

## **Commitment to 'Reach Out in Loving Service' Deepens**

### **Hazel Atkins**

On Sunday, May 9, we welcomed Bishop Mark MacDonald and Cynthia Patterson, representing the Council of the North, who signed an agreement with St. Matthew's to enter into partnership on the Suicide Prevention Project.

In the agreement, St. Matthew's has undertaken, through the Outreach Committee, to do the following:

- Prepare an information sheet on the suicide crisis within the 11 territories of the Council of the North,
- Collaborate with the Council of the North's Suicide Prevention Coordinator on the development of promotional and educational materials,
- Conduct an education campaign within the parish on the suicide crisis and the Council of the North response,
- Organize ongoing speaking engagements with the Council of the North,
- Engage with local Indigenous groups and other organizations to establish a local partnership, and
- Hold an event in fall 2010 to raise funds for the Suicide Prevention Project.

Bishop Mark delivered the sermon in this very special combined Mothers' Day and Partnership Service. He opened the sermon in the Ojibwa language: "I greet you as my relatives," reminding us that we are all family, moving together with the Indigenous Ministry into a new day. Bishop Mark reminded us that there are still a great many problems among our Indigenous peoples that should not be in a nation like Canada. "We live in a world that has become toxic to our own children; what we are trying to do here is to define a new world, a new reality."

He told us a bit about the direction the Council of the North has decided to take to address the most pressing and inflamed social issue in the Indigenous communities of Northern Canada. And St. Matthew's has chosen to help. In doing so, we begin to model a form of Christianity that is about joining together in compassion: "the Elders still believe that we can create a world that will be a great blessing for our children and our grand-children."

In this very special Mothers' Day Service, we prayed, "for all mothers throughout the world, for expectant mothers, wondering and waiting; for new mothers.... We ask that you bless all mothers.... We remember and pray especially for the mothers of our Canadian North, that their children may prosper and may become more fully your sons and daughters, recipients of your gifts and bearers of your hope."

The Service concluded with the signing of the Partnership Agreement between St. Matthew's and the Council of the North Suicide Prevention Program, and with a very powerful singing of Amazing Grace.

*"Let this light, let this hope, let this vision go forth from this place. This is our great challenge and our blessing. Amen."*

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