

Yellowknife United Church May 2012 Newsletter

A Reflection on the visit of Moderator Mardi Tindal to Yellowknife

One of the things I have discovered in my time in Yellowknife is that we live in a place which many people want to visit. For those who live in the south there is a kind of mystery and attraction surrounding “the north” which draws people to come and find out about us. This was affirmed late last fall when I learned that Mardi Tindal, the Moderator of The United Church of Canada was hoping to make a visit to Yellowknife. This opportunity was encouraged and supported by Nora Sanders, the General Secretary of The United Church, and as most of us know, a former resident of Yellowknife and member of Yellowknife United Church. The anticipated visit came about during the school break in March. This timing was important because Nora wanted to travel with her son, Johnny, so that he could experience a place which holds an important place in Nora's life. We also learned that Alex Tindal, Mardi's adult son would also be part of this journey to Yellowknife.



It was a great blessing to us that Mardi and Alex, Nora and Johnny were able to spend more than a week with us, learning about life in the north, in the magic of the returning March daylight and that great northern skyward spectacle: aurora borealis.

They arrived on Thursday, March 8th and almost immediately began an immersion into some of the things that occupy and challenge the lives of northerners.

Mardi Tindal has made concern for the gift of Creation a focus of her time as moderator. So she was particularly interested in finding out about the gifts and challenges that are part of our northern existence in connection

with the changes in climate and other environmental considerations.

The list of events, gatherings and adventures that our four visitors experienced over the eight days they were here is quite extensive and I think our visitors left with a good appreciation for life north of sixty. Their time here included a visit to the cabin of Barb and Emery Paquin at Prelude Lake, meetings with aboriginal leaders, Stephen Kakfwi and Francois Paulette, a gathering with about twenty people from various Yellowknife organizations who have particular interest, skills and knowledge in areas of environmental sustainability, impacts of climate change and some of the local challenges we face in the struggle to be good stewards of God's creation. Mardi and Nora participated at worship on March 11th, with Mardi offering the reflection. They also were able to meet with a number of different people over restaurant and home-cooked meals and experience some of the unique cultural experiences that are part of life in Yellowknife with visits to the Snow Castle and Bullock's Bistro. Mardi also very graciously offered time in her very busy schedule while she was here to be part of our “Exploring Our Faith” group. There were also the requisite tours of Yellowknife, the ice road to Dettah and some of the sights and scenes that make life in Yellowknife so interesting and exciting. They also had tours of the legislature, met with Minister Michael Miltenberger, learned more about and toured Northern United Place and met with Erin Freeland-Ballantyne and Daniel T'seleie of the Dechinta Bush University Centre for Research and Learning. There were also opportunities to meet with the media including interviews on both CBC Radio and Television and a feature article in the “Yellowknifer”.

Johnny also learned lots about the place where his mother used to live, and in particular was given an opportunity to try his hand unsuccessfully, but not unhappily, at ice fishing. However, more importantly Johnny had a chance to drive a snowmobile.

Alex was also captured by this place and left with a greater sense of what Yellowknife is like and a very great appreciation for this place.

It was a great privilege for us to host a visit of this length by Moderator Mardi. It was very much a time of mutual learning as we discovered more about the vision and focus she has for the church in our time and as she and our other guests had a busy and meaningful exposure to the joys, pleasures, blessings and challenges of life in the Northwest Territories.

Peter Chynoweth

Youth Group

Lots of activity in the Youth Group “corner” lately! Thanks to all of you who came out to support the Seder Supper that the Youth hosted on the Thursday of Holy Week. The celebration of the Seder or “Passover” is a chance to reflect on our Jewish heritage and the marvellous story of Moses and how the Hebrew people were released from slavery in Egypt. The Youth presented those events in a play and served up a terrific meal including the dishes that act as symbols of the ‘exodus’. We also added a new food symbol this year: to learn about what and why, put the phrase “an orange on the seder plate” into your computer browser. This was a nice alignment with the Affirm Committee’s work and the Youth Group’s concern that our work as a church is to ‘draw the circle wide’ and work for inclusion of all groups who sit on the church’s and society’s margins.

Another fun activity was presenting the play about the “star bellied Sneetches” in the service on April 22nd. This was a service presided over by the Affirm Committee and the story communicates a great deal about the power imbalance when we don’t question our ideas of “who is in” and “who is out”. If you missed this story and would like to read it, put “star bellied Sneetches, tribe.net” into your computer browser. A big thanks, by the way, to Lorne Gushe who directed the Youth in both of the dramatic pieces mentioned.

The Youth also took roles in the worship service May 6th as scripture readers and communion servers. These activities create ‘conversation starters’ about our faith tradition. One conversation that started that day was about different versions of the Bible. A version that often appeals to young people, because it is written in more contemporary language is “The Message”. If you’re curious about this version you can look up any passage on line – just type in “the message” and you’ll find it. There are links at the bottom of the home page to find any Bible passage. I suggest 1 Corinthians 13 – the familiar passage on “if I have not love....”. It’s a good one to see how this version communicates in a fresh way.



Finally, I’ll add that a project that the Youth Group has taken on is to raise \$2000.00 for BETTY House, a transition home for women and children that will be built on 54th Street, close to our church. Through this project the Youth will learn about the issue of homelessness. We will be gratefully looking for the congregation’s support in our fundraising activities, starting with a bake sale slated for May 27th.

Elaine Stewart, Youth Group Leader

Property & Maintenance- Future Plans

At the congregational meeting in February, plans to renovate the kitchen at the manse were announced. At the meeting the project was deferred until 2013 to ensure that there is enough funds in the Capital Fund to cover the cost of this major renovation.

In the past months, some major renovations including new siding, at the manse have been done. When the kitchen is complete, all major renovations to the manse will be finished and only regular maintenance should be required.

So, while it may seem Property & Maintenance isn’t very busy over the next months, please remember the Capital Fund and our “2013 kitchen Project” in your weekly givings.

Terri Lynn Hayden

SABBATICAL UPDATE

By now, readers are likely aware that Rev. Peter Chynoweth will be taking a four-month sabbatical later this year. The United Church of Canada has established a sabbatical policy that allows Ministers who have been in a pastoral charge for at least five years to take time for “reflection, recreation and revitalization”. Since last year, when Peter advised us of his intention to take a sabbatical in 2012, we’ve been actively talking with him about his plans, getting the necessary approvals from Northern Lights Presbytery, and, of course, making plans to ensure that Yellowknife United Church continues to receive ministerial services while Peter is on leave.

Peter’s sabbatical will cover the period from the beginning of August to the end of November. You can read about his study and research plans in the February 2012 Newsletter at:

<http://northernlightspresbytery.org/yellowknife/NewsletterFebruary2012.pdf>

We wish Peter a productive sabbatical leave, and look forward to hearing from him about his learnings through his regular blogging and other writings and presentations.

While he is on leave, Peter will be doing some travelling, but will also be spending time in Yellowknife. However, he will not be carrying out his regular duties related to worship, pastoral care and church administration.

During Peter’s sabbatical, ministerial services will be provided in a number of ways.

During the summer, Yellowknife United Church regularly partners with our friends at Holy Family Lutheran Church to provide summer worship and urgent pastoral care. This summer, the Lutheran congregation will take most services in August.

For September, October and November we will be inviting visiting ministers and lay worship leaders to provide us with meaningful and inspiring worship. Although the Worship Committee has not finalized details for all visiting ministers and speakers, we are happy to announce that the Very Rev. Peter Short will be providing part-time “weekend supply” for the months of September and October. Some of us will remember Peter Short from his time as Minister at YKUC during the 1980s, and others will remember him as Moderator of the United Church of Canada from 2003 to 2006. We look forward to welcoming Peter and Sue Short during their stay with us. [Note: We have committed to provide the Shorts with accommodation. If anyone knows of housesitting opportunities for September and October please drop a note to mmelhorn@theedge.ca]

Of course, our church is about more than Sunday worship. Pastoral care, outreach, Christian education and community life are also important. Yellowknife United Church is blessed with strong lay leadership and this can be an opportunity for us to try on new roles and stretch ourselves. Pastoral care coverage will be arranged, similar to what has been arranged while Peter Chynoweth is on holidays, with either the Lutheran pastor, or other local ministers. Members of the congregation will be asked to be particularly attentive to the needs of fellow members during the entire period of Peter’s sabbatical.

Northern Lights Presbytery will be appointing a “Pastoral Charge Supervisor” to work with the Official Board during the sabbatical period. The Pastoral Charge Supervisor will provide support for and general oversight of Yellowknife United Church and ensure that our administrative and governing structures continue to function in accordance with both the United Church Manual and Yellowknife United Church bylaws.

This is an exciting time for our congregation and for Peter Chynoweth. Our congregation can look forward to benefitting from the learnings of his sabbatical as well as to the return of a rested, renewed and enthusiastic minister!

Margaret Melhorn
On behalf of the Ministry and Personnel Committee



Affirm / S'affirmer UNITED / ENSEMBLE

Jesus teaches us that everyone is important and valued by God. Everyone is loved and cared for by God. This is at the core of our belief as Christians. However, for some, “everybody” comes with strings attached.

Many churches have hidden and still hide behind certain scripture passages in the Bible that are taken out of context to “prove” that homosexuality is wrong. This has resulted in the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered community having been (and continuing to be) shunned, shamed, humiliated, tormented and excluded.

Affirm United, a support and advocacy group within The United Church of Canada continues to challenge the church to “be true to its calling – to seek justice and resist evil”. Many congregations have responded to this challenge by becoming Affirming Ministries in support of the GLBTQ2S** community.

The Affirm Study Group at Yellowknife United Church has taken up the challenge to work towards living out the belief that everybody is valued and should be welcomed into our church family. In this process, we have discovered opportunities for our own learning while also offering opportunities for study and learning with the congregation.

But what about other marginalized people? What about those with FASD, autism, mental health issues? Shouldn't we be welcoming them, too? Of course we should! Experience shows that opening doors for some ultimately opens doors for all.

It is also okay to have questions. Part of being an Affirming Ministry is to always be learning, supporting and caring – it is an ongoing journey.

Members of the Affirm Study Group feel that the time has come to ask the congregation of Yellowknife United Church to prayerfully consider becoming an Affirming Ministry. We know that in many ways our church is already welcoming of everyone, including people who are part of the GLBTQ2S community. However, there are many people in the wider community who don't know this and therefore part of the process of becoming an Affirming Ministry is a public declaration of our desire to be more welcoming, not just of people in the GLBTQ2S community, but everyone. A decision to become an Affirming Ministry would be an important step in the journey to widen the circle of inclusion and more faithful following of God's way.

Please contact any members of the Affirm Study Group should you have any questions or concerns. You may also contact our congregation liaisons Gordon or Karen Hamre (873-8628).

Affirm Study Group:

Donna Allen
Kathy Burns
Sharon Chynoweth
Janice Daly
Lorne Gushue
Marg Henderson
Nancy Trotter
Kathryn Walker

** Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgendered, Queer, Two-Spirit – Please check out the YKUC Website and link to Affirm United for further information.

Annual Garage Sale

On Saturday, April 28, 2012, garage sale aficionados found the auditorium jam-packed with treasures. TV? We had several. A tree anyone or a foosball table? We had it. Dishes, furniture, books, games, sporting equipment, clothing, a trampoline – you name it, we had it. At the end of the day, \$1945 was raised from the “treasures” and \$243 from UCW’s Café for a grand total of \$2188.

Thanks to the volunteers who made it all happen, to all those who contributed items, and to all the people who came out to purchase our treasures.



Marg Henderson

“Exploring Our Faith” This Winter:

Peter offered the opportunity to all this past winter and I joined the somewhat eclectic group whose ages ran from teens to gray hair. I was raised by a “church-going-family” and have somewhat maintained that routine, but confess that beyond Sunday School I never participated in any form of bible or religious study. I go and I listen, yet over time I began to think about what I believe. For me wonderment => thoughts => questions => maybe that’s it, and so on. Our son asked me not that long ago “What is God” I didn’t answer easily; so ...

I accepted Peter’s invitation. The meetings were informal, no homework, no exams, just an easy open discussion. Peter listed a number of topics and the group chose the ones for discussion. We agreed with “Rule Number One:” What is said in the group stays in the group.

Weekly discussions included topics such as Faith, Prayer, God, Jesus, The Bible, Spiritual Practices etc. Peter’s ability to entice the members to expand their focus on topics created a variety of thoughtful and interesting discussion. The historical context applied to the writings of the New Testament was meaningful. Personally the discussion about God was the most interesting session. My understanding of many things has grown ... but the search goes on, and thinking back to answering our son however I can take comfort in the following:

The Three Statements of Faith, recently voted by our Board, to be included in the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union of the United Church included “**A Song of Faith**”. The Song begins with the verse: “God is Holy Mystery, beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description.” A scholarly statement; a song of faith.

Bruce Lewis

Yellowknife United Church Activities

