

Maritime Conference Annual Meeting 2010

The 85th Annual Meeting of the Maritime Conference was held from May 27th to 30th in the Tantramar Veterans Memorial Civic Centre in Sackville NB. 500 voting delegates from 13 Presbyteries and Bermuda Synod gathered around the theme "Come and See". We were welcomed by representatives of the First Nations people of the Maritimes and we presented them with a traditional gift of tobacco. We, in turn, welcomed a number of "ecumenical guests" representing sister denominations. Meeting in conjunction with the Annual Meeting were the 137 members of Youth Forum and 105 of Intermediates at Conference (including adult leaders). The theme was further expressed with the phrases: discerning self, daring church and dreaming world.

Music was provided by "The Message", Lloyd MacLean and Jackie Chambers. The President was the Rev Mr. Bob Johnson and the Executive Secretary was the Rev Ms Catherine Gaw.

On the first evening of the Conference AGM a worship service gave thanks for the lives of ministry personnel and lay leaders serving Presbytery who had died in the previous year. The ministry personnel remembered were Rev John Butler, Rev Bill Fraser, Rev Alex Gardiner, Rev Flemming Holm, Rev Ed MacVicar, Rev Lew Murray, Rev Vera Sampson, and Rev Doug Tupper. Mr Duncan MacKay first lay President of the Conference and Robbie Robinson, long time treasurer of Truro Presbytery were also remembered.

Since 2010 is not a "General Council Year" we spent more time than usual in table groups in discussion and developing the theme. On each table there was a tray of sand and a number of little wooden people made by a number of generous woodworkers in the Conference. The figures were of the type used in the "Godly Play" Christian Education program.

The "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations" (radical hospitality, passionate worship, Intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity) were used by the leadership team as a basis for the discussions which happened in table discussions and one evening of "breakout groups". (Breakout Groups provided an opportunity for at least one member of each table group to attend a presentation/workshop centered on one of the five practices and then to bring feedback to the rest of the people at the table group.) Youth forum and Intermediates at Conference Delegates spent time at our table groups and contributed to this discussion on each of the theme presentations.

Rev Jane Johnson was elected by acclamation as President Designate

Several proposals were discussed and passed. Proposal 1 titled "Commitment to Inclusion" sought to support the work of General Council 40 in opposing discrimination in the church. Educational resources will be developed and the work of conference and presbytery will support this. Conference Executive was given responsibility for implementing this proposal. Proposals 2 and 4 addressed funding for Hospital Chaplaincies (Saint John and Halifax) and were replaced by Proposal 5 which passed after much discussion. Proposal 5 called for an examination of options available to continue to fund these very valuable chaplaincies which can no longer be funded by Mission Support Grants alone. Interim reports will be presented to Conference Executive and the final report will be presented to the 86 Annual

Meeting for action. Proposal 3 was about Access to Justice for those who were involved with the court system but who could not afford to retain or even consult legal counsel. It too was carried.

The Financial Statement and Budget were accepted as well as printed reports from various conference committees. The Settlement Committee report, noting all ministry personnel moves since the rise of conference and those “official” at this time was received and/or passed. Retiring ministry personnel were recognized and the Conference approved the ordination of 2 persons the designation of one and the re-admission of another.

Saturday afternoon gave Conference delegates the opportunity to attend focus groups or for “community involvement” and the retiring ministers were treated to a dinner in their honour at Live Bait Theatre.

Retiring Executive Secretary, the Rev Catherine Gaw was honoured for her 15 years of service to the Conference. Most of those speaking at this light-hearted (and somewhat irreverent) celebration were Conference Presidents who held office during her time with us. Using farming and gardening themes the presenters noted her many gifts and she was presented with various shrubs for her own garden, tokens of appreciation and a gift from the Conference.

At the closing Celebration of Ministries service Betty-Jean Friedman and Catherine Stewart were ordained to the ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care, the Rev Christine MacLeod was readmitted to active ministry, Thomas Watson was recognized as a Designated Lay Minister and Ruth Gamble was installed as Conference President. As she was presented with the symbols of her office the Rev Catherine Gaw gave a mini history lesson on three symbols: the Presidents’ Bible, the gavel and the cane. We are a conference with a rich history.

Our parting words in song were “go forth for God, go to the world in joy”. What better conclusion could there be to the Conference AGM and what better words to live by until next year!

Rev Beth Johnston