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Turning Points in United Church Theology

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Editorial

When we set the theme of this issue of *Touchstone*—"Turning Points in United Church Theology"—we intended to highlight moments of significant change in theological understanding and expression.

But as I read the five fine contributions that appear in the following pages, I found myself wondering, are they really describing real "turning points"? In one sense, the answer is yes. The *de facto* replacement of historic confessions with the New Creed, or the removal of sexual orientation as a determining factor in ordination certainly changed the character and practice of the church. But looked at from a different perspective, these pivotal moments can be seen less as sharp changes in direction and more as the embodiment of theological principles that have remained remarkably constant since 1925.

The United Church was conceived to be, in the words of Phyllis Airhart, "a church with the soul of a nation," both reflecting and shaping the spiritual and moral life of Canadian society. But in its desire to remain at the centre of Canadian culture, it is clear that the church has been equally *shaped by* broader social and cultural shifts. Its theology can be seen as the ongoing attempt to respond to and keep pace with the evolution of Canadian society.

Peter Wyatt begins the conversation with an insightful analysis of the process that resulted in the United Church's 1940 Statement of Faith. This statement was an attempt by a newly formed denomination to find its own distinctive theological and doctrinal voice. Peter describes the final version of the Statement and the catechism that accompanied it, as "wrapping the body of doctrine in the clothing of fresh expression." The aim was to balance tradition and innovation; but, over the years, the balance has tilted increasingly towards the "fresh expression" side.

We see this clearly in Will Haughton's exploration of The New Creed, first approved in 1968 and then twice revised in 1980 and 1995. Will argues that the three successive "redactions" of the Creed mirror broader changes in theological emphasis. The New Creed was a creature of the Sixties when existential theology was at its peak. Questions of the meaning of human life were paramount. Unlike historic creeds, which are organized around the nature and revelation of God, the New Creed begins with us and our place in God's world. "We are not alone. We live in God's world." Despite vigorous behind-the-scenes debate and disagreement, the framers of the New Creed were all in agreement that it should "start with man."

The impact of feminist theology led to calls for a more gender-inclusive version of the Creed, which was adopted in 1980. In 1995, a third revision added the clause "to live with respect in creation," in response to the growing influence of the environmental movement and eco- or creation-theology. Three versions of the Creed in twenty-seven years demonstrates how consistent was the United Church's desire to keep in step with wider currents of social, political and religious change.

Michael Bourgeois' article on The Song of Faith, approved by 39th General Council in 2006, reinforces this point. The General Council's Theology and Faith Committee was given the task of preparing "a timely and contextual statement of faith "that would take into account the church's place "in a pluralistic world." The decision was made not simply to address changes in content but in form. The lyrical style of the Song of Faith in contrast to earlier doctrinal statements, was intended to be a true alternative to the "discursive rhetorical form" that was too narrowly reflective of a "modern, white, western, Euro-American culture."

Phyllis Airhart has written a fascinating account on the pivotal 20th General Council that met in London, Ontario, in 1962, which she refers to as a theological "crossroads." Four realities converged at this one remarkable gathering, setting the direction of the church for decades to come: an increasingly pluralistic Canada, the "end of Christendom," the need to redefine "mission," and the call for broader opportunities for leadership, especially among women. The Church grappled with the impact of these broader changes in Canadian society on the United Church's founding vision of "Christianizing the social order," a vision that was becoming less sustainable as the nation became more culturally diverse. Underlying key initiatives, such as the New Curriculum, was the Church's desire to maintain its position as the leading Protestant denomination in the country.

United Church theology has tended to be articulated more implicitly through its institutional values, practices and habits than systematically or dogmatically. From the beginning, there has been the tension between the national and the local church, between a highly centralized denominational structure on the one hand, and local congregations that have a high degree of autonomy and are relied on to finance the national Church.

Following World War II era, the Church increasingly emphasized radical social witness over traditional evangelism ("winning souls for Christ") and legacy moral issues such as temperance, gambling and Sunday observance. But national pronouncements often came up against the reality of local resistance to change. The Church presented itself as

being in the vanguard of change. But the situation on the ground is perhaps better captured by these words of novelist Julian Barnes: "most people didn't experience 'the Sixties' until the Seventies. Which meant . . . that most people in the Sixties were still experiencing the Fifties." [1]

Which brings us to our final article in which Bri-Anne Swan explores another seemingly major change: the 1988 decision to remove barriers to ordination and commissioning for gay and lesbian people. Bri-Anne argues that, while the decision was "celebrated as an example of The United Church of Canada's bravery and forward-thinking," it was made within the context of a traditional understanding of sexual morality that saw heterosexual monogamy as the norm and that did not really grasp the reality of gay or queer experience. In effect, she argues, the Church used "queer affirmation as a branding identity"—why?—in an attempt to appeal to young adults who "were leaving the church in droves." Gays and lesbians could now become ministers, but they were faced with deeply change-resistant or even hostile communities of faith.

What our authors convincingly demonstrate, I believe, is, first, that there *is* actually such a thing as "United Church theology" —but that it is inextricably connected to institutional factors which are inherently conservative and tend to put the brakes on the kind of change we could call a true turning point. These factors include our self-image as a "national" church; tensions (if not contradictions) between national, regional and local governance, courtesy of compromises of Church Union; and structural inertia that makes deep change hard to achieve.

Are they true "turning points"? Or are they more like the instruction from the GPS to "Keep slightly to the left to remain on this route"? I'll leave it up to you, the reader, to decide.

Paul Miller

[1] Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending,* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2011), 40.

THE 1940 STATEMENT OF FAITH: CONFESSING THE FAITH IN NEW CONTEXTS[1]

by Peter Wyatt

The 1940 Statement of Faith marks a defining moment in the history of The United Church of Canada. The preparation and adoption of the Statement was a crucial step for the Church in finding its own doctrinal voice. The diligent work of the Commission that produced the Statement avoided melding together former denominational particulars, as was the case with the original doctrinal articles of the 1925 Basis of Union. Instead, it invited the Church to move toward a more clearly catholic expression of the faith. Although the Statement did not adequately reflect important aspects of contemporary theological development and of prophetic witness, it did help, together with other key denominational resources, to shape the spirit of confident faith that characterized the United Church during the robust years 1945 to 1965.

The Winnipeg General Council in giving "general approval" to the Statement of Faith, the Ninth General Council, meeting in Winnipeg in September of 1940, commended it to the Church "for the instruction of the young and the guidance of believers . . ."[2] My maternal grandfather, Harry Zurbrigg, was a lay commissioner (delegate) at Council and I try to imagine what he would have thought in hearing the presentation of the Statement. It is easy to forget that the Council was meeting at the end of the first year of the Second World War. In preparation for attending Council my grandfather would have read the Digest of Minutes of the Executive of General Council that included a report on Christian responsibility in time of war. This report was in partial response to a letter, "Witness against the War," published in *The United Church Observer* and signed by seventy-five ministers of the Church.[3]

As well, my grandfather would have learned that the Four-Million-Dollar Campaign—to pay off a Mission and Maintenance Fund deficit, shore up the Ministers' Pension Fund, and provide for Foreign and Home Mission Property Funds—had been postponed until there would be

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[1] The full text of the Statement of Faith can be accessed at *https://united-church.ca/community-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/faith-statements/statement-faith-1940.*

[2] *Record of Proceedings of the Ninth General Council* (Wesley Buildings, Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1940), 40.

[3] Ibid., 205-8.

improvement in the financial and international outlook."[4] A report was received on equity in ministerial salaries, and a minimum salary was set for the first time (at $1800 for a married minister and $1600 for a single minister). Of course, as any United Church General Council commissioner would know, there was plenty more to read, hear, and ponder. Still, from today's vantage point, it seems that the *Observe*r missed the significance of a formative moment: it gave the Statement only ten lines in its coverage of the Council.[5] Later estimations of the Statement in assessing the work of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service (E and SS) and of its Commission would also underrate its importance.[6]

Made in Canada

Among the institutional challenges faced by the United Church after the union of 1925 was how to shape a common worship life. It was inevitable that some aspects of worship peculiar to formerly Methodist, Presbyterian, or Congregationalist local churches would persist for years to come. But publication of *The Hymnary* in 1930 meant that people in almost all congregations of the new church were soon singing proudly from the same hymn book.[7] As well, the publication of *The Book of Common Order* in 1932 provided ministers with "directories" (orders) for common worship. The Committee on Church Worship and Ritual hoped that it would prove "fit to be regarded as normative, and also found flexible enough for the many-sided life of a growing Church."[8]

These common worship resources meant that the coming together across former denominational lines would now proceed apace. Their widespread use also may have raised an implicit question: would such a new departure also be required to give expression to the doctrinal faith of the new church? The Doctrine Section of the Basis of Union, essentially in

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[4] Ibid., 149-50.

[5] *The United Church Observer,* 1 October 1940, 17.

[6] For instance, Finding Aid 510 (a kind of index) for the Statement of Faith, United Church Archives, indicating the matters discussed at annual meetings of the Board of E and SS, does not contain any reference to the striking or work of the Commission on the Statement of Faith by the Board.

[7] In its preface the Committee on Church Worship and Ritual reported that *The Hymnary* "has been prepared in order that all worshippers within The United Church of Canada may be provided with a book of common praise." *The Hymnary of The United Church of Canada* (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1930), v.

[8] *The Book of Common Order of the United Church of Canada* (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1932), iii.

place as early as 1908,[9] was a vital and utterly necessary achievement: without agreement among the three churches doctrinally, there would have been no point in proceeding with other matters affecting the union, including polity and attendant by-laws. But the language of the original Twenty Articles appears complex and has been described as "more confusing than helpful."[10] In what served as a spur to the creation of the Commission on the Statement of Faith, former moderator Richard Roberts had "urged the Seventh General Council to set up a commission for the purpose of preparing 'a statement that might be understood by the average layman and be useful for the instruction of catechumens.'"[11]

As critics in the years immediately before union noted, the piety of the Articles looks back to the nineteenth century rather than forward to the unfolding twentieth. One Presbyterian critic observed that the doctrine section of the Basis was a traditional statement despite the fact that "it was written when the various sciences were having their profound influence in reshaping our understanding of religion and when the social interpretation of Christianity was receiving emphasis."[12] Moreover, it was well-known that, in its work on the articles, the framers drew directly from the "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith" (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) and "The Articles of Faith of the Presbyterian Church of England." These two factors—the missing contemporary context and the dependence on prior statements of other churches—made it almost inevitable that the new church would want to issue a new statement of doctrine, one "made in Canada."

The moment for this self-authenticating step came in 1936 when the Seventh General Council declared that "the time is opportune for the preparation of a Statement of Faith which shall embody in concise and

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[9]The article on prayer (XIII) was added in 1917. The completion of the union project was interrupted by the First World War and the approval process lengthened by resistance in the Presbyterian Church.

[10] Comment of Dean Ritchie of United Theological College, Montreal. Minutes of the Central and Eastern Consultation of 20 November 1939, Commission on the Statement of Faith, United Church Archives, Acc. No. 82.031C, Box 1.

[11] Minutes of the Central and Eastern Consultation, Commission on the Statement of Faith, United Church Archives, Acc. No. 82.031C, Box 1. In a recent e-conversation with the Very Rev. Bruce McLeod, I learned that, in his early years of ministry, he used the Statement of Faith in his Confirmation classes.

[12] E. Lloyd Morrow, *Church Union in Canada; Its History, Motives, Doctrine and Government* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1923), 292.

intelligible form what we in the United Church conceive to be the substance of the Christian faith," and assigned the task of preparing it to the Board of Evangelism and Social Service (E and SS). It was time, after a decade of union, for those living in union to express their Christian faith from the perspective of the new-church reality. Moreover, in calling for a "concise and intelligible form," the resolution also was asking for a shift from the stained-glass and sometimes complex wording of 1908.

The Process of the Commission

At its meeting on 17 November 1936, the E and SS Board took up its mandate by striking a Central Commission on the Statement of Faith and also creating regional groups to which the Central group would submit drafts for consideration and response. The Central Commission was to comprise seven members, with power to add. On the Commission during the 1936-38 biennium were: four Toronto pastors (including former moderators George Pidgeon and Richard Roberts, as well as Harold Young and Gerald Cragg), two Emmanuel faculty members (John Line and John MacLeod, soon to be replaced by John Dow), one Queen's faculty member (J.M. Shaw), the principal of Victoria College (Walter Brown, nominated as a lay member), and E and SS staff member Ernest Thomas as secretary.

Fortnightly meetings were held through the winters of 1937 and 1938, and drafts of the Commission's work were sent to the regional groups for comment. "The response was extensive and the Commission found that the task had so grown on its hands that only a report of progress could be submitted to the Council of 1938."[13] As well, the work of the Commission was ostensibly hampered by the fact that its chair, Prof. Shaw of Queen's, was not able to attend regularly in Toronto, though personal conflict seems also to have been a factor.[14] In a reorganization of the Commission in November of 1938, Principal Richard Davidson of Emmanuel College, Toronto, joined the Commission as its chair, and James Mutchmor (the newly appointed general secretary of E and SS) took over the post of

[13] Report of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service, *Record of Proceedings of the Ninth General Council* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1940), 280.

[14] Ian Manson reports a comment by J. R. Mutchmor that "certain differences of' personality between Shaw and Thomas made it increasingly impossible for them to work together." "'Fighting the Good Fight': Salvation, Social Reform, and Service in the United Church of Canada's Board of Evangelism and Social Service, 1925 – 1945" (Th. D. dissertation, Toronto School of Theology, 1999), 193. Mutchmor's quote comes from J.R. Mutchmor, *Mutchmor* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), 89.

secretary. Wilfred Lockhart, the Secretary of the Student Christian Movement at the University of Toronto also served in the 1938-40 biennium.

The regional groups were led by members of United Church theological faculties in six locales: Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Vancouver. During the course of 1939 and in early 1940, in-person consultations with the regional groups were convoked, one in Saskatoon, one in Montreal, and the last in Kingston.[15] There was also a gathering of theological college representatives (mostly principals, including a Miss Rutherford, presumably representing the United Church Training School, now the Centre for Christian Studies) who happened to be attending the Board of Christian Education meeting in the spring of 1939.

There was consensus at the beginning of the Commission's work that the Statement should be a matter of "affirmation rather than apologetic," though there was a difference of opinion "as to the extent to which the affirmations should be made in terms relevant to the thought of our own day."[16] As the work proceeded, and comments were received and revisions made, by the winter of 1939 two main drafts were being circulated confidentially, denominated A and B. Draft A was largely the work of John Line, assisted by his Emmanuel colleague, John Dow; Draft B was largely the work of Ernest Thomas.

Draft A is the more scholarly and traditional in its wording, while B is simpler, and at some points almost lyrical. As an example, compare sentences in the two draft articles on "The Holy Spirit":

> Draft A: We believe it is the office of the Spirit to continue and bring to fulfilment the redemptive work of Christ; that he reveals and witnesses to the truth of Revelation recorded in the Scriptures; that He is the inspirer of faith and the bearer of forgiveness; that by Him men are inwardly moved and are enabled to persevere toward holiness . . .

[15] The Kingston meeting brought the Kingston and Montreal sub-groups together with the Central Commission on 5 February 1940, late in the process. The one-day consultation does not seem to have added materially to the work of the Commission. An interesting detail about this meeting is its cost: the *per diem* for members of the Central Commission was $9, the total cost not to exceed $75. At this meeting the death of Ernest Thomas was announced.

[16] Digest of Proceedings, Commission on the Statement of Faith, 17 November 1939, United Church Archives, Acc. No. 82.031C, Box 1.

> Draft B: We believe in the Holy Spirit as the Divine source of all that heightening of human character and ability which men from time to time have experienced in the service of God's people; and which is seen in the radiant joy and serenity with which Christians are enabled to overcome temptation, suffering and defeat.[17]

My reading is that the style of the final text of the Statement represents the attempt to achieve a middle ground between the more academic and more popular styles of the two drafts. More important than style, perhaps, is the difference in content, a difference characterized by Ian Manson this way:

> While Thomas focused on God's work in the world through Jesus' life and teaching was being continued by the church and spirit-filled people who were working to bring God's Kingdom closer to fruition, Line devoted less attention to Jesus' life and work and focused more extensively on the meaning of the cross and Christ's resurrection.[18]

Many of those serving on the Commission were also, or had been, members of the E and SS Board, including Line, J. M. Shaw, and R.B.Y. Scott, all of whom believed that social imperatives are entailed in the gospel. However, as the hard reality of the depression continued, and as war loomed and then came to pass, there was a shift on the Board and in the Commission[19] to focus more on a more traditional and transcendent—and less immanent—understanding of God's relationship to the world. Line, who was also a member of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, seems to have expressed this shift in his draft.

Global meetings that would lead to the formation of the World Council of Churches also likely affected the focus of the Commission. In 1937 the World Conferences on Life and Work (Oxford) and on Faith and Order (Edinburgh) had taken place. J. M. Shaw, who had attended, reported to the annual meeting of the Board of E and SS in 1937, expressing the appeal of the Edinburgh Conference to all Christian communions to

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[17] Drafts, Commission on the Statement of Faith, UCA, Acc. No. 82.031C, Box 2.

[18] Ian Manson, "Fighting the Good Fight," 194.

[19] Noted by Manson, ibid., 198f.

maintain in their thinking and acting the proper perspective between things essential and things non-essential, between things primary and secondary or subordinate . . . for the sake of the Church's more effective witnessing to Christ and to the healing and unifying power of His Spirit in the face of the tragic dissentions and divisions of the present.[20]

Although Ian Manson notes the twin factors of wartime stress and heightened ecumenical commitment as affecting a shift, he may underrate the significance of the traditional, catholic turn as an expression of historic faith. Does the New Testament not maintain the primacy of faith, with works as an exercise in gratitude and responsibility resulting from the fundamental relationship with God? Manson also characterizes a difference between a focus on Atonement in Draft A and Incarnation in Draft B. However, Draft B is not incarnational in the sense of professing the Incarnation of the eternal Christ. The focus falls rather on Jesus' earthly ministry, the outcome of the Incarnation itself.

Draft A contains all the heads of doctrine that are found in the final text, except for the later addition of "Christian Life and Duty," which contains reference to the Kingdom of God. Like many earlier drafts, its article on the Holy Trinity is complex, reflecting the concern of drafters that they should not fail to acknowledge the paradoxical (and, for some, confounding) nature of the doctrine. Draft B provides a long second article on "Creation and Providence," leaving only a single sentence in its first article on "God." It also contains articles on "The Church and Civil Authority" and on "The Kingdom of God." Of the Kingdom Thomas writes: "We believe that it is the unchanging purpose of God to establish an actual society of righteousness on this earth, and that those who profess and call themselves Christians should work and pray for its coming."[21] This postmillennial expectation of a culminating reign of God on earth is typical of Thomas's passionate, if prickly, advocacy of the social gospel.[22]

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[20] J.M. *S*haw, "The Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences," Board of Evangelism and Social Service Thirteenth Annual Report (1937), 52-53. Quoted by Manson, "Fighting the Good Fight," 192.

[21] Commission on the Statement of Faith, United Church Archives, Acc. No. 82.031C, Box 2.

[22] Too much could be made of the significance of the differences between the two drafts. As an example, in perhaps a mellower time in his career (1918), Thomas had "lauded American social gospel theologian Walter Rauschenbusch for 'having shown what the truly conservative student had asserted all along, that the old gospel contained in it all that was needed to support and inspire a social message.'" Reported by Ian Manson, Th. D. dissertation (1999), "Fighting the Good Fight": Salvation, Social Reform,

The Regional and Principals' Consultations[23]

The two drafts received significant comment from the three in-person consultations of 1939. At the *Principals Consultation* (17 April 1939) Commission Chair Richard Davidson began the meeting by saying "that the Statement should be conservative in the best sense of the word, and, at the same time, to be normative it must be timely and forward-looking in character . . . The Chairman agreed that the present draft was in academic language and claimed that this was necessary at the present stage." As if in rejoinder, "Dr. Thomas urged the timely as well as the timeless, claiming that this Statement of Faith should not be 'tied-up to' the New Testament. He pointed out that Jesus never married, never voted or joined a Trade Union." Thomas also "questioned as to whether it would be wise to make Barthianism determinative."

"Principal Tuttle [St. Stephen's College] urged that our statement re: the Resurrection be not based upon a physical fact . . ." Later he drew attention to the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and "urged that the statement re: the Holy Spirit be more definitely related to God and Jesus Christ. Principal Kilpatrick [United College, Montreal] and others agreed that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been allowed to lapse; to an alarming extent it does not exist in the minds of many of our ministers and people." "Dean King [United College, Winnipeg] questioned whether the thought that there is something in man to respond to the Holy Spirit was sufficiently emphasized."

Anticipating later concern about exclusive language, "Professor Falconer [Pine Hill] stated that the words 'He' and 'Him' occur too often."

> Principal Tuttle stated that an argument from the standpoint of psychology and couched in terms similar to those of Hegelian philosophy might be considered in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. The point was debated at some length." Tuttle also referred to the marked changes in scientific thought and expressed the opinion that a more extended reference to creation should appear in the statement." He warned against "vague indefinite statements regarding cosmos" and urged that "the

and Service in the United Church of Canada's Board of Evangelism and Social Service, 1925 – 1945, 47.

[23] All quotations in this section are from Minutes of the Commission, United Church Archives, Acc. No. 82.031C, Box 2.

> principle of development be more prominent in section one…

Following on Tuttle's reference to the creation, an existential question for Prairie people was raised by Principal Dix of St. Andrew's, who "asked whether the nature of the physical world should be a subject of consideration, and pointed out that to many people in the drought areas of Saskatchewan, the Providence of God was questioned."

The Western Consultation (16 October 1939) gave rise to discussion of controversial questions of belief. The note was sounded that care should be taken in dealing with them. For instance, "The question of the Virgin Birth was raised and it was agreed that the commission should be on guard against criticism of failure to include an affirmation on this difficult subject." Again, "One member stated that the Trinity was more a barrier than a bridge to belief…" Another "questioned the too metaphysical use of the word 'sin.' He urged that we approach the subject from the psychological or psychiatric angle."

The Central and Eastern Consultation (20 November 1939) heard significant comments about the purpose and method of the Statement, particularly from members of faculty at United Theological College/McGill. Prof. R.B.Y. Scott observed that both drafts were "unduly metaphysical," and that a more direct approach was desirable. "To this end, he urged that Christian experience as expressed in Scripture and as known in the Christian life should be the ground and source, from which our doctrinal statement should have its rise." Principal Davidson concurred, saying that "our plan should be to approach the doctrinal statement through Scripture and Christian experience."

The minutes of *the Central Commission* at its own meeting of 22 January 1940 show that the members wrestled throughout an evening session with a question about sin: "If original sin is not to be affirmed in terms of Genesis 3, on what ground is the universality of sin to be affirmed?" The answer found in the final text is the straight-forward assertion "that man has used his freedom for low and selfish ends." As Reinhold Niebuhr observed, sin is the only empirically verifiable doctrine of the Christian faith.

Extending the Influence of the Statement

At the beginning of the central and eastern regional consultation Principal Davidson had outlined the Commission's view of its fourfold task: "preparation of a briefer statement (1,200 words); a longer statement (2,500 words); a book similar to that of Rev. J.G. Riddell's of the Church

of Scotland Commission; a catechism." The book foreseen—described as "expository of the Brief Statement of Faith" and "a companion volume to the Statement of Faith"—was published in October 1943, written by Commission member John Dow. It consisted of twelve chapters, each chapter expository of an article of the Statement and headed by the quotation of the article. The first print order for *This Is Our Faith* was fifteen hundred, each copy to be sold for one dollar. The catechism was published a month later in booklet form (3.25" x 5.5") and sold for five cents a copy, or twenty-five for a dollar. Both these companions to the Statement of Faith were produced under the oversight of a new standing Commission on the Christian Faith that met for the first time in March 1941. Its membership now included four representatives of the Board of Christian Education, and all members participated in drafting the catechism—again in ongoing consultation with the regional groups.

The Enduring Significance of the Preamble

Perhaps the most enduring influence of the 1940 Statement on the United Church as a whole is its preamble, in particular these words:

> The Church's faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy, redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ. It is declared in Scripture; it is witnessed to both in the creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches; and it is formulated for a specific purpose in our Basis of Union. But Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs.

This resolve to hold fast the core of faith as God's redemptive love, while declaring (and living) it in ways relevant to changing context, was evident early in the deliberations of the Commission, and may well be the quintessential theological stance of the United Church. This stance can even be recognized in the reflections of those who crafted the original articles of the Basis. In his companion book to the original articles one of the participants, Prof. T. B. Kilpatrick, observed:

> [T]his doctrinal statement makes no claim to infallibility or finality. The substance of, or essence of, the Christian faith is here . . . But the form of human speech in which they convey their message to the church and to the world

> has the imperfection which must belong to all efforts to express in human thought and language meanings that are eternal and divine. Creed revision is the inherent right and continual duty, of a living Church. This is our "Confession of Faith." We are conscious of the limitations and inadequacies in the intellectual form of our statement. It will be the duty of those of those who come after us to find a more fitting intellectual expression of the unchanging and inexhaustible truth of the Gospel.[24]

This wrapping of the body of doctrine in the clothing of fresh expression also may be seen in two later denomination-shaping documents—A New Creed and A Song of Faith. After their approval by strong majorities in the pastoral charges and presbyteries of the Church, they are now included—together with the 1940 Statement of Faith—in the Doctrine Section of the Basis. These two later expressions of faith maintain the historic faith of the church while doing so in fresh and sometimes arresting language.

Reflections on the Final Text

At the beginning of its work the Central Commission identified seven doctrinal heads for the preparation of drafts: God, Revelation, Incarnation, Atonement, Holy Spirit, The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life. To these the Holy Scriptures and the Church were added. The final text has twelve heads: God, Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, Man and Man's Sin, Redemption, The Church, The Ministry, The Holy Scriptures, The Sacraments, Christian Life and Duty, The Consummation. As the Commission worked, it added to and reconfigured the original nine, twice relegating an original head to inclusion under another. "Revelation," originally the second article, was included under the head of The Holy Scriptures, and, in contrast, the trinitarian faith in God is highlighted through the cumulative significance of the first four articles. Reference to "The Kingdom of God" is included through brief reference in both Christian Life and Duty and The Consummation. The article on "The Church" is expanded to include separate exposition of The Ministry and The Sacraments; and "The Holy Scriptures" are now seen as a treasure carried by the church. In "The Holy Scriptures" one notes that God utters

[24] Thomas Buchanan Kilpatrick, *Our Common Faith,* with a Brief History of the Church Union Movement in Canada by Kenneth H. Cousland (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1928), 63.

the divine Word "in many portions progressively," an acknowledgement of the impact of biblical criticism and the need to explain evident development (and inconsistencies) in the Bible's portrayal of God. Man and Man's Sin (Article 5) is added as a basis for understanding the costly self-offering of Christ leading to our Redemption (Article 6).

Overall, this process of extending and reconfiguring seems to have involved a more catholic turn, perhaps under the heightened influence of ecumenism in the late thirties. Certainly, it was a turn allowing the United Church to play a more global ecumenical role, emphasizing the call to being a uniting as well as united church. This was a positive step in the growing maturity of the young church.

There are shadows thrown by the final text, of course. Two stand out for me. From our perspective today we might have wished for an independent article on the kingdom of God, giving due attention to the impassioned ministry of the prophets, as well to the teaching of the New Testament. Even today, in a Church whose self-understanding continues to include a strong commitment to social justice, the theological basis for such a commitment is not always well articulated or well understood. An article setting Christian commitment to serve God's world-mending mission within a defining theological statement would have been beneficial—and today it might help the Church avoid the pitfall of being seen as more a church of causes than of Christ.

A second concern is with the first article where the belief is expressed that "God, as sovereign Lord exalted above the world, orders and overrules all things in it to the accomplishment of His holy, wise, and good purposes." A submission from the Montreal group (written by G.G.D. Kilpatrick, G.R. Cragg, and R.B.Y. Scott) breathes a gentler spirit: "We believe in the sovereignty of God, not as that of bare omnipotence, but of the overruling love whereby we know Him as our Father."[25]

As noted by Principal Dix at the western consultation, drought was raising stark questions on the Prairies about an overruling Providence.

And then there is a letter of 13 June 1940 received by Wilfred Lockhart and reported at one of the last meetings of the Commission. In it, a young Anglican mathematics graduate and friend responds to the section on God from the perspective of A. N. Whitehead: "God 'transcends' the world, but 'exalted' suggests something more. God does not overrule all things; if he did, he would not have instituted the British Empire or the present war." Perhaps few on the Central Commission were

[25] Drafts, UCA, Box 3.

knowledgeable about Whitehead's doctrine of God's power as suasive rather than coercive, but many of us since have found his insights helpful in understanding God's relationship with the world.

In an early number of *Touchstone*, N.K. Clifford contends that, under the leadership of Richard Davidson, the 1940 Statement of Faith was largely based on the Church of Scotland's Short Statement of Faith (1935).[26] While I have not been able to locate a copy, it is easy to believe that there would be similarities. In common with other statements of faith of the time, there are similarities that one would expect: any brief statement of Christian belief is bound to have similar heads of doctrine. Having read the minutes of the Commission, perused the varying drafts, and knowing the back-and-forth consultative process, I find it hard to believe that the Statement of 1940 was not made in Canada.

The 1940 Statement of Faith was not the last word on the theology of the United Church, nor did its framers ever expect it to be. New occasions would teach new duties. However, those of us nurtured in its ethos were provided with resources to meet new challenges and to express our faith in the light of new perspectives. And —it almost goes without saying—such new expression would not be the last word spoken by the United Church.

[26] N.K. Clifford, "The United Church of Canada and Doctrinal Confession," Touchstone 2, No. 2 (May 1984), 12.

UNITED CHURCH "ARCHAEOLOGY": THE CASE OF "A NEW CREED"

By William Haughton

Introduction

We study the past in order to understand more about the world and our own place(s) in it. Of course, this is a broad statement. Yet, the vast expanse of potential human knowledge is precisely why our learning requires many and varied disciplines in order to reach even limited, conjectural explanations of how things have come to be. While I prefer to study a relatively niche subject area within Canadian church history, I often find fascinating analogies from other, quite different fields. Geology, for example, has taught us that all around the globe, sometimes not far beneath the surface, is a thin band of often grey or black rock, full of extra-terrestrial iridium, known as the K-Pg (Cretaceous-Paleogene) Boundary. It seems to be the remnant of an asteroid that hit the earth approximately 66 million years ago. Upon impact (at Chicxulub, on the Yucatán Peninsula), a massive cloud of toxic debris was kicked up into the atmosphere that, among other catastrophic consequences, blocked out much of the sun's light and lead to mass extinctions. Tellingly, all dinosaur fossils are found below the K-Pg Boundary. The intellectual tools needed to uncover a remarkable story like this are provided by geology, but the process of drawing conclusions is much like that used in history.

In a related way, the discipline of archaeology looks at human civilization—a comparatively recent development—through the lens of objects in the ground that have been left behind by our forebears. From weapons to household implements to the foundations of buildings, the artifacts of past societies that have been preserved in the earth, though often broken and fragmentary, offer tantalizing glimpses into former human societies. Where there have been centuries or millennia of continuous habitation, material has tended to pile up over time, creating layers—or strata—that, when revealed, provide fascinating insight into social evolution.

It is often thought that the study of text-based sources is fundamentally unlike the study of rock formations or material culture. While there are notable differences, of course, there are also striking overlaps and similarities. Textual criticism often relies on manuscripts discovered by archaeologists. More figuratively, the textual critic compares and evaluates different manuscripts in order to "dig down" through the accumulated copies, so to speak, hoping to find the autograph—the original text. Redaction criticism offers another analogy.

Working entirely with an established text, the redaction critic uses literary analyses to speculate about what editions or sources might lay behind the received text. In the book of Judges, for example, even a non-expert reader of biblical Hebrew (as I am) can see that the text of the Song of Deborah (5:2–31) is different from the surrounding texts in language and style—namely, it is much more difficult to translate. Experts tell us that this is because this passage preserves an older, relatively ancient piece of Hebrew poetry. In other words, texts sometimes display layers of development within themselves which, when opened up to a cross-sectional perspective, give us a picture of development through time.

The Layers of "A New Creed"

This lengthy preamble may seem an unusual way to introduce a discussion of "A New Creed." As it is a relatively recent text, we obviously don't have to excavate in order to find it. However, it has strata of its own, seen in its various editions or redactions. In *Voices United*, "A New Creed" is dated, "1968, alt."[1] This is because "A New Creed" was first approved by the General Council Executive in November 1968 but has since been altered. In fact, the text has been amended twice—once in 1980 and again in 1995. Each edition of the text bears a distinct theological and cultural imprint from its time. The purpose of this essay is not to analyze "A New Creed," as such, but to suggest that in looking comparatively at its layers of development, we can gain an interesting cross-sectional perspective on the evolution of The United Church of Canada in the second half of the twentieth century.

"Man is not alone, he lives in God's world"

In May 1965, the standing Committee on Christian Faith was reviewing a draft baptismal liturgy that had been proposed for inclusion in the planned *Service Book*—the long-hoped-for successor to *The Book of Common Order* (1932). Some members of the committee—along with many others in the denomination as well—were discomfited by the rubric of introduction, "The Apostles Creed shall be said by all."[2] In response, the committee wrote to its counterpart, the Committee on Church Worship and Ritual, then-preparing the *Service Book*, requesting that the Apostles Creed be "*permissive* rather than obligatory". It also wrote to the Sub-Executive

[1] *Voices United* (Toronto: UCPH, 1996), 918.

[2] Committee on Christian Faith, *Creeds*, 5. As was eventually spelled out in the "Introduction" to the *Service Book*, "shall" was a word that signalled the strong preference of the church.

of the General Council requesting permission to draft an alternative statement that could be used in place of the Apostles' Creed. Before the writing of such an alternative liturgical confession was actually begun, however, the committee wrote to the General Council Sub-Executive a second time and gained permission to produce such a statement within the context of a broader study of creeds and confessions throughout the Christian tradition as well as the place of creedalism within the United Church.[3]

Work on this creed-writing project began in the fall of 1966. For a year, progress was frustrated by a striking divergence of opinions present among committee members, who had profound disagreements in almost every area of discussion. A "creative explosion" in the group occurred in October 1967 when one of its members, Mac Freeman of Victoria College, submitted a confession that began, "I believe that Man is not alone." With its opening line likely inspired by the renowned book of Abraham Joshua Heschel (*We Are Not Alone*) and an article by John C. Bennett, his draft became the seed from which "A New Creed" grew.[4] After a consequential revision by Richard Delorme of Valleyfield, Quebec the committee spent the remainder of its time essentially fine-tuning this document, which was approved for publication in the *Service Book* by the General Council Executive in November 1968.[5]

"The sixties," however we might assign its start- and end-dates, was an era of considerable cultural upheaval. The revolutionary tenor of the times was felt in virtually every part of society, including in churches. Though theological liberalism had existed in the United Church from its beginnings, a notable shift occurred in the 1960s whereby its tenets were proclaimed more boldly, with greater variety, and from an increasing number of directions. Many theological gaps opened up within the United Church in ways that sometimes seemed threatening to the future of the denomination.

A popular theological movement in the post-WWII era was existentialism. Existentialism, in its broadest sense, was a philosophical approach popular in the mid-twentieth century that focused on the subjective experience of the individual over against the search for transcendent, metaphysical reality. In many manifestations, existentialism was atheistic. "Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all

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[3] William R. H. Haughton, *The Search for a Symbol: "A New Creed" and The United Church of Canada* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022), 32–34.

[4] Haughton, *The Search for a Symbol*, 40–43.

[5] Haughton, *The Search for a Symbol*, 60–61.

the consequences of a coherent atheistic position," writes Sartre. It "isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing."[6] Christian existentialism differed from its thoroughly secular counterpart in supposing that within the relatively closed loop of personal experience, God could break in and *encounter* individuals. The German New Testament scholar Bultmann expresses this succinctly, "for modern man the idea of a God above or beyond the world is either no longer viable or is perverted in a religiosity which would escape from the world . . . Only the idea of God which can find, which can seek and find, the unconditional in the conditional, the beyond in the here, the transcendent in the present at hand, as possibility of encounter, is possible for modern man."[7]

There was "general agreement" within the Committee on Christian Faith that its creed should "start with man" and express an "existential conviction"—the existential condition of human loneliness in particular.[8] Such an ideological orientation is quite evident in the 1968 version of "A New Creed."[9] "Man is not alone, he lives in God's world" emphasizes an interpretation of human experience rather than a claim about the transcendent reality of God. There is a stress throughout on the implications for us of God's coming to encounter us, rather than what is declared to be true about God-independent-of-us. "God . . . has come in the true Man, Jesus, *to reconcile and make new*" and "God . . . *works in us and others* by his Spirit." In marked contrast to the Apostles' Creed it was intended to replace in the liturgy about half of "A New Creed," which is taken up with ethical imperatives, through an explication of the statement, "He calls us to be his church." There is no doubt that the "Man is not alone" text is a classic expression of the theological existentialism so popular in the sixties, which itself both affirmed and challenged the broader movement of atheistic existentialism of which it was a noteworthy variation.

"We are not alone, we live in God's world"

In the late 1970s, as part of a broader restructuring of the United Church,

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[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 51.

[7] Rudolf Bultmann, *Translating Theology into the Modern Age*, ed. Robert W. Funk (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 93–94.

[8] Donald Evans, "Possible Revision of the Creed (Based on Committee discussion, September 23)," box 3, 82.204c, Committee on Christian Faith fonds, The United Church of Canada Archives.

[9] *Service Book for the use of the people* (Toronto: United Church, 1969), 310.

a new and smaller Theology and Faith Committee replaced the Committee on Christian Faith. One of the new committee's early tasks was to re-evaluate "A New Creed." In 1979, it made a proposal to the General Council Executive that the first line of the statement be revised to read, "We are not alone, we live in God's world." As one member of the committee told me, this was an obvious suggestion as many in the denomination were already privately reciting the text with that amendment.[10] The Executive not only supported this proposal, it asked "that the [entire] Creed be revised to make it inclusive in its language."[11] Over the course of a year, the Theology and Faith Committee worked to remove masculine pronouns for God and humanity. "Man" became "we" and "us". "His" became "God's." The most striking change was from "the true Man, Jesus" to "Jesus, the Word made flesh" in the fourth line. At least one commentator has suggested that this stylistic amendment actually signalled a shift in the creed's Christology.[12] Coincidentally perhaps, this was also the line of the statement on which it was most difficult for the committee to find a change that would meet the threshold of consensus.[13] Almost twelve months to the day after the Theology and Faith Committee had received its direction, Chair Peter Gordon White went back before the General Council Executive to present the revised text. The Executive then approved this new version of "A New Creed" for use throughout the United Church.[14]

According to more recent intellectual developments, the 1980 version of "A New Creed" might not be considered "inclusive" today.[15] However, it was considered so by the standards of its time in its move away from explicitly male language in referring to God or humankind. Indeed, this second edition of the creed reflected the concerns of the United Church in its time as had the "Man is not alone" text in the 1960s. N. Keith

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[10] Haughton, *The Search for a Symbol*, 62.

[11] "Executive Meeting Minutes" (21 Nov. 1979), box 34, 82.001c, Correspondence of the Executive and Sub-Executive, The United Church of Canada Archives.

[12] Don Schweitzer, "The Christology of The United Church of Canada," in *The Theology of The United Church of Canada*, Schweitzer *et al*. eds., (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2019), 137.

[13] Haughton, *The Search for a Symbol*, 62.

[14] "Executive Meeting Minutes" (19 Nov. 1980), box 34, 82.001c, Correspondence of the Executive and Sub-Executive, The United Church of Canada Archives.

[15] William S. Kervin, "Sacraments and Sacramentality in The United Church of Canada," in *The Theology of The United Church of Canada*, 236–239.

Clifford, writing in the early 1980s, expressed his surprise that "A New Creed" had not been more sensitive to concerns of sexism from the beginning. After all, he writes, "the [original] drafting committee included two women" and "the concerns of the new feminist movement . . . were just [then] beginning to make the presence of women felt within the churches."[16] But, in reality, the church rarely responds to stimuli so rapidly.

Second-wave feminism was so-named in a 1968 *New York Times Magazine* article by Martha Weinman Lear entitled, "The Second Feminist Wave: What Do These Women Want?"[17] Stretching eventually from the 1960s to the 1980s, this phenomenon emerged from the confluence of various economic, technological, cultural, and intellectual currents in the post-WWII era. No longer content with the legal-political victories of first-wave feminists—particularly regarding women's suffrage—second-wave feminists went further in confronting other structural and philosophical foundations seen as patriarchal. Christian theological thinking and the praxis of many churches were influenced by this expression of the women's movement. The work of Mary Daly, professor at Boston College 1967–1999, demonstrates this most poignantly. In fact, perhaps the classic work in the genre is her *Beyond God the Father* (1973), in which she summarizes succinctly, "if God is male, then male is God."[18] For Daly, and many after her, it became simply impossible to call God "Father" or to use any kind of male language or imagery for God.

A former member of the Theology and Faith Committee who played a key role in the inclusive language revision of "A New Creed" once told me that the original "Man is not alone" text, "was a product of the sixties in all sorts of ways."[19] Indeed, the same kind of assessment could be made of the "We are not alone" revision a decade later. By this time, feminism—and within it a feminist theological perspective—had become an absolute commitment for many in the United Church. In subjecting denominational life to a critical analysis through a feminist lens,

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[16] N. Keith Clifford, "The United Church of Canada and Doctrinal Confession," *Touchstone* 2 (Fall 1984): 18. Although, interestingly, an early draft of "A New Creed" during Committee on Christian Faith deliberations in the late 60s did begin, "We are not alone." Angus MacQueen, "Revision of the Freeman-DeLorme Creed," box 3, 82.204c, Committee on Christian Faith fonds, The United Church of Canada Archives.

[17] Martha Weinman Lear, "The Second Feminist Wave: What Do These Women Want?" *New York Times Magazine* (10 March 1968): 24.

[18] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 19.

[19] Haughton, *The Search for a Symbol*, 27.

many United Church leaders discovered a decisively male-centred tradition and pushed for change in a variety of areas. In 1979, Bloor Street United Church installed Lutkenhaus's *Crucified Woman* sculpture in its sanctuary and in 1980 Lois Wilson was elected the first female Moderator of the General Council.[20] Along with the adoption of a revised denominational confession, these were symbolic of the considerable influence of second-wave feminism on the United Church in this period. In as much as a feminist theological perspective has remained largely normative in the denomination, the absence of male pronouns and imagery has contributed considerably to the enduring popularity of "A New Creed."

"To live with respect in Creation"

In 1994, Toronto Conference petitioned the Thirty-Fifth General Council to direct the Theology and Faith Committee to write a new line, for inclusion in the second main stanza of "A New Creed," that would reflect a growing concern about environmental issues. Though the proposal stated that, "the final wording and placing [of a new line] would be determined by the Theology and Faith Committee," it also offered a number of possibilities for consideration: "to care for creation;" "to live in harmony with creation;" "to pursue the integrity of creation;" "to walk softly on the earth;" and "to heal the earth."[21] After the success of this petition at the General Council and a relatively short period of work by the Theology and Faith Committee, "To live with respect in Creation" was approved for insertion into the text of "A New Creed" by the General Council Executive in March 1995.[22]

Harold Wells notes that, "'to care for the earth,'" another option, "was felt to be too anthropocentric."[23] This is a telling comment, for it speaks to a significant shift that had occurred in the theological and cultural outlook of the United Church. In the 1960s, a key influence in the writing of "A New Creed" was the philosophical movement of existentialism. By the 1990s, the existentialist impulse had faded away within the denomination, as its popular influence had similarly dissipated in the

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[20] Joan Wyatt, "The 1970s: Voices from the Margins," in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, Schweitzer ed. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 120, 129–132.

[21] *Record of Proceedings*, Thirty-Fifth General Council (Toronto: United Church, 1994), 526–527.

[22] Harold Wells, "From Classical Theism to Ecotheology," in *The Theology of The United Church of Canada*, 91, 100n70.

[23] Wells, "From Classical Theism to Ecotheology," 91.

surrounding culture. "Too anthropocentric" was not a prevailing argument in the sixties, but thirty years later it was decisive.

A key impetus for the contemporaneous environmentalism in the West was its adoption by the counter-culture movement from the 1970s onward.[24] An important signal of its shift into the mainstream was the surprising electoral success of *Die Grünen* (The Greens)—having grown out of anti-nuclear protests just three years earlier—who won 27 seats in West Germany's Bundestag in 1983. By the mid-1980s, ecological themes were becoming more prominent in theology.[25] Sally McFague's *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (1987), Matthew Fox's *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (1988) and Thomas Berry's *The Dream of the Earth* (1988) are seminal examples of this development. United Church theologian, Douglas John Hall, notably has been among the influential thinkers in this area. He writes in *The Steward*, "historic Christianity has seemed either to ignore and escape from the world, or else wish to possess it."[26] For Hall, the analogy of incarnation provides a more faithful vision and calling for humanity: to be in union and solidarity with the whole of creation and, if necessary, to be willing to suffer for it.[27]

More broadly, the United Church's attention in the 1990s became focused more consistently on issues of creation and the place of humans within it. In 1997, the Thirty-sixth General Council "affirmed" a report entitled *Mending the World* that states:

> The world is at risk because there are those who, refusing to see through tears, seek dominion and use the instruments of military, economic, political and cultural power to that end. God, who sees clearly through tears, is grieved by the estrangement of God's children from one another and from the created order. God works, at the beginning of the day as at the end, for the mending of creation.

The understanding of "ecumenism" at the core of this influential document is grounded in an interesting re-interpretation of the Greek

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[24] New York Times, "In Praise of the Counterculture," *New York Times* (11 December 1994): E1.

[25] Wells, "From Classical Theism to Ecotheology," 89.

[26] Douglas John Hall, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 102.

[27] Hall, *The Steward*, 224.

oikouménē, moving from its generally Roman, political meaning in the New Testament and its derivatively inter-denominational significance in traditional ecclesiology to something more akin to "creation" (typically *ktísis* or even *kósmos*).[28]

Conclusion

This brief essay has been written specifically for an issue of *Touchstone* on the theme of "Key Moments in United Church Theology." What makes "A New Creed" a particularly interesting object of study for this purpose is that the text itself has been initially approved and subsequently amended twice.[29] In other words, it encapsulates three distinct "moments." The three editions, or redactions, of "A New Creed" have been sanctioned for liturgical use throughout the denomination by the General Council Executive. In 1968, the Executive approved the version beginning "Man is not alone, he lives in God's world." In 1980, it approved a non-gendered language revision beginning, "We are not alone, we live in God's world." In 1995, a line regarding environmental stewardship was added into the second main stanza, "to live with respect in Creation." Speaking figuratively, the various layers of the statement's development give us a kind of cross-sectional picture of theological change in The United Church of Canada from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s.

The evolving text of "A New Creed" over this period is reflective both of continuity and change. While the edition in use today is in recognizable continuity with its antecedents, it has also changed in significant ways. Each redaction of the creed displays tendencies which, while fitting well in its own time, would seem at least a little more out of place either earlier or later. Yet, despite the striking cultural contrasts and theological adjustments evident, a clear historical pattern of movement emerges: from the seemingly irresistible influence of secular intellectual fashions to responses of theological adaptation to adoptions of new or modified denominational statements of faith. In the 1960s, the United Church sought a fundamental redefinition of its credal confession in light of existentialism. In 1979-80, it made notable changes in both the style and

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[28]InterChurch and InterFaith Committee, *Mending the World: An Ecumenical Vision for Healing and Reconciliation* (Toronto: United Church, 1997), 1.

[29] This is not totally unique, but is not the norm in Christian history either. The Nicene Creed has been amended—in A.D. 381 and later with the addition of the controversial "*filioque*" clause in the West—but most statements of faith eventually get supplemented or replaced, either explicitly or implicitly.

substance of this creed to reflect the influence of feminism. Then, in 1994-95, the document was updated again in order to include an expression of concern for the environment.[30]

Archaeology is a tantalizing discipline that often leaves us wanting to find just a little bit more. Its inherent challenges invite students to be both open to what is discovered and also accepting of what is not. One would be rash, based on just the uncovering of a few building-foundations or fragments of weapons and tools, to reconstruct life in an entire ancient society. So also in the work of more modern history must we be cautious in drawing conclusions. We ought not to take a small sampling of data and imagine we are able to "connect the dots" with more certainty than we actually can. From the evidence of "A New Creed" alone we cannot claim to know everything about the United Church or even its theology. What we catch in its most popular faith-statement, however, is an exciting glimpse into the form, content, evolution, and contexts of the denomination's confessional life during the second half of the twentieth century.

[30] I acknowledge the oversimplification of this proposal. After all, influences and eras overlap. Simone de Beauvoir could be suggested as a significant cultural influence for both existentialism—through her essays such as "*Pyrrhus et Cinéas*" (1944) and "*Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*" (1947)—as well as feminism—through her pioneering *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949). What I am suggesting is not a mechanistic cause and effect relationship between intellectual trends in society and United Church confession but rather that the various versions of "A New Creed," as textual artifacts, are themselves evidence of certain influences coming to bear, and bearing fruit, at particular moments when the time was ripe.

A SONG OF FAITH
By Michael Bourgeois

C. S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew,* the sixth-published book in his *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, is the Narnia origin story. It tells "how all the comings and goings between our own world and the land of Narnia first began,"[1] especially the comings and goings described in the first and best-known Narnia book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In *The Magician's Nephew* we find out the identity of the professor who owns the house where Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy are sent during the bombing of London during World War II; how the wardrobe in the professor's house came to be the passage between our world and Narnia; and even how the lamp post came to be where Lucy saw it when she entered Narnia for the first time. In *The Magician's Nephew*, we also find out how Narnia itself began. Magically transported from late nineteenth-century London, England to a dark and empty world, the children Digory and Polly and their involuntary traveling companions listen as Narnia is created around them.

> In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to come from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it.[2]

Stars appeared in the dark sky, followed by the rising of a brilliant sun revealing a river valley and hills and mountains, but without grasses, bushes, or trees yet. Digory, Polly, and the others are startled when they soon see that the singer is a lion: "Huge, shaggy, and bright, it stood facing the risen sun."[3] Readers of the other Narnia books have an advantage, however, because they immediately recognize the lion as Aslan, the Christ figure whom they have already come to know and love. And here, at this point in the story of *The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan creates the world of Narnia by singing.

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[1] C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (Penguin Books, 1973), 9; first published by The Bodley Head, 1955.
[2] Ibid., 93.
[3] Ibid., 96.

Singing is powerful, and the relationship between singing and expressions of faith is the most distinctive characteristic of *A Song of Faith*, the statement of faith affirmed by The United Church of Canada's 39th General Council (2006). Other important considerations about *A Song of Faith* include: why the United Church periodically revises and renews its statement of faith; how *A Song of Faith* reflects the United Church's theological traditions; and what influence *A Song of Faith* has had to date.

Singing What is Deepest in Our Hearts

Some desire for a new statement of faith for the United Church appeared in the late 1970s and by the mid-1980s it was understood to be an important task for the church's Committee on Theology and Faith. Over the next fifteen years, however, the committee first took up work on the United Church's understanding of biblical authority and interpretation and of the person and work of Jesus Christ. After the 34th General Council (1992) received the committee's report *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture* and the 37th General Council (2000) received its report *Reconciling and Making New*,[4] the 37th General Council went on to commission the Committee on Theology and Faith to develop a new statement of faith for the United Church. Specifically, the General Council directed the committee "to produce the draft of a timely and contextual statement of faith, with a view to circulation throughout the whole church for study and response, while honouring the diversity of our church and acknowledging our place in a pluralistic world and in an ongoing and developing tradition of faith, with interim reporting to the 38th General Council." It further directed that in this work the committee "give priority to engaging the church in conversation on the nature of the church (ecclesiology), ministry and the sacraments."[5]

When the Committee on Theology and Faith took up this mandate in late 2000 and early 2001, its members quickly agreed that a timely and contextual statement of faith that acknowledges the church's place in a pluralistic world and its own faith traditions should take a more poetic and musical form than had the church's 1925 and 1940 faith statements. One

[4] The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the 34th General Council, 1992* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1992), 104-109, 215-271, and 584-588; and *Record of Proceedings of the 37th General Council, 2000* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2000), 174-175, 188-192, 383-405, 1177-1179.

[5] The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the 37th General Council, 2000* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2000), 190-91.

important consideration is that the discursive rhetorical form of those faith statements reflects modern white, western, Euro-American culture in ways that limit their intelligibility for other cultural traditions. Another important consideration is that Christian Scriptures are full of songs. The songs of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 praise God for delivering the Hebrews from the Egyptians and profess their faith in their God. Similarly, Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 praises God and proclaims the deliverance that God is working through her. The Song of Solomon, sometimes known as the Song of Songs, is one long song; and the Book of Psalms includes 150 different songs of faith. We also see the link between singing and profession of faith in Philippians 2:6-11, where Paul quotes what is likely one of the earliest Christian hymns about Jesus Christ.

In addition to the songs in Christian Scriptures, there are the hymns United Church members and their ancestors have been singing in praise and worship for generations. During the church union movement in Canada in the early twentieth century, Methodist leader Nathaneal Burwash observed that "the hymn book is our liturgy, and, more powerfully than either articles of religion or confessions of faith, fashions our religious thinking as well as feeling." Burwash also noted that it was the unity fostered by singing the same hymns that had, already by 1912, made it possible for Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists to reach a relatively quick and easy agreement on the doctrinal basis for union. By singing these hymns, he said, "we had been learning and absorbing each from the other, all that was truest and best in our neighbour's ways and thoughts, until we found that in every essential we were one."[6] In much the same way, the hymns that church members have been singing from *Voices United* and, more recently, *More Voices*, clarify and confirm their faith, both personally and collectively.[7] As Nancy Hardy observed: "In the church, we sing what is deepest in our hearts—about God's creation and God's grace; about Jesus who is our friend and saviour; about the Holy Spirit who encourages us and blows us into the world. As we sing, we learn our theology: what we think and believe about God and one another."[8]

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[6] Nathaneal Burwash, "Church Union—Questions for the Methodist People. II. When?," *The Christian Guardian*, 31 January 1912, 14.

[7] The United Church of Canada, *Voices United: The Hymn and Worship Book of The United Church of Canada* (Etobicoke, ON: United Church Publishing House, 1996); and *More Voices* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2007).

[8] Nancy Hardy, ed., *Singing a Song of Faith: Daily Reflections for Lent* (Toronto:

Singing a New Song

Songs and singing them are clearly essential to how we express our faith, but with all the songs and hymns in our Scripture and hymn books, and all the other ways that we express our faith in creeds and confessions, why would we need a new song? There are some clues for how we might answer that question in the Bible itself. Psalm 98, for example, is very clear: sometimes what God does for us requires a new song. The old ones simply do not work for expressing our gratitude and praise—or our pain and grief.

The church's faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy, redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ. It is declared in Scripture; it is witnessed to both in the Creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches; and it is formulated for a specific purpose in our Basis of Union. But Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs. This we have attempted to do for the people of The United Church of Canada—seeking always to be faithful to Scripture and to the testimony of the Universal Church, and always aware that no statement of ours can express the whole truth of God.[9]

Then in the late 1970s, the United Church started talking about the need to take up the task yet again—and it was only with the approval of *A Song of Faith* in 2006 that the task was finished. Nevertheless, new situations, diverse perspectives, and different insights will always call the church to renewal. *A Song of Faith* expresses that point in its first line: "God is Holy Mystery, beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description." It expands on that point in its "Preamble": "This is not a statement for all time but for *our* time. In as much as the Spirit keeps faith with us, we can express our understanding of the Holy with confidence. And in as much as the Spirit is vast and wild, we recognize that our understanding of the Holy is always partial and limited. Nonetheless we have faith, and this statement collects the meaning of our song."[10] None of us knows all the answers, let alone all the questions. The inevitable incompleteness of all our expressions of faith is what animates the ongoing task of revising them. And the ongoing task of revising our expressions of faith not only includes incorporating new insights and experiences, but also includes paying attention to what we may have forgotten or neglected.

United Church Publishing House, 2007), 9.

[9] *The Manual*, 21.

[10] The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the 39th General Council, 2006* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2006), 428.

A Song of Faith and United Church Theological Traditions

Observing the 37th General Council's direction that a new statement of faith acknowledge "our place…in an ongoing and developing tradition of faith," the Committee on Theology and Faith studied and reflected not only on the United Church's major doctrinal documents—the "Doctrine" section of the Basis of Union, the 1940 Statement of Faith, and *A New Creed*—but also on the wealth of other theological resources that the church had developed in the decades following 1940. For example, in the 1960s the United Church's Committee on Christian Faith not only developed *A New Creed* but also generated the important related report on historic and contemporary creeds and their role in the church.[11] Similarly, the church's Commission on World Mission presented its landmark 1966 report that initiated a fundamental reorientation in the church's relationship with other faith traditions.[12] That reorientation was reflected in the later work of the Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations, including its reports *Mending the World* (1997) on a "whole world ecumenism" that embraces not just all Christians but also people of all faiths; and *Bearing Faithful Witness* (1998) and *That We May Know Each Other* (2004) on, respectively, the United Church's relationship with Judaism and Islam.[13] Recognizing this work, and explicitly alluding to the Commission on World Mission's 1966 report, *A Song of Faith* affirms that "We sing of God the Spirit, faithful and untameable, who is creatively and redemptively active in the world."

Another important aspect of the church's theological work in this period was its deliberations about the influence of sexism and patriarchy, including leadership in the church and the use of predominantly masculine language and images for God.[14] One focus for these deliberations was (and

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[11] Committee on Christian Faith, *Creeds* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1969).

[12] Commission on World Mission, *World Mission* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1966).

[13] Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations, *Mending the World: An Ecumenical Vision for Healing and Reconciliation* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1997); *Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church–Jewish Relations Today* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1998); and *That We May Know Each Other: United Church–Muslim Relations Today* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2004). The more recent report from the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, *Honouring the Divine in Each Other: United Church–Hindu Relations Today* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2016) continues this tradition.

[14] See for example Task Force on The Changing Roles of Women and Men in

is) the place of the traditional trinitarian formula "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" in the baptismal liturgy. By the 1990s, many in the United Church agreed with feminist theologians that more balanced and more faithful language for God should incorporate feminine and gender-inclusive as well as masculine forms. The United Church could not alter the traditional trinitarian formula in its baptismal liturgy, however, due to the agreement among the United Church and Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches on mutual recognition of baptism. Beginning in 1995, the Roman Catholic/United Church Dialogue of Canada considered this issue and in 2000 presented its report *In Whose Name?* to the 37th General Council. While not providing a complete solution, the report carefully assessed the concerns of both churches and described the theological and practical reasons for and against altering the tradition trinitarian formula. It also offered some partial solutions, including using various "defined expansions" with more inclusive language alongside the traditional formula, to offer broader imagery for God while maintaining ecumenical recognition of baptism.[15] In its section on the Trinity, *A Song of Faith* employs this principle of using multiple, inclusive images for God alongside the traditional formula:

> With the Church through the ages,
> we speak of God as one and triune:
> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
> We also speak of God as
> Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer
> God, Christ, and Spirit
> Mother, Friend, and Comforter
> Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,
> and in other ways that speak faithfully of
> the One on whom our hearts rely,
> the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.[16]

Church and Society, *The Changing Roles of Women and Men: Report to the 30th General Council, 1984* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1984).

[15] Roman Catholic/United Church Dialogue of Canada, *In Whose Name? The Baptismal Formula in Contemporary Culture* (Etobicoke: The United Church of Canada, 2001).

[16] For more on understandings of the Trinity in the United Church, including in *A Song of Faith* and other resources, see Catherine Faith MacLean, "The Triune God" in *The Theology of The United Church of Canada*, Don Schweitzer, Robert C. Fennell, and Michael Bourgeois, eds., (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2019), 21-49.

A third important element of the United Church's developing tradition of faith taken up in the development of *A Song of Faith* was the church's steps towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples of Canada. With its 1986 "Apology to Indigenous Peoples" at the 31st General Council, its subsequent apology "To former students of United Church Indian Residential Schools, and to their families and communities" at the October 1998 meeting of the General Council Executive, and its establishment of the All Native Circle Conference and the Healing Fund, the church acknowledged and began to make amends for the harm inflicted on Indigenous peoples. As the 1986 "Apology" expressed it:

> We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the Gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel. We tried to make you like us and in doing so we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred and we are not what we are meant by God to be.[17]

The United Church's participation in the colonialism of the Canadian residential school's system was an especially cruel means of imposing western ways and culture, one which inflicted immense suffering on generations of Indigenous children and their families. The Committee on Theology and Faith recognized, then, that any "timely and contextual statement of faith" that acknowledges "our place . . . in an ongoing and developing tradition of faith" must take account of the specific harm that the church has done. While expressing its joy in God's redeeming and liberating love, the church must also confess and address the ways in which it has used its faith to oppress rather than to reconcile. *A Song of Faith*, then, not only affirms the pervasiveness and systemic character of sin but also explicitly names "the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry" as one of sin's manifestations. It also confesses that the "Spirit judges us critically when we abuse Scripture by interpreting it narrow-mindedly, using it as a tool of oppression, exclusion, or hatred"—as the United Church has done in its interactions with Indigenous peoples.[18]

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[17] "1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples," *https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apologies-response-crest.pdf,* accessed 29 August 2022.

[18] For more on this topic, see Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd, "The United Church's Mission Work within Canada and Its Impact on Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Communities," in Schweitzer *et al*., *The Theology of The*

The Influence of A Song of Faith

The years from 1988 to 2012 were particularly significant for the United Church's theological self-understanding. When the 37th General Council (2000) mandated the development of "a timely and contextual statement of faith," the United Church had endured decades of theological disagreement on, for example, sexism in church and society, and sexuality and biblical authority and interpretation. In this context, the work of developing a new faith statement was not guaranteed of success. Some in the church thought the task unnecessary, or at least much less important than other pressing matters. Some, considering the recent theological divisions and increasing respect for diverse theological perspectives, thought the task impossible. And others thought that while it might be possible to write a new statement of faith, it could not attain wide enough support to be truly representative of the church's faith. Nevertheless, the six-year process of developing the new faith statement and 39th General Council's enthusiastic approval of *A Song of Faith* in 2006 demonstrated many United Church members' keen desire for a comprehensive, contemporary expression of the faith that unites it and frames its response to the challenges of the times.

One early sign of the impact of *A Song of Faith* was the proposal to the 40th General Council (2009) that the original Doctrine section of the church's Basis of Union be removed from it, declared an historical document and celebrated as such, and that it and the 1940 Statement of Faith, *A New Creed*, and *A Song of Faith* "be identified as expressions of the faith of The United Church of Canada in their time." The 40th General Council did not support that proposal, but instead authorized a remit process on the question of whether the 1940 Statement of Faith, *A New Creed*, and/or *A Song of Faith* be added to the "Doctrine" section *alongside* the original 1925 Doctrine section.[19] When the process concluded in 2012, United Church pastoral charges, presbyteries, and conferences had endorsed this expansion of the church's official "Doctrine."[20] For candidates for the United Church's order of ministry, the result of the 2012 remit means that the church's decision about whether candidates are in "essential agreement" with United Church doctrine now

United Church of Canada, 279-311.

[19] The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the 40th General Council, 2009* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2009), 535-36 and 165-66.

[20] The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the 41st General Council, 2012* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2012), 151.

encompasses all four of the church's formal expressions of faith. For the church collectively, it means a revived acknowledgment of the limits of any one statement of faith, a renewed appreciation of the strengths of older faith statements despite those limits, and a reinvigorated sense of the church's ongoing task of articulating its faith.

It may still be too early to know what the long-term influence of the 2006 adoption of *A Song of Faith* and the 2012 remit process will be in the United Church. These actions may signal a reinvigorated collective engagement with how United Church members express what they believe.[21] The church's recently-expanded "Doctrine" section may also reflect a revitalised theological consensus for the United Church for the first decades of the twenty-first century. One important element of this consensus is a renewed recognition of the limited nature of all particular expressions of faith. Another important element is the conviction, shared with other faith traditions, of God as loving creator of all creatures and our shared home in this universe. This shared conviction can be vital as we collaborate with others to address the global environmental crisis while "acknowledging our place in a pluralistic world." Another key element is a Trinitarian understanding of God, central to our "ongoing and developing tradition of faith" but expressed to point beyond the gender-exclusive language of traditional descriptions of the Trinity while emphasizing relational love as the core of God's being. God is, as *A Song of Faith* affirms, "Wholly Love." And a fourth element of that consensus is the affirmation of God as the source of hope for reconciliation with those we have harmed and for renewal and abundant life for all. In the words of a hymn that inspired members of the Committee on Theology and Faith as they took up their work in 2000:

> What though my joys and comforts die? My Saviour still is living.
> What though the shadows gather 'round? A new song Christ is giving.
> No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging:
> since Love commands both heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?[22]

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[21] For a discussion of diverse theological views in the United Church and how to facilitate communication and understanding among them, see Janet Gear, *Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith* (Altona, MB: Friesen Press, 2022).

[22] Robert S. Lowry, 716 "My Life Flows On," verse 2, *Voices United*.

THE UNITED CHURCH AT A THEOLOGICAL CROSSROAD: THE 1962 GENERAL COUNCIL

By Phyllis Airhart

Approaching a Theological Intersection

For many years I taught a course at Emmanuel College called "Issues in United Church of Canada History." Since I could think of more topics to be covered than there were weeks in a term, picking from among so many interesting possibilities resulted in a different mix each time. Being asked to focus on a "key moment" in United Church theology presents a similar predicament. I have given myself a little more wiggle room by selecting an event that was consequential: the General Council held in London, ON, in the fall of 1962. I have stretched the metaphor a little further by framing it not as a turning point, a tipping point, or even a hinge, but rather a crossroad. The 20th General Council was a junction where at least four "vehicles" for theological and institutional remaking converged in the business conducted there: coming to terms with its prospects in a pluralistic Canada, communicating the faith after the end of Christendom, rethinking its mission, and opening opportunities for leadership.

At the time, the United Church was still celebrating postwar expansion that was especially evident in the suburbs and preparing for continued success. Even so, some of the less sanguine cautioned that what appeared to be a revival might be a mirage. Such concerns were not new. Over the years John Line, a professor at Emmanuel College and a major contributor to many of the United Church's commissions and committees (including the one that prepared the 1940 Statement of Faith) had warned the church that the notion of a "Christian world" was illusion. As far back as 1951, he had urged theologians to prepare to make a "basic re-presentation of Christianity to a world near the edge of being void of it." His prediction was that the public would soon have no interest in Christian truth.[1]

The United Church in a Religiously Diverse Canada

Warnings of trouble on the road ahead were easy to brush off by pointing to packed Sunday schools and rising numbers on membership rolls. But a different threat to the United Church's prospects had been spotted in figures from the census conducted the previous year. Postwar immigration

[1] John Line, "Decisive Theological Issues Today," *Theology Today* 8, no. 1 (1951): 20–1, 28. Also see George C. Pidgeon, "Is the Church in Danger?" *United Church Observer* [hereafter *Observer*], 1 May 1951.

and refugee resettlement showed a definite trend: more continental European immigrants meant more Roman Catholics *outside* Quebec. A month before Council convened, a news item in the *Observer* reported that analysis of the new census figures showed Roman Catholics and Protestants nearly equal in numbers—a significant change from the census taken ten years earlier.[2]

How would the United Church fare if these trends continued? That question was on the mind of Hugh A. McLeod, minister of Knox United Church in Winnipeg and outgoing moderator, as he prepared to open Council. His address made headlines in secular newspapers almost immediately with its indelicate references to the negative consequences of the growing number of Catholics outside Quebec. The nation's future would be in peril, he predicted, if immigration continued "overwhelmingly as in the past ten years to make Canada predominantly Roman Catholic." He feared their growing numbers heralded "the end of liberty as we have known it." Although aware that the Second Vatican Council was about to get underway in a few weeks, McLeod dismissed the optimism of those who hoped for a different kind of Catholicism.[3]

Ironically, the coverage of Council in the October 1962 issue of the *Observer* competed with a cover story on "Pope John's Vatican Council" that drew the fury of a good number of readers. An attractive picture of the pope graced the cover, and inside was a reprint of an article by a prominent American theologian, Robert McAfee Brown, a Protestant observer at the Second Vatican Council. It is unlikely that Protestants like McLeod who feared Catholic domination were placated by the disclosure that the pope sought to show the world how the Catholic Church was facing its internal problems in hopes of welcoming back to the fold "other sheep" that had "strayed"![4]

The reports presented to Council that year disclosed the divided mind of the United Church on the changing demographic makeup of Canada. Over the years its International Affairs committee had supported immigration programs to attract people to Canada from all regions of the world.[5] The tone of its report in 1962 was still pro-immigration as the

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[2] *Observer*, 1 September 1962, 4.

[3] "The Address of the Moderator," in "'Thus in the Stilly Night': Being the Recollections of the Very Rev. Hugh Alexander McLeod," Unpublished mss., Victoria, BC, 1972, Appendix D, 283–4, Hugh Alexander McLeod Papers, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

[4] Robert McAfee Brown, "Pope John's Vatican Council," *Observer*, 15 October 1962, 15–16, a reprint of Brown's article in *Presbyterian Life*.

[5] See for example, "On the Church and International Affairs," *ROP* (1956),140–1

country awaited details of a new federal immigration policy that would benefit chiefly Asians, Africans, and those from countries in the Middle East.[6] However, religious diversity was among the factors undermining stands the United Church had taken on moral and social issues in the past. A case in point was Sunday observance. According to the report on "The Lord's Day," pluralism was being used as an excuse to change Sunday legislation. Conceding that urban areas of Canada were no longer "chiefly Anglo-Saxon," it maintained that immigrants should generally "be prepared to accept Canadian ways rather than expect Canadians to adapt themselves to the ways of newcomers." A child living in a "Christian country" should not have to choose between a baseball game and Sunday school, it insisted; thus laws "which ensure such choices do not have to be made, are not only good Christianity but good citizenship."[7]

The Committee on Christian Faith signalled a different direction in its report on "Doctrine and Practice of Church Membership."[8] Questions had surfaced about baptism, confirmation, admission to Communion and transfer of members from other denominations—not surprising given the mobility of the population after the war and church growth in the 1950s. Over a million people who claimed to be "United Church" at census time never showed up for services. After six years of investigation, a committee chaired by Donald Mathers of Queen's Theological College presented a final report. The only item that drew any real attention simply encouraged congregations to enforce an already existing provision in the *Manual* that authorized the removal from its roll of the names of members who without good reason had been absent from public worship and Communion in their local church for three years (or some other period determined by the session). It was a solution to a practical problem that perhaps had unintended consequences, as congregations followed this directive and purged their membership rolls over the next few years.

One wonders how many delegates took note of the introduction to the report, which set the *practical* recommendations for membership policy in a *theological* framework that divulged the precarious condition of Christendom in Canada and offered a frank assessment of what was in

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[6] "Canada's Immigration Policy," *ROP* (1962), 531-33.

[7] "The Lord's Day," *ROP* (1962), 338–40, 347.

[8] "Doctrine and Practice of Church Membership," *ROP*, 458-510. The lengthy report was reprinted as *Church Membership: Doctrine and Practice in the United Church of Canada* (n.p., n.d), a study pamphlet sent to congregations.

store. The report admitted that the church no longer had the power and prestige it once enjoyed. It bluntly stated that the Middle Ages "have finally come to an end"; Christendom in Canada was over. Living in a "religiously plural society" would soon mean distinguishing "more clearly than in the past between church membership and citizenship." The report claimed this was cause for celebration, for Christianity was awakening from "the comfortable slumber of a thousand years of European domesticity" and could now embrace its "world mission" more fully.[9]

A crossroad on the issue of pluralism was thus reached in 1962 and the United Church moved toward accepting the uncoupling of Christianity and culture. For instance, by 1971 a report on Sunday observance proposed a choice between one of two days of rest (Saturday or Sunday), basing its case on promoting "human well-being." By then the United Church was ready to concede that in a pluralistic culture, "the Christian segment can no longer expect the state to enforce, by the law, religious practices which are uniquely matters of individual conscience."[10] And despite the misgivings of some in its ranks, the Second Vatican Council marked the beginning of a new era of co-operation with Catholics. A committee report presented at the 1972 General Council recommended that the United Church "at every level" from congregation to the national divisions "no longer use any literature on Protestant-Roman Catholic relations which is pre-Vatican II."[11] The Inter-Church Committee on Protestant-Roman Catholic Relations, formed in 1944 by several Protestant groups to keep an eye on Catholic "encroachment" on the state, was discharged the following year.

In acknowledging the "end of Christendom," Mathers had identified what other leaders failed at first to appreciate: the extent to which the public role of *both* Protestant and Catholic churches was about to shift in a religiously diverse nation. Whether those at Council realized it or not, Christianizing the social order in Canada, at the heart of the United Church's founding vision, was soon to become problematic in a pluralistic world.

Faith Formation in a Secular World

If Donald Mathers was a bit of a celebrity at Council, it was because of another project that drew far more attention than his role on the Committee on Faith. The United Church had begun to celebrate the launch of an adult

[9] Ibid., 459-60.
[10] "The Lord's Day Act," *ROP* (1971), 161–2.
[11] "Inter-church and Inter-faith Relations," *ROP* (1972), 267.

study book that he prepared for the long-awaited New Curriculum. A picture of Mathers holding a copy of *The Word and the Way* appeared on the cover of the *Observer* in August with the caption "Best-Seller: The Story of Don Mathers and His New Book."

The New Curriculum was the linchpin of the United Church's response to concerns about faith formation in a secular world: a more theologically literate membership. Conservative critics who later lambasted it failed to appreciate how deeply biblical and theological it was in both aim and actual content. The materials aspired to relate the teachings of the Bible to the contemporary context by harvesting the fruits of the theological renaissance of the 1940s and '50s. J.R. Mutchmor, the influential secretary of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service, later claimed that the 1940 Statement of Faith and the catechism based on it were the "seed-bed" out of which the New Curriculum had grown.[12] But it also pivoted to newer theological currents being discussed in ecumenical circles; for instance, a chapter in *The Word and the Way* on "The Church in the World" familiarized readers with Mathers's views on the end of Christendom in setting out his understanding of its mission.

The New Curriculum drew much of its inspiration from the Christian Faith and Life program launched by the Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1948.[13] A critical difference was timing: the United Church lagged by at least five years. According to editor Peter Gordon White, the reason for the production delay was failure to agree on the design he proposed: a three-year cycle organized around the questions: "Who is God?"; "Who is my neighbour?"; and "Who am I?" Years later, he recalled that commissioners at the 1958 General Council who rejected it had wanted "a curriculum built on the great affirmations of the Christian faith" rather than questions, which might give the impression of doubt. Instead, the New Curriculum adopted "God and His Purpose; "Jesus Christ and the Christian Life"; and "The Church and the World" as organizing themes. The discarded design was a decade ahead of its time, White speculated, and might have worn better.[14]

While some castigated the New Curriculum as too modern, others

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[12] J.R. Mutchmor, "Forty Years," *Observer*, 1 June 1965, 11.

[13] For an overview of the New Curriculum and Peter Gordon White's critical role, see A.C. Forrest, "The Crisis and the New Curriculum," Observer, 15 February 1965, 19–21 (the first of a two-part article).

[14] Peter Gordon White, "Magnifying Voices, Sharing Visions," in *Voices and Visions: Sixty-five Years of the United Church of Canada,* ed. John Webster Grant, et al. (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1990), 110.

found it dated as soon as it came off the press. The United Church's New Curriculum focused on the family as integral to Christian education, and produced hardcover illustrated books intended for reading at home during the week. Its illustrations showed two-parent families in almost exclusively white middle-class settings, presuming a stability that was in many respects illusory. United Church ministers were already grappling with how to deal pastorally with a rising number of marriages ending in separation or divorce. The Commission on Christian Marriage and Divorce that reported to General Council in 1960 and 1962 considered the issue of the *remarriage* of divorced persons, with the second report making the shocking admission that for healing and wholeness, divorce was sometimes a better choice than remaining unhappily married.[15] Not all would experience the Christian home presupposed by curriculum developers.

The United Church rolled out its New Curriculum just as commotion over the "secular theology" of John A.T. Robinson's *Honest to God* and the death of God disputes were surfacing. In a recent article in the *Christian Century*, William Hamilton's son recalled that it was in 1962 that his father presented a six-part series on the death of God theme that at first drew little notice. Things changed after *Time* magazine featured a book that Hamilton co-authored in its 8 April 1966 cover story. The words *Is God Dead?* in red letters on a black background sparked a controversy that led to his being forced to leave his teaching position at Colgate Rochester Divinity School a year later.[16] The New Curriculum was widely but wrongly assumed to be an expression of similar theological trends.

Don Hamilton recalls his father describing his notoriety as "a new kind of media event" that attracted a different kind of media attention.[17] Those in the United Church charged with communicating the faith were soon to find themselves coming to terms with this new media environment. Although the New Curriculum prided itself on the modern look of its colour illustrations, its mode of communication was still print-based and minimally visual. A line in writer Grace Lane's glowing cover story sounds cautionary in retrospect: "The book's emotional appeal is limited: the approach of the book is more to the mind than the heart of the reader."[18]

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[15] "Report Number Two of the Commission on Christian Marriage and Divorce," *ROP* (1962), 152-69.

[16] Don Hamilton, "When My Dad Killed God: Life with a Radical Theologian," *Christian Century*, 27 July 2022, 31.

[17] Hamilton, 33.

[18] Grace Lane, "Best-Seller," *Observer*, August 1962, 12. The publication of the

The promotion of *The Word and the Way* at Council was a vehicle at a crossroad for the United Church as it headed toward a rollout of the three-year cycle in 1964. The New Curriculum soon collided with a conservative backlash, radical theologies, and changes in media. Its launch coincided with the end of the baby boom, more-complicated family relationships, and a different theological climate from the one that had informed its design.

Rethinking the Mission of the Church

If one were looking for a case where a budget recommendation had far-reaching theological consequences for the United Church, it would be hard to do better than the report of the Commission on Financial Policy at the 20th General Council. Among the tasks assigned to the Commission was how best to spend the sizable reserves held by the newly formed Board of World Mission (formerly Overseas Missions). One of the amendments to the Financial Policy report suggests that some Council representatives were aware of a recent paradigm shift in how churches influenced by the ecumenical movement saw their "mission to the world."[19] The wording of the report was modified to propose that the United Church undertake a study to determine how the Board of World Mission could extend its "ecumenical outreach" and "best share in the World Mission of the Church."[20]

Signs that ecumenism was in flux had been evident at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held the previous year in New Delhi, which saw the WCC merge with the International Missionary Council. The Commission on World Mission appointed to study the United Church's mission policy later declared the amalgamation to have been a turning point: it "underscored the place of mission in the whole life of the World Council of Churches and so gave that body a new direction and significance."[21] The merger accentuated the double meaning of world

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New Curriculum coincided with interest in media theorist Marshall McLuhan's insight about the relationship of the message and the medium, and could have served as a case study of its soundness. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* was first published in 1962.

[19] *ROP*, 55, 71. For an analysis of the shift in ecclesiology and the role of missionary conferences in reshaping how churches saw their "mission to the world," see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 368-93.

[20] "Commission on Financial Policy in the Distribution of the Unified Budget," *ROP* (1962), 298. The words in quotation marks indicate the amendments.

[21] "World Mission," *ROP* (1966), 327.

mission: it was *global* in outreach, and it focused on the world rather than on the *institutional church*.

C. Douglas Jay, a professor at Emmanuel College who served as secretary of the commission and was instrumental in drafting its report, saw it that way. Invited to give the R.P. MacKay Memorial Lectures in 1967, Jay described how the ecumenical task had recently shifted from focusing on missionary enterprises—"missions"—to making "an effective Christian presence in the world."[22] In current ecumenical thinking, he explained, the boundary was no longer between home and foreign missions, but between the church and the world. Ironically, such initiatives designed to bring churches into closer cooperation instead created divisions over *how* to be the church in the world. Critics of ecumenism detected a repudiation of past efforts to convert the world to Christ in the rhetorical move from the enterprises of "world missions" to the church's "mission to the world."

The recommendations of the Commission on World Mission carried the United Church in new directions. Reflecting on the report thirty years later, Jay astutely assessed its impact: "the United Church pioneered in the establishment of an interfaith dialogue portfolio" that was ahead of similar initiatives in the World Council of Churches by several years.[23] It was a new direction in the United Church's approach to pluralism that provided a basis for the denomination, as well as its flagship college, to cultivate new ecumenical and interfaith relationships. It signalled what was then its controversial openness to other faiths through its eleventh recommendation: "The church should recognize that God is creatively and redemptively at work in the religious life of all mankind."[24]

Opening New Lanes for Leadership

A final example of the busy intersection of United Church life on display at the 20th General Council was its decisions about who would lead it in the future. In 1962 the Woman's Association and the Woman's Missionary Society merged to form a new organization: the UCW (United Church Women). As part of the negotiations, the WMS transferred $6.5 million in funds and property holdings in exchange for a promise of more female

[22] C. Douglas Jay, *World Mission and World Civilization* (Toronto: Board of World Mission, United Church of Canada, [1967?]), 2–4.

[23] C. Douglas Jay, "Missiological Implications of Christianizing the Social Order with Special Reference to the United Church of Canada," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 12, no. 2 (1996): 278.

[24] "World Mission," *ROP* (1966), 435.

representation on committees, especially at the national level, where women were present in far fewer numbers as ordered ministers or lay leaders. How to steer around obstacles that had been placed in the way of women aspiring to such roles, especially after they married, was a question that could no longer be avoided.

Conventional sex roles were in a process of redefinition after the war. The 1961 census reported a startling statistic: nearly half of the women in the labour force were married. This was a dramatic increase from 1941 (one in twenty) and 1951 (one in ten).[25] The ambivalent mind of the United Church as it dealt with this new reality was apparent in two commission reports that came to different conclusions about married women working outside the home. The Commission on the Gainful Employment of Women presented what was billed as the first study in Canada to consider the implications of married women in paid positions from a Christian perspective. It assumed that working women were here to stay, and the church's task was to figure out how to deal with complications expected to follow. Among its recommendations was a call for government and social service agencies to help working families and support for the principle of equal pay for equal work.[26]

In marked contrast was the approach of the Commission on Ordination to married women seeking "gainful employment" as ordained ministers. Although the United Church had ordained Lydia Gruchy in 1936 (and several women thereafter), a married woman was still not eligible for consideration. Deaconesses who married were disjoined—formally released from the vows they had made when they joined the order—but there was no similar provision for 'un-ordaining' women. Women could sidestep the problem by delaying marriage until after they were ordained, but not everyone felt comfortable taking that route. After Elinor Leard, a married woman, was ordained in 1957 (over the objections of the moderator), Council was asked to clarify "the relationship of an ordained woman minister to her work following her marriage."

Those hoping to see more women in positions of leadership were no doubt chagrined to learn that the Commission on Ordination concluded that a married woman was *not* able to discharge her obligations to her husband and children and, at the same time, carry on the work for which

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[25] "Report of the Commission on the Gainful Employment of Married Women," *ROP* (1962), 259. It was subsequently published as a pamphlet titled *Married Women Working*.

[26] "Report of the Commission on the Gainful Employment of Married Women," 259–60, 276–7.

she was ordained. Hesitant to adopt this recommendation when it was put to a vote, Council applied the brakes and referred the matter to its executive for further deliberation.[27] The executive rejected the report's recommendation, in effect changing how the Basis of Union had been *applied* by reaffirming the wording (as amended in 1936), which referred to ordaining "men and women"—with no reference to marital status. When the 21st General Council approved the action of the executive in 1964, the road to ordaining married women was cleared.

The actions taken by the 20th General Council were early indicators of what lay ahead. Those who later claimed that feminists had "destroyed the church" were partly right.[28] As women assumed leadership roles, they generated further changes to the United Church's organizational culture. Often preferring more fluid networks and coalitions, they joined other critics of the United Church's complex hierarchical structure; they were among those who cheered the movement to re-form the United Church both theologically and organizationally.

New opportunities for women in congregational and executive leadership were created by another decision made in 1962: approval of a ten-year process of restructuring presented by the Long Range Planning Committee. The transitions of boards and departments to "divisions" coincided with a generational shift in leadership and turnover in a number of positions at the national level after the mid-1960s. Many among that new generation of leaders were women who felt that the church was on the edge of something new and tremendously exhilarating. Among them was Katherine Hockin, a former missionary to China and member of the Commission on World Mission. She experienced the early 1960s as a time of "zest, confidence, adventure and anticipation," where even ways that were unfamiliar would stretch the church and keep it growing "in understanding, capacity and obedience."[29]

As the 21st General Council prepared to meet two years later, the

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[27] "Commission on Ordination," *ROP* (1962): 370, 393–5; cf. recommendation 3 and 4.

[28] See Joan Wyatt, "'We've Feminists Like You to Blame for this Mess,'" *Touchstone* 24, no. 2 (2006): 6–16, discusses the connections between Council's decision on the ordination of gays and lesbians in 1988 and the feminists' earlier fight for inclusion.

[29] Katharine Hockin, "Revolutionary Changes in the Twentieth Century Challenging Conventional Approaches to Missions," n.d., 11, Commission on World Mission, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, 82.124C, box 1-10. The paper was presented at a consultation, possibly at a special meeting held 12–13 February 1965.

retirement of J.R. Mutchmor was hailed as the end of an era.[30] He had been chosen as moderator in 1962 in recognition of his long years of service at the Board of Evangelism and Social Service, and J. Raymond Hord elected as his successor. It was Hord who soon came to personify the direction of theological change that was coming into clearer view as the United Church headed toward a different sense of its mission in and to the world.[31]

Looking Back through the Rearview Mirror

Any year in the tumultuous decade of the 1960s was arguably a momentous one for the United Church, but after the 20th General Council, change was inescapable. Even actions that perhaps seemed uncontroversial at the time were consequential; only with the benefit of hindsight was the extent of theological and institutional change clear. A knell had been sounded for Christendom, with no map at hand for how to navigate its end. But by the time the Council adjourned, there were indicators of where a "world mission" might lead. Despite occasional nostalgic glances in the rearview mirror and a few attempts to apply the brakes, there was no turning around. Those who gathered in London in the fall of 1962 grappled with the challenges of a post-Christendom world as they deliberated; they left more alert to the ferment in church and society around them—much of which is with us sixty years later. As a crossroad on that journey, the 20th General Council was momentous indeed.

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[30] "End of an Era" was a cover story on J.R. Mutchmor in the 15 September 1964 issue of the *Observer*. The first part ("The Summing Up") contained excerpts from Mutchmor's report as the retiring moderator, followed by "The Controversial Years," an article by editor A.C. Forrest.

[31] For more on how the United Church responded to the uncoupling of Christianity and culture in Canada after the "end of Christendom," see Phyllis D. Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), especially chapters 7-9.

EXPLORING 1988 WITHOUT SAFETY LENSES

by Bri-Anne Swan

For many within The United Church of Canada, the 32nd General Council is a defining moment in the history of the denomination. It was at this gathering of commissioners, on August 24, 1988, the United Church declared that, in and of itself, sexual orientation was no basis on which members of the church could be blocked from seeking admission to the Order of Ministry.[1] Despite being an extremely contentious issue at the time, the 1988 decision is celebrated as an example of The United Church of Canada's bravery and forward-thinking within the Canadian Christian context.

There is little doubt that the decision made by the commissioners of the 32nd General Council was bold and courageous, especially considering the volatile, anti-queer rhetoric of the era, intensified in the height of the AIDS crisis. However, it is important to acknowledge that the cost of this important work was disproportionately paid by queer and marginalized members of the church. Commissioners were presented with a heteronormative version of what it means to be homosexual and great care was taken in maintaining the felt safety of the dominant church, without that same care being afforded to queer members and clergy.[2] As a denomination, 1988 was less about changing who we *were,* than who we allowed in.

The following recounting of "The Decision", its context, as well as its implications, is done delicately, but with the hope that critically engaging with this distinctive piece of United Church history may inform where we find the denomination now, and how it might move forward in other areas of diversity and inclusion.

1925-1988: A Very Brief Synopsis

The decision of the 32nd General Council not to block the ordination/commissioning of openly queer clergy wasn't a decision made

[1] "United Church of Canada Allows Gay Ministers," CBC Archives (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), accessed September 11, 2019, *https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/1988-united-church-allows-gay-ministers*.

[2] Language is fluid. Terms that were in common use 30 or 40 years ago may now seem at best archaic, at worst, offensive. Though I lean towards the language of the time, throughout this paper I switch between using terminology used by the United Church in the 1980s to describe sexual orientation, and words that are in common use today.

suddenly and without consultation. The United Church of Canada had been wrestling with the issue of Christian ethics and sexuality ever since Union, with the second half of the 20th century seeing the church move away from an *act* centred understanding of Christian sexual ethic (where the heterosexual marriage covenant was considered *de facto* good), to an understanding that was far more *relationally* informed.[3] For the first time, the *quality* of homosexual relationships began to be considered by the church. By 1976, the United Church publicly voiced its support for protecting the human rights of gay and lesbian people.[4]

The United Church entered the 1980s with a clear mandate from the 25th General Council (1972) to create a comprehensive statement on human sexuality. *In God's Image . . . Male and Female: A Study on Human Sexuality (IGI)* was released in 1980. This report was followed by 1984's *Gift, Dilemma and Promise: A Report and Affirmations of Human Sexuality (GDP).* This document included stories of lived experience, biblical reflection, as well as study questions for consideration by United Church members. 1984 also saw the publication of *Sexual Orientation & Eligibility for the Order of Ministry (SOEOM),* which was presented to the 30th General Council. It was a deeper study into the assertion found in *IGI* that there was no reason to preclude openly gay candidates from ordered ministry.

GDP was approved by the 30th General Council (1984) and affirmed acceptance of all human beings as persons made in the image of God, regardless of sexual orientation.[5] However, the commissioners defeated a motion coming out of *SOEOM* that states, "In and of itself, sexual orientation should not be a factor determining membership in the Order of Ministry of the United Church of Canada."[6]

Out of the 30th General Council, the National Coordinating Group for the Programme of Study and Dialogue on Sexual Orientations,

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[3] Tracy J. Trothen, *Linking Sexuality & Gender: Naming Violence Against Women in the United Church of Canada* (Waterloo, Ont.: Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation canadienne des sciences religieuses by Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2003), 19.

[4] Don Schweitzer, *The United Church of Canada: A History* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 214.

[5] Alyson Huntly, *Of Love and Justice: Toward the Civil Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit, 2003), 38.

[6] *Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientation Lifestyles and Ministry* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1988), 15.

Lifestyles and Ministry (NCG) was formed as a means to further study questions surrounding the commissioning/ordination of homosexual ministry candidates.[7] The resulting document, *Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientation, Lifestyles, and Ministry (SOLM),* was circulated to commissioners prior to the 32nd General Council.

Mirroring Language of the AIDS Crisis

Both *GDP* and *SOLM* emphasized that children and other vulnerable individuals would not become gay due to influence by homosexual people in positions of leadership:

> As important as the discussion of what contributes to one's orientation is the discussion of what does **NOT**. The presence of a gay teacher in the classroom, or a lesbian minister in the pulpit, or a heterosexual parent in the home does not make a person gay, or lesbian, or heterosexual. It can now be said with some certainty what is not the cause of one's sexual orientation: recruitment; role model; parents; negative experience with the same or other gender; circumstance.[8]

The language of this claim mirrors much of the language circulating at the height of the AIDS crisis, with schools, governments and other public institutions working to assure a panicking public that they could not contract HIV simply by being in an affected person's presence.[9]

Despite the NCG advocating for the full membership of homosexual people, the language of the report undermined this advocacy since it could be interpreted to mean that same-sex attraction is an inclination that, like an infectious disease, should be avoided if at all possible, but that those afflicted pose no danger to the wider community and therefore should not be ostracized. In other words, homosexual people are safe. One cannot catch "the gay" by shaking hands, sitting on the same toilet seat, or hearing a homosexual person preach from the pulpit. The connection with the language of disease, as well as the connection between notions of clean vs. dirty/pure vs. filthy, is striking.

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[7] Ibid., preface.

[8] *Toward a Christian Understanding*, 49.

[9] "Are AIDS Victims a Danger to Society? - CBC Archives," CBCnews (CBC/Radio Canada), accessed September 15, 2019, *https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/are-aids-victims-a-danger-to-society*.

The language of *SOLM* was meant to create a sense of safety for the straight commissioners of the General Council. There was no danger of spreading homosexuality throughout United Church communities by adopting the recommendations of the NCG. The document straddled a line between compassion towards the gay community and the fear that straight commissioners, or their children, might become gay themselves. In hindsight one wonders: if there is no sin in being gay, what would be so wrong if the queer community influenced members of the church in more fully exploring or understanding their own sexuality?

Unfortunately, at the time of the 32nd General Council, there were still members of the church who linked both homosexuality and pedophilia within the category of sexual deviance. It might very well be that the authors of *SOLM* were attempting to subtly *differentiate* attraction to those of the same sex from attraction to children—and did so without explicitly naming that intention. Read through today's lenses, however, this language now seems more like compassion crawling into bed with homophobia.

Gay, But Not Too Gay

GDP, SOEOM and *SOLM*, all asserted that those who are gay and lesbian are able to exist in long-term, committed relationships.

As an example:

> 1.(j) We acknowledge that heterosexual, gay, and lesbian adults can engage in sexual behaviour within a committed relationship with the intention of permanence that is morally responsible. The standards for discerning whether sexual behaviour is morally responsible are the same irrespective of orientation or marital status.[10]

It is, of course, true that homosexual people can nurture long-term relationships. However, the prioritizing of lifelong, committed (monogamous) relationships for homosexuals echoes the language around relationship and marriage that had been coming from the Church for hundreds of years, directed to its (assumed) heterosexual members. As at least one survey respondent suggested, it was unfair to hold homosexual members to the same relationship standards as heterosexuals when society and the Church had not endorsed, and in fact had impeded, those

[10] *Toward a Christian Understanding*, 4.

relationships from developing and flourishing.[11] In fact, what was presented as a valid sexual ethic by the NCG, as well as the various study documents coming from the national church, was as close to the heteronormative ideal for relationship and family as possible. While also restrictive regarding heterosexual relationships, *SOLM* espoused a traditional model of sexual morality, attempting to fit the queer and liberative within a heteronormative and patriarchal box. *SOLM* clearly displays its bias when claiming "The Bible assumes that everyone is heterosexual."[12]

The Dominant Church as Hero

Both *GDP* and *SOLM* attempted to explore "The Issue" through the lens of Christian scripture. *GDP* offers a biblical study on Acts 10:1-11:18. Regarding Cornelius' devotion and Peter's conversation about what is (and is not) unclean, the authors of *GDP* offer this reflection:

> Some would say of [homosexuals], as Jews of that time said of some animals and birds, that they are "unclean". That is, they regard homosexual persons as "dirty", or as "unnatural" or "perverted". But what if such people, like Cornelius, are God-fearing, devout and generous? Does God not speak to them? What if they show evidence of being moved by the Holy Spirit of God? Can they then be regarded as unclean? On what grounds can other Christians deny them acceptance as brothers and sisters in Christ?[13]

The writers of the report did not attempt to *deconstruct* assumptions about the text or approach it with a hermeneutic of suspicion.[14] It prioritized the narrative of the dominant heterosexual group to demonstrate how *acceptance* of homosexuality could fit within their already established understanding of the text. The straight readers of *GDP* were able to see themselves as Peter—the hero of the story and liberator of those blessed to call him ally, and who allowed for access to the Holy Spirit, even to those previously deemed "unclean." Power differentials remained intact through

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[11] Ibid., 27.
[12] Ibid., 35.
[13] *Gift, Dilemma and Promise* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1984), 78.
[14] Also of note here is how queer people were being spoken about as an *other*—to be studied, to be welcomed, but as separate from the mainstream church.

tolerance rather than radical mutual inclusion—a dynamic that continued in the months and years both following the 32nd General Council.

Sessional Committee 8 & the *Membership, Ministry, and Human Sexuality Statement*

Prior to the General Council gathering, Marion Best (who would go on to become Moderator at the 35th General Council in 1994), was called on to chair Sessional Committee 8, which was asked to consider *SOLM* ahead of the 32nd General Council gathering. The group was committed to acting on a consensus model, and included members from the Community of Concern, the United Church Renewal Fellowship, as well as other commissioners known to oppose the ordination/commissioning of homosexual candidates.[15][16] Two openly gay resource people were made available to the committee.[17]

The recommendations laid out in *SOLM* as discussed by Sessional Committee 8 were *not* the original recommendations of the NCG. Committed to the goal of persuading General Council to accept the report, the NCG had offered a "softer" version of recommendations for consideration.[18] With the addition of two dissenting opinions in *SOLM*, one member of the NCG moved to include the *original* version of recommendations for commissioners to read.[19] After much resistance and debate, the original recommendations were made available as an appendix but not within the body of the report (as the dissenting opinions were).[20]

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[15] Peter Wyatt, "What the United Church Really Did," *Hamilton Spectator*, October 12, 1988.

[16] The Community of Concern emerged out of the United Church Renewal Fellowship with the intention of preventing homosexual inclusion as suggested in *SOLM*. Members united around a "Declaration of Dissent" that upheld the standard of married faithfulness for heterosexual couples and chaste singleness for others.

[17] Nathaniel Christopher, "The United Church of Canada's Prophetic Stance on Gay Rights," Xtra (Pink Triangle Press, September 12, 2013), *https://staging1.xtramagazine.com/power/the-united-church-of-canadas-prophetic-stance-on-gay-rights-53211*.

[18] Interview with former staff support to the NCG, October 1, 2019.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Further description of the progressive "softening" of recommendations made to the commissioners of the 32nd General Council can be found in my Master's thesis: "Not Too Gay: Exploring the United Church of Canada's Membership, Ministry, and Human Sexuality Statement with Mild Indecency," St. Andrew's College, 2022.

Even with these "softer" recommendations, Sessional Committee 8 decided not to present *SOLM* to the full court of the General Council. Instead, they presented a resolution which has come to be known as the *Membership, Ministry and Human Sexuality (MMHS) Statement*:

> *1)* That all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to him, are welcome to be, or to become, full members of the United Church of Canada.
>
> *2)* *a)* That all members of the United Church of Canada are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry.
>
> *b)* That all Christian people are called to a lifestyle based on obedience to Jesus Christ.
>
> *c)* That all congregations, presbyteries and conferences covenant to work out the implications of sexual orientation and lifestyles in light of the Holy Scriptures, according to their responsibilities as stated in the manual.[21]

Once the recommendations were put to the floor, many homosexual members began sharing their experiences of rejection by the United Church, as well as their hopes and longings for a way forward where they were included and belonged. Commissioners, most of whom arrived at the General Council gathering intending to vote against the ordination/commissioning of homosexual clergy, were moved by these stories, as well as their interactions with gay and lesbian members throughout the Council. After hours of debate, at 12:40am, the General Council approved the *MMHS Statement*, purportedly signaling a new era of The United Church of Canada's relationship with queer communities and 2SLGBTQIA+ affirmation (an acronym that stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning,

[21] The full text of Membership, Ministry, and Human Sexuality Statement can be read on the United Church of Canada Commons: *https://unitedchurch.sharepoint.com/sites/UnitedChurchCommons/PublicDocuments/Forms/AllItems.aspx?ga=1&id=%2Fsites%2FUnitedChurchCommons%2FPublicDocuments%2FShared%2DPublicly&viewid=e2134baf%2Da16b%2D4e3d%2D8676%2D5fea6ff19677*.

Intersex, Asexual, and additional sexual orientations and gender identities) within the denomination.[22]

After the Decision

Most United Church members from across the country initially opposed the commissioning/ordination of openly gay clergy. Response was swift and harsh, with the General Council receiving hundreds of angry, sometimes violent, letters.[23] Unsurprisingly, many members felt betrayed by what they experienced as The United Church of Canada's denial of the very morality it had taught them. Clergy from across the country began publishing commentaries in local newspapers with varying opinions of what "The Decision" meant. In October of 1988, Rev. Dr. Peter Wyatt penned an article for the *Hamilton Spectator* in which he explained that rather than being revolutionary, the *MMHS Statement* was merely an upholding of the *Basis of Union (1925)*. He argued that there was no provision in the *Basis of Union* for preventing any member from being considered for ordered ministry, nor was there any means to exclude somebody from being a United Church member on the basis of their sexual orientation.[24] Writing for a Hamilton audience was significant; Hamilton Conference had an explicit policy "not to ordain any self-declared, practicing homosexuals."[25] This policy came after Susan Mabey, a candidate for ordained ministry, was denied by the Hamilton Conference Interview Committee following her disclosure that she was lesbian.[26] [27] Continuing after the 32nd General Council, ministry candidates needed to be confirmed by each of the three lower courts of the church. Any one of these could block a candidate seeking ordination/commissioning. As Wyatt wrote, ". . . it is up to Conference to decide what is appropriate to a lifestyle patterned on obedience to Christ. The conference could continue to regard homosexual practice, as distinct from orientation, as incompatible with

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[22] "United Church of Canada Allows Gay Ministers," CBC Archives (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation).

[23] Interview with former staff support, October 1, 2019.

[24] Wyatt, "What the United Church Really Did." October 12, 1988.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Gary Stephen Ross, "Three LGBTQ People Explain What the United Church's 1988 Decision Meant to Them," Broadview Magazine, July 8, 2013, *https://broadview.org/three-lgbtq-people-explain-what-the-united-churchs-1988-decision-meant-to-them/*.

[27] Susan Mabey did not appeal the decision, and went on to become an ordained minister with the Metropolitan Community Church.

obedience to Christ."[28]

As such, the *MMHS Statement*, in and of itself, did little in practical terms to pave a path for queer candidates seeking to enter the Order of Ministry. Culturally, it marked an important shift in acceptance of homosexual members, but the *MMHS Statement* did not immediately impact denominational polity or prevent conferences from denying ordination/commissioning to openly queer candidates.

Pastoral Response

Some clergy who were not yet open about their sexual orientation were asked by their congregations to help protest the 32nd General Council's decision. As a result, some felt compelled to disclose before they, or their congregations, were ready—sometimes with unfriendly or unsafe consequences.[29]

At this same time, the newly elected Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Sang Chul Lee, wrote two pastoral letters. One was mailed to every pastoral charge in the denomination.[30] The other responded to those who had sent letters (either as individuals or as a congregation) to the General Council Offices:

> I am responding to letters from many members. Some are upset by the statement and the interpretations they hear. Others are accepting of it. I urge you all to understand our disagreements as a quarrel within the extended family and to commit ourselves anew to our covenant of fellowship and mission together.
>
> At the request of the Sub Executive of General Council which met September 30th, I have taken two important steps.
>
> First, I have appointed six persons with broad experience of the Church to meet with a like number representing the Community of

[28] Wyatt, "What the United Church Really Did." October 12, 1988.

[29] Some information is drawn from anecdotal pieces of history relayed to me in conversation with friends and colleagues who were clergy in 1988. I have chosen not to name them to protect their identity, as their experiences of 1988 and its aftermath can still be quite painful.

[30] Rt. Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee, official correspondence to congregations, (September 2, 1988).

> Concern. A first meeting is scheduled for October 25th. It is hoped they may be able to share some common advice with the General Council Executive meeting in November.
> Secondly, I have extended that meeting of the General Council Executive so that all of November 21 & 22 will be devoted to "assessing the tensions in the Church". I expect there will be news to share with you after that time.[31]

From a 21st Century perspective, the thought that the General Council found the dissent of the Community of Concern compelling enough to not only meet but send *six* people to gather is telling of how widespread and open the objection to the 32nd General Council's decision truly was. At the same time, I have found no evidence of any pastoral support for gay clergy or United Church members who were suddenly thrust into the turbulent waters of congregational distress and anger. Was the fear of a potential schism prioritized over the safety of queer clergy? Could a split possibly have taken the violent dissenting voices away and therefore protected the people who were most at risk within these ongoing conversations?

Ally as Self-Identity

With little support, it was exactly the people that the *MMHS Statement* was meant to protect and affirm who bore the burden of dealing with the fallout of the 32nd General Council. Not so many years later though, The United Church of Canada became far more vocal in its support of queer members, including its clergy. In fact, affirmation of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons became a defining feature of the denomination and was used to distinguish itself from fundamentalist and conservative mainline denominations across the country. While some United Church members left their congregations after the 1988 decision, many eventually returned. At the same time, others began to join the church because of the United Church's developing position of affirmation and inclusion, although the number of people coming to the United Church because of this affirmation has not been officially studied or calculated.

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[31] Rt. Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee, official correspondence to those who wrote expressing dissent (October 1988).

Over the years, the United Church's inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ people became a major focus of its advertising campaigns, especially those targeted at young adults, 30-45 years old. In 2006, the United Church launched Emerging Spirit and its WonderCafe website aimed at connecting with both those attending and not attending church.[32] One advertisement for WonderCafe featured a wedding cake with two men as toppers, clearly meant to indicate they had just been married.[33] In the intervening 18 years, the church went from threat of a split to projecting a calculated image of being accepting and affirming of queer people. In fact, this projection of the denominational queer ally persona began to emerge far earlier. As a child, I recollect posters and promotional material, created by the United Church, on display at the 1996 Toronto Conference gathering, explicitly affirming gay and lesbian inclusion.

Despite the increasingly calculated image of a queer affirming denomination, by 1998 only nine pastoral charges across the country would publicly say they were willing to hire an openly gay minister.[34] Once the danger of a split had been alleviated, the United Church's inclusion of homosexual persons became something potentially valuable to a denomination desperate to infiltrate the spiritual marketplace of young adults who were leaving the church in droves. There is often a fine line connecting aspiration to truth, but what does seem clear is that the United Church began using queer affirmation as a branding identity long before the majority of congregations were authentically safe spaces for queer members, as well as seekers in search of a spiritual home.

It could be argued that in the years after the 1988 decision, the United Church marketed both a heteronormative version of what it meant to be queer, as well as a mythic version of its own role in 2SLGBTQIA+ liberation. As the *MMHS Statement* continued to affirm the stance that sexual relationships are ideally long-term and monogamous, the version of homosexuality being presented by the denomination placed heavy emphasis on the traditional, even conservative, heterosexual attitudes and

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[32] Ben Ziegler, "Wonder Cafe: Online Conversations Are Changing The United Church of Canada," Collaborative Journeys, accessed September 27, 2019, *http://collaborativejourneys.com/wonder-cafe-online-conversations-are-changing-the-united-church-of-canada/.*

[33] Acknowledging that the United Church and much of the rest of the country was deeply engaged in conversation surrounding the civil recognition of same-sex marriage at the time, once again it was the traditional, heteronormative ideal of queerness that was presented in this image.

[34] "United Church of Canada Allows Gay Ministers," CBC Archives (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation).

values of fidelity and longevity—an almost über-heterosexual ideal. In addition, the United Church developed a narrative about the 32nd General Council whereby one only needs to state the year 1988 to be reasonably certain that those in United Church circles will understand the reference to the 32nd General Council and the enormous, brave, and liberative decision for homosexual members. Within this narrative, The United Church of Canada has continued to market a mythic version of itself as a denomination whose existence has been a solely liberating force for the queer community. August 1988 has become a defining moment that describes who we are as a denomination, even though some queer ministers still struggle to find congregations who will hire them, and queer members struggle to find communities of faith who will fully accept them. We are therefore left with another question: What is the balance between reality and aspiration when portraying the church to its own members, along with the wider society?

The United Church of Today

This question carries over into how we talk about queer inclusion within the United Church even now. There are timelines on the United Church website that list the positive actions the church has made towards Gender and Transgender Inclusion, as well as Sexual Diversity Inclusion.[35] These timelines are constructed to show the United Church's affirming actions—and there are many to celebrate! However, they do not include instances of the United Church "getting it wrong," so to speak. They do not, for example, include Susan Mabey's rejection by her interview committee. The timelines place the United Church on the right side of history every time. In doing so, those timelines also inadvertently assume that the exclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ persons could be considered nothing but normative until these monumental and named actions occurred; exclusion is the default until the dominant church decides otherwise.

This narrative emphasizes that the United Church made a bold and courageous move in 1988. It does not assume or query whether queer inclusion should have been the default from the outset. In other words, the celebration of openly queer folk having access to consideration for ordered ministry was only naming what ought to have been standard practice in the first place. The *MMHS Statement* concerns the over 60-year-old *Basis of*

[35]The United Church of Canada, "A Timeline of Gender and Transgender Justice in The United Church of Canada," *A Timeline of Gender and Transgender Justice in The United Church of Canada* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada , n.d.).

Union and the prior normative practices of exclusion. Like the biblical study offered in *GDP*, my sense is that the current narrative of the United Church emphasizes the "goodness" and "justness" of the *dominant church's choice* at the 32nd General Council. It leaves out the perspective that queer inclusion was the *only just choice possible*. Therefore, the dominant church continues to be centred in this narrative.

Conclusion

Even today, there is hesitancy to critically engage with this era of United Church history. Perhaps the memories still land too close and tender. Those who identify as allies are happy to find themselves on the right side of this story. Many within queer communities, especially those who lived through the "The Issue Years", hesitate to articulate the 1988 decision as anything other than courageous and groundbreaking. Yet, while the decision of the 32nd General Council was both brave and revolutionary, it did not happen without cost, particularly to those whom the decision was intended to support. It came about only after assuring the safety of the dominant church through compassionate pleas echoing the language of disease. It also occurred only subsequent to first creating a heteronormative picture of what an "ideal" homosexual person might be. Soon afterwards, the denomination, which spent so many years blocking the ordination of queer clergy, started to use its openness as marketing material within a crowded church landscape. These points are made with little comment on whether this (perhaps unconscious) strategy was appropriate or not. Rather, my request is that in the pride we, as a denomination, name surrounding the events of the 32nd General Council, we also acknowledge the incredible cost of this decision, not only measured in numbers of adherents gained or lost, but also in the risk carried by some of the denomination's most vulnerable members.

By further appreciating the struggle of queer people within the denomination's prevailing narrative, dominant voices in the church can also learn to adopt more humble, open-hearted modes which centre the narratives, perspectives, voices, and leadership of those who too often remain outside the centres of power. As the United Church continues its work to become an anti-racist denomination, it seems especially important to understand our patterns surrounding how safe the dominant church needs to feel before dramatic shifts in culture and polity can be lived out.

DORIS JEAN DYKE
FIRST WOMAN FACULTY MEMBER AT EMMANUEL COLLEGE, TORONTO

by Joan Wyatt

Early Years

Doris Jean Dyke, born Doris Jean Scott, died 8 October 2021 at Christie Gardens in Toronto,[1] having lived her ninety-one years with vigour and courage. She was an intellectual, wife, mother, teacher, mentor, leader, and friend. Born on a farm in southern Ontario, Doris was a prodigious reader from a very young age. When the local librarian refused to let her borrow a book she wanted, deeming it unsuitable reading for a young adolescent, her mother, a piano teacher, returned to the library with Doris, and told the librarian that Doris was allowed to read anything that she wanted. So, a curious mind was unleashed, and perhaps educational principles began to gestate.

By the age of sixteen Doris began teaching in a one room schoolhouse. Over the course of the next fifteen years, she moved to Toronto, "taught school, fell in love, got married, and had a baby."[2] She fell in love with Ossie Dyke who, because divorced, was no longer a practising United Church of Canada (UCC) minister. A commitment to issues of justice for UCC ministry personnel may have formed at this time, as did perhaps the seeds of a maternal feminist perspective. Doris described giving birth as "the most awesome experience of my life . . . I felt close to God as if I had participated willingly and passionately in bringing new life into the world."[3]

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[1] "Doris Dyke, Obituary (2021)—Toronto Globe and Mail." Doris married Karl Jaffray in 2011 and moved back to Toronto from Vancouver where she had been living close to her daughter Catherine and son-in-law Paul Evans for 10 years. Her end days were difficult, clouded by severe arthritis and dementia.

[2] Doris Jean Dyke, "Retirement Reflections on Faith Seeking Understanding", unpublished essay presented as the presidential address to the Canadian Theological Society, Montreal, June 2, 1995,3.

[3] Ibid.

Doris reflected that she "got to know hundreds of children in Sunday Schools as a teacher or superintendent" in the late fifties, but despite such busyness the decade was for her "a time of reading, introspection, theology," as well as "art, poetry, writing, coffee houses and folk songs . . . about love, work, justice and hope."[4] She taught full-time and studied part-time, completing a B.A. in psychology and religion from Queen's University in Kingston in 1959, and a B.Ed, in 1961 and a M.Ed. in 1963 from the University of Toronto.

At the age of twenty-nine Doris's life changed abruptly when, with 3 year-old Catherine on her lap, she watched Ossie Dyke collapse and die of a heart attack while playing tennis. She felt she could not go on living "what seemed to be a half-life" in a home she loved but that felt now like a "place of desolation." She wanted to "go away." She did not blame God, but rather wanted "to learn more about God."[5]

Union Seminary and Columbia University, NYC

A year after Ossie's death, Doris and four-year-old Catherine left Toronto for New York City, where she began study at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University. Being a foreign student and a single parent confirmed her life "on the edges"[6] as she organized her schedule around child-care at Riverside Church for Catherine. She was reluctant to let others know what a challenge it was to accomplish her studies in her restricted hours. But she observed that her time with Catherine healed her aching spirit. Although lonely and far from family, she became part of a new community, making many lifelong friends and gradually finding herself "a contented and happy person." In 1962 she earned an M.A. conjointly granted by Columbia University and Union, and in 1967 an Ed.D. Philosophy of Education (Religion) with a thesis on "The Implications of Paul Tillich's Protestant Principle for Public Education."[7]

Doris' years at Union and Columbia, influenced by Tillich and his students—such as Union's Tom Driver and Columbia Teacher's College's Philip Phenix—formed her lifelong commitment to theology and the arts. It also galvanized her commitments to social justice movements. In March 1963 Martin Luther King gave his "I have a dream speech" at the civil rights march on Washington, and Malcolm X reported he saw only a nightmare. Doris was immersed in reading black literature and

[4] Ibid.,7.
[5] Ibid., 7.
[6] Ibid.,7.
[7] Doris Jean Dyke, "Curriculum Vitae 2001."

participating in anti-racist activities. A firsthand experience stood out for her. In 1964, while working for the Religious Education Council in NYC, inspecting congregations that had received grants for Vacation Bible Schools, she overheard children singing "We Shall Overcome" as she "stepped over broken glass and around police barricades where hours before a black teenager had been shot at point blank range by police. Within a period of five years, John and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X were all dead."[8]

University of Saskatchewan

By the mid-sixties she observed that "the search for freedom was so important that it became known as a revolution." She agreed with Theodore Rozak's description of the sixties as a "phantasmagoria of exotic religiosity" noting that the same could be said of Fellini's films.[9] Harvey Cox and the Beatles were "getting good press, the mood was upbeat," and she "was happy to have a job teaching at the University of Saskatchewan."[10] She arrived in 1964 as a lecturer in the College of Education and left in 1972 as an associate professor, having also lectured part-time in religious education at St Andrew's College. She said that immersion in the works of Canadian prairie authors like W.O. Mitchell, Sinclair Ross and Margaret Laurence helped her see "the vast prairie sky and the goldenness of it."[11]

At this time, she and Catherine also responded to an urgent initiative by Saskatchewan Social Services, a response that, she reflected later, "may not have been the best solution for the children who were classified as unadoptable because they were older and of mixed race."[12] Adopted by Doris at ages nine and five, Brenda and Tanya later were able to re-establish relationships with siblings from their birth families. In 1995 Doris described them as "beautiful young women who keep in touch with each other, with their older sister and with me."[13] They remained an integral part of Doris' life and continue to be so for Catherine.

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[8] "Reflections," 8.

[9] Theodore Rozak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday,1968).

[10] Ibid., 9.

[11] Ibid., 10.

[12] Ibid., 12.

[13] Ibid., 13.

Louisville, Halifax, and Toronto

In 1972, with her expanded family of three girls, Doris moved to the University of Louisville for a year in a joint appointment between the Department of Philosophy and the School of Education. In 1973 they moved to Dalhousie University in Halifax, where she became Dean of Education and one of only three full professors. Returning to theology and education, Doris arrived in 1977 at Emmanuel College, Toronto as a full professor of Christian Education and Director of M.R.E. (Master of Religion Education) studies. She was the first woman appointed to teach in any UCC theological school. The Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) in Toronto, which prepared candidates for diaconal ministry in both the United and Anglican Churches in Canada, had had many outstanding female faculty.[14] However, theological schools that prepared candidates for both ordained and diaconal ministry in the UCC had had none. Regrettably, relationships between CCS and Emmanuel during Doris' tenure were strained, including mistrust of Doris as an academic. In a disappointing loss for Emmanuel College the national UCC Division of Ministry and Personnel ruled that only training at CCS would be recognized to commission diaconal ministers. The loss for Emmanuel students and faculty—and for the Church—was the loss of two orders of ministry learning together in the same community. Doris was disappointed by the decision, but her education courses thrived and the full-time position of professor of Christian Education persisted at Emmanuel until 2016.

Sharing stories was key to Doris's theological practice and teaching. I was her teaching assistant for several years in the time leading up to her retirement from Emmanuel in 1995. During that time, we frequently reviewed highlights from her career. One stands out for me. On arrival at Emmanuel Doris met with the president of Victoria University. Among other introductory information that he shared with her was that regrettably there was no women's faculty washroom at Emmanuel College. He suggested that she could go next door to the Victoria building and use the small faculty women's washroom there. Doris demurred and said that she would use the same washroom in Emmanuel's faculty lounge as all the other male professors. It was, after all, right next door to her office.

Phyllis Airhart, the second woman appointed at Emmanuel, in 1985, when introducing Doris as one of theme speakers at a thirty-year celebration of the installation at Emmanuel of the sculpture, *Crucified*

[14] See Gwyn Griffith, *Weaving a Changing Tapestry: The Story of the Centre for Christian Studies and its Predecessors* 1892-2005 (ArtBookBindery.com, Gwyn Griffith, 2009).

Woman, told a story to demonstrate how different life at Emmanuel was in 1977 and how Doris navigated Emmanuel's often choppy waters. When Phyllis told Doris the story of how she got trapped in the faculty washroom when the lock broke, Doris countered by telling her that when she arrived there was no lock. The all-male faculty apparently felt comfortable using it without one. When Doris made the very practical suggestion that they request a lock, the initial response from the men was that there was no need of that—she could just use one of the other washrooms in the building. Doris, however, reminded them that she was a member of faculty, that she *would* use the faculty washroom, and she hoped they wouldn't be too embarrassed if she walked in on them unexpectedly. Not long after, unsurprisingly, a lock was installed. In telling the story, Phyllis noted that "the lock was there when I arrived, along with many other supports for my role as a woman teaching in a theological school. Doris removed obstacles for me and for others. She unlocked doors and (in one case) helpfully locked another."[15]

I arrived at Emmanuel in 1982 to study for the M. Div. degree. Along with other women in my class, I initially found Doris impressive, if intimidating. She had a steady, discerning look, and, on occasion, also an arched eyebrow, or disapproving frown. She was elegant, fun, and gracious, but also an outspoken giant in her opinions about feminism, inclusive language, abortion rights, the importance of interfaith dialogue, the rights of LGBQ people, indigenous peoples, and many other religious and social issues. Required reading of the book, *In Search of April Raintree* [16] in our first year, made us aware of the harm done to Indigenous peoples by Canada's colonial policy. An M.Div. course that she co-taught with Bruce McLeod[17] on education, preaching, and the arts influenced me deeply. The co-teaching modelled collegiality. The engagement with the arts taught us that dance, music, visual arts, novels, plays, and films can nourish our spirits, stimulate our creativity, and give fresh insights and vision, and that artists, like prophets, can challenge and change us, not by rational thought but through experience.

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[15] Phyllis Airhart, "Introduction of Doris Dyke: keynote speaker at Crucified Woman Reborn" May 13-14, 2010, Emmanuel College Toronto.

[16] Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree* (Winnipeg: Pemican Publications, 1983).

[17] The Very Reverend Dr Bruce McLeod, who completed a doctorate in preaching from Union Seminary, was the youngest moderator of UCC (1972-74), and former minister at Bloor Street UCC.

Crucified Woman

Doris was a member of the worship committee of Bloor Street United Church that made national headlines in 1979 by installing Almuth Lutkenhaus's sculpture, *Crucified Woman* in the Bloor Street narthex during Lent. After a protracted and frequently acerbic debate within Victoria and Emmanuel, Luthenhaus' gift of *Crucified Woman* was permanently installed in Emmanuel's east garden in 1986. An outdoor worship service marked the end of a two-day celebration that spring. Doris and Cliff Elliot[18] preached, liturgical dance was offered under the leadership of Sandra Caverly Lowery,[19] and the hymns sung were all by Doris' former student and celebrated Canadian hymn writer, Sylvia Dunston.[20]

Like the woman in the parable of the persistent widow in Luke's gospel, Doris engaged the debate within the academy with determined passion, but also with realistic resignation at the predictability of her opponents. She was a role model for many of us about why, theologically, and how, strategically, we must stand up for what matters. In 2008 I took copies of Doris' book *Crucified Woman* [21] as gifts when I taught a summer feminist theology course in Indonesia. It was enthusiastically received by the twenty-six students, including three Muslim men. The course reading list was primarily Asian feminists, but Doris's book found its way into most of the final essays; many were stimulated by how art can provoke theological enquiry in a congregation—and change hearts.

Interfaith and Hospitality

Doris said that travel was for her "the yeast that made my consciousness

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[18] The Rev Dr. Cliff Elliot was minster at Bloor Street United Church from 1977-1986 and a key supporter and spokesperson for the installation of the *Crucified Woman* sculpture at Bloor Street in 1979.

[19] Alexandra Caverly-Lowery, MDiv, ThM. is a movement educator, liturgical artist and spiritual director in private practice in Toronto. "Exploring God's Forgotten Language," Dreamwork Canada, accessed July 12, 2022. *https://dreamworkcanada.squarespace.com.* Alexandra, a former professor of dance at York University was a student of Doris in the 1980s during her M.Div. and Th.M. studies.

[20] A full profile of Sylvia G. Dunstan, authored by Lynette Miller, appears in *Touchstone* 15:1. See also *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology.* Canterbury Press, *http://www.hymnology.co.uk/s/sylvia-dunstan.* accessed July 12, 2022.

[21] Doris Jean Dyke, *Crucified Woman* (Toronto, United Church Publishing House, 1991).

rise."[22] In 1983 she was part of a delegation to Nicaragua, seeing firsthand the effects of the revolution there. Her sabbatical in 1984 saw her travel to Japan, China, Thailand, and the Philippines. This experience set the stage for an international women's interfaith dialogue conference that was held in 1988 at Emmanuel College. Here women from many faiths around the globe ate lunch in the garden with the *Crucified Woman*. Doris observed that many women saw how the sculpture raised questions about women's suffering. One young rabbi, who presided at a service in the garden, said that it was the first time that she "knew everyone wanted her to do well."[23]

When I returned to Emmanuel for graduate study in 1990, I was Doris' teaching assistant. Again, I was impressed by how her courses engaged contemporary issues and the latest feminist writings. The requirement to visit and write reflections on mosques, synagogues, and Buddhist and Hindu temples, was ahead of most of the UCC's inter-religious relationships at the time.

I also came to appreciate something perhaps unknown to those who saw only her public battle form. Her undergrad work in psychology and religion coupled with a very generous spirit meant many, many students who needed a listening ear found compassionate, hospitable space with her in her comfortable office. Part of the comfort of her office was that Doris always had on her desk only the work we were to discuss. If we met to review marking or course syllabi, we got right to it. This was a busy woman who had a full career, many outside commitments, including years serving on interfaith committees and living out single parent responsibilities. Yet she always walked with grace and ease as if she had all the time in the world. No matter what, she smiled, but all the while that quick mind was active, observant, engaged. She missed very little.

Gerontology and Retirement

In the year before Doris retired from Emmanuel, she returned part time to school at the University of Toronto to take a diploma in Gerontology. This training helped her obtain a post that she thoroughly enjoyed as Pastoral Care Coordinator at Greenwood Court, a Mennonite long term care facility in Stratford, Ontario.[24] A relative of mine experienced her leadership at that time. He loved her tender listening and her descriptions of God. He was a faithful United Church member all his life and Doris gave him fresh

[22] "Reflections," 19.

[23] Ibid., 24.

[24] After retirement from Emmanuel Doris lived in Stratford Ontario for several years with her husband Don Milne.

images with which to think about God. Doris also offered courses in gerontology and pastoral care both at Emmanuel College and the Vancouver School of Theology.[25] Eleven years ago, Doris spoke at my retirement from Emmanuel's faculty. Her arthritis by then had become very painful and she needed a cane. I watched her struggle up the platform stairs. But when she reached the podium, she beamed that fabulous smile into the audience and in her usual articulate gracious way held everyone's attention.

Doris told me once that she was by preference a peaceable person, yet most of her career she found herself in places requiring her to engage in conflict. She was an amazing woman, a model of Luke's persistent widow and a rare creature in the church of her time. She was an imaginative and influential teacher and mentor who increased awareness of injustice; she inspired social activism and faith, readiness to engage interfaith relations, appreciation of the importance of the arts and religion, as well as deep gratitude for the daring path she so tenaciously followed. For who she was, and for her many gifts and contributions, particularly to her beloved United Church, I am not alone in being grateful.

[25] Doris shared a house with her daughter Catherine and son in law Paul M. Evans and delighted in her close proximity and relationship with her two beloved grandsons, Paul Robert and William. In 2001 she moved to Vancouver where Catherine and Paul now lived. Family was for Doris a source of deep joy. She loved them well, as they did her in return.

Turning Ourselves Inside Out: Thriving Christian Communities
Russell Daye and Robert C. Fennell. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021.

Daye and Fennell got tired of hearing all the doom and gloom about mainline churches in decline. They hunched that, if they looked and listened, they would find another story, another trajectory, in the midst of the ravages of modernity. They did, and this book is an inspiring and instructive report on their learnings.

It begins with a powerful metaphor of life after a raging forest fire. It's found in the roots, in the hidden life beneath the surface destruction, in the mycelia. Daye got that image from Jim Drescher, co-founder of a retreat centre where he had gone to write. He described the mycelia as "the vast system of fungus that lives under a forest, carrying both the intelligence and the nutrients for that forest."

Out of long-term chronic crises, such as the unraveling of much that the mainline churches took for granted for generations, new hope for new/renewed forms arises from the heritage preserved in the life of the mycelia. There are "perceivers and innovators" who name the emergency honestly and experiment with creative responses, what some are calling "traditioned innovation." The responses documented in this book have generated thriving churches in a wide variety of settings and styles. Daye and Fennell are careful to caution that their accounts are not models to be followed, but stories to be adapted to our own crises and contexts.

They organize their findings into six character traits or virtues that they found in a delightful diversity of manifestations in all of the churches and agencies they studied. In brief, the six are:

- Saying 'yes' to hope;
- Being humble enough for life-long learning;
- Loving with an open heart, especially among the leadership core;
- Finding the courage to risk;
- Identifying a compelling and coherent purpose;
- Willing to give and give up things (*kenosis*) to change for the better.

These are not things to do as much as a culture in which all of the virtues are interacting and reinforcing each other, an ecosystem that nourishes the community to flourish in a symbiotic relationship with the flourishing of its social and spiritual environment.

Several insights about these virtues struck me as provocative for bettering the missioning of congregations and church agencies. First, I particularly like the focus on the potential of congregations as they are. This is not a book about new witnessing communities as much as it is about renewing witnessing communities. Each congregation or agency faced a crisis of survival. Their renewal often began by simply figuring out a way to survive. In that survival, then, they were able to imagine together better ways of living out the heritage of their Christian ways in hopeful and constructive ways. They realized they were already missional and said 'yes' to being more so in faithful, wise, and effective ways.

Second, I appreciated the recognition that individuals in the leadership teams might have been catalysts in cultivating the potential of the mycelia, but it took a team to spark and sustain the innovation and impact. It wasn't always the clergy and it was never the clergy alone. It was many people making many contributions to new ways of with-nessing (a phrase I learned from Tom Reynolds in our conversations about church and jazz) and witnessing that were fed by new hope found in the heritage.

Third, I value the push Daye and Fennell gave me to look more deeply into the organizational development wisdom of Otto Scharmer and Theory U. In brief, it's a way of engaging in organizational change that is rooted in a respectful listening that is willing to risk going down into the 'Ground of Being/Force Field of Divine Love.' Such listening opens minds, hearts, and wills to find new ways up into a generative co-creating and co-evolving for the well-being of all creation.

The virtues recommended in this book are at work in and through Brentwood Presbyterian Church, a revitalizing congregation in Burnaby, BC, whose primary missional neighbours are jazz musicians. Our flourishing in hope, fed by our heritage, is very much a work in progress. It always will be, if we are to avoid the pitfalls of complacency in the self-righteousness that plagues so many religious institutions these days. Churches are still infected with the disease of denial. Officials at various levels of the institution think they know what is best for the future of your congregation without ever having a conversation about it with you or digging deeply enough into the soil from which you have sprung to find hope in your heritage. Let's stop doing that and find more faithful, wise, and effective ways of collaborating with Christ in transforming our missioning. The possibilities for that happening are inspiringly and instructively presented in this book.

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Barth in Conversation, Volume 1: 1959-1962
Edited by Eberhard Busch. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018. Pp 330

Barth in Conversation is a three-volume collection of theologian Karl Barth's correspondence, articles, interviews and other shorter writings from the last decade of his colourful and productive life (1886-1968). They show the great Swiss theologian conversing with fellow theologians, preachers and students.

Barth was clearly at ease with the question-and-answer format in these encounters. In fact, he declares at the outset a growing preference for dialogue over and against "the day of grand lectures, while one person talks on for hours while the others are condemned to listen to whatever might pop into that person's mind."

Highlights of the conversations in Volume 1 include the occasion when Methodist preachers in Switzerland asked Barth about hell. Does it exist? Who goes to hell? Are its horrors eternal? Barth acknowledged that the Bible takes hell seriously, but as a defeated power. The rallying cry of the gospel is not "There is a hell!" but "Heaven is open!" (John 1: 51). While Barth did not preach universal salvation, he nevertheless held out hope that in the end all will be saved.

When Karl Barth visited America in 1962, he met Billy Graham and took a personal liking to the famous evangelist. However, when Billy Graham came to Switzerland, Barth heard him preach and was horrified: "There was pressure in the appeal to people: you must, you should! It was preaching the *law,* not a joy-inspiring message. He wanted to shock the people. Threatening always makes an impression. People like much more to be shocked than made to rejoice. The hotter one makes hell for them, the more they come running."

One day Barth was approached by a Jewish man whose nine-year old son, having read the story of Jesus in his school's Bible, wished to be baptised. Barth accordingly spoke to the boy, believed that the child knew what he was doing, and took the liberty of baptising him. "I hope," the theologian later said, "I have done the right thing."

The wrong thing, however, would have been, as far as Barth was concerned, to baptize babies who have no idea what is happening to them, thereby turning the church into "a big family club." As Barth puts it here: "I think that what we have now as children-baptism is, excuse the harsh expression, a caricature of a true baptism. And maybe it will be one of the big questions of Christian and ecclesiastical life in the future whether a change must not be made. Think it over."

Questioned once about the rough ride that Barth sometimes gave his theological hero, John Calvin, he retorted: "Calvin is in Heaven and has had time to ponder where he went wrong in his teachings. Doubtless he is pleased that I am setting him right."

Asked to comment on Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of Barth's silence in 1956 when Barth refused to publicly condemn the Communist repression in Hungary, the theologian responded with a question of his own: "Why is Reinhold Niebuhr silent about American prisons? Wouldn't it be wiser if he thought of things nearer to him than farther away?"

Asked by Carl Henry, the editor of *Christianity Today*, whether the bodily resurrection and virgin birth of Jesus were of such a nature that newsmen would have been responsible for reporting them as news, Barth pointed out that the bodily resurrection did not in fact convince the soldiers at the time but had significance only for Christ's disciples: "It takes the living Christ to reveal the living Christ."

Asked to describe the greatest obstacles to Church union, Barth cited the little word "and": "When we say 'Jesus,' the Catholics say 'Jesus *and* Mary.' We seek to obey only our Lord the Christ. Catholics obey Christ *and* his vicar on earth, the pope. We believe that the Christian is saved by the merits of Jesus Christ; the Catholics add '*and* by one's own merits.' We think that the only source of revelation is Scripture; the Catholics add "*and* Tradition." We say that the knowledge of God is obtained by faith in his Word as it expresses itself in Scripture; the Catholics add, "*and* by reason."

But enough polemics! This book also recalls a poignant moment when Karl Barth was responding to questions from students while visiting Princeton Theological Seminary in 1962. "Dr. Barth," one student began, "I'm a senior in seminary, and most of my colleagues will be going out this next June into the pastorate. I wonder if, out of your experience . . . you would give us some advice on the calling of the pastor."

Barth accordingly encouraged the student to "busy himself earnestly with the message of the Old and the New Testaments, and not only with this message but also with the object and the subject of this message." Then he added the most important question of all: "Do you like them, these people on the streets? Not the good Christians only, these also, but do you like people as they are? People in their weakness and wickedness also? Do you like them? Do you love them? And are you willing to tell them the message that God is not against them, but for them?"

I am a long-time Barth aficionado. Perhaps this book will encourage you to join the club!

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Building God's Beloved Community: Discipleship in the United Church of Canada.

Taylor Croissant, ed. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2022. 165 pp.

This is a very helpful book. Taylor Croissant has edited a useful, interesting, thorough, worthwhile, and informative collection of excellent essays written by an A-list of contributors. Fundamental aspects of life in The United Church of Canada are covered, and submissions by Gary Paterson, Andrew Kinoti Lairenge, Susanne Abbuhl, and Bill Richards are highlights. There is a Glossary, a Timeline of the Emergence of the Bible, and a good Bibliography, all things I like in a book. Its purpose is to be an accompanying text during a "period of preparation" for those exploring the path to becoming a "full member of the church." (back cover). Right off the bat, membership is addressed by Croissant, but the book would have been more engaging, I think, if more had been said about the work that the UCC has done around this issue, in documents such as "Our Model of Church Membership: Time for a Change?" (2017) by the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee. That document explores with sensitivity the arguments for and against Church membership. Starting with reference to that document would have contextualized this book within the wider discussion around valid questions of the value of membership in a Church in the 21st century.

Each essay is clear and well-written; the topics are fascinating. As an admirer of John Young, I was glad to see his name and read his submission, but I felt it didn't go far enough in articulating the extent to which the UCC 2019 change from four courts to three courts resulted in a consolidation of power into the hands of Executive Ministers in the Regional Councils. Horseshoe Falls Regional Council, for example, is one of three Regional Councils under the direction of one Executive Minister. The role and reach of Executive Ministers are not mentioned. Yet EMs have tremendous influence, as well as virtually unchecked control over many aspects of life in the Regional Council, from property issues to Ministry Personnel issues to various other issues of governance. Commissions within the Regional Councils are led to believe that they have autonomy in decision-making, but that is not necessarily true.

The book is rich in detail, but it left me with a couple of questions: 1) does the UCC have ministers or any kind of educated clergy or spiritual leadership? 2) do we feel joy in what we do as the Church? For the first question, I note that the book cover shows a diverse group led by a stoled (so, presumably Ordered) minister, and yet there is little mention of

spiritual leadership in this book. If this book were required reading in an M.Div. course at Emmanuel College, would not students there ask, "Hey! Where are we in the UCC? Are we working on this post-graduate, 30-course, 3-year full-time M.Div. degree that you told us we needed, to hardly get a mention in a book about the Church?" Fortunately, ministers are mentioned in YunJung Kim's essay (54-55), briefly by Andrew O'Neill (58) and in passing by William Kervin (95) in the fact that ministers are licensed to officiate at weddings. But Kervin, a long-time and popular Professor of Worship at Emmanuel *does not mention* in any meaningful way the role of the clergy in his chapter on "Worship in The United Church of Canada". As an ordained UCC minister, former student, and graduate of Emmanuel College, that struck me as odd, as did the virtual absence throughout the book of the mention of the role of educated, trained, spiritual leadership in the UCC. Why is that? Yes, we as the Church espouse the idea of the "priesthood of all believers", but God's Call to some to endure the training and sacrifice required of Ordered Ministers warrants more recognition from the Church itself of how God's sacred work sometimes requires prophetic leadership.

I recommend this book for anyone wanting a good primer on essential beliefs widely held in the United Church, on how it views itself, and the thinking behind decisions that have been made in its history. But I don't think anyone is going to be inspired to become a member of the UCC after reading this book. This brings me to my second question: Where is our joy? Where is our passion? Where is the sense of relief that we have a faith that makes us feel "strangely warmed" (vii)? In his Foreword, Gary Paterson wrote that this book is about the "Thinking Room". Now we need a book about the "Heart Room"—as much as I love the fact-based, intellectual content of this book, to attract members we need a book about the "Heart Room", a book that oozes with passion about a God we can rest in and who has hopes for us, who revealed Godself in Jesus of Nazareth, and whose Holy Spirit enlivens and heals us as we live into discipleship. People exploring the UCC want to know what we believe, and whether we have the peace of Jesus Christ in those beliefs. People are aware of the *work* of the United Church, but not of how we *celebrate* our belief in Jesus Christ. We're good at disrupting and unsettling, but we're not so good at waving our arms around and proclaiming with joy that Jesus Christ is the centre of all we do. In other words, do our faith statements match what is found in our churches? *That's* what people need to know when they consider membership in the UCC.

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