

STREAMS OF JUSTICE

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

Spring 2018
Volume 20, Issue 1

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Stephen Allen is Retiring

What a joy and privilege it has been to serve God and The Presbyterian Church in Canada as Associate Secretary for Justice Ministries for almost 21 years. This newsletter, now called "Streams of Justice," began in 1998. For many years it was called "In Our Small Corner." The title and design have changed. It's purpose has not: to shine a light on justice initiatives by Presbyterians across Canada.



Justice Ministries has been nourished by these many initiatives. We depend on you, who are so committed to social justice. Thank you for your faithfulness, persistence and support. The opportunities to speak and lead workshops across the church are vital to Justice Ministries, and are energizing.

Over the years, General Assembly has directed Justice Ministries to prepare responses to overtures or motions adopted by General Assembly. They range from statements on genetics, health care, sanctuary for refugees, violence in computer games, the growing gap between rich and poor in Canada and, more recently, inclusion for Presbyterians who are members of the LGBTQI community, the opioids crisis and forced labour. It has been exciting learning about a variety of issues important in the world at large, and important to the church. Justice Ministries has worked hard to prepare clear responses for the church, knowing that the decision to approve or not approve these statements rested with General Assembly. Thank you to the many people who contributed to these reports, including the many stories from churches that ground these issues in congregational life and ministry.

Thank you to Presbyterians who faithfully represent the church on the ecumenical agencies that Justice Ministries connects with: Church Council on Justice and Corrections, KAIROS, ISARC and Project Ploughshares. Commitment to ecumenism reflects above all a theological commitment, an acknowledgment of the broken nature of Christ's church and the church's prayer and hope for church unity.

It has been a privilege to provide leadership for the church's Healing and Reconciliation Program. I attended five of the seven Truth and Reconciliation Commission National Events. The courage and dignity of Survivors who shared their truth about residential schools was both a gift and a challenge. I have been blessed to learn from, and to collaborate with, colleagues and friends in National Native Ministries. They minister to some of the most vulnerable people in Canada, and do so faithfully day after day.

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It is tempting to say that the times we live in are especially difficult. But each age presents its own unique challenges. Each age calls the church to name injustices, walk with vulnerable people and work with others for the common good. Victories, however small and infrequent, offer a glimpse of the Reign of God: of how God calls us to live. Our faith is a public faith. We bring the Gospel to the public square. The issues may be complex, controversial and messy. It seems to me this is a good place for the church to be. Above all, as followers of Jesus, we are a people of hope. Thank you for the privilege of serving as Associate Secretary for Justice Ministries. I am most grateful.

Stephen Allen



Stephen Allen, right, with KAIROS friends. Campaign to support UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Churches Responding to the Opioid Crisis

In the winter of 2018, Justice Ministries received an overture requesting information on the opioid crisis in Canada. A response was prepared for the 2018 General Assembly. To prepare a response, Justice Ministries spoke with Presbyterians to learn how different communities have been impacted by the crisis, and how they are responding. These are some of those stories.

Winnipeg Inner City Missions assists people with drug and alcohol addiction on a daily basis. The staff and volunteers minister to low income people, many of whom are Indigenous, and many of whom are also living with the legacy of residential schools. The Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin, former executive director, writes:

"The drug and alcohol crisis is a part of our daily experience. Staff and volunteers must have adequate personal capacity to deal with any crisis as it arises. Fentanyl is being laced into everything it seems and more people are dying from overdosing. Our people are dying out here and it is directly related to colonization and the residential school legacy. We bear witness that generational trauma is real and devastating."

Claudette Young is an elder at **Callingwood Road Presbyterian Church in Edmonton**. During a family crisis nine years ago, she sought family supports for parents with children struggling with addictions. Finding no appropriate supports locally, she contacted an American group called Because I Love You (BILY) and started an Edmonton chapter. Ms. Young is its executive director.

BILY is a non-profit organization that creates spaces for families in crisis to meet with, and support, other families in crisis. There are no fees. Parents of children, teens and adults of all ages who are struggling with addictions, mental health, criminal activities, etc. come to share their sto-

ries, seek comfort, support and advice from other parents in similar circumstances. Groups are mentored by parent volunteers who provide support during, and outside of, weekly meetings. There is a facilitated youth group for teens and their parents. One focus of the youth program is to build self esteem and teach interpersonal communication skills. Additionally, BILY operates a 24 hour hotline supported by volunteers. Callingwood Road PC provided funding and other support to set up a BILY group in Edmonton and continues to support BILY. In response to the fentanyl crisis Parkland County (west of Edmonton) requested a second chapter of BILY for their community, which was established in May 2017.

Ms. Young notes that hundreds of Albertans have died and are continuing to die every day, and that each of these individuals has value and worth. She encourages churches to take action: "You don't have to have a personal connection for this to be an issue in your community." She challenges church members to do what they can and to consider how church facilities can be used to support families in crisis.

Verne Gilkes is a church elder at **Knox Presbyterian Church in Vankleek Hill** (half way between Ottawa and Montreal). A retired police officer, he is concerned about the opioid crisis and, after consulting with his minister, Rev. James Douglas, convened a community meeting on March 27, 2018. Speakers addressed different aspects of the opioid crisis: Melanie Willard, author, talked about overcoming many life-threatening challenges including addictions; Ontario Provincial Police Officer Jean Alexandre Robillard-Cardinal spoke about opioids and street drugs; Eric Larocque is a Paramedic Superintendent and commented on the opioid crisis from the perspective of first responders; Nickolas Hotte works for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit and commented on the opioid crisis as a public health emergency.

KAIROS funding renewal with Global Affairs Canada

On May 30, 2018 KAIROS announced a renewal of a funding partnership with the Government of Canada. Global Affairs Canada will provide \$4.5 million over five years in support of KAIROS' Women of Courage: Women, Peace and Security initiative. The funding will support the work of five grass-

roots women-focused organizations that help to heal female victims of war while empowering them to be peace builders in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, South Sudan, and the West Bank.

Atlantic Missionary Society Reconciliation Event: Discovery Days

Approximately 40 people attended the Atlantic Mission Society's (AMS) Discovery Days event in Truro NS, April 27-28, 2018. The event focused on reconciliation.

On Friday evening, the Rev. Dawn Griffiths, minister of Hartsville Presbyterian Church in PEI, led worship. She preached on Jacob and Easu and shared a personal story which underlined the importance of reconciliation within families.

On Saturday, Joe Michael and Veronica Gore led a smudging ceremony, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise and a talking circle. Joe Michael is a retired RCMP officer, originally from Eskasoni First Nation, and a long-time resident of Indian Brook First Nation. Joe is an Elder, Pipe Carrier and Spiritual Advisor. Veronica is the Coordinator of Aboriginal Student Services at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax. She belongs to the Yellow Quill First Nation SK and has lived most of her life in Nova Scotia. Katharine Sisk (Program

Coordinator, Justice Ministries) traced the history of the relationship of The Presbyterian Church in Canada with Indigenous peoples and led a workshop on how we can respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. In small groups, we were asked to focus on Call to Action #59, which calls the church to develop educational initiatives so we can learn about the church's role in colonization and residential schools.

Supposing that we were preparing an event for our local congregation, we discussed the most important message to communicate and ways we could do that. We identified challenges and how to overcome them. So much did we get involved in the planning, that we almost forgot we were "supposing."

Joan Cho, Saint John NB. Adapted from Atlantic Mission Society's "The Message." Joan Cho is the editor of "The Message."

A Palestinian Theology of Liberation



A Palestinian Theology of Liberation: The Bible, Justice, and the Palestine-Israel Conflict is the latest book by the Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek. Dr. Ateek is the co-founder of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre and is a former Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. On May 2, Dr. Ateek launched his new book in Toronto and shared his insights on justice and reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Dr. Ateek spoke about the importance of international law in the region, "if I want to resolve the conflict, I have to look to international law, not the Bible; because the Bible can be, and is, interpreted in many ways". He further elaborated that although the Bible does not contain solutions, it inspires us to do justice. The central theme in the Bible is our covenant with God, a covenant that calls for justice for all of God's people.

When asked how long the occupation can continue, Dr. Ateek's answer was: until *we* stand for justice. Whenever there is a struggle for liberation, there needs to be liberation for all. We are called into costly solidarity. We need to actively stand for justice in word and action. Dr. Ateek told the audience that if people do not listen, continue to make your witness: "do not be afraid."

Written by Amy Zavitz. Amy served as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Israel-Palestine in January-April 2018.

Responding to the TRC Calls to Action

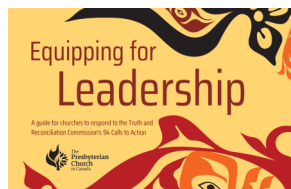
The 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission address the history and legacy of the Indian Residential Schools System in Canada. The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran 11 of these schools, two after 1925. Our 1994 Confession is a covenant to seek healing. Reading the Calls to Action can feel daunting. You may ask: How do we begin? What can we do?

Equipping for Leadership: A guide for churches to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action is a new free resource to help Presbyterians begin these conversations. This resource provides suggestions of how to read the Calls to Action (CTA), questions for reflection and ideas for action.

Ask a few members of your congregation to read the Calls to Action with you. Pray about them and talk about them. Choose one that stand out and begin to learn more together. Seek Indigenous voices. Listening is essential in reconciliation. Justice Ministries' staff can suggest resources.

Presbyterians are responding to the Calls to Action. In January 2018, First Presbyterian Church (Collingwood ON) hosted a day camp for 40 children in their community to participate in activities and make crafts that highlighted Indigenous culture and history (CTA #59). The Rev. Mark Tremblay has prepared a Lenten Bible Study for his Knox Presbyterian Church (Calgary AB) and a liturgy for Mission Awareness Sunday (April 29) about the Doctrine of Discovery (CTA #46 and 49).

No one is alone in the work of reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, we are reminded that through Christ, the world is reconciled to God. God calls us to the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ. God draws us into this ministry and walks with us.



Contact Justice Ministries to receive copies of *Equipping for Leadership*.

Book Review: *Beyond Incarceration* by Mallea and Latimer

Paula Mallea, a lawyer, and Catherine Latimer, Executive Director of the John Howard Society, in their new book, *Beyond Incarceration: Safety and True Criminal Justice?*, make a persuasive and compelling argument that Canada should radically overhaul its criminal and correctional systems and move away from its focus on incarceration as a means to deal with offending behaviours. They propose that Canada adopt more compassionate, restorative alternatives, drawing from examples modeled in other countries like Finland and Norway. Authors Mallea and Latimer offer a clear vision for a different approach. I commend the book to your attention: it is certainly worth a read.

While new technologies have led to new crimes, such as cyberbullying and identity theft, overall, crime rates in Canada are lower now than in the 20th century, and in general, rates are decreasing.

But there are problems with our criminal justice and correctional systems. Even though crime rates are relatively low, incarceration rates are high. Prisons are necessary to protect society from dangerous individuals who have committed violent crimes. However many people in prison simply don't fit this profile. For example, many people in prison are there for non-violent property crimes.

There are more people in Provincial custody awaiting trial

than people who have been convicted of an offence. This is a pressing concern that must be addressed.

Most urgent is the need to address the over-representation of Indigenous people in the corrections system. This is a troubling legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system named in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and which Canada has been asked to address in the TRC Calls to Action.

Church partner The Church Council on Justice and Corrections is mandated to shine a light on restorative approaches to justice and corrections and seeks to encourage creative and innovative thinking about new approaches to justice and corrections. CCJC is committed to supporting the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada, and to intervening in exclusionary logics that make prisons seem like the only way to deal with offending behaviour. The CCJC's theology is clearly consistent with the comments and alternative proposals articulated by Mallea and Latimer in their brilliant new book.

Reviewed by Rebecca Bromwich. Dr. Bromwich teaches law at Carleton University and is member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa ON. She is president of the CCJC's board.