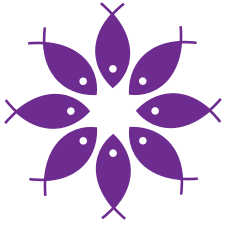


Stories of Mission

LIVING FAITH





Radical Acts of Kindness

Presbyterians Sharing helps Cariboo Presbyterian Church reach out with the love of Christ to people who live in the rural and remote areas of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of British Columbia.

Two Rivers Church in Guelph, Ontario, is exploring new ways of being the church. A recipient of the PCC's Supporting Ministry Grant, the ministry is made up of "Living Rooms," where people gather together in homes for meals and conversations that draw them deeper into friendship and spiritual formation in Christ.



Nestled between the Coast Mountains and the Rocky Mountains is a region of British Columbia called the Interior Plateau—a breathtaking wilderness consisting of grass-filled valleys and rocky ridges with forests and deep blue lakes scattered throughout. The communities in the northern part of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region are small and spread out with many miles between them. Most of these towns and villages are accessible only by driving countless hours through winding back roads. Despite the distance, Christians living in these communities are connected through a house church ministry called Cariboo Presbyterian Church.

Halfway across the country is Two Rivers Church in Guelph, a vibrant community of over 120,000 people, located in the heart of southern Ontario. It is a city rich in music, arts and culture. The magnificent limestone Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate stands watch over the downtown area, and there are many places of worship, including four traditional Presbyterian churches. But some people are more comfortable in

a less-traditional setting. So, Two Rivers Church offers a house-church model of "living rooms" where people gather together for meals and conversations that draw them deeper into friendship and spiritual growth.

These two congregations, meeting in very different settings for different reasons, have something in common besides their house church ministries: each has made the intention to serve their neighbours through small acts of service and hospitality. The vision is simple, but the impact is great.

"We seek to follow Jesus' example by providing care and support to those who are in need, and by serving them in practical ways," said the Rev. Mark Carter, minister at Cariboo Presbyterian Church. Acts of hospitality have included yard work for elderly people, meals for families grieving the loss of a loved one, and community bike tune-up and repair days.

Two Rivers is also seeking to be a blessing in their community by responding to the needs of their neighbours. Something as simple as walking a neighbour's dog during work hours can create a



relationship of trust. With each act of kindness, members of Two Rivers are making an impact in their neighbourhood and providing an example of what it looks like to be part of God's church. If you ask them what God is up to, they will respond, "God is making all things new."

While baking a pie, shovelling snow or driving a neighbour to the doctor may not appear to be radical acts at first glance, reaching out in kindness is in fact counter-cultural behavior in a world that too often has valued individualism and consumerism over conversation and connection.

For many of us, outreach is part of our collective church experience. It is easy to forget that we are called, not just as a church, but as individuals, to go out into our communities and share the good news of the gospel message. Sharing the love of Christ with a neighbour can seem as daunting as scaling one of the Rocky Mountains or ascending the spire of the Basilica in Guelph. But as we open ourselves to God's love, and share that love through acts of generosity, friendship and kindness, God's healing and transformation can be experienced. And people's lives can be made new.

Read: John 13:34-35

Reflect

In John 13: 34, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment—to love one another as he loved them. This is not a passive love, but a call to action: a call to care for others and put love into everyday activities. And by doing so, to be recognized as a follower of Christ.

How many times do we hurry past someone on the street or in the hallway of our apartment building or workplace without acknowledgment? How many times do we leave church without greeting a newcomer? How often are we too busy to check in with our own friends and family, let alone people we don't know? Without reaching out, we have no way of knowing the context in which others are living or the joys and challenges that they experience. We have no way of knowing how we might offer care or hospitality.

Hospitality is a notion that is deeply rooted in the Bible. It allows people to experience a taste of God's love and grace through their interactions with one another. Jesus loved others by providing for them in practical ways, ministering to their physical and emotional needs as well as spiritual. When we pay attention to the people around us and seek to understand their needs, we can form relationships and offer hospitality through simple acts of kindness and service. And they'll know that we are Christians by our love.

Discuss

1. Think about the community where you live.
Who are your neighbours? Who do you know well?
Who is a stranger?
2. It can be difficult to go outside of our safety zones and extend God's love to strangers. How could you

get to know people in your community? How can you listen to people who live on the margins or across boundaries?

3. What defines Christian hospitality today and how can we embody it? What challenges might we face?
4. What could you do as a congregation to share Christ's hospitality in your community with the people you have identified? What can you do as an individual?

Sing

471 – We are one in the Spirit

475 – I am the church! You are the church!

637 – Take my life and let it be consecrated

Prayer Focus

Please pray that all Christians will be deeply rooted in the love of Jesus Christ and will be inspired to share that love with others. Pray for Cariboo Presbyterian Church and Two Rivers Church as they bless their communities through loving service. Pray that each act sends out ripples of change, allowing new life to emerge in hopeless places.

Pray

Loving God, we praise you for being a God whose love stretches across all borders and boundaries. No location and no situation is too remote for your love to reach. Thank you for modeling for us your generous love in the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. Forgive us for when we erect borders in our minds that block us from sharing that love with others. Remake our hearts so that we may reflect your love, and help us to find ways to gladly share our gifts, service, food and lives with our neighbours.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.



Mission in Canada

Through Presbyterians Sharing we support mission in Canada in many ways. Together we help congregations meet local needs in their communities and work to make the Gospel relatable and relevant to people of all ages. We support ministries that help meet the needs of people living in at-risk urban communities. We walk with staff and volunteers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as they work together to meet people's physical and spiritual needs through ministries that operate in and with Indigenous communities in Canada. Together we live out our faith, sharing God's love and igniting transformation.

