

REPORT OF UNDERMOUNT REGIONAL COUNCIL

New Wine in Old Wineskins?

The Undermount Regional Council has met three times over the course of the past year. Usually, the Council meets five times a year and conducts its business with a routine agenda, looking at what new directions have been occurring in the region and throughout the Diocese. This year has been a different one for Undermount Regional Council because of the transformations occurring in its midst.

Almost two years ago, in November 2011, Bishop Mitchell had spearheaded a month long mission and bible study for the parishes of Undermount. From the mission, an Open Space meeting in January 2012 laid the groundwork for people to identify areas of common interest for ministry. Then in March of the same year, a few interests became more clearly defined and included timelines for next steps. Since then, over the fall of 2012 and the spring of 2013, a number of new developments in sharing parish resources in the west end of the Region began. One such initiative was the ambitious series of Children's Ministry workshops offering programming ideas for the seasons of the Church Year as well as First Communion and Confirmation. Another active group has determined to claim its interest in deepening their spirituality. A third group wanting to improve communication about each of the parishes in Undermount completed its mandate in June of 2012 by creating a brochure for the regional parishes.

In November 2012, the Archdeacon of Undermount Regional Council invited members of its ten parishes to determine next steps of the Region. At this meeting, parishes expressed their dismay that more results had not been occurring while others listened attentively to Bishop Michael's call to be patient. The seemingly stalled progress of initiatives and the vacancies of a few parishes in the Region caused significant concern in the Region about their futures. At a proposed March meeting, the Council was to gather for a morning and gain updates. However, no meeting in March ever occurred.

While the Regional Council was waiting to have new representatives gather after Vestry meetings in early spring of 2013, the news arrived that a clergy team to minister to both the Ascension's and All Saints' congregations. Even greater news followed: the Church of the Ascension announced its building plans and All Saints identified its need to change its worship space to a nearby church building. The wisdom of the Bishop's exhortation to patience a few months earlier was obvious.

Waiting for a final meeting in the spring to co-ordinate information sessions with the developments from the Open Space meetings held earlier, the Regional Council discovered that its Secretary belonged to a parish that was recently merged into Lincoln Region. Finally in September 2013, the Regional Council met to try to determine its role in the string of changes occurring in its midst while having no information or input into its transformation. After discussing a range of possibilities for its emerging role, the Council reps determined two basic goals to drive its work: listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church in Undermount Region and be bold in putting into place what excites them. The next meeting scheduled for November 27, 2013 will continue this search to find new ways to be the Church to the world.

REPORT OF UNDERMOUNT REGIONAL COUNCIL cont'd

Does the Region need a canon change to make its work more effective? Can old wineskins serve the 'new wine' fermenting in some parts of Undermount to satisfy the needs of people who live in their midst?

The answer lies in the Body of the Church. What Synod decides and how the parishes respond determine our collective future. Transforming ourselves to the will of God is what unites us. And the love of God compels us to do the rest.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan A. Little
Chair