

Between the Aisles

A Robertson-Wesley United Church Quarterly

AUTUMN

But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.
Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?

Job 12:7-9





Welcome from the Editors'

Greetings to all the members of the Robertson-Wesley family, who would have guessed that when we bade farewell to our church friends on a Sunday morning in March of 2020 that we would still be fighting a pandemic two and a half years later!

Since the beginning of Covid-19 we have had a few staff changes. One of the changes has been the arrival of Rev. Dirk Jessen. He will serve as a bridging minister until a full-time replacement is called to our pulpit. We welcome you, Dirk, and our prayers are with you during your time of service to us.

One of the highlights of this past year has been the emphasis on Mother Earth and our relationship with her. Readers will notice that several submissions to the Fall edition of *Between the Aisles* are personal memories, memories that were formed when the writers were very young.

This newsletter also includes information about upcoming activities this Fall. Old-timers as well as newcomers are invited to attend. R-W is definitely a place for faith in action. May this Fall season be meaningful and fulfilling for our church family.

Janet Clark and Nancy Heule, co-editors

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect the history, spirituality and culture of the Treaty 6 people, and the Metis people of Alberta region 4, and affirm our responsibility to Treaty members. May we live with respect on this land in peace and friendship with its people.

Courtesy of United Church Women

WHAT'S ON MY NIGHT TABLE



The Environmental Stewardship team has been exploring how nature calls us into the sacred, and how we need to re-consider how we treat our neighbors, even our non-human and inanimate neighbours, as kin in God's creation. We have delved into the Victoria Loorz's book *Church of the Wild* in order to do so. Loorz highlights that it is in personal conversation with the specific elements of the Earth that we can experience Christ, and that one element frequently missing from our faith formation is how to pray in nature, despite the repeated biblical examples of people going into the wilderness to be with God. Loorz argues that it is through accepting our part in Creation that we can then care for the planet.

The Environmental Stewardship team is in a discernment process about how to implement ideas from Loorz regarding Wild Church. This form of worship intentionally fosters a sacred conversation with nature in order to connect with God. It honours "connection over comfort" and challenges us to connect with nature throughout the year and to experience God in all seasons, even when unpleasant. Keep your eyes out for some upcoming events!

Submitted by J.S.

a PEEK at the PAST

The neighbourhood in which Robertson-Wesley is situated has an interesting history. For example, this neighbourhood featured the first apartment building in Edmonton to have a main door that didn't face the street which demonstrated the growing importance of privacy. 124th street's original name was Edward Street, 102 Avenue was also a street, and its name was Athabasca.



Church-wise, Robertson United Church in the mid-1950's offered Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides, Explorers, CGIT, as well as two Junior choirs, one for boys and another for girls. The church was definitely a hub of week-day activity for children, not to mention bursting at the seams with activities for adults. Wow!

Submitted by Nancy Heule

EMAIL SAFETY TIPS

Occasionally some people in R-Ws community of faith have experienced scam emails, using a method called spoofing. Email spoofing is when a scammer forges (spoofs) the email's *from* address, so the sent message appears to have been sent from someone you know with the intention of infecting your computer with malware, asking for money or stealing information. These addresses can either be created by using alternative numbers or letters to look slightly different than the original, or by disguising the 'from' field to be the exact email address of someone in your network. If you receive an email that looks like it is from someone you know, requesting gift cards or help and asking for secrecy, please feel free to call Elyse in the church office or the person who sent it to confirm legitimacy, do not reply to the email because the reply will get sent to the scammer.

R-W at Work REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Late in 2021, Reverend Karen asked for volunteers to help with a refugee sponsorship. Charles Sabu, a long-time member of Robertson-Wesley United Church (RWUC), was hoping that the church could co-sponsor bringing his sister and brother-in-law to Canada as refugees. Jael and Bolot Tshoba are both originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo but civil war forced them to flee their home country. They have been living as refugees in South Africa for many years but, due to xenophobic attacks and harassment, their situation there is perilous.

Several church members came forward and the RWUC Board gave their support to the Refugee Project Team to pursue a refugee sponsorship through The United Church of Canada (UCC). As a refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holder, the UCC receives a set allocation of refugee spots annually. In order to proceed with a refugee sponsorship application, the Government of Canada requires that sponsors have enough funds to cover one-time start-up costs plus monthly income support for 12 months. For Jael and Bolot, our target budget was set at \$26,000. Together with the incredible support of RWUC members, we raised \$30,000 by the end of June! In addition to a grant from the Helen Mack Outreach Fund, funds from the RWUC refugee sponsorship account and members' generous donations, we also undertook fundraisers. In April, we sold Epicure seasoning blend packages at the church and to family and friends. On June 25, we hosted a play at Delton Community Hall. With all the funding raised, we were able to submit the sponsorship application forms; our case is on the waitlist for 2023-24 submission. While we await next steps on the application process, we ask for your prayers for Jael and Bolot. Sincere thanks to everyone who has supported this project so far.

A special shout out to our fundraising lead Jay Ferguson for her ideas and energy, to Barb Thompson for her diligence in completing all the application forms, to Charles Sabu for being the heart of the team, to Leanne Foff for logistics and liaison with the Board, and to Nova Laurin for communications.

Submitted by Nova Laurin

The land that raised me was lush and green, surrounded by mountains and at the convergence of two rivers. I remember being allowed to take off with my bicycle for hours without any need to check-in. And with that specific freedom I explored my surroundings to the fullest. I rode my bicycle through our towns Rotary Nature Trails over the packed clay pathways and on the post flood sand covered trails. I even went up and over the train tracks to the protected area on the other side of the river where the sockeye salmon would go every year to start their cycle all over again.

I played in the trails, as most of us did, even when it was the height of flood season I remember one year watching as one of the older bridges in town was washed away by the flood waters, but even in that moment I was not afraid. The fascination I felt with 'the wild' began when I was 6 or 7, but by 8 I was fully given over to the process. I had respect for all the wild things, but I can't say that I felt fearful of any of it. It was a blessed time in my life. I have tried in the past to explain to different people in my life what that forest where I lived and played was like, but although they sometimes smile and nod appreciatively, I don't feel that they truly do understand.

It is something that you need to experience to really feel it. When you are standing there in your own spot in the forest and listening to the sounds around you, what do you hear? Open your eyes look around, you will find the most incredible assortment of flora; from lichen to moss to ferns that grow to immense proportions. Inhale- smell the moisture in the heavy air with the faintest hint of cedar. Take a step; do you feel the earth beneath your feet springy from not only the decomposing logs, but the multiple layers of shed pine needles and cones that have built up overtop of that rotting log? It may not sound like it and indeed I had to look it up to be sure, but I grew up in a rainforest.

There is so much to take in that you would never get it all in one visit, but the next time you are within the Fraser Valley, if you can, take some time to spend away from the hustle and bustle of the traffic, city, work, or anything else you may be involved in and just go spend an hour sitting in the forest, listening. You never know what you may hear.

For further information on the Coastal Rainforests of British Columbia visit [Hinterland Who's Who - Coastal Rainforest \(hww.ca\)](http://HinterlandWho'sWho-CoastalRainforest(hww.ca))

Trisha-Lee Wasmund

KOINONIA WORSHIP

KOINONIA (meaning "fellowship" in Greek) has been an alternative worship service at Robertson-Wesley Church for over 50 years and is held monthly from September to June. Over its proud history Koinonia has been unique among Edmonton area United Churches.

Each service (normally held the 4th Sunday of each month) emphasizes informality, fellowship and lay leadership. Teams, including musicians, plan and lead the informal participatory services, which have encouraged the whole group to express and share their faith and commitment towards others through thoughtful lively discussion, singing, prayer circle, Scripture readings, audio visual presentations, guest speakers, etc.

A few examples of themes from worship services in the past have been: Faith As a Mustard Seed; A Time for Thanksgiving; Music, Mission & Memories; Spiritual Practices in Time for Lenten Season; Prayers for the Planet; Hope for Advent; Food Insecurity "Until All Are Fed"; and so many others.

While participants of the Koinonia group value the close, spiritual nature of the services, they are also visible members of the Robertson Wesley congregation as a whole, and continue to play an essential role in the life of our R-W community.

Potluck suppers, R-W Easter Sunrise service planning and breakfast, outdoor services, White Gift packing and delivery to Bissell Centre, BBQs and progressive dinners round out the active group that Koinonia is.

Worship Service evenings are advertised in Robertson-Wesley Spirited (Friday e-newsletter), in the Sunday church bulletins, and often on a church bulletin board.

Everyone is invited to join the group for an evening potluck supper and worship; please know that you will be welcomed anytime!

Submitted by Joann Cooke

An Environmental Stewardship Personal Observation.

When considering our spiritual relationship between humans and the 'natural world," as described in the book Church of the Wild by Victoria Looz, we sometimes come upon situations where the human/wildlife metaphors almost synthesize.

My wife Jean and I were on a vacation in 2017 which included a visit to Glacier National Park in the north-west corner of Montana, directly below Alberta's Waterton Park. There, we experienced what happens when humans intrude in the back woods inhabited by wildlife. Part of our trip was a boat excursion on Swiftcurrent Lake inside Glacier National Park. The boat was full of tourists from all over the world. As part of the excursion we had to get off one boat and hike over to another lake to catch yet another boat to go further into the wilderness.

While we were waiting for the second boat to come and pick us up, a female moose and her calf were spotted feeding and wading along the shore not far from our location. Her sighting caused quite a commotion amongst the tourists, most of whom I don't think had ever seen a live moose before.

The people all grabbed their cameras and cell phones of every description and rushed to the water's edge to get photos of Mrs. Moose. Being from Alberta, and often at lakes, or in our abundance of parks, sighting a moose was not such a 'once in a life time event.'" I must admit I was laughing at all the commotion. In addition, I sensed what Mrs. Moose was thinking:



Can't a Girl have any Privacy

2017

"CAN'T A GIRL HAVE ANY PRIVACY!"

Although I am being sarcastic towards humans, the situation did point out the extent of human interruption there is on wildlife, even in wildlife 'so called' protected areas.

Submitted by Jim Triscott

MAGIC PANTRY

Robertson-Wesley has a very active outreach program. One of the programs is called Magic Pantry. We give out a bag lunch, to people in need, 3 times a week. The program gives a couple of sandwiches, a dessert, and a drink. To supply the program with sandwiches, we have a sandwich making bee every 2-3 months to make 100 loaves, or approximately 900 sandwiches, at a time. These sandwiches are made by 12 to 16 volunteers. This group is headed up by Derek Sutherland, who keeps the Pantry supplied and organizes the sandwich making. There are also volunteers who come to the church and hand out the lunches. The demand for this program is increasing! Thanks to all who help keep this program operating.



2022 Edmonton Food Bank Janet Hughes Award

Robertson-Wesley has been an Edmonton Food Bank distribution center since the beginning of the Edmonton Food Bank. Janet Hughes was a member of our congregation and was the first chair of the board for the Food Bank. The Food Bank instigated the Janet Hughes Award for superior volunteers as thanks to the recipients and in remembrance of Janet.



This year at the annual meeting of the Food Bank, our very own Rosemary Dunbar received this prestigious award. Rosemary is the smiley face that greets our clients at the reception desk.

Congratulation Rosemary!

Submitted by Jack Waters

Learning to Love the Wind

Up front, in the nearly empty Greyhound, Mom, my two younger brothers and I were moving from Medicine Hat to Stavely. Dad had driven there months earlier, to be the new bank manager. The bus driver happily teased us boys much of the way. "It's so windy in Stavely", he said, "that you'll never be able to stand up. You'll have to cling to fences and hedges to get around."

And apparently, it was true! As we drove north, past Fort McLeod and Claresholm, the line of bluish hills loomed closer in the west. The ditch grasses were obviously being buffeted and flattened by a howling gale. De-bussing in Stavely and with growing apprehension, we lugged our bags through the gusting winds into the west door of the two-storey bank building. Other than the grain elevators, it was the most westerly exposed building in the town. It was to be our home for the next five years! Looking west that day, we marveled at the awesome, undulating Porcupine Hills, crowned with a great chinook arch and bands of long narrow clouds stretched out parallel to the hills. It was our introduction to the night west wind.

"Unto the hills", my Dad would say as we headed west in the new car to explore the ranch country. Years later, I designed a pink gravestone with those words and a line of hills carved into it. It marks our parents' resting place, in the windy western edge of the Claresholm cemetery, in the countryside they loved best.

For my brothers and me, as boys in Stavely, the west wind became our constant companion. It whipped around the grain elevators and flapped the fabric of our tent, pitched in the bank's side yard. We slept out there from April to October. Through the flapping we could faintly hear mom yelling from a second-storey window "You boys turn out those flashlights and get to sleep". (Our comic book hoard was prodigious!) That same wind often made off with the arrows we would try to shoot over the elevators. And our homemade kites only flew successfully with a substantial chunk of two-by-fours tied to the tail. But on a smooth bit of road, riding our bikes, we could hold up our jackets and sail along "No Hands!" Sometimes that didn't end well.

Every spring our family climbed the hills to admire the crocuses, mom's favourite flower. We would scramble to the tops, where among the still unmelted snow patches, the hair little violet cups rocked happily in the spring breezes. Occasionally, we would visit a peculiar flat-topped hill, crowned with a large glacial erratic. It was about twenty feet across and had a narrow passageway through which you could sort of crawl/walk. Another large slab formed the roof. On these adventures, the sky was usually filled with long narrow clouds, formed by the west wind dropping down off the mountains and bounc-

ing high again over the hills, creating a great succession of standing waves.

In the early seventies, my Edmonton Soaring Club began bringing our gliders to a broad valley under the east face of the Livingstone mountain range north of Cowley. Our goal was to get pulled up by the tow plane to a point where we could release the tow-rope and catch the upside of one of these great west wind air waves. One fall day, in our little single-seat glider, I was fortunate to do just that and climbed high among the narrow, smooth lenticular clouds I had admired from below as a boy.

That day I climbed the great wind wave to over 28,000 feet. Once above the peaks the wild turbulence ceased and the air became glassy smooth. I didn't hear the wind, just the soft hiss and click of the oxygen system. The view was phenomenal, take in Crowsnest Peak and many rows of mountains to the west. I could see beyond the pass to Watterton. North, I spotted the "gap" where the Oldman River cuts through the Rockies. Reluctantly, I had to return to earth. Banking to find the downside of the wave, and scraping the canopy clear of obscuring frost, I searched below for the bend in the river that marked our grass landing strip.

Years later, at the end of a school reunion weekend, my wife Ann and I revisited the big glacial erratic west of Stavely. It was a glorious, sunny, windy morning. We startled a herd of mule deer at the base of the hill, then climbed (not as nimby now) to the top and approached the big split rock. The sky was filled again with gorgeous wave clouds. Walking around the big erratic (and noting that a lot of cows had done likewise) we prepared to go inside. This time we were equipped with a flashlight and a booklet we had picked up on a trip to Writing on Stone Park on the Milk River. It mentioned the big erratic at Stavely and encouraged us to look for something we had missed on our earlier visits to the rock. There, on the stone ceiling, in that narrow gap, illuminated by the flashlight, we saw tiny, ochre-coloured "hoof print" marks, perhaps suggesting deer tracks, in a long wavy line. Perhaps they were painted there by a young Indigenous person on a "spirit quest" long before Europeans arrived. Did they represent the youth's "spirit animal", made present in that special, secret place in paint?

It reminded us of how ancient these lands are, and that these marvelous hills and windy skies had been held in awe by others, long before we were there. Southern Alberta remains, for me, full of fond memories created in those mountains and hills by the might west wind.

Submitted by Garnet Thomas



The Gratitude Team tries to remind you on an on-going basis of all the gifts that God has given each of us. After recognizing these many gifts and being grateful for them, we should consider how each of us is going to share them to make God's Kin-dom come to fruition here on earth. As the Lord's Prayer says 'let thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven'. The way Christians get there is by sharing. Each of us is gifted with differing amounts of time, different abilities and different levels of financial resources. There is no right amount to share; each person after thoughtful prayer and reflection must decide what is appropriate for them. Whatever you share is enough.

The Gratitude Team makes a yearlong effort to ask people to show gratitude for each of their gifts. In the past months, the Team has focused on time and abilities. We have asked each person to consider what they can do to help Robertson-Wesley, our community and the world become a better place by volunteering whatever time they have and what abilities they have. Some help with worship by singing in the choir, reading scripture, doing prayers of the people, greeting people and setting up fellowship. Some come to connect to God in that worship hour. Others support the community with Community Dinners and the Magic Pantry. There is no end to the things people can do and we encourage them to go the limit.

Starting in October the Gratitude Team will focus on the financial needs. We have heard a few people often newcomers say they thought the national church provided the funding to operate Robertson- Wesley. This is a reasonable assumption if one is not familiar with how churches are funded. In reality all the money necessary to run Robertson-Wesley comes from people who are associated with it. No funds are contributed from the national church; in fact, the opposite is the case. We send money to the Region who send some to the national church. So starting in October you will be hearing from the team asking for your financial commitment for 2023. The financial commitment you make in October and November 2022 is used to put together the budget for 2023. In the fall of 2021 you made your commitment for 2022.

It is important to say that we make our financial commitment based on our present circumstances. If those circumstance change, it is appropriate that you change that commitment during 2023. The Gratitude Team thanks you for all you do for our church. Each person's contribution whatever it may be makes a difference in this world.

Thanks be to God for all the gifts that God has given us.
Submitted by Pat Stewart

Worship Theme for the Season of Creation

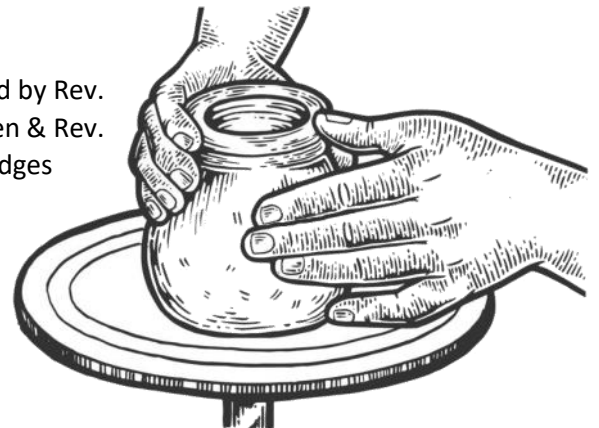
As this program year begins, the first Old Testament reading is from the Prophet Jeremiah who is given the vision of a potter at work at a wheel. The vessel the potter is working on isn't turning out as intended, so the potter reworks it. Jeremiah understands that God is the potter and the house of Israel the vessel.

The people are being shaped with a divine purpose in mind and God will reshape them if needed. A community of faith can also be considered a vessel with its own God-given purpose. Over the years, the community of Robertson-Wesley United Church has continued to be shaped and reshaped as needed.

We find ourselves drawn to the gathering of this community in this place with spiritual needs we desire to have met, in hopes that it can happen here. At the same time, we come having within us what others require to help meet their spiritual needs. One of the blessed mysteries of our faith is that we can both drink from and contribute to this collective vessel of the Spirit.

Identifying and naming your spiritual thirsts may be top of mind or may require some thought and prayer. It also requires humility because we need to rely on others to be spiritually filled anew, or maybe even for the first time. May this year begin with humility, allowing each of us to be open like a vessel to receive. May we also be moved to being open vessels to be poured out for others.

Submitted by Rev.
Dirk Jessen & Rev.
Karen Bridges





Women's Weekend 2022 Our Metamorphosis



Every September for 16 years women from Robertson-Wesley have travelled together to a Women's Weekend in the beautiful Alberta countryside. Thirteen of those years we gathered for our Weekend at Strawberry Creek Lodge. Right from the beginning the purpose of the annual Women's Weekend has been to provide an opportunity for women from R-W to get to know each other better and to experience our Faith as a group of women. And so...our metamorphosis has begun. Women of R-W are invited to an afternoon gathering on the R-W Green Space in September 2022. (Rain accommodation will be in R-W room 11.)



#BLESSED & BBQ

It is time to reconnect and explore our faith together! On Sunday **Sept 18** during worship children, youth are invited to remain in worship as we take time to Bless backpacks and other items that are important on our journey in life. We will take time to recommit ourselves to sharing our faith with one another while listening for where God is calling Robertson-Wesley to live out its ministry and mission in the world. After church there will be a BBQ on the lawn in celebration of the return of programming for all ages!

Kids' Church and Youth Group

Registration for Kids' Church and Youth Group begins on **Sept 11, 2022**. The Family Ministry Committee is excited to offer in person programming for children and youth this fall, with the return of Kids' Church, Youth Discussion and Youth Group. On Sept 11, guardians/parents will be invited to gather downstairs for a brief introduction to what is happening in the church. You will be asked to fill out a registration form so that there is up to date information. Children who are 2 years of age and no longer in diapers up to Kindergarten are invited to register for the Garden Patch. Children grades 1-6 will register for Kids' Church. Youth grades 7-12 will be invited to register for the youth program which includes Sunday morning discussion hour during worship as well as evening activities twice a month. We will be inviting people from the congregation to help with the leadership in this program. All volunteers will need to ensure that they have an up to date Police Record Check for working with vulnerable children. If you have specific questions feel free to contact Rev. Karen at karen.bridges@rwuc.org or call the church 780-482-1587 ext 224.

SPIRITED ARTS MOVEMENT

As we enter the fall, plans are coming together for new workshops with some new and some familiar faces. Keep your eyes open on the website and in Still Spirited for updates. The Spirited Art Studio also hopes to start up mid September. Stay tuned!

Broken and Beautiful and Blessed

Saturday, **September 24th** from 1:30 – 4:00 pm

Registration forms are available from the office or register online at rwuc.org/womens-weekend. For more information talk with Carol Anne Inglis, Jill Lambie, or Sylvia Duffus

Photo Directory

Stop worrying that you have forgotten someone's name, or never knew their name in the first place! It's time to put a name to the face and compile a new photo directory of people who participate at Robertson-Wesley United. Please consider having your photo included (or updated) in the fall edition. It doesn't matter if you have been here for one week or 90 years... please drop by the Club Room starting at 10:00 am or after the Sunday service starting at 11:30 am to get your photo taken on any of the following Sundays: **Sept 11, 18, 25**. The photo directory is produced right here at R-W – no cost to you, no photos to purchase, you will receive a directory once it has been compiled. Let's learn each other's names together!

R-W Ringers & Choir

The R-W Choir and R-W Ringers are looking for new singers and ringers. September is a great time to begin in either group! Speak to Allan Bevan after service for further information, or contact him at music@rwuc.org.

NEW TO YOU CLOTHING SALE

On **September 17** R-W will have a fundraising event to sell clothing, shoes and accessories for adults and children. Donations can be dropped off at the church starting September 11. Unsold items will be donated to the Bissell Centre. Funds raised go to general operations.

Annual Art & Book Sale

R-W will be having an Art and Book Sale on **October 1, 2022**. If you have art, books, CDs or DVDs to donate you can drop them off at the church or Sheila and Pat can pick them up at your home (call 780-481-0056 for pick up). For those who are donating art, a donation receipt will be available for the sold price of your donated art after the sale. If you would like a donation receipt, please leave a list with your donated art pieces including your name and brief descriptions of the art when you drop it off, or when we pick it up we can make a list for you.

SCRIPTURE READERS' WORKSHOP

September 25, at noon. Have you ever wanted to read the scriptures in worship? This is a workshop for you! All ages and stages can sign up to read in a worship service. This is an opportunity to receive some coaching, training and tips. A workshop for current, and future scripture readers, basically anyone who wants to deliver text to the best of their ability! With guest coaches: John Kilduff and Donna Krucik. Please sign up in Memorial Hall.

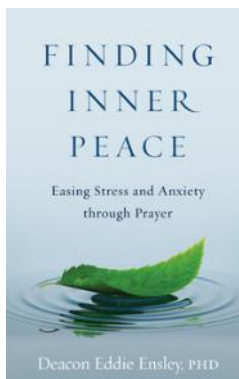
Scripture Reflections

Join the minister on **Tuesdays** at 12:00 pm, to reflect on the scripture passages for the upcoming Sunday. We are using the practice of Lectio Divina which means we read through the scripture three times. You will be invited into some moments of silence, and if you are willing you are invited to share with the group. You don't need to be a Biblical Scholar. God speaks through the scriptures and it is always wonderful to hear the diversity of messages that are received. Come with a bible and a journal, or simply yourself on Zoom or in person in the Club Room.

Affirming Focus Group

On Monday **Sept 12** at 7pm in the Club Room, R-W is looking for members who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to be a part of a focus group that will explore questions specific to the spiritual needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and if or what role R-W is being called to in support of the needs identified. How and what is God calling R-W to in this aspect of its affirming ministry. Please contact the office to indicate that you will be able to participate.

Finding Inner Peace Book Study with Rev. Dirk



The book I'd like to explore with you is *Finding Inner Peace—Easing Stress and Anxiety Through Prayer*, by Deacon Eddie Ensley. It's a book I've looked at with a group before and participants found it transformative--and so did I! If you'd like more information on the book, please take a look at on-line samples and reviews of the book or ask me for a sample.

Some of the chapter topics include "The Peace of Gratitude," "Making Peace with the Past," "Making Peace with Suffering" and more. The final, culminating chapter is "How Inner Peace Leads to Compassion." Exactly which topics we'll cover, as well as when we'll meet will depend on participants' interests.

I would like to meet in person either weekly or every two weeks starting in mid-October, so please let me know as soon as you can about what time frame works best for you. Please let me know if you are interested and if you would like a paper copy of the book by Sunday, September 18 so I can order them. I can be reached at dirk.jessen@rwuc.org

Rev. Dirk Jessen

Coming in October

Art & Book Sale

October 1 at 10 am

Capella Quirina Neuss Concert

October 11 at 7:30 pm

Pastoral Prayer Workshop

October 15 at 10 am

Spiritual Gift Exchange

October 23 at 12 pm

Check out the e-news, bulletin or website for more information on these events as it becomes available.

Robertson-Wesley Amidst God's Wondrous World

When I first started attending Robertson (not yet Wesley) Edmonton extended only to 149th Street; the town to the west was Jasper Place. Brian and Belva Piercy and family lived on 143rd Street, at 106 Ave, the same street as Margaret Reid, now Marg May.

As we didn't have a car, and because we enjoyed it, my twin sister, Linda, and friends from the area used to walk to the church to Explorers (taught by Marguerite, mother of Alison Seymour) and CGIT (taught by Karen Hansen) along 102 Ave. There was no Groat Road but we enjoyed gazing down on the lush green ravine as we crossed the bridge, stopping for five cent popsicles at the drug store at the corner of 124 St.

During my elementary and junior high days Robertson had a yearly church picnic at a big park. What I remember most was the three-legged races run across fields of grass by screaming kids and then the adults, who loved it just as much. At that time there were 800 children in the Sunday School. CGIT had a yearly camp at Fallis on Lake Wabamum. One of the joys for me was the 7:00 am Morning Watch, sitting on a rock by the calm morning lake and reading a devotional.

Jump ahead to married life. When Louis and I were married 51 years ago, Koinonia, the informal evening service, was just one year old. We started attending immediately and formed a close friendship with the 30 or more people who still attend. For years a group of us went to Rundle's Mission at Pigeon Lake for a weekend each year. Sometimes it was February, sometimes it was May. There are two lovely houses available, each with 5 bedrooms. We had several wonderful traditions. In the winter months the hardy ones would walk the mile into town, about 9:00 at night, winding past the frozen creek, listening to the ice crack across the lake, following the guidance of the often full moon to the stop sign in the middle of Mission Beach. That was far enough. Sometimes we walked in the other direction to Camp Wohelo and checked out the cabins we'd stayed in our youth. And there were other thrills. Garnet Thomas went out hiking first, at 7:00 am, and came back with tales of the moose he'd seen. Phyllis Harlton, the Cookes and Pecknolds and I cross country skied later in the day, miles on a skidoo path through the con-

necting fields which owners had thoughtfully cleared. How nice to hear the bird song from overhanging trees.

Or we strolled through the woods to the cemetery and to a circular house made from mud over straw, a wonderfully insulated construction. Evelyn Beveridge's favorite activity was the toboggan ride. Louis built a sleigh out of available material. We would tuck Evelyn in on blankets. Some would run behind and some would sit on the tailgate of Louis' famous Suburban, watching that Helen didn't fall off as we zig-zagged down the road or across the frozen lake. The toboggan never disappeared in the many years we attended.

Now we enjoy the beauty of the front lawn of the church with its rainbow painted chairs. Or the Women's Weekend Committee sits under the shade of the huge tree to plan events once Covid restrictions are over. Or we enjoy the street barbeques after a church service in June, sitting on the lawn to munch hamburgers and drink orange pop.

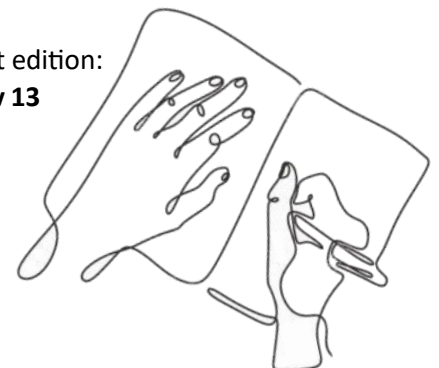
I love my life at Robertson-Wesley, made fuller by God's surrounding nature.

By Lorna Piercy Berlinguette

Write for BTA

Do you write poetry? Have you read a life-changing book lately? Do you have a faith question you are exploring or a passion you want to share? Then why not submit something for inclusion in the church's quarterly newsletter *Between the Aisles*? For publication requirements, see www.rwuc.org/between-the-aisles.

Deadlines for the Advent edition:
Submissions due by: **Nov 13**
Published: **Nov 27**



Heat and Sweet: Memories of Maple

Growing up on a farm, nature was all around in a way it's not in a big city or a small town. In the summer, the closest town was still far enough away that while you could see a faint glow in the sky in that direction, you could also see hundreds/thousands of stars in the night sky. You fell asleep to the sound of crickets (and possibly squirrels running around in the attic... At least, I hoped they were squirrels...) and not the sounds of car horns and sirens. In the winter, you could really hear the wind whistling amongst the tree branches while snow blasted against the window panes.

However, one of the big differences with my family's farm was that we also had a tree grove (bush) on the back 25-30 acres of the farm. And given this farm is back in Ontario, one of the main tree species in the bush was maple sugar trees (as well as birches and ashes, oaks and elms). The bush, year round, was the wildest part of the farm, with trilliums and other wild flowers growing in the spring and summer (though, as Ontario's flower, we kids were told we couldn't pick them, as it was illegal... other flowers, yes, the trilliums, no). We were also always pulling the birch bark off the paper birches and my dad had to keep telling us not to (there were a lot of things we weren't suppose to do... But we did them anyways).



There were the big "puffball" mushrooms that my grandmother would gather and cook up. There were generally some deer and other animals moving through the trees, and the occasional fox family.

And for one week, every March, there would be a hoard of kids (my brothers, sister and me) running around, collecting buckets off the maple trees and putting the sap in a large vat that my dad would build over a fire. Luckily, most years, the "running of the sap" would coincide with our March Break from school. Nowadays, a lot of the commercial sugar shacks will have plastic tubes running from the trees directly to the vat, but we were old-school, with buckets hanging off the trees. Each of us would have our own bucket, and we would go around to each tree, taking the sap in each tree's hanging bucket and dumping it into the one we carried. When our bucket was full enough, then we would take it and dump it into the vat.

For those of you who don't know, to make maple syrup, you basically have to boil down maple sap. Depending on how dark and thick you want it, you boil it more or less.

My dad tended to like his very dark and rather thick, so he used a 40:1 ratio (40 litres of sap to get 1 good litre of syrup). He always complained that the syrup you bought in the store was too light and thin (probably a 37 or 38:1 ratio). So we had to collect a lot of sap to get enough syrup to cover our family and friends needs (we never sold it... Just shared it). Let's just say it was quite a work-out, with all the running and lugging of buckets.



Once the sap had boiled down a decent amount (but not the finished product), my dad and grandmother would put it in a couple of old milk cans (which we had due to being a dairy farm) and

take it up to my grandmother's for straining (to remove anything that might be in the sap that shouldn't – tree bark, leaves, etc.) and the final boiling... Then it would be bottled into whatever bottles were available.

I have a lot of great memories from our syrup making (and one horrific one, but we won't get into that). One is that my dad would bring an old pot back in the bush with us, and we could dip it into the boiling sap, cool it in the snow, and then drink it... I'm sure it probably wasn't the most hygienic practice, though the sap would be safe because it was boiled, the pot maybe wasn't the cleanest... But it was really good (basically you're drinking maple flavored sugar water). There was also the time that my grandmother was supposed to be making maple sugar, but something went off, and we ended up with a big pan of maple taffy/toffee... We would take a table spoon and dig out a huge portion... No wonder I have a sweet tooth.

There were also the occasional times when things could get a bit scary... I still remember the one time we saw these two large dark shapes moving between the trees, and my dad rushed us though the trees to the car, which was about a kilometer away... Apparently, that winter, wolves had come further south then they had previous years in search of prey (we didn't tend to have many wolves in the area of Southwestern Ontario that I'm from). But for the most part... It was a great way to spend March break. Exercise, clean air, and a sweet treat at the end. What wasn't to like. Also, it kept us out of my mom's hair, which with five rambunctious kids, was always a good thing.

Marilee Stephens

CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP

Help Wanted!



This year, December 25 will fall on a Sunday. We are mindful that during the Christmas season, there are many who seek a meaningful time to celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas morning, whether they be alone or otherwise.

To give our staff a much-needed break on Christmas Day, we are seeking a small team from within our faith community who can be available on Christmas morning, and who would welcome the opportunity of leading this service.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact the Worship Committee through our church office at mail@rwuc.org. We'll put you in touch with our worship team who will help you in your preparation.

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