

## WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Interim Report, May 2020

### WMS CONSTITUTION

At the Council meeting in May 2018, the following changes were approved to the constitution of the WMS. This effort was mainly an editorial clean-up of the constitution to bring it up to date with decisions that were made in previous years. These changes are presented to the General Assembly with deletions shown with strikethrough and new wording underline:

#### VI – Meetings

1. Council: The ~~annual~~ bi-annual meeting of the Society, to be known as the Council meeting, shall be held ~~every year~~ every two years at such time and place as determined by the Council, or the Council executive when authorized by the Council.

#### VII – Officers of the Society

The officers of the Society shall be president, vice-president, ~~secretary~~ corresponding secretary, treasurer and such other officers as may be deemed necessary for the conduct of the Society's work. The officers of the Society shall be the officers of the Council executive.

These and any members of Council executive without portfolios shall be elected at the Council meeting.

There shall be two signing officers of the Society for official documents, which shall be any two of the following: the president, vice-president or treasurer.

#### VIII – Administration of ~~Property~~ Finance

~~All property, real and personal, acquired by purchase, bequest, gift or otherwise shall be administered by the Council executive, subject in the case of the real property to the provisions of section IX and subject in the case of all bequests to the direction of the Council.~~

All donations, bequests, presbyterial givings, and other items related to finance (such as property) shall be administered by the Council executive.

#### ~~IX – Board of Trustees~~

~~The trustees shall be appointed by the council, one of whom shall be from the council executive and shall be the convener of the board of trustees. These shall hold for the Women's Missionary Society all the real property which it may require by purchase, bequest or gift, such real property to be administered for the benefit of the Society and by the direction of the council through its council executive.~~

~~The council executive shall have the power to revoke the appointment of any trustees in the event of the removal by death or by reason of illness, incapacity, or refusal to act, and to appoint a trustee to act in the place of the one so removed until an appointment is made at the next meeting of the council.~~

The following sections be renumbered as:

~~X~~ IX – Report to General Assembly

~~XI~~ X – By-Laws

~~XII~~ XI – Change of Constitution

**Recommendation No. 1** (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

### COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

The Council executive of the Women's Missionary Society met on March 7 and 8, 2019 and October 28 and 29, 2019 at 50 Wynford Drive.

The meeting in March dealt mostly with future changes that were imposed by the finances. After much consideration and discussion, the difficult decision was made to finish publishing the *Glad Tidings* magazine at the end of the 2019 subscription year. Stemming from this decision, there were other decisions to consider including staff changes.

At the October meeting,, the actions of the Personnel Committee in executing the staff changes were approved. Other agenda topics and decisions were: 1) approval of the budget for 2020; 2) Regional Gathering 2021 to be held in Montreal; 3) staff changes; 4) ideas for transitioning with staff reduction; 5) Mission Awareness Sunday resources to

finish production in January 2020; 6) ideas for studies that will be produced beyond *Glad Tidings* for the next few years; 7) approval of the Nominating Committee's decision to extend the term years of the individuals who were due to finish in May 2020, to continue for two more years until May 2022; 8) future mission exposure tours suggestions; 9) grants decisions.

### **TRANSITIONS IN THE WMS OFFICE**

The WMS relies on the free-will offering of its members. This is over and above what they give to their local church and Presbyterians Sharing. We consider it "second mile givings". For many years this offering has not been covering the general operating budget, creating a shortfall that has been covered by our capital (from bequests or special donations).

In 2014, after very careful deliberations, the Council executive determined that the Book Room, which had served the WMS and the whole church for decades, had to be closed and the Book Room staff were terminated. In 2016, when the Financial Officer resigned, she was not replaced. In 2017, our Administrative Assistant finished her job and was not replaced. This left us with one full-time staff and two part-time staff, all of whom we respect and love and whose work is excellent!

In the last two years, as we watched our income decline steadily, the Council executive struggled with ways of making the expenses decrease to match the income. In 2019, decisions were made to terminate the two part-time positions and keep only the one full-time position. These decisions were made with great difficulty and made only after several scenarios were considered. Once the decision was made, steps were taken and proper protocol in terminating staff was followed.

As of June 30, 2020, Colleen Wood will finish her position as editor of *Glad Tidings*. During Colleen's years as editor, the magazine subscriptions grew and many positive comments were received for the very interesting articles and studies. The WMS is grateful to Colleen for her dedication in producing many excellent issues of the magazine! We wish her well on her future endeavours, wherever God leads.

In addition, Alexis McKeown, will end her time with us as of December 31, 2020. This position covered much work in the office, including, on average, a quarter of her time on the laying out of the *Glad Tidings* magazine. Many jobs have landed on this desk and everything was done with a professional flair for which we are very grateful. We wish Alexis well on her future endeavours, wherever God leads.

This also meant that the *Glad Tidings* magazine had to end as the editor position would be terminated. It was with great sadness that this decision was made. Our membership and many others who subscribed to *Glad Tidings* will miss this handy and well-read bi-monthly publication. A commemorative issue was published in early 2020.

Going forward, we realize that we will have to "do business" differently. Our worship services and studies that were published in *Glad Tidings* will continue to be produced but will now be mailed to the groups once a year. Our website will be revamped to become a more useful tool as we will not have staff available for individual phone or mail requests. We recognize that not all of our members have computers or use computers but we hope that those in groups will share information – those who do with those who don't.

We have been in conversation with the Communications department of the Life and Mission Agency regarding our website and have been assured of their support once we figure out what we want to communicate and how we would like to see it done. The Life and Mission Agency has offered help in any way it can and we are thankful for this support.

This has been a very difficult two years but we are thinking positively and are trying to be proactive about the ways work will be done. It will be a huge change and change can be difficult when it occurs. We ask for your prayers as we travel this path of adjustment for our Council executive, our members and our staff.

## **RESOURCES**

### ***WMS Matters!***

Articles on WMS national activities/outreach and the grants given can be found in the annual newsletter, *WMS Matters!*

### **Mission Awareness Sunday material**

Mission Awareness Sunday was led by WMS members on Sunday April 26, 2020. Sessions and WMS/AMS groups have worked together to promote mission through Mission Awareness Sunday since 2000. The material was distributed to WMS groups, affiliated groups, and churches (by request) in January.

The material, written by the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, consists of the liturgy, sermon and children's story.

The 2020 material is the final resource the WMS will produce for congregations and groups for Mission Awareness Sunday.

### **Other resources**

Resources that WMS groups rely on will continue. Resources such as the WMS mission study and the Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas services will be available to groups through the WMS summer mailing and on the WMS website.

## **GLAD TIDINGS MAGAZINE**

Throughout 2019, the *Glad Tidings* magazine continued to provide valuable resources to WMS members and those throughout The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In 2019, we explored topics such as joy, light and community. We offered great resources for worship and study, including a study by the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean and his work in Taiwan. We shared stories from overseas mission staff and partners.

In the May/June 2019 edition, there was coverage of the Western Regional Women's Gathering held in Surrey, British Columbia, in March 2019.

Our last regular edition was published in 2019. To see a little of what you missed in 2019, visit the website at [wmspcc.ca/glad-tidings](http://wmspcc.ca/glad-tidings).

## **REGIONAL PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S GATHERING**

The first Western Regional Gathering took place at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel and Conference Centre, in Surrey, British Columbia, on March 29–30, 2019. There were 97 people registered and about 20 women providing leadership throughout the event. The theme was "Shine" (based on Matthew 5:14–16). The keynote speaker was Dr. Mary Jo Leddy, founder of Romero House in Toronto. The two day event was filled with much laughter, fellowship, learning and above all, praising God.

The next regional gathering will be held in Montreal. It will be the first Eastern Regional Women's Gathering and will be held at The Westin Hotel, Montreal (Downtown), from Friday March 19 to Sunday March 21, 2021. The theme is "Together in Joy" based on John 15:11, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete". The keynote speaker will be the Rev. John Bell from the Iona Community in Scotland. The planning team has been working hard since November 2019 to organize this event. Much organizing has been done already but there is still much more to do. Check the Women's Gathering website ([womensgathering.ca](http://womensgathering.ca)) for the full information/registration booklet, or contact the WMS office for a printed copy.

## **NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S GATHERING 2020**

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the planning team for the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering 2020 made the very difficult decision to cancel this event. Much prayer and discussion took place at the planning team zoom conference call on March 12, 2020, about two months before the Gathering was to start. Before the meeting, we were told by the hotel staff that, at this stage, the international travelers coming to attend the Gathering would not be able to stay at the hotel for the full week, if at all. As well, the health and safety protocols in place would not be able to guarantee that the virus would not be transmitted. Therefore, after considering various possibilities as to what could be done in this uncertain situation, the planning team made the decision to cancel, with the foremost rationale being

that the health and well-being of the participants was of the utmost importance. It was recognized that the majority of the registrants were in the senior age group, which is the most vulnerable age group.

Postponing the event was also considered. The option to postpone would have been to hold the event within this fiscal year as we were told by the hotel. There was no guarantee that the current registrants would be able come at a later date and even the speakers and other leadership was up in the air with regard to re-scheduling. The planning team felt that the situation was too complicated to postpone and that a clean decision to cancel or not was better.

About a week after this decision was made, the pandemic situation in Canada kept changing, with governments at all levels taking steps to control the situation, with further restrictions and cancellations, prohibiting international travel, closing gatherings of 50 people or more, etc. Seeing how the pandemic was growing, our confidence in our decision was affirmed; that is, we believe this was the right decision for these uncertain times.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS**

The WMS is active in a number of women's organizations within Canada and around the world. We not only pray for our partners but we also walk in solidarity through prayer, study, fellowship and sharing of our resources.

The WMS has had a long partnership with the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC). As well as making financial contributions, the WMS sends a representative to sit on their committee. WICC is a member organization on the World Council of Churches. It is the organization that produces the World Day of Prayer resource as well as participating in the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

The WMS continues to be a voting member on the National Council of Women of Canada. Although this is a non-church organization based in Ottawa, we give voice to Presbyterian women through our membership and vote.

The WMS was invited to the 70th anniversary celebrations of the National Christian Women's Association of the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ), which was held in Osaka, Japan, June 24–25, 2019. Janet Brewer (WMS President) and Sarah Kim (Executive Director, WMS) attended. David McIntosh, missionary of The Presbyterian Church in Canada was also present. David helped with translation during the conference. After the conference, David shared about his work at the Center for Minority Issues located in Tokyo.

The WMS has had a long history of mission work in the Vindya Satpura area of India, especially in Jobat. In the past, the WMS sent women nurses to work in Jobat and Mendha, including missionaries like Ida White and Pauline Brown. In recent years, the WMS built the Jobat Christian School and Hostel. As well, in honour of Dr. Pauline Brown, the WMS established the Pauline Brown Bursary Fund to support Christian nursing students in the Vindya Satpura area. To monitor these projects and to visit the church women of the Bhopal Diocese, Janet Brewer, Cathy Reid and Sarah Kim traveled to India, January 8–21, 2020. Places visited were Delhi, Indore, Jobat, Amkhut, Mendha, Alirajpur and Mumbai. In Indore, the Graduate School of Nursing submitted a project to renovate the roof on one of their school buildings. This project will be presented to the WMS for financial support. In Jobat, the school and hostel were visited; suggestions for their upkeep and needs were given by the principal, Flora Kalib. In Amkhut, the annual meeting of the Women's Organization of the Bhopal Diocese took place. There, some old friendships were re-established and new ones made. As well, the Women's Organization was given a grant of \$2,000 (CAD) from the WMS to use towards projects of their choice.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AGENCIES OF THE CHURCH**

The WMS continues to give grants to various organizations and projects. In 2019, the following grants were made from our endowment funds:

- \$400 each for five Presbyterian students from Knox College for their Intercultural Learning Experience event in Cuba in February 2020, from the Giollo Kelly Memorial Fund, a total of \$2,000.
- \$226.96 for Essex-Kent Presbyterial's expenses for its KAIROS Blanket Exercise event from the Louise Reith Fund.
- \$200 to Montreal Presbyterial for their expenses at their June meeting from the Louise Reith Fund.
- \$400 each for 12 youth from the Place of Hope Church, Winnipeg, to attend CY2020 from the Margaret Renton Memorial Fund, a total of \$4,800.
- \$200 to Betty Leppanen for her granddaughter, Ariana, to attend Camp Cairn for two weeks in the summer of 2020 from the Margaret Renton Memorial Fund.

- \$400 each for 10 women from the Place of Hope Church, Winnipeg, to attend the 2020 National Presbyterian Women's Gathering from the Giollo Kelly Memorial Fund.
- \$2,000 to the Women's Inter-Church Council (WICC) for the annual WMS grant in January 2020.
- \$70,000 to The Presbyterian Church in Canada, annual grant from undesignated legacies.

Our "Together We Can!" projects continue to do well. As of December 31, 2019, the total amounts raised since the beginning in May 2017, are: Kenora Fellowship Centre – \$36,032.96 and Haiti – \$30,006.24. Funds will continue to be raised for these two projects until May 2020.

For the full financial report, contact the WMS office.

The WMS is very grateful to all our members who give generously through second mile givings. We are also grateful to all Presbyterians for their support of the "Together We Can!" projects.

Janet Brewer  
Past President

Sarah Kim  
Executive Director