

STREAMS OF JUSTICE

Let justice flow down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24)

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Presbyterians and restorative justice ministries

"I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt 25:36)

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) is a national organization that promotes restorative justice. Restorative justice is based on the understanding that crime is a violation of people and relationships. Justice is served when those who commit an offence are given opportunities to redress the harm caused. These stories are from Presbyterians who are involved in restorative justice ministries.

Rev. Tom Brownlee is a retired Presbyterian minister who was a prison chaplain in Calgary for many years.

He writes:

In early August 2016, my wife and I attended a wedding in Edmonton. Our connection was with the bride. I had met her about 10 or so years ago at the Women's Unit in the Calgary Remand Centre. I received a request to visit Christina (not her real name). Thus began a journey that continues today. I watched her grow and mature as she took her first steps in the Christian faith. It was my great joy to baptize her in the Remand Centre. Later, I journeyed with her through a pregnancy, her release from the Edmonton Institution for Women, and the beginning of her relationship with the man who is now her husband.



Christina has struggled over the years with childhood trauma, addiction and poverty. However, she is a determined woman and she wanted a new life. Going to prison gave her the chance for one. Christina is an inspiration to others, especially her younger sister. She has received permission to go back into the Edmonton Institution for Women to work with the inmates there – a rare privilege. She is also at university, pursuing a degree in Sociology. Now with a wonderful family, Christina has a bright future to look forward to. With God's grace, she continues to live one day at a time.

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Restorative justice

Rev. Brad Shoemaker is a chaplain at Maplehurst Correctional Complex, a provincial medium-maximum security prison and remand centre in Milton ON. He writes:

Many incarcerated people choose to live differently after release. They often don't know where to start and feel they won't fit into a community. Restorative justice compels us to help people bridge the gap from being in prison to living as a contributing member of society. I refer inmates who show a commitment to change to a program called *Aftercare*.



The *New Life Prison Ministry Aftercare* team interviews inmates before their release to identify their needs. They find out about pre-existing community supports, like family, and identify additional needs like addictions counseling and mental health support. *Aftercare* will connect inmates with faith groups and assists both inmate and a faith community leader to discuss how the inmate can become part of the faith community. Supporting people who are trying to change their lives helps prevent recidivism.

Rebecca Bromwich represents The Presbyterian Church in Canada on CCJC's Board. She writes:

I had the opportunity to attend the National Restorative Justice Symposium this November in Halifax. This symposium is an annual national gathering of practitioners, policy-makers, researchers, law-makers and academics.



An innovative restorative justice initiative profiled at the Symposium was the Centreline *Studio in Uniacke Square* in Halifax. This is a recording studio where teens can spend time making music and connect with social workers and community support. It is a partnership between *Communities and Uniacke Square Engaging* (C.A.U.S.E.) and the Halifax Regional Police. The studio was opened in response to demands for a space for youth activities. The Halifax Housing Authority provided the space and the Halifax North Memorial Public Library funded the project. It demonstrates how restorative justice initiatives include providing young people with opportunities that deter vulnerable youth from committing offenses in the first place.

Celebrating God's Garden

In June 2016, 25 Presbyterians attended the *Delighting in God's Garden* retreat at Crieff Hills Community. The goal was to create an immersive learning and sharing forum to foster a sense of awe and love of God's creation. Participants walked Crieff's outdoor labyrinth, planted a tree, did star-gazing, and shared information about church greening initiatives. Speaker Stephen Bede Scharper, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto Mississauga and School of the Environment, talked about the biblical imperative to care for God's creation. Rev. Kristine O'Brien led a communion service in Crieff Hill's garden.

If you would like to host a similar retreat in your presbytery or synod, Justice Ministries would be delighted to hear from you. Contact Katharine Masterton at kmasterton@presbyterian.ca



Retreat participants plant a tree which is a native species to the area.

Merry Christmas from Justice Ministries

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation. Isaiah 52:7

What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:3-5

These passages from Isaiah and John speak of hope, of the dawning of a new day, of a peace that is not just the absence of war, but includes justice, forgiveness and right relationships. Darkness does not overcome the light.

This issue of *Streams of Justice* shares stories about restorative justice, care for God's creation and restoring right relations with Indigenous people. Change and transformation are indeed possible.

With adequate support, men and women who have served time in prison can successfully re-integrate back

into the community. The article about Shoal Lake 40 reminds us that much remains to be done in our journey of healing and reconciliation. Too many Indigenous communities lack what a majority of Canadians take for granted - clean and safe water.

We are blessed to walk with Indigenous people who generously share their gifts, like Imelda Perley, a Wolastoqiyik and Elder in Residence at the University of New Brunswick who shared her considerable gifts and wisdom at a KAIROS Blanket Exercise hosted by St. Andrew's PC in Fredericton.

Though there is much darkness in the world, it will not overcome the light. For each step walked in hope and in peace, we give thanks to God.

Merry Christmas from Carragh, Katharine and Stephen

KAIROS' Blanket Exercise on the road

In Fredericton

On Saturday morning, November 19 a group of Presbyterians gathered in St. Andrew's in Fredericton to participate in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise. Stephen Allen, Associate Secretary of Justice Ministries, led the workshop. Imelda Perley is Wolastoqiyik from Tobique First Nation, St. Mary's First Nation and Houlton Band of Maliseets (United States). She is an Elder-in-Residence at the University of New Brunswick. She teaches the Wolastoqey language at the University of New Brunswick and the University of Maine. Imelda promotes good will, peace, healing and harmony among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We were blessed to have Imelda attend the workshop, and co-lead the conversations that followed. Our time together ended with lunch: smoked salmon, prepared in the Wolastoq tradition.

Helen Morag McKinnon is a member of St. Andrew's in Fredericton.



Imelda Perley

In Avonton

On November 20, Katharine Masterton and Carragh Erhardt led Avonton Presbyterian Church (near Stratford ON) in an adaptation of KAIROS' Blanket Exercise during its worship service. The worship version of the Blanket Exercise is condensed into a 20-minute message and incorporates a series of symbolic items to suit the context of a worship service. The heart of the exercise is the same; blankets are folded throughout the exercise to demonstrate the loss of Indigenous land to European settlers and the number of volunteers directly involved in the activity declines to correspond with the decline in the Indigenous population due to diseases and hunger.

Following the service Katharine and Carragh had conversations with congregants about what steps they could take to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Consider leading the KAIROS Blanket Exercise during a worship service to mark Healing and Reconciliation Sunday (May 21) or Aboriginal Day Sunday (June 18).

Shoal Lake 40 and Access to Water

Shoal Lake 40 is an Ojibwa community on Treaty 3 territory. It is in the Eastman Region of Manitoba and the Kenora District of Ontario. Nearly 100 years ago, the city of Winnipeg had depleted local potable water supplies and looked to Shoal Lake to meet future water demand.

The community was located at the mouth of Falcon River on Shoal Lake. In 1914, the community was displaced to a peninsula, away from the water intake site (bound for Winnipeg). This land loss included Ojibwa burial grounds. The peninsula became a man-made island when an aqueduct was built to divert swamp water away from the intake site.

Shoal Lake 40 has lived under a boil water advisory for 18 years. It has 568 residents, of whom 260 live on reserve. The community relies on bottled water trucked in from Kenora. The community does not have access to treated water destined for Winnipeg from Shoal Lake. Residents rely on a barge to transport all supplies, including water. In the winter months, residents drive across the frozen lake. In spring and fall, residents are often stranded on the island. The ice cannot support a vehicle's weight but is too thick for the barge to break up. Shoal Lake 40 spends \$1,000 per person per year on barge and water costs. Winnipeg, for comparison, spends approximately \$300 per person per year for water from Shoal Lake. The barge is aging and has broken down. Each time this happens, a state of emergency is called, causing dire situations for medical and basic services. People have fallen through the ice trying to cross the lake and some have drowned.

Why is this important to The Presbyterian Church in Canada?

Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, run by The PCC from its opening in 1902 to 1969, was located near the Shoal Lake community. Many members of the community attended Cecilia Jeffrey school. The church is dedicated to walking with Indigenous people toward reconciliation.

After years of advocating by the community, municipal, provincial and federal governments are building a road

connecting Shoal Lake 40 to the Trans-Canada highway. This is a positive initiative. But the community remains under a boil water advisory.

What can you do?

Water is a gift from God. Access to clean, safe drinking water is a right most Canadians take for granted. There are more than 600 First Nations across Canada; 89 have boil water advisories.

Be aware

- Learn about Shoal Lake 40 <http://www.sl40.ca/>
- Learn about the situation: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/07/make-it-safe/canadas-obligation-end-first-nations-water-crisis>
- The Ontario Native Women's Association has produced a toolkit for educators regarding the relationship between Indigenous women and water. <http://www.onwa.ca/upload/documents/water-commission-toolkit-final.pdf>

Create awareness

- Organize or participate in a water walk (<http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/>)
- **Write to Minister Carolyn Bennett** (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada). Ask what the government's plan is to address water advisories in Indigenous communities. Minister Bennett's email address is Carolyn.bennett@parl.gc.ca. Sample letters are available from Justice Ministries.

