

*“Our past is seeded in our present and is trying to become our future.”
Adrienne Rich, Arts of the Possible, p.149*



As our country celebrated its hundredth birthday, **Southminster United Church** was born. A decade later, when the Queen was celebrating her silver jubilee and Jimmy Carter was inaugurated as president in the United States, **Steinhauer United Church** was born. In the year that Kim Campbell became the 19th prime minister of Canada and its first female prime minister, **Southminster-Steinhauer United Church** was born. So we are 40 years old, 30 years old, and 13 years young.

On the eve of the turn of a century, we became the first affirming congregation in our conference. As the 20th century became the 21st century, our faith community developed a new site for mission, drawing the circle wider still as we opened our doors on 19th Avenue. So we are 8 years old and 6 years young.

In person years, we are “in the middle ages of *our* life, not too old, no longer young” (as our baptismal song would sing it); but in community years, are we young or old or in between? In the part of Canada I come from, no matter how we count our years, as a community of faith, we are still wet behind the ears. In Atlantic Canada, congregations hardly notice their age until they are counting the centennials and the mid-centennials. But in our formative narrative, in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, forty is prime time. It is not just any number! Stay tuned for more thoughts on ‘prime time’ to be aired on Sunday, April 29th at 10AM.

As I read our story thus far, it is a tale of resistance and persistence. Emerging from the post war era that couldn’t build neighborhood churches fast enough, we were founded on a vision of being a church radically in the world without walls. Living in an era when churches were planted and programmed by clergy, we were founded on a vision of being a church where every member is a minister. In an era when churches built gyms and classrooms to bring the baby boomers into its bosom, we were founded on a vision of being the world’s servant ‘out there’ where its need was greatest: providing a home for young women coming to the big city; caring for vulnerable seniors in the inner city. Over the decades that followed, a resisting and persisting conversation engaged the issues of each era: seeking justice in language and imagery, building a curriculum that invited feet to follow minds into action, finding the courage to bring justice to sexuality, and questing always to learn and live fresh theology and new cosmology.

In this year of celebration, in the midst of turning forty, I invite us into a moment of “looking back into the future” (*Adrienne Rich, Midnight Salvage, p. 55*). May we be faithful to the long conversation of resistance and persistence in this, our time.

With gratitude for all that has been and with great expectation for all that shall yet be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nancy Steeves'.

Nancy Steeves