

# 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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Revised May 2023

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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 neighbours, 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 use a 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 sufficient funding to support part time ministry – to 0.5 FTE.

**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 30 hours per week.

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 Program and Events Coordinator** (25 hours/month) who assists in organizing a wide variety of events throughout the years.

#### **2.1.6 Volunteers**

Wesley United Church is fortunate to have many dedicated volunteer members give generously of 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.

*The COVID pandemic has hit us hard at Wesley United Community of Faith. We responded well in the moment, moving to livestream worship, which we continue now. We switched our Book Study online, and added a weekly Coffee and Conversation time, and a weekly Prayer Meeting on ZOOM. The Pastoral Care team dedicated themselves to regular calls with members so no one would feel they were forgotten.*

*When we began to worship in person again, we found that some of our folk had discerned other priorities for their weekly schedules. Some were still uncomfortable being in large groups, especially those who had vulnerable loved*

*ones at home. The numbers attending activities have not “rebounded” to pre-pandemic numbers.*

*This was particularly noticeable in one group, families with children and youth. We have struggled to keep them even marginally connected to the life of the congregation. They have said out loud and by their choices that church attendance is a very low priority for them at this time.*

*COVID has been a kind of accelerant. The stress and isolation, then the challenges of opening up, have hit our members with health issues in a kind of all-at-once struggle. The health issues we expect as we age have come on for some more rapidly than expected and have been incapacitating for some. Our volunteer core has found this a challenging reality. It has become difficult to find enough people to fill all the roles in our governance model, or to support the fundraising efforts we have so enjoyed in the past.*

## **2.2 Governance Model**

Wesley currently has a Council that provides leadership and oversight of church operations. Council is made up of the executive committee of Council, being the president, past president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and the minister, and filling out the rest of the Council membership are the Representatives of the Regional Council, and the coordinators from each of the five divisions, Pastoral Care, Christian Education, Worship, Ministry and Personnel and Administration and Finance.

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 activities of Wesley members**

Members link the congregation to the community 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, our social justice commitment has included:

- Food Bank barrel
- Donation bins for used prescription glasses and the Women’s Transition House
- Sandwich donations to Interchurch Sunday Lunch Auxiliary

- Saturday Lunch Program through First Baptist Church
- 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 and support
- Early Learning Centre book sale
- KAIROS involvement
- RAPM
- RNOM
- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
- ELC

*"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 people 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.

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, the Wesley Website, and through weekly emailed announcements. 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 Mutchmor Lodge. 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. Our members pledge \$40,000 to Mission and Service.

### **Family Activities**

Community BBQ  
Messy Church  
Games Night

## **4. Pastoral Care**

The minister and our pastoral care team provide pastoral care. They provide support for those who are bereaved, ill, shut in, or those who might be in crisis. We consider that 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 has hosted special events 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. We hope that these may be possible in future.

There is a prayer meeting held on Tuesdays at 7 PM on ZOOM for the purposes of holding in prayer members of the community of faith, and indeed any and all needs that come to the attention of those who participate.

Friday mornings at 11 AM there is a Coffee fellowship time on ZOOM that is especially helpful for some of our members.

### **4.2 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. The Wesley Knitters have recently resumed meeting at the church on Monday mornings from 10 to 12 noon.

### **4.3 Men's Club**

The Wesley Men's Club is being revived after the three years of COVID. Supper is provided by the monthly house members, or catered, 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 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.

Historically, the Men's Club has had a very active role in fellowship and fundraising at Wesley. We hope this group may transition into the amalgamation.

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.

### **4.4 House Committees**

The House Committees or "Sharing the Workload" were established in the early 90s and continues to carry out the tasks assigned to them. The house committees are a good way for the congregation to get to know one another. Memorial Teas served after funerals 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 have served 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.

We have committed volunteers who prepare a Sunday lesson for special occasions like the Advent and Easter seasons.

### **6.1 Drop in ZOOM Book Study Group**

We decide together on a book to study that is related to a biblical or spiritual theme. Sessions are held weekly.

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

## **7. Leadership**

Leadership is a 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 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. Worship**

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 church season. We see worship as an opportunity to explore and celebrate God's presence not only by preaching but in music, prayer and liturgy. We livestream our worship for the benefit of members who are comfortable joining from home.

The congregation is generally well educated and includes mostly retired professionals. We have a high proportion of seniors and a few households with young children.

A central part of the service is the reflection or sermon. 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. 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 the Affirming Team, the 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 video 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 handbell choir.

## **9. Ministry and Personnel**

The Ministry and Personnel Division currently functions to fulfill our obligations as an employer. Duties include the development and review of staff job descriptions, preparing annual reviews of our staff (minister, office coordinator, caretaker, music director) and managing all personnel matters.

## **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 providing 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.

The work of the A Team continues with strong support from the community of faith.

***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.

This partnership continues with the WUC/UCAS Liaison Committee made up of representatives from both partners, functioning to enhance and support the ongoing management of the partnership.