

*Saskatchewan team ministries***When couples are both clergy**

Sunday mornings are hectic at the Corkum home in Melfort, Sask. Marilyn Anderson Corkum, a diaconal minister, and Rev. Bill Corkum, an ordained minister, work together to organize themselves and their two sons before leaving for the local United Church to lead in worship.

Bill, Nathan and Peter head out the door first. Bill looks over the sermon one last time and checks to see that the sanctuary is prepared. When Marilyn arrives, the two ministers discuss the service again and divide their leadership duties. Marilyn meets with the Christian Education workers to ensure their program is in place. The boys, ages nine and eight, cut up paper, play with a Nerf ball, and otherwise entertain themselves. While Bill settles in behind the pulpit, Marilyn takes a seat in the pews until it is her turn to lead. The boys either join their mother or sit with friends in the congregation.

The Corkums have worked together in team ministry in Saskatchewan for all of their married life. They served Maple Creek for four years, then moved to Melfort, a community of 6,000, almost eight years ago. Their commitment to marriage also involved a commitment to working together in team ministry, said Bill. The Corkums have always worked in positions calling for one-and-a-half ministers; Marilyn had taken the half-time role. But, "For the past three or four years, we did make the change to each of us working equal time and



From left: Marilyn Anderson Corkum, Margaret Read, Barbara Ann Bryant-Anstie, Ken Anstie, Bill Corkum and Eric Read: sharing interests, understanding and support.

equal salary," says Bill.

The Corkums are one of three diaconal-ordained married ministerial teams in Saskatchewan's Prince Albert Presbytery. Barbara Ann Bryant-Anstie and Rev. Ken Anstie have worked together in Nipawin, a community of 5,000, since a few months after their marriage five years ago. Although Margaret and Rev. Eric Read have been married 34 years, they have worked together for only seven years, the last four of them in Tisdale, a town of 3,500. Barbara Ann and Margaret each work half-time, while their husbands work full-time.

These minister couples were all called to pastoral charges in the northern Saskatchewan Presbytery because the congregations there recognized the attributes of diaconal and ordained ministers and the benefits of calling a married couple. There was work for more than one minister, but not enough work or funding for two. Ordained and diaconal ministers may

have different skills and training, and the couples were willing to split the workload to fill the one-and-a-half positions.

Diaconal ministers are commissioned for education, service and pastoral care while ordained ministers are trained to work in word, sacrament, as well as pastoral care. Ordained ministers usually focus on conducting worship and pastoral care while diaconal ministers concentrate on educational ministry, helping congregations with outreach and pastoral care.

Douglas Phillips, a lay person in the Nipawin-Codette charge which the Ansties serve, says the diaconal-ordained team has been good for the charge. Having ministers who are married also has advantages. "There's a certain complementary force there that's expressed in their work." The ministers say their marriages help them to be more trusting and adaptable during worship services. The spouses are not as easily threatened by a preference for one minister over

DEANA DRIVER/OBSERVER PHOTO

the other, and they encourage each other's ministry. Through trial and error, these couples have all developed their own areas of expertise and preferences over the years.

Margaret works with study groups, the Christian Education committee and Sunday school teachers while Eric handles funerals, weddings and baptisms. They work together on the worship service, but Eric does most of the preaching.

Barbara Ann spends much of her time visiting with seniors in Nipawin and working with mid-week and Sunday school groups. Ken does worship preparation and adult education, and both do hospital chaplaincy work.

At Melfort, Bill Corkum takes the lead in worship services and conducts most of the funerals. Marilyn Corkum concentrates on church school and adult education, and they share tasks such as counselling and administrative duties. The Corkums have to have a precise outline of their duties because they have two young sons. When one parent is not working, he or she is at home with the boys. Neither of the other minister couples has children at home.

An advantage of team ministry is that one minister can pick up the pieces if the other falls ill. Three years ago, Eric had a heart attack and was off work. "Margaret did everything. We just continued on," he said. "She went full time and that was acceptable to the congregation."

But it is a constant struggle to keep a half-time job to half-time hours, and the ministers sometimes feel pressure

to avoid taking holidays with their spouses. When there is a family occasion which both adults would like to attend, they feel obliged to be back at home on Sunday to lead in worship. "We may feel that more than the congregation feels that," says Ken.

Douglas Phillips agrees. Joint vacations and special occasions were minor points in agreeing to a married team at Nipawin-Codette, says Phillips. The Nipawin church Board decided early on that they could make alternate arrangements for those occasions.

There is also an ongoing concern about the congregation's ability to pay two ministers, the couples say. Ruth Olson, a lay person from Melfort, says: "The congregation is concerned now more than they have been about the costs of the two of them," but there is more than enough work for two people. At Nipawin, the topic will come up again at the annual meeting. Givings have dropped off because of backlash to the 1988 General Council's statement on ordaining homosexual candidates. And the rural economy is still struggling.

There has also been some resistance in Melfort to a diaconal minister doing preaching and funeral services, but Olson herself has nothing but praise for the Corkums. "They share the pressure of the job. With the diaconal training, Marilyn gives excellent leadership in Christian Education, Sunday school and the UCW. That's been quite a help." Bill's visible roles as minister, husband and father have also been a good influence on the congregation, she said.

Eric enjoys the opportunity to work with his spouse after years of working alone. "I find it exciting in many ways," he says. But he also knows some of the pitfalls of working with his wife. "You don't have as many team meetings as you should have," because it's just as easy to talk about work at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The Corkums are more strict about keeping most of their church work at church, because their sons demand it. "Not church again," they moan upon encountering a room full of visitors after school one day. But the boys seize the opportunity to sell a few boxes of chocolate almonds to raise funds for a local project, then skip off to their rooms while Mom and Dad talk about church again.

Another danger of working in team ministry is that one's weaknesses aren't dealt with, said Ken. "If I have a weakness dealing with children's education, Barbara Ann can look after that," he said. A conscious effort must be made to work on self improvement.

Still, these three diaconal-ordained couples share interests and understanding. Working in the same Presbytery, they support each other through occasional meetings or suppers and will periodically cover for the others on Sundays. The couples credit local and Presbytery pastoral relations committees and Saskatchewan Conference office staff for accepting and encouraging diaconal ministries in the province. "It's Saskatchewan Conference, and Saskatchewan Conference has always been open to women and open to teams and any innovation," says Margaret.

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