

Web Weavings – a vision of healthy congregations – stories that show the way ...

Web Weavings will feature stories of healthy congregations and some of the hopeful, creative, renewing ministry experiences. Each month you will find 3 stories – from Large, Medium and Small congregations across our conference. Here are some of the stories & topics to watch for:

January – Creative Worship

February – WoRM (Workshop Rotational Model)

March – Conflict Resolution

April – Camping stories

The Conference Overview & Visioning Committee for HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS will be gathering these stories in the belief that we need to hear about the healthy congregational happening around the conference. Check in with the web site each month! If you have a story to share in this or another ministry area, send it to the committee via e-mail at coffice@anwconf.com

Web Weavings on Worship – January 2002

Music in Worship

@ Hillcrest United Church in Fort Nelson, B.C.

Hillcrest has always been blessed through the years with a musically gifted congregation. Various people, on the spur of the moment, have led the congregation in informal song as a prelude to Sunday services. As well as forming small choirs for special occasions throughout the church year, choirs have come together on a moment's notice for worship and in one instance to entertain Presbytery representatives traveling through Fort Nelson on their way to Whitehorse.

Our church has been without full time paid ministry for almost two years now. We find music in our worship services to be one of the most uplifting ways to praise God, to draw closer to God and also to come closer as a church family.

In addition to the piano, we have an informal guitar group. We have incorporated the guitar group into our service after the call to worship, in a "praise and worship" time. This usually includes four to five songs, using the Voices United, as well as country gospel and praise songs. One Sunday we had an "all-request" service. For the main part of the service, members of the congregation would suggest a hymn and the guitars would lead the congregation in song. On occasion the guitars lead the congregation in singing before the service. The guitars were also featured in our 40th anniversary celebration this fall leading a sing-a-long. The Sunday school and Worship committee have featured our young people on piano and flute at some of our special services.

We believe our music has fed us spiritually and enabled us through this joyful experience to carry us through times of need.

Do you dare? Do you dare to be what you are called to be? Do you dare to color outside the lines? Do you dare to grow the mission of the church? Do you dare?

Riverview Sunday Worship – Fusion Style @ Riverview United Church in Calgary

Written by Rev. Rita Cattell, Associate Minister

Sunday morning worship at Riverview Church has taken on a different flavor. For us it all began three years ago. We faced the fact that no matter how well we did traditional worship it was not attracting people to join our church and there was little evidence that regular attendees were maturing as followers of Christ. Our initial changes were cautious. A choir that had become too frail to lead the congregational singing gave way to a hymn leader and soloist. The digital piano was used more than the organ. We succeeded in making everyone equally dissatisfied with this neither fish nor fowl that was.

After some soul searching and much research in the area of church renewal, we made the move to two different worship services each Sunday. In an effort to meet the needs of different worship preferences, we offered the "Heritage Service" with a traditional United Church liturgy and "Feel the Spirit " with a contemporary praise format. However, other needs were not met. For many, there was an uncomfortable sense that we had become two churches instead of one. Volunteers burned out attempting to provide two Sunday Schools. The quality of worship was often uneven because of the demands upon the worship leaders to create two different worship services each Sunday. We continued with this Sunday format for almost two years and then choose to return to one service.

Soul searching and research continued. The following things became clear: Worship needs to offer a sense of personal encounter with God. Worship needs to press the worshipper to view the world through the grid of a Christian worldview. Worship needs to make plain the connection between the story of your faith and the life experience of the worshipper. The sights and sounds of worship need to "feel right" for every worshipper.

Our current worship style is best described as fusion. An analogy would be fusion cooking where the cook takes the best of a variety of cuisine to create new dishes. Fusion worship is the intentional use of a variety of technologies, techniques, and traditions. At Riverview, power point sermon slides, video clips, and praise band is normal fare. Organ music is a rare ingredient. Head set microphones are preferred. Words to both contemporary praise choruses and Voice United hymns are projected on a large screen. Worship leaders dress casual. Albs and stoles are visible on Sundays when baptism or communion is celebrated. Technical support at the soundboard and the LCD projector is as important as the sermon or a solo.

At Riverview Church, we have come to realize that worship is more than just singing the songs we like to sing or praying our favorite version of the Lord's prayer. It is more than whether the volume is too high or too low. It more than whether there should be an object lesson or a video clip to illustrate a worship theme. The style and substance of worship is the means by which the worshipper is able to impact the world as a follower of Christ and for the glory of God.

Do you dare? Do you dare to be what you are called to be? Do you dare to color outside the lines? Do you dare to grow the mission of the church? Do you dare?

Lay Participation in Prayers of the People @ Yellowknife United Church in Yellowknife, NWT

From late October 2000 until early January 2001 Yellowknife United Church was without a paid minister. Members of the congregation enthusiastically took on the task of providing Sunday worship. When Rev. Liz Richards arrived in January she was asked at the first Worship Committee meeting if she would provide a workshop on prayer writing. She was able to quickly organize a series of four prayer writing workshops that happened each Monday evening in February.

Eight to 12 people attended each workshop where they learned about different types of prayers (i. e. prayers of the people, opening prayers, prayers of confession) and practiced prayer writing. The participants learned a lot and had fun doing it. Workshop participant Jill Harbicht, who plays piano most Sundays at Yellowknife United, says that she found the workshops interesting and hadn't realized the structure in prayers, especially the Prayers of the People. She thinks it is marvelous to hear prayers written by congregation members and that she gets a lot out of hearing them.

Since the workshops, congregation members have had many opportunities to write and present prayers during worship, particularly the Prayers of the People. Rev. Liz Richards feels that "congregational prayer is the prayer work of the people and is best articulated by a variety of voices from the congregation".

Interestingly, even people who didn't take the workshops have begun writing and presenting prayers. Former Board chair Randy Wedel and his 16-year-old daughter Karen recently wrote, and Karen read, the Prayers of the People. Neither of them had attended the workshops.

Learning to write and present prayers has been a worthwhile learning experience for members of the congregation. We enjoy hearing from each other and are comfortable in the knowledge that we can provide meaningful worship services and prayers.