We wait for a world on the way. Living Faith tells us that Christians are people who hope, not in their own potential, not in progress, but in God whose will for the world will get full traction on earth one day. God has prepared a future and will usher it in, and it will blow our minds. The planet will flourish and life brimming over will come to all. Lions and lambs will lie down together, swords will get hammered into plowshares, and the whole planet will be detoxified. God will do it. Finally, God will triumph over all opposition and everything that disrupts creation. Salvation full on.

While we wait for God to act decisively, we pray. We pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples: “thy kingdom come.” Prayer is doing something. Prayer is an act of defiance at the way the world is—say “thy kingdom come” and you start holding out for better arrangements in the world than those currently on tap. Say “Our Father, let your kingdom land right here in this world,” and find that certainties about the way it’s got to be become, well, combustible. Prayer for God’s Kingdom is a subversive act, as Karl Barth said, “to clasp one’s hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”

In a class H. Richard Niebuhr taught on the Lord’s Prayer, he said that praying “thy kingdom come” is like yelling at the bottom of a snow-laden mountain. You’re asking for an avalanche! Hope in the form of prayer for God’s Kingdom is asking for an intrusion into the world that changes everything. Praying Christians participate in the coming of the Kingdom by divine invitation.

*The Rev. Dr. Richard Topping is principal of the Vancouver School of Theology*
John appears every Advent to remind us that God is at work—or did you forget?
The time is at hand—or have you lost track?
The Lord is with us—or have you already checked out?
All flesh shall feel, every eye shall see the salvation of God.
This is good news, the best news really. God brings freedom to the captives, healing to the wounded, rest for the weary and life to the dying.

But why with John does God sound like such bad news?

“Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

If God loves us, why would God, through the prophet John, judge us?

Yet through John and even more through the one John prepares us to welcome, we are shown that God does indeed both love and judge us. Because God loves us, God judges us. And who better? For God judges us but never condemns, instructs but never destroys, challenges but never chides. God confronts us with the truth that there is a better way to live our lives. There is a better way to treat this world. There is a better way to use our words and minds and hands and gifts.

There is the way revealed by Christ.

The Rev. Derek Macleod is a minister in The Presbyterian Church in Canada serving at St. Andrew’s Covenant Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, North Carolina
When the followers of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked if he was really God’s Anointed One, he gave them a very concrete answer: “Go, tell John what you see and hear: those who are suffering from lameness, blindness, deafness, etc. are healed. Tell him also that those who are poor are hearing good news” (Luke 7:22). In effect, people who were marginal in society were to be treated with respect and compassion; in fact, they were at the very heart of Jesus’ mission.

According to Jesus, there is no good news (or gospel) if the grace of God does not affect the lives of those most in need. In saying this, Jesus realized that he was being radical because he added, “Blessed are those who do not take offence [literally, are not scandalized] because of what I have said” (Matthew 11:6).

From the Social Action Handbook of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
I’m a strong believer in reason
But every once in a while
When I hear something that sounds impossible
And I’m banking on my incredulity, suddenly
That quiet voice
You know—the one in your heart’s ear
That says strange things like “do not fear”
(When it’s clear that being afraid makes sense)
That voice speaks
And I want to argue, “you’re kidding, right...?”
But it presses
And just as I feel my skeptical eyebrow raising
I remember Joseph’s story:
Joseph, who woke from a strange dream
With a strange word whose call he heeded
And I can see him make his decision,
Take a deep breath,
And then find the frightened young woman
He could have left
To tell her instead, “Well, Love...
we’ve got a long way to walk, so I can’t build it yet,
But I’ll start drawing up plans for a cradle.”

Joseph doesn’t get much attention in the Christmas story. That’s really too bad, because he took a leap of faith in listening to the angel’s word and protecting Mary, soon-to-be mother of God. Since the birth of Christ is a one-time occurrence, none of us will face the same choice as Joseph. Nevertheless, he reminds us that sometimes we are called to step into important secondary roles, despite how impossible they seem, to help God’s promise unfold.

_Dr. Allyson Carr is Associate Secretary of Justice Ministries_
Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. In him all things in heaven and on earth were created, all that is seen and all that is unseen. Christ Jesus our Lord was revealed in flesh and vindicated in the Spirit, he was seen by angels and proclaimed among the nations; he was believed in throughout the world and was taken up in glory (Colossians 1, Titus 3 and 6, Hebrews 1).

All this and more we say that Christ is. But tonight, the Word of God is made flesh speaks in baby-talk and Christ is born among us as a fragile infant who is born in the darkness of the night as the Light of the World.
Late one night, Yousif heard a knock at the door and was surprised by his neighbour and friend of over thirty years, Omar, urging him to leave Iraq immediately. In a nervous voice, Omar told Yousif that he had heard people plotting to kidnap Yousif’s young son. Fearing for his family’s safety, Yousif made the agonizing decision that it was best to get away.

Extremist groups can make it difficult for Christians and others to feel safe and secure from acts of persecution. By echoing the prophetic words of the gospel of Matthew, Omar was a modern-day angel of the Lord, urging his friend to flee to a safe place.

Today, people around the world are forced to make the same painful decision that Joseph made over 2,000 years ago. Some will seek refuge in Canada because they have heard it is a fair and compassionate country for refugees.

Will we welcome them as Christ in our midst?
One wintry Sunday morning in Saskatchewan, when I tried to leave home for church, the car wouldn’t start. I didn’t have time to wait for a boost, so I called a taxi to get to worship on time. As we pulled into the church parking lot, the driver asked me, “What kind of church is it?” I briefly explained that it was a Presbyterian church, a type of Christian congregation.

Then he told me, “I am a Muslim.” I nodded. “We are brothers, you know,” he continued. “Muslims, Christians and Jews... We are brothers and sisters because Abraham is our Father.”

“Yes,” I agreed, “We are siblings, and we share a faith in the One God who is the Creator of all that is.”

“Yes, we believe in One God who speaks to us through many prophets.” And he started to list some of them, including both Mohammed and Jesus in the list.

I suppose I could have stopped him there and said, “Well actually, Christians don’t believe that Jesus was just a prophet, but that he was God’s Son.” But I didn’t. I thought it was better to celebrate what we share in common. So I said, “If we would all live according to our faith, then we would get along well.”

“Yes,” he agreed, “We should love one another.”

The Gospel text for Epiphany reminds us that we are not alone in our quest. When God came to us in the child, Jesus, it was Gentile foreigners, not the Jewish religious leaders, who first found their way to the Christ and bowed down to worship him. We are all searching and longing for light, love and hope for the future. May God help us to love one another so that together we may find God-in-our-midst.

_The Rev. Amanda Currie is Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly_
Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church. Through it we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and are commissioned to his service.

*From Living Faith 7*
Christ has come and dwells among us.
   God is with us.

We are not alone—
   we will be stewards of creation.

We are not alone—
   no human ideology or agenda holds
   the secret of history.

We are not alone—
   we are in solidarity with the poor.

We are not alone—
   human beings are not commodities.

We are not alone—
   we are called to build a new community
   with a simple lifestyle.

We are not alone—
   we do not despair for God reigns.

We are not alone—
   with all God’s people we welcome and
   proclaim God’s glory.

*From the 1997 declaration of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches
General Council*
Generations of Sunday school children have puzzled over this statement of Jesus: “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” The children ask, “What on earth does it mean to ‘fish for people?’”

If you tried to explain this phrase to a nine-year-old, what words would you use? Would they sound like this?

“I will joyfully share my faith with others.”

“I will invite others to church to hear news of hope.”

“I will help others learn to follow Jesus.”

“I will share a passion for justice with the youth in my community.”

“I will exhibit calmness in a fast-food world.”

Fish for people? What will we use for bait? Surely the enticement will be the example of our lives and our words—which reflect love, hope, justice and courage.

Dorothy Brown Henderson is retired from ministry at Caven Presbyterian Church in Exeter, Ontario, and is actively involved in children’s ministry.

Photo: Supported by PWS&D programs, a woman helps fabricate new fishing nets on Jinamoc Island in the Philippines. Credit: ACT Alliance/Paul Jeffrey
Putting food on the table, finding meaningful employment, knowing life-saving medicine is available and advocating for positive change—thanks to the generosity of Presbyterians across Canada, women, men and children living in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the world are opening the door to abundant life. With our global partners, Presbyterian World Service & Development seeks the sustainable transformation of vulnerable communities through life-changing programs in development and emergency relief.

“I appreciate what PWS&D is doing in my community. With your support, I am now able to provide for my family.”

In Malawi, Nickson’s family escaped the cycle of poverty when he joined a savings group and was able to purchase livestock, improve his farm and send his children to school.

“I feel at home in this hospital. I receive such good care along with good food and accommodation.”

At the PWS&D-supported Shining Hospital in Nepal, Jumai received the care he needed to overcome leprosy and restore his health and well-being.

“Because of this teaching, my family has been able to prosper.”

After learning to cultivate a kitchen garden, Fozia from Pakistan is ensuring her children have a reliable source of nutritious food.

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!

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16
“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Very early in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul admits that he felt fearful and inadequate when he first came to speak with them about Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. It was God’s Spirit working through him, not his own words or wisdom, that convinced many people in Corinth of the truth of Jesus Christ and his life-giving sacrifice.

Too often we hold back from speaking about our faith in Christ because we are afraid or feel inadequate. Like Paul, we do not fully comprehend the gifts that have been given to us through the Holy Spirit. We have been given the power to discern the things of God, the ability to identify God’s gifts, and to speak to the human heart of the wisdom of God. These are difficult gifts to claim and live into, but when we step out in faith, God meets us and uses us for the Spirit’s purposes.

Paul was used by God to spread the gospel and his letters of encouragement bring people to faith today. God can use our words and our actions in amazing ways if we, like Paul, overcome our fear and speak out in faith.

Jen de Combe is Associate Secretary of Canadian Ministries
In Deuteronomy 30, God says, “See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands…”

We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation. We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.

The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.

We live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all. The policy of unlimited growth among industrialized countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment.

We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (John 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.

We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24.1).

Change is a reality we have come to expect, but when it happens suddenly, it really catches our attention. Peter, James and John were surprised by the change they saw in Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as light.

What God was doing was giving these disciples a glimpse of the glory Jesus had before he came to earth in human form, and they knew he was the Son of God. Later, John would write, “the Word became flesh and lives among us, and we have seen his glory” (John 1:14). A cloud then enveloped the disciples and they heard the words, “this is my Son...listen to him.”

If we believe Jesus is the Son of God, we are to listen to him. We listen to Jesus because he alone speaks with the authority of God. As we listen to him, our lives will be changed.

The Rev. David Sherbina, minister in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, is Professor of Spirituality and Pastoral Ministry at Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, Ontario
God of all times and seasons,
God of grace and reconciliation
God of liberation and new life;
in this holy season of Lent,
give us grace to lead a life of discipline,
as we journey to the cross.
Christ knew in body, mind and soul
all the temptations and struggles of human life
and was obedient to you in all things.
Help us to discern by your Spirit
what we must reject
and what we must embrace,
what we must lay down
and what we must take up;
what we must end
and what we must begin.
Jesus’ response to Nicodemus was that whole and lasting life is available to all in the midst of discouragement, fear or doubt.

The love of God through Christ is such that the world is forever altered by that love.

The perishing world, a dark, dangerous place is transformed by God’s love.

That is the good news for us.

*The Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset is minister at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ontario*
Her daily trip to the well began as it usually did, as it had for each of the thousands of times she had set out to collect water for cooking and cleaning. Early in the day, the well was crowded and busy, but at noon the well should have been deserted.

It should have been a quick, uneventful task.

Instead of being deserted, there was a tired and thirsty Jew there who, in a shocking breach of protocol, asked for a cup of water from the well. The thread of conversation that ensued was anything but usual and uneventful, as she recognized who was instead offering her the water of eternal life.

The impact of speaking with and recognizing the Messiah affected her dramatically and impacted her whole community. Can you imagine the impact of the world if we were also to cross religious and cultural boundaries and breach customs by speaking Christ’s love to those we currently consider “others”?

The Rev. Jim Smith, retired minister at Central Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, British Columbia

Photo: Woman at the Well stained-glass window detail from Rosedale Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ontario
You, O God, are our shepherd, Saviour and guide:

You are our hope; you lead us into green pastures.

You are truth; you lead us beside quiet streams of reflection.

You are life; you restore our souls.

You are freedom; your rod and staff comfort us.

You provide; you cause our cups to overflow.

Your mercy and goodness chase us down and we long for a strong sense of your presence.
Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was from Bethany. He was a beloved friend to Jesus. Tradition has him becoming the first bishop of Larnaca, appointed directly by Paul and Barnabas.

But Lazarus is most remembered today because he was raised from the dead. He was called from the tomb.

Lazarus was called.

Lazarus was called out. He was called to come out of the tomb. He was called to come out of the place where Martha said there was a stench. He was called out of a place that was sealed with a stone.

Lazarus was called out by love. He was called out of a tomb into life. He was called back into life. He was called by love, called by Jesus, to a life that was defined by that love.

*The Rev. Dr. Rick Fee is a former missionary with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and former General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency*
Amid shouts of Hosanna,
Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem
for the redemption of the world.
Betrayed by friends,
rejected by all,
he accepted the shame of the cross.
By his suffering and death
he defeated the power of death
becoming for us the source of eternal life.

*From the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship*
What are we to do with these stories and the visions of Christ as the victim of so much betrayal, anguish, violence and pain that we reflect on today?

While Jesus is praying in the garden, he asks his disciples to keep watch with him and to wait. Our task this week is to watch and wait, to contemplate the mystery and grace of God that converts hatred into love, bondage into freedom, enemies into friends, violence into peace and death into life. We are to gaze upon the crucified Christ and see in him all life’s pain and disappointment, all of our disorientation and confusion, all the world’s failures and failings and to consider what it means that all of this was taken up into God. And then to be patient, to keep alert, to not be distracted or discouraged or fatigued, but to watch and to wait to see what God will do with it all on Easter morning.

The Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald is General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency

Photo: Drawing by an inmate on a prison wall in Malawi
Early on the first day of the week, while Mary Magdalene stood stunned and confused in front of the man that she thought was dead, Jesus chose to remind her of the reality of the close relationship that she and all people could have with God: *Go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”* The God that Jesus prayed to and called “Daddy” is the parent of us all, and Mary was called to go and tell all of Jesus’ siblings that they are part of the Family of God.

When we join the Family of God, as we did when we were baptized, we are welcomed into both a relationship with God, our loving parent, and relationships with all of God’s people, our siblings. There is great joy that comes from being a part of this family including the welcome, hospitality and encouragement that we receive. We learn from each other, share experiences and support each other through life.

But being a part of this family has its responsibilities as well. We are called to listen when others are struggling through difficult times. We are called to help when our siblings are hungry, homeless or alone. Like Mary, we are called to go and tell our siblings that Jesus is our brother and God is the parent of us all.

If we reflect honestly on the church throughout the world, the people who claim to be the children of God, it is obvious that our family is broken and dysfunctional. We separate ourselves off into groups, many of us not understanding or accepting of others.

Though our God welcomes the lost children to come home, we often find it difficult to see some people as part of our family, and we refuse to accept them. Part of the good news of Easter is that we are God’s children, members of the family of God. This is both a family joy and a family responsibility.

*The Rev. Amanda Currie is Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly*
Thomas said that he would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he had seen and handled the print of the nails in his hands and thrust his hand into the wound the spear had made in Jesus’ side.

Thomas doubted just to be sure; and when he did, his surrender to Christ was complete. Our faith is certainly born from the Word; it is also inspired by the witness of our forebears, including Thomas.

*The Rev. Dr. Dong-Ha Kim is Director of Basic Degree Studies at Knox College in Toronto*
In an increasingly chaotic and dangerous world, it is tempting to retreat and turn inward. For many of our Christian friends around the world, there is no choice but to be engaged in the world in decisive and immediate ways, for they are on the front lines of danger. Recent years have seen an unprecedented number of people on the move, seeking peace and perhaps wondering where God is. Economic upheaval is pervasive, changing ways of living and accompanied by social problems.

The good news is that our partners around the world witness the God of love, justice and compassion in significant ways. They worship, pray, learn and take action to respond to God’s call. Partners tell us that our connections are crucial. Dr. George Sabra, President of the Near East School of Theology in Lebanon, wrote:

“We, as Christians of the Middle East, cannot on our own remain and fulfill our mission without the support of the worldwide church, especially the church and the Christians in the West. To remain and to witness to the gospel in our lives, in our words and deeds and institutions, we ask for your support. What is really at stake is witness to the truth; what is at stake is the nature and identity of God.”

Inspired by these haunting words and similar comments from other partners, The Presbyterian Church in Canada takes this challenge to be faithful partners with churches around the world seriously.

*The Rev. Dr. Glynis Williams is Associate Secretary of International Ministries*
As followers of Christ and sheep of his pasture:

- Our mission, in a world where many do not know the gospel, is to tell the biblical story in ever new and creative ways.

- Our mission, in a world wounded by sin, is to point to the redemptive work of Christ and the life-changing presence of the Spirit.

- Our mission, in a world burdened with anxiety and apprehension, is to provide a place of sanctuary, tranquility and renewal in the name of the One who said, “I will give you rest.”

- Our mission, in a world where many are oppressed, excluded or ignored, is to call for personal righteousness, justice and reconciliation in the church and in the world and to hear, respect and cherish all God’s children.

- Our mission, in a world of limited resources, is to use God’s gifts wisely and fairly for the good of all.

- Our mission, in a world of many nations, peoples, denominations and faiths, is to learn from one another and work together for the healing of the nations.

"Acts & Proceedings of the 121st General Assembly, 1995"
“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?” (John 14).

God has prepared for us things beyond our imagining. Our hope is for a renewed world and for fullness of life in the age to come. As Jesus taught us, we pray: “Thy kingdom come.”

Life in the age to come is pictured in the Bible in different ways: an eternal kingdom, a new heaven and earth, a marriage feast, an unending day, the father’s house, and the joy of God’s presence. God will triumph over all opposition and everything that disrupts creation.

Life had its beginning in God. In God it will come to completion and its meaning be fully revealed.

*From Living Faith 10*

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Photo: Art by Oliver, age 9
By the Spirit, Christ calls the church into being and unites us to himself and to each other. The Holy Spirit is in all who know Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. We pray as a church to be guided into truth knowing that such truth may disturb and judge us. The presence of the Holy Spirit is seen in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, loyalty, gentleness and self-control.

Living Faith 4
Five years ago, several members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada trekked to Ottawa to hear the history and the living legacy of the Indian Residential School System brought to light by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

We were inspired by the survivors and leaders that we heard from who insisted that change was coming. As we crossed the bridge from Gatineau into Ottawa during the Walk for Reconciliation, we knew it meant something big for our country and our church. I left Ottawa feeling like there was a spark inside me and that society was going to make things better. I had hope.

Slowly, I noticed more of a focus on Indigenous history and culture in education and a stronger Indigenous presence in the media. I noticed congregations working alongside local Indigenous organizations, sharing meals and conversations, learning and healing together.

Sometimes, reconciliation feels difficult. Indigenous communities don’t get the support they need. Change feels slow. The hope fades.

But when I think back to what it looked like five years ago, and I think about the small and slow changes that have occurred, I see new leaders stepping up in their communities and starting projects that I couldn’t have ever imagined. Then the sparks come back again. Once again, I am hopeful.

*Allison Dyjach is a KAIROS Blanket Exercise Facilitator, member of the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee and lives in Kitchener, Ontario*

Photo: The Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie presents the 1994 Confession to the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin at Winnipeg Inner City Missions in Winnipeg, Manitoba
The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and Son, is alive in the world, sustaining all creation and bringing about the renewal and reconciliation of all things.

The Holy Spirit reconciles and renews individuals and communities, opening hearts and minds to the way of the risen Jesus Christ—a life of repentance, reconciliation, compassion, righteousness, justice and peace.

The Holy Spirit creates the church, drawing women, men and children together into the resurrection life of Christ, into the triune life of God and into meaningful relationships with one another and with the wider human family. The Holy Spirit equips the church for service in the mission of God.

By the power of the Spirit, and in unity with Christ, the church is called to be a community that witnesses to the joyful and hopeful reign of Christ. The Spirit leads the church to celebrate and support manifestations of the reign of Christ where it discerns them in the world.

*From Living in God's Mission Today, The Presbyterian Church in Canada*

Photo: Detail from a tapestry at Central and Galilee Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, British Columbia
Protestant Reformer John Calvin described the Trinity as one God in three persons. He wrote, “whenever the name of God is used indefinitely, the Son and Spirit, not less than the Father, is meant.” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Chapter 13, Paragraph 20)

On this Trinity Sunday, ministers, elders, committee conveners, young adult and student representatives, an assortment of guests and national office staff are congregating for the 2020 General Assembly. They are coming from every province. They are bringing a diversity of language, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. Then, in the model of the Trinity, all are one—one in desire and responsibility to discern the will of God for the church today.

May the blessing of the Trinity continue to inspire all of us as the Lord continues his ministry in and through the church.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Corinthians 13:13).

*The Rev. Don Muir is Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly Office*
The true character of the church is revealed through the way in which it exercises hospitality. When it is reluctant, calculating or measured, it points to an insular community. When it worries about its dwindling numbers and tries to increase its attractiveness to outsiders through welcoming strategies, it is still turned inward by self-interest. When, however, the church truly grasps what it means to be a company of the Spirit of Jesus called to share the grace and love of Christ, there are no limits to its welcome, and the radical hospitality of grace becomes a given.

From Radical Hospitality: A Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Art Van Seters, past principal of Knox College and Vancouver School of Theology and former Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Photo: Art by Samantha, age 11
In the old days, among the Red nations, a man sometimes had more than one wife, did not raise their voices at their children and they could communicate with all of nature. But one day a woman raised her voice at her stepson. The boy picked up two other boys and they left their people. People followed them and pleaded with them to come back. As they were walking, the Creator taught the people many things about life and nature. When the people reached the waters, the boys were already out in their canoes and told their people, “We will not come back until you have built a Holy House.”

The hummingbird is allowed to fly over the waters to get the *Holy Seed* that the Red nations need to build the Holy House. From the three boys who left, the Father made the Yellow, Black and White nations, and one day they will reunite with the Red nations. There will be no jealousy, no harm to future generations, and no harm to creation for the *Seed of Love* will bloom on Mother Earth. All the races, religions, classes and genders will be the Holy House together. All my Relations!

_The Rev. Mary Fontaine is from Hummingbird Ministries in Vancouver, British Columbia_
Matthew 10:40–42 speaks of hospitality: “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”

The practice of service and hospitality is expressed as we prayerfully open and share ourselves, our lives, our apartments/homes and our resources with each other, seeking to embody the hospitality of God in Christ. As individuals, families and congregations, we must develop practices of hospitality and let our spaces be hospitable spaces. In these ways we live in love.

*From Living in God’s Mission Today, The Presbyterian Church in Canada*

Photo: Dorothy Dixon, long-time member of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Riverview, Nova Scotia, celebrated her 100th birthday in 2019
In a world where we can feel lonely in a crowd; God is among us and we are not alone.
In a world where it is hard to know who we are; we have been created in God’s image and called by name.
In a world where we are not always sure of the path to follow; we have Christ to follow, the spirit to lead us and a community where we see God face to face.

From the worship life of Canada Youth

Photo: Every second summer at Canada Youth, hundreds of youth, young adults and leaders from across our denomination join together with guests from around the world to celebrate their vibrant faith
With our arms around the shoulders of the homeless, we walk in love, as God loves us.

With our hearts breaking for those who are hurting, we walk in love, as God loves us.

With our eyes flashing in recognition of injustice, we walk in love, as God loves us.

With our feet standing in solidarity with those who are persecuted, we walk in love, as God loves us.

With our hands helping up those who have fallen, we walk in love, as God loves us.

With our mouths speaking kindly and truthfully, we walk in love, as God loves us.

*Heather Chappell is Education Program Coordinator in Stewardship and Planned Giving*
“Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful” (Psalm 149:1).

The church’s musical worship is a gift from God that allows it to express the richness and depth of life in Christ—lament, hope, joy, service, justice, redemption, peace, reconciliation, resurrection and grace.

The church’s musical worship provides congregations with a vehicle to be attentive to the context in which they live—this attentiveness could be expressed instrumentally, lyrically and musically.

The church’s music should seek to link with the questions, aspirations and pains that are particular to the wider cultural context.

The church as a worshipping community should share musically with the community around it—listening compassionately for themes and struggles that provide an opportunity to witness to the reign of Christ.

The church should be in touch with and share in the music of global Christianity—so that it can learn from and be shaped by the gospel’s inculturation in other contexts.

*From Living in God’s Mission Today, The Presbyterian Church in Canada*
“The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army move and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them” (Exodus 14:19).

As they made their escape from Egypt, the Israelites were guided through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Despite this clear sign of God’s provision, they were seized with fear when the Pharaoh’s armies were closing in and there seemed to be no way to cross the Red Sea.

Even though many of us have experienced God’s guidance during difficult moments in our past, we too, like the Israelites, can be seized with fear when we find ourselves at a crossroad. In these moments, we remember Moses’ words of assurance as well as Christ’s own that tell us to not be afraid and wait for the Lord. Waiting for the Lord to make a path is one of the most challenging stances of faith. At the right time, God worked through Moses to part the Red Sea and lead the Israelites to safety. This moment of deliverance is the most celebrated part of this biblical story, yet it was God’s visible presence through the pillars that protected the Israelites and brought them to a place where they could cross safely.

God always finds ways to be present in the ways God’s people need. The miraculous moments in our lives, when we truly know that God is delivering us, are part of a larger story of God’s constant faithfulness towards us. We can trust in God our moments of waiting to provide guidance, protection and deliverance.

*Jen de Combe is Associate Secretary of Canadian Ministries*
We may miss the socially subversive nature of Jesus’ stories if we do not read them in the context of their first century setting. To single out a Samaritan man as the conveyer of God’s mercy, for example, is to use not only an outsider but a despised individual whose religious convictions are as suspect as his ethnic origin. The action of the father who welcomes his prodigal son back home and throws a big party for the whole community seems absurd. For a mere widow to confront a judge over what appears to be a family inheritance issue is surprising, but for her to outwit him is shocking. The idea in the parable of the vineyard that the workers who laboured for only an hour are to be paid the same as those who had worked all day seems patently unfair. Such stories are sometimes introduced with the phrase “the Kingdom of heaven (or God) is like...” which signals a new order where God’s reign is everywhere evident. The parables, in other words, picture another way of being where the rejected and the unworthy are included, where evil systems are undermined and where generosity reaches beyond merit to grace.

How might the agenda for the church reflect this new order?

*From the Social Action Handbook, The Presbyterian Church in Canada*
Through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing, we help support vital ministry and mission in Canada and around the world. We engage in healing and reconciliation. We live out God’s call to justice. We provide tools for worship and support leaders in their ministry. We empower youth and encourage spiritual renewal. We help congregations renew and grow their ministries.

We encourage and support one another. We walk in love, as God loves us.

“We have witnessed transformation with the assistance and support of many caring individuals through Presbyterians Sharing and from many congregations that have helped us save lives.” — Yvonne Bearbull, Executive Director of Kenora Fellowship Centre.

Together, we make mission and ministry happen.

Together, we are Presbyterians Sharing.

“We are God’s servants, working together” (1 Corinthians 3:9).
We do this and we remember that as we were welcomed at the table we will make room for everyone.

We do this and we remember that as we have been fed we must ensure none go hungry.

We do this and we remember that as we have been served we are called to serve others.

We do this and we remember that as we have seen God’s goodness we are sent into the world to show it.
We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (John 10:10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit, we open ourselves to the reality of our world.

We believe that God is sovereign over all creation: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1).

We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9:8–12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the marketplace (Isaiah 55:1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners and calls us to put justice for the “least of these” at the centre of the community of life (Matthew 25:40). All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hosea 2:18ff).

Therefore, we reject the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system or any other system which claims there is no alternative.

The Lord continues his ministry in and through the church. All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As his body on earth we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head. Through the church God orders this ministry by calling some to special tasks in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Ministers of Word and Sacrament are set apart to preach the Gospel, celebrate Baptism and Holy Communion and exercise pastoral care in Christ’s name. Their ministry is an order which continues the work of the apostles. Christ preserves this order today by calling to it both men and women.

People are trained for various ministries within the church and world through The Presbyterian College (Montreal), Knox College (Toronto), Vancouver School of Theology and St. Andrew’s Hall (Vancouver).

*From Living Faith 7*
Living God,
to turn away from you is to fall and
to turn towards you is to rise.
By the power of your Spirit,
reform your church and
help us to hear your word
in ways that we will understand it truly;
so that in understanding we may trust fully;
and that in trusting we may follow you always.
Give us, dear God,
your help in all our responsibilities;
your guidance in all our uncertainties; and
your wisdom in all our discerning.
Where we are corrupt, purify us.
Where we are in error, direct us.
Where we are divided, reunite us.
And use your church to your glory
and the service of your people.
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A prayer for the church from the writings of the Reformers
To celebrate All Saints is to affirm hope. Christian hope trusts that all things are in the hands of the God of yesterday, today and tomorrow who is on the side of life; who is always bringing new life from what is past, who is even now in the midst of whatever is broken or painful working wholeness and healing; and who has prepared a future where all will be redeemed and made new.

_The Life and Mission Agency_

Photo: Art by Sophie, age 10
We Remember

We remember God’s grace and care in times of need and crisis.

We remember the courage and sacrifice of those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

We remember those whose bodies, minds and souls were scarred in battle and whose lives will forever bear the wounds of war.

We remember refugees, the poor, children and all those who are caught in struggles of power.

We remember the pride and nationalism that often leads to war.

We remember those who make and keep peace.

We remember those who fell in war and who now dwell in the eternal peace of your presence.
My father-in-law, Adam, was an amazing man, generous with time, money, encouragement and love. When he passed away, we were particularly grateful for his talent for planning. He’d thought of everything—and thank goodness, because there was so much to think about. At every turn, he had provided all the decisions and information we needed. Adam never stopped giving, even after he died.

My wife, Linda, and I are following his example by maintaining a loving gift of an up-to-date estate plan for each other and for our children. I can’t think of a better way to leave a legacy of love that I know my family will appreciate. It’s important to me that my wishes will be known and the things I care about will be remembered.

None of us likes to think or talk about death. And yet it is going to happen to us all. Estate planning—making plans to disperse the things we own after we die—is both meaningful and kind. We can take care of our family and support causes that reflect the generosity we shared in life.

Jim MacDonald is Development Manager for Stewardship & Planned Giving, part-time M.Div. student at Knox College and an elder at St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church in Vaughan, Ontario

Photo: Adam MacDonald and his grandson
Christ is King, but not like the kings of history and of grandeur and wealth. We know that from our salvation history. We know it from the biblical story. We know it from our hymns.

We worship a king who not only sits on a throne but walks daily with the least of all the people in the kingdom.

We worship a king who chooses love over wealth, who influences by giving rather than demanding, and whose power is not over and against us but in us and through us.

Christ’s crown is of thorns; Christ’s throne a cross. Christ is powerless; Christ is vulnerable. Christ our King is servant of all.

The Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset is minister at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ontario