

## King City United Church marks its 50th

**By Mark Pavilons**

An anniversary is a time for reflection and renewal.

The congregation at King City United Church is set to mark its 50th anniversary. The celebration will take place Oct. 5 with a fun-filled evening of dinner, entertainment, memories and memorabilia. Lots of pictures and mementos will be on display at the event, to be held at Oak View Terrace.

The church on Elizabeth Grove Street has been getting a lot of use over the years, and remains a centre of attraction for many community events.

Reverend Evelyn McLachlan, a veteran spiritual cheerleader, has settled into her role and given the congregation some stability and enlightenment with her unique flair. She arrived in June 2012 from an urban Mississauga congregation, and loves her new rural home.

"It's an exciting time," she said. "King City and King Township are growing quickly and so there are all kinds of adjustments that have to be made. The folks with King City United Church have been welcoming - they love to eat and laugh, they work hard, they pray together, share in Bible study and are committed to being a loving presence in this community."

"In her second year now, we are blessed with the enthusiastic leadership of our Reverend Evelyn McLachlan," said long-time parishioner Eleanor Fry. "She has revved us up, given us new hope and faith. King City United is alive and well and looking forward to the next 50 years."

The church is well rooted in the community and the building is now home to various groups such as Pathfinders, a dance studio and martial arts group. The annual men's dinner is a popular affair at the church and it's a popular venue for music concerts in conjunction with the historical society.

Numbers are growing incrementally and the parishioners are a mix of empty nesters and younger families.

But attendance is no reflection on the reverend's welcoming presence. Once considered a vital commitment and a social meeting place in our villages, church-going is no longer a priority.

But people are still looking for spiritual guidance and direction. And that means ministers have to think outside of the box to attract parishioners. McLachlan admitted the United Church hasn't been aggressive in attracting new members, but she'd like to see a joint effort among all King churches to create a pamphlet for newcomers, indicating all the options available in the area.

Youth at the church is not great in numbers but "very great in spirit," she said. Both she and Rev. Nicola Skinner of All Saints Anglican Church, are creating a youth drop-in program for high school students. They want to provide a safe place for them to relax, interact, play, enjoy music and even talk about relevant issues. They'd be happy to bring in guest speakers if the need is evident.

The churches are kicking it off with a grand opening BBQ on Wednesday, Oct. 23 from 3-5 p.m. at All Saints. Everyone is invited.

As the church continues to evolve and move forward, this milestone anniversary is also a time to reflect on the humble beginnings. Roots date back to the mid-1800s. The branches of the Methodist denomination united in 1883 and the Springhill congregation then became part of the Bradford District of the Methodist Church.

In 1891 the King Circuit became a 4-point charge - Purpleville, Teston, Laskay and King. In 1893, Purpleville was dropped and the remaining 3-point charge continued until 1967 when King City finally became a 1-point charge.

In 1871, land on King Street was donated for a church to be built, and the building was completed later that year. That former church site remains and is a commercial enterprise.

In 1925, this Methodist congregation entered the United Church of Canada and joined Laskay and Teston to constitute one 3-point circuit.

More than 100 years ago the land on which the church now stands formed part of the farm of two brothers, Isaac and John McBride. Isaac's grandchildren offered the gift of three 75-foot lots on Elizabeth Grove, a street named after their mother. An additional 1 1/4 acres was purchased from Gordon Orr for the parking lot.

William Heaslip was chairman of the building committee. Toronto architect John Layng was chosen and submitted an unusual design, calling it a "church in the round." The choir, minister and congregation formed a complete circle. The communion table was placed in the centre and soaring 50 feet in the air rose a great pentaspire covering the sanctuary.

The shovels hit the ground in May of 1963 and throughout the summer everyone watched with anticipation as the church took shape. The actual dedication was Oct. 20, 1963. Reverend Jenkinson received the keys from the stewards and with a prayer, placed them on the Communion table.

As you enter the sanctuary there were three stones placed in the floor. These stones were brought from the Holy Land. The light

coloured stone is from Galilee where Jesus walked. The pink stone came from the Pater Noster Church in Gethsemane where Jesus prayed. The larger brown stone is from Bethany, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, where Jesus stayed.

Many families have been in the congregation for four, five and six generations.

Since that October day in 1963, the church has been in constant use, and not only on Sundays, but through the week.

With excerpts from 'One Hundred Years 1871 - 1971,' written by Beulah Swayze, preface by Dr. Quentin Hardy, and 'The Spirit's Alive In 125,?' written by Helen Rumble.