

To the National DUCC gathering at Tatamagouche, N.S.

Our conference is wide – 15 hours from top to bottom and about 7 hours east to west. It is not easy to gather with great regularity but we do find some ways. A number of diaconal ministers in ABNW conference have provided leadership as the coordinating cluster of DUCC, which provides a few of us to meet with great regularity and do catch up with each other. As well some DMs meet within their presbyteries and during church meetings. At each annual conference we began gathering over supper. We used to have a major meeting at the end of a day at the annual conference but this has continually met with some complaint so supper seems to offer the same opportunity. This is our chance to recognize the passages of our colleagues such as retirement, commissioning, marriage, births, deaths, etc. But besides gathering at each conference and a few regional gatherings there have not been too many times we have been graced with the presence of one another. Except for Oct of 2004.

Last October (2004) many of us gathered at the home of Barb Myers, just south of Edmonton. We were feeling rather scattered and needed to connect with one another after what seemed like too a long time. Letters went out to all diaconal ministers in our conference. We are retired, students, volunteers, employed, and some awaiting calls. Twenty-six were able to be there for 2 ½ days. These few days provided us with a wonderful occasion to get reacquainted and tell stories. As we began we sat in order of our commissioning or designation. Generations of graduates from the 1960s to the present were there. We sang, ate, slept, and talked – a lot. We listened to Betty Marlin's stories from Zambia, which provided good opportunity for Betty to begin getting integrated back into life in Alberta. We are glad she is back here to stay.

We continue to find creative ways to meet and support one another. Bruce Jackson began a web site a couple of years ago for DMs in this conference and this method of communication continues to be developed and updated.

BC Diaconal Ministers Report

Number of Diaconal Ministers in Conference: 26, includes students

Number of Students in DM Training: 7

Concerns:

SU: BC Conference will only provide extra travel allowance/bursaries if I attend VST Native Ministries - they don't consider other courses (last year I wanted to take Native Drum Making at Naramata - with one of our village folks leading - and I was told to take it in the village - they missed the whole point of me going to build relationship and support his leadership outside the village, and taking something with more relaxing setting after 7 years of study study study... greater bursaries and travel allowances should be based on how far folks are from centres.... e.g. it takes 2.5 days to get to Edmonton to take con ed at St. Steve's... or fly to Rupert, fly to Vancouver... then fly to Edmonton... folks in remote areas are not encouraged to stay because of this kind of isolation! I asked to be part of the consultation for Ministry Compensation, and was told I would be included by a telephone consultation... to which I agreed, but then no one contacted me... others were paid to travel to Kelowna and the lowermainland for inperson consultations... but I couldn't afford to take all that time off (and it would have cost national so much...) but now I feel totally left out of the process... as well as uncompensated for this kind of isolation. I love being in ministry where I am... but I need the church to be financially involved in making it just as easy for me to connect in person with other colleagues as if I lived in a major centre, or else these little places will never have ministers.

BC: The continuing lack of knowledge/acceptance of Diaconal ministers is still a concern. Folks have been refused interviews in the pastoral relations process, or minimised within their congregations. Adding to this is the incredible diversity of opinion within diaconals about who we are. When ever someone starts talking about "diaconal positions", I start to feel limited and ghetto-ised.

LE: still calling us Commissioned Ministers, still no real understanding of Diaconal Ministry, are we valuing Educated Ministry, we have many little congregations who need 1/4 -3/4 time and congregations look for the cheapest option, when can we talk about the justice of part time work for trained ministry people, how are we supporting educated ministry people to get the jobs, here it is ordained or Lay Pastoral Minister

Celebrations:

- SU: love being in a small native village setting. Sunday School now running weekly, pastoral presence is growing strong... I'm going to England with the Grade 10 class from the local band school in April!
- BC: Still working away after 24 years! The 20th anniversary of my commissioning is this June...egads!! I am celebrating the arrival of Brian Thorpe, who will be my colleague in ministry. And, I have become a new step-grandmother and great aunt of twins!
- LE: enjoy congregational transformation work, in ministry now for 32 years, do interesting women focused Bible Studies, getting into stewardship and trustees work, also find myself being invited to give leadership in these areas which I thought I would never want any part of

Church Involvement:

- SU: Minister at Grace United Church - Lax Kw'alaams (formerly Port Simpson).
- RC: RC: single "ordered" person on Salt Spring Is.
- BC: Full time ministry at Ryerson United in Vancouver
- LE: full Time Team Ministry, am called the Lead Minister

Congregational focus:

- SU: Actively involved in the village life, even the pentecostal lay ministers in town from the local pentecostal type church call me "our minister" Other than NRC which is tiny, and connected to the Independant Alliance of pPentecostal churches, the United church is the only and focal centre of village spiritual life... I am the only minister in town - other than the Pastor Ted Ryan (who has cancer)I preside at all weddings, funerals (they last a week!), etc. There is great respect from most for my ministry here. - it is a largely pastoral and village involvement role...
- RC: pastoral care, re-building the Social Action com., active on Kairos cmt.; encouraging "In from the Cold" emergency overnight care; encouraging political pressure to look at affordable housing projects
- BC: Education and pastoral care. Add to that: Liturgist, preacher, congregational growth, ministry with women and gays/lesbians and ethnic families, special event planner, personnel co-ordinator, weddings, funerals and and and....
- LE: Sunday worship, jazz vespers, stewardship, congregational transformation, working on Holy Conversations as a strategic planning and spiritual process for congregations, community outreach, currently involved in developing a bus mobil for health services in the community, additional transitional housing units for all kinds of folks, and a Dream Center-sort of Community Living Room and am on a Housing Coalition, developing a Drumming Circle for the fall

Presbytery:

- SU: Presbytery Prince Rupert Presbytery - I am currently working on a JNAC Committee in Haisla (Kitimat Village), and a Discernment Committee with

someone from Terrace, and just finished working on the Search Committee to hire the Central Mainland Marine Minister (circuit minister for old Crosby circuit on North Coast of BC)... I may take on secretary of Presbytery in 6 months

RC: Program (Outreach) cmt., currently working on a Discernment cmt.

BC: Education and Students Committee, and Christian Education.

LE: incoming Chair of Education and Students, pastoral oversight for two congregations

Conference:

SU: hasn't been a Conference meeting since I was commissioned in 2003, but I attended a Global Justice Workshop in Feb 2004 in Vancouver... haven't been invited to any more... and would need full travel costs to consider it

RC: Interview Board

BC: Sexual Harassment consultant and regular planner for the celebration of ministry services

LE: Sexual Harassment consultant

National:

SU: nothing so far... if full travel were covered... I'd consider it...

RC: not on any cttee, would consider

BC: Mentor for diaconal student, workshop leader for VST summer school

LE: no UC involvement but am mentor for Diaconal Student, supervisor for LPMit,

Diaconal Ministers in BC who responded to the Questionnaire

Sharilynn Upsdell: spiralspirit@telus.net

Ruth Carins: unitedchurch@saltspring.com

Bari Castle: bari@telus.net

Linda M. Ervin: lervin@telus.net

I am disappointed that so few responded to this questionnaire. I was trying to make it easier for everyone. Not sure how to help us as a Diaconal Community. Disappointed that I am the only one from BC. We will get together at Conference this year. I now have a list of all the folks in DM, retired, active, students thanks to Daphne Rogers and I will try and develop a support system for us in BC.

Please support us.

Submitted by

Linda M. Ervin

March 2005

Report of the London Conference Diaconal Ministers Group

The London Conference Group of DUCC consists of 18 Diaconal Ministers and Diaconal Students. Over half of the group are students. We are delighted to have so many in the Conference studying for Diaconal Ministry and we are impressed with their commitment and energy when they are so busy with demands of their studies!

At the last National Meeting, The London Group took on the coordination to the next Gathering and so our time since then has been focussed on that task. Much time has been spent on establishing a budget for the gathering, coordinating plans for business, theme, worship leadership and local arrangements, creating the brochure for the event, planning the agenda, etc. Often we have felt that our time was too focussed on agenda needs and not enough on support and encouragement of each other in ministry. For this reason, we would like to be relieved of the task of Coordination of the National Gathering, after this meeting. We would be prepared to consider another task. We feel the need for a database to be established to facilitate communication within this dispersed group. We would consider taking on that task or some other smaller task for the next 2-3 years.

One of the challenges that we have faced is the ongoing task of educating the church about Diaconal Ministry. Members of our group are currently working with the Conference Education and Student Committee on a presentation on Diaconal Ministry for the Conference Annual Meeting. The Education and Student Committee initiated this, not our London diaconal group. The purpose of the presentation is to describe Diaconal Ministry and to encourage congregations to consider calling a Diaconal Minister. We feel that the inclusion of Diaconal Ministers on the planning team for this educational presentation is a step in the right direction (originally there was no Diaconal representation!). Perhaps the Power Point presentation that is being created will be helpful elsewhere.

An area of concern for us is the difficulty of having the time and energy to cover the necessary tasks. It is wonderful and important to have Diaconal representation on committees, but everyone is so busy. It would be a fulltime job to cover all the requests! Yet we also need to gather to talk, reflect, and support each other in this important ministry.

With so many students in our groups, we are very much aware of the need for Diaconal positions for Settlement. Four of our group will be commissioned this Conference. They have been an important part of our group and we wish them many blessings as they begin this next phase of their journey.

Cheryl Kirk and Joan Tuchlinsky, Coordinators

TORONTO CONFERENCE DUCG REPORT:

Toronto Conference has only a few of us in active ministry at this time. Barbara Lloyd is at the Toronto Conference office where she is doing a huge volume of work in Christian Formation and Congregational Development. Her portfolio covers spirituality, evangelism, financial stewardship and

M & S, and leadership training and empowerment to name but a few. Betty Lou McNabb, a student for Diaconal ministry who is in an aboriginal charge on Christian Island has changed her program from CCS to the Francis Sandy Centre. I understand the two training centres are working together, acknowledging the credits completed at CCS and that in about two years Betty Lou should graduate with some kind of a diploma that acknowledges her duo educational process. I am still in a creative and active team ministry in a Toronto Scarborough Presbytery charge. However due to the fact that this has been a grieving year for me with the anniversary of the death of my daughter just a week away (March 12) and the added family responsibilities I took on for my son-in-law and small grandchildren, I have not had enough energy or the time to really be in touch with the remaining Diaconal folk in Toronto Conference. There have been no special Diaconal gatherings or events that I know of in Toronto Conference since our last National gathering in Ontario.

Margaret Collard