

Music and Ministry come together in perfect harmony

There has been something new in the sermons and songs rising to the rafters of Trinity and Primrose United Churches in recent Sundays.

Reverend Candice Bist and musician Bruce Ley, who happens to be the Reverend's husband, work in harmony to create an atmosphere of spiritual joy and learning through their ministry and music.

The couple says they "have only positive things to say about the two congregations." Both have been "very responsive and very appreciative and open to modern theology," says the Reverend.

The change of leadership comes with the recent resignation of Reverend David Howes, as he moves on to new experiences after four years at the Shelburne-Primrose Pastoral Charge.

Reverend Bist has now been hired as a short term, congregational designated minister for Trinity and Primrose. The sister churches have shared a minister for many years. The Pastoral Charge Search Committee is seeking a permanent minister and hopes to have a decision by late summer.

Reverend Ann Harbridge, a designated lay minister, who has been preaching at the United Church in Rosemont for 13 years, has also been hired part-time, to provide leadership support to both councils and congregations.

Reverend Harbridge has served at all levels of the church, including two years as President of the Toronto Conference. Following the death of her husband in 2001, Ann says she "responded to God's call to ministry," pursuing her "passions for the church" including, "preaching, pastoral care, and guiding congregations as they discern their future and seek to be healthy communities of faith."

Reverend Bist's career is filled with interesting paths and turns, including producing, writing and directing children's television programming for TV Ontario (TVO) and working, both as a writer and director, on documentary films.

She and her husband, Bruce Ley, have worked together for over 37 years "co-creating countless children's songs." Although, he plays piano and organ, Mr. Ley has worked in music all his life "experimenting with a wide variety of instruments" as a performer, composer and arranger.

The couple, who live in the area, say they love working together.

When Trinity was in need of both a musical director and a minister at the same time, "it all just came together."

Both Reverend Bist and Reverend Harbridge say their goal is to provide "some quiet continuity and pastoral care, so the congregation can relax and work on finding their new minister."

The two ministers are "a good fit" as a team.

Reverend Bist calls the partnership "very freeing" as it enables her to focus on pastoral care and sermons.

On the musical side of the equation, Bruce Ley says he really likes playing in churches

"They are made for music" he says. "The sound is good and there are often good instruments in place. I like what music is for in a church " you are playing for a good reason."

For most of his career, Bruce has been focused on the instrumental side of music, but over the last decade his interest has turned to

singing.

Trinity choir is very keen and supportive," he says, adding he also hopes to invite local musicians into the church to perform at services.

He says he wants the music to be attractive to people and bring them into the church.

In reflection on her sermons, Reverend Bist says, "people feed their spirituality in different ways."

"Anyone could come to what I teach in my sermons," she says. "In all of the scriptures, Jesus did three things: loved people; taught them in interesting ways; and ministered to their immediate needs."

She says she believes the Christian church should follow him.

"If this was their mantle, churches would quickly re-invent themselves and prosper," she says. "Canada, as a western civilization, was formed with the idea that it would be a Christian country. It is not anymore."

She says the movement used to be from the community to the church, but the church must now ask, "How can we serve the community?"

Both Reverend Bist and Harbridge feel, "There is huge potential in both congregations to minister to the community."

"There is a longing for deep teaching and wisdom," says Reverend Bist of today's changing world. "Despite the errors, the Christian church has something unique to offer to the larger conversation of humanity. If we don't participate, the world will be in trouble."

Sunday service at Primrose begins at 9.15 a.m. Service at Trinity begins at 11 a.m. For more information, call 519-925-2233.

By Marni Walsh