



WILMOT UNITED CHURCH WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

For the Week of October 19, 2020



The Very Rev. Dr. Peter Short

Peter writes:

As I write this many of us will be preparing for the Fall Rummage Sale. It's a ton of work accomplished by members and friends of the United Church Women. Not only does this project redistribute low cost clothing and household goods, it is one of the revenue streams contributing to the broad spectrum mission the UCW undertakes. To mention a few: financial support to the church, scholarships, equipping the kitchen, hosting funeral receptions, contributing to a host of community projects, and caring for seniors with cards and visits. Did I say that it's a ton of work?

Work in our outreach programs is demanding. The work of UCW is one aspect of a larger mission undertaken by the people of Wilmot. The issues are big, deep, thorny: hunger, homelessness, human rights, addiction, environment...there is no end. As you may have heard me say, there is no Stanley Cup in this work.

We can get exhausted...discouraged...conflicted... We can also find wonderful friendships in working with others who care and are willing. We can find a sense of rightness in making a contribution to a better life for someone in a better world

One of the ways of knowing when you're getting too tired or too frazzled or too discouraged is when you feel that you no longer have a big picture, when everything has collapsed into the overwhelming demand of this day or this hour.

Here's a principle to remember and go by when things are closing in:

The more narrowly you concentrate on today, and the more you are defined by this present moment and this present situation, the more fragile you become.

On the other hand, the more you are able to expand your framework of time to include what you know of the past and what you envision of the future, the more solid you are in identity, purpose, competence and ability to handle stress.



Organize This!



Chair of Council

As a way of expanding our temporal bandwidth we might begin by recognizing that the work we're doing has been going on for ages and ages. We have our spiritual roots in the deep past.

The Old Testament prophets made it clear to the administration of their day that if the present arrangement isn't good news to the poor, it isn't good news at all. We see Jesus taking up this message as he reads from the scroll of Isaiah: "*...the spirit of the Lord is upon me for God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind...*"

Or think of our Methodist heritage. Wilmot congregation was founded in 1792, the year that John Wesley died. Wesley's Methodists took spiritual life into the streets and brought the streets into spiritual life. It was the Methodists who started Sunday Schools. But look at their purpose: it was to teach reading to children working in the mines and the factories. It was a literacy program. They started credit unions and pioneered women in leadership and preaching. It's no accident that Wilmot has always been engaged with the street.

Or think of the decision the people of Wilmot faced in the late fifties and early sixties. With children everywhere and inadequate facilities the congregation chose not to take up the proposal to build new facilities in the suburbs. We chose to be a downtown church - and here we are.

What we struggle with now is part of a much longer struggle. Today is demanding and resources are stretched, and facilities are inadequate and the healthy mind says, "*I recognize this. This is our story, our old struggling wonderful story.*" In this way the healthy mind expands the framework of time, widening the temporal bandwidth, because living only in today leaves us just too fragile.

The same thing is as true of the future as it is of the past. We have a vision of low-cost housing for people who are homeless. We have a vision of a church and a city that sets its heart on the healing of the planet. We advocate for the day when rights and inclusion are extended to all people and we are reminded of that vision every time we light the rainbow candle to start our worship service. Without a vision of tomorrow, we are left fragile in the narrow space of the present day.

All this is why going to church is important to us. As G.K. Chesterton might say, going to church is one thing that can save you from the degrading servitude of being a child of your own times.

Thank you for being part of all this. We'll go together.



Management



Reverend Ellen Beirsto

Ellen writes:

Katherine had just turned 9 when she was asked to be part of a Children’s Bible Study. Katherine uttered a resounding “Yes.”

The first day arrived and her grandmother drove Katherine over to the church. As Katherine was about to get out of the car, her grandmother handed her a well worn Bible. “I want you to have this,” her grandmother said. Katherine knew instantly what it was as she had watched her grandmother read stories from her Bible every morning. Katherine carefully took it and proudly walked into the church – already looking forward to hearing more of the stories that her grandmother’s book held.



I first became fascinated with stories and storytelling when I was a young child as I listened to our bedtime stories. My sister and I would crawl into bed, the storybook would come out and words would fill the air and our imagination. It is said that *when we read (or hear) a story, we inhabit it.*



On Sundays, our family would pile into the car and go to church – Wilmot United Church. When it was time for Sunday School, we would head off to Miss Harvey’s room. Miss Harvey and her flannel board would hold our attention as she told yet another story. ...young Samuel and Eli....Joseph and his coat of many colors...Jesus and his parables - such wonderful stories that teach us about ourselves and the world in which we live.



Over the course of my ministry, I have heard and told many stories. Some hold a smile:

- like the Christmas Eve a squirrel re-arranged everything in the sanctuary just before the service
- or the day the little one dropped a cellphone into the font as I baptized him.

There are those moments that become frozen in time:

- holding a little one who is only hours old
- or watching the faces of our children and youth at the Christmas pageant



Precious moments that make up our lives. Never underestimate the power of your story.

Robert McKee once wrote: "*Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.*"

Peter Short and Ellen Beairsto share an interim ministry at Wilmot United Church as the congregation prepares to call a new ministry team.