

New Anglican minister arrives

April 13-1988

By Alice Gray-Donald

Even though he grew up in southern Ontario, Rev. John Stematt likes to consider himself a northerner today.

He has been a priest with the Anglican Church in various posts in northern Ontario including Moose Factory and Hornepayne, as well as Rupert House in northern Quebec. Stematt is now the new Anglican priest for Iroquois Falls, Matheson and Monteith. He said that he and his wife Mary Lee are just getting settled into their new home with their four children: Edward, 15, Juliana, 14, Christopher, 11, and William, 3.

Stematt was born and raised in London, Ontario. He went to university in Saskatoon where he joined the air force in 1962. He was sent to do his basic training in St.-Hubert, Quebec. While he was there, he spent much of his time in Montréal, which he found to be a very warm city. From there, he was moved to Clinton, Ontario to do his trade training. Once his training was completed, he moved to Winnipeg to do his first posting. He lived in Winnipeg for two and a half years until he was sent to Ottawa.

During his four years in Ottawa, Stematt became very involved with the chapel activities with the Air Force Youth Group. He headed the young people's group, organized youth conferences, sang in the church choir and sat on the church council.

In 1970, he was posted to the Canadian Forces Station in Ramore. During that time, he lived in Matheson and became involved in the activities of St. John's Church. He became the lay reader and shortly after he met his future wife, Mary Lee Metzlar, who was very involved with the church activities of a different denomination.

In 1972, they were married at the Base Chapel at the Air Force Station in Rockcliffe and moved to Saskatoon so that Stematt could begin his religious training. He became the proud father of Edward (1973) and Juliana (1974) before he graduated from the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad in 1976.

Soon after graduation, he was ordered a deacon at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Timmins. He became a member of the diocese of Moosonee and took up residence in Moose Factory, where he remained for two

and a half years.

In 1977, he was ordained priest at St. Matthew's Cathedral and was appointed to the parish of Rupert House, Quebec, 90 miles north and east of Moose Factory. Part of his job, at Rupert House, was to build the rectory which he did almost completely on his own. The only form of transportation available at the time in both Moose Factory and Rupert House was by skidoo, which Edward and Juliana thoroughly enjoyed.

In 1981, Stematt and his family moved to Hornepayne where they have lived for the past six and a half years. The town of Hornepayne is similar to Iroquois Falls in terms of the economy. Many of the people in Hornepayne work for C.N. Rail. The employment rate is not

quite as steady as the one in Iroquois Falls because of the many changes that C.N. is presently going through. Hornepayne is also much more isolated than Iroquois Falls because of where it is located. Due to this feeling of isolation, Hornepayne generates many of its own activities, and it is a town with a great deal of community spirit.

What made Stematt decide to move to Iroquois Falls? He and his wife, Mary Lee, have a great deal of affection for Matheson and they also have many friends and acquaintances in Iroquois Falls.

The diocese of Moosonee is the only one in Canada that is fully trilingual (English, French and Cree). It is also the only diocese in Canada that covers areas in both Ontario and Quebec. The only

one that is larger is in the Canadian arctic. The diocese of Moosonee covers an area of 350,000 square miles and is only serviced by 26 priests.

Stematt has found a great deal of difference between the lifestyles in southern and northern Ontario. For one thing, he thinks northerners are much more patient people because they must wait longer for things to happen, and that they also have less resources so they must make more use of them. Consequently, he believes there is more involvement in community activities and the townspeople are much more close-knit. He sees northerners as being much closer to life and death issues and are less pretentious.

"You do not get lost in a crowd up here," Stematt said.