

## Yellowknife United Church Newsletter

### December 2010

#### Choose Life!

"Listen. What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled among the weeds and nothing came of it. Some fell on good earth and came up with a flourish, producing a harvest exceeding his wildest dreams. "Are you listening to this? Really listening?" Mark 4: 3-9 (The Message)

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving your God, obeying God, and holding fast to God; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that God swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Deuteronomy 30: 19,20 (NRSV alt.)



In my visits to presbyteries during the first year in my term as president, a theme began to form for me as a result of the questions I was asked to address and in a kind of general mood that people are feeling across the church in ANW Conference. As might be expected I got better at perceiving this and addressing it as the year progressed. Its most recent form comes out of the two passages quoted above. We don't have enough resources to do everything. We're not even sure that it is right (or righteous) to do everything. So, we need a tool for discernment. Recognizing that seed is being scattered far and wide - as described by Jesus in the parable of the sower, we need to discern which of those seeds have landed in good soil and focus our attention on nurturing them. In short, we need to do what the passage from Deuteronomy asks us to do: Choose life!

The question then becomes, where is the life we are being called to choose? I know for me that part of the answer came a few years ago when I read The Heart of Christianity by Marcus Borg. It was there that I think I first read the term "emerging Christianity". Borg described a Christian faith that is different in many ways from what might have been a normative expression a few decades ago. This is a faith which is radically welcoming. By this I mean that this "emerging faith" is one which expresses welcome openly but also specifically. This means that we don't just say that we welcome everyone, we make it clear. Of course we welcome everyone, but we then spell it out. We welcome regardless of sexual orientation. The church of a few decades ago would say that it welcomed everyone, but it was clear to some people that they weren't welcome. This radical welcome is also one which is open to the changes that can be expected with such a welcome. There is not just an openness, but an expectation that every new person welcomed will change the way we are and will in turn lead to an even wider openness. There is one kind of welcome which expects and accepts others. There is another kind of welcome which expects others to change the way we are.

The characteristic of being radically welcoming is one that could be seen to be a means of evangelism. This is evangelism that is somewhat different from an older style. It also might seem at odds with yet another characteristic of "emerging Christianity", radical ecumenism. Ecumenism in Borg's "emerging faith" is not just dialogue and co-operation between Christian denominations, it is multi-faith dialogue. It is a recognition that there is more than one way to live faithfully and that we learn more about the way of God in discussion, conversation and study of all the ways that people come to know God.

Finally (at least for this article!) I see another sign of life coming out of "emerging Christianity". This characteristic involves inner growth in the form of spiritual practice. This too, is ecumenical in nature. It draws upon spiritual practices from many different faith traditions in order to make connections with God at a deeper level. I've seen it at work in our congregation with the small gatherings of people who come for times of contemplative prayer and practice. I can see it in other congregations who have started drumming circles and healing touch groups. There are many more options to be explored along this path.

It is easy in these times to see a half empty glass. There is always a will to be bigger, but I think if that is the real desire then it won't happen. The real desire should be to "choose life". Find the things that affirm and add to the life of ourselves and our community of faith. Nurture them, feed them and reap the harvest.

Peter Chynoweth

## Christian Education Update

The Christian Education Committee reviewed curriculum options this summer. The challenge: to find supportive materials that would help a rotating group of Sunday School facilitators deliver exciting ideas to a continually changing mix of children, in the same classroom. Our Sunday School classes might range from two pre-school children to a mixed-age group of ten to twelve school-age children.

*One Room Sunday School:* This curriculum was designed by The United Methodist church specifically for a children's Christian education program where four or more age groups are taught in one classroom. *One Room Sunday School* provides materials where children ages three through middle school participate in comprehensive Bible study, apply Bible lessons to everyday discipleship, and engage in a variety of age-appropriate activities. The resource materials are very user friendly.

At Yellowknife United Church, we have a terrific group of children who come to Sunday School with questions and enthusiasm. They are engaged in the world around them and love to explore values, current events, and ethical issues. The One Room Sunday School curriculum provides you with the tools and prompts you need to structure discussion and activities.

Each week, there is a clear spiritual message and a variety of activities from which you may choose for that day's lesson. You may wish to photocopy a worksheet or do a game from the resource guide. If you are a person who loves to read a story to a child, can help a child colour or do a craft, or even act out a Bible story, we welcome your time and ideas.

Not sure you can teach Sunday School? There are many ways you can check out the curriculum and your comfort zone:

- Shadow or observe another Sunday School teacher
- Co-teach with someone
- Borrow the curriculum to check out the lesson plans

If you have any questions... see Reverend Peter or Sandy Little.

## Warm Feet For The Street

With your help, the Yellowknife United Church Outreach Committee will provide stuffed socks to homeless people coming to the Salvation Army foot hygiene program this Christmas.

We encourage you to buy a pair (or more) of warm socks and then fill one sock with the other sock and top it off with useful articles for a person whose home is the streets and who carry all their belongings in one small bag. Travel size items are appreciated. Please bring your filled socks to church on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, **December 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>**.

Please include the following items with each pair of socks:

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|--|---|
| • Phone card                                 | • Kleenex                                 |
| • Band-aids (small package - not a full box) | • Toothbrush and toothpaste               |
| • Lip balm                                   | • Skin cream (travel size)                |
| • Comb                                       | • One of the following gift certificates: |
| • Disposable razor/shaving cream             | (Equivalent to one meal)                  |
| • Gum, candy bar, mints                      | The Gourmet Cup*                          |
|  | McDonalds                                 |

Four more items, which may include such things as:

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|--------------------|----------------------|
| • Gloves           | • Small address book |
| • Small sewing kit | • Pen & pad          |
| • Calendar         | • Bookmark           |

**Please do not include articles that contain an alcoholic base such as after shave, mouth wash, hair spray, hand sanitizer or perfume.**



\* Gourmet Cup vouchers are available from Gwyneth at the YKUC office.



## United Church Women Annual Christmas Tea & Sale

**When:** Saturday, December 4, 2010  
**Where:** Northern United Place Auditorium  
**Time:** 2 pm to 4 pm  
**Cost:** \$5 / adult  
 \$2 / children under five

### UCW

This is a busy time of year for most of us and particularly for the UCW. We have already made our antipasto and pepper jelly in the kitchen at the church this fall. Thanks to all of you who donated items and money to purchase the ingredients. Thank you also to everyone who came out on these evenings and worked together preparing these prized foods for the Annual Christmas Tea & Sale. These specialty foods will be on sale on Saturday, Dec. 4, in the auditorium of Northern United Place from 2-4 p.m.

If you are able to help with the Annual Christmas Tea & Sale, we are looking for donations of baked goods or crafts. These can be dropped off at the church between 10 a.m. and noon on the day of the sale. We are also looking for people to help us prepare for the event or to work at it. If you are willing to give us a hand, please speak to one of the UCW members or call Marg Henderson at 873-4428.

The United Church Women (UCW) have set our schedule of events for the upcoming year. Please mark your calendars with the following important dates:

December 4, 2010 @ 2:00 am  
 Christmas Tea and Sale  
 (Preparations start at 10:00 am)

February 7, 2011 @ 6:30 pm  
 Kitchen clean-up (tentative date)

March 7, 2011 @ 7:30 pm  
 Regular meeting (place to be determined)

April 30, 2011 @ 8:00 am  
 Garage Sale, NUP Auditorium

June 6, 2011 @ 6:30 pm  
 Wind-up Pot Luck & Penny Auction  
 (hosted by Marg Henderson)

Money raised from the fund-raising activities are donated to worthy local, national and international causes. To be successful we need the support of the whole congregation. Thanks!

For further information, contact:  
 Marg Henderson 873-4428  
 Jeannette Hall 873-3942  
 Sharon Chynoweth 873-3089

### Water, Necessary for Life

Ecological justice is that which respects and seeks to preserve and advocates for just relationships among all living things. It concerns the future of all life upon this planet, the coordination of the natural world and our human impact or foot print on it. (Mandate Contents, Feb.2007)

The Outreach committee is looking at ways to reduce the use of bottled water in NUP. In some parts of the world there is restricted access to water that is safe for human consumption. The current outbreak of cholera in Haiti is a real example of this, where people living in conditions of poor sanitation are contracting the bacterial infection that is spread through contaminated water. In Yellowknife people enjoy drinking water directly from their taps because there is a safe source of water from the lake as well as a municipal infrastructure to ensure a quality of water that meets health standards. Purchasing bottled water is unnecessary and only serves to support the companies producing and manufacturing bottled water. The refuse from the discarded bottles is non-biodegradable and takes years to break down in land fill sites.



Canada is a land of lakes and rivers. The lives and livelihood of First Nations people was built upon this: transportation and trade routes, safety and security, harvesting and drinking was all dependent upon the water that flowed in the rivers and lakes where they lived, and continues to be today to some extent. There are connections within the water systems in western Canada. The Athabasca River flows from Jasper on the western border of Alberta and British Columbia and continues to flow north to Lake Athabasca where Fort Chipewyan and Wood Buffalo National Park are situated. QuatreForche is the junction where four waters meet in the Delta near Fort Chipewyan and industrial activity on one of these lakes or rivers affects them all.

In 2007, tar sands companies were granted approval to withdraw one hundred and twenty billion gallons of water for their operations with most of the water coming from the Athabasca River. Much of the reclaimed water, after it has been used in the process of bituminous extraction combines with waste sand and toxins used in the extraction process such as benzene and naphthenic acid ends up in tailings ponds now covering one hundred and thirty square kilometres. (Kairos, Christian Faith and the Canadian Tar Sands)

Wise and judicious use of water involves thinking about quantities of water that are accessible to all living creatures as well as the quality of the water. Trans-provincial and trans-territorial agreements could be developed regarding water usage. Native people, NGO's, industry and governments need to work together to determine the cost/benefit of industrial use of water. Listening to the stake holders and the debate that could ensue is necessary before rivers and lakes, iconic symbols in the Canadian psyche as well as an element necessary to life, is extracted beyond its recuperative capacity. Guidelines that are agreed to by all the stake holders for the use of water by industry, need to be in place.



## Art and Dessert Auction

A fundraising “Art and Dessert Auction” was held on September 25, 2010 in conjunction with the fall supper. Original artwork, photographs, prints, and edible artwork plus some stray homegrown Yellowknife garden produce was up for grabs. By the end of the evening, \$1,106 was raised to support the work of the church. Thanks to our artists, photographers, bakers, and donors and a special thanks to those in attendance who kept the bidding lively.

A few of the artists who contributed their art to the auction were Janice Daly, Sean Daly and Aidan Cartwright. Nancy Trotter takes a look at the art submitted. (right)

The Art and Dessert auction was a fundraiser organised by the Stewardship committee.

Community and Life Membership (CLAM) committee organized the potluck.



Nancy Trotter worked in Africa from October 2009 until February 2010 on an environmental health project in sanitation. Nancy worked in Monrovia, Liberia. Before the war from 1989-2003 there were lots of wells in Liberia but now there are fewer wells and a satisfactory system for sanitation and waste disposal, both solid and liquid waste is not in place. People purchase “pure water” in plastic bags and toss the bags into the streets when they are finished. There is a covering of plastic everywhere, the roads and streets have layers of plastic refuse mainly from the “pure water” packaging. Nancy with colleagues working in Environmental Health in Monrovia were trying to find ways for people to be more responsible for the waste they create after consuming potable water from bags. They had a meeting with a delegation of people who worked in sanitation in Ghana to discuss what they were doing in Ghana with similar waste. In Ghana they had created work for women to collect the waste bags, sort the waste and they set up a plant to shred and make the plastic in to cords which were exported to Korea for use as computer parts. In Liberia they were considering a plastic coating that is used in tar for finishing road surfaces. When Nancy returned to Canada her African colleagues were investigating the kind of infrastructure that would be necessary to recycle the water bags in this way. They were meeting with many of the stakeholders to find a way to make this potential solution work. In most developing countries, the infrastructure for recycling refuse doesn’t exist and it is expensive to get some of these basic systems in place.



Nancy with the children.

Nancy looking at the cocoa plant and learning about it.



The community thanking Nancy in Monrovia, Liberia.