

Tapestry

Fall 2009

Proclaiming and celebrating the work of the CCS community through the stories of those who are involved in the ministry of diakonia

United Church General Council And GLBTQQI* Issues

by Denise Davis Taylor

This summer, I was delighted to attend my first General Council of the United Church. General Council meets every three years and the 40th Council met this August in Kelowna, BC.

Proposals from across Canada were debated in 1 of 3 Commissions. As a member of the Arctic commission I was there to witness first hand the protracted deliberations on the proposal entitled "Commitment to Inclusion".

It asked: That the 40th General Council 2009 adopt a policy that the Session (or Church Board or Church Council), in the exercising its duty of oversight of the order of public worship, may not discriminate against any group of persons on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disability or status as divorced persons to the fullest extent, subject only to the laws of Canada, its provinces and territories as may exist from time to time, especially those which protect the vulnerable; and authorize a remit [voting by Presbyteries] to test the will of the church with respect to this policy.

There were very strong opinions and convincing experiences shared with the commission in support of the original proposal, which were specifically about the crisis of integrity for ministers who were willing to do same sex marriages but were forbidden to do so by their congregational policy, banning same sex marriages.

But to embed that concern in the broader issue of inclusion raised other issues that became reasons not to support the proposal. Arguments against it were questions about forcing the renovation of aging buildings and dramatic changes to worship practises to include people with physical limitations (wheelchairs and signers).

Notable was the response of the youth in the commission. They were very distressed and confused that we would be arguing about inclusion. All of them had been raised in the church to believe that we are an inclusive church. To talk about the issue of whether or not a remit would get passed to make this change to UCC polity was very disillusioning for them. They did not see why a congregation would be allowed to discriminate for any reason in the United Church. They were heard and their emotional arguments kept in focus that this proposal was fundamentally an issue of justice.

The commission returned to this very contentious proposal three different times before the final document was passed.

The final document states: "That the 40th General Council 2009

1. Declare that in matters respecting doctrine, worship, membership and governance, The United Church of Canada is opposed to discrimination against any person on the basis of age, ancestry, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender identity, language, marital status, place of origin, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other basis by which a person is devalued.

2. Commit The United Church of Canada to journey to where there will be no discrimination in any aspect of church life and strongly urge each court, congregation and other ministries to embrace this commitment."

It also went on to ask the General Secretary, General Council to develop educational resources on overcoming all forms of discrimination and to prepare a report on a process for doing so, to the next General Council. Presbyteries are also to discuss discrimination in their triennial oversight visits to pastoral charges and missions.

Other items regarding our church's commitment to supporting the GLBTQQI community were dealt with more easily. The proposed National Consultation of the GLBTQQI community was passed as was the proposal affirming the ministry and participation of transgendered people in the church.

What do I infer from this action? People at General Council accept these actions as part of living our support and commitment to a marginalised portion of the Canadian population. A more skeptical part of me wonders if people are more willing to pass motions that they don't see as relating directly to themselves.

What will WE do to support the ministry and participation of transgendered people in our midst? Transgendered people are such small parts of the population that I wonder if many of us in the commission have had the opportunity to get to know what challenges and gifts these people have to offer the whole church? I once suggested that a person be included on a panel on homosexuality to represent the position that GLBTQQI people have unique and special gifts. I was told that's TOO extreme! No one believes that!

*Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Queer, Questioning and Intersex

Denise is a Diaconal Minister working in Edmonton with St. Paul's United and as Chaplain at the University of Alberta.

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The Never-ending Anglican 'Discussion' Of Same-sex Issues

by Jim Boyles

It was 1992 when the Anglican General Synod held its first forum on homosexuality. It was at Ryerson University in Toronto, and the galleries were packed. The speakers were many and their views expressed forcefully and with passion. The result: a study was commissioned.



Eighteen years later, with the issue looming large at each of the five ensuing General Synods, the church continues to study, study, study. The times, however, have changed, and the church has been moving, often in spite of, or in tension with, the national governing body.

Where are we now?

The General Synod in 2004 passed a motion to "affirm the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same sex relationships." At the same time it refused to recognize the authority or jurisdiction of dioceses to proceed in authorizing same sex blessings.

In 2007 it affirmed, "that the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine, but is not core doctrine in the sense of being creedal, and should not be a communion-breaking issue." There was an attempt again to allow dioceses to proceed, but it was defeated by the bishops while being approved by the clergy and laity.

Meanwhile, however, in spite of the lofty theological and constitutional debates at the national level, the church is moving.

The Synod and Bishop of the Diocese of New Westminster (Vancouver area) approved the blessing of same sex unions in a small number of parishes in 2003, and although a few parishes and individuals left the diocese, it continues this policy and the diocese is healthy and well.

It is only this year that a second diocese has followed this path. The Diocese of Niagara following a motion of its Synod and the approval of the bishop now permits the blessing of same sex couples that have been civilly married. The synods of the dioceses of Ottawa, Montreal, Huron and the Parishes of the Central Interior (formerly Diocese of Cariboo) have approved motions to enact similar practices, and the bishops are in the process of considering the next steps.

With the passage of federal legislation enabling same sex couples to marry the debate in the church has subtly shifted and now in many places seems to

be centered on how to move in this direction rather than if it is the right choice. There continues however, strong sentiments for the traditional view of marriage as between a man and a woman, and strong debate over biblical interpretations around this issue.

Several congregations have decided to leave the Anglican Church. Most joined the Anglican Network, now associated with the Anglican province of the

Southern Cone in South America. Its website lists 30 parishes, a quite small number compared to the over 2,000 Anglican Church of Canada congregations.

Where are we going?

In 2010 the General Synod, which meets in Halifax, will again face this issue. I expect that there will again be a motion to allow diocesan action, and this time it may pass. The last synod asked that the question of whether the marriage canon (the constitutional provision that governs marriage in the Anglican Church) should be amended to include same sex marriages, but the decision was that this route not be pursued now.

Of course, the action in Canada is only part of the Anglican story. The General Convention of the American Episcopal Church this past summer passed motions affirming the openness of ordained ministry to all, including gays and lesbians in committed relationships, and took steps to provide a liturgy for blessing of same sex unions or civil marriages of gays and lesbians.

All of this led the Archbishop of Canterbury to express regret and ponder whether this might lead to a two-tiered Anglican structure at the international level. Already several of the Anglican provinces (national church bodies) have indicated their disapproval of the direction of the Communion and have been absent from meetings. A conference of dissenters was held in Jerusalem just before the Lambeth Conference in summer 2008.

The debate and study will continue. The church will move. Step by step gays and lesbians will be welcomed fully by the rest. Then the church can move on to the real issues of life and of the world that constantly crowd around us calling for attention.

Archdeacon Jim Boyles is the Anglican Co-Chair for CCS and is a retired General Secretary of General Synod.



Our Tower's Transgendered Connection

by Bob McMillan

Welland Avenue United Church, in St. Catharines, Ontario, was maybe my favourite place on earth. My partner Michael and I started attending this wonderful church during its final years of existence, soon after it first extended a welcome to the local LGBT community. While the entire building was beautiful, its most striking architectural feature was its tower, built in 1877. To early churchgoers, the imposing tower embodied their faith in a powerful God, while its twelve spires represented the twelve apostles. Because of a discovery I made in the church's final days, the tower has also come to symbolize for me the often-hidden, often-elusive LGBT presence in most Christian churches. Our presence is not confined to a page or two in the final chapter of Welland Avenue's history; rather, the LGBT past is intertwined in mysterious, unknowable ways with the entire history of the church.

While the tower was central to the identity of Welland Avenue Church, it was kept locked and people rarely entered it. I had heard that several people had signed their names in the tower over the years, some of them as early as the nineteenth century, and was interested in researching who some of them were. In June 2008, with nine days left before the church's final service, Michael, two other church members and I ventured up the steep, rickety steps to the top of the tower. I found it to be a dank, dreary place, full of character – we could imagine we were ascending to the gallows. Bird excrement covered much of the interior brick, a testament to the multitude of pigeons that once made the tower their home. When we got to the roof, the view was breathtaking. What a memorable morning!

While most of the people who had climbed the tower over the previous 131 years had left little obvious trace of their visit, others had signed their names and date of visit around various windows. I found 14 clear inscriptions of names associated with dates, the most intriguing of which proved to be "Frank Woodhull[;] London. Apr. 11.1887." When I Googled this name, I found a 1908 article from the New York Times about a Frank Woodhull who had been detained at Ellis Island immigration station in New York after one of the matrons discovered that he was "in fact Mary Johnson, an English-Canadian woman, who adopted men's dress." Apparently Woodhull, who was 50 years old and had been living as a man for 15 years, "confessed that she had so disguised herself to have a better chance in the world." Woodhull is a very uncommon surname – when I searched the name on Canada411, I failed to get a single hit. Even though the dates don't match exactly (Woodhull would have started living as a man around 1893, according to the dates in the article), and even though the Woodhull in the article claims to have lived in the United States for the previous 30 years, could this be the same person who climbed our tower in 1887? Because of the outreach our church had extended to the transgendered community during its final years, I thought it would be wonderfully appropriate for one of the first people to have signed his name in our tower to have been transgendered as well.

But this is not likely the case, suggested Erica Rand, a professor at Bates College in Maine who devoted a chapter of her recent book, *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*, to Woodhull.



Frank Woodhull signature. Photo by Michael Flynn.

Professor Rand's information about Woodhull came from a photograph in the Ellis Island history centre and a series of newspaper articles that were published in New York at the time of the 1908 incident, and she wrote me by e-mail that the articles were packed away and would be difficult to find on short notice. "I'm not sure if they said exactly where in Canada he had come from. But I'm guessing that he had little money to travel once he left. He seems to have been an itinerant peddler – some say in the Southern or Western U.S."

But Rand went on to suggest another wonderful possibility: "Maybe he named himself after this Frank Woodhull. After all, who knows why someone with the birth name 'Mary Johnson' would wind up named 'Frank Woodhull,' which requires a decision to change both names, not just one. Obviously, he didn't pick a name related to his birth name (like Mark Jones or something) ... So it might be that instead of having found the Frank Woodhull in question, you found someone he wanted to name himself after – and maybe, just maybe, the Frank Woodhull at your church was someone that the next Frank Woodhull thought would be affirming, progressive, and/or personally supportive – a great person as well to be climbing your church tower in 1887."

Or maybe it was the transgendered Frank Woodhull making a pilgrimage up our tower, trying out his new identity within the dreariness of its walls before emerging into the sunlight amidst the spires. Like the LGBT people of faith who wonder whether David and Jonathan's relationship was more than simply friendship, or Ruth's love for Naomi was more than the devotion of a daughter-in-law, we'll probably never know. Looking for the LGBT past usually means looking for traces of our existence that have survived in hostile environments. Sometimes the best we can do is find hints that fire our imaginations, be they inscribed on the scrolls of ancient Scripture or on the walls of our holy places.

Bob McMillan is a United lay person and attended the recent Leadership Development Module in Winnipeg.



Resource Review: Funny Kinda Guy DVD (2005, 83 minutes)

by Karen Lumley

*Reprinted with permission from the Manitoba and Northwestern
Conference Weekly News for April 22, 2009*



This is the incredible story of a boy whose gender identity was female at birth. His story is the expression of the struggle he endured as he realized his assigned identity at birth was not who he was. His story takes place in Scotland where he is the youngest of three children and, as a girl was the delight of his mother who finally got her girl. Even as Ruth he finds himself uncomfortable and the theme of his life is the line of a song he sings, "Inside of Me I Want to be Free." He knows he must be himself but struggles to know how to do that in His story is the story of a young man who is trapped in a young woman's body. The appearance of his breasts and the hormonal changes of his adolescence remind him of how he needs to be himself which is what lead him to choose to transition from a girl to a boy. I Want to Be Who I Am is the theme throughout the story of Simon as he calls himself. As he tells his story the greatest loss he anticipates and does in fact grieve is the change in his voice. He has been recording as a woman and with the transitioning process his voice changes and singing becomes more of a concern for him because his once female voice is now becoming male.

He receives good advice to Be Yourself and this motivates him to transition. His parents are supportive in his process and understanding. His mother remembers that from a young age Ruth seemed different, even more than just a tomboy and so when Simon tells her what he wants to do and his struggles she is not surprised having recalled the painful years of his high school days when he was ridiculed and did not fit in.

His story is moving and powerful as the reality of Ruth now Simon's life unfolds before us. His is a story of hope and healing. He has support and understanding from family and friends. It is a story of how a young man comes into himself and becomes the man he wants to be. He is open with the process and brutally honest about his struggles with his masculinity. He could not conform to be a girl he had to transition to be a boy.

It is refreshing to see him enjoy the little things of life such as walking around without a shirt on which as a child he wanted to do but as a girl could not do. It is a powerful story of the reflection of his life as a girl, his transitioning, implications, the struggles of that and his coming into his own as a transsexual person who has undergone a sex change operation. Tranninboy as he calls himself comes into himself and meets and marries the love of his life and together they spend their lives growing into their identity as a couple. All of Simon's changes were supported by Rowena his girlfriend now wife who embarked on this journey with him.

Simon realizes "I've Always Been This Way," which is expressed in one of his songs. He is himself and his story is a great story for personal growth and education. A must see for all!

Karen Lumley is ministry personnel who formally worked at Rainbow Ministry, an outreach ministry of Winnipeg Presbytery. Rainbow Ministry kindly donated the DVD Funny Kinda Guy to Conference Resources. Karen currently works in team ministry at St. Andrew's-River Heights in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

CCS is working, through education and social integration, for the welcoming of and inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the life and work of the church.



Sticks and Stones may break our bones, But names and labels wound us deeply.

by Wilson MacLennan

We are given many gifts in life, and for many of us, the first was our name. Our parents gave much thought to the name they intended us to carry for life and was given with love and hope for our future. At birth our name is celebrated. We are recognized and recorded by the name in government records, in our church at baptism, and any number of official places as we set off on life's journey.

As our life unfolds we find that titles, labels, and nicknames are attached to us. Some are honourable, descriptive of heroic deeds. Others establish our position in the community.

But some labels are derogatory. Young children encounter unwanted names, labels, or taunts in the schoolyard and among their peers, such as tomboy and sissy. Although labelling changes as we age, it does not go away.

As we grow older, the labels we are assigned can be uplifting and related to our life work, such as doctor, teacher, preacher, retired. They can even relate to where we are from - Canadian, American, Mexican, Indian.

However, there are labels assigned to us by others, without our consent, that can be derogatory and demeaning. Demeaning labels sometimes relate to our financial status, social status, employment, sexual orientation, ethnicity, perceived intelligence, - the list is never ending.

Derogatory labels cut deep into our very being. They shame us, and too many times we come to believe those labels reflect our true character.

Some months ago, the topic of labels was raised at a monthly alternative worship and discussion group for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer and questioning committee meeting at Robertson - Wesley United Church in Edmonton. It became apparent that people were weighed down and even at times discouraged by some labels that had been assigned to them.

As I listened to the discussion I was reminded of the words in the hymn, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, a hymn I had learned in my childhood. "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer." The words from the hymn stayed with me during the discussion and were the inspiration to have labelling and naming the theme in a future gathering.



At the June worship, paper and pens with washable ink were provided and during the service people were invited to write names and labels that had been given to them and weighed heavily on them. They were then invited to place the papers in a bowl of water on the table. As everyone watched, we saw the labels and names slowly disappear from the papers and a sense of cleansing was felt throughout the sanctuary. Cleansed of the labels and names that had weighed on us heavily and we went away into the evening with a new inner identity.

*We sing of the Spirit,
who speaks our prayers of deepest longing
and enfolds our concerns and confessions,
transforming us and the world.*

Wilson MacLennan is the past Co-chair of Affirm United, a retired RCMP officer and has worked in various positions within the United Church. He currently works on congregational and ministerial reviews.

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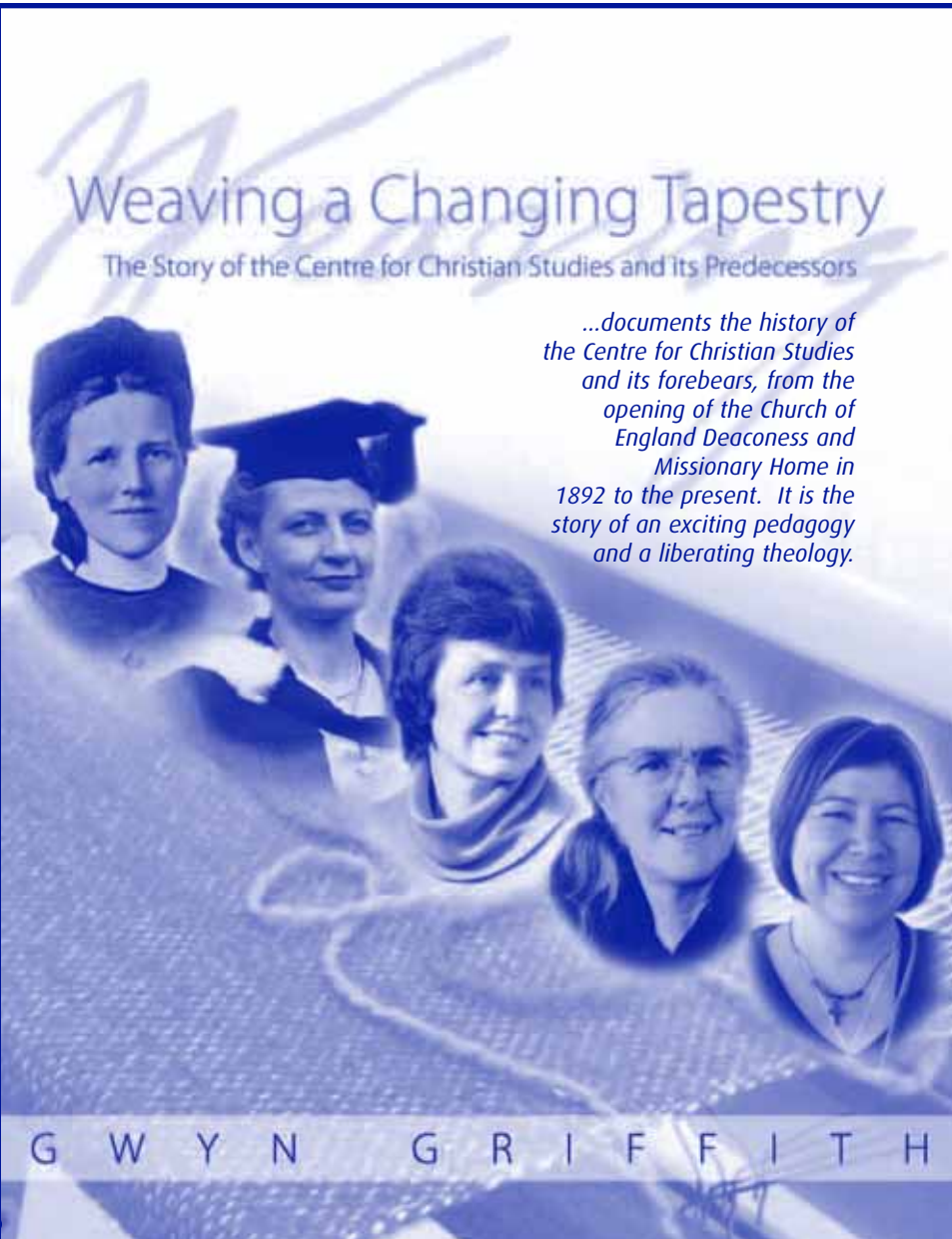


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Reflections On Gay Parenting

by Irene McKenzie



Alison, Chantal and Liana celebrate being family

John and I have three daughters and one of them, Alison, is gay. I'm wracking my brains trying to think about what was so distinctive about being Alison's parents. As each daughter took a different path in life, each gave us great joy and at times great anxiety, and all have found loving partners whom we dearly love.

Alison is the youngest of the three and "came out" to us more than 25 years ago. At that time we had barely heard of lesbians or gays but we did know that as a group, many, including church people, despised them. We were very fearful for our daughter's safety and her future. We also felt sad that she would never experience the joy of parenthood.

Alison felt that it was time for her parents to be educated, and provided us with several books, the most enlightening being "Different Daughters" edited by Louise Rafkin. This is a compilation of stories by mothers, of their relationships with their lesbian daughters. Reading it was very much like being part of a support group where every imaginable reaction from total acceptance to rejection and disbelief was shared. We were not alone.

At first we found it difficult to share the news with extended family and friends, but gradually we did. We were becoming more aware of the situation of gays and lesbians in our society and around the world, and joined Parents and Friends Of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), which was just starting.

In the mid eighties, John and I attended Human Rights Hearings at the Manitoba Legislature where Bill 47 was being debated. It included a section protecting all people, including gays and lesbian persons, from discrimination. We were shocked to hear the venomous rhetoric in presentations by fundamentalist Christians. Thankfully, some United Church clergy spoke of acceptance and loving relationships.

John made a presentation as a father of a lesbian daughter whom he loved. To our surprise, we received many cards of thanks from people we had never met. This was followed up by an invitation to join a United Church committee known as "Friends in Ministry to and with Gay and Lesbian Persons, their Families and Friends". This was a mixed group of clergy and lay folk, some of whom were gay, but all were passionate about the need for the church to be accepting and supportive of gays and lesbians in every aspect of church life.

We held services, spoke to congregations, and wrote countless letters. One of the fun things was an annual picnic at Portage la Prairie, which was between Manitoba's largest 2 cities - Winnipeg and Brandon - so attracted many from outside Winnipeg.

Eventually, Rainbow Ministry, an outreach to the lesbian and gay community, came into being. At the time, it was a courageous step by Winnipeg Presbytery. All during this time we met more gays and lesbians, became aware of transgendered and bisexual folk, and found that our lives were greatly enriched in the process.

As Alison's parents, we met her lesbian friends and in particular, Chantal, her chosen partner. We loved Chantal immediately and she and Alison had a beautiful commitment ceremony in 1995, as marriage at that time was not possible. They were determined to have a child, despite the barriers, and thanks to artificial insemination Chantal gave birth to our granddaughter, Liana. The donor was known to both sides of the family and later, became known to Liana, although he resides in another country. So we needn't have worried about Alison not experiencing the joys of parenthood after all!

Since Liana's birth 13 years ago, Canadian laws have changed to allow homosexual couples to marry and also adopt children. Alison and Chantal were married in Kenora, Ontario in 2003. My, how times have changed!

So yes, being parents of a lesbian was a different experience. It's been hard work, but parenting is always hard work. We feel very fortunate to have had this rich experience.

Despite the legal barriers that have been removed, there is still much work to be done to change long held prejudices in churches and society.

Irene McKenzie is a long time United Church member and serves on the CCS Property Committee. John, her husband, assisted in writing the article. He is a retired doctor. Both have served on many church committees.



Getting To Know You...and Me

by Bob Webster



Ruth Pogson and Beth Aimee at their wedding

My first encounter with Ruth Pogson was at St. John's College in Winnipeg when she was on staff as Director of Field Education – training clergy to supervise students in field placements.

I was also aware of Beth Aimee who was serving in the Diocese of Brandon in northern Manitoba at the parish in Easterville from 1978-82.

What I did not know was that Beth had gone through a painful divorce and that Ruth had been a much-needed support during that time, out of which a strong relationship grew. What I was aware of was the strength of personality and call each had as they undertook difficult ministries in the challenging early days of women's ordination.

After completing 2 units of Clinical Pastoral Education at St. Boniface Hospital, Beth accepted Ruth's offer of accommodation in Arthur, Ontario while she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at Waterloo University. After completing her Masters of Divinity degree at the Atlantic School of Theology, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Beth returned to Arthur to establish a counseling centre funded by Anglicans in Mission and governed by a local council.

This was also a time of realizing that their relationship was moving deeper than friendship. Beth describes Ruth as a strong and complicated person. After four years, in order to exercise her own sense of call and to maintain her identity, Beth took up parish ministry in Calgary Diocese and Ruth retired from parish ministry to Cambridge, Ontario, where she did what she did best – give spiritual direction to those seeking it.

In the early 90's, Beth fell ill with the myalgia encephalomyelitis – M.E. virus, which afflicted her severely for three years. It continues to do so. Ruth came at Christmases and they holidayed at Ruth's cottage.

In 1995 Beth left Grand Rapids due to an accident and moved to Kincardine, Ontario near Ruth, who later modified her house so Beth could have an apartment of her own.

It was during this time that issues of sexual orientation arose for both of them. For Beth it was a struggle with telling her four daughters and grandchildren. Fortunately they were all supportive and proud of her. For Ruth it was a matter of recognizing herself for who she was. She read a book, which she found in a bookstore, and it dawned that this was herself she was reading about.

After allowing their awareness and knowledge of each other to deepen and mature, it was on June 1, 1997 that they had a service of commitment to acknowledge the new status of their relationship at St. Luke's on Lake Huron.

In 2002 they moved to Sidney, BC and bought a house together. It was here that they encountered the weight of church policy. Having gone to Bishop Jenks to share with him the whole of their identity, he barred their ministry, refusing to license them. His successor followed suit and they have been denied the freedom to exercise their priestly ministry since then. Last spring, Rev. Mary Louise Meadow, who had ministered with Ruth during her final illness, relinquished her ministry in protest over the treatment of Ruth and Beth, and will not return unless the policy is changed.

Because Ruth had entered into a prolonged illness, they realized that they had to move on their desire to be married. On April 23, 2008, they were married and on August 1, had a blessing at St. Jude's Anglican nursing home in New Westminster.

Ruth's death December 30, 2008 left Beth alone and ended their time of learning together who they were individually and together. Ruth's ashes were buried at St. Luke's Church near Kincardine, Ontario on June 27, 2009. Beth shares that while the loss is great, the death was also a relief due to the pressure on them both over the length of illness and the depth of suffering.

Beth is of the opinion that the church does not know what to do with elder clergy, so she has undertaken herself to do hospital visiting and goes to church when she wants to. A major time commitment is the study she is in with the University of Victoria on the issues around older Lesbians coming out. Her other major project is writing her memoirs.

My hope is that through her work we will become aware of the truths it took her and Ruth so long to work through.

Rev. Bob Webster is a retired Anglican priest who has volunteered in various areas of CCS ministry, including worship for last year's AGM. Bob currently works half time at St. Martin in the Fields.



Passages



Beulah Clark

Beulah Clark U47, Beu passed away May 3, 2008. Bea was a member of our church for many years and a very good friend to many. (Port Lambton United Church)

Betty Syer

Betty Syer U47 was appointed in 1947 to Knox UC in Trail, BC and moved in 1951 to Consort, Alberta as lay supply. She was Designated a deaconess in 1952 by the Alberta Conference. When she married she was one of the women who was disjoined.



May Saunder

Rev. May Sanders U72, Graduated from CCS. Died Sept. 9th at the University of Alberta Hospital. May "lived with her cancer, rather than died of it" and kept her laughter present up to the last. May last served in the Milk River-Coutts Pastoral Charge before her retirement and disability status. Prior to that, May served in several roles of hospital chaplaincy including the General Hospital in Edmonton, U of A Hospital in Edmonton, and as chaplain to out-of-town patients with Edmonton Presbytery in the mid 1980's. She also worked with the St. Albert Pastoral Charge and had an internship at Ministik-S. Cooking Lake. As a diaconal minister and then ordained, her courses of study took place at the Centre for Christian Studies and Queen's.



The **TAPESTRY Committee** welcomes comments on this issue. This was the first newsletter for many on the committee and we want to continue our learning experience. Were the articles interesting, useful and varied? Did we miss something you'd like to know more about?

Please email Glenda at gknoll@ccsonline.ca or write to her at CCS.



A Parable Reflection With A Different Attitude

by Ken DeLisle



I want to start by telling you a story.

I think we all like stories and Jesus certainly used them to teach.

This is a true story. I don't know if it really happened this way but it is a true story.

Many years ago, in a small town, there was a young boy who lived with his parents and sisters. He was well liked and admired and people thought he would go far in the family business.

While he was still young, his parents died. At first, people felt sorry for him and understood why he was still living with his sisters – they needed to be taken care of.

But years went by. Many women were interested in this young man and tried to entice him into marriage. He never did marry. Nor did his sisters.

Rumours started in the town. What kind of a man was this? Real men married and had children, especially sons. How could he be a real man if he never had sons to work for him, to carry on his name?

The rumours became worse. Wealth business competitors, who were jealous of his wealth, started to tell stories that the man wasn't interested in women at all. He wasn't "normal". He was "one of those people".

Word spread and friends and customers started to avoid him. Some began to point out that the laws

of the church and the laws of the country did not approve of his supposed behaviour. He needed to be punished.

Although the law said he should be killed, the people were reluctant to shed blood and began a campaign to shun him, to declare him dead.

His sisters, hearing the stories, warned their brother but he refused to bow to such foolish comments. The sisters sent word to their close friend, a preacher the citizens of the town knew and admired. They told their friend that their brother was "dying", being shunned and ignored by the town's people. They begged their friend to come and speak some sense to the people.

Their friend was delayed and by the time he arrived the whole town had declared the man to be dead and that everyone was to shun him. Bowing to the pressure, he had left everything with his sisters and had gone to live in a cave.

When the friend arrived and heard what had happened, he wept. He knew that the people had failed to understand his preaching on love and justice. They failed to accept the fact that God created out of love and so all were loved equally by the Creator.

He asked the sisters to take him to where their brother was buried so that he could be brought back to the life of the town. The sisters understood but were worried. Surely if their brother came back, the towns people would become angry and raise a stink about his being accepted again as a full living, loving human being!

The friend insisted. The sisters took their friend to the cave. By now, most of the town had heard that the preacher was back and knew what he was planning on doing and followed them to the cave.

The preacher spoke again about how powerful God's love was. That God, the source of all love and life, wanted all humans to live in a community of love and justice and equality. The town, in the way it had treated his friend, had failed to show God's love. But God can forgive and give them all a new change. God's love so powerful that life could be given back to the dead.

The preacher turned toward the cave in a loud voice cried, "Lazarus, come out!"

Ken, former Co-Chair and a Companion of the Centre, was guest editor for this issue. He celebrates 30 years of marriage and sharing the raising of 7 foster children with Rev. John Robertson, who is a current member of Council.



Community Update

Kellie McComb is leaving Grand Nations on the 6 Nations Reserve and will be doing family ministry in a congregation in Waterloo, Ontario. **Mary Anne MacFarlane** is moving to Sarnia, Ontario on Aug 1 for work with Central United Church. She will be in a team ministry doing work

in the areas of pastoral care, seniors and Christian Education. **Juanita McKinnon-Smith** has moved on from CCS to work at St. Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry full time starting September this year.



COMPANION OF THE CENTRE 2009

Do you know someone who would qualify for this year's Companion of the Centre?

- graduates who through their life and ministry, have brought distinction and honour to the Centre for Christian Studies,
- members of the Centre for Christian Studies community (friends, volunteers, staff, students, and so on) who have made a significant contribution to the work of the Centre,
- individuals in the wider community whose life and work epitomizes the ideals of the Centre.

Submissions must be received by October 30, 2009.
The award will be made in March.

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Editor's Note...

I thank CCS for the opportunity of being Guest Editor for this issue on sexual orientation and gender identity issues. I have learned much. We are in need of a Permanent Editor and I would encourage each of you to think of your gifts and talents and if you are creative, organized, work well with other talented and gifted persons, contact Glenda for more information. - **Gail Golding**



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