

Report of Valley Presbytery to the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada

The true measure of a national church, a pastoral charge, or a local congregation is how they promote their Christian gospel during perilous times of controversy and change. It is fair to say that 2009 has been a very challenging year for Valley Presbytery as we have dealt as faithfully as possible with all the issues and concerns which beset the contemporary church: reduced resources, declining membership, debates over governance and theology, and other sometimes divisive forces which arise when congregations are pushed to their limits simply to survive.

Yet the Holy Spirit spurs our people to work and promote the true, the good, and the just in the lives of our churches. We have welcomed several new clergy as they accepted the call to ministry in our area. The lives of our congregations have been enriched by student intern placement, DVD studies and discussions groups, innovative worship experiences, generous support of the Mission and Service Fund, outreach and other service initiatives, exploration of new ways of being the church in our times. Our people are proving to be both resilient and devoted in times of retrenchment and renewal.

One special initiative within our Valley Presbytery deserves particular mention. During the past two winters our presbytery has devoted much meeting time to open and frank discussion of “Let’s face the future realistically” issues that are particularly painful and often seem daunting. This April four staff persons from Maritime Conference office came to our presbytery and conducted practical hands-on workshops dealing with finances, ending ministries, expanding and renewing ministries, and the unique gospel mission of the United Church of Canada. This workshop experience has been of great assistance in helping us see our way forward through some of the minefields which might otherwise distract us from our faithful service in the Lord’s name.

There is a consensus and a commitment within Valley Presbytery that Christ calls us to face our future with daring and resolve. In the past the great strength of the United Church of Canada has been the open arms and generous loving hearts of its many diverse and wonderful people. Secure within that model and that hope, we will continue to do the work of the Lord as gently and prayerfully as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Homer C. Noble, Chair of Pastoral care and Support Committee

Valley Presbytery of the United Church of Canada