

END OF CHURCH YEAR REPORT

MISSION DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

JUNE 1, 2010

Every Presbytery should have a Mission Development Officer and every minister should have the opportunity to serve in this position at some time because it is so interesting to analyze how to effect change and development in the United Church of Canada in close proximity to our congregations. What a joy it is to participate in the lives of so many congregations in this kairos. We are pushing back to the beginning as we experience the freedom of the end of Christendom and the hope of the Holy Spirit leading us and empowering us into a future radically different from what the church has known for most of her history.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

In Halton Presbytery our congregations are mostly healthy with a future that, while not secure, is possible. With clarity of mission and focussed on development our congregations can turn around the decline that has described our last ten years at least. It is nearly impossible for our congregations to change that decline without being focussed on the Gospel. The Message says it nicely, "I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward – to Jesus. I'm off and running and I'm not turning back." Phil 3:

We have often been dragged off that course by the drive to maintain the institution. We have often lost sight of Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God and we have developed secondary and tertiary visions that have succeeded in guaranteeing our decline. What transformed the church in the early years was the singular focus of Paul and a few others on Jesus' relationship with God and Jesus' integration of spirituality and life. We too as a church will be transformed as we focus on that same inspiration and life style.

As a Presbytery we have recognized the importance of focussing on new life in our congregations. We have chosen a Mission Statement and a Purpose that clearly align us with where we need to go in the future. 'Strengthening Congregations to be Christ for the World' means that Halton Presbytery has our focus where it should be and our expectation is that all of our programs and committees will be committed to the congregation and not to maintaining an institutionalized presbytery. Our purpose is to Grow Disciples or as we read in the Message, "Go out and train everyone you meet." Matt. 28

MINISTRY PERSONNEL

The odd thing is that the very people who could lead us into that new vision are being exhausted by maintaining the 'membership of the club.' It is obvious to me and I hope to others that our congregations have to set our ministry personnel free from many of the maintenance tasks in order to hold up a vision for our congregations of deepening spirituality and courageous outreach. Too often our ministry personnel are criticized for the very things that will set our churches aflame with passion for the Gospel. They are often unfairly criticized when they prioritize differently from the management of our congregations. Leadership is not management. Our ministry personnel need to learn how to leave behind the ministry of management to answer yes to the call of leadership. An afternoon with Rev. Dr. Ken Callahan will help us focus on the issue of leadership in the congregation in June and where that will lead we will be interested in seeing.

Halton Presbytery is gifted with a staff cadre that is singular of talent and spiritual gift. We are in the best position now with little time devoted as a Presbytery to solving problems. Thus we are free to work on development issues. Our Presbytery is working on a number of programs and initiatives that will hopefully inspire our ministry personnel to further develop their leadership skills and take the courage to say no to the demands on time and energy that do not benefit the development of our congregations.

The Vital Congregations and the Fourth at Four programs offer teaching and inspiration focussed on congregational development. If taken advantage of these Presbytery initiatives can inspire new ways of doing ministry.

The Regeneration Task Force is working on Ministry Clusters that offer ministry personnel an opportunity to share with one another what is working along with solving some of the problems that loneliness and isolation cause. Also they are planning a conference with a well known church leader to inspire and focus us on revitalization.

DISCIPLESHIP

There is wide agreement that discipleship is key to the future of our congregations. We do need to stress that we are disciples of Jesus and that church membership is only a small part of being a disciple. The development of a small group ministry is so important in our congregations as study, reflection, prayer and spiritual expression will help us in discipleship. Several congregations are using Unbinding the Gospel as a discipleship enterprise and are so pleased with the result. Other congregations will begin in the Fall with the hope that as congregations discover the growth of discipleship we may be able to increase the number of congregations involved.

Herb Percy is coming to a Vital Congregations event to help us learn how to actually do discipleship training. Where that will lead we shall see in the Fall and Winter.

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Many in Halton have become aware of how important technology may be to our future. Our new Communication and Technology Committee will be a wonderful resource for our congregations in the years to come as we seek to add technology to our toolbox for ministry. A Minister's Forum to help us share ideas and learnings is coming soon. There will be another Intersection of Worship and Technology Workshop in the Fall. How congregations can take advantage of the vast resources of new technologies is open before us.

SATELLITE MINISTRY

Our experiment in Milton with the Annex seems to be working as people are gathering on Tuesday evening in a restaurant for worship and study. The Sunday Worship service is developing while still searching for a suitable place. Now that we see it can work our hope is to expand satellite ministry in East Oakville and Churchill Meadows in the next church year.

FRESH EXPRESSIONS

Network Day helped Halton to identify both green possibilities as well as Fresh Expressions. It was a day of discovery as Network Days have been such a delight over the years.

Fresh Expression is the metaphor used in the Anglican Church to describe new experimental ways of being the church in England and in Canada. Perhaps in our future each of the congregations in our Presbytery could work on a Fresh Expression in their community.

ENVIRONICS

Several people are being trained to interpret the Environics data on our congregations. They will be available to help congregations to use the data to learn more about their community and to know how to design their advertising and programs to serve.

TOWN OF OAKVILLE

Halton Presbytery, Maple Grove United Church and the Interfaith Council of Oakville have been in discussion with the Town of Oakville about their plan - Liveable Oakville and the future of Places of Worship. We have appealed the plan with the Ontario Municipal Board in order to protect the freedom of the church. Already we are having some small successes and the discussion continues. We believe that this

is the beginning of difficulties that the church is going to have in the future as we have lost our privileged position and struggle with the idols of property values and business competition. Taxation will not be far off.

NEXT YEAR

What will come for next church year? What plans will come to fruition? What will have to be planned again with changes.

There are a number of possibilities to work on:

- ministers could be encouraged to give birth to Development Teams in their congregations separate from Management Boards or Councils?
- We could have a Social Justice Coalition Halton-wide?
- We could have a course in Fresh Expressions development

The possibilities are endless.

Thank you to Halton Presbytery for offering me an opportunity to wonder with you about how to be the church in this new environment.

The Message says this, "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth... Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world." Matt. 5

There we have it – strengthening congregations to bring out the God-colours and God-flavours in the world.