

Toronto United Church Council

Our Story – Excerpts from our Meeting Minutes

Series 2011

Prior to the 2011 Annual Meeting, the following excerpts were emailed weekly to members of the Corporation “in order to continue with the story-telling and to prepare for our time together at our Annual Meeting.” They were received with appreciation and are offered here to help introduce Council and its history to those who visit our website.

From December 10, 1929 [The Methodist Union of Toronto]

[This being the final meeting of The Methodist Union], Rev. Dr. S.W. Dean reviewed the history of The Methodist Social Union, The Fred Victor and City Mission Society, and The Methodist Union of Toronto.

Moved by Mr. W.G. Watson, seconded by Rev. Dr. W.L. Armstrong, that the officers of The Methodist Union of Toronto are hereby authorized to execute all such documents and do all such acts and things as may be required to carry out directions given by the Toronto Church Extension and Mission Union from time to time with respect to real or personal property vested in or held by The Methodist Union of Toronto. Carried.

From January 16, 1930 [The Toronto Church Extension and Mission Union]

The General Secretary reported on the final meeting of the Board of Directors of The Methodist Union of Toronto.

Moved by Rev. J. Ewing Reid, seconded by Mr. Arthur Hewitt, that this Board of Directors of The Toronto Church Extension and Mission Union of the United Church, being successor of The Methodist Union of Toronto, having heard the minutes of The Methodist Union of Toronto as of December 10, 1929, concur in the action taken by The Methodist Union Board of Directors in the transfer of securities and continuance of the Officers of the Board [to complete the transition]. Carried.

As an added note, these resolutions of The Methodist Union and The Toronto Church Extension and Mission Union amalgamated the corporations, confirming that the roots of The Toronto United Church Council extend to 1892 with the establishment of The Methodist Social Union (later known as The Methodist Union of Toronto).

From May 12, 1964

Ministry to Alcoholics – The [Toronto Conference] Committee [chaired by Rev. Clarke MacDonald] was anxious that this work should be undertaken with adequate provision for budget requirements. Accordingly, representation was made to the Board of Evangelism and Social Services [General Council], the Board of Home Mission [General Council], and the Toronto Home Missions Council. Fortunately, these presentations were all cordially received, and the first two Boards are underwriting the major cost of the project, and our Council is providing \$1000 for office equipment [equivalent to \$7,245 in 2011].

The person being nominated to the Settlement Committee of Toronto Conference [as Director of the project] is the Rev. Gordon Winch of Oak Ridges. Mr. Winch will be taking special courses at the University of Western Ontario and Rutgers University. His appointment is effective July 1st, 1965. His office will be located in Saint Luke's United Church on a trial period of one year.

It is the view of the Committee that this Ministry to Alcoholics ought to be a multi-phased one. It will include the families of alcoholics, and also those for whom alcohol is becoming a problem. We hope and expect that Mr. Winch will work in close association with the Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Research Foundation and Alcoholics Anonymous. Also it is anticipated that he will have opportunity to speak to various Church groups to elicit co-operation. In other words, it is but the beginning, we trust, of a greatly enlarged ministry in this most needy area. To assist Mr. Winch, it is planned to have an Advisory Council for the purpose of consultation, counsel, and support.

As an added note, Gordon Winch is a recipient of Council's *Heart & Vision Award* (presented to him in 2009). Gordon took his ministry into the bars and taverns on Yonge Street earning him the nickname "Padre of the Pubs". It was here that he discovered that the greatest work he could do was to simply listen to and recognize the many disenfranchised and forgotten people living on the edge of society. In 1967, Gordon founded the Toronto Distress Centre and in 1971 he gave leadership in the establishment of Alpha House, a residential centre for men committed to overcoming drug and alcohol addictions. Our Council assisted in the establishment of Alpha House and continues to financially support the initiative through a non-performing mortgage.

From October 24, 1940

Mr. A.P. Johnston, Chair of the Church Extension Committee, reported "Your Committee met with a delegation from Leaside United Church. As a result, the Committee reaffirmed the former promise of this Council to Leaside and advised them that:

- *the Toronto Home Missions Council would give a free deed of the property known as Lots 348-349-350-351 Plan 2121 situated at the north-east corner of Millwood Road and McRae Drive valued at \$6,600, providing the congregation form a trustee board to take over administration of the property and erect a church building.*
- *in addition, the Toronto Home Missions Council to provide a loan of \$16,000 to Leaside United Church, without interest for two years, and thereafter at a nominal rate."*

As an added note, this is the report of one of the several church sites granted, in whole or in part, by Council to organizing congregations. In the case of Leaside United Church, Council's contribution of land and forgiven interest – converting 1940 dollars to 2011 dollars – was \$122,650. This conversion, of course, only describes appreciated dollar values and does not include appreciated land and building values.

From November 28, 1933

Council Committee on Welfare – In presenting his report, Mr. L.A. Neelands stated two distributions of clothing, boots and shoes had been made by the Council during the month in which the following churches shared – Berkley Street, Church of All Nations, College Street, Queen Street, Silverthorne, Harwood, St. Stephen's, Wanstead, Fred Victor Mission.

One hundred bags of potatoes were purchased at a special price and were distributed through College Street, Church of All Nations, Queen Street, Berkley Street, Wanstead and directly to families in need known to Council.

The Community Service Club of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church has again contributed to the Milk Fund. 232 gallons of milk per month is being delivered through Council's help to the following centres – College Street, Church of All Nations, Queen Street, Fred Victor Mission, Berkley Street, King Street. Additional contributions for the Milk Fund have been received and the available supply will be increased.

As an added note, throughout the Great Depression reports like the one above appeared regularly in the minutes of Council. The Council provided financial resources, delivery services, coordination of the distribution of food and clothing through the downtown churches, and support of welfare fundraising activities among the churches of Toronto. The Directors and staff of Council were always on the lookout for bargains (including bags of potatoes) to make sure that as many people hurt by the ravages of the Depression could be cared for by our United Church.

From May 19, 1971

The Report on the Survey of Northern Area of the Presbytery from the Sites & Planning Committee [of the Dufferin & Peel Presbytery Extension Council] was adopted and forwarded to Presbytery. In elaborating on the Committee thinking, Rev. F.A. Cook and Rev. G. Day pointed out that "larger parishes" and perhaps "team ministry" should be the future directions of any moves in realignments of Pastoral Charges. Better use of lay people in each area could help those Charges who could not afford team ministry persons. It was felt this new concept should be brought to the membership of each parish.

Extract from the Report's summary

Here then are the principles, aims and objectives of larger parishes and team ministries as we see it. The principle is to be more effective in serving the people, to be more economical by pooling our resources, to be more viable, more outreaching, more realistic in what the church should be. A small congregation of less than 100 members is very limited in what it can do outside its own immediate needs. There are no extra funds available to do something for outside people's needs. Yet, the church, which is "we the people", must be aware of our fellow men and women and their need, not only what they will eat, but who might listen to his or her worries and show sympathy. Here we could make better use of some ministers' talents. Some are more effective in their service if they visit people in trouble or the lonely. Others are better at preaching and rouse the people to action. We also feel our talents in lay people are not fully made use of. Each congregation has ladies, men, and young people of leadership. The minister should make use of these people especially if there is only one ordained minister in the parish. Team ministry is not easy to implement and care must be taken to see that if a second minister is called, that he or she is in harmony with their colleague and the work to be done. The "objective", of course, is to make our church relevant to our times.

As an added note, on January 1, 2008, the Dufferin & Peel Presbytery Extension Council and Toronto United Church Council amalgamated to become a new corporation. This 40 year old report, with the language and understandings of its day, is interesting in that it reveals the concept of regionalizing the church has been percolating and evolving in the minds of church planners for some time. For the past decade, Toronto United Church Council has been developing and making resources available to help our congregational and Presbytery leaders consider and discuss the Regional Church Model as the third wave of church development in our United Church.

If you are interested in reading Council's Discussion Paper entitled ***The Regional Church – New, Creative, Effective***, visit www.tucc.ca/churchdevelopment/cdr.html and select the article.

From September 18, 1933

Sparrow Lake Camp has had a good year. Property improvements expenditure amounted to \$568 [equivalent to \$9,552 in 2011]. They included a tennis court fence, baseball backstop, and a new well.

From September 25, 1934

Hydro at Sparrow Lake Camp – The Secretary's report informed the Directors that [the four month old] hydro service had already proved itself a great boon to the work, particularly during the shorter days of the camp season – having been installed at a cost of \$611.50 [equivalent to \$10,010 in 2011].

From September 22, 1935

During the Mothers' Camp some anxiety was occasioned by forest fires but the Government and Township sent experienced Fire Rangers with 75 men, two gasoline pumps, and 12,000 feet of hose. The fire was brought under control and stopped at the Township Road which runs through the middle of our property. The back part of the property was burned over but there was no serious timber loss. The Board expressed its appreciation of the entire camp staff for faithful and efficient service. [As well, the Directors were informed that] platforms in front of cabins and broken cabin doors are to be replaced and that necessary repairs are to be made to the camp launch "Pirate II"

As an added note, Council's Sparrow Lake property has been made available for church camping since 1912. The land transfer to Council was completed in May 1921 by Mr. Chester D. Massey and the Sparrow Lake Outing Company. This generous gift was later confirmed by action of the Massey Foundation and a special Act of the Ontario Legislature sponsored by the Honourable Vincent Massey. In order to expand the site, the Board of Directors of Council purchased two adjoining properties in 1920 and 1932. Management and oversight of the program component has taken many different forms over the years, most recently through a lease arrangement with a partner United Church Corporation that delivers quality camping programs. As noted in the above excerpts from the minutes, Council takes a keen interest in ensuring the facilities are cared for and improved. This priority has not waned, and continues most recently with the net proceeds of Council's successful 2011 *Heart & Vision Celebration* being used for capital improvements at Sparrow Lake and Council's other three properties made available for camping.

From March 28, 1972

Other Business – Dr. A.E. MacKenzie informed the meeting that he had received word that a large quantity of Royal Doulton restaurant type dishes were available at an extremely reasonable price, the idea being that United Church institutions and camps might avail themselves of the opportunity to purchase a stock for their use. The suggested price for 20,000 pieces was \$5,000.

It was moved by Douglas Kingsbury, seconded by Alec Rice, that Council buy the 20,000 pieces of restaurant type dishes at a price of \$5,000. Carried.

From April 1, 1976

Sale of Royal Doulton Dishes – In 1972 Council purchased a large quantity of Royal Doulton dishes with the suggestion that any profit from the sale would be given to assist in inner city

church work. The dishes have all been sold, realizing a profit of \$1919.32. Dr. Doug Conlan paid high tribute to Mrs. Bea Howard for her tremendous efforts in arranging for the dish sales.

As an added note, the minutes do not reveal the supplier of the dishes. Research from the Ontario Heritage Foundation indicates that in 1972 and 1973, the Royal York Hotel underwent an extensive renovation program, called the Royal York Revelation, to modernize its image. This may be the source, but it is only speculation. The noted profits were distributed in full to Winchester House and other inner city outreach work. What is important from these excerpts is that Council was and continues to be creative and ready to take action in support of its partners.

From November 30, 1950

Malvern: Mr. Crockford explained that [the pioneer] Malvern United Church [located on Markham Rd. north of Sheppard Ave.] now had no organized board, two trustees are deceased and the surviving trustee had resigned. There is a frame building 40' long x 27' wide, on cedar posts, size of lot 100' x 150'. Toronto East Presbytery has requested that deed of property be transferred to The Toronto Home Missions Council. Sunday school work is carried on at Malvern and they have applied for hydro service and installation, and have requested the Home Mission Council to sign required authorities.

Motion: Mr. W.B. Cowan, seconded Mr. L.A. Davenport, that deed to be so transferred, and authorities signed for hydro installation. Carried.

As an added note, after consulting with the Presbytery and municipality as to their need of the structure, the building was demolished in 1974. With the building removed, Council continued to own and maintain the cemetery property on behalf of the Presbytery. Currently, Council's Property Committee is carrying out a discernment process on ownership options for this historic United Church cemetery. To see a photo of the historic Malvern United Church, visit www.tucc.ca/property/councilproperties.html.

From October 14, 1999

Camp Incorporation: Paul Dowling introduced Kevin Aalto [B.A., LL.B., representing Lake Scugog Camp management committee], who together with Barbara Puckering [B.A., LL.B., representing Sparrow Lake Camp management committee] and Vincent Alfano, is a member of the task group charged with the mandate of considering the feasibility of incorporating Lake Scugog and Sparrow Lake Camps.

Kevin referred to the document "Incorporate or Not?" which is the outcome of the task group's work. The task group looked at incorporation from three perspectives: Liability – Incorporation would provide a barrier between Council and the Camps should a lawsuit be filed for an action over which Council has no control. Accountability – As landlord, Council would have representation of the Camp Board and the Camp would be accountable to Toronto Conference under Appendix 4 of The United Church Manual. Fundraising – Incorporation would allow the Camps to perform fundraising activities on their own. Acquiring charitable status would allow the camps to provide their own tax receipts for donations. Council has administered fundraising for all the camps and efficiencies could be gained should Council wish to continue this activity.

Costs to incorporate could be up to \$5,000 per camp. It would be Council's responsibility to cover some or all of these costs.

Motion: Paul Dowling/Shirley Baster that proceedings be initiated to incorporate Sparrow Lake Camp and Lake Scugog Camp as non-share capital charitable corporations. Carried.

Paul Dowling moved a vote of thanks to Kevin Aalto and Barbara Puckering for giving their time and expertise to the task group. The Directors responded with a round of applause.

As an added note, this action began the process to incorporate the two camps and to end Council's 95 year role of directly overseeing the two camps' program activities. Within six years of this motion, the two camps were incorporated, Boards of Directors were established, and new leases were prepared by Mills & Mills. All four Council owned campsites are now leased to partner United Church Corporations that provide quality camping ministries.