The session of Parkwood Church, Ottawa wishes to record and express thanksgiving to God for the service of Janet Sheridan on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of her ordination as a ruling elder of the Church.

We mark this her Jubilee with much joy and gratitude. In 1966, The Presbyterian Church in Canada adopted enabling legislation which permitted the ordination of women to the ministries of both teaching and ruling eldership. In the fall of 1970, the session of Parkwood Church called upon the professing members to submit by October 25th the names of those individuals in whom gifts for service as ruling elders were discerned. The session thereafter proceeded to approach several individuals who had the confidence of the congregation, among whom was Jan Sheridan. She accepted this call from God and from Christ's church, and on November 29, 1970 was the first woman ordained as an elder for Parkwood Church. She has served faithfully through all of the ensuing fifty years.

Our present clerk of session, Dennis Featherstone, moved to Ottawa in 1972, and began to look for a church, with friendly people, which he and his family had found not so easy to find in Toronto. Often driving past the building site for Parkwood, where the church building was under construction, they decided to attend on the first day the church building opened for worship. A small and crowded narthex was the entry point for those attending, but Jan Sheridan made a point of locating and welcoming a young father and daughter, and fifty years later that father testifies that Jan was the one who "cinched the deal" that the Featherstones should worship at Parkwood.

Jan's ministry within the congregation and beyond — literally around the world — has reflected her commitment to Christ and to those for whom He has come to bring life, and also embodied an awareness of and understanding for people on the move. As a physical fitness educator, she has remained fit and active, and encouraged others to do the same. Having married Steve, her deep appreciation for his Hungarian roots and culture enhanced her interest and delight in learning and valuing other cultures, and also led her to show great empathy for those who have come to Canada as part of the diaspora of other countries and peoples.

She has been an integral part of the Coffee Klatch, which began as an initiative for young mothers to meet for Bible study, and has continued through the years, now as a seniors' Bible study, meeting within the past year in a retirement residence to accommodate limitations for travel.

Jan has taken a great interest in the work of CanHave, supporting orphans in Uganda who have lost their parents to AIDS. She visited Uganda as a part of the delegation under the leadership of Floyd McPhee, and has taken the initiative to reproduce note cards designed by one of the student artists, and has tirelessly supported the ministry of CanHave through the sale of cards and dolls.

At a season in life when many would retire, Jan took on a ministry of outreach to young students who were gathering in Parkwood Church for tutoring in the Kumon after-school

math and language study program, offering hospitality to their parents and siblings, and providing a snack and a craft for students before or after their lesson. In this way, some families were led to enquire and learn about Christian faith.

Jan also supported the English as a second language (ESL) outreach initiative which provided newcomers to Canada and to the Parkwood Hills neighbourhood with opportunities to practice English conversation and to gain skills and support to navigate life in a new country. For several years, Jan opened her home in December to host a pre-Christmas celebration for some of the newcomers, and the Christmas story and various ways of marking its significance were shared.

Jan has served many years as co-ordinator for the session's Benevolent Fund, and beyond basic administrative and financial duties has personally provided to those in need much practical help, through the delivery of food and vouchers and the provision of transportation to and from worship and other meetings at the church, and to and from medical appointments.

Her knowledge of the city of Ottawa as a former tour guide has been generously shared and been the means of blessing to many. Our clerk of session also recalls that it was Jan and her late husband who introduced them to the Seven Lakes community in North Carolina, which led to many years of happy spring vacations and worship in a supportive community there.

One has summarized Jan's ministry as being one of "extraordinary service doing ordinary things".

We would quote and apply Paul's word:

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 1: 3-6, NIV)

We rejoice in God's gift to His Church and especially to the session and congregation of Parkwood Church, Ottawa of the life and ministry of Jan Sheridan.

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