

The United Church Women's Participation in Helping to Build St. Paul's United Church

Trinity Methodist Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church were both established in Estevan about the same time 1892. Being no church to go to, services were first held in homes and then in the original part of the stone school, called Central School. (This school was where the Post Office is now) During 1902 and 03 the two church buildings were erected, on opposite sides of 3rd and 12th Ave.

The women immediately became very involved and formed the Ladies' Aid. Mrs. John Gallaway was the first president of the Methodist Ladies' Aid and Mrs. L. A. Duncan of the Presbyterian. The duties of the Ladies' Aid were as numerous as they are today.

No doubt the raising of money for the building of the church and the current expenses the main objective.

The manse was built in 1915 by the Methodist Congregation and the furnishing of the manse became the responsibility of the Ladies' Aid. This was added to the work of the women.

In both churches, during the years that followed, a worthy succession of Ministers came and went. The congregation knew days of encouragement and seasons of difficulty but, by and large, the story of those days is one of growth in numbers and in influence. Through the dark days of World War I the records show many from these congregations serving in the armed forces. When the war was over plans were carried out to welcome the men home. The memory of those who did not return was honored in the beautiful stained glass window in the south of the sanctuary of the present church, unveiled and dedicated in 1925.

Many factors, among them fire, had a part in shaping the destiny of these two congregations. When fire damaged the interior of Trinity Methodist Church in 1920, the Presbyterian congregation extended an invitation to the Methodists to worship in Westminster Church while repairs were being made to their church building. This closer fellowship of the two congregations bore good fruit. For when, soon after the Methodists had returned to a remodeled Trinity Church, fire partially destroyed Westminster Church in February 1921. Negotiations were entered into which, by the unanimous decision of both congregations, culminated in the formation of a local Union congregation to be known as "The United Church of Estevan." This union came into effect on July 1st, 1921. Later the congregation voted to become a part of the United Church of Canada upon the consummation of church union. This latter took place on June 10th, 1925. The congregation continued to worship in the former Trinity Church but the facilities of this and Westminster church were needed for the various activities of the congregation.

It was 1931 that the congregation, still known as the Estevan United Church, having left behind the former names of Westminster and Trinity at the time of the local union

ten years earlier, decided to take a new name. "St. Paul's United Church", was chosen on a vote by the congregation.

The fifteen years that followed were years to try the souls of men. Drought, depression, conflict and confusion were to be the lot of our people along with others. It took stout hearts to face such difficulties. Financially and numerically, it was a period of regression. World War 11 broke out and again many from the congregation went to battle. Others from distant lands found a spiritual home within our ***church, while they trained for combat. Here again, the women's groups were not idle. They knit, made quilts, sent parcels overseas and did what they could to help those that had come to train, to feel at home in Estevan. They took turns preparing programs and entertainment for the men.

St. Paul's emerged a stronger and more effective congregation when came the days of peace and material prosperity. So it came about that the mid century found the congregation taxing its facilities beyond the limit. Rev. Ellis King came at this time, the year 1949. Just in time to help plan a new building program. Finally a decision was reached to dispose of the Stone Church and extend the church then being used for worship so that the life and work of the congregation might be brought under one roof and the sanctuary extended to meet the ends of a growing congregation. Reading through several books of old minutes, I noticed that the Stone Church was used extensively by the congregation for meetings and socials.

Immediately the decision was made committees were set up. The necessary funds were soon in sight and plans prepared. On Friday, May 20th, 1949 the sod was turned for the extension of the church. By November of the same year the congregation began to use the new sanctuary and rededication services were held on Sunday, May 7th, 1950.

In 1951 the W.A. mothered a new group of younger women who organized as a Junior W.A. with Mrs. Marguerite Gallaway, President. After a couple of years experience they became the W.A. and the original group became a circle to the W.A. and became known as the Friendship Circle. These younger women took up the work in a most satisfactory way and surely filled all the requirements. The Friendship group had carried the load for a number of years. They were tired and wished for less responsibility. However, they were always there when they were needed.

At the annual congregational meeting in 1952 it was decided to honor the memory of those who served in World War 11 by installing a memorial organ. A Concert Organ (Wurlitzer) was dedicated on Sunday June 29th, 1952.

For a number of years the congregation sponsored the serving of meals at the time of the summer fair. The W.A. accepted a goodly share of this responsibility. In 1955, with money raised in this way, a second large memorial window was installed in memory of the pioneers who had the vision and accepted the responsibility of the work of the church.

Rev. Mel Ryan came in 1959, the year that the Sector Plan came into effect. The Sector Plan is an intensive Face-to-Face Visitation of Members and Adherents in their homes for a deeper commitment to Christ and his Church. Mr. Torgeson was first General Chairman. This plan required many meetings and a great deal of planning. Many people became involved. The first visitation was on Sunday, November 15.

It was recommended in May 1959 that all women's groups be united at all levels for more adequate support of the general work of the church. It took a while to organize. Finally in January, 1962, an inaugural meeting of the St. Paul's women was held in the Church. The Friendship Circle, Young Ladies, W.M.S. and W.A. united to form one group. Mrs. Babe Bannatyne was the first President and Mrs. Lillian Simpson, the first secretary of the General Executive. There were 170 women on roll and the membership list was divided into nine Units. There were three afternoon Units, four evening Units, one Business Women and one morning Unit. In 1963 the Paulette Unit formed. This was a group of younger women with small families. Joan Davies was first President.

The congregation continued to grow. Sunday School facilities in church basement weren't adequate. Part of the School moved over to the Legion Hall. Two services were necessary to accommodate all the people (9:30 and 11:00 A.M.). Plans began for a new Christian Education Building and on November 3rd, 1963 the new centre became a reality.

Also this same year, a new manse was built. A new committee was set up from the Official Church Board to look after the Manse furnishings, relieving the women of a huge responsibility. However, the U.C.W. always worked very hard to raise money, serving meals, annual Fall Fairs, making and selling quilts, and many rummage sales and teas. The new building program needed money and help, and the women were always ready to do their part. The U.C.W. have been responsible for furnishing the kitchen at the C.E. Centre, including building of cupboards.

February 1970 the One Board was set up. This was the Union of the Official Board, Board of Trustees, the Elders and the Board of Stewards. Mr. Harold Kraus was the first President and Mrs. Elaine Pettigrew, the first secretary of the new Board. The Mortgage of C.E. Centre was burned in October, 1974.

Drapes were purchased for the auditorium in the C.E. Centre in 1975. This was the year St. Paul's congregation celebrated the Fiftieth anniversary of union of the United Church of Canada.

In 1976 and 1977 the kitchen in the C.E. Centre was improved by adding additional cupboards and kitchen facilities, including a set of dishes.

The Fall Fun Fair has proved to be a very popular event with St. Paul's congregation. It is a time of fellowship as well as a revenue earner for many projects. Some of the funds were used to help the Church Board invest in a new Allen Digital Computer Organ,

which was dedicated in August 1976. The funds from the 1977 Fall Fun Fair were used to buy gowns for the Junior Choir.

A new unit for Young women was formed in 1979 under the appropriate name of "JOY" unit with Mrs. Barbara Schmuland, President. To highlight "The Year of the Child" the U.C.W. invited women of the community to hear their special speaker, Father Larre, of Bosco Homes.

A building program has been projected for 1980. This will result in a new church being attached to the C. E. Centre. No doubt the women's group will do all in their power to help make it a reality.

We are thankful for all those individuals who have given faithful leadership for all the long and outstanding service in the life and work of the church. We look forward to a future of still greater service.

Ministers since Local Union.

Rev. R. D. Finlayson - 1921-1922

Rev. L. E. Berry, United Church - 1922-1925

Rev. C. B. Lawson - 1925-1930

Rev. M. C. MacDonald - 1930-1933

Rev. P. T. Dennis - 1933-1935

Rev. H. A. Mutchmor - 1935-1942

Rev. R. W. K. Elliott - 1942-1945

Rev. F. H. Morgan - 1945-1949

Rev. E. A. King 1949-1959

Rev. Mel. Ryan 1959-1971

Rev. E. Pullam 1971