmore Park over the last year. Of course, it is important to remember the most important principle of communication: that it is two-way! If I need to know something about you, please be sure to call or email the office. Telling only one individual may not necessarily mean that the office knows, or that I know.

Means of Communication

1. The bulletin, and verbal announcements in worship (if you're not in church, indeed you may not know what's going on!)
2. Website – all announcements, reminders and events are posted by Sunday
3. Newsletters occasionally printed by myself and regularly by Kerry
4. Phone fan-out for important events
5. Small groups
6. Occasional mass emailing
7. Letters, Christmas cards sent several times per year
8. Phone message on the answering machine for important events/changes
9. My door is always open for appointments to ask me or tell me anything!

APPENDIX IV
My work week – as of January, 2005

SUNDAYS (12 H)

8:30-10	Leadership class
10-12	Worship
12-2	Fellowship, appointments
2-4	Project 21 rehearsal
4-6	Begin sermon preparation
7-8:30	Project 21

MONDAYS (6H)

Sermon preparation at home
Leadership class 2X/month

TUESDAYS (12 H)

9:00-12	Hospital ministry
12-1	Office
2:00-5	Teach at Vancouver School of Theology
7:00-9	Meetings (Council, presbytery, small group leaders)

WEDNESDAYS (12H)

9-5	Office (10:30-11:30 in supervision)
5-9	Evening appointments

THURSDAYS (8H)

9-11:30	Leadership class
11:30-5	Office/appointments
Evening	Choir (volunteer time)

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS

Off