

Anna Rowcliffe

(who passed away at University Hospital on Thursday, January 15, 2015, in her 88th year. The following stories were shared by Anna on June 25, 2014, at a special gathering of Metropolitan's senior members.)

When we (Anna and husband Jim Rowcliffe) first came to Metropolitan United Church in 1952, Dr. George Goth was our minister. You may recall that, in March 1965, Dr. Goth decided that he had to be a part of Martin Luther King's march to Selma, Alabama. Not all the congregation were in favour of this; there were those who were opposed. Dr. Goth strongly believed that it was his calling to participate. That was an historical mission in the life of Metropolitan. I well remember the Sunday he returned home. We had two worship services at Metropolitan ... one at 11 a.m., one at 7 p.m. The Church was packed with people for both services. At the Sunday morning service, a choir member, Bob McMyrtle, fainted in the back row of the choir. Bob was a very tall, well built man. I remember other choir members taking him out through one of the two side doors at the back of the choir loft.

On July 20, 1969, we were at home watching TV that Sunday afternoon in anticipation of Neil Armstrong stepping out onto the moon. It was Jim's Sunday to count the collection after the evening worship service, so Jim and I went to church while the children stayed at home because it was going to be history in the making. Just as we arrived at church at 7 o'clock, in the park at that time were what we referred to as "hippies." They marched into the church and sat down in the two rows of pews at the front of the Sanctuary. I have to be careful how I say this because perhaps we now wear black leather coats down to the floor with chains over them. It was quite a sight to arrive at church and have all these people coming in as well. Dr. Goth came out of his study not knowing that they had arrived and led the service through to his sermon. He then came out of the pulpit and said, "I am not going to preach what has been announced. We have people here who I know want to say something. But I wish to say something to them first. I want them to try to understand my generation. We, from seeing the first plane fly, tonight are probably going to see a man step out onto the moon. Can you appreciate what we have had to adjust to?" What a way to emphasize such an historical event! Dr. Goth continued, saying to them, "If we wanted to go anywhere, we could not expect other people to look after us. We had to pick potatoes – do anything to make enough money to go from one town to the next. So, we've had to adjust to something that's very very different." And, of course, then the group of people in the front pews, with their Bibles in their hands, spoke. "If you are your brother's keeper, you are going to allow us into the Church to sleep and eat." Metropolitan's insurance policy disallowed such accommodations. Tom Browne would be very much aware of all this too. The next day Neil Armstrong stepped out onto the moon. I will always remember both this event and the impact Dr. Goth had in explaining this event to everyone in the congregation on the evening of July 20, 1969. It was an historic time.

In 1996, Al Boyd and I were Co-Chairs for the planning of Metropolitan's Centennial. It was a great event. When we began our search for the Church archived papers and photos, there were boxes all over the church. It was truly an effort to try to gather all the archived materials. A lot of our archives were at Western University. An outcome of all our planning was the need to bring all Metropolitan's archived resources together. Walker Schofield has done so much to carry out this project. He has organized all Metropolitan's archives into a separate room off Met Hall. Metropolitan's next planned celebration will be much easier to bring together, I can assure you.

Thank you.
