

Ici Radio-Refuge : **Un rêve se réalise** **et** **“une voix qui parle** **à une oreille”**

Editors Note: We know about United Church Television that broadcasts nationally on Vision TV. But many in Montreal and Ottawa Conference don't realize that the church's Montreal City Mission has its own French-language radio show – Ici Radio-Refuge.

The following is by the Mission's Sylvain Thibeault who started the show and is a long-time refugee worker with the Mission was recently named Citizen of the Year by the Montreal office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Par Sylvain Thibeault

Le 12 janvier 2006 la Mission communautaire de Montréal (MCM) organisait un débat électoral sur les questions de l'immigration et de la protection des réfugiés.

Ce débat était diffusé en direct sur les ondes de Radio Centre-ville où une équipe d'analystes commentait



les propos des représentants des cinq principaux partis présents.

Plus d'une centaine de personnes étaient présentes dans la salle Dawson de l'église unie St-James. Plusieurs anciens du Projet Refuge (PR), la résidence d'hébergement d'urgence pour demandeurs d'asile de la MCM étaient présents.

À la fin du débat, le coordonnateur du PR était invité à se joindre à

l'équipe d'analystes pour donner ses commentaires sur les différentes orientations que donneraient tel ou tel parti s'il était élu. Plusieurs anciens du PR avaient alors manifesté le vif désir d'eux aussi commenter le débat.

Naissait alors *sur le champ* ce projet.

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Une programme de radio communautaire serait créée afin de mettre sur pied une émission hebdomadaire où les réfugiés seront les maîtres à bord, où les sujets traités proviendraient de leurs propres préoccupations.

« Ici Radio-Refuge » est née quelques mois plus tard, nous en sommes maintenant à plus de 20 émissions déjà produites.

En partenariat avec trois autres organismes oeuvrant auprès des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (Refuge Juan Moreno, Maisonnée et Centre Scalabrini), cette émission radiophonique souhaite informer et sensibiliser la société d'accueil sur les questions d'intégration.

Elle souhaite également offrir une plateforme pour ceux et celles qui s'intéressent aux médias en leur offrant l'opportunité de s'investir bénévolement pour ainsi acquérir une expérience fort enrichissante qui les conduira vers d'autres opportunités d'emploi.

« Ici Radio-Refuge » est aussi un espace de rencontre avec ceux qui partagent les mêmes passions, un espace privilégié de socialisation. Et c'est un moyen original d'expression et d'insertion dans ce nouveau contexte de vie.

Enfin c'est là qu'on trouve de nouvelles racines, des racines qui feront leurs chemins dans ce terreau qui désormais est le leur. Pour la société *accueillante*, c'est un espace pour nous découvrir, nous apprécier et pour apprendre sur nos espoirs, sur ce qui nous animent.

C'est aussi un agréable étalage de nos talents d'animateur, de rappeur, de chanteur, de guitariste et bien d'autres.

Alfredo, ancien résident de PR et co-fondateur de IRR s'exprime :

«L'émission Ici Radio Refuge représente pour moi mon arme, une arme pacifiste pour exprimer ma douleur et faire valoir les droits de tout être humain.

«Grâce à cette émission, je suis inspiré et encouragé à trouver des solutions à mes problèmes et par le fait même à trouver des solutions pour l'ensemble de la société.

«Je n'ai jamais fait de journalisme

**“inspiré et encouragé”
Alfredo,
ancien résident de PR**

et je n'avais jamais pensé en faire un jour.

J'ai trouvé à « Ici Radio-Refuge » une place, c'est ma place dans cet univers et j'envisage même le journalisme comme un rôle à jouer dans ma nouvelle société»

La journaliste Michèle Cotta disait « la radio est une voix qui parle à une oreille. C'est par les mots seuls que l'idée fait son chemin jusqu'à l'esprit de l'auditeur ».

Voilà l'anima de « Ici Radio-Refuge » Pour nous écouter, nous diffusons les lundis matin à 10 heures sur les ondes de CINQ-FM (102,3). Vous pouvez aussi nous suivre sur notre blog à : www.iciradiorefuge.blogspot.com

The national church,

by Rev. Graeme Carruth

GRANBY, Que. -- M&O Conference hosted an “open-space forum” in Granby, Que., in late November to explore the challenges facing the United Church's ministry in French.

United Churches in Quebec face the same general problems faced by congregations across the country.

But in addition, while we consider ourselves a national church, few people in the province know who we are.

Highlighting the lack of visibility and even awareness of the United Church in Québec is the fact that very few francophone Québécois(es) belong to the United Church or even know what makes it different!

There was no pre-planned agenda or pre-selected topic.

At the start of the meeting, Rev. Rosemary Lambie, M&O executive-secretary, told participants: “Welcome to the market place.

“For the next two days we will be discussing your issues and your concerns in working groups that you design.”

the local church and the challenge of their ministry in French

The crowd was somewhat skeptical. But the ‘open space’ provided for talking circles and modifications to the agenda.

And Paula Kline, Chair of Montreal Presbytery and executive director of the Montreal City Mission, said, “We finished the event re-energized by new relationships and thought-provoking discussions on youth ministry, environmental concerns, the current challenges of all our congregations, the possibilities for bilingual team ministry, issues of church implantation, the essential role of elders in linking past, present and future and so much more.”

Some participants talked about the special role of the United Church's English-speaking congregations in Quebec which have become bastions of anglophone survival within a majority French culture. There was also discussion about the history of past failures among anglo United Churches trying to bridge the language divide. People noted the limited Protestant resources available in French in Quebec despite the efforts of the United Church's own Unit for Ministries in French (UMIF) and the resistance - even hostile suspicion - among francophones towards anything with the word “église” (church) in it.

But despite all this, a strong feeling of Spirit-filled hope emerged. There was general agreement that our denomination is uniquely positioned within francophone culture to attract the ‘Emerging Spirit’ demographic.

Many thought that the recent history of religion in Quebec has provided an opening for the United Church to offer a spiritual home for many people in the province.

Among them are those who have doubts or questions about organized religion and the place in it for women and married and divorced people, for those who are concerned for the environment or native issues or have an openness to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-sexual communities.

There was a call for closer ties between English- and French-speaking United Church members within the Conference through greater conversation, further gatherings and a wider use of the internet. There was also a suggestion that the Emerging Spirit information be made available in French and adapted to the special circumstances facing the church in Quebec.

Kline said the results were well worth the effort.

And a francophone participant wrote in a feedback comment, « En 40 ans de ministère j'ai assisté à beaucoup de réunions sur l'œuvre francophone! C'est la première fois que j'ai l'impression de faire partie d'une même équipe! »

(In 40 years of ministry I have often attended meetings concerning work in the francophone community! This is the first time that I have the feeling of being on the same team!)

Kline added, “It's up to us now to seize the moment and transform our hope for new life into concrete actions – actions that we must live out with respect, healthy dialogue and steadfast commitment to our overarching mission to build a just and caring society for all.”

This was not just another interesting event. It was the beginning of a new chapter in the story of the United Church in Quebec. If you would like more details about the results of the symposium or wish to participate in other ways, contact Michèle G. Brown. You can reach her by telephone at the M&O Conference office in Lachine at (514) 634-7015 ext. 21 or by e-mailing her at montreal-office@montrealandottawaconference.ca

With files from Paula Kline and Rob Bull

Ideas and Visions from Seaway Valley Presbytery

By Rev. Gwen Hermann

Cornwall, Ont. -- Seaway Valley is trying to face tomorrow in a systematic way.

For now the Presbytery is in a process that they hope will lead them into a brighter future. They don't know what it will look like. They know it will present its challenges. But they realize it's time to start looking for answers.

For most, it began at an open meeting on a cold night in February 2006, when members of churches across the Presbytery discussed a host of practical and basic United Church issues ranging from what we can expect of a minister, to how we pay for a church, from how to build a faith community to what happens to all the buildings.

"I knew we touched a nerve when 120 people, representing 25 out of 29 pastoral charges turned up," said Blair Patterson who was Chair of Presbytery at the time.

Underlying the discussion was the question of what a Presbytery can do.

A statement issued at the time said, "This meeting is a beginning of a process which could give Seaway Valley an opportunity to evaluate and make some radical changes in the functioning of the Presbytery."

Seaway Valley has a number of small churches that are multi-point charges. The bulk of these are rural or small-town congregations. The only charge in a relatively major urban setting is in Cornwall, Ont.

Talk at that first meeting was lively. People considered how to keep a minister longer and discussed factors such as shopping and Sunday sports that tempt families away from regular church services and they voiced their concern about the shortage of children and young adults in their congregations.

They asked whether team ministry is the answer to the problems faced by small charges or just a way of putting off their inevitable death. And they were happy to learn that while Presbytery can make recommendations, only congregations can make decisions on issues like closing a church.

As a result of the meeting, the Presbytery hired Chris McKelvey, a management consultant and an Anglican lay reader, to help move along a process of visioning and planning.

His contract states that he is to "review activities so far . . . gather demographic data and information on each charge, send out a questionnaire to each charge then schedule meetings and meet with each Pastoral Charge."

That process is well underway and McKelvey said most charges have been "co-operative." He said he found it most fruitful when congregations completed the questionnaire before he met with them. And he added that while most churches are open to his visit, some have been cautious because "they know they are having trouble."

McKelvey prepared a preliminary report over the Christmas holidays and had more meetings scheduled for January. A final report with recommendations is to be presented on February 22nd.

Quelques réflexions sur un colloque concernant l'Église en milieu rural

Editors Note: In early November, Lou Joyal of the Consistoire Laurentien attended a United Church symposium in Saskatchewan on the church in a rural environment. He sent us his thoughts on issues similar to those faced in a different way by United Church people in Seaway Valley.

Par Lou Joyal

Danville, Que — Ces trois jours furent une très belle expérience. Nous avons reçu des messages venant de tout le pays et cela était magnifique. Nous devrions prendre note et analyser tout ce qui s'est dit pendant ces trois jours et nous devrions nous revoir ou du moins rester en contact. Nous devrions continuer ce dialogue.

Ce qui a été commencé là est quelque chose de fantastique. Des gens de différentes régions et de différentes pensées se sont retrouvés dans un même local à échanger des tas de renseignements.

Oui il y a eu beaucoup de frustration au début, parce que tous avaient besoin d'être écouté, parce que depuis longtemps on essaie de parler et personne ne nous écoute, et là, tout d'un coup, nous pouvions nous exprimer sans se faire dire qu'on ne peut rien faire pour nous ou qu'on doit suivre ce qui est écrit dans le manuel. Mais si nous continuons ce processus, je crois que nous pouvons faire changer beaucoup de choses.

Oui c'est triste lorsqu'une personne, une compagnie, une ferme, où tout un village meurt; mais il y a aussi l'espoir, l'espoir que Dieu est là. Notre mission dans ce monde est de répandre l'amour de Dieu et non d'écrire des lois et des règlements afin de tout encadrer à notre image et non à l'image de Dieu. Dieu est libre, Dieu est vivant, Dieu est la joie de vivre, l'espoir d'une vie meilleure.

Nous sommes allés bien au-delà d'un simple échange. Nous avons pu constater des similitudes entre nos régions et nos congrégations ainsi que des différences.

Nos congrégations nous avaient demandé de conter leur histoire et c'est ce que nous avons fait. C'est magnifique lorsque tout le monde s'entraide à restaurer un bâtiment, mais c'est terrible quand ce bâtiment est leur lieu de rencontre et que leur propre église fait tout pour le détruire. L'église (bâtiment) représente l'âme du village, et lorsqu'elle ferme ou est détruite, c'est toute la communauté qui s'en ressent.

Mais ce qu'il y a de plus terrible c'est :

Lorsque notre propre Église essaie de fermer nos congrégations.

Lorsque, parce que l'on parle français, nous sommes rejetés par ceux qui croient que seuls les anglophones ont le droit d'être là.

Lorsque la structure dictée dans le manuel devient plus importante que la parole de Dieu.

Lorsque le pouvoir est plus important que l'Amour de Dieu

Lorsque notre moi et moi-même est plus important que le monde que Dieu a créé.

Lorsque, parce que nous voulons à tout pris une belle retraite, les autres sont sans aucune importance.

Lorsque l'on nous fait sentir que nous ne sommes pas importants...

Pour quelqu'un qui est né francophone et catholique romaine dans la province de Québec il ne faut pas oublier que beaucoup ont été abusés verbalement, physiquement etc... supposément au nom de Dieu. L'église catholique romaine est vue ici comme une église de pouvoir et de contrôle. Alors qui est l'église Unie du Canada? Un autre groupe de gens pour qui le pouvoir est important ou un groupe de gens pour qui la mission de Dieu est importante.



RICHMOND'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS ECUMENICAL CANTATA - (Photo by Gordon Alexander)

RICHMOND, Que. -- Director, Diane Duguay from Ste-Christine, Que., (right), rehearses a 35 voice ecumenical choir which performed a Christmas cantata at Richmond Melbourne United Church, Saturday and Sunday Dec 9th and 10th and at the Wales Home the previous Saturday.. The four-part choir had singers from the United, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in Richmond, Windsor and Ulverton.

Orleans United Shows How

By Margaret Richardson

Orleans, Ont— Church debt can be a terrible burden but, during Stewardship Month last October, Orleans United Church near Ottawa successfully paid off its Ventures-In-Mission loan.

While some thought the goal was too ambitious, Tom Connors, Chair of Stewards, was not daunted. The previous year, pledged givings to the church had risen by 14 per cent and 35 more families had joined the pre-authorized remittance program. In 2006, it was time to reduce the debt!

The national church had offered to match any payments made against the principal of outstanding Ventures-in-Mission borrowings dollar-for-dollar. Connors and his committee decided to aim for the retirement of the local loan, which had just over \$60,000 remaining on its principal. The idea was to persuade people to retire the debt by donating \$30,000 through one-time supplementary contributions.

Before the month-long Campaign was even announced, the Men's Club was asked to sponsor a "Giving Thanks" Prime Rib Dinner on the last Sunday of October. The dinner would provide a chance to celebrate whatever contributions had been received. On October 29th, after a spectacular variety show, Mac Cassleman, a local butcher affectionately known as Mac the Knife, carved generous portions of succulent roast beef as the crowds made their way down the line.

When the diners had consumed nearly 70 kg of roast beef, 36 kg of potatoes, 23 kg of peas and carrots, three dozen pies and 10 litres of ice cream, a hush fell over the room and Tom Connors announced that final contributions totaled \$31,000. Then Rev. Norm Baines auctioned off the remaining roasts of beef and pies, raising nearly another \$1,000.! Connors said he's already thinking about 2007. The focus will be non-financial — a celebration of the ministries and talents that allow Orleans United to act out its Mission.

A Meditation on Violence

By Rev. Tom Edmonds

Bromont, Que. -- On Sept 13th, 2006 we were at the right place at the right time. Six hours earlier, the violent shooting at Dawson College had left the city of Montreal in shock.. Numb, we sat in St James United Church whispering about the events. People moved quickly back and forth on last minute arrangements.

After 79 years of being hidden behind ugly brick commercial buildings the magnificent front wall of St James United Church was exposed to Ste Catherine street for all to see. The celebration that night was to include a gala concert, tributes from political leaders, the unveiling of a new stained glass window. The plans had been in the making for months. But a man with a gun who killed one student and injured 18 others at Dawson College, a CEGEP of 10,000 students some dozen blocks from St James, thwarted these best of intentions.

In response to the tragedy which stunned the whole city and with events at the College still uncertain, the leaders of St James scrapped their meticulously planned celebration. Music, prayers, speeches, the party outside on the front steps, were all changed to reflect the shock and confusion that had fallen over the city of Montreal.

Violence is inherent in the human condition. We are shocked at violent acts, but not surprised that they happen!

Our heritage: Cain and Able, tribal wars, Biblical and others, the clash of empires, the violence of invading armies, the code of revenge, massacres, the holocaust, pathological killers, Columbine, suicide bombs and bombers, shock and awe, Hiroshima, Dresden, Cambodia, Rwanda, Iraq, school shootings, ethnic cleansing, disappearances and tortures, violence in prisons, in families, in sport, in subways, the violence of natural disasters, the violence of poverty, the violence of TV shows and internet games, the arms trade, the right to bear arms, the violence of our own darkest thoughts...

Is this enough? Add to the list! Avoid for a moment the urge to balance this list with another of non-violent happenings.

Violence as a human trait grows and, like bacteria, is nurtured in a certain kind of medium: Greed, lust, fear, the need to control, to be somebody as a nation, a community, an individual. Violence is anti-human, destructive of creation.

It can be intentional and planned, rational or irrational. The State uses violence; revolutionaries use violence, terrorists use violence.

It is the ' weapon of choice ' for nations and empires to maintain their power and control.

Humans, alone among most species, seem to cultivate violence. With animals it is a means of physical survival, a quest for food, a need to propagate.

At our peril we ignore the possibility of violence in ourselves, our communities or nation or the globalized world. We plan for it, and hence have police and armies. 'The right to bear arms' applies in Canada! In the Dawson College tragedy a 20-year-old from suburbia used three legally registered guns to do murder and injury. The spiral of violence seems to move without stopping, as violence begets violence.

Violence shocks us, thank God! Accepting violence as a part of human nature doesn't mean a blasé or laissez-faire attitude.

Being human also means working and building for a non-violent world; Violence diminishes and besmirches the image of God in which we are created. Peace and calm, justice and love, resurrection and life, all opposites of violence, work to complete that image.

Creating the milieu or medium for non violence is part of our mandate as followers of the Prince of Peace. Jesus comes that we might have life, and life in all its abundance. (continued on page 8)

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The message that God lives, and that God is love, has to be taught and proclaimed and practiced generation after generation.

There are non-violent options for our personal lives and for our society. One example is the absurdity of guns. Instead of registering guns, why not do away with them? Their only purpose is to kill or maim. Who needs one? Will I run for my gun if someone invades my house?

If there has to be hunters, why couldn't they rent guns for the season? Perhaps ranchers or farmers, where wild animals threaten their livestock, need to have a rifle but who else does?

The violent acts we witness, or are victims of, stay with us.

Our deepest psyche is touched and scarred. Post-traumatic stress is real, and can last a lifetime.

Less than three months later, there was another similar occasion at Dawson Hall in St. James -- the annual service to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action of Violence Against Women and the anniversary of the Ecole Polytechnique massacre in 1989 when 14 women were killed and 14 other people injured.

The service was organized by the Montreal City Mission in partnership with St James, the Quebec branch of the University Womens' Federation and others.

One of those who spoke was Meaghan Hennegan, who comes from a United Church family and was only a year old when the Ecole Polytechnique massacre occurred.

But she had been shot and injured at Dawson where she studies and was barely released from the hospital when she appeared before us on that December evening.

**“ . . . In life, in death,
in life beyond death,
God is with us. We
are not alone.”**

**From a new Creed for
the United Church**

She told us that the issue of violence was very real to her and she spoke to us about her hope that we could change things and her belief that we can make it happen.

As she talked, we heard reverberations of the message we had listened to at St. James on the night she was shot.

Together in grief that September evening, we had been reminded that 'we are not alone.'

There was the beginning of post-traumatic peace.

Focused in worship on the Divine healer, our thoughts gathered in inspired messages from our Pastor who spoke wonderfully from the heart.

As we raised our confusion and fear to God in prayer and song, the healing began. It was a brief time of grace, giving deep and fundamental meaning to the fact that St. James United Church was open to the street.

No longer a metaphor, the violent reality of the street entered the sanctuary. And in the crisis the church became the People of God offering the eternal Word of Divine Peace.

The Clarion/Le Clairon is inserted three times a year in The United Church Observer to tell our story and share our faith so as to further God's purpose in the Montreal and Ottawa Conference. Our next copy deadline for the May 2007 issue is March 30th.

Editor: Rob Bull
5466 rue Sherbrooke ouest, #3
Montréal, QC, H4a 1V9

E-mail : mtlbull@hotmail.com

Editorial Board:
Christina Blake (Quebec-Sherbrooke)
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