

FAITH FORMATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Committee Members: *Rev. Myles Vardy, Patricia Young (Music), John Bowden, Jean Brown, Lloyd Brown, Elizabeth Purchase (Liturgy), Ruth Wakeham, (Liturgy & Sunday School) Jalna MacMaster, (Liturgy) Ivy Martin, (Liturgy) Rhonda Coady (secretary) and Bette Anderson (chair)*

Greetings from your Faith Formation and Christian Education Committee (FFCE).

The year 2008 had its challenges and achievements for this committee. Our role in providing regular Sunday worship services was impacted by the illness of family members of our minister, Rev. Myles Vardy, and also by the minister's own health concerns during this past year. We were challenged to provide meaningful worship activities but it is my opinion that we 'rose to the challenge'. This did not happen without the incredible support of congregational members. There were so many people involved that it is impossible for me to name all of them and so I will not try. I would like to particularly thank, however, John Bowden and Dr. Lloyd Brown, who on very short notice sometimes, provided us with very meaningful and well-researched sermons, on many Sundays throughout the year. We are very appreciative that whenever asked they were more than willing to help. Also our Liturgy Committee (whose names appear above) kept everything together during this time. It is impossible to express our appreciation for the work they have done in preparing for such special services as Easter and Christmas as well as all Sunday services during the year.

I would like to highlight some of the activities of our committee for 2008 and I am going to do this by referring to the duties and responsibilities of FFCE as contained in our constitution.

1. *Firstly, we are directed to provide experiences that involve more people with the opportunity to grow in a transforming relationship with God.*

At the present time the principal activity in achieving this is our Sunday worship services, which provide Liturgy and Sacraments. The Liturgy Committee (names above) provides a valuable service in preparing each bulletin for Sunday service, thereby allowing the minister more time for visitation. The following are some 'special' worship activities that were provided in 2008.

- **Feb. 24th**. The musical group "Sight Restored", from St. James United Church, provided musical leadership for this service.
- **March 23rd**. It was with sadness that we said farewell to our friends Rev. Olivier Wacker, his wife Andrea, Anina and Flourin. They were very active members of our congregation for the past year, helping with preaching, Sunday School and outreach activities. Family members read scripture lessons in their native tongue.
- **April 20th**. This was the date of our Baptismal Party, where families and babies, who were baptized during the previous year, are invited to come to church and have a party afterwards in the hall, where they can meet each other and have family pictures taken (courtesy of Celebrity Photo Studios).
- **April 30th**. It was our pleasure to welcome to our service members of the African community in our city. Dr. Lloydetta Quacoe organized the event, bringing with her the International Children's Choir under the direction of Jimmy Howard. The sermon was provided by various members of the St. John's African community and discussed the condition of the Christian church in Africa today.

- **May 4th**. We welcomed to our church the Bethany Bible College Chorale from New Brunswick. The choir is composed of students preparing for ministry and is affiliated with the Wesleyan Church. They performed in the evening with a program that covered a wide variety of Christian music, which delighted the audience.
- **July 6th**. On this date we were delighted to welcome the Gideon Bible Society to our service, who were holding their national convention in our city.
- **November 23rd**. The sanctuary was filled with joyous, gospel music for this service when our visitors, the Brigus/Cupids/Georgetown Male Choir joined our morning worship. They were able to stay afterwards for lunch provided by the Kainos Unit. Many thanks to them for allowing us the opportunity to get to know them better.
- **Nov. 30th**. This was the date of the Downtown Santa Clause Parade and, following up on last year's success, we invited families to come to church and have lunch afterwards, allowing them to park their car and walk to the Parade. Lunch was provided by Time Out for Women, with proceeds going to the Sunday school.
- **Dec. 21st**. His Honour, the Honourable John C. Crosbie attended and participated in our Service of Lessons and Carols. He also attended a reception in the hall following the service.
- **Dec. 24th**. The teachers and children of our Sunday school prepared and presented the special family service for Christmas Eve at 7.00pm. In place of a sermon they treated the congregation to a performance of the Huron Carol.
- **December 28th**. This Sunday marked the last service that Patricia Young played as our church organist, having decided to retire on Dec. 31st. This service was dedicated to performing and singing Patricia's favourite musical selections and hymns. It was wonderful to see the choir loft filled with present and past choir members.

In addition to the above events, for the first time Rev. Vardy performed Holy Communion for the residents of Elizabeth Towers. This was administered to people from other congregations in the city as well as our own members.

As noted in the report from Patricia Young, the Junior Choir was treated to a trip to Bell Island on September 29th. where they performed at Jackson United Church. This is only one of the many ways that Patricia ensured that music was an integral part of the spiritual growth of junior and senior choir members and the congregation as well. She also was responsible for the direction of the instrumental group, The BeBoPS, and the handbell choir. Thank you Patricia for the care and thought you gave to this ministry of music.

Our Sunday worship is immensely enriched by our time in the hall after service for our regular cup of coffee and a 'sweet'. Thanks to the many people who magically have this ready for us each Sunday. It is a wonderful way for members to keep in touch with what is happening in people's lives.

2. To provide opportunities for life-long learning, from childhood through adulthood, through worship and other events:

- Thanks to the generous support of the Canadian Bible Society, we are able to present a special commemorative Bible to each baby being baptized.

- FFCE has made a point of trying to continue to have contact with families of baptized babies. As noted above we had a Baptismal party for the babies baptized in 2007. Birthday cards are also sent for two years. Pictures of babies for each year since 2003 are hanging in the church hall.
- An email list has been developed where news items are sent to young families of the congregation highlighting events happening at the church and Sunday School that may be of interest to them
- When a child reaches toddler age families are encouraged to bring them to Sunday school. Ruth Wakeham and her team provide a wonderful faith-building experience for your children. Please see Ruth's report for more information.
- Confirmation is the next stage of spiritual growth. Confirmation was not held in 2008 but in 2009 we have two teenagers requesting to be confirmed.
- Attracting youth to become involved in church activities is a real challenge for most United churches in the city and we are no exception. More work needs to be done in this area.
- A number of activities have been tried in terms of Adult Christian Education, including Bible studies, books reviews etc. These have not been well attended possibly due to the busy lifestyle of people today. This activity is now being reviewed by FFCE with an eye to possibly partnering with other downtown churches.
- It is also hoped that, in the future, we will start acquiring books for a church lending library. We would love to talk with anyone interested in helping with this activity as volunteers are needed.

3. *Discovery and celebration of gifts, as a means of equipping people for tasks that will serve the church and our faith.*

Under this category I would particularly like to thank Stephen and Charlotte Jewczyk for their 'gift' of providing the congregation with a wonderful church picnic experience. They do not take this responsibility lightly and spend days researching traditional games that they can introduce for our fun. And we do have fun! Also thank you to the men who do the cooking!

Early in 2008 FFCE held a meeting where we discussed establishing goals for the coming year. One of the areas we focused on was, over time, to contact all congregational members on our historical list. We decided the first group of people we would contact were those who were unable to come to church.

- **New:** We have now compiled a congregational visitation list of approximately 50 people who fall into this category. Background information has been provided based on previous visits made by the minister and others. Members of the congregation interested in visiting have been identified and training will be provided. A committee will be formed to oversee this activity.
- **New:** It was decided that we would once again publish the *Cochrane Chronicle*, a newsletter that was produced in the 1960's. We had hoped to have the first issue ready for Christmas but that was not possible. Plans are underway to have it ready as soon as possible. A committee will be established to oversee this activity as well

4. ***Formation of community relationships that will reflect our faith and enable us, as a congregation, to grow in our understanding of what it is to be a Christian in today's world.***

FFCE committee organizes three community outreach activities that allow congregational members to become involved, if they wish to serve in this way. Also Lois Ryan, on our committee, organizes congregational and community outreach, which deals specifically with seniors, young families and promotional activities. Lois and her committee also help with the events listed below. Please see Lois's report at the end of this report.

○ ***BBQ in Bannerman Park:***

Through the generous support of businesses in the city we are able to provide a summer BBQ for clients of Bridges to Hope Food Aid Centre and other social agencies in the city. We were very fortunate to have "Sight Restored" Band perform for us in the gazebo this year. Plans for next year will include some children's activities. This was the second year we held this event and we noticed people now appear to be less intimidated talking with us. Once again the men do the cooking!

○ ***Bag To School Project***

This is our third year filling school bags for families of Bridges to Hope Food Aid Centre. Each year we notice the need increasing. This year more than 125 bags were distributed, covering the needs for kindergarten to adult education. Our sponsors increased substantially this year due to the generous support of VOCM radio announcements, VOCM Cares Foundation, The Williams Foundation and individual givers. We also are very appreciative of members who volunteered to 'stuff' the bags.

○ ***Deal of A Meal***

This is our Sunday turkey dinner prepared by our men's club and served to the hungry in the downtown area of our city. This year we served over 125 dinners with the help of over 42 volunteers. Thank you so much to everyone who made this evening such a success.

In closing, I want to particularly thank our minister, Rev. Myles Vardy, who despite his inability to participate as fully as he would have liked in our activities, has provided spiritual leadership to us in all that we do.

Future Challenges:

- Attracting youth to become involved in attending worship will continue to be a challenge. It has been noted that youth are encouraged to come, when they can be involved in music appropriate to their age group, and when there are other people their own age attending.
- We have also noted a challenge in recruiting young families. There are many conflicting activities occurring Sunday morning at 11.00am. We need to look at other options and times for family involvement.
- We are the most easterly United church in Canada and are situated in a part of the city, where the demographics of the neighbourhood is very diverse. It will be a challenge to know how to reach out to these diverse groups with programs and services. Some research has been done in this area.

- We need leaders! Those who are interested in being part of the work of this committee, please contact us. We would welcome you.

May God bless all our efforts to continue to serve in His Name, in this place at this time.

Respectfully Submitted. Bette Anderson, Chair

Mission and Outreach

Year 2008 was a busy year for Mission & Outreach (M&O) and we felt we accomplished all we could with a small committee. We made every effort to reach out to our congregation by means of mailing out a note/card for 'keeping in touch', get well wishes and sympathy cards to families with illness or loss of a loved one. We know our minister, Rev. Myles Vardy, does tremendous outreach within our church community by his many visitations.

Our Baptismal children are remembered by M&O for a period of two years by reaching out and mailing a birthday card to all of them in their birthday. M&O and FFCE also hosted a spring Baptismal Luncheon in the form of a party for all baptismal children, their parents and families in 2008. A photographer was available to take photos of all children. This party was a great success but little growth has been observed within the church regardless of our outreach over the past four to five years and one wonders if we should try a new strategy.

Brochures, made up for Cochrane Street United Church, are distributed to nearby hotels, the Tourism Bureau, Memorial University and placed in the main lobby of our church.

M&O hosted two Senior's Parties in 2008. A spring party on May 9th, with a Hawaiian theme, and a Christmas party on Nov. 28th. They were a great success, especially the spring party. Again, as reported last year, there is a drop in our congregational attendance with more visitors attending. The parties are a great form of outreach; provide fun with entertainment and a lovely free lunch. We would like to see our congregation take a keener interest in joining us, as it is a way for us to come together in great fellowship at least twice a year.

We assisted with the BBQ in Bannerman Park on Aug 3rd, and the Meal of a Deal served at Cochrane Street in November. It was very rewarding for our committee and was a great success for all. A great form of outreach for our church!

Bridge Fellowship Hour- This has become a great outreach success with our attendance growing each year. Many outsiders have joined us and are enjoying the fellowship at Cochrane Street and many are attending our Senior's parties. We had a nice potluck luncheon to end our bridge in June 2008.

* It is important to note that a charging fee of \$2.00 per person, as a fundraiser occurs with most of the funds going to the Restoration Fund. The funds are given

to Time Out for Women for that purpose. Our remaining funds are used by M&O for supplies for bridge.

Members of the M&O committee are as follows: Brenda & Bob Mercer, Dave & Linda Boone, Joan Soulier, Gerry Penney, Ruth Mitchell, Maxine Chipp and many others who assist us with our Senior's parties. We would like to thank all of them.

Respectfully Submitted: Lois Ryan