

The Ministry of Amy Evans of Harrington Harbour

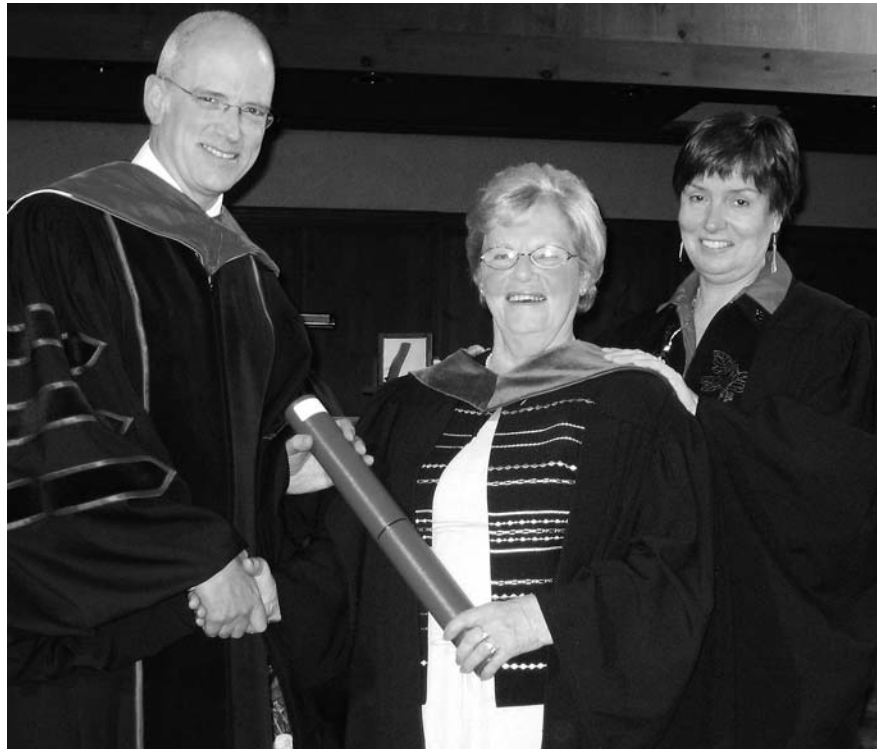
Quebec-Sherbrooke licensed lay preacher gets UTC Doctorate

Editor's note: Amy Evans was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Divinity at the Spring Convocation of United Theological College in Montreal. She comes from the three-point charge of Harrington Harbour-Chevery-Aylmer Sound about 1,400 kilometres north-east of Montreal on the Quebec-Labrador border at the extreme eastern edge of Montreal and Ottawa Conference territory. Rev. Bill Jay proposed her for the degree with this text and some added elements from the degree ceremony are included.

By Rev. Bill Jay

During the six years during which I was minister of Chalmers-Wesley United Church in Quebec City, and Quebec-Sherbrooke Presbytery's supervising minister for a number of Eastern Quebec communities, I met and came to deeply admire the ministry of Amy Evans, a devoted and gifted lay preacher of the United Church of Canada.

While our paths do not cross as frequently these days, we remain in touch, and I hear through others of her continuing ministry in the Lower North Shore villages of Harrington Harbour, Chevery, and Aylmer Sound — fishing communities founded in the



Rev. Dr. Phil Joudrey, Principal of UTC, Dr. Amy Evans and Rev. Janet Bisset who chairs the UTC Board of Governors

19th Century by Newfoundlanders, one of whom was her grandfather.

I recognize in her many of those rare qualities and abilities that the Church and its centres of theological training need to hold up for celebration and as example to others exercising ministry in the Christian faith community.

Amy Evans was born the daughter of a light-house keeper at Harrington Harbour on Quebec's Lower North Shore. Her family wintered in nearby Aylmer Sound when navigation season ceased.

She received her public school education in a one-room school house in Harrington Harbour, married a fisherman and they had four sons and a daughter before he died in 1976 after his fishing boat was struck and sunk by the cargo and passenger ship which serves the isolated communities of the Lower North Shore.

Participation in the life and work of the Church has always been an integral part of her upbringing and life, even while busy raising her family.

(continued page 2)

She has been a quiet guide, confidante, mentor and a model of service and caring, standing out even in a community of caring. She has also been a wise partner in ministry who has quietly gone about the business of living her faith, sharing her gifts and talents wherever and whenever they were needed for decades on the Lower North Shore and in the Quebec-Sherbrooke Presbytery where she has been a significant force and which recognized her as a Licensed Lay Preacher in 1982.

Due to its remote and isolated location – 150 kilometres east of the end of the road — the Harrington Harbour Pastoral Charge on occasion finds itself without a resident minister for several years at a time.

During these vacancies, she has been granted permission by the Montreal and Ottawa Conference to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion.

She has led worship, visited the seniors' home every week and given pastoral care to members of the community in times of death and tragedy

She also provided leadership through the hard times of the cod moratorium of the 1990's

She worked on Joint Needs Assessment and Joint Search committees (which could not really be very "joint" because of the geographic reality).

And she has been and remains a leader of the UCW and takes part in Advent plays, and white gift Sundays.

Throughout it all, she has constantly shown a sense of humour and an ability to laugh at situations and herself.

And she brought her quiet matriarchal wisdom and keen analytical skills to bear on many projects to maintain and revitalize the communities where she has spent her life.

"It was," Amy recounts, "just something you learned."

Ministers, and student interns preparing for ministry, including the Reverends Kent Chown, Doug Stewart, and Eric Lucaks have benefited enormously from their experiences of working with Amy Evans.

Chown, who served the Harrington Harbour Pastoral Charge from 1985 to 1991, provides this first-hand look at how Amy has faithfully ministered and touched the lives of so many people in the Lower North Shore community over decades:

***'If you
have a gift,
you should
share it.'***

– Dr. Amy Evans, DD,
(at the Spring
UTC Convocation)

"I recall that Amy oriented me, as a new minister, to the pastoral charge and its people and was a confidential advisor to myself as a newly ordained minister, in my adjustment to the community and culture without my having to ask for confidentiality," Chown wrote.

"She supported and guided student ministers that came to Harrington Harbour while I was there, adding to their learning, and she was constantly an encouraging, positive force in the congregation. . .

"She also sought harmony within the complex relationship between the United Church and Anglican Church, modeling openness.

"Amy was able to harness her understanding of the community for the benefit of the community," Chown wrote. "She stood behind community improvement initiatives, such as the community radio station and others . . . and was a driving force behind a report to Presbytery on sealing."

When reflecting on her ministry over the years, Amy recalls several aspects of ministry which give her particular satisfaction.

Long before being appointed to formally-recognized ministry and to this day, she enjoys weekly visits to the seniors' home at Harrington Harbour, knowing how much the residents look forward to those occasions. She leads in story-telling, singing, and prayers.

She finds herself deeply moved by her contacts with people as she is welcomed into their homes.

These are not always happy times, as they might be on the occasion of a death, especially at sea, but nonetheless she feels this to be a vital part of her ministry.

And, of course, the travel to and around the three isolated communities that make up the Harrington Harbour Pastoral Charge is always an adventure, whether it is by ski-doo, boat, or helicopter.

Asked why she has devoted her life in this way, Amy quietly answers that whenever she "saw the need", she felt moved to offer herself in recognition that "if you have a gift you should share it."

Her villages have richly benefited from her faithful, gentle, caring pastorate over the years, and she is an exemplary model for ministry.

She has earned the profound respect of her communities to whom she is "Aunt" Amy.

Her faith journey, preparation for ministry and generous stewardship of her many gifts over decades are worthy cause for recognition.

A message from the President

LACHINE, QC-- At the risk of sounding like a cliché, it does seem like only yesterday that I was putting together my first "message" for the Clarion. One short year ago!

As the newly installed President of M&O Conference, I was just beginning to find my way into this new role.

I gathered a few 'maps and charts' – books, articles, Bibles, writings and the ever trusty UCC manual. (I always say, one can never be too prepared!)

Grateful for skilled, trusted 'guides' whose own experience and insights would offer ongoing help, I loaded up my backpack and checked in to take my bearings.

I had set out on my new venture – my 'new beginning' – and I told you of my eagerness and my apprehension.

One year later, I can happily report that my apprehension has lessened with each event, each visit, each meeting.

And, happily, I can also report that my eagerness has not diminished in the least.

We have a lot going on across our Conference and your representatives attentively and diligently carry out their duties.

I have a great deal of admiration for these people and am proud to learn from them and work alongside them as we go about the ongoing work of our conference.

The true gift in this role for me has been the added privilege of being a guest in congregations, units and presbyteries and attending special events and celebrations throughout the year.

A fall Orientation Event for new ministers to our conference; a couple of days in the spring with the Conference UCW executive; congregations' Anniversary Services; and Inspiration '08 have been new opportunities rich with spiritual and personal growth.

Unexpected treasures discovered in this journey are the times I have been invited to worship with and speak to congregations.

Not having experience in this and not imagining I ever would or could, I am constantly delighted by the interaction and surprised that I find such joy in this.

"Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? Will you go where you don't know and never be the same? Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known, will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?"

A highlight for me this first year was the Celebration of Ministry service at Inspiration '08. It was a true honour to preside at this worship service - to be a part of a Commissioning, an Ordination, and an Admission to the United Church of Canada – and to preside at the table as we shared the sacrament of Holy Communion.

For someone whose preference not so long ago was observing from the sidelines, now being so drawn into all of this has revealed new depths of divine blessing and grace. May your life be enriched by the acts you engage in and by the people you encounter on your journeys.

Blessings,

Anna

*Anna Barr is President of
Conference*

"SOME ARE CALLED TO BE"

By Eileen Lavigne

Ottawa— Come to dinner at Emmanuel UC, Ottawa, Thurs., Oct. 16th, at 6 pm to learn about **SOME ARE CALLED TO BE**, a Stewardship Family Event to be held July 15th - 19th, 2009 at the University of Guelph, Kemptville Campus organized by The Stewardship Network of Montreal & Ottawa Conference. Theme speakers are **Debra Farrington**, **Gretta Vosper** and **Steve Sharlow**.

Debra Farrington is a lecturer and leader of retreats who is the author of eight books on Christian spirituality including *The Seasons of a Restless Heart: a Spiritual Guide to Living in Transition*. She will host a workshop on Living in Transition.

Rev. Gretta Vosper is the pastor of West Hill United Church in Scarborough, ON, Chair of the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity and author of the recently published and controversial book – *With or Without God: Why the Way We Live is More Important than What We Believe*. She will host workshops on Challenges Facing the Future of the Church.

Steve Sharlow, iStewardship Coordinator for the Montreal and Ottawa Conference, organizes seminars and workshops to help congregations thrive through effective stewardship. He will host workshops on asset mapping. Worship will be led by **Rev. Richard Bott** and **Rev. Shannon Tennant** and music by **Sharon Campbell**. The children's program will be facilitated by **Carole Dallas** and the youth program by **Eileen Lavigne**. There will be entertainment and many other activities.

For information, contact **Eileen Lavigne** at 613-722-7523 or eileen12003@yahoo.ca. Deadline for registration June 15th, 2009. Cheques payable to Montreal & Ottawa Conference.

A memorable visit!

By Rosemary Lambie

Montreal — The Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Right Reverend David Giuliano, visited the Montreal and Ottawa Conference for a whirlwind 6 days - May 8-13, 2008.

The visit began on Thursday, May 8th, with a tour of the Mohawk Community of Kanasatake. After visiting the Church, the survival school, the Treatment Center and the Pines cemetery beside the golf course (the original site of the Oka crisis in 1990), the Moderator was treated to an aboriginal feast.

To the community, and especially Residential School survivors, he presented in Mohawk, copies of the public Apologies to the First Nations made by The United Church of Canada in 1986, and the second for the victims of the residential schools in 1998.

The Kanasatake community presented him with a Bible in Mohawk, and their history.

On Friday morning, the Moderator visited the former Erskine & American United Church in Montreal, now owned by the Museum of Fine Arts of Montreal.

A presentation was made showing how part of the building will be transformed to be a museum housing religious artefacts, and the sanctuary preserved for a space for presentations and concerts.

The Moderator did a very moving blessing of the space, moving from Baptismal font, to Communion Table, from organ to pulpit, inviting all to remember the many ways in which the church blessed those who participated in worship during its many years. We ended sharing the Lord's Prayer.

That evening the Moderator went to Hemmingford United Church, in a farm community south of Montreal.

The evening was filled with good food, meetings with young people and song and entertainment by local talent, as he joined members of rural congregations.

Saturday and Sunday were spent in Québec City, learning, in a bilingual meeting, about Protestant history and the on-going struggles of being a United Church in a very Roman-Catholic Québec. There was worship, (and again the celebration was bilingual), with the Moderator preaching, to members of Chalmers-Wesley United Church and *église unie Saint-Pierre*, congregations who use the same historic building in the heart of the Old Québec.

On Monday, the visit moved to Winchester, Ontario for sharing of rural concerns which the Moderator understands well, coming from a small community himself. He encouraged congregations to celebrate their abundance. That night there was volleyball, pizza and creative, spirited worship with Youth Groups of the Seaway Valley and Ottawa presbyteries, gathering at Parkdale UC in Ottawa. Each presbytery had selected a Youth leader to honour, and plaques were presented by the Moderator after video presentations of their ministry.

On Tuesday morning, the Moderator joined the retirees and other Order of Ministry persons for coffee and conversation, and in the evening, he shared with yet another group his passion and concerns for the United Church as he preached at the Ottawa Presbytery worship service held at Rideau Park United Church.

Thank you to all who shared the ministry of hospitality for this visit.

Rosemary Lambie is Executive-secretary of the Montreal and Ottawa Conference of the United Church of Canada

Around Conference

Shirts and beans in Bell's Corners

Bell's Corners UC in Ottawa began a tradition of unique "theme" Sundays last year, with a mid-winter "toque and hat" day, when church-goers arrived at worship clad in typically Canadian head-gear. This year, the congregation changed the theme, encouraging worshippers to wear flannel shirts. The Sunday service was followed by an all-Canadian meal of meat loaf, baked beans and coleslaw.

A Century of Brides at Woodroffe UC

Woodroffe United in Ottawa celebrated 60 years of congregational life last spring with more than a century of brides. The Anniversary Wedding Show and Tea paraded 55 wedding dresses, ranging from 1889 to the present day. Fashions ranged from dark-coloured dresses of the late 19th century to the more numerous white dresses of the 20th century. There were 12 models showing off the dresses and the church was decorated with flowers, candles and ribbons. Fashions ranged from boned bodices and leg-of-mutton sleeves of the last 1800s to drop-waist, mid-calf gowns of the 1920s, to fitted head-pieces of the 1960s and bare shoulders of the 1990s.

(Editor's note: These two items were from The Observer website.

Journeying together

Subscribe to M&O's UCW newsletter

Those wishing to subscribe to the Conference UCW newsletter, "**Journeying Together in UCW**" - may send \$6.00 for 4 issues to Eileen Lavigne, Apt. 408, 198 Macy Blvd., Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 7K1. The next issue will be mailed in January 2009.

*The Hilliker
Preaching
Lectureship,*

*supported by the Chalmers
United Church Endowment
Fund, Kingston, Ont.*

Sat. Nov. 1st 7:30pm,

Public Lecture
by Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor

What the Body Knows

From earliest times, Christians have lived uneasily in their skins, regarding the body as a drag on the spirit. This address will explore the physical dimensions of Christian faith, paying special attention to the concrete practices Jesus taught his disciples in order to awaken them (and us) to what the body knows.

An award winning author of 11 books (including her latest "Leaving Church"). Dr. Taylor, as the Sewanee Theological Review has noted, "possesses a gift that is in short supply these days: the gift of conveying a living sense of the transcendent, the holy, and the grace-full in and through the stuff of our lives."

This free public lecture will include an opportunity for questions. Refreshments will follow in Chalmers' MacCallum Hall.

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Sun. Nov. 2nd 10:30am.

Worship Service
lead by Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor

Chalmers United Church
212 Barrie Street, Kingston, Ontario
K7L 3K3

phone: 613-546-3263

email: office@chalmersunitedchurch.com
website: www.chalmersunitedchurch.com

Worship Matters - Célébrons ensemble: Un colloque sur la prédication, la musique et la liturgie

Editor's note: A major forum on French-language liturgy and worship resources will take place on the first weekend of October at Église Unie Saint-Jean in Montreal. While presentations will be in French, discussion will also occur in English

Montréal — En 2003, une consultation sur la célébration liturgique a été lancée "afin de découvrir comment animer les cultes dans les paroisses locales de l'Église Unie du Canada pour en faire des événements revivifiants et transformateurs." De cette consultation est née l'idée d'organiser les événements nationaux et régionaux que nous connaissons sous le nom de **Worship Matters - Célébrons ensemble**.

Pour 2008, nous planifions le premier colloque **Worship Matters - Célébrons ensemble** de style régional. L'événement exploitera la riche diversité que nous retrouvons dans nos paroisses. Et les coûts de déplacement relativement bas permettront aux leaders, aux comités de liturgie et aux paroissiens et paroissiennes de participer. L'événement régional durera deux jours, avec un-e conférencier-ère de renom, des ateliers et des expériences liturgiques semblables à ce que les colloques nationaux de **Worship Matters - Célébrons ensemble** ont offert par le passé.

Venez nous joindre pour partager un événement sur les différents aspects de la vie liturgique de l'Église Unie dans le contexte francophone, au cœur de la métropole de Montréal ! Il y aura six ateliers : **A.** Chanter "nos voix unies" : Venez chanter vos airs préférés ainsi que les nouveaux chants du recueil « Nos Voix Unies ». **B.** Célébrations interculturelles : Venez explorer cette question avec les gens de la Mission communautaire de Montréal. **C.** Cultes intergénérationnels : Venez explorer comment rendre nos cultes plus participatifs en incluant des personnes de tous âges. **D.** La danse et les gestes dans la liturgie : Venez redécouvrir les danses de Myriam dans le contexte des célébrations d'aujourd'hui. **E.** L'église numérique (emploi des nouvelles technologies) : Venez découvrir comment la technologie peut aider dans la célébration de nos cultes. **F.** Les cultes "sans papiers" et "sans congrégations" : Venez explorer comment faire le culte « sans papiers » et comment vivre une expérience d'église avec des petits groupes, comme Église Unie Loblaw (hors de nos sanctuaires).

Quoi : « Fêter et célébrer ensemble » : Colloque en français mais planifié pour accueillir tant les francophones que les anglophones

Où : Montréal, QC (3-4 octobre, 2008) Église Unie Saint-Jean,

Quand : Octobre 2008

Tarif : 75\$

Date limite d'inscription : vendredi 26 septembre 2008

*Pour des plus amples informations, contactez: Thierry Delay
au Courriel : egliseuniest-jean@videotron.ca.*

Social Justice: 'It's who we are and what we do!'

By Carolyn Ruda

Cornwall, ON — Have you ever taken a good hard look at what you think the Christian perspective on Social Justice should be?

Lisa Sizeland-Ross our chair of Outreach at Knox – St. Paul's United Church in Cornwall asked me to do that earlier this year after our church had been contacted by the local Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association who were interested in holding an Interfaith Seminar in Cornwall on Social Justice.

On May 10th, 2008, as hosts of this Interfaith Seminar, we opened the doors of Knox– St. Paul's and invited Ottawa/Cornwall into our home Mayor Bob Kilger of Cornwall graciously acted as moderator.

It was only fitting that the meeting began with readings from the Bible (Matthew chapter 25 verses 35-40) and the Qur'an.

I spoke on the Christian perspective on Social Justice and Atauil Wahid LaHaye, secretary for New Converts of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association, spoke on the Islamic point of view. This was followed by a question-and-answer session.

Throughout the evening, Christians from the various local churches learned how much we have in common with our Islamic neighbours in our attitudes about our obligations to bring Social Justice to everyone.

The concepts of "Peace for all, Submission to God, Obedience to God, Love for humanity, Love of God, Amity and concord," are among the fundamentals of Islam, we were told. The following statement, for example, is from a pamphlet distributed at the meeting.

"The members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are expected to illustrate high levels of social, moral and spiritual values in their daily lives.

They are also committed to promote friendship, goodwill and righteousness among themselves, and among all communities and nations. The Community is noted for its active engagement in social welfare and in meeting the medical and educational needs of the communities in which they reside."

As a Christian, I believe that the Bible gives us a clear picture of God and His purposes for us, His creation. We see a God who comforts those who mourn, a God who satisfies the needs of the poor and the hungry.

'An essential and dynamic element of how we live our faith is in our generosity to others.'

– Carolyn Ruda

As easily as we breathe the Holy Spirit in and out, we should be bringing about Social Justice in our society, safeguarding human rights and working for peace and reconciliation. In the Old Testament Micah gives us simple instructions on the subject -- "What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God."

In the United Church of Canada, when we support "the Mission and Service Fund", or "the United For Peace Campaign", and work with other denominations on such varied projects as "Enough For All, The World Development Fund, Kairos and The Canadian Foodgrains Bank, or with the World Council of Churches in "The Decade To Overcome Violence"

among other programs, our goals are very similar to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

But we are only doing what we have been called to do by God. An essential and dynamic element of how we live our faith is in our generosity to others.

In 2007, in our quest for economic justice, Knox-St. Paul's and the local ecumenical Social Justice Committee successfully gained the Cornwall City council's support for a resolution calling for a living wage for all residents of Ontario. At the time Cornwall was only the third city in the province (Ottawa and Toronto were the others.) to express support for legislation prioritizing this goal.

Our next project with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community will be a Food Drive for "The Agape Center," the local food bank,

Working with other denominations and faiths means we can have an impact far beyond our expectations.

The meeting was a case in point.

After we closed with prayers, we met for fellowship downstairs over "samosas" provided by the Muslim Youth Association and the Family Restaurant in Cornwall.

The Muslim Youth Association provided books and pamphlets on their display table on the world of Islam that we were encouraged to take away. There were also tables set up to show Social Justice work being done by the different Christian denominations.

It was wonderful to discuss our views in an informal setting with our new acquaintances.

Carolyn Ruda is a member of Knox – St. Paul's United Church in Cornwall, ON, a Licensed Lay Worship Leader for Seaway Valley Presbytery and Mission and Service Fund Enthusiast and Support Person for M&O.

United Theological College's Ministry-Based Ordination Program ends, consolidates at Atlantic School of Theology

By Rob Bull

Montreal — The United Theological College has announced that its Ministry-Based Ordination Program ended August 31st, 2008 and has been consolidated with a program of the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax.

"UTC is proud to have been involved in the development of Ministry Based formation for the past five years," the Montreal-based college said in a statement on its website.

"In 2006 we received our first students for the Ministry-Based Ordination Program (MBOP).

"We have been encouraged to see that our dreams and our work to develop this new model of formation for ministry have worked

exceptionally well in practice through enhancing learning and professional teaching by integrating the practice of ministry with a high-quality educational program.

"However, despite our best efforts and those of the national Church in promoting this approach, enrolment has remained very low and has obliged us to ask the hard questions about stewardship of faculty and economic resources.

"In consequence, UTC and the National Church, in consultation with our colleagues at the Atlantic School of Theology (Halifax), have made the decision to consolidate our Ministry-Based Ordination Program with AST's Summer Distance Master of Divinity program. "

In *Passages*, the UTC newsletter, Rev. Dr. Abigail Johnson, Director of the MBOP program at the College wrote : "Optimistic vision met with the reality of low enrolment which could not sustain this innovative program.

"Despite present realities, the vision of ministry-based learning is still alive in the theological education mandate of our United Church and at UTC. The challenge exists to cast this vision in new directions."

Dr. Johnson added that the six students currently in the program — Diane Robinson, Stewart Walker, Ruth McArthur, Julia Kimmet, Melanie Kauppila and Lee Ann Hogle

— "will continue their student supply ministries and keep alive their call to ordained ministry within the United Church."

***'Optimistic vision met
with the reality of low
enrolment...'***

— Dr. Abigail Johnson

"Thus our six students will become AST students from September 1st, 2008, as they continue their educational journey toward ordination," she wrote.

The UTC statement said Dr. Johnson will be working with AST as adjunct faculty for the fall and winter (2008-09) semesters.

"We believe that this is a rich context in which our students can continue a ministry-based formation, and represents a more responsible use of the Church's resources at this point," the UTC statement said. "We appreciate the strength of the United Church's educational network and the opportunity for this type of collaboration, for the benefit of our students and our Church."

Continuing Education Week at UTC, Montreal November 5th to 9th, 2008

"Resisting Practices of Empire, Renewing Communities of Faith" a workshop with Ched Meyers, November 5th to 7th. This workshop will facilitate critical conversation about how we can, in our households and local churches, slowly but surely discern and embrace practices of resistance and renewal. We will use the three final gospel lectionary readings of ordinary time in 2008 (the three parts of Matthew 25) as a springboard. Meyers has worked with several peace and justice organizations and movements. He focuses on building the capacity for biblical literacy, church renewal and faith-based witness for economic and political justice.

and also:

"The Pig and the Elephant: Preaching in a Culture of Affluence" The K. J. Campbell Preaching Workshop with Rev. Dr. Tim Olson, November 7th to 9th. Author Robert Heinlen is credited with the saying: "Never try to teach a pig to sing. It annoys the pig and frustrates the teacher." This describes a common attitude about addressing economic life from the pulpit. And yet, the persistent pursuit and accumulation of the marks of affluence are an integral part of our daily life. The North American "culture of affluence" is the elephant sitting in the middle of the sanctuary. Exploring both what preachers can say about economic life in preaching and how they can say it so that people will listen will be the focus of this workshop on preaching.

Open to clergy, lay people and students: Workshops will be in English with bilingual discussion. For details and registration information, see: www.utc.ca, email admin@utc.ca, or telephone 514-849-2042, ext. 200 or 1888-849-2042 (toll free)

Jazz & Spirituality

By Rob Bull

MONTREAL – It happened during the Montreal International Jazz Festival. Up the street from the Festival site, Rev. Peter Woods was leading the Vespers Service at St. James United Church, that great old red sandstone, one-time “Cathedral of Methodism in Canada.”

Rev. Woods leaned forward on the pulpit, paused and then said: “There are those who have said a church is a kind of hotel for the saints. But others say a church is a kind of hospital for sinners.”

Then he picked up a saxophone and started to play *The St. James Infirmary Blues*.

Pianist Brian Browne of Ottawa, a long-time colleague, joined in on the church’s Yamaha grand and Alex Nesrallah of Montreal (whom Woods has known since they were teenagers together) came in on the guitar.

The congregation was rapt.

For Woods, the Blues chord progressions are the essence of jazz. One of his favourite pieces of music is a recording of *the West End Blues* played by Louis Armstrong which he describes as “an act of exuberance that is technically perfect but so liberating.”

And the Blues, he said later, “are fundamentally about hope so enduring that they help us be steadfast in trying times.

“Those really core Blues sounds – the Blues scale which is essentially the African pentatonic scale, and the complex rhythms — evoke joy and hope in the face of despair,” Woods said. “There is a whole world in this type of music that speaks to this theme of spiritual life, how to have integrity in the world, how to go about finding the energy to deal with reality.”

As well as being a performer, arranger and composer, Woods, 45, is the minister at Trinity United Church in Smith Falls, ON. He developed his musical skills when he was a student at Nepean High School in Ottawa.

He discovered jazz listening to it as a teenager and said that its intensity and the depth of its spirituality was a personal epiphany. He started actually playing jazz by himself during his first settlement charge in St. Martin, NB, a small community near St. John. He has played jazz in worship at Southminster UC, Woodroffe UC, Trinity UC, Orleans UC and All Saints Anglican in Ottawa and at Erskine and American UC, Roxborough UC, Montreal West UC, Union UC and of course St. James in Montreal. His music has brought him to churches across the country and he led a jazz-based workshop at General Council in 2000.

Like many of us, he finds inspiration in the Psalms.

“The Psalms are a testimony to the way the human voice can find a way of trying to be faithful in difficult circumstances,” he said. “So are many hymns.” And Woods is always on the lookout for new songs that work in church like *Nature Boy* and *Come Sunday*.

“The Bible is our song book but any jazz tune can work in church,” he said. “The way we interpret our songbook is an act of faith. There is a healing power when music is part of our lives, a soothing balm. But it’s so much easier to find that balance with a congregation if I’m taking, for example, ‘*Abide With Me*’ and turning it into a sweet ballad.”

“It’s so much easier when we respond to something we already have a feeling for. You can let the song breathe in a little different way. We know where we are working from and you know that everyone in the room is with you because they all know where you are going.”

Woods and Browne have been performing as a duo for more than five years. They don’t just perform in churches. They have played club dates throughout Central Canada.

Woods said, “As Brian often reminds me, the music works best when it’s being played as honestly as possible,”

Their latest compact disc – *Testimony* – celebrates the intimacy and depth that is part of the jazz tradition.

“No matter the tune or the tempo, our music helps remind me that there is no real line between what is sacred and what is secular,” Woods said. “It is all an attempt to point to the utter holiness of life.”

For more information, contact Rev. Peter Woods by telephone at 1-613-284-0445, by email at peterwoods@sympatico.ca, or visit his website at www.peterwoodsmusic.com

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 February 2009 issue is December 29th., 2008

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The next meeting of the editorial board will be on January 5th in Montreal

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