

Earth Sunday Message. Trinity United Church, Summerside, PE
April 18, 2021 Written by Elaine Burrows

If you listen to the words of the hymns this morning, you are going to hear water related words: rain, streams, rivers, seas, oceans, high tides, waterfalls and waves. Then you hear words like: morning sun, and breezes. Many words are earth related: garden, seeds, mountains, trees, bumblebees, whales. And you hear words like trickling, bubbling, curving, working, and yearning. Phrases like source of life, and healing streams, and spirit, travel, and journey. Words about the earth and creation, and life in general.

This Sunday is recognized as Earth Sunday in the church year. Earth Day is Thursday April 22, but every day should be earth day in our lives.

Have you ever thought about what is under your feet – under the ground? Have you ever felt an earthquake? It is a really different sensation – fortunately the ones in this part of the world have been small. The only earthquake I remember experiencing was on 9 January 1982 when there was a 5.7 earthquake with its centre in the Miramichi area of New Brunswick. 30.5 hours later there was another earthquake registered at 5.1.¹ These were felt in Alberton (West Prince) where I was living at the time. It felt very strange under my feet as the dishes rattled in the cupboard, and a vase fell off the window ledge. I looked out every window as I felt that something could have struck the house – but, it didn't. I noticed on Monday at Westisle Composite High School, Elmsdale, PEI that there were some cracks in the cement walls, and that some of the cupboard doors never shut quite the same way as they had before. So there are earthquakes and volcanoes. We can see what can spill out of the earth with volcanoes – like the one recently in Iceland and in the Caribbean where people are trying to leave as quickly as possible.

Have you ever looked out at the sky on a clear night and looked at all the stars? Do you ever wonder what is out there? Do you ever wonder how the universe came to be? Do you wonder why life happened on this planet and not on the moon or Mars?

Do you ever think about the earth? What were things like in this part of the world a million years ago? It is hard to comprehend a thousand years never mind a million years.

How the earth was created was a question early peoples grappled with, too. In fact, there are two creation stories in the book of Genesis. We are still trying to figure the creation story today.

Marc Garneau was the first Canadian in space. He commented that when you look back at earth from space you realize how fragile the earth looks – this ball spinning in space so we need to take care of the earth each and every day.

¹ Government website on earthquakes. Personal experience.

For our survival we need the sun, water, air. We are much more conscious of the air that we breathe with this COVID-19 virus around us. Water is essential and precious for life on this planet for all living creatures, and without the sun we could not survive. These are all things we have to share. In the reading from Acts 4: 32-35, the early church believed that no one claimed private ownership, but everything they held was in common. Today we share air and water resources, roads, and parks.

From the ground beneath our feet, and the stars over our heads, we are going to get local with a brief history of Trinity United Church, and the churches that preceded it here.

So what is happening here at Trinity? Here is a quick one hundred and seventy year history of Trinity United and its predecessors. Thanks to Jean MacKay, Wyatt Properties,² PEI Archives³ and Historic Places on PEI for the following information.⁴

- The first Methodist services started around 1850 in homes, and then were held in a schoolhouse.
- The first Methodist building on First Street opened in Jan. 1860, and saved from fire in 1866.
- In 1883, there was a national union among churches based on Methodism which led to a local amalgamation of the Wesleyan Methodists and Bible Christians.
- It was decided that the Bible Christian building built in 1874 on the corner of Spring and Winter streets would become the place of worship (now the parking lot) and the Methodist building was sold.
- The combined congregation became known as the Summerside Methodist Church and services were held there till 1894 when it became known as Epworth Hall.
- Land for the new church was acquired in 1892, with tenders being called in 1893, and the building opened in 1894.
- Twelve years after the church opened, it was threatened by the Great Fire of 1906. One member, George Sudsbury, at the risk of his life, stood on the

2 Heritage Properties: Trinity United Church, Summerside. Prepared by Jean MacKay 23 Feb. 2010; Architectural component 04 March 2010- Fred Horne; Wyatt Properties – Summerside, PEI

3 [Http/www.pei.gov](http://www.pei.gov). Archives

4 [Http/www.pei.gov](http://www.pei.gov). Historic Places

roof pouring water whenever sparks caught. It was mainly through his efforts that the church was saved.⁵

- 1909 a Cassavant pipe organ was installed.
- 1910 a manse was built at 175 Spring Street.
- There were some renovations in 1914.
- On June 10, 1925, in Toronto, there was the national union of the Methodist, 2/3 of the Presbyterians, and the Congregational churches and the United Church of Canada was formed. After that Trinity United Church was the name chosen for the congregation.
- 1933 a 70 foot wide strip of land was purchased on Winter Street.
- 1938 the first stained glass window was installed.
- 1947 – the original 7 foot foundation was further excavated to gain more usable space beneath the building for Sunday School rooms.
- 1957 – the church was closed while 56 feet was added to the building in a westerly direction, thus creating seating for another 200 people. The church was rededicated on Sunday 17 November 1957.
- On October 31, 1982 the new addition of a “church centre” housing the kitchen, auditorium, office space, washroom, etc. The work was carried out by the general contractor Aurele Arsenault. Epworth Hall was torn down in 1983 after the new centre opened.
- More work was carried out in 1988 on the foundation.
- In 1991 further work was done at the front of the church: organ pipes exposed, and there were changes in the choir loft and platform.
- 2007 was the completion of another project when a piece was added to the eastern end of the building. 16 feet was added taking the church to Spring Street with a redesign of the two main entrances. This added a washroom, cloakroom on the main level, and a large multipurpose room downstairs.
- When you have a building as large and complex as this, the work is never

5 Heritage Properties: Trinity United Church, Summerside. Prepared by Jean MacKay 23 Feb. 2010; Architectural component 04 March 2010- Fred Horne; Wyatt Properties – Summerside, PEI page 3

done. Since we have this beautiful big building, we have to look after it. In the fall of 2019, after post tropical storm Dorian roared through on September 7 and 8, a new roof was placed over the shingles above the sanctuary later that fall. Fortunately, contractors were not working on the roof when post-tropical storm Dorian roared through. The storm took down a tree next to the church, but it missed the building, and landed on park property.

- Then in March 2020, life changed very quickly with the pandemic. The church building was closed down, but the ministry continued in new ways. The building was checked every day during the pandemic.
- So what are we doing here at Trinity to make this building more earth friendly?
- There is a partnership between Faith and the Common Good with Faithful Footprints of the United Church to reduce carbon emission by 80% in United Churches by 2050. The target is to reach 500 churches in Canada by 2025.⁶
- Faithful footprints provides ideas, tools and grants to help the United Church to reduce their carbon pollution.
- During 2020 there was an energy audit to see how we could improve our carbon footprint. During 2020, the trustees, Wendy Murray, and a few others were involved in applying for a grant through the Faithful Footprints program to further insulate the attic above the sanctuary.
- On January 7, 2021 through the United Church of Canada and the Common Good program, we were awarded a Faithful Footprints grant of \$24,359.67.
- So what was done? Before the insulation went in above the sanctuary, there had to be some electrical work done, and some clean up. Then the insulation was pumped in. The cost to heat the building will be compared with other years to see how much impact the new insulation has made in reducing our carbon footprint.
- The oil fired water heater was leaking so a new electric water heater was installed.
- If any of you have worked in the kitchen during the summer months, or were in the hall for a reception, you might remember how hot it got even

⁶ Faithfulfootprints.org

with all the kitchen, hall and counting room windows open. A New Horizons grant was applied for and received. This March, three heat pumps were installed, one in the kitchen and two for the gymnasium – heat for the winter and cooling for the summer. We look forward to the day when we can do receptions again.

- Light bulbs are gradually being replaced with more energy efficient ones. It is ongoing to keep a building this size in good shape, and we thank the property team and the trustees for their role in making that happen.
- In Acts, those believers believed that everything they owned was held in common. We do share some things in common – like the air and water. We are much more conscious of the air that we are sharing with COVID-19 around, and water is another precious shared resource.
- In the words of the hymn: “Water Flowing from the Mountains” found in *More Voices # 87* “Water flowing from the mountains, Water flowing over the earth, Water comes to us so precious, Living water gives us birth. Drink deep this source of life and know, for living water sings and living water brings the love that makes our spirit grow.”
- What are we doing as individuals to be more earth friendly?
- Whether we are at home, at work, at play, we have to remember that this planet is being shared by billions of humans, and other creatures, and that by sharing the resources and using them wisely, we will have a happier planet.
- Every day needs to be earth day. Let it be so.

