

# Insight

Sharing our Good News stories throughout Toronto Conference

Northern Waters, Living Waters, Toronto Southeast and South West Presbyteries

July/August 2010

Volume 38, Number 4

## Conference annual meeting held in Orillia

Toronto Conference's 85th annual meeting took place at St. Paul's United Church, Orillia May 28-30, the first time in many years that the meeting had been held in a congregational setting. Despite sitting in pews for three days enduring the heat and humidity of a late May heat wave, those attending the meeting seemed enthusiastic about the change in venue.

President Carol Gierak ended her two-year term. "I am delighted that we had this opportunity to hold the meeting in a church setting again. It changed the tone of the meeting," she said. Margaret Walker, a lay member of Knox United Church in Agincourt, said she was feeling "excited and humble" as she began her term as president. "The work of the Conference is a shared responsibility and I look forward to working with many individuals as we continue to grow and learn together."

Presentations by Moderator Mardi Tindal focused on her theme of soul, community and creation. Joined by former Moderator Bob Smith, journalist and author Alanna Mitchell, and environmental advocates Paul Abell and Lauryn Drainie, Tindal encouraged Conference members to consider how they can be active players in expressing concern for the environment. "It's important that we tell and



Photo by Richard C. Choe

*Marg Walker installed as Conference president.*

hear stories of hopeful engagement," said Tindal. "I want people to tell their own stories and the stories they hope will be told in 50 years."

One of the highlights was the Celebration of Ministries service attended by over 500 people. Five people were ordained, one minister was admitted from another denomination, and two persons were recognized as Designated Lay Ministries.

In response to a Proposal from South West Presbytery, the Conference will commend the Government of Ontario for steps it has taken to reduce poverty; Conference will call on the government to initiate further poverty reduction measures. The annual meeting also approved a budget that will see a slight decrease in the assessment to Pastoral Charges.

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# Ordinands begin new ministries

At its annual meeting in May, Toronto Conference ordained five people. All will be leaving Toronto Conference through the action of the General Council's Transfer Committee, and will be settled in other Conferences.

Earlier this spring there had been some anxiety that none of the candidates would be ordained because no settlement sites were available within the Conference. However, all five found new ministries in other Conferences. "Our candidates for ordination have the gifts and the formation needed for ministerial leadership in our church today", says Rev. Jim Keenan, chair of the settlement committee. "The needs were there and our ordinands were open to go to where the Spirit was calling them".

Here's where they're going:



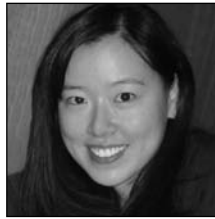
**Cindy Bourgeois** will have a chance to catch up on her Shakespeare and acting skills as she heads to Stratford in London Conference where she will be settled into a team ministry. "I am excited and honoured and blessed to be serving at Central United in Stratford," Cindy says.



**Bronwyn Corlett** is moving to Hamilton Conference. "I am very excited to start at Binkley United in Hamilton," she said, "but I am also feeling the incredible responsibility and honour that is being bestowed on me through my ordination."



Humorist **Ann Hines** has the greatest distance to travel as she moves to a new home in Prairie Pine Presbytery, Saskatchewan Conference. "For years my spouse and I have joked about how one day I might find myself settled to some remote corner of western Canada," she notes, "so when I got the call saying I actually was being posted to a tiny three-point charge in rural Saskatchewan my first thought was, 'Why the heck didn't we joke about Mississauga?'"



**Hannah Lee** will move from her Toronto home to the Bruce Presbytery in Hamilton Conference. Like many of the others, Hannah is "ready and excited to begin a new ministry." As she leaves Toronto Conference, she says she is "grateful for the love and support of friends, and looking forward to new adventures led by the Spirit, with the communities of Teeswater and Salem."



Bay of Quinte Conference will be home for **Christine Sloan** as she begins her settlement in Kingston Presbytery. "I am very excited to be settled to the Bath-Morven Pastoral Charge and I look forward to our ministry together."

"Heading out to a pastorate for the first time can cause some anxiety," says Rev. Teresa Burnett-Cole, personnel minister in Toronto Southeast Presbytery. In early May she gathered the five ordinands together to talk about issues they'll face when they get started. The biggest topic of conversation was "what to expect and what people expect of us as ministers," says Burnett-Cole. The group also covered statistical reports, church records, relations with Ministry & Personnel Committees, and even how to read a balance sheet. The group heard from recent ordinands Christina Boyd and Cheryl-Lynn MacPherson who shared "the good, the bad and the ugly" of starting a new pastorate, says Burnett-Cole. "It felt good to be able to talk without anyone judging their fears. It was a safe place to share."

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# Ecumenical Ministry Provides Support in Etobicoke

By Linda Dixon, director, Stonegate Community Ministry

Who among us would not want to live in a community that is strong, kind and just? The question may sound rhetorical or even a little utopian, but the words summarize the main goal of the Stonegate Community Ecumenical Ministry, a Christian outreach ministry in Toronto's Etobicoke-South district. With a solid history of achievement, this group is making a significant difference in the south-east corner of Etobicoke.

The Stonegate community lies just north of the Queensway and East of Park Lawn Road, and the ministry's core constituency is the approximately 12,000 tenants who live in 79 low-rise apartment buildings in the neighbourhood. "With poverty figures double that of the rest of Toronto, these people need our attention", says Board Chair, Barbara Jenkins. "In fact," Jenkins points out, "compared with household incomes across the city, Stonegate incomes fall into the lowest brackets. More than one quarter of the senior population is considered low income while up to 53% of the children in the community come from low income families.

Census reports clearly support Jenkins' statements, and reveal that the Stonegate community has become home for large numbers of immigrants from the Central and Southern European countries such as Albania, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. While these new citizens are well educated and doing their utmost to establish roots in their new country, they are contending with restrictions in Canadian professional organizations and sometimes at the governmental level which greatly hinders and very often blocks them altogether from working within the field of their training and expertise. Add to the mix language challenges experienced by many immigrants and one discovers significant barriers to accessing employment, health care and help at virtually every step towards integration.

Enter Stonegate Community Ecumenical Ministry - an outreach organisation that is supported by seven partnering churches across six denominations - Anglican, Baptist, Four Square Gospel, Presbyterian and two United Churches (Kingsway Lambton and Royal York Road) and with a Methodist Director! All are working together to build a stronger, kinder and more just community in the Stonegate neighbourhood.



Photo by Paul Patterson.

Play therapy participants at Stonegate Ministry.

And it does so by offering a variety of services and programs to strengthen families. Stonegate Community Ministry partners with a local food bank to feed the hungry. It operates a second hand store to clothe (at exceedingly reasonable prices) those in need, and also carries small houseware items and linen. Food vouchers are provided for food bank families twice yearly - once at Christmas so that people can buy a few foods of their choice at that special time of year and again in summer when the Farmers' Market is underway so that fresh fruit and vegetables may be purchased. Also at Christmas, it provides new toys for low income people in the area so parents and children can have a good Christmas. As well, the ministry sponsors the Time Together program - a wonderfully creative Play Therapy program to facilitate bonding between parents and children.

Furthermore, the Stonegate Community Ministry is partnering in a number of projects initiated by others in the area. It has been actively involved in mobilizing the community to revitalize a local park so that children can have a safe and fun place to play. In addition, it has helped in establishing a Farmers Market; aided in improving street lighting for resident safety; helped in organizing a Market Garden where community green thumbs are often ready to share the bounty with those around them, and was instrumental in securing a basketball and hockey court for youth, which is always active.

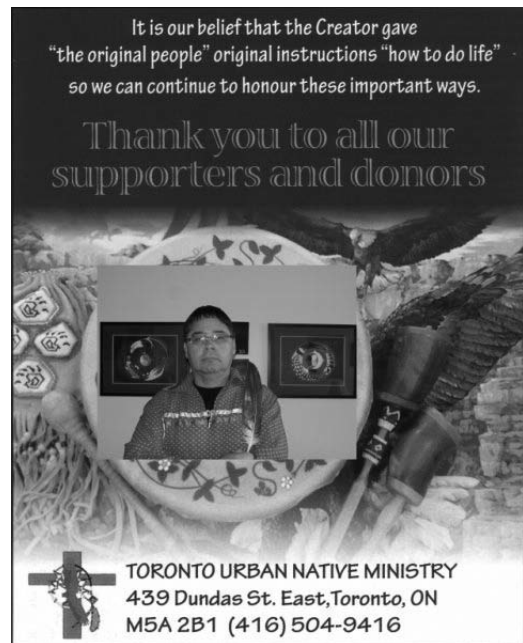
Through these initiatives Stonegate Community Ecumenical Ministry has proclaimed the Good News of God's love to the Stonegate community and is actively and effectively working to build the community it envisions - one that is strong, kind and just.

# Vision becomes Reality at Toronto Urban Native Ministry

Rev. Allan Sinclair came to the Toronto Urban Native Ministry (TUNM) five years ago because he wanted to find out what was happening to the youth from his community. Prior to coming to TUNM, he was serving his settlement charge in a northern remote area of Manitoba. He noticed that many of the children from the community were sent to towns or cities to attend school after grade 8. Some of them lasted one year, after which, discouraged and with their interest in education diminished, they returned to the community. Others were distracted by the glamour and freedom of partying or became involved with gangs. These young people fell through the cracks or else “they came back and I buried them,” said Sinclair matter-of-factly.

But it did matter to Sinclair. Those young people mattered and he wanted to find out why this was happening. So he accepted the position with TUNM and began to minister with people - both aboriginal and non-aboriginal - dealing with poverty, dysfunctional families, homelessness and a multitude of other challenges. TUNM offers opportunities for worship that combine Aboriginal and Christian traditions, opportunities for personal healing, and a place to drop in for companionship in an open, safe, accepting environment. The staff of three, including Sinclair, Rev. Andrew Wesley of the Anglican Church and Sandra Campbell, social and pastoral care worker, also take their ministry to the streets. Sinclair estimates that about 70% of their work is on the streets, where they try to reach as many people as possible, although he notes that the streets can be pretty dangerous, “You need to know who you can approach.”

Sinclair also shares that an important part of their work is to promote principles for justice and reconciliation. Many of their clients have been touched by residential schools, either as survivors themselves or as the children or grandchildren of survivors. He would like to develop an intergenerational program that would help these clients to develop skills in parenting and establishing healthy homes and families. Sinclair has also found himself taking on an advocacy role within the larger church. He attended a United Church one Sunday recently and was surprised to learn that they had



*Rev. Allan Sinclair, Toronto Urban Native Ministry.*

never heard of TUNM. Undaunted, he began to develop a relationship with the people he met, and has been invited back as a speaker. Sinclair is glad to have opportunities to make people aware of the work of TUNM and also the work being done in the United Church around residential schools. “Often people don’t want to hear it, but I think it has to be said.”

Toronto Urban Native Ministry was originally the dream of Grafton Antone, a United Church minister who felt that people needed a place to worship that would combine Aboriginal and Christian traditions and beliefs. He held on to that vision for several years while working out an agreement with Council Fire, with whom the Ministry is co-located, and while seeking funding. Sinclair’s position is funded entirely by the M&S Fund, but all the money used to run their programs and purchase supplies comes from other donations.

If you would like to learn more about the work of this ministry and how you can support them, please call 416-360-4350. When we contribute to the Mission and Service Fund, we are supporting this ministry.

# Table Soup Kitchen Meets Community's Needs

Heather Berg knows that it can be difficult to hear that God loves you if you have no food in your belly. The mother of three once dreamed of being a missionary, but she has found a mission field in the community of Huntsville, located in the northern part of Toronto Conference. In November 2005, Heather and her husband were hosting a Bible Study group in their home when she casually threw out the idea that someone should start a soup kitchen. One of the other participants suggested, "Maybe you should do it."

The idea didn't go away. Berg did some research and learned that none of the local churches or organizations was running a soup kitchen. Following a ski accident in February 2006, she had several weeks in recovery to reflect on what God was asking of her, and came to believe that God truly loves all people and wants to meet their needs. And so the idea for The Table Soup Kitchen was formed.

It took quite a while to make the vision a reality. The first job was finding space; this proved to be difficult as many people were nervous about opening their doors to those in need. But Berg found a friend in Pastor Dan Ferris, youth minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and, with his support, the church board agreed to provide space for a weekly dinner. Next came the search for insurance, obtaining charitable status and forming a board. The first meal was served at Thanksgiving 2006, but the weekly program did not get under way until May 2007. This meal is served every Thursday and, in May 2008 a second meal was added every Monday at the Community Living building. What was truly amazing was that, in the midst of this, Berg was dealing with personal challenges resulting from a car accident that caused physical and emotional distress for herself and her children. "It would have been easy to stop and focus on my family," says Berg, "but people were so supportive and I knew this was what God wanted me to do."

In November 2009, the Monday night suppers moved to Trinity United Church because more space was required. Berg notes that members of Trinity were supportive long before the move, but they have been amazing around the meal program. Rev. Derek Shelly is a source of great encourage-

ment for Berg and often joins the guests for dinner, offering pastoral care and companionship. Justine MacDonald is the primary contact between Trinity and The Table Soup Kitchen and she too can be found at the church on many Mondays helping with dinner. The UCW and others from the congregation often provide appetizers, soup, dessert and fellowship for the guests.

In December 2008, The Table Foodbank opened its doors. While the weekly dinners may serve 30 – 40 people on average, the foodbank sees 150 people weekly, 70% of whom represent families. The Table purchases skids of food every three weeks, but also relies on the support of local people who donate fresh produce, dairy products and bread, none of which come in the food orders. Berg admits that it takes a lot of work and a lot of money to keep this ministry happening. Forty people volunteer at the food bank and 80 at the kitchen, but she admits quite frankly, "We are in desperate need; we will have nothing left after paying for the next shipment and the utilities need to be paid." At the same time, she continues to be grateful for the support received from the local churches, noting that all the downtown churches have really worked together for this worthy cause. The Table Soup Kitchen provides the framework within which the churches can minister to those in need.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help, check out The Table Soup Kitchen Foundation's website at [thetablesoupkitchenfoundation.com](http://thetablesoupkitchenfoundation.com). Donations can be sent directly to The Table Soup Kitchen Foundation c/o Heather Berg, 36 Lorne Street South, Huntsville, ON, P1H 1V7.

The name Table Soup Kitchen suggests people meeting and eating together, gathered around the table as family and community. Heather Berg and the many volunteers bring this image to life. When we support the M&S Fund, we are supporting this important ministry.



# Re-awakening the Spirit

By Lynn Watt

*“Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need many more chances to meet each other face to face and learn about one another. We urge Canadians to become involved in a broad and creative campaign of public education.”*

- from Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Chances to meet one another and an opportunity for education are being offered by the Living into Right Relations Circle (Toronto Conference) during the fall of this year. Through a series of educational and cultural events called “Re-awakening the Spirit”, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will come together in a shared learning experience. The name “Re-awakening the Spirit” derives from the imperative for many Aboriginal people to rediscover traditional beliefs and values as a foundation for living in today’s world.

Themes for event workshops are the Teachings of the Medicine Wheel and the Sacred Grandfather Teachings and the Impact of Colonialism and the Residential School System. Workshops are facilitated by Aboriginal Elders.

For Aboriginal people, opportunities to learn about their cultures often have not been presented, a legacy of the residential school system. For non-Aboriginal people, the history of Canada has been told largely from a non-Aboriginal perspective and has emphasized the “opening up” and “developing” of the country, without telling the story of the effect on the original inhabitants. Re-awakening the Spirit will offer an opportunity to learn about traditional values through the voices of Aboriginal people and to hear from them about the Aboriginal experience.

The series is made up of three events, with each event consisting of workshops extending over a two-day period. Events are open to all.

The schedule for events is as follows:

Sept. 18-19, 2010	Georgina Island, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation Community Centre
Facilitating Elders:	Grafton Antone, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux

Oct. 16-17, 2010	Toronto, Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, 439 Dundas Street East
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Facilitating Elders: Andrew Wesley, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux

Nov. 13-14, 2010 Toronto, Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, 439 Dundas Street East

Facilitating Elders: Andrew Wesley, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux

Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concludes by saying that we all have a part to play in arriving at a new relationship between us so that, “we can look forward to a Canada that celebrates Aboriginal heritage and draws strength from Aboriginal peoples as full partners in a renewed federation.”

“Re-awakening the Spirit” offers us a chance to play a part. When we do, we will be closer to realizing the vision of the leaders of the Shuswap people who wrote to Sir Wilfrid Laurier a century ago with their hope for a shared destiny:

*“We will make each other good and great.”*

For further information about “Re-awakening the Spirit”, including registration, please contact Linda Parsons at 905 809-7194 or reawakeningthespirit@gmail.com.

## **AVAILABLE from Aurora United Church, post-interior refurbishing:**

One antique wooden pulpit (fairly large and quite heavy!)

plus

two “Bishop style” chairs covered in red velvet, plus a set of brass railings and finally wooden divider panels that sat in front of the organ in the previous configuration.

Worship context preferred, but price adaptable to your situation and intent.

You may inquire by e-mail to: [rupert.ray@rogers.com](mailto:rupert.ray@rogers.com), or you may contact the Church office where you will be speaking with Sharon Baillie at (905) 727-1935, ext. 23, if you wish to arrange a viewing.

A decision will be reached regarding disposition of these items by Labour Day.

# Inter-Presbytery Confirmation Retreat Faith-full and Fun

For twenty-four hours on May 14 and 15, the halls of Collier Street United were filled with the sounds of laughter, chatting and basketballs thumping as 38 youth and eight leaders gathered for the second half of the Inter-Presbytery Youth Confirmation Program. Co-sponsored by Northern Waters and Living Waters Presbyteries, this was an opportunity for youth to meet new friends, to have fun, and to reflect on what it means to be confirmed into the United Church.

The first retreat was held at Muskoka Woods Sports Resort near Lake Rosseau. Through crafts, games, movies, rock-climbing, worship and conversation, participants gained a deeper understanding of the New Creed and the sacraments of the church. At the second gathering, the focus was on what it means to be a member of the church and what it means to be the church in the world. A highlight was spending time with staff and volunteers from the David Busby Street Centre learning about their important ministry, along with games to help us understand the Bible and United Church history. As the final activity, participants spent some time exploring their own faith statements, through words, visual art or music.

The Inter-Presbytery Confirmation Program is not intended to be a stand alone program, but rather to complement what is being offered in local congregations. It originated in the former Simcoe Presbytery where it ran successfully for several years prior to the restructuring. This is one program that has risen from



*Some of the enthusiastic participants in confirmation program.*

the ashes of the old with the hope that it will continue to grow and evolve within the new structure. This was an excellent opportunity for young people, some of whom may be the only one in their church seeking confirmation, to engage with other youth around issues of faith and of course to have fun. The most frequently heard comment on evaluations was how great it was to meet other kids and spend time together.

Andrea Wheaton and Ann Harbridge co-chaired the planning team; Ann Harbridge and Kim Posno organized the food for the May retreat. The rest of the leadership team included Ruth Noble, Heather Power, Dennis Posno, Pam Mauti, Kerrie Perry (staff) and Jody Maltby (staff). The young people participated with such enthusiasm and made the event the huge success it was!

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## Calendar

### "Therefore Chose Life"

The R. Alex Sim Rural Ministry Symposium 2010 sponsored by Queen's School of Religion  
October 25 to 27, 2010  
Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch Ontario

For more information, go to: [www.ruralsymposium.ca](http://www.ruralsymposium.ca)  
or phone: 519-689-7555

The R. Alex Sim Rural Ministry Symposium is held biennially to nurture and empower rural churches. It is co-ordinated by an ecumenical Planning Committee, which includes members from the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Salvation Army and United Churches. The symposium being held October 25 to 27, 2010, at Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch Ontario will be the eighth such event.

"Therefore Chose Life" will focus on issues related to the sustainability of rural communities and the role that rural churches can play in strengthening and/or preserving their communities through fostering various aspects of community health such as economic, services (public, social, medical) environmental, and families.

Two theme presenters will be featured. Dr. Gil Waldkoenig, Director, Town and Country Church Institute, Gettysburg P.A., will examine how the local church's witness in environmental concerns can be an important resource for community building, sustainable living, and proclamation of the Gospel in fresh and clear tones. Dr. Rene Van Acker, Associate Dean External Relations, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph, will examine the effects of agricultural production systems on rural communities and how churches can help create/sustain healthy communities.

The symposium will also include a variety of experiences including small group discussions, plenary forums, workshops, worship, entertainment, and free time for one-on-one exchanges. In a book display, current resource material related to rural issues and rural ministries will be available for browsing and purchase.

## Celebrations

On June 3 Toronto Christian Resource Centre (CRC) was honoured by the City of Toronto as an Affordable Housing Champion. CRC is one a number of public and non-profit organizations that are building 3,000 units of affordable rental and ownership housing in Toronto in 2010. The award was presented at Toronto's City Hall.

Former Conference staff member Wenh-In Ng was honoured by Emmanuel College at its convocation in May. An internationally-recognized scholar and teacher, Ng received an honorary doctorate.

A long list of ministers were honoured at the Conference's annual meeting in May on the occasion of significant anniversaries of their ordination or commissioning. Included were five ministers celebrating 60 years — Ronald Arkwright, Nettie Hoffman, Gordon Hume, Andrew Myles and Stewart Porteous.

The Conference's annual meeting recognized ministers who have retired in the last year, or will retire shortly. The retirees were John Brown, Tony Gazzard, Bonnie Kelly, Grant Kerr, David Lander, Douglas McKenzie, Judith Oliver, Harry Oussoren, Neil Parker, Judith Springett and Vivian Yarwood. Those present addressed the meeting following the singing of one verse of a hymn significant to the retiree. President-elect Marg Walker introduced the retirees, and President Carol Gierak presented each with a certificate.

Vol. 38

No. 4

INSIGHT

Publisher

Toronto Conference

**Editor:** David Allen, Executive Secretary

**Layout and Design:** Carol J. Anderson

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INSIGHT will next appear in the September issue of *The United Church Observer*. **Deadline is July 25.**

Conference website: [www.torontoconference.ca](http://www.torontoconference.ca)