

Spring 2016

First Things First



Meet Jeet
His story of friendship and success

CREATING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL, TOGETHER



**Executive Director
Genesa Greening**

Spring always feels like a time of new beginnings. As a new mom, that is especially true for me in 2016.

It's amazing to watch my son's eyes as his brain makes connections. Every day he's learning, growing more aware of his world and his place in it.

We all start out in this world as helpless babes. What makes us strong and capable doesn't come from within us; it is our relationships, our connections with other people, which transform us into thriving, thoughtful human beings. There is no such thing as a self-made man or woman.

At First United, we all help each other. Each person has something to offer. We are so blessed to be learning and sharing every day in the vibrant Downtown Eastside.

Thank you for all you offer. Your gifts, time and prayers help create fresh starts and renewed hope. Together, we lift each other up. Together, we are mighty.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNITY



**Community Minister
Rvd. Sally McShane**

We are approaching the anniversary of the Last Supper. When Jesus lifted his bread and cup, he made the act of sharing a meal sacred. 2000 years later, we continue to embody this sacrament. As we gather with friends and family around the table, we accept the invitation to live into the sacred reality of the incarnation of Christ.

Every Wednesday night at Spirit Circle, the communion of Christ takes place in the chapel at First United Church. We may not share bread and grape juice but the intention of the sacrament is felt. In this, and so many other ways, First United may not look like a church but the spirit and vibrancy of our faith community is vividly alive. Oh yes, we are Church.

We are community. Diverse. Struggling. Hopeful. At Spirit Circle, we talk about God. We worship together. We seek the transformation of the shared time together. We recognize we are loved. Why? Because Christ told us so.

Jesus transformed our understanding of life in community by strengthening its purpose. Every time we sit down to a meal, gathered with friends or in quiet solitude, let us renew our acceptance of his invitation. Let us celebrate the vastness of our community's beauty, the depth of our love, and the delight of the possible.

In Christ we pray and have our meaning.

SUPER-SOCIAL JEET FINDS STABILITY



“I feel safe at First United. I know that, if anything bad happens, I have a place to come back to”

A few years ago, after a hard night of partying, Jeet was wandering up East Hastings when he came across the bustling church on the corner of Gore Street. Struck by the overwhelming friendliness of First United, he stepped inside.

Jeet was homeless, addicted and estranged from his family. The church introduced stability and comfort to his life. After a stay in the shelter, he secured an apartment in a nearby SRO. Thanks to the help of First United and community partners, he has retained his housing for over two years. His addictions are managed, and he is slowly rebuilding his family relationships.

“I was in a bad situation, and First United got me a shelter bed in 5 minutes. They sat me down, I had a cup of coffee, and we filled out the forms. From food to clothing, everything from A to Z, they helped me with it all.”

Jeet is now a core part of First United and volunteers regularly. “I love to sing so I do karaoke and music jam. At senior’s group, we do creative writing. I find that art takes away my stress.” We are so lucky to have this jovial soul in our midst.

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY

We know strong support programs are vital to the well-being of people like Jeet. Here’s what we’re doing right now to make a difference:

STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND DROP-IN

We are reinforcing these core services to better serve women, seniors and vulnerable adults.

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

We are hiring a Volunteer Coordinator to help supporters have a great experience while giving back.

IMPROVING OUR BUILDING

Offering a low-barrier drop-in space is hard on our aging building. In 2016, we will replace the bulk of our furniture and refresh our space, from storage to skylights!

WANT TO HELP?

DONATE TODAY TO HELP ADDRESS OUR URGENT NEEDS.

- Give online at firstunited.ca
- Mail a cheque with the enclosed donation form and envelope
- Call Natalie at 604-681-8365 ext 104

COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER FOR COLDEST NIGHT



On February 20th, First United hosted the 2nd Annual Coldest Night of the Year Walk.

It was a great opportunity for all our friends to come together, check out First United's fresh paint job, and show their support for First United's important programs benefitting our neighbours experiencing homelessness and poverty in the Downtown Eastside. Thank you all, and see you next year!



There is still time to give!

Sponsor a team or walker before April 1st to show your support for the men, women and families of the Downtown Eastside.

Email cnoy@firstunited.ca to learn more.

URGENT COMMUNITY NEEDS

As the cold, wet weather transitions to spring, the needs of our community shift. Help First United prepare for the coming season with a gift of these vital supplies.

Please donate these items by contacting Jerrri at 604-700-7385 or jmorrisk@firstunited.ca

- Towels
- Socks
- T-shirts
- Shorts
- Sleeping bags
- Sweats and casual pants (especially smaller sizes)

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