



# Eglinton St. George's United Church

Extending love · Serving others · Growing in faith



Photography by  
WeDo.ca

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

# Living out our mission in 2020

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## The Year of **Being Church** Differently

The 2019/2020 fiscal year was indeed another transformational year for ESG in terms of building sustainable ministry in North Toronto, guided by our congregational goals established in 2016:

**Growth:** meaningful presence of young adults, children, youth, seniors and families. Strategies for financial viability.

**Leadership:** a talented ministerial and lay leadership team that inspires and engages members and newcomers

**Extravagant Welcome:** open, welcoming and engaging culture of belonging



The story of this year is one of “before” and “after” the COVID-19 public health emergency was declared in Ontario on March 17th, 2020.

Before ... we were living out our strategic vision for growth, navigating well various opportunities and challenges, including focused on growth and long term viability initiatives such as Project Flourish, Project Thrive, and our collaborative work within the North Toronto Cluster of United Churches.

And after ... we faced a challenging programmatic shift to 100% online ministry and financially a tough road ahead.

Amid pandemic anxiety, loss and isolation, ESG worked tirelessly to be a tower of strength and stability as we learnt new ways of **being church**. The ESG community demonstrated that we are indeed more than a building.

The awe-inspiring collective talent, creativity, and commitment of our staff and volunteers to shift how we offer comfort, spiritual support, be community and steward the financial operations of the church has been remarkable and transformative.

We reduced our expenditures to soften the financial impact of COVID 19 and the congregation very generously supported an appeal to improve our year-end operating results at the same time as giving financial help to four longstanding, Outreach ministry partner organizations.

We are also sincerely grateful for our amazing members, volunteers and staff team of Paul, Don, Jennifer, Shawn, Kate, Aidan, Irina, AJ and Alvaro who together embraced this transformation of being church differently with admirable resiliency and courage.

*Susan Moore*

*Chair, Governing Council*

# Living out our mission in 2020

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## Pivot!

2019-2020 was a great year!

The final quarter caught us off guard, forcing us to find our new normal!

Online worship began, and we are now connecting with more folks at the cottage, on holidays, at home, or even while out walking in nature, than we did in person. Bryan Estabrooks has been brilliant in producing our Online services, and Shawn, with the Leads, has done a fantastic job with leading music from home!



We are both connecting well and missing each other terribly. ESG Ambassadors came on board to communicate with all of our congregation as we were united in our isolation. We are grateful for the leadership of that program with Donna MacCandlish and Heather Parker. Many received comfort participating each week in the Prayer Circle led by Peter Wilkins and the weekly "We Are Not Alone" email that Patti Thompson coordinated, encouraged us and supported us weekly. The Pastoral Care Committee with Rev. Don Parsons offered care-filled support new ways.

We managed Sarah's parental leave and celebrated Ruby's arrival. Kate Littler did brilliant work expanding her role from Children's Ministry to Family Ministry, and we are grateful! Her online children's program is connecting with over 100 each week!

All in all, we continued moving forward in faith, knowing that with each step, with each breath, no matter where the path of life takes us, that on this journey, we are not alone.

Thanks be to God!

*Rev. Dr. Paul Hutchison*

*Lead Minister*

# Supporting our Faith Community

## Adult Education

We started the church year with a four-part series on Compassionate Listening facilitated by Patti Thompson and Don Parsons. The sessions were well attended with an average of 40 people per evening.



the  
art of  
*compassionate  
listening*

Learn to silence the inner critic &  
create more meaningful  
conversations with others

Mary Thomson created a Feeling Better series focusing on cognitive behaviour therapy applied to depression, anxiety, and anger. She ran two in-person sessions in early March with approximately 65 people in attendance. The remaining ones were cancelled due to COVID-19. Mary distributed a 55-minute video on anxiety to the congregation and all previous seminar attendees.



### From readers of "We Are Not Alone"

*"Thank you. Some of your offerings have been distributed to 168 residents at Amica Bayview Gardens. Your influence spreads."*

*"Thank you, these articles/stories have inspired me on a 'dark' day."*

In the spring, we responded to the pandemic with two offerings of emotional and spiritual support:

- a weekly congregational newsletter called **"We are not Alone"**
- a weekly **Prayer Circle** initiated by Peter Wilkins with an average attendance of 10-12 people.

**In 2020-21, adult education will focus on virtual programming. This will include:**

- 3-part webinar series on Coping with Covid-19 Anxiety facilitated by Mary Thomson
- Bible for Busy People led by Stephen Milton
- Weekly Prayer Circle with shared leadership
- Weekly "We are not Alone" newsletter
- Living in Alignment with your Values webinar series
- Embracing Aging on-going educational sessions tailored to meet COVID realities

*Patti Thompson*  
Adult Education

# Supporting our Faith Community

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## Church Community Engagement Ambassadors Initiative

During the early days of the COVID 19 pandemic, a team of 31 Champions and Ambassadors reached out to over 400 individuals (both ESG members and volunteers) to 'check in' on how they were faring, offer a listening ear, as well as learn about what's lifting their spirits and their strategies for navigating COVID's challenges. The feedback was truly gratifying. People were grateful for our calls, expressed positive sentiments about our online Sunday Services and the various ways we have been reaching out (weekly updates with poems, stories, prayer groups sessions, etc.). They genuinely appreciate how ESG is keeping them connected.

The experience was not only gratifying for those contacted, but also for those Ambassadors and Champions making the calls. We learned a lot, engaged in many lovely conversations, uncovered several instances to enlighten individuals as to on-going ESG activities and connect individuals to various groups, such as New Perspectives and Unit 12. Happily, there were even opportunities to 're-connect' individuals to ESG – individuals who have been less active in recent years.

In a nutshell, this was a win-win experience for all concerned. Kudos to our ESG Champions and Ambassadors who brought this to life!



# Supporting our Faith Community

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## Pastoral Care

*"The real measure of success is how we make a difference in the lives of others."*

- Don Parsons, Minister of Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Team is a small but mighty group led by Arlene Duncan and supported by Don Parsons, Minister of Pastoral Care. Together we focus on the support, nurturing and caring for the well-being of the ESG faith community and beyond.

COVID-19 has caused great duress and hardship this year. The Pastoral Care Team did a pivot and got creative. Meetings switched to ZOOM. Regular support activities were ramped up.

ESG Cares phone calls to people with ongoing concerns continued, and the team organized a list of over 100 people with whom we maintained contact through lockdown and ongoing. These were in addition to the Ambassadors Program.

Our Card Ministry coordinates with the ESG Angels to make sure those in hospital or with health challenges know that they are being held in care via thoughtful notes. These were extra appreciated during COVID.

Pastoral visiting work continued until COVID restrictions occurred.



The Fall Seniors' Lunch was enjoyed by many but the Spring edition had to be cancelled.

The Meighen Seniors' Residence tour was held in October but a Spring tour was cancelled.

This year our Funeral Coordinator ,Betty Heining, and ministerial staff supported 9 families through their services. Due to COVID restrictions many other families chose to hold remembrances outside the church. Others chose to defer their plans or to abandon formal remembrances completely. There were 18 deaths, including many since March. Pastoral Care and the ministerial team were there for them to provide support in a doubly difficult time. Every bereaved person receives a personal note from Don telling them about Deborah Hart's Grief Support Group for the North Toronto cluster of churches which ESG volunteers' support.

# Supporting our Faith Community

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The team supports Don in offering the 'Christmas in a Minor Key' service: a quiet Christmas experience for those suffering bereavement or other loss.

Pastoral Care fosters connections and offers support to young adults facing the challenges of postsecondary life via personal notes from Don. The Tim's gift cards and a caring note for exam time went even farther when students could not come home due to COVID.

In our third season delivering 'Embracing Aging' we offered sessions designed to help us understand the aging experience and equip us with the knowledge, perspective and resources to provide support during this time in our lives.

We were fortunate to learn from experts January through March, and to hold the Community Resources Fair in early spring before COVID.

- Agnes Stawicki, Managing Editor at Comfort Life: insights designed to help navigate the array of options for families making critical decisions about retirement living and care
- Vicki Reilly Keyes, President, Red Coats Moving Solutions: strategies and tips on tackling the overwhelming task of downsizing when transitioning from one's home
- Margot McWhirter, Occupational Therapist: ideas for creating safe, functional spaces for seniors seeking to continue to thrive at home
- Community Fair: over 20 agencies and service providers showcasing how they can support active living, caregiving, financial planning, health and wellness, long term care, safety, security and transportation.



Sessions were well attended (over 80 attendees per session) and very well received.

All our work is laid upon the foundation of Don's ongoing ministerial pastoral work, for which we are truly grateful.

*Kathleen Hull*

*ESG Cares and Member at Large for Pastoral Care*

# Discovering Spirituality Together

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## Family Ministry

We started the year welcoming Aidan Legault, our new Youth Minister at the Welcome Back BBQ. Blessing of the Animals was a great opportunity with families to enjoy a hands-on animal experience with Pawsitively Pets. Families gathered to help harvest tomatoes and lettuce from the Community Garden. Afterwards, everyone had the opportunity to taste the fresh produce.

The Family Christmas Party and Carol Singing Evening was held at the end of November with a pizza party and holiday crafts. At the Christmas Pageant, we staged the Nativity Play and welcomed the newest member of our church family, Ruby Chapman Hodgson as baby Jesus. It was a joyous occasion with singing by the ESG Choir, VOX youth choir and families of all ages. We also celebrated the twenty years that Lita Tobias, our nursery caregiver, has provided to our church community. A special Christmas Eve play: Jesus' Christmas Party was performed complete with kids in PJ's and Star Glow Sticks for all.



At the beginning of March, an ESG Family Tour of the church was organized by Doug McWhirter, Aidan Legault, Morgan Bell and Kate Littler.

Although our fundraising efforts were limited this year, we still helped our outreach charity, House of Lazarus, through the Cookies-in-a-Jar and the fall Rummage Bake Sales.

At the end of March, with the beginning of Covid 19 restrictions, Kate with the assistance of her daughter Charlie began posting Sunday School lessons on the ESG Facebook page each week. Adapting our SparkHouse Digital curriculum and using additional educational resources, each lesson included: Lighting the Christ Candle, a story, an activity and prayers.

We celebrated Easter with families making Easter gardens and palm branches in their homes. Parents shared photographs of their children's crafts which were included in the weekly Children's Ministry emails. A special Easter Day Zoom Party was organized with simple games for families to prepare and enjoy at home. Zoom Kids Talk events during May and June provided a fun opportunity for kids to connect with their church friends from their homes.

In June, we celebrated the three-year ministry of our Youth Minister, Morgan Bell. Members of the congregation had the chance to send their best wishes to Morgan virtually during the Zoom Coffee Time. At the end of June, a musical Power Point presentation was shared with the congregation to highlight all the Family Ministry events of the year.

*Kate Littler*

*Family Ministry Coordinator*

# Discovering Spirituality Together

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## Youth Group

From the fall of 2019 through to the summer of 2020, ESG's youth group was involved in a number of activities aimed at connecting our congregation's young people both to our church and to our broader community. The pandemic complicated our ability to be in contact with each other and our neighbours, but, thankfully, our connections were maintained in meaningful ways.

When we were still able to meet in-person, Morgan and I each led half of the group in programming that we designed independently; Morgan worked with Grades 7- 8, and I worked with Grades 9-12. Through check-ins, lessons and games, we offered a time for community-building, faith formation and reflection during our Sunday morning meetings. We also held monthly social events , ranging from laser tag, our most successful event, to movie night; every other month, this social event coincided with the larger youth group being run by the North Toronto Cluster. Although not many ESG youth chose to participate in cluster events, those of us who did attend were consistently impressed by the experience.



Faced with the reality of the pandemic, our youth group moved to Zoom; from March to June, both groups met together for an hour on Sundays. Between our meetings, Morgan and I maintained contact with the youth over the phone to check on them and provide support.

Three members of the youth group and I participated in virtual GO Project programs this summer, allowing us to maintain our connection to the broader church community.

This fall, our youth group is meeting over Zoom each Sunday at 10:30 AM; Morgan begun his doctorate at Emmanuel College, leaving leadership of the group in my hands. One of the new aims of the group is to allow space for personal and collective reflection and introspection during our meetings. We will be using Scripture (a new passage/story each month) to discuss the troubles, joys and challenges of our own lives, with the goal of producing individual statements of faith (brief summaries of what we believe about ourselves, God and the world) based on these conversations by the end of the year. I am also in conversation with other youth leaders both throughout the North Toronto Cluster and at Glenview Presbyterian to offer our youth some connections beyond our congregation.

*Aidan Mitchell Legault*

*Youth Leader*

# Discovering Spirituality Together

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## Worship

As everyone knows, the way in which we worship at ESG this year has changed dramatically. The ministerial team and members of the congregation developed a plan to offer worship online. Services were pre-recorded and live-streamed each Sunday morning. Members were able to watch the service from our website, on Facebook or on Zoom either on Sundays or another time that worked for them.

Despite all of the challenges created by the pandemic, our extravagant welcome endured and blossomed. People joined our weekly worship services from British Columbia, Nova Scotia and many places in between. Family members, who were separated by geography or COVID-19 restrictions, stayed connected through ESG online worship. A Children's Program was also offered online every week and the number of children participating saw a steady increase each week. Through creative application of technical skills by our in-house ESG production team, members of our choir have continued to bring us the gift of their talents weekly since our online services began in March. Zoom coffee hours following the services were added soon after, offering members a way to connect virtually, chat and catch up.

This fall, we are planning to resume in-person worship. We will also continue to offer online worship, presented by live-streaming on Sunday mornings, so members can still watch from home in real time or later if they prefer. We are excited about '40 Windows/Screens', which will bring us the gift of our full choir performing together virtually through the application of technology. Watch as well "love aLIVE", online Dinner Church 2.0, and our Thursday night Evensong services resume.

Thank you to all who contributed their time and energy to our services.

*Christine Lawson*

*Chair, Worship*



# Discovering Spirituality Together

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## Music

The 2019-2020 choir season was much shorter than planned! In addition to supporting the weekly worship services until ESG closed in March (due to COVID), the choir prepared two concerts, before Christmas last year, and had planned to sponsor a concert by the Elmer Iseler Singers in the spring and a gala in May called “Hooray for Hollywood.” Plans for the latter are in abeyance until we can gather again. The Remembrance concert in the fall featured John Rutter’s beautiful “Requiem” with a small chamber ensemble. Pieces by Canadians Eleanor Daley, Lydia Adams, Mark Sirett and Ruth Watson Henderson rounded out the serious part of the program. We also featured songs from wartimes with audience participation: “Keep the Home Fires Burning” and “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary”.

Our Christmas concert, **Gloria!**, included our traditional audience carol singing with orchestra and organ, Mark Hayes’ “Gloria” and a medley from the movie, ‘Home Alone,’ which featured the stunning writings of John Williams. It also featured VOX, our community youth choir. Both concerts were well attended and received.

During the spring COVID lockdown, we were able to use some of our recorded concert material for anthems, supplemented by recordings made by the leads at home or pre-recorded at ESG, and mixed by Bryan Estabrooks, to keep our church musical life alive. We received appreciation from many congregational members, and others from around the country, which reminded us of the importance of music during a time of unrest and uncertainty.

The choir connected by ZOOM several times in the spring, which were mainly social, but we are now using ZOOM as a tool for rehearsing and will be producing some anthems for worship services during the year by recording ourselves at home.

Our leads will also record preludes and anthems to be used during the services all year. We look forward to the time when we can be together again.

### *The ESG Music Team*

*Shawn Grenke, Director of Music*

*Bronwyn Best and Beth MacRae,*

*Co-Presidents of ESG Choir*



# Extending Our Reach

## Outreach and Social Justice

This has been an interesting year for Outreach at ESG. Earlier, we were running several successful programs such as the Thursday Drop In, Good Food Box, Out of the Cold, Compassionate Justice Speakers Series, Peace with Justice, and had begun connecting with churches in our North Toronto Cluster about potential collaboration on outreach projects. Then... COVID. Once we got our bearings, we found that we could continue to offer programs and help to those in need. The **Good Food Box** program moved to twice monthly, operating from Maggie's garage, and attracted several new customers. While the Thursday Drop In program cannot operate as before, we are now offering our guests a monthly Good Food Box (vs a food voucher every 2 months). Those guests who have received boxes have been very appreciative of the gift of fresh produce. As one woman said, "God bless you for what you are doing!" Additionally, on Sept 10<sup>th</sup>, the **Little Free Pantry** opened its doors. We believe this program will engage both people in need and residents in the community around ESG. Through the Pandemic Support campaign, we were able to donate \$10,000 to our four Outreach partners, who we plan to continue to support with various projects through the coming year. We are still unsure of the status of the Out of the Cold program, but hope to be able to fill a gap for those in need in other ways.

On the Social Justice front, a discussion group has been initiated by members of the choir to read and reflect on **Anti-Black Racism** and how we can be part of the solution. A Peace with Justice **letter writing campaign** about the urgent need for adequate housing in Toronto is on the website, a partnership with other churches in the Cluster. And finally, the Outreach team along with groups in the church plans to supply shelter residents with **winter survival supplies** to prepare for the coming months of cold. Lots of room for advocacy in our world right now!



# Extending Our Reach

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## Project Flourish

Project Flourish was funded to build the framework upon which to broaden our reach and to impact more people who could benefit from the programs, fellowship, and support that ESG offers so many of us already. Building on earlier quantitative and qualitative research undertaken, our Project Flourish team developed our strategy to achieve this, shared this strategy with the congregation and our Council, recruited and selected our marketing partner (RAMP), and commenced work on our communications approach. This work – work that has subsequently been informed by dozens of ESG members – has enabled us to develop refreshed branding, reenergized marketing and an external communications program which will raise ESG’s profile and demonstrate our awesome and diverse array of programs and services.

Under Sarah’s leadership, Project Flourish continues to explore how the three young people leading our intentional ministry can best integrate with and support ESG’s efforts to spiritually serve and enhance the lives of young adults. Dinner Church is being rebranded “love aLIVE” as it seeks a bigger and more diverse audience (digital for now) and serve those who find alternative forms of worship and fellowship more attractive than ESG’s Sunday morning offering. We will continue to identify programming that meets the emerging needs of people as we all navigate challenging times and difficult societal issues. Our core mission is to provide a sense of belonging, comfort, meaning, and purpose and our team will continue to focus on developing pathways for people to discover ESG through programs that meet their individual spiritual needs.

### *The Project Flourish Team*



Aidan, Bailey and Thomas—residents of Flourish House

# Governing Responsibly

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## Ministry & Personnel

Our church year had a wonderful start last fall with the birth of Reverend Sarah Chapman's daughter, Ruby. Sarah returned from her Parental Leave in September 2020.

All of our remaining staff were performing their duties with their usual high level of professionalism and dedication -- and then the pandemic struck. We are **especially** grateful this year for the creativeness, flexibility and determination displayed by our ministers, lay employees and contract staff, as they adapted to a closed building, online services and Zoom committee meetings, and otherwise supported the life of our church and the members of our congregation while working largely from home.

### Staff Team

Rev. Dr. Paul Hutchison, Lead Minister

Rev. Sarah Chapman, Next Generation and Growth Minister

Rev. Don Parsons, Pastoral Care Minister

Shawn Grenke, Music Director

Jennifer Torrens, Church Administrator

Andrew (AJ) Brant, Custodian

Irina Denissova, Bookkeeper

Kate Littler, Family Ministry Coordinator

Aidan Legault, Youth Leader

Alvaro Perez, Custodian

We were delighted to welcome AJ Brant as our full-time custodian last fall.

We also said a few goodbyes during the year.

Edgar Fulay, Custodian (resigned)

Ainsley Munro, Community Engagement Associate (resigned)

Sam Cavanagh, Project Flourish Coordinator (resigned)

Donna Lang, Outreach Coordinator (completed her contract with ESG)

Morgan Bell, Youth Leader (completed his contract with ESG)

*Heather Parker*

*Chair, Ministry & Personnel*

# Governing Responsibly

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## Property

### Maintenance and Repairs

Over the past year, property maintenance on the church infrastructure included:

- Repairs to the brick wall beneath the servery window
- Replace west transept exit doors with metal clad insulated doors
- Repaired 4 roof leaks and gutter downpipes on the west side of the church
- Repairs to the heating system
- Inspected and cleaned the Duplex Ave sewer drain line
- Replaced the Servery dishwasher
- Pruned vines on both the Duplex and Lytton faces for the building

### Special Projects

**92 Craighurst:** The house at 92 Craighurst Avenue was renovated and repurposed in the fall of 2019 as a young adult community under the management of project Flourish. Costs associated with the operation of the building have been transferred to Project Flourish.

**Driveway:** Council approved the replacement of the Lytton Blvd driveway pavers and underlying gravel bed and a contract was awarded to Pro-Loc. Work will be done in October 2020.

**HVAC:** A new maintenance contract for the heating and cooling systems awarded to Power Application Group Inc

**Water Damage:** An engineering assessment of the concrete slab roof over the storage room adjacent to the west wall of the gymnasium was undertaken to determine the extent of water damage and suggest remedial work. The project was interrupted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic but is back on track.

Three significant new projects were approved by Council and were implemented in fall 2020. Both the lighting and BAS projects are entirely funded by a grant from the United Church of Canada's Faithful Footprints greening program and rebates from the Independent Electrical System Operators (IESO).

**LED Lighting:** In the continuing effort to reduce our carbon footprint all the lighting in the church has been replaced with hi-efficiency eco-friendly LED lighting. Projected annually savings in electrical costs, \$6000

**Building Automation System (BAS):** Completion the BAS to monitor and control the heating/cooling systems based on occupancy. Expected savings, \$5,000 in annually energy costs.

**Sound System:** Replacement of the 18 year old sound system, sanctuary projector and the 30 year old hearing assist system, all of which were on their last legs.

*John Blevins*

*Chair, Property*

# Governing Responsibly

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## Trustees Report

The ESG Board of Trustees holds all of the property of ESG for the congregation along with the church's endowed and restricted funds. The ESG property includes the church's real estate and investment funds. The ESG Trustees meet 3-4 times a year to receive reports on and discuss property issues, to review all investment funds and to monitor the performance by our asset manager. In addition, the trustees consider ways to use monies from the endowed and restricted funds to support the work of the church both within our walls and in the larger community.

This year, in addition to supporting our own programs, these funds were used to provide ESG bursaries to local high school students who have exhibited leadership skills and who have uplifted others, to provide ESG financial support to a third-year PhD student in Theological (Liturgical) Studies at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto and to provide ESG funding to the Go Project, a vital youth ministry endeavour in Toronto that engages youth from our congregation and our community. These are examples of how, through the efforts of members of the congregation, our trust funds are being accessed to help us live out our goals as a congregation and to build the ministry we share together.

Fund reports are included in yearly ESG financial reports and are part of yearly audits.

No new business arose in the past year that requires congregational input.

*Hugh DesBrisay*

*Chair, Board of Trustees*

# Governing Responsibly

## Financial Report

We ended the fiscal year June 30, 2020 in a positive financial position.

The following is a high level recap:

(Please refer to the Audited Financial Statements for details.)

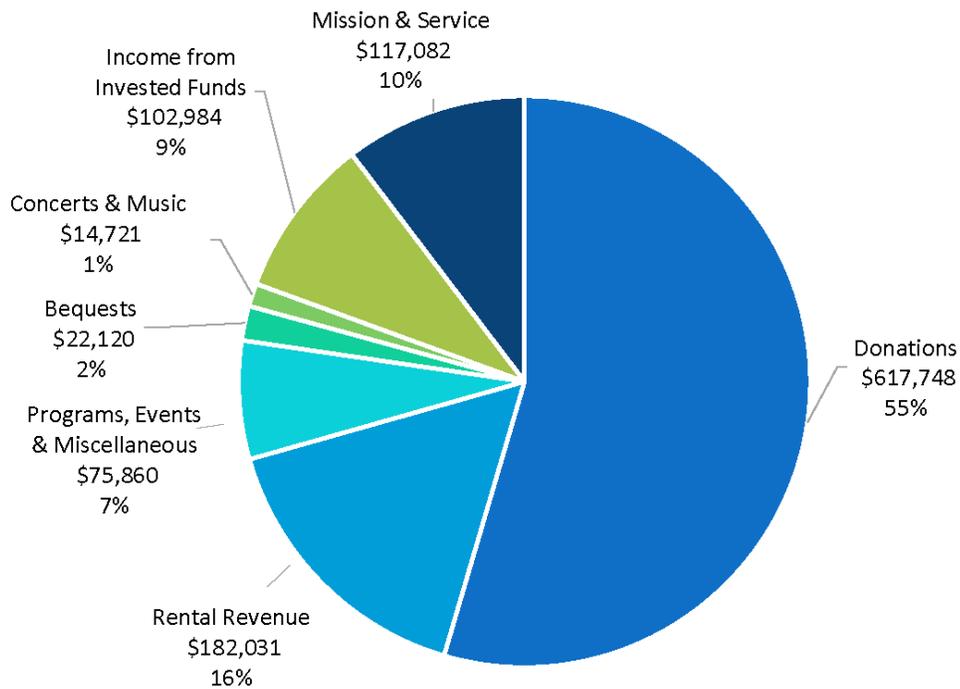
- Our donations increased by **\$14,000 (2%)** from the previous year due to year end appeal and major donor.
- Our rental revenues decreased by **\$22,000 (-11%)** due to COVID. (\$182,031 vs \$204,414)
- Our revenues from Programs, Events & Miscellaneous includes \$34,657 received from the Canada Employment Wage Subsidy.
- Our operating expenses were carefully reviewed due to COVID lockdown and reduced **below budget by 6%**.
- We received **\$22,120** in undesignated bequests.
- Our Operating Fund increased by **\$5,034 (4%)**.

The pie chart below provides the breakdown of our revenue sources for the fiscal year.

*Gord Thompson*

*Chair, Finance*

## SOURCES OF REVENUE





**Eglinton St. George's United Church**  
**35 Lytton Blvd. Toronto, ON M4R 1L2**  
**[www.esgunitied.org](http://www.esgunitied.org) [info@esgunitied.org](mailto:info@esgunitied.org)**