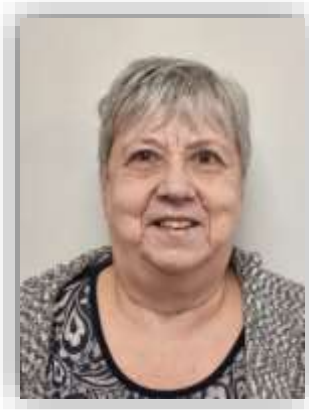


PROFILES – ORDINAND and COMMISSIONAND

The Celebration of Ministry Service for Prairie to Pine Regional Council was held on June 23, 2024, at Dauphin: First United Church. During that service, two Ministry Personnel who have served the United Church for several years as Designated Lay Ministers/Lay Pastoral Ministers who have been recently granted “testamur” as a result of recent actions by GC44, were commissioned to diaconal ministry (Maureen McCartney, Oakbank) and ordained (Ilene Dowd, Dauphin). Click [here](#) to watch the service.



**Ilene Dowd
(Ordinand)**

Beginning at the beginning is a good place to start; so, I guess this profile needs to start *w a-a- a -y* back in a Vacation Bible School led by a Summer Intern and his wife in the little village of Graysville, 7 miles from Carman Manitoba. My memory of this event is no clearer than the memory of my baptism, in that small village church in the fall of the year I was born. However, family lore has it that my enthusiasm for VBS led my parents to take an active part in the other activities at St. Paul’s. During my growing up years, the church and the community I encountered there, was my second home. Sunday School, Junior choir, Explorers, and later CGIT in Carman, plus summer camp at Rock Lake United Church camp all played a role in my faith formation.

After a couple of years at the University of Winnipeg, marriage and family soon followed. We settled down to farm for 5 years in the community where my husband Murray was born and raised - Glenboro Mb. Here our two sons, Russell and Stephen were born, and Murray suffered a farm-related accident that could have been, but was not fatal. We had just begun to get involved with the church in Glenboro, when circumstances took us on an adventure to the community of Ethelbert, north of Dauphin. In May of 1978, we set out with a caravan of trucks pulling trailers loaded with machinery, cars full of household goods and children, and a transfer carrying our cattle to move to what would become, and still is our home south of Ethelbert.

While establishing ourselves in the new community we became involved in the Ethelbert United Church. After a couple of years, two daughters, Erin and Allison were born to complete our family. Involvement in the local church increased as Ethelbert became part of a Joint Pastoral charge with Gilbert Plains. Life was as it was for farming communities of the late 1980’s. God must have thought that our family needed an extra shake-up, for about that time there was a need, in what was then Northland Presbytery, for someone to do twice a month worship services at Pine River United Church. I volunteered to give it a try. I had taught Sunday School – how hard could leading worship and preaching be! I soon found out the difference. Thanks to the very patient people at Pine River, and with the support of the Presbytery and MNWO Conference, I became a Lay Supply Minister in 1989.

Things could have ended there, except that the University of Winnipeg had a distance education program for a Certificate in Theology available at the time. Rev. Dexter Van Dyke – minister at Dauphin First United, and Rev. Bill Richards, living part-time in the community of Dauphin, served as mentors for me as I embarked on this course. They also provided sacraments when required at Pine River. With their help, I was able to complete the required coursework, receiving my Certificate in Theology in 1993.

Thoughts of entering Lay Pastoral Ministry training became a reality when the Russell-Inglis-Silverton Pastoral Charge gave me the opportunity to train under the auspices of the then Assiniboine Presbytery. From January 1992 – June 1996, I travelled between home and Russell, sharing in a team ministry with Rev. Rick McCorrister, as well as engaging in direct supervision and study on a bi-weekly basis with Elgin Hall, minister in Minnedosa, at the time. It was also during these years that I attended the three-week intensive residential training periods each June as required by the then LPM program. My training was received in Saskatchewan, the first year at St. Andrews College, and the last two years at Calling Lakes in Fort Qu'Appelle.

After the tragic death of our son Stephen, in a 1995 New Year's Eve traffic accident, my interview for recognition was postponed, to be held later in the spring of 1996. I was recognized as a Lay Pastoral Minister at the June MNWO Conference meeting of 1996. Thus, began my journey in ministry, as I was appointed to the Gilbert-Plains-Ethelbert Pastoral Charge beginning July 1, 1996 - with a funeral.

The next ten years proved to be a time of testing, learning, and growing as I served these two communities where I was known and knew many of the congregation from earlier church involvement. During this period of time, I was also involved with the wider church serving on Presbytery and Conference Committees. As I look back on those days, they were too busy, with not enough time to recharge and refresh those parts of me that needed care. With some regret, I ended my relationship with the Gilbert Plains- Ethelbert pastoral charge in December of 1996.

However, it wasn't long before I was back preaching, this time as Sunday Supply at Winnipegosis United Church while working at a variety of part-time secular jobs during the week. Thanks to the community of faith in Winnipegosis, I was able to share five years with them before they closed. After that, the Presbyterian Church in Winnipegosis invited me to lead worship as a preaching supply. With the support of these two congregations, I was able to nurture and renew my focus in ministry, while exploring new avenues of service in education and social services.

With a new name of Designated Lay Minister, created by the National Church, I ventured back into full-time ministry in 2016, when I applied for an appointment for a full-time position with Dauphin First United Church. It felt like "coming home" to be accepted for the position as many in the congregation had already played a big part in my life and ministry. I was familiar with the building and the history of the congregation. The first few years of this relationship saw a lot of changes. The congregations sold the building - choosing to put time and energy into ministry, not property management. Then Covid- 19 hit, and the way of doing ministry effectively took a whole new path. Learning on the way, a lot of energy and time was spent in self- reflection on my part as well as the congregational leaders.

When the question of phasing out or doing away with the Designated Lay Ministry stream came up, I began to realize just how deeply I had come to understand myself as a minister called to a vocation. It was a painful time to think that the church I loved and had served for so long appeared not to value the gifts and talents I had shared over the years. I struggled to feel affirmed, but with the help of some very astute people around me, I was eventually able to hope that the idea of ordination for DLMS might someday come a reality. That it would become a reality so quickly. and I would be able to be a part of it was the most gratifying of surprises.

Ordination has been a long time coming - a goal I never expected to achieve, yet accept with gratitude. Thank you to those who have walked with me along the way. Thank you to my immediate family for their patience and grace. Thank you to those who have been mentors, teachers, and supporters throughout the years. Thank you to the seven classes of nursery school students who showed me we can all get along if we try. Thank you to the various communities of faith who have taught me so much - have worshiped with me, and shared with me as we have learned of God's love together.



**Maureen McCartney
(Commissionand)**

Liverpool England was where I grew up, in a home with my Nana, Mum, and two brothers. My oldest brother Brian was crippled; this I believe is where my advocacy started. Although four years younger than him, I was very much his protector! Our lives literally revolved around County Road Methodist Church. 'County,' as it was affectionately called, was a hub of activity. Sunday School at 3 pm, Children's Evening Service at 6.30 pm, and Church Parade once a month on Sunday morning, with Girl Guides, Brownies, Boys Brigade, and Life Boys packing the pews.



Almost every night of the week was spent at this bustling, active church. From the time I was 8 years old, my brother Colin, (3 years older than me) and many church kids took the 'Scripture Exam.' We had classes after Sunday School and once or twice during the week for months before the exam. When the day arrived, we had learned by memory: a psalm, a passage from both a gospel and an epistle, and had studied a theme from both Old and New Testaments. We wrote a 'long hand' examination and our papers were sent to Methodist House in London for grading. We anxiously waited for our results to arrive in the mail. On the Sunday School Anniversary, we were presented with a certificate (see insert) and a book. It was this yearly activity that engendered in me the love of the scriptures and reading (reading was also encouraged in my home by my Nana). I can still recite some of the passages I memorized in my youth (perhaps not as perfectly as I once could!). I have attached a photo of 2 of my certificates from 1953 & 4 when I was 10 and 11!

It was also at 'County,' I was introduced to 'Diaconal Ministry.' Most Methodist churches had an 'Ordained Minister' and a 'Deaconess.' The Deaconess' title was 'Sister;' her role was 'Education, Pastoral Care and Social Justice' (sound familiar?). These women were allowed to preach occasionally; they were celibates; (had to leave the order if they married); they wore a navy-blue uniform and mostly rode bicycles to deliver

pastoral care around town. During my childhood and teen years, along with my much-loved S.S. teachers, Deaconesses were my role models: Sister Phyllis Shafto, Sister Kathleen Share, and 3 favourite S.S. teachers: Mr. Milne, Miss Barbara Swain, and Miss Ivy Champion. Ivy Champion's faith shone from deep within her and I can still hear her delightful laugh ringing in my ears; she was known as 'Auntie Ivy' to the entire, very large, youth group! I am so grateful for these wonderful pillars of the church who led me to Christ by their rich example. It is little wonder that I still love church, even though sometimes it confounds me!

I came to Canada as a young, spirited Registered Nurse with the goal of having a two-year adventure! Apparently, the adventure continues to happen and Canada is my home and I am a proud Canadian. Once in Canada, I joined and was involved in committees, choirs, S.S., and youth work in the Baptist Church. Then early 1990s, I left the church completely for a while before trying out John Black Mem. U.C. Entering JBUC felt like I had somehow returned to my roots. The line in T.S. Elliot's poem, 'Little Gidding' speaks to me. *"We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."* The Church felt 'new' again and the fact I could ask difficult questions and not be judged for asking them was very appealing to me.

Introduced to Diaconal Ministry by Anne Duncan I had NO intention of becoming a minister! However, I believe God had a different idea. After speaking at the funeral of a dear friend, I was challenged by one of my daughters: 'Mum when will you stop messing around and go into ministry.' Like Sarah laughing at the visitor in scripture, I retorted, "I am too old!"

In 1999, Heather Robbins was introduced at John Black as a ministry student doing a year-long pastoral care placement (she had white hair, my curiosity was peaked!). I became part of her Lay Facilitation Team and the spark became a flame and lo and behold I entered CCS in June 2000.

I took the 3-week LDM, Social Ministry year, Pastoral Care year, 2 reflection years and decided to leave to pursue my degree, eventually becoming a recognized DLM. Although I have served the church as a congregational minister, I have always regretted not becoming Diaconal. Diaconia is my calling, always was, and always will be. I am grateful to the G.C. for the opportunity to be granted Testamur.

I loved serving both Rosser and Grosse Isle Pastoral Charge, Oak Bank, and Dugald congregations, and thank them for the wonderful support I have received over the years.

Many people have encouraged me on my journey, too many to name, and in fear of leaving someone out, I will not name individuals. Thank you all for the love, encouragement, faith, and belief in me since I began this journey in 2000. I must mention the Rev Paul Campbell who became an important mentor, confidante, and encourager who truly believed in me. I miss him and will remember him always with gratitude.

Many blessings.
Maureen A. McCartney
