

UCW 60th Anniversary Celebration – Continuing in Hope



Some 250 registered at Membertou Trade and Convention Centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of United Church Women on July 11-15. They travelled from across Canada and Bermuda and ranged in age from 6 months to 96 years. The theme “Continuing in Hope” was evident throughout the event. It was hosted by Maritime United Church Women. Seven Saskatchewan United Church of Canada Women from Living Skies Region attended.



I will try to summarize the week's events.

We began with dinner on Monday evening and received a warm welcome from Ruth Kennedy, chairperson of the 60th Anniversary committee and Nancy Risto, National UCW President. We also heard from Marilyn Bubar and Debbie Hawkins, co-presidents of Maritime (Bermuda, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Gaspe) UCW. Then Chief Terry Paul, whose current role is Chief and CEO of Membertou, greeted us and gave an overview of Membertou and how it has become one of the most progressive Indigenous communities in Canada with an employment rate at 80%. Next, we were entertained by dancers and drummers from the Membertou community with the Elder explaining the meaning of some of the Indigenous dances, music and songs that were performed.



Banners from all regions were carried in and put on display for the entire week. Most evenings ended with vespers and mornings began with music and worship led by Rev. Alice Fnnamore. She wrote the words to our theme song "Into Your

Hands” and was one of our enrichment speakers. Our musician/pianist/choir director was Stephanie Cole who is the Director of Music Ministries at Winsloe United Church on Prince Edward Island and holds a Master’s Degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy as well as a Bachelor of Music Degree.



During our Tuesday morning worship all 15 Regions were invited to bring sand they had collected and pour it into one common vessel. We were greeted by National UCW President Nancy Risto. Then, Plenary Speaker Sally Armstrong spoke about the plight of women and girls in zones of conflict all over the world. She has covered stories featuring the dangers encountered by women and girls in

areas including Bosnia, Somalia, middle East, Rwanda, Congo, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Iraq. She is well known as a human rights activist, journalist and award-winning author. She urged us to continue to speak out, offer financial assistance when possible and address ways of pushing human rights to the forefront, saying :“Evil thrives on apathy!”



Rev. J.D. Kennedy was the enrichment speaker on Tuesday afternoon giving and explaining excerpts from his book “How to C.O.M.F.O.R.T. a Dying Friend”. He was also a driver, meeting our plane at 2:30 a.m., videographer and full-time go-fer for the event (maybe because his wife was the chairperson). I’ve seen worship resources by J.D. Kennedy used in worship services here in Saskatchewan.



Comedian Patrick Ledwell was our Tuesday evening entertainment. He has appeared several times on CBC Radio's "The Debaters" and is the author of "I Am an Islander", his first book which became a Canadian bestseller. I don't know if I have ever heard a better comedian: no swearing, no sexual innuendos and no racist remarks...just everyday good humor that we could all relate to.



Wednesday was tour day. There were choices of three tours: Louisbourg, the Highland Village in Iona, or half way up the Cabot Trail to Cape Smokey. Wednesday evening's entertainment was The Men of the Deeps. Need I say more?



Thursday morning we heard from our two special guests for Women for Change (WFC) from Zambia. Lumba Siyanga was appointed Executive Director of Women for Change in 2015. Shadrick Chembe is the Program, Monitoring and Evaluation manager for Women for Change, who works with rural communities to help

women and girls “achieve sustainable development”. One of their main focuses is on upholding gender equity and equality and trying to prevent gender based violence. Girls’ education is of primary concern. They explained how Zambia is one nation but is made up of 73 tribes and 287 chiefdoms. 75% of the population lives on an income of less than \$2 a day. Women for Change, Zambia was the five-year 60th Anniversary project for UCWs across Canada and Bermuda. To date \$103, 294 has been raised by UCWs along with over \$5,000 from UCW member Marilyn Rogers who sewed and sold UCW masks and donated all proceeds to Women for Change, Zambia. It costs \$2,789 for one child to have 3 years of middle-school education.



Our Thursday morning enrichment speaker was Rev. Alice Finnamore who spoke on “Self-Care – Hope in Action.” She pointed out that poor self-care leads to isolation and lonesomeness and suggested we should “Start Now”. She also pointed out that helping others is self-care. Meetings can be about helping each other. Alice has a degree in theology and two in psychology and was ordained in

the United Church of Canada in 2019 after having a career in psychology private practice for many years.

Rev. Catherine Stuart gave hope for the journey by offering “Spiritual Renewal Through Movement and Song” on Thursday afternoon. She is Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults in all three Atlantic Regions and has been a member of UCW since her internship days. She is a liturgical dancer, ukulele player, singer and liturgist and likes to bring all of these things into her ministry.



Guest speaker at Thursday night's banquet was Rev. Michael Blair, General Council Secretary for The United Church of Canada. He thanked UCW for their contributions to the United Church and praised them for the amount they raised for the Women for Change, Zambia as their 60th anniversary project. He suggested that, though we are a very welcoming church, maybe we need to

consider welcoming people as they are. Fiddles and Friends provided our entertainment on Thursday night. They were from Cape Breton and are members of the Cape Breton Fiddler's Association. They shared their musical and singing talents with us and even provided dancing music.



Friday morning worship and communion was led by Rev. Alison Etter. Worship was done in Gaelic and English. She is an ordained minister serving a two point charge in Glace Bay and recently completed a term as member and interim chair of the Theology Interchurch Interfaith Committee of The United Church of

Canada. The communion cups were donated from churches in the Maritimes that amalgamated or closed and were to go home with each participant. The banners were marched out at the close of the service to bagpipe music. Following the noon lunch some left for home and some took advantage of extra time to visit the harbor in downtown Sydney.



There was a gift at every place setting each day – crocheted pot holders hand done by UCW members in the Maritimes, musical egg shakers from Barrie Hill, Rockwood, Ontario, a Bermuda penny with an explanation of why Bermuda pennies have a picture of a hog on them and a beautiful tea cup and saucer

donated by various Maritime UCW members. The centre pieces for Thursday's banquet were fresh flowers in a tea pot. Each centre piece went to whoever had a dot on their cup at that table. All registrants also received a special canvas tote bag with UCW Continuing in Hope Logo and the date 1962 – 2022 on it. Inside the tote were information pamphlets, pens and a book with the week's agenda and backgrounds about all the guest speakers and entertainers and all other information we might need.





There will be more details at the one-day event in Watrous on September 24 (open to all in Living Skies Region) and in the September Newsletter of Sask. UCCW, that is posted on the Living Skies website under Women's Network. Also detailed information and pictures will be available on the National UCW website.

Mary (Mohn)