

“God has given each of us different gifts.”

(Romans 12:6 paraphrase)

100 United Years

Lydia Gruchy

Lydia Emelie Gruchy was born on September 5, 1894, in France. When she was 19, she moved to Saskatchewan, Canada. Lydia became a teacher, but a man named Edmund Olivier encouraged her to go to a special school to become a minister. A minister is someone who leads church services and helps people with their faith and spiritual life.

At the school, Lydia learned about the Bible and how to help people. Even though she studied hard, when she finished school and asked to become a minister, the leaders of the church said “no” because she was a woman. At that time, no women were allowed to be ministers.

In 1925, a new church called The United Church of Canada was formed. Lydia asked again to become a minister, but they also said “no.” Lydia didn’t give up. She worked at three different churches, teaching and leading services, but she couldn’t do everything her male classmates could do, like serving communion and baptizing people.

For 13 years, every two years, the local church community asked the United Church to make Lydia a minister. Every time, the answer was “no.” Finally, the local churches told the United Church that they would make Lydia a minister unless they stopped it. At a big meeting, the United Church leaders asked if women could be ministers. This time, the answer was “yes.”

In 1936, when Lydia was 42 years old, she became the first woman minister in the United Church of Canada. Today, there are ministers of all genders in the United Church!

Lydia believed that God wanted her to help others. Edmund Olivier and the churches in Saskatchewan saw her gifts and supported her. Because of Lydia’s hard work and the support of her friends, The United Church of Canada decided that people of all genders could be ministers.



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