

## **Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario DUCC Regional Gathering**

Twenty Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario DUCCs gathered from Thursday March 1 at 1:30pm until noonish Saturday March 3, 2007 to reconnect, sing and worship together, remember and discover new elements of our history, discuss diaconal concerns and issues and share resources. Thanks to Yvonne Naismith and Ted Dodd whose planning and facilitating made this event possible.

A number of our colleagues who had hoped to be in the circle were unable to attend because of health and work issues. Another was en route during a snow storm when her bus was in an accident. Although we missed their physical presence, they were there in spirit as we held them in our thoughts and prayers throughout our time together.

Engaging and challenging conversation took place as we examined the UCC diaconal ministry statement of belief adopted in 1992. We celebrate the work and energy out of which this statement was born, and embrace many of the images it offers us. However, our conversation surfaced questions about who the statement is intended for and whether some of the language could be updated.

During the time of our gathering we were delighted to welcome several guests into the circle. One was our Conference archivist, Diane Haglund, who offered an engaging presentation on several former deaconesses. It was exciting to hear their stories. It was also distressing to hear how little of their history has been retained and how difficult it is to search out even a small amount of information about their lives and ministry. It was a good time to be reminded to complete our profiles for the website so that there will be a record of us and our ministries for future generations.

We heard from diaconal folks who had attended General Council and the Fall General Council Executive. We celebrate that we now have a diaconal voice into the General Council Executive through the participation of Caryn Douglas as our Conference Clergy representative. Thanks Caryn for your willingness to take on that role. We spent time in smaller groups examining three issues that had been before the 39<sup>th</sup> General Council: Outcomes for Ministry Leadership; Lay Presidency at the Sacraments; and Isolation in Ministry. During these discussions we were able to recognize our appreciation for the work done as well as identify our questions and concerns. We also discussed the process for submitting proposals to General Council. We wondered about the wisdom of sharing any that have implications for diaconal ministry with the community prior to sending them forward.

On Saturday morning Bruce Faurshou, Bill Gillis and Judy Hare from the conference staff; Betty Kelly, our lay representative to the General Council Executive; and Diane Dwarka, Chair of Programs for Mission and Ministry of the General Council, joined our circle. It was helpful to be able to share with them some of our discussion about General Council and to relay our appreciation, questions and concerns.

A time to "Show and Tell" gave opportunity for folk to share resources which they had found useful.

The upcoming national gathering was also discussed, in particular who will be attending, as well as our role as the DUCC Communications Cluster. Plans for gathering at our conference annual meeting in June were begun.

The group very much appreciated being able to meet in the pleasant surroundings of the Centre for Christian. Thank you! A donation will be made to CCCS as a indication of our gratitude.