

Yellowknife United Church Newsletter

Fall 2013

Finding Faith in the Rainbow



I had a request that my article for this newsletter would consist of a devotional that I prepared for the September meeting of the Yellowknife Ministerial Association. It is too long to be included here, but I would like to summarize what I had to say. It was given in the context of response to our participation in the second annual NWT Pride Festival which took place in August, and in response to a workshop given there by Brad Dahr, the Chair of the Yellowknife Ministerial Association, and the pastor at the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Brad closed the last meeting of the Ministerial Association before the summer break by expressing his concern for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) community and his concern for the treatment the community had received as a result of negative views of homosexuality that are held by conservative Christian communities. Brad had acted on his concern by offering to facilitate a workshop “Finding Faith in the Rainbow” as part of the NWT Pride Festival.

After attending Brad’s workshop at the Festival, he invited me to lead the devotional at our next meeting, which took place on September 11th. What follows is a summary of what I shared. The full text of my devotional can be found online at the following address: yellowknifeunitedchurch.ca/findingfaithintherainbow/

Twenty five years ago, in August 1988, the General Council of The United Church of Canada met in Victoria, British Columbia, at which the dominant issue was a decision made by the commissioners that homosexuality in and of itself was not a barrier to ordination or commissioning to ministry in The United Church of Canada. I was there as a staff person for a national committee and my mother was there as a commissioner. Many minds and hearts were changed during the course of the General Council, and my mother could be included among those who changed their perspective. Even though she voted against the final resolution, having felt some obligation to do so by the church members who elected her, she lived out a completely different and positive response. She returned home and began attending worship services for members and allies in the LGBT community and hosted dinner parties for many of the people she met at the worship service. She nursed and visited one friend named Keith, who died of AIDS and at his request, conducted his funeral.

I had pushed my mother during the General Council to vote according to her heart and conscience, which had changed as a result of some of the heartfelt stories that had been told during the gathering in Victoria, but in the years following, in action she was able to go far beyond anything I had done, as a newly ordained United Church minister.

When I was called to Yellowknife United Church eight years ago, I recall one question in the interview that I felt would seal the decision about whether I would be called or not. It was a question about my attitude to same-gender marriage. A supportive policy had just been adopted by Yellowknife United Church and the search committee wanted to be sure that I would support the policy. Of course I could. In fact I rejoiced that this policy had been adopted.

LGBTQ issues are an increasingly common and normal part of our world. Many hours and lines of newsprint have been given to the issue of participation of gay and lesbian athletes at the Sochi Olympics this coming winter and the repressive laws enacted by the Russian government. A breakthrough in the professional sports community was made when Jason Collins came out as a gay man who has been playing in the National Basketball Association.

I firmly believe that society is ahead of the church. I believe in decades ahead, we will look back as a Christian community and wonder how we could have been so blind.

Yellowknife United Church is on the way to becoming an affirming ministry. We've already decided that we are affirming – but we need to have that affirmed by the organization which checks us out to make sure that our actions match our words.

Yellowknife United Church was a visible and active participant in last month's Pride Festival. I have no doubt in my mind that the LGBTQ community is a part of the community of faith. I have learned so much about faith through the many people I know who are part of the community. Is there faith to be found in the rainbow? Why do we even think we need to ask the question.

Peter Chynoweth

Meals on Wheels – Part of our Outreach

The Meals-on-Wheels (MOW) program has been in operation in Yellowknife for approximately 35 years and is one of the community outreach projects that involves our congregation. We are one of six groups who have committed to providing volunteer drivers once every six weeks (evening meal only).

Here's a quick re-cap of what is involved as a volunteer driver. An individual can do it alone or you can take along some helper(s). You pick up the evening meal(s) from the Stanton Hospital kitchen between 4:45 and 5:30 p.m. and deliver to those individuals on the list for the day. There can be up to half a dozen meals although for the past several months there have only been two deliveries. The meals are individually packaged, marked with the recipient's name and put into an insulated carrying bag.

It's quick and easy when you drop the meal at each address. This is often a highlight in the person's day and makes you feel a bit like Santa Claus! After delivering the meals, you return the insulated bag to the appreciative staff at the hospital kitchen. Again, the commitment is for less than an hour one evening every six weeks. With lots of volunteers you may only be called every second time.

This is a quick, easy, and rewarding community service and if you are interested in joining our team of drivers or have some questions, please call Jeannette Hall at 873-3942 or Cappy Elkin at 873-5747. Our upcoming scheduled drives are Oct 5-11, Nov 16-22, Dec 28-Jan 3/14, Feb 8-14 and Mar 22-28.

Thanks!

Jeannette Hall, MOW Coordinator

In June, Deanna Roos joined the staff at YKUC as the new office administrator. Deanna has had the summer months to adjust to her new surroundings and is doing a great job so far. She's enjoying working with Peter, the various groups that share our space and the members of the congregation she's encountered up to now. Deanna brings great organizational and computer skills, along with a good dose of the diplomacy needed to coordinate the office and different users of the facility.

Deanna has been a Yellowknifer since 2005. Originally from Saskatchewan, she and her husband Scott moved here from Northwestern Ontario. Scott is a music teacher at St. Pat's and they are parents to five year old twins Cobain and Abby. Deanna is also a music teacher, for a number of years she has taught piano and violin and continues to do so on a part time basis.

Please join the M&P Committee in giving her a warm YKUC welcome!



YKUC Summer Activities



Goodbye from The Lewis'

So long it's been good to know ya,
Long time since we've been home,
So we gotta be drifting along.

Hey Everyone. The old song says it all for us. It *has* been good to know you. Some of you we came to know very well, others we wish we had time to know better. We arrived in Yellowknife without a time horizon; however, and to a great extent regrettably, family circumstances dictated our time of departure.

It is a fact that life is what you make it. We wanted "church" to be a part of our northern life. We sought you out, you welcomed us in, and you made us feel a part of what you are. The generous giving by many, of time and talent working within the church and the greater community is inspirational; truly a model of faith in action. You have enriched our lives in many ways for sure, and we are grateful. Without the spirit you possess and demonstrate, the beauty of this land north of 60 would be much diminished. Treasure what you have, keep up your good works, and may God's blessings follow you all.

Kay & Bruce



Fall Supper and Dessert/Silent Auction

On Saturday, September 21st an enthusiastic crowd of church members and guests came out for the annual fall potluck supper and dessert/silent auction. The food was plentiful and delicious and the conversations lively as folks caught up with each others' news. Desserts were auctioned off and shared among tables while bidding took place on several silent auction items. The two auctions combined raised \$702.00 for the work of the church. Thanks to the Community Life and Membership Committee for organizing the potluck dinner, the Stewardship Committee for organizing the auction, the Youth Group for helping with the set-up and to our amateur auctioneer, Sean Daly.



Sharing the purchases



Young & old enjoyed the fall supper

Update from the Affirm Study Group

On the weekend of August 9th to 11th rainbow flags were flying and rainbow feet were dancing as the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered and queer community partied it up with their YK allies in the second annual NWT Pride celebration at the Folk on the Rocks site. Sunday afternoon saw three of the Affirm Study Group members attending the Faith at the End of the Rainbow workshop, moderated by Brad Dahr. Brad is the minister at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, but in this case he was speaking as a community member, not an official religious leader. His workshop was created with the guidance of the NWT Pride board members. Kathy Burns, Peter Chynoweth and Kathryn Walker were impressive in their Yellowknife United Church Affirm t-shirts, made especially for the weekend during a long session with hot irons, fabric paints and crayons in the church kitchen. The workshop focused on asking participants to share their own ways of connecting with their spirituality and there was a lot of great sharing, from the woman whose parents made their children attend all the religious places of worship in the community before deciding what faith community to join, to the young man feeling totally disconnected with church ritual and language. Kathryn got a plug in for the awesomeness of our United Church by sharing her story of being congratulated with hugs all around from the Affirm Committee, when she came out to them. Though most people seemed to feel the workshop had been a positive experience, one of those who attended but did not participate told an Affirm Committee member “I can’t wait for next year when you guys and Peter get to lead that workshop”. Amen!

On Sept 11th, Peter expressed a very strong Affirming message in his address to the Ministerial Association. You can find a summary of his message in this newsletter and see for yourself why the Affirm Study Group is so very proud to have him for our minister!

On June 10, 2012, after a couple of years of study, planning and preparation, the congregation of Yellowknife United Church made a decision to proceed with plans to become an affirming ministry. The Affirm Committee created a vision statement that was accepted by the congregation and have developed an action plan that will allow for our ministry with the people of Yellowknife to be designated as an ‘Affirming Ministry’ – a ministry which welcomes everyone, including people of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer sexual orientation. For more information on what an affirming ministry is, please check out the Affirm United website.

Our celebration of becoming an Affirming Ministry will take place on Sunday Nov 17, 2013 at our worship service. Nancy Steeves, the minister for Southminster-Steinhauer United in Edmonton will be joining us to speak and share in our celebration. Southminster-Steinhauer was the first United Church in Alberta to become an Affirming congregation. We are delighted that Nancy will be coming and are hoping that her partner Dawn Waring will also be able to attend. So people, mark this date on your calendar! It is going to be awesome!



Manse Upgrades and Renovations

YKUC has been saving for a while now to renovate the kitchen in the manse. The 'fun' began on August 14th. The kitchen was gutted in the first couple of days and then the following week the electrical requirements were set up, new circuits and fixtures were wired, switches and receptacles roughed in. Next the new pantry was framed, dry walled and painted. New flooring was laid, followed by installation of cabinets and preparation for a new sink. The placement of the new sink allows the dishwasher to be converted to a 'built in'. September 13th was an exciting day, the sink; new oven and refrigerator were installed. To date, the remaining items include installation of the counter tops, plumbing the water supply to the refrigerator, finishing off the lighting, receptacles and switches and installation of the dishwasher.

There is also a clearer view out one of the living room windows. In early September, the Property and Maintenance Committee made arrangements for the window to be replaced. There often was condensation on the inside of the window but that will stop now that there is a new window in place.

Property and Maintenance Committee



Kitchen before renovations



Kitchen during renovations



Kitchen almost finished

From The Chair of the Board

The days are getting shorter, the skies greyer, the air colder. My cats have left their spot on the deck and appear to have permanently retreated to the couch. But we humans respond to the whiff of fall in the air with renewed vigour, as we gear up for a new school year, a new season of hockey/soccer/figure skating/skiing/dance and the numerous other activities that Yellowknifers immerse ourselves in over the winter months.

Yellowknife United Church is no different. Fall means the start of worship at the “regular” time, church school, the fall supper and dessert auction, and of course, Board and Committee meetings and work. This is my first year serving as Chair of the Official Board, assuming the role from the very able Bruce Lewis, whom I would like to thank for his calm and patient leadership over the past two years. We will miss Bruce and Kay tremendously when they depart for PEI, but wish them all the best.

This fall we are looking forward to our celebration of becoming an affirming congregation on November 17th. This is one more step in our congregation’s journey of work, study and prayer toward our vision of being a community which welcomes and includes everybody, celebrating the diversity of our age, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, ethnicity, and socio-economic circumstance.

I would like to welcome a few new faces to the Board and Committees – Paula MacFadyen as Vice Chair, and Greg Short and Laurie Gault to the Ministry and Personnel Committee – and thank all those who are serving on the Board or on a committee. This work is vital to the life of Yellowknife United Church. There are still a few vacancies on some committees, and anyone who is interested in serving should contact our Nominating Committee, Lloyd Henderson or Donna Allen.

Finally, although it’s not quite finished as I write this in early September, I want to celebrate the completion of the renovation of the manse kitchen, a project long in the hoping and wishing stages, and now a reality, thanks to a special fundraising drive last year, and to the skillful coordination and hard work of Stuart Oldham, our Property and Maintenance Coordinator and Bruce Lewis. I am hopeful that by the time you are reading this, Peter and Sharon have been able to put away their cups and silverware, give the barbeque and microwave a well-deserved rest, and enjoy the luxury of a kitchen sink and a real oven.

Margaret Melhorn

Hello everyone - my name is Rachel Munday and I’m very happy to be back in Yellowknife for a couple of years. Some of you may remember that I lived here in 2003 and have visited occasionally over the past nine years. I have been living in Aklavik since the beginning of 2005, where I am nurse-in-charge of the health centre. I have come to Yellowknife to do the Masters of Nursing/Nurse Practitioner course at Aurora College. My two dogs, Seven – a husky mutt from Aklavik, and Katie, who is originally from Big Trout Lake in northern Ontario are with me. They are both about 12 years old and are adapting amazingly well to the big city! Seven has never been out of Aklavik.

I like to be involved in many different things, although unfortunately studying has to take precedence. I hope that I can at least sing with the choir. I have been involved with various nursing and territorial planning groups over the years so I will enjoy getting to meet some of the people who have so far just been voices on a teleconference. Aklavik just recently got a new cell phone service, I have now joined the 21st century and have a cell phone – just don’t expect long, correctly spelled text messages from me!

It has already been a real pleasure to walk and cycle around Frame Lake, visit the Museum and Visitor centre again and SHOP! There are also a lot less flies down here which the dogs and I appreciate.

A big thank you to Barb and Emery Paquin for putting me up for a couple of weeks while I found a place to live. Barb regularly sent me the weekly bulletins, so I have kept up a little with the activities of the Church. I look forward to joining in as much as possible.

Rachel Munday

United Church Women News

The Yellowknife United Church Women (UCW) continues to be involved in the life of the church. A small but enthusiastic group of women hold not-so-regular meetings during the year.

Each year we are able to help support the life and work of the church locally and in the broader community. Last year with funds raised, we were able to donate \$3,400 to local, national and international causes. This is made possible through the generous support of the congregation.

Here are some upcoming dates and suggested ways that you can help:

- Oct. 28/13: Antipasto (need help in kitchen beginning at 6:30 and all welcome to come help), will also be looking for donations of supplies.
- Nov. 19/13: Pepper Jelly (need help in kitchen beginning at 6:30 and all welcome to come help), will also be looking for donations of supplies. **Yes, that's a Tuesday!**
- Nov. 30/13: Christmas Tea and Sale (need help in kitchen beginning 10 am), will be looking for donations of baked goods and crafts.
- Mar 10/14 Kitchen clean-up, all welcome to come help.
- Apr. 26/14 Garage Sale - UCW sells muffins, bannock, cookies and coffee, we will be looking for donations and help.
- June 9/14 UCW Yearend pot luck and penny auction, great opportunity for food, fellowship and fun!

Officers for the upcoming year are:

Chair: Gwyneth Davis
Secretary: Jeannette Hall
Treasurer: Margaret Henderson

The UCW would like to offer a special thank you to everyone who has supported us by donating their time, energy, and talents. Without the generous support of the congregation, UCW would not be able to function.



Work of the church



Children's time



Youth Group Garden Project

Thanks to the YKUC Youth Group and some adult helpers, the Northern United Place planters were both colourful and “harvestable”. This might be the sixth (or seventh?) summer that our youth have planned, planted, and nurtured the summer garden project for the benefit of NUP residents and all who pass by. Our usual project leader, Karen Hamre, was out of town on the planting weekend, but her spot was capably filled by Leslie Creed. Thank you Leslie!

Some new additions to the summer plots were potatoes and roses that are still in flower!! The group also tried to coax a rhubarb plant along, but when it didn't do so very well, and its extraction left a bare spot, Larry Elkin came by with some lovely substitutions from his own greenhouse. Thank you, Larry! Larry also played the role of ‘guardian angel’ to our garden over the summer as he often came by to pluck out chickweed or add an extra watering over the hottest summer days. While doing this work, he fielded lots of comments from residents and passers-by, all of whom expressed how delighted they are with this annual summer gift.

Big thanks to the Youth planters and watering crew: Martha and Stuart Hamre, Paige and Ben Elkin, Johanna Stewart, Seamus and Janice Daly, Ally and Mia MacInnis, Emily Sabourin, Emily and Robert Paddock, Sarah and Kathryn Walker.

Thanks to Karen Hamre who has been our overall garden project manager all these years. A very big thank you to the NWT Community Services Corporation who supplies the funding for this project year after year.



Elaine Stewart

