

WESTMINSTER UNITED CHURCH

Summer 2015 Newsletter

Summer is fast approaching and the weather is finally cooperating! As we look forward to a few months of sun, heat, gardening, golfing and just being outdoors, I hope you enjoy this edition of our Church Newsletter.

A big thank you to all of you who contributed to this newsletter and to previous ones....I couldn't do it without you!

Have a great summer everyone!

.....Anna Marie Hancock

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Jan's Jottings....

Summer's here. Time to relax, laid back on the deck or patio, smeared with sunblock; cool glass in your hand ; maybe slip into the pool , run the AC or zoom over to the pond at Echodale.

Or maybe not. This summer is also a hectic and transformative time for the United Church of Canada and for Westminster United Church. Delegates to Alberta & Northwest conference Annual General Meeting in Slave Lake May 28-31 (both Chelsea & Jan are going) are busy printing or e-reading the agenda book. The key issue on the table is the result of the Comprehensive Review process to streamline ecclesiastical

structure and administration. We have seen videos and read bulletin inserts in worship, and further information is readily available online at GC42.ca. The proposal will shake us from our comfortable pews:

- Instead of pastoral charge or congregation, think 'faith community'—could be a house church, online group, any of the ways in which people network aka form community. 'Faith communities' are encouraged to 'cluster' locally for mutual support, planning and cooperation; and to participate in nationwide (perhaps global) 'networks' focusing on specific issues or projects.
- Presbytery and conference courts of the church will fade away to be replaced by 'regional councils' with equal lay and clergy representation . Said councils and staff will be funded by assessments contributed by faith communities.
- A ' Denominational Council' will be the national face of UCC. Composed of clergy and lay representatives from each faith community, it will meet

triennially, the cost thereof to be covered by faith communities.

As well, a College of Clergy will be formed to deal with training, certifying and disciplining ministry personnel.

Aboriginal Ministries will continue working towards the long-term goal of mutuality, respect, and equity. After centuries of segregation and residential schools, healing is a slow and costly process. But given how the colonial invaders (most of us) have profited for centuries at the expense of our First Nations neighbours, we can hardly complain.

Summer is a busy time here at Westminster, too. Plans are afoot for a RedHat (Gordon Memorial <Redcliff>, Peace <Irvine>, Fifth Avenue Memorial & Westminster) Vacation Bible School and Stampede Parade float. Congregational committees have been asked to bring their priorities to a Board of Elders goal-setting meeting-retreat in late August to plan our upcoming year together. Another RedHat project is Messy Church: a gathering of folks, young and old, for a time of reflection, crafts, and supper—together. Originally aimed at attracting the unchurched, it's also a great opportunity to build community for all of us. Mark the date: September 25.

So for this season of Pentecost let your spirit and imagination soar with the angels. Experience 'the unbearable lightness of

being' as the Spirit engages your soul. Come back rested, refreshed and raring to go.

In the meantime Yee-haw!

.....Rev. Jan Stevenson

Comprehensive Review:

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Have you been hearing about the Comprehensive Review that the United Church of Canada undertook over the last 3 years? The report, called "United in God's Work," came out this spring. It has been discussed by our board, presented in worship one Sunday, and both South Alberta Presbytery and Alberta Northwest Conference have offered input on it for when it is dealt with this summer at General Council (the UCC's national body).

Basically the review addresses the fact that the United Church has been living outside its means for years, and needs to dramatically address its financial situation. It makes a number of recommendations that aim to "renew communities of faith, support and nurture new forms of ministry, simplify governance and administration, and enable us to live within our financial and volunteer resources." The recommendations deal with topics such as developing new ministries, continuing to honour and develop Aboriginal ministries and engage in reconciliation work, a Three-Council Model for the UCC (currently we have 4 councils in our church structure: the local church, Presbytery, Conference and General Council), a College of Ministers, an Association of Ministers, and

how we will fund our new model for the denomination.

The report itself is over 40 pages and so we cannot reprint it in our newsletter; however, if you are interested in learning more we encourage you to visit <http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report>. If you don't have a computer we can print you a copy in the church office.

Whether you read the report or not, we invite you to join us in praying for the people seeking to do God's work in re-shaping the UCC, that we as faithful people who find our spiritual homes in this denomination may continue to live into our part of being the Body of Christ in the world. The following prayer is reprinted from the report:

O Holy One, Source of All, Creator of all that is and will be, Christ, Saviour, and Redeemer, hope of the world to come, Spirit and Sustainer, Advocate, breath of life and love...

We give thanks for your creation.

In awe and wonder, we marvel at the new life and beauty you are continually creating. And we know, beyond all sense of knowing, that what you are doing is good.

We draw inspiration and strength from places where we already see hope lived out and the Spirit unleashed.

And we know that your Spirit—that sense of unwavering hope—is stirring and speaking life in the very depths of our being and inviting us to be part of your new creation.

We know our attention sometimes strays and we focus on things that do not serve your mission.

But your mission is our mission.

We pray for insight, that we may sense your call. We pray for the strength to let go.

And we pray for the courage to travel more lightly.

May we draw closer to you and your vision, as inspired and invited by Jesus' own example. Propel us into your future, which is rooted in the richness of our past.

This is our prayer, and in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. May it be so. Amen.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Chelsea

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Thomas the “Doubter”

We had a request to include a story that Chelsea shared in a sermon this spring. The story came from the April 12, 2015 Seasons of the Spirit Fusion weekly resource, © Wood Lake Publishing Inc. 2014. Here it is in its entirety:

“Amazing!” Based on John 20:19–31

Okay. This is what I know. Jesus is dead. I know that. I saw it all happen. I watched them arrest him and I watched them execute him and bury him.

I'm not one of the Twelve, you understand. I mean, I'm a disciple of Jesus and everything, just not one of the Twelve. But I came to Jerusalem with all the rest and I was just hanging around when Jesus went to the garden to pray and take the eleven with him. I saw it all.

Okay. Now, here's the other thing I know for sure; Jesus is alive. I saw him. Don't ask me any questions about it because I can't answer them. All I can do is tell you what happened; what I saw. Okay?

There was a group of us in the upstairs room we'd been using since we arrived in Jerusalem. And we had the doors locked and

bolted. We were scared. None of us had a clue what was going on, whether we'd be arrested too. We were all just sitting there looking at the locked doors and the window shutters wondering if they would hold if the soldiers came. I must have shut my eyes for a while when I heard someone gasp and I looked up. I saw Jesus.

Of course, I thought it was a hallucination or something. But it wasn't, it was him. Or at least it both looked like him and didn't look like him at the same time. It was as if he looked more like he was supposed to look than he actually did look. I know that doesn't make any sense...

He smiled at us, "Peace be with you," he said, and showed us his wounded hands. He told us not to worry. When he said that, when he told us not to worry, just the way he used to say it, I knew it was him.

And then he wasn't there anymore. And the place was silent.

Then we all started talking and shouting and arguing. After about an hour of this Thomas, who was one of the Twelve, returned with the others who had been out getting food. We must have scared them half to death all yelling about what we had just seen. We were interrupting each other, contradicting each other, arguing. But the more we tried to explain it to Thomas and the others, the more we tried to convince them, the crazier we sounded and the less believable it all seemed.

In the end, Thomas yelled for everyone to be quiet. And he said something I think I'll always remember, "Look," he said, "as far as I can tell, each of you here has had a real experience of Jesus in some way or another. I don't understand it, and I don't think you can explain it to us or prove it to us or convince us of it. I think each of you has had a different experience and I think that each person has to have their own experience of Jesus if that's

possible and whatever that means. Wasn't that just the way when Jesus was with us?

"So, I don't want to hear any more about it; and I'm not going to believe, or not believe or anything else until I have an experience of Jesus, too." He added, "I want to see, hear and touch Jesus, and I don't see why that isn't going to happen. If he picked you rat-bags, he's obviously not fussy! Let's eat!"

A week later, during which time our conversation kind of changed from talking about what happened and how, to why it happened and what it meant, Thomas got his wish.

And you know, afterwards, after Jesus just wasn't there again, there wasn't much talk. Martha sat on the floor with her eyes closed smiling. I watched Nathanael weep. And Thomas just went around unlocking all the windows and doors and opening them wide.

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Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The closing events for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission took place from May 31-June 3, 2015. Since 2010, the TRC has been holding national and regional truth-telling events. These events were places for survivors of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) to share their stories and for others to listen. The process has been powerful, and could be both healing and/or (re)traumatizing depending on participants' experiences. For about a century (late 1800s to late 1900s), the Government of Canada and religious partners, through the IRSS, forcefully sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian culture.

Although many people who worked in the schools were well-meaning, many others were abusive - physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The system itself did not respect the cultural and spiritual heritage of Indigenous peoples. In fact, in his final report as chair of the TRC, Justice Murray Sinclair referred to the Indian Residential School system as "nothing short of cultural genocide." The May/June events may be the close of the formal commission, but the United Church (we ran some of the schools) and all Canadians (we are blessed to live in this land that the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island share with us through formal and informal agreements) have a responsibility to continue the work of reconciliation. Generations of abuse will need generations of healing. May we be guided in this work in Spirit and in truth, that the Great Healer may work in and through us all for reconciliation, wholeness and our highest good. For more information and for ways to stay involved, please visit <http://www.trc.ca> or <http://www.united-church.ca/aboriginal/schools/trc...> or talk to Jan and Chelsea about initiating some TRC-related work or study right here at Westminster.

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Board of Elders Report

The last Newsletter focused on introducing the 2015 Board of Elders and what each committee is responsible for. This Newsletter will focus on the 2014/2015 Goals set by the Board last year and where we are at in achieving them.

GOALS 2014/2015: (3 of the 5 goals have been completed)

Goal #1: Introduction of two new Clergy; building congregation & community relationships.

- Completed, with ongoing facilitating of our Ministry Team.

Goal #2: Fill vacant volunteer positions.

- Not complete—a representative for both Trustees and Mission & Outreach remain vacant.

Goal #3: Review Annual Social Events

- To be reviewed at the June Board of Elders Meeting.

Goal #4: Community Connection

- Achieved with the Parade Float, the Homecoming Launch, Messy Church is planned for September 25th, Jan & Chelsea attend both the Red Hat Ministerial group and the Medicine Hat Ministerial Association, Jan & Chelsea lead Worship at Teeoda on a monthly basis, Jan & Chelsea attend and support the Ecumenical Campus Ministry, visitations at senior’s care facilities have increased, Jan & Chelsea met with Saamis Immigration Executive (*Church Manse Rental*), etc. Although this goal has been completed, the Board will continue with a commitment for ongoing discussions to remain a priority.
- It takes everyone in our Church to connect with the wider community. Reflecting back on calendars, bulletins, and the Annual Report ... the numerous tasks that connect us to the Community of MH are to be commended. Having said that, we

often need a nudge to keep that work going.

Goal #5: Grow Committees

- Not complete—Mission & Outreach, Pastoral Care and Christian Development need more volunteers on their committees.

COMMUNICATION GOALS: (*3 of the 4 Goals have been completed*)

Goal A: Improve Congregation awareness of Committees

- The spring Newsletter gave a detailed summary of what each Committee is responsible for, who Chairs these Committees, and who the members are.
- Verbal, written, and visual communication by Committees has been achieved at *Sunday Announcement Time*, as well as included in the Bulletins and PowerPoint.

Goal B: Board Updates:

- Summaries of Board meetings have been provided through the Bulletin and PowerPoint.
- The Board has provided Accountability Reports quarterly at worship services.
- Our most important means of communication is the Annual Report, issued in January of each year.

Goal C: Website Redevelopment

- An Ad Hoc committee has recently been formed to pursue this.
- Board information on the Website will be updated when the Committee finishes with their tasks.

Goal D: Community Awareness

- Saturday’s Church page ad, Christmas Eve Church page ad, volunteering for Salvation Army Kettles, Messy Church planned Sept 25, supporting Project Connect and Campus Care projects, World Day of Prayer participation, sharing announcement events/projects with multiple churches, rentals and user groups, Fall Supper, Poinsettia Tea, Prayer Shawls, Christmas Carol Fest participation, guest musicians and recitals ... to name a few.
- Goal achieved with the above activities; with a commitment for ongoing discussions (that nudge we need) to remain a priority. Jan submitted a draft pamphlet “Welcome to Westminster United Church” with a wealth of information. The intention is to have this ready for distribution in September.

*Respectfully submitted by Kim Sherring,
Board Secretary*

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GATHERING AT GOD’S TABLE

Grace & I as well as Chelsea Masterman and Jan Stevenson attended the Epiphany Explorations Conference in First Metropolitan United in Victoria, B.C. on January 21 – 24, 2015. Here, the Moderator, Gary Patterson, spoke about the challenges facing the United Church of Canada in the 21st Century. One of his questions was

“How do we build a community of faith where we can discuss faith? “ My initial response was that we should hold seminars like “Fresh Start” which I now realize is only a partial step toward addressing this question.

Chelsea, Grace and I attended “**Gathering At God’s Table” A Worship Arts Workshop Exploring Biblical, Historical, Theological and Creative Approaches to Holy Communion**” at Peace United Church in Irvine, Alberta on May 23, 2015. Chaplain Lisa Waites was the facilitator providing some new insight about what is needed. Here we examined the communion ritual looking at: a) prayer as dialogue; b) using different kinds of prayer at church & home; c) exploring - Eucharistic poetry; Eucharistic music ; Eucharistic symbolism and art.

Lisa Waites brought me to the realization that if we are going to have an inclusive church, then we need to think beyond our present practices to see how the arts might be used to communicate in a more meaningful way . First, understanding the contemplative approach to spirituality is a way to address spiritual growth. Second, selecting art, music and poetry from the wide range that is available will allow people to connect spiritually. Third, analyzing and reflecting on the use of signs and symbols is a useful exercise as many of the symbols that have been passed down to us have lost their meaning and we need to renew the meaning, or replace them with others that produce understanding.

In order to build a faith community that discusses faith, it will mean investing our time in exploring, deepening and growing our spirituality in groups where we feel comfortable asking questions, and sharing our thoughts so that our spirituality fits

comfortably into our rapidly changing society with all its technology and movement of peoples.

One example of our new situation is the awesome images of the universe brought to us by spaces telescopes such as Hubble and Kepler which have vastly changed our awareness of the cosmos and surely, we need to address this new awareness in our spiritual beliefs.

The question for Westminster’s congregation is “When will we begin?”

A second example is a thought provoking poem that was shared during the seminar:

NO WORDS

There are no words
For the things that break us open,
Strip us naked in the glare;
for birth and death,
for joy and grief,
for madness of the lost
or for the lighting of love.
There are no words for the lash of beauty
cutting without warning from the sky or land,
stealing breadth;
or for the stark cold of midwinter
midnight
alone in the desert of the self
hollow with dread;

or for the lighting of love
sudden or slow,
blue flame piercing mind and bone.
We need words,
Whose power in the throat
rises like the welling of ancient water.
from the roots of the earth,
wise with the secrets of fire and stone;
words for what lives
in the eyes of the newborn
or the dying or the mad;
words for the breaking open,
for the glancing merciless terror
and the unrelenting glory;
words for the lighting of love.

.....Submitted by
Boyd Alcock
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PAR—Pre-Authorized Remittance

It is so easy to sign up and you will find your life much easier. The donation comes out of your bank account on the 20th of every month and is deposited in Westminster's bank account. The finance committee has a good idea how much money they have to work with and it is a constant. When you go away for holidays or just miss a Sunday, the church still gets the donation. Westminster United is

closed for a month each summer, but still needs your donation in order to keep running. The application forms are in all the pews, as you enter the church, or on the ramp to the hall. Fill this out and put in a voided cheque - mark the envelope for PAR. I will get it and send it in. A person can change the amount anytime too, so don't think that locks you in. Please contact Donna Scharf at 403-526-1555.

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Communion & Fellowship at Chinook

Eight years ago Ruth Patrick realized there were people in Chinook who no longer were able to attend church and therefore did not receive communion. With this in mind, Ruth organized the first communion service for Westminster folks. Since that time it has grown to include people who have a connection to the United Church. Volunteers arrange with the minister to lead the service including communion & invitations are delivered. Following the time of worship everyone gathers at the table for a cup of tea, some goodies & a time of fellowship. This service is well received.

The last Communion Service & Tea was April 1, 2015 with 17 in attendance, including the volunteers. Thank you to Rev. Jan Stevenson & the volunteers who book the room & make all the arrangements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Lemon & Betty Sidlick
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Sound System Fund Raiser

Thank you to all those who supported the Fund Raiser for the Sound System on May 24th by purchasing the greeting cards of Trees with Scriptures. In total, with the \$20 on May 1st at the church sale, we were able to donate \$210 to Westminster United for the Sound System equipment. Because of the overwhelming response, we were unable to fulfill all the requests for cards. We would like to do this again on either June 14th or 21st. The greeting cards are hand drawn in ink portraying 18 unique designs of trees with appropriate scriptures for that tree at a cost of \$5 each. The inside of the card is left blank for your own personal message. We will display the cards at the back of Memorial Hall following the Sunday service.

.....Faye and Lorenz Fedrau

UCW NEWS

The UCW was unable to hold their Spring Tea this year. That being said, they are always looking for new members and monetary donations to help with their events. Lil Iwanicki discovered an original poem about having your own tea at home, and it is included below.

UCW Tea By Proxy

*Westminster UCW invites you to tea
By means of mental telepathy.
The date is your choice, the hour is at three
Make yourself tea and think of me.
The distance between us be it great or small
Doesn't really matter at all.
For you don't have to hurry, dress up or fuss*

*Drive the car or wait for a bus.
Rainy or fair no matter the weather
In our thoughts we can be together.
To help the church is our aim proposed.
Will you please your donation make
And send it back to us post haste.*

If you so choose to make a donation to the UCW, please put cash or a cheque (made payable to Westminster UCW) in an envelope and mark it 'Westminster UCW'. This may be dropped off at the church office or simply put in the collection plate.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

.....Barb Grozell
UCW President

Sunday School Report

The Sunday School has had a very busy spring. Our thanks to Grace Alcock who shared her knowledge of, and talent for the making of Ukrainian Easter Eggs. The children loved the activity and have already asked if she might be able to come again!

After Easter, we experimented with a new and different type of curriculum. It was called "The Living Water Rotation", written by Amy Crawford from the General Council Office of the United Church of Canada. We taught the scripture, John 4:1-30, the story of The Woman at the Well, in different workshops: games, science, cooking, art and drama. The children learned about the significance of water in both Jesus' time and in the present day.

Our cooking workshop was a Mission and Service project that raised \$220.00 by selling our soup mix that was made by the children. The money allowed us to buy 2 “Suit Up a Paddler” gifts in Newfoundland, and 3 “Dig a Well, Protect a Spring” gifts in Nicaragua. Both descriptions of these projects can be found in the Mission and Service catalogue online at <http://www.giftswithvision.ca>.

We have decided to go with a rotational curriculum for the fall. The following is an excerpt from the website www.rotation.org:

The Workshop Rotation in One Long Sentence:

In Workshop Rotation Sunday School, we teach one Bible story for 4 to 5 weeks in a row to all our kids, --rotating them into different exciting, media-based "workshops" each week, ...while the teachers stay-put in the workshop of their strength, -repeating, adapting, and improving their lesson each week during the "rotation".

Why Rotate?

The Workshop Rotation Model slows down the rate of story change, which benefits both students and teachers.

Bible literacy improves when the same story is taught through different workshops over 4 to 5 weeks.

Each workshop focuses on a different creative learning style or "intelligence," which broadens memory.

Teacher preparation time is reduced from every week to every 4 or 5 weeks. This also allows the teacher to improve their lesson and consider more creative approaches because they aren't having to come up with something new each week.

Teachers are recruited for the workshop of their strength and choice in four to five week commitments.

Traditional boring classrooms become transformed into fun, inventive workshops. Students anticipate something new each week, and teaching supplies and equipment are organized by workshop instead of being scattered across classrooms and closets.

Creative Workshop environments signal quality to parents, and are attractive to visitors and our kids!

Flexible scheduling depending on the size of your church, chosen story, creative inspiration, or calendar need.

Free Rotation Curriculum. Many Rotation churches use www.rotation.org to glean their 8 to 12 lesson sets a year. Money previously spent on curriculum can be re-directed toward attractive decor and teaching resources.

With this new curriculum comes the opportunity for members of the congregation to share their talents as they may relate to some of the rotation themes. If there is a theme that is of interest to you, we would love to have you come and share your expertise with our Sunday School. If you have a talent that does not exactly match our curriculum, we would still love to give you the opportunity to share it with our children.

We officially wrapped up our Sunday School year on Sunday, June 7th at our ‘service in the park’. Thanks to everyone who helped make our year a success. Have a wonderful summer, and we look forward to seeing everyone in the fall.

.....Lynnette Burry

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Fresh Start

The next Fresh Start is taking place Saturday June 20, from noon to 4:30pm. Potluck lunch. The topics we will be covering this time are "Leading Planned Change" and "Planning for Effective Ministry." Please RSVP to reception@westminsteruc.com if you are planning to attend.

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Barnabas' Corner

Two thumbs up to Rev. Jan for being selected as one of 2 representatives from South Alberta Presbytery to be a commissioner at General Council in Corner Brook, Newfoundland in August! The UCC has some important decisions to make around the comprehensive review and our future as a denomination. Let's send her forth with our prayers, and pray for the whole General Council as they undertake this work.

A Big Thank You to Rev. Chelsea, Jeanette Zollner, Harry Koch and all those who helped plan and execute the "Service in the Park" followed by a great Picnic on Sunday, June 7th. Both events were enjoyed by all!!

Thank you to Pat Evans for taking the time to give the staff a lesson on working the wheelchair lift.

Kudos to Pat Evans for her tireless work operating the sound system every week. Her efforts are greatly appreciated (and that's an understatement!).

Special thanks to Lynnette Burry for her tireless efforts coordinating Sunday School for this year. Great job, Lynnette!!

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And on a Lighter Note:

Car Keys

They weren't in my pockets. Suddenly I realized I must have left them in the car. Frantically, I headed for the parking lot. My husband has scolded me many times for leaving my keys in the car's ignition. He's afraid that the car could be stolen. As I looked around the parking lot, I realized he was right. The parking lot was empty. I immediately called the police. I gave them my location, confessed that I had left my keys in the car, and that it had been stolen.

Then I made the most difficult call of all to my husband: "***I left my keys in the car and it's been stolen.***"

There was a moment of silence. I thought the call had been disconnected, but then I heard his voice. "***Are you kidding me?***" he barked, "***I dropped you off!***"

Now it was my turn to be silent. Embarrassed, I said, "***Well, come and get me.***"

He retorted, "***I will, as soon as I convince this cop that I didn't steal your damn car!***"

Welcome to the golden years...