

Helping others

In Matthew's gospel, we read: "What you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you have done to me." This invitation of Jesus to reach out to those in need and work to overcome injustice is a hallmark of R-W. In various ways we put the message of Jesus into action in both the local and global communities.

Our History

The congregations of both Robertson and Wesley (amalgamated in 1971) had long histories of outreach work. With women like Nellie McClung as members, it's no wonder helping others is in our blood. Each generation rallies around a concern, be it women's suffrage, helping refugees or advocating for the poor. An example in our history is *The House Next Door Society*, formed in response to the need for women's transitional housing during one of Edmonton's many "booms" and now a provincially supported housing agency which assists individuals with mental illness acquire skills in order to achieve greater independence.

Peace

With the threat of nuclear arms in the 60's and 70's peace was on the minds of many. In 1976, the Canadian Council of Churches founded *Project Ploughshares*, a group mandated to find ways to build peace and prevent war. In response, members of R-W helped found the Edmonton chapter. More recently we took part in a United



Church consultation to create a new Peace Policy in response to the UN policy of the "responsibility to protect", namely the need for the global community to protect vulnerable people even if it means using military force.

Refugees

In the late 1970s, Vietnamese refugees began pouring into Canada. In response R-W sponsored the first of our refugee families, working hard to raise money and help them rebuild their lives. In the intervening years, we have sponsored and assisted people from countries as diverse as Kosovo and Somalia. In recent years this work has involved delays and problems due to government policies, but we continue to respond be it sponsoring a family or helping with the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers projects.

Food Bank

In the '80s, with a sharp downturn in the economy and an influx of First Nations people into Edmonton, the need for a food bank became apparent. With a present member of R-W as a founding member Edmonton Food Bank, it's no surprise that R-W has been a distributing food bank depot for over 20 years with some volunteers operating the morning phone-in service while others unload the truck, check clients and distribute food in the afternoon.

Community Dinner

Responding to a growing need in our neighbourhood, R-W started the Community Dinner program in 1997. Once a month, 100 to 150 people are

welcomed to Memorial Hall for a free hot dinner, often accompanied by entertainment. We alternate with Christ Church Anglican to ensure there is a hot meal twice a month and join with them in early December to put on a special Christmas dinner. Volunteers plan, purchase, prepare and serve food, and clean up afterwards. A volunteer sign-up sheet is maintained in Memorial Hall and necessary funding is raised through bake sales and other donations.



Street People

Our Magic Pantry assists transients and homeless people who come to the church seeking food. We have had an increase in demand in recent years, offering between 15 and 25 bag lunches each week. The cost of buying food and juice is assumed by the Community Dinner budget, but donations of easily opened containers of food are always welcome.

Inner City

Robertson-Wesley has had a long involvement with the Bissell Centre. Many in our congregation have worked there as volunteers in various capacities. Of course, R-W's significant Missionary and Service (M&S) givings contribute to Bissell's annual financial requirements. Each year, volunteers make hundreds of

sandwiches to help the Bissell Centre meet its growing demand for food. In addition, we participate in the Inner-City Pastoral Ministry, providing lunches and serving at some of the services.

Seniors

Operation Friendship is a program which ensures that difficult-to-house inner city seniors are fed hot lunches and provided a space for gathering and conversation. We provide money, food and servers for four hot meals at McCauley Seniors' Drop-In Centre each June through September.



Housing

Recently *Habitat for Humanity* has become a focus and we now include a regular "food for the builders" program in our yearly budget to help feed *Habitat for Humanity* building crews.

First Nations

Hearing of the struggle of the Lubicon Cree in their land rights dispute with the Alberta government in the 1980's, film nights and other events were held to raise awareness and offer support. The dispute remains unresolved but members of this congregation continue to work for resolution. In addition, we have participated in the annual National Day of Healing and Reconciliation, a day set aside to encourage healing and right relations among all who call Canada home, especially cultural minorities.

Zambia

Following the 2007 visit to Edmonton of members of the Mindolo Church in Zambia, \$500 was donated for mosquito nets for children. This partnership continues through an annual donation.



Education

Over the years there has also been an active educational component to our work, as members highlighted various social justice issues through educational events organized with resources from *10 Days for World Development*. Now called *Kairos*, this interchurch coalition continues to help raise awareness about various issues like poverty, aboriginal rights, and the environment.

Responding to Needs

Following the sale of Wesley United Church, funds were set aside in a trust to help people and organizations in need. The E.I. Clarke Trust is also set aside to help fund outreach efforts. We continue to respond to the needs of the local and global community, with our hands, our pocketbooks and our hearts. As often as there is a need, folk have responded.

The Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee meets at 9:00 a.m. on the first Sunday of each month. Anyone who wants to participate is welcome! For further information, call the church office at 780-482-1587.

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Helping Others

at Robertson-Wesley



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