



KNOX-METROPOLITAN UNITED CHURCH

2014 **APRIL**

9 Ways

Dynamic Downtown Churches Are Growing

You think it's over for the downtown church? You couldn't be more wrong.

There was a time when downtowns everywhere were in decline. Downtown churches were wondering just how long they could keep going as people moved to the suburbs.

But some downtowns are coming back to life — downtown Regina for example. And Knox-Metropolitan United Church is positioned to bring Christ to a new generation providing we can figure out how to connect with a younger audience choosing the downtown core as a place to work and live.

Lyle Schaller has written 36 books on religion in America, particularly as it applies to ministry. Many people think he's worth listening to: in one survey of 1,500, he

was once judged to be the most influential Protestant church leader in the nation. (Billy Graham came in fifth.) In *Center City Churches: The New Urban Frontier*, he has gathered reports from the leaders of 14 vital, dynamic churches in downtown areas. While no church has all of the features listed below, they appear often enough to garner a mention.

Our January article, "The Soul of the City: What Does It Mean to Be a Downtown Church?" noted that downtown churches were centres of excellence. As a result, people have high expectations in helping them solve their problems — and that's where this survey of successful behaviours begins.

The expectation of excellence

1 Programming for higher expectations. Schaller notes that many downtown churches offer twelve-step recovery programs, divorce recovery workshops, support for the children of traumatic divorces, as well as help for the single parent.

2 Putting more emphasis on teaching. People expecting an excellent experience anticipate a deeper treatment of topics. One response is the longer, memorable, visual, teaching sermon.

See ***Downtown*** on next page

Downtown — continued from front page

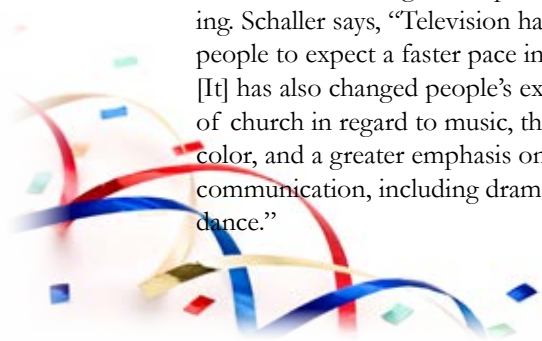
3 Ready for the “loyalty-challenged”.

It’s easy to be anonymous in the city. It’s easy to “shop” for a congregation. Downtown churches meet the challenge with opportunities for short-term involvement.

4 Keeping pastors longer. Church visitors may come and go, but when they return, they want to see the same people leading the congregation — the longer the pastorate, the larger the size of the congregation.

5 Leading vibrant, colourful worship.

Television has shortened our attention spans and created the need for more effervescent, arresting worship and teaching. Schaller says, “Television has taught people to expect a faster pace in life. . . . [It] has also changed people’s expectations of church in regard to music, the use of color, and a greater emphasis on visual communication, including drama and dance.”



Reflecting directions the congregation wants to grow

6 Creating men-only programming.

Women are a larger percentage of central-city churches. Schaller reports a downtown church is likely to have women making up 60 to 85 percent of its congregation. Exceptions to this come from churches that intentionally build all-male enclaves — a men’s Bible study, for example — or high-commitment churches with great expectations on both women and men.

7 Using younger music for younger people.

The First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, New York, was feeling locked-in to classical sacred music after it had been the soundtrack of the congregation for 300 years. They started using a guitar to lead the children in song after the children’s lesson. From that developed a contemporary choir.

8 Integrating persons of colour into the work of the church.

First Presbyterian is a multi-cultural church, comprising South Asians, African Americans, and whites. They’ve discovered some of the

secrets of creating a vibrant, multi-ethnic faith community. For example, youth of various ethnic backgrounds work in taking the morning offering, and board members reflect the multicultural makeup of the congregation.

9 Preaching as if non-believers are present.

For his contribution to *Center City Churches*, Timothy Keller describes his game plan as he started a church in Manhattan. Sermons had to explain everything, assuming that non-Christians were attending the service. Keller goes on to say that, “If we always preached as if these kinds of people were present, they would come or be brought.”

Large — and liberal

Over the past 20 years, it’s been the conventional wisdom that the only growing churches were conservative ones. This is not always the case. A church in the centre of town can be both large and liberal. Schaller’s book shows that six of the 14 growing, healthy congregations describe their theology as liberal.

Passages

Dawn Rolke and Don Black speak about the Regina Indian Industrial School.

Saturday April 26 is the date for Knox-Met’s Spring Food and Fun Event. The potluck dinner starts with punch at 5:30 and supper at 6 p.m. Sign up to help at this event during our Sunday coffee times. Volunteers will be calling you in the weeks ahead to see if you wish to attend. The fun is open to all; if you want to come — and aren’t contacted — call Elizabeth Calam at 306-924-0533.

Thank you from Palestine . . .

and Lorne Street. The Sheepfold cares for children with severe disabilities who are not being served by other organizations and whose parents are unable to care for them. The Outreach committee at Knox-Met sent to the charity one-third of the proceeds of the \$3,100 it raised at the Christmas Eve offering. Director Mary Rewers sends a huge thank you



Hearts in sync!

February 28 began a two-day drum workshop at Knox-Met. In addition to the challenging and fun rhythm exercises, the group of 33 — including seven children — learned about the history of drumming, its spiritual aspect, and the cultural connections.

The larger-than expected turnout surprised the Christian Education ministry organizers, and drum teacher Joanne Crofford added an assistant to lead the larger group. Six participants came from outside the Knox-Met community.

to Knox-Met for its “love, prayers and support for the Sheepfold’s precious children”. Another third went to the Regina Immigrant Women Centre, a non-profit community-based organization providing support services for immigrant women.

Hooray for Janice Diemert!

Administrative Professionals day is April 23. Our administrative professional is Janice Diemert. Working alone in an office that usually has two people, Janice keeps several plates spinning simultaneously in a

job that involves information management, front-door security, computer expertise, and a deep understanding of the moods of office machines. We’d be lost without her. Thank you, Janice!



From Me to We

Students at the Knox-Met Sunday School learned about helping others around the world when Anne Parker (left in photo) gave a presentation in late February.

Anne, daughter of Jean Parker, visited Kenya last September with a group from Me to We,

the for-profit arm of Craig and Marc Kielburger’s Free the Children charity. Anne spoke about numerous projects that the aid organization runs in the east central African country: ventures around education, health, clean water, alternative income, and sustainable agriculture. Anne

Parker’s project paralleled the Christmas project our Sunday School participated in through the Mennonite Central Committee: they raised \$450 to buy “living gifts” in these areas. Find out more about the Kielburgers’ work at www.metowe.com.

National forum probes reasons for missing generation

There is a lack of young adults in most United Church congregations and the national church is investigating why.

A February 27 online event, chaired by United Church minister Lauren Hodgson, featured a conversation with Rev. Alexa Gilmour and Christine Boyle, a community organizer, activist, and communicator.

The presentation found its start when Boyle wrote “The United Church diaspora” in the April 2013 *United Church Observer*.

In the article, she recounts coming out as a religious person to colleagues interested in social action. Several young adults shared with her why they had left the United Church, even though it was through that church that they first saw the importance of social action.

Alexa Gilmour grew up in the United Church, and then left it at 13. Twenty years later a search for meaning drew her back to involvement with groups she terms “spiritual but not religious”. It was during that time that she felt called to minister.

She believes that millennials — people born after 1980 — are uncomfortable sitting quietly and not participating. The generation sees Christianity as old-fashioned, unconcerned with social justice issues, judgmental, and moralistic.

Boyle notes that millennials have a real distrust of institutions and there is a reluctance to be involved in faith organizations as they exist — and as they think the institutions exist.

Watch the 47-minute video at <http://goo.gl/tF8BwP>, and follow the United Future dialog online through Twitter at #UnitedFuture and on the web at www.UnitedFuture.ca.

April



4 Book and Bake Sale To April 5. Books only Friday 4 – 7 p.m. Books and baking Saturday 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Lower Hall

12 Regina Philharmonic Chorus *Mystique* 8 p.m. Sanctuary

13 Palm Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.

17 Maundy Thursday Communion Service 7 p.m.

18 Good Friday Service Noon.



20 Easter Sunday Communion Service 10:30 a.m.

27 Corinne Groff Piano Student Recital 2 p.m. Sanctuary

May

4 Amici Singers Concert 3 p.m. Lower Hall



25 Rosa Mirijello-Haynes Piano Recital 2 p.m. Sanctuary