

## 2016-2107 Annual Report RCC John-Peter Smit

I am privileged to again bring my report to the RCC to the Synod of Central Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda. It is an honour to both serve the synod in this manner and to have been able to work so closely with the RCC over many different members.

Again, in many ways this report will not be too terribly different from all the reports preceding it. The synod and indeed the Presbyterian Church continue to struggle with all of the issues around aging and decline that beset every denomination in our country.

As I look back over this year, I see two distinct but related threads of ministry. The first and perhaps most urgent has been helping congregations and ministers identify options for their future. This has included;

- Working with congregations to help them discern their future, with or without buildings and with or without a permanent minister.
- Working with ministers who are facing the closure of their current congregation or its inability to continue with a full time minister who are facing limited options for their future.
- Working with presbyteries as they consider how to best serve their congregations into the future.

So, for instance I am currently Interim Moderator of three congregations in the Presbytery of Temiskaming. These congregations will likely never be able to call a minister again and we are working to adapt to this new reality in a way that allows them to be a vibrant and healthy witness to their respective communities.

The second thread is resourcing congregations and presbyteries for ministry in our current reality. This includes elder training, stewardship, hospitality, conflict and various other kinds of workshops to equip for service. Incidentally, one very bright spot in my ministry this year has been requests from a number of congregations for help in transitions as the result of growth!

In addition to these main themes, I remain responsive to requests for support in situations of conflict and turmoil. I continue to use Natural Church Development as a resource for ministry for a number of congregations. I also try to connect with students, particularly at Knox College, by teaching at least once per semester and by meeting with graduating students to explore the Call process.

In addition to my Synod work, I served as Interim Moderator to a congregation in my presbytery, as well as serving on a commission. I further serve on the General Assembly Council. As well I was a speaker at the Rural Symposium; an ecumenical event focused on Rural Ministry. Finally, in terms of continuing education, I took the first level of training as a transitional minister (Interim Minister)

This is just a sample of the various duties and tasks I undertake over the course of a year. As my work has continued and as the church continues in these challenging times, I find there is more and more need for regional staff to encourage and support ministers, congregations and presbyteries. I am

grateful for the privilege of being able to do this ministry and for the support of the synod and the Presbyterian Church in Canada to be able to continue in this ministry. It is making a difference.

As I look forward to the coming year, most of my ministry will continue as is. However, I will be focusing on two areas of ministry. The first is equipping congregations to continue to serve and thrive without a permanent minister. This is an issue for congregations through the synod and is a reality that continues to grow. The second area of focus is helping congregations navigate periods of transition, particularly transitions of size. It seems to me that these are crucial times and times when support can make a real difference.

Finally, it is my hope that I intend to continue with continuing education this fall. I plan to enroll in a Transitional Ministry Course (in November) specifically designed for denominational, synod and presbytery staff. This is being held in St Louis, Missouri.

Again, thanks to the synod and especially the Regional Consultative Committee for their care and support. It is a blessing and an honour to be a part of this crucial ministry.

Respectfully submitted

John-Peter Smit

In 2016-2017 I worked directly with 28 congregations, 9 presbyteries (including various congregations attending workshops not counted in the previously mentioned 28). I also worked with Knox College, the Rural Ministry Symposium as well as other denominational and ecumenical bodies in the ministry of the Synod.