



Making Room for Women Project

Interview with Sharon Copeman

February 23rd, 2022



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Oral History Recording Summary

Interviewee: Sharon Copeman

Date of Interview: February 23rd, 2022

Transcribed by: Deanna Feuer

Interviewed by: Catherine Atyeo

Location: Zoom call

Auditor of Transcription: Sharon Copeman

Time Log (minutes)	Description of Content
00:00	Beginning of Interview, introduction, permission
00:27	Early life in Southern Saskatchewan, mother's struggles with depression and farm life
06:38	Teaching aspirations, meeting her husband, teaching kindergarten
12:00	Starting a family, working in the Headstart program
15:32	Call to ministry, going to VST, discovering passions in ministry
23:18	GATE tours and being called to Lynn Valley United
26:59	Retirement and pastoral work in Pemberton
35:22	Women in ministry and the need for balance in ministry
41:47	The future of the church and Truth and Reconciliation
48:52	Goodbyes and thank yous



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Sharon Copeman

49:13

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Catherine Atyeo, Sharon Copeman

Catherine Atyeo 00:02

Okay, my name is Catherine Atyeo. It is February 23 2022. And I am going to be speaking with Sharon Copeman. Sharon, do I have your permission to record this interview?

Sharon Copeman 00:13

Yes, you do.

Catherine Atyeo 00:14

Okay, well, thank you for doing this. And I'll start. I know you were originally from Saskatchewan, but could you tell me a bit about your early life, your family, your community, and your early participation in the church.

Sharon Copeman 00:27

So, I grew up in a farming family in Saskatchewan. Until I was three years old, we lived on the farm full time. And at that point, my mother's health failed, and so she couldn't be a full-time farm wife or farmer's wife in the active way that is required for farmers wives, and so we moved into town, into Regina. So I had the gift and the blessing of summers on the farm and winters in the city, where the city schools were an advantage. I had one brother, he was three and a half when he was adopted into the family and seven when I was born, so we were not close. My dad was, my parents were both in their 40s when I was born, so I grew up in that kind of a family that, you know... I'm first generation Canadian, my family are all from the States. And that's fairly common in that region of Saskatchewan. A lot of farmers from the States moved up.

Catherine Atyeo 01:25

And what region of Saskatchewan was it, Sharon?

Sharon Copeman 01:28

Our farm is halfway between Regina and Weyburn. So, in southern Saskatchewan, about, I don't know, maybe an hour and a half or two hours from the border with the States. We were wheat farmers when I was a child.

Catherine Atyeo 01:43

Okay. Okay. And so, do you think you had a lot of happiness growing up there?

Sharon Copeman 02:27

I had, it was a fairly mixed upbringing actually. My mother lived with depression and so her health was not good. I had a solid relationship with my dad who was very kind and very generous with his time. And because he was a farmer, I spent a lot of time with him in the summers. And in the winter, a lot of time too, because he would come in and be in town, in Regina. I grew up, by the time I was in the family they weren't attending church all the time, but I was interested because I guess my friends were doing it. So, I was in Explorers and CGIT, and all those groups, the children's groups, I think it was Treasure Seekers to start. And if my parents went to church, I got more stars on some kind of record, I remember, (laughter) so, my parents went to church. So yeah, it was a church centered family for sure, faith centered for sure. Mom was raised in the Southern Baptist Church and so I think she kind of was church-ed-out, you know? And...

Catherine Atyeo 03:56

Can I just ask, Sharon, what year were you born?

Sharon Copeman 03:59

I was born in 1943.

Catherine Atyeo 04:02

Okay, and were you born in a hospital in one of those towns?

Sharon Copeman 04:08

No, I was born in Regina, in the hospital in Regina. My mum had not been well during the pregnancy and so it was determined that I needed to be a hospital delivery. My grandparents were living in town by that time, I know. I was a December birth, and so, when I was expected, my parents moved into a small town that was on the highway on the way to Regina...

Catherine Atyeo 04:40

So, getting back to your church experience. It sounds to me like it was a very happy time, like growing up in those church groups...

Sharon Copeman 04:52

Oh, it was. It was a mix. Because my mother had several nervous breakdowns, I didn't grow up thinking that she loved me. We had a close relationship, there was no question I couldn't ask her. I was the kid that knew all the facts of life, and was sharing those facts with other kids. So, we had an interesting relationship. And then I was 25, 26 I guess when my dad died, and then my mom's health was such that she stayed in Regina for a while, for a number of years, but then she moved to Vancouver into extended care here. And so, I had 12 years of being the one who was supporting her and visiting her and we actually, when she died, she died of a heart attack sitting in her wheelchair, on a Saturday morning. And the last thing we had said to each other at the end of my last visit was I love you. So, yes, I've done a lot of... throughout my preparation for ministry, and in ministry, I've done a lot of thinking

about how family systems and how our relationships with the people in our family has affected me in particular, and therefore, how it affects us as human beings and I realize how complicated it is. Yes.

Catherine Atyeo 06:29

So, when you were finished high school, what was in store for you next in your life?

Sharon Copeman 06:38

So, when I was in, I'm gonna take you back to when I was in grade school. I was a recess monitor for the kindergarten teacher. When she went out of the class, I was there. And that experience made me want to be a kindergarten teacher. And so, when I finished high school, I knew what I was going to do. I went to the university for two year, it was a diploma program, I guess, that qualified me to be a kindergarten teacher, and I did that for three years. I always wanted to get married and have children and I met my now husband, when I was in grade nine.

Catherine Atyeo 07:29

Wow!

Sharon Copeman 07:30

And he was in grade 10 (laughter). We dated for six years and got married when I had my qualification to teach kindergarten. And I just always planned to get married and have children. I've always loved children and... yes.

Catherine Atyeo 07:50

Yes, yes. Well, no doubt they're a great gift. So, you started after high school. Now you started working as a kindergarten teacher? Did you get a degree? Or...

Sharon Copeman 08:08

No, it was one year of arts and one year in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Saskatchewan. And that got me what was then called a Permanent Teacher's Certificate. I could teach anything from kindergarten to grade 11. I couldn't teach grade 12 (laughter). And so, Bob went to McGill, I went to Saskatoon for university. And he was not finished McGill yet when we got married. My plan was to teach kindergarten and I got a job with the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal. And in order for me to get that job, the interviewer and the school required that I would take a summer school course, because I had no experience with teaching kindergarten, and it was a kindergarten teaching job. So I went to Minnesota, and I was to take this course with a very particular teacher in Minnesota at the university there. And I did that, Neath Hedley was her name. She was renowned for her experience with kindergarten and then I taught for one year in Montreal. We went to Wisconsin because Bob did a PhD in Wisconsin and I got a job there teaching kindergarten. And so, every summer I had to take summer school, in order to keep my qualification. But no, I didn't have a degree. So, then years later, [when] I felt called to ministry, I had to go back to university, and take some summer courses in order to qualify for what they called the shorter course. So, I didn't have to get a bachelor's degree before I could go into the Master of Divinity program, because they recognized the life experience.

Catherine Atyeo 10:42

Oh, I see. But before we get to you going to VST as a mature student, which I know you did, so you started... You taught kindergarten then in... Did you teach it in Montreal too?

Sharon Copeman 10:58

I taught for one year in Montreal. And then two years in Wisconsin. Yes. So, in Montreal, back then, children who had no English, well, they could be in the Protestant school system, not have any English at all, and be schooled in the English program. And so, I had children whose parents didn't speak English, they only spoke French. So, I had a French English dictionary in my desk all the time. And I got not too bad with French. But the parents' goal was for their children to learn English. So that was okay.

Catherine Atyeo 11:50

So, in all then, it sounds like three years teaching kindergarten. And then was it after that that you, I understand you started your family, Sharon?

Sharon Copeman 12:00

Well, I started my family, yes, I was pregnant the last year I was teaching and I wasn't supposed to let that be known because pregnant women were not supposed to be in the school (laughter). Not supposed to be teachers in the school. But yes, and the last summer that I taught after I had finished with the kindergarten, I was hired in the summer school to teach Headstart, which was at that time a pilot project in the States. Headstart was a program that was for children who lived in poverty, came from families that were in poverty, and to give them a catch up or a Headstart before they started kindergarten. Because back then, we're talking pre preschools and pre daycares and all of that, really. Children grew up in their homes, until they got to school. And so, it was to give them a head start in terms of both being in the school and some reading preparation and so on. But also, every child had a medical checkup, and a dental checkup and a vision checkup. So, they were up to speed with those kinds of things before they started into the public school system. It was a good program, and I think it has become, definitely it happens now. It became a model for the educational system in the States at least. And I think it has influenced Canada as well.

Catherine Atyeo 13:55

Yes, definitely heard of it. So, you were pregnant, and you had how many children?

Sharon Copeman 14:07

So, I have three children. Cari was the first and she was born in the States. And then when Bob finished his degree, we came back to Canada and to Vancouver and we had Deb, and then we had our son, Rob.

Catherine Atyeo 14:26

Yes, and so how long did you stay at home with the kids and really not engaged in a career outside the home? How many years was that?

Sharon Copeman 14:40

My guess it was about 25. No, no, it wasn't. Cari and Deb were in university, I guess about 18 years before I went out to VST and went back to school. It was 25 years from when I had finished my own university until I was back studying again. So, when I felt called to ministry, I thought, "God, you must be crazy. There's no way I can be a student again." (laughter) "Alzheimers has already set in!"

Catherine Atyeo 15:16

Can you talk a bit about that call, because I'm interested in that. If you could talk a bit about how that call to return to studies and go to VST, how did that call happen?

Sharon Copeman 15:32

So, I'm a singer. And I had been doing all kinds of things that I thought were my ministry. I always kind of thought in terms of ministry, but lay ministry because women weren't ordained back then. And so, I was in church, I was in the choir on a Sunday morning. I was feeling somewhat unappreciated as a singer at that point in my life. For about a year I'd been feeling unsatisfied and unappreciated. I'm in the choir, I'm singing with the choir, the choir in Knox was right up at the front, and totally visible. I was right in the front row. And the young person who was preaching that Sunday was David Anderson, who was the son of good friends, and it was his ordination sermon, he was to be ordained that year, he was a candidate for ministry from Knox. And he was telling his story of call. And as I listened to him, and just was registering his story, I felt, "I have to do this. God is calling me into this, I have to go to VST." That was the essence of it - that, "I have to go to VST and do this preparation." And the tears were streaming down my cheeks, right in front of everyone. Nobody was focused on me, I'm sure. But I felt - like - (laughter) very obvious. And I thought it was impossible and I knew I couldn't say no. It didn't even occur to me that it was possible to say no.

Sharon Copeman 17:28

So that afternoon, I phoned my friend, I'd been doing some groups with Elly Bradley, who was—I think at that point he was still teaching at VST—and was doing Bible stuff and lay leadership. And I told him my experience. And he said, "Well, it sounds to me like you've been zapped, kid!" I phoned David Anderson and told him what I had experienced. And he said, "It sounds like the Holy Spirit to me." And so, I phoned VST. And I made an appointment to go out. And Elly had said to me, "You want to speak with..." and I can't remember who it was now. With the person who was the office registrar. And she was on leave, she had a sabbatical. And it turned out that the person that I did speak with was the person Elly had named as, "If you have a chance, you should talk to this person." And so that was who I spoke with. And I told him I wanted to start with Bible. I wanted to audit one class, I would just audit, but I wanted to do everything. I wanted to take the exams, I wanted to write the papers, because I wanted to prove [to] myself that I could actually be a student again.

Sharon Copeman 18:59

And so, my class was to be a Thursday afternoon from two to four, I think it was, but the other two classes in the week were in the mornings. Well, the class that was in the afternoon was going to be a problem to me. Because I had an eight-year-old son who was coming home from school at three o'clock in the afternoon. How could I not be there? But I had, I guess, I had both my daughters in university then. So, I guess it was a bit longer than I'd said before, it was maybe 19 or 20 years. So, I

asked my second daughter that night at dinner, I said, "Deb would you have a friend who could be at our house at three o'clock in the afternoon and receive a phone call from Rob if he calls to say he wants to go to a friend's house, or receive him home if he comes home and I won't be there at three o'clock?" And she said, "...until after three o'clock. Mom, I could do that. And I think I want to learn how to cook so I could cook dinner that night." And I thought, "Okay, God, I get it." (laughter) Because it was just all fitting into place so well, you know? So yes, just along with that initial call when David was preaching, that is kind of the moment, I call my "call moment," but God calls us over and over and over again all the time, and we just don't always hear it.

Catherine Atyeo 20:48

So how many years did your studies at VST take, Sharon?

Sharon Copeman 20:56

I took six years because I did it all part time.

Catherine Atyeo 21:00

Right, right.

Sharon Copeman 21:01

Until the last two years, actually, the first year, the first semester, I only took that Hebrew Bible class. And then I got into it a little bit more, I did it as much as I could, and still be mom, and wife, and have my home responsibilities covered. But then once I got to, until I was ready for the internship, and then I did my internship at First United and that was full time. And the final year was also full time - had to be. But by that time, Rob was old enough that he was more independent. And by that time - I guess we had an answering machine by that time as well. So, yes.

Catherine Atyeo 22:01

So, I want to ask you about your passions beyond VST. But when you were studying at VST did you discover a particular passion in ministry that you had?

Sharon Copeman 22:20

Well, I am a pastoral person. That's who I am at heart. So, the pastoral care, the community stuff, the being in congregation in a way that would be available for people was always very important to me. And social justice. People having enough of what we all need - the basics. Yes.

Catherine Atyeo 22:57

So, what year did you graduate? And what degree did you graduate with, Sharon?

Sharon Copeman 23:07

So, I graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1994.

Catherine Atyeo 23:13

Okay. And what did you do after that?

Sharon Copeman 23:18

Well, actually, before I was ordained, I guess it must have been after school had ended. After class, oh, I was finished classes. Yes. I took a GATE tour to Guatemala with Joan McMurtry who was our minister at Knox. And she, I think, had gone on a GATE tour before. Anyway, GATE is global... (laughter) My memory is not what it used to be. Global Awareness Through Experience, I think is what that stands for. And at that time Central America was, we had a lot of refugees coming from Central America, and we were newly aware of the injustices and the heartache and the trauma that people in Guatemala were experiencing. And so, I took that tour. And when I went in – I think it was April – I felt, "Gosh, I should really be in Vancouver because I'm open to a call to ministry. And I'm not there if somebody wants, or some congregation wants to call me." So, I took that tour and not knowing whether I would have a church and therefore be ordained or not. And when I got back, I had already put my resume out and made myself available. I had a call from Lynn Valley United Church to come for an interview. And I had that one interview and I was called. So, I went into ministry when I was ordained in May of 1994. And began in ministry on July 1 of 1994. And that was the beginning of ordained ministry, ordered ministry.

Catherine Atyeo 25:41

And how many years were you at Lynn Valley United? And what was that like, Sharon?

Sharon Copeman 25:47

I was there for 13 years. And it was wonderful. It was just, it felt so right. And as a matter of fact, I had a phone call from one of my former congregation members, just before you called telling me that she was not well, and she's in the midst of some major health stuff. She in the meantime has become a Mormon, because her son has gone to the Mormon church when he married and so she's not part of Lynn Valley United Church anymore. But she keeps in touch. I was very much a pastor in that congregation. And I was very close with congregational members. I loved preaching. My preaching was well received.

Catherine Atyeo 26:55

So, after Lynn Valley, where did you go, Sharon?

Sharon Copeman 26:59

I retired basically, from Lynn Valley. I was 63 at that point, and I was tired. I, yes, I was tired. So in the last few months, after I had announced my retirement, I had a colleague who was also a retired United Church minister and a member of Vancouver Broad Presbytery, where I was, who came and asked me if I would be the Pastoral Charge Supervisor for the little lay lead congregation in Pemberton. He had been there for three years, I think, and wanted to know if I would do that. And my first instinct was to say no, because I was so tired. But I didn't say no, right away. And as I pondered it and thought about it, I thought, "You know, that would give me an opportunity to continue in ministry, to be contributing to a congregation and serving with some people." And so, in the end, I said yes. And I was their Pastoral Charge Supervisor for I think it was 13, no, it was, from 19, no from 2007 until... Yes, I guess it was probably 13 years, maybe even more. And that job took me up to Pemberton for four Sundays, four to six Sundays during the year. So, every time I was there, I did pastoral visiting. And I did some memorial services for them. I did some baptisms with them. And I always led the service on the Sunday that I

was coming. And we went up on a Saturday, came back on a Sunday, and I did some pastoral visiting while I was there. And that was the thing that they had been missing, according to Bill Dyer, who was the person who did it before me.

Catherine Atyeo 29:32

Can I just ask you, can you repeat the name of the church? Because I'm not sure it came across on the recording.

Sharon Copeman 29:37

The name of my church, or the church in Pemberton?

Catherine Atyeo 29:47

Pemberton.

Sharon Copeman 29:48

Oh, I didn't actually say it I don't think. It was St. David's Pemberton United Church.

Catherine Atyeo 29:55

Okay. Okay, great.

Sharon Copeman 29:57

Yes.

Catherine Atyeo 29:58

So, you were there essentially, I think you said, 13 years?

Sharon Copeman 30:02

I think so. But I'd have to look (laughter). It was a lot of years anyway. And as long as the congregation continued to exist. So, the person who was the primary worship leader, and really the in-house minister, was a lay man whose name was Dave Walden, a wonderful man, and gifted, I thought - did a fine job of preaching. I listened to him a few times. And he was also the musician, the church musician. So, we had a team effort going, there was a team of I think at the beginning, there were four lay people who shared - did a rotation of Sundays. They took the services when I wasn't there, which was most of the time, of course. But what they had been missing was pastoral visiting, the pastoral visiting that comes with someone who knows how to maintain confidentiality, I think, because in a small town, and Pemberton is a small town, everybody knows everybody else's business. And so, they don't have that, that ability to maintain confidentiality, because everybody knows everything. And I was coming from out of town. And so that was - that worked well, actually, it worked well.

Catherine Atyeo 31:50

Yes, you were probably seen as objective and pretty fair because you weren't living in the town.

Sharon Copeman 31:57

Yes, that's right. And the other, actually the other benefit was, my husband is a plant pathologist and taught at UBC for many years, and worked with the Canada Department of Agriculture people, who were on campus as well close by. And Pemberton, as you may or may not know, is the world, or was then the world capital of seed potatoes, disease free, virus free seed potatoes. And so, Bob had, 25 years before, spent several trips up to Pemberton and stayed with one of the families, that by this time, were elderly and needing pastoral visiting. So, it was a reconnection for that family and him. And that was one of the primary places where I did pastoral visiting was with that family and others who came to their home, actually, sometimes. They had a sense of trust, because Bob had been well respected in the community as well. So, it was like it was meant to be. God is involved in our world. You know? (laughter).

Catherine Atyeo 33:24

I know, you believe that deeply. And I do know, by the way about Pemberton potatoes, I buy them at my local farmer's market

Sharon Copeman 33:32

Good for you!

Catherine Atyeo 33:35

I love the fingerling potatoes.

Sharon Copeman 33:37

Yes.

Catherine Atyeo 33:38

So, it sounds like your years in Pemberton at St. David's were very rich, Sharon.

Sharon Copeman 33:46

They were, yes. It really made retirement for me, because I was able to continue with the parts of ministry that I have been really passionate about. And, one of the bonuses was – as I said at the beginning, I'm a singer, or I was until COVID– but one of the things that had happened at Lynn Valley United Church, maybe two or three years before I retired, was we did a congregational exchange, a clergy and choir exchange, with the congregation in Deep Cove, Mount Seymour United Church. And the minister at that time was Philip Cable, who was also a musical person. And he had suggested, and he brought, into the mix of that two-congregation exchange, a sung communion liturgy that I then continued to use in Pemberton after I had retired. I used it in Lynn Valley, and people loved it. And I continue to use it in Pemberton with this wonderful Dave Walden, who was the pianist, the keyboard person there as well as the minister, ongoing. So that was a gift for me, that was a gift for my spirit and a gift for them. So yes.

Catherine Atyeo 35:22

So, I wanted to ask you, as a woman – and I'm asking the women I interview this, and I think it needs to be asked – in your ministry, Sharon, did you ever feel that your gender was an issue? Did you ever feel

[like], "This is happening because I'm a woman." And do you have any thoughts on that? Or did that not really affect your ministry or you?

Sharon Copeman 35:51

It's interesting because, of course when [I was a] young person there were not a lot of ministers who were women. Very few, I wasn't even aware of Lydia Grucci, although she had been ordained, of course, before me. But I didn't know any women ministers. And it never occurred to me that I could be one, really. I used to wonder if I would marry a minister. So, ministry was a big deal for me. But no... not a woman. And, and it really didn't become an issue, even something that I was terribly aware of, until the World Council of Churches gathered here in 1983. June Lithgow came to Knox, and she was very aware – I guess, Len [her husband] was the choir director, while our team were involved, because Gordon How was very much involved in the World Council gathering – and she made me aware of words and language that we use, that back then it was all exclusive. That was kind of the beginning of my awareness, of conscious awareness. And over the years, then I became aware that... Well, actually, when I was being ordained, and I went away to Guatemala, I wondered if I was taking this trip at the wrong time. I wasn't going to settlement. You could go to settlement, and then the church back then would place you. I wasn't doing that. So, I reached the point when I was ready for ordination that I thought, "I'm a woman. As a woman, it'll be a miracle if I'm called. Because women don't, women are not the first thing people think about when they're going to call a minister. But if I'm not called... if I've done this all the six years of study for nothing, it's not for nothing, because I've gained a whole lot." So yes, I was very aware that it would be a miracle if I was actually called. (laughter). - I was called. And I was called to the right place, because Eleanor and John O'Neill had been in team ministry there before me. So, this congregation was receptive and ready for a woman minister. And I really strongly believe that we need both. And I really strongly believe that the ideal is to have both in every congregation and so if there is only going to be one minister, then a woman in ministry needs to have strong men around her, and women around her, we need to model that team.

Catherine Atyeo 39:03

Why do you feel, can you just explain why you feel a congregation benefits from having a male and female minister? Why is that?

Sharon Copeman 39:13

Partly I think it's because, as much as we'd like to believe we're all the same – and we are definitely all the same in value—and in the need for both genders and all genders, not just both, there are many. But because we all have our own experience of life, that means we have our own understanding of life and our own perspective of what life is about. So, we need the wisdom that comes from that understanding to be represented in our leadership and in our congregational life in ways that are supportive. And I don't know, if I'm expressing myself well. I just feel if we want our congregations to be multi-factional, multi-perspective, multi-inclusive, then we need to have that in all levels of our congregational leadership as well. And I also would include not just gender specific, but age specific too. I look at congregations now and we're an old congregation at Knox, and I think that's the norm. I really think that most congregations are, these days, not nurturing or not appealing to young people. And we need, I guess we've gotten to that last part of what's my dream for the church? Maybe I'm wandering, but I just, I feel so strongly that men and women and those who are –what are they called?– non-binary,

everyone, we just need, because we are a world of all these folks. And so, we need to be open and ready and receptive and loving of all of these folks. Nurturing, yes.

Catherine Atyeo 41:47

And that sort of lead me to my final question, really, Sharon, and that is how do you view the future of the United Church? Are there things that concern you? Are there things you feel the church needs to do? Because as we all know, attendance is declining. And we're in a new very intensely secular era in this country [and] in this province. So how do you view the future of the church?

Sharon Copeman 42:19

I think, I went through these questions last night and thought, "I don't have wisdom for where we can go," but we are going. We are on a road. And I think we need to be really listening, really listening to the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our world, the Spirit is present in all people and in all of creation, and we need to be listening. We need to be open; we need to be expectant. And the United Church, the Christian church has an awesome story at our heart. And we have a horrendous story as part of our history. And I think if we have the openness and the wisdom to listen. I just have, I have such a feeling that we need to be listening for... And I don't have language for what it is. Mystery, I think Mystery.

Catherine Atyeo 43:55

Can I just ask you, Sharon, sorry to interrupt, but you said we have something horrendous? I think you need to explain what that is.

Sharon Copeman 44:03

Oh, well, our relationship as Christians with other people, our arrogance, the residential schools in Canada are one example of it. Our beliefs that the whole world has to be Christian is just, I think, a major problem - because of the way we've done it. I don't think that our message of Jesus is clear - our understanding of who he was - because he was so completely open and so completely centered in God. And we have become so completely, I can't even really come to the words, because I think we're so centered in ourselves and the importance of our survival, that we're losing the heart of who Jesus calls us to be. And I think who Jesus calls us to be is lovers of creation. All people, without any exception - unconditional love is what we're called to. And our history as a Christian church and as a United Church, and we can't dodge it, has been abusive. Has been damaging. And part of the reason that a lot of people have turned away from the Christian church is because of that. There was a time when I thought, "I don't, I can't believe I'm actually preaching the Christian gospel. And we've done all these terrible things." You know? And I don't even think that it's only Christians. But we as a Christian church, we have our story to live with and to work with and to figure out how the heck do we do it better?

Catherine Atyeo 46:59

Yes, you must be heartened by the Truth and Reconciliation efforts of a lot of United Churches.

Sharon Copeman 47:07

I attended that when it was here in Vancouver. And I'm right now, in the midst of a book study that our minister has been leading through zoom. And we're reading our way through, and the present book is

"A Knock at the Door. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Yes, I'm very heartened. That - and the Black Lives Matter movement. That's... "Every Child Matters." I've got signs across my window, actually, "Every Child Matters" and "Black Lives Matter." I am heartened by that. And I hope that we have the wisdom as we move forward to be people who do stop saying, "What needs to happen?" — what we see as the answer — and start listening to those people who have been our victims and figure out how to live together and how to heal together. Because we all have healing we need to be doing. And that I hope, I think that's where the church needs, I guess if I can say where I think the church needs to go, I guess that's where I think the church needs to go. I'm very involved and very passionate about the refugee situation in the world. We're just... oh my goodness. Oh, my goodness.

Catherine Atyeo 48:52

Anyway, Sharon, I think I'm gonna end the interview here if that's okay with you?

Sharon Copeman 48:59

Absolutely. That's just fine. Yes.

Catherine Atyeo 49:01

And I'll turn off the recorder and then just say a few words to you on the phone. But thank you so much. It's been really interesting.

Sharon Copeman 49:09

Thank you.