

# Evolution of FBCH Auxiliaries

Compiled by Judy Whalen



2003

2022

Front Page Photo:

Back Row: L to R: Marjorie Fountain, Joan Leitch, Jessie West, Marion Crowell, Jean Dexter, Doreen Bennett, Alana Foster (office administrator), Linda MacIntosh, Hughena Hubley, Judy Whalen

2nd Row: Shirley Morton, Doris Colwell, Helen Colwell, Lois Shields, Doris Gorman, Jean Crowell, Sally Illsley, Lorina Isnor

3rd Row: Betty Thomas, Alice Auld, Jean Fraser, Gladys Bearsto, Mary Large, Myra Prentice, Ann Stailing, Vern Johnston, Jan Heighton (kneeling)

Front Row: Jackie Eisner, Louise Schurman, Joan McQuinn, Noreen Lawlor, Lynn Ritchie

### **Acknowledgements:**

Researching and writing this history turned out to be more complex than I anticipated and much more rewarding. I learned a great deal about our church and its values in the process. Who and what we are is reflected in our history.

A brief version of our Auxiliary history written in 2009, included information and anecdotes from Auxiliary members now deceased: Jean Dexter, Doris Gorman, Fran Harvey, Hun Keddy, Sally Illsley and Carol Snair. Excerpts from it are included in this document.

Reference materials reviewed were:

The History of First Baptist Church, 1827-1977

Auxiliary Minute books, 1943 until 2022

Church bulletins

Church Annual Reports from 1943 onward.

During the writing of this document, I am grateful to John Boyd, Ed Tummers, and Elaine Cox who supplemented our information as well as our current Auxiliary Members who shared memories and photographs, particularly, Nancy Brown, Linda MacIntosh, and Johanne McKee.

Thanks also are extended to our photographers through the years; Doug Eisner, Leslie Ferguson, Warren Hoeg, and Ian McKee. It has accurately been stated 'a picture is worth a thousand words.'

I am also indebted to Peggy Dunbar and Janet Margeson for editing and technical assistance in the production of this document.

*When the Spring Garden Road Church burned in 1942, some of the historical records to that date were lost so our recorded history is incomplete until 1942.*

Evolution of FBCH Auxiliaries

## EVOLUTION OF FBCH AUXILIARIES

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## EVOLUTION OF FBCH AUXILIARIES

### Introduction:

The word Auxiliary means 'to provide help or support' and the First Baptist Church Halifax Auxiliary has done just that unofficially and as an organized group for nearly 200 years! This group functions independently of the church with its own Constitution and Bylaws. Our members come from all walks of life with a common goal of serving others.

So how old are we, in actual fact? Records show we have been active since the early 1800's, however, at that point we were not yet an organized body. In the Auxiliary minutes of Dec.6, 1953, it states that the Auxiliary recognized its 50th anniversary. This was based on the testimony of Mrs. Parker Colpitt, a charter member of the group, who reported the Auxiliary was 'organized' in 1903. A report made to the Baptist Association in 1903 referred to hopeful features of the Henry Waring ministry, one of which was recognizing the 'Women`s Auxiliary of the church for discussing current topics of interest and promoting social intercourse.' As these sources appear to be reliable, the Auxiliary voted in February 2022 that the date of 1903 be accepted as the 'birth' date of the Auxiliary.

In later minutes there is also a reference to Mrs. A. MacD. Morton formally organizing the group in the early 1920's. A copy of constitution used prior to 1949 was read at the beginning of the first meeting each year. It is still available.

Some things haven't changed in all that time! According to records, even back in 1827, the ladies were called on to do many of the same things we do today even though we weren't categorized as an official group. Records would also imply that in 1898, these women appeared to be less than enthused about making tea for those attending the Baptist association meeting because Brother Beckwith had survived "breaking the news" to the group.

In 1919 women were declared legally to be persons! It took until the mid 1970's before married women were known by their Christian names. Prior to that, women were known by their husband's name such as Mrs. A.B. Jones not Janet Jones.

Regular meetings were held weekly on Monday afternoons. The business meeting and executive meeting were held monthly. Often a guest speaker was invited to a monthly meeting. Attendance was higher on days when a speaker was present.

Times changed and our attitudes along with them. As many women had entered the work force or were home with small children, it was difficult to come to afternoon meetings so in 1951, Kay Davison organized the group which eventually came to be called the Evening Auxiliary. In 1956 the Intermediate Auxiliary, a group of younger women, was formed.

## **Membership:**

Membership has varied widely and included regular and associate members. Regular members were defined in 1947 as those who attended meetings regularly and paid the annual fee of \$1.00. Associate members were those who paid the same fee but did not attend meetings regularly. Associate membership has since been discontinued.

In 1945 there were 45 members with 20 an average attendance at a meeting.

In 1956 there were 145 members split among 3 auxiliaries.

In 1973 there were 69 members between 2 auxiliaries

In 2009 the two auxiliaries united into one.

In 2017 membership was 27 members

In 2022 there are 20 members in 1 auxiliary.

## **Community Support:**

Over the years the Auxiliary have contributed to many community causes: The School for the Blind, The Red Cross, Protestant Orphanage, knitting and entertaining the troops of both World Wars, assisting during the Halifax Explosion, contributing to the rebuilding of the church after the 1942 fire and to the building and furnishing the Christian Education wing.

In 1900, "The pastor reported two girls in the School for the Blind in need, whose cases were being attended to by the sisters and also two boys for whom the pastor paid \$9.00 - \$8.00 was allowed for girls".

In 1943 the group made 740 articles of clothing, mostly bathrobes and dresses for the Red Cross.

In 1945 the group made 60 hospital bed sheets, 30 pairs of men's pajamas and 12 boy's suits among other items for Red Cross Lodge.

In 1946 an 'Imitation Tea' was held where money was requested rather than making sweets during a time of rationing. Five quilts were sold at \$5.00 each. A sale of aprons and pantry goods at a store on Spring Garden Road netted \$244.30. Two war bonds were purchased that year.

1947 was a busy year with a 9-member Finance committee being formed to handle distribution of donations and purchases. Within several years this committee seemed to dissolve.

The group catered a banquet for 125 from the Provincial CGIT organization with T. Eaton Company paying all the expenses. Guests were charged \$1.00 per plate.

An Auxiliary representative personally placed a wreath on the Cenotaph, a practice which continued for many years.

In 1948 Mrs. S.A. Hurst sold 110 tickets to the Tea. Also, that year a concert was held to raise funds.

In 1949, a membership drive increased the number of members to 128. Several boxes of food and clothing were sent to a pastor in London under the 'Boxes for Britain' program.

In 1976, the Intermediate Auxiliary was honored with a citation for their work at Red Cross Lodge where they staffed the canteen.

### **Community Liaisons:**

Our ladies have always had an interest in liaising with other community groups. Among other groups, the Auxiliary was represented for decades on the Local Council of Women, Women's Inter Church Council until its local demise in 2017, Grenfell Mission and the Cancer Society. In 1987 our group hosted the World Day of Prayer which was organized nationally by WICC.

### **Church Support:**

The auxiliary accepted the responsibility of paying for the furnishings of the Sunday School Auditorium and classrooms in the new Oxford Street church and installing the folding windows in the main Sunday School room. The architect brought samples of the wood to persuade us to 'try modern light woodwork' and oak pews.

On April 24, 1950, the first meeting of the Auxiliary in the new church was held in the Ladies' Parlor. At that meeting numerous small gifts of items for the parlor and kitchen were acknowledged. Also Mr. Martin donated the initialing of the flat silver.

The Ladies Auxiliary catered to the Men's Institute monthly for several years in the 1950's. As a thank you, in 1971, the men began to serve a dinner to the ladies and to this day, the Valentines Dinner continues.

The auxiliary has for years catered to the church annual meeting, numerous Baptist organizations meeting in our church, congregational meetings, retirement, wedding, and funeral receptions as well as an occasional birthday party. Within two weeks of the church's opening in 1950, the Auxiliary fed 1,200 people at various functions. We have catered to as many as 400 guests at funeral receptions.

In 1973, 100 calls were made on church members by the Auxiliary visiting committee and in 1983 the number increased to 240. In more recent years, the group provides flowers and visits to our sick and shut ins twice a year.

At least since the mid 70's, as recorded in our weekly bulletins, the Auxiliary have been hosting Coffee and Conversation after our Sunday church service as an opportunity for congregational fellowship.

A springtime banquet was provided to the Brownie group for several years. The most popular menu item was "Kraft Dinner". Sally Illsley and Hazel Simpkins acted as chaperones to take the Brownie pack out to McNab's Island in a rowboat and spent the day counting 52 heads!

How many of you remember when the Tea and Sale was held on Friday afternoon in the hall? Tea was poured on the stage, tea tables were set up on the hall floor and the sales tables were set up in the small classrooms around it.

Does anyone remember seeing Betty Thomas and Marian Gordon, who were involved with the house committee, up a ladder painting the hall walls? (Or in 1900, two ladies overseeing the dusting and cleaning of the church.)

### **Lifelong Learning:**

We believe in continuing education! We invite guest speakers to come and talk to us about their area of expertise. Back in 1966 a slide show of the construction of Expo'67 in Montreal was presented. We have learned how to prevent identity theft and computer fraud and about Early Halifax buildings. In 1985 Joan Fraser told us of her experiences as a Citizenship Court Judge and Terry Tingley spoke on Alcohol and Drug Dependency. We enjoyed a talk by the Tummers entitled 'In the Footsteps of St. Thomas'. David Freeman entertained us with stories of his creation of model trains.

### **Craft Group:**

In 1972, a group of ladies began to meet in Sally Illsley's basement to raise funds by creating handcrafts that would be sold at the Tea and Sale. And so, the Craft Group was born. The creation of pinecone wreaths gave way to tole painting lessons under the tutelage of Barb Isnor. These projects made in Jean Dexter's basement, progressed to our craft room on the lower level of the church. In 1993, the craft group alone raised \$2,807.

In 2005, the craft group expanded to include a Loonie Book Nook which sold books for one dollar each. They were sold on the honor system for 13 years.

There really were two craft groups functioning independently. The afternoon Auxiliary met on Monday and largely was responsible for the knitting table at the Tea and Sale while the Evening group met on Wednesdays to provide the crafted and sewn items.

### **The Move to Gender Neutral:**

The Women's Auxiliary slowly began to feel the effect of diminishing membership with the death and infirmities of many of our stalwart ladies. In 2013 it was decided we should rattle the chains of tradition and consider admitting men to our ranks so in 2014 we renamed our organization as First Baptist Church Halifax Auxiliary otherwise known as 'The Auxiliary' and welcomed our first male president, Frank McGill in 2016. Our Constitution and Bylaws were changed to make them gender neutral. To this day we have a challenge in convincing our male populous that we would enjoy having them (and their muscle and brain power) as part of our numbers. Beginning in 1976, the Men's Group provided a table of items for the annual Tea and Sale. Who remembers Don Myer's yummy fish cakes! Fresh vegetables from cottage gardens and hand-crafted wood projects were included.

## **Fund Raising:**

Records show that in March 1943 the Auxiliary hosted a St. Patrick's Day Tea and a Halloween Tea in October which then were held in St. Andrew's Hall. The spring event eventually morphed into a coffee party and bake sale continuing until 1977 when it became difficult to carry on two large annual functions. The decision was made to switch to a letter sent to the church membership requesting financial backing rather than having to bake. We have had wonderful support from our congregation.

The afternoon group (called the Dorcas group) and evening groups have continued to work together through the years supporting community outreach efforts such as Phoenix House, Coverdale, Rainbow Haven, Goodfellows, Sharing Way, Bread of Life, etc. Together we have provided receptions for bereaved families and delivered fruit baskets or flowers to shut-ins. We have raised funds by conducting rummage/yard sales, plant sales, teas, receptions, no-bake sales, bridge parties, pantry sales and sold our crafts at local malls. We have financially supported the renovation of the main kitchen and baptistery, roof fund, Big Dig, and the replacement of the front doors on the church. With the unfailing support of the church family, we have been able to assist where there was a need in the church or the community. In more recent years, as our fund-raising efforts flourished, we were able to help fund the new grand piano, elevator, sound system, blinds, and Assembly Room flooring.

In searching our records, the writer noticed a change in how support was provided by the auxiliary through the years. In the 40's, during the war years, much of the support was provided to outside groups in the form of knitting or sewing projects. As time passed support shifted in the 50's and 60's to financial donations given to the church operating fund when we had a new church to furnish and pay for. With the advent of the Outreach Committee, the Auxiliary focused more on internal projects. In more recent years the Auxiliary has provided specific items needed by church, boards, and committees.

## **Church Life:**

A story is told by several of our Auxiliary members, that there was a bright spot in the dreadful fire when the Spring Garden Road church burned in 1942. A large function had been held the day prior to the fire. The caretaker, who lived in an apartment in the building, had placed the silver ware to soak in the bathtub planning to wash it the following morning. As the structure burned, including the floor beneath the tub, the tub crashed upright and unharmed onto the ground level below. Harvey Crowell is reported to have spread out the silver on his driveway and turned the garden hose on them in effort to clean them. Today we are still using this silver at our dinners.

Part of the responsibility of the Intermediate Auxiliary group was to maintain and dry clean the Junior Choir Gowns. In the mid 1950's there were 35 girls and boys involved in the Junior Choir.

In March 1977, the Auxiliary, in its first attempt, assumed full responsibility for the Sunday morning service. This was a time when women were just beginning to take leadership roles in the church. Our first two female deacons were elected in 1976 and both were members of the Auxiliary, Ethel Beckett and Lalia Johnston.

A project assumed by the Auxiliary that year was to rebind the damaged hymnals.

In 1986, one of our members, Doris Hilchey donated her dining room table, designed, and created by her father, to the church for intended use in the Board Room. Eventually it was thought best to move it to the Parlor to be the centerpiece there. It has served us well for 25 years.

Our ladies have been supportive, creative, and dedicated. Marjorie Lindsay was secretary of the Afternoon Auxiliary retiring in 2005 after 30 years as secretary!

Any well functioning group has a photographer to maintain pictorial records! Warren Hoeg, as a former member of our auxiliary, has photographed our functions for 20 years along with the talents of several other church members. We have very limited numbers of pictures available from the distant past. Today we can catch candid photos anytime on our cell phones!

Have you been aware of the shiny polished brass offering plates? You can thank the afternoon auxiliary who polished them once a week at their meeting during the 2000's. Today the job falls to the Auxiliary House Committee.

And there was the day when Millie Mouse came uninvited to afternoon tea. The Auxiliary were enjoying tea after their meeting when Millie detected crackers and cheese on the menu and came to join them. Not to be dissuaded when the ladies rather forcefully suggested that she vacate the area, she stared them down. When she finally got the message that there was no cheese coming her way, she left in a huff amid ladies' squeals and flying cutlery.

The Auxiliary have assumed responsibility for the main kitchen and kitchenette since its inception. House Committee members have maintained an inventory of dishes, linens, and cooking equipment so we can handle up to 100 hungry people for meals. The kitchen is used by many groups in the church and maintaining routine cleanliness is the responsibility of each group, even though it takes some goading from the Auxiliary. One consistent activity throughout all our history is requests for catering. That has never ceased!

The Auxiliary continue to provide a representative on several committees in the church such as the Board of Management, Finance, Property Maintenance, and Personnel. It provides a useful vehicle for communication.

Then in 2019, Covid 19 struck having a serious effect on church life in general. Public Health Regulations curbed our church services, meetings, social activities and curtailed our fund-raising opportunities. We learned how to use Zoom so we could participate in meetings from home and attend online church services.

### **The Future:**

We now look into a crystal ball and see further change afoot. Our church, like many others, has a diminishing membership and maintaining our large church becomes more problematic. The planned Property Redevelopment will impact on current functions. As we may lose our parlor and Assembly Room to the wrecker's ball, we will need to relocate or replace some of our activities. Coffee and Conversation, held for years in the parlor, will move to the back of the sanctuary after the Sunday

service. The auditorium will be redesigned to accommodate meetings, lunches, receptions, sales, etc. Our active and flexible members will adjust to these changes as they have always done!

Anyone in the church is most welcome to participate in our activities. Come and join us. We have fun carrying out responsibilities and enjoy the camaraderie. After probably 200 years of caring and sharing with each other, we look to the future with optimism!

14 THE HALIFAX MAIL-STAR Wednesday, May 3, 1950

## Of Interest to Women



**THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY** of the first Baptist Church held its first meeting in the new church this week. In the above photograph the members of the executive are shown, left to right, seated, Mrs. Irva Dexter, treasurer; Mrs. R. I. Balcom, vice-president; Mrs. G. J. Colwell, president; Mrs. R. E. Hatfield, secretary; standing, Mrs. S. Campbell, Mrs. M. A. Hirtle, Mrs. E. K. Puddington, Mrs. F. T. Ripley, Miss Alice Blenkhorn, Mrs. H. E. Crowell, Mrs. S. A. Hurst, Mrs. W. E. Newcombe and Mrs. G. A. Smith.—(Photo by Norwood).

**Preparing handcrafts for the 1969  
Tea and Sale**



*L to R:* Josie Gaverley, Greta Grimmer  
Linda Colwell, Marjorie Evans



Workers from three groups prepare for the Fall Tea and Sale being held by the First Baptist Church October 24. Photographed, left to right, Lynn Ritchie; Ethel Becett, Alex Ferguson, Doris Colwell.



**Enjoying lunch in the Youth Room after the Yard Sale, circa 2005**

*L to R:*  
 Nancy Brown,  
 (pouring coffee)  
 Susan Morse  
 Doreen Bennett  
 Alex McQuinn



**Back Row:** Judy Whalen, Marjorie Stevenson, Robin MacInnis, Jackie Eisner, Marion Kennedy, Hughena Hubley, Sharon McGill, Eva Conn, Marlene Dexter, Grace Coughlan, Jean Dexter, Jan Heighton, Linda MacIntosh, Johanne McKee. **Front Row:** Nancy Brown, Carol Snair, Doris Gorman, Shirley Morton, Noreen Lawlor, Mary Large, Alice Auld, Juene Schoales, Joanne Stonehouse.



**Auxiliary Executive 2010**

*L to R*  
*Back Row*  
Robin MacInnis  
Joanne Stonehouse  
Marjorie Stevenson  
Johanne McKee  
*Front Row*  
Bette Yetman  
Marlene Dexter



**Plant Sale 2005**  
Jeune Schoales  
arranging day lilies



**Plant Sale 2010**  
Debbie Boyd set to sell geraniums



**Kitchen Crew Tea and Sale 1993**  
*L to R:*  
Joan McQuinn, Marjorie Lindsay, Jean Crowell, Alice Auld,  
Beryl Spencer

**Tea Makers  
Tea and Sale 1992**

*L to R: Barbara Murphy and Pauline Wood*



**Mother/ Daughter Teams  
1993 Tea and Sale**

*L to R: Evelyn Pelton and Marjorie Stevenson with Marjorie's daughter, Janet Margeson and Evelyn's daughter Judy Whalen preparing plates of sweets.*



**Working at the 1993 Yard Sale**

*L to R:* Jessie West, Doreen Bennett,  
Eva Conn, Marion Crowell



**Enjoying the Christmas Luncheon and meeting 2010**

*L to R:* Shirley Morton, Betty Thomas, Jean Dexter Marion Kennedy



**Craft Group busy at work making items for Christmas Tea and Sale  
1992**

*L to R: Back Row:* Barbara Murphy, Beryl Spencer, Doris Colwell,  
*Sitting:* Vern Johnston, Noreen Lawlor, Pauline Wood, Fran Harvey



**Tea and Sale 2005**

Bryan Darrel and Susan Clarke pouring tea with Ken  
Margeson and David Gibson serving



**Guests Enjoying Christmas  
Tea 2004**  
*L to R:*  
Olga Milosevich, Jackie Eisner,  
Alexa McDonough,  
Ida Armstrong and Naomi  
Nonnekes



**Ready at the Jelly  
Table Tea and Sale  
2012**  
Ian and Johanne  
McKee



**Enjoying a  
celebration of  
Helen Colwell's  
Birthday in 2018**

*L to R:*  
Johanne McKee  
Carol Snair  
Helen Colwell  
Eva Conn  
Nancy Brown  
Mary Anne Eisener  
Judy Whalen



**New to You Table  
2012 Tea and Sale**

*L to R:*  
Debbie Boyd  
Marlene Dexter  
Marjorie Stevenson  
Elaine Cox



**How to carry a plant  
laden table  
Plant Sale 2005**

*L to R:*  
 Bud Whalen  
 Bill Ferguson  
 Wayne McPhee (Sexton)



**Men's Table  
Tea and Sale 1991**

*L to R:* George Allwood  
 Burnley `Nick` Nickerson  
 Glen Robertson



**Annual Meeting, 1992**

*L to R:* Bernice  
 Peters  
 Ellen Nickerson  
 Jean Dexter  
 Beryl Spencer  
 Hazel Simpkins  
 Barbara Murphy



**Closing  
Luncheon  
Ashburn Golf  
Club  
2005**

*L to R:*

Doreen Bennett  
Grace Coughlan  
Sally Illsley  
Mary Large

**AMENDMENTS & ADDITIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE  
WOMEN'S AUXILIARY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
HALIFAX, N. S.**

The Society shall be known as the Women's Auxiliary of the First Baptist Church, Halifax.

**OBJECTS:** The objectives of the Auxiliary shall be:

**Article 1:** The development of the social life of the Church, This to include,

- a. The giving of an adequate welcome to women who are strangers in our midst;
- b. The providing of refreshments and entertainment for any of the social functions of the Church where deemed advisable by the members of this society;
- c. The securing of a better acquaintance and Christian fellowship among the women of our Church.

**Article 2:** To undertake to help the Church financially in the securing of any objective that especially appeals to the Auxiliary.

**Article 3:** When thought advisable, to assist in any good cause or work undertaken by organizations outside the Church.

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Any woman of the congregation shall be eligible for membership in the Auxiliary upon the payment of One Dollar, due at the Annual Meeting.

~~Members shall be classified as Active and Associate.~~

Active members shall consist of those who are usually in attendance at regular meeting, and have paid \$1.00 fee.

Associate members shall consist of those who pay the \$1.00 fee, but are not usually present at the regular meetings of the Auxiliary.

Active members only, shall be eligible for election as officers and as members of standing committees.

**Excerpt from the Constitution  
of The Ladies Auxiliary  
1947**