



COMMUNIQUE



Erin Mills United Church: www.emuc.ca

September 2009

Erin Mills United Church Home

On Thursday August 20th, a fire erupted in the kitchen of Erin Mills United Church. In the aftermath of the initial shock, conversations with the insurance company, the work of cleaning up and ongoing discussions for the refurbishing the kitchen, many have spoken to me about the importance of EMUC as their church home. I too have been reflecting on my attachment to this building. What makes me use the word 'home' to describe it?

It's not so much the design or architecture...although I do like the shape of the worship space with the light pouring through the windows and the sweep of the wall with the cross; however, I am not as thrilled with the cramped office spaces and the layout of some of the meeting rooms. And of course, now that the building is edging ever closer to its 20th anniversary, it is starting to show its age in places...there's lots of potential for renovation and renewal. So what makes this place feel like home?

For me, EMUC feels like home because of the Spirit that dwells here. It is a Spirit that echoes in the laughter of children that has bounced off the walls. It's the Spirit in the music of choirs, instrumentalists, soloists and congregational singing that floats in the air.

It's the Spirit glowing in the light of Christ, shining from hundreds of candles over the years in weekly Sunday or Wednesday worship, glowing in the hands of those newly baptized or pin-pricking the darkness of Easter vigils or Christmas eve communions.

It's the Spirit in the words that encircle the rooms: fervent prayers, dramatic dialogues, challenging questions, tense discussions, comforting phrases, heart-

felt conversations, joyous halleluiahs, friendly banter, and sage advice. It's the Spirit in the moments of deep silence and in the joyful noise of celebration, banquets and party times.

It's the Spirit in the remembrance of those who once walked these church rooms with us and shared in our lives - some who have moved away and moved on; some who are now in the company of the saints; some whose names grace the walls of our worship space.



It's the Spirit in the dedicated work of so many hands joining together to create beauty and strength, to offer healing and comfort, to guide and to nurture.

We see that Spirit in the quilts and fabric hangings, the painting, repair and maintenance jobs, the decorations and the food preparation, the gardening and the landscaping, the greening and restoring, the multitude of Sunday School projects & crafts and the hundreds of boxes filled for Christmas gifts in the community.

It's the Spirit in the people and groups who have found welcome, refuge, and a place to belong; some for an hour or a day, some year after year. It's the Spirit

in the faces of those we see week after week, people who are dear to our hearts; people who have become beloved family.

It's the Spirit that continues to challenge all those who enter these doors, to move with the Spirit wherever they may go out of these doors - down the street, into the community and out into the world. It is this Spirit of the living God dwelling here in our midst that makes this building a church home.

Truth be told, EMUC would still be a church if this building had burnt down; we would still be a church in a school auditorium or in a tent or in a park or in a storefront, and yet something would be lost to us. In the wisdom of the Creator, we are given places in this world to call home; places for shelter and companionship; places for protection and refuge; places to be ourselves; places to belong; places to welcome the stranger and the ones in need.

Out of the recent fire, there is opportunity for all of us to deeply ponder what it means to be 'at home' in this church building. It can lead us to consider the gaps in our hospitality and how we might more faithfully open the doors to welcome individuals and groups. It can lead us to consider the experience of those who are homeless in this world and those whose home is threatened - by war, by climate change, by pollution, by greed, by ignorance. What is our Christian responsibility to partner in the building of a world where they can be at home?

It can lead us to consider the state of this earth, home to all peoples and to all creatures and to all life on this planet.

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As citizens of the globe how can we become more intentional in safeguarding the delicate balance so that future generations of peoples, creatures and life-forms will enjoy fullness of life and the protection of being at home on Earth?

And as we spend time over the fall repairing and restoring this church home, may we renew our commitment and resolve to work toward the repair and the restoration of all that draws us to be at home among neighbours near and far in this our earthly home; so that the Spirit of God may dwell richly among us and all God's creatures everywhere.

Kathy Toivanen

Thanks!

All who provided leadership in worship over the summer: Ross Gilmour, Barb Finlay, Joanne Hedge & Kofi Hope for the sermons they offered; Hermine Bingham, Deb Sturgeon, Deb Siertsema, Dianne Hope, Sylvia Arnold for their leadership in prayers & story; the Worship Committee for organizing and hosting the services during the summer months.

Larry van Goozen of the property committee for addressing a number of repairs and building maintenance items in the building.

Kai marks for adding more decorative touches to the upstairs washroom.

Rad Cassanova for resolving an electrical problem.

Mary Anna Williams, Sue and Mike Ogilvie and Sylvia Arnold for various gardening tasks both outside and inside.

Jennifer Allen and Sue Ogilvie for cleaning out the sound room and reorganizing the church banners.

Those who offered support and advice following the kitchen fire: Trustees (David Leeder as chair), Janet Gilmour, Audrey Macdonald, Bob Beck, Peter Kiteley.

Laurie Currie & Grace Hildebrandt for assisting with office organizing & filing.

Youth News

September is finally upon us, which means the start of another school year. While many of the youth probably aren't overjoyed to be back at school, they can certainly look forward to the beginning of all the youth events at EMUC. I would like to especially welcome all the youth who are entering Middle School and High School for the very first time. They're fortunate to have several terrific and welcoming groups available to them. Which is the perfect lead in for a brief discussion of those particular groups. Junior Youth group, for youth in Middle School, will continue to meet Sunday mornings during the regular church service (10 am) in the Classroom, starting on September 13th. For those who are in High School, Teen Talk will also meet during the service, also beginning on September 13th. Both groups, after the requisite icebreaker period, will be delving into interesting themes that involve various discussions and activities.

Starting September 16th, the Senior Youth group, a program for High School aged youth, will meet every Wednesday night from 7:00 until 9:30 in the Classroom. It serves as a great mid-week break from the stresses of school to spend time with friends, discuss themes relevant to the life of a teenager, and of course play great games.

Finally, youth in the current confirmation program will go on retreat for the weekend of September 19th. Thursday night sessions will resume again in October, leading to a special Sunday service on November 1st when the youth profess their faith. Stay tuned for further information regarding that next month. Best of luck to all the youth this year!

Cheers, Ian Blackport

Music Workshop



On Saturday October 17th, the EMUC Chancel Choir is hosting a music workshop facilitated by Don Besig and Nancy Price, sponsored by Shawnee Press and Leslie Music Supply. Invitations have been sent to Choir Directors and Choirs of 92 surrounding churches. This event gives directors an opportunity to learn from very talented and experienced directors and choir members to read new music and sing en masse. The event will also contribute to EMUC's fundraising. If members of the congregation would like to provide baking for the coffee break, please speak with Janet Tait or Barb Jennings.

Worship Schedule

Every Wednesday evening at 6:45 a service of readings, reflection, prayer & communion. Sunday worship is at 10:00 a.m. with care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers; EMU Club for Primary Age Children; Junior Youth for Gr. 6,7,8, & Teentalk for youth in high school.

September 13 Communion Theme: Religious Education or Spiritual Growth? Readings: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 119: 97-104, Mark 10:17-22

September 20 Theme: Walking Out of Step - Marney Dyker preaching. Readings: Philippians 2:5-8, Matthew 21: 23-32

September 27 Theme: Stumbling Block or Salt of the Earth? Readings: Mark 9:38-50

October 4 World Communion Sunday Theme: "Creating a Climate for Feeding the Hungry" Readings: "Mark 8:1-9; Isaiah 55:1-5

October 11 Thanksgiving Sunday All Ages Worship Together Theme: "Creating a Climate for Growing Gratitude" Readings: Matthew 6:25-33; Joel 2:21-27; Psalm 126

An Update from the Joint Search Committee

Welcome to fall and the comfort that comes from familiar routines. Throughout the next several weeks the Joint Search Committee, elected at a congregational meeting in June, will continue with the relatively unfamiliar task of seeking a part-time minister to join the EMUC ministry team and the congregation in serving EMUC and the larger community. The committee began its work this summer and with the support of two Presbytery representatives, Norm Graham and Chris Cheung, began learning the process for reviewing and selecting applicants and creating the posting based on the JNAC review outcomes. The job description has been posted on the job board at Emmanuel College and on the web at: www.united-online.ca. The committee has begun receiving applications and is now beginning the evaluation process.

Heather Santamaria, Chair, JSC

Deacon's Cupboard

After taking July off to provide volunteers a "vacation", The Deacon's Cupboard resumed in August. Since then we have served between forty and fifty families per week. The hours of operation are every Wednesday from 9:30 am until 1:00 pm and the last Monday of the month from 5:30 until 7:30 pm. The cupboard is dependent on the sponsoring churches for donations of food and money; particularly in the summer when contributions from many sources are less. Please remember the needs of the cupboard this fall. Providing the guests of the cupboard with more fresh produce is a goal, so if you have a surplus in your garden, please share it.

Remember that the Cupboard serves your neighbours in the community and is entirely operated by volunteers; there are no paid employees. The Cupboard would like to thank two special members of the EMUC congregation who have assisted faithfully - Dorothy Wilson who assumed responsibility for our community board which assists our guests in orienting themselves to the services available in the area for them and Lorraine Brignall who served as our treasurer and also assisted in the Cupboard in many other areas. Both women have left us to follow other pursuits but we will remain grateful for all their efforts.

Music Minister Search Committee

At this time the vacancy for the position of Minister for Music has been posted on the United Church web site, several Universities and Colleges and at Music Schools. The submission date has been extended due to vacations over the summer. The committee met again in September and will have an update for October.

Transitions

Congratulations to Kofi Hope and Lisa Sookhoo on the celebration of their marriage, Sunday August 23rd.

Congratulations to Chris Munro and Sarah Briggs on the celebration of their marriage, Sunday September 6th

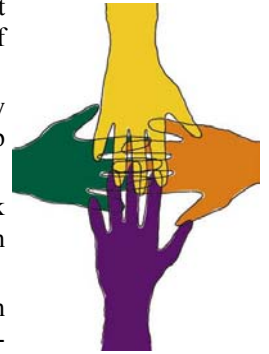
Condolences to Rev. Arch McCurdy and his family on the death of Arch's wife, Phyllis in August.. Arch McCurdy was a minister with Crossroads United Church before the birth of Erin Mills United.

From the Leadership Circle

After a quiet summer, the Leadership Circle met twice at the end of August. An emergency meeting for Leadership Circle, Trustees and EMYOP Board & Staff was called on August 20th, to respond to the fire that occurred in the kitchen earlier that day. A stove and fridge were severely damaged by the flames and the building was affected by smoke damage. Quick action by EMUC Office Coordinator Peter Kiteley, kept the situation from becoming more critical. Children and staff from Oasis camp had already left for a day trip. The insurance adjuster was in the next morning and the clean-up of smoke and soot began that day.

Fire recovery was at the top of the agenda for the regularly scheduled board meeting on Tuesday August 25th. Three main areas of focus have emerged, with the recommendations of Larry Van Goozen, chair of Property and supported by the Leadership Circle.

- Settlement of insurance, including appropriate process for recovery of property. To date Peter Kiteley has been working with Janet Gilmour and the church's insurance company, reporting to the Leadership Circle and Trustees.
- Kitchen Plan. Taking this opportunity to re-evaluate the kitchen needs of the community and to look at potential improvements. Susan Ogilvie, Barb Jennings Jennifer Allen, Andy and Dorothy Wilson (Green Team) with Debby Sturgeon (EMYOP Board) are assisting with this process.
- Health and Safety. The property committee, with input from Paul Marot, will be reviewing the health and safety policies and procedures and ensuring that up to date and effective emergency response practices are in place.



All groups will be reporting to the Leadership Circle and Trustees with regard to recovery from the fire and refurbishing of the kitchen. Regular updates will keep the congregation informed. With the written recommendation of Larry van Goozen, Peter Kiteley received a unanimous commendation from the Leadership Circle for his quick and effective manner in handling the emergency. Thank-you Peter! Thank-you Kathy Toivanen for your oversight and guidance as we heal. Thanks to those who have offered their time and expertise. As more volunteers are needed a notice will be made to the congregation.

The progress of both the Joint Search Committee and the Search Committee for the Minister of Music were reported at the Leadership Circle meeting. Both groups have met this summer and begun the search process, with job postings in relevant locations. Heather Santamaria is chair for the Joint Search Committee, seeking to fill the position for a half time minister and Janet Tait is chair for the Minister of Music search committee. Thanks to all who are working to fill these positions.

Until a permanent music minister is appointed, Jim McVittie has been appointed as the accompanist for Sunday worship, chancel choir practices and weddings & funerals (as he is able). Jim is an active member of EMUC, an accomplished pianist and a high school student in Grade 12.

Nancy Blackport, an active and longtime member of EMUC, has given much musical leadership at EMUC over the years. Nancy will direct the chancel choir and offer support to other musical/singing groups as needed. EMUC is grateful to both Jim and Nancy for stepping into these interim positions.

The United Church of Canada has adopted an Emergency Plan to guide congregations, presbyteries, conferences and the national office for appropriate and helpful action in the event of a crisis such as a flu pandemic. In consultation with other local United churches and on the advice of Halton Presbytery, an emergency plan, tailored to EMUC and the surrounding community will be created and adopted. Such a plan would include changes or provisions for Sunday worship, the managing of administrative and other leadership needs, the public use of the building and pastoral care of people affected in a crisis.

The next regular Leadership Circle board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday September 15th at 7:30.

Peace and Blessings, Heather Bunting, Chair hibunting@rogers.com 905-828-9974

Fall EMUC Dinner & Auction



The date of the fall dinner and auction has been changed to Saturday Oct. 24th to give more time for planning and preparing. Please mark your calendars! If you would like to help with the dinner, speak to Sue Ogilvie. Services and items for the auction are still required. Please enter any donation on the sign-up sheet which is located on the bulleting board by the office. If you would like to help with auction, please speak to Jennifer Allen or Sandy Hayes.

KAIROS National Gathering

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (of which the United Church of Canada is a member) hosted a National Gathering at the University of Waterloo in June. I was fortunate to attend the gathering as a delegate for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region of KAIROS. Kathy Toivanen also attended as 'participant at large'. The gathering represented a diverse group: people that have been involved in KAIROS and its predecessor organizations for years along with those who are new to justice work; young and old, from near and far, with interests in a variety of justice issues; along with delegates representing a variety of heritages and races. Indigenous, global, French Canadian and local speakers led in plenary sessions and thought-provoking workshops.

At a pre-conference anti-poverty session, I was particularly inspired by a presentation on the 'Shoelace Collective' by Bob Paterson-Watt of Woodbine Heights Baptist Church in East York. The program involves users of the food bank in decision-making and offers a variety of services including a job bank and people to accompany the clients to meetings with social service agencies. There is a real focus on empowering the participants of the program and building on their strengths.

Concern for the environment is one of my passions but despite the fact that several workshops focused on environmental issues, I decided to pursue different topics in my workshop selections. The first was "Can a Corporation Act Ethically?" One of the presenters was Gary Hawton, CEO of Meritas Mutual Funds, a socially responsible investing company founded in 2000 by 3 Mennonite groups. Meritas purchases shares of companies that have the potential to increase their social responsibility. The shareholder actions of Meritas have influenced big businesses to make changes regarding the way executive salaries are decided. This action is in response to the way that executive salaries have increased dramatically in recent years while salaries of regular workers have actually declined.

In a second workshop I experienced using anti-racism analysis in social justice work. A key learning for me was around how those of us with privilege are often oblivious to the fact that it makes our lives so much easier. The final workshop that I attended was called 'The Lonely Hearts Social Justice Club'. I came away from it with some insights about justice, "justice and charity are not polar opposites", as well as some practical suggestions for carrying out justice work; "celebrate what is already happening".

One of the highlights for me at the National Gathering was attending an aboriginal sunrise ceremony during which a sacred fire was lit. There, we learned how the women care for the water and the men care for the fire. Although we couldn't see the strawberry moon because of the cloud cover, we got to taste the first fruit of the season at the fire. The fire continued to burn under the watchful eye of the "firekeepers", including volunteers from the gathering participants, for the duration of the gathering.

Dorothy Wilson, co-chair EMUC Green Team

EMUC Financial Report

With the approach of fall, Erin Mills United moves into the final quarter of its financial year. As of the end of August, congregational givings by weekly envelopes, cheques, monthly PAR (pre-authorize remittance) and other offerings collected at worship, totaled \$117,300 for the local operations of the church (salaries of church staff, building & property maintenance, utilities, office & program expenses). The budget for local givings for the year is \$195,000. This means that to meet budget, \$77,000 will need to be contributed through congregational offerings in the remaining months of the year.

To date \$19,000 has been given toward the Mission & Service Fund, the national United Church fund which supports the larger church's ministries in Canada and around the world. At EMUC whatever is collected for this fund is sent on to the national church; a target budget has not been set. To date \$14,000 has been contributed by EMUC givers to the Tithe fund. This fund is sent on to the national United Church in repayment for the church building which the larger church helped to finance. The target budget for the Tithe Fund for the year is \$22,830, leaving \$8,800 to be contributed in the remaining months.

EMUC's total budget of approximately one quarter of a million dollars is also dependent upon fundraising efforts and rental of space in the church building.

You can do your part to support the vital programs and ministries of EMUC and avoid the burden of undue worry about financial issues by your regular and faithful giving. All financial gifts to the church receive tax receipts.

If you wish to be part of a regular giving plan to EMUC or if you wish to revise the amount of your current givings, please contact Mike Ogilvie, the church's envelope secretary. The financial offerings of all contributors are held in confidence by Mike. Contact Mike at oglivia@sympatico.ca or 905-820-2387.

EMUC Green Team Activities

The “Green Team” has been very busy over the last few months. Activities, in no particular order, include:

- EcoSource participation in the EMYOP/OASIS Summer Camp – EcoSource’s “3R Rock Star Lunch” program provided information and buttons for the campers, and encouraged campers to bring lunches and beverages in reusable containers in order to reduce garbage.
 - Sorting of garbage at the OASIS Community BBQ, Aug 18 – by using signs on various bins, people were guided to separate waste for recycling (Styrofoam plates, cans and bottles) and for green compost (food waste including corn cobs and paper serviettes). As a result, only one small bag of actual garbage was collected!
 - Local food – a group of EMUC folk has sourced local fruits and vegetables locally to preserve by making jams and pickles (contact Lorraine Brignall if you are interested in participating).
 - Interior sanctuary lighting – The eight main lights in the sanctuary need to be replaced and additional eco-friendly lighting is required for the choir and platform areas. One vendor has visited the church and will be supplying a proposal. Other vendors have been contacted. It is anticipated that a proposal and plan will be ready to present to the Leadership Circle this fall.
 - “collecting pop tabs for wheel chairs” - Peter Kiteley has discovered that this activity, which has been ongoing for several years, doesn’t actually result in anyone getting a wheelchair – i.e. it is a hoax. Please leave the tabs on your cans and recycle; collection at the church is discontinued.
 - CFL (Compact Florescent Light) bulb disposal – a failed bulb should not be put in the garbage. Take it, at no cost, to any Mississauga Hazardous Waste depot (Battleford Rd. has one of the closest sites) or to any Rona store for proper disposal. CFL bulbs contain mercury, which will leak into the environment if the bulb is broken, and thus they must be disposed of properly (they aren’t a risk unless they are broken).
 - Dead battery disposal – these should not be put in the garbage either. Save them up until you have a bunch and then take, at no cost, to Mississauga Hazardous Waste depot (along with old paint). If you cannot get to a depot, bring your dead batteries to EMUC. We will take them to the depot for you.
 - Kitchen dishwasher – we have been researching industrial dishwashers for the kitchen so that we can dramatically reduce the use of disposable plates and cutlery. With the recent fire in the kitchen necessitating a renovation, we hope a dishwasher will be part of the project.
 - Alternate heating/cooling system – Heating the church in winter is mainly by an electric furnace resulting in a large annual electricity bill. Research on alternate sources for heating and cooling the church building (such as a ground source geothermal heat pump) or an alternate source of electricity (such as an array of photovoltaic panels) is underway.
 - Bulletin Board – The articles and information on the “Green Team” are updated and posted on a regular basis, so you are encouraged to check out the board regularly
 - Energy Audit – the EMUC building has some basic airflow and heating problems. An energy audit is under consideration to study the building’s energy efficiency and to provide suggestions for correction and reduction of annual energy costs.
- Community gardens – Take a look at the community gardens at the west end of EMUC’s property. Folks are growing all kinds of produce. If you don’t have space for a vegetable garden at home, maybe you’d like to have one of the plots next year?

Upcoming events – planned green activities for this fall include:

During October, worship service and other events will lift up the theme: “Creating a Life Giving Climate”.

On October 25, Peter Hodgkinson has arranged for a representative from the Region of Peel to speak about water issues. Be sure to attend and receive a free refillable water bottle.

The next Green Team meeting is scheduled for September 23 at 7:30 p.m. Please join us if you are interested in taking part in this important work.

Andy Wilson, co-chair, EMUC Green Team



Journey to General Council, Kelowna BC

Theme & Agenda

The theme for the United Church of Canada's 40th General Council was "Down to the Potter's House" based on the scriptural passage: Jeremiah 18:1. This theme was selected by the outgoing Moderator Rt Reverend David Giuliano in the hope of inspiring commissioners to be part of the shaping of our church through participation in the community of faith and in responding to the call of being Christ in the world. In the opening worship of council, potters and their wheels were placed on stage and as they worked the clay, worshippers could visualize the molding and shaping of our lives by the community that uplifts us and supports us. At the closing worship all participants at council were gifted with pottery communion cups as a reminder of this time and of our connection to one another as we and the church are molded.

The work of this General Council was made possible through the coordination and work of many teams and I hesitate to name various groups but cannot forget the work, time and passion given by the Agenda and Planning committee, Local Arrangements team, the Worship team. The Agenda and Planning team worked to ensure that we would be able to fit all the work into the seven days and include time for worship, discernment and decision making. Each day the agenda was revised with new and continuing business. The Local Arrangements spent time greeting and transporting commissioners and guests to the location at UBC Okanagan, registering the approximate 700 guests, answering questions and calming our fears of the local fires. One group set about sewing cloth bags for each registrant to be given with registration information. The Worship team worked to ensure that during worship we honoured the land and the traditions of the area, that the language of worship included both French and English and that we were truly living into the church's vision of being an intercultural church. Our church life is truly shown through the hearts of the people, many and diverse.

Our gathering space in the gymnasium was framed by 400 prayer flags sent in by local congregations to acknowledge that their prayers would be with the Council during this time. The flags offered a wide variety of fabrics, textures and designs which also emphasized the diversity of our church. There were drawings, signatures, quilted diagrams, shocks of wheat gracing these flags around the space for the week.

The work of the Council

Prior to General Council Commissioners receive two "workbooks" the first of which involves the general details of the event and a draft agenda. The second includes the details of all reports and the 173 proposals to be discussed during the seven days in Kelowna. There are some proposals that are discussed in the full court (the commons) but others are divided between three commissions. This year the commissions (Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic) were named to remind us that our church that crosses the country from sea to sea to sea. Each commission examined from 30-73 proposals and made decisions on behalf of the full court on these proposals. Commission allocation is done based on diversity from the membership of all commissioners to ensure balanced representation (by conference, ordained/diaconal/designated/lay ministry, male/female, age category). With this intentionality, it is hoped that the voice of commissioners represents your voice at the national level. Each Commission focused on proposals with a similar theme to ensure that decisions were made based on all relevant information. My simplified summary of the very detailed work of the commissions would be summarized as follows. The Pacific Commission dealt with proposals with a primary focus on ministry and employment standards, The Arctic Commission reviewed and discussed proposals with a focus on the work of the church through mandates and ministries, locally and nationally. The Atlantic Commission's focus was primarily on the place of our church in the world.

Two documents were offered for commissioners to review prior to arrival at General Council: "State of the Church" and "Called to be Church". The reports described the identity, nature and context of the United Church of Canada at this time. In the Commons, proposals were offered and discussed regarding Denominational Identity, the Meaning of Ministry, Candidacy Pathway, Transfer and Settlement for Ministers and Future setting of priorities. Further motions were made from the floor of council, and included adding two names to the ballot for the election of Moderator on Friday. The names on the ballot included 8 candidates and the successful candidate was Mardi Tindal.

Mardi Tindal, New Moderator of the United Church

Mardi is the Executive Director of the Five Oaks Centre, near Paris ON, a United Church education centre. Mardi, a lay leader in the church, was raised in the rural community of Victoria Square, Ontario, and now lives in Brantford. She has an M.A. in psychology from the University of Toronto. Throughout her life her vocational choices have led her into leadership with children and youth as camp director of UCC's Camp Big Canoe and as a program staff for youth at the national church offices. She and her husband Doug were Stewardship and Communications officers for Hamilton Conference, and of course many will remember Mardi as co-host of the UCC's show 'Spirit Connection' on Vision TV.

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Mardi states that she is deeply committed to encouraging young leaders and to living in right relationship with creation, in and beyond our faith community. To a church struggling at times with the perception of inadequate resources, Mardi says, "What's most important is to discern what's faithful, set a course, trust in God's abundance, and invite people into it."

One of Mardi's spiritual disciplines is to begin each day with 20 to 30 minutes of silence—the practice of Christian meditation—to be silent, still, and simple. "In those times I'm reminded of God's abundance, and things are put in their proper perspective, and the day is different as a result," she said.

Tindal's international church experience includes leading pilgrimages to Iona (Scotland), continuing education in Jamaica, and giving leadership within the global ecumenical network of retreat centres. Her active involvement in the life of the church continues as a member of Sydenham Street United Church in Brantford, Ontario, and as a member of Erie Presbytery.

Read More on United Church of Canada Website!

Much occurred during those seven days of council and no one article will be able to do justice to this work. Please take the time to review further information regarding the 40th General Council found on the GC40 Website. (gc40.united-church.ca) The daily newsletters are available to provide information on decisions as well as video clips from specific presentations and other events at council.

Deb Siertsema

Living into Right Relations A Visit to Curve Lake First Nation - Sept 26, 2009

As The United Church of Canada continues to walk in partnership with our First Nations brothers and sisters and to live out the apologies offered by the church we can also do our part by getting to know our neighbours.

On Saturday September 26, you are invited to travel with Deb Siertsema (working in the Aboriginal Ministries Circle at the General Council Office) and Marney Dyker (former minister at Curve Lake United Church) to meet friends and colleagues in Curve Lake First Nations Community just north of Peterborough.

Departure from EMUC will be at 8:30 am, to give us time for a full day of activities there. We will meet with the Chief in the Band Office; enjoy lunch prepared by the women of the local United Church, and will head over to the amazing Whetung Art Gallery (www.whetung.com) to shop, observe and particularly to meet an artist who is a residential school survivor. It will be a very full day, with information, education, observation and shopping. Departure from Curve Lake will be at 3 pm, leaving time for dinner and evening activities back home.

Drivers are needed for the 2 hour trip. Please contact Erin Mills office or Deb Siertsema (905-814-0590), or Marney Dyker (905-286-1885 (until Sept.14, and then at (905- 891-1885) by September 18th so that those who are hosting lunch have a week's notice to prepare for lunch. Please sign up for the trip by calling the office or by signing on the bulletin board at the church.

Kyotoplus

In December of 2009, government representatives from countries all over the world will be meeting in Copenhagen to negotiate a climate change treaty to follow the Kyoto Protocol. In order to ensure that our government knows what expectations Canadians have for this treaty, a national broad-based petition campaign, 'Kyotoplus', has been created. This campaign has been endorsed by a coalition of 500 Canadian environmental, labour, indigenous, human rights and faith-based groups.

KAIROS is coordinating church participation in this campaign. The petition calls on Canadian politicians to set a national target to cut greenhouse gas emissions; implement an effective plan to reach this target; help developing nations reduce their emissions and adapt to climate change; and adopt a bold, strengthened second phase of the Kyoto Protocol in Copenhagen. Copies of the petition are available at the church or it can be signed on line at www.kyotoplus.ca

"Pedal for the Planet" is part of the 'Kyotoplus' campaign. In late June and early July riders left Whitehorse in the Yukon, Victoria, B.C. and St. John's, Nfld. All are bound for Ottawa where they will converge with others arriving by foot or by train in mid September. They will demonstrate their personal commitment to change and relay the expectations that Canadians have for the government to take action on climate change both at home and in Copenhagen. The riders' schedule included a public forum hosted by Erin Mills United on September 2.

Book Review

Without or Without God , Vosper, Gretta

Vosper, a United Church minister at West Hill United Church, believes that religions are human constructions, that they have caused a great amount of destruction in the world, that the Bible is not the Word of God, that there is no God, and that the churches that still exist should emphasize only the ethical values that exist in all religions: values of love and compassion and care for the environment.

To further these radical beliefs, Vosper has founded the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity, for those exploring the boundaries of Christian thought.

Vosper's book is the most radical I have ever read. Vosper declares that Jesus is not the Son of God. The term 'Son of God' only indicates a person with a heightened moral value, anyway, and it comes from the thought processes in the culture in which the gospel writers were raised.

In Vosper's opinion, many clergy are unwilling to share with their congregations the critical views of the Bible which they have been taught in the theological colleges. If they did, it would be difficult to replace the conservative views of the congregations with regard to the Bible with other motivations that would still encourage attendance and good works. So Vosper, in the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity is trying to say that practicing love and compassion, and showing concern for the environment should be high enough motivation in themselves, without the notion of God to impel us. Because God does not exist (according to Vosper), to save the planet, and ourselves is up to us. There is no higher power that will do it for us.

I believe that Vosper ignores the transcendent experiences that give power to the Bible stories. What did Moses hear at the burning bush that gave him direction to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt? What gave power to Jeremiah to challenge the Jewish people about their behaviour, which led to him to be rewarded by being thrown down a well? How did Amos gain the insight that God was not pleased with burnt offerings, but instead wanted justice and mercy? Why is Jesus still such a presence in the world that women and men children find comfort and challenge in invoking his name?

To Vosper, there is no God or god. Yet she remains as a minister within the United Church: she practices baptism of a sort, she celebrates communion of a sort. She wants the church of the future to inspire the world with beauty, justice, integrity, and a constant yearning for truth. But what will be the new motivation which the world does not now have? She would not recognize the Bible motivation, "The fear (often translated as 'awe') of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," (Ps 111:10) or the words of Jesus, "I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will not walk in darkness" John 8:12

Vosper has written a readable and valuable challenge to those with flabby beliefs. Is she right? Does God exist? If you or I believe God exists, what difference does that make in our lives? Is the church a drag on society, or a God-inspired and directed society? This book is an important confrontation to believers.

Lloyd Freel

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