



inCONTACT

with Alberta and Northwest Conference

January 2014

Northminster United Celebrates 60 years!

Recently, over 250 people came together to celebrate 60 years of ministry at Northminster United Church in Calgary. Out of town friends, former staff and clergy, and special guests were in attendance for this joyful occasion. The worship service, led by Rev. Nancy Nourse, included an energizing blend of past, present and future. Old friends and new were treated to a slide show of the 60 year history of Northminster. It featured memories of special events at Northminster, giggles over the changes in cars, clothing styles and hats, and gentle reminders of absent friends.

Former clergy from Northminster took various parts in the service. Our children assembled huge pieces of the puzzle they had been creating over the summer to reveal Northminster's identity statement *Welcoming* Celebrating* Becoming*. They also assisted the entire congregation in the assembly of a beautiful stone mosaic that will have a place of honour in the building.

The choir led favourite, familiar hymns while the Youth Band chose Green Day's "I Hope You Had the Time of Your Life." The offering was collected to a piano version of "Sentimental Journey". Rev. Nancy referenced Pink Floyd's "The Wall" from the pulpit. The choir anthem was the more traditional "Jerusalem".

Northminster was honoured to have Charter Members present for this 60th Anniversary and they were presented with a New Crest pin. We also celebrated the 100th birthday of Mr. Cy Goodhall who was present for all of the festivities.

At lunch following the service, Board Chair Ernie Abbott commended the exceptional effort of the Anniversary Committee. He also read congratulatory greetings from United Church Moderator

Gary Peterson, Lieutenant-Governor Donald S. Ethell, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Opposition Leader Thomas Mulcair, and several others. Our guests also took the opportunity to congratulate Northminster on its 60 years of ministry to our community and to the world.

Everyone left with a handful of memories, a new photo of Northminster, a brief history of the church, and a renewal of enthusiasm for the next 60 years.

As Rev. Nancy Nourse reminded us, referencing Joshua 4 "In the future, when your children ask, 'What do these stones mean to you?' You should tell them..."

— Submitted by Lynda MacKinnon
Secretary
Northminster United Church



Members of Northminster's Youth Band rock our 60th Anniversary with Green Day's 'I Hope You Had the Time of Your Life'. Pictured are Zachary Lavenne and Tristan Westbroek.

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Leigh's Laptop



Leigh Sinclair

We often hear about the “good” old days. However, with any reflection we realize how much better our lives can become with the progress of time, learning and understanding. One of the key ingredients to making a better future for ourselves personally and our children’s children collectively is to open up the secretive manner in which we hold the “bad” (old and current) days’ stories. Diseases like cancer used to be only whispered about. Now they are given official month’s for us to focus our attention on them (including (moustache growing) awareness campaigns and “survivor laps” at Relays for Life. Domestic violence and child abuse are beginning to be uncovered in honest discussion and active education in our communities. This year we all have the opportunity to be a part of the formal aspects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While its work of healing, storytelling and reconciliation will need to continue long afterwards, the opportunity to be a part of this moment in history — the unveiling of the realities and policies of Residential Schools — is ours to experience. I pray these days will lead us to the “good new days” wherein we will all continue to listen and tell truths.

— Leigh Sinclair,
President of Alberta/Northwest Conference

We Get Mail!

In the November article we asked readers to tell us how their congregation worked in the community following the instruction “Go and Do Likewise”.

“Small towns are hot beds of outreach ministry in keeping with the rural tradition of “Go and Do Likewise”... our congregation members serve in the community as: fire chief, most of the firefighters and EMTs; sports coaches; Figure skating coach; Meals on Wheels deliveries; Executive of the Seniors’ Organization; driving seniors to appointments and accompanying them; driving the community bus; helping seniors learn about computers; organizing the local fair and parade through the Ag. Society; Kids’ Day in the Park Fair; leading tours and cataloguing and setting up displays at the local museum; on committee to organize Remembrance Day Service; playing the national anthem at community functions; on local council and town council, school board, library board; are members of Lions, Elks and Legion; lead 4-H and CGIT; work at and collect for the local Outreach Society (Food Bank plus services as needed); assemble and deliver for the Community Christmas hampers; deliver plates of Christmas baking with greetings to shut-ins; collect Christmas gifts for the Women’s Shelter in the city; collect for a mission in Chile; foster pets for the humane society; bring meals to shut-ins and bereaved; send appropriate cards to church

members and the whole community as needed; have a prayer shawl Ministry; share garden produce and flowers with others. Two retired nurses do unofficial community nursing as they see the need, keeping caring eyes on shut-ins and seniors.

I am always so proud of our United Church members for being so involved in everything in our community.

— Elaine Martin,
*Trinity United Church,
Picture Butte, Alberta*



“Gifts of food to shut-ins and bereaved” show care and compassion. Photo and pie by Liz Goddard

Impressions of a Party

A conference wide party for 214 people was held at Gaetz Memorial United Church in Red Deer on Nov. 1, 2 & 3. "Glad and Generous Hearts" was billed as a "renewal of spirit" event, designed to connect Presbytery and Conference committee members halfway between our three year cycle of business meetings. We were invited to share, care and encourage one another, using our own energy and participation. Who could resist a celebration invitation like that?

The weekend was formatted to follow our worship service liturgy and was guided by the theme scripture of Acts 2: 42 – 47. At that time there were new converts to Christianity praying, learning, eating and praising God together, so we did likewise with glad and generous hearts.

Our CALL TO WORSHIP began Friday evening in the sanctuary, with music and introductions of Gaetz staff Rev Liz Richards and Rev Jeff Rock and Conference President Rev. Leigh Sinclair. We all enjoyed the children's time, before the dozen dashed off on a scavenger hunt into the labyrinth of rooms in the basement. The gym next door was set up for about 30 "Home Groups" where we lighted Sabbath candles in the Jewish manner, using prayer and suggested discussions. After refreshments special guest Anne Hines of "Ottawa General Council fame" entertained us, as she would on two subsequent occasions. Her humorous stories and zippy one liners, indicated that she is either "one of us" or she had successfully infiltrated our ranks.

HEARING GOD'S LIVING WORD on Saturday morning included one of four Presbytery led hymn singing sessions, Home Group encounters, Anne Hines' hilarity, and a choice of 10 well led Workshops that were largely repeated in the afternoon. Of course we had several "Minute for Mission" presentations: on New Funding opportunities; Child Well Being Initiatives by UCW; and Truth and Reconciliation updates.

In our Home Groups, we shared the most savory and bountiful turkey supper brought to us by the Innisfail UCW and friends. Two in-house hot lunches were also provided to spoil us rotten.

Who knew that PASSING THE PEACE on Saturday evening would begin with 50 people dancing to selections of jigs, polkas and rock and roll, and end with a large drumming circle by candle light! Luminous light greeted us in the wintry evening air on 20 cm of newly fallen snow.

Sunday morning began with a closing service and communion in the gym prior to the regular worship service with the Gaetz congregation. After lunch people left for home, nervous of encounters with snow laden roads, but all agreed that the event was a wonderful time of connecting and sharing in the best United Church tradition.

— Geraldine Dyck,
Chairperson of the In Contact Editorial Board



Children's Program welcomed younger members

Growing in Wisdom: Preparations for the Truth and Reconciliation National Event: March 27 – 30, 2014

Third in a Series.

It takes a lot of planning and many people to be able to light a Sacred Fire in downtown Edmonton, to set up safe spaces for telling and listening to painful stories, to feed and accommodate thousands of people, to arrange for sessions to teach students from grades 4 to 12; to set up panels, research presentations and town halls to talk about the many ways we have all been affected, and the ways we might heal and reconcile; to celebrate resilience and share many cultural gifts in music, drama, and art; to establish a display space with church archival photos as a central feature; and to facilitate the offering of expressions of reconciliation.

The two key subcommittees engaged in planning the event are the Culture and Program committee and the Logistics and Planning committee. Ruth Lumax from Wetaskiwin First United Church and Theresa Wynn from Southminister-Steinhauer United Church in Edmonton are serving as ANW Conference representatives on those subcommittees. Together, we will work to keep you informed of the plans, and invite your

questions and participation. You can help us keep you informed by signing up for the list serve that Alberta and Northwest Conference is hosting. Please send your name, congregation and email to trc@anwconf.com.

The theme for the National Event is Wisdom. Linda Robinson, co-chair of the Conference's Living into Right Relations committee, has offered this understanding of Wisdom, one of the seven sacred Aboriginal teachings:

Wisdom is more than just learning and knowledge. It is finding the gift the Creator has given you and using it to better yourself and your community

Alberta and Northwest Conference has declared Sunday, February 2 as Wisdom Sunday and worship materials have been prepared to help us reflect on the Wisdom theme. Please contact the Conference office if you have not received those materials.

You are also invited to host 'wisdom circles' to learn, pray, and discern how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people might "walk together in the spirit of Christ so

that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed." Not an easy walk but one that speaks to God's vision of shalom for all. So I invite you to begin that walk by participating in the many opportunities leading up to and during the Event and invite others to join you.



Debbie Hubbard

— **Debbie Hubbard** attends Trinity United Church in Edmonton and is Alberta and Northwest Conference's representative on the Regional Advisory Committee for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's National Event taking place in Edmonton March 27 – 30, 2014.

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Send photos with captions to incontactphoto@gmail.com. Be sure you have permission to share someone's image before sending us a photo. Thanks.

— *Liz Goddard*

The Quilters Group

An Outreach Project of St. Paul's United Church, Edmonton

Since 2003 The St Paul's United Church Quilters' Group in Edmonton, comprised of 10 or so women, has been meeting on Wednesday mornings to make colourful, cozy quilts to give to needy individuals for warmth and comfort. Sewn in a corner of each quilt is a label stating "Made for you with God's Love" by St. Paul's Paulettes".

Initiated by Reta Kennedy and Eva Penzes Wright after a great deal of leftover fabric was donated to the church's garage sale, this outreach project is truly now a community effort. Some members of the congregation, who are not able to come to our Wednesday "work bees", donate fabric, some donate funds for the batting (filling) while others sew tops from packets of colourful 11" or 8" precut squares which we provide. Each year the Quilters Group completes approximately 100 quilts of various sizes (last year it was 107). Over the years we have given quilts to a number of non-profit organizations such as



L – R: Betty Mullen, Barbara Nickel (Bissel rep.), Rita Kennedy, Myrtle Thorsby

Hope Mission, Terra Association, Ben Calf Robe Society, Youth Emergency Centre, The Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre, Ronald McDonald House, Compassion House and Bissell who in turn distribute them to their clients. This year the majority of our quilts will be donated to Bissell

for their H2H program (Homeless to Homes). It is our prayer that the recipients will understand that we care about them and hope that our quilts will warm their hearts as well as their bodies.

— Betty Mullen
(chair of the Quilters' Group)

Member Recognition and 88th Anniversary Celebrations

On November 24, 2013, the ConneXions Committee of the Camrose United Church presented a Membership Recognition as part of the church's anniversary celebrations. One individual and two couples were honored:

Casey Reed was born and raised in Camrose and confirmed in our church in 1999. She was an active member of Sunday School. In 2003, she joined the choir where she sings soprano. This past year, she joined the handbells choir. Casey keeps the Children's

Ministry supply room organized and inventory and attendance records up to date. Casey has also participated as a Camp Counsellor at Hardisty and Bar Harbour.

Dave Steblyk and Kay Wallis were married in Camrose United Church in 1977. Their two sons, Tom and Dean, were baptized here as well. Dave and Kay Steblyk both taught Sunday School when their boys were ages two to five. Dave served on both the Christian Development and Property Committees, and also has chaired



L – R: Dave Steblyk, Kay Steblyk, Casey Reed, Penny Sawchyn, Jim Sawchyn honoured at Camrose United Church

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the Property Committee. Kay has been involved with Camrose United Church since she was a child. While in Junior and Senior High School, Kay sang in the church choir and remains today a proud member of the choir, rarely missing a practice or a Sunday service. She is presently Chair of the Worship Committee, a position she has capably filled for many years.

Penny and Jim Sawchyn met as teachers on staff at a village school in rural Manitoba. They have been married for 49 years and have been blessed with four children and seven grandchildren. After a number of years teaching, Jim changed careers. He became an Ultrasound Technologist and, after moving to Camrose 25 years ago, worked at St. Mary's Hospital. Penny continued teaching. They joined Camrose United Church eight years ago. Jim is a valued member

of the Property Committee and has learned how to operate the sound system in the Sanctuary. For the past two years, he has worked on a mobile ultrasound machine, on a team from "Doctors Without Borders" in Central America. Penny has served on Presbytery, the ConneXions Committee and the Pastoral Care Committee. She helped start the Healing Pathways program and also loves participating in Soul Weavers and playing in the handbells choir.

We are most fortunate that these individuals are members of the Camrose United Church and are grateful beneficiaries of all that they do in our congregation and our community.

— Alex Oliver
Member of Editorial Board

"I'm Glad I Came" — A Look at the 2013 Banff Men's Conference

We sang and prayed; we listened to outstanding speakers; we talked and ate with one another; we walked in the mountain sunshine; and we sat quietly and reflected on the theme: "We live in a complex world; we worship a simple God."

Stephen Kakfwi offered three thoughtful and challenging addresses on the theme. From age nine to sixteen, he was in a residential school in the north, and emerged with a lot of anger. "In the residential school, my spirit left me. For me, there was no god."

His anger fueled a determination to change things for First Nations people. He was elected to the legislature of the Northwest Territories (NWT) and served for sixteen years including three years as Premier.

He holds a strong hope for the future. "Sometimes the NWT government gets it right. An example is the Water Strategy, which includes an agreement with the Alberta government to make the lakes and rivers healthy again."

"I think there is hope," he said, "and it is not so far away. There is a spirit sweeping across this land. If we will share the struggle and the pain, we can make a better country."

He tells us to care and to be involved. "Nothing will happen if we leave it to government. We need Canadians to be aware of the history of aboriginal people in Canada and the opportunity for a better way."

Our Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Gary Paterson, was equally challenging. He is very conscious of the sharp and continuing decline of human and financial resources in our church.

"We need to change our structure," said Dr. Paterson, "but that alone is not enough. We need a renewal of faith, a clear understanding of God's call, and a deep connection with Christ."

He invited us to talk with delegates about a time when God was real to us. "Before we look at changes," he added, "let's tell our stories of God. For in this complex and sometimes chaotic world, we can trust that God is doing a new thing."

The Conference was enlivened by opportunities to hear some of the stories of Banff pioneers, to explore an introduction to yoga, to try some spiritual practices, to discuss climate change and energy strategy, or to climb a mountain.

— Dave Edwards



Right Reverend Gary Paterson addresses the conference



Dave Edwards and Tom Dobbie attend Men's Conference

The Gift of Song

When the Reverend Marilyn Evans of Diamond Valley Pastoral Charge heard how much destruction had occurred because of flooding at neighboring High River United Church in June, she knew she and her congregation had to do whatever they could to help. Though their own community had experienced damage, such as having the road washed out between Turner Valley and Black Diamond the High River church had sustained major damage. When Marilyn took the idea of a benefit concert to the church Board, they were very supportive and the congregation really got behind the project. She then called churches and community choirs that she thought might be interested and able to participate.

It all came together on Saturday, November 9th with 80 – 90 performers in “The Gift of Song”. Turner Valley Elementary School provided the venue. The Diamond Valley Pastoral Charge not only hosted the concert but also provided refreshments at the church. At the end of a very busy day of song and performance they had collected \$3,860.00 to help High River United Church restore their facility. This was over and above the \$4,530.00 they had already donated as a Pastoral Charge!

Choirs and individuals from United Churches and communities as far away as Knox in Calgary, Okotoks, High River, Red Deer Lake and Turner Valley offered the gift of song for over two hours. At the end of the evening, someone was heard to say, “This is what we do when our friends and neighbours need help”.

— Gordon Hunter
(past Chair of Editorial Board)
and Marilyn Evans
(Diamond Valley Pastoral Charge)



Paul Rumbolt entertains at “The Gift of Song”



Jim Sawchyn has second trip with Flying Doctors

This past July 8, 2013 I made a second successful trip with The Flying Doctors of Canada to bring medical help to the villages in rural El Salvador.

We all met in Houston, Texas. The entire team then flew to San Salvador, the capital.

The medical team had 7 all-day clinics in different locations. We saw approximately 1,800 patients. Ultrasound was very busy and I examined approximately ninety-five patients. One clinic was missed because my equipment was accidentally left behind in San Salvador upon arrival. I was not very popular that day because ultrasound has proven to be a very valuable tool for the physicians on the team. Next summer will be different. The administration of the Flying Doctors has redirected the medical trips to Haiti rather than El Salvador. There appears to be a much greater need in Haiti at this time.

We are blessed with a second mobile ultrasound machine donation; and we will be able to have two sonographers in rural Haiti.

My personal experience this time in El Salvador was much more relaxing and rewarding. I could

lean upon my experiences from last year. I feel that I was able to use God’s gifts to me during my career in sonography to be expressed in the needs of the villagers less fortunate than I.

— Jim Sawchyn



Jim Sawchyn examines El Salvador patient using ultrasound

Around Our Conference

Upcoming Events — Please save this!

February 2. Wisdom Sunday.

March 27 – 30, 2014. National Truth And Reconciliation Event. Edmonton. Volunteers needed. See article in this issue. Increase your understanding and be part of the healing process by supporting and participating in this historic event.

April 29, 2014. The upcoming secretaries event will take place in Red Deer, Alberta at the Gaetz Memorial United Church, 4758 Ross Street, Please RSVP Linda before April 29th if you are able to attend. 403-347-2244 gaetzuc@telusplanet.net Come and join us for a time of sharing and fellowship.

June 2014. Celebration of Ministry
October 5 to 8, 2014. The 25th annual Strathcona County Ecumenical Mission, Sherwood Park.

Call for Volunteers for Final Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Edmonton, March 2014.

We will need volunteers, especially for the Churches Listening Area, birthday party cupcakes and gifts of prayer shawls and blankets for survivors. Our Conference has established the *Residential School Survivor Hospitality Fund* to assist in providing accommodation and travel subsidies for survivors needing support to attend the event. Contributions for this fund can be sent to the Conference office. Details about volunteering are available on the Conference website (www.anwconf.com) and the Truth and Reconciliation website (www.trc.ca).

WANTED... Your Input!

In mid-January 2014, the newly-formed Communications and Technology Committee of Alberta and Northwest Conference (ComTech) will invite you and others to take a short and engaging survey. The members are Peter Chynoweth, Paul Walfall, Blaine Woodall and Stuart Jackson. Contact Stuart at stuart.j@telus.net or at 780-455-3664. Data about the communications technology currently being used by United Church people in our Conference will help direct the work of the committee as it makes future plans. As with any statistical tool, the usefulness of the survey needs responses from a broad and diverse audience.

We want your input, so... stay tuned!

— Stuart Jackson,
Chalmers Castle Downs United Church, Edmonton.

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Submissions for our blog
accepted anytime!