

Trinity Church in Campbell's Cross closing this week

By Bill Rea

It's been said that nothing in life is permanent, and that can apply to churches too.

Trinity Church in Campbell's Cross will be closing the end of this month. The last service will be conducted this Sunday (Nov. 26), starting at 9:15 a.m. with Bishop Jenny Andison officiating.

A letter to the friends of the church from People's Warden Pat Thornton and Rector's Warden Tony Day announced the closure of the church.

"The congregation after encouragement from the Diocese, the requirement to hire a full time minister, and falling attendance voted, after many meetings and discussions, to shut down," the letter stated. "It was a decision none of us wanted to make."

The letter added the church will have a "Sabbath rest" until the Diocese sees a need to reopen it. Thornton explained that will be in effect while the community grows and "until the need arises for an Anglican church."

She added a management firm will be responsible for maintenance and security of the building.

The church was opened Oct. 24, 1899. The Conservator, a local newspaper of the day, wrote at the time, "Long may it stand as evidence of the Christian enterprise of the parish."

A history of the church and Campbell's Cross was compiled in 1980, and it included an account prepared by Lois Neely.

"The first settlers were farmers, but right behind them came the craftsmen . . . the blacksmiths, wagonmakers, cobblers, etc.,"

Neely's account read. "And this second group settled in small crossroad hamlets scattered throughout the township. Transportation was either by horses, oxen or on foot overland. This area did not have a waterway large enough to provide any quicker travel."

Many of the early settlers to the area were named Campbell.

William Knox bought 97 acres at Lot 27, Concession 2, in 1898 from Joseph and Harriet Campbell, and Knox subsequently sold 5,750 square feet to the Lord Bishop of the Church of England of the Diocese of Toronto for \$1.

The cornerstone of the new church was laid May 30, 1899, Neely reported, with an impressive list of dignitaries on hand for the ceremonies, including Premier A.S. Hardy, Peel MP R. Blain and Peel MPP John Smith. The church was constructed during the following summer and fall, officially opening Oct. 22.

Knox's granddaughter, Gladys Knox Williams, was the first child baptized in the new church, and she was still an active member in 1980.

In its day, Trinity was part of a three-point parish with St. James' in Caledon East and St. Mark's in Sandhill (now North Peel Community Church).

But the numbers have been dropping over the years.

Joyce Wiggins, who's been attending the church all her life, noted the church was originally established by local farmers.

"People don't go to church like they used to," she observed.

"It used to be the only thing you could do on Sunday," Treasurer Beth Cope added.

Thornton also pointed out the congregation has been aging, and lately they have been getting about eight to 10 people into church Sunday mornings.

There were times when people would move away from the area, but still come to Trinity Sundays.

"We had a very active congregation with young children," Thornton recalled, adding there were years when they would have six to eight young people in the Confirmation class, and there was one year in the early '90s when they had 12.

There were many memories and stories that developed over 118 years.

Wiggins remembered trips to Stanley Park in Erin for church picnics. "That was a big deal," she said.

Thornton also remembered like large barbecues, Easter Egg Hunts, Christmas pageants, etc. There were also things like garage sales, special suppers, including Irish Stew Dinners.

"All of the people who are left here have done a lot of hard work," she remarked.

The closing of the church is going to be handled quietly. Wiggins said there was little in the way of a push for a celebration.

"We decided we would close on our terms," Thornton added, observing they're not happy about it, but there is satisfaction that it was members of the church who made the decision.





Joyce Wiggins, Pat Thornton and Beth Cope each have their memories of Trinity Church.