



DUCC NEWS



Diakonia
of The United
Church of Canada

Sharing news, stories and reflections about Diaconal Ministers and Diaconal Ministry

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH DIACONIA

As we share the gift
of friendship
among ourselves,
we can be like a
leaven in the
churches — and
even in the whole
society.

Louise Williams, World
Diakonia President

By Russell Mitchell - Walker

During the summer of 2008 I was on a three month sabbatical. One of my goals for this time was to travel to Brazil to connect with the Diaconal Ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil (Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil – IECLB). I met Vera Walber who is the coordinator of the Office of Diaconia for the IECLB at the DOTAC conference in Trinidad, 2006. As I considered my sabbatical plans I contacted her and proposed my trip with the purpose of learning about Brazil, diaconal ministry there,

and building global connections between our congregation of Sunset United Church in Regina, and their community, particularly youth and young adults. I approached it with a commitment that whatever develops would need to be mutually beneficial. They were open to this so we proceeded to plan together and I began to learn Portuguese.

I was away to Brazil from June 12- 30 . I arrived in Porto Alegre in the southern most part of Brazil, and it was winter, with temperatures between 4 and 22° C. After some rest and orientation at Casa Matriz, the diaconal

motherhouse where I was staying in Sao Leopoldo, about 30 km north of Porto Alegre. I began a schedule of fairly full, rich days of visiting various agencies and ministries of the diaconal community and IECLB in general. I quickly learned that diaconal ministry in Brazil focuses solely on service, with ministers working out of a congregation often doing community development in the neighbourhood to address needs that are identified. The first two agencies I visited, a nursery day program for young children and after

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REGISTER FOR DUCC NATIONAL GATHERING

CALLED TO ORDER

*Ordained? Commissioned? neither?
all ? to Diaconal Ministry .
How shall we be true to our call and our
preparation to that call?*

April 14-17, 2009

Five Oaks Centre, Ontario

Mark these dates on your
calendar!

Watch for more information
and find the latest details on
the DUCC Website at
www.ducc.ca

PRESBYTERY RECOGNIZED MINISTRY

By Joan Tuchlinsky

After 6 years in my settlement position with two wonderful rural congregations I accepted a position at the Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre as their Public Education Coordinator. With much sadness but also excitement and joy, I left my congregational position and began my ministry with this secular feminist organization.

That was two years ago and it has turned out to be everything I hoped for and more. The best way I can describe my work experience is that it is like being at a non-religious version of the Centre for Christian Studies without the papers and reflections to write! I am responsible for raising awareness in my community about sexual violence against women and children and working with others to end it.

People would ask me why I left the ministry, even ministers!

Every minute of the day I am using the education the United Church provided for me at one of their theological schools, C.C.S. Every day I feel blessed to go to work.

But something was missing. Even though I felt I had come home to the ministry I had always been called to, my ministry was not recognized. People would ask me why I had left the ministry; even ministers! At Presbytery, which I attend regularly, I seem to have no value without a congregational identity and every year I have to justify why I should be kept on the roll of Presbytery. Part of me wanted to withdraw from the church alto-

gether and just focus on the work I enjoy and understand as my ministry. But there was another part of me that wanted the church to recognize that what I am doing is ministry. So, I began the process of having my ministry recognized.

This is no easy task, as others who have pursued this will tell you. Because the United Church is currently in process about how to go about this, each Conference and Presbytery is working out its own response to this request. I am in Waterloo Presbytery of Hamilton Conference. Fred Monteith, Executive Secretary, is supportive and provided me with the UCC Draft Proposal for Presbytery Recognized Ministries (PRM) dated Oct. 25.06. Fred pointed out that this isn't about my ministry being recognized but the Sexual Assault Support Centre being recognized as a ministry if it fits the criteria. He also offered to meet with the Board of Directors of my workplace to explain what this would mean for them. Fred suggested that I talk to someone in my Presbytery and we narrowed it down to two people and I sent an email to both.

After a few weeks I heard back from Steven Huntley, Pastoral Oversight who was working on getting another



Joan Tuchlinsky's ministry setting is a sexual assault support centre.

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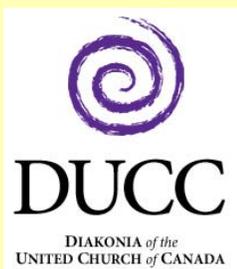
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Visit the website for other resources and news.



BRAZIL EXPERIENCE ENRICHES DIACONAL UNDERSTANDING

continued from page 1 ... school program for children and youth were the result of the diaconal ministry community development work of Leila Schwingel who was also at DOTAC 2006. She worked with the community to get funding from the government for sewage, better housing, and a nursery program, as well as the after school program. She showed me one of the most recent accomplishments, reclaiming a space beside the nursery that was previously used by drug dealers. I learned about a ministry in the periphery of the city, working with youth at risk to give them skills in a bakery program that also taught life skills. The pastor took us on a tour of the neighbourhood and showed us occupied land (people who came into the city landless and found somewhere to build a house), and two house churches he established when he learned that it was too far and too costly for people there to come to the church to worship. I met a class of theology students, including diaconal students, and later went to the diaconal volunteer placement working with children and youth in a poor area of Sao Leopoldo. They used sports and games to build community and talk with the young people about the issues and needs in their lives, and basically provided a safe place for them

to be and play and learn. I also spent a day with the pastor of Matriz Congregation in Porto Alegre, out of which Leila did her ministry (She is now employed with the nursery program). This included meeting their youth group, and sharing some information together about my church, their church and their experience as youth in Brazil. Many are keen to connect with youth from Sunset through the internet. This is only a sample of all the things I did and learned.



Young people at Villa Deque, a diaconal student placement. Links will be made between congregational youth online.

I learned that our diaconal ministries have much in common. We both struggle with recognition and understanding from the national church. We both find that many people in the congregation do not understand diaconal ministry and that there are a lack of employment opportunities for us as a result. There were also some significant differences. While the IECLB has a full time staff person working with

diaconal ministries, The United Church of Canada no longer has any staff person working with us. The IECLB has recently shifted its ministry training program so that all ministers train together while in the United Church Diaconal Ministers train separately.

Another difference is that the diaconal ministry of the IECLB focuses solely on service ministry and community development and I think that we can learn from this. I am challenging as I come back, to explore if I can do some of this within my present ministry with Sunset.

It was a very rich, cross-cultural experience and I am very appreciative of all the work that Vera and her colleagues put into planning such a wonderful experience and opportunity for me. I look forward to building the relationship with Matriz Congregation. I am already connecting with some of their youth online and look forward to connecting our youth with them. Hopefully down the road, we, both groups, will be able to plan to visit our ministries in each of our countries. The experience has continued to deepen my appreciation for the richness of diaconal ministry around the world and the value of the global network we have. If you have opportunities or a vision to connect with another diaconal ministry in another country, I encourage you to do so. The rewards are great!

Russell Mitchell-Walker practices diaconal minister in Regina, SK.

By Ken DeLisle

“All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.” I was surprised and pleased.

On September 29, 2007, Selkirk Presbytery (it almost surrounds the city of Winnipeg) discussed the cuts to national staff and to Mission and Service and Global Partner grants made the previous June.

Shortly after the news, General Council Commissioners from our Presbytery started calling and emailing each other. We expressed anger, shock, fear and surprise. None of us remembered being told of a financial crisis while at General Council and did not expect that “A Call To Purpose”, given to us on the last day, would be the cornerstone used to create these cuts.

What could we do? We



TAKING POSITIVE ACTION OVER M&S CUTS

felt we had a responsibility to say something to our Presbytery. We knew some members of Presbytery supported the cuts while others didn't know anything about it.

We could, like other Presbyteries, concentrate on the staff reductions which had also occurred. But we felt not enough attention was being given to the proposed cuts to Mission and Service and Global Partner grants. The most vulnerable persons were being harmed again. They became our focus.

We presented a skit, set as the last show for *Vision TV* to present the details of the cuts. There were table discussions and questions and answers. At our invitation our two conference reps to General Council were present. We explained that we wanted to do something positive, something that all of Presbytery could support, to help those whose funds would be cut drastically in 2009.

A motion was passed to encourage each Pastoral Charge to raise at least the equivalent of \$5.00 per identifiable giver and inviting other Presbyteries across Canada to join in this challenge,

Communication was sent to all Conferences, friends and supporters stating, “This is not a protest or a sign of support for what has happened, but an active way for all of us to express our concerns for the most vulnerable partners in and outside of Canada. Mission and Service donations are not a weapon but a tool of love. In faith and in hope and

in solidarity let us act to reduce the impact of these reductions on our brothers and sisters.”

How did the campaign do?

There is no real way to know. Within the Presbytery most pastoral charges did take up the cause. One congregation thought the appeal said \$5.00 per Sunday for the month and they were prepared to do it — and they did, even after the original intent was clarified.

The most vulnerable persons were being harmed again.

How much was received? There is no real way to know. The United Church has 303,643 identifiable givers. IF each giver contributed \$ 5.00 more that would mean an additional \$1,518,215. YES, one and a half million dollars. That much wasn't raised. *The Observer* did report that additional funds for 2009 were received but not the amount hoped for. The cuts have gone ahead. But clearly, the motion prompted discussion and a greater awareness of the purpose for the M&S fund.

Another important benefit was that our presbytery came together to hear and hope and act. Other Presbyteries did the same. Was it enough? Was it helpful? I don't know. Was it worth it? Yes.

Ken DeLisle was a Commissioner to the 39th General Council. He is a graduate of the Western Field Basef Program and currently is in interim ministry in Edmonton.

FINDING HOPE

By Jen Dresser

As I read about the changes at General Council and listen to the stories of those more closely connected to this process, I continue to be disturbed by the direction in which the United Church is moving.

It seems to me that the church has become focussed on survival ministry and less so on ministries of justice. There is always within the church a tension between what we want to do and what the finances say is possible. At this time it seems that the finances have taken precedent and I wonder if, as a church, we have lost sight of God's vision for a world where justice abounds.

I recognize the need to cut the work of the Mission and Service Fund comes from the very real fact that M&S dona-

**as a diaconal
community, we can
continue our own
work of building
relationships**

tions have not increased over the last ten years. At the same time these cuts have a very real impact on actual ministries in Canada and around the

world. There doesn't seem to be a plan in place to ensure that the ministries have funds to continue. The expectation is that congregations will take on the work of justice that has previously been done by General Council. This is an admirable goal. For me, one of the calls of living faithfully is to live justly. Those ministries that will not be taken on by congregations, or in another manner are seen as expendable.

It's important to take time to reflect on who we are as a church, to take stock of our life as a community of faith. But Jesus calls us into the world to ministries of compassion and justice. And these ministries require our prayer, time, energy, commitment and money.

General Council Executive has decided that at this time we are to move away from the ministries of justice that define us as a church. At times it seems that there is nothing to be done but get used to a different way of being church and yet I am not satisfied with allowing those on the margins to be abused and victimized by the church. I am left with the question of how to continue to support and encourage others to support ministries that are vital to justice. There are no easy answers to this but I wonder if, as a diaconal community, we can continue our own work of building relationships with those on the margins. We can continue to hold General Council accountable for its commitment to ministries of justice. We can continue to create networks of people both in and outside of the church who are committed to the work of justice. We can continue to promote and uphold the work of the M&S fund so that in future there will be financial resources to support these ministries.

As diaconal folk we have a history of being on the margins. At this time it seems to me that we are even more on the margins of the church. For me, it's a question of "with whom do I seek to stand." In choosing to stand with and build relation-



ships with those on the margins, I see that there is hope. It's not easy, or short-term and it requires us to risk and to



live creatively. But isn't that part of our history as a diaconal community and our call to live lives of justice?

Jen Dresser is in her integrating year at CCS. She has a passion for rural ministry as a place that is becoming more on the margins of both church and society.

By Heather Sandilands

A Breath of Spring in the middle of a Prairie January...fresh flowers blooming outside a reasonably priced hotel room. Dreaming? No – Epiphany Explorations at First Met United Church, Victoria. Five days, one thousand people, different genders, diaconal folks from all over the country...a few global visitors....16 workshops, 5 internationally renowned scholars ... singing and worship services that matter!

I attended because Marcus Borg and Dom Crossan were to be in dialogue about the messages of Jesus and Paul, “are they really different?” In the midst of the Roman Empire, both preached radical messages that said, “Follow God’s Kingdom, Not Caesar’s Kingdom.” For more information there are



EXPLORING EPIPHANY EXPLORATIONS

new books by Borg (*Jesus: uncovering the Life, teachings and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*) and Crossan (*God and Empire*).

If *that’s* not enough for your Diaconal Soul, Sr. Miriam Therese Winter delivered a keynote address on women in the resurrection stories (“And then *Mrs.* Cleopas made supper. Of course it *had* to be *Mrs.* Cleopas...unless of course the “two of them” who turned into “their house” were in fact a gay couple: Mr. Cleopas and his partner. Hmmm,”). A third keynote was delivered by Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, a woman from India offering feminist theological reflection on the Empires we face in our own day and how the church is (or isn’t) responding to the injustice of our time. One of her reflections was on the Class of the *Dalit* (untouchables) in India and how current global market forces deepen their oppression. It was a powerful presentation, which was even more authoritative when the woman presenting announced that despite having 2 PhDs, being an elder in her church, a published and internationally renowned scholar, if this gathering were in India she wouldn’t be able to come into this assembly because she was *Dalit* herself. Many of us were rendered speechless by that injustice.

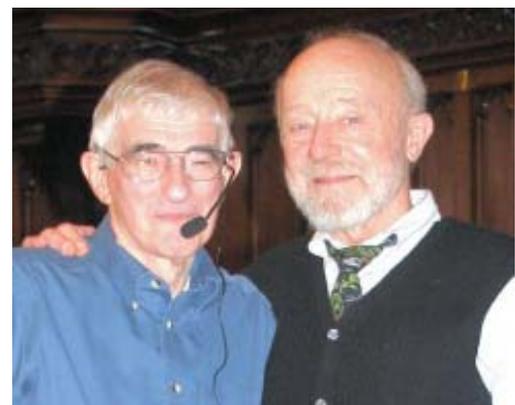
There were small-group workshops (some more interactive than others) on spiritual practises, eco-theology and spirituality of food. Tim Scorer offered experiential workshops for the new Wood

Lake Books series that “companion” popular books (like Borg’s *Heart of Christianity*). The idea of the series is to offer “Adult Theological/Spiritual *Re-*Formation” – challenging “Sunday school attitudes” still held by many adults in our congregations, offering an experiential learning opportunity “towards transformation”. They’re expensive but well put together. Designed to be offered by trained lay people, the series sessions follow a spiral model using DVD, Leader’s Guide, community building and small group process.

radical messages that said “Follow God’s Kingdom, Not Caesar’s”

I was very impressed that the facility was able to accommodate 1000 people, plus volunteers without anyone feeling squished! There were small screens throughout the Sanctuary space, so that every seat I had allowed a face-on view of the speakers.

Continued on page 7 ...



John Dominic Crossan (l) and Marcus Borg challenged with questions: what does all this have to do with the church and the life we are leading

A DIACONAL MINISTRY IN THE WORLD

continued from page 2 . . . Waterloo Presbytery ministry recognized. He suggested that I take the criteria the United Church has set down in its draft document to the Board of Directors at my workplace and see if they are comfortable with what we are proposing. This is when I would probably have Fred Monteith present to answer any questions they have. If my workplace agrees, I would then get back to Steven and he would take my request to have my workplace recognized by the Presbytery to the appropriate persons in Presbytery.

There is no doubt in my mind that my workplace, a “social justice community ministry” fits the criteria for being a PRM and since it is not a Presbytery *Account-*

Hopefully my experience will make it easier for diaconal ministers in the future

able Ministry, there should be no added responsibilities or accountability for my workplace. My hope is that Waterloo Presbytery, the Sexual Assault Support Centre and I will have a covenanting that validates that I am working in a ministry setting, although I expect to continue to fill out the yearly forms for staying on the Presbytery roll. Hopefully my experience will make it easier for diaconal ministers in the future to have their ministry recognized if it is outside a congregational setting. As well, according to the draft proposal, my workplace can be consid-

ered as eligible for settlement in the same way as any pastoral charge.

I know that this recognition carries a responsibility for me to intentionally connect with my church about the ministry happening at our Centre. I am happy to do this and believe this strengthened relationship is beneficial to my workplace and my church.

If you want more details about my quest for Presbytery recognition, feel free to be in touch 519-893-0873 or joan@kwsasc.org

Joan Tuchlinsky is the Public Education Coordinator at the Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre.

EXPLORATIONS CONTINUED

continued from page 6 . . . There were “overflow rooms” with 10 ft screens for folks who were not able to sit in the Sanctuary space. Lunches could be ordered with registration and they catered to all dietary needs - without making us feel like we’d put them out! Conference rates were available for WestJet flights and at local hotels (double room was \$60 per night *after taxes*). I felt wel-



Kathy Platt (l) and Deborah Vitt, two of the many diaconal ministers taking in learning and community at Epiphany Explorations.

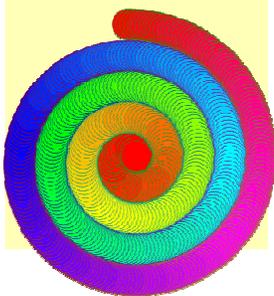
comed, among friends, and presenters rubbed shoulders with conference-goers during others’ presentations. The hosting by FirstMet (Allan Saunders & Megumi Matsuo Saunders and 200 volunteers) was superb. January 22 -26, 2009 is the next Epiphany Explorations. Visit firstmetvictoria.com for more information. Get your registration in ASAP!! The registrations were *completely full* by the early bird deadline last year!

Heather Sandilands is in a team ministry with John Black United Church in Winnipeg.

THE PROMISE IN A RAINBOW

A typical day in the life of Karen Lumley, the Rainbow Minister....

- phones ringing
- emails waiting to be answered
- pastoral care to be offered
- services to prepare
- spiritual groups to facilitate
- workshops to prepare and present on Same Gender Marriage, Breaking Barriers of Homophobia
- funding proposals to write
- advocacy to be undertaken



By Karen Lumley

Rainbow Ministry, never heard of it! What is it anyway? Rainbow Ministry is an intricate part of Winnipeg Presbytery, and works with all sectors of the church and society to bring gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited and queer persons and their families and friends to their rightful place. It is a visible sign of the care and concern of the United Church of Canada. The mandate of the ministry includes advocacy, outreach and support for the GLBTTQ community, education with congregations, AIDS awareness, crisis support and the provision of resources on inclusiveness.

Specific priorities and goals are:

acceptance *of GLBTTQ people in the United Church*

pastoral care *to provide counselling, pastoral care & referrals as needed*

community *to facilitate community building gatherings and worship with GLBTTQ people*

issues *to work with the GLBTTQ addressing their concerns and issues*

referrals *to be aware of relevant resource materials, to facilitate safe referrals*

resource *to be a resource to United Church congregations desiring to dialogue and study on issues relating to the Ministry*

network *to facilitate a network with and among GLBTTQ persons and their families*

advocate *to be an advocate for GLBTTQ*

people, both in the church and in the wider community

Rainbow Ministry networks with other agencies working with the GLBTTQ community. We participate in events such as PRIDE and the National Day Against Homophobia (May 17th) which lets the community know we exist for support and help.

By being public with the issues it is our hope that society and the church will respond differently and acceptance will be the norm.

Rainbow Ministry also works with churches and faith groups to facilitate workshops on issues like Same Gender Marriage, Homophobia and Becoming An Affirming Congregation. Recently we worked with the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario as they became the first Affirming Conference.

We offer a Spirituality Group open to people of all faiths. Many folks in the community struggle with their orientation and their faith. To be Christian and GLBTTQ is still, to some, considered sinful and unacceptable. People struggle with the rejection they experience from the religious powers, family and friends. Sharing scriptures and new interpretations challenge exclusive views and affirm that Christians can be who they are: Queer or Straight. An important part of my work is sharing my own journey. The Ministry holds a drop in "Chat with the Minister" offered in partnership with the Rainbow Resource Centre.

Continued on page 9 ...

folks in the community struggle with their orientation and their faith

KAREN'S JOURNEY

The Rainbow Ministry minister plays an important role in being out and public as a Christian and, in this case, as a lesbian. We profile Karen Lumley, who models a powerful diaconal ministry.

An Ontarian by birth, Saskatchewanian by choice and a Manitoban of the last several years Karen comes from an ecumenical background having grown up in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, worked in the Baptist Church and then transferred into the United Church. Karen has worked with children and youth as Minister of Christian Education in a Team Ministry at Lakeview United Church, Regina, Saskatchewan.

She studied at The Canadian Bible College in Regina, Canadian Theological School in Regina, St. Andrew's College, and Centre for Christian Studies in Winnipeg. She was commissioned in 2002.

Being the Rainbow Minister is an opportunity to be who she is.

Karen had a long time pastoral relationship of 15 years at Lakeview prior to accepting a call to Winnipeg to Northend Stella Community Ministry where she has been the Community Minister and Director of the Ministry, initially full time. She accepted a call to the Rainbow Ministry position (half time) and is the Community Minister at Northend (half time). Karen's love for social justice, equality and jus-

tice for all is her passion and certainly explains why she would feel called to Outreach ministry within the United Church.

Karen loves long walks with her partner Colette (married in 2005), and their three four legged friends (shih tzus Chloe, Cokenee and Vern). She also loves motorcycling and has traveled across Canada

and the United States to the Mexican border on a motorcycle.

Karen's journey has not always been easy. Being the Rainbow Minister is an opportunity to be who she is, and to be proud of it!

RAINBOW SHINES IN PUBLIC WITNESS

continued from page 8...

From time to time there are informal, interactive small group worship services for the GLBTQ community and their supporters. The last one was "Coming Out...Invisible No More" for Good Friday.

The ministry was formed in response to the church-wide concerns and study and the General Council action. Winnipeg Presbytery established the committee, Friends in Ministry To and With Gay and Lesbian Persons and Their Families in 1989. The Committee's mandate and work have evolved since that time and staffing was put in place. The recent reductions in the Mission and Service Fund grants will mean a significant reduction in funding for the ministry. Its future with staff is now in question.



Rainbow Minister, Karen Lumley (l) conducted a wedding for diaconal minister Margaret Scott (next to Karen) and her partner, Lynne Miller (r). Ordained colleagues, Julie Baker and Ross Taylor were guests at the wedding held at the Centre for Christian Studies.



FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR INNOVATIVE MINISTRY

Do you like the look of the newsletter? Excited about the possibilities for this communication tool?

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commcluster@ducc.ca

BARB ELLIOTT TRUST FUND

is available for diaconal projects that are innovative and difficult to fund. This fund is still relatively new and needs ongoing donations to build its capital in order to provide an adequate amount of interest income. There is presently less than \$5000 available each year for funding projects. Applications are received by February 15 and grants are decided by a committee of three: Nancy Post of Thunder Bay, Christine Dudley, of Nelson BC, and Russell Mitchell-Walker of Regina. For information

on the application process and funding criteria please contact any committee member. Applications can be sent to:

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Diakonia - Crossroads of Grace ...Revive and Reconcile

**Diakonia 2009 World Assembly
Monday July 20 to Monday July 27 2009
Atlanta, Georgia**

There is no experience to match attending a World Assembly. Every diaconal minister is encouraged to attend at least one gathering. It is a fantastic way to deepen and enrich your diaconal heart.

Visit ducc.ca to see who has already registered. YOU WOULD MAKE A GREAT ADDITION TO THE LIST.

Additional information on the 2009 World Assembly may be found at the DIAKONIA World Federation website www.diakonia-world.org

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Simply email deutsch.editor@diakonia-world.org



DIAKONIA 2009