

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Mae (McLennan) Williams and Cindy (Williams) Corrigan

Mrs. Mae Williams and Mrs. Cindy Corrigan graciously provided stories and comments about their involvement with Christ Church Fernie on Sunday, July 15th, 2018. July 15th itself marked another bit of Christ Church Fernie history as the *Se Quis* with respect to Cindy being ordained a deacon in the Anglican church was read aloud at the 9:30 service by Rev'd Andrea Brennan. As there were no objections or causes as to why Cindy should not be ordained, the *Se Quis* was duly signed and sent to the Diocese of Kootenay in Kelowna. Ten days later, on July 25, Rev'd Cindy was ordained by Bishop James Cowan at Christ Church. Rev'd Cindy is seen here with husband Kerry, mother Mae, and Bishop Cowan.

The Williams and Corrigan Families have had a long history worshipping at and serving Christ Church. "Auntie" Ann Carnworth (Cindy's great-aunt...aka Wilf William's father's sister) and her husband James were very strong in the church, for example, and Cindy's husband Kerry Corrigan's grandmother, Queenie Corrigan (the "dark" Queenie as opposed to the "fair" Queenie Rowe -- mother of Leona Carolla, a present day parishioner) was very involved with the ACW. The Carnworth granddaughters (who live in Calgary and have their own churches there) still refer to Christ Church as "our church."

Three members of the Williams family are commemorated in a stained glass window facing Fourth Avenue. At the time of the dedication of the window in 2015, Linda LaGroix (Cindy's sister) commented, "Giving a stained glass window was my husband's idea, and when he suggested it, the family knew he was right. Even though none of us live here anymore, Fernie is home. Our grandparents were born here, our parents were born here, my siblings and I were born here, and my sister Cindy's son was born here. Both he and my oldest son were baptized in this church. I will be buried here. As I said, Fernie is home."



Mae's father, William James Grant McLennan, was Roman Catholic and her mother Clarice Dorothy (Dolly) Simmonds was raised in the "Corps" - The Salvation Army, in Wales, but not active. Mae was also raised Roman Catholic but her baptismal records could not be found at Holy Family, so she was given conditional baptism on Nov. 21, 1957 by Father W. H. Tingey and confirmed on Nov. 27, 1957 by Bishop Philip Rodger Beattie - both at Christ Church, Fernie. Her mother was confirmed at the same time.

Mae and Wilf Williams were married at Christ Church in 1953 by Rev'd. Fred Wyatt from Cranbrook because Rev'd Canon Yerburgh, the incumbent of the day, was away. Mae and Wilf (an electrician by trade) were blessed with five children: Linda, Bob, Cindy, Ted, and Eric, who were all baptized at Christ Church.

- In addition to volunteering with the Red Cross and public libraries over the years, Mae was active in church life.
 - She was an active member of the evening group of the ACW (as opposed to joining the second ACW group that met in the mornings). The main purpose of the ACW was to raise money -- often to support a discretionary fund for the priest or for other "specific" items.
 - She also served on Church Council for a number of years. She became the first woman to be elected Warden serving under Rev'd Paul Robinson. Mae commented that the Church Council discussion for decades has been: How to keep the doors open? Relying totally on fundraised dollars was not an option; Bishop David Crawley closed down St. Barbara's Anglican Church in Sparwood because the church operational funds were not coming from parishioner weekly giving but from fundraising.
- Wilf, although not a regular church goer until later in life, also contributed his skills to the church. He helped add the office to the church hall, helped install the panelling in the hall, and sometime between 1983 and 1990 helped remodel the rectory kitchen so that a bathroom could be added to the main floor. This was to support Rev'd Garwood Russell who had a bad back and could not climb the stairs to the bathroom on the second floor (the only bathroom in the rectory until this time). Mae remembers Wilf speaking of an Eaton's sticker he found inside the wall at that time.
- Further information on Wilf (and his son and grandson) comes from Linda: The three men being remembered by the stained glass window shared other commonalities [in addition to a love of fishing]. All three were electricians. Dad worked in the City of Fernie's electrical department for many years, ran his own business for five years, and then joined BC Hydro for the last fifteen years of his career. Right up to their respective deaths, Dad (83), Eric (42), and Mark (28), all valued good solid hard work. Quiet men, seekers, and very private, the three were known as good trustworthy friends and great co-workers, and all loved music. While growing up Dad played the mandolin, often serenading us as we did the dishes; Eric and Mark, the guitar. Love of the outdoors was another common bond, and from Dad, we all learned the philosophy of leaving the

world (or your campsite) better than when you got here – and we all try to live this out as best we can.”

- Ted and Eric were servers in the church but did not remain involved in church.
- Linda and Cindy have both remained active in the church; both are graduates of the Education for Ministry program and have also completed almost all of the Kootenay School of Ministry requirements for Locally Trained Priests.
- Cindy was prepared for Confirmation by Father Bray (she remarked, “we never used the priests’ first names in those days”). She describes Father (Ray) Bray (Incumbent 1965 - 72) as kind and gentle, a great teacher, and as having a huge influence on her deepening spiritual journey and commitment to Christ over her lifetime.



- At age 12, Cindy was confirmed by the Most Reverend Bishop Ted Scott (6th Bishop for the Diocese of Kootenay and the 10th Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada/left). The service held on April 5, 1971 was a joint Knox United and

Christ Church Confirmation service, led by Father Bray (right) and the Reverend Bert Forsythe (the Knox United incumbent/middle), and Cindy was confirmed along with her life-long friend Lorna Baher (daughter to Lorraine Palmer, Bette Nohels’ sister -- another longtime Anglican parishioner in Fernie)

- In 1983 Cindy and Kerry (Corrigan) were married in Christ Church by Rev’d Garwood Russell (Incumbent 1983 - 90), and on Easter Sunday in 1986, their son Jesse was born. He was later baptized by Rev’d Russell.
- Cindy followed in her mother’s footsteps, also serving on Church Council for a number of years beginning in 1980. She served as Treasurer for many years; at the start, she



came to the rectory to do the books and reconciliations until 1986 when her son Jesse was born. At that point, she said she would only continue doing the books if she could do them at home...so she did! Cindy was both Treasurer and Warden many times over and when she and Kerry moved away from Fernie in December 2014, she was acting as Treasurer as well as sitting on the Bishop's Personnel Commission (which was established to help Bishop John Privett select a new priest after the departure of Rev'd Trevor Freeman).

- Outside the church walls, and rooted in her faith, Cindy's strong sense of community service and love for Fernie led her to serve on City Council from 1999 - 2005 and then as Mayor from 2008 - 2011. She also served on the Board for the East Kootenay Community Credit Union and loved to promote the cooperative nature of the financial institution throughout the Kootenays ...and also, Uganda. Cindy's volunteer life was wide and varied, and she always aimed to work for those who could not work for themselves, the most vulnerable.

Cindy comments, "My life in the church has molded me into the person I am today and the person who served the community as a volunteer, looking for nothing in return. God's will and plan for me have given me a life I love and people in my life that have helped me grow and mature."

When asked what she would like to pass on to future generations, Cindy replies, "Recognize God's hand as a guide in your life and follow his lead and good things will happen for you and the wider community."

And for Mae, "Christ Church, it is, and always will be, my home church – a place where I always feel welcomed - a source of understanding, comfort, and strength."

Information Collected by Catherine Ripley, 15 July 2018