

Mission Bytes

North Bay Presbytery Mission Committee

11/21/2014

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Green Action

TransCanada Pipeline

The Mission Committee continues to monitor and stay informed regarding the repurposing of the TransCanada pipeline. If the proposal is approved, the pipeline will ship tar sands bitumen through Trout Lake, risking North Bay's only

This four-minute *handimation* offers some background on the controversial Energy East pipeline proposed by TransCanada. The video is narrated in English by Maude Barlow, author and national chairperson of the Council of

The North Bay Presbytery Mission Committee is pleased to offer you the second edition of the Mission Bytes newsletter. Building on our Presbytery's Mission priorities established in 2011 and re-affirmed in 2014, this newsletter is a way to share actions and offer information on how we can support these mission goals.

source of drinking water. Regardless of where you are living in the Presbytery, take a moment to become informed about how this will affect all of us.

For more information visit www.environmentaldefence.ca/

You can also check out a four minute video called "Energy East 101", www.canadians.org/energyeast

Canadians, and in French by Quebec-based activist Steven Guilbeault from Equiterre.

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The Mission Committee will be drafting a proposal calling on the UCC to divest from fossil fuel funds. More info to come!

## Mission Priorities

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As set forward by North Bay Presbytery, September 2011 and re-affirmed in 2014

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- To strongly encourage **green action** by individuals and in congregations by providing support, resources and guidance.
- To continue to work in advocating for **justice for Aboriginal peoples**.
- To support **youth** through programming that engages youth in their faith formation, and in their post-secondary lives.

## An Interview with Meg Purdy

*At her home in the Beaches, Thursday November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 By Brenda McLay*

Like melting sun on a November morning after stormy darkness, there are souls that warm hearts and illuminate minds simply by exuding their openness to the presence of God. These are our visionaries, our teachers of life's wisdom. We are blessed to count Meg Purdy as one such friend among us. Hers is a journey of grace, courage and hope. Her life has been in service to others; her faith deeply rooted in the presence of the Divine and Creation.

I call Meg and ask if we can have a conversation to write her story; she is surprised however consents. Out of the cold, her home is inviting, simple and elegant, with mementos of family and past journeys, Meg greets with a wide smile and bright eyes. She rests more now with a view to the natural world of lake and sky. Her thoughts though are clear, and there is strength in her convictions.

She begins with the statement that she has always had a burning desire to experience the ultimate reality of God; to have a personal connection – and feels it was found in Creation. As the Celts said, the first scripture is about creation. The second and onward are about how people tried to express an understanding of God. She feels Jesus was so open to the personal presence of the Divine and it is what she has strived to be.

Asked if she was ever called to do something she didn't want to she replies 'no'; life has always unfolded before me and I've had wonderful opportunities. The question turned to when she let go of everyday concerns, when did she feel called? Meg answers, 'I think I've always been there since I was a kid, always open'. She goes on to describe parents that were 'Victorian' and would have helped her get to university if she had been a boy. However since she was a girl, well..., girls got married. Meg says, "I wanted to go to university". So she began nursing and then teaching nursing and went on to university and achieved a B.A. and a B.Sc. in nursing. It was afterward she studied theology and earned her M.Div. in her 40's.

What was the progression from nursing to theology? Meg tells this story of one of the turning points when a woman asked her – do you believe in God? She chides

herself about how she launched into her own beliefs and realized afterward that she should have been more understanding, that the woman probably wanted to discuss her own experiences. That was when Meg started to read and delve deeper into spirituality and theology. Deciding to go back to school, she told Ron she wanted to study theology. Not knowing what to say, he commented something like "Oh, that's nice". She had three children in public school at the time. However, everything worked out to provide for this chapter – someone to help with the children and it was a point in her life when she was not working having moved from Toronto to North Bay. She first took a feminist theology course in Ohio for 7 weeks followed by the 1-2 day commutes per week to Toronto. Meg chuckles about a neighbour asking where she had gone to which her youngest daughter replied, "I don't know. She packed her bags and left."

Most important in her life and when she felt the deepest presence of the Divine was in her mission work, in particular in the women's movement. It is in the

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differences between people like gender, race, culture etc. that we need to work toward partnerships rather than domination; equality is too simple she states. The Youth,

Women and Environmental work all fit together. Women are concerned with faith formation, with children growing up. The basic problem is the differences between people. We need to solve that, there is still work to be done. Instead of working together with what we've got, we lord it over one another. We need to be working on partnerships. She spent 3 weeks in Crete early on at a global feminist meeting. It was there she spent a lot of time with Riane Eisler who wrote the Chalice and the Blade which talks about these things. It became a turning point in her journey and a hallmark of her philosophy.

Meg sees a recalling of spirituality in these times. We've been given the Lord's Prayer and feel present to "They will be done". We need to say this prayer often and reflect on it more. It's when we act with compassion and for justice that we feel the closest to God. That's when there is a personal presence with you - live simply...be a

part of the earth community. It's in this cooperation with others that compassion leads to a wonderful life. The human mind cannot understand everything – it only comes to us in snitches and snatches. The world is too mysterious.

Her words are grace-filled, thankful for her many blessings. I ask Meg about her illness and she opens up about her M.S that is known as primary progressive meaning her condition will steadily worsen. There has much adjustment and adaptation. She first had a limp which, as a nurse, she self-diagnosed to her doctor as a result of polio. After 5 years, an MRI led to the diagnosis of M.S. Asking about frustration and anger, Meg talks again about the natural unfolding of events in her life, her witness to the Divine, her gratefulness for the support of her husband and family and her thankfulness for not having a more debilitating condition. I see her courage and she tells me that she keeps a rock from one of her grandsons on her bedside table. It's a stone with the word 'courage' on it to always remind her.

The study of theology led Meg to first work in small churches such as Temiscaming, Carmichael, Phelps and Restoule United. After ordination, she had the charge of Mattawa/Rutherglen. When this became too much, she became a Chaplain at both the Civic and St. Joseph's Hospital sites. During this 20 year period, Meg sat on the Mission Committee, the natural place for her to serve the Presbytery. Her energy was dedicated to women and the environment including letting her name stand for the Green Party she adds while she was on only one cane.

She worked with youth for nearly 20 years at the Near North Youth Center and also Project Dare. She held group discussions in one place and one-on-one in the other. They had questions about life and it was not lost to her how many had read the Bible or parts of it. I ask Meg, what would you tell people, adults now, about what is important with our youth? She does not hesitate - most young people have a deep yearning to be good and to do what's right but they need a lot of help. They are

influenced by others around them especially with drugs and alcohol. They need support and context, an example.

Meg talks about four things we can give them: 1. Teach them how to be silent and to benefit from silence. 2. Be a storyteller; help them to tell their stories. 3. Simplicity – teach them to pray simple prayers. 4. Practice the Sabbath. It doesn't have to be traditional – take them into the bush; call attention to the Creator, Great Spirit, Holy One who talks to us through beauty and splendor. Be open. It can be a morning a week or take a special day with no TV or electronics.

The conversation carries a thread about the love for her partner and how supportive Ron has been during their 45 years of marriage. She states often, "I have a great husband". She chuckles telling one story of spending 3-4 years with the Gateway Theater Guild. She says she won best actress in 1971 at Theatre Ontario – then says how Ron won a prize too, even though his character had no lines in the play.

Well-read and with sharp memory, Meg pulls examples from literature and experience. She says it's an effort to write anything now as she doesn't have the strength in her hands, yet she still has work on the go. She talks of her unfinished piece: 'God is \_\_\_' and the challenge of trying to fill in the blank. And laughing, she talks about how some mothers send cards to their children while she sends snippets of theology.

I see Meg is tiring and we finish with a few stories about some of the eclectic pieces she has displayed on her window sill from her travels. Again, Meg expresses her gratefulness for a wonderful life with many opportunities and challenges. It's been a humbling conversation with someone clearly led by the hand of God. And even in her loss of physical strength, there stands tall and straight, a soul filled with life and purpose to which anyone that knows Meg, can aspire – an example of faith and love in the Divine and in Creation. Thank you Meg for your work, your legacy and inextinguishable light which lives on in your hope and your vision for us all. Yours is a life well served.

*In working with youth Meg says it is important to share these four things: Teach them how to be silent and to benefit from silence; Be a storyteller and help them to tell their own stories; Simplicity – teach them to pray simple prayers; and practice the Sabbath.*

## Youth and Young Adults

### *Right Relations Youth Retreat*

The Inter-Denominational Youth Group and North Bay Presbytery Youth Group were joined by 18 youth from Sudbury to Sundridge (and points in between) to spend a weekend at Spirit Point on October 24 – 26th. The theme for the weekend was Right Relations: with yourself, with others and with our earth. Youth and their leaders participated in high and low ropes courses, community building games, creative worship and intentional Right Relations work which included the Kairos Blanket exercise, Will Kunder's DVD presentation on the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and a closing worship co-led by Kim Robinson, who shared some teachings and taught the group some drum songs.



### *Camp Lorrain is Alive and Well!*

Please note that Camp Lorrain will be offering two children's camps in 2015, a Junior Camp (ages 7 –10) from July 5-11 and an Intermediate Camp (ages 11-14) from July 12-18 as well as a CIT program beginning on July 1 to July 18. These important camp programs for our children still need whatever financial and promotional support our congregations and presbyteries can provide. The rest of July and August is available for Camp Rentals. These rentals will provide other services to our communities as well as much needed revenue for our Manitou Conference Camp Programs.

## Justice for Aboriginal People

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created in 2009 to offer a vehicle for former residential school students to share their experiences. The TRC entered its final year on July 1, 2014 but was extended by one year in order to give more time to complete documentation and to write, translate and produce a final report.

**The Commission's Closing Event will be held in Ottawa, May 31–June 3, 2015.**

Folk in North Bay Presbytery, including St. Andrew's Youth Group, are preparing to host Patrick Etherington and other First Nations' walkers who will be passing through our Presbytery from Cochrane en route Ottawa for the release of the final report of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission in late May/early June. Stay tuned for more information on how we can support this important work!

*If you have announcements or items that you would like to submit to the Mission Bytes Newsletter please forward them to:*

**Lisa Blais at [blais.trinity@gmail.com](mailto:blais.trinity@gmail.com)  
Deadline: January 22, 2015**

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