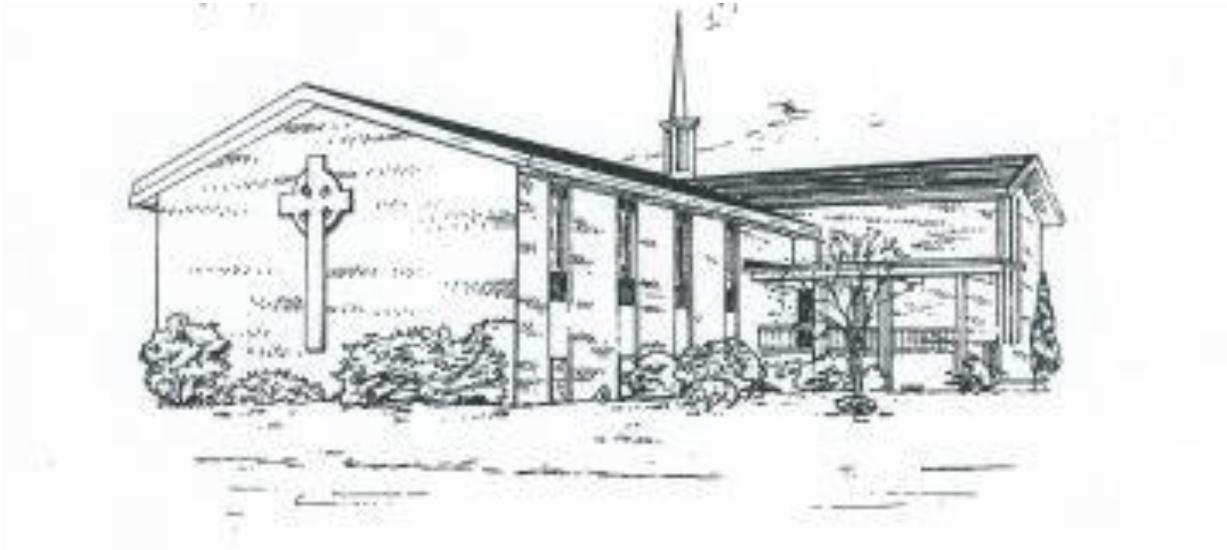


Dorval-Strathmore United Church

1916-2016

A century of commitment to the community



The congregation that is now Dorval Strathmore United Church began in the western part of Dorval, near Sources Blvd. Our story is one revolving around our dedication to creating a place for worship and our community. Over our history we have had years when membership was high but also when it was very low and struggling, but we persisted. We are, and continue to be, a dedicated and compassionate group of people who are actively living out God's word by supporting the community around us.



Strathmore Union Church

In 1915 a small number of residents in Dorval started meeting for informal services in a boathouse on Lake Avenue. They were from several denominations, the three largest being Presbyterians, Methodists, and Anglicans. As the membership grew, this small congregation decided to purchase land and build a church on Lake Avenue. Volunteers from the congregation built the church over 8 weeks and they

held their first service in the new building on December 17, 1916. Leading this young congregation was William Swan.

In 1925, Strathmore Union changed its name to Strathmore United when the United Church of Canada was formed.

During the early 1930s the congregation was a small one. In 1931 there were only 27 members, but the spirit was still strong. There was an active Ladies' Aid Society and even the men participated in fundraising. In 1933 there was a Men's Supper. All the cooking, serving and entertainment was supplied by the men of the congregation. They made \$28.51!

The church did not have just one minister providing services. They moved from having 3 ministers in the early days, each representing a major denomination (Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans), then several part-time ministers. Finally in 1927 they got a full-time minister in a 3-point charge (Strathmore-Valois-Beaurepaire) which lasted until 1937 when Beaurepaire joined Pointe-Claire and Valois-Strathmore became a 2-point charge. They rented a manse in 1938 and in 1955 an anonymous donor made a gift as a down payment for the purchase of a manse. The congregation decided to purchase the property located at 78 Brookhaven Ave. Dorval.

As for music, we know that in 1940 the church acquired a harmonium at a cost of \$70. Then, five years later, the church accepted the loan of an electric organ from its sister church, Valois United.

On May 22, 1941, Mr. J. Tinkler presented to the Church an Honour Roll bearing the names of members and friends who were serving in the Second World War. We still have the Honour Roll hanging on the North wall of the Narthex. Then in January of 1945 an Honour Roll listing all Protestants in the community who had served overseas in the Second World War as formally presented to the congregation.

Going into the 1940s the membership was growing and renovations were needed to the building. This included the building of a new church hall complete with hall space, kitchen, toilet and hot air heating facilities for both buildings. The work was completed in the fall. The dedication of the rebuilt church and the new hall took place on Sunday December 12, 1948. This allowed the congregation to remain in the building for a few more years but they grew too quickly for their home. In 1954 they purchased land on Carson and Touzin for a new building.

Fundraisers have always been an important part of the congregation, and they moved up from small events to raising \$75,000 for the new building. Quite a feat! The new building was built and the first service in the new church was held on Easter Sunday April 1, 1956.

1975 was the 50th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada. To mark this occasion the Annual Picnic was held at Camp Anderson, near Hudson, with other United Churches in the West Island.

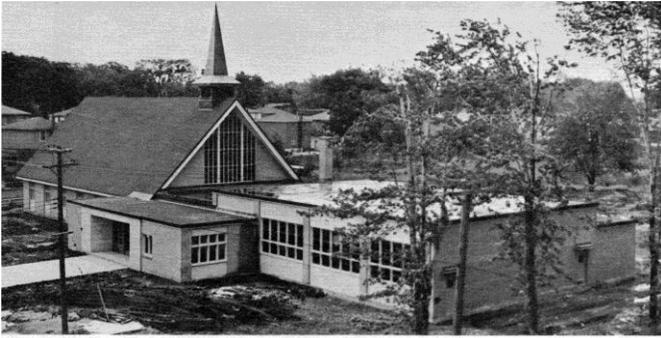
In 1981, with declining membership in many of the West Island churches, five congregations came together to discuss possible options. "Awareness" committees in each Church considered their options. Talks began between Strathmore United and Dorval United about joining as a single charge using Strathmore Building.

The congregation was a busy one. The bulletin is full of activities; bible study, clothing drive, Helping Hands, choir rehearsal, confirmation classes, Observer subscriptions and of course, board and budget meetings. There were orders being taken for Strathmore's Christmas cards (2\$ for a box of 12) and a member of the congregation was selling pumpkins.

The United Church Women's group has been very active, holding card parties, giant garage sales, muffin parties and their ever popular Bazaar.

C.A.R.E. Project: Create A Rehabilitative Environment (C.A.R.E.) apartment is a project under the auspices of the West Island Citizen Advocacy and various churches in the West Island. It is part of a support system for psychiatric patients who are well enough to be discharged from the hospital. The congregation started taking care of tenants in an apartment in April 1988 and we are still part of this project in 2016.

In 1988 a devastating fire at Dorval United turned the discussions about a two-point charge between them and Strathmore into a necessary merger.



Dorval United Church

While Strathmore United was serving the population on the west side of Dorval, a new congregation was forming in the east. In 1950, half a dozen parents banded together to start a Sunday School for their children. Many families were traveling to Lachine for services and to have their

children baptized, but they really wanted to worship locally. They were able to rent space in an old school house owned by the Protestant School Board, and they received support from the neighbourhood. The Lachine churches loaned them hymn books, old pews and choir gowns. The local dry cleaner supplied planks for seats for the church services. As the community came together the Sunday school flourished.

Services started in 1952 with ministers coming from Lachine to preach. As attendance grew, Dr. DeWitt Scott supported the small group to officially form a congregation and offered to provide pastoral care. The first service was held on March 23, 1952 in the little wood school house on Dorval Avenue. 67 people were in attendance. The congregation quickly grew and only 2 months after the first service, a new location was needed.

During those first few years the congregation ran fundraisers such as the Old Time Square Dances and Military Whist parties organized by the woman's group. Many of the flags and boards they made were still circulating at the time of their 25th anniversary and may still be around today.

In 1953 the congregation acquired the property at 109 St. Joseph (now Lakeshore Road) with many renovations it was ready for services, Sunday School and W.A. meetings. They had their first Christmas Eve service there.

A few members of the congregation made the necessary items for this new location: a pulpit, a worship service screen for Sunday school and church services, railings, a Christening Font and platforms. Their organ was unique. It was an old portable organ that was reconditioned with rubber from aircraft gas tank 'bullet-proofing', and then electrified.

When Dorval Gardens School was completed, arrangements were made to move the services and Sunday School to that building as the accommodations on Lakeshore were becoming too small. With this change, the old building became the Manse.

The Sunday school grew until it took over all 11 classrooms and the services had to move to the foyer and then the gymnasium to seat everyone. It was time to find another location. In 1955 the DUC started looking into building a new church. In 1958 they held their first service in their new building on the corner of Dawson and Dorval Avenue.

Up until now volunteers played the piano, but with the growing congregation it was decided that an official organist would be found. The congregation found an organist and choir leader in a young couple who had recently moved to Dorval. This family also had an organ in their basement which they generously loaned to the church for services.

In the years that followed, the DUC choir took part in many choir festivals in the Montreal area. The junior choir won many competitions. This was a source of pride for the congregation.

One of the congregation's major projects was the commission of stained glass windows depicting the life and stories of Jesus. They were all designed at the same time and made by the Whitefriars Stained Glass Studios in Weadlestone, Middlesex, England. Over the years they were bought by people wishing to dedicate them or honor certain members of the congregation.

Fundraising events are central to the church life and finances. In 1972 the choir organized its first "Fairs". It was very successful and was one of the first of many events to raise a considerable sum of money to help out the church finances. Another successful and rewarding annual event that involved the whole congregation was the "Fall Fling". Each year it was more successful than the last. It came to be the most exciting social and financial event that happened in the congregation.

Even though this was a vibrant congregation, declining membership spurred them to look with other congregations for new alternatives.

Unfortunately, while discussions were still progressing, tragedy struck. On September 15th, 1988 the Dorval United Church building caught fire. Much of the building was damaged. Suddenly the discussions were no longer theoretical. Dorval joined Strathmore United and the process of physically and spiritually merging began.

The stained glass windows were saved and some of the indoor furniture. These items were brought with the congregation when they moved to the Strathmore building and joined that congregation. The front doors were saved and remained with the building

when it was sold in 1989 to the city. The building was renovated and it was used as a community center until 2017 when it was decided that it needed to be taken down. The doors were then offered to Dorval-Strathmore United Church to preserve.



Dorval-Strathmore United Church

The merging of the two congregations allowed for some improvements to be made to the Strathmore building. The money from the sale of the Dorval United church made it possible to build an addition that would provide an office on the third floor, space for a nursery on the main floor and a much needed elevator for the congregation. On June 3, 1990 a new cornerstone was laid in the addition to commemorate the merger. This stone has historical documents of both founding churches and details of their coming together.

Between 1991 and 2016 the membership continued to decline and so did the Sunday school. We had a congregation of 453 and 328 children in the Sunday School at our largest, but now membership was down to approximately 90 and in 2016 we no longer had a Sunday School. Discussions were again happening with other churches about merging and becoming part of a two-point charge, much like in the 1920's and 1980's. Although we are a small congregation, there is never a dull moment. We continue to be fully engaged in community projects and fundraisers. Not only are members helping the surrounding community, we also open our building to groups. Our building and congregation is buzzing with activity. The next 25 years can attest to that.

UCW: The United Church Women's groups have always been a vibrant and hardworking part of the two congregations. With the merger of the Dorval United Church and Strathmore, there were now 6 UCW groups. At the height of their membership, there were as many as 100 + women volunteering their time.

They took on the role of continuing the social, fundraising and community service in our church. They decorated the church for Thanksgiving, and are an integral part of the church spirit. They ran quite a variety of social events ranging from Spaghetti Dinners and Strawberry Socials to catering weddings. Card parties were very successful events with the Annual Card Party in May being the biggest and Military Whist on Friday nights, once a month. There were Bake Sales, Muffin & Coffee Sales as well as the summer garage sale and Bar-B-Q lunch where the whole congregation would bring in their treasures for the good of the church. At Christmas time, many of the women continued

the tradition of making meat pies and fruit pies for sale. Lunch is served at the bazaar and is very popular.

The UCW is a generous contributor to local charities. Among their beneficiaries are; Dorval Community Aid, West Island Women's Shelter, Meals on Wheels, Chez Doris and their biggest donation is to the church. At each meeting the members bring in money that will go towards buying cards and flowers for the people of the church who are sick or otherwise in need. They also created handmade items for the community.

OUTREACH: We are very mindful of our duty to the community and although the coffers are not overflowing, there has never been a time when the congregation voted to withdraw our support of community charities. Through our fundraisers and the UCW we continue to provide support to Dorval and the surrounding areas. One project that we have been involved in is the C.A.R.E. apartment. Started in 1988 in collaboration with West Island Citizens Advocacy, we aid the intellectually handicapped tenants of one apartment with groceries, medications, paying bills and refurnishing, among other tasks.

In keeping with the spirit of our mission to be supportive of our community and Christmas, the Congregational Life committee initiated an annual Christmas concert to raise money for Dorval Community Aid. Each year the Mimosa Wind Ensemble and The Blackwatch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada pipers put on a lively concert. The hall is vibrating with music and applause each year. The proceeds go to providing food baskets to Dorval families. For the last few years we have also been providing Christmas presents for the youth at Batshaw. This concert brings together our members in a great way. Many come to see the show while others help behind the scenes. Volunteers are needed to buy, sort and deliver the food. 2016 was our 15th concert and we are looking forward to many more!

ACTIVITIES: We have some annual activities and some one-time events. Two of our regular activities are the Bible Study sessions and our Annual Family picnic. Rev. Steve facilitates a bible study group once a week for a dedicated group who keeps him challenged with questions. For years we have had a family picnic every June for the members of the church and their families. We meet on the lawn after service and have a pot-luck lunch and BBQ with bible trivia quizzes for participants.

There are always projects popping up which are usually met with enthusiastic support. Over the years we have put together Christmas Child boxes, collected soda can tabs and bread clips for various organizations, collected milk bags for making sleeping mats for children, sold coffee for fundraisers and many more.

Our largest fundraiser is the Murder Mystery Dinner: Started in 2005, Steve Gillam writes and directs a combination of congregation members and actors from Lakeshore Players. In our 100th anniversary year of the church we performed our 10th performance. For every show we have prizes donated by local business for the audience member who comes the closest to identifying the murderer. We have done additional productions, (Phantom of the Op'ry – no dinner, The Dining Room and Love Letters and a youth production of Fools).

These performances are a large endeavor involving many members of our congregation and volunteers outside of the church. We have anywhere from 13 to 22 actors and stage crew involved with the play, numerous people preparing the food, with many volunteers helping to clean up after the shows. Serving staff is mostly teens from the Girl Guides, Scouts and local high schools who come to help and get community service credit.

Congregational Life: This is a very active section of the congregation organizing many events and fundraisers throughout the year. Anything from painting rooms in the church to putting on a Christmas benefit concert with a large group of musicians. They provide us with all sorts of events. One favorite is the annual Christmas Pot Luck where we can sing carols and get into the Christmas spirit.

Occupants of 310 Brookhaven: The building is old and has a dinosaur of a boiler to heat it. It has housed us faithfully for 50 years and has become a home for many community groups.

We have welcomed groups that service the community for all ages. We have had a pre-school with us for 10 years. The Scouts and Girl Guides have groups ranging from 5 year olds to young adults, and have both been with us since 1998, if not longer. We have three AA groups who have also been with us since 1998 and they use our building in the evenings. There is a small group of seniors that enjoy a quiet night of Chess every week. A Karate group uses our facilities for their classes.

Our biggest renter is the West Island Chinese Alliance Church. They have been with us since 2002. They have their services on Sunday after ours and they use the church for their activities and celebrations as well.

Various groups use our space on an occasional basis. Choirs, band practices, recitals, use our sanctuary when they need to. We also rent out our space for one-time events such as fundraising groups, craft shows, parties, receptions and various groups hold their meetings here.

We are comforted in knowing that not only are we helping the community through our actions and outreach programs, but that we can provide a safe space for the community to use.

This congregation has faced financial difficulty throughout its history and still flourishes. It has not let its small numbers or lack of funds deter it from living out its ministry of faith. Our history has not always been easy but this congregation has a passion that has not been lost with the passage of time and the changing of generations. We look forward to continuing our mission for many years to come.



*The only church we know of
where a congregation member
asked that the minister lengthen
his sermons by 10 mins!*

(found in 1934 congregation meeting minutes)

Join us exercising our spirit on Sundays at 10am.

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Visit us at <https://dorvalstrathmoreunited.weebly.com>