

Happy 150th, Stouffville United Church

From page 1.

"There are not as many members as there used to be, but the Sunday School program is still as active and as lively as it always was," said Rev. Robert Nightingale of Stouffville United Church. The Sunday school program centers around encouraging children to explore Bible stories and the church's history through readings, plays and a variety of colourful crafts.

"This has created a more exciting and lively atmosphere for the children," Rev. Nightingale said.

The Wesleyan Methodists had other popular programs including their choir, which was formed in 1877 under the leadership of David Stouffer, affectionately known as "Uncle Dave."

"With as many 20 members now, it has become an outstanding senior and a growing junior choir," Rev. Nightingale said. Members range in age from their early 20s to their late 70s.

Youth involvement was encouraged through groups such as The Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT). These teenagers were part of the church scene for many years with membership varying from 20 to 80.

Some of the girls did babysitting for the United Church Couple's Club members. Now called the Couple's + Club, it evolved in 1970 out of the membership of the Over Sixty Club. It met monthly for events such as murder mystery games, dinner parties and scavenger hunts with historical local themes.

Youth activities are still encouraged at Stouffville United. The first Stouffville Scout Troop received its charter in 1954 at the church, while the Brownies and Girl Guides were formed in 1962. A number of the Girl Guides have received their Canadian Cord, the top award promoting them to Rangers.

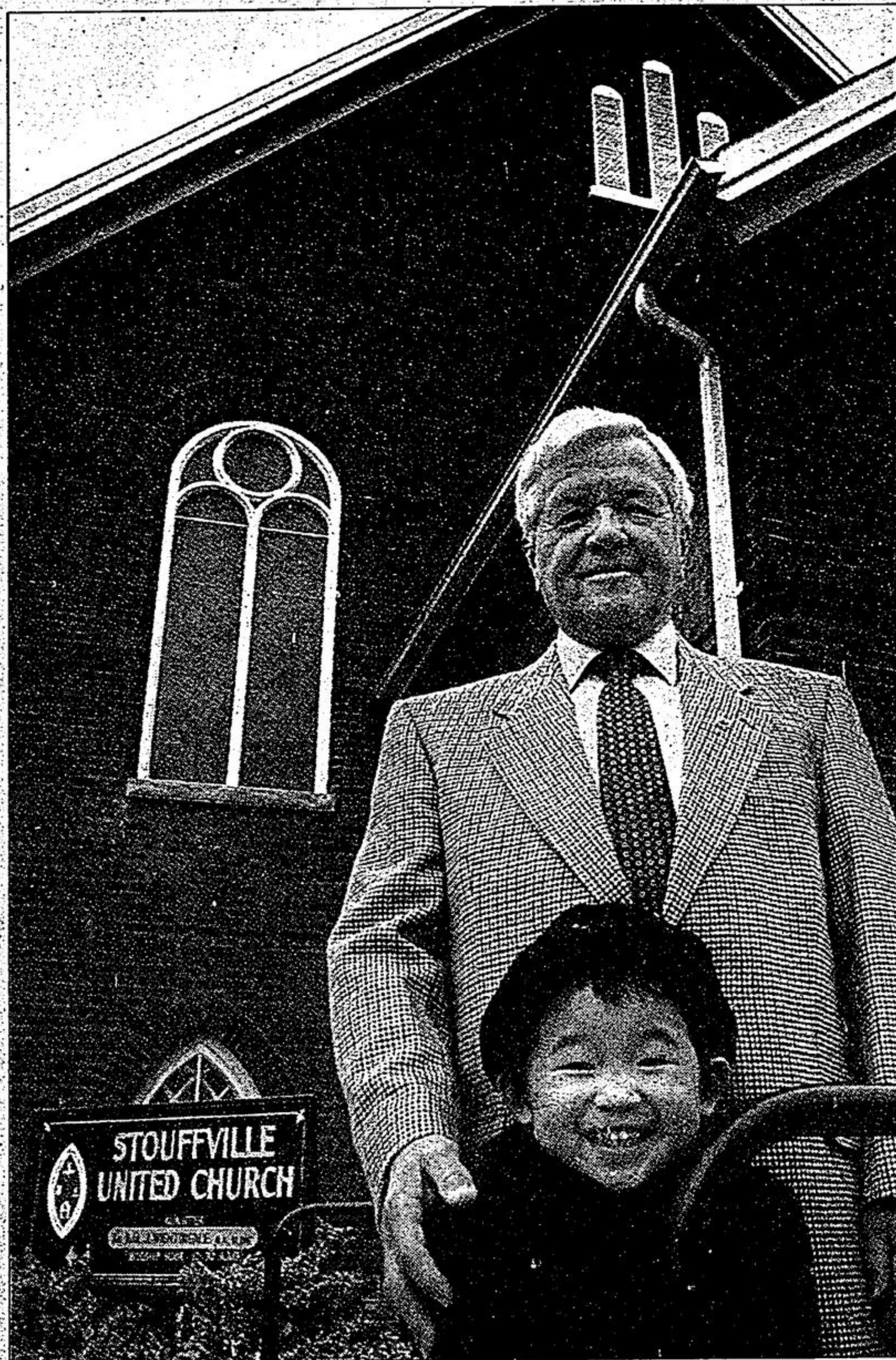
"The church is at its doorstep of a whole new phase of its life and is energized to move forward."

The CGIT recently bought Bibles for the church library. The Explorers were created for girls between eight and 11 years of age. At Christmas, the Explorers go carolling, make gifts for people in seniors' homes and assist with church services.

Currently there are two youths on the United Church Congregation Council, who assist in all aspects of running the church.

"The more youth we can encourage to participate the better," said Rev. Nightingale.

Forty years after being founded, the United Church Women (UCW) is



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Generations of church goers at Stouffville United Church include four-year-old Bronte Anderson and Murray Wagg. The church is celebrating 150 years.

also a vibrant group, meeting once a month. Their very active quilting group holds a bazaar every fall to auction off their hand-created quilts to help support Massey Center, a center for unwed mothers and their children. Since 1962, the UCW has helped organizations such as Yellow Brick House, food banks and Camp Big Canoe, a camp that is designed to bring youths together in a fun and exciting atmosphere.

"It is a wonderful group that is very supportive towards the community. Involvement from the younger generations is always encouraged," said Myrna Watson, who has been a member of the UCW for almost 39 years.

The library was set up in 1964 with numerous children's Bible story books and a well-used audio-visual system added to the collection over time.

Stouffville United has been reaching out to the community for the past 43 years with its popular Music Mania variety show. Anyone

who lives or works in Whitchurch-Stouffville can join the show to sing, dance, be in the band, do skits and blacklight numbers or work behind the scenes. Rehearsals for the late April show begin soon after the New Year Music Mania range in age from their 20s to their early 80s.

"Ninety percent of my wife's and my friends were met through Music Mania and are currently residing in Stouffville. It is a great way to meet people in your home town," said Jim Brazier, who has been with Music Mania almost since it began.

Over the last few decades, the church has had several additions constructed as the church membership grew, including offices, the Friendship room, kindergarten class, washrooms, a kitchenette, refurbished halls and choir areas and a new south entrance complete with an automatic chair-lift.

"The church is at its doorstep of a whole new phase of its life and is energized to move forward," Rev. Nightingale said.

Health care community likes Romanow report

From page 1.

improvements to the health-care system.

Under the plan, Canadians earning less than \$31,000 a year would pay about \$180 a year for the tax. Those making more than \$100,000 would pay about \$1,500 annually.

"Some will call this another tax. We look on it as a much-needed investment," Mr. Kirby said when he delivered his report.

Capital funding aside, Mr. Pilon said his group is pleased with Mr. Romanow's recommendations.

"The thing that really kind of pleases us is his understanding of the need to stabilize the system first," he said, pointing to the report's recommendation Ottawa boost health-care spending to 25 cents of every dollar from the present contribution of 14 cents.

Mr. Pilon also supports Mr. Romanow's strong aversion to privatizing delivery of medical services.

Mr. Romanow lobbied the federal government to invest \$15 billion in health care over the next three years alone.

"The changes I am proposing are intended to strengthen and modernize medicare and place it on a more sustainable footing," he said when delivering his report Thursday.

"They are based on a vision of medicare as a national endeavour, where governments work together to ensure timely access to quality health-care services as a right of citizenship, not a privilege. And they are designed to achieve a more effectively integrated and a more accountable world-class system that helps to make Canadians the healthiest people in the world."

Mr. Pilon supports publicly funded health care, arguing the public sector can provide less expensive and more efficient services than for-profit businesses.

"We can operate much more efficiently than the private sector. It's never been proven the private sector is cheaper or more efficient. We're much cheaper than U.S. hospitals," he said. "We're trying to provide the best patient care. I don't think we need the competitive impetus to do that."

NURSES IN SUPPORT

Mr. Pilon is not the only stakeholder applauding Mr. Romanow's vision of health care.

Chris Steeves, a surgical nurse at Southlake Regional Health Centre and a spokesperson for the Ontario Nurses Association, is pleased with Mr. Romanow's strong backing of

universal, publicly-funded health care.

She's also delighted with the proposal to create a national pharmaceutical program to pay for drugs needed by patients with catastrophic illnesses and the recommendation to bring home care under the Canada Health Act. But she's concerned Mr. Romanow didn't address recruitment and retention of health-care workers.

"I'm generally pleased (with the report). I think some areas could have been a little more defined, like targeting funding for doctors and nurses," she said.

"We can talk about keeping universality, but without the personnel to do it, it's not going to do much in the short term."

Ms Steeves is also worried the federal government will shelve the report.

"I think the federal government has to take the initiative. I think this only works if the federal government grabs the ball and goes with it," she said.

"Medicare is at a crossroads now and has been for some time. Profit is not the cure"

"If we leave it to the provinces, each province makes its own choices and that doesn't give us what we want as a national system. I think the federal government has the money. I would hate them not to put new money in and take away from other social service spending."

Simon Collins is a York Region spokesperson for the Ontario Health Coalition, a grassroots group representing patients, residents, community health groups, labour organizations, women's groups and others with an interest in health-care issues.

He is happy Mr. Romanow rejected private delivery of health care.

"Medicare is at a crossroads now and has been for some time. Profit is not the cure," he said.

"A single-tier system has always proven to be cheaper."

Mr. Collins believes Mr. Romanow's report will help put a stop to privatization in some provinces.

"In Ontario, B.C. and Alberta, health care has been under assault," he said.

"We will certainly be using this report to fight tooth and nail with the province."

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