



November 2021 United Church Women of Western Ontario Waterways

Next week is the first Sunday of Advent. I look forward to decorating the tree and putting out candles (battery-run), stars (ditto) and the several sets of creche figures I have accumulated over the years. I anticipate Christmas carols and music, church services, notes to and from friends, Christmas creches. Cacti and palm trees supplement the European (made in China) tree in the living room. I love Christmas!

Reading the Moderator's Christmas message in *Broadview* last week, I was brought up abruptly to consider the aspects of the Christmas story that are less comforting. A young couple - the woman probably still a child in age but pregnant - travelling to Bethlehem at the whim of the Roman state to be registered so that they could be taxed to pay for occupation troops and Herod's lavish building projects. There was no place in the inn for the couple to birth their child.

My creches do not stink of manure, nor are they crowded with animals and merchants, males who have travelled far and sleep rough. My creche animals are quiet, stationary and well-behaved, all looking admiringly at the new-born. My favourite Christmas stories do not include Herod's killing all boys under the age of two whom he sees as a threat to his power.

There is a time for the peace and joy and quiet contemplation in our Christmas celebrations, but the work is there also. Migrants and refugees, births without hospitals, homelessness, authoritarian and cruel governments, the reality of poverty, violence, uncertainty, and fears for the future - these are also part of our Christmas stories.

But God enters our world with each new birth. The light still shines and the darkness cannot put it out. Let us see a vision of the possibilities of enough for all no matter where one lives. Let us live as though we believe that a world based on love and justice, peace, sharing and healing can be achieved; that the Word does become Flesh over and over again. That stars invite us to travel out of our comfort zone.

May we live the magic and mystery of Christmas. Emmanuel – God-with-us - is born anew again and again!!

Merry Christmas to you all.
Anne Reuber, President

Fall Gathering of UCW WOW

Almost 80 women gathered by zoom on Saturday Oct. 6 for a Regional Gathering. The Grey-Bruce Climate Engagement Team led us in conversations about Climate Action. For those who were unable to attend, you can watch it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/J56lQleihKA>.

It was suggested you view "Resilience - A Climate Change Documentary of Hope" which is available at <https://resiliencedoc.info>. Copy and paste it into your search engine.

The theme was "Hope for Creation". Start with what you are already doing and try to build on that. Focus on one thing or idea that you can do, rather than trying to do everything and feeling overwhelmed. Find solidarity and support in an existing group to advocate for change. Don't wait for governments to mandate change to protect the environment.

Ideas People are Already Implementing

- Drive less; learn to use zoom to attend virtual meetings; walk more; cycle; carpool
- Compost; rejuvenate the soil
- Plant native trees; pollinator & Butterfly Gardens
- Reduce purchase of plastics
- Take children out to enjoy nature
- Regenerative Agriculture; help landowners and community groups do stewardship projects to improve and protect water and soil
- Eat local—support local; eat in season; more vegetarian meals
- Reduce frequency and length of showering
- Get books on our environment for study on line or for your own reading. Use public library more
- Share tools with neighbours
- Support refugees
- Offer forums for issues such as: organic farming/conventional farming; local/imported food; how to cook and knowing where food comes from
- Grow vegetables & fruit for the local food bank
- Speak up about climate emergency in our communities, municipalities and churches; suggest your church look for more environmental alternatives to green lawns; demand more from our political leaders

Additional Resources

- The final benediction came from *The Celtic Wheel of the Year* by Tess Ward.
- Send additional ideas about what you are doing to UCW.WOW@gmail.com for sharing.

Save the Date:

**Winter Tri-Regional Gathering
Saturday, February 12, 2022**

Our UCW Voice on WOW Regional Council

Edith Coyle is our rep on the Mission & Discipleship Commission. Here are some highlights from her report that might be of particular interest as many of you have supported these programs and organizations for years.:

- Financial Grants were given to: Grand River and Mitchell Resource Centres; Grey Bruce Healthcare Chaplaincy Council (covers 11 communities); Guelph Ecumenical Campus Ministries
- Grants were also given to the church camps in our region: Silver Lake (dining hall), Camp Menesetung (Live Out Loud project); Camp Bimini (Leadership training).

Other News from UCW of WOW Region:

- On November 1, the former Waterloo Presbyterial held their final Gathering by Zoom. They celebrated their past with a photo presentation of past leaders and participants. Joyce Ward spoke for many women as she talked about what UCW had meant to her over the years. There were votes on motions to disburse funds, close the books and to disband.
- Barbara Seaton closed with "This group of women in Waterloo Presbyterial have given a wonderful service to UCW groups in our [former] Presbytery. When the United Church reorganized into Regions, all UCW's in our Presbyterial became part of Western Ontario Waterways UCW. We are part of a much bigger family. As members of that bigger family, we continue to support the UCW purpose in WOW and within our local churches."

Tri-Regional Fall Gathering (Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls & WOW UCWs)

- Almost 70 women from three regions met on Nov. 6 by Zoom to explore the topic of "Another Step Toward Affirming". Rev. Michiko Bown-Kai of Cambridge United Church led us in worship, and Thea Sheridan-Jonah spoke about how being an Affirming Community of Faith was different from being a welcoming community. Thea is a young university student in her first year in British Columbia.
- Rev. Michiko noted that for many people, being part of an affirming congregation can literally be a life-and-death issue. Thea talked about how affirming shifts the power structure from "We welcome you" to "This is our community and if you come, you will change us." Rev. Michiko closed by saying "Don't forget to worship, to pray. Let the Spirit transform you with joy."
- Unfortunately, there were a couple of technical glitches outside of our control, that meant there is no recording available to anyone who missed the event.

Resources Mentioned in the Discussion

- Some affirming terms/labels.
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
- *Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder*. Ma-Nee Chacaby with Mary Louisa Plummer. A video interview with the author is also available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v+juzpocOX5ik>
- *Pastrix*. Nadia Bolz-Weber

National UCW News

- Nationally, UCW donated \$686,686 to Mission and Service in 2020. Thank you!
- A reminder that the 60th Anniversary project, Women for Change – Zambia, is open until our anniversary celebration in Sydney, Nova Scotia in July 2022.
- If you are still interested in applying for a \$400 grant to help defray costs of attending the anniversary celebration July 11-15, 2022, the last Grant Application deadline is **April 15, 2022** from the Agatha Kaasa Bursary Fund.

Mission and Service

UCW of WOW donated \$88,251 in 2020 to M&S of the United Church of Canada.

World Day of Prayer

Information is available about the Day of Prayer materials for 2022. It is not too early to start making your plans now to share worship prepared by women of Great Britain. The theme is ***I know the plans I have for you***. Jeremiah 29:1-4. Again there will be resources for both an in-person, video, or combined service. Check out what's available at www.wicc.org

A Happy and Safe Christmas to you all!

The UCW Executive of WOW Region:
Anne Reuber (President), Marnie McDonough (Secretary), Joyce Osborne (Treasurer), Kim Posno (Communications), Edith Coyle (Rep to WOW Regional Council), Members-at-Large: Eleanor Firth, Nancy Lennox, Barbara Seaton, Eileen Townsend, Joan Whyte, Jacquie Diverty & Staff Liaison Kathy Douglas (Faith Formation Minister)