

inCONTACT

with Alberta and Northwest Conference

November 2011

Nicaragua Beckons...

I awake to the squawking sound of a parrot, several parrots in fact. It's early morning and the sun is just peeking over the horizon. Already it is warm and muggy. This is my first full day in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, the second poorest country in Central America. I stumble out of bed, take a cold shower and make my way to a scrumptious breakfast provided by Angelique Garcia, my host. She is a beautiful woman who speaks no English but who fills the room with warmth and love. This will be my home for the next 10 days.

I, along with thirteen other intrepid folks from Wild Rose United Church, am here to meet and work with the people who live in one of the poorest slums of Managua, the Barrio Grenada Anexo. We've joined up with an organization called Companeros, a volunteer-based, international development service organization that melds together groups from all over the world with residents in the barrio to carry out projects that make a difference to the 856 men, women and children who call the barrio their home. Today I will be digging foundational post holes as we begin construction of a 99 square foot house for a woman and her three children. Other projects for our group include the refurbishment of the school playground, painting a colourful mural on one of the drab walls that surround the barrio and spending time with children and adults in ESL classes. We always begin our work day in the barrio with a prayer, either in Spanish or English.

The tools we use for the work are rudimentary at best. Saws, hammers, wheelbarrows and shovels. The work is physical and hard, especially for North Americans who are used to electric saws and diesel equipment. But we work and sweat together, stopping

often to drink water and admire our blisters. At lunch, through translators, we share our lives and our dreams. And, on one memorable day, we were taught Latin American dances that left us breathless and exhausted.

On our final day in the barrio, as we exchanged small gifts and shed many tears, there was a real sense of accomplishment. Our barrio families had told us what they needed, we raised \$5,000 to meet some of those needs and then we worked together, Nicaraguans and Canadians, to make it all happen.

As Gonzalo Duarte, President of the Companeros organization, said to us as he drove us to the airport, "Come back again soon. You need to spend more time with the people who live in Barrio Grenada Anexo to find out what you most value in life."

— Linda Hunter,
Wild Rose United Church, Calgary



Mural painters

In this issue

President's Ponderings 2
Food for Thought 2
Love Thy Neighbour 3
St. Stephen's College Accessibility . . 3

Plant Sale Draws A Crowd. 4
Living into Right Relations. 4
Fellowship Group Anniversary. . . . 5
Northern Lights 6

Rendez-vous 2011 6
Charles William Gordon 7
Scholarship Honours Volunteer 8

President's Ponderings

"God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors." (Genesis 45:7)

Joseph has just been reunited with his brothers after many years apart. Those were years in which he played a crucial role in the government of Egypt. Those years also followed on a time when Joseph was betrayed by his family and left to make a life in a foreign culture and environment. It would have been fair to anticipate that Joseph would be angry, or vengeful, or, at minimum, totally disinterested but instead he is so overjoyed to be reunited with his brothers that he weeps uncontrollably and asks that they not be angry with themselves but understand that he was sent by God to preserve life.

I hear a lot of emotion in the voices around me in my travels these days. There are voices of betrayal, and anger. There are voices of despair and of desperation. There are voices of hope and yearning. The emotions all make sense to me. We have moved into (or maybe been sold into) a strange land. People communicate in ways which are largely foreign to many of us. There is a whole new language to be learned for people who are texting and twittering. The face of the culture around



Sally Boyle

us is changing rapidly. There are voices in the wilderness crying "the church must change or die".

At the same time there is hope. There are those who are excited about the possibilities of a new understanding of God which will lead us to a renewed sense of our common responsibility for the life of each other and of the created order. Our incarnational theology has deeper and more profound meaning for us. We look with awe and wonder at the great things which can be accomplished through the use of social media. We call upon the god-like qualities in one another to support work in major areas of social responsibility. In the words of Carter Heyward we "god one another into being" and we have begun to do that using technology to our benefit.

Awakening one day and discovering that one is in a foreign land is not something which is new in the life of human beings. It may simply be seen as another opportunity to decide between life and death. Let's talk together in this time about how we also "preserve a remnant and keep alive many survivors." Choose life.

— Sally Boyle
President of Alberta/Northwest Conference

Food for Thought: A Unique Fundraising Opportunity

Since the end of May, 2009, Grace United Church in Edmonton has participated in a win-win fundraiser.

Safeway, Save-on-Foods, Sobeys and Superstore donate 4% – 8% on each \$100 spent on the purchase of their respective Grocery Cards. Congregational members and their friends purchase these cards on a regular basis. Cards are redeemable for the amount purchased. The grocery stores then donate \$4 to \$8 for each \$100 card purchased back to the church. Sobeys and Safeway donate 8%, Save-on-Foods 6% and Superstore 4%. From 20 – 30% of the congregation participate in this endeavour.

To date from May 2009 to Sept. 4, 2011 a total of \$25,393 has

been raised for the church. Cards to the value of \$349, 200 have been purchased. Grace has earned \$11,680 from Safeway, \$9,576 from Sobeys, \$2,085 from Save-on-Foods, and \$2,052 from Superstore.

Cards must be purchased from each store and then sold to participants. Grace has been fortunate to access money from their Trust Fund for the initial purchase of Grocery Cards. This money is repaid in full to the Trust Fund after the sales of the cards.

The organizational skills and commitment of Gord Pollon, Gerry Anderson and Lorelei Muma have been invaluable in making this fundraiser possible. They have volunteered their time and talents to support their church.

We all buy food every week, month and year. This fundraiser enables us to give to our church and feed our bodies at the same time. Everyone Wins.

— Lynn Tupper
with the input of Gord Pollon



Lorelei Muma and Gordon Pollon of Grace United, Edmonton selling Grocery Cards as a fundraiser.

Love Thy Neighbour

Forest Lawn United Church in South-east Calgary rents its building to three other church groups: The Church of God; The Sudanese Seventh Day Adventist Church; and The Church of the Evangelical Flame, (consisting of folk from Congo and Angola). The richness of this diversity was revealed to us this spring when all the groups came together in a benefit concert.

Recently, the pastor of the Church of the Evangelical Flame returned to Congo to assist in the care of his mother who required surgery in Angola. She then required a second surgery, which necessitated Pastor Jean remaining longer than anticipated. The extra stay meant that his return ticket expired. It was seven months before he could return to Canada. In the meantime, his church and young family in Calgary were left without their breadwinner and the primary contributor to the church rental.

The United Church accommodated the people of the Flame by inviting them to join with us for services. We were

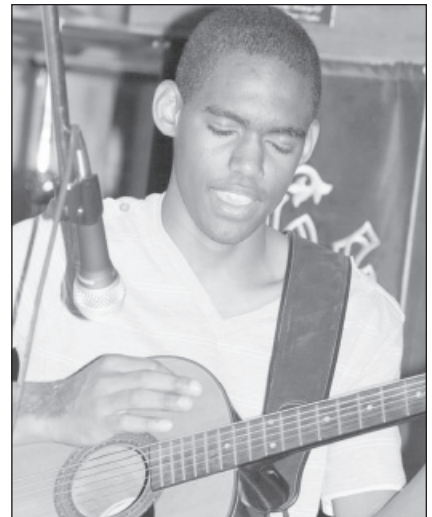
richly rewarded with the music of Africa, usually sung by one to three talented young ladies who sang a cappella and danced their evangelical hymns. Forest Lawn has many older folk than those of the Flame. They enthusiastically hummed along and tapped out the rhythms of upbeat African songs.

Keeping in mind Jesus' admonitions to love neighbours and believing that all peoples are our neighbours a plan was set in motion for a benefit concert to assist The Evangelical Flame. On May 14th each church that worshipped in our building presented music in a vibrant concert. It was a memorable evening of shared song and an inexpensive exotic musical journey to other parts of the world. The Evangelical Flame sang in French, the Sudanese sang in Nuer (a dialect of Southern Sudan), the Church of God and the United Church employed English and we all sang a final song in Swahili. Two other groups generously volunteered their talents, The Painted Fish, a musical theatre

group and Justin and Martin from Hillhurst United Church.

The benefits of this concert were many. Almost \$700 was raised to help the Evangelical Flame. New friendships and understandings were forged and many expressed the desire to have such a concert again next year.

— Gordon Hunter
Forest Lawn United, Calgary
(Past Chair of Editorial Board)



Church of God guitarist

Increased Accessibility at St. Stephen's College



1. Cutting the Ribbon to the new ramp: Principal and Dean Dr. Earle Sharam, Past Chancellor Rev. Dr. Gordon Oaks, and Board Chair Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour.
2. Past Chancellors: La Von and Ron Holgate.
3. Donna Martin finally has access to St. Stephen's!

See more pictures in full colour at our new blog:

<http://incontactunitedchurch.blogspot.com>.

Send quality photos of United Church events/work/people with SHORT captions to incontactphoto@gmail.com anytime! We will consider them for our new blog at <http://incontactunitedchurch.blogspot.com>. Thank you.

Plant Sale Draws A Crowd of Avid Gardeners

Every year on the day before Mother's Day, the Coronado United Church holds their Mother's Day Tea and Plant Sale. The first of these sales was held almost fifty years ago and the event has become more popular every year. Featured are perennials, trees and shrubs which have all been dug up from our member's gardens and it's not uncommon to have over 600 items for sale. It is a very popular event and a line of eager customers starts to arrive with their wagons, wheel barrows and boxes long before the gates open. Inside the church hall, there are houseplants, tomato plants and home baking for sale as well as a lunch featuring strawberry shortcake.

The Coronado Church also hosts a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, spring and fall rummage sales, a yard sale, a beef on a bun

and live auction and a Christmas Bazaar. These events not only generate income for our church, but also provide a lot of fun for all of those who volunteer and for those who attend.

Coronado United Church is part of the Sturgeon Valley Pastoral Charge which is made up of Gibbons United Church and Coronado United Church. Although we are two congregations, we worship as one with services being held each Sunday at alternate locations. We enjoy a wonderful sense of co-operation between the two congregations. Over the years, we have been a learning site for many student ministers. We are currently blessed to have Rev. Wendy Molnar as our Minister.

— Sheila Bruce

Coronado United Church Board



Plant Enthusiasts at Coronado United Church Mother's Day Tea and Plant Sale.

Living into Right Relations (LIRR) around the Conference



In March, the LIRR home group held a two-day consultation at Kamp Kuriakos on Sylvan Lake gathering Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals together to understand "where we are now" and "what comes next?" Discussions included: integrating youth; working with schools, communities, and Presbyteries; developing partnerships and networks; connecting to existing groups; utilizing the KAIROS Blanket Exercise in different settings; connecting with prisons; and discussing our grandparents and the early settlers by imagining their interaction with Aboriginal peoples. A World Café generated discussion around several difficult issues prompted by newspaper articles. Marie Barr and Lee Spice lead the way artistically creating a banner for the KAIROS "banner train" in support of Indigenous rights. The train stopped at several Alberta locations mid June.

Circle Alberta gatherings are ongoing, bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants from all sectors of the province to explore a better future together. Cecile Fausak joined a small group April 15th to determine the next steps for the Circle Alberta effort around short, intermediate and long-term goals. Short term, a pilot project was initiated

to host potluck meals and circles for up to 10 people in 4 different communities by the end of August. The intent is simply to introduce folks to one another to relationship build and expand the circle and network.

During their Lenten series, Southminster-Steinhauer UC heard from Chris Peet and Maggie Hodgson, TRC Special Advisor. About 60 people were brought up to date on LIRR activities in the Edmonton area, and the TRC mandate and progress.

In May, an Edmonton group calling itself "Kanata: Canada," including United Church ministers James Ravenscroft (Edmonton) and Denise Davis-Taylor (U of A chaplain), hosted an evening called "Peace Movement: A Process of Listening to Self, Others, the Land" which followed two events the past two years. Lewis Cardinal welcomed everyone and Emil Durocher began with a smudge and opening prayer. Rev. Travis Enright, Anglican Aboriginal Ministries coordinator for the Edmonton Diocese, facilitated the ritual. There were drums and prayers offered by people from all lands and directions who make Edmonton home.

— Patricia Robertson

Chair of the LIRR Ad Hoc Committee

50th Anniversary Fellowship Group

The former “Parents’ Group” of Central United Church in Calgary has evolved into the “Adult Fellowship” group with now over 50 years of supporting and caring for each other. Over the years, this group has been supportive of many other activities in the Church, as well. Some of the Charter members were even members of an earlier Youth Group! Thirty-one members celebrated, in June of this year, a dinner, entertainment and reminiscing together. A time of thanksgiving and looking ahead to hopefully more years to come.

— Submitted by Pat Blair & June Zabel



Photo credit: Russell Moore

Mission to Mexico

This past March, 26 members and friends of Southwood United in Calgary headed off to Tijuana Mexico to build a home for 22 abandoned children. They were partnering with the Canadian organization “Project Help Mexico” and a group of churches in Tijuana that builds homes for needy families. Over the three and a half day build, the team constructed a three bedroom, loft style home of approximately 640 square feet.

The new home was an answer to prayer for a group of women in a poor area of Tijuana who have been caring for and feeding local children for over six years now. These women have a heart for the children in their area who are often left abandoned by parents unable to find work, or who might be in prison or have drug addictions.

Southwoods’ group had been planning the mission trip for over six months. During that time they raised \$25,000 which paid for all the building materials for the home, as well as furnishings such as beds, couches, a fridge, stove and washing machines.

The team from Southwood also donated funds to help three local churches with their ministry needs. They had generous support at home from the active UCW group that pitched in to offer financial support for the build. Beyond helping to construct and furnish the new home, members of Southwood donated extra money to pay for school fees and uniforms for 16 of these children.

Each member of the team was responsible for paying for personal flights, accommodation and meals while on the Mission trip. This is the second home that has been built by a group from Southwood over the past four years. In the years ahead, Southwood United hopes to send a team to help with a new project they will be sponsoring in Mombasa Kenya.

If your church would like to consider a hands-on mission, please feel free to contact Southwood United in Calgary at office@southwoodchurch.ca.

— Pastor Ed Lewis
Southwood United Church, Calgary



Southwood United team (Calgary) cooperated to build a home for 22 abandoned children in Tijuana, Mexico.

Northern Lights

It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you; night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you.

Psalm 139 (The Message)

This marks the return to "In Contact" for my "Northern Light" column. After a couple of years writing as the President of Alberta and Northwest Conference, I offered to continue "Northern Light" with a more specific focus on life and faith from North of Sixty, and I am pleased that my offer was accepted.

In keeping with this focus, I was asked by Editor Liz Goddard, to offer some reflection on traditions of Advent and Christmas from a northern perspective. My first reaction was that there is not much difference. However, no sooner having said that, my mind wandered, as it often does in consideration of the way things are different in the north, to the play of dark and light, which along with discussion about "the cold"

is one of the most notable features of life in northern Canada. Short days in the winter and short nights in the summer were also a source of fascination for many "southern folk" that I met as I traveled about the conference in my time as President. There were many curious questions about what it is like and how I coped with such dramatic change between the dark of winter and the light of summer.

I have often described the advance of night and light respectively in the days leading up to the winter and summer solstices as "galloping". At its peak rate, the nights and days are shorter or longer by more than six minutes per day. Quick arithmetic tells us that in a ten day period we can have a whole extra hour of daylight or night. This has been most noticeable for me when I've been away somewhere in the south during these peak times, only to return and notice how much the days have changed in such a short span of time.

What this means of course, is that most of advent is a time of deeper darkening. Now you might think this would lead to so-called dark nights of the soul, but as I've written before, I've discerned that God often uses darkness as a surprising source of insight, inspiration and newfound wisdom. Having said that I can still say that when the turnaround comes on December 21, there are some pretty happy people as we head into the Christmas season with the promise of longer days ahead.

Yellowknife is below the Arctic Circle, so we will always have some daylight in the winter and some night in the summer. However, in Inuvik, above the Arctic Circle, the sun goes down for a month! You can imagine my delight and surprise last year when I discovered that the sun peeked over the horizon in Inuvik on January 6. It was quite an epiphany for me (Pun intended!)

— Peter Chynoweth
from North of Sixty!

Rendez-vous 2011



During the month of August, I was blessed to attend Rendez-vous, a United Church youth conference, in Toronto. Over a period of four days, 500 youth and young adults enjoyed fellowship with peers. We were privileged with fantastic speakers and musicians that spoke and sang with us about God,

dreams, and what it means to be a Christian youth in the 21st century.

One speaker in particular, Shane Claiborne, spoke with us about his advocacy for the homeless in Philadelphia. He shared a story regarding some unjust laws in Philadelphia that prevented anyone from serving food in public without a permit, as well as prevented anyone from sleeping in public areas. Shane and some friends decided to take a stand, and for a few nights shared some pizza with a few homeless friends, and then stayed overnight in the park with them. As they continued doing this the police were ordered to arrest many of them, and they were taken to jail. At their trial Shane wore a shirt

that said "Jesus was homeless", and the judge asked to speak with him before they began. He asked about the truth behind the saying on his shirt and Shane recited the passage from Matthew 8 that says "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." The judge smiled and dismissed him. At the end of their trial the judge found them not guilty and cleared of all charges.

At the end of his talk, Shane told us one last story of some younger girls that he met that told him they really wanted to help others and serve God, but they liked their manicures and pedicures too much to be as radical as he was. He gave them some suggestions and they parted, but he

cont'd from previous page

soon heard from them again. They were volunteering in a senior's home where they kept all the ladies company, and every week the girls gave them all manicures and pedicures.

I'll end with some questions: How can we modify our church to appeal to the 21st century youth? Could it be as simple as starting Monday evening services for youth and young adults, so they don't

have to wake up early on Sunday morning? And how can we use our individual talents to serve God and our communities?

— Brianne De Man, age 19
Yellowhead Presbytery

Charles William Gordon a.k.a. Ralph Connor

In the early 1900s Ralph Connor was a household name in Canada and had authored 26 novels set in the west that captured the imagination of the time. Ralph Connor however was a penname for Charles William Gordon, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church and later in the United Church of Canada.

Charles Gordon was born on September 13, 1860, in Glengarry County, Ontario to Donald Gordon, a Presbyterian minister, and his wife Mary Robertson Gordon. After high school at St. Mary's in Harrington, Ontario, Charles earned a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Toronto in 1883. He later completed postgraduate work at New College, Edinburgh University, and a year of theological training at Knox College, University of Toronto.

In 1890 Charles Gordon was approached by Rev. Dr. James Robertson, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Home Mission Committee whom he had met several years earlier, with a missionary opportunity in the west. Gordon accepted, and travelled to Calgary, where he was ordained in June of that year. At the time, the Presbytery of Calgary was the largest in the world, but must have seemed far removed from life in Toronto and Edinburgh. In his autobiography *Postscript to Adventure*, Gordon recalls "The ordination service was exceedingly primitive. Rules of order were sometimes forgotten and at other time ignored." Despite this inauspicious start, Gordon enjoyed his time on the frontier, and it would have an enduring impact on his later career.

With the arrival of the railroad the number of settlers in the west exploded, and many were in desperate need of spiritual guidance. As an ordained minister Gordon was expected to supervise missionaries in the area and do some exploratory work. He travelled between Banff and Canmore, as well as the other mining and lumber villages that dotted the mountainous terrain. Among the many

contributions Gordon made to his far flung flock was the construction of a Presbyterian church in the Village of Canmore completed in 1891, now known as Ralph Connor Memorial United Church.

Though by 1894 Charles Gordon had been called to serve at St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, it was his brief stint in the Foothills and Rocky Mountains that coloured many of his novels.

Although criticized by some as misrepresenting the Prairie West through his romanticized stories, it was his blend of adventure with the reform spirit and religious needs of the time that resonated with audiences. His books decried gambling, violence and alcohol — demons which he dealt with as a minister in the West and would continue to battle for the rest of his life — and championed themes of renewal, hope and above all heroism. In fact, Gordon has been quoted as stating that his experiences at Canmore and Banff furnished him with material for his novels, particularly his second and most successful book *The Sky Pilot*.

Though he spent less than four years in the Presbytery of Calgary, Gordon made an important impact on the lives of those struggling to live in the new west. At the same time, the Presbytery of Calgary made an important impact on him. His experiences and the people he met are visible in his many books, and introduced thousands of Canadians to life in western Canada.

— Tim O'Grady
Edmonton

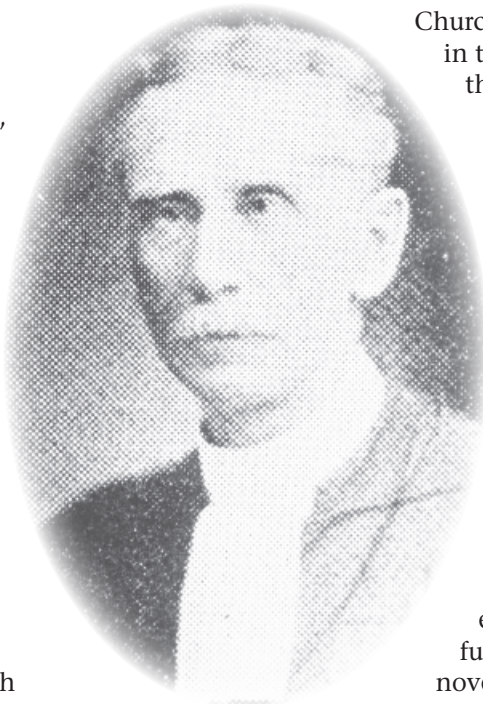


Photo:
PR 1975.0387/5348
Rev. Charles W. Gordon (Ralph Connor), Winnipeg
[ca. 1920s – 1930s?]
The United Church of Canada Alberta and Northwest
Conference Archives
and Provincial Archives of Alberta

Scholarship Honours Volunteer Extraordinaire

While many volunteers come and go, Grace United Church in Lloydminster has one of the most dedicated volunteers in the community. For 55 years Gladys Jack has been dedicated to the Ministry of Music at Grace.

Her involvement has been extensive: From the very popular traveling Joy Singer group of the 60's and 70's through to today's Bell choirs for ladies and youth, Junior choir, choir leader, music festival involvement at many levels, Christmas Cantata and musical evenings as well as promoting and encouraging local musical talent: Gladys has become well known as musical volunteer organizer extraordinaire.

Her involvement doesn't stop with music. For 10 years Gladys co-chaired the Grace United

Exhibition food Booth Committee. She is a Life member of the United Church Women's group and works tirelessly with that group. The local Lions Club selected Gladys as Citizen of the Year in 1976, and she has added 35 years of service to church and community since then.

On May 15th Grace Choir were proud to honour Gladys by providing a Scholarship to "The Kiwanis Lloydminster and District Music Festival" in her name. This will be an annual \$250 Scholarship to be given to the participant with the highest mark for Sacred Contemporary Music. We congratulate Gladys for 55 years as a member of Grace Church choir and 45 years as choir leader.

— Shirley Aston
Grace United Church Choir



Gladys Jack's service in Music Ministry at Grace United, Lloydminster was recognized with a musical scholarship.

Correction

The author of "Soaring Spirits in Coronation Presbytery" (September issue) is Marilyn Penfound, not Penfold. My apologies for the error.

— Liz

Around Our Conference

Upcoming Events

Dec. 9, 2012. Macklin Grace United Church in Macklin, SK is celebrating 100 years of service. Details not finalized at time of publication but likely to follow the congregational Christmas Pot Luck Supper 6 pm (5 pm Alberta time). Contact Darlene Kidd 306-753-2185 or Gladys Crich 306-753-2142 for details.

Dec. 25. All the blessings of the season from all of us at In Contact!

July 23 – 27, 2012. The United Church Women celebrate their 50th Anniversary in 2012! A national gathering, "Our Tapestry of Love", will be held in Ancaster, ON. For info Email ucw50@hotmail.ca or phone 1-519-621-2184.

March 5 – 9, 2012. Returning to Spirit Workshop (aboriginal). Residential School Reconciliation process. Star of the North, St. Albert. kjackson@anwconf.org to register. www.returningtospirit.org for information.

March 5 – 9, 2012. Returning to Spirit Workshop (non-aboriginal). Residential School Reconciliation process. Providence Centre, Edmonton. kjackson@anwconf.org to register. www.returningtospirit.org for information.

Alberta and Northwest
Conference
insert in the
United Church Observer

Volume 30. No. 5

"The purpose of *In Contact* is to share news of the Church's life, work, programs, policies and people with Observer readers across Alberta and Northwest Conference".

 inCONTACT

Editorial Chairperson:
Geraldine Dyck

Editor: Liz Goddard
780-436-3801

c/o ANW Conference
9911 – 48 Ave.
Edmonton, AB T6E 5V6

Guidelines for Submission
available at www.anwconf.org
or by email or mail. Maximum
submissions of 400 words.
incontactphoto@gmail.com

Deadlines for next Issues:

The 20th of November
and January