



A “rebirthing” picture taken at the cemetery of St. Matthew’s United Church, April 14, 2023.

April 14, 2023

Last year, President Jane began her message to the Annual Meeting with the question: Where has the year gone? My answer for 2022 or 2023 is exactly the same. “It flew!” I have learned a lot about the regional church as I watched many people work very hard while these years flew by.

Before I was a pastoral charge representative, the regional church was the invisible church. The national church was the Manuel and Broadview. The General Secretary and Moderator gave it faces. The regional church asked for reports, sometimes told us to do things, and held annual meetings. After two years watching this large, intergenerational mix of dedicated lay and “clergy” meet, in many committees, to do the work, the regional church has materialized. In Region 15, the many forms God’s love takes are reflected in its many faces. With gratitude, I watch as difficult decisions are made in committees informed by wisdom shared in the Zoom room. Our decision-making processes take time; however, the importance of these decisions for communities of faith mean it is time well spent.

This year, in-person meetings returned to Region15. It was wonderful to meet, in-person, friends made in Zoom rooms. That said, the regional church continues to enjoy Zoom meeting benefits. Most meetings were on-line, keeping smaller the UCC’s carbon footprint, while saving dollars and travel time. We continue to work to find the right balance between in-person and Zoom meetings. In 2023, we experimented with more on-line Webinars to improve educational support for communities of faith. Your encouraging response encourages us to continue.

This year, the divisions and their committees continued learning how their work fits into and fulfills our Strategic Plan’s commitments. In more than one committee, the work to be done needs more labourers. Hoping some reading this message will be interested. Fill out the volunteer form on Region 15’s website (<https://ucceast.ca/56874-regional-council-15-committee-volunteer-form>).

Several times this year, communications surfaced as a problem to be addressed. Please know we are aware that restructuring created some gaps. It is on our radar that we need to build bridges connecting the regional church with churches in the region. Information sharing is essential to discipleship, mission, and leadership, hence, to doing well everything we aim to do. So, expect improvements down the road.

As you probably know, by March 31, 2024, the United Church will have finished a remit asking the church to agree to remove structural barriers preventing the development and sustaining of an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada. Every pastoral charge and regional council must vote on a remit. Since abstentions are counted as votes against this remit, I encourage every community of faith to vote. Only by voting can we show how much Region 15 cares about Indigenous peoples’ rights to their spiritual identities and self-determination.

Some of the most interesting conversations in Jane’s Annual Meeting Planning Committee this year have been about choosing the theme and the logo for the meeting. The Story of our Discipleship theme opens the door to interesting conversations about communities of faith past

and communities of faith in our future. Looking forward to hearing these stories when we gather at The Mount. This year, we have again to thank Christina Wightman for a beautiful logo for our annual meeting. It has inspired deep reflection in the committee. Minimally, the logo symbolizes the sources of the energy fueling our discipleship and faithfulness as members of communities of faith living out our mission locally and in Region 15 and nationally, our larger communities of faith.

In addition to thanking everyone for all they have taught me this year, there are several whom I want to thank for the guidance and support they have provided during my term as president. Jane was always there when I needed rescuing and president-elect Shauna has been a great sounding board for thinking about how to connect with communities of faith. Rev. Faith in many ways is the glue holding us all together and end her e-mail with “Thank you for all you do.” when what I have just been doing has created more work for her. I have spent time in Zoom rooms with Revs. David, Sherpherd, and Catherine learning why we should all be thankful for the work they are doing for us.

It is hardest to know how to thank the two women to whom I constantly turn for assistance of various types and who regularly send me to the other Jennifer because I cannot remember who does what. Jennifer Taylor and Jennifer Whittemore are, simply put, patient saints, who laugh with you when things are going wrong. You have both been a god-send and I am so grateful.

Looking forward to seeing everyone, in-person, in June and to the Service of Praise and Celebration of Ministry on June 11, when I become Region 15’s past-president.

All good things,

Sandi

Dr. Sandra Tomsons, President