

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

To the Venerable, the 149th General Assembly:

COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

The Council Executive of the WMS met at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga, Ontario, from May 1–3, 2023.

This was the second in-person meeting since COVID-19, the first time for our president, Cathy Reid, who could not attend in person the previous year. In her report, she mentioned how things were different from the COVID-19 years. Especially notable were the traveling opportunities which had opened up. In 2023, she traveled to India, Taiwan and Malawi, catching up on in-person meetings with mission partners which were suppressed during the pandemic.

The topic of how to continue the WMS into the future was considered, looking at the possibilities of restructuring and renewing, as well as looking at the trends in membership and finances. This conversation continued in other meetings of the Council Executive throughout the year.

Business was taken care of with the passing of the budget and estimates, as well as some grant decisions.

In 2024, the WMS will be celebrating its 110th anniversary. Much brainstorming and discussion took place as to how to celebrate. The event will take place at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, May 6 and 7, 2024, with the Council meeting on May 8 thereafter. It was decided that the planning team would be the Council Executive members. The theme of the 110th anniversary celebrations will be based on Philippians 1:6, to be entitled “Celebrate God’s Goodness”. Many things were discussed in the full plenary and then the group was divided into subcommittees to continue with the ongoing planning throughout the year.

In 2024, the WMS Council will hold its first in-person meeting since COVID-19. As part of the anniversary celebration, it was decided that this Council will be augmented with extra delegates and guests attending.

COME TOGETHER SERIES

Due to popularity, the Come Together series of virtual meetings continued throughout 2023. The Council Executive was very impressed and pleased with the members’ determination to keep in touch through Zoom as well as to learn about missions through these presentations. The list of participants has grown and the participation continues to go beyond the WMS, to the AMS and others globally.

March 8, 2023 – World Day of Prayer 2023

Every year in March, many WMS groups and churches celebrate the World Day of Prayer (WDP). This worship resource is produced by a member country of the World Council of Churches from which it is adapted for each country. The Canadian arm is the Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) which co-produces the WDP resource with sister churches globally. A new development during the pandemic was the production of the WDP resource in a video format so that it could be shared virtually. It was our privilege to have Catherine MacKeil, Executive Director of WICC, join us for our event and give an introduction of the worship written by the women of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, after which we worshipped together using the video.

April 12, 2023 – Easter Worship

Our Easter Worship was uplifting as the Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie, writer of the resource, gave the message. We came together to worship and praise virtually, during uncertain times as the world began to come out of the pandemic and the new normal was yet undefined. The worship and message lifted us out of the dark gloomy days of the pandemic, filling us with new hope!

June 14, 2023 – Malawi

After the cyclone hit a large part of Malawi, we were concerned about our friends in the village of Chipagala, near Blantyre, Malawi. The cyclone had hit some of the poorest regions leaving many people in a devastating and dire situation. Cathy Reid, WMS president and her church in London, Ontario, had built relationships with the people in Chipagala, by building the Timvane Community Centre as well as supporting agriculture projects and the local church

school. We were privileged that our friends in Chipagala were able to join us by Zoom and share about their situation after the cyclone.

September 13, 2023 – Taiwan

The Rev. Bob Faris, Moderator of 2022 General Assembly, was the guest speaker. He spoke about his moderatorial trip to Taiwan, along with a few members of the group that traveled with him.

October 11, 2023 – Thanksgiving Worship

With the Rev. Joanne Lee, writer of the resource, a full worship with praise and thanksgiving was lifted up. We were grateful to her for joining us. As well, there was a moving time of sharing about what we were thankful for. It was wonderful to see how God works in the lives of the people of God!

November 15, 2023 – Presbyterian World Service and Development

Our guest speaker was Mr. Guy Smagghe, Director of PWS&D. Because of COVID, the WMS had lost touch with PWS&D. It was a good opportunity to reconnect and to get an update on its.

December 13, 2023 – Christmas Worship

With the Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid, former Central, Northerneastern Ontario and Bermuda regional staff and the writer of the resource, Christmas was celebrated with much wonderment through the story of Joseph. As well, we were blessed to watch the recording of the joint choir of St. Timothy Church, Toronto, who performed at the reconciliation worship organized by the General Assembly Office. Although the anthem was not a Christmas piece, we heard about God's love sung through the pure voices of the children. Then, we meditated on the complexity of Joseph's story. How beautiful and touching it was to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus!

January 10, 2024 – Justice Ministries

Dr. Alyson Carr was invited to speak about her work as the Associate Secretary of Justice Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency. It was a very informative time of learning about the current justice issues where our church is involved as well as getting an overview of the scope and breadth of the work of this department of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

February 14, 2024 – on Gender Justice

Our guest speaker, the Rev. Nicqi Ashwood, spoke on the topic "Not On Our Watch". Nicqi is the Programme Executive with responsibility for Gender Justice at the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, Switzerland. She spoke about gender justice globally. One of the programs run by the WCC to promote gender justice is "Thursdays in Black" campaign where everyone is encouraged to wear black on Thursdays to raise awareness about gender violence.

RESOURCES

Resources continue to be produced for WMS groups to use. Three worship resources are produced each year for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. These are sent out by email in September and January.

The worship resources for 2023–2024 year were:

- Thanksgiving – written by the Rev. Joanne Lee
- Christmas – written by the Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid
- Easter – written by the Rev. Dr. Emily Webb

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 the sharing of our resources.

The WMS has had a long partnership with the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. As well as making financial contributions, the WMS sends a representative to sit on their committee. The WICC is an affiliate of the Canadian Council of Churches. It 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 is proud to be a partner of Tumekutana (African Reformed Church Women's Organization). Normally, they would hold a triennial gathering of representatives from the different churches and countries, however, since the pandemic, their triennial meeting continues to be held virtually. Together, they worship and share about their African church women's issues, especially as it relates to African church and society.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AGENCIES OF THE CHURCH

The WMS gives grants to various organizations and projects. In 2023, the following grants were given from our endowment funds:

Reformed International Theological Education Seminary in Ukraine (RITE)	\$5,000
Mount Moriah Church and Village of Chipagala for Malawi Disaster Relief	\$5,600
Women's Guild of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria for their building project	\$3,000
PWS&D Afghanistan Earthquake Relief Project	\$5,000
InterVarsity Fellowship Scripture Camp & Pioneer Camp	\$3,000
Women's Interchurch Council of Canada (WICC)	\$2,500

At the biennial Council meeting in May 2022, two new Together We Can! projects were established for 2022–2024: Kenora Fellowship Centre and Action Refugies Montreal. Our projects also receive funding support from groups, however, due to the groups being unable to meet in person, the donations have not been high compared to pre-pandemic years. These projects will continue until new projects are chosen by the Council in May 2024.

For the full financial report, contact Sarah Kim at skim@presbyterian.ca.

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.

Cathy Reid
President

Sarah Kim
Executive Director