

## HAMILTON/TORONTO Regional DUCC 2009 Report for National Gathering

The diaconal ministers in the Hamilton and Toronto Conferences have met regularly since the last national gathering in 2007. Not long after that event in St. Albert, Alberta, we gathered at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre for a pot luck lunch followed by a time of discussing the concept of diaconal ministry as servanthood and the images and connotations associated with it, an issue that arose in St. Albert. We tried to connect for a Christmas lunch, but schedules just did not cooperate. Then in June of 2008, a number of us gathered again at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre. We had decided it would be a fun, relaxing day with talk of the 2009 National Gathering strictly prohibited.

The day was to be one of pot-luck. We gathered at 10a.m. Our activities for the day included a very long check in, a pot-luck worship service, exactly as it sounds... and a pot-luck lunch. I offer an excerpt from the minutes pertaining to the planning of this day, which should provide insight into the laughter we usually experience when we gather:

“... it was decided we would do a pot luck worship ... The possibility of 8 sermons is staggering and highly appealing to all.”

We also compiled a list of books for summer reading and movies for watching; here is an excerpt of that list:

She Changes Everything: Seeking the Divine on a Feminist Path, Lucy Reid

A Hidden Wholeness, and Let Your Life Speak by Parker J. Palmer

The Book of Negroes, Lawrence Hill

Jesus for the Non Religious, John Spong

A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming, Sallie McFague

The Knitting Circle, Ann Hood

Monkey Beach, Eden Robinson

White Teeth, Zadie Smith

The Piano Tuner, Daniel Mason

Summer Gone, David Macfarlane

Rousseau's Garden, Ann Charney

The Polished Hoe, Austin Clarke

The Memory Keeper's Daughter, Kim Edwards

The Time Traveler's Wife, Audrey Niffenegger

“Young at Heart” - movie

Plot: A story of the Young at Heart Chorus, a group of senior citizens who perform contemporary and classic rock and pop songs.

“The Visitor” - movie

Plot: The story of a university professor who has no zeal for living whose life is radically turned around by two people who are discovered living illegally in his NYC apartment. The two people are also living illegally in the USA. Great drumming in the movie.

Then just this past January, we gathered once again at Crieff for an overnight retreat. As always, we had a lengthy checking in period before lunch. Kathy Toivanen had agreed to put together the menu for us and to purchase all the necessary food, which was wonderful, although we all took turns sharing in the cooking and cleaning up. The theme we had decided upon for this retreat time revolved around our personal core values for ministry and the stories behind them that make them important to us. We also had a lot of play time and Sabbath time. Crieff Hills is a wonderful place with many trails and the weather was very cooperative ... the snow was simply awesome. Some of us stayed up into the night playing games which included a bout of charades ... Margaret Collard impressed us with her fire starting skills ... in the fireplace, I mean. Others of us went to bed relatively early for some much needed sleep.

We've all come to rely on one another for respite from the day to day busy-ness of ministry ... be it to vent, seek advice, or just be present for each other. We often leave our gatherings feeling refreshed and renewed and very blessed to have this community for support. In between our regional gatherings, we are intentional about keeping in touch with each other through the modern technology of the telephone and email!