

ATLANTIC MISSION SOCIETY

Interim Report, May 2020

The purpose of the Atlantic Mission Society (AMS) is to glorify God and support with prayer, study and service mission endeavours through The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

We are a group of women and men from the four Atlantic Provinces who have a heart for Christ's mission in the world. The AMS provides financial support to Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D projects from the general Society level and from local auxiliaries. The auxiliaries also support local and regional mission work. The AMS members serve on national committees of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, including Assembly Council, Life and Mission Agency Committee, International Affairs Committee and PWS&D. Members also work with and support financially one synod and two presbytery camps.

The AMS publishes *The Presbyterian Message* nine times a year. It keeps us connected with each other and the wider church with features such as a monthly devotion, prayer corner, mission studies and events happening locally, nationally and internationally.

Our 143rd Annual Meeting was held in Miramichi, New Brunswick, this year with President Linda MacKinnon presiding. The weekend was one of good fun, good food, interesting speakers and wonderful worship. We rejoiced in our past history, celebrated the work being done now and are looking forward to the future with hopeful hearts, with God as our ever present helper.

The meeting was declared open by Presbyterial President Vera Blake, who acknowledged that we were meeting on the unceded territory of local Mi'kmaq Communities of the Wabanaki Confederacy. She led us in worship and brought us up to date on a project at a nearby Mi'kmaq high school teaching computer programming and maintenance.

Our Saturday morning speaker was Mr. Guy Smagghe, Director of Presbyterian World Service and Development. He brought us up to date on PWS&D projects working with refugees and relief work around the world, as well as the work being done in Malawi to improve maternal/child health. There was a good discussion of ways the AMS can be more effective in helping bring the work of PWS&D to our congregations, including promoting the use of the Gifts of Change catalogue and encouraging each congregation to have a champion for change to promote the work of PWS&D.

The guest speaker this year was Ms. Rebecca (Becky) Bauman. She and their three children accompanied her husband Nicholas, who was sponsored by Presbyterians Sharing on a two year mission appointment at the United Mission Hospital in Tansen Nepal beginning in February 2017. Nicholas is a surgeon who worked and taught in the hospital. Becky is an occupational therapist who works with people with disabilities, providing therapeutic skills training. While in Nepal, Becky volunteered her time to work at the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Center affiliated with the hospital. The center is a safe home environment for psychiatric patients and people who have been abandoned by their families. It's a place where they're cared for in body, mind and spirit; taught skills of daily living and given vocational training. Becky spoke very honestly and movingly of their time in Nepal and the events leading up to it. She was pregnant when they arrived and Dorothy (Dot) was born while in Nepal. Dot was welcomed and 'adopted' by the residents, opening doors, hearts and opportunities for mission for Becky. Becky brought Dot with her to our meeting where she won a lot of hearts in Miramichi as well! Becky's wonderful presentations and her obvious passion for the residents she worked with in Tansen prompted the AMS to choose the New Life Center as the recipient of funds from the AMS 20/20 Project. Becky added that part of her heart was left in Nepal and that she enjoys sharing their experience with others.

Our Honorary President for 2019–2022 is Ms. Rosemary Smith. Rosemary is a long-time member of AMS, serving on the executive of her local auxiliary, as St. John Presbyterial president and as convenor of Personnel and Policy for the General Society. Rosemary graciously thanked everyone for the honour.

We were once again very pleased to welcome the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, General Secretary, Life and Mission Agency. He brought us up to date on people working in mission fields and the work they are committed to. He asked for, and received, ideas for articles in the *Presbyterian Connection*. He answered many questions and took an active part in all that was going on at the meeting. On behalf of the membership, Ms. Linda MacKinnon thanked him for his interest in, and support of, AMS.

Ms. Penny Gillies is the AMS representative on the International Affairs Committee. She reported on the work of the committee and updated us on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.

We welcomed Ms. Janet Brewer, president of Women's Missionary Society (WMS) to our annual meeting. It's always a joy to share with the WMS and learn from one another.

There is much to celebrate in the AMS, both at the local and general society level. However, as with many groups, the Atlantic Mission Society has seen a decline in membership over the past year. We recognize that our members are aging and younger people generally don't join groups. Membership currently consists of 62 auxiliaries, 512 members and 147 associate members. With a decline in membership, there is also a decline in giving but we are blessed by the continued support of our members. We donated \$46,000 to Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D and continue to support overseas mission projects, as well as many projects here at home. Three bursaries of \$600 each were awarded last fall to students from Atlantic Canada studying for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We support a synod camp and two presbytery summer camps in our region. As mentioned, our special project for 2018–2020 is the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre in Nepal.

In the light of these changes, our focus is shifting from each group doing the mission work, to becoming educators and empowers. Many groups lead worship on Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D Sundays, providing education for the whole congregation and opportunities for greater involvement in carrying out Christ's mission for members of our congregations and Sunday Schools. Many AMS auxiliaries develop Lenten, Advent or other seasonal challenges to support the Canadian Food Grains Bank, Gifts of Change Projects, donations to relief projects like Hurricane Idai, and other projects. The response from the congregations is generous and positive. The way we do mission work is changing, but giving thanks to God, and relying on the Holy Spirit to lead us, we continue to share Christ's love with the world.

Rob Griffiths
President