

in Contact

with Alberta and Northwest Conference

May 2009

Discovering Cuba 2009



A farmer shows Val Ross the roots of the Yucca plant which is eaten like potatoes.



Val Ross checks out one of the local plant products.



Inside the Iglesia Presbytero or Presbyterian Church in Varadero with the minister, Joel, at the pulpit.

A group of six from Calgary joined participants from Ontario, the Maritimes and the Dominican Republic in Cuba from February 8 – 15, 2009. The Calgarians stayed a second week in Varadero to combine vacation time with more project exposure, visits and tours.

Our first week was spent at the Seminario Evangelico de Teologia in the seaport of Matanzas. Beside its teaching role, its significance for people from abroad lies mainly in its extensive support for church and social programs in many centers across Cuba. Our time was spent both at the Seminary learning about its work and also on field trips to visit some of the supported projects.

For United Church members, and other Canadian and United States denominations, it is important to know that much financial support for the Seminary and its work is via annual grants from our churches, including the UCC's Mission and Service fund. The profits made from hosting and arranging the programs for visitors and small personal material donations brought by visiting groups, round out the overseas support.

At the Seminary we had lectures on its religious and secular programs, including supporting AIDS victims and education work for young people. We saw their extensive garden which provides most of the vegetables for the kitchen, feeding all folks on the premise. We also were

delighted to have evening events where we learned folk dances and were entertained by a world class chamber choir, a quintet with an eclectic repertoire ranging from toccata to tango, and a large Cuban folk group.

During a side trip, we visited a rural Episcopalian church, met its pastor, heard from a local doctor about Down's Syndrome research into genetic tendencies in certain family blood lines, and enjoyed a wonderful barbecued pork meal. This church supports local field workers, encourages community gardening, and is growing due to its spiritual programs. Though still needing financial help from the Seminary, it has founded two new embryonic churches in the area. Another trip took us to Havana to see two other projects and to tour some of Old Havana.

The theological highlight at the Seminary was two days of lectures by John Dominic Crossan based on his book, *God And Empire*. Reflective responses were on the agenda, but one person was unable to attend. Moderator David Guiliano was pressed into service in the role, and was an energetic and incisive participant in small group discussions between lectures, too.

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President's Pen

The past two years have gone quickly, and by the time this article appears, my two years as President of Alberta and Northwest Conference will be ending, making this my last "President's Pen." I have had the privilege of meeting all Presbyteries, of worshipping with many congregations from Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, of attending special anniversary services, of celebrating the lives of many saints of the church at memorial services, of representing the Conference at General Council and some of its committees, and of representing the United Church at ecumenical and public events. Thank you for these opportunities.

This has been a time of re-focussing for the church. With Mission and Service Funds being flat-lined for a couple of decades, we have had to make hard decisions as to what we can let go and still be effective. It has meant changing expectations of what is possible as a national church, but at the same seeing new and creative ways of partnering with others for effective public witness in Canada, and vital ecumenical overseas sharing of ministry. At the Conference level, we also are having to do more with less as funding to Conference from our Mission and Service giving is being reduced each year for the foreseeable future. As well, congregations are being stressed financially with our economic downturn.

In spite of this, I have discovered a strong hope in our congregations. It is a hope based on faith, and faith that God is with us in these changing and challenging times. I have seen creative development of lay involvement in worship leadership and in pastoral care in congregations — especially in more isolated small congregations. At the lay level, people are often more willing to develop ecumenical shared ministries.

Some exciting things are happening around the Conference. The Emerging Spirit initiative has been embraced with its research on the 30- to 45-year olds who are not coming to church. Its "Living the Hope" program during this current church year has been extremely helpful to congregations that have attended workshops. The Youth Leadership training program of our Youth and Adult Ministries program has Intern Leaders in Training at various congregations. The Edmonton



Tom Sawyer

and Yellowhead Presbyteries "New Possibilities" project presents promising challenges. The re-development of the Red Deer Lake Congregation involving former congregations of both Foothills and Calgary Presbyteries is exciting, as is the leap of faith shown in the re-location and re-development of the Symons Valley Congregation. The Crowsnest Pass ecumenical project is also very promising.

I must pause to give thanks to our excellent, dedicated Conference staff who work so hard on our behalf. They are the ones who help all of us volunteers by doing the detailed background work we need to our jobs.

The Rev. Peter Chynoweth will become President around the time you read this.

Peter, minister at Yellowknife, NWT, will bring a wide background of experience, as well as a view from the northern part of our Conference. He will not be able to personally travel the Conference as easily as I have, but with his computer expertise, he may well pioneer ways to electronically meet, visit and bring greetings. I look forward to his presidency and his leadership into the near future of our church.

God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

— Rev. Tom Sawyer, President of ANW Conference



WOHELO SUMMER PROGRAM

Mission statement of CGIT Camp Wohelo is "to discover and celebrate our natural best".

Have fun at Camp Wohelo at Pigeon Lake, AB. Celebrating 50 years of all Girls camping.

SUMMER DATES FOR 2009

LEADERS IN TRAINING: July 2 – 4, girls 14 and up, free!

MOM & KIDS #1: July 5 – 10, \$210 female caregiver + \$135 for each co-ed kid 3 – 11

JUNIOR CAMP: July 12 – 17, \$250, 8 – 12 year old girls

MOM & KIDS #2: July 19 – 24, 210 female caregiver + \$135 for each co-ed kid 3 – 11

TEEN CAMP: July 26 – 32, \$250, 12 – 15 year old girls

MOM & KIDS #3: August 4 – 8, \$168 female caregiver + \$108 each co-ed kid all ages

WOMAN'S WEEKEND: May 1 – 3, \$140

JOB OPPORTUNITIES: Working at Camp WOHELO is a fun and rewarding experience!

VOLUNTEER: Whatever your interest there is a place for you on our Team!

RENT THE CAMP: Available year round — WOHELO is a great place for a gathering!

Info at www.campwohelo.com or call 780.430.4062

2008 Camping Award

The United Church of Canada's 2008 Camping Award, recognizing distinguished service for contributions to United Church Camping, was awarded recently to 13 staff and volunteers from United Church Camps. Among that group were two Albertans: Kathy Yamashita, from Canyon Church Camp, and Shane Bell from Camp Maskepetoon.

Kathy Yamashita has served as volunteer at Canyon Church Camp in many capacities, as well as serving on the Board for many years. A family physician herself, she has brought energy, enthusiasm and caring to her many roles at the camp. Her rapport with counselors, resource staff and campers is strong and her ability to make everyone feel comfortable and an important part of the camp team has been invaluable.

Shane Bell has been active at Camp Maskepetoon for over 30 years, in every conceivable position including camper, counselor, dishwasher, summer staff, director, board member, program committee member, trade show volunteer and now as camp registrar. A story-teller and guitar-player as well, Shane has entertained and supported campers with his enthusiasm, dedication, participation and caring. His commitment to camping has been outstanding and many have benefited from his role modeling.

We congratulate both these dedicated people for their contributions to United Church Camping in Alberta.



90 Years of CGIT Camping In Alberta — 50 at Camp Wohelo!

"Share the Flame"



Evoking the Memory of the Feeling We Get When We Are Gathered Together Around the Campfire...

On the northwest side of Pigeon Lake situated on twenty acres of picturesque lakefront property, nestled among the trees is the natural beauty and tranquility of Camp Wohelo, where gentle waves glisten and you can hear the whispers of nature...

Come and celebrate with us!

Calling all alumni, come on out to camp!

In honor of our 50th Anniversary, "Share the Flame", we are hosting a come-and-go Open House weekend of memories, fun and friendship September 4 – 7, 2009. Accommodations and meals provided by Camp Wohelo – book a bunk, pitch a tent, or park a trailer. Please RSVP to get a registration form.

We will be holding a Saturday night Banquet and weekend-long Silent Auction, so come join the bidding on some great items, donations welcome. Our Anniversary Fundraising Project is a new environmentally friendly and accessible Wash House. Bring your change and help us fill up our "big pocket" (we really do have one!)

We are collecting your stories, pictures, and/or artifacts from camp to use in our Memory Book, in displays, and on the website. Contact us for more information. Anyone with ideas or wanting to help organize the event, please let us know.

50 NEW MEMBERS FOR OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY! - Become a member and help us reach our goal!

We are accepting resumes for summer staff and welcome much-needed volunteers in all areas.

Share the Flame represents 50 years of memories and recollections of campfire get-togethers, water fun, much laughter and the peaceful ambience that is Camp Wohelo's.

We invite Alumni, staff members, campers and visitors - anyone who has ever enjoyed the natural essence of Camp Wohelo, to attend the "Share the Flame" celebration for a casual weekend of fun and reminiscence. Come celebrate friends, old and new...walk the trails...breathe fresh country air...share memories as you take in the scenic brilliance and beauty of Camp Wohelo.

For information contact us at 780-430-4062 or by email at campwohelo@yahoo.ca. Visit our website at www.campwohelo.com.

Dorothy Hodgson: Volunteer Archivist Preserving Church History

It may be interesting to read stories of church history and the people who founded and built the churches, but how do we know those stories?

How are they preserved? In Alberta, church records from congregations should become a part of the ANWC Archives which are maintained by our conference archivist Jane Bowe McCarthy at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Some stories of church history are told each year in the journal published by the ANWC Historical Society. Future generations owe a debt to those who preserve our history.

One woman who worked to preserve our church history was Dorothy Hodgson. Dorothy was a musician and music teacher by profession, but the history of the United Church in Alberta also became a passion. She understood the importance of good record-keeping and good archival practice. Her interest in history was spurred in the mid-1970s when she and several other volunteers were given some archival training. Until then, conference archives had been stored at St. Stephen's College in Edmonton. At that time, they were moved to the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The volunteers assisted the conference archivist Ruth Schrag with the move.

Dorothy carried that archival interest forward. For many years, she chaired the History and Archives Committee of Edmonton Presbytery. There she helped congregational archivists to recognize the value of church records and the importance of proper management. Until her death in January of 2009, she also served on the conference Heritage Resources Committee and was a member of the ANWC Historical Society.

One of Dorothy's legacies remains at the Provincial Museum of Alberta where, as a volunteer, she played an integral role in the United Church Artifact Project, a joint venture in the early 1990s of the museum, the United Church and the ANWC Historical Society. Volunteers worked with museum staff to collect artifacts and document some of the history of the United Church and its Methodist, Congregationalist and Presbyterian predecessors in Alberta. The collection was meant to "establish a base of artifacts, photographs, documents and audio sources for

understanding the living tradition of Protestantism in western Canada and its contribution to civil society." The final report includes a list of the artifacts collected from churches and individuals around the province, as well as a collection of photographs, some taken to record items located in other collections and some to record other aspects of church life around the province. Dorothy arranged for the acquisition of many of the items. The collection also includes a number of taped interviews with United Church people. Dorothy was one of those interviewees. On the tape, she discusses her United Church involvement from childhood and indeed, she had literally grown up with the church – she was born just weeks before church union.

Those who, like Dorothy, believe in the power of story and the importance of knowing our own stories, are encouraged to support the telling of those stories by

becoming members of the ANWC Historical Society. Individual memberships are \$25 and corporate (including congregational) memberships are \$50.

Send your name, address and membership fee to: ANWC Historical Society, c/o Alex Cooper, 207 Rhatigan Road, Edmonton, T6R 1A2.

The conference archives are located at 8555 Roper Road in Edmonton, AB T6E 5W1. To contact archivist Jane Bowe McCarthy for more information on the archives, *phone 780-427-8687, fax 780-427-4646 or e-mail: jane.bowe-mccarthy@gov.ab.ca*

— Submitted by Gayle Simonson



Dorothy Hodgson

Event Update

May 22 – 24, 2009 — *reclaimer. redeemer. responder.*
2009 Conference Meeting at Millennium Place,
Sherwood Park, Alberta.

Please Note: the Pre-Conference Event originally scheduled for May 21 – 22 has been cancelled.

Further information will be posted on the website at www.anwconf.com as it becomes available.

Revelations – Your Bright Ideas Bookstore



Meet some of the faces at Revelations: Barbara McKinley (Store Manager) and Joyce Madsen (Board Co-Chair).

Revelations Book and Gift Cooperative specializes in books for main line questing Christians, including the spiritually inspirational or just good reading. The children's section is a joy to behold. If you are looking for a special gift, Revelations is the right place. Much of the stock consists of Fair Trade items, ensuring workers in other countries receive good wages for their work.

When the United Church closed its bookstore, it left a vacuum that Alberta and Northwest Conference stepped in to fill. The result was Revelations. It is a ministry we can be proud of.

Revelations manages the Edmonton Presbytery Resource Centre. People can pick up candles, hymn books, certificates, church manuals or bulletins — and not have to wait for mail delivery.

The Cooperative is owned by its members. What's it like to run a bookstore with 826 owners that live in every corner of Alberta and as far away as New Glasgow in the east and Victoria in the west? It's a lot of fun, because they are such great people to talk to in the store or connect with when we are on the road with a display.

When the current Board took over in May 2007, Revelations was at a crossroads. Debt was high,

inventory was down, and sales were taking a hit. Betty Welsby — we call her Saint Betty — took over operations at the store that summer while we advertised for help. We now have three terrific staff — our store manager, Barbara McKinley, Monica Rosborough and Jan Thompson.

We moved from a policy-making Board to one that was hands-on. Walk into the store and you are likely to find Pat Stewart checking on receivables, Joyce Madsen analyzing sales, or Jeanna Baty stocking shelves. Board meetings are great because decisions are based on first-hand knowledge. As a result, this year we expect to operate in the black for first time since the store opened — not much in the black, but at least over the line.

Support for Revelations has been phenomenal. In the beginning when operating capital was needed, people from all over Alberta invested over \$120,000. That was inspiring. This last year, share holders donated over \$40,000 of that back to the store, reducing the debt and improving our standing with the bank.

What does Revelations need? The answer is simple – for you to use the store. We have a discount table for members. Our staff will willingly help you over the phone too. Your continued support can make it even better than it is.

— Submitted by Clair Woodbury

continued from cover

Discovering Cuba

At Varadero, we stayed at the Presbyterian guest house and worshipped at the church. We visited a church-based social services agency, a market garden and an individual farm. Both of the latter were using manure and human wastes to generate methane for cooking and

processing produce. Of course, beach time and tourist activities were mandatory.

Heartfelt thanks are due to Vallerie Ross and Chris Levan for organizing and guiding the tour and its processes.

— Submitted by Don Dale

Cause for Hope

Grace United Church, Edmonton, held their fifth Spirituality Symposium in mid-March. The Very Rev. Dr. Bill Phipps, former Moderator of the United Church of Canada, peace and justice activist, and author of the provocative book *Cause for Hope: Humanity at the Crossroads*, was the guest presenter. Bill's presentation and group discussion gave all of those attending rich food for thought, many challenges and cause for hope.

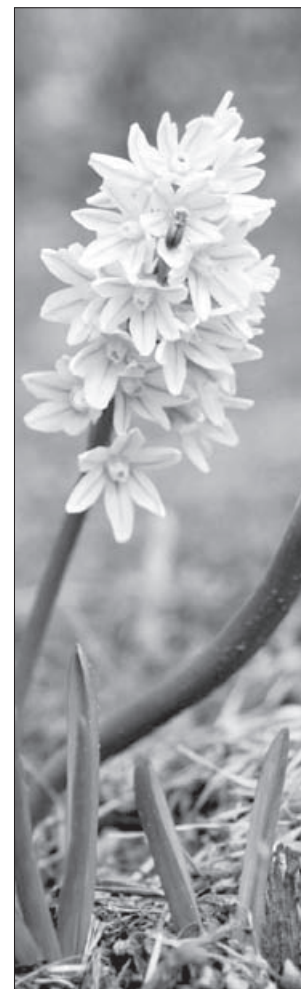
Our earthly home is sick and wounded. The powers of empire have pushed our earth and its people to its limit. Poverty is endemic, 30,000 children die daily from preventable diseases, wars scar the planet, our economic system is bankrupt, many forms of wildlife are becoming extinct, and our climate is changing. We cannot have economic and social justice if we do not have ecological justice. We must "live with respect in creation."

We are shaped by the stories which govern how we live. The basic thrust of the Old Story is that humans are the masters of creation founded on the patriarchal myth of male superiority and control characterized by violence, domination, arrogance and competition. This results in a desire for power, war and its subsequent cost, consumerism, an increasing gap between the rich and poor, greed, the poisoning of the earth, a sense of entitlement and the culture of fear. The Old Story is no longer

viable. Clearly, it is time for a New Story to be written, rooted in spiritual values found in most faith traditions. This story is relationship-centered, non-violent, child-honouring, mindful and sustainable. It is characterized by a sense of wonder, gratitude, cooperation, empowerment, interconnection, interdependence, respect, humility, and hope.

We also live in a time of great opportunity for all of the world's faith traditions. All religions view the world as sacred. It is our challenge to seek economic justice, to be guardians of our earth, to respect and care for humanity, and to work towards peace for all. This period of history is full of grace, opportunity and possibility. The New Story is being written and lived by individuals and communities throughout our earth. There is a creative energy at work in the world giving purpose and direction to life. "In Jesus we glimpse as much about the will and nature of God as can be embodied in a human being.... The Holy Spirit shows us the authority, comfort and presence of God in our world. The crossroads we face require the spiritual traditions of the world to weave together their distinctive personalities into a tapestry of hope and vision that will help us all to change direction."

— Submitted by Lynn Tupper



High River United Church — Celebrating our New Facility



High River United Church lovingly restored a series of stained glass windows as features in their newly completed church.

We moved into our new building with a sense of awe in early June, 2008 and by October had worked out how to run our new sound and light systems for the grand opening celebration.

We are all still amazed at the way the love and attention given to the building process is reflected in the space itself. Our memory wall, with bricks from the original church and lit by on original fixture highlights the strengths of the story from which we have risen. Folks who made significant gifts and small gifts now come together to worship, care for one another and offer service. God continues to work in mysterious ways as we find our sacred space to be far more beautiful than we ever dreamed or imagined or planned.

Attendance at worship has increased by 30%, new folks join us at every service, the building is used daily for groups in the community, wheelchair accessibility is a blessing. We've hosted a choir from Texas, Linnea Good, Sing for Peace, Watoto Childrens' Chorus, Silent Retreats, Renewal Day for Healers, Quilting, Calligraphy and Watercolour workshops.

We are surrounded by angels, saints and guides and upheld by God's loving presence. You are welcome to join us, as we each seek grace, comfort and hope within our space, that we may go forth in service in Jesus' name.

— Submitted by Jo Parsons

Innisfail UCW Busy Caring for Others



The members of the Innisfail UCW have been very busy helping others. In 2008 they gave out 40 quilts and baby blankets to Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter, 39 quilts to Calgary Urban Projects Society (CUPS), 36 quilts to Bissell Centre, Edmonton, and 2 quilts and other bedding to a burned-out family. During the same time period, 8" squares were knit/crocheted by many different

people and put together make afghans. These were then passed on to others as well: 39 afghans to Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter, 19 Afghans to Calgary Urban Projects Society, 17 afghans to Bissell Centre, Edmonton, and 7 lap-sized afghans to Innisfail Hospital.

— Submitted by Sheila Thorsen, Innisfail UCW

Have you considered a vocation in youth ministry?

These are words that make all of us run for the hills!!! Me? A Leader? WITH TEENAGERS???? It is a daunting task, to look at the faces of teenagers looking at you with a range of excitement, boredom, challenge, and anticipation. Too often, youth leaders feel alone. Isolated. Lost in a sea of hormones!

In 1998 my colleagues at the time, and your conference predecessors created a training program designed with these people in mind, now called Y2MT. Since that time, we have expanded the program to include young adult ministry, and (thanks to the awesomeness that is St. Stephen's) a Faith Formation class that focuses on youth and young adult faith development. It is an intense diploma program, with a year of academic study and a year

of practical study. It is designed for part-time, distance study over 2 – 5 years. It is also designed with YOU in mind...

All courses and workshops can be accessed by anyone. Even youth who are peer leaders! Anyone who is leading youth or young adults, and who is seeking a network of like-minded people, who feels alone, who thinks "there must be more I can do," a clergy person who wonders "why didn't they teach me THIS in seminary,"YOU.

Y2MT courses include: Principles in Youth and Young Adult Ministry (a great foundational course for volunteers and diploma students alike), Pastoral Care, Ethics, Music & Worship, Spiritual Practices, and Faith Formation. Participants have not only appreciated the course work, but

the network and friendships made through their learning. Participants have commented "this course was ministry transforming...thank you!" And I am grateful too!

I feel blessed to facilitate these connections, and soooooo proud to be part of ANW Conference! We believe strongly in providing excellent training for all of our leaders, especially those who work with youth and young adults! What a blessing!

— Submitted by
Shauna Gibbons, Program Coordinator:
Leadership Education Resources
(and coordinator of Y2MT)

Around our conference

Upcoming Events

May 7 – 9, 2009: International EcoConference, Building Bridges, Crossing Boundaries:

Interdisciplinary Dialogues on Person, Planet and Professional Helping, to be held at the University of Calgary, Calgary, AB. For further information, contact John Coates, at jcoates@stu.ca, or Misha Lysack at mlysack@ucalgary.ca

May 22 – 24, 2009: reclamer. redeemer. responder. 2009 Conference Meeting at Millennium Place, Sherwood Park, Alberta. For further details please go to www.anwconf.com under Upcoming Events.

May 26 – 28, 2009: Leading the Church Through Change, with the Rev. Mary (Sellon) Huycke and the Rev. Daniel P. Smith. Location: Providence Renewal Centre, Edmonton, AB. For further information, phone: 519-742-2280 or leave a message at 1-866-782-0287 (toll free), email: nancessman@symptico.ca

May 29, 2009: Deadline for new student applications for the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Training Diploma Program, a program of academic and practical training for ministry with youth and young adults. Direct inquiries to y2mt@anwconf.com

July 10 – 19, 2009: The Canadian Badlands Passion Play 2009 will be held in Drumheller, AB. Information on dates, times and tickets can be obtained by calling 1-888-823-2001, or visiting www.canadianpassionplay.com

August 16, 2009: Botha United Church will be celebrating its 100th anniversary on August 16, 2009, with a 10:30 am worship service followed by lunch. All members, former members, and interested persons are invited to attend. For more information, contact the church at Box 64, Botha, AB T0C 0N0, or phone Isabel Kerl, at 403-742-3932.

Sept 25 – Sept 27 or Sept 28 – Sept 30, 2009: Women Together — The Common Walk of Generations. The Western Women's Conference 2009 will be held at Naramata Centre with keynote speakers Flora McDonald and Kathy Galloway. For further information, contact 1-877-996-5751, or email info@naramatacentre.net

Knox Metropolitan United Church

Edmonton's Knox Metropolitan United Church women have a long tradition of participation in all facets of the life of our congregation. For many years the UCW continued in the pattern of its predecessors of study, worship, service, and fundraising.

But times and circumstances change, and challenge. Our numbers decreased and it became more difficult to mount a slate of officers, or continue with the same responsibilities. With fewer resources, we choose our projects carefully. We combined several units into one, and have welcomed new members. Gradually, we have developed a way to share the load.

Each of our 10 meetings is the responsibility of 3 members, who arrange a program, conduct the meeting, and provide a light lunch. Programs, following a brief opening worship, have been informative and interesting: "Tools for Schools in Africa", Growing up in Amber Valley, an afternoon with Dr. Helen Huston, a visit & speaker from a Guide Dog Association, and occasionally simply tea and conversation. Twice yearly we have a lunch at "Lifestyle Options" with our friends who reside there, followed by a brief meeting and special program.

In co-operation with our Ministers and many other volunteers we have offered a "Service for Special People" twice annually for 30 years. Folks who are rarely able to attend church are invited to an afternoon Communion Service, arriving by DATS bus, volunteer drivers, etc. We provide a hot meal and entertainment.

We provide bibles to our church School children as they complete their 3rd Grade. We prepare receptions following memorial services held in the church, and continue to make and sell "Christmas Puddings" because of many requests. Most of these activities are made possible by the help of other volunteers, both men and women.

We invest our earnings in the Mission & Service Fund, our local congregation, our church kitchen, Bissell Center, church camps, Women's Shelters, our soon-to-arrive Somali refugee family, and other needs. This is our way of serving and outreach. In so doing, we strive to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and therefore to serve God and his Church to the best of our ability

— Submitted by Joan Davis, Phyllis Fowler, and Norma Robertson

in Contact

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*The purpose of In Contact is to share
news of the Church's life, work,
programs, policies and people with
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