

## **Remembering our Rural Ministry Heritage – Memorial Tribute to Dr. R.F. (Bob) and Janet Schnell**

The lives of Dr. R.F.(Bob) and Janet Schnell were rooted in rural Saskatchewan and those roots nurtured every part of their life and ministry in St. Andrew's College, in the Communities of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, and in the United Church.

### **Scholastic Contributions**

Bob Schnell returned to His Alma Mater in 1943 to serve as Professor of Old Testament at St. Andrew's College, and Professor of Hebrew at the University of Saskatchewan. He carried on this work for 35 years while also assuming various administrative responsibilities for the College. In 1955 he became the College's Principal.

For ten years the Extension Fund Campaign consumed a generous part of the Principal's time and energy as he worked closely with Saskatchewan Conference and visited dozens of congregations throughout the Province. His friendly, pragmatic approach was always appreciated and the College building stands as a monument to his vision, tenacity and optimism.

Dr. Schnell was recognized for his scholarship and teaching abilities and commitment to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. His articles were published in the Interpreter's Bible and in book reviews. He and Dr. Stanly Frost prepared the Psalm Selection of the Service Book (published in 1969).

He spent the summers of 1962 and 1964 as a member of the Drew-McCormick Archaeological Expedition at biblical Shechem, and brought back even more enthusiasm for the subject he loved to teach.

In an ordination sermon delivered one year before his death (1978) he said, "I say to you 'Aspire to the prophetic office which involves intimate work with God: a clear eye, a keen judgment and a courageous honesty. And aspire also to the anguishing, passionate love of the intercessor who dares to wrestle with God for the blessing which God himself desires to give to those who seek it with their whole heart. And be assured the God is faithful; he will show you his glory --- as much as you can stand, and as much as you need.'"

### **Team Ministry**

From the very beginning Janet and Bob Schnell were always a team.

Janet's name was legendary in the music fraternity in Saskatoon and Bob not only played first violin for the Symphony, but also brought his fiddle out for less formal settings.

Students, both in theology and pre-theology, always enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of the Schnell home. One student couple remembers the couple arriving at the students' new quarters, their arms laden with a bouquet of white peonies from their garden. They were generous and gracious with friends from college, from church and from the community at large.

Bob even offered to supervise a year-round out-of-town student field. This allowed him to connect with grass-roots folks, visit and oversee pastoral care, and see how his students related their classroom lessons with the demands of practical work of ministry. Janet served as a coach when a student felt hesitant to directly approach so revered a supervisor.

Neither of the Schnell's strayed far from their rural roots: he from Aberdeen, Saskatchewan, and she from Floral. It is so appropriate that their ashes lie mixed together, resting in the columbarium overlooking the old family farm at Floral. The land, the community, strong pastoral care, gentle humour and the sharing of stories are wonderful gifts of ministry these two persons have shared with all whose lives touched theirs.

Joyce Sasse, March 2009