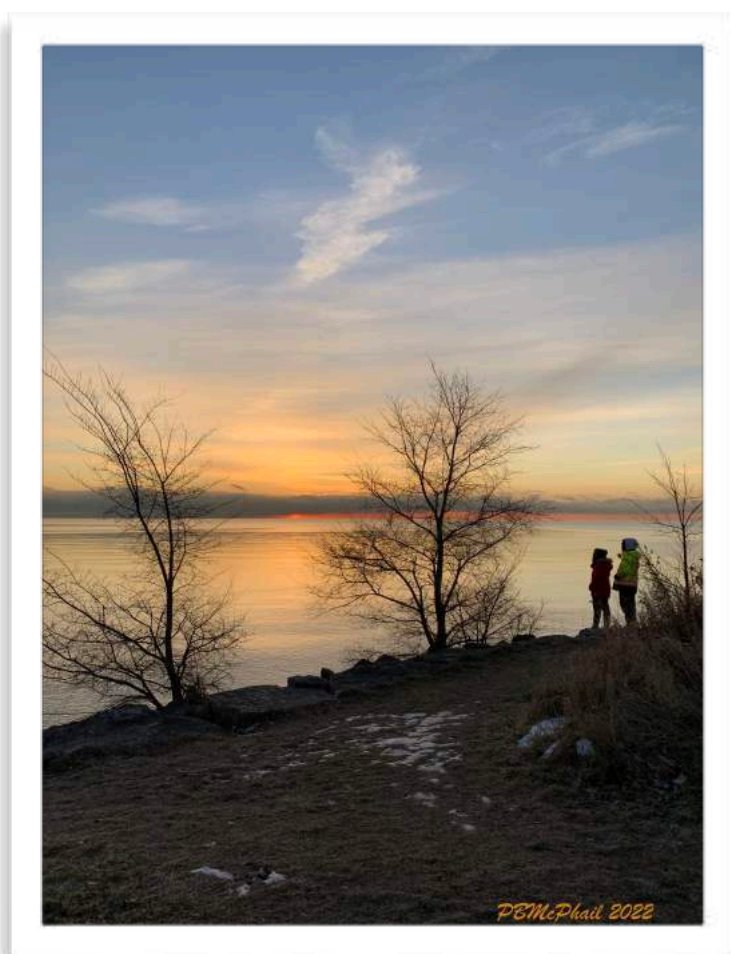


Living Faith Story

for

Wesley Mimico United Church

May 2022



"Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore"

Community of Faith – Telling our Story

The Wesley Mimico United Church (**WMUC**) Community of Faith is a vital congregation serving the South Etobicoke Lakeshore community. Our goal is to become a centre of faith, action, care and healing. Our mission is to be a joyous people of the spirit, delightfully reflecting God's love in all that we do and are. We reach out to those around us by providing programs and services that are needed and to join with others who are serving the community.

We are a church with no building. We worship and carry out our mission in a non-traditional space, the auditorium of the local library (pre pandemic). We have a separate office for the minister, who is half-time, and a part time administrative resource person, as well as a space for church meetings and Bible and book study.

Currently, about 60 members and friends are part of the life of the congregation with average attendance of about 25 at Sunday worship (by Zoom). The worshipping congregation has experienced that small and simple can be beautiful, that learning to be small but effective is a challenge, but that countless other local Christian congregations are similarly challenged.

The focus of our faith growth opportunities are adults of all ages. The congregation participates in Bible and study opportunities in Advent, Lent and other times. In recent years before the pandemic, WMUC held four 24 hour congregational retreats, where participants deepened their care, trust & empathy for each other. Participants have found this to be spiritually uplifting and fulfilling.

Our active Worship Committee meets frequently with the minister and music director to plan faith-based activities, especially rich, engaging, multifaceted, faith-based weekly worship services. Services celebrate music through an enthusiastic choir and talented music director. The choir sings at ecumenical and

other special events and at Christmas at a local nursing home. The Worship committee is looking forward to working with a new minister to help create fulfilling faith based services and events.

WMUC continues to grow its outreach and to strengthen its social justice impact in our community through its Food Justice Ministry; participation in refugee work with Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran church (**MLELC**), social justice groups, especially ECULINKS & St. Margaret Anglican church, and with Buddhist, Muslim & Jewish interfaith activities. Our enthusiastic and vigorous Mission and Outreach committee spearheads many of these efforts.

Through the congregation, the United Church is present to a large and growing population base in Etobicoke's Lakeshore. To continue being present and active in the Lakeshore area is a priority for the congregation because there are people in need of spiritual, pastoral, social, and justice ministries that contribute to wholeness and well-being. The potential and scope of ministry in the area is large and growing.

Wider Relationships

Active involvement with Shining Waters Regional Council (**SWRC**) and the United Church General Council is an essential expectation of Ministry Personnel and the congregation to support the life and work of the wider church. An ability to work well in an ecumenical and interfaith setting is important. The minister is not expected to speak publicly on behalf of our community of faith, but is expected to participate in religious services with other denominations from time to time.

The WMUC actively responds to God's call "to be the church" in the Lakeshore. WMUC reaches out to our community in various ways, including participating in Mimico's Party in the Park, World Day of Prayer and special events such as concerts and bazaars.

Wider WMUC outreach activities include the Wesley Food Ministries and Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (**MLELC**) outreach programs, including the MLC Refugee Fund and the MLELC Bowls and Blessings, Food Pantry, clothing distribution and Dinner Church by the Lake programs, as well as the Etobicoke ECULINKS Social Justice group and the St. Margaret Anglican Church Social Justice committee. WMUC has participated in Black History celebrations and events with St. Margaret Anglican Church.

Active working relationships have formed with neighbouring Christian congregations especially, Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (**MLELC**), Mimico Presbyterian Church, St. Margaret Anglican Church, Mimico Baptist Church and the Meeting House Church, and with various other Lakeshore community groups and organizations. These churches share their sanctuary, their ministers & choirs in combined ecumenical special services, for example, Lenten, Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas Eve services, World Day of Prayer and Blue Christmas (sometimes called Longest Night) services. Sanctuaries are also shared for bazaars and concerts.

Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (**MLELC**) provides space for our food programmes. The Meeting House church provides volunteers, financial resources and in kind donations for our food programmes. WMUC members have actively participated in several inter-faith meetings and visited local Buddhist temples, mosques and synagogues. Two local schools hold Christmas food drives in support of WMUC's food ministries. Members of WMUC assist with the Out of the Cold program at St. Margaret Anglican Church.

WMUC has consulted other congregations (United Church and other denominations and faiths) and contacted numerous organizations seeking advice and opportunities to ground itself in a new location. The pandemic has severely limited these ongoing efforts. Regular consultation and reports on this activity have been made to Council and congregation and communicated through the weekly church newsletter and announcements in Sunday services.

Administration and Support

The church office is located on the 4th floor of a professional building at 2405 Lakeshore Blvd. W, Unit 403, Toronto, M8V 1C6. Our website is wmuc.ca and our Email is office@wmuc.ca. The minister is not expected to supervise other staff, but is expected to work effectively with the secretary and music director.

The secretary maintains regular weekly office hours, compiles and distributes the Wesley Mimico United Church (**WMUC**) annual report, produces the weekly Sunday bulletins, manages church mailings, files official minutes of church committees and official church and ministerial records, sorts mail, handles phone calls to the office and mails contribution statements, tax returns and ministerial & other letters to members and friends. The secretary ensures the appropriate people are informed of matters that come to the church office and need to be addressed in a timely fashion.

WMUC has maintained a website for about 12 years. WMUC's secretary posts new items to the WMUC website, such as the weekly newsletter Happenings. WMUC pays an annual fee of just over \$500 to Churchweb Support (located in Dundas Ont.) for ongoing web support. The secretary contacts them from time to time as required. Churchweb Support designed and set up the current website in 2018.

WMUC uses TWM Compu Age for computer maintenance and computer problems. They are located across the street from the church office. WMUC's Treasurer uses Not4Profit to retain its financial records & to produce its financial statements. WMUC pays an annual fee of just over \$100 to Cooperstock Software to provide regular updates to the software program as well as a HelpDesk.

The Chair of the Finance & Stewardship Committee submits the annual Statistic report to the United Church of Canada and the annual charitable return to Revenue Canada. The weekly newsletter, Happenings, is produced & distributed by a WMUC volunteer independently of the church office. The WMUC archivist maintains documents and photographs of long-term interest. There is a "phone tree" that ensures timely communication about matters of interest and concern to the WMUC congregation.

The governing body of WMUC is the Council. Council includes the minister, the chair and secretary of Council, the WMUC Treasurer, the Chair and Treasurer of the Trustees, the Lay Rep to Shining Waters Regional Council, the WMUC archivist, the person appointed to maintain statistics on members, adherents, weddings, deaths and births and the chairs of the, Finance and Stewardship, Mission and Outreach, Ministry and Personnel, Worship and Communication Committees. The Mission and Personnel and Worship Committees meet frequently with the minister and staff to:

- ensure minister's concerns and wishes are thoughtfully and timely considered:
- provide feedback, support; and
- act as a sounding board for ministerial proposals and creativity.

The Trustees oversee investments of the proceeds from the sale of the church manse and building and related properties.

The minister and the Lay representative to SWRC attend the SWRC Annual General Meeting. The previous WMUC Lay Representative to SWRC was a Commissioner to the General Council.

WMUC members and friends readily volunteer for all the varied work of the congregation and minister. They volunteer to support special church events, ecumenical and community activities. They participate in each church service, doing readings, participating in plays and other worship leadership roles. Our food ministry programme, which is financed and staffed by volunteers from the WMUC congregation, is housed in the local Lutheran church on the Lakeshore.

Pastoral Spiritual Care

Our minister, together with the congregation, provides pastoral care in different ways to members and friends. We are a small congregation and do not have a pastoral care team, but we are open to, and aware of, one another's needs, whether they are physical, emotional or spiritual and maintain regular direct contact through visits, phone, email and social media, such as Facebook. We rely on committees and small groups to keep us aware of changes in people's lives.

United Church Women continues as a vibrant and active group, which deeply enriches participants' lives and sense of community. Several men meet for coffee weekly with participants sharing their life experiences and thoughts. The Choir & Bible & book study groups are also lively occasions to share personal experiences and news. Committee meetings and church services begin with a time of social and spiritual interaction. WMUC utilizes a phone tree to ensure a caring and prompt response to the ever changing needs and news of our congregation and community. Our church office is an important hub from which news of our members and friends are shared.

WMUC has a strong and long-term tradition of sharing memories and food on special occasions, such as dinners to celebrate our elders, some who have belonged to the WMUC family for over 80 years. We also gather over food to

celebrate baptisms and weddings of children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren as well as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other special occasions. “Progressive dinners” are held from time to time to build community. We hold welcoming back dinners in the fall and luncheons for new comers.



WMUC has an excellent newsletter “Happenings” that is published weekly and distributed to members and adherents by Email. Members often provide articles or photos to Happenings concerning personal experiences, information and events of interest from the wider community and updates and opportunities concerning our food and refugee ministries, and other social justice issues. We participate in a Drum Circle with Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (MLELC).

WMUC encourages its minister to set goals for ongoing self-care by maintaining a healthy balance between their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. We support opportunities to include rest, recreation, and professional development. WMUC Ministry and Personnel Committee meets with the minister (and the music director and secretary) a number of times throughout the year to ensure meaningful, sensitive and responsive two-way communication between the minister, congregation, secretary and music director; and that the minister pursues personal, vocational, and professional goals for continuing education.

Worship

WMUC members share in worship that is inclusive, open, welcoming and meaningful in the context of our place and time. We aim to grow our worship capacity to inspire greater faith. Our worship is inclusive and seeks to find a balance between those who are long-time United Church members and those with little or no church background. Our services centre on God, Jesus and Spirit and how they ground us in a living personal faith as well as give them context to our world. We enthusiastically use Voices United and More Voices and have a printed bulletin with responsive readings and other elements of the service. The Worship Committee meets frequently with the minister to provide support and to help ensure rich and relevant worship services and opportunities.

We value our choir and as lay people like to engage with and contribute to the service. We have had adult and infant baptisms; a teen confirmation and a



transfer from another congregation. WMUC often shares worship services with other local churches at Christmas, Easter and Lent and during the summer. We hold annual outdoor services and annual Easter Sunrise services on the Lake in which onlookers join in the celebration.

WMUC expects a minister to:

- create engaging, living, rich and spiritual worship services;
- expand and lead us to be a profounder community of faith;
- support our growing and vibrant ecumenical outreach;
- encourage and support others in development of their own gifts and contributions; and

- enable us to continue to be responsive and relevant to the ever changing community needs and social environment.

The ministerial style sought is collegial with a highly personable approach to leadership that builds relationship and consensus, delegates and shares leadership appropriately. We would like a minister that is prepared to try new things and who is able to learn through both successes and mistakes.

Before the pandemic, WMUC worshipped in the auditorium of the Mimico Centennial Library. Our Sunday attendance at the Library has remained steady. The congregation is enthusiastic about the intimacy of the library space. We are discovering that who we are as a community of faith does not require a physical home. We are exploring different ways to build a loving, Christian community and growth and self-care are important in this endeavour. We continue to explore our options to strengthen our ties with one another as we come to a common understanding of what the mission that God has given to our congregation.

WMUC adapted quickly to pandemic restrictions by shifting worship to Zoom. Services embrace technology by incorporating images, music, videos and messages from other sources, as well as traditional scripture readings, hymns, prayers and sermons. Services flow seamlessly and engage participants throughout. About 25 participate in each zoom service.

Stewardship

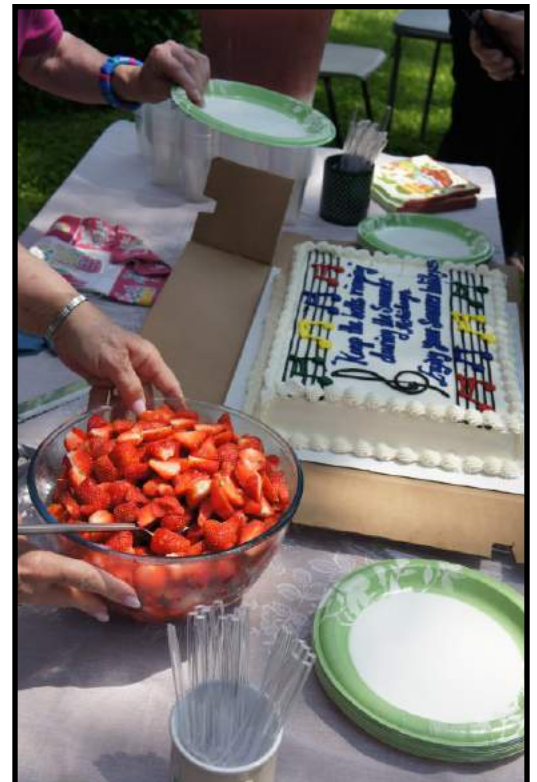
WMUC is a welcoming caring congregation that gives generously of its resources of time, money and spiritual gifts. We aim to enhance stewardship awareness in the congregation to promote stewardship, generosity and thanksgiving. We encourage stewardship through gatherings to celebrate special occasions in the lives of one another.

For example, we celebrate farewells at luncheons to longtime members, Murray and Marion Seeley.



We celebrate special occasions at member's homes.

We celebrate the beginning of summer each year by sharing strawberries and shortcake.



We regularly promote participation in PAR with 10 participants, who contribute the majority of congregational envelope donations, which ensures smooth and continuous financial support throughout the year. Special quarterly letters provide congregants with financial updates, and assurance that their donations are critical to the worship & fellowship of the WMUC community and their food & social justice ministries. Materials provided to the congregation from the Division of Philanthropy of the United Church are used to promote stewardship, generosity and thanksgiving. Outreach programs are highlighted and promoted at the WMUC General Annual meeting, The Mission and Service Sunday, and briefly at Sunday services. On these and other occasions congregational health and cohesiveness are cultivated.

Several 24 hour congregational retreats deepen congregational care and commitment. In this photo, retreat participants enjoyed a fun drumming 101 introduction at the Valley of the Mother of God Coptic Retreat Center.



The WMUC Treasurer distributes (by Email) detailed monthly comparative income statements, balance sheets and asset and liability statement for review by the Committee and Council. The WMUC Finance and Stewardship committee meets 3-4 times a year and holds a budget meeting in early January to prepare a detailed budget for the coming year, for review by the WMUC Council who approve an annual budget for discussion and approval at the WMUC Annual General Meeting. The WMUC year-end comparative income, balance sheet and asset and liability statements as well as the proposed budget are presented in detail to the Annual General Meeting for review, discussion and approval.

WMUC is a financially healthy congregation, with resources to pay:

- the minister at above the minimum salary required by the United Church;
- the WMUC music director a pandemic bonus of \$2,500 due to extra hours worked due to the pandemic; and
- a secretary with enhanced pandemic payments.

WMUC also supports the Mission & Service Fund of the United Church; a vigorous food ministry; and donations to other charitable organizations that are detailed in the section on Financial Outreach. WMUC has ample financial resources to support a long-term ministerial commitment and diverse & vigorous outreach activities.

In six of the last seven years (2015-21) WMUC revenues have exceeded expenses. Revenues are expected to exceed expenses for many years to come. The 2021 year-end bank balance increased to \$80,882, the highest level since 2015. The bank balance increased, even though WMUC used \$100,000 of its general funds to make new investments. WMUC has investments of \$1,685,399 of which \$1,216,500 is invested with Toronto United Church Council and \$468,899 with Alterna Savings. Care was taken to ensure that preservation of principal was a major consideration in making these investments.

Financial Outreach to other Charitable Organizations

The Mission and Service Fund Congregational donations were \$3,884 and \$9,459 in 2021 and 2020, respectively, and averaged over \$4,000 from 2011 – 2019. Annual Mission and Outreach Sundays include special speakers and a review of outreach activities. Minutes for Mission are regularly presented to the congregation during services.

- WMUC has committed to supporting the Ministere Protestant Francophone de Toronto, a small francophone Church in Downsview, by payments of \$4,200 in each of the years 2022-2024.

WMUC also has provided:

- \$8,062 in 2021 to support its food ministries;
- a \$1,000 to purchase books on Indigenous lives by Indigenous authors for use in John English Junior Middle School (our local school);
- \$2,500 in 2022 to the Indigenous Toronto Spirit Garden Fund;
- \$2,500 in 2022 to the United Church Ukrainian Emergency Response Fund;
- thousands over the past several years to the MLELC Refugee Fund;
- \$1,100 to the United Church Humanitarian fund in 2020 and regularly supports such special funds;

- WMUC's choir presented a Food Grain concert at which they raised \$1,400, which was matched twofold by the Canadian Federal Government.



The WMUC Mission and Outreach Committee made donations of \$100 each in 2021 to:

- Gifts for Vision to purchase vaccine doses for Covid19;
- Broadview to provide copies of Broadview to prisoners;

and in 2022 to:

- Women's Habitat, which provides safety & shelter to battered women;
- Fred Victor Mission, which provides food & shelter to unhoused people;
- Covenant House, which supports at-risk youths; and
- the Catherine Norris ECULINKS Etobicoke Memorial Fund.

Local Food Justice Ministry

Food Ministry is extremely important to WMUC. We are committed to these food and social justice programs and are proud of the contribution we make to our local community. Our programs include a weekly community lunch, food bank and Christmas food and gift card programs. WMUC Food security programs began more than 50 years ago, with the WMUC food bank commencing in 1995 and WMUC community luncheon commencing in 1996.

The WMUC food programs are exciting ecumenical and community based undertakings. We have received recognition from the community for our food outreach by receiving the Gem of the Lakeshore annual award for a number of years. The weekly community lunch and food bank serves a segment of low-income people - many on disability pensions or Ontario Works or OAS/CPP – among the large number of residents living in rental accommodation.

Statistics of families and family members receiving food bank and community luncheon support are compiled weekly to ensure the program is effective and thriving. Meals are monitored weekly for nutrition, variety and quality. Food program expenditures were \$10,315 (in 2021), \$9,477 (in 2020), \$15,480 (in 2019), \$15,322 (in 2018),. The reduction in expenditure starting in 2020 is due to the discontinuance of the WMUC community luncheon due to the pandemic.

Financial support for WMUC food programs is varied and widely based throughout the Mimico Lakeshore community. WMUC members contributed \$8,062 in 2021 to this food ministry and SWRC and Meeting House churches provided annual grants of \$3,000 and \$1,500 for many years. Donations in kind for the programs are made by WMUC members, Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (**MLELC**) and The Meeting House church. With space generously provided by MLELC, WMUC has been able to continue to carry out its local food justice ministry, since the sale of the WMUC building. Christmas-food drives are conducted on our behalf by John English Junior Middle and David Hornell Junior schools and a local community group of friends. Outreach to the wider community is made through a free annual Barbeque to which food program participants and the entire Mimico Community are welcomed.

The WMUC **Weekly Community Luncheon** (which persisted in various forms since 1996) was discontinued on March 14, 2020 due to the closure of Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (**MLELC**) building during the COVID 19 Pandemic. When safe, the program will be restarted.

Prior to the pandemic, the minister and other congregants attended the WMUC community luncheon occasionally. WMUC provides spiritual and pastoral care for participants in the community luncheon and food bank programs. Luncheon begins with prayer and participants are invited to come to church services, which some do. We provide Broadview, daily prayer publications and other magazines to take away. We provide music at the annual BBQ and at Christmas luncheons. Here WMUC choir presents its Christmas concert.



Food program participants are encouraged to join with others from the congregation and wider community to volunteer in order to strengthen their social skills and to make their experience more enjoyable. Many participants meet together for a couple of hours prior to the luncheon to enjoy coffee and to build fellowship and a sense of community in a safe environment.

For more than 50 years WMUC has provided Christmas hampers of food (including turkeys, hams or chickens) as well as toiletries, clothes, toys, books, puzzles and games, mittens, scarves and toques to families. At Christmas, we also give to each adult in the program (39 families in 2021) either a \$25 Restaurant or a \$30 Grocery gift card. Gift card expenditures were \$1,741, \$1,454 and \$1,565 in 2021, 2020 and 2019, respectively.

After March 14, 2020, when access to the **Food Bank** ended, food and grocery cards have been delivered monthly to food bank recipients at their residences in a Covid pandemic safe manner. Deliveries to about 35 families were made monthly with 46 different families served in 2021. The amount of food given out was increased and a \$10 grocery certificate was also provided, in response to the increased food insecurity arising during the pandemic. Grocery gift cards (\$10 each) totaling \$3,560 were distributed in 2021. On occasion, fresh fruit and vegetables were provided. WMUC shared vaccine information and had conversations to encourage and support families getting vaccinated.

Reports on WMUC food programs are provided to WMUC Council and to the WMUC congregation at Sunday services, through newsletters and in Annual Reports and at the annual Mission and Outreach Sunday service. Semi-annual reports on the WMUC food programs are provided to SWRC and the Meeting House church. Presentations on the food programs have been made to MLELC and the Meeting House church.

Refugee and Social Justice Activities

A member of WMUC participates in the Social Justice Committee of St. Margaret Anglican Church, which is extremely active in local issues.

The Mission and Outreach Committee represents the WMUC congregation on the Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church (**MLELC**) **Refugee Committee**. WMUC has donated in excess of \$1,000 (on average) each year 2018-21 to the MLELC Refugee Fund. This MLELC committee is extremely active sponsoring refugees of several members each from five different families over the past 5 years or so. These refugees are all thriving and self-sustaining members of Canadian society with homes, jobs and embracing educational opportunities as appropriate. A few refugee applications are in progress including:

- an Eritrean refugee now in Ethiopia (The application has been submitted and approved);
- a family of five Eritrean refugees now in Sudan (The application is in progress); and
- a family of four, Syrian refugees now in Kuwait. (The application is in progress).

A member of The Mission and Outreach Committee represents the WMUC congregation on **ECULINKS Etobicoke**, and currently acts as its secretary. ECULINKS Etobicoke is made of representatives from 12 Etobicoke churches. It is focused on networking, information sharing and support for each other's programs leading to greater understanding, awareness and clarity around outreach and social justice issues. It identifies and acts on issues of common interest and collaborates, where appropriate, to address injustice. It promotes Faith-based Social Justice and Outreach Initiatives such as Poverty reduction, Refugee/newcomer sponsorship and support, Right Relations with Canada's Indigenous Peoples, Care of the Environment and Anti-Racism. The **Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario)**, an initiative that has grown out of Islington UC Refugee Ministry and ECULINKS Etobicoke, became incorporated in 2021. Letters were written to the Federal and Provincial governments in 2021 to raise issues related to Long Term Care. (website www.eculinks.ca and email info@eculinks.ca)

Conclusion

We think of our WMUC congregation as small but vibrant. We care for one another and the community, with reverence and gratitude for our history, and confidence in what we continue to do.

