

The Church Mouse

The Newsletter of Oxford Presbytery in the United Church of Canada

February 10, 2010

Volume 29, Issue 2

Dear friends in Oxford,

Last month we wrote about six PEDRA bursary girls applying to Teachers College. We've just found out that two of them succeeded—a good percentage for PEDRA when you think of the big picture: that thousands in Zambezia applied for 300 positions. The others can apply again next year, and in the meantime are enrolled in Grade 11.

We'd like to continue telling about preparations for the new school year just starting. In the lar (residence) for bursary girls in the mountain village of Molumbo—52 of them this year—they've just finished refurbishing their well and building properly sealed latrines. These blessings are an offering from your fundraising neighbours in appropriately-named Grace United, of Tavistock in Huron-Perth Presbytery.

We know the stress associated with clean water supplies in southern Ontario, especially since the Walkerton debacle, and how these can complicate life for rural churches. In Mozambique, water sanitation is most dangerous in two circumstances above all: when it rains (and fecally contaminated water enters unprotected water sources, causing annual cholera epidemics in affected communities), and when it doesn't (meaning dried-up wells and streams, and long treks after water from farther sources for girls and women hauling 20-litre jugs on their heads for 10 kilometres more).

From here on, the girls of Molumbo lar will stay in health in rainy seasons, and in dry times can pump water from their own yard, and spend more time instead on their studies.

Praise be to God. *Bill & Karen Butt*

Glen Soderholm in Concert ~ Everyone is invited to hear this gifted songwriter on Sunday, February 28th at 7 p.m. at **Avondale Zion United Church**. Tickets: \$12.50 Don't miss it!

For information and tickets, call 519-842-5532. For sound bites, visit www.glensoderholm.com. Glen has been described as a gifted songwriter with a sharp mind, a pastor's heart and an old friend's soul.

Haiti & Food

The devastating earthquake in Haiti has not only destroyed buildings and homes and killed and maimed thousands of people, there has also been a loss of jobs and livelihoods and the infrastructure needed to supply food has been disrupted. This has led to widespread hunger.

Most of the food stocks in the country were not destroyed by the earthquake. Traders still had food in their warehouses, and many aid agencies had food in the country as part of ongoing food distribution programs. In addition, special ready-to-eat foods were flown and shipped into the country relatively quickly. The initial problem was not the availability of food, but the ability of aid agencies to effectively access and distribute the food and the ability of Haitians to purchase food that was in the markets.

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Aid agencies were overwhelmed with the immediate needs for medical assistance and shelter. Setting up food distribution systems on a large-scale is difficult, and was complicated by the destroyed infrastructure. Early food distribution programs ran into difficulties, many of which were reported on the television news. Systems are now being established that are allowing for well organized and larger-scale food distributions using coupons given to women. Women can redeem these coupons at special food distribution sites.

Our member churches and their partners have been wrestling with all of these challenges. They have been focusing on immediate needs first and getting organized to support a larger recovery effort. Canadian Foodgrains Bank has placed two people on the ground to work with the member churches and partners in developing longer-term food distribution programs. Various feeding programs are being set up.

For those who have lost jobs and incomes, they will need food support for many months to come until their livelihoods can be restored. The good news is that the Haitian harvest is underway, and a relatively good harvest is anticipated. The earthquake did not affect crops. As the transportation infrastructure is restored, the ability to supply available food to communities in need is improving. Resources are required to finance the purchase and transportation of this food in the months to come, or to pay people cash to work on recovery programs so that they can purchase the food they need.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank will continue working closely with member churches and partners to help address the ongoing food needs in the country well after the TV lights are turned off.

Jim Cornelius, Executive Director, CFGB

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The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.

The Will of God never takes you to where the Grace of God will not protect you.

You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him.

We don't change the message, the message changes us.

Thanks for keeping me in the loop! I do have something to tell Oxford Presbytery:

George and I have responded to Rev. Eloi's challenge to churches to raise \$1000.00 for Haiti in each charge. I just wanted to tell you that our appeal to my 3 little churches in the Apsley, Paudash, Cardiff Pastoral Charge has been successful - I don't have final figures yet, but we ran the appeal for 2 weeks - January 24 and January 31 and on those 2 Sundays we were able to collect \$1500.00+ ! It can be done - even in poor areas where most people are on social assistance which is the case for us in Apsley, Cardiff and Paudash! God Bless - keep up the great work! *Rev. Joan Kacook*

## Canadian Rural Church Network

The Vision of the Canadian Rural Church Network (CRCN) is to be a supporting network for rural church and rural community development in Canada. Through the internet and modern communications, ecumenical partners are able to:

- Support each other.
- Help articulate the rural story and spiritual values.
- Affirm the Church's role at the heart of small communities.
- Exchange information and resources across Canada and around the world.
- Advocate on behalf of the rural perspective.
- Reflect the importance of community values in a global society.

Believing that feelings of isolation and despair can be overcome when people of the land gather to share stories about positive possibilities... the Canadian Rural Church Network (CRCN) is an organization of persons (lay and clergy) who have a passion for enhancing the quality of life in rural communities.

The CRCN network meets during Canadian Rural Conferences held each year. In 2009, the Conference was held in Lloydminster Alberta, hosted by the "Centre for Rural Community

Leadership and Ministry” (The Rural Ministry program of the Saskatoon Theological Colleges). In 2010, the Conference will be The R. Alex Sim Rural Ministry Symposium 2010, October 25 to 27, 2010, at Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch (Guelph), Ontario (connected with Queen’s Theological College). Brochures will be available at London Conference in May.

CRCN hosts a website with lots of great rural stories and thoughts, with links to other National and International Rural Church Networks: [www.canadianruralchurch.net](http://www.canadianruralchurch.net)

The CRCN also hosts a “Google Group”, for sharing of stories, thoughts and questions: [canadian-rural-church-network@googlegroups.com](mailto:canadian-rural-church-network@googlegroups.com)

*Eric Skillings*, President CRNC.

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Northern Youth Abroad is currently recruiting host families for its 2010 summer program

Host Families are needed to host two northern youth who will be volunteering in the community from July 7 to August 11. Northern Youth Abroad is a unique program providing youth (ages 15-21) from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories the opportunity to live in southern Canada and to gain hands-on volunteer work experience.

Host families will be compensated for room & board. Considering the amazing geographical diversity in Canada and in an effort to give our participants unique experiences, we are encouraging Host Family applications from all 10 southern provinces, from the east coast to the west coast.

To learn more about this unique opportunity please visit www.nya.ca

or contact Naomi Schatz, NYA Program Officer

◇? toll-free 1-866-212-2307 ◇? via email naomi@nya.ca

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you!

Oxford Presbyterial United Church Women Annual Meeting

The Oxford Presbyterial UCW held their 48th Annual Meeting Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at Dundas St. United Church, Woodstock with 100 members present. The theme for the day was “Bless Now, O God, The Journey”. Brenda Harris and Nancy Vandenburghe lead the “Let’s Sing”, and the theme hymn for the day was # 633. Thamesford Westminister UCW did Community Building .

Welcome and greetings were given by President Ilene Chesterman; President of Dundas St. UCW, Jean Phelps; Page 3.

Minister of Dundas St. United Church, The Rev. Bonnie Pilkey; The Chair of Oxford Presbytery, The Rev. Dr. Eloi Gunn and President of London Conference UCW Marilyn Mitchell. Linda Fishleigh read a letter from Heather McLean bringing greetings from London Conference. She thanked the UCW’s for always being ready to serve.

The Rev. Dr. Eloi Gunn led in worship and prayer. His message emphasized that we as individuals and as the United Church Women must walk with and talk with God. We may need to learn to walk in a new way with God and with each other. He closed with prayer.

President Ilene Chesterman rang the bell from the Christian women of Korea to call us together, lit the UCW candle to symbolize Christ’s presence among us and placed the open Bible to remind us to study faithfully. She drew attention to the Banner, hanging at the front of the church, produced by Ruth Ellis, and noted that this is the 48th Annual Meeting of Oxford Presbyterial UCW. Ilene conducted the business meeting with a review of the secretary and treasurer reports. Louise Baird presented the proposed budget for 2010. Remember to save your Zehr’s tapes and Canadian Tire money to support Camp Tanner. Ruth Skillings spoke about the earthquake in Haiti and that each church had been challenged to donate \$1,000 toward the fund. Oxford Presbyterial UCW will send a donation of \$1,000 to help the people of Haiti.

Carol Tabor & Anne Cooper presented a skit to announce the 2010 Westminister Weekend to be held April 30 - May 2 at Stoneridge Inn, London; and the Summer Event to be held on July 24 at Siloam U. C. in London. Ilene Chesterman asked the UCW Local Presidents to stand and be recognized.

Jackie Childerhose, Director of Grand River Bookstore, talked about some of the resources available for sale in the Book Room. She would be most willing to help plan your meetings and can be reached at 1 888 668-0871. She thanked the Oxford churches for the money they sent to build the new chalet kitchen at Five Oaks. They also received a Government Accessibility Grant to make the chalet washroom and a bedroom completely accessible.

Jean Manning introduced Eleanor Wood, the guest speaker for the day. Eleanor greeted everyone and in her humorous and positive way described

how she procrastinated with dusting, folding the wash and cleaning the carpet, before writing her speech for this meeting. She used the Chinese Philosophy; the journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step. A new direction must be taken, the time must be right, one must be motivated and the research must be completed. Eleanor's journey is to make people laugh. Give out smiles and you will get smiles back. Go forward with confidence because we are God's Children. God will raise us up, comfort us, love us and reassure us. We are not alone on our journey God is always with us.

The trio, "Just Friends", Karen Dobbs, Lynn Ropp, and Shirley Waugh with Fran Foster on the piano, sang several beautiful songs.

Oxford Centre received and dedicated the offering.

Grace was sung and a lovely lunch, fellowship and book room shopping was enjoyed.

The guest speaker, Eleanor Wood used, "Home Again" as her afternoon theme. She used her positive, humorous way to develop the following thoughts. A smile is your most powerful tool and if you want to change others you must change yourself first. Pattern your life after and cast your worries on Christ. Glorify God and enjoy him forever. People must be praised, encouraged and rewarded. Be an optimistic, cheerful, enthusiastic person and you will be a builder not a wrecker. Stick together, hold hands with your God and ask God into your life.

Sandra Stock thanked Eleanor for bringing laughter and many positive suggestions about life to the meeting.

An In Memoriam service was conducted by the Mount Elgin UCW with the Regional Coordinators lighting a candle in memory of the members of their region.

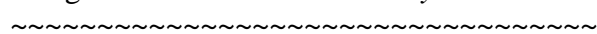
Lois Irving extended an invitation to attend Norwich UC in January of 2011 for the 49th Annual Meeting of the Oxford Presbyterial UCW.

Louise Baird extended courtesies to everyone for making it such a fine day.

Jean Manning conducted the election of officers and was able to read a full slate of officers for the coming year. Marilyn Mitchell installed and dedicated the officers for 2010. President – Ilene Chesterman; 1st Vice President – Vivian McDonald; 2nd Vice President – Sandra Stock; Page 4

Past President – Jean Manning; Recording Secretary – Ellen Town. Corresponding Secretary – Carol Tabor; Treasurer – Dianne Weeks; Regional Coordinators – Doreen Bateman, Louise Ross, Ruth Stephenson, Doreen Smith; Archives – Ruth Ellis; Press & Publicity – Sandra Stock; Stewardship – Louise Baird; Mission & Outreach – Evelyn Chute; Leadership & Christian Development – Carol Tabor & Anne Cooper; Rural Life – Ruth Skillings; Advisory Members – Nancy Cockle, Elizabeth Heeney, Linda Fishleigh, Helen MacLeod, Ruth Stephenson.

The theme hymn was sung followed by all repeating the UCW Benediction. *By Sandra Stock*



Events at Five Oaks—519-442-3212
Male Spirituality Feb. 16 - 19

Five Oaks Confirmation Weekends
February 26-28 and March 26-28

Express Art Retreat Feb 19-20

Courage to lead Retreat February 23-25

Keeping the Faith in a Culture of Consumerism
March 8-10

Editor: Ruth Skillings 519-467-0187 rskillings@aol.com
Web Master: John Ross, webboxfordpucc@look.ca 519-469-3320
Web Page: <http://www.oxfordpresucc.ca>
London Conference: www.londonconference.ca 519-672-1930

The Mouse that Roars 4 is out and shows everyone how their \$20 membership fee to the United Church is spent. Did you see it?

The special appeal for Super Gifts for Haiti is over, how has your church done? Innerkip raised \$2,965, while Eastwood raised \$1,050. Have heard that bigger churches have raised much more. It would be nice to know the totals at the Presbytery February meeting.

I haven't heard but there will likely be a number of Pancake Suppers on February 16. Innerkip is having one 5 - 7 pm. Cost \$7 & \$3.

CAMP TANNER AUCTION brought in \$8,500!! 185 tickets were sold for the dinner, catered by Janice's Fine Country Catering. A big thanks to all who came, purchased, supplied the 425 articles & services that were sold. **THANKS!!!**