

CONTACT



Council of the North

a newsletter for the Council of the North



A message from the Chair

We are so pleased to share with you this first issue of CONTACT.

We look forward to sharing our stories with you—stories of heroic and sacrificial ministry being carried out throughout the North.



In many northern communities, we are the only church. And so the need to provide places and opportunities for people to worship—to learn, and to serve, to grow, to be healed and to be equipped to reach out to the rest of the community—is enormous. We are so thankful for the ongoing and gracious support we receive from the rest of the Church. This newsletter is one way for us to share with you what a difference an Anglican presence makes in the North, and to say “thank-you” for your partnership with us in the Gospel.

In Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Michael Hawkins (Saskatchewan)
Chair, Council of the North

Yukon Models Ministry of Presence

In August of 2012, Terry and Ida Reid loaded a year’s worth of belongings onto their half-ton truck and left Newville, Nfld., to head west and north. “We were leaving our friends and family, our house—and definitely our comfort zone.”

The Reids were responding to an online invitation from Bishop Larry Robertson (Yukon) to come and be “Ministers of Presence”—to commit to a year of living in and providing basic pastoral care to a northern community.

Awaiting them in Fort Nelson, BC was a furnished rectory, a monthly honorarium, and a friendly, receptive congregation—one of numerous parishes Bp.

Robertson describes as having been “in need of pastoral care” with “no one to provide it.”

Robertson explains: “At its peak, about 15–20 years ago, the Diocese of Yukon had 15 stipendiary clergy... The mines were thriving and they required their employees to live on site.” But the situation Robertson inherited when he took office in 2010 was a radically

different one. “The mines had closed and the employees either moved or, in the case of many, became unemployed.”

The other change afoot—one much bigger than the Diocese’s local struggles—was the declining financial state of the Anglican Church of Canada, which, through the Council of the North, is the Diocese of Yukon’s main source of funding.



Bishop Larry Robertson & the Reids

According to Robertson, “Some parishes shut down. Others continued to function with a small number of dedicated lay ministers.”

But Robertson, painfully aware of the financial struggles of the national Church, was also considering

its hidden wealth. He says, “This is an opportunity... the reality is, especially in our cities, there are many trained people who are retired but are not ready to roll over. And it gives them an opportunity to minister in a different atmosphere, to a different culture.”

Robertson looked at what his diocese could offer: “We’ve had all

- continued on page 3



www.anglican.ca/cn
facebook.com/CounciloftheNorth
cnc@national.anglican.ca

Mishamikweesh

The Anglican Church of Canada will soon have a new diocese. On July 6, the General Synod approved Resolution B001, a proposal that an area mission in Northern Ontario become an indigenous diocese—bringing to fruition plans that have been decades in development and which, according to Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, were born out of “the dream of the elders.” Mamakwa, elected as a Keewatin area bishop in 2010, will become bishop of Mishamikweesh, centred in Kingfisher Lake (500 km north of Thunder Bay).

With its primarily indigenous identity, the new diocese will be a source of ministry responsive to the particular needs of First Nations communities—including the provision of services in Cree and Oji-Cree and community-based responses to addictions, violence and suicide. Mamakwa says, “There is a lot of work yet to be done in areas of healing: our people have undergone so much pain and despair—and yet they still go on with their ministry and with their faith.”

The creation of this new diocese does not add to the current number of Anglican dioceses or bishops since, on Sept. 30, 2015, Archbishop David Ashdown (currently bishop of Keewatin and metropolitan of Rupertsland) will retire, the Diocese of Keewatin will cease to exist and the remaining portions of Keewatin will be realigned with other jurisdictions.



Bishop Lydia Mamakwa

A new vision for Moosonee

An interview with retired Bishop Tom Corston of the Diocese of Moosonee

CNC: Tell us about the changes that are taking place in Moosonee.

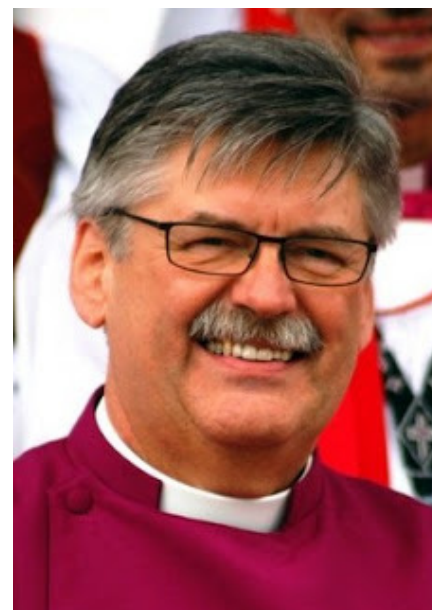
TC: The diocese over the last few years has started to see some difficult changes, mostly brought about by the economic situation in the one-industry towns in the southern part of the diocese. You know, if the industry dies, the community struggles. Shortly after I became bishop, we realized that while we had a lot of finances tied up in investments, we didn't have the necessary funds to keep us going—without doing some desperate restructuring.

CNC: What did that look like?

TC: So we developed what we call a “Vision Quest team” and we looked at how we could we guarantee the future of the diocese... And what we came up with was to create out of the diocese a mission district that would remain exactly the same as far as the physical boundaries were concerned, as far as the Church was concerned, and the ministry of the Church in the diocese—but that the administration would change. The ecclesiastical province of Ontario would take it over; the Archbishop would be the bishop in charge;...the synod office would basically change or shut down and we'd have a part-time priest/administrator, part-time book keeper. The Archbishop will be the episcopal overseer and then there'll be an episcopal visitor who will do the confirmations, the ordinations, and do the travelling.

CNC: Do you know who that will be?

TC: That could be any bishop in Ontario, but for the time being, I've agreed to stay on in that capacity because I can do it from home—and I can travel in the good weather. So



Bishop Tom Corston

we've got it all worked out so that when I'm gone, it should just roll over into the new entity.

CNC: Is your diocese comprised mainly of indigenous people/parishes?

TC: The diocese is basically divided into two: the southern half of the diocese is for the most part non-indigenous, one-industry (pulp and paper, mining) towns and while there are indigenous people in every congregation, it's basically a non-indigenous part of the diocese. And then the northern part of the diocese and on into Quebec, around the James Bay and inland Quebec, are all very strong indigenous communities. And they are quite different, of course in culture, but also in ministry. They are very active parishes, very big parishes, and lots of future, lots of building going on. So there's a striking contrast.

CNC: How will the coming structural changes affect the parishes?

TC: Ministry stays exactly the same. You know, there have been places in

- Continued on page 3

- Ministry of presence *continued*

these empty rectories, they've been rented out. We've seen this and we've asked for volunteers—primarily from the South. They need to have their own income.” In return, “We ask that they look after the Sunday service, then they fit their ministry with the needs of the parishes and their own skills.”

The Reids have organized retreat weekends, confirmation classes and a Sunday School. And, Ida adds, she's “working to get a little choir organized. It's coming.”

Lynn De Brandabere, from London, ON, serves under the same model in Haines Junction, Yukon. With skills in spiritual direction, community building and organizing, De Brandabere has initiated community meals, a summer art gallery in the church hall and diocesan women's retreats.

She also reflects on some of the personal benefits of a northern lifestyle: “At my stage in life, it's very nice to have a simpler lifestyle....People love the outdoors, to cross country ski...you feel very connected with nature.”

As for the ministry of presence she says, “I'd like to say it's 9 to 5, 5 days a week, but it's more like being a parent, there are no vacations. It's something that you take with you...it's that sort of love that we're called to.”

Their bishop is modeling “ministry of presence” too: De Brandabere explains, “The bishop says ‘Anything you need, you call’... he's a very good listener, which then allows us to be the same.”

It's a calling that is both humble and profound. Ida Reid says, “Quite often people just want to sit and talk and have a listening ear...You know, the title itself says a lot: you're representing God—here on earth.”



- A new vision *continued*

the southern part of the diocese where we've had to actually deconsecrate churches and close out congregations, but mostly very tiny ones—either just a handful left or, in a couple of cases, nobody left. While we have smaller numbers of clergy, since I've become bishop we've developed a new program of raising up local leadership—people in their own communities—to carry on in an ordained, non-stipendiary capacity. And I've ordained 3 people in that already, who were basically already working toward it, and I have 2 more this summer that are being raised up locally and have had enough training--and there's a commitment on their part to continue with training as they go forward.

CNC: How significant is it to maintain an Anglican presence in the communities of Moosonee?

TC: In many of our communities, the Anglican Church is the only church presence there is. It's interesting that on the Quebec side of our diocese, most of our parishes don't have a Roman Catholic community in them. And we have in every community now, pretty well, a Pentecostal presence. In some communities, the Pentecostal church has grown and has really affected us; but in a lot of them, we work in partnership now and they haven't affected the Anglican Church to a great extent. So that's been good. And so for many of our communities, particularly the indigenous communities, they would be devastated if there were no Anglican presence.

CNC: Seeing what's happening in Keewatin with the creation of a northern, indigenous diocese, can you see something similar happening in Moosonee?

TC: There is a movement afoot—it isn't very strong in our diocese at this point—but some of our indigenous leaders would like to see an indigenous diocese in that part of the James Bay area...And while that has presented itself formally at our synod and at the James Bay Deanery gatherings, when it comes right to a vote—it's the indigenous people that always carry the vote (there are more of them)—they have been very emphatic: “No, we don't want an indigenous diocese, our grandfathers created this diocese with the bishops and so we will remain as a family.”

CNC: How will the economic situation, demographics, etc. play into that movement?

TC: I'm concerned that if the southern end of the diocese does start to diminish that the northern part of the diocese, the indigenous communities, will end up being on their own. And at that point, I think there probably will be strong leaders that will say, “We're on our own now.”

CNC: It seems you're retiring at a very interesting time, possibly with some changes on the horizon.

TC: It's an exciting ministry, and I love it, and retirement is coming and part of me thinks, “You know, I'm going to miss it all.” But we have done all we can in our restructuring work...and I need to step aside and allow it to happen. The Diocese has the right to reverse the decision...and that gives them some sense of hope that they are in charge of the process. But, for now, everyone is of the same mind to suspend the Diocese for the next few years to get it on a more sure footing. I have hope that it's going to be a good few years.



**Council
of the North**