

## David Aitken

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It may have been around Christmas 1924 when I first heard the music at First Methodist Church before its name changed to Metropolitan United. I was born in March 1925 and began a life-long association with the church on being christened on June 19 that year. I attended the church's Sunday school and joined the Cubs in 1934. After my mother died the next year, we moved to live with our grandparents in Goderich. Father continued to work for a London company as a travelling salesman throughout Western Ontario. We enjoyed much commuting to London but we missed the excitement of the great flood of 1937. However, father married a lady he met in North Street Church Choir and we returned to London and Metropolitan later that year.

When it was announced that Metropolitan's new senior minister would be the Rev. Dr. W.E. MacNiven, father was delighted because they had camped together by the river at Edmonton as young men in the summer of 1916. Father soon invited the MacNivens to dinner at our home. While father was an outgoing gregarious successful salesman, he was slightly nervous at hosting dinner with his new bride who was also our new stepmother. The first thing he did as we gathered in the dining room was to tip over his glass of tomato juice. He always appreciated that special moment when he "broke the ice" and everyone relaxed.

We continued at Metropolitan with father singing in the choir to the 1950s and my brother and I in Sunday school and Young Peoples Union through the thirties and forties (with some of the members of Metropolitan who attended the June 25, 2014 gathering at Metropolitan).

I joined the Church's scouts in 1937 and enjoyed many years of activities under the leadership of Frank Dickinson who told us his purpose as our Scoutmaster was to help us become Christian gentlemen. When he urged us to take part in some community event, he would remind us, "Do not let your inclinations overrule your obligations." We had a lot of fun, enjoyed competitions, industrial tours, hikes and camping events in many places in southern Ontario.

In 1939 our community was plunged into World War II. An early service project had the Scout troop loading equipment on trucks at Wolseley Barracks on a Saturday morning. For several years, some Scouts spent Saturdays helping to load household salvage on trucks operated city wide by the Red Cross Corps.

In the 1940s, London was headquarters of Military District Number One, so there was a lot of recruiting and training in and around the city. There were many parades, including church parades on Sunday morning. There would be Army one week, next month perhaps the Navy or the Air Force. The woodwork on the ceiling of the church sanctuary was dark and so were all the pews. Sometimes the high humidity in summer softened the dark finish on the pews. On more than one occasion, when the service ended and the closing hymn was announced, as everyone stood up, there was a loud sound heard ... slurrrrrrpppppp ... as the sailors' uniforms were released from the somewhat sticky surface of the pews. A war story!

Over two hundred members of Metropolitan served in Canada's military forces and in February 1946, over three hundred former service personnel, friends, family members and guests attended a homecoming banquet at Metropolitan United Church.

We were privileged to grow up and grow old in this Church.

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