

Greater Wellington Report

On Wednesday June 14, 2006, Rob Park and Jonathan Marler attended a service of Holy Eucharist at St. James, Fergus, followed by a meeting of the regional clergy. The service, led by the Rev. Dr. Nigel J. Bunce, and the meeting, at which supper was served, reminded of us of everything that is good and worthwhile about the work of the church.

Parishes represented at the meeting were:

St. Alban the Martyr, Acton
Grace Church, Arthur
St. John's, Elora
All Saints, Erin
St. James, Fergus
St. Alban's, Grand Valley
St. George, Guelph
St. James the Apostle, Guelph
St. Matthias, Guelph
St. David and St. Patrick, Guelph
St. Paul's, Mount Forest
St. John, Rockwood
St. Paul's, Shelburne
Christ Church, Whitfield

Parishes not represented were:

St. Mark's, Orangeville

We started the meeting by reviewing our First Interim Report to Synod Council, dated June 6, 2006. The subsequent discussion was intense, addressing such issues as gender equality, the role of unpaid clergy and tending to the spiritual needs of rural communities of modest means.

Guelph is clearly an exception to the norm in Greater Wellington. However, the unassuming and delightful manner of Archdeacon Tom Greene of St. George's, Guelph, the second largest parish in the Diocese in terms of net operating income, lent an air of serenity and sincerity to the whole meeting.

The Rev. Patrick Patterson of St. John's, Elora, spoke passionately and most articulately about the role of the church in society, by describing it as an "essential" but not "necessary" institution, in the sense that the church must earn its continued existence and has no right to demand or expect it.

Several women clergy told stories of their experiences in the church, which were of too personal a nature to record in a report. Suffice it to say, the stories told were such that the section of our draft report on Pay Equity, written by the Rev. Martha Tatarnic, will be of considerable significance to the clergy of Greater Wellington.

Parish sustainability was, of course, a subject on everyone's mind and the relationship between rectories and parish sustainability was discussed at some length, albeit without any clear conclusion being reached on that difficult subject.

Reimbursable expenses received special attention from a group, who are largely at the lower end of the compensation spectrum and yet are forced, by the lack of a comprehensive diocesan policy on reimbursable expenses, to absorb parish expenses from their own salaries.

The discussion was still in full flight after an hour and three-quarters, when we were required to vacate the church basement to make room for the next group. We look forward to returning to Greater Wellington to spend more time with a group of highly motivated and dedicated clergy. The whole evening was an uplifting and rewarding experience.

Prepared by Jonathan Marler and Rob Park