

# OUR LIVING FAITH STORY

*As Approved by the Community of Faith June 2019*



Photography: Greg Bawden

## WESLEY UNITED CHURCH

An Affirming Ministry



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Wesley United Church, located on Treaty 4 land, is an Affirming Ministry of Jesus Christ, nurturing spiritual exploration and growth. We advocate for justice and social action. We love and care for ourselves and our neighbours throughout the world.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

*We seek* a better world through life in Christ, as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

*We seek* to live up to our Treaty 4 promises.

*We see suffering.* We seek comfort, health, and happiness for all. We acknowledge the pain of the world and insist that this pain cannot be endured forever.

*We see exclusion.* We seek inclusion; all are welcome no matter your gender identity or sexual orientation, whether you are old or young, whether you are rich or poor, whatever your ethnicity, whether you're indigenous, settler or immigrant, whatever your ability, whatever your spiritual beliefs. Indeed, we welcome all to share in all aspects of our spiritual life including membership, leadership, celebration of marriage and life passages.

*We see injustice.* We seek justice, peace, and right relationship with God, our neighbour, and the Earth. We seek an inclusive, just and loving community called to alleviate suffering and to break the cycles of inequality and injustice in our world.

## **2. ADMINISTRATION**

At Wesley United, we recognize that administration and governance is critical to the effective management of ministry resources including, people, time and money. We have carefully considered and documented our mission and vision in order to provide guidance on our spiritual path. We are guided by a strong governance structure but also the policies of The United Church of Canada and the Wesley United Church Organizational Manual. Administration involves the dedicated work of ministry/staff and many dedicated volunteer members who undertake leadership and organizational roles in the Church.

### **2.1 Human Resources**

#### **2.1.1 Ministry Personnel**

Wesley United has one full-time minister.

**2.1.2 The Office Coordinator** provides administrative support to the ministerial staff and Council. He/She is the church receptionist and responds to frequent requests and visitors. He/She maintains church records, prepares the weekly bulletin and the newsletters, organizes the upkeep of the church office and

manages all rental inquiries. He/She is employed five days per week for ten months of the year and three days per week in July and August.

Wesley uses "*Power Church*" software for the revenue side; pledges, contributions, and also for membership and mailing lists. "*Simply Accounting 2009*" is used to track the budget, expenses, issuing cheques and regular production of the Financial Statements.

**2.1.3 The Custodian** works 25 hours per week, Monday to Friday, maintaining the cleanliness and upkeep of the church property and where possible, setting up and dismantling the rooms as needed.

**2.1.4 The Music Director** coordinates all aspects of music in the church in consultation with the minister, handbell director and Worship Committee. He/She directs the choir and plays piano/organ for worship services, weddings and funerals. Although there is no formal choir during July and August he/she is responsible for organizing music for these months.

**2.1.5 The Youth Coordinator** engages in ministry with children of all ages, particularly with middle year and high school youth (approximately grades 5 – 12). The programming aims to be spiritually nurturing, providing examples of Christian living, encouraging faith development and leadership skills in an engaging and esteem-building atmosphere. The intent is to foster a church environment respectful of children and youth, supporting their inclusion in the life of the church. The Youth Coordinator works approximately 4 hours per week.

**2.1.6** Wesley also has a part time (25 hours/month) **Program and Events Coordinator** events coordinator who assists in organizing a wide variety of events throughout the years.

### **2.1.7 Volunteers**

Wesley United Church is fortunate to have many dedicated volunteer members give generously their time and talents to manage the affairs of our community of faith. We have many volunteers who carry on a wide variety of functions and activities within our community. Our House system, organized by month, shares the responsibilities for serving refreshments following Sunday services, hosting (for a fee) Men's Club meeting suppers, funeral luncheons and other church events. Senior Choir and Handbell Choir comprised of volunteers participate regularly in our Sunday services.

## 2.2 Governance Model

Wesley has a Council that provides leadership and oversight of church operations. Council is made up of the president, past president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and the minister comprise the executive committee of Council. There are five divisions and the coordinator from each serves on Council; Pastoral Care, Christian Education, Worship, Ministry and Personnel and Administration and Finance. The minister is a member of Council.

Approximately 59% of our budget is allocated to salaries and approximately 37% of the budget is allocated to operational expenses.

## 3. Community Outreach and Social Justice

As a committee of Wesley United Church, our guiding focus is to activate our church's mission statement which is that "Wesley United Church, located on Treaty 4 land, is an Affirming Ministry of Jesus Christ, nurturing spiritual exploration and growth. We advocate for justice and social action. We love and care for ourselves and our neighbours throughout the world."

Our mandate is to link the congregation to the community and to educate, promote, support and motivate action in seeking justice for all in the local and global arenas. We believe that most of Jesus' ministry was outside the religious walls and in the streets, meeting people where they are at physically and spiritually, ministering to their needs in order to promote social justice, love of our neighbours and seeing a neighbour in everyone you meet.

Over the years, the Social Justice Committee has been involved in many activities that support our social justice commitment including:

- Food Bank barrel
- Donation bins for used prescription glasses and the Women's Transition House
- Sandwich donations to Interchurch Sunday Lunch Auxiliary
- Monetary support for youth programming including the Rainbow Youth Centre and Standing Buffalo Lacrosse Team)
- Recycling/green program
- Bread Delivery to Carmichael Outreach
- Annual potluck supper with guest speaker focusing on social issues
- Social Justice church bulletin board displaying correspondence and information from outside community agencies and the National United Church
- Refugee family sponsorship
- Early Learning Centre book sale
- KAIROS

*"We see injustice. We seek justice, peace, and right relationship with God, our neighbour, and the Earth. We seek an inclusive, just and loving community called to alleviate suffering and to*

break the cycles of inequality and injustice in our world.” We attempt to structure our social outreach to serve the needs of both peoples suffering hardship throughout the world, as well as those who are living among us, and too often are in desperate circumstances. Our priorities are informed by listening to those in our community and beyond, through Mission and Service information, word of mouth, media, national church literature, meeting with other social justice groups or individuals, letters from community groups seeking support. We base our efforts on a solid foundation of knowledge about causes and conditions of deep need both locally and globally.

The challenge for our committee is accessing volunteers and time and perhaps leadership. We have responded by partnering with community experts in their field who come as guests to provide information about projects that Wesley supports in its budget. The speakers are asked to help us understand the “what and why” of a social justice need and perhaps suggest or initiate ways to help.

Because we are a small committee, the extent of our collaboration ranges from minimal to intensive depending upon interest and the amount and type of support that’s requested. Wesley and Sunset United Churches have collaborated to sponsor a Syrian refugee family.

As indicated, we see “community” beyond our walls; Regina community. Its strength is diversity including the University of Regina, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, First Nations University of Canada and the seat of the provincial government. As such, there are a lot of educated people and resources available. The community has become more diverse in the last 15 years, bringing challenges including the need to understand and embrace cultural diversity and inclusion. Also, it is a community with many indigenous lands around it and in it, so there is a need to always be aware that we are on treaty land and we need to work toward reconciliation.

We continue to spread our presence and word in a variety of ways including, Facebook, church bulletin board, outside church sign, affirming banners, our Mission and Vision Statement and the Wesley Website. We consistently use information from the national church about Mission and Service projects. During every service, we read a "Minute for Mission" to keep informed of Mission and Service supported projects around the world. We encourage the congregation to donate to Mission and Service and we are recognized for this commitment.

Wesley is represented on the Boards of The United Church Housing Corporation (Regina) Inc., and Clare Parker Homes Inc. Members are also involved in ecumenical activities such as the local KAIROS group and Regina Multi-Faith Forum. We provide financial support but more importantly, volunteers. Wesley allocates approximately 1.2% of its budget to Social Justice activities. The church, beyond the Social Justice budget, pledges \$48,000 to Mission and Service.

## **Family Activities**

Community BBQ  
Halloween Carnival  
Parking Lot Hockey  
Spring Fling for children

## **4. Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care, including visiting is considered a priority for the minister and a team of lay visitors; visiting at times of bereavement, illness, or other crises, or shut-ins, is a priority, but visiting should be extended to others within the congregation. Pastoral care is the practical expression of our concern for the needs of our members and the community.

### **4.1 Lay Pastoral Visiting**

It is important to maintain contact with those of our congregation who are no longer able to be active participants or who may be coping with illness, loss or isolation. The work of our visitors and those who phone or send cards is vitally important and much appreciated to help “stay connected” and provide support as needed. In some circumstances, they will also arrange rides to church. All help to maintain contact and show we care.

The Pastoral Care Team hosts several special events (Pumpkin Pie Social, Strawberry Social) for our members but particularly those in our community who are unable to attend Wesley on a regular basis. Also, on an as needed basis, they provide educational and advocacy opportunities.

**4.2 Newcomers and Welcoming Committee.** Members greet newcomers and visitors and acquaint them with the church and existing programs in order to assist them integrate into our community of faith. There is an annual luncheon event to formally welcome our newcomers.

**4.3 The prayer shawl ministry** is made possible by the contributions of our many Wesley knitters and is another means of sharing our love and care for our members.

### **4.4 Men’s Club**

The Wesley Men’s Club has seven regular monthly Friday gatherings usually starting in October and ending in May. Supper is provided by the monthly house members and normally there is an informative guest speaker.

This provides a unique opportunity for fellowship but also organizes significant fund raising events to support our community of faith. Events include an annual

Christmas party, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and the Garage sale and spring barbeque.

Some of the funds are provided for operational requirements, the purchase of equipment for the community (tables, shed etc.) and a significant donation is made to Lumsden Beach Camp.

We reach into the wider community over the course of the year as a number of men's club members volunteer to pick up bread from Ready Bake Foods and deliver it to Carmichael Outreach.

#### **4.5 Wascana Rehabilitation Centre Services (WRC)**

Wesley United and Eastside United alternate monthly conducting services at WRC. Most services are conducted by lay people.

As a 'long-term care facility', Wascana Rehabilitation Centre cares for a wide variety of people with sometimes complex and unique needs. As of May 2019, the Resident Worship Census showed 27 residents who have checked 'United Church.' Some family members attend services regularly – more, in fact, than recent years (so worship is an opportunity for them as well). From January to May 2019, the average attendance of residents, family, and volunteers (who often sit with solo residents to help with bulletins and singing) has been 25.

These services can easily be seen as a form of evangelism and outreach to those who are prevented from attending a 'home church' due to infirmity. Singing is an important part of the service offering a combination of traditional and more contemporary songs. Scripture lessons are read; sermons or other reflections are, typically, scripture-related - timely to the season of the church year and to 'the world we know' (e.g. growth, harvest). Intercessory prayers incorporate needs and, for grace in dealing with grief, loneliness and wisdom for our world leaders.

In 2017, all funding for spiritual care in the health care budget was eliminated. However, with grants and donations, a part-time United Church hospital chaplain (South Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplaincy) was established.

Volunteers do worship planning including worship and music leadership; porters bring residents from their units and then return following the service. One person coordinates the day by checking lists of residents, visiting the units to get health updates and changes; they then make up kits for porters. Training and refresher training is required of all porters.

This is a valuable part of Wesley's community outreach and in keeping with our mission and visions; we seek spiritual growth and health and happiness for all.

#### **4.6 Women's Group**

The Susanna Wesley Friendship group meets once a month for fellowship. As part of their outreach they have made toilet bags for the Isabel Johnson Women's Shelter operated by the Y.W.C.A. This year they made and sold fascinator hats with proceeds going to the church. They have provided funds to the Rainbow Youth Centre and North Central Family Centre.

Occasionally, they enjoy outings such as The Royal Floral Conservatory to view the flowers and have tea.

#### **4.7 House Committee**

The House Committee or "Sharing the Work load" was established in the early 90s and continues to carry out the tasks assigned to them. The house committee is a good way for the congregation to get to know one another. Memorial Teas have become a congregational activity and are not restricted to one house. The House system continues to cater to the Men's Club meeting and the revenue generated provides enough money for the beverage and the occasional cake we enjoy on Sunday mornings. We continue to serve Fair Trade Coffee.

Approximately 1% of the budget is allocated to Pastoral Care activities.

### **5. Denomination and Community**

We watch the Church evolve and support the new church structure with representation to the Regional Council as well as General Council. Two of our members currently serve on the Coordinating Committee of Regina and Area Cluster which is a part of this evolution. This is an important part of our commitment to continue the work of Christ.

As indicated, we recognize the need to reach out to the community beyond our walls. We are aware that our members are involved in agencies/organizations in our community beyond formal church related activities; Amnesty International, Rotary, support for refugees, providing reading buddies at local schools.

Wesley sees the role of the minister and lay persons to reach out to the larger community. It is important to create and nurture partnerships with other communities of faith and agencies including informal and formal communications with Regina United Church Ministers, UR Pride, and Affirm United etc.

We believe that our mission is supported by the ongoing, collaborative efforts of the minister, paid staff and lay people.

## **6. Christian Education**

The Christian Education Division provides a continuing program of Christian education, nurturing and witness for all members of the congregation and for others in the community.

### **6.1 Church School**

Wesley relies on strong lay leadership in our Church School Program. We foster an innovative, inter-spiritual, values based progressive Christian curriculum where our students learn how to live faith-filled lives. Children are a valued part of that leadership, and we encourage them to participate in worship in many ways.

Church school classes begin with three and four year olds, and go up to grade twelve. We have a nursery available for children two years old and younger. Church School classes are held during worship, and most classes are led by two teachers.

Church School registers in early fall, provides a Christmas program on one Sunday in December, participates in a Palm Sunday Parade, and enjoys a picnic in early June as the regular church school program ends. An all-ages program runs from there on and throughout the summer during worship. This is a time for children of all ages to gather together for some informal times of worship and learning.

Our Church School Co-ordinator, teachers and minister meet at regular intervals for leadership training and to plan upcoming events.

### **6.2 Youth Group**

The Wesley Youth Group meets at least once a month for friendship, food, faith and fun. We welcome all youth grades 6 and up. We often have games or craft nights, movies or cooking, and are open to all, so please join us! The youth also occasionally participate in worship leadership and leadership for children and/or family events. They love making the haunted house for the Halloween Dance!

### **6.3 Potluck & Playgroup**

The Wesley Potluck and Playgroup is an opportunity for families with young children to get together once a month for food and fellowship. Potlucks are typically held once per month on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday evening from about 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Wesley United Church kitchen lounge.

#### **6.4 Drop in Book Club**

Using the “Book Club in a Bag” program from the public library, we distribute selected books and meet monthly to discuss them.

#### **6.5 Grad Student Lecture Series**

In conjunction with the CE committee, we invited 6 grad students from the University of Regina to come and share their grad research projects with us.

#### **6.6 Study Groups**

There are two study groups, one on Sunday Morning provides opportunities to explore progressive Christianity and the other is bible study, Friday at noon.

Wesley allocates approximately 2.6% of its budget to Christian Education.

### **7. Leadership**

Leadership is critical part of a responsive and relevant community of faith. Our main goal is to recruit, develop and maintain strong leaders. This presents significant issues for us as church numbers decrease and members age. Our objective is to continue and challenge people to assist with or take on lay leadership roles.

In the Wesley’s context leadership is a dual responsibility of the minister and lay leaders. The minister plays a strong leadership role and must use skills of communication, collaboration, cooperation, good judgement and sensitivity in order to thrive.

### **8. Sunday Service**

Following the tradition of Christian churches, our community of faith gathers on Sunday to explore the wonder of our spirituality. We celebrate the grace that surrounds us that we understand through the actions and words of Jesus of Nazareth and his lesson of living mercifully, loving all, and inviting all into the wonder of community. We share a common understanding of the power of spiritual experience and of the value relating to each other as searchers for spiritual connections and identities. Our service is designed to encourage this relationship and searching while we celebrate and offer up praise in the presence of God as we know it. Weekly service is held on Sunday morning with additional services on special occasions. Worship normally lasts for 1 hour. Communion is served once per month. We see worship as an opportunity to explore and celebrate God’s presence not only by preaching but in music, prayer and liturgy.

The congregation is generally well educated and includes a number of working and retired professionals. We have a high proportion of seniors and a number of households with young children. We attract a small number of students from the University of Regina.

A central part of the service is the message, sermon or speculation. It is usually scripture based and provided by the minister. We anticipate that it will engage, inspire and challenge us and connect us with God's word and the world we live in. As such it often has a justice focus as it relates to our mission.

Wesley often has a varied order of service with worship most often led by the minister. Usually worship includes a welcome and introduction, gathering words, opening prayer offered by the minister, lighting of the Christ candle, children's time, prayer of illumination, speculation (sermon), prayers of the people and benediction. Music is an important part of worship including hymns, from Voices United and More Voices, anthems, handbells and on occasion, soloists or instrumentalists. Scriptures and minute for mission are done by members of our community. On occasion, worship is led by various groups within our community including children, Affirming Team, Social Justice Committee, Stewardship Committee and the choir that support specific areas of our faith mission. Occasionally we hold table services which are interactive services usually led by either the minister or a group within the church family and are theme based.

The order of service is projected onto 4 large screens and this offers the opportunity to view videos and PowerPoint presentations as part of the service. We also have a sound system.

Music ministry is led by a professional music director who plays for services and directs the adult choir. In conjunction with the minister, they organize the music for Sunday and special services. Piano is most often played and occasionally organ. Wesley is blessed with an adult choir made up of approximately 15 members. They have a wide repertoire including gospel, classical and sacred anthems. On occasion we have vocal and instrumental guest soloists. We also have a very active handbell choir.

## **9. Ministry and Personnel**

The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Division is a consultative and supportive division that helps to clarify the roles of ministers and staff, and to build positive, trusting relationships. This division oversees relationships within Wesley, particularly the roles and function of paid leaders and employees. Individuals of the team relate to one of our staff members and are in touch with them on a regular basis. We are responsible for personnel matters including staffing, performance planning, salaries and benefits.

## 10. Affirming Ministry

In 2018, Wesley United became an Affirming Ministry, something of which we are very proud. As a community of faith we publicly declare our commitment to inclusion and justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We continually grow and change as we seek to live more fully into God's way of welcome, love, and justice for all creation.

A motion was made at the June 2014 Council meeting "that Council initiates a process for Wesley becoming an affirming congregation and that Council undertakes recruiting a committee to initiate discussions for becoming an affirming congregation". The Affirming Team also known as the "A Team" was formed at that time.

Since then, the "A Team" has focused on providing opportunities to consider questions about the concept as well as provided learning opportunities about what it really means to be Affirming. As part of the process our Wedding Policy and Mission/Vision Statements were revised to ensure that they were fully congruent with the concepts of full inclusion and diversity.

The Affirming Ministry proposal along with the revised Mission/Vision Statement was brought forward for consideration at the Congregational Program meeting on June 3, 2018 and received unanimous approval. Having approval from Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble, on Sunday September 23, 2018, Wesley had a memorable celebration of this important milestone.

***All Are Welcome*** at Wesley.

## 11. WUC/UCAS Partnership



The Uganda Canadian Association of Saskatchewan (UCAS) approached Wesley United Church (WUC) to ask if we would consider entering into a partnership agreement that would support growth for both WUC and UCAS under which UCAS could occupy a small part of Wesley's building. It was anticipated that with this fixed site for its programs and activities, it would be able to pursue its objectives more easily and more effectively. In November, 2020 WUC entered into an agreement with UCAS providing dedicated space for their office and access to other space for their program activities.

The year 2020 marks UCAS's 30th year anniversary. The management of UCAS has embarked upon a year-long plan to address this situation and to establish a foundation

towards full integration and sense of belonging in Saskatchewan and Canada. Finding a welcoming home in which it could establish an Association office and other spaces for their programs and events, is transformative for UCAS.

UCAS was established in 1990 and has a history of advocacy for human rights and social justice, collaboration and development work for the Uganda-Canadian community, and other immigrants and marginalized Canadians. They aim to promote understanding and cooperation among the Ugandan community, preserve and promote the culture of Uganda Canadians in Saskatchewan and assist new immigrants. They advocate for equality, equity and integration in society, and for the welfare of Ugandan Canadians in Saskatchewan. At the same time, they work towards the elimination of racism and discrimination within the Ugandan Canadian Community and the community at large. UCAS contributes to the making of a richer and more diverse social and cultural life in Saskatchewan.

This partnership with UCAS under which our building is shared on an on-going basis, supports our Mission and Vision statement.