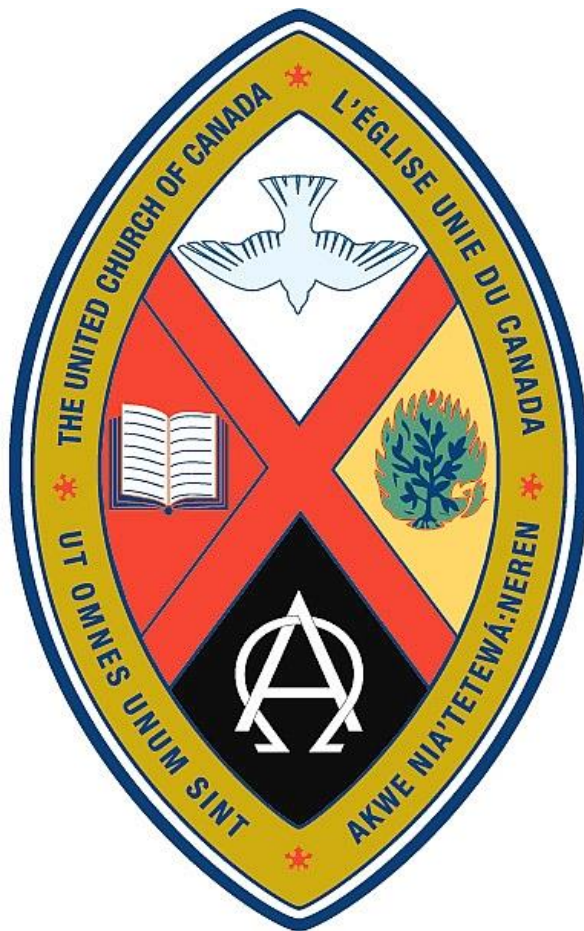




2020

Robertson-Wesley Annual Report



Budget Information Session
Sunday, February 7, 2021

Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, February 21, 2021

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Trustees of Robertson-Wesley United Church

General Purpose: The Trustees are authorized on behalf of the Congregation to hold in trust all properties of the Congregation.

Membership: There shall be no fewer than 8 Trustees. Vacancies shall be filled by election by the Congregation.

Specific Duties: To erect and repair buildings; to permit use of property for church purposes; to sell, mortgage, exchange or lease the property with the consent of Presbytery. Trustees' activities are restricted and governed by public statute, the UCs "Trust of Model Deed" and lawful directions of the Official Board or Church Board or Church Council and of other courts of the UC having jurisdiction.

Current Trustees:

Vital Ouellette, Sylvia Duffus, Lorne Langman, Allison Seymour, Bud Squair, Karen Hansen, Harry Bridges, Ray McKall

2020 Statistics

Average Sunday Morning Attendance:

January	155	Confirmations	0
February	180	Reaffirmations	0
March	404 (3 services in person, 2 online)	Transfers In.....	0
April	932 online only	Transfers Out	0
May	370 online only	Baptisms	0
June	310 online only	Funeral/Memorial Services*	5
July	229 online only	Weddings*	2
August	188 online only	* For services performed both at R-W and offsite.	
September	55 in person 186 online		
October	49 in person 165 online		
November	41 in person 168 online		
December	36 in person 240 online		

Minutes: Annual Congregational Meeting

February 23, 2020 **DRAFT MINUTES. Attendance** (Appendix A)

Chair: John Fleming

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
1. Call to Order	John Fleming welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order 12:05pm . We have quorum.
2. Invocation	Rev. Leigh Sinclair and Rev. Karen Bridges opened the meeting with a prayer and a call to Holy Manners.
3. Opening Hymn	Spirit God, Be Our Breath verses 1 and 2 (More Voices 150) Erin Craig
4. Act of Remembrance	Rev. Karen Bridges and Rev. Leigh Sinclair read the names of who died in 2018 in an act of remembrance and lead us in prayer.
5. MOTION to allow adherents be allowed to vote:	MOTION: Adherents be allowed to vote at the 2020 Annual Congregational Meeting. Moved: Lynn Maki Second: Ron Soans Motion Carried.
6. Approval of Agenda	MOTION: Accept the agenda for the 2020 Annual Congregational Meeting be approved as presented. Moved: Gary Pecknold Second: Colleen Ouellette Motion Carried.
7. Approval of the 2019 Meeting Minutes	MOTION: Approve the meeting minutes of the 2019 Annual Congregational Meeting Moved: Lynn Maki Second: Ron Soans Motion Carried.
8. Approval of Annual Report 2018	MOTION: Accept the 2019 annual report as printed. Moved: Richard Kennedy Second: Lisa Fairweather Motion Carried. Music Report – no mention of the Interim organist and thank you for her service from Chris Gowers.
9. Motion to accept 2019 financial statements	MOTION: Tory Bachmann moves the acceptance of the 2019 financial statements as audited year ending December 31, 2019. Moved: Tory Bachman Second: Louis Berlinguette Carried.
10. Motion to accept 2020 budget.	MOTION: Tory Bachmann moves the approval of the 2020 annual budget as presented. Moved: Tory Bachmann Second: Karen Hansen Carried. 1 Abstention Q-Budgeting a deficit is in question from the floor and if a non-profit can we budget a deficit without extenuating circumstances? A-Deficits are covered by the reserved fund if required, either interest from the fund or the principal. Q-How do we top up the reserve fund to keep it from depleting? Q-How can the congregation work to continue to provide the services we provide while topping up the reserve fund. A-Funds are carefully invested and monitored to get the best we can from our investments. C-We are on a slippery slope with deficit budgets and need to get a handle on our planning. Q-What happens with the reserve funds are depleted? A-Long term planning has begun to determine what we can do and what is the trigger point that determines when we cut back. C-This is the first time we have budgeted offerings based on actual numbers and not “pie-in-the-sky” numbers. Q-We had frozen the reserve fund at 500,000 but now we are dipping below. What will the new “freeze” point in the future?

	<p>A-We are aware but some funds drawn down have not been returned to the fund do to early expenses this year. Our budget is “faith based” in the hopes that people will see the need and meet the challenge each year.</p> <p>Q-Where did the trust funds come from was a question asked and was answered by Ian Ingles who explained where the funds have come from.</p>
11. Appointment of Auditors	<p>MOTION: That we continue using Ellis Group to audit Financial Statements. Moved: Tory Bachman Second: Ann Thomas Carried.</p>
11a. M&S 2020-21 Goal	<p>MOTION: Set the 2020-21 goal for M&S of \$35,000 Moved: Lynn Maki Second: Donna Krucik Carried</p>
12. Recognition of Retiring Official Members	<p>Colleen Graves (Past Chair) Trisha-Lee Wasmund (Regional Representative) Felicia Drever (Regional Representative) Dawn Allan – (Mission and Outreach Pod)</p>
13. Election of 2020 of Official Board Members and Trustees	<p>Ron Soans presented the following nomination slate for the Official Board:</p> <p>Those continuing their term: Past Chair: John Fleming, Chairperson: Doug Sollows, Treasurer: Tory Bachmann, Secretary: Paul Verdin, Ministry & Personnel Chairperson: Lisa Fairweather, Property Chairperson: Jack Waters, Member-At Large: Chris Gowers, 1 Regional Rep –Tamara Wright, Rev Karen Bridges, Rev. Leigh Sinclair</p> <p>MOTION: To close nominations. Colleen Graves nominated as Regional representatives; No nominations for Incoming Chairperson Moved: Bob Klakowich Second: Gary Pecknold Carried Motion: Approve the slate of candidates as presented including Colleen Graves. Moved: Tory Bachmann Second: Lorna Berlinguette Carried. MOTION: That we ratify Lesley Verdin as Regional Rep. Having started her term in 2019. Moved: Tory Bachmann Second: Karen Hansen Carried MOTION: Give the Board the power to fill the vacant positions until the next congregational meeting. Moved: Lynn Maki Second: Felicia Drever Carried</p>
14. New Business	<p>a. Gavel is passed to Doug Sollows b. Listening Team for Music Ministry - 3 of the 5 listening team shared what they have heard and learned so far. They shared the survey results with us. March 15th is a discussion with the Pods and people are welcome to attend. Report will be presented to the board on March 17th and the listening part is finished and the hiring work continues. c. Other new business raised, if any.</p> <p>Motion: Thanks to all the people who prepared the budget for 2020 and the Annual Report Moved: Karen Hansen Second: Lorna Berlinguette Carried</p> <p>A suggestion was made for next meeting that the next budget be presented without a deficit show?</p> <p>Doug thanked Colleen Graves and John Fleming for their gentle guidance and support given over the past year.</p> <p>A graphic illustration shows the number of groups and the number of people that make things</p>

	<p>happen here at RWUC. The strategic 5 year planned is aimed at ensuring we remain financially viable in the future and support the work of all the people who volunteer their time and talents to the betterment of this congregation.</p> <p>Doug closed his remarks with a benediction.</p>
15. Closing Hymn	<i>Spirit God, Be Our Breath verses 3 and 4 (More Voices 150)</i>
16. Benediction	
17. Adjournment	MOTION: Move to Adjourn the AGM – 13:25 Moved: Gary Pecknold Carried

Appendix A

Attendance: Tory Bachmann, Arnold Maki, Lynn Maki, Joni Soans, Ronald Soans, Joyce Soans, Diane Sollows, Douglas Sollows, Bud Squair, Betty Squair, Lois Butler, Marilyn Kazeil, Elsie Coon, Sharon Damery, Karen Hansen, Gayle Houston, Rosemary Dunbar, Ann Thomas, Karen (Markus & Julia) Gabert, David Begin, Judith LeBlanc, Sarah Wiens, Ian Inglis, Carol Inglis, Garnet Thomas, Ed Buckland, Derek Sutherland, Melisa Guilbeault, Erin Craig, Phyllis Harlton, Felicia Drever, Lois Field, Anne-Marie Ndikymana, Jill Lambie, Lourdes McLaughlin, Ted Blezard, Jane Chesebrough, Jean-Marie Nzeyimana, Rhonda Black, Robert Klakowich, Julie Golosky, Colleen Graves, Joan Morrison, Brian Webb, Lisa Fairweather, Elizabeth (Charlie) Nash, Kathryn Rambow, Elizabeth (Manany) Lovencin, Susan Cameron, Erica Locencin, Nancy Heule, Gary Pecknold, Joan Pecknold, Kathleen Gowers, Chris Gowers, Doug Densmore, Janet Clark, Donna Krucik, Lorne R Langman, Trisha-Lee Wasmund, Rev. Leigh Sinclair, Frazz Kamal, Dean Lawymik, Lorna Berlinguette, Louis Berlinguette, Colleen Ouellette, Richard Kennedy, Susan Hutson, Laura David Foster, Pan Graham, John Fleming, Paul Verdin, Rev. Karen Bridges,

77 in attendance (children in attendance)

Official Robertson-Wesley Church Board

This year has been a privilege; to participate with and to observe the people at Robertson-Wesley; to see how we have adapted and innovated in 2020.

The staff, committee members, and board colleagues have shown their best. Their professional and personal dedication; to serve for the betterment and health of the Robertson-Wesley community was and continues to be, inspirational.

The introduction of services and programs, on-line, have allowed congregation members to stay in touch socially and spiritually while expanding our profile, virtually around the world. The joy, for some of us, to have the opportunity to worship within the Sanctuary, represents an empathy to allow choice.

The review of the Church this summer by the Pastoral Relations Commission heard from 92 persons, 87 whom were members. This process of evaluation identified many strengths and opportunities to grow and improve.

Change will continue in to 2021 as we:

- evaluate and learn from our experience of this year;
- continue to evolve a 5-year Strategic Plan;
- revisit our Community of Faith Review;
- work with and integrate the findings for the Pastoral Relations Commission;
- select a new Director of Music; and,
- bring on new committee and Board members.

Robertson-Wesley is represented by a diverse, passionate group of people who have this year shown quiet confidence, compassion, nurturing their friendships and who often use the word FAMILY to describe their experience; a quiet refuge and alternative to the noise of the day-to-day.

The opportunity to serve has been a unique life experience.

A sincere thank you!



Douglas Sollows, FRAIC
Chair – Official Robertson-Wesley Church Board

Minister of Congregation and Community Development

"All truly great innovations are incubated in liminality. God's greatest work occurs in liminal space."

- Rev. Susan Beaumont

COVID thrust the church and the global world into a liminal space. A liminal space can be defined as the space between, a threshold or point in between two spaces. It is the space between the known and the unknown. These are moment in history and time when, as Susan Beaumont points out, "the continuity of tradition is called into question, and the uncertainty about the future fuels doubt."

Throughout my 26 years of ministry I have been in groups that use to joke about having a drive through communion so that everyone's differing expectations could be met. I have been part of conversations where fear was shared over the idea of moving the worship services on line. People would proclaim, "If we go online, no one will come to church, then no one will donate, and the church will die!" COVID changed everything and pushed us into a liminal time. AND in true Robertson-Wesley fashion, we took the path less followed and saw the possibilities. Robertson-Wesley is a wonderful and weird mix of traditional and edgy.

This has been a year of innovation and adaptive change. Many questions were asked, and there was a great deal of discernment done. I can't help but believe that the past few years leading up to this unprecedented time provided us with a strong foundation of faith. 2018-2019 we spent time on engaging in spiritual practices and living as disciples. We engage in issues of justice, spending time on learning about power and privilege, racism, gender identity and sexual orientation, differing abilities and mental health. All of this was done as a way to help us continue to live out the call of being a welcoming and inclusive faith community. A community that honours diversity, and empowers the people to answer God's call in this community and the world.

So when the world came to a sudden halt in March, we shifted, and we found a new way to engage in our faith, while engaging age old practices. We immediately began to offer daily live streams that helped people to deal with their grief and fear, to explore the bible, their faith, and to worship together while being physically apart. To my great surprise, we engaged in drive by blessings, and encounters. We picked up the phone and called people, we sent letters through the mail, we went for walks and did home deliveries.

Ministry shifted drastically. To say that this was the most difficult year in ministry is an understatement. How do you minister to people that you don't get to see? How do you know where and how the Spirit is at work with the people you serve? It all comes down to trust. How do you help people engage in their grief, anxiety, fear and doubt without community rituals? How do you journey with people during such trying times of great change and transition? You pray, you listen, you wait, you reach out, and you trust in God. Being thrust into using technology has brought with it new understandings and gleanings. Technology has allowed us to extend our ministry throughout the world. Our viewership increased and this new technology has provided an opportunity for people who have moved away to engage in and still be part of this faith community. Technology has provided people, who were unable to attend programs during the day because of work, to do so from their office over lunch. Technology has provided people who deal with social anxiety an avenue of support, and community in a way that feels safe for them. Technology has allowed people with health issues or mobility issues to be part of worship. I loved hearing all the creative ways people have found to help people without computers to listen to the service while on the phone together.

My ministry moved to the lawn of the church. Throughout the spring, summer and fall, people gathered on the grass to meet with one another. I had the opportunity to meet with more and more people from the community to talk about our mission and ministry. In these difficult and trying times, the Spirit is alive and well. We are a resilient people who will continue to care and love one another as Jesus taught us to. It is as always an honour to be in ministry with all of you and the wonderful staff team that we have here at R-W. Our strength comes from living out this ministry together. We truly not alone! And for this we give God thanks.

Respectfully submitted by
Rev. Karen Bridges

Bridging Minister

Thank you for inviting me and welcoming me into your circle of community at Robertson-Wesley. I have been in ministry with you on a part-time basis since Nov.1 and I think it is fair to say that in that time I have learned more about things I never cared to learn than at any time in my previous ministry!

My first act of ministry with you was to conduct a funeral with 12 family members present and the service livestreamed to others. To say it was unusual is an understatement. However, I am learning how to “be” with people when I cannot touch or hug. I have found ways to hear concerns and hopes and dreams. I see the blessing of being part of a community of faith which is established and can communicate at a deeper level even if we are on Zoom. I have discovered that I can lead worship in an empty building. I can still see the faces of the saints whether from this congregation or former congregations and I know how some of those faces are responding to my words. I know that we are still linked in a faith which is deep and will live into the years beyond this pandemic.

I was reminded this morning of the theologian Carter Heyward who suggested that we might all spend time godding one another into being. I invite each of us to be god for one another during this time. Our care and compassion can outlive any virus. Blessings upon all of you.

Respectfully submitted by,
Rev. Sally Boyle

Office Administrator

2020 brought many changes to R-W, and with it changes to my roles as Office Administrator and Communications coordinator. When I reflect on the past year, the words and phrases that come to mind are pivoting, quick thinking, uncertainty, fear, disappointment, sadness, and hope.

In March of 2020, we closed the church. The only historical precedent for closing the church was over 100 years ago, when Robertson United and Wesley United both closed due to the Spanish Flu in 1918. The excerpt below, from Nancy Heule, is from an article she wrote for *Between the Aisles* in Spring of 2019 (some excellent unintentional foreshadowing on her part).

“Life in Canada came to a standstill for a few months in late 1918 and in early 1919. Schools, churches, and all other public facilities were closed. Stores and businesses shortened their hours of service in order to reduce the spread of infection. Anyone with a hint of a cough was banned from large gatherings, and people were encouraged to wear masks when they left their homes. In fact, local newspapers printed patterns and instructions to make facemasks. Robertson Presbyterian Board minutes of January 1919 record that because there were no Sunday services and no offerings, no bills could be paid. In fact, a church member wrote to the coal company to explain Robertson’s inability to pay its bills, but there is no mention of the coal company’s response. Meanwhile at Wesley Methodist church, the women did laundry in the church basement for the families of the sick. And the ministers? No study time for them. Instead they were busy burying the dead.”

The gravity of closing the church was not lost on the staff of R-W and we quickly worked together to figure out how to bring R-W’s programming and worship to the community despite not being able to meet in person. We worked on new systems, new platforms, and with new technology. Hoping to try and capture Robertson-Wesley’s warmth, welcome and feeling of inclusion digitally; no small feat! In September came the challenge of combining livestreamed and in person worship; with their months of experience at that point the wonderful tech team of R-W was able to make it happen and continue to bring Sunday worship into your homes.

In my role, as Office Administrator, I was able to quickly adjust to working from home, a lot of my job is tech based such as: bookings, record keeping, communications, IT assistance, website maintenance, and social media admin work. Forwarding my phone was easy and was done remotely too! I feel lucky that several years ago R-W had the foresight to move to the google cloud, this has allowed all staff to be able to access important work documents from any computer with their R-W log-in. I am also grateful for all the volunteers who spent countless hours digitizing our records and historic rolls, giving me access to needed information when I couldn’t be in the office.

My role in Communications continued, but with events being cancelled and the church being closed, I focused more on our social media channels, as they became our window to the world. Online attendance numbers skyrocketed at the start of the pandemic with over 1300 people watching our Easter services; later we would see numbers closer in range, and actually higher in number than our usual in person attendance. With much less printing of bulletins and posters we reallocated those printing costs to sending a monthly letter to those who were isolated, including copies of *Between the Aisles*, printed sermons or colouring pages coloured by the kids of R-W.

As this pandemic and uncertainty follow us into 2021, I continue to process the feelings and lessons of 2020. One thing that helped me through (and I think, the thing that makes R-W great) is the community. The feeling of community I get from R-W enveloped the world at the start of the pandemic, it felt like the whole world was in this together, we all had the common goal of helping each other and keeping each other safe at all costs. Unfortunately, that feeling worldwide eventually fell away; people got restless and started making exceptions for themselves, people put their own wants above others needs, people decided some folks were expendable because of age, health concerns, or disabilities. But in looking forward, I have hope for a better future, a future lived with R-Ws feeling of community, a future guided by R-Ws statement of welcome and inclusion to respect and honour all people, regardless of sexual orientation, age, gender identity, differing abilities, ethnicity, or economic circumstance.

Respectfully submitted by,
Elyse Munro

Music Ministry

“...above the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing:
It sounds an echo in my soul: how can I keep from singing?”
Robert Lowry, *My Life Flows On*

2020 will likely go down in history as one of the most difficult years on record for the Robertson-Wesley music ministry, the church as a whole, and the world at large. It’s still difficult to wrap my head around the differences between the year that was planned and the year that came to pass, and I imagine that we’ll all be feeling the effects and after-effects of the COVID pandemic for many years to come.

In the middle of a year where the permanent Music Director position is still vacant, this posed a large challenge for me as the Interim Director of Music: the music ministry at Robertson-Wesley had to be essentially re-invented because of the pandemic, without the kind of leadership that a permanent Music Director could provide. This led to a year that was full of discomfort and uncertainty for me, as well as for members of the musical ensembles at the church and for members of the congregation who value the historically strong music programming that R-W offers. Even though it was an unpredictable and difficult year, it afforded the music ministry the opportunity to distil down to its most basic parts, and space to discern what is needed from the music ministry going forward. The pandemic gave us space to create new things that likely would never have come about except for the circumstances around COVID. When it’s finally time to return to church the way it was pre-pandemic, the approach to music ministry will carry these ideas forward and be enriched for it.

Thank you so very much to the musicians who have helped to create music in this community: some in expected ways, and others in ways that wouldn’t have crossed our minds even a year ago. Thank you as well to all who support the various music ministries with your time, talents, and funds: it is because of all of you that music can continue to be a vital part of the life of Robertson-Wesley.

Pre-COVID: January 1 - March 15, 2020

Choir of Robertson-Wesley:

The choir of Robertson-Wesley is composed of volunteer singers plus four paid section leads. Some ability to follow written music and match pitch is required for membership in the choir, but otherwise this ensemble is open to all.

The choir rehearses every Wednesday evening at the church for two hours, and arrives at 9:45 each Sunday to prepare to sing at the 10:30 service.

Membership fluctuates with the seasons, but at a full complement the choir numbers about 35 singers. From January to mid-March 2020, the choir prepared 16 anthems to sing at 8 services, in addition to preparing the hymns and service music to lead congregational singing. The choir had already been preparing music for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter when the COVID pandemic shut down the rehearsal process.

The choir was directed by Erin Craig, interim music director. Section leaders Claire Rolheiser, Julie Golosky, Casper Seely, Matthew McGuigan, and Noah Wright provided musical support and leadership. The choir members also participated in the non-musical life of the church: the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper was spearheaded by choir members and led by Andy Melson.

Handbells at Robertson-Wesley:

Nova Bells and the Robertson-Wesley Ringers continue to hold the handbell tradition at Robertson-Wesley to a high standard. As an intermediate level bell choir, Nova Bells continues to hone their handbell skills, exploring advanced techniques and more difficult repertoire. The Robertson-Wesley Ringers are composed of twelve experienced ringers who are longstanding members of this ensemble and the handbell community. Both ensembles are directed by Isabela Ramos, Interim Handbell Director, and rehearse on Thursday evenings.

The R-W Ringers, who ring on five octaves of handbells and hand-chimes, explore and study a variety of repertoire and styles that consists of original handbell compositions to transcriptions of orchestral scores. They are grateful to count Betty Radford, an internationally recognized handbell composer, among their number. The R-W Ringers play many of her pieces, and are thankful for the musicality and freshness Betty's compositions bring to their repertoire selections.

On January 26th and March 15th, the Ringers played in Sunday Worship. They were joined on January 26th by flautist Matthew McGuigan, and on March 15, they were joined by percussionist Aaron Addorisio.

COVID: March 16 - December 31, 2020

Sunday Services: Live Stream Technical and Musical Challenges:

March - May 2020

When the COVID pandemic shut our church down to in-person worship, the ministers and I made a very fast and smooth transition to live-streaming our church services. The first two services under shutdown were broadcast by Rev. Leigh Sinclair from her home, where she provided the music by singing a cappella. After that, Rev. Leigh, Rev. Karen Bridges, and I began broadcasting a Zoom meeting between the three of us to Facebook Live. This was a simple way for us to get started, allowed us to all broadcast from the safety of our own homes, and allowed our services to be seen by a large number of people. The downside was that Zoom gave us minimal control over video and audio settings. At this point, music for these services was provided by me and my partner, Matthew McGuigan. Matthew was the bass section leader of the R-W choir until September 2020, and we share a home. I sang the hymns and played piano accompaniments, as well as piano preludes and postludes, and Matthew sang harmonies with me and played flute on several hymns, preludes, and postludes.

When communicating over an internet connection, on a platform like Zoom, there is always a delay from the time one person speaks to the time that someone on the other end of the call hears them. This delay is not caused by any software, but by the speed and strength of the internet connections of everyone on the call. Even with a strong internet connection for everyone on the call, the delay still happens. This makes it impossible for people to make live music, together, from two or more different locations, and this is why the music for each service was done by a single household.

The ministers and I experimented with both Zoom and BeLive, another live-streaming software option, for a few weeks, trying to improve the video and audio experience. Eventually, we switched to streaming from OBS (Open

Broadcasting Software), with much technical knowledge and assistance from Matthew. Making this switch allowed us to show the bulletin on the screen, which included words of prayers and hymns so that people watching at home could participate more fully. It also gave us more control over the video and audio settings, but it came with a much larger technical workload. This largely fell to Matthew, who would set up two laptop computers and two tablets at our piano each Sunday in order to control all the visual and audio elements for the live-streamed services, in addition to singing and playing flute.

June - August 2020

In June, staff members were allowed to re-enter the church building and live-stream our worship services from there. While this was a joyful thing for congregation members to see the church, it meant that Matthew and I had to make our technical setup portable in order to continue to live-stream the services from the church at the same quality we had been streaming from our home. There were many technical challenges surrounding this change of venue that are outlined in the section about live-streaming elsewhere in this report. Major technical assistance during this time period came from Matthew McGuigan, Brad Campbell, Elyse Munro, Shylo Rosborough, Pan Graham, and Tim Mallandaine.

The technical challenges faced during this time were very closely intertwined with the challenges around bringing in more musicians to sing and play live in Sunday services. Matthew and I had been providing all of the music up until this point, and we had always had the goal of bringing in different musicians to play on Sunday services as soon as it was possible with our technical setup. Because our streaming equipment was bought and added to our setup piece by piece, and because of the large obstacles around effective miking for voices and instruments, we did not believe, at this time, that we were adequately set up to have microphones on more musicians than just ourselves. We continued to provide most of the music on our own, but a few choir members sent in videos that we could broadcast as preludes, postludes, and anthems during services at this time. Thank you to Melisa Guilbeault and Bob Klakowich for their contributions.

When we were able to broadcast again from the sanctuary, the congregation made known that they really missed the sound of the organ. As a staff, we wanted to limit the number of households that were coming into the sanctuary, and did not want to add an organist to the households that were already there. I began to learn to play the organ, and since July, have been playing a majority of the preludes and postludes on the organ.

September - December 2020

The next challenge that the live-stream faced was the return of the congregation to the R-W sanctuary. This meant that all of the audio that was captured to be live-streamed also had to be captured and amplified through the church's PA system so that it could be heard by people in the pews. I cannot possibly overstate how big of a challenge this was, given the way the church's PA was built, the budget we had for equipment, and the necessity of any new equipment to be moderately comprehensible to volunteer technicians. This meant that we could no longer have pre-recorded music as anthems or special music, and we could not have scripture readers join us from their homes on Zoom. It also created yet another challenge of bringing in more singers for Sunday services: the acoustic balance in the sanctuary would need to be considered for worshipers in the sanctuary, in addition to the signals picked up for broadcast to the live stream for worshipers at home. With the equipment that had been purchased for the purpose of miking and broadcasting the whole choir, and the limitations of amplification within the sanctuary, this was not possible to do at this time.

During this time, Matthew decided that he needed a break from the church and the live-stream, since he had given so much to it over the previous few months. I continued to provide most of the music for services on my own, and Shylo Rosborough and Tim Mallandaine provided livestream technical support for all live-streamed services from September onward, with assistance from Kathryn Rambow, Conall MacLellan, Sophia Fairweather, and Charles Sabu, who all operated the camera.

Summary

From March 15 until December 31, there were 42 regular Sunday services, 4 communion services, and 8 extra services for Holy Week and the Christmas season, totalling 54 services. Each service has anywhere from 5-9 pieces of

music, including preludes, hymns, postludes, anthems, responses, and other special music, for a conservative estimated total of 378 pieces of music. Matthew played in all services until August, totalling 27 services and 189 pieces of music. Melisa Guilbeault provided video recordings of 5 anthems, and Bob Klakowich provided one video recorded prelude. The Nova Bells played prelude, anthem, and postlude on Advent 3, and the R-W Ringlets played prelude, postlude, and anthem on Advent 4.

Special Music:

The pandemic has changed the way that guest musicians are able to participate in regular services. For services that are streamed online only, such as regular Sunday worship from March to the end of September, and for special services like Lessons and Carols, it was possible to share video or audio recordings of songs from congregation members: thank you to Melisa Guilbeault, Bob Klakowich, Matthew McGuigan, Erin Craig, Shamin Malmas, Andy Melson, and Zylpha Melson, who shared their musical talents this way this year.

For the Lessons and Carols service, which was mostly pre-recorded and live-streamed only, several members of the choir collaborated on a “virtual-choir” style anthem, “The Glory of the Father” by Egil Hovland. Thank you to singers Claire Rolheiser, Caroline de Grave, Kalea Turner-Beckman, Shamin Malmas, Clara Dyck, Lea Callebaut, Julie Golosky, Maria Adria, Maria Smyth, Melisa Guilbeault, Andy Melson, Yaroslav Veremenko, and Matthew McGuigan; audio engineer Erin Craig; and video editor Jason Hardwick for making this production possible. Lessons and Carols also had two pieces from Jim and Jean Strathdee, who have made videos of their song catalogues available for churches to use for online worship during the pandemic.

There were a few occasions where we did have special music live from the sanctuary. Thank you to Belinda Chiang, primary interim organist, for playing each service from January through March, and on Remembrance Sunday. Thanks also to singers Douglas Graham, Isabela Ramos, Erin Craig, Jill Hoogewoonink, and Claire Rolheiser, and organist Elsie Hoover for sharing your gifts of music on Christmas Eve; to Douglas Graham and Elsie Hoover again for singing and playing organ with extremely short notice on November 8th when I was experiencing COVID symptoms; and to Matt Michielin for playing trumpet on Remembrance Sunday.

Hymn-Sing:

The Online Hymn-Sing was a new program that I started in March of 2020, after the initial shut-down happened in Edmonton. At this time, the ministers and staff wanted to have an online presence every weekday at noon, and I chose Fridays to present a sing-along style live-stream of familiar and comforting hymns. I choose approximately 12 hymns to sing on each broadcast, and it typically lasts for about an hour. I choose hymns based on themes that I change each week, whether that’s from scriptures that are coming up, from a certain liturgical season, or from a certain musical tradition. I’ve done hymn sings on Reformation music, on All Saints, on Transgender Day of Remembrance, and on several other days of note in the church calendar.

This program began as simply myself and Matthew McGuigan singing and playing hymns, with a single camera. As the weeks went on and we realized that we would likely be online for a long time, we upgraded the live-stream to have a hymn request form, and to be able to show hymn lyrics on the screen. Most of the technical credit for the way the hymn-sing now looks and sounds must go to Matthew: thank you so much for sharing your skills.

The hymn-sing is an opportunity for people to sing together while apart, but it’s also an opportunity to share some information on the hymns and the hymn tradition of the United Church of Canada. In the early streams when Matthew participated, we would sing and teach some hymns in four-part harmony. This gave the congregation an idea of what the choir sings, and it gave the choir members the opportunity to sing in harmony. I also took time to talk about the origins and pronunciations of hymns in different languages. On the stream, we have sung hymns in French, Spanish, Latin, Mandarin, Swahili, Luganda, and Shona. If there are hymns coming up in Sunday worship that are unfamiliar themselves, or in an unfamiliar style, I will often take time to teach melodies, rhythms, and words to make it easier to sing and follow along. I believe that when the congregation is able to sing together in worship again, these small moments of education will be helpful in creating more confident congregational singers.

When possible, I also talk about the cultural contexts of some hymns. I believe it’s vitally important to be aware of where our music comes from, especially when it comes from a marginalized culture or community. I also make a

point of changing hymn lyrics to have gender-inclusive language for God and for the people of God. When these issues come up, I talk about them each time, and try to foster a safe space for participants to ask questions.

In August, I began having special guest hosts on hymn-sing, where choir members, congregation members, and other interested folks from outside of the R-W community could choose all the hymns, then come on the live stream and talk about them with me. Thank you to all the special guests who have participated in the hymn-sing so far: Maria Adria, Sarah Wiens, Carol Inglis, Tammy Farkes, Emily Bamforth, Cathy Craig, Susan Farrell, and Kimberley McMann.

Hymn Sing started on March 20, and proceeded every Friday until December 18th, when I stopped for the Christmas break, totalling 40 broadcasts. I played an average of 12 hymns per broadcast, totalling 480 hymns broadcast over the course of 2020.

Choir of Robertson-Wesley:

Since March, the choir has not met in person, but has met on a number of occasions over Zoom to check in and say hello to each other. This has happened sometimes as a whole choir, and sometimes in section groups, to make it easier to talk with each other. The choir also met online at the end of the summer with the specific goal of discussing ways of continuing their role in the music ministry of Robertson-Wesley, without being able to be part of the choir. Some of the ideas have come to fruition, such as choristers guest-hosting the Hymn Sing broadcast, and choristers providing recordings for live-streamed services, as well as the virtual-choir style anthem that was produced for Lessons and Carols.

At this point in the year, public health rules and guidelines around group singing were rapidly changing, and had very specific requirements about spacing, barriers, and ventilation that, in the context of a Sunday service, the R-W sanctuary would not be able to meet. I had the goal of re-starting the choir to simply sing hymns together on our regular rehearsal evening, but with case numbers still rising when the in-person group singing ban was lifted in October, I was not convinced I could do it safely: a few weeks later, another ban came into effect, which meant that the choir was not able to sing together.

Handbells:

Nova Bells and the Robertson-Wesley Ringers continue to hold the handbell tradition at Robertson-Wesley to a high standard and have persevered and shown strength through the uncertainty and hardships presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ensembles began meeting again in October 2020. Blessed with two sets of handbells and an abundance of equipment, both handbell ensembles were able to thrive in a modified rehearsal environment that adhered to the restrictions and mandates stated by the Government of Alberta. Nova Bells and RWR have adapted and navigated through many changes and learning curves to be able to play music together. The ensembles also met via Zoom when necessary which allowed for the continuation of development within the ensemble and as lifelong learners. Both ensembles have found strength within their handbell community and musical journeys and continue to flourish regardless of the difficulties presented by COVID-19.

R-W Ringers:

The ensemble continues to master their art whether it be in-person during rehearsal or at home during their personal practice. The ensemble holds the handbell tradition at Robertson-Wesley to a high standard and bore the responsibility of learning and teaching themselves the repertoire and material at home on their own time when restrictions didn't allow us to rehearse together in-person. The R-W Ringers have experimented with Zoom and have met several times over the online format. Although ringing together via Zoom poses a grave of difficulties, the ensemble continued their musical journey through the means of score study where we looked at the musicality aspect of many pieces outside of physically ringing. We as an ensemble also engaged in many team building activities over Zoom to continue our growth as a community as well. The R-W Ringers rehearse for two hours on Thursday evenings.

The Ringlets, a handbell quartet composed of four members from the R-W Ringers, were thrilled to be involved in one of the Advent services at Robertson-Wesley as well.

Nova Bells:

In 2019, Nova Bells had growth from three octaves to five octaves. Due to the pandemic, we lost a few ringers and are now a resilient group of seven ringing 2-octaves of schulmerich handbells. When the ensemble meets online, the ringers have taken a keen interest and desire to expand their knowledge for the rudiments of music to improve their musicianship. The ensemble rehearses for one hour on Thursday evenings either in-person or online via Zoom.

In December 2020, Nova Bells was involved in the Advent 3 service at Robertson-Wesley where they shared a variety of Christmas musical selections. Nova Bells also pre-recorded special music for Spirit West United that was used for their Christmas Eve service which was uploaded on YouTube.

Respectfully submitted,
Erin Craig, Interim Music Director
with assistance from Isabela Ramos, Interim Handbell Director.

Affirming Ministries

United Church Ministry

Like many of you, my plans for 2020 were unfortunately disrupted with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Thankfully with the use of technology and social distancing measures, this year was still full of creativity, connection and joy. Many of my connections this year have been with United Churches all over the province. I had the chance to virtually meet so many remarkable, lovely, and hard-working affirming committees and individuals. I was also blessed with the opportunity to share sermons, messages and my journey with many different congregations, both in-person and online. Since the pandemic started, I was asked to help and assist Robertson-Wesley in the creation and running of their Sunday Worship Livestreams. This allowed me to learn more about audio, video, streaming, and programming. This in turn has assisted me in inputting these skills into my affirming work. One of the biggest challenges this year has been working with the Northern Spirit Regional Councils Affirming Task Group. We started meeting at the beginning of the year to plan and prepare a presentation for the 2020 annual regional meeting. We were preparing the region for the start of the Affirming Process. With COVID-19, the regional meeting was postponed until the end of the year and was hosted online instead of in-person. These changes were hard to navigate but after months of meetings and preparation, we were able to present and officially start our affirming journey for the 2021 year!

Programs

Haven is an inclusive Christian worship service and community for LGBTQ2S+ individuals and allies that meets once a month at McDougall United Church. Due to COVID-19, we shifted our services to be streamed online. This made it easier to reach people outside of the Edmonton area. Haven is a community initiative that relies on community support and volunteers. Unfortunately, with the pandemic and lack of community leadership, our Haven attendance has slowly dwindled to just a few volunteers. Due to this, our Haven planning committee met and decided to put Haven services on hiatus for 2021.

SoulOUTing is hosted once a month here at Robertson-Wesley United Church. It is a safe and inclusive space where LGBTQ2S+ folks and allies of all faith traditions and spiritualities get together to share conversation and community. Due to COVID-19, we shifted our meetings online through Zoom. Meeting online has been a barrier to some attendees, but it has also opened up the possibility for more folks outside of Edmonton to attend. This program has a collective leadership and is overseen and coordinated by Affirming Ministries.

Be Group is an activity group for transgender, non-binary & questioning minorities that meets once a month at Robertson-Wesley United Church (and other local locations). This is a group for transgender individuals to have fun and engage in the world, who might not otherwise have such opportunities. With COVID-19, all in-person activities were no longer an option. This created some barriers to the planning team. Due to social distancing measures and lockdowns, the Be Group had decided to end our meetings in the Summer.

Affirming Reflections is a weekly Livestream that was created at the start of the pandemic to engage the wider community online. Some of the topics that were discussed were LGBTQ2S+ history, pronoun use, transitioning, interviews, LGBTQ+ rights, and many more. This has been a great way to share information in a fun and engaging

way. These streams can be watched live and at later dates, which makes it more accessible for people to watch when they are able. These streams will continue monthly in the new year.

Affirming Coffee Hour started up in the fall when COVID fatigue started to impact people's engagement with streams and online events. The Affirming Coffee hour is a casual drop-in time on Zoom. This is a chance of connection and socialization for LGBTQ2S+ folks and allies. It is also a safe place for folks to learn more, ask questions, share stories and engage in thoughtful discussions. This program has been going well and will continue into the new year.

Community

An important part of Affirming Ministries is to establish relationships and create a partnership with LGBTQ2S+ organizations and faith groups in Edmonton and surrounding areas. Due to the travel limitations of COVID-19, the use of social media has been a huge asset in connecting with the community. Affirming Ministries has created and uses its own Facebook page and Instagram to share resources, live streams, events and information about programs and the affirming process. In addition to the creation of a social media presence, Affirming Ministries has also been creating and sharing resources for churches, organizations, Ministers, friends, family, and even for LGBTQ2S+ individuals. Due to COVID-19, all events had to be moved online. This allowed for further community connections and collaborations. Throughout the year, Affirming Ministries has collaborated with United Churches, Affirming Connections, Generous Space Ministries, Edmonton Interfaith centre, and more. These connections helped to create this year's events such as our United Church Pride video, interfaith pride service, affirming leader's day conference, as well as LGBTQ2S+ webinars and workshops. At the start of the year, I was disappointed to see so many of my plans get cancelled due to the pandemic. All of the hard work from everyone to move things online helped me realize how blessed we are to live in a world with such great technology. We were able to do almost everything we wanted to do online! It has been an exhausting and heartbreaking year, but the immense creativity and accomplishments that came out of all of the changes overshadow it. I am more than grateful to have this opportunity and I hope that 2021 is a little easier!

Respectfully submitted,
Shylo Rosborough (He/Him)
Affirming Ministries Coordinator

Live Streaming and Technology Annual Report

This report outlines how Robertson-Wesley has utilized technology to continue the ministry and mission of the church since COVID hit. This technology has allowed the congregation to worship, have meetings for different committees, groups etc, pastoral care visits, as well as programming and education. This is a summary of where we started and what it took to get to where we are today and where we are going in the future.

Below is a summary of the timeline of events:

- March 17 Scripture Reflection goes live on Facebook, using an I-phone and a mic, and an I-rig researched how to use an internal mic with a camera to ensure good audio.
- Church closed, and staff started live streaming from home using Facebook on their own personal phones or computers.
- We purchased live stream licensing for copyright.
- We started daily live streaming events at the beginning of COVID and continue to do so. Spirited Art Studio, Scripture reflections, Affirming Ministry, Seeds of Change, Hymn Sing, Bible Studies, Kids Programming.
- Worship was done by one minister only doing music, and scriptures, and all prayers etc., with no bulletin.
- Used BeLive on Facebook to incorporate 2 -4 people into worship along with text so congregations could sing and read along.
- Used Zoom to have meetings as staff, as committees, and as groups.
- Stopped using BeLive and moved to Zoom for worship so that the music could be done by the music team and both Ministers could participate in liturgy. At first we were able to live stream to Facebook only and then later we were able to live stream to both Facebook and YouTube, and from our church website.

- In late April a small group was gathered to find a way for how we were going to do live streaming from the sanctuary.
- Issues of lighting and poor internet connection led to staff doing worship in the sanctuary, socially distanced, using laptops, phone and I-pad through zoom on the internet platform called Open Broadcaster Software (OBS).
- The next step was to move to using the sound system in sanctuary on the live stream. This is when we purchased sound equipment to fix the poor quality of sound.
- With in-person worship starting in the fall, we shifted from phones and laptops to a dedicated video camera. This was to help address the issue of syncing the sound to the lips of the people talking, removing the lag time. We effectively moved off zoom. All tech equipment was hard wired to improve consistency and quality and so that the internet connection wasn't dropped.
- Tried Live captioning, and are looking into a better program to help with the translations.
- Changed the look of OBS
- Found volunteers to run the video camera on Sunday mornings, as well as the running of the live stream.
- Live streaming on both Facebook and YouTube

All of this technology did not exist before COVID, nor was there money designated for the equipment necessary to get this technology up and running. We got creative and were able to reallocate some funds with the 2020 existing budget. Now that we have a solid foundation in 2021 we would like to start upgrading some of the components to provide better quality, and work towards making the running of the technology easier for the operators so that we can continue to grow the volunteer team that runs it. We also plan to make this technology more seamless and invisible in the sanctuary once we improve the technology.

This is an acknowledgement of the collaborative effort of the people involved, (Elyse, Karen, Leigh, Erin, Brad, Garth, Matthew, Shylo, Laura, Brooke, Pan, Tim, Conall, Kathryn, Charles, Sophia, Jack) in the set up and ongoing process and could not have happened without them. Everyone had an equal part in making this a success.

Below is an in depth look from our current live stream technician:

In August, I was invited to join the Livestream team to bring some fresh ideas and share my skills with streaming and technology. At the start, I spent some time watching and learning about how R-W was currently streaming, what the goals were and what equipment we had. I was asked to assist Matthew with the creation and upkeep of our profile on Open Broadcaster Software (OBS). I had previous experiences with OBS so I was able to work with Matthew to create a user friendly and visually appealing OBS Scenes. OBS Scenes are a complex mix of media and audio sources, settings, controls, text, browser windows, files and more. This allowed us to showcase the bulletin text, photos, information and videos! Once the scenes were created we were able to broadcast them for the services. My first job was to sit and coordinate OBS during the services. This meant scene changes, audio levels, camera connection, bulletin changing and many other little settings that OBS needs for a successful stream. Once we solidified OBS, our next project was to create a permanent Streaming area. This meant researching, budgeting, and purchasing new equipment and setting it all up in the East Room. Here we were able to build and set up a new desktop computer, have an audio mixer, and dual monitors. Since this was a permanent area for the tech team, we created a streaming account, a RW Facebook account to stream from, and pinned and downloaded all necessary browsers and programs.

After a few weeks, we got the go ahead to worship together in-person. This meant that we had to change how we were streaming. Originally we were using phones and Zoom to provide our video feed. This created a challenge for in-person worship due to Zoom not being able to broadcast audio through the PA system. Brad and I spent a few weeks researching, testing and practicing video and audio setups so that we could purchase a video camera and use it instead of phones and Zoom. We had to troubleshoot camera locations, wiring, video feeds, lighting and settings in order for the camera to stream video to the computer. We found and bought HDMI link boxes that linked the camera and computer even at long distances. We kept the camera on the second level and had volunteers move the camera for us with the help of our OBS/Camera guide. We then moved the camera to the lower level and have finally placed it near the front. We continued to test and practice shots to make sure that things run smoothly, sound great and look clear. With everyone's collective help, we were able to go from not streaming at all, to having an advanced streaming experience on multiple streaming services. It has been a long and frustrating process, but seeing the

streams at the start of the spring, to how we conducted our Christmas services, I am proud to see how far we have come!

Respectfully submitted by,
Shylo Rosborough (He/Him)

Between the Aisles

*Meegwetch, *hiy, hiy Thank you, Creator! Thank you for churches, and newsletters, and

People, Hiy Hiy!!

Between the Aisles is a quarterly publication produced for the people of Robertson-Wesley. We have a group of five church volunteers plus the services of Elyse Munro our wonderfully capable Office Administrator. Elyse provides layout and graphics services. We have four rotating editors. They are Nancy Heule, Janet Clark, Marilee Stephens and myself, Maria Adria. Lisa Fairweather graciously serves as our proof reader.

We endeavor to provide a platform for information, ideas, storytelling, celebrations and reminiscences. The newsletter unites us as a community and allows people to reveal themselves in a safe and uniquely fulfilling manner. We encourage every single person to become an author and see their own name in print!! You can use this opportunity to explore, inform, entertain or foretell. You can ask a question, cite a solution or dish out some tried and true advice.

The group has had some impassioned discussions and disagreements amongst us!! And yes, we are learning what it is to be united, even in our differences. Researching and writing about critically contemporary and difficult topics helps us organize and distill our thoughts. I was able to use this process to firmly support and bless my own loved ones at an anguish filled, perilous, unprecedented time. I am deeply, deeply grateful for that fact.

Over the years, people have written about their childhoods, their trauma and their successes. Others have offered support, guidance, memories, poems or stories and quotes. We celebrate together as one body. In joy and pain, in laughter and tears. We are surviving in this liminal time. Hoping for the day we re- unite and worship in song. I give thanks for R-W and the various ministries it facilitates. I offer my deep gratitude to play a small part in the Mystery of hope, resurrection, love and joy. To partake in the play of the day. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted by,
Maria Adria

*Meegwetch from Algonquin meaning give thanks
*Hiy Hiy from Cree language means offering gratitude

Catering Ministry

The Catering Ministry is a ministry of caring for grieving families who choose to hold a funeral or memorial service at Robertson-Wesley. At such a difficult time, it can be comforting to meet with other family members and caring friends in Memorial Hall to share a few words, a beverage and a bite to eat.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions throughout most of 2020 did not allow for such gatherings. Catering ministry volunteers served one memorial luncheon in February, directing the net proceeds to the Mission & Service Fund of the United Church of Canada.

Respectfully submitted by,
Colleen Ouellette

Discernment, Envisioning, and Policy Pod (DEAP)

Discernment, Envisioning, and Policy Pod (DEAP)

The DEAP Pod is comprised of a group of people who meet regularly, listen, and discern where God's spirit is at work among the congregation of Robertson-Wesley. Most of our monthly discussions begin with sharing what we are hearing, noticing, feeling. These discussions, spurred on by theological questions and ideas from our ministers, inspire themes and direction in the life of our church. Periodically the group reflects back to the board and the congregation where they are sensing passion, energy, challenge, and discontent for the ministry and mission of this church. If you have visions, issues or questions you'd like the group to consider, please contact us.

Currently members of the DEAP Pod are Carol Anne Inglis, Jill Lambie, Robert Mah, Joni Soans, Sean Luyk, and Kay Meier along with Ministers Karen Bridges and Sally Boyle. This fall Elsie Coon and Charl Els decided to step away from the pod. To paraphrase Beverley McLachlin: *Each time a person leaves and is replaced, the group changes. And so subtly, do the people who stay on. One misses the person who has gone; one rejoices in the replacement. Everyone adjusts.* [p. 296. [Truth be Told](#)]

Many questions are posed and pondered during DEAP meetings, most of which have no answers. We have chosen twenty questions from the year 2020 to share with you, ordered from January to December:

1. How can DEAP support all staff and volunteers?
2. What symbolizes Robertson-Wesley Church for you?
3. Home: Is it a safe place? Is it a happy place?
4. What do we as a congregation want to remember from this time of coping with COVID?
5. In this new reality what could we let go of?
6. Where is the Spirit at work in the virtual community of Robertson-Wesley?
7. Liminal time: How long do we have to stay here? What can we learn of ourselves and our relationship with God from the plight of the Israelites in Exodus as we wait for COVID-19 to wane?
8. How do we build a new identity as a congregation?
9. How do we remain connected when we aren't **doing** our faith? What should I do to live my faith during the pandemic?
10. How can we support each other, especially during times of loss and grief?
11. Is it important to be physically in church? Is it enough to just be online?
12. What voices are we not hearing?
13. What is the best way to reach out to family, friends, the church community, and people named in prayers on Sunday?
14. How do we get courage to not-do as well as to-do?
15. What does action look like? Is it reflection? ...discernment? ...dreaming?
16. How can we find, foster, and create **peace**?
17. Family: What is it? How is Robertson-Wesley a family?
18. How do we want to channel our energy: Towards good will? Towards ill will?
19. In what ways are we re-evaluating the role of **kindness** in society?
20. In the vacuum that COVID has created are people thinking about issues differently, e.g., is there a renewed move towards seeking **justice**?

As we look back at this remarkable year, we acknowledge that it has been a time of prolonged daily stress, and many folks are feeling emotionally bankrupt and vulnerable in a myriad of ways. We are especially grateful for the many ways staff and volunteers have provided support to the Robertson-Wesley congregation during 2020 and kept us together while we've been apart.

A collaborative submission for the 2020 Annual Report

Family Ministry Committee

Well 2020 was nothing like we had planned! The pandemic impacted everyone and children, youth and families faced many changes and challenges this year. The Family Ministry committee and the work of family ministry had to adapt and change to our new virtual life and with the amazing creativity of Rev. Karen we were able to change our approach to keep families connected to RWUC.

Back in the spring, we had online programming 3 times a week for the first part of COVID, and that has now moved into Kids Worship on Sunday Mornings, with zoom fellowship once a month. This was and continues to be such a blessing for kids who are longing to connect to their church family. Little ones continue to dance and sing every Sunday morning – just in front of their TV instead of in the Sanctuary. The youth had a discussion group on Sunday afternoons via zoom off and on over this time. For Young Adults, we continued with virtual God on Tap once a month which was opened up to all adults a year ago.

Knowing how much the kids mean to the whole congregation and how tough the pandemic was particularly on some of our elders, we invited the children to colour a picture of the church to send to an elder. We also continued our tradition of the blessing of backpacks at the beginning of the school year but this year we did it as a drive by blessing and blessed everything that people wanted (bikes, instruments, letters, pets, etc.)

2020 proved to us that kids are, indeed, the most resilient of us all – we learned so much on how to adapt and still laugh (sometimes just at silly jokes in zoom chat windows) from our experiences this year.

Respectfully submitted by

Rhonda Black, Tory Bachmann, Elizabeth Nash, Heather Warkentin, Andrew Seale

Fellowship

Fellowship involves the planning for and presentation of the reception after the church service each Sunday: organizing the food and drinks (buying, making, accepting donations); setting everything out; serving; cleaning up afterwards. Co-chairs are Sylvia Duffus and Janet M Clark.

The Fellowship team is comprised of Sylvia, Janet, Karen Hansen, Monica Gerla, Ruth Belford, Felicia Drever and Susan Hutson, with frequent help from Brad Campbell, Melisa Guilbeault, and Richard Kennedy. Other members of the congregation are always welcome to help or donate, and do so frequently.

Last year, we enjoyed our new kitchen and our happy Fellowship — lively conversation, lots of laughter, kids playing, great snacks — until early March when we had to give all that up! All is not lost, however, because we eagerly plan to return to traditional Fellowship when we can.

In the meantime, please join Rev. Karen or Rev. Sally at 12 o'clock on Sunday for ZOOM Fellowship. They host a chat time of 30 to 40 minutes where those of us who "ZOOM-in" talk about the service and anything else that interests us. We are grateful to be able to visit without our masks during COVID. Just don't forget to bring your own drinks and snacks, please. Contact Rev Karen for the ZOOM link.

Respectfully submitted by,

Sylvia Duffus and Janet M Clark

Finance Committee

2020 truly demonstrated how Robertson-Wesley United Church is a community with a great sense of passion and purpose. This year was about adaptability and resilience and from a financial perspective, RWUC was able to be both! It is the job of the Finance Committee, and the Treasurer, to make sure the work of the church fits into the budget that is voted on by the congregation. Not always easy to do because we do so many amazing things and this year we had to pivot so many times into areas we never thought we would. But because of the incredibly generous

community who donates their time, talents, and treasures to support our church, we found a way. This year will truly be remembered for the generosity of people and their hard work to keep our community strong through a pandemic.

This year, the Finance Committee worked hard making sure we were tracking and planning for all scenarios as our financial outlook changed dramatically in March. We debated, discussed, and focused on shifting revenue and expenditures to ensure that the church was on track and in a healthy financial position. We met every month, we kept in touch with our tenants and the wider United Church to make sure we did everything we could to support our community. It was a challenging year for the stock market and our investments took a big hit, but luckily because of our cash position, we did not have to draw on them to support the work of the church. We are hoping as things improve through 2021 our investment portfolio will rebound as well. We are in a strong position currently, which will allow time for our investments to recover.

The work of the Finance Committee and especially the work of the Treasurer is made easier with the invaluable support of the Finance Manager at RWUC. Without Garth's spreadsheets and calculations and his extreme patience in working through the federal government programs and United Church of Canada support, we wouldn't have had such a strong year.

As we enter 2021, there is still so much uncertainty. The Finance Committee will continue to monitor closely our financials and any supports available to us through the various orders of government.

A huge thank you to all members of the Finance Committee: Eric Sauze, Connie Waters, Pat Stewart, Gary Pecknold, Sharon Damery, Staff support: Garth van Herwaarden, and Karen Bridges. And thank you to those who support the financial functions of the Church – from counting, to fundraising, to grocery cards – we couldn't do it without all of you!

Respectfully Submitted by,
Tory Bachmann, Treasurer

Fundraising

Our Fundraising groups had great plans for the year 2020. Thank you to all who attended the fundraising meetings and volunteered to coordinate events. Unfortunately, the restrictions due to COVID 19, made it difficult to continue with our plans as many of our ideas depended on having social gatherings.

Our fundraising goal for general revenue for 2020 was \$15,000.00. We managed to raise approximately \$3,000.00 for general revenue in 2020.

In February 2020 the Vintage and Boutique Clothing sale coordinated by Victoria Fedorak raised \$1,876.40
In June 2020, "The Family Friendly Drag Show" took place on "zoom" and raised \$200.00 for general revenue. This show was coordinated by Colleen Graves and Richard Kennedy with support from Shylo Rosborough.

The grocery card program continues and is coordinated by Robert Mah. The money raised from this program goes to general revenue.

Bake sales by Sylvia Post supporting the Anniversary Fund raised \$1,177.10.

Jams and Pickles by Donna Krucik raised \$831.00 for the Mission and Service Fund.

Thank you to all who coordinated a fundraiser and for all who supported these fundraisers.

Our next fundraising meeting will be in March 2021 and the date will be announced. All are welcome to attend.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Colleen Graves

Gratitude Team
(formerly known as the Stewardship Committee)

Who are we as a Robertson-Wesley United Church community?
Where have we come from?
Where are we going?

These are the kind of questions we asked and discerned at our Gratitude Team annual planning meeting last February. One of the things we know is that when our R-W community comes together we are able to learn from our past and look to our future. From these questions and the conversations that we had, we came up with our Gratitude Team 2020 theme, **One More Step.... Back Into The Future**. Throughout the fall we explored the idea of Gratitude with quotes, stories, and acknowledging the gratefulness that abounds at Robertson-Wesley United Church. This year our 2021 Pledge Drive looked very different. It was done through Sunday worship, through emails, telephone calls, mail outs, visits to the church to pick up a Pledge package, and to drop off a Pledge form. But mostly it was through our weekly *Still Spirited* e-news. We were asked to find information for our Pledge Drive on line. Thanks to Pat Stewart and to our R-W Office Administrator Elyse many questions were answered and Pledge forms returned to our church. One Sunday the Gratitude Team held a Drive-By pledge form drop off after church. During the 4 Sundays in November, we asked the Robertson-Wesley community to prayerfully consider their involvement in the mission of our church. These 4 Sundays were our 2021 Pledge Drive. The goal of the Pledge Drive is to invite us all to support the 2021 financial planning process of our church in the way that God calls each of us. It allows our Treasurer, Finance committee, and R-W Board to plan our budget for 2021 so that we can plan for the future and live out our ministry and mission in the world with confidence and a clear path. We are grateful for the time and talent that is given by our many volunteers to support the ministry and mission of our church. Without this our church would not be able to support our many programs, activities and ministries. Thank you for supporting the future of Robertson-Wesley United Church, and especially in these challenging times giving of your time, talent, and treasure.

The results of the 2021 Pledge Drive are shown below as well as the 2020 information for comparison.

Year	2021		2020	
	PLEDGES	AMOUNT	PLEDGES	AMOUNT
REGULAR	68	\$205,451	76	\$208,163
M&S	42	\$17,168	43	\$17,518

There are 80 PAR givers of which 42 have pledged. The number of pledges and amount pledged has changed from 2020 to 2021. RWUC pledge amount has decreased by \$2712.00 and the number of pledgers has decreased by eight (8). M&S amount decreased by \$350 and the number of pledgers decreased by one (1).

Our Gratitude Team is a hard working, fun loving, and diverse thinking, group of R-W people. There are always questions, discernment, word pondering, faith filled conversations and decisions, at our monthly meetings. If you would like to join us please contact our church office mail@rwuc.org.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jill Lambie and Pat Stewart
Gratitude Team

Mission and Service

“Mission & Service, the unified annual fund, is the compassionate response by the people of The United Church of Canada to God’s call to mission and healing for the world.” Monies raised by our congregation are submitted to the United Church of Canada to support the church and its mission locally and throughout Canada as well as partnering with humanitarian organizations throughout the world.

This year has been a challenge. During the pandemic our congregation was still able to send \$27,625 to the United Church of Canada for Mission and Service purposes. This represents \$1,000 from the UCW and \$25,982 from the congregation at large and \$643 from the catering ministry.

Heart felt thanks are offered to all who gave to M&S this year whether by your regular givings, special offerings on Communion Sundays or selling of baked goods and preserves. We continue to raise awareness about the importance of Mission and Service this year on Communion Sundays. Unfortunately, we have been unable to continue our quarterly Mission and Service bucket contributions due to COVID restrictions.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Sylvia Duffus
Mission and Service Coordinator

Koinonia Worship

What a year it has been! Who knew in January 2020, what lay ahead just two short months later? Hopefully you've been able to keep relatively well, are used to wearing a mask, staying home and distanced from family and friends; and found some interesting and satisfying activities to keep you busy for the last 10 months while the COVID 19 pandemic has forced shutdowns of favoured activities. Koinonia Worship, a friendly group of nearly 35 active attendees, was advised to close for the duration of the pandemic. The popular monthly potluck suppers and conversation around the dinner tables, followed by lay-led worship, were sadly put "on the shelf" for the final 10 months of 2020.

However, all was not lost: January and February started the year with two great evenings together! The first theme of 2020 was entitled, Growing Friendship, with songs, readings, stories, prayers and a discussion activity, reflecting on the value of friends; what does it mean to have a friend and ways to become a friend to someone in need. What an appropriate topic for the months ahead it turned out to be!

The second theme, in February, was about Serving, and living out what Christ lived and taught about Community. Over dinner, the groups discussed The Beatitudes and a poem entitled "Walk a mile in my shoes". Afterwards, we welcomed Dr. Karen Wilk, a vocational pastor, author, and local community leader, who talked about her work, Walking in the Spirit of Christ, followed by a Q and A period and discussion.

The third time Koinonia group members gathered, was for White Gift Sunday in late November, when after the morning service, several gathered in Memorial Hall to sort and pack up the amazing white gifts donated by our generous congregation, and deliver them to Bissell Centre for distribution over the Christmas season.

A few days after the "last" service at Robertson-Wesley in mid-March, the ministerial staff asked 4 of us to organize a phone-out to the other participants of Koinonia, to touch base with each other during this unprecedented time. No organizing was needed!! Individuals were already phoning, emailing and Zooming with others! And, when warmer weather arrived, there were even a few get-togethers in backyards – just to keep in touch in the fresh air! Friendship and Community in action!! Best wishes for a happy, hopeful and better 2021. The new vaccine is helping to bring that about, I believe! Stay safe!

Respectfully Submitted by,

Koinonia Worship
Joann Cooke, Group Contact

Men's Group

The RW Men's Group met at Robertson-Wesley twice in 2020: January to discuss proposals for 2020 activities; and February as a coffee hour social only. When the threat of COVID-19 appeared, all future meetings were cancelled until our community health situation is safe once again.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jim Triscott

Ministry and Personnel

2020 has been a year of transformation for our faith community and organisation, and the Ministry and Personnel Committee (M&P) played a role in the changes.

Highlights of our year include:

- Ingenuity of staff adjusting to changing public health requirements, offering meaningful connection and constantly adapted programming to church members and the world through phone, mail, and online platforms.
- Enjoying the healing and life-giving gifts of music and art, shared by Erin Craig, Isabela Ramos, Laura David Foster, Brooke Leifso and their guests.
- Devotion to the financial and physical well-being of our community, led by Brad Campbell, Elyse Munro, Garth VanHerwaarden, with support from Roderick Mamita, Riley Ross and Matthew McGuigan.
- Rev. Karen Bridges' creative and engaging Sunday worship and kids' church services, both in-person and virtual, and inspiring weekly reflections in the "Still Spirited" newsletter.
- Rev. Leigh Sinclair leaving for another pastoral charge.
- Community of faith and ministry reviews led by Northern Spirit Region.
- Hiring a bridging minister, Rev Sally Boyle, until June 2021 with plans to extend into 2022.

While not under M&P's supervision, we'd also like to highlight Shylo Rosborough's valuable weekly conversations in support of R-W's Affirming Ministry, exploring various aspects of diversity and inclusion in the church.

Building and maintaining a thriving faith community AND modern organisation has been especially meaningful this year. The role of Robertson-Wesley United Church in our personal spiritual lives and in the world has been a source of strength and service, our community when physical distancing and anxiety have been a pervasive force in our lives. We have an incredible variety of people who find nourishment at Robertson-Wesley, and we continue to be impressed by the professionalism of the staff and volunteers who light up our church and our community.

The M&P Committee consisted of six members of Robertson-Wesley United Church in 2020: Karen Gabert, Nancy Heule, Kathryn Rambow, Eric Sauze, Sarah Wiens and Lisa Fairweather.

M&P looks after confidential staff matters, and as such, regular meetings are attended only by committee members and sometimes staff members. We are available any time to answer questions or discuss matters - please let any one of us know!

Respectfully submitted by,

Lisa Fairweather
Chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee

Mission and Outreach Pod

Many of the Mission and Outreach Pod's typical activities have been impacted by the pandemic this year. Despite this, the Pod has hosted meaningful discussions throughout this year, with some new and exciting activities emerging.

The Mission and Outreach Pod met in March, during which we reflected on the incredible Refugee Ministry Robertson-Wesley has engaged in for many years and pondered the future of Refugee Ministry for Robertson-Wesley. Our dialogue included discussions regarding the various forms of Refugee Ministry, as well as logistical considerations. There were many attendees, which suggests that many in our community have interest in this work. The dialogue highlighted that this is a valuable area of ministry to revisit in the future, but one of the main considerations must be evaluating our capacity to engage in this important but demanding work.

The Mission and Outreach Pod is also continuing Robertson-Wesley's Truth and Reconciliation work. The Pod is in early stages of connecting with Indigenous visual/performance artists and creators, with the intent of developing meaningful relationships and opportunities for education through Indigenous art. Implementation of plans is dependent on the pandemic.

The Mission and Outreach Pod has also been exploring Environmental Stewardship as an area of ministry. In November, the Pod hosted a conversation, during which we considered how God is calling us to relate to Creation and how we as a Christian community can answer that call. We discovered that our community has a great passion and drive for action in this area. The Pod is planning a series of upcoming events and activities to engage the Robertson-Wesley community in Environmental Stewardship. Approaches will include reflecting on the spiritual connection we have with Creation, education, personal stories, and a Lent 2021 Environment Challenge. Above all, we intend to approach Environmental Stewardship with a hope in God and an optimistic envisioning of the future.

Respectfully submitted by,
Joni Soans

Nominations Committee

The nomination committee consists of Garnet Thomas, John Fleming, and Ron Soans.

The nominations team is mandated to find suitable candidates from our church membership for official board positions and to recommend their names to the Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM), where the general body can officially vote their appointment to the Board. The role of the individuals on the Nomination committee is to call members and ask them if they would be interested in the vacant roles and also to receive interest from members for these open positions on the Board.

The need for an incoming Chair of the Board will be a standing need every year. Interested candidates for this position please contact us. Also, this year we were looking for a Treasurer, Secretary, Member at Large and a Regional Representative.

We have been blessed in our search this year, as our search has yielded a full slate for the ACM. Please note, anyone still interested for any of the above positions can indicate their interest and could be added to the slate prior to the ACM on February 21st.

We believe in God's spirit at RW to inspire our congregation members to this calling every year and we look forward to welcoming all who show interest in being part of the Board.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Nomination Committee,
Ron Soans

Northern Spirit Regional Council (NSRC)

The new way we connect to our neighbouring United Churches.

Even through the uncertainty of the pandemic, the Northern Spirit Regional Council continued to provide support to Communities of Faith serving in northern British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and northern Alberta by providing ongoing programs, events, and announcements.

COVID guidelines and protocols and church reopening recommendations were developed. The council provided information regarding the money the Alberta government has invested to help faith-based and cultural organizations to recover costs associated with COVID-19.

At the 43rd General Council annual virtual meeting, the General Council approved a change to the Basis of Union to make Article 10.0 inclusive of persons of all gender identities. It also authorized a Category 1 Remit to test the will of the church with respect to this change and so requires a vote by two-thirds majority of regional councils. Then, Executive of the General Council may declare that the remit has passed and, if so, the policy change will automatically come into effect as of March 1, 2021. The Second Annual Northern Spirit Regional Council Meeting was held the evenings of October 14 and 21, 2020 online, with approximately 170 people in attendance. Ministry Personnel and Lay Representatives from Communities of Faith, and Guests from all over the Northern Spirit region worshipped together, heard a report from the Affirming Task Group, and learned about and voted "Yes" to Remit 1.

Northern Spirit Regional Council affirmed that Black Lives Matter. Addressing racism and racial justice will be an ongoing conversation and journey for the Regional Council and all ministries.

The Council developed an online calendar of all United Church communities of faith and incorporated ministry events that are open to the public to showcase fundraisers, delicious suppers, bible studies, special worship services and vigils, workshops, blanket exercises, and more.

One of the important tasks for the council in 2021 will be to consider applications for Mission Support and Regional Council Grants to support the mission of Communities of Faith.

Robertson-Wesley United Church (R-W) has four (4) elected delegates to the wider church as our representatives. These four members of R-W have voice and vote on *The Northern Spirit Regional Council (NSRC)*, along with Rev. Karen and Rev. Sally who are on the NSRC because they minister in this Region.

Regional Council's Purpose:

The regional council is responsible for encouraging and engaging in:

- a) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- b) local, regional, national, and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical, and interfaith) for ministry, mission, and justice work;
- c) ministry with children, youth, and young adults;
- d) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry;
- e) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community

There are regular updates that you can sign up for via KJackson@united-church.ca

Respectfully Submitted by,
Tamara Wright, Lesley Verdin, Colleen Graves
Northern Spirit Regional Council representatives from Robertson-Wesley

Outreach Committee

Outreach programs were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee met once in early January, and not again for the remainder of the year, on account of the reduction in activities. Due to the dedication of those involved, some of these programs have been able to resume again (with appropriate COVID measures), as outlined below.

Community Dinner

Our year started out with 145 guests at the January dinner to enjoy a scrumptious and satisfying pizza casserole and chocolate molten cake. It was especially well received. We continued the pizza theme later in January when we held a community dinner volunteer appreciation pizza night. Gathering together for a self serve pizza bar and chatting over a couple hours was fun and appreciated by all. If only we knew then what was going to happen later in 2020 we may have stayed a bit longer or cherished the casual gathering of people even more. February served 170 guests, serving pork chops, homemade beans and mac & cheese and cupcakes. There wasn't an hungry person leaving that day! Sadly, it was our last in person, in the hall dinner for 2020. By March the COVID-19 Pandemic had overtaken us. We made the decision quickly and effectively to switch gears for the March 14th dinner and prepare at 'take out meal'. We recruited a group of tireless volunteers who cooked, packaged and handed out an especially healthy and lovely take-out meal consisting of: chicken, pasta salad, huge homemade cookie, banana, juice box, disposable utensils all in to go format. About 100 people came to the door to receive that meal. All extras were carefully distributed to Magic Pantry lunch guests and to a variety of people in need.

Our Leadership and Planning group met virtually over the summer and fall to discuss the reality, possibility and challenges of attempting another 'take-out' style meal for fall of '20. The public health guidelines indicated it was not safe to host an in person gathering yet. After prayerful consideration we discerned that it was not the safest choice for both guests and volunteers. Our entire group was saddened by this reality of not providing meals and most importantly the community atmosphere that we know brings joy and comfort to the guests.

In December we hosted a Zoom social visit for all volunteers of the Community Dinner who wished to participate. We enjoyed a few hours of time together, sharing stories, reflections, poems and my 'silly' jokes. To close out the year we send cards of appreciation and gratitude to our amazing volunteers, about 80 cards went out! If you didn't receive one, because we were not able to be in touch to get your address, please know you are part of something special and we honour and appreciate all the warm hearted people who give of themselves. Looking forward to a healthy 2021 and as soon as we can, we will get the burners fired up again and get cookin'.

Rhonda Black, Community Dinner Coordinator

Magic Pantry

At the beginning of the year bag lunches which include 2 sandwiches, juice, cookies, pudding and crackers were given out by some dedicated volunteers on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday over the noon hour. An average of 24 bag lunches were give out each day. Then COVID hit and the program stopped for a while. It was started up again in October with a new system. A table is placed outside the church and a few bag lunches are set on the table with a sign 2 meters away from the door. The bag lunches are replaced when the people have left the table to ensure social distancing. There are lots of conversation and waving through the glass doors. Through word of mouth people are coming back and we are averaging 8-12 bag lunches per day. We again have a dedicated group of volunteers that make the sandwiches once a month, and another group that give out the lunches and make up the bags. A special thanks goes out to Connie and Jack Waters who ensure that supplies are purchased and available for this program. The community appreciates this help especially during these difficult times.

Food Bank

As with everything else, 2020 was a year of adaptability for the food bank depot. We closed mid March due to COVID-19 and reopened in October, once the board approved the reopening of the church. We have had to change the way we do things to meet the protocols and thanks to Brad's help (the Facilities Manager) we now have a great system in place. We wonder why we never thought of some of the small changes before. There is a dedicated group of volunteers who help every week. Most of our clients pre-COVID are starting to come back to the R-W depot and we are so glad to see them and know that they are safe and healthy.

Thanks to Derek, Beth, Dick, Steven, Rosemary, Colleen, Vital, Ron, the LDS Elders, and our newest volunteer Rebecca. Without all of you, we wouldn't be able to operate the depot.

Jack and Connie Waters

Helen Mack Fund

Funding for the various programs of the Outreach Committee is primarily supplied from the Helen Mack Fund, created from a generous bequest specifically designated for outreach projects. (Helen Mack was a long-time, passionate member of the Oliver and RWUC communities). The allocation of Helen Mack funding is discussed and decided by a subcommittee (Brad Warkentin, Pat Stewart, Robert Mah, Lois Field, Rhonda Black) that would normally meet twice yearly (May and November), or as necessary. Since its inception approximately a decade ago, the fund has been an ongoing blessing to the work of RWUC and the surrounding community. In 2020, there was no withdrawn from the fund as programs were stopped due to COVID-19.

Respectfully Submitted by

Brad Warkentin

Property

2020 has been some year! This was supposed to be the easy year for the Property Committee. We planned to re-roof the area above the offices and just maintain the church for the rest of the year. Well, we did get the roof completed and we received a grant for 1/3 of the cost from the City Heritage Fund. Thanks Doug Densmore, Pat Stewart, and Garth for the work they did on the grant and the roofing. They are planning to apply in 2021 for a Provincial Heritage Grant to cover another 1/3 of the cost.

Then COVID-19 hit, and the church was closed, except for Brad and his maintenance group. They spent from April to September, cleaning, painting, and repairing the church. With no one in the church they got twice as much done as they could have with the church open. The church looks like new. Great job Brad and crew.

Since the church was closed in March, we started to broadcast our services and some of our programs online. This required more electronic and video equipment. We bought a new computer, microphones, cameras and switching equipment to facilitate the productions. Brad, Erin, and volunteers worked to accomplish this task. This was a non budgeted item, but we are online and will continue to broadcast our services after COVID-19.

During the summer there was a power surge that blew up the controllers on the boilers. The controllers were repaired, and we had surge protectors installed to stop this from happening again. This was another emergency fix. Then September rolls around and the church opens under COVID-19 restrictions with renters, some programs and limited church services. Brad put in many hours coming up with safe operating procedures long before they were mandatory.

So, we continue into 2021 and hope we get back to normal or the new normal. For Property, our one major project will be to try and eliminate the sewer odour we get under certain conditions. We think we know where it is coming from, but we will not know for sure until we open some walls. We will continue to maintain the church and yards. We have a great group on Property; Rosemary Dunbar, Doug Densmore, Karen Hansen, Lorne Langman, Louis Berlinguette, Arnold Maki, Albert DeVos, and Jack Waters along with our Staff Rep and Facility Manager Brad Campbell.

Thanks everyone, it is a pleasure working with you.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Jack Waters, Chair of Property

Spirited Arts Movement

Justice Arts Movement

As 2020 came with unexpected changes, the Spirits Arts Movement – Justice programming shifted and changed. Originally, we had planned in person Theatre of the Oppressed workshops to occur in April. This could not happen and had our program lay fallow for the Spring. In the summer, Karen suggested that I run online programming to explain the theories behind current world events, and thus, Seeds of Change was born. Seeds of Change was online programming running via Facebook and Zoom that used a variety of formats to unpack current concepts. We spoke about Call out/Cancel Culture, “What is Anti-fa”, an American Election unpacking time, conflict theories, “what is anti-oppression/intersectionality”, and “allyship”. Lectures referenced accessible theories and gave participants links or book titles to learn more. It aimed to aid in making sense of our current world and explore possibilities of future growth through this turbulent times. Turn out to live events was small, however, a core group of 4 people attended regularly from across the country, and many watched the recordings at a time that worked for them on average there have been 130-150 views per session. These people, not knowing each other, created trust through sharing their fears, feelings and thoughts together. Lectures are publically available on the Robertson-Wesley United Church Facebook page, website and YouTube.

The Spirited Art Studio

The “Spirited Art Studio” is a community-based art program that started in the fall of 2015, and continues to run weekly during the school year, and once/month after the community dinner (which continues to be the busiest time). Until the middle of March 2020, the beginning of pandemic, the community was continuing to outgrow the studio space in the lower hall.

Starting on March 23, a week after the pandemic began - when the church building closed, and people were asked by the government of Canada to physically isolate and begin social distancing - the Spirited Art Studio began a livestream on Facebook as a way to continue to connect with participants. We felt that more than ever before, particularly for people who were single and lived alone, physical isolation became a prevalent mental health concern.

Similarly, to our in person program, in the online live-streaming, simple art directives were demonstrated and feedback was welcomed. The viewing and participation fluctuated from week to week, and at one point had gained a much larger viewing audience than our art program participants. At one point there were over 200 views, and it has settled down to on average 50 views per session.

Directions were kept very simple so that projects can be completed easily and in a short amount of time, with materials that were affordable, easily accessible and likely found around participants’ homes.

Then starting in the fall of 2020 we began with our online zoom art studio Monday evenings and Wednesday afternoons. This was in response to the church building remaining closed for most weekly programs.

Similar to meeting in the art studio in person, online on Zoom people gather together to connect, create art and build community. Our purpose was to better provide an outlet to gather together, have some fun, conversation, and feel a sense of belonging though the virtual connection. Each time starts with introductions, then an art directive, then we take time to create, while listening to music. We end each session with some sharing of what has been created and/or thoughts that emerge from experiences. People are finding this to be a worthwhile way to spend some time creatively, to get away from the stress of the pandemic and all that it has brought with it.

We have found that having both an evening and an afternoon time scheduled accommodates people who have availability and/or preferences for each.

In response to a call out, here is some feedback offered by some of this year’s participants: (Names printed in annual report with respondents’ permission. Thank you to each for your positive and encouraging feedback.) This will help to paint a picture of the mission and ministry of this program.

“I have attended RWUC Spirited Arts Studio for some time now and attend fairly regularly on Wednesday afternoon. I cannot attend on Monday due to other commitments. I like the projects we do with the freedom to do our own thing, the chance to exercise my creativity, the chance to see and socialize with others on Zoom, especially during this time of the pandemic. I need the structure and the camaraderie and am very grateful for Laura David-Foster’s kindness and leadership.” - Jane Chesebrough

“There is a real sense of accomplishment in painting/sketching a picture or making something with one’s hands. The Spirited Art Studio provides the means and the teaching so that a novice can produce a piece of art. The program brings together people of differing backgrounds with whom I would normally have no interaction – the effect is to broaden and appreciate other people’s concerns and perspectives.” - Doug Densmore “(aka Picasso)”

“Who knew the Spirited Arts Studio experience could be so excellent as an online programme! Laura is such a nurturing presence who inspires us all to connect with the creativity we all have while connecting with others near and far.” - Lynn Maki

“Since March 2020, our experience with the pandemic has been a difficult one for all of us. Having said that, I very much appreciate the opportunity to continue with art making hosted by Laura Foster and Robert-Wesley United Church. Many of us are isolated from friends and family, so it is very important to have a venue (Facebook or Zoom) to connect with others and to create art together, which has proven to be very therapeutic, at least for me. Laura has planned the classes very well, keeping in mind that the participants may have limited art supplies at home. But even without a great deal of art supplies, it is valuable to be able to share and converse with the other participants and to benefit from the facilitation of a professional art therapist. Not only do I enjoy participating in these "digital" classes, but I am often inspired to continue with the art form suggested by Laura in the class (such as watercolour, book arts, collage, etc) so the joy is spread throughout the week for me doing art at home after the class, or in preparation for the next class. The on-line classes have had a very positive influence on my wellbeing and have provided a much needed sense of community.” - Sheila Morrison

“The art studio has been a wonderful routine during the Pandemic (and prior to). I have been encouraged to stretch my creativity, try new things and be present in a supportive and safe (trans-friendly) environment. Being able to share with others what we are working on gives further inspiration even after Laura’s gift of small tidbits of art techniques. I really appreciate this space every week and hope it can be accessed by many more while online. I particularly appreciate being able to participate from wherever I am in the world via zoom to keep the regular participation and accountability aspect. Thank you to Laura and RWUC for having this partnership and freely accessible program for all!” - Pan Graham

“The Spirited Arts Studio has been a creative safe haven where Shelby (and Steve listening in the background on days off) could rest and step aside from the anxiety and worries of the pandemic. We are parents who shoulder the family worries and give strength and support to our family as they work in the Hospitals and Health Care. The Arts Studio has been a place where we can receive strength to pass on to others. One project was created with ideas shared during the studio zoom sessions and presented to an ICU doctor and his Wife at Christmas. This project was created to assist them with the intense stresses of their day to day life. A very practical expression of community love and support and outreach from Robertson Wesley United Church Spirited Arts Program. An interesting side note to God's amazing faithfulness over time is that in early days of ministry Rev. Karen Bridges was the youth leader for this ICU Doctor (as a teen) and his wife is our daughter. The Arts Studio brought us all together in a full circle representing God's love in action. For us personally it has been one stable vital part of our pandemic world. We have been sparked into creative action and also given a sense of hope for a world outside the confines of isolation and quarantine. Zoom has connected us to the Church Community through the studio and Laura David Foster's commitment to be that steady anchor each week has been our light during this turbulent time. The worry over our family and panic that threatens to consume our thoughts is reduced by knowing there is a steady weekly connection as well as a hands on approach to release our anxiety. We do not have enough words to express fully our gratitude but hope this letter says a little of what remains deep in our hearts and thoughts. Thank you so very much. God bless.” - Steve Gerber and Shelby Berezan-Gerber

Healing Workshops

Only one Healing Workshop was held this year in the spring of 2020, the first Spirited Arts Movement workshop on Zoom. We continued with the theme from the fall 2019 workshops of “Art as a Spiritual Discipline” and it was titled “Finding Calm in Chaos.” In this workshop we explored how to activate the imagination through various arts practices with the intention to experience the sacred and to explore meaning both individually and collectively in these unprecedented times. The workshop was well received by an enthusiastic though small group of 4 registrants. Healing Artistic Director Laura David Foster will be continuing offerings of up to 3 workshops this winter and spring.

Art Therapy Student Learning Site

We continue to partner with St. Stephen's College as a learning site for students in the Art Therapy Program. This allows us to offer free Art Therapy to people in the community and the church. Due to the Pandemic, this has had to be paused. We hope to have a new student in early Spring of 2021.

Art Therapy at Canterbury Court and Manor

R-W received a grant from the United Church Foundation in 2019 which allowed Laura David Foster to offer free Art Therapy to the residents at Canterbury Court and Manor. This program continued in 2020, up until March and ending due to the pandemic, with a grant from the Clarke Fund. This program offered artistic and spiritual exploration to seniors who are not able to participate in programs at the churches they used to attend with no cost to them. The art therapy offered at this long term care home strives to enhance autonomy, self-worth, and dignity through creativity, decision making, and storytelling in reflecting on the artwork they create. It is not just recreational and it is not just crafts. In this program we want to continue to hold space for feelings of grief and loss that may be felt in this stage of life as they are shared within the safety of a therapeutic relationship, with empathy, congruence and unconditional respect. We would like to continue to combat loneliness and isolation. Seniors have enjoyed experiencing something new. Feedback has been that they liked the stimulation of mind and imagination, the reassurance that there's no perfectly right way and no judgement, the freedom of expression, the uniqueness in each other's work, and the company and enjoyment of each other as they make things together. They are hoping that the program continues. The program ran on a weekly basis, for a one and a half hour session. We plan to continue when possible in 2021, with a grant from the Clarke Fund.

Respectfully submitted by,

Brooke Leifso and Laura David Foster

Spiritual Formation Pod

In a typical year, the Spiritual Formation Pod would gather 3-5 times over the year to have conversations regarding how the Spirit is moving among us and how we can best form a faith that is resilient and life-long. Conversations are open to all to attend. Plans for 2020 included sessions planned for the first half of the year, with potential undefined additional sessions for the latter half of the year. For 2020, the conversations planned included:

- January 19: Risky Conversations: Getting Past the Weather
- March 15: Funeral Planning
 - Based on "The Five Wishes - A Framework for Funeral Planning", the session was planned as a supportive discussion on how to plan for your own funeral, reducing the burden on those closest to you as they are grieving your passing.
- May 17: The Role of Music in Worship
 - Using words, pictures and our creativity, participants will learn their "spiritual type" (the best way we connect with God's love) and explore how music helps each type to sing their faith.

As we now know, 2020 was not a typical year, and many plans shifted dramatically as a result. The first of the sessions was held, and the other sessions were not able to occur.

Risky Conversations: Getting Past the Weather

The conversation held after church on January 19 was attended by approximately six individuals and shared over hot chocolate. There was agreement that at times, congregants had a hard time talking in ways that could lead to open and honest conversations. There was a recognition that very often, conversations can remain at a surface level, and that conversations that extended deeper could encourage greater connection and support. Various possible conversation starters were developed.

Plans for 2021 for the Spiritual Formation Pod remain undefined as yet, and will start with the recruitment of a new Coordinator.

Respectfully submitted by,

Ainsley Brown

UCW & Friends

Robertson-Wesley UCW and friends currently has 33 people on our membership list, though some are not currently active members. Our executive members are Lorna Berlinguette, Janet M. Clark, Donna Krucik, Margery Wright and Elsie Coon. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m., currently by Zoom.

Our first meeting of 2020 was held on a cold day in January. As we usually do in January, we enjoyed a catered lunch, and invited the church staff members to share it with us. As we do every meeting, we acknowledged our presence on the home of Treaty 6 and Metis people, and we read our UCW purpose:

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

As we usually do, we enjoyed a song sung by Melisa, had a short devotional, sang “Happy Birthday” to those having birthdays this month, and closed with the UCW prayer. Our main income these days is contributions from our members, and in January we voted to send our offering to Bissell Centre for cold weather relief. Our main program item was the last part of Betty Turcott’s study on the UCW purpose. In February, we welcomed two guest speakers from ABC Head Start, the largest childhood early intervention program in Edmonton. It prepares children 3 and 4 years old to succeed at school, at no cost to their parents. On February 29, some UCW members ran a concession at the Vintage and Boutique Sale. In March, our guest speaker was Samina Mian, who spoke on “The Spirit of Giving: An Ahmadi Muslim Woman’s Perspective”. We also voted to make our annual charitable donations, as we always do at this time of year. We voted to support Mission and Service, St. Andrew’s College (Saskatoon), Rundle’s Mission, the Centre for Christian Studies, and Bissell Centre, for a total of \$3000 in donations. Donna presented a budget for the year. We had no meeting in April due to COVID. Elsie Coon phoned members to keep in touch and to wish them a happy Easter. From May to December, we have met on Zoom, including the months of July and August. These meetings have been primarily social in nature (“fellowship”), but always include the acknowledgement of Treaty 6 and Metis territory, a song from Melisa, a devotional, and the UCW prayer. Our members have done well in finding interesting information to share, and in keeping in touch with older people in UCW and in the congregation. If anyone wishes to join us on Zoom, please contact Elyse at the church office. Meetings are always on the second Tuesday of the month at 1:30 p.m., and will continue to be on Zoom for the foreseeable future.

UCW Prayer

And now, go with us, God, into the days ahead.
Strengthen us for peace, give us wisdom, keep us humble,
And may we live and work together, and so striving,
Build a new and better world for tomorrow. Amen.

Respectfully submitted by,
Margery Wright, UCW Secretary

The Wesley and Clarke Funds

The Wesley Trust Fund

The Wesley fund was established in 1971 when the Wesley United Church (originally, Wesley Methodist Church) building was sold. Proceeds of the sale were designated to be invested, with the proceeds donated for social development in the Edmonton area.

The E. I. Clarke Memorial Fund

The Clarke Fund was established in 1968 by a member of the Robertson United Church congregation, the late Edwin Irwin Clarke (d. 2009). This fund is designated to be invested, with proceeds donated to outreach projects. The Clarke family, presently of Victoria, have made additional contributions to the fund in recent years.

Wesley & Clarke

The Wesley & Clarke Trustees meet annually, usually in early December, to consider requests for funding in relation to the amount available for disbursement that year. The current trustees are Rev. Karen Bridges (Chairperson, *ex officio*), Tory Bachmann (Treasurer, *ex officio*), Dr. David Buchanan, Robert Mah, and Marg May.

2020 Allocations

	Wesley Clarke		Total
Bissell Centre	8,000	7,000	15,000
Inner City Pastoral Ministry		2,500	2,500
Choral Morphosis	5,000		5,000
No Room in the Inn (Catholic Social Service)	1,500		1,500
R-W Benevolent Fund		4,000	4,000
Art Therapy at Canterbury		2,000	2,000
R-W Spirited Arts Movement	10,800	4,200	15,000
Total Allocations	25,300	19,700	45,000

Total Allocations in Recent Years:

	Wesley Clarke		Total
2019	28,150	21,750	49,900
2018	25,500	19,500	45,000
2017	25,500	19,500	45,000
2016	23,000	18,000	41,000
2015	22,000	18,000	40,000

Commitment:

Robertson-Wesley continues its commitment to the management and allocation of these Funds according to their originally specified purposes. Along with these disbursements go our prayers for the thousands of people whose lives are supported and enhanced by these contributions.

It was decided at the meeting in 2019 that if deemed necessary we would use the principle of the Wesley Fund up to \$20,000 for the recruitment of the recruitment of the music position at R-W.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rev. Karen Bridges
Chairperson of the Wesley & Clarke Trustees

Worship Committee

In the tumultuous year that was 2020, through the exceptional problem solving skills, creativity, and resourcefulness of our staff, church board, and many individuals and groups at Robertson-Wesley, “virtual worship” has become a reality.

In March, the COVID-19 virus forced regular in-person worship services to come to a grinding halt and, like other worship institutions, we at Robertson-Wesley took to digital resources to carry on the work of our faith community. It seems as long as we have access to a device such as a computer, tablet or cell phone, we can still connect and worship together, albeit remotely. Until the church reopened in the fall, the virtual service was all that was available to us. Since September, we have returned to Sunday in-person services which are also live-streamed and recorded, offering us at least a choice between the convenience of experiencing worship in the comfort of home, and of feeling God’s presence in the traditional sacred environment of our sanctuary. But even so, in-person gatherings have had to adhere to Government restrictions such as physical distancing, no communal singing, no communion, no baptisms, no face-to-face fellowship etc. It feels very much like a sort of hiatus—we have been put on pause as we wait out the pandemic, and long to return to worship as we have come to know it.

The absence of choral music, especially for special services this year at Holy Week, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, has been most keenly felt. Together with our resident choir, we miss other vocal ensembles who have been tenants at Robertson-Wesley, such as the Cantilon Choirs and Choral Morphosis. We are thankful, however, for the R-W Ringers and Nova Bells, under the direction of Isabela Ramos, who have managed to continue their work through this trying period, and have had a delightful musical presence particularly during the festive season. Besides COVID, we at Robertson-Wesley have had to overcome staff shortages as well with the June departure of Rev. Leigh Sinclair, Minister of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Development, and previously of Music Director, Tammy-Jo Mortensen. The search to fill these vacancies had to be delayed for public health reasons, but Erin Craig has been filling in admirably with the music end of things, and beginning late in the year we have benefitted from Rev. Sally Boyle's coming out of retirement to join us for a period of time as an interim minister.

The transition to remote worship, as mentioned, has not been an easy one, and it required the acquisition of digital and electronic equipment to make it happen. Actual worship spending came in well under its normal budget due to the suspension of in-person services through the spring and summer. To offset the cost of equipment necessary for future live streaming, the Worship Committee was able to contribute \$4000 of its 2020 budget as a one-time expenditure.

If any of us might be feeling overwhelmed by all we have had to endure in that fateful year of 2020, and are wondering how long it will continue, I might mention by way of reassurance the words of two of the people I most admire. One is Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, who recently reminded us that there has never been a pandemic in the history of civilisation that hasn't come to an end. The other person is our Queen who, in a televised address shortly after the virus began to spread worldwide, uttered the famous words "We will meet again." Keeping these words in my thoughts and prayers has strengthened my resolve that we will, indeed, meet again in our beloved worship space.

Respectfully submitted by,
Bob Klakowich
Worship Committee Chair

Ushers & Greeters

It was quite the year of 2020 and COVID, but Robertson-Wesley Church finally re-opened in September and it was very humbling to walk back in after months of not being able to. I, and many others who did return, were thank-full to be back.

Because of City regulations on how many could attend a service, Pat Stewart and I, after some discussion, decided we would need fewer ushers this year with Pat Stewart at the Memorial Door entrance and myself in the Narthex with Joanne McQueen and Rosemary Dunbar helping and filling in if one of us is not available. We are very grateful for their help. There is a strong protocol when people enter the church. They must sanitize their hands, be wearing a mask (if they do not have one, they can take one from the box provided), and sign our Attendance Sheet with their name and a Contact Number. They are to then seat themselves in a pew on the Yellow Square and enjoy the service.

How heart-warming it's been to see many of our congregation AND walk-ins at R-W and we hope that in 2021, we will see more of you come back to this wonderful Church!

Respectfully submitted by,

Brenda Sheppard and Pat Stewart

Staff

Brad Campbell	Facilities Manager
Brooke Leifso	Justice Artistic Director, Spirited Arts Movement
Elyse Munro	Office Administrator
Erin Craig	Interim Music Director
Garth van Herwaarden	Financial Manager
Isabela Ramos	Interim Bell Choir Director
Rev. Karen Bridges	Minister of Congregation and Community Development
Laura David Foster	Healing Artistic Director, Spirited Arts Movement
Richard Kennedy	Facility Support Staff: Event Assistant
Riley Ross	Facility Support Staff: Choral Morphosis Assistant
Roderick Mamita	Facility Support Staff: Event Assistant
Sally Boyle	Bridging Minister
Shylo Rosborough	Affirming Ministry Coordinator



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