

Fort St. John



Fort St. John – St. Luke's United Church

The United Church Presence in the Fort St. John Area.

Pastoral charges and congregation's histories need to include stories of both people and buildings. The United Church has had a presence in Fort St. John area since 1930. New settlers were moving into the Peace area in the late 1920's and early 1930's. With these came a commitment to faith and church. For the United Church the first congregation was in the Montney/North Pine Area, which is 15 miles from the Fort St. John. Student ministers were sent for summertime ministry from Edmonton. By 1933 a minister was placed in North Pine and since then with short pauses there has been full time ministry to the people of this area.

In 1958 with the initiative of a small group and the help of Barry Passmore (student) the Fort St. John pastoral charge was constituted. It was a two-point charge including Fort St. John

and North Pine. Bob Smith (late Moderator) was settled in the charge as a new ordinand. There was neither a church building nor a manse for him and his family. However, the people solved both problems by moving an old empty army barracks onto a lot in the village making one end the church sanctuary and the other end the manse.

This building served the people until 1970 providing services, choir, Sunday School, church suppers, weddings, baptisms and funerals. A separate manse had been purchased before 1963.

In the late 1960's the congregation of St. Luke's and the Anglican congregation of St. Martin's had begun talks of a building, a church to serve both congregations. Both groups were enthusiastic in their commitment to making this a reality and in 1970 we had our first service in the new building. As in any family the two congregations and ministers have had their differences but they have been resolved.

The congregation welcomed an interim working in our midst in 1977 and when he was ordained, we asked that he be settled with us. This was a growing experience of helping each other in our faith journey.

In 1984 a woman minister came to serve us, which took some readjusting in our thinking but everyone warmed to Ann Foster and loved her ministry.

The congregation in this community is constantly changing. The economy is such that their companies or their own wish moves employees every five to eight years. Perhaps 25% of the people have been here most of their lives. Fewer, that were born here, still reside in the area.

This makes for changes, new ideas and continuous adaptability of the people.

I am proud to have been part of this church family for many of these years.

Written by:

Barbara Godberson with help from a previous history from 1975