

United Church Moderator Visits Lakeside United Church Friday

"The more I study the biblical message, the more I am called to where people are hurting." Making the comment last week was Dr. Lois Wilson, the 1980-82 moderator of the United Church of Canada.

Dr. Wilson spoke at a special service at Lakeside United Church Friday followed by a lunch in her honour at Harrington United Church.

She said the biblical message demands that Christians have to be involved in the society around them. They are "the salt" who improve life around them.

In her message in the service, Dr. Wilson said the day of judgement for all people can be illustrated by the Old Testament prophet Amos who compared it to escaping from a bear only to run into a lion. It won't be nice, she said.

Yet, because North American society has been brought up to think that being a Christian is a suffering-free individual, doing good deeds at no inconvenience to oneself is considered what Christ's preachings are all about.

The breaking of bones, a passage from Psalm 51, was the thrust of Dr. Wilson's sermon. She said people have to suffer before they can benefit. Yet, because they don't want to suffer, they never benefit.

For this reason she said she can't understand the television evangelists who preach that knowing and working for Christ is nothing but joy.

"When you take the risk of loving people, there is the risk of pain," she said.

The risk of pain is something which deters many people. She said her experience with people in the Third World has shown this to be true in North America. North Americans don't feel they should have to suffer in order to be Christians. Yet, the Bible constantly stresses

this theme.

Dr. Wilson said there has been a loss of nerve on the part of the church. "The United Church is in danger of talking itself into despair."

"If we know who we are, there is no problem," she said people can practice their faith in their communities and be examples to others. Thus, they are the real evangelists.

Dr. Wilson said the ecumenical groups which she has encountered in her travels are among the great

strengths of the church in Canada. She said she only wishes they could be more active in the outside world in order to provide a better witness.

One example of involvement she mentioned were some Newfoundlanders who gave mentally retarded people one-on-one instruction with the result that they were able to return to their families to live relatively normal lives.

"Please don't be bamboozled by the press which says you aren't what you

used to be," Dr. Wilson said of the United Church. "Thank goodness we aren't."

She said the church has a lot of strengths. People only have to realize them, recognizing that the process will require change which isn't easy.

Dr. Wilson trained for the ministry in Winnipeg in 1950 but because of her four children wasn't ordained until 1965. She and her husband, also a United Church minister live in Kingston.

One of the reasons she gave for not seeking re-election as moderator was to be with her husband. "I miss the working relationship as well as my marriage."

Dr. Wilson said her doctorate was an honorary one. She was elected as the United Church's moderator in 1980 and during her two years has travelled extensively in North America as well as other continents.

She was presented a cheque of \$1,000 by Mrs. James Wells of RR 2 St. Marys on behalf of the United Church congregations of Harrington and Lakeside at the Lakeside service Friday morning. The money is to go to the world development program of her choice.

While Dr. Wilson gave the sermon, the service was conducted by Rev. Wesley Ball from Westminster United Church, Thamesford, and Pirie Mitchell of London, interim minister at Lakeside and Harrington.



MODERATORS of the United Church of Canada and the Hamilton-London Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada are Dr. Lois Wilson and Rev. Grant Muir of Embro respectively. Rev. Muir was one of the guests who attended the lunch held in Dr. Wilson's honour at Harrington United Church Friday. (Staff Photo)

1982 - April 23