



ACW Chaplain's Message to the women of Algoma : Summer 2012

My dear friends in the ACW,

It was good to see so many of you at the Annual Meeting in North Bay this May and I would like to thank the women of Temiskaming Deanery for organising such a wonderful event for us. I would also like to thank Bishop Stephen and Fawna for their presence with us and to the local clergy for their leadership during the opening and closing services of worship. Thank you too, to the members of the Past Diocesan Executive Committee from the Muskokas, whose term ended at this Annual.

I left that meeting though, with the sense that there was a great deal of confusion and uncertainty amongst many of our women as to what was happening with the Diocesan Executive Committee in the coming year. I received a few messages from women who thought that I was no longer the ACW Chaplain. I hope that this confusion has now been dispelled and that you understand that I remain your Chaplain for this year.

There is still a functioning Diocesan Board consisting of the Bishop and Fawna Andrews, the five Deanery Presidents, the Social Action, Family Life and Communications Chairs, as well as the Transitional Team members -Jacquie Howell, Donna Oliver and Janet Pike. They will be guiding us through this year as we discern the 'what next' for our Diocesan Executive. The Transitional Team were given the mandate to propose changes to the ACW Constitution that would give us permission to change the structure of the Executive Committee. I ask you to pray for the whole of the Board during this year of transition, that God will grant them courage, wisdom, and humility in everything they do.

It is my hope that there will be a great deal of consultation between the Transitional Team and the other members of the Board so that everyone is clear of what is happening at each step along the way. Transparency in all things is key to effective leadership. Those changes will be presented to the membership and voted on by all of us at the 2013 Annual Meeting in Muskoka. It will be an important Annual meeting.

It has been, and continues to be, a great blessing to serve as the ACW Chaplain. In the coming year though, I will also be prayerfully considering what God might be asking of me after the Annual in 2013. By then I will have been in this position for over 12 years and perhaps it will be time for a change – for both of us.

While the important work of discernment at the Diocesan Executive level continues this year I urge all the deaneries and parish branches of ACW to continue with the ministries to which God has called you. It never ceases to amaze me when I hear and read of the variety of activities that you are involved with in your deaneries and parishes. There are so many wonderful things happening everywhere and it is a source of great encouragement to me to know how important your sense of mission is. Keep up this great work and remember the words of Mother Teresa when she said: “We can do no great things, only small things with great love.” The LOVE part is the really important bit!

I would like to close with a few thoughts on the Gospel passage illustrated above. It’s from Mark 4: 35-41 – Jesus calming the storm. Please do take a few moments to read it.

Fear is the visceral response of Jesus’ terrified disciples in a frail storm tossed boat and it resonates both in our individual and corporate life as Christians. We are often afraid of the ‘wind and the waves’ that crash around us in our lives, our churches, our ACW groups, and even our cities (this is written two days after the Elliot Lake tragedy). Although we try to be faithful in our Christian lives and witness, like the disciples, we are often overcome with fear. Many of you might be feeling this right now as you think about changes to the ACW’s Constitution. Our own efforts seem so fragile against the enormity of what lies ahead.

When you read the text you will notice that when Jesus wakes from his sleep he doesn’t say to the disciples ;”You have nothing to be afraid of.” Of course Jesus recognises that the storm on that Galilean Sea, like the storms in our lives, are very real and fearsome things. Whether our fears are related to our personal circumstances or the future of our churches and ACW groups there is in this world a great deal to be afraid of.

What does Jesus say? He turns to those he loves and says, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” If, in the midst of all the storms in our lives, as those disciples did, we can turn to Jesus in faith, the storms will never have power over us. Jesus will calm our fears.

You see, God is far mightier than any of the fearsome things that might come our way, and they should never have the last word. Time and time again in the Scriptures those reassuring words, "Do not be afraid" can be heard high above every storm in the Gospel. Not because there is nothing to be afraid of, but because in the midst of the storm, God is there with us.

As we begin this year of discernment and growing together in our faith, let us trust in the God of the storm who journeys alongside us and says to each of us this day: "Do not be afraid. I am always with you."

With every blessing for a wonderful summer. If you wish to email me at any time I can be reached at germond@persona.ca

I remain,

Your ACW Diocesan Chaplain,

Anne

Prayer for Unity

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you, my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly city, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. Amen
(BAS)