

# Calgary parishes mark endings, new beginnings with amalgamation

## A moving service

By Donna Uncles

It's 2:30 on a warm Sunday afternoon. Step inside St. Michael and All Angel's Anglican Church on 16th Avenue North in Calgary. The church bell has been ringing out our news to the city. It is time to mark a time of change, of new direction, of new beginnings.

The scriptures for the day - Oct. 5th - make promises to the chosen ones. We look at each other, other chosen ones, in our running shoes and Tilley hats, cowboy boots and patent leather, vestments and track suits, three-piece suits and shorts, walkers and wheelchairs, bikes and baby carriages. All are gathered in this place to worship almighty God. We sing "The Church's One Foundation" loudly and "How Firm a Foundation" even louder!

The children lead us singing "Jesus Loves Me" just before Jesus' prayer for us in John 17, today's gospel reading. Archbishop Barry Curtis uses autumn imagery for the homily: the rich mixture of colors, a reminder of our rich diversity; blue sky and water in contrast with deep browns and greys, fond memories, profound sadness and grief; splashes of yellow, dabs of red and gold - our joy and our hope. The great glorious autumn day God made for us comes streaming right into St. Michael's through stained glass designs, through open doors and windows, through the music and the Word, through our prayers, our silence, our tears and through one another.

Almost suddenly it is time to leave. The words of de consecration of St. Michael and All Angels' Anglican Church are spoken. The icons of faith are removed from this place: crosses, banners, books, Bibles, the baptismal font, the altar. We gather up the sacred items of worship to accompany us today as we journey through the streets of Calgary.

Step out into the street: the parade assembles at Balmoral School. The HMCS Tecumseh Marching Band has already arrived and we step in time to "Lift High the Cross" and "Onward Christian Soldiers."

Traffic is stopped at intersections. Horns honk and dogs bark, adding their joyful noise to ours. Leaves clatter down



Photo courtesy Larry MacDougal, Calgary Herald

### TRIUMPHANT PROCESSION: Parishioners marched from St. Michael's to St. Cyprian's.

steadily today. The wind lifts and tumbles them in brief acrobat antics and people stop raking them to wave at us and watch us parade by. Other residents on the route come to the window, curious about all the commotion, give us a wave and clap in time with the band. The procession now includes a city bus, police escort, the marching band, a van carrying St. Michael's altar, another with the font, a few people in cars and lots of marchers.

It takes just over an hour to hike to St. Cyprian's Anglican Church on 19th Street. The non-hikers have assembled outside to welcome the parade. The temporary sign is unveiled which reads, The Anglican (Episcopal) Parish of St. Cyprian and St. Michael and All Angels. Sacred items of worship are unloaded and the procession into the sanctuary continues.

The wardens from St. Cyprian's and St. Michael's offer the amalgamation covenant and parishioners declare their intention to join together for future ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. Water is presented and poured into the baptismal font. The jostling, rather rowdy royal priesthood is silent; we can hear the water being poured. During the renewal of baptismal vows, presenta-

tions are made which represent the various ministries of the parish.

We quietly watch the Bibles, chalices, pattens and prayer books being presented. The children bring in their banners and posters. We are elbow to elbow and nose to nose with each other, yet there is a quiet hush.

Archbishop Curtis offers personal words of encouragement and support and then the Peace of Christ is shared. We spend a few minutes embracing the peace of Christ in one another as we prepare to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Late-afternoon sunshine floods a golden pool of light over the Lord's Table. People from Lethbridge are here, from Canmore, Three Hills, Ponoka, Red Deer, Innisfail; greetings are received from parishes throughout Calgary and the diocese. We are encouraged by the prayers and presence of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The final hymn is "Lift High the Cross." Quite a day, this day that the Lord made. A meal has been prepared for us - we are a bit weary and ever so hungry.

We catch a breath of crisp autumn air. Anticipation is in the air as we step into the future - accompany us, Lord.