



2022

Robertson-Wesley Annual Report



Budget Information Session
Sunday, February 26, 2023

Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, March 5, 2023

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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, Jack Waters

2022 Statistics

Average Sunday Morning Attendance:

January	56 in person	59 online	Confirmations	3
February	75 in person	65 online	Reaffirmations	0
March	101 in person	77 online	Transfers In	2
April	133 in person	79 online	Transfers Out	0
May	99 in person	75 online	Baptisms	5
June	85 in person	87 online	Funeral/Memorial Services*	14
July	74 in person	54 online	Weddings*	10
August	84 in person	48 online		
September	123 in person	55 online		
October	127 in person	78 online		
November	124 in person	68 online		
December	96 in person	59 online		

* For services performed both at R-W and offsite.

In person attendance includes staff, choir members and musical guests.

Online attendance reflects devices used not people watching, so for example if a family is watching together at home it will count as 1 viewer.

Robertson-Wesley Church Board

As more Canadians have received the COVID-19 vaccine and social restrictions have been lifted, we are cautiously optimistic that the end of the pandemic may be in sight. It has been a lengthy period of isolation, anxiety and distress, but we are very grateful that we've come this far. Are we ready for what this post-pandemic world will hold? What will a post-COVID society look like for the Church and our community? What will the "new normal" look like in 2023?

First and foremost, as acting chair I wish to thank the entire Board for their tireless efforts and contribution over the past year. In 2022, our Community of Faith and its volunteers engaged in a plethora of events, furthering our mission. Like 2021, the year has been productive and enriching; there are so many inspirational stories from members of our family on how God has impacted the lives of people in our community. There have also been many memorable events in the past year – read all about these in the full Annual Report. A major accomplishment has been the completion of the Community of Faith Report and Living Faith Story. Under the skillful leadership of Colleen Graves, with the support of the Region, the committee completed their report, which is foundational to the recruitment of our new clergy. Next step is for final report to be submitted to the congregation for further input and approval. We are deeply grateful to Rev. Dirk Jessen for the bridging services provided and we are excited about embarking on the journey of searching and selecting a new minister.

Notwithstanding all our programming, supports offered, and the beauty of the human spirit daily on display in our Community of Faith, there is a part of me that is uncomfortable with the fate of religion in Canada. Statistics Canada has been tracking the affiliation and behaviour of Canadians since 1985. It is disconcerting that religiosity in Canada is at an all-time low. Christianity has seen a sharp decline in the last few years, and the pandemic has understandably impacted this. The decline is most pronounced for Canada's United and Anglican churches, starting well before the pandemic. As Canada's second-largest Christian denomination, the United Church is currently losing one church per week across Canada, according to a media report in 2022. This is a number that is expected to accelerate, and the concern I have is, why would RWUC be immune to this? What are we doing to remedy this? Although there is no easy answer, one possible response is to look at the process of "renewal" or "rejuvenation".

After careful consideration, the initiation of such a process has been approved by the Board, and this will require we look beyond simply improving our processes and programs, as we would do as part of usual quality improvement initiatives. There is some published literature on what churches may be asked to do when embarking on a journey like this, which includes making more fundamental shifts in our perspectives, attitudes and overall way of interacting and doing business. These are often not easy messages for us to receive, but ones that may be necessary when we want to embark on a journey of growth. I have little doubt that the best time to embark on this journey of renewal is when things are going well, as is the case for RWUC right now, and not to wait till our church is in dire straights financially or with dwindling membership, as is the case in so many Christian churches in Canada today.

Thank you to our community for a year of serving God and one another in love, for worshipping both together and individually, for equipping people for ministry, and for caring for those who need it most. It has been a year of worshipping collectively. This is my invitation to each of you, personally, to join us on this journey of renewal of our hearts and minds, to help build our church of the future.

Respectfully submitted by,
Dr. Charl Els, Acting Chair of the RWUC Board

Staff

As we reflected upon the past year, and what this community of faith has done and how we hope to move forward in the coming years we came to realize how blessed and fortunate we are. We, as staff, are privileged to see day in and day out the impact and potential impact of the mission and ministry of this community of faith. We feel that it gives us a unique perspective, for our work is not just Sunday-centered, nor is the life of this community of faith.

We believe strongly that Robertson-Wesley is much more than the conventional definition of a church can capture. We feel that R-W excels at being a community of faith and gathering place for people who are seeking safety, belonging, healing, understanding, and support, both spiritually and figuratively.

Robertson-Wesley supports people who are hungry, homeless, who live with mental health concerns, who are lonely, refugees, have differing abilities, people who have experienced trauma and are dealing with addictions. People who walk through the doors of Robertson-Wesley are looking for a community of people with similar values. People also come seeking a quiet prayer space and on Sundays they come to worship and sing together. Both during the week and on Sundays people are looking for someone to listen to them, and to fill in the gaps that our biological families once did. This is our chosen family. This is where we will find a friend, a grandparent, a chosen sibling that will help us.

We hear the stories of how grateful people are when they receive sustenance in various forms. We hear stories about how people finally feel that they have a place to belong where they are accepted for who they are. This is a place where everyone is invited to participate in whatever way fits for them.

As we reflect on the people that Robertson-Wesley serves, we began to dream about what this place could be, how we as a faith community could grow, and expand on the solid foundation of who R-W is today. We wondered what it would mean to be a community hub of support, a place of worship, healing and growth, and how we can build on what already exists to keep up with the rejuvenation in the neighbourhood. We believe that there is an abundance of resources here with people who are passionate about sharing, and living our faith in the world. We believe that we are called to help each other become better human beings, learning and growing, reconciling and transforming harmful patterns for patterns of healing and wholeness. That is, we seek to follow the example and teaching of Jesus. We have shown over the past few years that we have the ability to adapt and respond to emerging needs, and it is clear that the people of Robertson-Wesley are committed and willing to respond. The groundwork is laid. The foundation is secure and strong. How will the mission and ministry of this community of faith expand, and flourish in the next 5 to 10 years.

We are excited to support, encourage, and journey with all of you in this adventure. How will we multiply the blessings that we have received and share this abundance in the world? We begin by doing it as a team (both staff and volunteers)! We are grateful to share in all the work and dedication that the volunteers have for this place and the people we care for and serve in the name of God.

The staff

Respectfully submitted by,

The staff of R-W

Dr. Allan Bevan, Rev. Dirk Jessen, Rev. Karen Bridges, Brad Campbell, Elyse Munro, Garth van Herwaarden

Agenda
Annual Congregational Meeting
Robertson-Wesley United Church
Mar 5, 2023 12:00 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation
3. Opening Hymn: *Let Us Build a House* **More Voices 1 vv.1,4,5**
4. Act of Remembrance
5. Motion to allow adherents to vote
6. Approval of Agenda
7. Approval of the 2022 Annual Congregational Minutes
8. Approval of 2022 Annual Report
9. Motion to accept the 2022 Financial Statements
10. Motion to accept 2023 Budget
11. Motion to appoint Auditors
12. Recognition of Retiring Official Members of the Board and Trustees
13. Election of 2022 Official Board Members and Trustees
14. New Business
15. Closing Hymn: *Lord Speak to Me* **Voices United 589**
16. Benediction
17. Adjournment

Minutes: 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting

Robertson-Wesley United Church

March 6, 2022 12:00PM

Chair: Doug Sollows

Attendance: Appendix A

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1. Call to Order	Doug welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order 12:08 pm	Doug
2. Invocation	Rev. Karen opened the meeting with a prayer and a call to Holy Manners.	Karen
3. Act of Remembrance	The Ministry Team led a time of silence and read the names of those who died in the past year. Connie Kennedy, Helen Dragich, Dr. June McConaghie, John Windsor Ford, Joan Erving, Betty Jenkins, Bob Butler, Mary Van Dolder	Karen and Sally
4. Opening Hymn	<i>Take My Life and Let It Be</i> VU 506	Allan
5. MOTION to allow adherents be allowed to vote	MOTION: That adherents be allowed to vote at the 2022 ACM. Moved: Margery Wright Second: Lorna Berlinguette Motion CARRIED	
6. Approval of Agenda	MOTION: that we accept the agenda for the 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting be approved as presented. Moved: Brian Webb Second: Richard Kennedy Motion CARRIED	
7. Approval of the 2021 Meeting Minutes	MOTION: that we approve the meeting minutes for the 2021 Annual Congregational Meeting held on February 21, 2021 Moved: John Fleming Second: Richard Kennedy Motion CARRIED	
8. Approval of Annual Report 2021	MOTION: that we accept the 2021 annual report as printed. Moved: Lynn Maki Second: Norma Johnson Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The music listening committee is thanked for their diligence ● Like to add a thank you to staff and staff that have left over the year ● Really appreciated the groups resumed on Zoom, programs ● The role Shylo had, is there something that can be done to fill that role? Can the Soul Outing be resumed by a layperson? ● Contact with the church ● Gratitude for programs that kept going ● Online services were appreciated, as well as the ability to have as many in person services as well ● If we are to continue digitally, technical considerations could be improved ● Interested in more environmentalism and appreciation of the world God created. ● Welcome to Dr. Allan Bevan ● We are in a much better financial position than anticipated. Grants from federal government are appreciated 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glad for the new sign • Presence and access within the community, a welcoming and opening church • Food bank, property, M&P, secretary... a lot of work made lighter across many hands • thank yous and sharing volunteer tasks among people <p>Motion CARRIED</p>	
9. Motion to accept 2021 financial statements	<p>MOTION: Treasurer moves the acceptance of the 2021 financial statements as audited year ending December 31, 2021.</p> <p>Moved: Joanne MacQueen Second: Richard Kennedy Motion CARRIED</p>	Troy
10. Motion to accept 2021 budget.	<p>MOTION: Treasurer moves the approval of the 2022 annual budget as presented.</p> <p>Moved: Troy Murray Second: Lynn Maki Motion CARRIED</p>	Troy
11. Appointment of Auditors	<p>MOTION: Treasurer moves that we continue using Ellis Group to audit Financial Statements.</p> <p>Moved: Troy Murray Second: Motion CARRIED</p>	Troy
12. Recognition of Retiring Official Members of Board and Trustees	<p>Outgoing Chair of the Board: John Fleming M&P Chair: Lisa Fairweather Regional Rep: Lorna Berlinguette Mission and Outreach Pod Coordinator: J.S.</p>	Doug
13. Election of 2021 of Official Board Members and Trustees	<p>Nominations committee introduced our new leadership that is appointed not elected such as Pod Coordinators Rachel Frey – Spiritual Formation Pod Coordinator</p> <p>Nominations committee introduced our new leadership that is appointed not elected such as Pod Coordinators Rachel Frey – Spiritual Formation Pod Coordinator</p> <p>Nominations committee presented the following nomination slate for the Official Board:</p> <p>Those continuing their term Board Chair: Brian Webb Past Chair: Doug Sollows M&P Chair: Karen Gabert Treasurer: Troy Murray Property Chair: Jack Waters Member at Large: Tamara Wright Regional Rep: Lesley Verdin Regional Rep: Colleen Graves Regional Rep: Phyllis Harlton</p> <p>Nominations from the Floor: None</p> <p>MOTION: To approve new board members</p> <p>In-Coming Chair of the Board: Charl Els M&P Chair: Karen Gabert</p>	Ron

	<p>Regional Rep: Laurie Mereu</p> <p>Moved: Ron Soans Second: Norma Johnson Motion CARRIED</p> <p>Doug sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a recurring theme and focus on gratitude • Adopted the language of “Community of Faith” as community • Thank you for your support, and to all those I have come to know <p>Brian sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very honoured to be able to be part of the leadership team, to chair the board this year. • We have a strong collaborative atmosphere • Will work my hardest to continue that collaboration 	
14. New Business	<p>Chair Requested new business to be raised, if any.</p> <p>The communication plan was described for the attendees.</p> <p>A gratitude to the board, and particularly Doug as a board chair, for taking on a challenge and looking at communications within the church.</p>	Brian and Doug
15. Closing Hymn	Sent Forth by God’s Blessing Voices United 481	Allan
16. Benediction	Rev. Sally Boyle	
17. Adjournment	<p>MOTION: Present Chairperson asks for a motion to close the Annual Congregational Meeting.</p> <p>Moved: Karen Hansen</p>	Brian

Chair: Doug Sollows

Secretary: Ainsley Brown

Robertson Wesley United Church Official Annual
Congregational Meeting March 6, 2022

Appendix: Attendance

Geoff Anderson, Ruth Belford, Allan Bevan, Rev. Sally Boyle, Rev. Karen Bridges, Elsie Coon, Doug Densmore, Alison Dunwoody, Charl Els, John Flemming, Karen Gabert, Colleen Graves, Karen Hansen, Phyllis Harlton, Grant Harlton, Nancy Heule, Ian Inglis, Carol Inglis, Tony Jansen, Norma Johnson, Peter Kannu, Richard Kennedy, Judith LeBlanc, Joanne MacQueen, Lynn Maki, Arnold Maki, Laurie Mereu, Troy Murray, Ron Soans, Doug Sollows, Pat Stewart, Derek Sutherland, Garnet Thomas, Margery Wright, Tamara Wright, Mike Wolfer, Lori Zack.

Zoom

Ainsley Brown, Lisa Fairweather, Lorne Langman, Joan Morrison, Ann Thomas, Paul & Lesley Verdin, Connie & Jack Waters.

Catering Ministry

The Catering Ministry cares for grieving families who would like to hold a reception following a funeral or memorial service at Robertson-Wesley. At such a difficult time, it can be comforting to join with family members and friends to share a beverage and a bite to eat. Families can choose from a variety of menu items, prepared by a professional caterer and served by our catering volunteers. 2022 was a busy year for the group: our roster of 21 volunteers offered their time and energy at 11 receptions, with net proceeds of \$5,145.80 donated to Mission & Service of the United Church of Canada. Thank you to Dawn Allan, Lorna Berlinguette, Sheila Carr-Stewart, Janet Clark (deceased), Sharon Damery, Rosemary Dunbar, Clara Dyck, Debra Free, Gayle Houston, Susan Hutson, Jeannie Jensen, Donna Krucik, Janet Mears, Patricia Mich, Vital Ouellette, Laoussa Pawlowski-Weinlick, Pat Stewart, Derek Sutherland, Larry Wright and Margery Wright!

Respectfully submitted by,
Colleen Ouellette

Communications

In 2022 R-Ws communications continued to be split between digital spaces and in-person communications. Marketing and Communications focused on in-person communications through posters, pamphlets, Quarterly newsletter *Between the Aisles*, the R-W report, and internal and external printed signage, and on digital communications through social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram), R-W's website, and e-news.

R-W continued to reach out through monthly mail outs to people at Canterbury and to those who were isolated, including letters from the Reverends, copies of *Between the Aisles*, and printed sermons and blogs. In the neighbourhood R-W reached out with the digital lawn sign, featuring messages about worship, events, community dinners, and inspirational quotes. We also supported our tenants Cantilon Choirs and Prescolaire des Pétites Étoiles by featuring their events.

R-W continually updates the forms of communication, and works to ensure that we continue to engage the congregation and wider community in the great things that Robertson-Wesley is offering.

Respectfully submitted by,
Elyse Munro

Discernment, Envisioning, and Policy (DEAP)

"With ears of yesterday and today help us appreciate spiritual traditions, yet have the courage and willingness to grow and change." Gill Le Fevre, Gathering.

COVID-19 took our church into a liminal time, a fallow time. The restrictions of COVID gradually lessened during 2022, and more and more pre-COVID activities and behaviours began happening. Like a garden in spring, during 2022 the people of Robertson-Wesley have been challenged to tend perennials and plant new seeds.

What seeds planted long ago still needed tending?

- Music programming
- Sunday worship services
- Building, grounds and hospitality
- Financial stability and stewardship
- Pastoral care
- Outreach: local and global
- Faith Formation (Kids' Church, Youth Ministry, Adult Education)

These perennials, which are central to the fabric of Robertson-Wesley, continue with both traditional and edgy new elements.

What seeds planted recently need tending?

- Inclusion, diversity: a safe place for all
- Being a welcoming, caring, loving community
- Offering online worship and meetings
- Using the POD structure to enhance internal communication
- Wild Church

Are you concerned that small group programs and worship, such as Wild Church, Koinonia, and Women's Weekend, splinter Robertson-Wesley? Or, do you believe they strengthen Robertson-Wesley?

What seeds might be planted this year (2023)?

- Newcomers bring new ideas and challenge continuing members to take some risks by trying out new-to-Robertson-Wesley programs introduced by some of the newcomers
- Build more connections with neighbourhood businesses such as has been done with parking (McElheran's Furniture and Optometrists' Clinic), product donations (Good Earth), and grocery cards (Sobeys, Save On, President's Choice)
- Implement new methods of promoting Robertson-Wesley and communicating with the residents of Oliver and other communities

The people supporting Robertson-Wesley are the gardeners tending and planting seeds. Several long-time active members have passed away during 2022. We reflect that this leads to grief, as well as opportunities for new faces to take up their roles, or even opportunities to reimagine the roles and programs themselves.

A collaborative submission by Carol Inglis, Jill Lambie, Angela Glasel, Robert Mah, J.S., and Kay Meier

Family Ministry Committee

The role of the Family Ministry Committee is to support family-based and multi-generational programming at Robertson-Wesley. We focus on children, youth, young adults, and families through supporting a variety of activities and programming. 2022 was another challenging year for families at Robertson-Wesley United Church. The year felt very much like a pull between the pandemic and trying to resume in person activities. Early 2022 continued with largely virtual participation, including a family-led Lenten zoom series. We were also able to host Easter activities on the lawn of the church including crafts, an egg hunt and games.

In the fall, in-person activities resumed, though certainly with more hesitation than before. In September, we kicked off with our annual Blessing of the Backpacks (and other things) so we could start our school year carrying the spirit of R-W with us. Kids' Church resumed and a small group of kids actively participated in fun, faith-filled activities throughout the fall. Youth group also resumed and have had fun activities throughout the fall - including a games night, climbing at Vertically Inclined and helping with the Community Christmas Dinner.

At Christmas, the early service was both in person and livestreamed and featured many voices from our younger group, which allowed us to share the good news of Jesus' birth. These moments helped ground our kids in the spirit of belonging and joy, knowing that even in uncertain times, the congregation is with them.

We are hopeful that we will continue to build on our strong foundation as we adapt to our changing world. We continue to reflect on how we can support our younger community and make sure that they feel the warmth of the congregation – no matter the stage of the pandemic we may be in.

A big thank you to all the amazing volunteers who support family ministry, including our Kids' Church and Youth leaders: Andrew Seal, Doug Graham, Angela Glasel, Beth Janzen, Susan Cameron and Jay Ferguson.

Respectfully submitted by,
Tory Bachmann

Fellowship

Fellowship involves the planning for and presentation of the reception after the church service each Sunday: organizing the food and drinks (buying, preparing, accepting donations); setting everything out; serving; cleaning up afterwards. Sadly, we report that the Fellowship team has lost a valuable member, Janet Clark, who served many years as co-chair along with Sylvia Duffus. She is greatly missed by all. Susan Hutson stepped in to fill her shoes in June when Janet was no longer able.

We are grateful for donations of food items and financial donations from congregation members. The local Good Earth Coffeehouse has been donating day old food items as well. Financial donations have been generous and enable us to add cheese and crackers which are much appreciated. The Memorial Hall is once again buzzing with people enjoying each other's company.

Fellowship would not happen without our volunteers. We would like to thank Gwen and Ed Blanchard and Richard Kennedy who do early set up duties - a great help. Tiegan Benson and Judy Hayman have responded to the call for assistance. We are grateful for anyone who has pitched in when they see a need.

Sylvia Duffus and Susan Hutson

Finance Committee

Like last year, I'll start the report by acknowledging the great folks that make up the Finance Committee: Bill Hodgins, Eric Sauze, Pat Stewart, Rev. Karen Bridges, Tory Bachmann, Rev Dirk Jesson, and Garth van Herwaarden! This team meets monthly throughout the year to ensure we regularly review and discuss the financial position of RWUC. It is the job of the Finance Committee to ensure that the work for RWUC fits into the budget that is approved by the congregation. The vast majority of funding for the programs and services delivered by RWUC comes directly from this congregation in one way or another - so thank you to each of you who donates your time, treasures, and talents to advance the Mission of RWUC.

Garth van Herwaarden, Financial Manager, makes the work of the Finance Committee and especially the work of the Treasurer easier. Garth's financial analysis and cash flow planning, coupled with his wealth of knowledge and experience, all contribute to the financial well-being of this church. Thank you, Garth.

We started the year with a lot of uncertainty, not the least of which was uncertainty on how the continuing pandemic would impact us financially. While there have been some rocky roads, we find ourselves in a much better financial position than we had presented in the budget for this year, and for that, we give thanks! Increased donations coupled with Government grants and subsidies were a large factor in the positive results. In 2022 the markets dropped, and as a result, our investments along with it. However, protecting minimum balances, we still have cash gains that we withdrew in late 2021 before the market dropped, placing us in an excellent position for the first part of 2023.

As always, we enter the new year with what feels like so much uncertainty about the future. But, we rejoice in the knowledge that we know from God's word that we can have faith about the future. Matthew 6:33-34 "But seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

The Finance committee lives out the mission of RWUC by collectively working together to learn and grow in faith and to use God's gifts wisely. Growing in faith is a dimension of working together on the finance committee. Faith and the belief that monitoring and articulating an accurate financial picture of our faith community helps provide the best basis for informed decision making as a congregation. The Finance committee lives out the values of RWUC. For example - there have been some friendships made over the last year, we work in a caring, respectful manner, trying to be caring and accommodating for those in need. We rely on the collective wisdom of the group to collectively make decisions.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Troy Murray, Treasurer

Fundraising

The COVID pandemic again limited the number of fundraisers this year. However, by members of the congregation going to where the need was and through the spirit of friendship, belonging, and joy, the total sum raised for fundraising into general revenue exceeded the 2022 budgeted amount that was set at \$5,000.00. The total amount raised was \$7,435.44.

General Revenue

General revenue supports the regular operations of Robertson-Wesley United Church (RWUC) such as the cost of staff wages, programs, and facility upkeep and utilities.

- Pat Stewart and Sheila-Carr Stewart raised \$2,185.35 at the Book Sale/Art Sale.
- Robert Mah, Carol Anne and Ian Inglis, Lea Callebaut, Jean Marie Nzeyimans, Gloria Kazywiski, Rosemary Dunbar, and Connie and Jack Waters raised \$3062.34 through the selling of grocery cards.
- Sylvia Post raised \$1,993.00 at the New to You Clothing Sale.
- \$194.15 was raised through other revenue such as bottle returns, etc.

Anniversary Legacy Fund

The fund was established to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the church in 2013. The fund was to be used to provide income for the operation of the church. The Board in recent years approved using the fund for capital projects as well. Sylvia Post's Bake Sales raised \$2,333.60 for the Anniversary Legacy Fund.

Mission and Service (M&S)

M&S contributes to world outreach and mission in Canada projects, theological colleges, the meetings of General Council, and the operations of the national offices. Its revenue comes from contributions from members of the United Church across Canada. Donna Krucik's Jam and Pickle Sales raised \$891.00.

General Information

To read Frequently Asked Questions about Fundraising, refer to the Leadership Manual. A Fundraising Meeting was held on January 15, 2023, and a number of great ideas were presented and booked for this year. Thank you to everyone who attended the fundraising meetings, organized a fundraiser, volunteered, and supported them.

With Gratitude,
Tamara Wright
Fundraising Chair 2022

Gratitude Team

The Theme this year was: Beyond Gratitude – How are we leaving our mark?



As we think back to our beginnings, we remember those dedicated folks who mortgaged their homes to support the initial construction of Robertson-Wesley. Walking through R-W every item is a loving gift or memorial. What we do not see is the hours and years of dedicated work that allows R-W to operate and carry out our mission in Edmonton and the greater community. Every gift of time, talent or financial support makes a difference to the mission of Robertson-Wesley. The Gratitude Team is an optimistic, energetic group who worked hard to plan and present R-W's

Givings Campaign to the congregation this year. We send all our faithful attendees and supporters our THANKS for the positive response you have provided in so many ways.

E-Sign Outreach: The Gratitude Committee submits weekly inspirational messages, which have been posted in attractive formats by Elyse. (Thank you)

Givings Campaign

Transforming Gratitude into action is another way to leave our marks. Financial support allows us to work at the mission Jesus has given us. Our Gratitude Givings Campaign enables the Church programs and operations to work at this mission.

Gratitude Financial Commitments 2023

	2023			2022	
	Goal	Amount	Givers	Amount	Givers
Regular	\$ 350,000	\$ 274,426	93	\$ 292,346	100
M&S	\$ 30,000	\$ 28,792	52	\$ 31,511	56
Anniversary legacy	n/a	\$ 2,500	8	\$ 5,457	9

There are 72 PAR givers as of January 2023 compared to 77 in December 2022.
The Gratitude Team considered someone on PAR as making a financial commitment.
People making a financial commitment decreased by 7.

Mission and Service

“Mission and 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 the 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.

In 2022, donations from Robertson-Wesley to Mission and Service total \$36,273. This is made up of \$30,273 from the congregation, \$5,145 from the Catering Ministry and \$891 from the sale of baked goods and preserves (thank you Donna). Thank you to all who contributed in any way.

On Communion Sundays we continue to raise awareness of the many ways this money is used to support the mission of the church. We have also brought back the quarterly M&S Bucket at services so congregants can make donations to celebrate special occasions in their lives.

As we consider and plan how we will leave our mark on Robertson-Wesley and our communities may we listen to and be inspired by the words Jesus has given us.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Jill Lambie, Sylvia Duffus, Vicky Mah, Pat Stewart, Fraaz Kamal, Roy Skoreyko, Ed & Gwen Blanchard, Ian Inglis , staff support Rev. Karen Bridges and Rev. Dirk Jessen

Koinonia Worship

2022 was a good year! Though a few Covid restrictions were often in place, the Koinonia group was able to hold services each month, January through December with a break over the summer. Potluck suppers were held as often as possible, with “bring your own supper and masks” occasionally taking their place.

As Koinonia Worship has been a lay-led service since its inception in 1968 or 69, it’s variety of services has offered “something for everyone”. The members have shared their faith by planning and leading the services, participating in the reading of Scriptures and other readings, the singing of hymns pertaining to the theme, sharing in table discussions, and in the closing Circle Prayers. We experienced a loss of a few long-time members because of health

issues, but gained several new friends over the course of 2022. We were particularly saddened to lose Gary Pecknold, who, along with Joan, had been a part of the group leadership for years, and Janet Clark, who offered leadership and support when she could. They are remembered in our hearts and prayers. According to well-kept records by Joan Pecknold, we enjoyed the company of 15 to 25 folk each Sunday evening during the year!

I can't say enough without describing in depth the excellent services offered, so I'll list them briefly with apologies: FOOD INSECURITY was the theme offered in January by Arleen and Bonnie; MEDITATION PRACTICES IN TIME FOR LENT, by Arleen and Joann in February; a lively MUSICAL CELEBRATION in March by Phyllis (piano), Margery(flute), and Graham (trumpet), and the rest: enthusiastic singing! EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE on Easter Sunday morning at Paul Kane Park, was led by Rev. Karen, Rose and Arleen, followed by the annual Easter breakfast (delicious pancakes made by the 4 G's: Gary, Garnet S, Garnet T, Graham. Lorna led worship on the theme of SYSTEM RACISM in May. We met again at the end of August for WORSHIP PLANNING at the home of Grant and Phyllis, for a potluck supper, some camp singing led by Larry and Margery, an exercise in determining what was important about Koinonia to each person, and scheduling services to the end of the year.

We started the unofficial Koinonia season in September with a workshop, so ably led by Rev. Rachel Frey of Robertson-Wesley, who had us do some fun exercises to get us "in the mood", and put us through some serious questions about what a post-Covid Koinonia would look like and how we could welcome some more new friends (it worked!!). In October, Jane and Joann led us through a service on GRATITUDE, continuing the theme of several weeks in the Sanctuary. November's theme of WAITING AND HOPE helped prepare us for Advent with a play reading led by Garnet and Ann, and the rest of the cast. Two events occurred in December: White Gift Sunday was carried out by several members of Koinonia sorting and packing up of a large number of gifts and delivering downtown once again by Louis and Lorna. Bissell Centre expressed much gratitude for the generosity of Robertson-Wesley congregation! A few days later, the ANNUAL KOINONIA PROGRESSIVE DINNER took place in Memorial Hall (appetizers and Main course), followed by dessert and Carol Singing at Garnet and Ann's, Music by Phyllis. A wonderful wonderful evening to end KOINONIA 2022!!

I wish to thank the worship leaders for their thoughtful service preparation, the attendees for their loyalty and support, and the enthusiastic musicians (Phyllis, Margery, Graham and Marg). Thanks to those who contributed food for the potlucks and to the many who helped set up and clean up and to Richard who helped immensely with set up, running the electronics and designing such lovely posters! And for all the assistance from RW staff: Rev Karen, Elyse, Brad, and Richard who without that help and guidance throughout the year, would have made our efforts much more challenging!! Happy 2023 everyone!

Respectfully submitted by,
Joann Cooke on behalf of Koinonia Worship

Men's Group

The "Men's Group" is a loose number of the usually male members of the congregation who gather for fellowship and conversation at Robertson-Wesley or often are found wandering around the city experiencing its numerous features which many people may not normally undertake. Please note the name of the group is the "Men's Group", but the title does not emulate how the group operates. Where as the activities of this group are organized by mainly the senior men of Robertson-Wesley, all other individuals or groups of Robertson-Wesley are always welcome to participate.

Because the Men's Group consists of members of Robertson-Wesley United Church, there is a consistency of common faith amongst those attending. During the monthly activities undertaken, there is a strong sense of friendship, caring, belonging, wisdom and joy amongst those participating.

Unfortunately, with the COVID pandemic, and it's lethal affect on people, especially seniors, the Men's Group has been inactive since February 2019; however as of September 2023 the Men's Group reinstated their Monthly meetings to the delight of all the participants.

At the first Men's Group Meeting in January 2023 the decision was made to maintain the regular meetings of once a month, but decided to change the meeting day to the second Thursday of every month, usually starting at 10:00 am. The reason for the change is over the last few years the ability of some of the groups people to attend a Wednesday meeting was declining and Thursdays have now become a more accessible day for the majority.

Everyone of the Men's Group is excited to be back and active in 2023.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jim Triscott

Ministry and Personnel

2022 was a year of continued adaptation as Robertson-Wesley began to emerge from pandemic restrictions. R-W staff responded with creativity and compassion to the ever-evolving needs of our community. M&P supported the staff team by ensuring they have what they need to do their jobs.

Highlights of our year include:

- Welcoming our bridging minister, Rev. Dirk Jessen, to the team in August. Rev. Dirk brings humour and humility to his work and we're grateful for his presence in this transitional time.
- Bidding farewell to Rev. Sally Boyle in April. After a year and half in our community, we sent Sally off with a party, our thanks, and best wishes as she returns to retirement.
- Rev. Karen's steady presence and leadership through uncertain times. Rev. Karen continues to bring energy and enthusiasm to the team and the wider church community.
- The musical gifts of Dr. Allan Bevan and the high calibre of musical excellence he brings to worship services.
- Commitment to the day-to-day operations of our church, led by Garth van Herwaarden, Elyse Munro, and Brad Campbell, with support from Richard Kennedy, Roderick Mamita, Nathan Dennis, and Christine Mandrusiak, and summer student Michael (Azuka) Morah.

M& P would like to recognize the staff team for the professionalism and grace they each bring to their respective roles. Having a group of off-site volunteers as their supervisors means they must work together closely to carry out the day-to-day work of the church. This is not always easy, but their resourcefulness and commitment to each other and the church community makes this work. We thank them for this commitment and the excellence they bring to the job.

The M&P Committee included the following members in 2021:

Eric Sauze, Ron Soans, Heather Warkentin, Connie Waters, and Karen Gabert. Heartfelt thanks to Connie for her service as she wrapped up her term on the committee, and welcome to new member for 2022, Margery Wright!

M&P looks after confidential human resource 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,
Karen Gabert
Chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee

Mission and Outreach Pod

What is the Mission and Outreach Pod?

This pod is responsible for reaching out to the congregation, the community and the world around us. The focus of this pod is to be a spiritual presence outside the walls of the church. This pod will find ways to advocate for justice, equality, and the environment, while serving others through compassion, charity and caring.

Living the Mission: Zoom Conversation with Jordana Wright

On March 20, in advance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Mission and Outreach Pod coordinated a Zoom presentation and conversation with **Jordana Wright**. Jordana shared the professional and academic journey that led her to launch **Activate Space**—a tech startup that supports churches in creating new revenue streams, boosting sustainability, and expanding their roles as community hubs. The 14 virtual participants, which included RW congregation members and representatives from United Churches across Alberta, considered how to continue building vibrant online spaces even as in-person activities resumed, such as Jordana’s **Virtual Coffee Hour**, as well as how new technologies can impact the in-person experiences in our churches and communities.



Truth and Reconciliation

- National Indigenous Peoples Day
- **Stanley Salopree** preached on Indigenous Sunday in June and the Mission and Outreach Pod shared many activities, initiatives, and ideas in the bulletin leading up to National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21.
- Invitation to a Sweat Lodge Ceremony
- R-W congregation members interested in learning more about the Indigenous way of life were invited to a Sweat Lodge Ceremony at Doug and JoAnne Heckert's acreage near Elk Island National Park, hosted by Doug and Elder Wil Campbell. Ceremonies took place on September 18 and September 25.

Environmental Stewardship

A voice of one calling: in the WILDERNESS, prepare the way of the Lord. Isaiah 40:3

R-W's **Environmental Stewardship** team works together to plan church activities, projects, and events that help us heal our relationship with Creation.

The Forest - Common Ground (TFCG)



The Forest - Common Ground is an art installation comprising photographic images of tree trunks from across Canada to create an immersive experience while emphasizing a diverse forest is a strong forest. Participants were invited to photograph tree trunks with Alberta photographer Jon Havelock. Here are the results!



Environmental Stewardship Theme for Easter Season

How can we use nature to cultivate an awareness of God?

There were several activities related to Environmental Stewardship during Easter Season:

- An ES focused service on April 24, during which the idea of the “ecological examination of conscience” reflection was introduced.
- The subsequent weeks included a verbal presentation of one reflection question and silent reflection during the service, as well as quotes, questions, and scriptures, and a responsive Prayer for Creation.
- Jim Triscott provided pictures for the bulletin each week.
- The glass display case was updated with a theme of “Restoring the Great Conversation”
- The Environmental Stewardship team challenged the congregation to reflect how the theological banquet orientations align with caring for our Earth home
- Activities included:
 - Zone 3 Gardening Presentation
 - Leadership In Energy & Environmental Design Workshop
 - *Revolution Generation* Film
 - Book discussion of *Church of the Wild* by Victoria Loorz

Wild Church

Wild Church is a communal practice of learning to converse with nature in order to experience sacred transformation and restore connection with the web of life to which we already belong. This is an all-ages form of worship, and all are welcome.



Book discussion: *Church of the Wild* by Victoria Loorz

This eco-spiritual book considers Biblical narratives through the lens of nature, presenting a call to be in communion with all creatures and expand our conception of the Church to include the Earth itself. Victoria Loorz, MDiv, is a “wild church pastor” and a co-founder of the [Wild Church Network](#). The Network is focused on expanding our sacred connection, rooted in love, with all of nature, through recognition and participation in the kindred interconnection of all places and beings. The book discussion took place on June 13 and asked the questions:

- Tell me about the land who raised you
- Which points/concepts in the book moved you the most? Why?
- What are you feeling called to do after reading this book?

Further, the group considered the following: Is the spirit moving us to start a wild church? What would a wild communion look like? And the group began to consider the logistics of a wild church at RW.

Gatherings

From the book discussion of *Church of the Wild* by Victoria Loorz came the idea to offer wild church as an alternative worship on the third Sunday afternoon of each month. A planning group now meets monthly to collaboratively plan worship. Wild church participants share leadership between all who are interested, rather than having a singular

“leader”. So far, there have been four wild church gatherings: One at Paul Kane Park in September, two at Victoria Park in October and November, and one at Emily Murphy Park in January 2023. The planning group found that there is a desire to do this throughout the year: they expected less participants in the winter, but were surprised that 13 people and two dogs attended the most recent gathering in January!



The format for these gatherings is as follows:

- Enter circle
- Pay attention to breath
- Land acknowledgment
- Intro to theme
- Readings
- Time to wander
- Heart listening (instead of ears)
- Return to circle
- Offering - share insights questions observations
- Wrap up with blessing / prayer

Communications

These communications channels broaden the initiatives reach:

- The website wildchurchyeg.org includes past liturgies and information about upcoming gatherings.
- The Wild Church YEG Instagram account ([@wildchurchyeg](https://www.instagram.com/wildchurchyeg)) includes quotes and upcoming gatherings.

Insights

Wild church is an example of a group shifting how they have approached an aim. As you can see in this report, the ES team started by focusing on earth issues and education (workshops, seminars) and through a book discussion and subsequent conversations, have shifted to eco-spirituality and created a new, inclusive, regularly occurring gathering.

Here are some insights so far:

1. **This is an exciting new area** and we are tapping into a larger movement.
2. **This isn't as radical as it sounds.** There is a template in our faith tradition for people walking into wilderness to be with God, pay attention, and care for the earth.
3. **This practice engages a diverse group.** Some are people who have been involved with RW for a long time. Others are invited by friends and do not have church attachments. Offering something welcoming to all means we can draw the circle wider. Victoria Loorz considers herself an “edge walker” of the Christian tradition. This practice honours its roots in the United Church, while acknowledging and holding that individuals may face traumas around Christianity. Liturgies are intentionally designed to be inclusive and accessible, for example including poetry and quotes, to create an accessible worship for those who may believe in a bigger power, but traditional Christian language does not work for them.

Ideas to Continue Growing RW's Wild Church

- Engage more people in upcoming year
- Wild church for kids
- End of school year potluck - do it outside!
- Activities outside of formal worship besides the third Sunday of the month. So far, some have gone snowshoeing and stargazing
- Show other churches what they can do

Respectfully Submitted by,
Julie Lovell

Nominations Committee

The nominations committee consists of Garnet Thomas, John Fleming, and Ron Soans. The nominations committee 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 Secretary, a Member at Large and two positions for Regional Representative at the Northern Spirit Regional Council.

Please note, all those interested for any of the above positions can indicate their interest and could be added to the slate prior to the ACM.

We believe God's spirit at R-W will inspire 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 by,
Ron Soans on behalf of the Nomination Committee

Northern Spirit Regional Council (NSRC)

As Northern Spirit Regional Council Representatives, we are called to follow the news of the Northern Spirit Region. We share the news of the Region with the RWUC Board and our Community of Faith. In 2022 the 4th Annual Meeting of the Northern Spirit Regional Council met online on October 14 and 15th, 2022.

Hundreds of delegates and visitors registered for the annual meeting. A highlight for many was the small group conversations that built on three stories of ministries surviving and learning through COVID-19. We talked together about envisioning church differently, our needs and hopes for the future, and about decisions made at General Council 44 and how these affect our Region. Prayer, communion, song, and reports from across the Region and church rounded out our time together.

If you would like more information about the Northern Spirit Region, please sign up to receive their weekly newsletter at northernspirit@united-church.ca. Perhaps you would like to visit their website at northernspiritrc.ca.

The Northern Spirit Region offers many online courses and opportunities throughout the year. As NSRC representatives, we are interested in discovering more about the activities of our region. We are inspired by having the opportunity to listen and share with other United Church members. The work of the NSRC is ecumenical, working for social change. For NSRC representatives the meetings are also spiritual as we worship and pray together throughout the meeting. It has been a pleasure to serve as your NSRC representatives. For 2022, your NSRC representatives were Colleen Graves, Laurie Mereu, Phyllis Harlton and Lesley Verdin.

Lesley Verdin is a Licensed Lay Worship Leader for the Northern Spirit region and is sharing her gift, along with her husband Paul Verdin at various churches in the region.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Colleen Graves
RWUC Northern Spirit Regional Council Representative 2022

Outreach Committee

Outreach's long-term core programs (Community Dinner, Magic Pantry and Food Bank Depot) continued to faithfully serve the broader Robertson Wesley community in 2022 (further details below).

The Helen Mack Fund, overseen by an Outreach subcommittee, is the primary financial sponsor for the Community Dinner and Magic Pantry programs. In 2022, a total of \$12,144 was withdrawn from the Helen Mack fund to support these two programs, and to supply a \$5000 grant to the RWUC Refugee Project. The value of the fund (approximately \$63,000 at the end of 2022) has now declined to a level below that of the initial bequest. Given this, the subcommittee has decided to continue to prioritize funding stability for Outreach's core programs (though funding applications for other internal RWUC Outreach projects will still be considered). With Community Dinner and Magic Pantry currently having combined annual expenditures exceeding \$10,000, the Helen Mack fund may be able to support these programs for approximately another 5 years (assuming no large additional expenditures or drastic market changes).

Respectfully Submitted by,
Brad Warkentin

Community Dinner

Community Dinner started with takeout meals given out at the door with guests ranging from 50 to 100. We started sharing any leftover food with Magic Pantry so the guests Monday and Tuesday had a boxed meal. It makes so much sense and we feel it's important to be using every stitch of food.

Summer '22 we had monthly barbeques out on the lawn with tables, chairs, music, and oh, such needed visiting and conversations. It was evident that people were 'hungry' for community gathering as they lingered long past the normal finish time. Everyone seemed to truly savor the fresh taste of barbeque and all the fixings. Guests were happy to help us clean up and haul tables and chairs back into the hall.

Starting in September '22 we moved back into the hall for our traditional sit down meal. We noticed some volunteers were hesitant to return, as were some guests. Slowly regulars returned and new people joined in as well. By Thanksgiving and Christmas the hall was bursting with nice energy and interactions, it felt so good.

Along with our amazing base leadership group we have an awesome volunteer interest with both our congregation members and many people not associated in that way yet they feel a part of the life and work of RW by coming to help at the dinners. We have welcomed brand new volunteers each and every dinner. Friendships blossom and connections are made while we work to set up, prepare, cook and serve. Thank you to everyone who share their time and energy.

Our mission to serve allows us provide a meal and a lovely, welcoming setting to enjoy it in. Especially in these times of soaring grocery prices we are so truly grateful for the Helen Mack Fund, RW congregation, generous donations and local business support with Cobs Brewery District and The Little Potato Company.

The legacy of Community Dinner is destined to continue.

Respectfully submitted by,
Rhonda Black

Magic Pantry

The Magic Pantry at Robertson Wesley continues to supply lunches to those in need in the neighbouring community three days a week. From it's humble beginning it has grown to be a significant part of the outreach program graciously supported by the Helen Mack Fund. 2022 saw an expected increase in demand as inflation took hold. Costs also went up 10-15 % . A decision was made to reduce waste and cut costs by eliminating pudding cups, plastic spoons, snack bags with cookies and napkins. Recently the local Good Earth Cafe on 124 Street offered their day old

pastries to the church and now a muffin/pastry is included in each lunch. If you have a chance please support this local cafe. A lunch now consists of two sandwiches, a juice pack and a muffin/pastry. One hundred loaves of sandwiches are made every 2-3 months and frozen until needed. Total expenses for 2022 were about \$4200, or around \$1.66 per lunch bag. The program would not be the success it is without the many volunteers who give their time to organize and hand out lunches, make sandwiches and buy supplies. Magic Pantry served 2,520 bagged lunches, containing 5040 sandwiches in 2022, an average of 49 lunches a week.

Respectfully submitted by,
Derek Sutherland

Food Bank

The Food Bank Depot operates every Wednesday at Robertson-Wesley from 12:00 pm to 2:30 pm. Clients must register with the the Central Food Bank and phone them when they require food. At that time, they are directed to one of the sixty-five depots in the city of which Robertson-Wesley is one. A group of dedicated volunteers helps set up the church hall to receive about thirty clients each week. Food hampers are prepared at Edmonton's Central Food Bank and delivered by truck. Approximately 50-60 boxes have to be unloaded each Wednesday. Clients check in at the registration desk and are directed to a table with their hamper(s). All unclaimed hampers are returned to the Central Food Bank. During the month of December, 2022, 3,774 kg of food passed through the R-W Food Bank Depot.

The Edmonton Food Bank has seen a dramatic increase in demand in the last two years. The number of clients helped per month has increased from an average of 20,000 (2020) to a high of 34,867 (June 2022). Because demand has outpaced supply the Edmonton Food Bank has had to recently purchase 1.15 million dollars of food to keep the program going. We have recently been informed that the size of a hamper and the number of hampers for large families will have to be decreased to keep up with demand. In the last several months we have seen many Ukrainian individuals and families visit the depot as they settle in the Oliver area.

Recently the Good Earth Cafe on 124 Street has graciously donated their day old pastries/soups to the church and we are now able to offer clients a few treats to take home. If you have a chance please support this local cafe. Many thanks to the team of volunteers who give their time each week to keep this long running program going and make it the success it is.

Respectfully submitted by,
Derek Sutherland

Property

It is always exciting being on the Property Committee. You never know what the year will bring. We plan and then plans change. We think it will be an easy year and then something falls apart. Having a Historic Building to look after is interesting and rewarding.

This year has been the year of getting back to normal, after the covid restrictions. Getting back to normal means the building is getting used more and more. It is quite busy at our church and not just on Sundays. That means wear and tear on everything. Brad and his crew have got this down to an art and the general maintenance is ongoing.

For the last couple of years, we have been looking at changing the lights in the Church to LED lighting. We have been slowly changing some of the lights as they burn out. However, this last year has seen a dramatic increase in the utilities of the church. Ex: Power and gas. We have been fortunate over the years to have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to complete projects at the Church. The United Church has a grant called Faithful Footprints, which we have applied for and would cover \$28,000 and along with the government grants of \$10,000 we

should cover most of the cost of light replacement. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the lights are changed. Pat Stewart and Garth van Heerwarden have put a lot of work into grant applications.

Another major project is the refinishing of the Sanctuary main doors. These doors have not been done in years and are starting to crack. This is a difficult job, but the cost is partially covered by the City Heritage grant that we qualify for.

We are looking at painting the exterior trim of the Church and painting the Sanctuary and Chapel. These are major jobs, and we will be looking for grants. Another project is solar panels, again we would require grants.

Our yards were beautiful this year. There is a lot of volunteer work that goes into maintaining our yards. Thanks to Lee Callebaut Ian and Carol Anne Inglis, Rosemary Dunbar, and Jim Triscott for the work they do.

There are hundreds of little jobs that get done every year by many different people and we want to keep our church home as clean and well maintained as we can. Brad, his crew, and many more help to keep the church the way we want. Thanks to everyone who contributes. Finally thank you to the Property Committee: Albert deVos, Karen Hansen, Doug Densmore, Arnold Maki, Rosemary Dunbar, Louis Berlinguette, Lorne Langman, Brad Campbell, and Jack Waters.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Jack Waters, Chair of Property

Refugee Project Team

The Refugee Project Team was very busy for first half of 2022, fundraising and coordinating the refugee application to sponsor our family. Hopefully most of the congregation have become acquainted with Jael and Bolot from our updates in Still Spirited and Between the Aisles, and our project bulletin board in Memorial Hall.

Jael Tshoba and Bolot Mayaka are the sister and brother-in-law of Charles Sabu who has been a member of RWUC for a long time. Like Charles, Jael and Bolot are originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They were forced, by civil war, to flee and have been living as refugees in South Africa for many years. Unfortunately, the situation for them there is unsafe and unstable due to xenophobic attacks, harassment and discrimination.

The Project Team ran two fundraisers: selling Epicure seasoning blend packages and hosting a play. Most of the funds we raised, however, came from donations from the incredibly supportive RWUC community. We also received a grant from the Helen Mack Outreach Fund, and the balance of funds from the RWUC refugee sponsorship account. Altogether, we raised \$30,000 in the first 6 months of the year, even more than our target! As per Government of Canada requirements, as sponsors, we needed \$26,000 to cover one-time start-up costs plus monthly income support for 12 months.

Parallel to raising funds, the Refugee Project Team also worked to get the sponsorship application forms completed. These were submitted and we were advised that our application is on the 2023-24 submission list. This means that The United Church of Canada, which has a refugee sponsorship agreement with the Government of Canada and is allocated a set number of refugee spots each year, will submit the application to sponsor Jael and Bolot for government review in 2023.

While we wait to hear news on the application processing, we ask for prayers for Jael and Bolot.

Respectfully submitted by,
The Refugee Project Team
Barb Thompson, Nova Laurin, Charles Sabu, Leanne Foff, Jay Ferguson & Lois Field

Spirited Arts Movement

Processing COVID Together through Art – How do we let go to come back together?

The beginning of 2022 society was in COVID lockdown state. There were large divisions within our society and it seemed insurmountable. Meeting also seemed challenging, as vaccine mandates were in place. We were isolated. I decided to use an Artist-in-Residency model and explore answering: *How Do We Let Go to Come Together?* I created a performance piece from what I discovered within the Robertson-Wesley congregation and general community. People were invited to sewing and collage workshops to collage or sew small things about COVID. Interviews also occurred where people could come and talk about their COVID experiences.

In the fall, the justice thread of the Spirited Arts Movement resumed regular programming but with a connected theme—how do we process our COVID experiences together? Beth Janzen and Charlie Peters were invited as artists to work alongside Brooke in their respective art forms, writing and clown/movement. Charlie Peters is a theatre artist with a social justice and clowning background. Beth is a multi-disciplinary artist, working with a focus on writing. Coming out of COVID we first began with a popular clowning workshop. We played together with creating imaginative worlds and playing. It was refreshing to be together!

In the monthly writing workshops, attendees noted having fun, while it being refreshing to have a space to reflect upon COVID. We noted all the things we forgot throughout our many years journey together: the toilet paper shortage, fashion masks, sourdough bread, vaccination passports, wedding restrictions, etc.

In mid-December, I completed my residency by performing a first draft of an unusual structure. The performance featured monologues, simple dances and collaged soundscapes from news clips, and a feedback time where I asked the audience questions: what we should keep and let go of during the pandemic? How do we heal as a society? Do we even want to come back together?

I am grateful for the community to be open to experimenting with me and sharing regarding a tender and hot topic. 2023 sees continued programming with Charlie and Beth – check out your bulletins for more info!

Respectfully submitted by,
Brooke Leifso

Spirited Art Studio

With the reinstatement of in-person activities following a lengthy lockdown, and the retirement of long-time Spirited Art Therapy Director, Laura David-Foster, the Art Studio in many ways began a fresh start in October of 2022. The new incoming Spirited Art Director, artist and instructor Julie Kaldenhoven, reopened the long empty studio in the Lower Hall on Monday evenings from 7-8:30pm and Wednesday afternoons 1:30-3:00pm, with an additional session 5:30-7pm following monthly Community Fellowship Dinners every 2nd Saturday.

Although participants were initially wary of reemerging from their lockdown cocoons, attendance grew steadily through announcements in the church bulletin, renewal of the email list, and the new electronic sign erected in November. Current attendance per session ranges from 7-10, with numbers into the mid-teens after Community Dinners. The email list continues to grow through word of mouth, referrals from other church programs and/or mental health practitioners and simply from googling “free art classes.”

Participants range in age from 8 to over 80 and are from a variety of life circumstances - a number are unemployed, have special needs, are accessing therapy for mental health issues and/or addictions, while others are seeking community because of isolation due to being new to the city or country, grief or loss, and/or looking to find a supportive, welcoming place to be creative and connect with others. The majority use public transit or are within walking distance, while others drive from longer distances and one utilizes DATs. The studio is barrier-free to accommodate mobility issues.

As the Spirited Art Director, Julie's heartfelt aim for the Studio is:

- to provide an inclusive, welcoming and supportive space for fostering community and connection to others,
- to augment healing modalities of mental health programs through creativity and fellowship,
- to remove financial barriers to artmaking through no-cost programs,
- to offer multifaceted, interesting and fun entryways to creativity and thus to Spirit,
- to make every art or craft project accessible to any skill level,
- to provide a friendly, non-judgmental environment conducive to sharing thoughts and feelings,
- to be environmentally responsible by, whenever possible, using repurposed, recycled, or donated materials, and
- to grow attendance through word-of-mouth, referrals and social media.

Our projects have ranged from drawing, printmaking, wax-resist painting, altered recycled books, and self-care reminders to collage and photo transfer, among others. Participants often express gratitude for the program and delight at their creations.



*"Message"
plaque*



Tissue collage



*Advent theme box used during
services in the Sanctuary*



*New Year's
Inspiration Beads*

Respectfully submitted by,
Julie Kaldenhoven

Spiritual Formation Pod

The Spiritual Formation Pod is not a committee, nor is the same group of people who participate each time. A pod is simply word to describe a gathering of people hosted by the Pod Coordinator to engage in dialogue about events or programs or things that people are interested in doing or learning about on their journey of faith.

There were several conversations that were hosted in 2022 by the coordinator of the Spiritual Formation Pod. After the season of Easter a small group of people began hosting a book study on Church in the Wild felt called to organize what is known as Wild Church. Wild Church is an alternative worship service which takes place outside to bring people together who connect with the Divine and connect with their spirit in nature. After this conversation it was decided that Wild Church would be offered once a month on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 1PM at various locations in Edmonton and surrounding area. This would be a lay lead worship service for all ages. It began in June, and is gaining momentum.

The Spiritual Formation Pod Coordinator was also invited to lead a visioning conversation with Koinonia which is another group that meets monthly offering a lay lead worship service on the fourth Sunday of the month with a potluck dinner to begin. After 50 years of this being offered it was felt that it was time to have a conversation about what are the things that are valued about this program, and what changes might be made to help grow the group again as many of the original members are no longer wanting to be in direct leadership. After being shut down over COVID it was felt that it was a good time to talk about this again to see where new growth was emerging.

Scripture Reflections is offered every Tuesday at noon where people are invited to explore one of the scripture passages for the following Sunday using the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina. This is to help people enter the scriptures in a deeper way and gather wisdom from one another.

From Feb 9 – April 20th Rev. Sally Boyle led an Adult Study which explored the book of Amos, and also a DVD series entitled Eclipsing Empire with Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan.

There was a Membership Class and learning about the United Church of Canada during the season of Lent, lead by Rev. Sally Boyle.

There was also a Labyrinth Workshop March 26 hosted by Lynn Maki. This helped people to understand and learn about the history and the practice of walking the Labyrinth.

Contemplative Practices April 10, this was an evening of quiet contemplation and spiritual practice to begin holy week. It included, writing, art, the labyrinth, anointing, breath prayers etc. and helped people to deepen their relationship with God and their prayer life.

In the summer Rev. Karen Bridges offered membership classes.

In the Season of Advent a Labyrinth Walk was hosted and people were invited to come and walk the Labyrinth on Wednesday nights for 4 weeks as we journeyed toward Christmas. Hosted by Lynn Maki.

Rachel Frey stepped down as the coordinator in November, and John Fleming has stepped forward to take on this role in January 2023.

Spiritual Pod Coordinator

UCW & Friends

Robertson-Wesley UCW and Friends is part of a Regional body (Women of the United Church, Chinook Winds and Northern Spirit) and the National UCW. We celebrated our 60th anniversary in 2022! One of our members, Donna Krucik, attended a national 60th anniversary celebration in Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and reported back on the wonderful hospitality, worship and programming at that event.

The UCW purpose has four parts: Christian witness, study, fellowship and service. Fellowship is one of our strong points, and if you come to our meeting you can always count on getting a cup of tea or coffee, a snack of some kind, and a warm welcome. We have great discussions, readings, videos and short devotionals, and at most of our gatherings, music. During COVID, we met over Zoom, but that was definitely second best to meeting in person, and fewer people attended. Now that we are meeting in person again, our members have been putting forward a wide variety of program ideas and ways to serve the church in future. We are mostly women of retirement age, but we make space for men to join us too (indeed, people of all gender identities), particularly when we have a special program planned. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month, except July and August 1:30 pm in Memorial Hall.

In the fall, we mourned the death of Janet Clark, a great friend and wonderful member of UCW and of the church as a whole.

In closing, please pray with me the 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 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 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*), Troy Murray (Treasurer, *ex officio*), Dr. David Buchanan, Robert Mah, and Marg May.

2022 Allocations	Wesley	Clarke	Total
Bissell Centre	5,000	10,000	15,000
Choral Morphosis	5,000		5,000
No Room in the Inn (CMHA)		3,000	3,000
Inner City Pastoral Ministry		3,000	3,000
R-W Spirited Arts Movement	15,000	5,000	20,000
Total Allocations	25,000	21,000	46,000

Total Allocations in Recent Years			
	Wesley	Clarke	Total
2021	22,800	18,200	41,000
2020	25,300	19,700	45,000
2019	28,150	21,750	49,900
2018	25,500	19,500	45,000

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.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Karen Bridges, Chairperson of the Wesley & Clarke Trustees

Worship Committee

This year in worship at Robertson-Wesley marked a slow and gradual return to “normal” as far as restrictions we have had to endure during the past three years. Although we are mindful that the COVID virus and its inevitable variants were still present in late 2022, we seem to have reached a point where we can now, with guarded assurance, gather safely in person to worship in the beauty of our sanctuary. While live streaming of services continues to be an alternative, how wonderful it is to see the sacrament of communion once again administered in person during regular Sunday services, to see the choir loft full, to enjoy after-service fellowship in Memorial Hall, to see Soul OUTing return to its familiar once-a-month gathering, and the youth and children’s programs to resume as before.

The year brought some noteworthy change in ministry with the departure of Rev. Sally Boyle in the spring. Sally came out of retirement to fill in admirably, energetically, and always with a keen sense of humour as bridging minister during much of 2021 and 2022. In the fall we welcomed Rev. Dirk Jessen as the new bridging minister. We also bade a fond farewell to Laura David Foster, a valued member of the Worship Committee and leader of the Spirited Art Studio, as she has relocated to BC. Happy trails, Laura!

As always, special services took place throughout the year. Lent and Easter offered a number of opportunities for meaningful worship on Ash Wednesday (March 2), Palm Sunday (April 10), Maundy Thursday (April 14), Good Friday (April 15), Easter Vigil (April 16), and two services (the sunrise service in Paul Kane Park and the 10:30 service in the sanctuary) on Easter morning. In October, people in the congregation were invited to learn the ministry of Pastoral Prayers during a workshop led by Rev. Lynn Maki, further expanding the group of people giving the Pastoral Prayers each Sunday. The Advent and Christmas seasons were active as well with a musical feast of Lessons and Carols (December 11), a prayerful service of healing entitled “Blue Christmas” (December 18) and three services on Christmas Eve at 4 pm (family celebration), 7 pm (“Christmas with a Twist”) and 10 pm (“Choral Candlelight”). As Christmas Day--a day of rest for our hard-working ministers--fell on a Sunday this year, an informal service led by Jay Ferguson and Angela Glasel was attended by some 26 worshippers. Many thanks to Jay and Angela for their fine leadership, as well as to David Gurnett for sharing his musical gifts, Charles Sabu for reading the scriptures, and to the volunteer ushers for giving up part of their Christmas morning. Indeed, there is no underestimating the value of lay leadership in our faith community, and it is a testament to the resourcefulness of these individuals to step up and grasp these stewardship opportunities. We are all ministers, in a way, and there was no better proof than this!

Finally, it is with mixed emotions that, after six years of chairing this committee, it is now time for me to pass the torch. As this is the last Annual Report I will be writing on behalf of the Worship Committee, I wish to thank Rev. Karen Bridges, Rev. Dirk Jessen, Rev. Sally Boyle and Rev. Leigh Sinclair for their guidance and support throughout this time, as well as Music Director Allan Bevan and his predecessor Tammy-Jo Mortensen. The other members of this committee, Pat Stewart, Jill Lambie, Susan Hutson and Laura David Foster, have all been a joy to work with. At the time of this writing the Chair is vacant; we invite a new Chair to come forward and experience the rewards of being on the pulse of worship at Robertson-Wesley. Indeed, fresh perspectives are always needed, so the committee is also accepting new members, including those within the youth orbit, as well as ushers, communion servers, scripture readers and prayer leaders. Anyone can do it, and if you happen to be new to R-W, this is a great way to get involved and meet new people!

Respectfully submitted
Bob Klakowich, Outgoing Chair
Worship Committee

Music

Our thanks go out to Jack Waters, Brad Campbell, Doug Densmore, and Azuka Morah for building and painting the new risers for music use in the chancel. These are at a safer height and light enough to reposition for any number of uses. This new flexibility is allowing for instrumental and choral music to be performed simultaneously in worship and in concert in the same location. It also allows for percussion, wind, and brass instruments to be moved in and out effortlessly. Some new handbell tables and foam pads were purchased this year to save wear and tear on our equipment and our people who move it when necessary. Some of our bell equipment can be kept upstairs closer to where we ring while keeping other equipment in the lower hall where we rehearse. Special thanks to Leonard

Davidchuk whose advice on the new tables was invaluable. I would also like to express my thanks to David Gurnett who has worked consistently over the year to set up our bell rehearsals, and to organize our music.

I am thankful for the growth in our music program and the positive way in which these new singers, ringers, and instrumentalists have impacted our worship and integrated into our music community both personally and professionally.

In closing, I would like to thank the Worship and Ministry and Personnel Committees, the Board, all our wonderful Staff, Reverends Karen and Dirk, and all our volunteer musicians for making R-W such a happy place to make music in praise of God.

Respectfully submitted,
Allan Bevan, PH. D. Director of Music



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