

Lois Althea Tupper: A Biographical Sketch

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And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Lois Tupper is one of those rare individuals who is able to call forth the best in others. During her lifetime she led more than one generation of young people to Jesus Christ and has then empowered them to lead others on that same journey. As a leader among the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT), as teacher, as Girls' Work Secretary for the Maritime Religious Education Council, as Director of the Women's Leadership Training School and as Professor of Christian Ministry at McMaster Divinity College, Dr. Tupper laboured to make the Word of God come alive to those with whom she came in contact.

The Formative Years in the West

Dr. Tupper was born 23 March 1911 and spent the first eight years of her life at her maternal grandparents' farm in rural Saskatchewan. Her Grandfather Rand was an important person in Lois' life, teaching her to read and giving her his wonderful gift for recitation. Lois can still remember the "funny little poems" that she and her brother and sister learned from him. This one was intended for her four-year-old brother Ben to learn:

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When I'm a man I mean to buy
A dozen plates of pumpkin pie
A barrel of nuts, to keep 'em handy
And fifty pounds of sugar candy.

When I'm a man I mean to wear
A long tailed coat and crop my hair
And buy a paper and read the news
And stay up late whenever I choose.

In 1919, the family left the farm and moved to Saskatoon. There Lois attended school for the first time. Many children would have been intimidated by this late start but Lois had been well-prepared by her grandfather and soon took her place alongside her peers.

While living on the farm the family had attended church services in the local school house. Once settled in Saskatoon they joined First Baptist Church. The differences were quite startling. Dr. Tupper remembers being "totally intrigued" by the windows, the organ, the communion table and being thrilled by the opportunity to sing in the Junior Choir. She still recalls the feelings of excitement when, at Christmas, the choir processed up the centre aisle of the church singing the "First Noel." As the years passed, the church gave Lois many opportunities to develop her skills. She tells, somewhat ruefully, how at the tender age of sixteen, she was chosen to be the Sunday School teacher for a group of eleven boys who were eleven years old; she kindly described them as "fascinating kids".¹

The year 1924 represents a significant milestone in Lois Tupper's life. She was baptized, she graduated from Grade 8, receiving a wristwatch as a reward for passing without having to write any exams, and she joined CGIT, thereby beginning a relationship that continues to this day.

CGIT was a "wartime baby" born of the determination of reform-minded women to provide teenage girls with opportunities to grow physically, socially, mentally and spiritually. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) had been trying for a number of years to develop a program that would attract young Protestant girls across Canada and had experimented with a variety of strategies including girls' clubs, summer camps and Girl Guide companies. To this end, the YWCA had sponsored a number of Girl Guide companies when Guiding first began in Canada in 1910. However, by 1917, YWCA workers had concluded that

the Guide program was simply too competitive. "Furthermore it was not devoted to religious education and the Guide leaders were unwilling to accept a policy in which group leaders would be responsible to local congregations. The YWCA was, however, committed to co-operating with churches and through their girls' work played an important part in disseminating new ideas throughout Canada, preparing the way for church-sponsored girls' work."²

In the autumn of 1915, several YWCA secretaries decided to have dinner together. As a result of that dinner meeting the National Advisory Committee for Co-operation in Girls' Work was formed. The Committee included personnel from the YWCA as well as representatives from the Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican and Baptist Sunday School Boards and Associations. (The Board was renamed the National Girls' Work Board early in 1920.) Una Saunders, General Secretary of the Dominion Council of the YWCA, was appointed chairperson. Saunders, along with Constance Body, Winnifred Thomas and Olive Ziegler began actively to promote the concept of a unique program for girls. Although teaching material specifically for girls was virtually non-existent, the women were determined not simply to adapt the more plentiful material available for boys. Olive Ziegler said,

Right from the beginning we felt that the girls' work program must be entirely different. We gained a great deal from the boys' work secretaries, but we worked out the specifics in our program very much on our own.³

In 1917 the new program was finally ready.

Modelled after the YWCA girls' clubs and led by a YWCA worker or a Sunday school teacher, CGIT activities were organized under the YWCA's four standards for youth development. In the planning of the CGIT program their knowledge of girl psychology, the use of self-governing clubs, the recognition of the appeal of camp experience and the commitment of the special relationship of the leaders to each girl were incorporated.⁴

The CGIT purpose eloquently illustrates the Christian grounding of the program:

As a Canadian Girl in Training
under the leadership of Jesus
it is my purpose to
cherish health,
seek truth,
know God,
serve others,
And thus with His help become the girl
God would have me be.

In a manuscript written in 1982, “Co-operation Among Canadian Churches,” Dr. Tupper vividly described her teenage years in CGIT:

Our class in First Baptist Sunday School in Saskatoon was, I suppose, a typical class – 15 of us, tall and short, thin and chubby, serious and giggly, boy-crazy and otherwise. Our teacher, Eva A. Milne (whom we thought to be old, of course, was in reality the gamest of 40-year olds – stenographer and telegraph operator par excellence at the C.P.-R.). We were all ecstatic about the C.G.I.T. idea, especially because there were groups beginning in neighbouring Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches – and because Boys’ groups were already inviting C.G.I.T. groups to special functions . . . We did have a wonderful time, many serious moments, and a splendid Mother and Daughter Banquet. We conducted a church service, and visited the hospitals, had toboggan parties, invited the boys to wiener roasts and some of us went to camp!

“Once a camper always a camper.” I first went to Camp Wakanda, on Wakaw Lake, Saskatchewan in 1927. The camp boasted one rough hewn “Lodge” and a great circle of tents with lumpy straw ticks for beds. Dorothy Kirkpatrick was our director and my group leader was Ida M. Duffus (another wonderful sport in her 40s--who died only recently in her 90s). I can still close my eyes and sense the spell of campfire readings from “Winnie the Pooh,” the Bible and poetry of many sorts. I can still sense the hush of Vesper time at sunset. I can still feel the chill of morning dip and the trials my pal Muriel Young and I had climbing that long hill fast enough to be dressed in time for flag raising, morning watch and breakfast! It was thrilling to hear that in all provinces of Canada, groups of girls like ourselves were at camps, and that the C.G.I.T. idea had already gone to Newfoundland

and Trinidad.⁵

Although the world outside was troubled, one can sense from Dr. Tupper's words the security and peace that another generation of young women were privileged to enjoy through CGIT.

Not all of her time was spent with CGIT! High school was also enjoyable and rewarding. Lois had inherited her grandfather's love of English but during these years she developed an affinity for History, French and Chemistry. Upon graduation Lois received a scholarship to the University of Saskatchewan. Her family, which now included three brothers and two sisters, had moved to Wayne, Alberta where her father's brothers owned a coal mine. Dr. Tupper remained in Saskatoon and began classes at the university, boarding with family friends.

These were good years but in her final year of studies, tragedy struck. Lois received word that her mother, who was only forty-six, was dying of cancer. Dr. Tupper described the train journey home:

I'm still rather childish about prayer, at this point, maybe I still am. But I'm banging on the gates of heaven and saying, "Dear God, don't let her die till I get there!" Isn't that absurd? But that's the way you pray sometimes and long about – I'm in a lower berth on the train, you see – and eventually – I can describe it only as a voice – the voice said to me, "You know, why don't you go to bed and get a bit of rest, you're going to need it and you know I'm with you and I'm with your mother" – and sort of – "I'll stay up and look after things." It was a very moving experience. I've had a few like that since but that was the first time and that was just unbelievable. Just, just a voice said, "You know, why don't you go to sleep. I'm there and I'm here" and so on.⁶

Her mother was dead when she arrived. Lois remained at home for a month and then returned to school. However, it wasn't long before she was seriously ill herself – with nephritis. She graduated with her B.A. in bed in Civic Hospital in Saskatoon. Knowing how difficult the situation was at home, Lois kept her illness a secret. But, in June, she was expected at home and had to let them know. She was allowed to travel back to Wayne but spent most of the next year in bed.

Dr. Tupper returned to the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in the Fall of 1932. She was determined to be a teacher but she was also well aware that her family needed her financial support.

However, it was not easy. The first hurdle was the medical examination. The doctor, a woman, was very blunt, “You might as well go home – you’ll never be strong enough to teach.”⁷⁷ Fortunately, Lois didn’t listen and began studies anyway. There were about forty students in her class. The Bachelor of Education was normally a two year process but that year five students completed the program in one year – Dr. Tupper was one of them.

In 1933 the Great Depression was at it height and some graduates wrote hundreds of applications. Dr. Tupper wrote seventeen and then was hired to teach at a rural school in southern Saskatchewan called, rather appropriately, Grainland School. The drought was dreadful. Dr. Tupper remembers walking across the fields to the school in the spring and fall and being hit in the face by grasshoppers. It was, nevertheless, an interesting place; Dr. Tupper was responsible for all grades from one through twelve with the exceptions of grades two and seven. The high school students did correspondence lessons but, quite naturally, needed a great deal of assistance particularly in French and Senior Math. At the end of the year, Dr. Tupper transferred to Shaunoven High School which boasted a staff of five. The following two years were difficult ones. Dr. Tupper had problems maintaining discipline and as she recounted somewhat ruefully, “Lots of trouble with great big boys . . . they were very strict about contracts, after my second year, my contract was not renewed.”⁷⁸ However Dr. Tupper has described the next four years at Davidson High School as a wonderful experience. She then transferred to Wynward High School where she continued to find fulfilment as a teacher.

Teachers’ salaries were not high in Saskatchewan during those depression years. Annual salaries ranged from \$400 to \$700 per annum. However Dr. Tupper was able to supplement her income by marking Grade XII Departmental Exams in French. The Saskatchewan government was prepared to pay \$100 for ten days of marking! The extra money allowed her to send more money back home to her family.

Throughout this time, Dr. Tupper was actively involved in church activities as well as providing leadership for local CGIT groups which, more often than not, she began. Dr. Tupper reports,

Let me say when I was teaching high school in Saskatchewan I was all the time involved in youth work in the church. Quite often there was not a Baptist Church in the towns I taught in, in Saskatchewan, so I

did such things as superintend a United Church Sunday School. All my CGIT groups were interdenominational; we had Unitarians, Catholics, lots of United and, if there was a Baptist Church, Baptists, Presbyterians, Mennonites, what have you, because Saskatchewan communities were already pretty cross cultural. Very rich experience working with teenagers . . . At Wynyard we had a high school girls' club and a little contest – What Shall We Call It. The name they chose was “Tupper’s Order of Good Cheer”; this was TOGC and I thought that was fun. The second year, of course, it became CGIT.⁹

However, her work with teenagers did not stop there. In 1937, ten years after her first experience “as a very green camper,”¹⁰ Lois Tupper served as a leader at Camp Wakanda. Her talents and commitment did not go unnoticed, with the result that the next year she was invited by Win McElroy, then Girls’ Work Secretary of Saskatchewan, to direct the camp. Dr. Tupper described her feelings about directing that first camp:

I can never forget the responsibilities, joys and challenges of that first time as director! Early rising to have a half hour quiet before God in preparation for the day; work with leaders in Bible study; Council Hour with the whole company of 90 campers; the great privilege of leading worship on a hilltop; the realization of God’s nearness in all activities and the joy of thinking through issues with fellow workers.¹¹

Dr. Tupper directed camps at Carlyle Lake, Saskatchewan for the next three years. Then in 1943, “out of the blue in the midst of World War II,” while (she) was teaching at Wynyard came a letter from Muriel Jacobson, National Girls’ Work Secretary and coincidentally a member at Wentworth Baptist Church in Hamilton, extending to (her), on behalf of the Maritime Religious Education Council, the invitation to become Girls’ Work Secretary of the Council.¹²

Dr. Tupper’s roots were in the Maritimes, in Nova Scotia. Both her mother and father had been born not far from Wolfville. Her father, along with half of his brothers, had gone west to work on the railways while her mother, an only child, had moved west with her family. The Rand family’s Maritime roots were especially deep and Lois had grown up on her Grandmother Rand’s stories about Nova Scotia. Some of them were about her great uncle, Silas Rand, who was the Baptist missionary to the MicMac and Malecite Indians during the second half of the nineteenth century. So,

although reluctant to leave her family, when both her Grandmother Rand and her sister Marg said “Go!”, Lois did.

The East – The Maritime Religious Education Council

The Religious Education Council of Canada (RECC) was formed in 1919 by the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Anglican Churches and representatives from the YWCA and YMCA. It was patterned after the American Religious Education Association (REA) which had begun work in 1903 under the leadership of William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago. The RECC was to be a “national denominationally-controlled, co-operative agency . . . which would replace the old non-denominational Sunday School Association.” Its inception “marked the official engagement of the Canadian churches, particularly the Methodists and Presbyterians in the new religious education movement.”¹³ In 1920 the twin National Advisory Committees for Boys’ and Girls’ Work severed their relationship with the YMCA and YWCA and became “auxiliary arms” of the RECC. Shortly thereafter, two other boards were created to work with children age twelve and under (National Children’s Work Board) and with young adults ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-four (National Young People’s Board)¹⁴. By 1926, duplicate organizations were set up in all of the provinces, the three eastern provinces choosing to form one council – The Maritime Religious Education Council.

As Girls’ Work Secretary for the Maritime Religious Education Council, Dr. Tupper’s responsibilities were many and diverse. She described her duties with these words:

The years were packed with conferences, rallies, Sunday School Conventions, Leadership Training events, planning and directing camps for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The M.R.E.C. had about 20 girls’ camps then (as well as boys’, young people’s and leadership training camps), and I directed 4 or 5 each summer, and, of course, served on staff of leadership training camps too.¹⁵

When asked what she felt her greatest contribution was to youth work in the Maritimes, what made her feel most satisfied, Dr. Tupper replied that “the most strenuous and the most thrilling was the camp

work.”¹⁶ At the camps there were opportunities to enter into people’s lives, to talk about personal relationships, to share in Bible study with camp leaders and opportunities to help them in their struggle with issues that the Scriptures raised.

With twenty-three girls’ camps to organize and staff, leadership development was an important facet of Dr. Tupper’s work. She identified some characteristics that she looked for in a potential leader. First, a director must genuinely enjoy the camp experience. She must be interested in both the leaders and the individual campers and be prepared to invest herself emotionally in them, i.e., she must love those who were in her care. She must also be capable of working intergenerationally. She must be willing and able to share her own faith journey and be willing to open doors for others, to try to broaden their horizons whether they came from a non-church background or a very narrow one. Most important, she must have made the important discovery that Bible Study was fun and realize that Jesus was capable of laughter.

While in the Maritimes Dr. Tupper worked as part of a team in close co-operation with two of the Boys’ Work Secretaries, Al Gibson and Ralph Young, with Ada Adams, who joined the Council as Children’s Work Secretary in 1946, and with the office secretaries, Kate Abrams and Alma Price. However, the “network” extended far beyond the Council itself. Dr. Tupper wrote,

With what a splendid network of men and women leaders in the churches of many denominations I shared in so many ways as we sought to strengthen the teaching ministry of the churches! And what “friends for always” so many became – like the Levys, McIntyres, Burns, Murrays. At annual conferences in Toronto what a privilege it was to work with Harriet Christie, Margaret Webster, Mary Tully, Trudie Patmore, Jean Baynton, Nelson Chappel, Wilbur Howard, Alvin Cooper and so many others!¹⁷

The effectiveness of Dr. Tupper’s work is evident in the statistics contained in the *United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1943-1947*:

	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Baptist CGIT Groups	56	62	69	81	87
Membership	621	642	833	824	984
Baptist/United CGIT		8			
		93			
Total Number of CGIT					
Groups in the Provinces			334	350	
Membership				3699	
Baptist Explorer Groups		21	28	20	
Membership			286	333	300

When Dr. Tupper resigned from the Maritime Religious Education Council in 1947, the Maritime Baptists recognized her efforts with these words:

In the Co-operative field we record our regrets that we are losing Miss Lois Tupper from our Girls' Work. She has made a fine contribution to Christian Education in the Maritimes and has set a standard of work that will not be easy to maintain. We congratulate her and wish her very success in her new position at McMaster University.¹⁸

Central Canada – The Women's Leadership Training School and McMaster Divinity College

Each April the RECC held a staff conference in Toronto to which the provincial secretaries were invited along with representatives from the various denominations. Dr. Tupper described these conferences as "a wonderful time of reunion, sharing, renewal and venturing in hopes and plans for Christian Education of teenagers and their leaders."¹⁹

At the 1947 Conference, Dr. Tupper received a message from Dr. Harold S. Stewart, the Dean of McMaster Divinity College asking her to meet with him in Hamilton. When they met Dr. Stewart invited Dr. Tupper to become Director of the fledgling Women's Leadership Training School (WLTS) at McMaster. The School had been formed in 1946 in response

to a growing demand for theological training for women and was receiving “enthusiastic financial support and publicity from the various Women’s Boards in Ontario, Quebec and Western Canada”.²⁰ Although challenged by the prospect, Dr. Tupper was convinced that she did not have the necessary academic background, specifically formal theological training. However, with the promise of a \$500 grant from McMaster, she enrolled in the Master of Arts program offered at Union Theological Seminary in co-operation with Columbia University. One year later, in the spring of 1948, she graduated with the degree M.A. in Christian Education.

The year in New York was an exciting one. Not least because Dr. Tupper was given the opportunity to do her field education component at the historic Riverside Church where, in 1947, Dr. James McCracken, a former theology professor at McMaster, was the senior pastor. She still remembers with excitement what it was like to be at Riverside at that time:

When I was there you had for family school, church school, three hours (9:00-12:00 a.m.). You were stacked up on ten floors of the tower, I had the juniors . . . The first minister was Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick whose “heretical” sermons we used to listen to at university, up in the attic where nobody knew, because he was thought to be terribly modernistic. He was a wonderful, wonderful man. Riverside was a Baptist foundation but it became, of course, very soon, inter-denominational, inter-income bracket, interracial. It is one of the really great churches.²¹

In the summer of 1948, Dr. Tupper returned to McMaster to take up her duties as Director of the WLTS.²² The WLTS grew out of the need to enrich the two-year Missionary course for women that the University had been offering since the early thirties. The program was intended to prepare young women “to be pastors’ assistants, directors of Christian education, church secretaries and missionaries at home and abroad.”²³ As the Director, Dr. Tupper was to be directly responsible for all WLTS students, counselling them in curriculum choices, teaching several subjects, assigning field work and guiding them toward placement at the end of the program. Recruitment was also to be her responsibility. In addition, as a member of the Divinity College Faculty, she was to carry her share of the teaching load in the College. Although it was modified over the years the original curriculum was structured in the following way:

First Year: English, Biblical Literature, Speech, Baptist Church Polity, Missions, Religious Education, History of Christianity, Public Speaking, Field Education. Courses in Home Nursing and First Aid were also offered.

Second Year: Psychology, Evangelism, Missions, Pastoral Duties, Christian Ethics, Old Testament Interpretation, Religious Education, New Testament, Christian Theology, Field Education. Courses in Group Leadership were also offered.

Electives: Electives were selected in order to meet the individual career needs of the student. They could include such diverse elements as French, German, Spanish, Sociology, Typing, Accounting or Dietetics.²⁴

Although the WLTS had the support of the faculty of McMaster and of many in the Convention there were others who were still opposed to women taking any leadership role in Canadian churches, although it was considered appropriate for them to minister overseas. In addition, McMaster continued to struggle with the prejudice generated as a result of the fundamentalist/modernist controversy of the twenties. As one student recalls: "I was warned by my Bible College teacher to beware of McMaster as I might come under the devil's control. I was also cautioned by my minister that I might lose my evangelical zeal. So it was with watchful and wary eyes that I came to Mac."²⁵

In 1957, Dr. Tupper was joined by Miss Muriel Israel. Like Dr. Tupper, Miss Israel had a long history of Christian ministry. After graduating from Acadia in 1932, Miss Israel taught in Nova Scotia for a number of years before coming to Toronto where she served at the Royce Avenue Baptist Mission, a project of Walmer Road Baptist Church. Following this she worked for the Baptist Women's Missionary Societies (BWMS) in Beverley Street Baptist Church. During the war years she was asked, by the BWMS to travel to Windsor where she served at both the Anna Phelps Mission and the Aubin Road Mission. Convinced of her need for further study, Miss Israel enrolled at Hartford Theological Seminary where she earned the degree M.A. in Religious Education. On returning to Canada, Miss Israel joined the pastoral team of Howard Park United Church as Christian Education Director. Some years later Miss Israel felt compelled to return to Sydney, Nova Scotia to deal with a family crisis.

While there, recovering from the death of both her parents, she was contacted by Dr. Tupper who invited her to come to McMaster as Assistant to the Director. The two women had much in common, sharing a commitment to Christian Education as a whole and specifically to the work of CGIT.²⁶

Just one year after her arrival at the College, from September through December 1958, Miss Israel was called on to direct the school while Dr. Tupper fought a battle against cancer. Thankfully Dr. Tupper won the battle and was able to resume her duties.

During the WLTS years Dr. Tupper was also involved in the wider Christian community. In the summer of 1959 she travelled to England and Scotland to visit training schools “with a view to possible improvement of our own.”²⁷

She was thrilled, if somewhat overwhelmed, by the invitation to the lead the Bible Studies at the First National CGIT Camp in 1952 and the First National CGIT Leaders Camp in 1961. She says of those experiences, “What joy it was to share in leadership of Bible Study at those camps”.²⁸

In 1963, Lois was invited by the Baptist Board of Religious Education to take a group of fifteen students to the Baptist World Youth Congress in Lebanon and then on a mission tour to Jordan, Israel, India, Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong and Japan. Dr. Tupper described the opportunity:

In 1963 I had the opportunity, this was Ken Gillespie’s plan and he couldn’t go himself, to partner with a leader named Turner from the American Baptists and take a group of young people to the Baptist World Youth Congress in Beirut . . . and then around the world on a mission study tour to both the American and Canadian parts of Burma, India, Thailand. First of all we went to Jordan and to Israel and of course the wall was there – the no man’s land – but it was an extraordinary experience. We had eight Canadian young people and seven Americans – we were seven weeks. It was a very great experience.²⁹

In the academic year 1965-66 Dr. Tupper had her one and only sabbatical. She has described how this came about and a little bit about her experiences in Nigeria:

The other experience I had was in regard to the only Sabbatical I ever had. Now Dr. Parker was at Mac for forty-three years. He came from Mississippi to teach Hebrew for three years, as a young man, he stayed forty-three and, of course, became head of the College and he had one and a half years off in forty-three years – It’s a bit different now and I hope it stays different – but he determined I should have a sabbatical before he retired. So it came in ‘65-‘66.

Just when I knew it was going to happen I had the phone call from my friend Nelson Chappel in New York who was Head of the World Council of Christian Ed. He asked me to go to Nigeria where there was to be a special Christian Education course for young men in very responsible positions from across Africa. He was doing this, asking professors on sabbatical from various Divinity Colleges to do this in various parts of the .world . . . I went to Nigeria and taught in Immanuel College, this special course. The person who worked with me, the other Canadian was John Johnston . . . It was a very fine time.

I wasn’t there the whole year because of the civil war. We had to keep renewing our visas every month . . . so we had to go up to Lagos every month to renew and red tape you know, it was just unbelievable . . . you went to about six different floors of twelve for different things. It’s like getting a traveller’s cheque cashed in India! . . . I taught a fair bit of Bible to the regular theological students and that was a good experience.³⁰

When Dr. Tupper returned to McMaster the winds of change were blowing. In the *Baptist Year Book, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1966-67* it is recorded that a committee was appointed “to assess the situation and review the school’s curriculum in relation to the needs of the churches for women workers. Suggestions from individuals and churches were requested.”³¹ An explanation was offered in the next year’s report which said it had “become come apparent that most of our Churches feel unable to add women staff members; patterns of Christian service at home and abroad are changing, and the young women themselves feel the need for a broader preparation than can be given in a short certificate programme.”³² Thus it was that in 1968 the University Senate, acting on the recommendation of the Divinity College Senate and Faculty, approved the creation of a new degree program – Bachelor of Religious Education

(shortly to become Master of Religious Education). It was intended to “meet the demands expressed by many Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) churches for specially-equipped persons to undertake leadership in the field of Christian Education.”³³ From this point onward women and men would have equal opportunities to prepare for ministry.

As a result the WLTS was closed. Miss Israel returned to Walmer Road Baptist Church in Toronto as Director of Community Work. Dr. Tupper, however, remained at the College for another three years as Professor of Christian Ministry. Thus Dr. Tupper became the first woman to hold a full professorship in any theological college in Canada. This was a position she held until her retirement in 1971.

Throughout her years at McMaster Dr. Tupper was a source of inspiration and support to the students to whom she ministered. One woman wrote, “The most ‘growing’ aspect of WLTS was to know Lois Tupper. I saw in her the love of Christ for her students. Her desire to help and also to offer friendship was a rich experience. In my teaching days I often thought of her and asked myself, ‘How would Lois do this?’ Her tact and skill were surely gifts from God.”³⁴ Nor was her influence restricted to the women. One of her male students, Robert Campbell, expressed in a letter his deep respect and love for Dr. Tupper:

Lois Tupper is simply an outstanding woman, always, realistic, warm, caring and above all sensitive to those she encounters. I’m not sure how she did it but she made it her business to be interested in you as a person so that you felt sincerely cared about. She has always met me with a smile, as if I were one of her children returning after a brief absence. Perhaps that is the truth, I am one of her spiritual sons . . . She would constantly surprise me with her responses. That was part of the mystique about her, she was always fresh and delightful. You couldn’t anticipate her.³⁵

At Convocation on 7 May 1974, Dr. Tupper was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity. Grace Anderson described how, as “the degree hood was placed over her shoulders there was a spontaneous standing ovation. Waves of clapping continued for at least the next five minutes.” During the reception that followed, Professor Russell Aldwinckle remarked to one of the guests in a classic English understatement, “I think that was one of our better choices!” It was indeed!

The Retirement Years

Although Dr. Tupper retired from McMaster in 1971, her ministry was far from over. For the next four years she served as part-time Coordinator of Christian Education at Westdale United Church. She also taught in the Adult Education Department at McMaster. She has described how she went to the adult education department hoping to teach a poetry course in the evening. However, what they needed was someone to teach Business English to accountants. Never one to turn down a challenge, Dr. Tupper agreed and says of the experience, "It was good you know but it wasn't what I had in mind!"³⁶

From 1967-1970 Dr. Tupper served as First Vice-President of the Baptist Federation of Canada and in 1970-71 as Vice President of the BCOQ. Following her retirement, she acted as Moderator of the Niagara-Hamilton Association of Baptist Churches from 1971-72. In addition, Dr. Tupper has also been active in the Baptist World Alliance, leading Bible Studies at their meetings in Miami (1965) and in Stockholm (1975).

In November, 1972 she was elected Vice-President of the Canadian Council of Churches, a position she held until April 1976. Dr. Tupper has been an ardent supporter of the Canadian Council of Churches since its inception in 1944 and has worked on the Council's Committee on Christian Vocation, and (after the Council's reorganization in 1968) on the Commission on World Concerns. Throughout, Dr. Tupper continued to lead Bible Studies both in the Hamilton area and in Toronto through the Ecumenical Forum, an affiliate of the Canadian Council of Churches.

Epilogue

To trace the pattern of a life is a difficult thing. No doubt there are many threads that I have missed, threads that would enrich the telling of the story. But this much I know, Lois Tupper, by her life, testifies to the truth that is found in the Bible she loves so much. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Lois has been all of that and more.

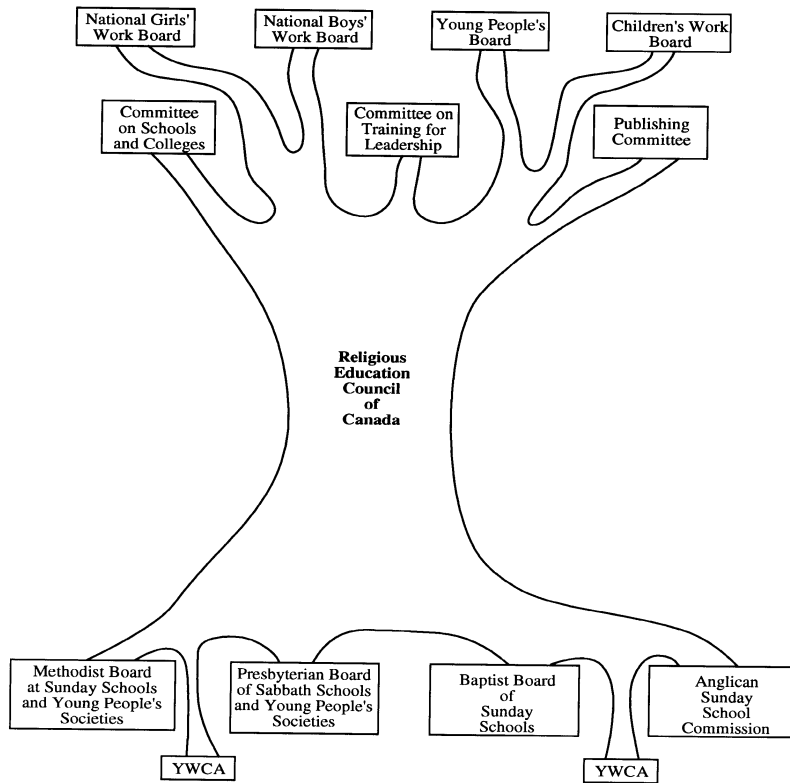
Endnotes

1. Lois Tupper, interview by author, 10 November 1992, tape recording, Canadian Baptist Archives, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON.
2. M. Lucille Marr, "Church Hierarchy and Christian Nurture: The Significance of Gender in Religious Education in the Methodist, Presbyterian and United Churches in Canada 1919-1939" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1990).
3. M. Hewitt, *Sixty Years of CGIT, 1915-75* (Toronto: The National CGIT Committee, n.d.), 5.
4. Marr, 44.
5. Lois Tupper, "Co-operation Among Canadian Churches," mss. dated 1982, Canadian Baptist Archives, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON, 2.
6. Lois Tupper, Tape Recording #91-068, 15 April 1991, Canadian Baptist Archives, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON.
7. Tupper, tape recording, 15 April 1991.
8. Tupper, tape recording, 15 April 1991.
9. Tupper, interview with author, 10 November 1992.
10. Tupper, "Co-operation Among Canadian Churches," 3.
11. Tupper, "Co-operation Among Canadian Churches," 4.
12. Tupper, "Co-operation Among Canadian Churches", 4.
13. Marr, 34.
14. See Appendix I: The Co-operative Bodies and Boards of the Religious Education Council of Canada (taken from Marr, 291). This chart predates the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

15. Tupper, "Co-operation Among Canadian Churches", 5.
16. Tupper, interview with author, 10 November 1992.
17. Tupper, "C o-operation Among Canadian Churches," 5.
18. *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1945* (St. John: Barnes Haskins Ltd., 1945), 171.
19. Tupper, "Co-operation Amongst the Churches," 7.
20. G.M. Anderson, *The Leadership Years* (Hamilton: The Alger Press Limited, 1987), 3.
21. Tupper, tape recording, 15 April 1991.
22. The story of Dr. Tupper's twenty-three years at McMaster has been captured in G.M. Anderson's *The Leadership Years*.
23. Anderson, 6.
24. Anderson, 64.
25. Anderson, 18.
26. Summarized from Anderson, 24-26.
27. *Baptist Year Book, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1958-59*, 174; cited in Anderson, 66.
28. Tupper; cited in Hewitt, 22.
29. Tupper, tape recording, 15 April 1991.
30. Tupper, tape recording, 15 April 1991. Dr. Tupper's letter home at Christmas is included as Appendix II.
31. Anderson, 70.

32. *Baptist Year Book, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1967-1968*, 1116; cited in Anderson, 70.
33. Anderson, 70.
34. Anderson, 22.
35. Letter from Robert Campbell to the author, 8 December 1992.
36. Tupper, tape recording, 15 April 1991.

Appendix I: The Co-operative Bodies and Boards of the Religious Education Council of Canada



The Co-operative Bodies and Boards of the Religious Education Council of Canada

Appendix II

Immanuel College
Ibaden, Nigeria
Christmas, 1965

Dear W.L.T.S. Grads and Friends:

Greetings from Nigeria – warm and long! – for Christmas and the New Year. Perhaps you are already having chilly days in most parts of Canada. Here it is the end of the rainy season, and midday temperatures are climbing higher into the 90's! But I'm writing this in the cooler evening hours.

Above the palms of this beautiful campus the November moon is climbing steadily and revealing the colors of flowers and foliage usually lost when the swift dark descends. The perfume of lily and hibiscus reaches me on the lazy breeze of evening. Songs of a thousand insects fill the air; and the untiring lizards hasten up and down the outside walls of the house that is mine for this term.

This afternoon I went with a young friend from the University of Ibadan to see an outdoor program of Nigerian dances given by students of University College Hospital School of Nursing in honor of the charming Scottish lady who has been their director for 6 years. Can you believe it, I forgot to take my camera! A great pity – for the costumes were colorful and the gaiety unmistakable. Students of the different regions (and tribes) of the land presented characteristic dances in home costume – all to the accompaniment of “an orchestra” of drums played in a furious crescendo by male drummers in flowing Yoruba dress. Often when a dancer had sung a lovely bit of song or performed an intricate dance movement, a member of the audience walked onto the grassy “stage” and pressed a shilling on her forehead or tucked a pound note into her headdress. Fun!

Everyone here is hospitable and friendly. I enjoy thoroughly my classes in Christian Education with the 19 men in third year Theology. Faculty meetings are never dull when one sits with 3 Nigerians and 3 Britishers! Many of you know that I came by invitation of the College and of the World Council of Christian Education especially to assist with a special “pilot experiment” – one year Diploma Course in Christian Education – for experienced pastors and teachers carefully chosen and sent on scholarships provided by World Council of Churches. Not all the 12 have managed to arrive thus far (only 8, in fact) – but they represent 8 African nations and many denominational backgrounds. Under various African leaders they are studying “dynamics” of African society in all its swift changing turbulence. Dr. John Johnston of Lagos, a fearless Canadian Presbyterian, and I are

attempting to help students think into the teaching task of Nigerian Churches today – which is surely a wider and deeper and harder thing than the traditional patterns so firmly rooted and in such need of “jolting” (as are some patterns in Canada – and everywhere in the world today). The men are soon to go to visit a Government school 70 miles away which aims to prepare young people to give leadership in Community Development back in their own towns and villages. Miss Carina Robins, a delightful Britisher, is working with the class on Christian Drama. You can imagine my delight in this! They are creating a play – complete with songs and dances (instruction in these given by staff members of the University School of Drama). The play is to be presented near Christmas. Theme is “forgiveness.”

Of course I’ve been reading as widely as possible African plays, novels, history, poetry. I’d like to share with you one exquisite poem. It was written by Minji Karibo (who now lives in Enugu – librarian, I think) and published first in “Nigerian Student Verse” in 1959 when she was a student at University of Ibadan. First line is the title –

“It could have been a lonely night,
But tree and shade shared common greenness;

It could have been a tearful night,
But the teasing shadows shook with laughter;

It could have been a poor night,
But the moon showered a million sequins;

It could have been a fearful night,
But the gentle breeze sang of safety;

It could have been a troubled night,
But the unruffled waters spoke of peace.”

I’d like to mention two books I brought from home – “Just think, Mr. Berton” by Ted Byfield (answer to “The Comfortable Pew”); and “A Quest for Vitality in Religion” by Findley B. Edge. Both excellent, I think.

Last Sunday at our 10 A.M. Communion in the College Chapel we used the form of service for the Lord’s Supper as used by the Church of South India – for it will be the basis of the service now being prepared for the Church of Nigeria which comes into being this December, by union of Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches (not Baptist) in this land. We go forward in groups and kneel and partake of the broken loaf and the one cup. For me this is a rich

experience. Many Christian services in Nigeria will be services of Thanksgiving and of dedication of the new church to Mission for Christ. Meantime we seek to pray in very truth for love and wisdom of action for all branches of the Church in these days of trouble and violence in this region.

You may be sure that my thoughts are often with you, grads and friends. Wish I could greet each one of you in person – but I am grateful once again to Irene Flett for mimeographing and mailing this letter for me. Greetings to present W.L.T.S. students also, and to their teachers, Muriel Israel and Muriel Carder! Every happiness to you at Christmas as you share with family and friends. I am excited about the prospect of having Dr. Dorothy Mann of Hamilton (now serving in a Mission Hospital in Kenya) here with me in Ibadan for Christmas.

My love to you,

Lois A. Tupper

Appendix III

McMaster University

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
L8S 4L9
Department of History

Mr. Chancellor:

By authority of the University Senate I present to you that you may confer upon her the degree Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*,

LOIS ALTHEA TUPPER

Miss Tupper comes from a Nova Scotia family of immense renown although her branch of it had settled before her birth in Western Canada. She herself was born and brought up on the prairies, graduating Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education, with distinction, from the University of Saskatchewan in 1933. Subsequently she did advanced work at Columbia University and at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

For the first ten years after her graduation she taught in the public schools and the high schools of her native Saskatchewan, a province at that time sorely afflicted by the great economic depression. These were years well calculated to reveal the true mettle of those who lived through them, and Miss Tupper made them years of splendid and cheerful usefulness. She was not content to serve her community merely by teaching English, French and History in its schools, she wholeheartedly involved herself in every aspect of young people's endeavours, working with youth groups in church work, in summer camps, in public speaking and in amateur theatricals. The nation-wide attention that this attracted led to her being appointed in 1943 to the Associate Secretaryship of the Religious Educational Council of the Maritimes, and for the next five years she effectively discharged the administrative interdenominational responsibilities this post entailed. From it she came in 1948 to McMaster University's Divinity College to direct the then newly formed Women's Leadership Training School. She remained its Director for the next twenty years, and those of us whose good fortune it was to be her colleagues on this campus during that period can testify to the devotion and capacity, not to

mention the quiet charm, with which she supervised her school, fashioning its students and developed an M.A. programme in Christian education. In 1968 the Divinity College anticipated the women's liberation movement of a few years later and made all of its courses available to members of either sex; whereupon the Women's Leadership Training School lost its separate identity and merged with the College as a whole, and its Director was appointed to the chair of Christian Ministry. Lois Tupper thus became the first member of her sex to hold a full professorship in any theological college in Canada. She continued to hold it until 1971, when she retired – nominally anyway.

This necessarily brief and rapid summary of her career hardly conveys the true dimension of her services and achievements. She has been a member of the Canadian Council of Churches' Commission on World Concerns and of the Committee on Christian Vocation. In 1963 she led a North American youth group on a world mission study tour. In 1965/66, while on sabbatical leave, she was sent by the World Council of Christian Education to Nigeria as Visiting Professor at Immanuel College in Ibadan, where she helped to establish a new interdenominational course for ministers and youth leaders. She was First Vice-President of the Baptist Federation of Canada from 1967 to 1970 and of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec in the following year. In 1971/72 she was Moderator of the Niagara-Hamilton Association of Baptist Churches; and, whether retired or not, she is still teacher in the McMaster christian education programme and the Coordinator of Christian Education for the Westdale United Church. She is also still very much engaged in her lifetime's work with Bible study groups, youth camps, retreats, church and community affairs and similar activities: she continues to be a woman of all seasons.

In these days of increasing feminine participation in the world's business and of burgeoning ecumenical collaboration in matters spiritual it is a signal honour to be able to present to you, Mr. Chancellor, one who can be authentically described as the practising personification and living embodiment of such enlightened and progressive values:

LOIS ALTHEA TUPPER

E.T. Salmon
University Orator

7 May 1974

