

You dream of a church that encourages personal spiritual growth in an age when simple answers are no longer adequate; that nurtures relevant engagement in the midst of intransigent and complex social injustice; and a church that creatively passes on to the next generation these human values of growth and care.

You are not alone.

We are not alone . . .



Our United Church

From the first moments of its birth, The United Church of Canada has been about the dream of a better, more just society.

Union itself, in 1925, was unprecedented and has provided a model for churches in other countries. The merger ran against centuries of fracture in the Christian church.

And now for more than 80 years, The United Church of Canada has served as a beacon throughout the world, standing steadfastly for basic human rights and for the expansion of the human spirit, even when it seemed the trend ran toward meanness. More than that, it has stood in opposition to injustice of all types, including war, apartheid, racism, poverty, bigotry and discrimination.

We have often been accused of being ahead of our time.

As far back as the 1930s, the United Church lobbied for birth control to be legal, arguing that it was already available to the wealthy and so should be for all. It took the federal government until 1969 to make that happen.

The searing debate about women's place in the church – still a vexed question for some – was settled in that era, too, when Reverend Lydia Gruchy was ordained in 1936. Recently the church apologized to those women who, before a change in 1957, saw their careers cut short when they married, recognizing that when hurtful mistakes are made, healing must become a focus of concern.

By 1952, the church had tackled medicare, urging the government to back it. It was 1972 before Canadians had universal access to doctors and hospital services. In 1988, the church opened its arms and its orders to Canadians of all sexual orientations.

For us, sharing Creation's wealth is an act of responsibility and of joy.

Much of this church's social conscience was inherited intact from predecessor churches. Beginning in 1912, in the midst of an unprecedented four-year span of immigration to Canada, our Methodist ancestors took on the delivery of the City of Toronto's social services. The Methodist Social Council and its Fred Victor Mission had a hand in every part of the city's care for the homeless – largely immigrants.

Their work helped fashion a new understanding of what it meant *to be* the church. Remnants of the network of care established at that time remain today – the Fred Victor Centre and the Massey Centre. And the Methodist Social Council itself is still active. Now called The Toronto United Church Council, it provides creative leadership in Church Development.

The Seven Years of Plenty Campaign

The root narrative that tells the church what it is, is changing. Congregations are still defined by physical and organizational traits. But these do not necessarily reflect what our church might become. Our church has a duty to recreate itself, to get on with the business of transforming lives and society.

A network of creative visionaries is seeded in every congregation. These "midwives" see new life emerging within our church and seek to nurture it to health. The Seven Years of Plenty campaign represents a critical element of this new life.

A compelling new understanding of "church" is emerging - with input from within and outside the church. A healthy, new church is expressing itself, relevant to the young. It continues to translate hope into action for the marginalized and breathes new life into its congregations.

Seven Years of Plenty is a bold initiative. During a time when few feel as though we live in the midst of plenty, the campaign will remind church members that we live affluent lives, blessed by the richness of life itself. It will remind church members that our faith calls us to live in gratitude for God's generosity, for life's beauty, its bounty and its challenges to the human spirit. And it will remind us that God's gifts are given to us to share.

TORONTO UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL

Council's membership is made up of twenty-four representatives from congregations across the Conference. Two members are appointed by each of the nine presbyteries of Toronto Conference and six members-at-large are named by Council itself.

Council's Financial Development Committee leads the campaign and is chaired by Jim Hilborn.

The Campaign's Advisory Board is made up of members from across Toronto Conference.

CAMPAIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TO MAY 2006)

Mark Aston, Executive Director, Fred Victor Centre

Bonnie Greene, Dufferin & Peel Presbytery

Rev. John Houston, York Presbytery

Maureen Huisman, President, Toronto United Church Council,
Past President, Toronto Conference

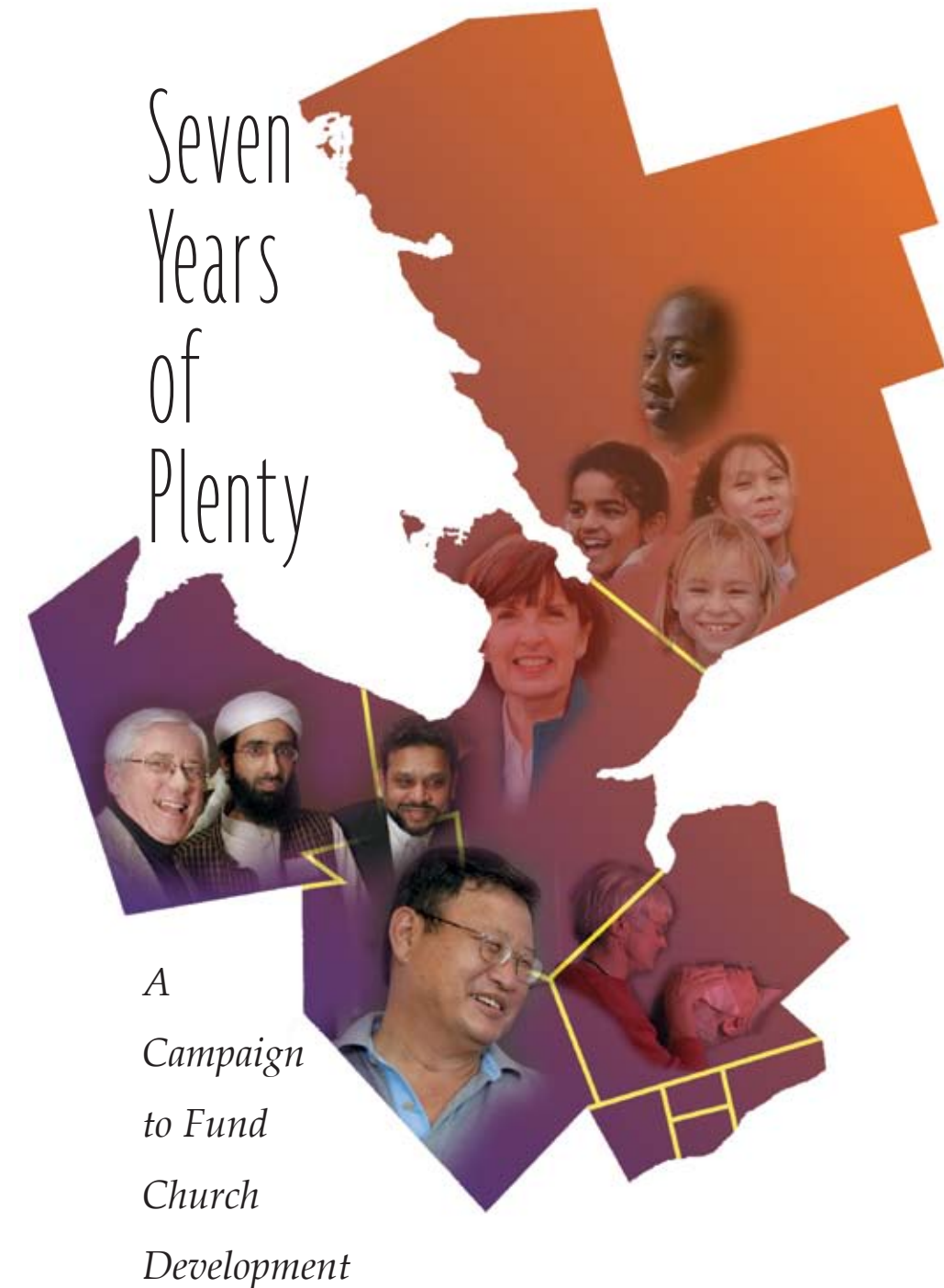
Jim McKibbin, President AOTS, Toronto Conference

The Very Rev. Bruce McLeod, Former Moderator, United Church of Canada

John Patterson, Founding Partner, Kanbay International

Rev. Gordon Winch, O.C., Founder, Toronto Distress Centre

Rev. Albion Wright, Planned Giving Advisor, United Church of Canada



*A
Campaign
to Fund
Church
Development*



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Church Development

Our church's strength lies in its willingness to transform itself – growing to meet the spiritual and social challenges of the day. Church development keeps us real, relevant and reachable.

TODAY:

- 175,000 people rely on emergency food relief each month in Toronto;
- 1 in 5 of the children whose families use food banks live in homes that never have enough money for food;
- In Muskoka, 40% of the area's residents have difficulty affording adequate housing, a figure that is common in Ontario's rural areas;
- Around the world 40,000 children die each day of starvation and preventable diseases;
- For one of three world citizens, water is sometimes scarce.

AND THERE IS SPIRITUAL HUNGER TOO:

- Decreasing rates of violent crime cannot mask the spiritual poverty inherent in the highly publicized gun violence on the streets of the greater Toronto area;
- A culture built on increasing productivity makes financial demands that fracture families;
- Endemic advertising communicates one thing only: I NEED MORE.



Seven Years of Plenty



A CAMPAIGN TO RAISE \$20 MILLION BY 2010

Toronto United Church Council works with more than 300 congregations and mission units, nine presbyteries and with Toronto Conference itself to promote the development of our church. It is responsible for gathering the knowledge and some of the finances needed for this development. Its work helps congregations realize their dreams.

Today, those dreams are vast. Congregations see the social and the spiritual need within their communities and around the world, and they are responding with big plans, plans that will take large amounts of money. More than Council now has.

In its first fundraising push in nearly 50 years, Council has pledged to raise \$20 million by 2010 to respond to these needs.

The campaign is called *Seven Years of Plenty*, after the Bible's story about making sure there's enough to go around in lean times. The campaign started quietly in 2004 with a large gift. In the past two years, plans have taken shape and other gifts have come in, garnering a total of more than \$2.5 million

toward the goal. Now, the campaign is going public, both to church members and to society at large, to raise the balance.

The name, *Seven Years of Plenty*, also declares that it is our church's task to respond in gratitude to God's generosity and to lead in the building of a society that shares that generosity with all.



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The Work Ahead



Human life cannot be reduced to production and consumption. Personal spiritual growth and the creation of inclusive, caring community are critical elements of a "whole" and healthy life.

Unleashing its creativity, our church is finding hopeful new ways to care for society and itself – both locally and across the earth. Today, this means rebuilding ourselves,

recrafting our own stories of what our church is and does.

Today, with vision that sees a hundred years, we are dreaming a new understanding of our church for a new generation. We continue to be ahead of our time.

Today, as the United Church navigates its path of critical change, Council is experiencing unprecedented demands for money.

Twenty-three development projects are in the works with budgets totaling \$35 million. *Seven Years of Plenty* will raise \$7 million in support of these needs and those of other congregations as they finalize their development plans.

Current projects include:

- Upgrading congregational homes across Toronto Conference;
- Replacing old church buildings with new;
- Building new churches in rapidly expanding communities;
- Partnering with Presbyteries to anticipate demographic shifts and acquiring sites for future congregations.



Toronto Conference camps represent the church's most active programming for youth, and the campaign will raise \$7 million for that program too. The camps need \$6 million for capital improvements and another \$1 million over the next five years for sending children to camp. The camps' ministry of spiritual awakening and "earth-keeping" for more than 2,400 children and young people every year is one of our church's best kept secrets.

As well, *Seven Years of Plenty* will raise \$6 million to continue Council's commitment to the social action on which it was founded in 1892. Those funds will infuse the Community Relief Fund with new resources and launch other initiatives such as The Muskoka Housing Fund.

This adds up to a total of \$20 million by 2010.