

Growing a New Garden in Mill Woods

Mill Woods United Church in Edmonton may not be the biggest or the flashiest church in town, but when it has a seed of an idea, everyone pitches right in. It has had two intern ministers and produced two ordination candidates, raised money for Beads for Hope and numerous other projects, all in the last eight years, but the latest venture has surprised even the most optimistic dreamers of the congregation with how fast it's come together.

In the summer of 2008, a group of ladies thought about starting a community garden in the front yard of the church. They had been learning about food security issues from the Greater Edmonton Alliance, and after digging for some information, were able to develop a project with the help of the City of Edmonton that will see a number of families producing home-grown vegetables. It hasn't been a bed of roses — there were grants to be applied for, plans to be developed, challenges to be weeded out and raised boxes to be built.

Community involvement was important to the project. "We wanted to involve as many in the community as possible so that it wasn't just another 'church outreach project' but to include our neighbors — to invite people to learn and grow with us so that we could increase visibility and ownership for the gardens. There is a real sense of community with this group already," said committee member Nancy Siever. The high school constructed



Participants in the garden project lay out the new raised beds made by local high school students.

the boxes, and Sunday school classes will be growing vegetables for the Bread Run, a gleaning project for low income families. Seasoned gardeners shared tips with beginners, and a great sense of enthusiasm has developed. "Lawns are not always the best use of environmental resources, and this is a way of being good stewards to the land as well as our neighbors," explained another member. All in all, the plotting is paying off, and our world will be greener because of it.

— Submitted by Monica Rosborough

Storefront ministry with a twist

For almost two years, I have been part of a dynamic ministry project cleverly disguised as a bookstore. Revelations may seem like just another shop that happens to also double as a UCRD outlet, but for many of our customers it is simply a safe haven. Whether

they are popping in for the first time or are long-time members, customers come in with a sense of reaching a sanctuary. They often express surprise at the gems and treasures they find. We get all sorts of people in: I once helped a Hutterite lady find a bible

and a grief-stricken university student find an angel pin to help clear her negative energy.

My greatest joy is serving and supporting other ministries.

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President's Pen — Northern Light

In these days of instant communication, it seems strange to be sitting here on a northern summer morning writing my first contribution for "In Contact," knowing that it won't appear until September! You'll already know more about General Council than I do at this moment, but you might need to know a little bit about me.

I have served in pastoral ministry since I was ordained in High River in 1990, first of all in the Bonnyville Pastoral Charge, followed by a dozen years in ministry with the people of Jasper United Church, and now in my fourth year with the congregation of Yellowknife United Church in the Northwest Territories. Ministry is a second career. I first worked as a systems programmer for a Calgary oil company.

I facetiously say that I did not change careers because I became disillusioned with computers but instead left programming to become a "Systems Analyst" for God's operating system!

I was elected President-elect in May 2008 and became President a year later at last May's conference meeting. In the year between those dates I spent a good deal of time attempting to discern what God was calling me to as President, given my particular aptitudes, interests and abilities and where I live.



Peter Chynoweth

We have all been made keenly aware that our modern, peripatetic lifestyle has caused extra harm to our climate by releasing millions of years worth of buried carbon into the air. So, it seems that even though there will still be lots of travel, it cannot and must not be a major theme of my time as president. Instead, I believe that the gift God has given me in my facility with technology and communication will draw a larger focus. Person-to-person encounters are very important and I will still have many, but a generation of people younger than me is showing us that community can be formed beyond the boundaries of our own space. I believe that we can use these insights to continue to build justice-seeking communities of faith. I think we are being

called to re-imagine the meaning of church, and it will require some thinking and dreaming outside of old boxes to see just what is emerging.

I hope to use this column to explore these ideas with you, and in person, and in the blog I've created: anw-northernlight.blogspot.com

Blessings . . .

— *Peter Chynoweth*

Couple can claim jointly over 100 years in church choir

Stony Plain United Church has had a choir for a good portion of its more than 100-year history and Len and Jean Webber have been singing in it for more than half that time.

Len says that it was a member of his curling team that got him interested in singing with the church choir, where he met Jean, and the couple were married in the Stony Plain United Church on July 27, 1962, by Doctor K. C. McLeod. This photo shows Choir Director, Terry Blois, who can only claim a paucity ten years, standing with Len and Jean, about whom it has been suggested that "this further supports the scientific evidence that singing in the choir regularly helps to reverse aging!"



Choir Director Terry Blois, left, with Jean and Len Webber, long-standing members of the Stony Plain United Church Choir.

A Half-Century of Continuous Ministry

Fifty years seems a very long time to have been in ministry. It's gone by quickly, however, partly because I inhabited a number of discrete "careers" over the years. I was a teacher, a congregational minister, a hospital chaplain, a family therapist...and a perpetual student. There have been many aspects to my lengthy ministry.

One task seemed to follow another naturally in the scheme of things. To try and distill wisdom out of all that activity, all those interactions...that's difficult. I often feel very humble in the face of my own life, unable to discern or share any wise dictums for others.

There are some important facts to remember. I was educated theologically in another century — another age — some would say another planet! While it is dangerous to leap from one theological fad to another, it is crucial that one tries to stay abreast of current theological trends. It isn't just a matter of looking "with it," but rather of being in touch with the thought and language of the day.

I worked at this quite intentionally all through the years, although I laboured under a disadvantage; for over 30 years of my ministry, I worked in medical institutions with heart transplant patients, ALS sufferers, and people with severe mental health problems. I supervised and guided close to 150 pastoral students and residents through learning and growing time in the face of human crisis, as well as Marriage and Family Therapy students and those in Educational Psychology. So my learning was broad, and not always focused on the vagaries of congregational life.



James Strachan ponders a half-century of ministry.

I enjoyed this kind of "rushing off in all directions" style. It's stimulating and engaging, and it provides a wide and deep look into human distress and human organization against distress — one of the major functions of the church in any age!

However, such a life has its cost. You can be so tied up doing all these wonderful things that time for relaxation and enjoyment of people just doesn't happen, or at least not enough. I see that pattern mirrored in my own body. For the longest time I took care of heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, etc by regular and strenuous running. That ended when the other parts of my body finally said "no," and my joints began to break down. My back, my knees —

my joints in general had finally had enough. So today, I have wonderful memories of marathons and runs under the trees at the lake, and I have very healthy lungs and heart for a person my age...and I have two surgically altered discs in my lower back and two titanium knees!

The wisdom I garnered was less from the good theology I read than from the tissues of my body, which spoke to me even when I wasn't listening. I suppose that's the sum total of the wisdom I can share today. No matter how important or exciting your ministry is, no matter how demanding and rewarding is your call, listen carefully to your body. God has given you only one, and it talks to you all the time. At times it talks theology, at times speaks in pain. In the end, it is the one "voice of God" you can't escape. Work with it, and enjoy it, a lot more than I have done.

— By James Strachan

Hazel Bluff celebrates 100 years

Hazel Bluff had its beginnings before Alberta was a province in 1905 and the settlers had been moving in. The name was well chosen as the hill where the church was built had many low bushes that grew hazelnuts.

Rev. Robert Telfer, a Methodist Missionary, held worship services but a church building was needed. The isolation, lack of roads and medical services brought people together and it was easier to be thankful for what they did have. While Robert Telfer was getting the land location and church building organized, he passed way in November of 1908, and was buried in the new cemetery. His son Douglas, a Student Minister, came for the next two years until May 1910. He would have been the minister for the opening of

the new church in August 1909 and for the beginnings of a new congregation.

The church has been continually active and in the early years was a hub of social events, debates, picnics, and chicken suppers. The railroad came to Westlock in 1913 and a new village was born 5 miles east of Hazel Bluff.

Members of a Pioneer family have placed a large rock in the church yard. There are two memorial plaques — one in memory of pioneers, and one in memory of the fallen soldiers of World Wars I and II. "Lest We Forget" some of the important accomplishments of the past 100 years, August 2009 is a time of celebration.

— Submitted by an anonymous Hazel Bluff member

A French Protestant Presence in Alberta: Rev. John Ezra Duclos

In the early 20th century, religious and cultural divisions were strong among settlers in the west. As immigrants began to arrive from many different places, these sometimes became quite contentious. Yet one couple, John and Nella Duclos, took on the challenge of a diverse rural area and were responsible for the development not only of a Protestant church but also of schooling and hospital care in that area.

The child of French Canadian converts to Protestantism, Rev. John Ezra Duclos was 63 in 1916 when he and his wife Nella moved from Erskine Presbyterian Church in Edmonton at the invitation of some of the French-speaking people of Bonnyville. At that time, Protestant work was challenging in a predominantly Roman Catholic district. In the beginning, some services were offered in French, some in English in a total of 15 locations including Cold Lake where, on his first visit, the temperature was reported to be -50! There was no Protestant church building in the area and many of the services were initially held in homes. However, with some fundraising and the work of many of the parishioners, construction of a church began in the spring of 1917. It was completed in 1920.

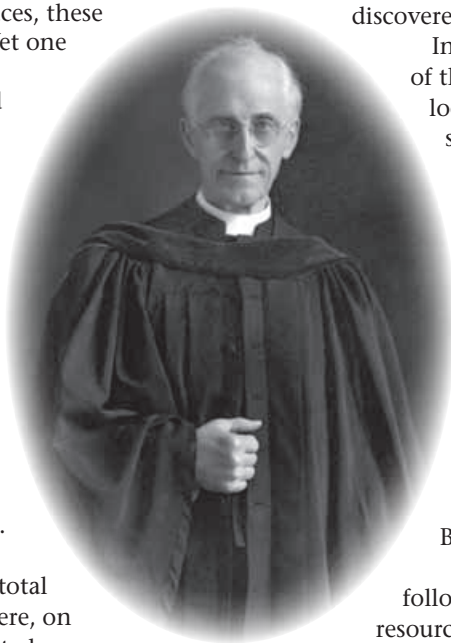
With the help of the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) and of nurse Jean Stewart, a farm house was converted into the first hospital in the district. Bonnyville General Hospital opened in October of 1917. At first, the Roman Catholic clergy forbade their followers from using the hospital but

that soon changed when Nurse Stewart nursed a gravely ill Catholic woman back to health and the Catholics discovered that Protestants did indeed pray!

In the beginning, Nella Duclos used some of the hospital space as a day school for local French Protestant and Scandinavian settlers. Evening classes were held for adults. However, attendance was often determined by the weather. John and Nella urged the WMS to provide a boarding school in Edmonton so that students could attend more regularly. The WMS agreed but, as funds were limited, the Duclos family furnished it themselves and Nella was put in charge. A second school was opened in Edmonton and Nella directed the operations for eight years until the school operations were moved back to Bonnyville.

With the outbreak of Spanish flu following World War I, the hospital's resources were strained to the limit. Again, the WMS responded to Duclos' urging, and a small hospital was opened at Cold Lake. Management of the hospital helped to unite the varied ethnic groups of that area with a real sense of community. By 1929, Cold Lake had united in another way with the establishment of a United Church. John Duclos conducted the first service of Cold Lake United Church on October 13, 1929.

With his retirement in 1930, John had time to concentrate on writing a history of French Protestants in Canada. They moved to Edmonton where he died in 1943 and she in 1954.



PR1975.387/5293
Missionary for Alberta, [ca. 1930's] Rev. Dr. [John E.] Duclos: English-French
Credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta / United Church of Canada ANW Conference Archives (courtesy Rob Hutchinson)

continued from cover

Storefront ministry with a twist

I now know more about both Anglican and Mennonite worship needs, can find my way around a UCRD bulletin catalogue (not to mention their website), know where the Presbyterian hymn books are, and how to make the perfect cup of fair trade coffee, a major feat for a non-coffee drinker like myself! I have met, talked with or emailed so many United Churches that I feel I know almost everyone at Conference. There have been challenges, and there have

been mistakes, but it's been a learning experience and we appreciate our customers' patience when Murphy's Law takes over the store. Generally, Murphy is less present than serendipity, who is a regular visitor that gives me goose bumps.

One thing I recently have been working on is a searchable catalogue on our website. While it won't list our gifts or UCRD stock, it will have most of the books we carry. Given that in the last year, we've shipped

More Voices to both Virginia and New Zealand, this tool may help us weather the tough times that have seen several small bookstores and distributors in Canada closing their doors. I hope that the future will be kind to the customers, staff and board of this powerful ministry, and that it will continue to serve as a creative way to reach out to the larger community.

— Monica Rosborough

That All May Be One

“Gathering as God’s people, moved by the Spirit to be one Body of Christ” — this was the theme of a multi-congregational service of worship at Southminster United Church in Lethbridge, Alberta on the Day of Pentecost on May 31, 2009.

The service began with the enthusiastic singing of *Draw the Circle Wide* and *Make a Joyful Noise* led by Darrell Croft and the “Catch the Spirit” contemporary music team from McKillop United in Lethbridge. Following words of welcome from Lois Punton (Southminster) and a call to worship by Cathy Coates (McKillop, Lethbridge), those in attendance were blessed with a lively rendition of the traditional *Spiritual God’s Gonna Set This World on Fire* by a fifty-voice mass choir directed by Ken Rogers. A children’s time and some congregational singing were followed by a prayer of confession and assurance of pardon led by Aldeen McKay (Japanese United, Lethbridge). The McKillop Handbell Choir, led by Deb Logan, then treated listeners to a catchy performance of *Lord of the Dance*.

Several aspects of this service were intended to echo some parts of the experience of the first Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, verses 1 to 17, where various people were speaking in other

languages. In keeping with Peter’s message assuring others that these people were not drunk, the sermon by Elizabeth Brown (then First United, Lethbridge) and Glenda Wert (Picture Butte/Barons) was titled “We are not drunk.” At the designated time, about twenty volunteers stood up to say the Lord’s Prayer in various different languages. The

Bell Choir played *Pie Jesu* during the offering and the choir then sang the anthem *The Gift of Love*. After celebrating communion, the service concluded as the rafters rang with the jubilant singing of *You Shall Go Out With Joy*.

Other contributing musicians were Kade Hogg, Andrew Gierulski, Cheryl Nelson, Marilyn Sinclair and musical group members. Volunteers contributing in other ways included Joy Honish, Dave Mabell, Mary McLean, Lexie Rogers and Gloria Wendel. Cathy Coates, Hilary Squires and Joy Honish organized the church school. The Southminster Worship and Music committees organized the reception. The combined service was the brain-child of Dave Mabell, reporter for The Lethbridge Herald, and chair of the Worship Committee at McKillop.

— Submitted by Harold Schroder



Photo: Shona Archibald

The McKillop Handbell Choir shares their wonderful music.



Photo: Shona Archibald

There was a full church on May 31, 2009 for the Pentecost Service at Southminster United in Lethbridge, AB.

ANWC Heritage Cemeteries Ad Hoc Committee

When Mary Repka of Calgary read an “In Contact” article that mentioned early mission work at Wahstao near Smoky Lake, she decided to see if anything could be done about the little cemetery there which had not been maintained for many years. Sheila Johnston of Calgary, then chair of the Conference Heritage Resources Committee, followed up on Mary’s request for information. One of her first findings was that title on the Wahstao cemetery was still in the name of the Methodist Church! The Conference has now established an ad hoc Heritage Cemeteries Committee to try to identify other abandoned cemeteries, whether United Church or those that

had been associated with predecessor denominations within the Conference.

Sheila has agreed to chair the new committee. Other members include Donna Krucik who now chairs the ANWC Heritage Resources Committee, Oliver Seward, Don Mayne and Conference Archivist Jane Bowe McCarthy.

Letters were sent to Presbytery secretaries for assistance in locating any other sites. Since then, several more have been brought to the attention of the committee. Once sites are identified, committee members hope to work with government agencies, as well as nearby congregations and historical

societies, to have the sites properly identified, perhaps with plaques, and also to try to ensure that they are cared for in the future.

If you know of an orphaned “heritage cemetery” or have any other information on these sites, please contact a member of the committee or: Conference Archivist Jane Bowe McCarthy Ph. 780-427-8687 Toll free outside Edmonton on the RITE line (310-0000) E-mail: jane.bowe-mccarthy@gov.ab.ca

— Submitted by Gayle Simonson

Conference 2009

Conference is an exciting time for United Church people, the time when we get to meet key people such as the leader of Conference. For the past two years we have had Tom Sawyer as our very approachable president. The president's position will now be assumed by Peter Chynoweth from Yellowknife. It will be interesting to observe his approach when the kilometers between Peter and most charges are great. Fortunately, he is "up" on technology. He will also attempt to visit every presbytery at least once. My impression of Peter is that he is a great listener, so talk to him when he is in your presbytery and let him know what is happening in your

church. The photo of Tom passing over the artifacts demonstrates the importance of this office.

Lynn Maki, as the Executive Secretary, is the glue that holds the Conference together, so we see her sharing the elements of communion and presiding over the installation of a new president.

Also, in the photos we get a glimpse of the newly-appointed ministry folk. A couple of representatives from this group are shown in the images with Kent Horsman, chair of Education and Students. At the other end of the timeline, (which is sometimes quite short with mature folk coming into

ministry) are the retirees, represented in these photos by Judy Chapman.

The work of Conference in supporting churches is expedited by hundreds of folks who are between the lines. Some of them hold offices, some do not. Perhaps they are represented by the supporting folk in the images, like Wayne Dresser and Mike Stockdale, both of whom contribute much to the church.

Like biting into a newly ripe peach, United Church attendees can let the taste of Conference drip down their chins and attain a taste which may lead to bigger bites in the years to come.

— Story and photos by
Gordon Hunter



Captions:

A., B. and C.:

Tom Sawyer and Lynn Maki with Peter Chynoweth, incoming President of ANW Conference.

D. *Kent Horsman with newly-appointed ministry folk.*



Captions:

- E. *Lynn Maki shares the elements of communion.*
- F. *Jen Dresser with father, Wayne.*
- G. *Retiree Judy Chapman with her husband, Dave.*



Conference 2009

Camrose Ministers Emeriti

On Sunday March 22nd, 2009, the Camrose United Church bestowed on two of its former ministers the designation 'Ministers Emeriti.' The Reverend Brian Hunter and The Reverend Robert Smith, who served the congregation 14 years and 7 years respectively, were both honored. The criteria included having served for a period of time as Minister of the Camrose United Church and to have continued to serve with quality service in retirement such as providing leadership,

serving on designated committees, and giving support to the policies of the Camrose United Church.

Rev. Brian Hunter is currently serving as a Pastoral Care Chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital, Camrose, and Rev. Bob Smith chairs the Camrose and District Senior Coalition Committee addressing the various needs and issues of Seniors.

— Submitted by Rev. Bob Smith

Around our conference

Upcoming Events

September 25 – 27, and

September 28 – 30, 2009: Western Women's Conference – Women Together: The Common Walk of Generations, with Flora McDonald and Kathy Galloway at Naramata Centre, Naramata, British Columbia. For further information please go to www.naramatacentre.net or call 1-877-996-5751.

September 26, 2009: The United Church secretaries will meet at Olds United Church, 4810-50 Street, Olds, AB at 10:30 a.m. This is a time of fellowship and sharing. At this time, MaryEllen Speers & Lynn Martens from Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers will be with us. Please contact Lil at 403-556-3052.

October 15 – 17, 2009: Rooted in Faith: Celebrating Rural Churches in Community 2009, hosted by CiRCLÉ M and Rural Alberta's Development Fund with

the Rev. Dr. Dittmar Muendel and Brother David Andrews CSC, at Best Western Wayside Inn, Lloydminster, Alberta. For further information please call Pat at 306-825-3116 or email lloydanglicanchurch@sasktel.net

October 17, 2009: "Time to . . ." Healing Spa — Reflective Rejuvenating Retreat presented by Red Deer Lake United Church Healing Ministry at Red Deer Lake United Church, Calgary, Alberta. Phone: 403-201-0137 or 403-256-3181, email: info@rdlunitedchurch.org

October 16 – 18, 2009: 54th Annual Banff Men's Conference at the Banff Centre. Theme: Giving Voice to our Faith. Keynote Speaker will be Bill Blaikie with Music Leader Blair Odney. For further information, go to www.banffmen.org or phone Harry Clarke, Registrar at 250-833-4622.

October 30, 2009: 4th Annual Great Chili Cook-Off, Edmonton Presbytery Stewardship Event. "Firing Up the Youth for Stewardship" with David King at Highlands United Church, Edmonton, Alberta, 6:30 p.m. For further information call David Allan, 780-423-3877.

October 30 – 31, 2009: "Following Jesus in a Time of Empire" with Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan at Lister Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. For further information please contact paulnahirney@telus.net

November 13 – 14, 2009: Cultivating a Culture of Generosity — A Stewardship Event with a Twist, with Andrew Richardson and members of the Stewardship Development Advisory Committee of The United Church of Canada at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta. Further information can be had by calling 780-439-7311 or email: kparson@ualberta.ca

Affirming Conference to be held in October, 2009

That's not my lifestyle, that's my life was the theme of the third conference celebrating gays, lesbian, bisexual and transexual persons in the United Church family. The conference was held over a weekend in October, 2008. The conference was attended by representatives from at least twelve different churches. Some were already affirmed, some were hoping to be affirmed soon and some churches were gathering information on what the next steps should be to start the process of becoming affirming. Some people were there to offer information and some people were there to find out how to introduce the idea of becoming affirming to their congregations. There was a mix of congregations from all over Alberta, except for northern Alberta. We are currently discussing ways to get the smaller, rural church communities more involved in

upcoming conferences.

When asked what new insights had been gained, many people mentioned the personal learning around heterosexual privilege and inclusive language. There were frequent requests for ongoing educational opportunities. About half of the attendees reported that the opportunity to discover shared experiences offered mutual support and learning from one another.

Planning is underway for the 2009 Alberta Northwest Affirming Conference to be held in Calgary, AB at Symon's Valley United Church on the October 24th weekend. More details to follow as they become known. The outcome of our searching and listening to each other and to the Spirit we leave in God's hands.

— Submitted by Sharon Woodhouse
Scarboro United Church, Calgary, AB

in Contact

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