



Supporting Renewal at Huron Shores United Church



Executive Summary

Huron Shores United Church is in the midst of a major renewal of its heritage building, located in the heart of Grand Bend. In addition to being a place of worship for our congregation, we envision making the building a community resource, six days a week.

After restoring the exterior of the unique building, we have constructed an addition that makes the building fully accessible to those with mobility limitations – one of only two accessible structures in Grand Bend. The next phase of renewal will see the creation of a multi-purpose community concert hall/sanctuary, a community centre/fellowship hall, and a catering kitchen.

We're not building for the sake of building, or simply to create a fancier place of worship. The capital expansion is driven by our desire to become an integral part of our community. The multi-purpose space will host musical concerts, plays, screenings, presentations, and special events. The community centre and catering kitchen will house a six-day-a-week program for seniors who might otherwise experience social isolation. Because the spaces are fully accessible, everyone will be able to benefit. By welcoming people into our building and our community, we will be ensuring that our church remains vigorous and vital.

There are many ways to contribute to this project. The vision and generosity of all donors will be celebrated.

By reaching out to serve our community, we are living our faith.

Our Community

Grand Bend is a retirement community: the average age (64) is significantly higher than the Ontario average (40.4). Fifty percent of Grand Benders are 65 or older, and 27% are single, divorced, separated, or widowed. Thirty percent of our congregation live alone.

Our ‘junior seniors’ are active and engaged, a source of energetic volunteers and participants. But as people age in our small community, they may experience social isolation, both in the winter when many younger retirees go south, and in the summer, then the village becomes very busy.

Although 80% of residents report a strong sense of belonging, many must leave the community as they age. Research led by the Grand Bend Area Community Health Centre has identified social isolation as an issue for our community.

Grand Bend is also home to young families and has a vibrant elementary school. Our Sunday School is growing.

Through our renewal project we are reaching out to people of all ages in our community.

Who We Are

Huron Shores United Church embraces diversity in belief, gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, and economic and social status. We reach out to the broader Grand Bend community, saying, “Come, please share what we have!” Our doors and our arms are open wide.

It was in 1927 that the town’s early Methodist and Presbyterian churches came together to form Grand Bend United Church. The new church also included a group of campers who gathered for worship on the beach. In 2014 Huron Shores United Church was created, bringing together Greenway United Church and Grand Bend United Church. We have recently become an official “Affirming Church,” formalizing our commitment to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Our church building is not set apart; it is located on the main street of Grand Bend, surrounded by tattoo parlours and ice cream shops. We reach out to our community with activities such as the Free Store (where the price is always right!), a children’s summer day camp, contributions to the Community Health Centre We Can Help fund, beach clean-ups, and assistance to families in need. Our space is regularly used by community groups.

Our Renewal Project

We have completed exterior renovations, including a new steel roof, to preserve the beauty of our heritage building. The second phase, a two-storey addition on the north side of the existing church, makes our building fully accessible. It includes a full-sized elevator, and washrooms and a cloakroom accessible for people with disabilities. It also includes office and meeting space, a small kitchen, and a beautiful chapel.

The final phase will see the creation of two large multi-purpose rooms, and a full catering kitchen.

This project will ensure that all people, including frail seniors and people with disabilities, have full access to our building and to meaningful activity. By welcoming the people of Grand Bend into our faith community, we will be ensuring the vigour and vitality of our congregation, now and in the future.

The Community Concert Hall

The renovations currently under way will create something Grand Bend doesn't yet have – a beautiful 150-seat multi-purpose space with advanced audio-visual technology, ideal for holding intimate musical concerts and other performances and special events.

The Concert Hall (our sanctuary on Sunday mornings) will retain the architectural charm of our nearly 100-year-old building. The space will be fully accessible, with a level floor and elevator access, and seating will be flexible. Eventually a downstairs reception room will also be available, adjacent to a full catering kitchen.

The renovations currently under way will improve the already good acoustics and include the installation of a state-of-the-art audio-visual system and theatrical lighting.

This space will be available for musical concerts, theatrical performances, special events and movie screenings. A committee composed of community and church

members with special interest and expertise in the performing arts will help plan programming for the space.

Seniors Program

“Doors Wide Open” is a proposed program to provide meaningful activities for seniors in our church building five days a week. Seniors will choose from a variety of activities, such as the Prayer Shawl Ministry (a knitting circle), gentle exercise, meditation, bible study, a book group, cooking classes, learning and discussion groups, and musical performances and sing songs. Each activity will include a shared meal. The goal is to engage “junior seniors” in providing programs for older seniors.

Huron Shores United Church has developed strong partnerships with community groups and organizations, including the Grand Bend Area Community Health Centre, the three other churches in town, the Grand Bend Community Foundation, and the Grand Bend Art Centre. The Doors Wide Open program will be developed in collaboration with these community partners, as one facet of a multi-pronged community-based approach to the problem of social isolation.

Next Steps

We have reached a critical point in our project.

- The total cost to date is \$1,800,000
- To date we have raised \$1,400,000 in donations and grants.
- As a result, we have a debt of \$400,000
- We have an additional \$150,000 in pledges
- It will cost \$300,000 to complete the renewal project (sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen, etc.).

Ways to Give

There are many ways to contribute to the project.

- A cash gift
- A pledge

- Pre-authorized Remittance – PAR (for more information: <http://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/get-involved/give-regularly> or pick up a brochure at the church office.)
- A legacy gift
- A gift of securities
- Holding a special fundraising event

All eligible contributions will receive a charitable tax receipt. In addition, the generosity of our donors will be celebrated as follows:

- All donors will be listed in a Memorial Book.
- Donors of \$500 or more will be listed on a donor board, in the following categories:
 - Contributor -- \$500 to \$999
 - Builder - \$1,000 to \$2,499
 - Benefactor - \$2,500 to \$4,999
 - Partner- \$5,000 to \$9,999
 - Leader- \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - Visionary- \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - Founder - \$50,000 plus
- All donors will have the option of appearing as “Anonymous.”
- All legacy (bequest and life insurance) donors will be listed on a separate legacy donor board.

Final Thoughts

This project is both a physical and a spiritual renaissance for Huron Shores United Church. It is an opportunity to reach out and open our church building to the community seven days a week. When we are finished, we will have an outstanding facility that will serve our congregation and our community for many years to come.

It will take all of us, reaching deep and working together, to make it happen. Please think about how you can help.

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

