50th anniversary of ordination for Canon Michael McKinley

Robin Tilgner
Special to the News

Canon Michael McKinley is joined by his wife Olive as they cut a cake at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of his ordination in the Anglican Church which was held at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville last Sunday, June 26.

Canon Michael McKinley marked the 50th anniversary of his ordination in the Anglican Church last Sunday, June 26 at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville.

Canon Michael, who is an honourary assistant to Rev. Jane McCaig and the people of St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville, celebrated this very special day with the community of St. Thomas, his family and his friends at the 9 a.m. Sunday morning service and with coffee, cake and reminiscences after the service.

To further mark this day, at Canon Michael's request, the parish collected food and monetary donations for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre which has many refugees among its clientele. The welfare of recent refugees is an issue that deeply concerns Michael.

Canon Michael, who was born in Belfast in Northern Ireland, received his degrees from Trinity College in Dublin. He was subsequently ordained to the Diaconate on June 26, 1966 in the Diocese of Connor, Northern Ireland, followed by ordination to the Priesthood a year later.

After curacies in Belfast, Montreal and St. Catharines, Michael served as Rector in the churches of St. Brendan's in Port Colborne and St. Peter's in Hamilton and then for 25 years at St. Thomas in St. Catharines until his retirement.

Michael and his wife Olive have three children, Peter, Catherine and Janet, and six grandchildren and now reside in Kanata.

Celebration at St. Thomas

They fully enjoy the time that they now have to travel.

Canon Michael's warm Irish accent has not diminished over time and one is certain that it added a great deal to his theatrical performances for which he was noted in his previous parish. Probably few have forgotten his performances as "Dr. George Bradman" in the production of "Blithe Spirit" or as the "Bishop of Lax" in the play "Pools Paradise." Perhaps Michael could be persuaded to come out of his

A younger Canon Michael McKinley

theatrical retirement!

Canon Michael was prominent in the liturgical renewal movement among churches in the 1980's and 1990's to make worship spaces more "user friendly" following the guidance of leaders such as the former Anglican Primate Michael Peers.

Canon Michael and the people of St. Thomas in St. Catharines, after many challenges, revamped the worship space to reflect the need of the community to worship and to conduct activities in a flexible manner.

To quote from an article from the Jan. 2005 Anglican Journal:

"It was not an easy task convincing a congregation to change. 'It was a big hurdle even just to remove the pews,' recalls Mr. McKinley. 'I found that some people were attached to the trappings of Christianity, not the heart of Christianity. It was about the seven last words, 'We never did it that way before'…. After much prayer, persistence and education, the call for change prevailed…"

This left a lasting legacy and an example for others to follow.

Although retired, Canon Michael has been able to offer through his ministry to the community of St. Thomas a challenge to keep the faith and the church moving forward into the future. An energetic and erudite speaker, Michael's exploration of theology encourages each listener, whether in agreement or not on the finer points, to explore more fully his or her own faith journey.

The people of St. Thomas continue to be grateful for the presence of Michael and Olive among them and the gifts that each one brings to St. Thomas and to the wider community.

JOHN BRUMMELL/METROLAND

Joe Chennette, left, congratulates Canon Michael McKinley, right, on the 50th anniversary of his ordination in the Anglican Church at a celebration at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville last Sunday, June 26.