

Big Hat, Bright Smile, and all for *Mission and Service*

By Rev. Gwen Hermann

Cornwall, ON – It's easy to see her coming at meetings of Presbytery or Conference. Carolyn Ruda wears a big Dr. Seuss-type hat, and an enthusiastic smile. Her energy and zeal radiate.

When you see the hat and smile, you know it's time to hear about Mission and Service and the work it does.

Carolyn is the Mission and Service Enthusiast Support Person for Seaway Valley Presbytery and Ottawa Presbytery.

It's her job to spread the word about all the good work done by M&S. She sets up resource tables at events and will speak about M&S when asked.

She's always available to answer questions, and will help those churches who are just starting out their M&S program.

Carolyn is involved in work-



shops through out the two Presbyteries. She's our cheerleader for the cause.

Her journey began when she was an administrator for two churches in the Ottawa area.

She would scan through the M&S resource material that came across her desk, and the more she read and learned, the more she came to believe in

this work. It was the stories that got to her.

Still today, the stories of individual churches and programs that are helped by our donations resonate with her and she makes them matter to us.

The M&S enthusiast support job was started by Brian Cornelius in 2004, and now is

(continued page 2)

overseen by Rosemary Lambie, for the Montreal and Ottawa Conference. David Lambie does Montreal Presbytery, and Quebec-Sherbrooke. Yves Sampson does the job for the Consistoire Laurentien.

When interviewed Ruda bubbled over with her belief in the cause.

"It's easy for me," she said. "I believe M&S is the most effective way to spend our money. It relies on Global partners and they are there, know what is needed and can buy locally. This also helps the local economy."

She talks about the stories, how many Pastoral Charges and Missions are helped, how "grateful the churches are to stay open and continue to be a part of their community."

Discussing "House of Lazarus, (in Seaway Valley Presbytery), she said, "you can see what good our money is doing. On their part they know the grant is coming in and rely and count on that to do their work."

There is a Mission Support grant recipient in Ottawa that uses the money for re-education and re-focus. The Centretown Laundry Co-op was established through a partnership between First and McLeod-Stewarton United Churches, and the Centretown Community Health Centre.

In addition to clean clothes, co-op members also have opportunities for skills development, on-

the-job training, and mentoring.

"We are able to see all this done with money from Mission and Service Fund, and also funding from other areas," she said.

When asked what Ruda enjoys most about her position, she stated, "Talking about it, going and setting up the resource tables. Talking to people who have just been told they are to look after the Mission and Service program, and I get to help them get started."

What does she like the least? "The paperwork, condensing all that's been done and sending a report to Rosemary. But if my husband Gordon was asked that question, he would say, all the boxes, trying to find a place in our home for all the resources, and then carrying them all over the two Presbyteries."

When it comes to future plans, it's still all about the stories. Carolyn Ruda hopes to put together a booklet about local stories, in the area so people can see how their Mission and Service dollars are helping their neighbours. She would also like to put together and do workshops for children, so they can learn how other children are helped by the fund.

Why the hat?

"It catches peoples' attention, and gives them something to associate with M&S." she said.

And don't forget the smile.

The Green Church Project

Montreal – *The Green Church Project* \ *L'Église Verte en Devenir* is a pilot project to help a select group of ministry sites improve their environmental practices! Originating from Saint Columba House and Montreal City Mission, and now a joint project of the Montreal Presbytery Justice Global Ecumenical Relations Com-mitee and Ministries in French, the *Green Church Project* \ *L'Église Verte en devenir* provides leadership, animation, inspiration as well as very useful resources to ministries that are ready to embrace change and reduce their ecological footprint.

Each of the participating ministries will develop a Green Team that will work within their ministry site to identify and work towards concrete, achievable goals over the next few months. The diverse experiences will be shared by means of get-togethers and a web-site where progress will be documented and discussed. The project has been fortunate to recruit an excellent leader, Isaac Mundy, a UTC student in his 2nd year, who possesses a deep understanding of and personal commitment to eco-theology.

If you, your church, mission or other ministry site is interested in learning more about the *Green Church Project* \ *L'Église Verte en Devenir*, you can contact Isaac at Montreal City Mission (514-844-9128) or check out the Green Church Project web-site www.greenchurchproject.org

Nora Sanders Visits the Consistoire Laurentien and UMIF

Par David Fines
Aujourd'hui Credo

Montréal – Le 1^{er} janvier de l'an dernier, Nora Sanders a succédé au pasteur Jim Sinclair au poste non élu le plus élevé de l'organigramme de l'Église unie, celui de secrétaire exécutive. Juriste de formation, elle avait participé auparavant à la mise sur pied du système judiciaire du nouveau territoire du Canada, le Nunavut. La secrétaire exécutive a pour responsabilité première la bonne marche de l'Exécutif du Conseil général dont le mandat est de mettre en œuvre les décisions prises par le Conseil général et de superviser le travail des 150 et quelques employés-es de l'Église unie dans les bureaux centraux à Toronto ainsi que dans les divers bureaux des treize synodes de l'Église.

En réponse à une invitation qui lui avait été faite au moment de sa nomination, elle a rendu visite aux Ministères en français du 13 au 15 février dernier. C'était la première fois depuis la fondation de l'Église unie, il y a bientôt 83 ans, qu'une si haute responsable effectuait une telle visite.

Elle a reçu un très bon accueil du personnel de l'UMiF. Cette première rencontre a été suivie par une soirée fort animée en compagnie de membres des deux paroisses Saint-Jean et Camino de Emaús réunis pour

l'occasion ; une rencontre qui s'est déroulée en trois langues simultanément... au bénéfice de tous les participants et participantes !

Le jeudi, se sont enlignées trois rencontres : une avec l'équipe de la Mission communautaire de Montréal (MCM) que Nora Sanders avait elle-même sollicitée ; il s'agit d'un ministère social de l'Église unie, œuvrant surtout auprès des populations nouvellement arrivées.

« Nous n'avons rien de tel à Toronto ! »

Une deuxième avec l'équipe de communication de l'église unie Saint-James qui a le projet de s'afficher en français sur écran géant en plein centre-ville de Montréal. Et enfin, un bain dans la réalité québécoise avec des interlocuteurs aussi prestigieux que Gregory Baum, sociologue et théologien catholique de renommée internationale, Phyllis Smythe, longtemps formatrice et responsable des services pastoraux aux soins palliatifs, et Paula Kline directrice de la MCM. Étaient aussi présents, Pierre Goldberger, et Stéphane Vermette, le nouveau président du Conseil de l'UMiF.

La journée s'est terminée par une visite aux studios de Radio Ville-Marie. La secrétaire exécutive a été grandement impres-

sionnée tant par l'engagement de l'Église unie dans autant de domaines, que par l'ampleur des sujets couverts par RVM, de même que par son ouverture œcuménique et sa préoccupation pastorale. « Nous n'avons rien de tel à Toronto ! », n'a-t-elle pu que constater.

Le lendemain, aux bureaux du Synode, s'est tenue une rencontre importante avec la plupart des responsables, pasteurs-es et laïques, des ministères en français et des ministères bilingues du Synode. Vingt-deux personnes y ont participé, et il était assez impressionnant d'entendre les plaidoyers percutants en faveur du développement des services en français de la part d'anglophones francophiles comme David Lefneski, Rick Scheffer, Debbie Poirier ou Eric Luckas : « Mettons l'énergie à travailler ensemble ou alors nous nous effacerons chacun dans notre coin. » « Pour beaucoup, l'Église est le dernier bastion encore debout ! » « C'est OK d'être nous-mêmes... parmi les francophones. »

Oui, il était impressionnant d'entendre exprimer de leur part une vision d'une telle ampleur : une présence significative, conséquente et prophétique de l'Église unie en français au Québec. Et c'est avec cette vision en tête que Nora Sanders est repartie.

Summer in Montreal & Ottawa – not Just Camping

VÉLOTOUR DE L'ÉTÉ 2008 !

(avec la possibilité d'aller en France en 2009 !)

Editor's note: Back by popular demand this year is the Consistoire Laurentien's popular 550-kilometre bike tour for 14 to 19-year-olds of M&O Conference. It is open to any qualified youngster in any M&O Presbytery. People who take part this year have a chance to tour France next year

Par David Fines

Le "Vélotour du Synode Montréal et Ottawa" est un camp d'été annuel qui a débuté en 2000 et qui a la particularité d'être "itinérant".

Le principe est très simple : chaque jour nous pédalons d'un lieu à l'autre et nous passons la nuit dans l'une ou l'autre église unie qui se trouve sur notre route.

En huit ans, des jeunes francophones, anglophones et hispanophones des paroisses de la grande région de Montréal y ont participé. Et comme en 2008 nous recevrons 27 jeunes de l'Église réformée de France, nous voudrions recruter autant de jeunes (de 14 à 19 ans) de nos communautés, afin de permettre aux deux groupes de vivre une expérience interculturelle des plus enrichissantes.

Cette expérience est unique de plusieurs façons. Nous sommes en même temps totalement auto-suffisants et totalement dépendants les uns des autres, c'est-à-dire que nous devons voyager, avancer, cuisiner, nettoyer, réparer ensemble ; nous devons sans cesse nous entraider, nous sommes responsables les uns des autres, et notre réussite dépend de notre capacité de collaborer.

Le succès du vélotour sera entièrement le nôtre.

En outre, nous sommes redoublables aux diverses communautés qui nous accueillent chaque soir. L'accueil est toujours formidable ; des deux côtés, l'église et le groupe du vélotour, l'expérience de partage est inoubliable.

Les paroisses locales sont toujours heureuses d'accueillir notre groupe dans leur église et se réjouissent avec nous de l'accomplissement de notre exploit.

Enfin, chaque journée se termine par un moment de réflexion biblique et de méditation.

Il n'y a aucun doute que chaque les participants et participantes ont apprécié leur expérience et en ont retiré bien des bénéfices.

Et cette année, le vélotour prendra un relief tout à fait particulier avec la venue de ce groupe de France.

Ainsi nous planifions de nous rendre en France à notre tour en 2009 !

Chaque participant et participante du Vélotour 2008 aura la possibilité d'aller en France pour le Vélotour 2009 !

Le Vélotour 2008 aura lieu du 16 au 27 juillet et le trajet totalisera 550 kilomètres de Montréal à Québec, aller-retour. Nous passerons deux jours pleins dans la ville de Québec pour prendre part aux célébrations du 400^e anniversaire de sa fondation.

Tous les membres (et leurs ami-e-s) de 14 à 19 ans des paroisses des Consistoires Laurentien, de Montréal, d'Ottawa, de Québec-Sherbrooke et de Seaway Valley peuvent participer.

Le Vélotour a reçu l'appui du Synode Montréal et Ottawa, des Consistoire Laurentien et de Montréal ainsi que le Forum des jeunes de l'Église Unie du Canada.

Coût ? 150 \$ tout compris, hébergement, nourriture et animation.

Prérequis ? - Etre en forme et enthousiaste - Un vélo en bonne condition avec porte-bagages, garde-boue et une bouteille d'eau - Sac de couchage - Vêtements et trousse de toilette ; maillot de bain et imperméable.

Pour inscription et information, contacter David Fines : david-fines@egliseunie.org (450) 466-7733

United Church sponsors French Immersion for the Family in Quebec City

This week-long immersion program in Quebec City **Parlons français par coeur** offers the opportunity to converse in French for an entire week.

You will also learn about pastoral and liturgical language in French, the French-language context in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada and how it connects to the United Church, and the wonderful city of Quebec and its Huguenot founders, rich history, artists, and vibrant culture.

Come take advantage of this year's celebrations for the 400th birthday of Quebec City!

New this year: A family registration package—your whole family can come!

When: August 21–28, 2008

Where: Quebec City

Pre-register before April 30

Register before June 2

Please note that you may now find information about Parlons français par coeur - One week immersion in Quebec City at:

<http://staging.united-church.ca/en/getinvolved/events>
<http://staging.united-church.ca/fr/getinvolved/events>

Saint Columba House Literacy Day Camp

By Trish Murphy

Montreal – As the school year comes to a close, a whole new world of learning is opened up for 50 children of Point St. Charles – learning new games, meeting new friends, learning about cooperation, discovering the community.

Preparations are underway for the Saint Columba House Literacy Day Camp.

Registration for the Day Camp began April 1st. Families eager to find an affordable, educational and safe program for their children arrived at 9:00am to register.

As the registration forms fill up and the hiring of our counselors and Counselors-In-training gets underway, we anxiously await the arrival of the 50 children who will fill every corner of the building with laughter and song.

Our goals for 2008 are ambitious, but achievable!

We will continue to offer a program to enhance literacy skills of the children we serve, many of whom lack confidence and read far below their grade level.

We intend to reach out to more francophone and allophone members of the community who wish to benefit from a bilingual program.

We will offer a limited number of spaces to children with special needs who are often excluded from other camp programs.

We will apply for accreditation from the Quebec Camping Association, which requires high standards of excellence for training, program and security.

We will also continue our Counselor-In-training program that was a huge success last year. Seven young people between 14-17 yrs. will participate in our CIT program to develop employability skills, confidence, teamwork skills while enjoying a positive introduction to the world of work.

On-site, the Saint Columba House library will not only enhance literacy skills but also allow children to travel to far-away lands and learn about mystical creatures.

Off-site, children will swim, play and visit new places of interest while participating in such activities as word treasure hunts, reading maps or being reporter for the day.

All this to ensure that children have a fun, exciting and joy-filled summer, while enhancing their literacy skills and developing an appreciation of the written word.

A Message from the President

By Anna Barr

M&O Conference Offices, Lachine, QC -- I just went into the Conference website today and registered to attend Inspiration '08. As I placed my cheque in the mail, I scolded myself for leaving this so late. Please don't tell anyone that I didn't sign up before today!

Have you looked at that website? Have you seen the workshops and the guest speakers we have lined up? ... Creative responses with Gregory Baum; Healing with Sharon Moon; Christopher White; Healing Circle offered by Native Concerns Committee; Mandela for Peace with Helga Schlee; Praying with the Body with Jen de Combe; Racial Justice with Anthony Bailey; Singing Faithfully in the 21st Century with Michael Hawn. And that's the list for the first time slot only!

This is certainly a new venture for our conference – straying away from the business format and making our way down a different path – a path seeking a period of celebration and education and inspiration. If you are anything like me, you recognize that life, while full and rewarding, can often be intense and hectic. I know that I am looking for a time of retreat – a weekend away to join with



friends and colleagues and to encounter new faces – to pause for just a while to contemplate the Holy Mystery that is God “creating and seeking relationship in awe and trust”.

Our theme, “God on the Loose – Dieu en Liberté”, opens such a door in my mind and invokes images that are beyond description. It promises to be overflowing with praise filled worship, moving song, thought provoking discussion and inspiring teachings.

Saturday evening includes our Celebration of Ministry service. Our celebrants would be pleased to have you join in their service recognizing this stage in their ministry.

And I am delighted to be able to preside over the COM service and the sacrament of Holy Communion with them!

This event is open to anyone and everyone – clergy and lay, United Church and beyond.

I encourage you to search the website to learn about the theme speakers, the agenda and all that is being offered. I also encourage you to consider making space in your schedule for this event and to invite friends and family to join us.

See you on May 30th at St Anne de Bellevue

Blessings,

Anna

"GOD ON THE LOOSE - DIEU EN LIBERTE

INSPIRATION 08

**May 30 to June 1, 2008: An Educational Event offered by the Synode
Montreal and Ottawa Conference, John Abbott College, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC**

**By Rosemary Lambie
M&O Executive Secretary**

The 2007 Annual General Meeting voted to have an Inspirational Educational Event this year. The planning team has been challenged to create an event that will be an opportunity to gather with old friends or to meet new ones, as this weekend is open to all.

Indeed, we want to encourage participation from those who do not normally attend the business meeting of our Conference, or have a chance to share with the wider membership of the church, or the neighbour who may be curious about this United Church of ours. We are trusting the Spirit of God, loose among us, to be freely expressed in a variety of ways.

INSPIRATION 08 will start for the YAYA (youth and young adults, aged 16-25) on Thursday May 29, and for the 26+ crowd, registration opens at 3 p.m. on Friday, May 30. The weekend will offer opportunities to share in worship, in listening to dynamic presentations by our theme speakers and to participate in workshops that will run through Sunday, June 1 where we will conclude with worship and lunch. We will celebrate "God on the Loose" in its many facets of our lives.

Friday evening will begin with presentations by Christopher White, Gregory Baum and Michael Hawn to wet our appetites for what this theme means to each of them. Christopher White is the minister of Westminster United Church in Whitby, Ontario, and author of many books familiar to UCC people, but most recently has done some interesting church development and community building projects in his own neighbourhood. He will share his ideas around creative leadership and long range planning – a way forward for the 21st century church. Gregory Baum describes himself as a seasoned theologian, presently professor emeritus at McGill University, formerly editor of *The Ecumenist*, an ecumenical review of theology, culture and society. He sees God on the Loose from a historical perspective, and how the church has changed during his lifetime, and made progress in many ways. Michael Hawn is Professor of Church Music at Perkins School of Theology and Director of the Sacred Music Program, Southern Methodist University, and will share both in word and music leadership where he experiences God on the Loose locally and globally, inviting us to share in music and worship of various languages and styles.

Friday evening we will host a Coffee House - a chance to relax, chat or just listen to four groups of local talent with a diversity of music and languages. Coffee and desserts will be available. The time together will include theme presentations by the three leaders and also a variety of workshops about ways people are finding God on the Loose in their communities or ministries – in different settings, in the arts, drama and music, in healing ministry, through dance and yoga. There will be sharing of God's presence in areas of social justice, racial justice, interfaith dialogue, and in our different relationships. The Celebration of Ministry, with Rev. Christopher White preaching, will be held Saturday, May 31 at 6:30 pm at the College; a chance to celebrate new ministries of Ordination and Commissioning. We will also recognize those who are retiring after many years of service, and those who have passed from this world during the previous year. There will be a Celebration of Ministry Choir, and Michael Hawn who is leading the music, will welcome those interested in joining the choir. This event is open to all ages and those seeking who may not have heard of the United Church before and come out of interest for the program we are offering.

EXCERPTS FROM A PRAYER JOURNAL

A conversation with God in the world

Editor's Note: Jan Van Voorst, who attends St. James United Church in downtown Montreal, keeps a prayer journal and has shared some of his prayers with The Clarion/Le Clairon.

Mushiness

I tell You, God, that I fail miserably at times. I sidetrack myself when something could deeply affect me. Instead of welcoming the occasion, I find a way to circumvent it. I wonder how You look at half-heartedness in human life. Live life to the fullest! Yes, I clearly heard Your message but sometimes I am not able to give myself fully so my heart will burn and my head will spin. I ask You to leave me alone. I am not broken of heart, I am mushy of heart. Mushy feelings are not much to write home about. Time passes through mushy feelings and nothing seems to stand out, to hold, to impinge. As a result God, I leave You; able to receive your spirit but not able to let it do its work in me.

Homecoming

The prodigal son coming home finds complete acceptance in his father. Communion expresses our complete acceptance by God. But how often did I not wonder why the thought of this complete acceptance is so much easier to have than the actual experience of it? How long does it take me to get to this state of being and how many different circumstances have to fall into place before it happens? God, I admit to You, that I only get to the thought of being accepted during a lot of the communions

I take part in and remain removed from the experience deep in my soul. I have to add, however, that I do experience Your embrace at different times but only at unexpected moments and under all kinds of different circumstances. Yesterday, for instance, I felt in touch with Your depths while visiting my doctor. A split-second look at me made me feel completely accepted in Your eyes. An odd occurrence this is, considering that I see my doctor about once every four years. Could this indicate that in communion, we should really seek Your presence in the others who are part of the service? Doesn't that bring out the true meaning of communion? Will we only then experience Your presence deep in our heart?

Internal noise

Today, God, I had one of the most emotional experiences I have ever had in church. It began with a street person walking into the service cursing and screaming. Not in a million years will You see me going inside a church doing this. Yet the cursing and screaming resonated in me and made me realize that despite my ability to maintain a controlled surface, I have had periods when I was cursing and screaming internally because I could not take it anymore. Nothing else remained but dumping all my troubles on You in prayer and it felt that a big long scream came out of me while doing this. And curses were resonating in my head when things did not work out in my life the way I had expected.

Strangely enough, God, I never felt ashamed when doing this and I am wondering now why I felt so confident You stayed with me, just as You will stay with the street person. All my cursing and screaming came forth out of a tremendous internal turmoil that was pushing hard to find its way out. But for as long as I screamed and cursed, I was unable to feel the pain underlying the turmoil. All I felt was the violence of the screams and curses. Only after they died down, could I feel the pain. That is why, Lord, I believe that You were patient with me, because when I could finally feel my pain, things became really hard and You knew that I would need You then more than ever.

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.

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The Clarion is also available on the M&O Conference website at <http://www.montrealandottawaconference.ca>