

The Church Mouse

The Newsletter of Oxford Presbytery in the United Church of Canada

March 11, 2009

Volume 28, Issue 3

The Oxford Presbytery Camp Committee wishes to thank the members of Oxford Presbytery for their donation of auction items and their attendance at our Valentine's Day Dinner Auction. Many thanks to all friends, parents, workers of Camp Tanner who so generously supported this fun event, complete with a very good supper. The final tally is now in and it is **\$9,341.25 !!!** Isn't that wonderful! Thanks to everyone, 2009 camping programs are in good hands.

Word was received from Bill and Karen Butt in Mozambique and they have been fighting Malaria. Mom says a hole in the mosquito netting that they didn't see, but the mosquitoes did and managed to bite both of them and they both are paying. Bill had expected to get material for this edition, but none has come. Keep them and the people they work with in your prayers. The Garden Project that many are supporting during Lent will be a real boast to their people. Some congregations that have made a sizable donation already to the Gardens are now supporting Operation Sharing over the Lent season. There is so much need every where and yet we are still so fortunate. Everyone doing even a little bit altogether does make a big difference. Remember the three barley loaves and two small fish, together with God great things can and do happen. Thanks be to God.

Sunday afternoon at Oxford Centre United was the Covenanting Service, between Oxford Centre-Curries Pastoral Charge, Oxford Presbytery and **Barb Dawson**, their new minister. The church was full and overflowing, so quite a number watched the proceedings on closed circuit television. Barb did the Congregational Story Time reciting "Stone Soup", did a wonderful job! The Reflection was by Joan Golden a Diaconal Minister and friend of Barb. Rev Maya Landell,

David Catton, Allison Fairplay, worship committee all took part in the service. Covenant service was led by Rev. Donna Bowman-Woodall, chair of Presbytery.

There were 40 of Barb's former church people came from St. Thomas, to be with her at this time. They are very sorry to see her go and assured us, we would be blessed.

OFF TO CUBA

Six Innerkip girls and one Burgessville girl along with Rev. Maya Landell and helper are on their way to Cuba for the March break. They will have interesting stories to tell when they get home and I believe are prepared to do just that, if they are asked.

On page 3, Mary Lou Ross gives her impressions of her second trip to Nicaragua. Mary Lou is attending the Innerkip United Church. Also from that church, Keith Reibling is going off to Haiti in a few days for a couple of working weeks there. These are life changing events in a person's life as well as making a difference in many other peoples' lives.

Don Hilborn who traveled to Mozambique last summer has a great story to tell and is anxious to tell it to anyone who will invite him to do so. He can be reached at 519-537-3756.

Bev. and Allan Slater are going with the Foodgrains Bank on a Food Study Tour to Haiti, March 9 until March 25. Bev. will be willing to share her learning from Haiti with anyone who wants to listen to her!! Allan claims he will just support me to do that. Whatever that means? Some of the things we will be learning from our hosts are what it is like to live in poverty, recovering from disasters, the human right to food.

There are 8 people going and the others are much younger so apparently we will be known as the "old people from Ontario"! Page 1.

RESULTS FROM SURVEY

Seventeen people took the time to fill out the survey. Thanks very much to those people. For (a) Thirteen thought sending the Mouse by e-mail was working OK. Three answered the survey so although they didn't have internet, they still got the information so it must have been working for them. One liked the large print hard copy, ten are provided every Presbytery meeting.

(B) Eleven thought it was worthwhile to advertise in the Church Mouse. One was no. Some thought it was a resource that wasn't being used as well as it should be.

(C) Fifteen were interested in what other churches were doing. Some only if they were close by.

(D) Helpful information? Advertising events include dates, time, place, contact information. Names of Division Chairpersons with e-mail addresses and phone numbers- 3. Jobs and terms of reference for Divisions, 1 wanted news from churches; 1 - summary of meetings; human interest stories.

(E) 2- same font through out; calender of events, photos; short and newsy articles; clip art and pictures; monthly calendar; M & S projects. Liked introductions of new ministers. Need publishing dates. 1- wondered why information from minutes are in the Mouse, information already in Ayr News. Answer: the Church Mouse is for all people in our church (who would not see the minutes). It is also for all over the Presbytery of Oxford, The Ayr News or Norwich paper is not received by everyone over the whole county,

(F) 3- said well read; some, only leaders, needs more promotion in congregations.

So this is what at least 17 people in Oxford would like to see in the Church Mouse. Now this is your paper and to get what is wanted I need you people to send it to me. If you send it I will make an effort to print it, sometimes I have failed, but usually could use the material the following month. It would be really great to get material by the last week of the month before publication. EG for April I need material the week of March 29. If someone has something to send, but can't do it by then, let me know by then that something is coming and we can usually work around that.

Ruth Skillings Page 2.

FIVE OAKS

March Break Day Camp, March 16, 17 & 18, 8:30am-4:30pm each day. Youth Ages 5-12 are invited to join us Monday for sports and games, Tuesday for songs, crafts and stories and Wednesday for art, drama & movement. Cost is \$30 per day

Courage and Comfort: A Conversation on Scriptural Guidance, March 18, Wed 9:30am - 4pm. Join **Nora Sanders** to experience passages that offer strength, encouragement and hope. This day is offered jointly with Francis Sandy Theological Centre. Cost \$80

Christianity & Mysticism, March 20-22, Fri 7pm-Sun 12:30 with lunch. **Matthew Fox** discusses signs of a healthy mysticism and its role in a fuller spirituality in our times. Cost \$410

Coming Home: Connecting with your internal Compass through Soulcraft & Spiritual Practice, March 30, Mon 7-9:30pm. Find rhythm and stability through centering practices for mind and body with Parmjit Singh and Rosalind Grant. Cost \$25 for event or \$130 for series

NEOS: Emerging Church, April 24-26, Fri 7:30pm- Sun 12:30 with lunch. Over the past decade a movement called Emerging Church has been growing to create new ways of being church that speaks to an emerging generation. Come learn about this movement and have conversation about what it means for ministry. Cost \$250 (\$275 after Mar 27)

These Stones Would Shout! A special Five Oaks program offered free of charge to groups and individuals, to share Five Oaks stories, facts and future vision. Please register for one of the following presentations March 30, 7-8:30pm or April 20, 7-8:30pm

Email: registrar@fiveoaks.on.ca

Website: www.fiveoaks.on.ca/programs.htm

The Annual General Meeting of Five Oaks is on Sunday, April 5/09 from 3 to 5:00 pm. They will be dedicating the new Chalet kitchen made possible with the donation from Oxford Presbytery. Also enjoy the music of Singer /Songwriter Bob Carty .Thank You,

Mission of Hope to Nicaragua

In January, I Mary Lou Ross returned for my second Mission of Hope to Nicaragua. This Central American country has been the victim of a civil war as well as hurricanes and earthquakes. Half of the population is under the age of 20: their version of Canada's post WW II baby boom.

Our group, spearheaded by Innerkip Presbyterian Church, is part of a truly multi-denominational effort which supports the Baptist Church in Nicaragua. The first night, January 12th, was spent in a Mennonite Central Committee Mission House in Managua. Later we also connected with Missionary Ventures and the Nehemiah Centre, a hub for many different groups such as World Vision who work in that country.

My jobs involved much pre-trip preparation. As part of the children's ministry group, our committee chose biblical stories, found resources, planned crafts and activities for youngsters.

The need to prepare layettes for 300 young mothers and their babies prompted a wonderful response from women who helped to sew diapers, knit caps, provide undershirts, receiving blankets, diaper pins, soap and wash cloths.

My biggest responsibility involved the co-ordination and packing of donated items to support the sewing project in a poor barrio on the edge of Granada.

Last year we equipped the sewing room in the school, built by a previous Mission of Hope team, with seven treadles and two

electric sewing machines along with fabric, notions and patterns needed to begin the training program.

This year we restocked basic supplies and once again started the learning to sew lessons. The focus this time was on 12 to 14 year old girls preparing them for a career by teaching a valuable skill. I was very pleased to help facilitate this training.

We also planted the seeds for self-sustainability by discussing the concept of a business plan, marketing strategies and projects to consider. The possibility of seeking out a contract to sew fabric grocery bags for the large grocery store chain would be a win-win situation by creating income and helping to reduce the amount of plastic.

Throughout the two weeks, the medical group concentrated on basic health care information such as the importance of hand washing. At their clinics, vitamins and anti-parasite medications were distributed along with toothbrushes and toothpaste.

The children's program was offered in the same location in poor communities in the hills near Matagalpa and on the outskirts of Granada.

In Matagalpa, the construction team helped rebuild three classrooms damaged by termites. They also began construction of a rancho (gazebo) at a shelter for former prostitutes in Managua. Page 3.

The non-construction members of the team also had the opportunity to tour this facility and hear first hand testimonials from some women and young girls. Imagine a nineteen year old raising her nine year old child! Need I say more?

The success of our programs rely heavily on the skills of young Nicaraguans who translate, lead the songs, act out Bible stories, ensure crowd control and provide the essential link between two cultures.

Many mission groups go to various parts of the world to provide hope in one form or another. Participants share their skills and resources with the aim of improving the lives of the poor and the destitute. In return, we receive many blessings, friendships and a new awareness that we are the hands of Christ in a needy world.

I am making my readjustment to life in Canada, culture shock in reverse. As I continue with Spanish lessons, I am full of hope and ideas for next year.

Mary Lou Ross

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County of Oxford What you may not know 2008 Social Report is out and can be downloaded from the web site of the United Way of Oxford.

It is a very thorough report and contains information, that most of us have no concept of what our neighbours are dealing with. It is hoped that those working on these issues can come up with strategies to improve the lot of those living in poverty.

## OPERATION SHARING

Feb 12, 2009

Mark 1:29-39 Amidst the turmoil of this time and place, Jesus stayed connected to God and to his disciples as he carried out the shared good news. This newsletter is an opportunity for us, the church to stay connected to Operation Sharing - how it is good news.

### Our time and place:

What is the quality of life in Oxford? Who experiences poverty? Check out the website <http://www.unitedwayoxford.ca> for a Social Report – as we consider a strategy for poverty reduction here in Oxford.

**Want to help at Operation Sharing?** Pray, Volunteer, Support with money

**While grocery shopping** please remember your quarter donation to “The Food for Friends” program. Qualifying individuals/families shop for items which meet their particular needs. Don't depend on the cashier to ask – offer the quarter yourself each and every time you shop! **'It does make a Difference'**

**Still needed** – Because “The Food for Friends” program covers only non-taxable items, donations of heavy socks, diapers, baby formula, personal grooming products, detergent, and cleansers are always welcome.

**Everyday** – noon meal at Adelaide Soup Bowl at First Baptist Church. Needed is food, food preparation and friendship. Come by and enjoy a bowl of soup.

**Extended Family Program** contact Christine Crawford (519-535-7885) for information about how you can extend the hand of friendship in a healthy way.

**The need is real; the need is here; the need is now.**

In Christ's service, Marg Murray, on behalf of Operation Sharing

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Ken Callahan Workshop June 3 & 4, 2009
at Stoneridge Inn, London Ontario
for more information contact
Rev. Donna Bowman Woodall 519-863-3637

Transforming Congregational

Culture With Tony Robinson

Saturday March 28, 2009 from 10:00- 4:00

College Avenue United Church

22 Wilson St. Woodstock, Ontario

Join author, teacher and pastor, Tony Robinson to explore what it means to be faithful and fruitful churches in a new and challenging time.

INFORMATION: Workshop fee \$50.00, includes lunch at College Avenue United. Deadline for registration **March 20**. For further information contact Betsy Anderson 416-813-4096 betsy.anderson@utoronto.ca. On line information www.vicu.utoronto.ca.

College Avenue United Church: Phone: 519-537-6062, collegeavenuechurch@bellnet.ca

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**UCW SPRING EVENT** March 30/09 6pm  
at Princeton United Church Worship & Music  
Speaker: Mary Lou Ross Mission of Hope  
Dessert \$4. Served at 6:30 pm All welcome

An intimate evening with **Steve Bell**  
Fri, April 17, 7:30 pm Knox Presbyterian Church  
Tickets \$15 Phone 519-537-2962 buy in advance

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Linea Good is coming to Innerkip United
Sunday, April 26, 2009 7 pm Freewill offering

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**St. David's United Church** is celebrating their  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a gala dinner at the  
Quality Inn, after church 12:30 pm May 3/09  
**Tickets \$25.** Call 519-539-3161 for tickets.

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On the first day of our marriage retreat, the instructor talked about the importance of a couple knowing what really matters to each other.

“For example,” he began, pointing to my husband, David, “do you know your wife's favourite flower?” David answered, “Pillsbury All Purpose.”  
Page 4. Annemarie Woods R. D.