

60th anniversary UCW Service
A Service of Thanksgiving for the United Church Women
“Time, Talents and Treasures”
Written by Elaine Burrows, President of Maritime UCW (January 2022)

SHIRLEY WILSON

Reflection: *Our Time, Talents, and Treasures of the Past, Present and Future.*

The Past: Light a Candle

On Aug. 2006, General Council of The United Church of Canada approved this statement of faith

We sing of a Church

seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying God's presence in the world

Our ancestors in faith have left us with experiences of their faithful living & upon their lives, our lives are built.

When the United Church of Canada was formed in June 1925, there were 2 major women's organizations, the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) which focused on world wide mission and education. The other group was the Women's Association (WA) which focused on the needs of the local congregation and community. In many small communities, it was called the Ladies Aid

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) had a budget of \$1.5 million a year, and a staff of 165 people at work in 80 centres across Canada, with 97 active missionaries around the world as nurses, doctors, teachers, etc. They also helped to set up a network of study groups to help groups learn about mission work.

The world kept changing, and so did the women's groups over the years.

From the book “Ordinary Heroes” page 21, we learn that in 1960 the United Church General Council approved the formation of a new organization for women to “share in a much more meaningful way in the work of the church within the congregation, Presbytery, Conference, and in the various boards of the church under the General Council.” This meant that the Women's Association (WA) and the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) would be united under one name.

This was done on Jan.1 1962 & was called The United Church Women.

And so the purpose of the UCW is

To unite women of the congregation for the total mission of the church and to provide a medium through which we may express our loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship, and service.

Our history written by Donna Barber – Shirley use if you want or write it in your words.

“Our UCW has evolved over the past 60 years. When the women's groups of First United church joined to become the UCW, there were thirteen different Units of UCW . but in a few years it dropped to 11, which remained for many many years. Some units were formed with members of like interests. One of these was the quilters who worked throughout the week in the quilting room Beautiful quilts were made & sold. Fellowship, book studies, speakers at meetings, visiting the sick, raising funds, donating to Mission and Service and catering are some of the things that were done in the past. Many of these things are still being done by women but the group titles have changed to Working Groups connected to the church council.”

Remember those who are not with us anymore as the choir sings:

CHOIR

VU #494 Those Hearts That We Have Treasured

NORMA HAIN

The Present: A candle could be lit.

From a Song of Faith (2006)

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.

For the sake of the world,

God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry,

In the church,

some are called to specific ministries of leadership,

both lay and ordained;

some witness to the good news;

some uphold the art of worship;

some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;

some build up the community of wisdom;

some stand for the oppressed and work for justice.

To embody God's love in the world,

the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers.

A lot has happened in 60 years. The world has changed. The roles of women have changed. How the United Church is organized has changed. We need the action and the prayerfulness to carry on our work.

Witness: We witness through our actions and what we do on a day to day basis. UCW members witnessed financially through their support of their church, the Mission and Service Fund, and local community groups. They witness through their work within their churches.

Study:

Having a devotion or a short worship and a program is a part of most United Church Women meetings. At UCW rallies, Presbyterial/biennials, and other UCW events, having a speaker as part of the program is usually part of the day's agenda.

Fellowship:

There is fellowship in attending regular meetings, from preparing and being a part of events that take place in the church. One highlight event that has taken place at First United for years is the Christmas Tea, Bake Sale and Fashion show. Groups have had take-out suppers, prepared for wedding receptions, funeral receptions, anniversaries, etc. Working at these events was hard work, but the fellowship of working together for a common purpose created community. Over the years, First United UCW has taken their turn to host the Women's Day at Camp Shagabec for all United church women. 2022 is our turn to host, so looking forward to enjoying the fellowship and meeting new and old friends.

Service:

Events mentioned under fellowship fall here. United Church Women have led the way in providing service to their church – at the local level, Presbytery/Conference now Region, and at the National level (National UCW).

Groups provide hospitality, informal pastoral care, and outreach by providing for funeral receptions, anniversaries, and all sorts of other events such as yard sales, take-out or sit-down meals of all kinds, teas for all seasons, musical events and the list goes on. These events did raise funds for which the churches and others benefited.

United Church Women have prepared and lead many worship services over the years. From Thank offering Sundays to participating and organizing World Day of Prayer services in March.

United Church Women have been part of National United Church Women programs over the years such as the Beads of Hope (2002-2004); Sisters of the Spirit (2004). A more recent national UCW project was the “Child Well-Being Initiative” where among other work done in that area, Poverty Dolls were made and given out to politicians to raise awareness of the challenges facing many children in this country. . For the 50th anniversary of UCW, the national project was to raise \$50,000.00 for the Morogoro Women's Training Centre” in Tanzania to teach traditional birth attendants (mid-wives). The actual amount raised was over \$250,000.00. The 60th anniversary project is supporting “Women for Change – Zambia.” This is to help fund educational opportunities. They have been partners with Mission and Service for a number of years.

Every UCW within their community of faith has stories to tell of their work – some funny, some serious but all showing their commitment to the life and work of their

congregation and to the world beyond their walls.

BRENDA WARDER

The Future: A candle can be lit.

From the *Song of Faith* (2006) comes these words:

**We sing of God's good news lived out,
a church with purpose:**

**faith nurtured and hearts comforted,
gifts shared for the good of all,
resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize,
fierce love in the face of violence,
human dignity defended,
members of a community held and inspired by God,
corrected and comforted,
instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,
creation's mending.**

We sing of God's mission.

How do the UCW members use their time and talents as the groups are aging? United Church Women have certainly contributed their time, talents and treasures to the United Church in a big way over the past 60 years. Millions of dollars have been given to the Mission and Service Fund for the many ministries across Canada and around the world. Millions of dollars in volunteer time, and money have been contributed to the local churches for them to continue their work in the communities where the churches were located. How can the women continue their work in these pandemic times?

The future of UCW is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that we have been experiencing since March 2020 with different regulations across the country from day to day; week to week, and month to month. Mask on, masks off; physical distancing; vax passes; ever changing numbers for public places including churches. It is difficult to maintain momentum when things keep changing.

Maybe the UCW needs to start new programs (lunches out; book studies; short-term studies related to Easter, Creation time, or Christmas). Perhaps new leadership will emerge from these projects. More people may become involved with short-term projects.

UCW members need to continue mentoring other women and men of the congregation in how to organize and run events since that is something that UCW members are good at. Share those potato salad recipes, how to cook potatoes for potato salad without a scum on the top, how many sandwiches and sweets are needed for a reception of 100. How does the dishwasher work? There are all kinds of ways that knowledge can be passed on without having to do the hard labour.

United Church Women have decades of wisdom and experience that can be shared with those folks newer to the United Church, and in what is involved in the life and work of the congregation.

Elaine Burrows, Summerside, PE January 2022

President of Maritime UCW; Retired Licensed Lay Worship Leader.

We come with gifts – of the mind and the spirit. We come with tangible gifts that can be