

Inverness-Guysborough Presbytery – 2009 – Annual Report
for Maritime Conference United Church of Canada

In their annual reports, the congregations and pastoral charges of Inverness-Guysborough Presbytery state that their spiritual and financial needs are being met. It is evident that each of them is fulfilling their stated purposes through the energetic and care-filled activities of the people of the communities with the encouragement and leadership of their clergy.

With the presbytery extending from Canso in Eastern Guysborough to Margaree Harbour and Baddeck, the eleven pastoral charges are served by seven full-time and two part-time members of the orders of ministry. With twenty-six churches used throughout the whole year and three during the summer or for occasional services, much time and many dollars are required to meet the expenses of preaching and teaching in the various locations.

Eight manses and several halls are also maintained. One of the part-time ministers lives in his own home away from the pastoral charge. During the year 2010, one of the twenty-six churches will cease to be used and the small numbers of members will attend services at other points in the pastoral charge.

Presbytery has declared a vacancy in two of the pastoral charges. The joint search committees are active in searching for new ministers. One for a full-time minister; the other for a part-time minister or for a student/intern who can both preach and teach and also learn in the several communities of the three point pastoral charge.

The financial statements reveal that several congregations are meeting their financial obligations only by cashing in their investments. The congregations and pastoral charges recognize that changes will have to be made as the average age of members and adherents increases and young people move away from the rural regions.

It is evident as well that the people of the various congregations and charges are recognizing that planning for the future is necessary. Thus several have active committees which are meeting in order to draft long-range plans which will take into account the changing demographics.

Inverness-Guysborough Presbytery, as well, is undertaking several initiatives to identify and meet the needs of the people of the area. It intends particularly to communicate more effectively with the people of the various congregations and to share more openly with the people in the pews the need to consider what the organization of the churches in the area may need to be in the coming years as changes may require alteration in structure or format.

To many people, it appears that there is an increasing gap of understanding and awareness on the part of the people of the congregations concerning the other courts of the United Church. It appears that the lack of regular printed material from the conference office and the relatively small number of readers of THE OBSERVOR in many congregations contribute to the increase in the growth of a sort of “congregationalism.”

The active members of the Presbytery are, however, well aware of the many gifts of the staff of the Conference Office so well and freely shared. The efficiency with which questions are answered and requests are met contributes much to the work of the various committees.

The undertakings of the women's groups (under whatever names) and the contributions of several of the active men's groups reveal the dedication of the laity in providing welcoming places of worship.

One of the highlights of the year for many people throughout the Inverness-Guysborough Presbytery was the "Amazing Grace Race" in October. The activity brought together many people from across the extended area of the presbytery in gentle competition and fellowship.

Many people also attend the annual service held in the former United Church of Malagawatch which is now located at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum in Iona. Psalms sung in Gaelic as well as some reading in Gaelic and a time of fellowship following the service were much enjoyed. The Rev. Ivan Gregan brought an in spirit and energetic address to the large congregation. The service is held each year in the afternoon of the last Sunday in July.

One minister retired from active service in October and another will go back to retirement after serving half-time for a number of years. For the time being, the remaining clergy will continue in their positions for the coming year.

From the annual reports, it is evident that the various committees are meeting regularly. Accurate records are maintained. Each pastoral charge has a functioning M and P committee. The "work" of the United Church of Canada in Inverness-Guysborough Presbytery is well ordered at both the Presbytery and the congregational levels.

Dr. J. St.Clair, Pastoral Oversight Committee