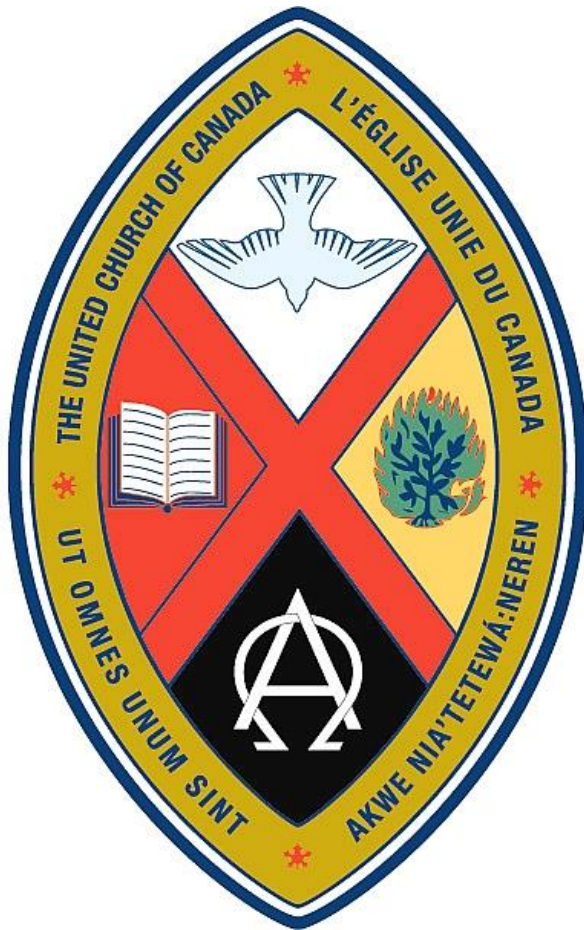




2023

Robertson-Wesley Annual Report



Budget Information Session
Sunday, February 25, 2024

Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, March 3, 2024

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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

2023 Statistics

Average Sunday Morning Attendance:

January	107 in person	57 online	Confirmations	2
February	111 in person	49 online	Reaffirmations	1
March	127 in person	47 online	Transfers In	1
April	168 in person	46 online	Transfers Out	0
May	112 in person	43 online	Baptisms	8
June	102 in person	48 online	Funeral/Memorial Services*	9
July	91 in person	42 online	Weddings*	4
August	81 in person	48 online	* For services performed both at R-W and offsite.	
September	116 in person	63 online		
October	110 in person	55 online		
November	116 in person	40 online		
December	128 in person	70 online		

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

Online attendance is based on youtube video views based on the information in youtube analytics, which only counts video views of over 30 seconds. It reflects devices used not people watching, so for example if a family is watching together at home it will count as 1 viewer. Previous years were counted incorrectly, using general video views (not over 30 second views).

Robertson-Wesley Church Board

As acting Chair and representative of the board of Robertson-Wesley, I would like to give a heartfelt welcome to 2024 and share our hopes for a year of positivity and service as we continue to do the work of God.

I would personally like to thank both the board and the various committees for their commitment, service and hard work throughout 2023. The work of the Church could not happen without you.

Our community of faith has continued to support the wider community, in particular the vulnerable and needy, and again I say thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment to supporting this critical work as Christians. Some of the highlights of the past year include serving over 1800 hot dinners and over 2000 lunches to those in need and holding the Community & Connections 2SLGBTQIA+ Advocacy Conference in June. This conference gathered agencies and people from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to help the various groups collaborate and learn from one another as we all advocate for the rights and respect of all people within the community. The rejuvenation renewal project to identify who we are as a community and what the future looks like was initiated by the board and tasked to a small working group made up of Lynn Maki and Tory Bachmann presently, which jumps off of the visioning work that Lynn Maki did to help with the vision for the future which was used to finalize the Community of Faith Profile.

We are grateful for the work and service of Rev. Dirk Jessen for continuing in his role as bridging minister as the search committee continues the work of selecting a replacement(s). That work is ongoing, slow at times, but the board is updated regularly as to progress, and the search committee is working together effectively to choose the right candidate(s). Thank you to Nova Laurin, Rowan Fox, Lorne Langman and Andrew Hopkyns for their dedication and hard work in this area.

2023 has been a year of change. It has not always been easy as we continue to navigate the challenges brought on by the return to 'normality' after COVID, and continuing to ensure that the Church is making the right decisions financially to ensure we are able to serve God and our community long into the future. I have learned from my discussions with members of the congregation that process visibility and communication is of key importance, and I endeavor to ensure that decisions that are made are well communicated, well-reasoned, and aligned with our values. As I gain a deeper understanding of the Church finances, I will be working with other board, committee, and finance members to collectively develop a multiyear financial plan to ensure our finances reflect a measured approach that is sustainable well into the future.

The year has seen some difficulties. We have had unexpected departures from our board for varying personal reasons— including some key positions - Charl Els (Chair) and Troy Murray (Treasurer). On behalf of the board, I would like to thank these members for their hard work and accomplishments. These departures put renewed emphasis on the need to identify and engage with members of our community of faith that are dedicated, humble, and genuinely interested in taking on the challenge of either a board or committee position. I personally have learned a lot in the 8 months that I have been in the role of incoming/acting Chair. I've made friends, had challenging conversations, and learned a lot about the workings of the Church. I invite you all to reflect on what you could bring to a leadership role, and listen for that little voice saying "I can do this". The work of the Church relies on people listening to that voice and volunteering their skills to the team. It's not always easy, but it is certainly rewarding.

I look forward to engaging, worshipping and working with you all as we continue to build on the rich 110th year history of RWUC.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jonathan Gregory, Acting Chair of the RWUC Board

Staff

As a staff team we have the distinct pleasure of seeing and hearing about the day to day impact that Robertson-Wesley has both within this community of faith and in the wider community that we serve. Our goal is to care for, support, and work with all people who serve in various roles and capacities within Robertson-Wesley. We look for new ways to communicate who Robertson-Wesley is, while living out the Spirit of Welcome and Inclusion in our various roles.

Over the past year we have begun to use a new way of enlisting volunteers with an online volunteer sign-up program. We have coordinated a leadership training opportunity for key leaders in the church to update or receive First Aid training. We have continued to develop the technology for online ministry and hybrid meetings. One of the focusses this past year was looking ahead at the next 10 years. How can we help the community of faith identify what we most value, and what God is calling us to do over the next 10 years?

As the surrounding community continues to develop and change we are noticing that the community has a passion for dogs, there are many young adults (18-40) who live on their own. Many of them are seeking to develop friendships and communities of support as they struggle with isolation, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. A challenge with this age group is that they have very little if any experience with the church. Robertson-Wesley has a diversity of people with differing abilities which has brought new life and new opportunities to change how we do things to be more inclusive and welcoming.

People who walk through the doors of Robertson-Wesley throughout the week are grateful that this is a safe place that cares about the people in their neighbourhood. This sacred space provides people with peace and sanctuary, both inside and on the lawn. This building provides people with nourishment for the body, mind and spirit through the various programs that are offered. Programs such as: Magic Pantry, Community Dinner, Art Studio, Food Bank, Music programs, the Affirming Conference, partnership with the Farmer's Market, Pet blessings, worship both in person and online. Robertson-Wesley is a place for celebrations such as weddings, blessings and baptisms, concerts, and celebrations of life (Funerals). Weekly Sunday worship services along with special seasonal worship services provide a place to be fed spiritually so that people are nourished and inspired to serve the world in the many ways that they do.

When people see what we are doing here, when they hear about what we offer, people are inspired to support these programs financially, and with their gifts of time. We see such great opportunities for the future and trust that you do too! We are here to help you connect with others and find ways to live out your call as disciples of Jesus.

We are looking forward to welcoming the new specialty ministers to further extend R-W's call and commitment.

Respectfully submitted by,

The staff of R-W

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

Agenda
Annual Congregational Meeting
Robertson-Wesley United Church
Mar 3, 2024 11:30 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Church Renewal Reflection and Questions
3. Act of Remembrance and prayer
4. Motion to allow adherents to vote
5. Approval of Agenda
6. Approval of the 2023 Annual Congregational Minutes
7. Approval of 2023 Annual Report
8. Motion to accept the 2023 Financial Statements
9. Motion to accept 2024 Budget
10. Motion to appoint Auditors
11. Recognition of Retiring Official Members of the Board and Trustees
12. Election of 2024 Official Board Members and Trustees
13. New Business
14. Covenanting
15. Benediction
16. Adjournment

Minutes: 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting

Robertson-Wesley United Church

March 5, 2023 12:00PM

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1. Call to Order	Charl welcomes everyone and calls the meeting to order 12:09 pm	Charl
2. Invocation	Rev. Karen Bridges opened the meeting with a prayer and a call to Holy Manners.	Rev. Karen
3. Opening Hymn	<i>Let Us Build A House – More Voices 1 vs. 1, 4 & 5</i>	Allan
4. Act of Remembrance	The Ministry Team led a time of silence and read the names of those who died in the past year.	Rev. Karen Rev. Dirk
5. MOTION to allow adherents be allowed to vote:	<p>MOTION 2023-48: That adherents be allowed to vote at the 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting.</p> <p>Moved: Colleen Graves Second: Marjorie Wright</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	
6. Approval of Agenda	<p>MOTION 2023-49: that we accept the agenda for the 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting be approved as amended.</p> <p>Moved: John Fleming Second: Karen Hansen</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	
7. Approval of the 2022 Meeting Minutes	<p>MOTION 2023-50: that we approve the meeting minutes for the 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting held on March 6, 2021.</p> <p>Moved: Pat Stewart Second: Troy Murray</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	
8. Approval of Annual Report 2022	<p>MOTION 2023-51: that we accept the 2022 annual report as printed.</p> <p>People were invited into small group discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is something they learned? ● Do you have a question about something? <p>Pat Stewart - Regarding the allocations of Clarke & Wesley Funds, why is so much money allocated to the Spirited Art Studio? The Spirited Art Studio is entirely funded by grants and these funds. There were also limited other requests from the funds.</p> <p>Geoff Anderson - Why are members of the choir paid? Pat Stewart - The church has always prided ourselves as a semi-professional choir. In order to do that, we need professional leads to have a quality choir.</p> <p>Allan Bevan - Director of Music - The line item referenced also includes guest performers. By having some semi-professional members, it encourages people to volunteer to come out to sing and it ensures that volunteers aren't risking being lone voices.</p> <p>Geoff Anderson - There was a rude comment. Reminder of mutual respect.</p> <p>Lisa Lane - The language in the report is, at times, difficult. Colleen Graves - Is delighted with the annual report, and it was so helpful that the</p>	

	<p>ACM agenda was in there. She expressed appreciation for the pods, Spirited Arts Studio, Food Bank, and many more. Overall, she thought it was fantastic.</p> <p>Moved: Garnet Thomas Second: Richard Kennedy</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	
9. Motion to accept 2022 financial statements	<p>Arleen Drysdale - Are we paying interest for the budget shortfall? Troy Murray - No.</p> <p>Lois Field - Are the M&S funds included in the financial statements?</p> <p>Troy Murray - The M&S funds are deposited to United Church, and are included as part of the total.</p> <p>MOTION 2023-52: Treasurer moves the acceptance of the 2022 financial statements as audited year ending December 31, 2022.</p> <p>Moved: Troy Murray Second: Tory Bachmann</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	Troy
10. Motion to accept 2023 budget.	<p>MOTION 2023-53: Treasurer moves the approval of the 2023 annual budget as presented.</p> <p>Moved: Troy Murray Second: Richard Kennedy</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	Troy
11. Appointment of Auditors	<p>MOTION 2023-54: Treasurer moves that the congregation empowers the Finance Committee to undertake an exploration of audit fees and service, and that the congregation further empowers the Board to act on the resulting recommendation of the Finance Committee.</p> <p>Moved: Troy Murray Second: Connie Water</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	Troy
12. Recognition of Retiring Official Members of Board and Trustees	<p>Member at Large: Tamara Wright Regional Rep: Colleen Graves and Lesley Verdin, Spiritual Formation Pod Coordinator: Rachel Frey, Board Secretary: Ainsley Brown Ron Soans is stepping down from the Nominations Team, along with Garnet Thomas and John Fleming.</p> <p>Thank you, each of you, for your time.</p>	Charl
13. Election of 2023 of Official Board Members and Trustees	<p>The Nominations committee introduced our new leadership that is appointed rather than elected. John Fleming – Spiritual Formation Pod Coordinator Julie Phillips – Mission and Outreach Pod Coordinator</p> <p>Ron Soans - Thank you for volunteering. Garnet - Presentation</p> <p>The nominations committee presented the following nomination slate for the Official Board:</p> <p><i>Those continuing their term</i> Board Chair: Charl Els Past Chair: Doug Sollows</p>	Garnet Thomas

	<p>Treasurer: Troy Murray Property Chair: Jack Waters Ministry and Personnel Chair: Karen Gabert Regional Rep: Phyllis Harlton, Laurie Mereu</p> <p>MOTION 2023-55: To approve new board members In-Coming Chair of the Board: Jonathan Gregory, Board Secretary: remains vacant Member at Large: Tom Hutchinson, Regional Reps: Arleen Drysdale Mona Bateman</p> <p>Moved: Garnet Thomas Second: John Fleming</p> <p>CARRIED</p> <p>MOTION 2023-56: Give the Board the power to fill the vacant positions until the next congregational meeting, if needed</p> <p>Moved: John Fleming Second: Pat Stewart</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	
14. New Business	<p>Chair asked for new business to be raised, if any. Communication Plan - Review There was a request for further information regarding a potential permanent minister.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The process thus far was reviewed. ● The profile is currently with the Regional Council, who are anticipated to approve the profile ● The next step will be to schedule a congregational meeting for communication with the community of faith <p>It was acknowledged that it does take a long time.</p> <p>There was an inquiry regarding the potential to extend Rev. Dirk's involvement in the church.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Norma Johnston - Expressed appreciation to the board and everyone that works to keep the board going. 	Charl
15. Closing Hymn	Lord, Speak to Me Voices United 589	Allan
16. Benediction		Rev. Dirk
17. Adjournment	<p>MOTION 2023-57: Charl Els asks for a motion to adjourn the Annual Congregational Meeting. Moved: Pat Stewart 1:32pm</p>	Charl

Chair _____ Secretary _____

Robertson-Wesley United Church
Official Annual Congregational Meeting March 5, 2023

Appendix: Attendance

Ainsley Brown, Albert deVos, Alison Dunwoody, Allan & Ilona Bevan, Andrew Hopkyns, Angela Glasel, Ann & Garnet Thomas, Arleen Drysdale, Brenda Sheppard, Carol Anne Inglis, Charl Els, Christopher Gowers, Colleen Graves, Colleen & Vital Ouellette, Connie and Jack Waters, Derek Sutherland, Rev. Dirk Jessen, Donna Krucik, Doug Densmore, Geoff Anderson, Jill Lambie, Jonathan Gregory, Joan Morrison, Joan Pecknold, John Fleming, Julie Lovell, Rev. Karen Bridges, Karen Hansen, Lisa Lane, Lois Field, Margery Wright, Mona Bateman, Nolan Herbut, Norma Johnston, Pat Stewart, Paul Verdin, Phyllis & Grant Harlton, Richard Kennedy, Ruth Belford, Sharon Damery Tamara Wright, Tom Hutchinson, Tony Jansen, Tory Bachmann, Troy Murray, Sylvia Post

Between the Aisles

This past year, 2023, *Between the Aisles*, Robertson-Wesley's quarterly newsletter, has been published for about twenty years. We, the editors, think it is time to evaluate the publication to determine if readers enjoy the content, and if not, what course of action should we pursue; does BTA continue but with changes, should it stay the same, and most importantly, what is its purpose? Questionnaires will be printed in our next issue which will be available in mid-February. Once again much of the content of each issue had to do with a particular theme such as volunteer recognition or special events. Travel descriptions, financial updates, photographs and poetry, were submitted by several talented members.

We welcome Lisa Lane to our small group of editors, but we would encourage anyone else who might be interested to send your contact information to Elyse at mail@rwuc.org. Thank you to everyone who helped to make *Between the Aisles* an interesting publication this past year.

Respectfully submitted by,
Marilee Stephens and Nancy Heule, co-editors for Spring 2024 issue

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. In 2023, our volunteers offered their time and energy at 7 receptions, with net proceeds of \$2492.57 donated to the M & S Fund of The United Church of Canada.

Thank you to Dawn Allan, Lorna Berlinguette, Louis Berlinguette, Ed Blanchard, Gwen Blanchard, Sheila Carr-Stewart, Sharon Damery, Wanda DesJardine, Rosemary Dunbar, Clara Dyck, Debra Free, Gayle Houston, Susan Hutson, Jeannie Jensen, Janice Kennedy, Richard Kennedy, Donna Krucik, Janet Mears, Patricia Mich, Barb Oberg, Pat Stewart, Brenda Sheppard, Derek Sutherland, Larry Wright and Margery Wright!

Respectfully submitted by,
Colleen Ouellette

Discernment, Envisioning, and Policy (DEAP)

DEAP is a group that meets monthly to discern signs of the Spirit at Robertson-Wesley. Discussions lead to envisioning the role of Robertson-Wesley in the lives of our congregation and the wider community.

The year 2023 has been filled with joyful and uplifting experiences, e.g.,

- Gifts of music by a variety of musicians in our midst
- Baptisms
- Sunday Worship and Fellowship
- A variety of midweek programs

Have you expressed your gratefulness to the volunteers and staff for these and other valued gifts?

During 2023 Robertson-Wesley has experienced grief and concerns, e.g.,

- Illness and death
- People moving away
- People leaving R-W
- A stolen Adirondack chair
- A flood

Have you reached out to receive or to give hugs?

During 2023 new experiences have been implemented at Robertson-Wesley, e.g.,

- Using technology to sign up as a volunteer
- Launching a new name-tag process
- Hosting the first Community and Connections conference

- Staging a Silent Auction

Will you be a person who introduces or participates in something new in 2024?

Looking to the future DEAP envisions that Robertson-Wesley will continue to be a positive presence in the Oliver community and the city of Edmonton by

- Forging additional relationships with businesses and social agencies in the area as is true with McElheran's and the Optometrists's Clinic (parking) and Good Earth (baking)
- Remaining rooted in the richness of our past while exploring new, sometimes edgy ideas
- Embracing new staff joining our staff team
- Supporting neighbours in need with meals, lunches, and food bank donations

Are you confident that the Spirit has blessed the congregation of Robertson-Wesley during 2023 and will continue to bless us in the future?

In the words of Jim Strathdee: "Dance with the Spirit early in the morning, walk/move/sing with the Spirit throughout the long day. Work and hope for the new life a-bornin', listen to the Spirit to show you the way."

Submitted by the DEAP group, Carol Anne Inglis, Jill Lambie, Kay Meier, Bill Hodgins, Angela Glasel, and Anne Rix. Off to other adventures are Robert Mah and JS whose contributions to DEAP have been greatly valued.

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.

2023 focused on finding diverse ways to engage families as we adapt to our new normal of in-person/virtual for families at Robertson-Wesley United Church. We held two great family focused events in 2023 – first an Easter basket making event in the spring and then a Christmas event in December that doubled as our pageant rehearsal time. As usual, the fall 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 continues to be a strong community of kids that actively participate in fun, faith-filled activities throughout the fall. Youth group also resumed and have had fun activities including a games night, climbing at Vertically Inclined and helping with the Community Christmas Dinner. For Advent, the annual pageant was an amazing success featuring a wonderful play and handbell performance. A big thank you to Ilona for leading this with the amazing support from David, who was "Instrumental" in supporting the handbell portion and Susan, for preparing and keeping the kids organized! On Christmas eve, 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. 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, Vicky Mah, Susan Cameron and Jay Ferguson.

Youth Group and Discussion: This past year was a year of rebuilding. In February the youth group created a team to raise money for the Coldest Night of the Year (which is a fundraiser with the Bissell Centre to raise money for people who are unhoused. Thank you to the adults and child who joined the team) This was a great success with lots of money being raised by Robertson-Wesley. The youth also volunteered to make the bag lunches for the Annual Inner City Pastoral Ministry lunch. There was also a lot of fun activities like Launch Pad, Christmas Community Dinner, Bowling, Games Night, Paint Night, and Movie Night just to name a few. The fall has seen some growth in the regular attendees. We have continued to explore our faith on Sunday morning as we explore different lines from A New Creed. Mom's and Dad's Group: There was some interest in starting up the Mom's and Dad's group again, but scheduling has been a challenge.

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.

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. It is a joy to witness the Memorial Hall come alive with congregation members enjoying each other's company during Fellowship Hour after the morning's church service. Fellowship would not happen without our volunteers. Susan Hutson is our lead team member. We would like to thank Gwen and Ed Blanchard and Richard Kennedy who do early set up duties. Helen White has joined the Fellowship Team on a regular basis for cleanup duty. Early morning volunteers include Donna Krucik, Wanda Des Jardine and Ruth Belford who help as they are able. Sylvia Duffus pitches in after choir. Other volunteers of note are Judy Hayman, Hughena Campbell and Shanelle Bird. We are grateful for anyone who has pitched in when they see a need.

Respectfully submitted by,
Sylvia Duffus and Susan Hutson, Co-chairs Fellowship Team

Finance Committee

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 donate your time, treasures, and talents to advance the work of RWUC!

First, we must acknowledge our Financial Manager. Garth van Herwaarden makes the work of the Finance Committee 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. At the end of 2023, Garth let us know he will be moving on from the role of Finance Manager in early 2024 and we want to acknowledge the contribution he has made as a staff member here. He has kept us on track and has managed us through some very challenging years. 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. Though we continue to be blessed with the incredible generosity of our community, inflation, increased building costs, and other pressures make our financial position challenging. We are lucky we have the investments to support us as we continue to plan for our future as we explore and understand who we are as a faith community and how we can live that out. We believe that articulating an accurate financial picture of our faith community helps provide the best basis for informed decision making as a congregation. As we move into 2024, we are re-focusing on our future and making sure we are exploring the opportunities available to us to ensure RWUC is a stable and flourishing community for years to come.

The Finance Committee had turnover this year, with Treasurer, Troy Murray leaving in the fall. An incredible thank you to Eric Sauze and Pat Stewart for being steady, consistent support through changing times and for Rev. Karen and Rev. Dirk for ensuring we are well grounded in our faith – even when talking about budget numbers.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Tory Bachmann, Acting Treasurer

Bequests and Planned Giving

A bequest is defined as the money or property belonging to someone that they say that, after their death, they wish to be given to other people. Many faithful members of Robertson-Wesley have added Robertson-Wesley to their will. Every year for the past 10 years, Robertson-Wesley has been gifted with a lasting legacy from members who leave a bequest of money to the church after their death. We are grateful for their forethought to do this as it helps to sustain and further the ministry and outreach that God is calling this community of faith to do. This past year we received bequests from several individuals that we would like to honour: George Ford, who helped to set up the Community Dinner and ran the bag lunch program for many years as he served on the Outreach committee. Dorothy Kelker, was a member of the R-W Ringers and shared her love and passion for music with others. We were also given a substantial grant from the private foundation called the Dr. Rowland and Muriel Haryett Fund. Rowland (Bus) and Muriel were long-time members of Robertson-Wesley and very involved. Both were very philanthropic and have helped many groups and individuals in the city of Edmonton. We also received money to help repair one of the Stained Glass Windows in remembrance of Charles H. Harley again a long time member of the church and a Doctor in the city.

What a gift and what a blessing to have so many people who care deeply about the ministry and outreach of Robertson-Wesley.

Designated Funds

A designated fund is an investment fund that has been designated to support a specific purpose.

These funds include:

Clarke Fund – to help fund social needs in the surrounding community.

Music Endowment Fund – for music programs at R-W

Falkenberg Fund – scholarships for the members of the R-W Choir

Helen Mack Outreach Fund – community dinners and other outreach programs

Reserve Funds

A reserve fund is an investment fund that is used based on the needs identified by the Community of Faith through the Management of the R-W Board.

These funds include:

Wesley Fund – social development work and to assist the church for work of the church and maintenance of the facility

RWUC Reserve Fund – to respond to emergent situations to help the church fulfill its call and commitment

Anniversary Legacy Fund – to secure Historical Designation of the building and help provide operating revenues

Kawalilak Fund – to assist with Seniors ministry

Geggie Endowment – general revenue for the church

Crawford Fund – general revenue for the church

Organ Restoration Fund – organ restoration

Respectfully submitted on behalf of,
the Finance Committee

Gratitude Team

The Gratitude Team creates annual themes. The theme for 2023 was: **Beyond Gratitude: How Have We Left Our Mark**. On May 28th, the team participated in the worship service to focus on our time and talents. We wanted to encourage people to volunteer to share these two gifts from God. It was a fun service where joy was shared by dropping various colored balloons from the balcony with words of encouragement upon them. The balloon shower surprised many and brought hope and joy to them.

The theme for 2024 is: **Hidden Abundance Revealed: Shared with All, Answering God’s Call**. The 2024 campaign for financial commitments started in the fall. On October 29, Vicky Mah led a discussion about sharing during Coming into God’s Presence where we practised sharing. On November 12, Jill Lambie spoke to the children about sharing. November 19, was Gratitude Sunday. Sylvia Duffus led the Gratitude Committee in sharing a version of the Stone Soup story with the Congregation using the M&S Bucket and real vegetables. We learned that when we all share what we have to offer we can all experience the bounty of God’s Gifts. Everyone was invited to share the bounty of stone soup [prepared by the Kids' Church] at coffee hour. The Gratitude Committee also provides positive messages for our E-Sign every week. Thanks to Ian for preparing them and to Elyse who presents them so attractively.

The following is a breakdown of the response to the 2024 Financial Commitment

	2024		2023	
	Amount	Givers	Amount	Givers
Regular	\$ 208,387	83	\$ 275,926	94
M&S	\$ 23,405	47	\$ 28,892	53
Anniversary legacy	\$ 1,720	5	\$ 2,500	8

There are 70 PAR givers as of January 2024 compared to 80 in 2023

Respectfully Submitted by the Gratitude Team,

S. Duffus, J. Lambie, V. Mah, J. Lambie, P. Stewart, R. Skoreyko, E. & G. Blanchard, I. Inglis, K. Bridges, D. Jessen

Mission and Service

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

The 2023 M & S member contributions are \$34,155. The Catering ministry added \$2,495 for a total of \$36,650. Well done! Thanks to all who contributed in any way.

On Communion Sundays we raise awareness of the many ways this money is used to support the mission of the Church. The M & S Bucket appears at services on a quarterly basis so congregants can make donations to celebrate special occasions in their lives. More information about Mission and Service can be found at The United Church of Canada website. Just put Mission and Service in the search box.

Respectfully submitted by,
Sylvia Duffus

Koinonia Worship

What is Koinonia you ask? Koinonia is an opportunity for food and fellowship that has been a quiet part of the life of Robertson-Wesley for over 50 years. *Koinonia* is a Greek word the meaning of which embraces such concepts as community, joint participation and sharing. On the fourth Sunday of every month (except July and August) we gather for a pot-luck supper. The supper is followed by a discussion, a presentation, a time of worship, or some singing, each gathering is unique. It always concludes with a time of prayer lifting up the concerns of those present for themselves, their community and the world.

The year 2023 was a period of both continuity and change. We started the year under the coordination of Joann Cooke, who had been organizing the gatherings of Koinonia for quite a number of years. Her “coordination” included seeking and confirming the presenters who would offer the programs at each gathering, submitting notices of the Koinonia gatherings to the church office, as well as informing those of the Koinonia mailing list of the upcoming gatherings. However, as the summer approached, Joann gave notice that she would not be continuing as Coordinator and, if Koinonia was to continue, someone else would have to be Coordinator. It became obvious that in order to do all that Joann had done, she would have to be replaced by five people. So, the Koinonia Coordinating Committee (KCC) was formed, consisting of Garnet Thomas, Arleen Drysdale, Wanda Des Jardine, Richard Kennedy and Larry Wright.

The first six gatherings of 2023 under the coordination of Joann had an interesting variety of themes. January, led by Lorna Berlinguette focused on Systemic Racism. February, in preparation for Lent, Larry Wright presented a look at the practice of fasting, and what has happened to fasting in the United Church. Arleen Drysdale led our March gathering with “Dealing with Difficult Days.” Discussion in small groups, comforting Bible readings and music was shared. April, Larry Wright led a time of reflection, meditation, music and prayer based on the Emmaus Road story in the style of the Taizé Community. In May, there was no planned program, so after the Potluck we shared in singing, readings, story-telling and discussion. For June, our last gathering before the summer, and our last under the coordination of Joann, Phyllis Harlton and Margery Wright organized a hymn sing. Following the summer break, in September, the KCC shared with the gathering the planning they had done, and we discussed the year ahead. In October the KCC invited the Koinonia participants to share stories, poems, songs, or readings that were for them signs or causes for “Gratitude in a Broken World.” In November, in preparation for Advent, Garnet Thomas led a reader’s theatre presentation of three short plays through which we were taken, with Shepherds, Magi and Refugees, on thought provoking journeys to new beginnings. In December we had our annual (semi) Progressive Dinner, with appetizers and main course in Memorial Hall, then dessert and carol singing at Phyllis and Grant Harlton’s.

Outside of our regular gatherings, members of the Koinonia community led by Joan Pecknold hosted the Easter Breakfast following the Sunrise Service. And in December members of Koinonia sorted and packed the White Gifts, with Louis Berlinguette delivering them to the Bissell Centre. Also in December, Koinonia got its own R-W email address. You can get hold of us a koinonia@rwuc.org. The reply will come from “R-W Koinonia.” On behalf of the Koinonia Coordinating Committee, I would like to express our thanks for the work of Joann Cooke, who kept Koinonia going for so many years. We would also thank all those who been a faithful part of Koinonia for quite a while, and for those who have more recently discovered this unique community within Robertson-Wesley. For those who have brought food, shared in leadership of our programs, and for just being there, thank you.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Koinonia Coordinating Committee
Larry Wright (with help from Joann Cooke)

Men’s Group

The Men’s Group is a loose organization operated by some of the senior men in Robertson-Wesley United promoting social interaction and comradeship amongst the attendees of Robertson-Wesley United Church, including the ladies. Meetings for 2023 were generally held Thursday mornings at the Church, or on the site of tours when taken.

Activities of 2023 included presentation by Chris Gowers regarding his career days as a Hotelier and Rev. Larry Wright sharing his experiences of his ministry while in Afghanistan. In addition the Men's Group revisited a couple of their most interested tour sites; the Edmonton Aviation and Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museums. The annual Christmas Breakfast meeting attracted approximately a dozen gentlemen to celebrate the season. The R-W Men's Group ceases operations during the Summer Months of July and August.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jim Triscott

Ministry and Personnel

The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee supports church staff on employment matters and ensures they have what they need to do their jobs.

In 2023, the membership of our staff team remained unchanged from the previous year. We are grateful for their ongoing commitment to the work of the church and to each other. In particular, we would like to recognize:

- **Dr. Allan Bevan** for continuing to lead our music ministry with excellence and commitment to the musical formation of our community;
- **Rev. Karen Bridges** for stepping into a new role and job description as R-W's Lead Minister of Community of Faith and Community Development;
- **Brad Campbell** for keeping our church building in good working order, even during a major flood and subsequent renovation.
- **Garth van Herwaarden** for managing R-W's finances with extraordinary skill and professionalism.
- **Rev. Dirk Jessen** for extending his bridging position for another year as our community works to secure the permanent ministerial roles identified in the Community of Faith Profile;
- **Elyse Munro** for keeping our office running smoothly and supporting the church's administrative functions in a multitude of seen and unseen ways;
- **Richard Kennedy, Roderick Mamita, Nathan Dennis, Christine Mandrusiak, and Lyra Motta** for supporting the day-to-day operation of the church.

M&P thanks the staff team for the dedication each of them brings to their respective role. 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 makes this work.

In 2023, the M&P Committee included the following members: Eric Sauze, Heather Warkentin, Margery Wright, and Karen Gabert. Heartfelt thanks to Ron Soans for his service as he wrapped up his time on the committee.

M&P is currently recruiting new members, including the Chair position. If you possess the following skills and interests, please get in touch with the office or any current committee member:

- Care for Robertson-Wesley and desire to support its staff
- Interest in human resources / personnel management
- Ability to commit 4 hours per month
- Knowledge of / willingness to learn about United Church policies and Alberta's employment standards
- Communication and conflict resolution skills
- All backgrounds and life experience, reflecting the diversity of the community of faith

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
(Outgoing) 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.

Environmental Stewardship

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.

Gatherings

From the book discussion of *Church of the Wild* by Victoria Looz 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”.

In 2022, there were three wild church gatherings. The planning group found that there was 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 gathering in January 2023!

2023 Highlights:

- Met 11 times in 2023 (including two unstructured solstice gatherings).
- Summer solstice included a potluck.
- Attendee count per gathering ranged from 5 to 13.
- 94 Instagram followers: @wildchurchyeg.
- Video clip from gathering posted to RWUC YouTube page.
- Liturgies posted on website upgraded to include links: wildchurchyeg.org.
- Met in more accessible location (Paul Kane Park) during warmer months, and Emily Murphy Park fire circle during colder months.
- Wildfire smoke caused one cancellation and may have impacted attendance for other events in affected months.
- Featured in article for Newo energy in connection with building upgrades.

Looking Ahead

- The WC will continue on from what they did in 2023.
- Currently reaching out to current and past participants for feedback; that might lead to changes over time.
- The solstice services are appreciated; they plan to continue those.

Photos below from Wild Church, taken on June 18, 2023 by Rev. Karen.



Affirming Conference

On June 7, 2009, Robertson-Wesley United Church was officially recognized as an Affirming Ministry of the United Church of Canada.

The Community & Connections 2SLGBTQIA+ Advocacy Conference happened June 22-24, 2023. This event brought together individuals and organizations in the queer community to share their experiences, challenges and hopes.



Conference Highlights:

- Approximately 45 people attended.
- The program keynote speakers Nisha Patel and Sissy Thiessen Kootenayoo, alt singer-songwriter Emmet Michael, and MLAs Janis Irwin, Brooks Arcand-Paul, and David Shepherd.

Workshop presenters included:

- The Queer & Trans Health Collective
- Michael Phair (Senior Pride Housing)
- The CHEW Project Model(youth and young adults)
- Rainbow Refuge (How faith communities can support LGBTQIA+ immigrants and refugees)
- Great energy and engagement between attendees and at the resource booths.
- Lee McLean led a visioning session at the end, which provided attendees with an opportunity to share their learnings, experiences, actionable steps, and how they can collaborate in the future.
- 20 evaluation forms were completed. Overall feedback was positive; many would attend the conference again. Some helpful suggestions included: Offering lunch, Single day tickets, Shorter days

Notable attended feedback (bolded added for emphasis):

*“There was a special moment at Two-Spirit (2S) workshop where the presenter and two attendees connected about building community. One commented, “Who would have thought 2S healing would happen in the basement of a church?!” Thank you for providing a space to connect and have those moments. Many of the people I talked to, keynotes and presenters talked about being wary of a church space. It was healing to have that space be welcoming and not centred in the conference. **RWUC was reconciliation in action and should be very proud of the way they approached hosting the conference.**” - Conference Attendee*

We would like to thank Angela Glasel for her dedication and hard work of organizing this conference.

Truth and Reconciliation

M+ O consulted with an Indigenous advisor and put out a call to initiate a quilt project that combined conversation and learning, artistic expression, and contemplation to create a visual representation of the ongoing personal and collective journey towards rebuilding, reparation, and reconciliation, but no congregation members were interested.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Julie Lovell

Northern Spirit Regional Council (NSRC)

Arleen Drysdale: As a representative I attended the Council Meeting at Camrose. The theme was “Deep Spirituality, Bold discipleship, Daring Justice” as an expression of who we are as The United Church of Canada. The call from God was to do ministry together, and dare to dream of a world where love reigns, called by God, as discipleship of Jesus, seeks a bold committed and evolving church of diverse courageous, hope filled community, united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice. There were several speakers who spoke on the injustices suffered due to race.

We had various learning sessions. I attended the one on Affirming Ministry, and saw an incredible movie, about a young son returning home as a woman after five years away, to attend her mother’s funeral. The movie showed the struggles a farmer from the east coast had in accepting he no longer had a son but a daughter. We also had a discussion and I learned that we still have many United Churches that are not affirming. I saw the presentations from Russel and Chloe Burns, about the Indigenous Organization, becoming an Autonomous and self-directed church but still under umbrellas of The United Church of Canada. I have sent on information to help with the remit vote.

Phyllis Harlton: As one of the Northern Spirit Reps, I attended the Northern Spirit Regional Meeting May 4-7, 2023 at Camrose United Church. The theme was CALL and VISION divided into Deep Spirituality/Bold Discipleship and Daring Justice with Jennifer Henry (Organizational Development & Strategy) as the Theme Speaker. Arriving we were assigned tables so over the weekend we had plenty of time to meet various other church members to discuss our fears, concerns, and hopes for the church while evaluating our present situations.

There were many workshops and I attended Social Justice as well as Fundraising & Membership. Many ideas were floated and there seemed to be a lot of cooperation among congregations especially in the rural areas. On Friday we were introduced to Dorcas Muketha, a candidate for ministry. As well we listened and discussed the Indigenous Church Remit which was carried over to the Saturday and it was said this is still in the planning stages to even put a proposal in, however the belief is that the funding will be in position when they are ready. When the Autonomous National Indigenous Organization is created and the remit approved, the Indigenous Church will be able to define its own structure and process within The United Church of Canada. As for Becoming an Affirming Regional Council this is also work in progress but there is an Affirming Task Group Action Plan to work with individual churches in the region. All in all, an informative and educational experience.

Laurie Mereu: As a Northern Spirit Rep, I served as a liaison between the wider church and our congregation. I included news of the region in the e-news and weekly bulletin. I also participated in focus discussions after church to clarify, discern and explain the Remit for an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization.

Respectfully submitted by,
Arleen Drysdale, Phyllis Harlton, and Laurie Mereu

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 2023 (further details below).

The Helen Mack Fund, overseen by an Outreach subcommittee, is the primary financial sponsor for the Community Dinner and Magic Panty programs. On average it cost about \$10,000.00 to provide lunches, and dinners for a year. Helen Mack was a long-time resident of the Oliver community and congregant of Robertson-Wesley who shared this passion for helping others.

Her will stated that her bequest to Robertson-Wesley United Church was to be used “for the work and services provided to the community by the Outreach Committee, more particularly but not limited to, the community dinners program.” In accord with her wishes, the Outreach Committee accepts small funding requests to the Helen Mack Fund for projects that meet a need in reaching out to others. Typically, these requests are evaluated twice per year, based on the project description, need, and availability of funds. Since its inception over a decade ago, the fund has been an ongoing blessing to the work of RWUC and the surrounding community.

Respectfully submitted by,
Brad Warkentin

Community Dinner

Community Dinner Makes the Heart Happy

Our monthly Community Dinners are a place of welcome, warmth, friendship and laughter. Our guests are ‘at home’ as they settle in for a couple hours. Waving over friends to join their table or a single person joining another who is alone at a table. Each month we see regulars and meet new people. Our nice background DJ, piano or live music add to the comfortable atmosphere. It makes my heart happy to see guests lingering in the hall over a final coffee long after the meal when the vacuum cleaner is running. Upon finally leaving we get a multitude of praise and ‘Thank you’. I have a feeling it’s not only the food that has brought this contentment.

It makes my heart happy to see our chef, prep team, servers, dishwashers, greeters, clean-up and set-up crew contribute and work happily and diligently to create a delicious dinner in a friendly, clean, well-organized environment. Our volunteer base is amazing. As volunteer interests shift and change, we continually recruit new regular volunteers. We offer one time, occasionally or even a commitment to longer term role. Please contact me with questions rljblack@shaw.ca or find me in church. Volunteering for Community Dinner makes many hearts happy.

2023 served 120-200 guests per dinner with Thanksgiving and Christmas always being the largest attendance. We plan and budget very carefully with a cost per month of \$500-600. All leftover food is packaged & distributed at Magic Pantry the following week.

We are ever thankful to the Helen Mack Fund for supporting the Community Dinner along with our private sponsors Cobs Brewery district, Little Potato Company and private donations. All are graciously gifted and gratefully received.

He took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. Matthew 15:36

Respectfully submitted by,
Rhonda Black, Community Dinner Coordinator

Magic Pantry

The Magic Pantry at Robertson-Wesley had another busy year handing out lunches three days a week. The number of lunches handed out over the year was similar to last year with some weeks busier than others. In total 2221 lunches (4442 sandwiches) were given out. Supply chain issues have been resolved and the price of bread has stabilized. Total expenses for the year were \$4100 which was slightly less than last year. The Good Earth Cafe on 124th Street continues to kindly donate day old pastries to the church which are included in each lunch. If you have a chance, please support this local cafe. In the last three months of 2023 our dedicated team made 234 loaves of sandwiches. The program would not be the success it is without the many volunteers who give their time to organize and hand out lunches, cut meat, make sandwiches and buy supplies.

Respectfully submitted by,
Derek Sutherland

Food Bank

2023 was a challenging year for the Edmonton Food Bank and the R-W depot did its part to help those suffering from food insecurity through the hamper program. Food Bank use in Canada has increased by 78.5 % since March of 2019 and nearly 2 million people a month now rely on Food Banks across the country. The Edmonton Food Bank had its biggest month ever in August of 2023 with over 37,000 clients served. To put that in perspective that is roughly the size of Leduc or Spruce Grove in terms of population. Edmonton clients can now order food through an online portal which has proven popular.

The R-W depot increased the number of clients helped per week to 35. Over the course of the year 83,737 kg of food passed through the depot and 3457 people comprising individuals, couples and families were helped. We continue to see many Ukrainian newcomers make use of the depot and are thankful for our two Ukrainian volunteers who translate and explain how the system works to the newcomers.

The Good Earth Cafe on 124th Street continues to donate their day old pastries/soups/pasta dishes to the church and clients are thankful for this added treat. 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

Hi everyone. Another year has gone by at Robertson-Wesley and Property has had a busy year again.

It was supposed to be a year of planning with only one project, the upgrading of the lights. Well, we did get all the lights upgraded with dimmers and motion sensors installed. This was done at no cost to the church, thanks to a grant from the United Church and a generous member of our congregation. However, we had a broken toilet water line that flooded a large area in the basement. It took several months and a lot of negotiating with the insurance company. It is complete, but at the time of writing the insurance company still has not paid the bill. Again, once the smoke clears this should not cost the church anything.

The rest of the year went as planned. The yards were maintained by the garden group: Lea Callebaut, Rosemary Dunbar, Ian and Carol Anne Inglis, Tom Hutchinson, Shawn Killiam, Jim Triscott, Jill Lambie and many of our staff (Lyra, Brad, Roderick, and Richard). We plan to do some more additions to the gardens this year (2024) as well. Another project was a stained-glass window that needed repair and this project is in the process.

This coming year we will be looking at painting the sanctuary and the exterior trim of the church. This is a pricey project so we will be looking at applying for grants from outside the church. This project would be for 2025, if funding can be arranged.

I would like to thank our staff, Brad, Richard, Roderick, Janice, Ed, Gwen, Lyra, and Nathan for their dedication to the job. Good news is that Lyra will be back this coming summer to help. I would also like to thank our property committee: Lorne Langman, Albert DeVos, Karen Hansen, Doug Densmore, Louis Berlinguette, Arnold Maki, Rosemary Dunbar, and Jack Waters for the work they do. A special thanks to Lorne Langman and Arnold Maki, who have retired from the committee after more than 20 years service.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jack Waters, Chair of Property

Refugee Project Team



After spending the first part of 2022 fundraising, the Refugee Project Team submitted the sponsorship application forms to The United Church of Canada in June of that year. The UCC is allocated a set number of refugee spots annually through its refugee sponsorship agreement with the Government of Canada. As the spots for 2022-23 were already full, our application was put on the 2023-24 submission list. The Refugee Project Team mostly spent 2023 following up on administrative application details and waiting.

We received the good news that our application was successfully submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on December 8, 2023! The Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa is the government agency responsible for processing privately sponsored refugee applications. We are now waiting for a ROCO number which will enable us to track progress on the application; this part of the process can take up to 10 months.

Jael Tshoba and Bolot Mayaka are the sister and brother-in-law of Charles Sabu, a long-time member of our RWUC congregation. Like Charles, Jael and Bolot are originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Civil war there forced them to flee and they've 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.

We'd like to thank everyone who made donations in our fundraising phase, those who wrote message cards for Jael and Bolot (which were on display previously in Memorial Hall), and all who continue to pray for them.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nova Laurin, The Refugee Project Team

Spirited Arts Movement

Spirited Arts Workshops

From January to May, we had a continuation of our workshops with multidisciplinary artists Beth Janzen and Charlie Peters. Beth led monthly writing workshops for the general community. Each month explored a different type of writing and a timely theme: such as "Rhyme Valentine" for and "Rainbow After Rain" for April. The workshops were well received, gaining a small regular gathering of attendees.

Charlie had 2 workshops looking at moving the body and acting techniques with the themes of animals and of elements. Charlie's workshops were not well attended, allowing a conclusion that people may not have been ready for moving with others at this time. People who did attend greatly enjoyed it.

In fall of 2023, we created new programming centering around the theme of identity. Three workshops were completed in the fall, and well attended. Workshops featured a variety of art forms, storytelling, bookmaking and writing, and drawing. We also explored symbols, colours, our stories and mapping our bodies.

Respectfully submitted by,
Brooke Leifso

Spirited Arts Studio

Studio visits continued to gain momentum through word of mouth and therapist referral. Although we post on social media regularly, the electronic sign has been a more effective vehicle to bring in the local community.

The studio continued to run on Monday evenings, Wednesday afternoons and after Community Dinner September through June. In the 4th quarter, I also co-facilitated a workshop with Brooke Leifso entitled The Shapes Around Us and created 4 Advent boxes for use in the Christmas services of 2022.

In 2023, we saw **634 visits** to the art studio. Despite inclement weather (and playoffs), anywhere from 5-17 participants attended each session. Groups include recent immigrants (e.g., Ukraine, Guatemala) and others new to the community seeking connection, fellowship and access to low or no-cost art making opportunities as well as several with physical/mental health, cognitive and financial challenges. Many are from the surrounding area, but some travel up to an hour by transit when they can afford bus fare. The age range is from 8 to 83 and includes a group of grateful seniors from Operation Friendship.

While the Studio continued to focus on providing fun, interesting and engaging programming that anyone can do, a deeper participant benefit revealed itself in the sharing of stories through art making and also the many supportive friendships that have blossomed as a result.

We often receive positive feedback from recreation therapists:

- *The kind, inclusive environment you created is really top notch! I have never felt so reassured bringing someone to a community group knowing they will have a good time!*
- *I just want you to know that G. talked all the way home how he really liked the art class, and this morning he is still talking about how he enjoyed himself. I[sic] little group loves you so much, very grateful for your kindness and patience. Thank you so much for the great day.*

and anonymous survey responses:

- *Your classes 🙌 lift my soul.*
- *Please keep up the program...Just doing art is fun and even somewhat therapeutic. At the very least, it reminds me that there is an artist in me.*
- *Various different art techniques. New inspiring art ideas!*
- *The art projects were great. But getting to know the other participants was really special.*
- *I love art and I just moved to the area so I wanted to meet people.*
- *What a great space!*



Words and Pictures: Our Stories, Gratitude Feathers, Coffee-painted leaves, Year-end Art Show

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 a word to describe a gathering of people, hosted by the Pod Coordinator, who come together to engage in dialogue about events or programs or things that people are interested in doing or learning about on their journey of faith.

For me, as the new pod coordinator, it has been a learning journey. Leading a pod is a different kind of leadership role than others I have filled in the past, both here at Robertson-Wesley and outside the church. I'm grateful for the assistance I have received from Rev. Karen Bridges as I have learned this role.

During the year, we had a conversation on fellowship after church. We talked about making fellowship more welcome to visitors and newcomers to the church. We also talked about supporting the small team of volunteers who make sure we have coffee, tea, juice and treats to enjoy after Sunday services. There is still work for the pod to do in this area.

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.

There were several Membership Classes for people who were seeking to learn more about the United Church and their faith, and Rev. Dirk Jessen led a book study on prayer. There was also a workshop offered in the fall on the Sacrament of Communion and why we do what we do, and how the different methods of receiving communion change the meaning and experience of communion for people. Thanks to Brian Webb for his research in this area. We also co-hosted a Pastoral Care Workshop with Christ Anglican Church, to help train lay people in the ministry of visiting. We had people from various UCC and Anglican Church participate.

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

Respectfully submitted by,
John Fleming, Spiritual Pod Coordinator

UCW (United Church Women) & Friends

Robertson-Wesley UCW and Friends continued to meet in 2023, on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM (except July and August). Average attendance was 7. We had some good discussions, readings, devotionals and music, and in March watched the World Day of Prayer video prepared by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, based on material written by women in Taiwan. Several of our Robertson-Wesley women attended the Regional Women of the United Church meeting, held in Calgary at the end of April, "We Are One: A Look at Bias and Racism". Lorna Berlinguette did a presentation entitled "Systemic Racism: A New Face Through Literature", which included an extensive book list of literature from different heritages.

Respectfully submitted by,
Margery Wright

The Wesley and Clarke Funds

The Wesley Fund

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

The E. I. Clarke Memorial Fund

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

Wesley & Clarke

The Wesley & Clarke Trustees meet annually, usually in early December, to consider requests for funding in relation to the amount available for disbursement that year. The current trustees are Rev. Karen Bridges (Chairperson, ex officio), Christopher Gowers, Gayle Houston, Joyce Soans, Geoffrey Anderson

2023 Allocations	Wesley	Clarke	Total
R-W Minister Benevolent Fund		6,000	6,000
Bissell Centre	8,000	7,000	15,000
Choral Morphosis (R-W Music Society)	5,000		5,000
No Room in the Inn (A Safe Place)	3,000		3,000
Inner City Pastoral Ministry (ICPM)		4,000	4,000
R-W Spirited Arts Movement	3,000		3,000
Voice of AB with Disabilities (VAD)	1,000		1,000
Recruitment for new ministers	5,000		5,000
Total Allocations	25,000	17,000	42,000

Total Allocations in Recent Years

	Wesley	Clarke	Total
2022	25,000	21,000	46,000
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
2017	25,500	19,500	45,000
2016	23,000	18,000	41,000

Commitment

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

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

Worship Committee

Worship both online and in person continue to nourish the spirits of all who participate as we praise God together. In the United Church we believe in the “Priesthood of all” which is why we seek and encourage lay participation in worship. Over the past several years we have continued to increase the number of scripture readers. Thank you to John Kilduff and Donna Krucik for offering a Scripture Reading Workshop to help people become comfortable reading the scriptures. We have had participation from all ages and abilities over the past year. The list of readers is almost 40 people long. We have also been inviting people who are willing to write and lead the Pastoral Prayers or the Prayers of the people. Greeters are essential each Sunday as we help people prepare for worship by handing out bulletins and answering questions that people might have. This is a great role to take on if you want to meet and get to know people in the congregation. Throughout the year we have invited people to participate in the music, and in various artistic manners. We also rely on volunteers to help serve communion 10 times a year. We have now moved to the method of intinction where we dip the bread into the juice, and we also provide an option for people who prefer or need individual cups.

This year the worship committee agreed that we would pass the offering plates on key holidays only, both Christmas and Easter. We have also worked on raising the profile of giving to the church with posters and QR codes for people who prefer electronic ways of giving.

We have shifted the announcements to before the worship service on Sunday beginning at 10:15 AM as a way of creating sacred and quiet space for people to prepare and ground themselves for worship. Each worship service is lived streamed starting with the announcements and it is also recorded for people to watch at a time that works for them. We continue to seek ways of engaging people who are watching online especially when we invite people in worship to have a conversation with each other.

Each year we schedule several All Age Worship services which are more interactive. We also invite groups like the Gratitude Team and the DEAP (Discerning, empowerment and policy) group to lead worship at different times in the year. The ministers and the music director meet weekly to talk about themes for the seasons as a way of ensuring that all elements of the service reflect the themes that are being explored. Starting in September, we moved to using the 4 Year Narrative Lectionary from the 3 Year Lectionary. The Narrative Lectionary takes us through the Bible starting at Genesis in the fall and moving to one of the gospels after Christmas. We also schedule Life Passages several times throughout the year which includes baptism, confirmation, transfer of membership and blessings of the unborn child and farewells.

As always, special services took place throughout the year. Lent and Easter offered a number of opportunities for meaningful worship on Ash Wednesday (Feb 22), Palm Sunday (April 2), Maundy Thursday (April 6), Good Friday (April 7), Easter Vigil (April 8), and two services (the sunrise service in Paul Kane Park and the 10:30 service in the sanctuary) on Easter morning. The Advent and Christmas seasons were active as well with a musical feast of Lessons and Carols (December 10), a prayerful service of healing entitled “Blue Christmas” (December 17) and three services on Christmas Eve at 4 pm (Family Celebration), 7 pm (“Christmas with a Twist”) and 10 pm (“Choral Candlelight”). There was no Christmas Day service this year, however, a special video with a music recording from the archives of R-W was live streamed on Christmas Day with beautiful Christmas music. Thank you to Elyse Munro for preparing this. People in the congregation were invited to learn about the Sacrament of Communion during a fall workshop led by Rev. Karen Bridges and Brian Webb.

We are seeking someone to Chair the worship committee and work with this great team of people. Thank you to the worship staff (Ministers, Music Director, Facilities Manager, Office Administrator along with the live stream tech people) who help to ensure that worship continues to be a vital part of the life of the church.

Respectfully submitted by,

Worship Committee – Pat Stewart, Jill Lambie, Susan Hutson, Dr. Allan Bevan, Rev. Karen Bridges, Rev. Dirk Jessen, and past chair Mona Batemann.

Music

I am thankful for all the people who have given of their time and talents in making the inspiring music we hear week in and week out at R-W. A few of the 2023 musical highlights include Easter Sunday which was a thrilling

celebration with our choir, guest brass group, timpani and a large congregation raising their voices in song; our Good Friday was very special with deep and meaningful music of J. S. Bach and others; The Service of Lessons and Carols featuring our choir and handbell groups and guest organist Belinda Chiang; the choir's presentation of Vaughan William's *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* with Douglas Graham as soloist and guest instrumentalists Ariane Maisonneuve and John Fedor, and our Christmas Eve services in their variety of tone and approach were very memorable.

Nova Bells and Robertson-Wesley Ringers led our musical outreach in 2023 with well-received musical offerings at the General Hospital and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. Thanks also to David Gurnett and Ilona Bevan for introducing our handchimes to the children and youth at Kids' Church over a period of six Sundays in November and December.

Thanks to our vocal soloists that anchor our choir, who inspire us with meaningful solos and duets at many times over the year and provide strong musical leadership over the summer months while the choir is off.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Heather Johnson and all the Cantilon Choirs who bring their gift of music to our services on a regular basis.

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

Ushers

Brenda Sheppard organizes the ushers at the Narthex door and Pat Stewart does it for the Memorial Hall Door. Only one person is needed at each door because the collection plates are no longer passed. A different person does each Sunday of a month and Brenda and Pat usher on the months there are five (5) Sundays and fill in for ushers who are not able to be there for their Sunday.

At the Christmas Eve services more people helped because the collection plates were passed for those services. If the church were to start passing the collection plates for each service, more people would be needed to do this. There is no plan to implement doing this in the future.

Our Thanks and Gratitude go out to those who have ushered during 2023. They are:

Narthex Door: Arlene Drysdale, Joan Pecknold, Joanne McQueen, Janet Mears

Memorial Hall Door: Tiegan Benson, Bill Hodgins, Jonathon Kerklywich, Brian Webb, Charles Sabu.

Garnet Stronach has agreed to greet in 2024.

Respectfully submitted by,
Pat Stewart



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