Vol. 35

Dedicated to Preserving Our Religious Heritage

Journal

United Church of Canada Historical Society

September 2023



In This Edition:

Anniversaries—History of United Church Women —Stoney Mission Update—
And More

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The past number of years have been a challenge for the Historical Society. Despite the reorganization of the national church into regions, it was decided The Society would keep its name. Afterall, its mandate is to preserve and promote the history of the United Church and its antecedents in the area of the former Alberta and Northwest Conference. The pandemic restrictions put pressure on meetings, but some brief meetings proceeded through conference calls as in-person meetings were not possible. In 2020, the lifting of restrictions allowed an in-person AGM. However, because of health issues, Rev. Don Koots has resigned as Chair. We thank him for his contributions over the years including arranging locations for meetings. His health continues to be an issue and we sent our blessings.

Therefore, the Secretary has taken on additional responsibilities, such as arranging meetings. Another development was the passing of long-time member, former President and chair of the Editorial Committee, Rev. Austin Fennell. It was through his efforts that conference calls were made. An obituary is in this issue. Another member of the Committee has helped to put together the 2023 edition of the Journal, which is the Thirty-Fifth edition.

We remind congregations and individuals that 2025 is the hundredth anniversary of the formation of the United Church or Church Union. We encourage congregations to research and publish their histories. For assistance finding materials and photographs, you can contact Leanne Templeton, the United Church Archivist at the Provincial Archives in Edmonton.

Thank you for your continuous support of the Society through membership and donations

The Historical Society is pleased to announce that we have accepted a new member. He would like to introduce himself.

Ian Fitzgerald is an independent researcher specializing in genre cinema. He has been published in The Canadian Journal of Film Studies where he wrote about the superhero genre of film, and the textbook *The Spaces and Places of Canadian Popular Culture*, where he wrote about mall multiplexes. Ian completed his masters at York University in the Communications and Culture program, where he wrote about the contemporary romantic comedy. He currently works at the Royal Alberta Museum.

Ian has been a member at Stony Plain United Church since 1988 when he was two years old. Since, he has taken part in the life of the church in many ways including youth group, choir, more recently official board, as well as having taken part in two separate Joint Searches. He is also the current chair of Stony Plain United's Archive Committee.

Letter from the Editor

Boy! 2023 has been an interesting year. It has been for me, anyways. Maybe for you it has been quiet and peaceful. Either way, I hope these stories allow you to escape for a bit and travel to different times (or maybe reminisce about the past). Thank you once again to all contributors. Hopefully this brings you as much joy as it has me.

-Katy Jones

Table of Contents

Obituary for Rev. Dr. Austin Fennell…...4

Peace In Our Time?.....…….5

History of United Church Women……..8

Stoney Mission Society Update……...10

Membership Form……..12

Fort Assiniboine United Church 1948 - 1998……..13

Fort Assiniboine United Church 1998 - 2023..... ……. ...16

Mosside (Agnes Memorial) United Church ….……..…...……. ….17

Congratulations Mosside (Agnes Memorial) United Church…..…..……19

The AWNC Journal is intended to provide a forum by which the history of the United Church and its antecedents can be told. It is designed to make readers aware of the contributions our church has made to the spiritual life and to the social development of the area encompassed by the Alberta and Northwest Conference. The Journal seeks to encourage individuals, congregations and presbyteries to bring together human and material resources in the preservation of our religious heritage.

The ANWC Journal is published yearly by the Alberta and Northwest Conference Historical Society of the United Church of Canada. The members of the board are:

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Obituary for Rev. Dr. Austin Fennell

By Rob Fennell

Following a brief illness, the Rev. Dr. Austin Fennell died on December 15, 2022, at the age of 89, one month before his 90th birthday. Austin was born in Hafford, Saskatchewan in 1933. He was the first child of Sadie (Boyd) and Rev. Harold Fennell. His father's career took the family to places such as Richard, Eston and Radisson, Saskatchewan. After high school, Austin attended the University of Saskatchewan (B.A.) and subsequently St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon. He married Jean (Ford) in 1956, and they shared many happy adventures over 66 years of marriage. Austin and Jean travelled widely to more than 30 countries. They shared community and church life in many places, including Saskatchewan, Scotland, Manitoba, and Alberta.

Austin was ordained by Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada in 1957. From 1960-1963, Austin and Jean lived in Scotland, as Austin studied under the well-known scholar and writer, William Barclay, for a Ph.D in New Testament from the University of Glasgow. On his return to Saskatchewan, among the pastoral charges were Davidson and Whitmore Park in Regina, where incidentally his father served at Westminster. Later he served in Winnipeg. He served 10 pastoral charges of the United Church over a ministry of 41 years and continued to preach and offer sacraments for many years in retirement. Following eight years of service with Southminster United Church in Lethbridge, he wrote a history of this church and the related history of Methodism in Alberta. He served as chair of the Alberta and Northwest Conference (United Church of Canada) Historical Society (2007-2015), contributing articles to its Journal, as well as chairing the editorial committee. In addition, he was a member of the editorial committee for In Contact.

Over the years, Austin made a significant contribution to church and community leadership, through music, Scouting, curling, General Council of the United Church, Rotary Club, and as a school trustee. He was chair or president of numerous organizations, including Presbyteries and Conferences (Alberta in 2002, travelling to meetings of all Presbyteries), the University of Winnipeg Library Board, St. Andrew's College Board of Regents, University of Lethbridge Chaplaincy Committee, the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs, and the Lethbridge Symphony Association. He was also involved with the Banff Men's Conference. He was a lifelong supporter of the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada.

He taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Winnipeg and was the first Dean of the Lay School of Ministry in Western Canada. Many younger ministers benefitted from his mentorship and encouragement for over half a century, and his colleagues valued his support and counsel. An avid amateur musician, Austin played piano his whole life, often providing the accompaniment during Presbytery and Conference meetings. He enjoyed singing, and at various times played the organ. In 2017, he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from his alma mater, St. Andrew's College.

Always ready for a laugh, a good story, or deep reflection on a theological or social problem, Austin enjoyed a cup of tea and cookie anytime. The classic Absent-Minded Professor, he sometimes caught up to conversations about ten minutes after the subject had changed. He felt deeply connected to the land and was an eager and gifted gardener. He was profoundly grateful for, and proud of, his immediate and extended family. He baptized several of them and conducted many family weddings. Austin will be remembered for his deep care for others, his readiness to listen, his generosity, his modesty, his intellect, his broad and deep knowledge, his excellent teaching, his powerful preaching, his lifelong love of learning, his commitment to a better society, and his abiding, trusting faith in Jesus Christ, in whose company he now rejoices, among the saints who have gone before him. Service was held in January at Southminster.

Remembering him with love and gratitude are his wife Jean, daughter Moira (Doug), sons Ian (Melanie), Andrew (Kerri), and Rob (Sally), sister Kay, brother Brian, fourteen grandchildren, one great-granddaughter, many cousins, nieces and nephews, and dear friends and colleagues.

Peace In Our Time?

By Robert MacDonald

The 1930s has often been called The Dirty Thirties, a reference to the drought and the soil drifting which occurred across the North American Plains. Though as David Jones indicated in *Empire of Dust*, similar conditions existed in the 1920s around the Medicine Hat area. It has also been called The Great Depression, with the collapse of prices in wheat and cattle and increasing debt of governments and citizens. It was a period of challenge to the nascent United Church, which saw contributions drop, congregations experiencing debt and arrears, some amalgamations, and minsters seeing salaries cut or in arrears. In addition, the United Church sought solutions; from supporting soup kitchens, to proposals for social-insurance plans. The Social Gospel heritage remained, including frequent resolutions against alcohol, gambling, and even smoking by the unemployed.

There were however other aspects which involved the church and its supporters. One issue which occupied much time and thought was the ordination of women, with some congregations supporting this well before General Council did. Another issue was that of the monarchy. The issue arose after the Jubilee of George V in 1935 (and his death in 1936), the abdication crisis of Edward VIII, and the coronation of George VI. The monarch became much more real with the Royal Tour of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in the late spring of 1939. These were occasions for heartfelt sermons. Another less well-known, but just as important, issue was that of peace, as people reflected on the failure of the League of Nations and the horrors of the First World War.

In October 1939, *The Observer* reported on a manifesto, "A Witness Against the War" which said "at no point has Christendom so departed from the mind of Christ and its own original faith as its acceptance of war." The 78 clergy who signed the manifesto said that through the 1930s the denomination consistently understood that war was contrary to God's will. They contended that non-violent assistance was central to Christ's life and urged people to remain true to Jesus and refrain from supporting the war effort. The reaction was swift, with condemnation in letters and newspapers. As a result, there was an emergency meeting of the General Council sub-committee. It declared the signatories of the manifesto, however sincere, had gone far beyond the limits of what was right and proper in a time of war. Those who signed the manifesto were not, the reply said, representatives of the Church. The statement ended with a declaration of unfailing loyalty to the King and support in the "present dire struggle." The United Church already had a War Service Committee.

Why did the manifesto come about? As it indicated, the denomination had stated its opposition to war for a long time. Many of the faithful believed that God, intimately involved in human affairs, was guiding people to create the Kingdom of God through following the Way of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And yet, Rolls of Honour hung in sanctuaries during the post WWI period testified to another reality. Remembrance Day was a time to reflect. In 1931, at a special service, Rev. J. Todd of Central of Calgary, spoke of the "Relation of Christianity to War", while Rev. G. Dickson of Knox of Calgary had as a theme "Unknown Warriors." Wesley's Rev. J. Fainchey spoke of disillusioned people opposed to any glorification of war. Other ways of advocating for peace were involvement in the World Day of Prayer or support of the League of Nations.

However, as early as 1927, Conference passed a resolution condemning war and opposing cadet training in schools. It should be noted that the resolution was vigorously opposed by Rev. George Kerby of Mount Royal College in Calgary. Major Kerby was a recruiter during the war for the Military District. One speaker spoke about patriotism. There were several amendments to the resolution, but these were defeated.

Throughout the 1930s, Conference, Presbyteries, and congregations weighed in on peace. In 1930, Peace River Presbytery mused about having the Peace Pact in schools, presumably the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact of 1928 outlawing war as a national instrument. The 1931 Conference passed a resolution advocating peace and endorsing the League. That same year, the Tuxis Parliament approved a resolution indicating that members were unanimously opposed to war in any form

They as individuals, even to cost to themselves, held firmly to the resolute conviction to exterminate this menace to civilization. In addition, the young men were urged to study the work of the League of Nations and to support Junior Leagues associated with churches. Earlier that year, Calgary Presbyterial of the Women's Missionary Society discussed not just usual themes as temperance or missions, but also peace. At the 1932 Conference, delegates repudiated war, reaffirming the United Church stance that war was diametrically opposed to the Spirit of Christianity and that the church should not participate in war, though resistance was an individual choice.

Two years later, Conference condemned war as unchristian, a crime against humanity, and pledged no support to any kind of war. However, Nelles Buchanan and Fred Johnson felt there was a distinction between defensive war and offensive war, while Revs. H. Peter and H. Rose suggested that no exceptions be made. The same year, at a Forum, the Edmonton Presbytery Young Peoples Union mirrored Conference in suggesting no distinction between offensive and defensive war. They stated that there was no justification in the teachings of Jesus to warrant war, and no one won in war, especially the young men. Within a year, Rev. Robert Paton of Scarboro, Calgary, indicated that people still suffered from the war and that youth would be needed in another war. He suggested a song contest on the subject of war. A few days later, Rev. J. Todd of Central used as his theme "Peacemakers or Peacekeepers." Rev. Hollingsworth of Hillhurst, Calgary indicated he would raise the issue of the need for action on peace at Presbytery. At a World Day of Prayer session, people were reminded of the origin of the occasion in 1927.

By 1936, international developments were turning violent, with Japan invading China, Italy involved in Ethiopia, and Hitler reoccupying the Rhineland. During this time disarmament talks had failed, and the League would not impose sanctions. In these circumstances, and as attitudes began to change, Rev. Melville Aiken still spoke of war as a crime. On Remembrance Day 1936, Rev. Kelloway at Knox, Calgary, asked the Question "How Much Do We Want Peace?" A few weeks later Rev. Paton stated "The 'Last Post' has sounded, but for you and me 'Reveille'. For them rest, for us labour." He cited "In Flanders Field', and mentioned some of the horrors, but stretcher bearers might be needed again. Despite labours, peace had not been achieved.

As the clouds of war gathered in Europe and Asia, there were increasing numbers of voices sensing that war could be inevitable, warning people of the dangers. Foremost among these was Rev. Warwick Kelloway of Knox whose outspokenness on several issues had angered some of his congregants who demanded his resignation. There was a tension between desire for peace and preparation for war. In June 1935, in a sermon "Merchants of Death", he mused about 50,000 to 60,000 more killed, and what would be the Christian obligation? He referenced munitions manufacturers. One advantage Kelloway had was that he had had a two-month visit in Europe (Scandinavia, Russia, Germany, Britain, Poland and France), and several of his sermons and speeches reflected this. Nonetheless he, like others, felt Christianity was superior to Communism or Fascism. And he talked of a new social order. By 1936, a new focus was the Spanish Civil War. Following a trip to Europe, he suggested that Spanish youth supported the Republican cause but saw much uncertainty in Europe. At another time, he ventured the idea that peace would end in one or two years. Also, he felt that while Germans might not want war, the key was Hitler who might not want war. He made reference to Italy and Germany involved in the Spanish Civil War and the arms race which was beginning. At a large evening service, he again raised the issue, noting that for some Hitler was a god. To Kiwanians, he spoke of possible strife in Germany, especially if Hitler turned his eyes to Russia. For Remembrance Day, he talked of peace despite the dark predictions he had made.

He kept up the crusade. In December, he began a series of sermons, along with slides, relating to his trips to Europe. He recognized that Hitler had given people hope and had raised the standard of living. Nonetheless, Hitler was a threat to peace. On one occasion, he gave a glimpse of life in Germany, with reference to Martin Niebuhr, a decorated submariner in the Great War, and after an accountant, before becoming a clergyman and theologian. Yet he was under house arrest. In 1937, Kelloway noted Hitler's character, and later talked of what it was like to live in Europe and whether war was possible. He suggested on one occasion that Hitler and Mussolini were taking advantage of Britain's desire to avoid

war. Yet he maintained war was not inevitable. At Remembrance Day, it was not just a memorial to the sacrifice, but the evening service was a peace parade, with guest speakers. Included were the Women's Peace Council, Women's International League for Peace and Faith, and the League for Peace and Democracy. There were increasing demands for boycott of Japanese goods, with Kelloway trying to take both sides. In March 1938, he had an interesting take on the situation, with a sermon entitled "Looking Backward on the Crisis in Europe and the Second World War."

Still there were naysayers. E.A. Lange, a Claresholm farmer told the Young Men's section of the Board of Trade, that Hitler was a godsend, and an outstanding public servant. Many of course were heartened in the fall of 1938 when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munch with the 'piece of paper' that 'Herr Hitler" had signed. And it should be noted that an important group during this time was the Moral Rearmament group, with an emphasis on reshaping society. Rallies were held, ministers urged people to turn to God, some spoke about prayer, as the greatest power of the church. R.B. Bennett, long associated with Central in Calgary, suggested in early 1939 that the church was the hope for peace.

The anxiety continued in 1939, even more so when Hitler annexed Austria. Kelloway continued to speak up. There was a Peace Crusade, opened by the Roman Catholic Bishop Carroll. Kiwanians were told that the dictators hoped for a short, swift war. Another person who sounded the alarm was Alexander Calhoun, founder and Chief Librarian of the Calgary Public Library. He told the Optimist Club that Germany's ambitions went beyond appeasement. He cited *Mein Kampf* and suggested that if war came it would destroy everything of value.

Storm clouds increased, especially after the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939 and the earlier guarantees that Britain and France had given to Poland. September 9th, 1939 created a dilemma for many as that was the day Canada declared war on Germany. How should Christians act? In the lead-up to war, churches in Edmonton prayed for peace, ending services with a singing of 'God Save The King'. The yearning for peace can be reflected in Rev. F. March of Central Edmonton suggesting the world would not be right until international brotherhood (living with others regardless of country, creed or personal views) was established, while Rev. E. Scragg of Wesley, Edmonton, spoke of the need for Christians to choose between two evils: whether to submit to tyranny and be slaves or to fight for freedom and justice. He chose the latter.

In High River, the dilemma affected Rev. A. Rowe. He was a strong pacifist, which was known to the congregation. Later, when the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan developed a base at High River, it was felt that there should be a recreation centre for the airmen. The old Methodist Church had been used as a hall for Sunday School and other activities. A proposal was made to allow the building to be used for such a purpose. Although there was consternation when Rowe staunchly defended his pacifism, it was a measure of his character when he defended the proposal. When he left High River in 1941, it was with genuine regret when he asked for a change in pastoral relations. Elsewhere, clergy who had pacifist leanings still urged people to buy war bonds. Others gave pastoral care to servicemen.

Attitudes changed during this time, especially as countries threatened peace and others increased readiness. The horrors of the Great War had dimmed for some, but not for all. The church opposition to war developed nuances. And by 1938, the General Council recognized the conscientious right and action of those who sincerely hold that obedience to Divine Law leads them to abstain from participation in any war. Nonetheless, the General Council subcommittee response to the manifesto of the fall of 1939 indicated perhaps that the leaders had come to the same conclusion Nelles Buchanan and Fred Johnson had in 1934: that there was a difference between defensive and offensive wars.

History of United Church Women

By Barbara Davison

Women have always played an integral role in the life of the church. From as early as the nineteenth century, women worked as teachers, missionaries, and nurses, providing care in communities. As time went on, fundraising and social function organizing were also added to the women's roles.

When the United Church officially formed in 1925, the Ladies Aid (LA) (later renamed to the Woman's Association (WA)) and the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) were doing work at home and abroad. The WA focused on supporting the local church and community, while the WMS was more involved with education and world mission.

In 1953, a committee was established by the General Council of The United Church of Canada to study women's work in the church with the goal of formally recognizing the work and contribution of United Church women. In 1956, the 17th General Council initiated the Commission on the Work of Women in the Church. The findings and recommendations of the commission were released in 1960 with the following goals:

1.To prepare a constitution for a new women's organization in the congregation and at Presbytery, Conference and national levels, the aim of which would be to enlist all the women of the United Church for the total mission of the Church.

2.To study the issues involved and any other matters related to the formation of such an organization.

3. To make such recommendations to the Eighteenth General Council as after consultation with Boards and Committees concerned may be deemed wise. (ROP 1960, p. 301).

The subsequent Commission on the Work of Women in the Church recommended:

1.That subject to the approval of the executive of General Council, the effective date of the functioning of the Board of Women and the coming into operation of the constitution of The United Church Women be January 1962.

2. That the attention of Conferences, Presbyteries and Pastoral Charges be called to the necessity of taking steps to set up this new pattern of organization to be ready to function as of January 1, 1962

3. That Conferences and Presbyteries be urged to make provision for representation from The United Church Women on Committees in whose work it is directly concerned. (ROP 1960, p. 317).

As a result, General Council took action to ensure that women could share in a much more meaningful way in all the work of the church by allowing them to participate on the boards of The United Church at all levels. Approval was given to this organization, United Church Women (UCW), at the General Council meeting held in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1960.

The UCW officially came into being on January 1, 1962. Its purpose was as follows: To unite women of the congregation for the total mission of the church and to provide a medium through which we may express our loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship and service. (ROP 1960, p. 304).

Women integrated their national-level work into the boards of the United Church, and blended their two organizations, the Woman's Missionary Society and the Woman's Association, into one: the United Church Women. The Women's Federation also joined the UCW at this time. Across the country, 300,000 women joined as charter members. The structure of the new organization was the same as that of the national church: Conference, Presbyterial, and local units, with UCW representatives participating at all levels of United Church structure.

In 1978, the United Church's new Division of Mission in Canada (DMC) initiated a study into the UCWs across Canada who were struggling with the structure set in 1962 and with other issues. The study recommended that it would be beneficial for

Conference presidents to meet regularly to discuss issues, concerns, and projects. The gathering was to be called a consultation, with no administrative or decision-making authority.

In 2000, at the General Council meeting, a resolution was passed stating that "all women's groups within the Pastoral Charge or Congregation are free to determine their size, structure, and manner of leadership." At the 2003 General Council meeting, the Women's Ministries Network was proposed and adopted. It would encompass the UCW, the only structured group, and all other women's groups within the United Church.

In 2003, the name National Consultation of United Church Women was changed to National United Church Women (NUCW).

Since the inauguration of the UCW, many projects have been initiated and completed, from worship and Bible study, to sending barrels of clothing overseas, to supporting the Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada with over $129 million in contributions.

Celebrations of the United Church Women anniversaries started with the 25th Anniversary in 1987, the 35th Anniversary in 1997, and every five years after.

In 2012, the United Church Women celebrated its 50th Anniversary, "Our Tapestry of Love," in Ancaster, Ontario. To celebrate the occasion, a special 50th anniversary project was adopted. It was to support the Morogoro Women's Training Centre in Tanzania. Over $268,000 was raised to support the training school, and as a result over 600 women were trained in maternity health care. One of many initiatives that UCWs have undertaken over the years, this turned out be a wonderful project.

In 2017, the United Church Women celebrated its 55th Anniversary, "Celebrating Spirit," with a gathering in Vancouver, British Columbia.

A gathering for the 60th Anniversary celebration of the United Church Women was held in Sydney, Nova Scotia in 2022. The theme for this Celebration was "Continuing in Hope". The special anniversary project adopted was Women for Change, Zambia.

Sources:

"Faith in Action: United Church Women, Present and Past," by Gayle Simonson and Phyllis Verhaar of Edmonton. Ordinary Heroes: Celebrating United Church Women, ed. Noelle Boughton (UCPH, 2012).

Since the Church changed it structure from Conferences to Regions, Alberta Northwest Conference is now Region 2 – Northern Spirit (Camrose and north), and Region 3 – Chinook Winds (the area south of Camrose).

The women of the two Regions did not want to divide into two separate groups but wanted to continue to work together. The ANWC-UCW changed its name to WUCC: - Women of the United Church – Chinook Winds & Northern Spirit. Information is spread across the Regions by "callout groups", and by our Regional UCW Newsletter – The Banner. The newsletter is sent us by email, but paper copies are sent to those who subscribe and have no computers.

Two Representatives from each Region attend the National UCW Annual Meeting held in September of each year, and it is at that meeting where networking takes place from across the country. New Projects are begun also our successes are discussed. Our failures are also discussed, and solutions recommended. The National UCW also keeps communication going by sending out a National Newsletter, "Keeping in Touch".

Although our numbers are declining, the UCW and the women of the Church, continue in following the UCW Purpose:

To unite women of the congregation for the total mission of the church and to provide a medium through which we may express our loyalty and devotion for Jesus Christ, in Christian Witness, Study, Fellowship and Service.

Stoney Mission Society Update

By Robert MacDonald

Despite the loss of the Provincial Historic Site designation, held for almost fifty years, the McDougall Stoney Mission Society continued with its relationship with elders and other members of the Nakoda Stoney First Nation. After the AGM of 2022, the annual cleanup of the site, and the raising of the tipi, there was the annual spring gathering at the site. On June 27th, the Society was invited to the celebration of National Aboriginal Day. July 1st was Canada Day celebrations. In early August, it participated in Heritage Calgary Week. A few weeks later, members of the Society were invited to attend a POW WOW honouring children. Also, during the summer when youth from the Nation walked from Morley to Cochrane to draw attention to the problems of addiction. Society members accompanied them and provided water along the way. On September 9th, there was the annual fall gathering at the church. Later on September 23rd, there was attendance at Treaty Seven Day celebration. A couple of days later was Truth and Reconciliation Day. Another interaction was on November 8th for National Aboriginal Veterans Day. A few days later, the Nation mourned the loss of a young dancer. Members were present at the feast to honour her. During the Christmas season, again through grants and donations, the Society provided hampers and gifts to elders and children, which were distributed by a Nakoda couple. Throughout the summer, through volunteers and docents, the site was open to tourists and visitors.

On April 22nd, 2023, the AGM was held. As always, it opened with a prayer in Nakoda (Stoney) and a smudge. It was noted that the restoration of the church was completed during the year, on time and under budget. Despite the loss of Provincial status, the province did continue financial support. The Treasurer and Board of Directors set up a Reserve Fund for ongoing building and maintenance. Among the projects was raising funds for a full-sized artwork piece, which was installed in the church. As well, an Elder Video Project of Sharing Stories and Song received funding from the federal government's Canadian Heritage and Indigenous Languages and Culture Programme, which promotes indigenous languages. A significant part of the Society's programme going forward is the final approval of wording and illustrations, and then the installation of fifteen panels or signs for an interpretative walk. The signs are bilingual (Nakoda and English) divided symbolically with a winding river (the Bow). They include elements such as edible plants and the geography, the Nakoda people, the settlement (around the church), the story of the Manitou Stone, Treaty Seven, the David McDougall's trading post, the role of the CPR, Chief Walking Buffalo, and the Stoney or Nakoda language.

Activities for 2023 include the June spring gathering, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Calgary History Week, the September fall gathering, and Truth and Reconciliation Day. Again, through volunteers, the site is open to visitors.



The ANWC Historical Society Journal is the only journal of its kind in Canada. Each year, we explore the stories and experiences that have been part of the rich history of the United Church in Alberta. Would you like to contribute to this important work? Then please consider buying a membership and subscription to our journal. Simply fill out the handy form on the other page and send it with a cheque to the address. Thank you very much.

Membership and Subscription Form

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Fort Assiniboine United Church 1948 - 1998

by Neville Smith

In 1998, a Booklet titled: “Jubilee In Fort Assiniboine” of over 30 pages (including some pictures) was written to mark 50 years of the Fort Assiniboine United Church. The Editorial Committee was comprised of: Enid McArthur, Margaret Penchuk, Diana De Groot, Kathy Dyck, Mary Williams, Maureen Fleming and Neville Smith. It should be noted that in 1929, the Edmonton Presbytery of the United Church of Canada, established a mission field in the Fort Assiniboine area, such as Timeu, Doris, Clearwater, Topland and Holmes Crossing. Student ministers, the majority from Eastern Canada, came out in the Spring and Summer, holding Church services, organizing Sunday School activities and making home visits.

Norval Woods from Exeter, Ontario, was the first Student minister in 1929 and 1930. Several Student ministers followed, including Stanley Rands, J.G. Prosser, Angus MacQueen, Charles B Hickman, J. Weston Peacock, and John M. Hoskin. (It was during Hoskin’s time of service, that hope, interest and planning toward building a church structure within the community began) In 1944, he started a Building Fund. He returned in 1945 and two lots were purchased. After he left, Student ministers Gordon Pickell and Fred Bradbury continued to promote the building of a church.

In 1948, Ronald (Ron) Lilley, a former student of the University of Alberta and a Veteran of World War 11, became the Student minister. The congregation and the wider community co-operated with talent, time, and treasure, to get the job done. Ron Lilley was able to purchase surplus building materials, including windows, and doors in Edmonton. Many men, some of whom may not have been associated with e United Church, helped with the actual building because they wanted to see the church built.

And so, on August 29, 1948, The Fort Assiniboine United Church was dedicated. It was a Joyous Celebration of Praise and Thanksgiving to God, "from whom all blessings flow." And Appreciation of all those, who had contributed in one way or the other, to this project for the Glory of God.

Gordon Mc Arthur unlocked the Church door and presented the keys on behalf of the congregation. The Service was conducted by Student minister Ron Lilley; Rev. Ernest (Ernie) Nix, who dedicated the building, Rev. George Caird, and Rev. Gerard A. Larve, who was the Guest speaker. Marguerite Weder was the organist; Harry Fawcett, the soloist, and Mrs. Walter Thomson, spoke on behalf of the Fort Assiniboine residents.

The First Wedding held in the Fort Assiniboine United Church was that of Ed Zutz and Ruby Carter on September 4, 1948.

Several Student ministers continued to serve in Fort Assiniboine after the Church building was constructed in 1948. They are: Evelyn Taylor, Stewart W. Anderson, Fred McKinnon, Marvin Taylor, John Chappel, Brian Jones, J.D. Veitch, Howard Plant, Don Spencer, G. Gimmel, John MacFarlan, Peter Tucker, Larry Fisk, G.C. McMillan, Ralph Mooves, J.B. Phelps, D. Ian Phelps, Tom King, Anthony Ruprecht, Marion Holder, Doug Aikman, and Anthony Ruprecht again in i971, the last year Fort Assiniboine congregation remained a Mission Church.

In 1950, two rooms were built at the back of the church and used as a Manse. By the mid-1980’s, some major renovations, spearheaded by Stetchy McLeod and assisted by Mary Williams, took place.

In 1997, a 12 by 20 feet expansion to facilitate more space for the Sunday School and Meeting Room took place. Harold Dyck, Chair of the Local Church Board was also the lead carpenter.The Dedication Service for this expansion was conducted by Rev. Dr Neville Smith on December

7, 1997, in the presence of Representatives of Yellowhead Presbytery, Civic Officials, Members, Adherents, and friends of the United Church, and the Community at large. It was indeed a Congregational achievement and even I learned how to use a nail gun and my spouse Joan was also involved in hammering nails.

Organizations Of The Fort Assiniboine Church

United Church Women (U.C.W.)

In 1963, a group of women, who attended the Fort Assiniboine United Church, felt the need to form a women's auxiliary group. The United Church of Canada had amalgamated the Women's Association and the Women Missionary Society to form the United Church Women (U.C.W.) Over the years, The UCW Ladies have made a vital contribution, in so many ways, to the local congregation and the church in general. We cannot mention all the names of the Ladies, who made such a wonderful contribution. A few examples are: Vi Brong, Donna Olson, Gail Seefried, Sylvia Zwarg, Lorraine Bready, Ann McLeod, Dorothy Utas, Kathy Dyck, Susanne Davidson, Stechy McCleod, Mary Williams, Margaret Melnyk, Margaret Penchuk, and many more.

In the Booklet, written in 1998, not only historical events are noted. In the Appendix there is a List with the names of Church Board Officials, U.C.W Presidents, and Church Organists, who served over the years, There is a print of the 50th Anniversary Service, held on Sunday, October 18, 1998. And there are images of Klondyke Church Group in 1946, Fund-raising events, Steve Williams, a very hard worker for the church, receiving a piece of Strawberry Short Cake and a Cup of Tea at a Mother's Day Tea event, Photos of some Student ministers, Congregational photos, of Sunday School, Events like Baptisms, Reception of New Members, of Ministers. One photo has a Sign that was put on the lawn, before the Sunday Service. It read: MINISTER IN.

Youth Group (s)

Over the years, several Youth Groups were started. For example, in 1949, Student minister Evelyn Taylor led an active Youth group. In the 1950's, Glen La Berge, Clara Barnhart, and Carl Wiese were in charge of Youth groups. In the 1980's, Noreen Ellis, Margaret Pederson, Debbie and Donnie Breitkreitz, were Youth leaders. In 1998, consideration was being given to start a Youth Group again. The Youth have taken part in Church Services from time to time.

Sunday Day School

Jean Fox was one of the early Sunday School Teachers. Enid McArthur taught in Sunday School in a hall, even before the Fort Assiniboine Church was built. In the early 1960's, Vacation Bible School was sponsored by the United Church several times. It was led by Student ministers, assisted by local people. In the late 1980's, the Sunday School started following the "Whole People of God" curriculum. This curriculum offered lessons to a wide range of age groups, with teaching pictures, unit logos, extra activities, craft ideas and so on.

In the 1990's, the Sunday School, under Maureen Fleming's superintendency, and in conjunction with the Youth, performed in a Christmas Pageant to the delight of the congregation. The membership of the Sunday School in 1998, comprised approximately 15 children.

Fort Assiniboine United Church As Part Of The Barrhead Pastoral Charge.

As mentioned earlier, The Fort Assiniboine congregation remained a Mission Church until 1971. In that year, James Nicolas, a Lay Minister, who had retired in Barrhead, started holding regular Services in Fort Assiniboine twice a month. In 1975, James Nicolas was made an Honorary Associate Minister of the Barrhead United Church on recommendation to the Board by Rev. Carlton

Miller. In 1976, he was honoured with an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. Rev Jack Towers, who was instrumental in getting Dr. Nicolas started in Lay Ministry, assisted in the Service, with Rev. Carlton Miller presiding.

In January 1977, the Fort Assiniboine Church Board started attending the regular Barrhead United Church Board meetings and eventually became an integral part of the Barrhead Pastoral Charge (now the Grizzly Bear Pastoral Charge), comprised of Barrhead, Mosside and Fort Assiniboine congregations. Rev. David Pype became the minister of Barrhead United Church in January i977 for a period of 12 years and since then has been called upon to help out on several occasions.

It should be noted that Barrhead United Church started in 1927 and will be celebrating 100 years in 2027. Mosside (Agnes Memorial) United Church started in 1913 and will be celebrating this year (2023) 110 years. (See an Article in this Journal) And Fort Assiniboine celebrates 75 years. (See another Article in this Journal, covering Fort Assiniboine United Church from 1998 - 2023.

It should also be noted that Ministers from Barrhead United, who would have helped with Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals, include Rev. J.B. Howard, Rev. Captain John Graham, Rev. Ernest (Ernie) Nix, Rev. John (Jack) Towers, Rev. Hugh Becking, Rev. Jim Roberts, Rev. Alan Scott, Rev. Ed Samuels, Rev. Gwen Symington, Rev. Carlton Miller, Rev. John Roberts, Dr. James (Jim) Nicolas and from the late 1970's when Fort Assiniboine United became fully integrated in the Barrhead Pastoral Charge would have provided full service: Rev. David Pype, Rev. Robert (Bob) Wallace, Rev. Lynne Maki, during whose ministry, after many years of planning and fund-raising, the new Barrhead United Church was built in i995. Roland Legge (Diaconal Minister) served for one year during Reverend Maki's ministry and Rev. Dr. Neville Smith.

One cannot underestimate the significant contribution, the Fort Assiniboine United Church and other Districts in the Area have made to their own members and adherents and to the wider Church and the Community as a whole, as Disciples of Jesus, the Christ, and by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, To God be the Glory.

Let me close this Article, with a Song written and adapted by Gertrude LaBerge, for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Fort Assiniboine United Church in 1998 Titled "Shall We Gather At The River"

The beautiful Athabasca River
Gather with our friends at the River
Share our old memories there,

As we gather at the River
Lay we all our memories down
Fifty years of reminiscing
With old time friends around.

Yes we are gathered at the River
The beautiful Athabasca River
Gathered with our friends at the River
Sharing old memories there.

Let us remember to be thankful
For those who have gone on before
Remembering their many gifts of labor
The Love when we enter the door.

Yes, we are gathered at the River (repeat)

Remember when we won our little trophy
Singing this tune in the parade
Steve Williams was so happy
Oh! the Joyous sound that we made.

Neville Smith is a retired United Church minister and a Board member of the United Church Historical Society. He served in the Barrhead Pastoral Charge (Barrhead, Mosside and Fort Assiniboine congregations) from 1996-2001

Fort Assiniboine United Church
1998 - 2023

by Roger Manuel

The hamlet of Fort Assiniboine celebrated its 200th. anniversary July 8, 2023.

The Fort's location beside the Athabasca River is the second oldest fort in Alberta after Fort Chippewan. The area therefore has a long history connected to the fur trade, logging, and as one of the starting points for the Klondike Trail to Slave Lake by paddle steamer. Oil and gas, farming, ranching and tourism are the primary economic focus. In 2020, however, a major local employer Trident Oil and Gas withdrew its operations from the area leaving a large empty office in the centre of the hamlet. It is still empty as of 2023.

The hamlet of Fort Assiniboine is still small. The 2021 Census gave the population as 156. (The 2016 Census indicated a population of 178.) Like many rural towns, villages and hamlets throughout Alberta rural de-population is a challenge. This challenge is reflected in the declining congregational numbers of the Fort Assiniboine United Church and local school enrollment.

2023 was the congregations 75th. anniversary. It was an anniversary recognized in contrast to that offered twenty-five years ago. Twenty-five years ago, the congregation celebrated with the Rev. Neville Smith its fiftieth anniversary as a "Jubilee" event. The church building had been extended in 1997 to accommodate its growing Sunday School and there was a spiritual sense of hopeful growth and sustainability. Unfortunately, that prayerful hope was not to be fulfilled.

After the Rev. Neville Smith's departure from the Barrhead Pastoral Charge (September 1996 - September 2001) the Rev. Susan Hertell was called. Unfortunately, her stay was brief (October 2002 - September 2003). Rev. Tom Sawyer was then appointed as interim minister from April 2004 - June 2006. The Rev. Sharon Foster from Mayerthorpe was then called. Under the Rev. Sharon Foster's watch (September 2007 - March 2020) Fort Assiniboine became a part of the *Grizzly Trail Pastoral Charge* which included Swan Hills, Fort Assiniboine, Barrhead and Mosside United Churches. The larger pastoral charge was made possible by having LLWL support, a program developed through St. Stephen's College in Edmonton. The two-year course created three LLWL's to assist the Grizzly Trail Pastoral Charge with regular Sunday worship. Many congregations throughout Alberta were amalgamating their pastoral charges at this time with the support of LLWL's.

As of 2023 Grizzly Trail Pastoral Charge has returned to being the Barrhead Pastoral Charge. Swan Hills United was sold in 2022 and is now a fitness gym. Presently, Fort Assiniboine United Church has two Sunday services per month from September to April. Congregational deaths, COVID, members moving to Barrhead for health, family and nursing home care have all compounded the challenge of sustaining the congregation. The building is being used by a play group and an art group during the week.

2023 will be a challenging year for Fort Assiniboine United Church.

Mosside (Agnes Memorial) United Church

by Carolyn Bajer - Secretary/Treasurer and Board Member

At the turn of the twentieth century settlers started arriving in the area, which was later to become Mosside. They soon felt a need for a district Church. A meeting was held on March 26, 1913, in the office of Mr. James Whittaker, to discuss the need, ways and the means of building a Church. Mr. A.W. Larter was elected Chairman and Mr. B.B. Beddome as Secretary with Mr. James Whittaker as Treasurer. Others in attendance were F.O. Hawkey, Mr. & Mrs. Walter Baldwin, J. Storms, A. Cummings, G.E. Granger, Fred Adair, C. Horner, and Mr. Maxwell Sr. A decision was reached to build a Church which was to be Presbyterian. Walter Baldwin, J. Storms, C Horner, Mr. Maxwell Sr. and A. Larter were selected to serve on a committee to oversee arrangements. Mr. Alexander Cummings Sr., a building contractor, was asked to draw up plans for the building.



Mosside Agnes Memorial United Church

An application was made to the Presbyterian Church and Manse Board in Toronto for a loan of one hundred and fifty dollars. Approval was granted by the Boards of Home Missions with the terms being that the loan be repaid in five annual instalments of thirty dollars each, free of interest if the payments were made on time. A loan of one hundred and fifty dollars from Mrs. Daily was received to help defray expenses. This was repaid, along with other loans she contributed when needed.

The building, on the NW 5-59-04 W5 was erected during the summer of 1913, under the supervision of Alexander Cummings Sr., and with volunteer labor. One acre of land was donated by Mr. Albert W. Larter, providing for a building site as well as a cemetery.

The Church, named in memory of the late Mrs. Agnes Larter, wife of the man who donated the land, was dedicated in September 1913 by Reverend Simmons, the Superintendent of Home Missions. Mrs. Omer Fluet (Alma), a Roman Catholic responded to an invitation to sing at the service and rendered "The Holy City," accompanied by Mr. J. R. Harris.

The Church was built on sills placed on a rock foundation. During a violent storm in the spring of 1914, it was blown off its foundation. A volunteer work party replaced it on its foundation. At this time, it was banked with soil, a condition that remained until 1955 when the Church was lifted and placed on a cement foundation.

In the spring of 1914, the land on the south side of the cemetery was broken by Frederick Hawkey and Steve Whit to prepare for burial plots. Fence posts were bought from Tom George for .12 cents per post. The 4 1/2-foot-high woven wire for fencing the property cost .60 cents per rod. The box heater, which is still used today was purchased in 1918 for $15.55 from Orley (Jim) Hawkey.

On August 27, 1920, at a communion service the following became the first members of this Church: Mr. John Maxwell Sr, Mr. Alexander Cummings Sr., Mrs. Sophronia Gaines and Mr. Frank Closer. In the same year, better seats were needed. A local cast presented a play called "The New Minister Arrives" and the venture netted $84.25 which was used for the purchase of pews. Records indicate Sunday collection amounts of less than one dollar and seldom over two dollars, depicting the state of the economy.

The first wedding in the Church was that of Harold Skirrow and Alice Eaton on March 29, 1921.

It was not until 1923 that the women were invited to a Church meeting. A ladies group was formed with Mrs. Carrie Senior as President and Miss Julia Gaines as Secretary. From then on,

women attended the Church meetings.

In the absence of a resident ordained minister, the area was served by student ministers in the summer months. In the early days, Mosside was connected with preaching points at Stewartfield, Meadowview, Roselea and Campsie. The student ministers usually made their way around the countryside on horseback. Often, when the mosquitoes became too plentiful, veils became part of their gear. Reverend Kelly, an ordained minister stationed at Zion came to administer the sacraments and supervised the work. When neither student nor minister were available, Mr. Tom Richmond conducted funeral services and Mr. Larter conducted a Presbytery prepared written service. Frequently, Anglican ministers filled the pulpit and interdenominational services were held. Ecumenicism is not so new - one hundred (100) years ago, Reverend Hatfield of the Anglican Church received permission from the bishop to conduct a joint communion service for many faiths. The Lutherans used the Church for their worship services on occasion, the only charge being that the Church be left clean, and they supply their own firewood.



Mosside Agnes Memorial United Church

Following Church union in 1925, the congregation became part of the United Church and in 1930 joined with the Barrhead Pastoral Charge. Since that time, Mosside Agnes Memorial has been served by ministers from Barrhead. Services were held every other week. During the winter months, services were conducted in the homes of the community members rather than building a fire in the faithful wood-burning stove that still serves the Church today. For several years, Sunday school classes were held for the children of the congregation during the summer months only. Regular settled ministers were : Rev. J. Graham (1930-1947), Rev. J. E. Nix (1947-1951), Rev. J. J. Towers (1951-1955), Rev. J. Roberts (1955-1959), Rev. A. B. Scott (1959-1961), Rev. E. G. Samuel (1961-1970), Rev. G. E. Symington (Jan - July 1971), Rev. C. H. Miller (Aug 1971-1977), James Woolf Nicholas Hon. D.D. (1971-1989), Rev. John D. Roberts (March-May 1977), Rev. David Pype (1977-1989), Rev. Robert H. Wallace (1989-1990), Roland E. Legge (1991-1992), Rev. Lynn J. Maki (1990-1996), Rev. Neville L. Smith (1996-2001), Rev. Susan Hertell (2002-2003), Rev. Tom Sawyer (2004-2006), Rev. Sharon Foster (2007-2020).

A valued contribution to the life of the Church, as well as to the community, was made by the late Mr. J. R. Harris, teacher at the Craven school. Mr. Harris, an Anglican, often played the organ at regular services and at funerals. The hymn books used by the congregation were a donation in memory of Mrs. Sophronia Gaines by her eight (8) grandchildren. The service books were a memorial to Mrs. May Strawson by several friends.

Over the years, improvements have been made to the Church and grounds. Mr. Bert Strawson donated an additional acre of land adjoining the cemetery for use when needed. In 1975, a government grant was received for the improvement of old cemeteries. With these funds, unmarked graves of Old Timers who had no known relatives were marked by small, low and attractive gravestones. 1993 and 1994 saw a major renovation to the Church. New vinyl siding, new windows, and a new door were installed. This was all done with Memorial donations, volunteer labour and the donation of equipment. Two support rods were put across the Church building to hold the walls in line. As there is no power in the Church, a very generous donation of the use of a generator to run power tools was most welcome.

On June 24, 1973, when the congregation celebrated its sixtieth (60) anniversary, the soloist for the occasion was Mrs. Rita Johnson - second daughter of Mrs. Alma Fluet who had been guest soloist for the Church's dedication. Rita chose to sing the same beautiful number that her mother had sung, "The Holy City" accompanied by her daughter, Jeanette Shipton. Mr. and Mrs. Harold Skirrow, the first couple married in the Church, returned from B.C. for this momentous celebration, as did several others from near and far.

On June 14, 1998, for the eighty-fifth (85) anniversary of the Church, the congregation was very honoured to have present the great grandchildren of Mrs. Alma Fluet to uphold the tradition that began eighty-five (85) years prior. Lynn Frier accompanied by her brother Bruce sang "The Holy City".

At the 90th (90) and one hundredth (100) anniversaries, Mosside Agnes Memorial were fortunate to have Lynn Frier return once again to sing, "The Holy City."

In keeping faith with the vision of our pioneers, we are now celebrating our one hundred and tenth (110th) anniversary. The past has seen many changes in our world but amidst all those changes, our little church on top of the hill remains a constant. The life and work of our Church continues as it has for so many, many years with its small but dedicated congregation. A total of three (3) worship services are now held throughout the year - Palm Sunday, Thanksgiving and Christmas. At the conclusion of our Christmas service, the congregation sings "Silent Night" - each holding a candle and looking out the windows at the History, Pioneers and Families that surround us. We would then hear the sleigh bells of either Jim Stocking or Fritz Kummer's team of horses that would pick up the congregation for a sleigh ride to Mosside Hall for supper and fellowship. This small rural Church has stood the test of time, and in this, its 110th year, serves the community as it once did in 1913.

Congratulations Mosside (Agnes Memorial) United Church

By Neville Smith

Congratulations to you on reaching the milestone of 110 years. Over those years, numerous people have been part of your story. Surnames such as: Andrews, Bajer, Capiuk, Geis, Grabler, Horn, Kummer, Meunier, Porter, Weeks, Skirrow, come to mind, when I served as minister to and with you, from 1996-2001. A bit of Humour: One Sunday afternoon, while conducting a Service at Mosside United Church, I observed that members of the congregation seemed to be distracted looking at the ceiling above the altar. I looked up and saw a mouse. To put the congregation at ease, I said jokingly something like this: "Maybe I should baptize this mouse, likely he may not come back to church." The congregation burst out laughing.

I also told a joke that I had heard many years before. "Several ministers had a problem with mice in their churches. So, they held a meeting to discuss how best to solve the problem. All of them gave their opinion. One of the ministers made the funniest suggestion. He said: " Look, we all know the problem that sometimes people come to be baptized or to have their children baptized and you never see them again. If we baptize the mice, maybe they may not visit our churches again. Problem solved." (paraphrase)

For a small congregation Like Mosside United, this was not true. There were a lot of children, attending and participating in church regularly and eagerly listening to the Children's story. At that time, there were five (5) Worship Services held annually. Of course, over the years, there are reasons why several people are no longer part of the church. However, you are still standing. I have many fond memories, including the dedication of the leaders and members, and the sleigh rides and potlucks, after the Christmas Service.



Thank you for your support!