

Central Peel Group of Churches? Gift Group winds up with hospice donation

By Joe Gray, Chair, Chris Trimble, Treasurer, Larry Flint, Executive Member

Central Peel Group of Churches started April 18, 2009 by lay members and ministers of United Churches in the Peel area. We shared ways in which our congregations had actively adapted to this changing world and in which our church life has been affected. We met regularly and discussed many issues. Working together made a difference. We were able to support each other Churches' events.

Many great ideas were exchanged.

Some of the interesting events that we organized were: The Amazing Race, similar to a car rally that we did for two years, 2011 and 2012. Directions and a route (thanks to Larry Flint) were created throughout the Region of Peel, close to the areas of our churches involved with our group.

At the end of 2012, the Executive decided to replace our race event, with a Spiritual retreat. So, in 2013, we had our first retreat at the Scott Mission on the Grange Sideroad. We organized those retreats annually until 2019. Each year getting a little larger and experienced by more people. However, COVID struck in 2020, so all the events were cancelled at that point.

The labyrinth was headed by Rev. Nancy Monteith. With her assistance, we started to build the site at Cheltenham United Church during 2014 and was open for visitors in 2015. A special workshop was planned for Father's Day of that year.

We organized a very interesting Interfaith Speakers Series, some of which were Hinduism, Indigenous (Aboriginal Practices), Islamic, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. They were well attended.

As other churches in the surrounding counties heard and willingly joined in the conversation we decided we better change our name.

Larry Flint came up with the ideal name The GIFT Group, ?Growing in Faith Together?, and our new name was voted on and approved at our meeting on March 24, 2015. We carried on for many years and as some of our Churches closed, I guess our enthusiasm dwindled and it was decided that we would no longer meet.

Some of us were disappointed that we never accomplished what we thought was possible, but that is life, everything is not achievable. We closed our bank account, and made an executive decision to donate this money to Bethell Hospice to further their work in our community.

Doing this we hope that other groups or churches closing would decide to do the same.