

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY SYNODICAL REPORT ALBERTA & NW OCTOBER 2016

This has been a memorable year for our Synodical as our various groups struggled to carry on with ever decreasing numbers, some with a few elderly women remaining found they were able to meet only by telephone. Other WMS members struggled to carry on the great traditions of service which was set in 1876 when fifty women, representing various congregations in Toronto met to form the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. Each woman was to then form an auxiliary in her own congregation after the Session had given its approval.

From this beginning, a handful of seeds carefully sowed with faith, hope, perseverance, and hard work, and especially a vision, an organization to unite all women, girls, and children of the church in prayer, study, and service for the advancement of the Kingdom of God at home and abroad was formed.

Our Alberta & NW Synodical groups have provided outstanding examples of service to our communities and to our organization as a whole. Bethany Grace has held successful Annual Thankoffering Dinners, and, this year, hosted our Synodical Meeting as well as hosting our Annual Presbyterian Gathering. This Gathering began a few years ago with Varsity Acres Presbyterian "Listening to Mission" hosting a June event rather than facing the problems of travel and weather encountered with Synodical in March or April. We will continue to carry on participation with The Society of the Least Coin and with The World Day of Prayer which, this year, was hosted by St. Andrew's Calgary "Mission Matters" with seven denominations participating.

Calgary's Centennial Presbyterian carries on outstanding service with five African countries active within their congregation. In February, Centennial hosted an Africa Day with their representative members providing entertainment based on their own national traditions as we welcomed Sarah Kim and Janet Brewer from our WMS National Office to speak about their own recent trip to Malawi. The work at Centennial is ongoing as new family members arrive from these various countries and the congregation, coordinated by a former Synodical President, Priscilla Towers, arranges to find accommodation, furniture, and clothing for these families. When members of these families make a return visit to their home country, they are accompanied by a suitcase full of school supplies, clothing, or other necessities to leave with those in need.

In August, I was honored to be invited to Greet at a Back-to-School Coffee Party at Centennial Presbyterian where \$1006.00 was cleared after some minor expenses to send to the Anyok Speaking Orphans in Ethiopia.

This type of service within our own communities is becoming typical of many of our long-time members and supporters. In Canada, we are so fortunate while millions around the world can only dream of waking up in Canada some day. As a result, our

Federal Government has adopted a policy of allowing more immigrants to enter our country and seek citizenship. These new citizens often need extensive help in order to find work and places to live.

It is this reality that led St. Andrew's Calgary Mission Matters to hold a Celebration Service for Closure of a WMS Group. It was their wish to honor the long history of WMS while recognizing that we have brought Mission forward within our whole Denomination. Most congregations now have Mission Teams as part of Session, teams which encompass both men and women who are actively supporting needy families and other organizations who are working within the community to assist teenagers, homeless individuals, immigrants, and others who are in need on our own doorsteps. WMS has achieved many great objectives and now, it is hoped, more great achievements can be accomplished by working with all of our members in our congregations who wish to carry on the work of Mission, whether at home or in other countries.

I wish to offer my sincere thanks for the dedication and work of our Synodical Executive members: Sandi Churchill, Lisbeth Duncan, Kathleen Tomie, and Carol Doyle.

Marlene LaMontagne, Synodical President, Alberta & NW

