

Summary of 2019-20 UCW Transitional Leadership Team Activities

How did we get a regional UCW team?

Over a year ago now, Western Ontario Waterways (WOW) Faith Formation Minister Kathy Douglas invited a number of UCW representatives from four former presbyterials and three conferences to meet and decide how we might move forward in the new church structure. From that first meeting 14 UCW volunteers have met, brainstormed, visioned, worked, organized and even hosted our first **Celebration** in September 2019. 150 women came together in Mount Forest for a wonderful day and a chance to meet our National UCW President Beulah Hayley. The feedback confirmed that this was exactly the kind of event that our membership wants, perhaps twice a year. Since this first event was a Celebration, there was no official 'business' conducted.

Where we came from:

UCW WOW is unique in that we are composed of 'orphans' from three former Conferences, namely London, Hamilton and Toronto. As a result, we have had to develop a new governing structure that we had hoped to present to the membership at an AGM. Please be assured that the UCW Guidelines are being followed. We have an interim Chair, recording secretary, treasurer with four signing authorities, a communications team which includes one woman from each of the four previous presbyterials (Waterloo, Huron-Perth, Northern Waters and Bruce), as well as members-at-large to ensure a wide perspective from across the region and church.

Regional Council Representation:

You may be aware that the 16 new regional councils within The United Church of Canada have extended executive voting rights positions to only five (5) of the regional UCW's, as it is up to each council to decide who would be offered representation and voting privileges. The transition leadership team (TLT) of the UCW WOW wrote a letter of concern in June 2019 to the President and Executive Minister of our Regional Council. In their reply they noted that their executive is much smaller now, and that General Council Executive recognized in Remit #1 that the "*principle that all voices of our diverse church must be heard but all will not necessarily be contained within the Executive*". It was suggested in their reply that UCW WOW might name one of our members to the Mission & Discipleship Commission. A second letter was sent in May 2020 to ask for our regional UCW to be designated a 'Community of Faith', receive official recognition, and have the same privileges granted to us as to other ministries. This requires that UCW prepare a full profile and that work is ongoing. We expect to hear from the WOWRC Executive by the end of June.

Lastest Statistics:

Your team has worked hard to collect UCW membership statistics from across our region, including their contacts. We are delighted to report we have 90 active UCW units, with 2,021 members. Eleven (11) Life Memberships were presented in the last reporting year. A short contact list will be distributed to UCWs, asking that we all respect privacy by not using for any other purpose.

Assessments and Money:

We've collected assessments so that we have sufficient funds to support ourselves and the National UCW. The assessment is set at \$3.50 per member, of which \$1 is forwarded to National UCW for their communications and programming. Only \$2.50 of the assessment will remain with UCW WOW. Thankfully start-up funds were received from the previous conferences, based on an a percentage of their membership joining our region. The Waterloo/Grand River UCW Presbyterial is continuing for now, so instead they made a donation. Huron-Perth supported both Antler River Waterways and Western Ontario Waterways with donations in 2019, but their units have paid their assessments to WOW UCW in 2020.

Continuing Outreach Projects:

Although the new region has different boundaries, the various ministries, camps, outreach programs and special events within our boundaries will still be supported. It is our desire that we might broaden the scope and appeal, and have more local events on a regular basis. Of course many of the things the local UCWs do will not change; it is only the support network that has been restructured. You were represented at the annual National UCW Gathering last September in Toronto. National UCW Statistics and project information was distributed by email to all the units on our records and is now posted on the UCW page of the WOWRC website, under Ministry/Faith Formation.

There were lots of opportunities for TLT discussions during **Meetings** as below:

2019: April 26, May 29, Sept. 21, Oct. 1, Dec. 16-Zoom

2020: Feb.17-Zoom, April 2-Zoom

Much work was done to prepare for a May 2, 2020 Annual Meeting which was cancelled because of the pandemic. It has been rescheduled to Oct. 3 but there is no guarantee that it will happen at this point. Perhaps it will be a virtual meeting instead.

With team members spread around the region most of the work is accomplished online, by email, text and phone calls too. The Virtual Zoom meetings have been hosted by the Regional Council under Kathy Douglas' leadership. The need to create, print, package and mail materials has moved to online delivery, using email and posting to the UCW webpage on the WOWRC site. This is why it is so vital to have current email addresses, and often more than one; thank you to everyone who has provided this information. It helps to honour our budget and get timely communications to you.

What's coming up:

The next national Gathering of UCW, our 60th Anniversary, is July 11-15, 2022 at Membertou Trade & Convention Centre in Sydney Nova Scotia. The theme is 'Continuing in Hope' with plenary speaker journalist Sally Armstrong. We initially have 22 spaces set aside for our region, and all UCW are welcome. We are asked to create a fabric banner to parade at the opening ceremony. It isn't too early sisters, to start saving and planning to attend. It is a rich, rewarding, inspiring event!

Our 60th Anniversary Mission project is the **Women for Change Zambia**. A separate attachment is available; you are encouraged to share it widely. We look forward to hearing about all the creative ways units support this wonderful project.