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Celebrate, London Conference!

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It's September. And for most folks this is the start of the year. Children go back to a new school year. Parents go back to work after vacations. This year, at London Conference, let's start our year by celebrating those who are being honoured for their commitment to volunteer work!

Harvey and Emily Wales donated 21 acres to The United Church of Canada in 1960 to build a campsite for children. The Wales' son, Keith, and his wife, Pam, continue to contribute to Camp Kee-mo-kee by serving on committees, organizing volunteers, dinners and auctions, as well as picking up paintbrushes or shoveling snow. In 2010 during Camp Kee-mo-kee's 50th Anniversary, Pam and Keith Wales received the June Callwood Award, an Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism! They went on to receive The United Church of Canada's 2011 Camping Award. The Wales' family epitomize volunteerism and Camp Kee-mo-kee, thousands of children and London Conference are grateful!

Over 400 volunteers at the Inn of the Good Shepherd in Sarnia, a centre which has evolved into a powerful avenue for the community to help the less fortunate, were also honoured by the Ontario government with a June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism. The Inn won one of eight group awards selected from a field of 175 nominees! (applause)

Sheila Greason is a remarkable woman who is an inspiration to us all! London Conference is grateful for Sheila and proud to stand by her as she accepts the Camping Award at Connections 2011, The United Church of Canada's National Camping Conference in October in Prince Edward Island. A true example of love and commitment to camping ministry, Sheila's love for Camp Tanner and all the staff and children who come through the gates is evident in her enthusiasm, energy and tireless hours of dedication to Camp Tanner. Well done!

And not to be overlooked, rumour has it that Allan and Bev Slater have been nominated as possible Citizens of the Year in St. Mary's!

~ Heather McLean



'BUBBLES'
 aka, Sheila Greason, Chair of Oxford Presbytery Camping Committee



Citizens of the Year Nominees,
 St. Mary's
 Allan & Beverly Slater

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Send submissions, suggestions, ads and letters to the editor to:

bridge@londonconference.ca

ALL MATERIAL SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE EDITOR OF THE BRIDGE.



The Wales Family of Komoka has been a long time supporter of youth activity. In 1960, they donated land to establish Camp Kee-mo-kee, a camp that welcomes more than 600 campers and 800 students a year. "Thank you," from London Conference!



The Inn of the Good Shepherd of Sarnia has mobilized more than 400 volunteers to serve those affected by the recession and difficult economic times for 30 years. Volunteers work at the Inn's food bank, soup kitchen, two emergency shelters for youth and adults, a free clothing and household items store and other many other programs.



Mozambique Letters

She has done what she could;...what she has done will be told in remembrance of her. MARK 14:8-9

Love your neighbour as yourself. MATTHEW 19:19

Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. HABAKKUK 2:2

Hunger. War. Climate change. Often we feel that this world's problems are huge and complex – and there's so little we can do. But the woman in Mark 14 just poured ointment on the head of Jesus. Nothing that took great skills; not a miracle; nothing apparently that would save the world or reduce one poor person's suffering.

She didn't think of that. She thought only of the person she was next to – her neighbour, Jesus – and recognized him with the only means she had. Body lotion.

What she did is still remembered. The modest long-ago moment still has its impact – because it was told, and told again until it got into the Gospels.

Communication.

That's what God commands of Habakkuk. Communication. Use what means you have to get out your story. In those days it was clay tablets and messengers to read the news and run with it. In the days of Jesus, maybe scrolls. Today? Email, websites, word of mouth – and good old print like *The Bridge*.

In fact, there is always something that each of us can do to take part in God's mission. It's simple and everyday: Love your neighbour. That is, anyone who suffers. It may be or may be not someone down the block or in our own town – comparatively few of us suffer greatly. It could be people physically far away – Great Slave Lake, Nicaragua, Sudan. The key is that we see them as neighbours; that we feel connected.

That's where communication comes in – to make other people alive to us; to make us feel we know them and how they feel; to make us see how we can help. And through them, learn and grow. A photo, for example. The most effective photos show 2 or 3 faces with emotion and an action within a context. The photo connects us to those people, emotions and actions. Like this photo from Mozambique in which cameramen from the Christian Council of Mozambique are filming scientific research into HIV/AIDS. In this case we have video communication.

This article then is a communication for staying connected. As United Church of Canada members do what you can to love your neighbours – and don't keep what you and others do beneath a bushel. Make connections and communicate – through *The Bridge*, websites, email and however else you can. Even body lotion can be news.

*~ in mission & service
Karen and Bill Butt*



CCM VIDEO, MOZAMBIQUE



We are back in Nicaragua after two months of visiting many of you across London Conference. We were so pleased by your energy and willingness to hear about the Mission and Service Fund. It was a joy to connect with friends from the past and new ones who will continue into the future...

Some highlights of this trip were: an announcement at Riverside United Church of \$10,000 for our school; another was Hebron United who raised \$1,600 for the security fence around our school. Many others offered different kinds of support. We were astonished at people's generosity. The women at Harrow United gave us a box of handmade clothes for small children. Another gave me an envelope of letters for our Sunday school. The idea of partnership takes many forms.

In our short time back home in Puerto Cabezas it has been hot and most of the time the electricity is off. We have reconnected with people here. We received a warm welcome. I am back at the school and Don is back at ADSIM. ADSIM was pleased to hear that more money is coming from churches in London Conference. So at least 3 more wells will be drilled. Every time a well is dug a few hundred more people have access to clean water. This is important work for the people of God.

This is the time of year when all the school bands are gearing up for the Independence Day parade. So the air is full of the noise of pounding drums... It goes on for hours and will culminate in a march to the stadium

where the winners will be announced. This year Don's Warrior group is going to march. We are in the process of getting some Red shirts and today will start to practise marching.

Last Sunday we had Confirmation as well as two people who reaffirmed their Confirmation vows. This is when someone leaves the church for some reason and then returns. The most common reason is young women who

whole pile of vegetablesSo now Charlie is loose on the porch at night. He has a ferocious bark that scares people. The funny part is that many of the kids come up on our porch and play with Charlie. They love him to death. So I have to laugh. This is my scary watch dog but the children have no fear of him. However in the middle of the night in the dark he would scare everyone.



BABY KENNY WEARING THE NEW SHIRT FROM HARROW UNITED CHURCH

become pregnant but are not married remove themselves. So it was joyful to admit three young people into the faith community.

I have mentioned the need for a more secure fence for the school. This week someone ripped open a screen in the kitchen and reached in and took everything that was on the counter which included a bottle of oil and our gas clicker to light the stove plus a

We want to thank everyone who made our home stay so rewarding. We want to give Matthew Stevens a special thank you for keeping us so organized. Also we want to thank those that billeted us and provided us with wonderful hospitality (both of our waists are evidence of good food).

*~ God bless you all
Deborah Elliott and Donald Gibson*

GODLY PLAY

~ Maya Landell

When you read a book on Godly Play it can be confusing because it is based on an oral tradition that is rooted in the Montessori method of education and developed over the past 30 years by the founder of the Center for the Theology of Childhood in Houston, Texas. It is a method of story-telling and faith formation, but it is so much more. To engage Godly Play is to experience it first hand. Some of us had a chance to do this at the Annual Meeting of London Conference in Sault Ste. Marie. And some of you will have an opportunity to train as Godly Play teachers/story-tellers on November 19 and 20 at Innerkip United Church.

“Godly Play is a refreshing way to bring the word of God to a level where children can touch, feel and hear our stories. It helps children understand the stories of our tradition and how they relate to their own lives. When was the last time you had a chance to play with God? ? ?”

BETSY EXLEY

FAITH FORMATION, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTER
LONDON CONFERENCE



The Godly Play story-teller knows the story by heart and places the attention on the story so the children are all drawn to it. There are only two leaders in a Godly Play experience: the Storyteller and the Doorkeeper, who welcomes the child by name and asks if they are ready to hear the story. One of the great things about these roles is that the Leaders are guides. They do not need to have all the answers. Children are encouraged to do the work of finding their own answers and have much to teach adults who take the time to listen. The Leaders set the space, share the story, wonder with the children, invite them into their work (creative response with different art supplies), share in a snack and a prayer. This all works to allow children to Wonder in faith.

- ◆ Children already have a spiritual life of a depth that we may not understand.
- ◆ Children can be given the gift of religious language that will allow them to express their spiritual experiences. Their play is their work and they are encouraged to choose their own work. Children, like adults, enjoy their work when it is work they have chosen for themselves.
- ◆ Children are treated seriously and with deep respect; it should never seem to them that we see them as ‘cute’ or as objects for our amusement. Leaders do not interfere with the children’s work unless the child asks for help.

The thing I love the most is The Godly Play environment - it is Sacred, and there is nothing in a Godly Play room that children cannot touch or use - which is so different from their normal experience of ‘don’t touch’ - the space is for them, a container that helps them to learn and use the language of faith.

- ◆ The Godly Play room is a place for children
- ◆ To be themselves
- ◆ To learn how Christians live in community
- ◆ To come closer to the mystery of God’s presence

Isn’t that the point of all church or worship?
I wonder if this is what we are all called to?

For answers to some common questions go to:
<http://southwarkdiocese.kdesignwinchester.co.uk/opening-the-bible/opening-the-bible-in-churches/review-of-godly-play>
Check them out on YouTube.

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CONGREGATIONAL FUTURES

~ Judith Gilliland

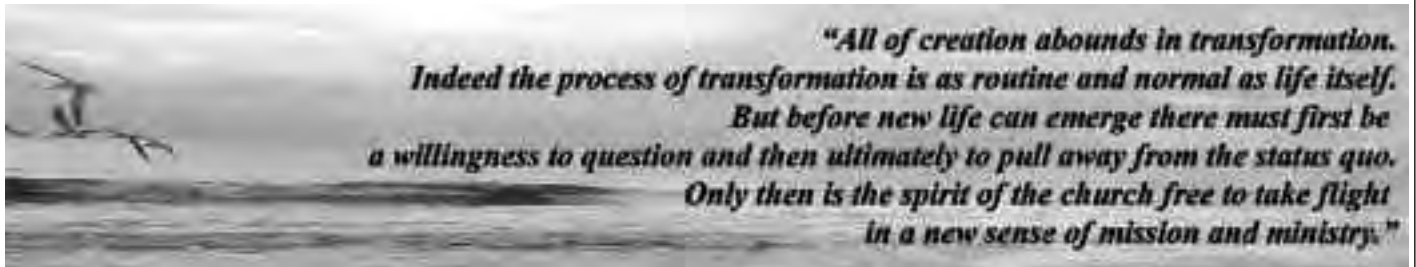
We are in what some religious scholars have termed a 'Post Church' culture. According to statistics collated during the past few years it appears that few of us in the developed world attend church or consider its place in our lives as significant. The era of going to church on Sunday morning, dressed in our best clothes and then enjoying a restful, quiet day with the family is for many an activity of the past.

That is not to say however that as a people we don't have spiritual needs, but rather as a society we are satisfying those needs in different ways.

subtle transformations, yet, not without a degree of resistance and struggle.

However, now is not the time to be stubborn and remain in denial, now is the time to respond to the Spirits' call and allow and even participate in what is desiring to be birthed. We are being invited to take part in that process. As a community of faith we must neither let fear of the new nor clutching onto the past dampen our next step.

Living out the Christian story is about demonstrating the courage to entertain the unfamiliar and then consciously deciding to step into the unknown without



Our need to belong to a community is met for some by joining a group; becoming a member of an organization or participating in a club. The desire to care for others and offer support and assistance is met through a number of different volunteer activities that, while not providing a Sunday School teaching lesson, does practice the prime message of love and caring for another.

Church as we know it is coming to an end. And a new way, a different form, that can fulfill our spiritual needs is unfolding. Such change is monumental and for some these are exciting times, to be part of bringing in the new! They are also frightening and difficult times for many others. In order to embrace the new we must be willing to grieve what we once enjoyed and experienced as satisfying, to celebrate what we have known. And, prepare to give birth to the new. It is truly a time of reformation.

Our understanding of what it means to gather together as a faith community: at a specified time, day and place; and to engage in particular activities, is changing and thus so is the expression of that desire and intent changing. Our theology and liturgy have been undergoing obvious and

hesitation. Isn't that what living a life of faith is all about? That doesn't preclude careful assessment of our options, or serious investigation of alternatives; rather it calls for us to recognize the signs of the time and reflect with honest hearts and open minds the decisions for our next step.

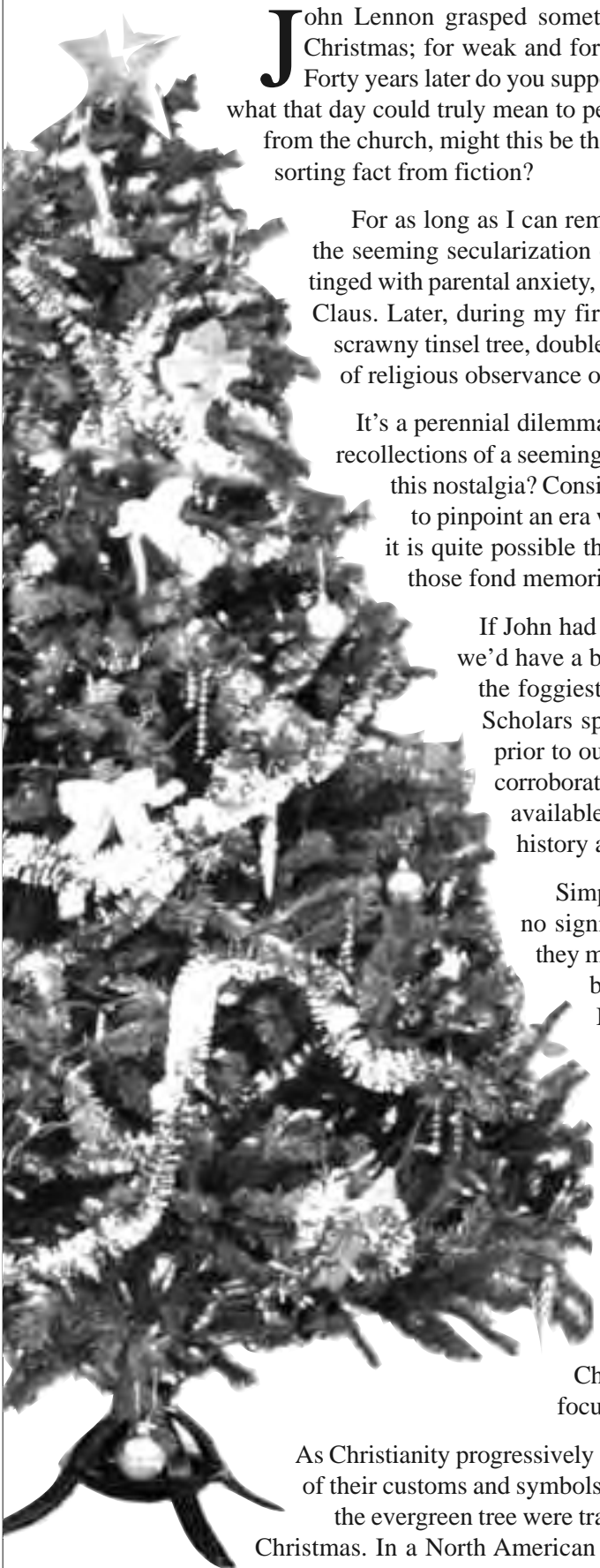
Our challenge now is not to be discouraged when the old ways give over to the new, not to yield to feelings of dismay because the end result isn't clear and not to surrender to giving in or up when plans alter. This is the moment for those of us who have experienced the richness of what our forbearers gave to us to usher in a new kind of church, to use our resources wisely, to carefully and prayerfully consider the unusual and to rejoice as co-creators in what we are able to bring to the new; wisdom from our life's experience; insight from our past learnings and the deep inner knowing that this new age is blessed of the Spirit.

What a gift we have been given, that of contributing to and assisting in reinventing 'the Church' and creating the next phase in the life of The United Church of Canada and in particular in London Conference.

Reverend Judith A. Gilliland, BA, MEd, MDiv, is the Congregational Futures Development Minister at the London Conference office since May 2010. She is available to Congregations and Presbyteries throughout London Conference as a Staff Resource for New Possibilities. Judith offers consultation and coaching to Effect Transformative and Radical Change. Other areas within her work include: offering Leadership and Resource for Staff and Ministry Re-development, Congregational Discipleship and Faith Development, Interim Ministry, Pastoral Care and Oversight and Joint Needs Assessment. Contact Judith for workshops and seminars focusing on Change Management at the London Conference office at 519-672-1930 or judith@londonconference.ca.

AND SO THIS IS CHRISTMAS?

~ Matthew Stevens



John Lennon grasped something essential when he penned the lyrics: “And so this is Christmas; for weak and for strong. For rich and the poor ones; the world is so wrong¹”. Forty years later do you suppose it’s time to talk honestly about the origins of Christmas and what that day could truly mean to people of faith? As more and more North Americans turn away from the church, might this be the last chance for Christians to do some housecleaning - finally sorting fact from fiction?

For as long as I can remember folks have routinely gotten themselves in a twist over the seeming secularization of Christmas. My earliest memories of family Christmas are tinged with parental anxiety, as they tread the fine line between Christian tradition and Santa Claus. Later, during my first overseas army posting, I recall the Padre standing by our scrawny tinsel tree, double-malt scotch poised in one hand, pontificating over the decline of religious observance on Christmas Eve.

It’s a perennial dilemma of long standing for Christians, never failing to evoke warm recollections of a seemingly gentler and more spiritual time. But, what is the basis for all this nostalgia? Considering the blurred origins of Christmas, it’s extremely difficult to pinpoint an era when the celebrations weren’t tainted with secularism. Indeed, it is quite possible that we’re more indebted to Hollywood than the church for all those fond memories.

If John had only issued a Baptismal Certificate for ‘Yehoshua ben Yosef’ we’d have a basis for fixing the date of Christmas. But not only haven’t we the foggiest notion of the day or month - we don’t even know the year! Scholars speculate that Jesus was likely born approximately five years prior to our current Common Era, but the Gospels offer little by way of corroboration. Attempting to link the details of the birth narrative with the available records proves equally frustrating, for in no single year does history attribute those events as simultaneously occurring!

Simple truth is that for the majority in Biblical times, birthdays had no significance. If Yosef and Mariam had been people of substance they might have had an astrologer cast a horoscope for their firstborn, but as peasants it would never occur to them to take note. Indeed, for the first three hundred odd years any concern over Jesus’ actual date of birth was considered blasphemous by the early church fathers. Clement of Alexandria condemns such attempts as ‘superstitions’ and Origen repudiates the notion as, “sinful ... as if Jesus were a king Pharaoh”.

When Emperor Constantine designated Christianity the state religion of Rome in the third century, correlations between December 25th and the birth of Jesus first emerged. By mid-century the festivals formerly associated with the cult of ‘Sol Invictus’ (the Invincible Sun) mysteriously morphed into Christmas Day. This choice of dates proved beneficial as Christianity spread into Celtic regions, encountering practices that focussed upon the Winter Solstice and the ‘rebirth of the sun’.

As Christianity progressively supplanted previous religious practices, it also subsumed some of their customs and symbols. Thus such elements as the yule log, holly, mistletoe and even the evergreen tree were transformed into the much beloved trappings now so essential to Christmas. In a North American context Clement Clarke Moore followed precisely the same

AND SO THIS IS CHRISTMAS?*Continued*

pattern when his poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas*² served as the primary source for the conceptualization of Santa Claus.

Assailed with comments like 'Keep Christ in Christmas' it's reasonable to ask what part of the mythical baggage shall we off-load? Many lament that Christmas has become far too secular, but it's evident that this didn't begin with twentieth century commercialism. Tactical considerations have long played the decisive role in the evolution of the festival. If Christmas is to be redeemed it can only be accomplished by discarding the romanticised nativity story and embracing Jesus' teachings.

So this is Christmas; and what have you done?

Another year over; and a new one just begun.

And so this is Christmas; I hope you have fun.

The near and the dear ones; the old and the young.¹

~ John Lennon

Rather than endlessly preaching 'Jesus is the reason for the season' imagine the effect churches might have upon society by actively demonstrating that sentiment. In preference to yet another re-enactment of the Nativity, what if churches collectively chose Christmas to stand in solidarity with the impoverished, demanding fundamental reform to the inequitable system that marginalizes and oppresses. If every Christian abandoned prevailing attitudes of political indifference and apathy, the unremitting and soul-destroying legacy of poverty could finally be eradicated.

Suppose Christians engaged Advent as a journey in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples. Motivated by Jesus' teachings, church-goers might abandon their comfortable pews for those weeks, visiting Reserves to learn the situation first-hand. Urban churches could uncover the appalling conditions that the lack of viable alternatives forces many Aboriginals to endure on the city streets. Some congregations might use their affluence to fly into isolated Reserves, while others might find common cause with the plight of Aboriginal women. The result could be an end to institutionalized apartheid.

Jesus never had much difficulty reaching across cultural divides, and in every instance learned more about the full scope of his ministry. Consider the potential for Christian mission if churches used this season to meet with their 'Samaritan Woman at the Well' or a Canaanite who illustrates, "...how great is your faith?" Churches who once prided themselves on the perfect creche or lavishly decorated tree, might recognize Christmas as an ideal auspices for an ecumenism that reaches beyond tokenism, building bridges of genuine respect and appreciation to other faith communities.

On an individual level, who amongst us doesn't have their own 'prodigal' - a relative, friend, or colleague - with whom we might make our peace and welcome back into full communion? Christmas could serve as an annual re-commitment to forgiveness - loving one another as Jesus first loved us. Sincere reconciliation is a precious gift, beyond the purchasing of the most affluent and yet within reach of those of modest means. What more fitting tribute to the Prince of Peace?

Jesus cautioned that it is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness. In that same vein, Christians can accomplish more to redeem the spirit of Christmas through positive effort than in endlessly lamenting creeping secularization and commercialization. If Christians would cease railing at the habits of others and bring their own behaviour in closer conformity to the teachings of Jesus, society as a whole would move much closer to realizing the 'Kingdom of God'.



¹ © 1971 Apple Inc - Music & Lyrics John Lennon - "Happy Christmas (War Is Over)"

² © 1823 Clement Clarke Moore - A Visit from St. Nicholas, or The Night Before Christmas

NANCY HOWARD JOINS ELUCO

~ ELUCO Staff



The East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO) Board of Directors is delighted to announce that Nancy Howard has accepted the part-time ELUCO Community Worker position for the Marconi Community of East London, effective November 01, 2010. Nancy is a long time member of First- St. Andrew's United Church and comes with education and experience in community development and child and youth work.

Nancy's first few months have been a very busy but rewarding experience for her. Orientation was provided by Carol Langford, our former Community Outreach Worker who introduced Nancy to community organizations, ministers and church secretaries of ELUCO partner churches as well as members of the community. Nancy jumped in with both feet, registering 88 families for Christmas Share (a program of St. Paul's Daily Bread which provides hampers of gifts and groceries), speaking at Siloam United Church, attending Racial Justice training, and organizing a community Christmas party.

In addition, she has provided advice and emotional support to many members of the community. Nancy has also obtained and delivered donated furniture to families. New programs Nancy is planning include crafts and healthy cooking on a budget. Great start Nancy!

The East London United Church Outreach (ELUCO) is committed to stand with people to build community in the midst of challenging circumstances. ELUCO advocates for families in the Marconi community, as well as maintaining and developing programs that will enrich their lives. ELUCO's programs include pastoral care and referrals, children's programs and activities, a school lunch program, a food cupboard (Gethsemane Church), community development, self help and empowerment.

ELUCO is thankful for both the spiritual and financial support it receives for this vital United Church Outreach Ministry. With your help, ELUCO strives to assist our most vulnerable to become more self-reliant and independent. We welcome Nancy into our fold and are excited about working with her!



Some people will do anything to meet their M&S goal!

Reverend Doug Peck of Chalmers United Church in Kintore challenged his congregation to meet its Mission and Service donations goal by saying he would shave his head if the goal was met. The congregation rose to the challenge and actually exceeded the goal. And here are some members of his congregation making sure he honours his promise!

~ Judy Irvine

PANDAMANIA GRIPS WILLOWGROVE UNITED CHURCH!

~ David Root

If you had walked into Willowgrove United Church in Sault Ste. Marie any morning of the week of August 15 you would have been caught up in PANDAMANIA - our Vacation Bible School. The panda-themed event attracted 23 young people, ages 4 through 11, for five mornings of Crafts, Games, Singing, Story Time and Snack Time.

In crafts the children made spray-dyed stenciled t-shirts, panda paw soap bars, and various banners and paper crafts. The games consisted of variations on a theme - co-operative relays - with water featuring prominently most days. The Story Time began with scripted dialogues between the 'Leader' and 'Panda Pete,' and continued with various object lessons and trust activities, like blindfold walks and scavenger hunt puzzles. Everyone's favourite time was, of course, snack time, with fresh fruits, vegetables and a daily special homemade theme treat.

Fourteen adult and teen volunteers provided supervision and leadership for this annual event. Willowgrove United Church is blessed to have such dedicated volunteers, a very supportive congregation, and of course, amazing children who come out each year. In fact, all of the sixteen volunteers have been campers themselves and have returned to help lead Vacation Bible School.

To teach outreach and caring for the community we held a canned food drive. Children brought items to donate to the local Salvation Army food bank. On the last day, Capt. Kirshner dropped in to collect the donations and thank the children. The children sang two of the songs they had learned for him.



As always, a good time was had by all, even if it left the adult volunteers somewhat exhausted by the end of the week.



How do you walk off with two of these heavy, brick cornerstones?

That's the question being asked in the community of Mount Elgin, just south of Ingersoll. The 110 year-old Mount Elgin United Church building is in the process of being replaced by a new \$400,000 accessible facility using volunteer labour to save money. The historically significant cornerstones and the original church bell were to be incorporated in a memorial cairn. Rev. Lynne Allin said, "They would take two people to lift! Why would anyone do this?", but added that the congregation would be thrilled to have them returned -- no questions would be asked.

SOUTHDALE CHAPLAINCY

~ Kate Ballagh-Steeper

She was not a pleasant person. She yelled obscenities as easily as she breathed. If she borrowed something it would not be returned. Everything about her - from her appearance to her voice, to her walk - told you that she had lived hard and was rough, not just around the edges but through and through. She had used crack every day of her life since she was 15 years old. She had active Hepatitis C and her liver

gathered for an honest celebration of her life. Because under the pain was humour and love. At the graveside we could proclaim hope in the resurrection from the deadness of addiction - finally free and sharing the New Life!

Because the Southdale Chaplaincy is a ministry rooted in the God of Hope we are able to provide a pastoral presence in the Southdale community. We do not receive



SHANTAUNA & KHALIL AT THE BBQ



NATHAN AT AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM



YELI & MARGIE (A LEADER) AT SENIOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

was toast. She had lived at Southdale for about 5 years. She had a 10 year-old son who was the absolute light of her life - perhaps the only light in her dark life of addiction. Though he had not lived with her for the past couple of years, she still fiercely loved him and visited him as often as she could. Then she ended up in hospital - a heart infection - not uncommon in those who 'use'. The infection settled in and in a body already tired and used up, she passed away four months later.

I had the privilege to visit her in hospital on several occasions. To hear her fears. To share her pride over her son. I had the honour to be asked by her family to conduct her funeral. And her friends from Southdale and her family

government funding but instead are supported by the generosity and prayers of the individuals, congregations and denominations who want to participate in this ministry of presence and relationship. We are deeply grateful for the generous support from the many churches of Middlesex Presbytery and London Conference.

Our needs are ongoing and we always gratefully receive your support, prayer and encouragement. You can donate online through our website. If you wish, join us in this ministry, we are always happy to welcome new volunteers. Call our office 519-685-2771 or look us up if you're interested in finding out more about us.

www.southdalechaplaincy.com



Pastor Larry Sayers projects this photo on Sunday mornings during Announcements to keep alive the third point in this now two-point Dungannon Union Pastoral Charge. On March 27, 2011, Nile United Church held its final service. This marker now stands as a reminder of its historical role in this community.



Watch or Tape CTV Two -- Sundays 9:30 a.m.

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Allow Children to Wonder In Faith

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See the article on page 4 in this issue of
The Bridge.



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Westminster College

To London Conference,

Don and I have just finished up our tour of SW Ontario and bringing the story of our lives in Nicaragua to all of you.

It has been a joyful time renewing acquaintances and seeing old friends and making new ones. All along the way there were gracious folk who made us feel welcome, who shared time and sometimes resources with us as we traveled.

We are back in Nicaragua with the community we have come to love deeply. And we offer our profound thanks for the generous gifts to the Mission & Service Fund and The Hope Book. Without you and your support we could not do the work we are doing. We are in it together. If anyone wants to receive our monthly letters just send us an email.

God Bless all of you in your ministries.

DEBORAH ELLIOTT
& DONALD GIBSON
OVERSEAS PERSONNEL
MATANZAS, NICARAGUA

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40th Anniversary FOR AND ABOUT CHILDREN, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

A regular column that invites contributions from youth & young adults of London Conference.

HILLARY GETS A CALL

~ Hillary MacDonald



Growing up, I always thought I would become a teacher. This was challenged when I went to University and I was asked if I wanted the job title of 'teacher', or was it the act of teaching? Very quickly I realized there are many ways of teaching. I started researching different jobs, and came across 'Child Life Specialist'. If I wasn't going to be a teacher, (I thought) "I'll be a Child Life Specialist". However there has always been something in the back of my mind telling me that's not the job I am called to do.

I've been fighting. I've put up walls and barbed wire fences. I've hired security guards and an army – all to fight what my heart is truly saying. All to protect myself from my fear. From being pushed away, from being excluded and from having my heart and soul being questioned and challenged every corner I turn. So what war am I fighting?

My call to ministry.

It's rare to hear of someone so young feel such a powerful connection to The Holy Spirit and feel called to be God's servant in this world. So, for the past number of years my army has been in full force fighting this battle between The Holy Spirit and myself, my heart and fears, my passion and apprehensions. What will people think when I say I am a minister? Will I be ridiculed? Judged? Accepted? All of these thoughts, questions and worries have been stirring in my mind for sometime.

Before I left for The GO Project I was skimming through Jeremiah and came across Chapter 29 Verse 11 – this verse has run through my head like rapid fire since the minute my eyes read them. All during The GO Project I've been thinking and stirring with this chapter and finally on July 7, 2011 it hit me.

During our spiritual practices, I was praying in the labyrinth and thinking about where God was calling me. How I can best use my gifts to serve others. As I began to get closer to the centre of the labyrinth masses of tears

started flowing from my eyes. The Holy Spirit was so present. Alive. Comforting and Moving. I reached the centre of the labyrinth and there were 2 candles – both that were burning when I began my prayer but when I reached the centre one was no longer burning, and the other shining so bright and filling the space with all its glory. It was as if the light from the candle was God telling me S/He was here waiting for me. That my battle was over and my heart won.

It was in that profound moment when I realized I need to push away my fears and trust that God is with me every step of the way. I shared this with my friend whom I've been close with for many years. She just said, "I am so, so happy for you". Those were words I needed. Words that I hope others can feel. Words that I hope I can feel. I have never felt the Holy Spirit move within me so fast, so vibrant, so real. God has some serious plans in store for me. I am moved, changed and revitalized. I am called.

Thanks be to God. Amen!

Direct any questions or comments to
youthcolumn@londonconference.ca

Swell:SuRF Swell:SuRF Swell:SuRF

TAKE THE SWELL, NOVEMBER RALLY AND YOUTH FORUM MASH THEM TOGETHER AND SHABLAM!

YOU'VE GOT Swell:SuRF WEEKEND - A 4-DAY WEEKEND RETREAT FOR HIGH SCHOOL AGED YOUTH THAT INCORPORATES FUN LOVIN' PEOPLE FROM ACROSS LONDON CONFERENCE, AN ACCEPTING ENVIRONMENT, RIDICULOUS GAMES, ROCKIN' MUSIC AND HOME GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

THE FOCUS OF THE WEEKEND IS TO BRAINSTORM AND CREATE THEME CONTENT FOR THE UPCOMING SWELL WORSHIP SERVICE. THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO

CO-CREATE THE SWELL. WHATEVER YOUR PASSION - VISUAL ARTS, DANCE, DJ-ING, HIP HOP, TECHNOLOGY, DRAMA, COMPUTERS, ETC.—BRING IT TO THE SWELL:SuRF WEEKEND AND LET IT INFECT THE CREATION OF THE SWELL.

SWELL:SuRF WEEKENDS WILL BE HELD IN THE FALL AND LATE WINTER, ROUGHLY SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS SWELL AND THE GOOD FRIDAY SWELL.

FOR MORE INFORMATION KEEP AN EYE ON THE LONDON CONFERENCE YAYAN WEBPAGE WWW.YAYAN.CA OR THE SWELL WEBPAGE OR WWW.THESWELL.CA FOR THE EXACT DATE AND LOCATION.