

Yellowknife United Church

Winter Newsletter 2009

In our end is our beginning...

It is Saturday morning on the day before the last Sunday in the church year. I am in Whitehorse in order to participate in worship at Whitehorse United Church where a covenant with God and among the congregation of Whitehorse United Church, Northern Lights Presbytery and Bev Brazier will be celebrated tomorrow. It looks like it is going to be a wonderful time of worship – a symbolic beginning for the ministry relationship that Bev and Whitehorse United Church began in practice in September of this year. It seems fitting to have this juxtaposition of ending – the church year - and beginning – the start of a new pastoral relationship. That's what I've been contemplating for the past few days as I consider what I will have to say in both the time with the children and a very short reflection at tomorrow's service. Part of my reflection has included a phrase running around in my head from Natalie Sleeth's hymn – In the Bulb there is a Flower. The phrase gives title to this article, namely “In our end is our beginning”. It reminds us of the fact that endings do indeed lead to beginnings.



Over the past several weeks at Yellowknife United Church the basis for the “Learning with Children” time has been a fill-in-the-blank sentence: God is _____. We've reflected on all the different ways that sentence can be completed. On Anniversary Sunday – the culmination of a wonderful weekend of celebration, the sentence was completed with the word “connections”. We explored the connections that everyone in the congregation, including those who came from other places to be with us that weekend, have with each other and how that is an important image of God. In the same way, endings and beginnings are connected. When endings are connected with beginnings we have a circle – literally and figuratively. I plan to demonstrate it with a ribbon during the learning time at Whitehorse tomorrow, but I'm sure you can also imagine how an ending connects with a beginning to form a circle. I am of the firm belief that God loves circles. There are so many of them in creation – the circle of the sun, moon and earth. Circles of ripples when a stone is tossed into a pool of water. Circles of light. The circle of the seasons whether it be Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer, or Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost and the Christian seasons in between, and of course circles of people.

We sing, Draw the Circle Wide, daring to imagine a community which is close enough that we can touch our neighbour, but open enough that our neighbours are constantly changing as others are drawn into the circle of faith – celebrating the connections we have with each other and with God – “the still point of the circle, 'round whom all creation turns”.

And so as we move into our new season in the Christian year, a season meant to be full of thoughtful reflection about our relationship with God and pregnant anticipation of new and meaningful insights into the ways God is active and present in our lives, let us consider the circles that God invites us to form and to join. What new thing is God calling us to do?

Peter Chynoweth, Minister

September Pot Luck Supper and Pie Auction

The September Pot luck supper held on September 26 was organized through the Community Life and Ministry Committee. Rhubarb and pumpkin pies were the flavours for the night in the pie auction where fifteen pies were auctioned and three-hundred and thirty eight dollars was raised for the Stewardship committee. Everyone who came contributed casseroles, salads, vegetable dishes, and tea, coffee, pickles and punch were contributed by Community Life and Membership Committee. Fifty- five people came to the event. The cooperation from people who set up for the supper in the late afternoon and cleaned up at the end of the evening was much appreciated. The six youth who helped were so efficient it was a challenge to find work for them throughout the evening.



Jan Stirling, Nora Sanders, Lois Kornichuk-Anniversary Dinner, Nov.7,2009

United Church Women Annual Christmas Tea & Sale

When: Saturday, December 5, 2009
Where: Northern United Place Auditorium
Time: 2 pm to 4 pm
Cost: \$5 / adult
\$2 / children under five



Come enjoy a nice cup of tea or coffee with some friends, and pick up some Christmas Baking at the same time.

Yellowknife United Church 50th Anniversary Celebrations November 7th and 8th

Many people who are presently part of the vibrant community of Yellowknife United Church came out for the anniversary celebrations on November 7th and 8th. There were many people who have moved away from Yellowknife who returned for the week-end of celebration. Letters and greetings were sent from all parts of Canada from people who were active in Yellowknife United Church at one time and are still a part of this community in spirit.

Kate and David Hamilton, former members of the Yellowknife United Church met Joyce and Bob Thomson this fall and after a brief visit they found a way for Joyce and Bob to be in Yellowknife to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary on November 7th weekend. Bob Thomson was minister at Yellowknife United Church from 1963-67. He told a story of flying to Lutselk'e to baptize an infant one winter and returning in a blizzard. The wings of the plane were heavily iced and the pilot had no visibility by the time they landed on Back Bay. All four of their sons were born in Yellowknife and one was buried in infancy in Yellowknife. Both Joyce and Bob recounted stories of the caring community of which they were a part while serving in Yellowknife.

Will Kunder, presently Executive Secretary of Manitou Conference, came to the Northwest Territories as an educator in Lutselk'e. Will struggled to understand the high absenteeism of his students. Over time Will became aware of the experience the community had with education: an experience marred by residential schools and he began to understand the intergenerational impact of the residential school system. The parents of the children still went to church and this puzzled Will based on their childhood experiences in schools that were thousands of miles away from their families and communities and created an estrangement that exists for many survivors to this day. The residential schools were operated by the Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Churches as well as the Federal government. Will questioned his faith and he didn't think he would remain faithful after witnessing this intergenerational disruption that was a result of misguided federal policy enforced and supported by the churches. Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife was the last residential school in the north and it closed its doors to students in 1990. Will thought this was progress: students throughout the Northwest Territories could be educated in their home communities. When Will left the North to study theology he had a lifeline of support from Yellowknife. His key supporters on his spiritual journey were Elaine Stewart, Barb Paquin and Donna Allen.

Sue Short, wife of Reverend Peter Short, reminisced about the Giant Mine Women's Exercise group and she recalled doing abdominal crunches in the recreation hall every Tuesday and Thursday in what is now the Mining Heritage Museum. Peter Short was minister of Yellowknife United Church from 1983-1990 and was Moderator of the United Church of Canada from 2003-2006. Sue recalled the best trip to Bethlehem she had in her life. She trudged through deep snow on 50 A Avenue along with Peter and their three children, looking like nomads, wearing bathrobes with dish towels tied to their heads on a pilgrimage to recreate the Nativity in Northern United Place. One of their children cried that Christmas Eve when they returned to the manse because she couldn't sleep in the stable with the baby Jesus. Sue invited women in the church to be a "cell group" and soon they became a tightly knit "cell block". Elaine Stewart, Donna Allen, Marie Wilson, and Nora Sanders were the group. Those women carried Sue through the trials and uncertainties of Peter's call to service in the Middle East in 1991.

The Yellowknife United Church choir sang a medley of songs from the musicals of Andrew Lloyd Webber during the evening with Elizabeth Tamblyn directing and Sharon Chynoweth accompanying. The Men's Celtic Chorus sang a repertoire of Irish and Scottish tunes.

The organizing committee, Sharon Chynoweth, Marg Henderson, Ian Moir, Brenda Tittlemier, Peter Chynoweth and Barb Paquin did a wonderful job of organizing the events of the weekend. Elaine Stewart was the emcee for the Saturday evening. The Anniversary Committee made contact in the past few months with former Yellowknife United Church members and pastors who are a part of the rich heritage of the church.

Children's time during the service on November 8th Peter Chynoweth showed the congregation all of the connections that Yellowknife United Church has across Canada. He invited visitors who had a connection to Yellowknife United Church to come up and the ledge beneath the altar quickly filled.

Nora Sanders, General Secretary of the United Church spoke from the book of Revelations and explored the idea of God saying everything is made new. Nora said that something new means letting the old fall away and taking something unknown instead, which can be both frightening and exciting. She talked about occurrences in nature where everything is made new and how beautiful it can be, as part of regeneration, renewal and regrowth.

Peter Chynoweth opened the evening dinner on Saturday, November 7th saying he had walked up to Pilot's Monument that week and this was symbolic for the call to members of the church to look out with vision for Yellowknife United Church. He said members need to look for opportunities to give in service and to give in blessings: for ways to go forth with new energy to spread God's Word.

With Peter's opening on the Saturday evening of the fiftieth anniversary celebration and Nora's reflection during Sunday service, people who attended were left with a tingling of anticipation of what the next steps will be for a people called to serve God.



An Interview With ...

Marie Wilson is one of three commissioners appointed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine the Indian Residential School experience that occurred across Canada from 1867-1990.

Joyce: This is a five year project but the work is a going forward legacy. What is that legacy?

Marie: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an opportunity to document the first hand personal accounts of survivors, staff in the schools and anyone else affected, other community members, second generation family. Our job is to document this as well as archive what is researched to create what will be a comprehensive and living document of the residential school experience. Our term is five years and it will be impossible to reach everyone, but we can create the mechanism, get it into place. We can gather all the arts and media, perhaps create a resource facility that is accessible to future generations.

Joyce: Would the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg that is scheduled to open in 2012 be the kind of place you are talking about?

Marie: The intention is to have an Aboriginal section with links to the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg from the National Research Centre in Ottawa. There will be seven national events over the course of the five years and the components of truth gathering include dialogue, reconciliation gestures, expressions of sorrow and forgiveness. We can know the great successes of people and that good things can come of bad or the building and strengthening of character that comes from adversity.

Joyce: What are the biggest challenges faced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Marie: First, how do we get out to those survivors, all eighty thousand of them spread out across the country-to let people know where we are and if they want we can come to them. Readiness to talk is a critical issue for some of the survivors. Some of the survivors may not be healthy enough to talk. Secondly, how do we help other Canadians sit up and take notice. How do we help them take ownership of this as citizens, to recognize the need to re-visit this and deal with Canada's dirty little secret in our history. Who knows what is good for little children? Canadian policy at the time was to kill the Indian in the child. What presumption informs such policy? We need to have a big, extremely meaningful conversation, the kind that takes you to new understandings, something that takes you beyond the ordinary.

Joyce: What would you like people in the Yellowknife United Church community to consider about the Indian Residential School system?

Marie: I'd like to ask people what restored ruptured relationships look like as church members. What does it look like daily as citizens? What do we need to do as citizens and church members to reconcile relationships?

Birth Announcement

Reverend Peter and Sharon Chynoweth welcomed their first grandchild,

Tekerra Coral Christie, on Wednesday, November 4, 2009.

Tekerra weighted 7 lbs, 10 oz.



Outreach Update November 2009

Here are some recent highlights of the local and international activities that the Outreach committee has been involved with on behalf of the church:

- For Advent, we are again coordinating the donation of socks filled with useful items to men at the Salvation Army on Christmas Eve. We will also pay for refreshments to be served at the shelter's Christmas Eve party.
- In November we partnered with the John Howard Society to support their family fiddle dance marking National Addictions Awareness Week.
- Peter Chynoweth and other members of the congregation have been building a stronger connection with residents of Northern United Place through weekly 'coffee times'. We will also be giving a Christmas card to each of the residents and extending an offer to help with grocery shopping.
- Church members continue to donate ready-to-eat snacks to the purple box in the lobby of Northern United Place. These snacks are available to anyone who needs them and are apparently quite popular.
- We continue to sponsor the education of Timmy Mbambiko through contributions to the Zambia Mission Fund. Timmy is a student at Xlamwianga Christian Secondary School in Kalomo, Zambia. Apparently he is bright, personable and an extraordinary singer.
- Through Nancy Trotter, who has gone to Liberia for six months, we have an opportunity to contribute to some projects there. One is a training school where women learn how to sew and how to run a business. The class has teachers, students and sewing machines, but no supplies like material or thread. Our money will go toward buying start-up material, and the women plan to sell items made to buy more supplies.
- We offer free meeting space or reduced rates at Northern United Place to many Yellowknife groups including Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cinema Politica, Cubs, and a Seniors Dancercise Class.
- The two-year **United for Peace** campaign wraps up in December. We are invited to learn about the root causes of violence, call on the Canadian government to take actions that promote peace around the world, and give to support Canadian and global partners as they work for peace with justice for all people. See www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/unitedforpeace for more details.
- Looking ahead to next year, in February we plan to join with the local Amnesty International group to hold a coffee house to raise awareness for international human rights.
- We have begun exploring the idea of making Northern United Place a water bottle-free zone. Stay tuned!

Our committee now has three members (Joanna Wilson, Brenda Tittlemier and Elizabeth Tamblyn) plus Peter Chynoweth who is an ex-officio member and attends most meetings. We would definitely welcome new members!

Report from General Council 40

The United Church of Canada's General Council is a national gathering which meets every three years to elect a new Moderator and to approve new and/or revisions to church policies. In 2009 the gathering was held August 9 to 15 in Kelowna, B.C. The theme for this General Council was "down to the potter's house" based on Jeremiah 18:1.

I attended GC40 as the Lay Representative from Northern Lights Presbytery. This was my first General Council and overall it was a wonderful experience although during the early stages of GC I felt somewhat frustrated. That frustration was with what seemed to be slow progress and a sense of mistrust by some people with actions that had been taken subsequent to the last General Council. In spite of that initial frustration, as the week passed things progressed quite well and decisions were made as required.

Some of the highlights that I noted from the meetings were:

1. The wonderful and varied forms of worship, with music led by rEvolvE.
2. The involvement of youth and children in General Council. The youth participated fully and added so much insight into the discussions and to worship. There was also a group of younger children present and they actually introduced the moderator candidates. Their video introductions were created in the form of G "CSI", General Council Special Investigations. They were super and can be seen on the GC web site.
3. The initiative by the youth to raise funds for a special environmental project for Naramata. In the end they raised approximately \$15000.
4. Each day we stated the "Whole People's Covenant" as a reminder of who we are and how we are to relate to each other.
5. The development of five themes to guide the church during the next 3 years.
6. The fact that we are trying to become an inter-cultural church, which has active aboriginal, French, and racialized ministries.
7. The development of 6 word stories to describe the United Church. Some of these were very serious while others were humorous. "Gospels told. People Bold. Buildings sold." "More franchises than Timmy's- better bread." "Followers of Jesus make world better." "God loves you, act like it." And one I can really relate to "Old white guys the new minority."
8. The presentation on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was created as a result of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Agreement. Marie Wilson, a member of Yellowknife United Church, is one of the 3 person commission and she made the presentation. Marie has since made a similar presentation to us here. In addition the personal testimonies of some residential school survivors were very powerful and moving.
9. We had a picture taken of current and former members of Yellowknife United Church and there were 9 people in the picture, which had to be close to a record attendance for a church.
10. Certainly last but not least the election of our new moderator Mardi Tindal.

It is difficult to report on seven days of activities in a few words. If anyone would like additional information about GC40 please ask Peter or myself.

Lloyd Henderson

Nancy with Ten Toes on the Ground

Nancy got this name when she took her sandals off in the home of a woman who gave her a bed for the night while she was visiting in her village. Nancy Trotter, a registered nurse with Health and Social Services Authority in Yellowknife is currently working in Liberia, Africa. Nancy worked in a refugee camp in Ghana in 2007. Since she arrived in Liberia in October, she is living in a township outside Monrovia, working on an assignment with the corporation environmental health department for the city of Monrovia. She is organizing a survey assessment of a number of community areas in



Monrovia. She writes, "Many people moved in the city during and right after the war for protection and stayed. The city is very stressed in terms of the infrastructure to handle all of the people from the country. There is a big garbage problem: not enough toilets and therefore a problem with safe drinking water. I am very impressed with how hard everyone is working to make things better. I have been out in the country, stayed overnight at a new housing place. The scenery is amazing, real rain forest. Again, there is no plan for wells and latrines/toilets, so this beautiful place has a big problem. I have been connecting with some of the people I knew from the camp when I was here in 2007, and it is great to see them all again. Scott McDonald a former Yellowknifer and volunteer I met at the camp in Ghana in 2007 will be coming here in December and I am looking forward to seeing him again. So close your eyes and imagine all the smells, sounds, passion, crowds and beauty of this place."

News Bites

Ed Jeske has been a member of YKUC since 1958.

Lynne Elkin was a CGIT member at YKUC in 1972.

Rae Brown was married in 1972 in the old church building for YKUC.

We extend our greetings to Kevin Nottle who is on leave in Vancouver after serving with the Canadian Department of National Defence in Afghanistan.

Please stuff a pair of socks for the "Christmas sock drive" so people who drop into the Salvation Army can experience the joy of opening a stocking on Christmas morning.

Please fill the purple box inside the foyer with small juice packs, granola bars and other non-perishable snacks for people who drop into Northern United Place and are in need of food or drink.

What in the world are Jaime, Bruce, Zam, Hizee & Ziko up to in Mexico?

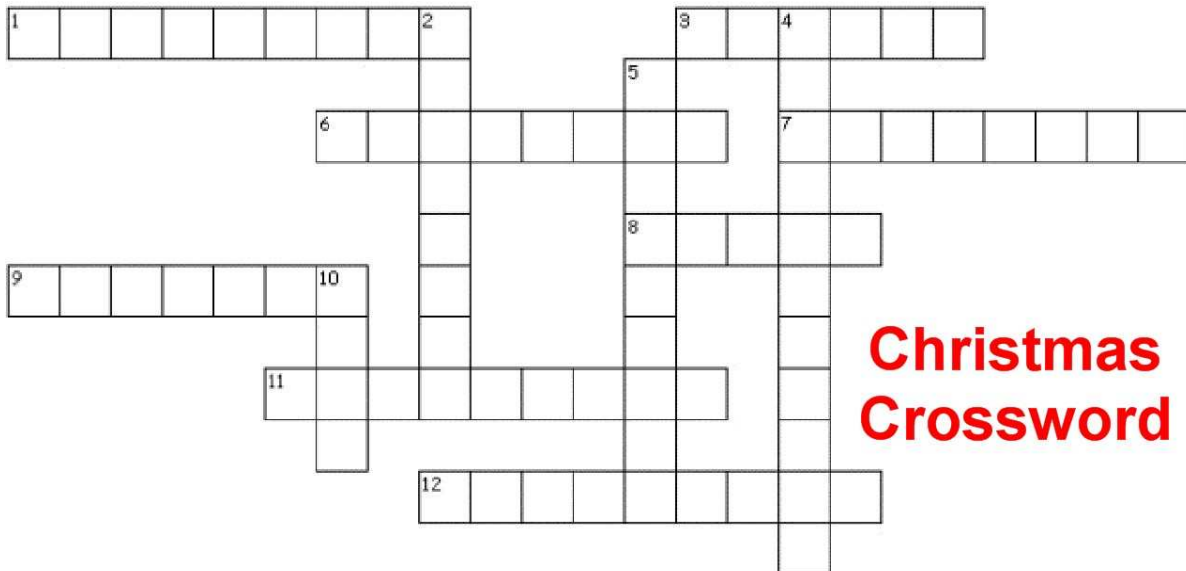
The Friesen-Pankratz family is serving their second year of a three year term with the Mennonite Mission Service in



Zacango, Mexico. Jaime has recently started an English class for children and their parents in the community. They have finished the corn harvest where the cob is ripped out and sacks are filled with the



cobs. These cobs are then placed on the roofs and dried until February when the kernels are rubbed off and used for soups, hot drinks, ground into flour and is a staple in their diet. The dried leaves and stalks are called 'sacate' and this is feed for the donkeys. This is one example of a nice ecological cycle which is the hallmark of a sustainable community.



Christmas Crossword

Across

- 1. Pretty baubles to hang on the Christmas tree.
- 3. Guardians who announce the good news.
- 6. Wrapped with love.
- 7. Jolly old Saint _____.
- 8. Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, _____, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen.
- 9. Warm snacks for Santa.

- 11. Sweet and red and white.
- 12. We wish you a merry _____!

Down

- 2. Keeper of the flocks.
- 4. House made of sweet treats.
- 5. The _____ were hung by the chimney with care.
- 10. Bright light marks the way.