

Gathered to Love One Another

"More love" was Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians, and the same prayer resounds through the church in the season of Advent.

Paul expressed joy and thanksgiving for the faithful ministry of the Thessalonians. 2000 years later we are thankful for the good ministry and mission being carried out by congregations throughout Canada: for the Word of God being proclaimed and enacted, for the fellowship and friendship shared among us, and for the hope we have in Christ.

But Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was for "more love." He wasn't telling them that they were doing a bad job at loving one another, and yet he prayed that God would cause them to increase and enrich their love for each other and for everyone. In this season of Advent, we are invited to enlarge our hearts and to love each other more deeply and fully, with more commitment and generosity.

The weeks ahead will provide many opportunities for seasonal celebrations, church, school and family activities. Let our prayer be that we choose "more love" and that our hearts be strengthened in holiness until the coming of our Lord Jesus.

The Rev. Amanda Currie, First Presbyterian Church, Regina, SK.



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Proclaim Justice for All

The prophet Malachi reassured the people of Israel that God was sending the Messiah that they longed for – one who would bring justice into a corrupt world. He described the coming Messiah as a “refiner and purifier” (3:3), someone who could remove impurities from the human heart and redress social wrongs.

Malachi urged the people of God then and now to trust that the Messiah’s advent will announce the refining and renewal of society to reflect God’s righteousness. Congregations across The Presbyterian Church in Canada are participating in this renewal by showing love to neighbours, nurturing peace and justice in their communities, sharing resources and building faithful relationships with ministry partners. From sponsoring refugees to feeding the hungry, congregations continue to act as the hands and feet of Christ in an unjust world.

Advent is first and foremost a time of preparation for the arrival of the Prince of Peace. As we prepare this Advent, let us continue to participate in the works of reform and justice, knowing that they are very “pleasing to the Lord” (3:4).

Canadian Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency.



Gathered & Sent

Stained glass, New St. James Presbyterian, London, ON.

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Second Sunday of Advent

*“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me,
and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.”*

Malachi 3:1

Gathered to Share Joy

The prophet Isaiah says, “as fresh water brings joy to the thirsty, so God’s people rejoice when he saves them.” It is my prayer for you and for your congregation that, as you gather this season of Advent, you will wait in joy for the coming of our Lord.

The promise of Christ’s arrival is like the fresh water that brings joy. And as we wait for this renewal, let us not wait in stillness, but let us wait with gladness! Joy is not a fleeting emotion; it is the deep recognition of God’s everlasting love renewed for us day by day. The days ahead will be full of busyness and preparations and may at times feel overwhelming, but joy continues to flow through us.

God’s promise of joy accompanies us our whole life.
It never runs dry. It is never withdrawn.

The Rev. Joanne Lee, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Innisfail, AB.



Gathered & Sent

Gathered to Rejoice

Several months before Jesus was born, his mother went to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was also miraculously pregnant. The joy of their reunion was amplified as Elizabeth's child leapt in her womb and, filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth spoke words of awe and blessing for the Christ child and his mother. In response, Mary sang her own words of praise to God:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God
my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on
the lowliness of his servant."

For ten verses, Mary exuberantly expresses her reverence for the power, strength, mercy and generosity of God.

In the coming days, as we gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, what song will we be singing?

Like Mary, we have been given the gift of a saviour sent to transform our ways of living and being in the world. Through Christ, the humble are exalted, the powerful are dethroned, the hungry are filled with good things, and God's promises are fulfilled. Let us sing our praises to God for looking on us, lowly servants, with such favour.

Emily Hill, Education Program Coordinator, Canadian Ministries.



Gathered & Sent

Stained glass, St. John's Presbyterian, Ancaster, ON.

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"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Luke 1:46

Gathered as God's Beloved Children

Emmanuel love — a love of presence — has come upon us. A child came to gather us together as God's beloved children. It would have been very easy to overlook the birth of a child born in a manger, to parents with no significant position and whose birth was announced to shepherds sitting on a hillside. Yet, through this child, God's transformative power was made known and gave us confidence to serve, heal and minister to the world.

Over the course of my first few months as Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, I had the joy of meeting with gifted and faithful young people in our Presbyterian Church at a youth consultation, the 144th General Assembly and Canada Youth 2018. I have been struck by their robust faith, maturity and spiritual commitment. It would be easy to overlook these gifts. And yet, as I ponder this group, I am amazed at the way God continues to raise generations of faithful Christians and gathers them in service to our church and the world.

This Christmas let us take notice and honour the many people and circumstances God works through to communicate gospel love. In lifting up the people God has gathered and sending them out to share the story, more and more people will come to know the power of God's transforming love.

The Rev. Daniel Cho, Moderator of the 144th General Assembly.



Gathered & Sent

Sending with a blessing!

At the end of the second chapter of Luke, in the only story we have from his childhood, Jesus goes missing! His parents, who had already traveled a day outside of Jerusalem, have to go back to find him. When they do, he is busy conversing with teachers in the temple, totally unconcerned that his parents had left the city without him.

I find it easy to relate to Mary and Joseph in this story. The panic, the search... that feeling of relief coupled with anger when they find him.

My children are grown now, but still they are my children. My love for them is both tender and fierce. From their first days of school to when they moved into their first homes, I have delighted in watching them grow up and into who God made them to be. Yet, at the same time, I have also wanted to hold them close, keep them in my sight and know they are safe.

When Jesus' parents locate him in the temple, I too want to demand, why did he make them worry? But I can also imagine, after the panic fades, looking into Jesus' young eyes, so confident and alive, full of the joy of discovering the life God has planned for him. I can imagine delighting in that as well.

We are told that Mary "treasured all these things in her heart" (2:51). There is a lot of faith involved in parenting and I have come to value the spiritual practice both of letting my children go into the world with a blessing and welcoming them home with one too. It helps me more fully delight in and treasure who they are and who God is making them to be.

The Rev. Karen Dimock, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, ON.



Gathered & Sent

Gathered by a Star

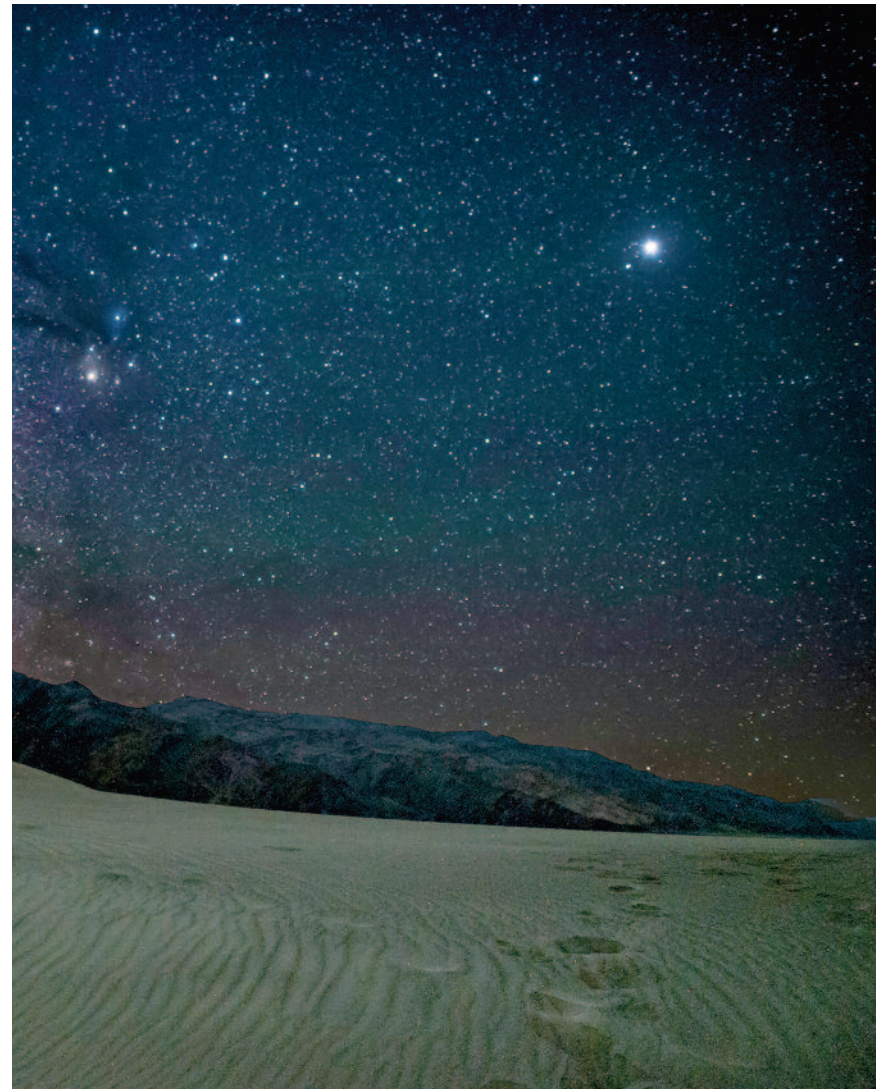
Immediately after Jesus' birth, God gathered a collection of unexpected people to seek out and honour his newborn son. Through angels, poor shepherds were invited to meet the infant child still in the manger. Through a bright star, God reached out and led the wise men from far off lands to celebrate the newborn king.

On Epiphany Sunday we celebrate the coming of these wise men to bring gifts to the saviour. The wise men did not know entirely what to expect when they set out to follow the star. Yet, when they arrived at the place the star had led them, they entered the house and saw the Christ child and bowed down and worshipped him.

God continues to gather people from all walks of life and from different nations to come and receive the good news of Christ's birth.

As Christ's church, our mission is to share this message!
Are we, as followers of Jesus, opening our eyes to the signs God is giving us and helping others to see them as well?
Are we seeking to share the good news of Christ's birth with all, regardless of who they are and where they come from?
Let us go out, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and take notice of the angels and stars that call us to Christ.

*The Rev. Torrey Griffiths, Kensington Presbyterian Church
and St. John's Presbyterian Church, PEI.*



Gathered & Sent

"When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy." Matthew 2:9-10

The Holy Spirit, Sent to Empower Us

When we are baptized we enter a committed relationship with Christ and the members of his body, the church. This kind of relationship is best described by the biblical term “covenant” — a solemn promise established by God, in which we receive God’s blessing and seek to love and serve God with all our lives.

Each day, we are called to live out this covenant but we aren’t required to do it alone.

When Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. Jesus’ baptism marked the occasion when he, claimed as God’s own, was equipped for ministry. The same is true for us. Through baptism we are also anointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered to live as disciples.

Baptism is one step on a life-long journey of faith. As we take each new step as individuals as a community of faith, we would do well to remember that the Holy Spirit is with us, lending us strength, courage and power for our journey.

Canadian Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency.



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Be in Relationship

Genuine hospitality means entering rich and meaningful relationships with people beyond our church's walls.

In my home church, we have an existing relationship with an organization that supports women exiting situations where they are being exploited and trafficked. Many members of our church have been part of this ministry. We've helped to provide safe housing for women and their children to get off the streets, and we've raised funds and gathered gift bags at Christmas.

Responding to God's call to go deeper in this partnership, we recently invited the organization to hold some of their programs in our church. They were interested in using our space, but one of the managers was concerned that some of the language their clients use would be offensive to some people in the church.

We were able to assuage her worries and the organization accepted our invitation. But, the concerns she expressed underscored just how far the church needs to go to be seen as truly believing that "all people may take refuge in the shadow of God's wings" (Psalm 36:7).

As we are sent out to be in relationships beyond the walls of our churches, let us be open to confronting the barriers in our own hearts and minds that stop us from embodying the radical hospitality to which we are being called.

Cindy Stephenson, Grace Presbyterian Church, Calgary, AB.



Gathered & Sent

Sent into the World

He was still wet behind the ears from his baptism in the Jordan River, still charged up from his forty days in the desert with the tempter. Where would Jesus go from here?

His ministry was just hitting the ground. Jesus wound his way from the wilderness through small town Galilee, stopping here and there at local synagogues, his Holy Spirit-filled teaching making an impression wherever he went.

It was from Nazareth where his ministry was launched, and not just Nazareth, but in the synagogue where he had been raised; in that worshipping, teaching community where he, along with others, young and old, was formed by and for the Word. On this day, when they gathered to listen, Jesus rose from among them and read from the scroll of Isaiah. It wasn't that he was reading the assigned lesson as determined by the lectionary for the day. No, he searched the scroll until he found Isaiah's prophecy of the One sent by God to proclaim good news. He was not home in Nazareth to stay, but to go. He was making an announcement. God was sending him out into the world.

God is sending us out into the world. Where will we go from here?

*The Rev. Allyson MacLeod, Keswick Presbyterian Church,
Keswick, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

"...the earth is full of the steadfast
love of the Lord."

Psalms 33:5

Our church is demonstrating God's love in some of the most vulnerable corners of our global community. In partnership with local organizations, Presbyterian World Service & Development responds to lift up the poor, the hungry and the oppressed. Together, we are building a world where women, men and children have what they need to improve their well-being, recover from emergency situations and plan for futures abundant in the blessings of Christ.



"We have received training on how to better tend to our land. It's only been the first year and I am so happy. Thank you so much!"

Since learning new sustainable agriculture practices, Rubén from Guatemala is growing more and better food to feed his family.

"It is my hope to be a mother of a healthy baby. If I follow the medical advice the midwife and the health worker gave me, I believe that this hope will become a reality."

At a new clinic in her village in Afghanistan, Fahima received the care that enabled a healthy and hopeful pregnancy.

"I appreciate your work. I am grateful to PWS&D for making my life meaningful."

Tilata's life has changed since receiving mobility devices and small business training through a project helping people with disabilities in Ghana.

**Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, PWS&D envisions
a sustainable, compassionate and just world.**

Your faithful support brings this vision closer to reality.

Thank you for all that you do!



We Respond

Faithful
to our calling,
we respond together.

PWS&D is the international development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Sent to Fulfill a Vocational Calling

Isaiah said: "Here I am Lord, send me..."

Peter and his fisherman friends dropped everything and followed Jesus.

Paul, once called, committed his life to spreading the gospel message.

I once heard Father Henri Nouwen say that we Christians are like the sacramental bread we consume in the Eucharist:

Taken — called by God, chosen, set apart

Blessed — with God wherever we may be

Broken — changed by God so we can share and be shared

Given — sent out by God for mission and ministry.

I have lived this in my work as a minister of Word and Sacrament, but I have also seen it in teachers, health professionals, farmers, business leaders and tradespeople.

Despite having very different gifts, these were people who found joy in their work, believing that God put them on this earth to do just what they were doing.

God is calling. Take the call!

*The Rev. Mark McLennan, Knox Presbyterian Church,
Woodstock, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

Gathered to Grow and Bear Fruit

Heritage Sunday is a day set apart in our Presbyterian Church calendar, offering us an opportunity to reflect on all that makes up our legacy as a denomination active in the world.

By God's grace, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been like the tree in Psalm 1: "planted by streams of water" and "yielding fruit in its season" (v. 3). We have been richly nourished by the truth and inspiration of Scripture, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and strengthened by our deep faith in Jesus Christ. With God's help, we have shared and continue to share the love of Jesus Christ through our congregations and ministries.

Over the years, God has blessed us with a huge yield of successful ministry and outreach initiatives: food programs, refugee sponsorships, advocacy and solidarity work, art and music programs, support and recreation for seniors, creative ministry with children and youth, evangelism initiatives... the list could go for pages!

We encourage you to celebrate your ministry milestones and successes; they are gifts from God. There are many creative and fun ways to mark significant church events: a new congregational history booklet, historical skit, church dinner using recipes from a heritage cookbook, time-line study, or a worship service in a style from the past wearing historical dress!

When planning a special heritage project, gather together your own congregational church records and photographs as these will serve as a wonderful resource. Contact the Presbyterian Church Archives for assistance as you ponder what project you might like to try.

Heritage Sunday invites us to remember our past and rejoice in our hope for tomorrow as faithful followers of a merciful God who promises that our leaves will not wither.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Build Life-Giving Relationships

For many of us, our deepest joy is experienced through the life-giving relationships we have with family, friends and community. At times, these relationships can also cause us pain, push our limits and draw out the worst in us. Our faith helps us navigate these relationships and turn these places of challenge into pathways to grow to be more Christ-like.

The scripture readings today speak about this. Joseph had trouble with his brothers. They sold him into slavery and deceived their father. Yet in Genesis 45, Joseph told his brothers not to blame themselves. Joseph understood that God had sent him to Egypt to preserve lives.

David had trouble with King Saul. Saul had fits of jealous and murderous rage. Yet, David wrote in Psalm 37, "Do not fret because of the wicked..." instead, "Trust in the Lord and do good." What amazing advice for us who can be consumed by unforgiveness!

Jesus told his followers to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you. Wouldn't it be amazing if, instead of living down to the worst in us, we could live up to all that God has called us to be?

Because of Jesus' resurrection, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 that what is sown in dishonour and weakness will be raised with glory and power. May we grow to be more like Christ in our relationships.

*The Rev. Peter Ma, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church,
Markham, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Care for our Neighbours

The Apostles said, “Master, it was good for us to be here.” Good, because they experienced the presence of God. Good, because it prompted their desire to act. And how did they act? The next day in the community they tried to help a boy who experienced seizures — a disorder of the brain. In the end they needed Jesus’ help, but it was good of them to care.

Calgary Presbyterians are supporting people in their neighbourhoods with a different brain disorder: Dementia. It has been called the plague of the 21st century. “Side by Side” began at St. Andrew’s and spread to Varsity Acres. It’s a once per weekday program that is filled with singing, physical and mental exercises, music therapy, crafts, a devotional time and lunch. It provides a fun-filled and interesting day away for the dementia sufferer and a day for self-care and rest for the family caregivers.

Experiencing the presence of God compels us to act by loving our neighbours in the neighbourhood. And we can still say, “Master, it was good for us to be here” because the act of loving our neighbour transfigures us as well.

The Rev. Peter Coutts, Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church, Calgary, AB.



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Share

On this first Sunday in Lent you may be thinking about meaningful ways to observe this time of preparation and reflection. Some people may adopt practices such as “giving up” certain things (like chocolate) as a form of sacrifice to God or drawing closer to God in prayer and meditation during their time of abstinence.

It’s interesting to read in Deuteronomy 26:1-11 that Moses instructs the Hebrews to bring to God their first fruits — the first and the best from their crops — as an expression of thanksgiving in response to God’s deliverance and provision. Moses declares that through this offering, “you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.”

I wonder if our Lenten celebrations this year could reflect this idea of rejoicing in all God’s good things. So, perhaps, instead of *giving up* something for Lent, we could *give away* something for Lent — sharing a portion of the good things the Lord our God has given us with those who may be struggling to find reason to rejoice. This Lent, may we rejoice in God’s goodness, but also share that goodness with others.

*The Rev. Heather Malnick, Living Faith Community
Presbyterian Church, Baxter, ON.*



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Children from St. Luke's Presbyterian in Salt Springs, NS
serve soup to support PWS&D.

The
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First Sunday in Lent

*“You shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God
has given to you and your household.”*

Deuteronomy 26:11

Gathered to Walk Together

A Labyrinth provides an opportunity for the ancient practice of walking meditation. The walking symbolizes our journey with God. The labyrinth serves as a place of sanctuary, a place for listening, a place for letting go. In the Labyrinth, we experience being held by the Mystery that we call God before returning to the world fortified to live and serve in our daily lives.

The people of St. Andrew's and our friends often walk the labyrinth together. We also walk together in our lives. We meditate together. We eat and drink in each other's homes. We come together in community to encounter God.

This Lent we encourage you to walk with the people in your communities. To discover God's presence together and to be transformed by that presence to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

The Rev. Lynne Donovan, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Picton, ON.



Gathered & Sent

Walking the labyrinth at St. Andrew's Presbyterian,
Picton, ON.

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Presbyterian
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Second Sunday in Lent

"Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path."

Psalm 27:11

Sent to Respond to God's Call

God placed a vision in the hearts of the Presbytery of Ottawa to plant a church in Barrhaven that builds relationships and serves the diverse community in our neighbourhood.

Our community life is modelled on the life of first Christian communities. We eat together, spend time with one another, pray for our community and praise God with one spirit. In all we do, we support each other to grow in faith and in service of Jesus the Christ.

We are small, but we believe that God has gathered us together to bear fruit and to share with excitement the stories of our faith. God never ceases to call people into new things. We are faithfully responding by returning to the core practices of our faith — listening for God, loving one another, and being formed into a sent community by the Holy Spirit.

God calls all communities at all times. What is God calling you to this Lenten season?

*The Rev. Sharzad Kandalaif, Barrhaven Presbyterian Mission,
Barrhaven, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Heal Relationships

Living Faith says, “Worship draws us into the work of Christ” (7.3.3).

Paul says something similar: God, “who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Gathered to hear and receive the good news of God’s grace, we are sent into a world of conflict and alienation to heal relationships.

The brokenness of human relationships reflects a broken relationship with God. But God in Christ ends the hostility between humanity and God, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection inaugurate “a new creation.” In this new order, alienation gives way to reconciliation.

For Presbyterians, the ministry of reconciliation is embodied in many ways, including

- our journey toward healing with Indigenous neighbours,
- our response to disasters, war and persecution providing relief and hope,
- our efforts in health care, education, human rights, farming,
- our research and advocacy on international affairs,
- our involvement in peacemaking through Project Ploughshares.

The ministry of reconciliation happens in our own backyard, too — in our homes, church, workplaces, communities — as we let God’s gracious Spirit work among us so that all can enjoy the abundant life that is the gift of a loving, welcoming God.

The Rev. Iona MacLean, First Presbyterian Church, Pictou, NS.



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Give

Once a month, I gather with a group of children to play, sing, eat and engage in mission. The children love taking part in outreach ministry, but this ministry can also be challenging. The activities that are the toughest for the kids are the ones that involve giving away things that they themselves would like to keep: a new backpack filled with school supplies, a baggie of chocolates and candies, a card meant for someone living in a nursing home and not for their mom. It can be difficult for children to understand the needs that exist in the world beyond our church program, especially when they cannot witness those needs firsthand.

It can be difficult for all of us to let go of the “gains” that we see around us — those things that we desire or see as rightfully ours but do not add the kind of value that Christ does to our lives. While our group may struggle with the value of giving and letting go of the things we would rather keep, we are also learning that engaging in Christ’s mission requires sacrifice. And this sacrifice is a small step towards making sure each person has enough.

Each day, there are opportunities to prioritize the needs of others over our own desires. It can be a struggle to embrace those opportunities, but God’s pervasive justice gives us the power to do so.

*The Rev. Rebecca Jess, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church,
Toronto, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

Youth from Westminster Presbyterian Church
in Barrie, ON, with meal kits they put together
and delivered to those in need.

 The
Presbyterian
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Fifth Sunday in Lent

*“Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard,
anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair.”*

John 12:3

Sent to Share our Faith in the Lord Jesus

Our pilgrimage group slowly made its way down the Mount of Olives, stopping to hear Scripture and imagining Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

The crowds roared at the beginning of that first Holy Week, but there were other voices at play that day. The religious leaders perceived the challenge of the world-changing effect of Jesus' ministry saying, "Teacher, get your disciples under control."

Pausing in a quiet garden along the route, we sat and reflected on Jesus' response to the Pharisees. "If they keep quiet, even the stones will cry out." Those words reminded us of both the sovereignty of God and the sinfulness of humanity. When were we quiet when we should have spoken out?

As redeemed sinners, we are called to witness to the glory of God at work all around us in acts of reconciliation and healing. Too often, however, we shrink back from speaking and living our faith in the world outside our stained-glass sanctuaries.

This Holy Week, let us prayerfully, respectfully and boldly share our faith in the Lord Jesus and add our voices to those who cried, "Hosanna in the highest." Next Sunday a stone will be rolled away and the whole creation will sing of God's glory!

*Professor Ross Lockhart teaches at St. Andrew's Hall and is
Minister-in-Association at St. Andrew's/St. Stephen's
Presbyterian Church, North Vancouver, BC.*



Gathered & Sent

Gathered Together as Family

There is no doubt that loneliness is one of the most painful emotions to bear. Mother Teresa once said: "The biggest disease today is not leprosy or cancer or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for and deserted by everybody."

On that Friday, Jesus was deserted by almost everybody. He may have felt forsaken by God and helplessly watched as his last belongings, his clothes, were divided among four soldiers.

We can only imagine how much Jesus' pain and loneliness must have intensified when he saw that only his mother, three other women and John stood alongside him at the cross. The other disciples were filled with fear and had run away.

At the cross Jesus did something remarkable. While experiencing pain and loneliness, he told John, "Here is your mother" (John 19: 27). It is remarkable that despite his own suffering, Jesus was able to bring people together so that they could care for each other and escape loneliness during a time of intense suffering.

Followers of Christ are called to come together in moments of pain and struggle as well as in joy and celebration. Today, we mourn and support each other in loss. On Sunday, we will rejoice and come together in hope.

*The Rev. Kobus Genis, Westminster Presbyterian Church,
Calgary, AB.*



Gathered & Sent

Despair Transformed to Easter Boldness

Overwhelming grief. Mary Magdalene had stood at the cross as Jesus died; she saw him buried in the cave tomb. Early Easter Sunday, she and the others returned to mourn awhile more. But the stone was rolled back, the tomb empty, the body gone. Confusion mixed with grief.

Mary stayed at the tomb when Peter and the other disciple left. A stranger asked why she was weeping. Turning to look at him, she heard him say “Mary.” In that moment, she knew the startling truth: Jesus is alive.

Turning from the despair of the tomb, she saw Jesus risen to life again. She boldly told the others, “I have seen the Lord.”

The risen Jesus calls us by name, inviting us to turn our focus from the grief, confusion and hopelessness that can dominate our lives — to see He is alive. Everything has changed — hope replacing despair, the resurrection answering the power of death.

We, like Mary, have good news to boldly tell. Christ has triumphed — Jesus is alive. God’s life-giving transformation is at work in the world. Death, destruction and despair are defeated in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

*The Rev. Peter Bush, Westwood Presbyterian Church
in Winnipeg, MB.*



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Partner

When the disciples told Thomas that they had seen the risen Lord, Thomas said: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

There are many things in this world that we do not see. We may hear a lot from the media or in the news, but how do we know what is true? How do we know what is actually happening in the world?

Thomas was invited to physically touch Jesus' side; he was given the opportunity to see and believe. He became a witness who could share the good news.

The mission staff of The Presbyterian Church in Canada are witnesses to the risen Christ's continued work around the world. By walking with our international partners, sharing experiences and learning the complexities of their stories, mission staff become our "living links" to the global community. Through them, our eyes are opened and we are changed by what they have seen.

On Mission Awareness Sunday, we pray for our "living links" and the partners they serve alongside. May they continue to gather in community around the world, and may we continue to gather in Canada to share their experiences.

Amy Zavitz, International Ministries Young Adult Intern.



Gathered & Sent

The Rev. Joel Sherbino with Friends of
Prison Ministry in Malawi.


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Church
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*"And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit
whom God has given to those who obey him."*

Sent to Reconcile

Like Saul on the road to Damascus, there are times when we need to be shocked into seeing that our current way of doing things is not what God desires — we must change. When confronted by Jesus, Saul changed from a persecutor of Christians to a leader who brought countless people to Jesus. It was not an easy change, especially because Saul had a bad reputation among the Christians.

Our risen Lord challenges us to see the wrongs we've been part of and the need to reconcile with those around us. When we have hurt or caused pain, we must be willing to be corrected and allow the love of Christ to transform us.

The Atlantic Mission Society (AMS) gathered last April to explore the theme of reconciliation. Our worship and teaching encouraged us to learn about reconciliation in our own lives; reconciliation with God, our families, friends and co-workers, and reconciliation with our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

For Christians, entering into right relationship with our neighbours begins with an encounter with Christ and allowing that encounter to change us and renew our relationships with all people. In doing so, we are taken off pathways that lead to harm and placed on a journey that leads to new life.

Rob Griffiths, Hartsville Presbyterian Church, Hartsville PEI.



Gathered & Sent

Gathered to Contribute

In 1961, John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.” It was an invitation to think about more than just your own personal needs.

Let’s apply this to the church and substitute the word fellowship for country. “Ask not what your fellowship can do for you — ask what you can do for your fellowship.”

In the New Testament, the word “fellowship” has a few different implications: getting together with other believers, sharing a common bond (the resurrected Jesus), and contributing to the well-being of the group.

In other words, the community of faith is something you need to contribute to — not just receive from. Should you be fed? Yes. But you also need to feed. Should you be blessed? Yes. But you also need to bless.

In our consumeristic society it’s easy to treat the church like any other product which exists to serve us and make us happy. As a result, fellowship with other Christians can seem optional. But let’s be counter-cultural and live out the principle in Hebrews 10:25: “let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another...”

It is helpful to ponder this spin on Kennedy’s memorable dictum from 1961, and to think about how we might respond as a part of Christ’s body on earth: Ask not what your fellowship can do for you — ask what you can do for your fellowship.

*The Rev. Matthew Ruttan, Westminster Presbyterian Church,
Barrie, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.”

John 10:27

Sent to Invite

From time to time — especially in spring and summer months — passers-by drop in to experience the beauty of our church. Like many other Presbyterian Church facilities, ours has a special historic quality.

Sometimes I stand across the street and ask, “What does our building say about our congregation? Is it warm? Is it welcoming?” We seek to keep it looking fresh and inviting — good upkeep and quality landscaping offer a hint of the care and welcome that is shared weekly. That said, in all my years at St. Andrew’s, I can count perhaps eight or ten people who have been drawn to worship because they were intrigued by our building.

But people — our people — they are a wealth of invitation. Those who live out Christ’s call of love are a reflection of the one who sends them: the man who delivers meals to seniors and stays for a chat; the woman who greets folks at the hospital and calms their anxieties as she helps them on their way; the musician who shares a passion for music with young people who are developing their skills (this could easily become a very long list...). The people who follow Christ’s call to love — they are the richest beauty of an invitational congregation.

The Rev. Ken MacQuarrie, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Thorold.



Gathered & Sent

Sent to Listen, Witness and Work for Reconciliation

When The Presbyterian Church in Canada announced the Healing & Reconciliation Tour, I eagerly applied to go. I felt that it would be a culmination of the life-changing journey that I began in 2012 when I attended my first national Truth & Reconciliation Commission event.

I would have the opportunity to once again listen to people speaking their truths about the experiences they had. I would have the experience of seeing the two memorials at the sites of Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School and the abandoned building that was once Birtle Residential School. I would have the experience of being and reflecting with others about what we had seen and heard.

However, as we travelled, I soon realized that this was not an ending to my journey, but only the beginning. I learned that healing can only be accomplished when we say that we are sorry and when we follow through in our actions. Reconciliation can only happen if we remember and accept in our hearts what Terry, one of the Elders at Birdtail (MB), said: "It is worthwhile to reconcile!" We must all work together to bring about reconciliation, we are responsible for making necessary changes to make sure that this happens.

Joan Smith, Women's Missionary Society Treasurer.



Gathered & Sent

Dancer, Hummingbird Ministries, BC.

The
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260519

Healing and Reconciliation Sunday

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."

2 Corinthians 5:18

Gathered for General Assembly

This evening in Waterloo, ON, the General Assembly will begin with worship around a communion table.

Each year, elders and ministers, ecumenical and interfaith guests, young adult and student representatives, and resource people gather together at the General Assembly. Their role is to discern together the will of Christ for our church today. That might seem like an impossible task, but with prayer and worship, with a sense of community, and most of all, by trusting in the power of God, we will be helped to do just that.

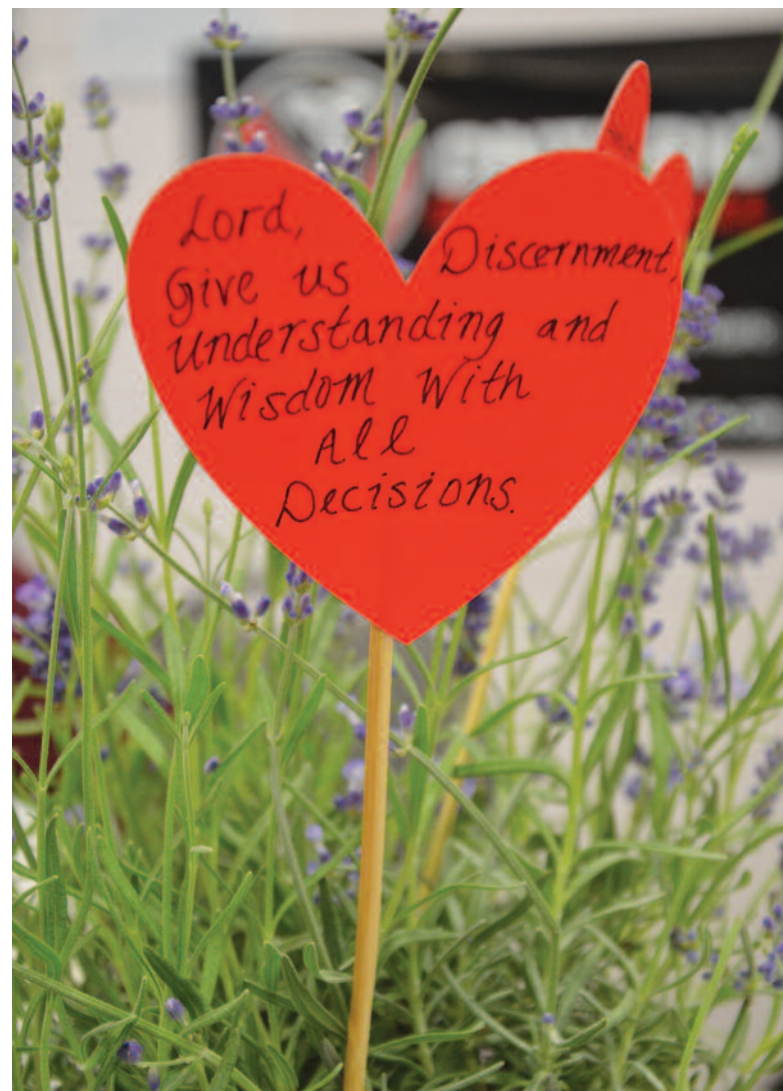
Everyone thirsts for something. It is wonderful when that thirst is quenched through faith in Jesus Christ who promised: "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living waters" (John 7:38).

So for our church.

As we thirst to be: Disciples of Christ
Empowered by the Spirit
Glorifying God and
Rejoicing in Service

pray that living waters flow freely through the Assembly and The Presbyterian Church in Canada so that, in turn, we may be participants in the Mission of God in the world.

The Rev. Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly.



Gathered & Sent

Sent by the Power of the Holy Spirit

Whenever the wind blows, something new is created.

Way back in the first chapter of Genesis, a “wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” In a beautifully poetic way, the author paints a picture of a cosmos fashioned, an earth created, time begun. And God was active in it all.

In today’s story from Acts, that same wind of creation returns. The disciples, together in hiding since the death of Jesus, experienced a “sound like the rush of a violent wind.” The wind blew and something new was created. A community was born. The disciples were given the gift of hope, the gift of courage, the gift of proclamation. The nascent church responded to these gifts by pouring out into the streets to embody the love of God.

That same wind from God blows still. And the church today is invited to respond by pouring out of our own doors to share God’s love with all. If we keep our eyes and ears and hearts open, we will encounter this ongoing creative and re-creative work of God. The church is continually being made into something new.

This is Pentecost.

*The Rev. Hugh Donnelly, Guildwood Presbyterian Church,
Scarborough, ON.*



Gathered & Sent

Stained glass, Leaside Presbyterian, Toronto, ON.


The
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in Canada
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Day of Pentecost

“And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”

Acts 2:2