

At President Doug Wright's initiative delegates pondered what it means to be 'The Church In Exile' and considered innovative ways to 'Sing the Lord's Song' in the 'Strange Land' of post-modern Canada.

The meeting was convened on the territory of the Anishinaabek. Elder, Geraldine Robertson, of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation offered an Aboriginal perspective on 'exile' and the spirituality of 'the land'.

We acknowledged the coming retirement of Bev Robinson & Carole Hockey after many years of faithful service. Judith Gilliland was welcomed as the Congregational Futures Development Minister and is already at work within congregations.

Rev. Dr. Bruce Gregersen provided the theme address inviting delegates to reflect upon the profound implications for the future of the United Church in our radically changing society & to take these discussions to their congregations. His questions elicited much conversation: "*What are we NOT prepared to give up?*" and "*How much are we prepared to risk?*"

Celebrating hope in the midst of exile, we ordained four new, passionate ministers:

- ◆ Rev. Lynne Allin, from Oxford Presbytery;
- ◆ Rev. Adam Kilner, from Lambton Presbytery;
- ◆ Rev. Mary Stewart, from Middlesex Presbytery;
- ◆ Rev. Adam Hanley, from Bay of Quinte Conference

Retirees & Jubilands were fêted Friday evening and treated to a play written & performed by Doug Wright, President of London Conference. Honouring and celebrating the long service of these servants to the mission of the church is an important element of the Annual Meeting. The evening's concert was by musical guests, Jim & Jean Strathdee, who entertained with their special collection of familiar Christian standards.

Bev Slater, Treasurer of London Conference, provided a thorough review of the previous year's budgetary figures, a detailed consideration of the rationale for the projections for 2011 and outlined the services that Conference provides Presbyteries and Pastoral Charges (*see [www.londonconference.ca](http://www.londonconference.ca)*), assisting delegates in understanding the financial report. Following lengthy discussion and suggested changes, the Proposed Budget as printed on page 18 in the Report book establishing the assessment for 2011 at \$15.10 per resident member based on a membership of 41,374 was approved.

Long-serving and recently retired overseas personnel, Mary Collins, spoke passionately about her experience in the Republic of Korea and the Christian commitment to resisting the forces of domination and oppression. Mary's insights offered substance to the church's role with overseas partners.

Rev. Gary Clark of Blyth United Church in Huron-Perth Presbytery was elected President of London Conference, 2011/2012.

Maya Landell was installed as President of London Conference on Sunday, May 30. She used story-telling to call the church on its journey out of exile. With creche figures she illustrated how 'the story' of Jesus' birth, life, death and rising might have been interpreted differently, and how Christian perceptions might have been different as a result. Delegates are invited to celebrate 'the story' and engage the question, "How might the church now be different?" based on 'the story' throughout the coming year.

The Children at Conference and Youth at Conference were both innovative and uplifting - not to mention fun and audacious. Once more, they convincingly demonstrated that they are not just future leaders - they already lead the church today!

Carole Hockey and Bev Robinson were honoured with retirement speeches & gifts that reflect their recreational interests. Two adult leaders in the church spoke movingly about how much Bev's guidance in youth programmes had meant in their growth and development.

449 adults, youth and children were a part of this year's annual meeting in London. Next year?? An invitation from Algoma Presbytery has been accepted to convene the 87<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of London Conference of The United Church of Canada in Sault St. Marie from May 27 to May 29, 2011.

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*Provide an opportunity in your congregation for your minister & your Presbytery delegate(s) to provide a first-hand report of their experiences & observations. More information will be posted to the Conference website as it becomes available.*