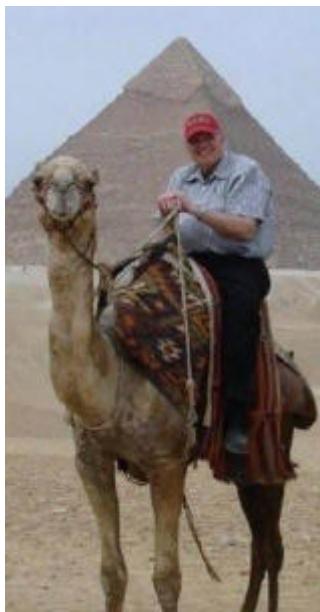


The Handshake



The Voice of the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs



Dear Brothers in Christ,

You will note a change in my picture; this one was taken on our recent trip to Egypt! It was very scary as I was hanging on for dear life! After the ride was over I was stiff and sore for 3 days. However one doesn't get this opportunity every day so why not take it! The experience was not unlike being your President in that I now realize how much time and effort is required to carry out the duties. Please pray for me.

I regret to advise that two of our council members were recently hospitalized. Please add Richard Deitrich and Jim Lawrence to your prayer list. A speedy recovery is wished for both.

Have you made any plans to celebrate our 85th anniversary? Did your club have a birthday party? Have pictures and a report gone into the Handshake?



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- a man who is active in the United Church of Canada.
- a man who enjoys the respect of others in the church.
- a man who is appreciated for his leadership, ideas and energy.
- a man with a Christian concern who dreams of ways to make life and faith more meaningful and active for other men.
- a Man who believes that the Gospel of Christ is good news for Christian males of all ages.

If you know of such a man who is not a member of AOTS please give him an individual membership form as we are actively looking for members with a vision for Christ-like service.

Hopefully you have read and shared with others our Winter electronic edition. If not check out our website at www.aots.ca

Men are like:

Weather: Nothing can be done to change us.

Bonds: We take soooo long to mature.

Mascara: We usually run at the first sign of emotion.

I hope to see you at the Spring Roundup of Central Region AOTS, April 25 to 27th.
God Bless all and keep serving,

Bill Love



Handshake

AOTS, "As One That Serves", is a church-related organization of men initiated in 1923 and dedicated to promoting Christian fellowship and deepening the spiritual life of men and developing effective programs of Christian service.

The Handshake © is published by the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs which was established January 8th, 1923, at Kerrisdale Methodist Church, now known as Ryerson United Church, Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Handshake contains news and announcements of the AOTS Men's Clubs and other men's ministry groups as submitted. It is provided to AOTS members twice yearly, by the national AOTS office. The views and comments which are published in the Handshake are not necessarily those of the National AOTS Office.

Photo submissions: If you want your original photo returned, please enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope with your submission.

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The AOTS web page can be found at <<www.aots.ca>>
Webmaster address: <<mark@aots.ca>>

The deadline for submissions to the next edition of the PRINTED Handshake is **October 31, 2008**

WANTED Church & Community Service Chair

Jim Lawrence has found it necessary to resign as chair of this committee due to "ill health". We are very sorry to lose Jim, but, we feel we must abide by his decision.

If you would like to become part of the National organization and take on Jim's responsibilities, please contact Wallace Macdonald at nationalsecretary@aots.ca or Bill Love at nationalpresident@aots.ca

Another new
"handshake"
(Check the front
page)

Bay of Quinte Conference AOTS

Craig E. Watson, on the left, hardly needs any introduction. He is a Past National President, a Past Honorary National President, Committee Chair of the 25th National Convention, patriarch of the "Watson Family" who has provided music to so many AOTS gatherings across the country.



Al Anthony is President of Bay of Quinte Conference AOTS. He was born in Nova Scotia. He had a career in the R.C.A.F., residing in four provinces, as well as France, Belgium and duty in England. Al is very involved in his community and in Grace United Church in Bellville and an ardent supporter of the United Church Camp, Quin-Mo-Lac.

Craig and Al will be on hand to extend the hand of friendship and welcome to all at the Central Canada Regional Round-Up being held on April 25, 26 & 27, 2008 at the Salvation Army Conference Centre at Jackson's Point, Ont.

Breaking News!!!
**"Early Bird Price" extended to ALL registrations
for the Central Canada Regional Round-Up**

ACHES & PAINS

Aches and pains we have them too
With exercise and gardening too
With raking leaves and shoveling snow.
Those aches and pains they come and go.
Aches and pains we have them too.
When falling down upon the ice too
Those aches and pains seem to bother us
With different illness we have pains too
When getting older its hard on us
I feel like lying on my couch
With headache pains that will not budge
Aches and pains we have them too
Shoveling all this snow its bad news too

Aches & Pains

Submitted by Richard Paul Deitrich



Editor's Note: "Life is what you make of it!!!!"

Thought for today...

Based on an excerpt from "Wisdom of the Ages" by Wayne W. Dyer

You are a great spirit! Live that way!

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power and He went around doing good....because God was with Him." Acts 10:38

"This is the true joy in life: the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die – for the harder I work, the more I live.

I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is not a 'brief candle' to me; it is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

G. B. Shaw worked into his 90's as a brilliant dramatist, literary critic, lecturer, music critic, theatre critic, and essayist on many, many subjects. His plays continue to be performed every year in some parts of the world. (My wife Helen and I make a point of visiting the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario every year to relive *St. Joan* or *Man and Superman* or some of his many other plays.) This passage reflects how George Bernard Shaw lived his life.

People who enjoy life as if their being is a force of nature are doers who are fully alive, have little patience for complainers and whiners, and generally are active every day of their lives. They are not active just to stay busy, but are rejoicing in their life activities. Shaw asks us to let go of our self-absorption and get involved in the true joy of life, which is to feel that you are being used for a purpose.

In this passage Shaw conveys his enormous enthusiasm for life and encourages us to embrace a comparable attitude toward everyone and everything. Let go of grumbling and passivity by changing how you choose to perceive life in general, says Shaw. He asks us to rejoice in life, not for the outcomes and rewards that come our way, but purely and simply for its own sake.

Dyer notes that he removes himself from those who violate the principles that Shaw is writing about. He refuses to participate in anything that might be construed as making him a 'selfish little clod' of ailments and grievances. Generally he will do or say nothing that might be interpreted as rejection. He has stopped using phrases like 'I'm tired', 'I don't feel well' because of his understanding from this passage. If someone tells him they feel a cold coming on he responds 'don't think cold thoughts'

He goes on to say that this one selection from George Bernard Shaw, when taken to heart, can literally change the state of your mind. If each day you see yourself as a mighty one and forgo self-importance and complaints, you will come to know what Shaw means by the true joy in life.

Like Shaw and Dyer, I love the idea of being thoroughly used up when we die. It means that we will not let negative thoughts, our own or someone else's stand in the way of our doing what we know we should be doing. It means that you will not die with your music still in you.

The verse quoted from Acts 10 simply states that Jesus went around doing good and He was able to do this because God was with Him. We have the same opportunity today and every day when we call out the Holy Spirit from within us. Put energy into your life by taking on new interests or projects and generally being consumed with rejoicing in life.

Sometimes we are criticized for what we are doing. Albert Einstein, a contemporary of Shaw's wrote "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

You are a great spirit! Live that way!

Let us pray –

O God, we thank you for Jesus' example
as a man who went around doing good.

We seek your guidance and strength that we might achieve our purpose
as we seek to follow the ways of Jesus as we read in our Bibles.

Strengthen our resolve that we do not become selfish little clods,
but truly 'live' until we die. Amen.

George Bishop – *Spiritual Life and Leadership Chair*



The Regeneration Committee is pleased to announce that the National AOTS will sponsor the *Sabbath Day* events at Kairos 2008. Kairos is a national conference and spiritual retreat for young adults aged 18-30. London Conference Youth & Young Adult Network will host Kairos 2008 at Five Oaks United Church Education & Retreat Centre, August 24-29, 2008. Anticipated attendance is 100-150 young adults from across Canada.

Theme streams / anticipated leaders

The Kairos 2008 theme is ***It Matters***. The entire conference will be devoted to study, discussion, worship, fellowship, and of course, fun. The theme streams and anticipated leaders are:

Self Awareness/Leadership – Adele Halliday

Politics & Activism and Where the Church Fits – Matt Wynott

Technology, Culture and the Church – Shannon McCarthy

Arts & Creativity - Sandy Harron

Environment – Chris Tindal

Wednesday, August 27 will be a special *Sabbath Day* to experience the local community and the environment through special experiences that complement the theme streams. Sabbath Day options are:

An Arts Experience at Elora

Adventures on the Grand

Adventures on the Grand Hope Ropes at Ganadaoweh

Operation "Sharing" in Woodstock

Francis Sandy Theological Centre

Francis Candy Missiological Centre Bike Journey to Paris and Brantford

Why does the AOTS Support Kairos 2008?

We believe that the AOTS should reach out to all generations to share our experience and encourage others to grow in their faith and service. For young adults, Kairos presents a wonderful opportunity to do just that.

- Kairos 2008 is a great opportunity to *extend the Kids to Camp Campaign* to the young adult generation. It is truly a camping experience for young adults that will surely serve them well in the future.
 - Kairos 2008 is a great opportunity to *extend our experience* to the young adult generation. It is very similar to the Round-Ups and National Conventions where so many AOTS men have experienced fellowship and spiritual growth. This is an opportunity to share our model with young adults.
 - Kairos 2008 is a great opportunity to *extend our reach* to the young adult generation. This event goes outside the bounds of the Emerging Spirit Campaign, to a generation deserving of our support.

How Will the AOTS Support Kairos 2008?

- The National Regeneration Committee will provide a grant of \$7500 to sponsor the *Sabbath Day* events.
 - National AOTS Executive and Regeneration Committee members will participate in *Sabbath Day* to provide personal testimony to the goals of the AOTS and to encourage spiritual growth and service.

How Can the AOTS Clubs Support Kairos 2008?

The National Regeneration Committee would welcome the participation of individual clubs to support this national initiative. We have listed a few opportunities for your club. You will likely think of others:

- Encourage a young adult from your pastoral charge to attend Kairos.
 - Promote Kairos at your Presbytery with the goal to find one young adult from the presbytery to attend. Presentation materials are available on the AOTS website committee to support you in this.
 - Provide financial support to one of the delegates (in whole or in part). Registration cost is expected to be \$375, plus travel expenses.
 - Kairos is a great opportunity for development of lay members. If your pastoral charge has development funding available, consider Kairos.

For more information:

Visit the Kairos website at <http://www.Kairos2008.ca> for lots of information and an introductory video.

Visit the AOTS website at <http://www.aots.ca/> for supporting materials.

Contact Regeneration Committee members:

gandhbishop@rogers.com
cookeic@ebtech.net

EULOGY FOR MURRAY KEER BY REV. WALTER COWAN

Monday, January 23, 2008.

Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, Man.

I am honored to share a few thoughts about my good friend, Murray. I came back to Winnipeg in 1972, so I have known Murray personally for only 35 years. I soon recognized him as one of a kind. He was Mr. AOTS. I am told that he helped organize the United Church AOTS Men's Clubs in Manitoba in 1947 and was one of its greatest supporters for the past 60 years. (AOTS stands for "As One That Serves". This is from Luke 22, when Jesus says – "Who is the greatest, the one who sits down to eat or the one who serves him? The one who serves him, of course. But I am among you as one that serves.")

With his job with Shell Oil, Murray traveled extensively. He always sought out the meetings of the local groups so that he could speak about and promote the AOTS. I especially recall his bringing greetings from the Duncan, B. C. club, a club he visited every year.

I will not bore you with listing the varied offices he held with AOTS, both provincially and nationally, but will share the fact that he was honored with a Life Membership in 1979. He served as Honorary President for a two year term and often wore his pin to show off this honor. Murray also served as Chair of the National Convention when it was held at the University of Manitoba in 1973. Murray was very active in the volunteer work of AOTS men at Riverview Health Center (formerly the Municipal Hospital) since 1954.

Murray often spoke of leading in worship at many gatherings of AOTS and of the many church services he conducted around Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario with his friends in AOTS. The long association with his Church (Westminster United) and his friendship and respect for all its clergy was often mentioned in his conversations. He was well grounded spiritually.

His smiling face and warm and sincere handshake sent a loving and caring message to everyone he greeted. He usually took a moment (as he often did on the telephone) to ask: "And how is your gracious wife?" (June)

He was always the gentleman - in every respect - well dressed, well spoken, well read, and a real joy as a guest at your home or at church. To many friends, he was often able to share certain goodies. The "Snicker Bars" and for myself "bags of flour" bought by the trunk full when on sale. In these later years we appreciated Alan's help in carrying them into "Cowan's Castle" - thus supporting Habitat for Humanity - through the sale of fresh buns and bread.

It was only a few weeks ago when he shared his hopes of going to the West Coast soon to see his friends in Victoria and perhaps even to visit his daughter Georgine and Jim in China.

His passing has left a real void in the lives of many and especially for the men in AOTS, not only in Manitoba but from coast to coast. His special presence will be felt whenever we share the Grace: "Be present at our table, Lord May spend our lives in serving Thee."

Well done, Murray - Good and faithful Servant.

Regeneration – As One That Serves

In the February devotion on the AOTS website, www.aots.ca, it is noted that the season of Lent is “about engaging in the ongoing business of renewal, regeneration and new birth.” Lent can be a time for meditation. In recent years, meditation has been promoted as a kind of relaxation exercise for busy people who find it difficult to rest. We are recommended to incorporate into our routine a little time each day – perhaps up to an hour – to sit in silence and focus on a word or an image. Scientific evidence supports the value of meditation as a tool for productivity and efficiency at work. But the original purpose of meditation was spiritual, to withdraw the mind from everyday concerns so that it might come in contact with the divine: so that the mind and the soul might renew, regenerate and we might experience rebirth.

As a suggestion, you may wish to meditate on the regeneration initiatives which were identified at the AOTS National Council meeting held at Trent University, Peterborough in August 2007. An update on the initiatives as described in the Fall 2007 issue of The Handshake shows the following:

1 – **Communication** - the website (www.aots.ca) continues to expand as more information is fed to our webmaster, Mark Browning. Information and inspiration are now spread through the “Handshake” as some electronic and printed issues are brought to publication by the editor, Harold Lorenz

2 – **Dues** – the letter of invitation for individual membership went to all congregations in the October “Infopac” under the name of our moderator, Rev. David Giuliano. We know that some new members have been welcomed. Your work with neighbouring churches, especially through 85th birthday parties, is helping to keep the name, the aims, the objectives and some of the successes of AOTS in front of people of the United Church of Canada.

3 – the **task group** examining new projects outside Canada continues to review suggested ideas and is currently reviewing projects with the United Church of Canada’s General Council personnel for total church-wide approval of our initiatives. We trust we will jointly identify a project or projects which the AOTS can champion which will appeal to many men of the United Church of Canada to fund and in which active physical participation is possible.

4 – the work with the **Kairos young adults** event is proceeding and is outlined in detail elsewhere in this issue as well as on the website. This should be a most worthwhile event for young men and women in the 18 to 30 age group. Please review the details and invite and support those in this age group in your congregation and your local presbytery.

5 –the “**camp for youth**” project is at the planning stage within Toronto Conference AOTS executive.

We welcome John Cooke of Sarnia to the Regeneration Committee and would welcome your input on any of these initiatives and/or any other suggestions or proposals you wish to have considered locally or nationally.

From George Bishop – Regeneration Committee Chair

A word from the Membership and Fellowship Chair

I will be back in the hospital again. I have been having trouble with my heart off and on, and in the recent past I landed in ICU for five days and nights. I will be going to Sudbury on May 12-13 for heart work again. I’m finding it difficult slowing down. I’ve enjoyed trucking along for the AOTS both locally as well as nationally.

I ask that you keep me in your prayers at this time.

As Membership & Fellowship Chairman I feel I might have to step down in the near future, and like the well known “milk horse”, be put out to pasture. I cannot travel any extended length of time and therefore will not be attending the Central Canada AOTS Spring Roundup.

Respectfully serving God & AOTS Richard Paul Deitriché

Devotional

“Hope and Prayer”

HYMN: #17

MUST READ SCRIPTURE:

Hope is a Star

Habakkuk 1: 2 – 11

{Key Verse 5}

“Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.”

OPENING PRAYER:

Creator God, we give thanks for the opportunity to learn more about our religion, our faith, and ourselves. Let the Spirit that was in Jesus fill us so that we may be enriched and renewed. Open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our hearts to take in what is discussed, and our minds to understand. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

LESSON:

ALL GOOD GIFTS COME FROM GOD

National Prayer Day is coming soon! Do we need to be reminded to pray? Sometimes we do. Prayers of thanks are most times few and far between. Almost out of reflex we pray at times, when we are in urgent need of help, when in our suffering. Our organization is struggling and we should be praying for it at this time. I pray for this organization (AOTS) many times throughout the year. I pray for the faith of the men in it. Faith is a gift from God and in times like these our faith is all that we have to fall back on. Ask yourself, when all else is gone, family, friends, this organization; if all were gone would your faith go with it?

As Christian men, we often struggle with how to answer the many questions of why people suffer in life. We pray to God. We repeat our prayers. We ask others to pray, and yet God does not seem to answer those prayers. Maybe He is not just answering them in a way we would like Him to. We think we know what is best for us, but we do not always know that. God knows what is best for us. So why pray? We do it to tell Him the deep feelings of our hearts because He cares.

Prayer is hope. When we pray for executive council to make wise decisions for us to not lose our jobs or homes, for our loved ones, for suffering, we are praying for hope. When there is no hope, people give up, so we pray to God for hope. Many do not believe God is there, or listens, or cares. However, if He is there, listening and caring, then our biggest sign is hope.

Hope comes in many forms: birth, jobs, etc. We really do not know what will bring us hope or the answer to our prayers, until it happens. I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will answer your prayer and give you hope. I do not know how that will happen. God may bring joy or suffering from which you will learn and grow. It is beyond my knowledge what good gifts God may bring to you or this organization, but I do pray that God will give good things to all, and that we will know that ALL GOOD THINGS COME FROM GOD.

CLOSING PRAYER: We come, O God, not in search of miracles but in search of hope. As we pray, have us see the world through eyes of kindness, loving deeds, and your gifts that you have given us to help others.

Amen.

Gil Reashore



Spiritual Life and Leadership Column

This year, the Spiritual Life Handbook is not being printed. At the beginning of each month you will find a new devotional message in PDF format on the website, www.aots.ca, under "Devotions". You may wish to print these for use in your monthly meetings. Alternatively you may wish to request a copy monthly by e-mail from the National Secretary.

In the February issue of "The Handshake" the "**thought for today**" is based on material from a private project of Jim Taylor and Ralph Milton. Their initial material is available on www.story-lectionary.com. The **Story Lectionary** is a volunteer venture with no remuneration for Jim or Ralph or for Linnea Good who provides music and word "to bring scripture and theme alive". They feel that "the 'kairos' time has come to devise an additional resource that speaks to the hearts as well as the minds of contemporary Christians. Many leaders.....have been advocating.....the extensive use of story to invoke the imaginations and awaken the spiritual senses of those hearing the sermon,"

Marcus Borg, in *The Heart of Christianity* stated "The emerging paradigm...is not very much concerned with the historical factuality of the Bible stories, but much more with their meanings. It is not bothered by the possibility that the story of Jesus' birth and resurrection are metaphorical rather than literally factual accounts. It asks, "Whether it happened this way or not, what is the story saying? What meaning does it have for us?"

There are at least two ways of "knowing" – the "intuitive" and the "intellectual". Most of what we hear today in our churches fosters the intellectual at the expense of the intuitive. Both are needed to enter the full experience of worship. The intuitive way of knowing is at home in the world of timelessness and eternity and is nurtured by story, drama and the visual arts."

According to Jim, Ralph and Linnea, the "emerging church" needs a preaching resource that is responsive to the needs of the lay leaders who are emerging at all levels of the church, including preaching. Early Hebrew theology was based on story, as was the ministry of Jesus. He was a master of the parable and used it almost to the exclusion of anything else. A First Nations story-teller from Washington State offers a helpful perspective. "I tell the people," he said, "that I don't know if things happened this way. But this Story is true."

We invite you to sample the stories from the story lectionary, and we invite your comments and suggestions on anything to do with spiritual life and leadership.

George Bishop – *National Spiritual Life and Leadership Chair*

Toronto Conference AOTS Men's Club Report 2007/08

Five AOTS clubs in the Toronto Conference continued to serve and thrive throughout the year. All clubs were major participants in the AOTS National Convention which took place in Peterborough in July. Jim McKibbin, president of the Toronto Conference of the AOTS was elected president-elect of the AOTS National at the convention.

All clubs continued with regular dinner meeting programs, speaker sessions and fundraising events, often in support of Conference Camping initiatives. The Conference Executive has passed a motion to be a partner in support of the Toronto United Church Council's "Seven Years of Plenty" campaign.

One club, Wexford Heights, has been active with its congregation in providing community leadership programs for Muslim youth in their community.

Another club is undergoing an amalgamation and has been re-titled "Beach United Men/AOTS". That club will be hosting this year's "**Toronto Conference Fall Rally**". ***The Rally will take place on November 1, 2008 at Beach United Church with a theme focusing on the environment.*** For further information please check the AOTS website.

Clubs at Don Mills and Kingston Road are developing new approaches to men's work in the church and seeing a revitalization of men's spirituality through their efforts.

The 2007 Toronto Conference Fall Rally took place in Newmarket where David MacDonald was a featured speaker for the theme "Bestowing the Gifts - the Legacy of the Elders".

This years Spring Round-up at Jackson's Point celebrates "85 years of AOTS" work in the church.

Submitted by Jim McKibbin



Working On Our Elevator Speech

It's called an "elevator speech".

Someone gets on the elevator with you and asks you what you do, or what meeting you are attending, or sees your "AOTS" pin and asks what an AOTS is! You have a minute or less to answer the question as well as you can. No pressure!

In a time of complex and sometimes ambiguous job titles, in a time when we speak in the language of acronyms, (e.g. I'm working in Men's Ministries in the CECM unit of the UCC), having an elevator speech that communicates the purpose and mission of our group with brevity and clarity is a good thing.

Last summer, three of us interested in starting a Men's group in our congregation, got together. In our first few gatherings we talked about our life, who we are, some of our joys and struggles, what is important to us. In doing this we discovered that this sharing was a good thing and would be the cornerstone of the Men's Circle we wanted to create and give leadership to. It became clear that we wanted to create a safe place for men to gather, to talk about real stuff in our lives, to learn how to listen and support one another. Getting clear on the group we wanted enabled us to advertise, attracting men who were also seeking what we were offering. We had a focus; we would be doing some things as a group and by necessity not doing other things. There are lots of different purposes that men can gather for. It helped our group to be able to say what we were seeking to build. Some men were attracted to the group and some men were not.

As new men have joined us it has been good to tell them how we are seeking to be together. Each time one of us gives the "elevator speech" to a newcomer, it helps us as a group to get clearer on what we're about, what our essence is.

As we start a new group we have a great opportunity to work through what will be important to us, the kind of group we want to create. Even groups that have been around for some time have opportunities to recreate themselves. It can be harder to reshape a group that has history. You may find the tradition of the group, the routines that have become part of the group's identity, make it more difficult to move with the Spirit that may be nudging you to do a new thing. However there are moments in the evolution of a group when questions about identity and purpose come to the surface creating an opportunity for looking deeper.

Sometimes it is when a group is stagnant or declining that a brave soul in the group asks the big question – "why are we declining?" – and the question can lead to a renewed vision and purpose for the group and renewed passion amongst the membership.

As the AOTS celebrates its 85th Anniversary this year can we discern voices across the country inviting us to engage more deeply our purpose and mission, asking important questions about direction and identity, working on an "elevator speech" that we can say with conviction and passion and pride and that has power to evangelize.

"What's an AOTS?

Let me tell you.....

Lloyd Paul
Men's Ministries
Congregational, Educational, and Community Ministries
The United Church of Canada

“Is Your Group Spiritual?”

So you have a Men’s Group meeting in your church. AOTS or some other name.

Is it one of the ministries of your congregation?

Is it spiritual?

Is there a religious component?

Is there a Christian component?

Of course it depends on how we define these concepts. Some of us will soon be getting ready to use the line “I worship God on the golf course” as a response to why we weren’t in worship last Sunday!

What does a spiritual/religious/Christian component look like in our Men’s gatherings?

I have attended gatherings and meetings in the church where the spiritual/religious component was used to begin and end the gatherings. I always found amusing the chairperson of the Official Board who would start the meeting by saying “now Rev. Lloyd will lead us in a BRIEF prayer!” What we call bookend prayers to start and end a meeting can feel like merely paying lip service to the spiritual/religious part of our gathering. Get it over with, keep it short, so we can get to the real purpose of our gathering.

Frequently in our men’s gatherings that include a meal, grace is offered. Often the resident clergy person is asked to say the grace. What about sharing this responsibility around, encouraging as many others as possible to prepare and offer grace, to bring their spiritual voice to the gathering. The variety of style and words will be enriching. Developing a prayer life will be encouraged. We may discover that there is no right or wrong way to pray.

In the AOTS group I was a member of, a devotional was part of our gathering. Again, sharing this responsibility around can be healthy for the spiritual growth of the group and helps those who offer the devotional to realize the work involved in worship. This can have pay offs for the paid staff in a congregation as the lay people develop an appreciation for the work involved in liturgy preparation. Having a couple of people prepare the devotional together can be even better, as community is built and they have opportunities to talk about their faith. Strong groups of support and sharing are developed by individuals meeting together to plan something for the larger group. Through the devotional we are spiritually fed. This can also lead to the purchase of books and resources that can be used by the group.

We have a “men’s circle” in our congregation. We check in, sharing how we are doing and then talk about a topic. Some of the themes have been: our relationship with our father; our unlived life; anger. Deep listening to one another, providing a safe place to share who we are feels like spiritual work. Is there something missing? What about a prayer component? Are there ways that as a church Men’s Circle we can deepen our spiritual life?

A while ago one member of our Men’s Circle was moving out of the community. At the close of our meeting we stood in a circle and offered words of blessing and affirmation to him, giving thanks for who he is and the gifts he has brought to our circle, wishing him peace as he journeyed onward. This felt like a spiritual experience.

More and more groups in the United Church are rediscovering some of the ancient spiritual practices. One of them is “lectio divina”. It is best practiced in a small group. A scripture passage is read aloud and in silence each person is invited to listen for a word or phrase that speaks to them. Then there is an invitation to share the word or phrase with others. There is no discussion, only listening to one another. The scripture passage is read again and each person is invited to listen for a word or phrase and hear what it is saying to their life. Again each person shares as they are comfortable. And then the text is read again and each person is invited to listen for a word or phrase that may be calling for a new initiative or learning in their life and to share in the group. This is a powerful spiritual process that connects the scripture to our lives in deep ways and helps us listen for God’s Spirit speaking through the Word and speaking to our lives. This is an individual spiritual discipline and when done with others, builds deep community. It also invites us to get out of our head and develop the ability to listen and receive God’s word through contemplation and prayer.

Tools to deepen our spiritual life are out there.

Finding and practicing them can be a great blessing.

Let us pray.....

(In the Fall edition of “The Handshake” I will reflect on developing the spiritual life of our Men’s Group through service)

Rev. Lloyd Paul - Men’s Ministries - Congregational, Educational and Community Ministries

HANDSHAKE Page 10 SPRING 2008

“Learning By Another Way”

In my work with Men’s Ministries in the United Church of Canada I am finding lots of resources for groups looking to engage men in dialogue, learning, and community building. While books and websites are important sources for deepening men’s ministries, I would love to hear about experiential practices that are working in our men’s gatherings.

I like the story of the dancer who had just finished an elaborate and exhausting dance that was well received by the audience. In a post-dance interview she was asked what the dance meant. She replied between gasps, “if I could have said it with words I wouldn’t have gone through all this trouble to dance!”

So instead of giving you book reviews of the ten books I have read on Men’s Ministries in the last few months, let’s reflect a little on experiences that have the potential to create inner transformation. Perhaps some of the stories shared below may give your Men’s Group ideas on things you could do together.

I have good memories of a gathering of family at a cottage where on a warm summer’s night we sat in the sauna by the side of the lake and then jumped into the water.

The repetition of this experience was wonderful.

What about taking your Men’s Group up to a cottage and share the weekend together.

In my congregation we hold once a year the “Men’s Bible Study Weekend”. We go up to a cottage, play golf, sit around, talk, laugh, tell stories, eat and drink, and hang out.

In some of our communities we may have access to a Native Sweat lodge.

I have never experienced this, but I know people who have and it can be a powerful, transformative experience individually and as something to share with other men.

We are getting into the weather to plan things outdoors.

When I was a preteen my father and his brother took my brother, my nephew, and I, on a 3 day canoe trip from Ottawa to Kemptville. A father and son outing with other members of our Men’s Group can be a wonderful way to mentor, and share a physical experience. Canoes, campfires, water and starry nights can make for a magical time. I know male friends who yearly have planned together and then gone on a canoe trip. There is something about sharing a physical experience that can be very powerful for men.

When I was part of the AOTS club in Stephenville, Newfoundland, at least twice a year we would plan a worship service and then take it on the road on a Sunday to the four point charge that we were on. We travelled in a large van, lots of stories and jokes and singing, and it was a great feeling of accomplishment to plan and lead the worship service together. Father’s Day is June 15th. There is time for your Men’s Group to plan and lead the worship service on that day in your congregation.

A Yoga group meets in our church, using this ancient practice along with lectio divina to deepen our relationship with God. Something that is physical and spiritual can be a powerful combination for a Men’s Group. Involving some kind of movement, exercise, breathing, in our gatherings can be transforming.

Continued on Page 12

Continued from Page 11

Some of our Men's Groups spend a weekend working together on a "Habitat for Humanity" build or some physical labour around the church or the community. Working together to build something can be an excellent event for our Men's Group.

I have known some men who have experienced "Outward Bound". This organization takes you on an outdoor experience that challenges you physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. You are challenged to move beyond personal limits. Some of it is done on your own and some of it involves working cooperatively with others.

I attended a "Spirituality and the Arts" event in Banff a number of years ago. A number of the workshops weren't about books and talking so much as about experiencing.

In one group we were all given drums and the leader led us through a drumming experience. Excellent.

In another group we were invited to move about the room and be aware of space, movement, others in the room. Again it was a wonderful experience.

There was also a small group that participated in outdoor rope climbing. I avoided this group, but if I see the opportunity again, I would try it.

Sweat equity! Holy sweat! For men, getting out of our heads, out of our left brain, can be a wonderfully transformative experience.

In June I am attending "The New Warrior Training Adventure" put on by "The Mankind Project".

I am not that clear about what the weekend is about but I am pretty certain that it will involve some experiential learning that takes many of us men out of our comfort zone to a place where change and deep ahha's can happen.

I would love to hear from you about experiences in your Men's Group that have been transformative; experiences that have worked and could be shared with other groups.

You can email me at: lpaul@united-church.ca

Blessings

Lloyd Paul
Men's Ministries
Congregational, Educational, and Community Ministries
The United Church of Canada



Rothwell United Church - Gloucester ON

(as reported in the Annual Report to the Congregation for 2007)



Mural Painted by the Youth – “Captured” from web site

Another year of fellowship, fun and a lot of hard work. The highlight of the year was once again our Family Christmas Party with one hundred and thirty-six people attending, including thirty-six children. We had four craft tables, which kept the children busy till supper time – turkey with all the trimmings. Good planning had everybody fed inside of thirty minutes. The Christmas gifts brought by our bouncing Santa will be providing lots of light for years to come. (*After receiving their gift of a flashlight from Santa, the lights in the church were turned off and the children lit up the church with their flashlights. Marilyn, Church Office Administrator, reports that it was a wonderful time*)

The rest of our projects, primarily food and fellowship to all who participated are listed as follows:

Projects:

January Bean Supper
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
March Strawberry Social
Easter Breakfast
UCW Bazaar Lunch Room
Christmas Party

Financial Support Projects:

Observer on Tape
Ottawa Mission (more than a shelter!)
Centre 507 (Drop-in Centre for those in need)
Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
CGIT Camp Kallala
Angola Memorial Fund

Two new members joined the club this year, swelling the ranks and providing two more pairs of hands to share in the work and enjoy the fellowship.

Submitted by Desmond Jarman

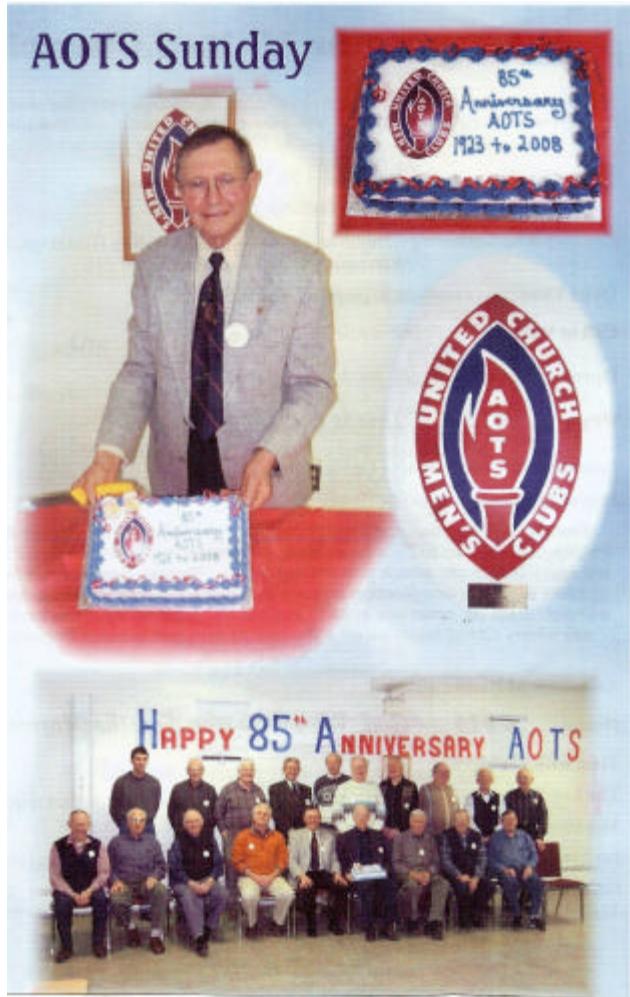
Calling all men from Manitoba and Eastern Saskatchewan

42nd Annual
Riding Mountain
Conference of Churchmen
Fellowship – Friendship – Worship
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
June 6th, 7th, and 8th, 2008



Contact Dean Weiten at DMW@Weiten.com or James Douglas at James.Douglas@mts.net

AOTS Sunday



Westminster United Church

Minnedosa United Church AOTS Men's Club, Manitoba

Minnedosa United Church Men's Club held another successful Pancake Supper. 2008 brought another twist to the Minnedosa AOTS club's activities. Since the church burnt, the club has had to find other locations to hold its meetings and fund-raising events. Thanks to the Minedosa Anglican Church, Shrove Tuesday found 12 Club members gathering in the basement of the Anglican Church to serve pancakes to the brave souls who ventured out in the cold. It was a fun evening for all and another financial success. The proceeds will be put to good use by the Minedosa Club. Past President Neil Cameron and Secretary Keith Robertson are busy helping clean the kitchen.

Respectfully submitted by Harvey Douglas



Westminster United, Belleville ON AOTS 85th Anniversary Celebration

Our regular pot luck meeting was held January 11/08. We invited Al Anthony, President of Bay of Quinte Conference AOTS to join us in celebrating the 85th Anniversary of AOTS. The hall was decorated with AOTS colours with a banner and an anniversary cake. Al spoke about the history of the AOTS.

Then on Sunday Jan. 20/08, our club ushered and the Sunday bulletin was especially designed to honour the anniversary.

This occasion was one of the last duties of Bryan Campbell as president, as of February 8/08, Frank White took over as president.

Editor's Note: The front of the Sunday Calendar is reproduced on the left. This bulletin was donated by Bob and Sheila Johnston, and designed by Marie Martin (church secretary) and Donna Fano. What a great job!

Submitted by Brian Campbell

Murray Cowan Kerr

Born - November 23, 1921 - Died January 13, 2008.

Remembering by Ernie Orpin.

Murray passed away peacefully in his sleep at home.

I became a member of Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1946 and met Murray soon after. This was his church and he was very much a part of it. In 1954, the AOTS Men's Clubs in Manitoba began their work with the Municipal Hospital (now Riverview Health Center) and Murray and I were there from the beginning. It was hard to say "no" to Murray when he had a project and for this one Murray was there until the time of his death.

So, for over 50 years Murray and I had been good friends. We traveled together to rural and to national conferences and to many Sunday morning worship services in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, where Murray was usually the guest speaker. He had a great sense of humor and enjoyed introducing me (and probably others as well) by saying "Have you met my dad?".

We will miss Murray here in Manitoba and I'm sure that his friends across Canada will as well. He was one of the greatest supporters and promoters of the AOTS wherever he went in Canada. He lived a good life, with the church as his main focus. As Rev. Waiter Cowan said in his eulogy, "He was a good and faithful servant" What more is there to say?

Foothills United Men's Club, Calgary AB



each hold individual membership in the National AOTS Association.

We meet the second Saturday of each month for breakfast, with fifteen to twenty attending. At our February 9th meeting, both Bill and Wally were the program presenters for that morning.

This club hosts an Annual Bar-B-Que for the congregation and supports Alberta Youth Parliament members. We also support the National AOTS Hospital Project.

Submitted by Fred Holberton

Thamesview United Church AOTS – Fullarton, Ontario (A history lesson)

As the National AOTS celebrates its 85th Anniversary, the Fullarton charge AOTS Men's Club, now known as the Thamesview United Church AOTS, marks it's 50th year of existence. It was under the ministry of Rev. Francis Lovelock, an innovative individual that we became acquainted with the AOTS under the mentorship of a dedicated group of men in the Exeter AOTS. We became aware of the Elgin House Conference weekends and in 1959 five of our members trudged up the hill to "Delectable Mansions". The Berkley Studio was actively promoting United Church activities and some of our men were seen on the cover of a booklet as a result of that long climb. In succeeding years, several of our members attended and I credit those experiences with the long-lasting efforts and membership in our club.

Rev. James Robinson, the black preacher from New York City had founded "Crossroads Africa" and as theme speaker at the 1959 gathering, filled us with inspiration to spread the Gospel. The culmination of that great year was a rally in Massey Hall in Toronto, where Rev. Robinson returned to address the packed audience of men. It was here that I think I first heard (perhaps we had sung it at Elgin House) the hymn "How Great Thou Art", and you can only imagine the impact of the sound and message as thousands of men sang from the soul.

Our enthusiasm showed as our club sponsored a Korean orphan through "Compassion", founded by Dr. Everett Swanson in the 1950's, and we watched him grow to a teenager. To financially support our projects we participated in the "National AOTS Christmas Box Nut Sales" and through our concentrated sales effort in the broader community, the AOTS became a well recognized identity.

Presently we support a local presbytery camp – "Camp Bimini", near Stratford Ontario, and one of our members has contributed hundreds of hours in it's renovation. Another member has for years headed our "Canadian Food Grains Bank" program, growing Soya beans project – scouting for land, seed and other segments and throughout the growing season, doing surveillance of the crop's needs and even marketing the crop in a professional manner. Our financial return over the years is over one hundred thousand dollars. Our men are highly capable of food promotion and frequently handle the food booths at regional events such as municipal and farm sales.

As we presently make an effort to enlist more men to our ranks, we hope to be ever conscious to listen to God's word so that we may in truth be "As One That Serves".

Submitted by Ron Skinner

Did You Know!

The first couple to be shown in bed together on prime time TV was Fred and Wilma Flintstone.

Coca-Cola was originally green and it is impossible to lick your elbow.

28% of Africa is wilderness and 38% of North America is wilderness.

The cost of raising a medium-size dog to the age of eleven is \$16,400.00

The first novel ever written on a typewriter was "Tom Sawyer".

The San Francisco "cable cars" are the only mobile National Monuments.

111,111,111 x 111,111, 111 = 12,345,678,987,654,321 (try it)

Bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers and laser printers were all invented by women.

At least 75% of people who read this will try to lick their elbow!

Many years ago in England, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim, or handle, of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service. "Wet your whistle" is the phrase inspired by this practice.



National President-elect Jim McKibbin's AOTS Presentation To the Gender Justice Advisory Committee of the United Church of Canada

On Saturday February 9, AOTS National President-elect Jim McKibbin was invited to make a presentation to the “Gender Justice Advisory Committee” (GJAC) of the United Church of Canada.

The GJAC has an advisory role to all units of the General Council Office to both challenge and ensure that the policies and programs reflect the church’s commitment to gender justice.

To this end, GJAC is mandated to:

1. Witness the pain caused by gender injustice,
2. Promote better understanding of issues around gender justice,
3. Advocate for those marginalized by gender injustice,
4. Work collaboratively for change in our church and our society.

GJAC meets twice per year to consider these issues and its membership is made up of church members and activists who reflect the diversity of the church itself.

More Men Welcome

Currently, there are six women on the committee and one man and more men are welcome. Kim Uyede-Kai of the church senior leadership team is the staff resource person to the committee.

Jim McKibbin presented a brief overview of the history of the “As One That Serves” Men’s Club. He indicated that the organization had reached a peak in member clubs in the late 1960’s when there were about 400 clubs and that since that time there had been a gradual decline in the number of AOTS clubs in the country reaching the current number of 60 in 2008.

He pointed out that for much of its early life the organization had received a fixed amount of money from the national church which facilitated the employment of paid staff and that that practice was no longer in existence. The AOTS as it is currently constituted is fully self-sufficient.

For the past several years the AOTS has been working with National Church staff to address the question of *men's work in the church*. For its part, the AOTS on its own volition has re-dedicated itself to this task and also to the task of supporting church camping and related events, such as the 2008 Kairos youth project.

Speaking from his particular experience, he outlined some of the more recent AOTS events that dealt with gender and related justice issues such as:

A History of Looking at Justice Issues

1. The 2000 Toronto Conference Fall Rally ***Being Human***
2. The 2001 Toronto Conference Fall Rally ***Faith and the Economy***
3. The 2002 Toronto Conference Fall Rally ***Celebrate the Diverse Ethnic Ministry of Men***
4. The 2003 Toronto Conference Fall Rally ***There is Hope***
5. The 2004 Toronto Conference Fall Rally ***Connecting Men – Building the Men’s Ministry Network***
6. The 2006 Fall Rally ***Stating Our Faith***
7. The 2007 Fall Rally ***Bestowing the Gifts – Legacy of the Elders***
8. The 2000 Spring Roundup and National Convention ***Men @ the Millennium***
9. The 2003 Spring Roundup ***The Business of Ability***
10. The 2007 Spring Roundup ***Discerning Moments***

A number of interesting workshops were developed in some of the sub-themes of the above events such as:

- a) the male single parent and the familyless father
- b) the unique relationship that men have to at-work injuries (5 times more likely to be killed than women)
- c) the fact that men are twice as likely to be a victim of a violent crime than women
- d) the fact that young boys are twice as likely to commit suicide than girls

The chair of the meeting extended warm thanks for the participation of the AOTS and reiterated the invitation for more men to take up roles on the committee. For further information about the committee please contact Kim Uyede-Kai at 416 231 5931 or Terry Beaumont at 416 231 7680 ext. 2019.

OAK BAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA – 2007 AOTS ANNUAL REPORT

During the year the AOTS men's club of Oak Bay United Church suffered the sad loss of long-time member Stan Thompson. A memorial donation was sent to the Church Building Fund.

The Club met nine times for general meetings, typically on the third Monday of a month, but not in July, August, or December. The executive met ten times, usually on the first Tuesday of a month.

The executive consisted of Ken Adsett, Daryl Anderson, Graham Howard, Bill Magee, (Secretary), Don O'Coffey, (President), John Reid, (Treasurer), and George Stewardson.

At the general meetings Clara Knight Associates usually catered the dinners. Devotionals were offered by Bill Bell, John Hurlburt, Gordon Johnson, Roy Jones (assisted by Matt Sherman and Ken Jones of Esquimalt United Church), Don O'Coffey, and Arnold Ranneris (twice).

The programs at these meetings were presented by a variety of people: Dr. Judith LeRoy, on bringing eye care to people in Africa; Arthur Caldicott, on the privatization of electric power in British Columbia; Cliff Wilkins, on a tour of Turkey; Rev. Cathy Victor, on the evolution of Sunday School teaching methods; Will Dunlop, on God the Trinity and our place in the universe; Doug and Sheryl Johnson, on the Aviation Mission Fellowship; David Docherty, on Fun, Fitness, and Fatness; and Hunter McDonald, on Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (of drugs).

For the June General Meeting members lunched in the B.C. Legislative Building and then visited the "Titanic" exhibit at the Provincial Museum.

The annual Spring Garage Sale was held on April 28. As usual this event added substantially to Church funds. These Garage Sales have been suspended because of the renovation work beginning at the Church.

In the fall, members and helped women of the Church organize a Thrift Shop Annex on Friday mornings to add to the Building Fund.

The Club presented the Church Service on Sunday, August 19, with Bruce Martin conducting a men's chorus and member Rev. Mark Bedford preaching.

Members manned the Salvation Army Kettle at the local Thrifty Foods store on two days in December.

During the year the Club gave funds to Camp Pringle, the Observer on Tape Fund, the Second Mile Project, and the National Hospital Project. It provided funds for three young church members to help with their secondary education and for two to attend youth training at the Naramata Centre. It also purchased coffee urns, a DVD projector and a laptop computer for local church use, and it supported the church library.

The annual Christmas dinner was held on December 10, with all members of the congregation invited to attend. Some seven dozen came. For it, Clara Knight Associates catered a turkey dinner and musician Scot Macdonald presented the program. Wives of former members were guests of honour.

Respectfully submitted by **Bill Magee**, Secretary

CREATION

A man said to his wife one day, "I don't know how you can be so stupid and so beautiful all at the same time." The wife responded, "Allow me to explain. God made me beautiful so you would be attracted to me; God made me stupid so I would be attracted to you!"

Ladies' laugh corner!!



WHO DOES WHAT

A man and his wife were having an argument about who should brew the coffee each morning. The wife said, "You should do it because you get up first, and then we don't have to wait as long to get our coffee." The husband said, "You are in charge of cooking around here and you should do it, because that is your job, and I can just wait for my coffee". Wife replies, "No, you should do it, and besides, it is in the Bible that the man should do the coffee." Husband replies, "I can't believe that, show me." So she fetched the Bible, and opened the New Testament and showed him at the top of several pages, that it indeed says... "**HEBREWS**"

Holy Trinity United Church AOTS Club, Elliot Lake, Ontario

It was a sunny but cold Saturday morning March 8th, 2008 when President Richard Paul Deitriche welcomed everyone present with hot coffee & "Tim Bits".

Rev Peter Tucker opened the meeting with prayer.

Richard asked those that went to "Breaking the Ice" weekend, to give a few words to us that were not able to attend. It was a real thumbnail sketch and they all enjoyed it.

Camp Report: Ken Lane displayed the new Brochures received from camp MacDougall. Planning for a week day "work schedule" is progressing.

Central Canada Regional Spring Round-Up: April 25 to 27, 2008 was discussed and several members are planning on attending.

Our club will be sponsoring a breakfast shortly with various other men's clubs in town invited to attend as part of our AOTS National 85th Anniversary celebrations.

Trinity United Church, Newmarket, Ontario

Our club has continued to be as active as ever. February's meeting was a special one as we were filled in on the details of our new minister's - Heather Powers - life beyond the church, a great talk and one that helped us fill in those things about Heather that we never would have guessed...

February brought along our annual Pancake Supper, a fun evening run by the club with assistance once again from the 6th Newmarket Scout Troop. \$200 from this event has been used to help two young lads attend a Presbytery camp this summer. At the right Harold Dohn – Pres., John Boore – Treas. and Don Stevens, (*"The Three Wise Men"*) staff the hot table, and are ready to serve our 190 guests.

Our guest in March was Ken Irizawa, a 'born-in-Canada' Canadian who grew up on our country's Pacific coast. In 1942 Ken and his family and all other Japanese or of Japanese descent from Canada's west coast were interned at various in-land abandoned mine or logging sites, Ken's family camped near Golden, B.C. Each member of the family was allowed to take one suitcase.

These camps were very simple and life was rugged. Internment lasted 4 years. After the war all internees were allowed to leave the camps, but could not go back to the west coast. There was nothing for them on the coast anyway, because all their homes, businesses and possessions had been sold by the government at "fire sale" prices.

Ken spoke very highly of the work of the WMS (Women's Missionary Society of the United Church). Life would have been a lot harder without their help and support

It was a very powerful story to hear. Recognizing that we were at war with Japan guided our leaders to make decisions concerning the Japanese in Canada, but the extent of their actions left us wondering how, hopefully with wisdom gained, we might handle this situation differently the next time. And if we stop and think about it, the 'next time' is with us today as the world moves into a new type of warfare, so much of it based around the threat of terrorists.

With God's help - if we listen - things can change. It is, as always and with His help, finally up to us. God bless.

Submitted by Jonathan Wardlaw

Rev. Peter Tucker suggested that as "men" we should support the "Women's World Day of Prayer". We all agreed to support this effort.

Devotional: Ken Lane read a scripture passage along with a video presentation, "Remembering Easter, The Lamb of God". This was well received by all present.

Rev. Peter Tucker will lead the April Devotional.

Rev. Brian Bigelow closed the meeting with prayer.

Our next club meeting will be Saturday April 12th, 2008 at 9:30 a.m. in the Alfa room at Holy Trinity United Church, Elliot Lake, ON.

"Go with God in Peace"

Submitted by Richard Paul Deitriche



A question: Do they only eat cake in Manitoba and Ontario?
Let's hear from the rest of you!



Trinity United –Newmarket, Ontario



Grace United – Trenton Ontario



Northminster United – Oshawa, Ontario



Grace United – Sarnia, Ontario



Minnedosa United, Minnedosa, Manitoba



Westminster United, Belleville, Ontario