

## President's Report 2020

The way in which we will be meeting (virtually) for this Annual meeting, speaks to the reality of the latter few months in Toronto United Church Council history. Last year we met at St. Andrew's United Church, Georgetown, site of a Senior's Affordable Housing project which was heavily influenced in its initial stage by expertise offered through TUCC. The inspiration that sparked interest in that project began at the Annual meeting of 1999, when John Sewell, former mayor of Toronto spoke about the opportunity for various levels of government and churches to work alongside one another for the improvement of society (specifically affordable housing). We are now living in a 'virtual meeting time' when the COVID-19 pandemic has given us a new opportunity to work collectively to build a better way of being society together. I dare say it offers us a time to build parts of the reign of God here and now!

As your President I want to be as bold as to say that this organization has been in the forefront of such change throughout its history and no less so during this last year. We have been most fortunate that our forebears bequeathed a significant trust to us that has enabled innovative ministry to happen for nearly 130 years. As I reviewed this year's work of 'connecting resources with ministry' I have seen the good stewardship of this trust and that the generosity of today's generation continues to be fruitful and imaginative.

A couple of years ago the Investing In Ministry Fund (IIMF) was closed to further contributions. The value of investments in the fund had grown to be far greater than the value of loans using funds to invest in projects for ministry. As I write this report, the IIM Fund now has 80% of its funds out in loans. Among the projects financed this year have been the significant restoration of Metropolitan United, the new extension at Wasaga Beach, and the planned construction of new day-care facilities at East Plains in Burlington, projects that are representative of our tangible support of new ministry initiatives through capital loans in all four of the Regional Councils areas we seek to serve.

Investors in the Investing In Ministry Fund tend to stick around. Another significant milestone for the Fund in 2019-20 was that, with a number of investment renewals, we reached the point where half of the 40 or so investors have either extended or renewed their ten-year investments at least once, and in some cases multiple times.

The Heart and Vision event this year once again took place in the fall season. The fund-raising focus for the event was for our 'Camping ministry'. The leadership and supporters of Toronto United Church Council experienced a new venue (Enoch Turner Schoolhouse) with a more intimate dinner and cabaret style. The Heart and Vision award was presented to the Honorable Margaret McCain, who weaved in to her address the value of camping opportunities for a child's development. Margaret has been a champion for the improvement of supports for child development from the 'birthing' room forward and has also been a personal supporter of camping programs all her life. We took the opportunity to thank major TUCC supporters David and Anne Patterson, who have generously contributed more than 2 million dollars to camping and other programs over the years. We highlighted the Patterson's 'soft spot' for Camp Big Canoe, where they met 51 years ago and returned as husband and wife to be the Camp Director and Waterfront Director the following year. A highlight of the evening included the presentation of a major gift resulting from the proceeds of the sale of Camp Wesceneaskin, which was given to support current camping ministries.

The fall of 2019 saw the launching of the Innovative Ministry Centre program with a series of workshops and recruitment of six congregations as the 'beta' cohort for the initial training course. The official 'course' began in January 2020 and runs through to January 2021. We look forward to the learnings which will be gleaned from this initiative. We are known as an

organization which brings leadership together and helps our churches innovate to meet the spiritual needs of our time.

As the national church eases into its new regional structure we have sought to develop better relationships with new partners. Relationships with four regions of central and western Ontario (Shining Waters, Horseshoe Falls, Western Ontario Waterways, East Central Ontario) have continued to strengthen. This was symbolized in the 2019 Baillie Youth Awards. Twelve young people representing each of the four regions were honored, the locations of their churches stretching from Grand Bend to Peterborough.

Sometimes TUCC has to have the courage to make tough decisions. One of the major matters before staff and the Board in the last year was the challenging decision made to sell Council's 25 Sewells Rd property. This happened after three years of long and careful discernment, bearing in mind the Malvern Emmanuel congregation and other small community gatherings who called the space, 'home'. The sale has made this land available for much needed affordable housing in this area of Toronto, together with an extended period for the congregation using the building to find a new home, as well the release of significant resources for ministry work.

This has been a year of staff transitions. Joyce Kung has now returned to her duties after a time of maternity leave and we rejoice with her in the birth of daughter Kayla. We thank Louise Kung for her commitment and diligence in this accounting work during Joyce's absence. Just this March we welcomed Tay Moss to the 'team' as part-time Coordinator of the Innovative Ministry Centre. For the last 2 years, our Director of Property Services and Capital Loans, Ken Clarke, has had an ever-expanding portfolio. We are thankful that he has renewed his contract with us. Last summer saw the successful engagement of Alex Jebson as a summer research student. This year we will have a new summer student and the focus will be on working with a group of congregations to update their social media presence.

The last 13 weeks with the COVID 19 pandemic seem to have 'overshadowed' this 2020 year. Our staff and the Board might have 'hunkered down' and just adjusted to working from home without child care, proper office facilities, and the on-going anxieties about our futures. However, I am proud to report that they have adjusted quickly and TUCC can be proud of its proactive response, with loan relief for borrowers, special loans for investors in the Investing In Ministry Fund, and leadership with our Camping partners to address their unique concerns in this time.

As we reflect on this time of turbulence we are grateful to Don Hunter and the CIBC team headed by Graeme Hamilton for their wise and careful stewardship of the Toronto United Church Council investment pool. The work of this group has meant that the pandemic has had a lower impact on the funds than might have been expected during this time of unprecedented financial challenge. We know that their diligent work continues and this gives the Board confidence in to the future.

This year inevitably amongst the challenges and successes we once again said a final farewell to a TUCC 'booster'. This year it was to one who left a strong legacy for TUCC and other groups, the Reverend Tom Lowry. Tom led us and walked with us in major housing initiatives and new congregation developments from the 1990s through to recent days. May the Lord Bless and Keep Us Always!

Ross Leckie – President  
Pentecost 2020