

Church vows to 'live out loud'

Local church becomes more accessible, unveils new band, programs

7 September 2013 - Packet & Times (Orillia) - Ann Marie Alexander

There is an air of enthusiasm as Westmount Congregation United Church looks to the future of the church not only in its physical sense, but also in spiritual matters.

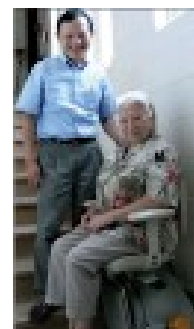


The Awesome Revelation Band, under the direction of Shelley Davis, has been an added feature at regular worship services and a main feature at praise and worship services held once a month at Westmount Congregation United Church.

Part of the future vision has come with the guidance of Rev. Young Joon Rhee, who has been in Orillia for two years. "There is an eagerness and enthusiasm from all members of the congregation," said Rhee. Over the years, churches have become community outreach centres, offering a variety of activities, events and meaningful opportunities for worship. "We are very optimistic as we look to the future," said Rhee.

ACCESSIBILITY

Recent physical changes to the church have come about due to accessibility legislation and at the direction of the Westmount council. The sanctuary was recently renovated to make way for a new and diversified musical direction that now includes a band. A recently installed stair lift takes worshippers from the main entrance to the sanctuary entrance. Another stair lift makes getting to downstairs events much more accessible for those who need it. "We're hopeful to have the stair lifts up and running in the fall," said Debbie Cahill, chair of the council.



CHRISTIAN YOGA

A new and exciting style of yoga that has gained popularity in the U.S. and Canada teaches yoga from a Christian world view. The introduction of Open to Grace Christian Yoga at Westmount about a year ago has been well received in the community as an introduction to spiritual awareness.

"Participants experience a powerful practice, which leads to improved fitness, relaxation and drawing closer to God," said Sandy Patrick, who teaches the classes. Patrick graduated from the Yahweh Yoga Teacher Training Academy in Chandler, Ariz., in 2012 and has five years of teaching experience. For more information about upcoming classes, visit opentogracechristianyoga.ca or email Patrick at <mailto:sandy@opentogracechristianyoga.ca>.

LIVE OUT LOUD

Live Out Loud is a new, free program at Westmount for families that may not traditionally attend a regular place of worship. "We hope they will grow a natural desire to learn more about Jesus Christ," said Donna White, chair of the new program. She explained there will be a variety of crafts and activities for all ages along with a contemporary worship service that will include the band. Live Out Loud officially starts Sept. 17.

MUSIC

The seeds for a diversified musical direction at Westmount were planted a few years ago, culminating in the formation of the Awesome Revelation Band under the direction of Shelley Davis. The music has been an added feature at regular worship services and a main feature at praise and worship services held once a month on a Tuesday evening. The Awesome Revelation Band has created a unique and meaningful sound to worship services. ""We play traditional hymns and contemporary Christian music with a twist of bluegrass, Caribbean, Celtic and rock," said Davis. Davis pointed out the band is not out for glory of its own, but rather its mission is to give glory to God.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

More than 50 years ago, Westmount Church was built to meet the needs of a developing community in the west end of Orillia. Located at 23 Westmount Dr. S., services are held Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Adapting to change is often a challenge, but Westmount appears to be thriving on it. While any change is inevitable, the church has not lost its focus on faith, family and friendship.

Rev. Rhee emphasized "Westmount is a family-orientated church based on Christ's message."