

Reflection by Anne Reuber
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It is a beautiful June day. I have been for a walk, suitably distanced from my two companions, have chatted via Zoom with some friends and am now settling in for the rest of the day. Like many of you, I am learning to make do with a much more solitary and less busy life.

Some of you, like me, may be finding that you enjoy the time to yourself. You don't find time passing slowly. Others may be finding that the "aloneness" really cramps your style, and you long for closer, in-person contacts with family and friends. Each of us is different in our reactions, but they are all valid for us.

One of the things that I have found is that, though I have been much more solitary for the past three months, I have also been much more globally connected too, thanks to the wonders of technology. The learning curve has been high as I have learned to Zoom, to record and tape my voice so that my church music director can use his wizardry and ability to manage the technology to put all our choir voices together in an anthem. Aside from the fact that we sound much better as a group singing the anthem than on our individual tapes, the really neat thing for me was that a former choir member who now lives in Montreal, taped her voice and sent it in. We were a church choir of Avondale United singers in Stratford plus one from Montreal!

Last week, I listened to a panel discussion by artists and artisans from the Stratford Festival via Zoom as they discussed racism and the arts. Aside from the conversations which were fascinating, I was struck by the fact that over 2100 people connected into the discussion, and that there were listeners from not only Canada and the USA but also from Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Japan. Most of us have probably watched how the American protests against the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis triggered protests against racism around the world. Again this is such a reminder that we are not just individuals cooped up on our own, but that we are part of a global community. What happens in another country affects us too.

These connections have caused me to think about the UCW. As an organization which will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2022, it has roots that are local, national and global. United Church Women through their organization have spent countless hours working in their local churches, serving meals, raising funds, cleaning, leading music, Sunday School, sharing their time and talents in their communities as they live out their faith in practical ways. But they also have raised awareness of needs globally, bringing the needs of people around the world to the attention of our local congregations.

The National UCW Executive has chosen a multi-year project, called *Women for Change, Zambia*, as our 60th anniversary project. (There is a report on that in this package of reports for you to check out.) As of January 2020, UCW members across Canada had already raised more than \$20,000 to help Women for Change encourage more young girls and women in Zambia to stay in school. I would encourage you to continue (or begin if this project is new to you), to find ways that you can support this project over the next two years. In 2019, United Church Women from across Canada donated \$1,020,034.00 to Mission & Service. Women from WOW UCW donated \$129,049.00 to M & S. As well, across Canada, United Church Women contributed more than \$2,240,000 to our local churches.

For years, through the UCW, we have been a strong voice locally and globally, calling for compassion and justice. Throughout the years, this voice has been influential in effecting change so that women are more equal participants with men in all levels of the church and society. We are still doing that as we seek new ways to be part of the restructured regional organization of the United Church. Please read the report of what your Transitional Leadership Team has been working on throughout this past year.

You will also find a report on what the three church camps in our WOW region, Silver Lake, Menesetung, and Bimini are doing this summer. Many of you have supported one or more of these camps, or another United Church Camp that was geographically within your former conference. Please check out the websites and videos in the report to see some of the creative ways that the camps are continuing to reach out to children and youth. Please continue to support these United Church camps. If you listen to the camping Sunday video prepared by Carol Young and some of her staff from Bimini, you will hear her say that they will lose more than 80% of their income this summer, while 40% of their expenses remain constant. I suspect that these figures are similar to those for all of the camps.

As you begin to consider how to reopen your congregations and your UCW's, I would encourage you to continue to work to keep others safe by following the recommendations of your area Health Units. I would also urge you to remember the many local individuals, community and global organizations, as well as the partners that the United Church of Canada support through our Mission & Service ministry. In this time of isolation, it is important to still support the many people both at home and world-wide whose lives have been turned upside down in ways that we find difficult to imagine.

Thank you for all you have done. Thank you for all that you are doing. We are women of the church who seek to follow the example of Jesus who brought together the lost, the lonely, the sick, the poor, the dispossessed to let them know they are loved and valued, accepted and recognized as beloved children of God.

We are not alone. We live in God's world.