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## **UCM mission statement:**

To lead men to an understanding of the work and witness of the church, that through commitment to Christ, they may fulfill the ministry to which they are called, in the home, in daily work, in the community and in the world.

## **UCM EXECUTIVE**

President:	Layton Peck, Hampton, NB
1st VP	Wally Ellis (DLM), Ellerslie, PEI
2nd VP	(position vacant)
Secretary	Bob Lindsay, Dartmouth, NS
Treasurer	Dwight Perkins, Dartmouth
Past Pres.	Bob Bartlett, Fredericton, NB

## **MEMBERS AT LARGE**

NS:	1. Ron Patterson, Amherst
	2. Dick Charlton, Dartmouth
	3. Don Hill, Dartmouth
NB:	1. John Hill, Quispamsis
	2. position vacant
PEI:	1. position vacant
	2. position vacant

**Editor: Bob Lindsay**

*If there was ever a time for reaching out* with questions and answers, it is now. The COVID-19 pandemic has us largely confined to home, learning how to “do church” in a new way, and reaching out to each other through social media. It’s me again: Bob Lindsay, secretary of the UCM of the Maritimes, who has also been registrar at UCM rallies, and editor of several newsletters, including this one.

## **WE’RE STILL HERE, AND STILL ALIVE!**

But things have changed.

It’s about three years since the last newsletter, and it’s now time to let you know we are still here. As I write this introduction, it’s Monday of Holy Week. Things have certainly been happening in the United Church, and, aside from the pandemic, the most notable is the year-old change of church structure.

We are no longer the Maritime Conference, but Regions 14 and 15, and that has prompted a change in the name of our newsletter, and in the link to our web pages at the bottom of the newsletter pages.

If things had continued as they were, you might be expecting another biennial rally to take place near the end of April or early May,

but that’s not happening. We’ve had a good run, with nine rallies in the even-numbered years from 2002 to 2018. At two of those nine rallies, the keynote speaker was the moderator (Peter Short, David Giuliano), and at most of the others they’ve been clergy or theologians. But every one of them came with inspiring and significant messages.

We spent 2019 trying to decide where we were headed, and making sense of our declining rally enrolments, which had dropped to a level where we thought it hardly feasible to host another one.

What have we been up to since our 2018 rally? Just spinning our wheels? Well, yes, we have, sort of, plus a lot more! Read on.

## **In This Issue:**

**p 2: We are becalmed and adrift with no wind to drive us, no chart to lead us,** and trying to decide if it’s time to throw in the towel. As we became introspective, we also looked outward and back to see where men’s ministry has been, and where it has brought us.

**pp 3-5: What factors have shaped the face of men’s work in the UCC from 1923 - 2018?** Who were the movers and shakers? What does the future hold? Do we pass on the torch, or snuff it out?

**p 6: What are some of the views on men’s spirituality and ministry that we can learn from?** Interesting and challenging ideas were shared by David Giuliano at the 2008 rally, and by such published authors as Calvin Sandborn, Rick Johnson, and Richard Rohr.

**p 7: This issue of mensnews asks important questions.** I was asked to do it to bring people up to date, but it can also set the stage for what may be the most important act of our existence: to find out what the role of UCM in the Maritimes could or should be, or if it’s time to fold.

## MEN'S MINISTRY

### in the wider context

Look for "men's work", "men's ministry", or "men's spirituality" on the internet and you will surely find an abundance of useful links, but the thing I couldn't find was any reference to the United Church. Apparently other denominations, and other religious organizations whose denominational connections are unclear, have a far greater sense of what men's ministry should be, or at least they have enunciated it. Some of these sites have useful advice about involving men and nurturing their faith.

I decided my next step would be to visit the website of the United Church of Canada, to use its search engine to search for "men's ministry". Nothing. AOTS? Nothing. Resources? Nothing relevant. Wait ... they have something on UCW, right? Yes! Tons of it! So shouldn't they have something on UCM? No. Not a bit. Searches for UCM on the UCCEast website direct the user to the few remaining remnants of our pages on the old Maritime Conference website, to which we as an executive had contributed.

This lack of on-line information confirms what some of us have already suspected: there's no longer anything in the United Church specifically designed to attract and speak to young men, or even to retain the much older demographic of men who ask, "What is there in the United Church for me? What is my role?"

Perhaps this points to a larger trend: For at least the last half-century, we have witnessed feminism, the sexual revolution, the rise of the LGBTQ movement, and all the associated social and political trends that have accompanied them. The result of social changes in the last half-century means that

women have successfully joined or replaced men in many professions, including medicine, law, and the ministry. Witness the annual crop of ordinands in Maritime Conference: in the ten years from 2010 to 2019, 15 men and 35 women were ordained. In four of those years, all were women. Of the remaining six years, 58% were women.

During that half-century, in what we might call affirmative action, the United Church has succeeded in being inclusive of just about every segment of society. After church on a Sunday in January, I briefly chatted with a young woman who expected to complete her undergraduate degree this spring and has been accepted to Atlantic School of Theology in the fall, with a view to entering the ministry. I know that in her classes she will have plenty of company in other women from all walks of life, some entering second careers, but I suspect that across the national church there are surely men wondering what that trend means for the church, and also wondering where it leaves them. Things are even more disquieting for anyone who is apprehensive about or troubled by certain aspects of the societal trends – about the blurring of gender identities, to name one.

### BECALMED AND ADRIFT

The tasks around the organization of biennial rallies kept us focused and on track during each two-year cycle, but after the 2018 rally and then the restructuring of the national church, we found ourselves becalmed in the nautical sense: no wind to drive us! That led us to the strategic planning process I mentioned. It meant drawing up a few objectives intended to fulfill the mission, strategies to meet those objectives, and then action plans to achieve the strategies.

The process began with our

mission statement:

*To lead men to an understanding of the work and witness of the church, that through commitment to Christ, they may fulfill the ministry to which they are called, in the home, in daily work, in the community and in the world.*

That statement raised a few questions in my mind: Who is doing the leading? Who are being led? And what does that ministry consist of?

### TO LEAD MEN TO AN UNDERSTANDING...

Where did our mission statement come from? And what does it mean?

My questions weren't answered until I was handed a binder of collected notes and records from the mid 1960s. They had been in the possession of the late Bob Hamilton, who was active in the men's club of Woodlawn United Church in Dartmouth, and on men's councils at the Presbytery and Conference levels. That binder included the UCM Work Manual, published by the national church's Board of Men in 1963-64. If you have been active in the church for your whole life, you probably have an idea of what was going on back then, what the Board of Men was, and what, if anything, preceded it.

### THE BOARD OF MEN (1954 - 1971)

A brief flame, then gone.

In 1947, the national church saw a need for "coordinated leadership for a nation-wide men's work program." The body created to accomplish this became the Board of Men in 1954. Incidentally, the second chair of the Board of Men (from 1956) was Dr. Laurence H. Cragg. I heard of him first in 1963, when he became president of Mount Allison University, my alma mater. In that same year, the Board adopted the statement of purpose that became our mission statement:

*To lead men to an understanding ...*

It's been used continuously into the present day by Men's councils at all levels, and later by Maritime Conference UCM, as its vision statement. And then the review that accompanied our strategic plan of 2019 suggested the statement was more about mission than vision. And so it became our mission statement, but nowhere was the statement ever specific about what the ministry itself entails.

About the Board of Men's UCM work manual: it provided for councils at every level – pastoral charge, presbytery, and conference. There were guides on how to conduct meetings, how to structure executives, and how to make the best use of

human resources without driving men to burnout.

If there was one thing that hastened the demise of men's work across the church, it occurred at the 24<sup>th</sup> General Council held in Niagara Falls in 1971.

The Moderator was the Very Reverend Arthur B. B. Moore. At that Council, the Board of Men and four other boards were combined into the Division of Mission in Canada. In his autobiography some years later, the Very Reverend Moore appeared to regret that move. Following are six clips from the 1998 history of the first 75 years of AOTS Men's Clubs, from 1923 - 1998, including his account of that meeting, which tells the story.

## WHAT HAPPENED AT THE 24TH GENERAL COUNCIL

The beginning of the end for men's work?

There now began a steady decline of Men's Clubs in the United Church of Canada.

In 1988 Dr. Moore referred to the new Division in his autobiography *Here Where We Live*. His remarks are from page 157 of this book.

Dr. Moore continued:

Much time was spent on restructuring the church. Every time the church grows discouraged over its condition, it seems to think that a new organization equates with revitalization. This is far from true: the renewal comes from within its members.

There had been Boards of Men, of Women, of Home Missions, of Christian Education, of Evangelism and Social Service. These were brought together into the Division of Mission in Canada.

Personally, although I could not participate in the debate from the chair, I thought this solution to any problems which might exist, too monolithic. I think that subsequent years have proven that a large administrative instrument is not necessarily an efficient one.

**The work of the Boards of Men, of Women, and of Christian Education has become obscured.**

## THE FACE OF MEN'S WORK SINCE 1923

A journey of discovery

Learning about men's work was a journey of discovery for me. Once I saw the Board of Men documents from the mid 1960s, it was only a Google search from there to discover AOTS Men's Clubs.

Some of you may know this already, but AOTS stands for "As

One That Serves". It's scriptural, of course, taken from Christ's words in Luke 22:27: "... but I am among you as one that serves".

AOTS Men's Clubs began in 1923 with the first club in Vancouver, at Kerrisdale Methodist Church, which became Ryerson United in 1925. My fascination with maps and historical trivia compels me to tell you that in 2017 it amalgamated with Dunbar Heights United (about three km to the

northwest) to form the two campuses of Pacific Spirit United Church. Both are situated on the western end of Vancouver, about five km from UBC. You'll find details at:

<https://www.pacificspirituc.com/>

By this point, I was beginning to discover the real importance of AOTS Men's Clubs in shaping the face of men's work across the national church.

AOTS has surely been a major driving force for men's ministry since 1923. Its aims are "dedicated to promoting Christian fellowship, deepening the spiritual life of men and developing effective programs of Christian service."

If anything is revealed by comparing this statement of aims with our mission statement, perhaps it is that the AOTS aims were drawn up by men of the local Church to give direction to their Christian faith and fellowship, while the mission statement was first devised by a Board of the national church to give structure and substance to locally organized groups.

Everything I learned about AOTS came from its website:

<http://www.aots.ca/>

I learned that the movement spread more or less from west to east; that they held biennial conventions across Canada; that local gatherings were called roundups; and that their newsletter was called *The Handshake*.

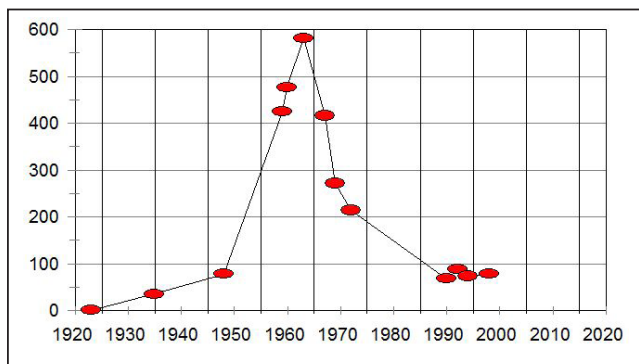
But the most significant things I learned from the 1998 history of AOTS was the number of clubs across Canada since its beginning in 1923. Growth was slow and steady until the late 1940s, and then it rose rapidly to a peak in 1963. Then it dropped off until the early 1990s. A graph on the next page shows this.

The website is now maintained as a static site, since in 2017 the national executive suspended its activities, citing difficulties in keeping in touch with local clubs, and the drastic loss of numbers across Canada. Local clubs were still encouraged to continue as they had been.



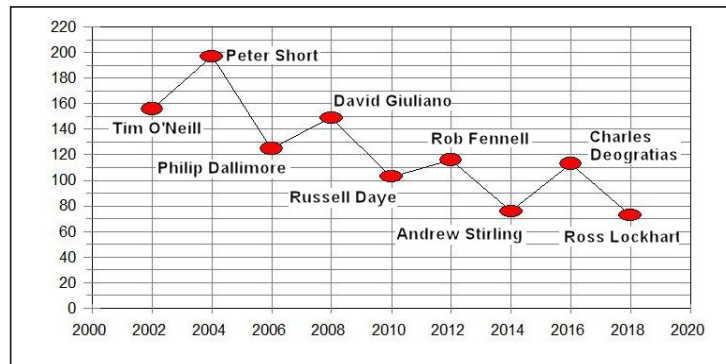
As recently as mid-March 2020, a weekend AOTS gathering in May was still 'on the books' for a location in Ontario but open to all, but by the end of March it had been cancelled.

The following graphs show trends both in numbers of AOTS clubs across Canada from 1923 to the early 1990s, and in our biennial rallies from 2002 to 2018.



Growth and decline of numbers of AOTS Clubs, 1923-1998

The website still has a link to that 75-year history: <http://www.aots.ca/pdf/AOTS-75Yearsofservice.pdf> and an explanation detailing the demise of AOTS, on the "AOTS blog" page.



Attendance at Maritime Conference UCM rallies, 2002 - 2018

The rally attendance numbers seemed ready to level off at about sixty to eighty. The upward spikes in 2004 and 2008 may have been caused by the UCC moderators as keynote speakers.

## THE LAST HURRAH ... OR PHOENIX ARISING?

Trends in both AOTS Men's Clubs and our own biennial rallies have much in common.

Reasons for the trends may include large-scale social changes in post-war Canada (causing the rapid upswing in the AOTS graph), and more local demographics as I discovered about fifteen years ago. I was involved in tracking numbers in our local Scouting groups, and discovered that the Sunday School in our church had dropped off, as school enrollments had done. In fact, the population of Nova Scotia had shrunk!

We can continue to speculate on the reasons for attendance drop-off, but I think it comes down to this: men won't attend a meeting or rally or conference unless they think there'll be something of value for them. And there must always be a core of capable folk to organize such events.

**Let's cut to the chase:** we've often felt that our time as the executive of UCM is running out,

and that maybe it's time to fold. Throw in the towel. Write our last will and testament. Insert your own metaphor here.

So now we feel compelled to appeal to the wider church — the men across RC 14 and 15, as well as to those who were expecting to attend the May 2020 regional meeting in Sackville — to share their thoughts on what men's ministry and men's spirituality means to them, and what our true role should be in the church of the 21st century.

There's another dimension to our situation: we are aging, and have not been able to attract many younger men, and that's in part because we cannot possess the insights or the world outlook of younger men. The saying about teaching old dogs new tricks might apply here.

## THE EXECUTIVE AT WORK

It's the last day of February, 2020, and a bunch of us "old guys" are sitting around a table in the Kimball Lounge of Trinity - St. Stephen's United Church in Amherst, much

as we've done for the past twenty or more years. This may turn out to be our last meeting.

We may look old, but we don't feel old and we don't act old: some of us still hike in the woods, climb small mountains, run marathons, and work at day jobs. There were seven of us; two had pressing commitments elsewhere, and there are three vacancies on our executive. There were as many as twelve of us in earlier years, but our numbers have been shrinking. Could it be our ages? On a whim, I asked everyone their age. We ranged from 63 to 80; average: 71.6.

The only two executive meetings in January and February of 2020 focused on what to do next.

The January meeting took place in Dartmouth, among a few of us of Region 15, plus President Layton Peck, who was in the area.

That meeting revealed the need to focus on three items: (1) our mission statement; (2) the question of men's ministry in a larger context; and (3) what initiatives we might undertake in 2020.

Item 3 was the easiest to resolve. We decided at the February meeting that any gatherings we organize should be smaller and more local. Although we had concluded that the spring was too early for us to organize anything, the pandemic removed all doubt about that. Now it appears that even a fall event is unlikely.

Item 1, our mission statement, has already been dealt with. That leaves item 2, the question of men's ministry and male spirituality.



The bunch of "old guys" around the table on February 29, 2020. From L to R: Layton Peck, Bob Lindsay, Ron Patterson, Dick Charlton, Dwight Perkins. Present but not in view are Bob Bartlett and Wally Ellis.

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

Our way of recognizing leadership in the UCM is by means of the Award of Exceptional Merit (AEM), instituted in 2002. It is given to "United Church men who have demonstrated exemplary leadership and activity in working with men of the church over many years." We also instituted an Honour Roll (HR) in 2006 to which names were added after their death. The same criterion applies.

The lists below give the names of men who were recognized in one or both ways, along with the year the recognition was made.

AEM	HR		
2018		Bob Bartlett	Fredericton NB
	2006	Randall Boates	O'Leary PEI
	2006	Alfred Boutilier	Dartmouth NS
2006	2010	Fred Brown	Fredericton NB
2012		Dick Charlton	Dartmouth NS
	2008	Henry Clarke	Winsloe PEI
2010	2012	Wendell Collicott	Fredericton NB
	2008	Major Osborne Crowell	Halifax NS
	2008	Maurice O Crowell	Halifax NS
	2006	Otis Currie	Fredericton NB
2010	2014	Glen D'Arcy	Saint John NB
2006	2017	Wilfred Dillman	Dartmouth NS
	2006	Sandy Farquharson	Dartmouth NS
	2008	Tom Ferguson	Trenton NS
2008	2013	Paul Foster	Florenceville NB
2014		Iver Gillis	Sydney River NS
2002	2006	Lorimer Harris	Charlottetown PEI
2006	2020	John Hildebrand, Sr.	Fredericton NB
	2006	D Gordon Hill	Sydney NS
2008		Don Hill	Dartmouth NS
	2008	Judge Robert Inglis	Halifax NS
2008		Wilson Jones	Pictou NS
	2006	Rev Heber Kean	Fredericton NB
	2006	Lester Keizer	Charlottetown PEI
2014	2020	Mac Leadbeater	Marion Bridge NS
2016		Bob Lindsay	Dartmouth NS

AEM	HR		
	2006	David Lockhart	Coleman PEI
2006	2014	A Bruce MacDonald	Sydney NS
	2006	Mackie MacDonald	Sydney NS
	2006	Allison MacKinnon	Charlottetown PEI
2008	2010	Alec MacLeod	Fredericton NB
	2006	Jack MacNair	Charlottetown PEI
	2012	Sterling MacVicar	Sydney River NS
	2010	Gordon Maybee	Debert NS
2006		D'Arcy McNabb	Glance Bay NS
	2006	David Miles	Springhill NS
	2006	David Murphy	Charlottetown PEI
	2008	Harry Murphy	Halifax NS
2002	2017	A Peter Murray	Sydney NS
2012		Laurie Naugler	Halifax NS
2010	2014	Howard Parker	Halifax NS
2008	2016	Gordon Poole	Truro NS
2004		Dow Price	Keswick Ridge NB
	2006	Willard Proud	Kingston PEI
2008	2009	John W Quigley	Kingsport NS
2004	2006	Dr Ian Robb	Halifax NS
2004		Ralph Sams	Dartmouth NS
	2006	Jack Scribner	Fredericton NB
	2006	Jim Williams	Charlottetown PEI
	2006	Rev Doug Woods	Charlottetown PEI
	2008	Glenn C Wright	Moncton NB
	2006	Lloyd Yeo	Charlottetown PEI

## MEN DOING THEIR THING

The list of those recognized for men's work includes a few who were active in AOTS, and many more who were active in Maritime Conference UCM.

So what is their thing? Recent examples are to be found in past issues of *mensnews*.

In the April 2017 issue (volume 6, #1), UCM Past President Bob Bartlett told the story about how he mentored a young man in his congregation as he looked forward to confirmation.

An earlier story received in 2015 tells of CMWT (Christian Men with Tools) from Hampton United Church in New Brunswick.

A group of men would undertake a wide range of cleaning, renovation, and building tasks for the public and for the church building's own needs. For one such project, the UCW provided lunches for crews of as many as 25 workers.

To quote Bob Wishart, "For me, CMWT has been all about companionship and cooperation. We have accomplished a lot with very few resources or money. I feel there is room for this type of endeavour among other churches."

No doubt, initiatives like this are common across the church, and have for decades been a mainstay of local men's ministries.

In the second of his two keynote addresses at our 2008 rally, Moderator David Giuliano told us about the need to mentor boys and young men. He began, "I want to share with you four rituals..." He went on to tell how he made that happen with his son, beginning when the boy was eight.

He enlisted the help of a few friends, whom he called "elders" or "uncles", to share qualities they saw in the boy. These would form part of the first of two rituals to take place on a beach or camping area on the eastern shore of Lake Superior near Marathon, Ontario.

**Age 8: identity.** The personal qualities so identified were expressed as four Christian and Aboriginal symbols (Bible, cross, raven and beaver) which were drawn with felt marker on the boy's back. The boy himself later drew his own versions of those symbols on a piece of driftwood, and hung the piece on his wall back home.

**Age 13: community.** The boy was encouraged to help plan this event, roughly paralleling a Jewish boy's *bar mitzvah*. The men, his "uncles", were seated in a circle at the lakeside camping area, with the boy on the outside. He was repeatedly asked if he wanted to join the circle, and at last they all got up, grabbed the boy and, amid his protestations of "You guys don't have to do this!", threw him into the lake. He was then admitted to the circle and allowed to address the men not as uncles, but as brothers.

**Age 16: solitude.** It was time for the young man to be taken by canoe and dropped off on a secluded island in Lake Superior for 36-hour solo camping experience.

**Age 18: Freedom and independence.** When the young man was 18 and had graduated from high school, he and a few friends went to Europe. After they had run out of money, they spent time busking (playing guitar) and dumpster diving.

Giuliano concluded by adding that it's not the father's role to do this, but another man. Based on my years in the Scouting movement, I can see these rituals share numerous features in common with experiences that were available to boys during their years as Cubs, Scouts, Venturers, and Rovers when Scouting in Canada was a boys-only organization. By the late 1990s it had already become completely co-ed at all levels, now known as Scouts Canada, offering its programs to girls and young women as well. This, and the introduction of Beavers for 5- to 8-year olds has forever changed the face of Scouting in Canada. No more 'Boy Scouts'; it's just 'Scouts', but these are discussions for another audience at another time.

## FURTHER READING

- 1 Sandborn, Calvin. *Becoming the Kind Father: A Son's Journey*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2007.
- 2 Johnson, Rick. *The Power of a Man: Using your influence as a man of character*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2009.
- 3 <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/male-spirituality-richard-rohr/> ... To find this and many other useful sources, Google "male spirituality".

Both Sandborn and Johnson begin by describing how they grew up in abusive and toxic environments, and continue to tell how they learned important truths on the journey to become caring fathers. Sandborn supervises the environmental law clinic at the University of Victoria. Johnson initiated the "Better Dads/Courageous Moms" ministry. Visit [www.betterdads.com](http://www.betterdads.com).

"*Becoming the Kind Father: A Son's Journey* is an alternative to outdated models of masculinity that our stressed and angry culture sorely needs." (from the foreword)

Johnson tells us, on page 194 of *The Power of a Man*, that if there's a verse written specifically for men in the Bible, it may be I Corinthians 16:13 which says: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong." Perhaps some of you will recall "stand firm in the faith" as the motto of the junior boys' group Tyros, which was active in the 1950s. I recall the royal blue long-sleeved shirt, with a zipper that went diagonally up the front.



Before I ask the big questions, I'll recap some of the things that now seem evident, including some of our executive's feedback on this newsletter. All of this should (may, might, can be expected to) point us in the right direction.

## THE BIG QUESTIONS

If you have received this newsletter, you are someone we want to hear from. So I urge you to consider the questions at the right, and send your responses, ideas and views to me: Bob Lindsay, Secretary, UCM of the Maritimes. Contact info below.

1. Large regional gatherings are a thing of the past, and will never return in the same form.
2. The executive of UCM of the Maritimes was confirmed as the group of record for networking among men. But our role is no longer clear, nor are the church's expectations for us in 2020 and beyond.
3. We now live in different times: society and demographics have changed, so we aren't expecting the national church to facilitate a men's program. But their expectations are key.
4. In a few pockets across RC 14 and 15, there are signs of

an active and vibrant men's ministry, but these have been decreasing steadily in number.

5. Perhaps some renewal will come in the form of a younger group of men (say age 30-50) who could develop a new vision for men's ministry, and organize activities that appeal to younger men.
6. Finally, on the matter of male spirituality in the larger context, we do not presume to tell men what their role should be. But we can help create awareness of some of the relevant ideas out there.

1. Please let us know what has been part of any men's activity in your pastoral charge before the pandemic. What activities do you have now?
2. If you are in a leadership or decision-making role in the church, we seek your opinion. What is your view of the role of men's work, men's ministry, and male spirituality within the UCC? What does the church expect of us?
3. Suppose a panel discussion were held via Zoom (it might happen!) open to all stakeholders, including those who normally attend regional AGMs: What questions would you have? What answers would you seek?

Rather than answering each question, just use them as guides to tell us what we need to hear, and what you want to share. This may be the last time you hear from us!

1923	The first AOTS Men's Club is formed in a Methodist church in Vancouver
1947	UCC undertakes the oversight of men's groups across the church
1952	AOTS holds a national convention in Winnipeg
1953	The 1st annual Maritime Conference of UCM is held at Berwick Camp
1954	The UCC's oversight body is called the Board of Men
1963	The Board adopts as its purpose: "To lead men to an understanding..."
1971	At the 24th General Council, several Boards are combined
1971	AOTS holds its 7th biennial national convention in Charlottetown
1977	AOTS holds its 10th biennial convention at Dalhousie in Halifax
1980	Four Men's Festivals of Faith are held, through 1988
1988	Past Moderator A. B. B. Moore publishes autobiography
1989	AOTS holds its 16th biennial convention at Mount Allison in Sackville
1998	AOTS produces a history of its first 75 years 1923 - 1998
2002	winter and spring: essentials of the upcoming UCM rally are finalized
2002	Maritime Conference UCM holds first one-day biennial rally in October
2018	The ninth (and probably last) UCM rally is held
2019	UCC's Presbytery-Conference structure is replaced by sixteen regions
2020	COVID-19 forces us to shut down, rethink, and reach out in new ways

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