



Ministries Shining Brightly in Challenging Times



The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud, associate minister, and the Rev. Christian Persaud, interim pastoral care minister, preparing a *3 in 1 Worship* video at Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary.

By Canadian Ministries

Congregations and ministries adapted in remarkable ways to the evolving circumstances in the early days of COVID-19. Many started live streaming their services, and others found creative ways to share elements of the liturgy with people at home by email or mail. Pastoral care teams responded faithfully to the increased needs within their congregations by making check-in calls and organizing grocery delivery. Community outreach programs adapted quickly to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable continue to be met.

It is truly inspiring to witness how God's love was announced and Christ's ministry has continued to shine brightly through Presbyterian congregations in this difficult time. We wish we were able to share all the stories we've heard of churches continuing to praise God and love neighbours while social distancing, but it would take up all the pages

of this edition, and more, to do so. Here are a few examples of innovation, passion and the commitment to God's mission that Presbyterian ministries have demonstrated over the early months of this pandemic.

3 in 1 Worship — Grace Presbyterian Church, Calgary, Alta.

When their congregation was no longer able to gather in person, the leaders of Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary seized the opportunity to experiment in worship. After prayerfully reflecting on the needs of their congregation, the leadership team determined that the best way to facilitate worship would be to engage more deeply with the Word of God. Using their unique gifts as leaders, and drawing upon the gifts of their elders, they developed a new series, which they called *3 in 1 Worship*. Each week, the three ministers at Grace presented one biblical story from three different viewpoints.

Those who tuned in through the online platforms were provided with videos and written reflections that helped participants explore three new perspectives on the story.

The leadership team is encouraged by the way that members of the congregation continue to engage with, respond to and share the *3 in 1* videos. "We are joking that *3 in 1* is causing Grace to go viral," the team explains, "because people are sharing the content with friends and family in Canada as well as around the world." It is not just the content that appeals to people, but the way that it invites connection and active engagement during this time of isolation. Along with each video, there are questions for reflection and three or more suggested ways to respond from home. The congregation has been enthusiastically participating by submitting thoughts, pictures and prayers shared through email and on the church's Facebook page.

Witnessing how people are en-

gaging with scripture in deep and meaningful ways through *3 in 1*, the team strongly encourages other ministry leaders to experiment: "Now is a time to try something you have wanted to try for a long time because people are looking for ways to connect and find meaningful ways to engage with one another and with church."

The gifts of many create beautiful online worship — Toronto Formosan Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Ont.

One of the strengths of the ministry at Toronto Formosan Presbyterian Church is the enduring connection between generations within the church community. In the early days of moving their service online, the worship team came together to develop strategies to build upon this attribute as they developed their virtual ministry. Thanks to the help of a few tech savvy congregants, they

have been able to create worship services that draw upon the gifts of many to keep members visible to one another.

Each week, a collection of videos that include worship songs from musically gifted congregation members, scripture readings led by children and prayers spoken by different households are woven together with the minister's homily. The result is a beautifully crafted worship service that enables members to participate in worship leadership even while they must be apart physically. While the ministry leadership team does encourage others to experiment with this style of ministry, they do have a word of caution about the amount of time required to do this well. This type of presentation calls for some work to be put into video editing, so that the light and sound from the assorted clips can be harmonized. But keeping the community connected is well worth the effort!

Continued on page 4

Page 4...
Reflecting
on Tragedy

Page 10...
Presbyterian
Graduates

Page 14...
Mission Staff
Update

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Being the Church at Home



The Rev. Amanda Currie with her husband, Nicholas Jesson.

By the Rev. Amanda Currie,
Moderator of 2019 General Assembly

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has had most of us sheltering at home, self-isolating and physical distancing, we've been spending less time with our church communities and more with our families. Staying home has come with blessings and challenges. Yes, we've enjoyed the quality time with our household members, but we've also been stretched to manage the inevitable squabbles and conflicts that arise when we're living in close quarters for a long time.

Congregational leaders have scrambled and adjusted to guiding and serving their church communities from a distance. We've figured out online worship, pastoral care by phone, electronic methods of giving, and delivering sermons and devotional materials by mail to our members. We have struggled with the reality that the church cannot gather together physically during such a serious pandemic and found ways to continue to be the church in a dispersed form. But the situation has also inspired some to begin thinking about families as the primary place where Christian education, faith formation, service and mission have always been intended to take place.

I remember someone suggesting that one of the new developments of the 20th century in North American churches was that Christian education became formalized and professionalized. It moved from being the responsibility of parents in the home to becoming the job of "theological experts" in the form of Sunday School teachers and pastors in the church. Of course, with that development, the time devoted to faith formation was reduced to a few hours each week rather than the regular attention to matters of faith that could take place in the context

of daily life.

In recent years, many congregations have been intentional about providing resources for families and encouraging faith conversations, prayer, learning and service from the home. But in the midst of most families' busy and hectic lives, I wonder how many Presbyterian households take time to read scripture and pray together. How many incorporate spiritual disciplines into their daily or weekly routines, besides the habit of going to church on Sundays (or most Sundays, anyway)?

As much as the pandemic is a terrible situation, it could provide us with an opportunity as well—the chance to encourage and equip families to initiate new patterns of shared prayer, worship and Christian nurture that could be continued even after we've been allowed to return to more of our past activities. Perhaps we might reclaim the idea that the Christian household is more than just a family, but is the smallest unit of the church itself, sometimes called the "domestic church."

I came across the concept of the domestic church when I was studying theologies of marriage in connection with my doctoral work on interchurch families. Sometimes also called the "church of the home," the idea will be most familiar in contemporary Roman Catholic circles because the Second Vatican Council sought to restore its practice in the 1960s. However, it is deeply rooted in Christian tradition, both biblical and historical.

In an article titled, "Marriage as Worship: A Theological Analogy," German Martinez suggests that the idea "goes back to the very dawn of the Christian community and its worship" when churches met in family homes, and households gave birth to communities. Giving the examples of the households of Lydia and Cornelius, he argues that Christian worshipping communities "originated in the bosom of the family, around the table, and under the couple's hospitality."

Florence Caffrey Bourg, in her book, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches*, notes that it has been used in various fashions, from the Pauline "house church" texts through John Chrysostom, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus to more contemporary writers such as American Congregationalist Horace Bushnell. She points out that in a commentary of 1 Corinthians 16, John Calvin remarks enthusiastically,



Currie family of Ottawa around 1981: The domestic church in which the moderator was nurtured in faith and life. She is the second from the left, wearing the blue top.

"What a wonderful thing to put on record, that the name 'church' is applied to a single family, and yet it is fitting that all the families of believers should be organized in such a way as to be so many little churches."

In *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II embraces the concept of domestic church because families are called to participate in the mission and ministry of the whole church: "the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity." He describes the Christian family in terms that sound like a small church: a believing and evangelizing community, a community of dialogue with God, and a community at the service of humanity, and he suggests that the ministry is not only carried out by the parents, but includes the full participation of children:

"All members of the family have the responsibility of building, day

by day, the community of persons, making the family 'a school of deeper humanity': this happens where there is care and love for little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; where there is sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows."

Pope John Paul II recognizes that family life can be difficult, and that "There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension, and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wound its own communion." He advises that unity in the domestic church requires sacrifice, a generous openness to understanding, forbearance, pardon and reconciliation, as well as the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men.

Ecumenical families, whose members belong to different Christian denominations, have been encouraged by the concept of domestic churches because, like every other Christian family, an interchurch family represents the Body of Christ in the home. While our churches remain formally

divided from one another, we are united in one church within the smallest ecclesial unit that is the Christian household.

While it continues to be difficult for our congregations not to gather for worship, fellowship and service week-to-week, our smallest Christian communities have been granted the gift of much time together in these days. Thinking of the activities of the earliest Christian communities in Acts 2:42-47, can we, as the wider church, equip our "domestic churches" so that they can "devote themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers"? Can we nurture and support our "churches of the home" as they spend time together and have all things in common: sharing possessions, taking care of each other's needs, sharing food, praising God and living together in love for one another?

May God bless and strengthen our church in all its forms, and may God add to our number those who are being saved.

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Later that Same Day

By the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald,
General Secretary
Life and Mission Agency

"Later that same day" is how the story of the disciples' trip to Emmaus begins in the Gospel of Luke. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women had returned from the tomb on Easter morning to report that Jesus had been raised from death. Some dazzling strangers in the cemetery asked them what must be the most indicting question in the New Testament: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Whereas most of the disciples dismissed the women's stories as nonsense, Peter ran to the tomb. He saw the discarded strips of the burial shroud that had bound Christ's dead body. In spite of all they had learned from Jesus, his followers were dead to the life-giving news of the resurrection. In spite of seeing the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the sick healed, the deaf hear, the dead raised, they lacked imagination. In spite of what Jesus told them about his own death and resurrection, the disciples quickly returned to their narrow vision of reality. Under the pressure of loss and surprise, so strong was the impulse to revert to what was familiar, the disciples regressed into their old habits. They become paralyzed and sad. Easter day was nearly wasted on a return to business-as-usual "later that same day."

The trauma of pandemic, the harrowing violence in Nova Scotia in April, the grief we all feel at the loss of work, missed opportunities, cancelled events, restricted travel, prohibitions on being with people, illness, death and the exhaustion of coping has diminished us. We want to put disruption, fatigue, uncertain-

ty and isolation behind us and return to what is familiar.

Rightly, we want to return to worshipping together. Rightly, we want to be with people in person, travel freely, eat together, go to work and school and enjoy our activities. We want to put an end to so much uncertainty and the constant reminders of our vulnerability.

We have lost so much in this surreal time. However, the last few months have given us a unique gift. The church has learned that it is resilient and creative. Congregations and church bodies discovered an agility that surprised them. We can see more clearly what is essential and what is distracting. We remembered that physical and mental health are also spiritual concerns. We embraced how much we value and need fellowship. We learned anew to cherish our ecumenical and community partner connections. We proved that disagreements don't have to impede cooperation. We woke from the fantasy of magical thinking that promises quick fixes and cures and were reminded of the gift of perseverance. We saw that we can move quickly AND do things decently and in good order. We learned that it's okay to experiment, that it's okay to not quite get it right and okay to then try something else. In many places, changes and challenges galvanized, rather than divided congregations.

Who would exchange these discoveries for the complete restoration of the familiar? We know from experience that the familiar usually feels good only because it is familiar and not because it is actually good, life-giving, beneficial or generative. While there is pleasure in recalling fond memories of the past, benign recollection easily overripens into malignant nostalgia, which is at



least one-part selective amnesia and one-part anger at having lost what we once thought was essential.

The mandated pandemic restrictions forced us to adapt quickly to our new circumstances. Now we have time to carefully consider what to treasure from this season of isolation and which features of the familiar we can let go. There will be pressure to submit to the hectoring voices in the church, and to our own small internal voices, that will rise and try to coerce us into getting back to normal and reviving all the old ways, means, systems and styles of living and being the church. However, we have a faithful responsibility and the spiritual resources to resist those forces. We can discard the bonds of the burial shrouds that bind us and keep us from resurrection. We can insist that we take the time to discern what the Spirit is saying about how to shape a new normal for ourselves, congregations and the church. Answers will vary in different places. And change, solely for the sake of change, is rarely helpful, always just mischief and never wise. We will have wasted this crisis if we drift into acting and thinking like it's just "later that same day" and do not consciously discern how to reform and be reformed.

The writer of Luke's gospel tells another very different post-Easter story in the Book of Acts. It's not "later that same day" but weeks after the resurrection. There, Jesus-

followers were together when they heard a sound like a violent wind coming from heaven. They saw what looked like tongues of fire resting on each of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gifted them. Instead of paralyzed downcast disciples, we are shown people revelling in a newfound energy and ability. Divisions and barriers were overcome, and an expansive new fellowship was formed. So exuberant were the people that onlookers wondered whether the church was drunk, even though it was only nine o'clock in the morning.

A question to consider as we emerge from this difficult time is, "Do we want to be a 'later that same day church' or a 'nine o'clock in the morning church'?" The difference is that one unquestioningly repeats old patterns, risking paralysis and gloom, while the other is freed to make choices and embrace hopeful new ways of living.

Oops!

In the Spring 2020 edition Gatherings section on page 23, we incorrectly listed Knox Presbyterian Church in the fictional location of Calgary, B.C., rather than Calgary, Alta., as it should have stated. Our apologies for the error!

PRESBYTERIAN **Connection**

The *Presbyterian Connection* is a quarterly newspaper published by the national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Barb Summers: Editor
Sarah Curd, Managing Editor
Heather Chappell, Copy Editor

Thank you to all volunteer contributing writers.
For submissions, questions and feedback, please email connection@presbyterian.ca or call 1-800-619-7301 ext. 243.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper is free of charge to all members and friends of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. For address changes, to subscribe or unsubscribe, please contact the national office or go to presbyterian.ca/connection.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

50 Wynford Drive,
Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
1-800-619-7301
connection@presbyterian.ca
presbyterian.ca

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a community of over 800 congregations in Canada. To find a congregation near you, visit presbyterian.ca/church-finder

Moderator of the General Assembly:
The Rev. Amanda Currie



Presbyterians Sharing

Presbyterians Sharing is the national church fund that supports the overall mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper is funded in part through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.

 **Presbyterian World Service & Development**

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

ADVERTISING Stuart Teather

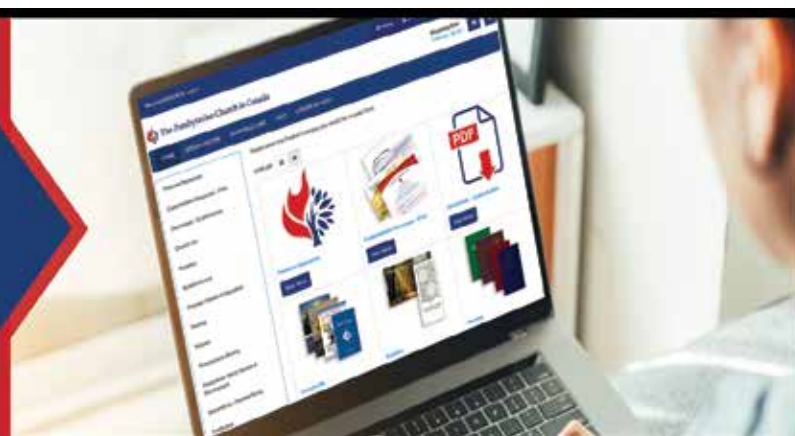
Fenn Company Inc.
P.O. Box 1060, King City, ON L7B 1B1
1-800-209-4810 ext. 23
presbyterian@churchadvertising.ca

The national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is on the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit Indigenous peoples.

ATTENTION CONGREGATIONS

The new and improved online ordering portal for all PCC resources has launched!
presbyterian.ca/portal

Contact communications@presbyterian.ca if you need your congregation's unique login information or any assistance with using the portal.



FEATURE (continued)

Continued from page 1



Jen Ostach-Gooch,
Cyclical PCC participant.

A new virtual home church — Prairie Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Jen Ostach-Gooch, a Cyclical PCC participant and worship and outreach ministry leader at Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, had long dreamed of starting an intergenerational home church. For weeks she had built relationships with young families and was preparing for their first home church gatherings, but

then the time of social distancing hit. At first, Jen was discouraged and ready to postpone the meetings until things went back to normal. But when it became obvious that we weren't going to be returning to normal anytime soon, and she sensed God's continued call, she changed direction. As Jen explains, "It took some time to figure out what the next step should be after the launches were cancelled. Although I was filled with doubt and insecurity, I knew that none of this is about me. It's about God, it's about people, and it's about finding authentic ways to help people connect with God."

Jen decided to call parents together for an online meeting for a time of sharing and prayer after their children had gone to bed. There was some reluctance in the group when she pitched the idea, but to her surprise, everyone came. As the conversation started and people began to share, you could see nodding heads fill the screen; the discussion, support and prayer were exactly what was needed at that moment. The ministry didn't have the launch it expected, but Jen is confident that the bonds created during this time will lay a firm foundation for the ministry when it is able to gather in person. Her advice for other leaders at this time is to "push past your

own feelings about yourself and trust the discernment work you've done." God will lead us all where we need to go in our ministries at this time, if we trust and listen.

Ecumenical drive-in church — Chatham-Kent, Ont.

When it first became apparent that it was no longer safe for churches to stay open because of COVID-19, various congregations in the Chatham-Kent region of Ontario came up with a unique way for people to worship together at a safe distance: drive-in church! It started as a local initiative by a couple of congregations, and others soon wanted to join in, including Knox Presbyterian in Wallaceburg, Ont. Barbara Sargent—a lay minister at Knox—attended one of the first drive-in gatherings. She was so inspired by the participation and connection forged through this unique form of worship that she encouraged her congregation to get on board: "The first time I went out there I was just participating, and it was uplifting to see other people and be able to worship together yet apart. You can do worship online, but there was something special about being together even while apart."

Harkening back to the days of drive-in movies, worshippers tune

in to the service through a radio frequency that is broadcast into their cars. Parked at a safe distance from one another in a church parking lot, they listen to the scripture readings, music and a message from leaders inside the church. It is an unexpectedly engaging form of community worship, as those in their cars wave to one another and honk their horns to say "Amen."

For a rural community with an older population, this form of church at a social distance was especially meaningful. Not only did the format remind seniors of their youth, but also the services were purposefully packed with joy, levity and playfulness—a welcome way of worshipping in uncertain times.

The drive-in worship services were cancelled after three weeks because of stricter provincial guidelines regarding social gatherings; however, those who led and participated are looking forward to coming together again for drive-in church when those restrictions are lifted. Barbara Sargent is sure that, when the time comes, people will be back honking their horns and praising God together as part of this ecumenical and creative form of worship.

Thank you to all The Presbyterian Church in Canada ministries and congregations who have responded



"Our group gathering has been an amazing opportunity to come together as a community in Christ and pray together. That is the most important thing this precious time together has meant to us. Of course, that beautiful human element of catching up and chatting is just gravy!"—virtual home church participant.

to the challenges posed and opportunities presented by COVID-19. More stories from congregations and ministries about their creativity, positivity and resilience during COVID-19 are in the News section, starting on p. 29.

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Reflecting on Tragedy in Rural Nova Scotia

By the Rev. Amanda Currie,
Moderator of 2019 General Assembly

On April 19, before I heard about the violent rampage in rural Nova Scotia, I preached on John 20:19–31 in which Jesus came to his frightened and bewildered disciples in the locked room, where they were sheltering themselves. The Risen Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." He breathed on them and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit to comfort, encourage and empower them for their mission.

I invited those who were worshipping online with the church community I serve to look for the presence of Jesus standing beside them in their homes, in their work, in their grief and struggle, and in our worship and fellowship together even in these unsettling and scary days of the COVID-19 pandemic. I reminded people to breathe and to know that God's Spirit is in them, around them and between them. And I sang to

them from "Here I Am," a hymn by Tom Booth: *"Here I am, standing right beside you. Here I am; do not be afraid. Here I am, waiting like a lover. I am here; here I am."*

Together with Canadians across the country, I was shocked and saddened by news from Nova Scotia as we moved through the rest of that Sunday. I could hardly believe that these small, friendly, rural communities had just experienced the worst mass shooting in Canadian history. As I listened to a community member on the news commenting that Portapique was not the kind of place where people locked their doors, but maybe they would think about doing it now, my thoughts returned to the disciples in their locked room.

I began to pray in that moment, that the people of Portapique and the other affected communities would have an experience of Jesus standing beside them in the midst of their fear. I prayed that those who have suddenly lost their loved ones would know the Spirit's consola-



tion as close as their own breath. I prayed with gratitude for the members of the RCMP and other emergency personnel who hurried to the aid of those communities, putting themselves at risk and doing everything they could to put an end to the violence.

The death toll rose in the days following April 19. Among the dead were teachers, nurses, social workers, people running errands, a family of three, neighbours trying to help, parents and RCMP Constable Heidi Stevenson, a 23-year veteran and married mother of two. As a church,

let us keep all the families of those who were killed and the communities they were from in our prayers.

Let us also pray for the pastors and churches of Nova Scotia, especially the Rev. Andrew Campbell and the people of St. James Presbyterian Church in Truro, that they will know Christ's presence standing beside them and the Spirit's breath equipping and empowering them as they minister to the hurting people of their communities. Especially in this current context of staying home and physical distancing, may the church find faithful and inspired ways to share God's love with those who are grieving.

The first place I visited after becoming moderator last summer was Nova Scotia. I enjoyed the beauty of the province and the warmth and hospitality of the people. My heart breaks with the thought of the pain and sorrow that they are experiencing. May the peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding comfort them.

LEADERSHIP

The Spirit of Christian Camp, Online



*By the Rev. Reuben St. Louis,
Nassagaweya Presbyterian Church in
Campbellville, Ont.*

ChaPodcast started when Nassagaweya Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont., had to cancel its March Break Camp. The camp (led in conjunction with Camp Kintail) is a wonderful outreach program to our community in rural Milton, Ont. However due to COVID-19, our plans changed.

Camp Kintail is an important part of my family's life. My kids (aged 10 and 7) love to go to summer camp, and I have seen how it has been an important part of their faith formation. A focus of my ministry at Nassagaweya has been to bring the spirit of camp into all our children's programming—you know, the experience of being part of a Christian camping community. Needless to say, we were all disappointed that

March Break Camp was not possible this year. In addition, I now had two energetic sidekicks who needed something to do all week. And that's when an idea came to me. We love camp, we were missing camp and we knew of 30+ kids who were supposed to be at March Break Camp who could use some of that camp spirit at home. So we decided to do what we love to do every morning at camp: have chapel!

For those who have never been to Camp Kintail, "chapel" happens before breakfast and includes energetic songs, a creatively presented scripture and an interactive prayer. It is one of my favourite times at camp because it sets the tone for the day. We decided to try and recreate chapel in our living room. We chose the name "ChaPodcast" for our online camp chapel and got to work decorating our fireplace with colourful construction paper letters.

The boys chose songs and we divided up the different reading parts. Our first theme was "praying without ceasing," a fitting message for these strange times. Of course, the boys were a little nervous about the whole thing, so we agreed that we'd record it first and then watch it to see if they were okay sharing it online. It turned out that they really enjoyed watching it and so we posted our first ChaPodcast on Nassagaweya Presbyterian's Facebook page on March 16.

As the likes, shares and comments started to roll in, we felt really good about how people were responding. Comments like "Really brightened my day," "Made me happy" and "We'll now remember to pray while washing our hands!!" showed us that we had created something special. The boys woke up the next morning to discover that our little ChaPodcast had been viewed over 1,000 times. This encouragement made it easy for



us to keep going and we produced four more live chapels to complete the week.

Our original intention had been to do something for the families that would have come to the March Break Camp, but in the end, it turned out to be something for a much wider community made up of family, friends, Presbyterians, camp alumni and more. What we thought was going to be a week-long adventure turned into an ongoing project. I started asking other camp families and the Kintail staff if they would be willing to record and post a chapel. The response was astonishing, and we quickly filled the schedule up to Easter. Our family continued to host on Mondays, but we really enjoyed

watching the other families take this idea and make it their own. While the colourful ChaPodcast letters remained the same from episode to episode, the content and style reflected the gifts and personality of each family that led.

We are so grateful for the support from Camp Kintail and all the families that have participated. It's been a great joy to share ChaPodcast with the wider online community. In and amongst the many challenges we are all facing, it has been a blessing to capture a little piece of the spirit that is Christian camping and pass it around.

To learn more about ChaPodcast, go to campkintail.ca/chapodcast-2020.

Social Cohesion and Social Distancing

By Katharine Sisk, Justice Ministries

I was speaking with a friend in ministry about the challenges of pastoral care in a time when they could not be physically present with their congregation. They said: "What we need is not social distancing, but social cohesion with physical distancing." This piqued my interest because it was not just about physical isolation and the intrinsic need of human beings to connect. Social cohesion is a deeper concept related to the structures that enable us to remain connected.

This conversation brought me back to the challenges of meaningful connection when face to face encounters are limited. In winter of 2019, I was finding my bearings

as a new parent. With an infant demanding attention at all hours you can lose your sense of time, and connections often narrow to your immediate family circle. The totality and speed at which all established rhythms and connections can be completely upended after the birth of a child is shocking. In talking to other new parents, I found that many of my experiences were common: you are homebound in various states of exhaustion, isolation and anxiety. Sound familiar?

So it was with a strange sense of déjà vu that, only a few weeks after I had returned to work, I found myself back at home, with my toddler, whose daycare had closed, shocked again by the speed at which my newly established rhythms and connec-

tions had once more been upended, only this time related to COVID-19. I know I am not alone; everyone is experiencing mass disruption. I know I am also in a position of privilege: I am healthy; I have cherished people I connect with; I have stability. I am grateful for these things. But it did lead me to reflect on how, in a time when physical connection is not only discouraged but, in some places, prohibited, we can forge necessary and meaningful connections.

That question brought me back to my friend's comment and to thinking about social cohesion. Social cohesion is a slippery concept. It is generally understood as properties or characteristics that hold com-

munities together. Societies with a high degree of social cohesion will be marked by a majority of people having strong social networks, communities that trust their neighbours, governing bodies viewed as legitimate, and by high levels of social and economic well-being. A lot of these qualities, it turns out, come down to a sense of being included. In fact, a 2013 report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology emphasizes the connection between social cohesion and social inclusion. This connection of social cohesion to social inclusion is important because it underscores the value of the common good. It reveals a responsibil-

ity between members of a society to care for the well-being of their neighbour, while also emphasizing the need for institutions and governments to reflect this value of care for the common good.

Caring for one's neighbour is a foundational Christian imperative. The notion is established in Leviticus (19:18), narrated by Jesus in parables such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), and even mandated in the second of the two great commandments (Matt 22:30–40). But what does "caring for one's neighbour" mean, especially in the context of having to remain physically distant from them?

Continued on page 6





LEADERSHIP

Bring What You Have and Ask for What You Need

By the Rev. Deb Stanbury, Director,
ARISE Ministry in Toronto, Ont.

Wednesday, March 11, ended with ARISE Ministry hosting a dinner for youth from the group home that we are in partnership with. We offered tacos around the table and then moved into the living room, where one of our staff members shared her story. The youth opened up too, about their pasts and what had led them to be at the group home. There was community and connection in the warm glow of the living room as heart opened to heart. There was such a feeling of hope. This is what ARISE is about—these empowering connections that create and transform community.

Five days later, everything changed.

We cancelled our onsite programs and suspended planned meals around our table. Supermarket shelves were bare, and good luck trying to find any cleaning supplies! It was dizzying trying to keep up with the rapidly changing realities. It still feels dizzying.

Our focus at ARISE Ministry is to build community and connection with those who have been marginalized by experiences of sexual exploitation. We empower individuals who have experienced isolation from their community, family and, sometimes, even themselves. In reaching out to our community at the beginning of the time of physical distancing, to those whose natural inclination in times of crisis is to isolate, I found the terms being used in the media entirely problematic. Our commu-



Artwork by the Rev. Deb Stanbury, ARISE Director, titled, "Heart Open to Hearts."

nity members needed to know that though we needed to be physically distant, we could still be connected. They did not need to isolate in the emotional ways they had become so accustomed to.

Our case management team stepped up to the challenges before us. Text messages were sent and phone calls were made to check in on our community members. Our peer support worker informed us of people we should reach out to. A 10-week curriculum we had created called, "Narratives, Gremlins, and Self-Care," became exactly what was needed for this time. We printed and mailed workbooks to community members. Our case managers have been using these workbooks for phone calls, which have given participants useful self-care exercises and activities for a time when self-care has become so critical.

Our participants reached back, grateful for the connection. We continue to hear stories of neighbours helping neighbours. People who have very little, bringing what they can to sup-

port one another, one thirsty traveller telling another where to find water.

A couple of weeks into this time of physical distancing, I tuned into a Sunday evening Facebook concert that David LaMotte was hosting. In between songs, he gave some advice for this time of crisis: "Bring what you have and ask for what you need." In the weeks since, I have been reflecting on that wisdom, thinking about how it applies to ARISE both in terms of what we bring to the community members we support, and the financial concerns and uncertainties that this time has presented for us.

Increasingly, I have been reflecting on this advice to bring what I have and ask for what I need as an outlook and approach to God in prayer. It seems so obvious; we talk about it on Stewardship Sundays and offer our prayers of dedication. This is where prayer turns to action and we live it.

Bring to God, and to the hurting world God so loves, what you have, and courageously and vulnerably trust enough to ask for what you need. That is how we get through dif-

ficult things. That is what connection and community truly means.

*God who seeks,
Who searches,
Who finds,
Who loves.
We thank you that you find us
where we are.
You meet us in the lost places,
The lonely places,
The isolated places,
The distant places,
The abandoned places,
The forgotten places,
The confused places,
The scared places.
You find us,
Love us,
And refuse to let us go.
Regardless of how small,
Or lost and lonely,
Or isolated and distant,
Or abandoned and forgotten,
Or confused and scared
We feel,
We matter to you,
And we thank you.
Amen.*

St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver

A NEW DEAN FOR ST. ANDREW'S HALL



REV. DR. ROSS A. LOCKHART

The Board of St. Andrew's Hall is pleased to announce that the Rev. Dr. Ross A. Lockhart will be the next Dean, as of July 1st, 2020.

Dr. Lockhart is currently an Associate Professor (with tenure) at St. Andrew's Hall serving as Director of Presbyterian Formation at The Vancouver School of Theology, as well as founding Director of The

Centre for Missional Leadership. Dr. Lockhart is a gifted and experienced pastor, preacher, administrator, scholar and teacher. Ross Lockhart is an Ordained Minister of Word and Sacraments in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, with congregational ministry experience coast-to-coast in Canada, over the last twenty years.

"We are thrilled at the appointment of Dr. Lockhart to the position of Dean at St Andrew's Hall. Ross is an outstanding, innovative and cheerful colleague and teacher. He is much loved by students and faculty at VST. His deep commitment to the gospel, to the world God loves and to congregational ministry is exemplary and inspiring."

Rev. Dr. Richard Topping,
Principal of VST



Due to the Covid-19 cancellation of General Assembly and following the direction of the General Assembly Executive, the Board of St. Andrew's Hall will bring a formal recommendation to the **General Assembly** when it next meets in 2021.

www.standrews.edu

Social cohesion and social distancing

Continued from page 5

Building community can be one-to-one connection or it can be communal support. Some health care workers have started wearing smiling pictures of themselves to reaffirm personal connection with their patients, who might otherwise see only a mask. Churches are offering online worship services and virtual coffee hours for community connection. Family and social networks are hosting virtual dinner parties, book studies and crafting circles. Stran-

gers are offering to pick up groceries and necessities for neighbours in quarantine or who are otherwise homebound. These are good news stories of building meaningful connection. They are also ways to promote social inclusion, and we can all find ways to creatively imitate them.

Physical distancing will take a toll on everyone, but especially on vulnerable communities. As we strive to remain connected, we must do so in ways that put vulnerable people

at the centre of prayers, policies and actions. God is always calling the church to seek justice in the world (*Living Faith*, 8.4.1). Pandemic does not mute, but rather amplifies the call for people, communities, institutions and governments to build an inclusive and cohesive society by changing customs and practices that oppress and enslave, protecting human rights and dignity and seeking those paths in which God's people and creation may flourish.

LEADERSHIP

When Your Hero Falls Off His Pedestal

By the Rev. John Congram, former editor of the Presbyterian Record magazine

Some readers may remember that in a previous edition of the *Presbyterian Connection* I wrote an article extolling the virtues of Jean Vanier. Frankly, he is one of my heroes. At the time, I was unaware that serious rumours were circulating about him. Since then, the L'Arche Community that he founded lodged an investigation that revealed that during his lifetime Vanier had sexually abused at least six women. I was shocked and disillusioned.

How should people like me react in the light of these revelations? A Catholic book publisher in Toronto decided to remove all of his books from their shelves and expunge his name from their book catalogues. Catholic schools named in honour of Vanier are presently deciding whether to continue using his name on their institutions. I wonder what my local library will do with many of his books on their shelves.

Beyond the personal sadness that I felt, these events had a practical ramification for me. During the winter, I had been leading a home study group for my local church. This term we have been looking at outstanding Christians of our generation. Of course on the list that I had announced we would look at was the name of Jean Vanier. He was scheduled to appear in about a month. Should I now remove him from the list and replace his name with a more

suitable character?

Quickly, I decided the best course of action was to leave his name on the list and have the group consider not only his accomplishments but also his failings. (This was before the coronavirus pandemic brought everything to at least a temporary pause.)

I made this decision for several reasons.

Most of us will have to go through the experience of having someone we admire fall off the pedestal we have placed them on. My wife tells me that in her younger days she had three people in her life on a pedestal: her doctor, her minister and her father. Ultimately, they would all tumble off the pedestal.

As I thought about Vanier, I remembered a church whose minister was removed from ministry for inappropriate sexual behaviour. Like many congregations, photos of previous ministers who served that church hang on their wall. One is missing. It is as if what he did erased any good or ministry he might have ever done.

Knowing what we now know about Vanier does not mean he did not accomplish some remarkable things. The L'Arche communities he founded around the world have been of tremendous value to thousands of mentally challenged individuals. Many of his books contain exceptional insights. Should we bury or burn them? Can we not still take and learn from his valuable insights? Though I hope that by saying this I do not heap an additional burden on those who have been abused.



In thinking about and preparing for my study group, I was drawn to the first commandment that says we should not have any other god except God. I began to wonder if, in the case of Vanier, I had been guilty of raising him to a level that neither he nor any other human deserves. Was I guilty of making him into a false god? We see people do this with celebrities all the time. Only one is worthy of our worship and that is neither Vanier nor any other human being. Had I forgotten that he would experience brokenness and weakness like we all do?

Finally, for people like me, Vanier's

actions raise the question of forgiveness. Can I forgive Vanier for the hurt and betrayal he has caused me and so many others? I understand that those who have suffered abuse may be unable to forgive him, at least for the time being. But I also realize that unless I am willing to offer forgiveness, I will not be free to move on and even appreciate the good that Vanier did, while never forgetting the evil he perpetuated. Only God is capable of not only forgiving our sins but "casting them into the sea of his forgetfulness forever." I am of Vanier's opinion when he pointed out

that the person who is unable to offer forgiveness will suffer more than the perpetrator.

In an essay titled, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, Cardinal Newman indicated that there resides deep in the mystical body of Christ (i.e., the church) a profound moral wisdom. When the pandemic finally recedes and our study group resumes, I look forward to seeing how this part of the mystical body of Christ, some of whom held the same opinion of Vanier as I did, will deal with this issue. Perhaps readers may also wish to share their insights.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly

The Assembly Council is responsible for carrying out General Assembly decisions between Assemblies and serves as a coordinating and prophetic body within the church. At the meeting of the Assembly Council on March 23, the decision was made to cancel the 2020 General Assembly, which was scheduled to take place from June 7 to June 11 at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont. First and foremost, the decision was taken to ensure the safety of commissioners and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic and was in keeping with Public Health and government recommendations and directives.

The Assembly Council referred



the implications of cancelling the General Assembly to its executive to work with the Clerks of Assembly. A plan addressing all of the implications and proposals related to the cancellation was approved by the

executive at its meeting on March 31. The official cancellation announcement and summary of implications and proposals are available to read in full on the PCC website.

The Rev. Amanda Currie, Modera-

tor of the 145th General Assembly, has agreed to carry on the role of moderator for another year. She has put out a pastoral letter and video message offering hope and reassurance in response to this decision. Both are available on the website.

The nominees who were on the ballot for moderator of the 2020 General Assembly have been advised that a new election will take place next year. Those nominees will be eligible to be re-nominated in 2021.

The 2021 General Assembly will again take place in Waterloo at Wilfrid Laurier University to fulfill the last remaining year in the PCC's three-year commitment with the university. In

the meantime, Wilfrid Laurier is holding the dates of June 6–10, 2021, for the next General Assembly.

A 2020 edition of the Acts and Proceedings (A&P) will not be produced in its regular format. The General Assembly Office will instead produce a book that only contains information included in the back sections of the A&P—statistics, financial statements, memorial minutes, and address and ministry lists. Interim General Assembly reports have been posted online without recommendations included.

To read interim reports from General Assembly standing committees, visit presbyterian.ca/ga2020

Presbyterians
Sharing

Kenora Fellowship Centre

Proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ

Your gifts put faith into action
in Canada and around the world.

Donate through your congregation
or online at presbyterian.ca/donate

YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT Presbyterians Sharing

- As a monthly donor for \$ _____ /month
- With a one-time donation of \$ _____

Please provide the following credit card information:

Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐

Credit card #: _____

Expiry date: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7 • 1-800-619-7301



The Presbyterian Church in Canada
presbyterian.ca

STEWARDSHIP

We Are the Church



The Rev. Jeanie Lee with friends at Kalunba in Budapest, Hungary.

By Heather Chappell, Stewardship & Planned Giving

During the past few months of challenges and change, it has been heartening to see that, despite closed doors, Presbyterian congregations have opened themselves up to new and innovative ways of worshipping and reaching out with the love of Christ. We have seen virtual Christian camp, drive-in church services, online worship, online Bible studies and much more.

While in many ways physically separated, we have been finding new approaches to being the church. Parking lots—including the one at the national office—have been used to coordinate and distribute groceries to people who are facing food insecurity. Congregations have reached out through prayer chains, phone calls and emails, and offered assistance to seniors and people who are sick. The church continues to be the church. And it feels more relevant than ever.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada reaches out by supporting mission and ministry across Canada and around the world through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. The church is present when grants are provided

to support new faith communities and to help congregations try new things. Innovation grants offer qualifying ministries access to \$1,000 to develop discipleship, faith sharing and community outreach programs. To learn more about this opportunity, visit presbyterian.ca/innovation-grants.

The church is present where there is support provided to nurture ministries with Indigenous Peoples, inner-city programs and people seeking refuge in Canada. Many of the Indigenous ministries within the PCC had to drastically change in order to meet the needs of their communities in the time of COVID-19. While social distancing guidelines caused many to temporarily suspend in-person gatherings, community needs continued to rise. Many ministries shifted their plans in order to arrange drop-off food programs to ensure that some of the most vulnerable community members could access healthy meals and personal supplies. The Presbyterian Church in Canada contributed \$25,000 to support Indigenous ministries running food programs.

The church is present internationally, even though our mission staff were called back to Canada during the pandemic. We continue to support health, education and evangelism initiatives with our international



Place of Hope Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man.

partners through grants and prayer. Read more about our international staff in the Rev. Glynis Williams's article on p. 14.

National church staff continue to support congregations, learning new platforms and programs as needed. We host and provide training for web meetings, offer financial advice and emergency support to congregations and individuals, help congregations with e-giving, gather and share helpful materials related to COVID-19 on our website, and so much more. Jim MacDonald, Development Manager in Stewardship & Planned Giving, has been busy helping congregations set up e-giving platforms on their websites. Read more about this on p. 9.

We hear stories of faith and generosity every day, and would love to hear your stories. How is your congregation reaching out? How are people continuing to support your church? How have you seen generosity lived out in the past few months? Stories and observations can be sent to stewardship@presbyterian.ca.

We are the church. We will emerge from this time of pandemic transformed. And we will continue to be the hands and feet of Christ as we reach out to our communities and to the world. Thank you for continuing to support the life-giving mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through your gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.

Ecclesiastical Refinishing Group Ltd

Sanctuary Restoration
Plaster Restoration
Design Services
Custom Painting

P.O. Box 1502
Kingston, Ont. Canada K7L 5C7
Tel: 613-549-9250
Fax: 613-549-3364
www.ecclesiasticalgroup.com

SUNRISE



Est. 1979

www.sunrisestainedglass.com

Memorial Windows
Restoration
Protective Storm Glazing
Custom Woodworking

97 Wharncliffe Rd. S.
London, Ontario N6J 2K2
519-432-9624
Toll Free 1-877-575-2321

STEWARDSHIP

Giving is Changing in 2020



By Jim MacDonald, Stewardship & Planned Giving

When churches begin to open their doors again, many congregants, concerned about a second wave of COVID-19, may be reluctant to return right away. Anecdotally, we've heard that churches that have created videos or done live streaming in the past few months have added viewers who were not attending church prior to the pandemic. Many churches will want to continue creating digital content to share with remote participants. Recorded worship videos can be uploaded to YouTube and worship service events can be streamed live on YouTube or any number of platforms dedicated to live streaming for churches.

Isolated donors give online

Church members who join you remotely may want to give to your church, and they'll need options. These include Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR), Interac eTransfer and online giving. Tithe.ly and CanadaHelps are two services that provide secure donation forms for your website, allowing you to accept gifts from both debit cards and credit cards. CanadaHelps is simple and already set up, however it issues the tax receipts, while Tithe.ly gives the congregation the tools to collect the gifts and the congregation issues the tax receipts. For the past few months, I've been helping churches add Tithe.ly and CanadaHelps forms to church websites, so feel free to reach out to me for assistance.

Paper money fading away

In the past few months, paper

money has been shunned by many for fear of virus spread. I recently tried to tip a grocery store shopper who had gathered my groceries for pickup, and, to my surprise, she refused the cash tip for that very reason! Prior to the pandemic, only about half of Canadians carried cash all the time; and only a third of all transactions were cash-based. Now it will be even fewer.

Churches may want to explore terminal devices, like a Square Terminal, in response to a cashless society. The Square Terminal can swipe, tap and insert debit and credit chip cards for in-person transactions. If the device is connected to the Internet via Wi-Fi or cellular data, donors can give using debit cards and the church will only be charged \$0.10/transaction by Interac. If the device can't find an Internet signal, it will still accept credit card transactions, so it will even work at a church picnic! Best of all, it comes with a small printer in the back, so you can provide the user with a receipt. Square devices that connect to mobile phones and tablets start as low as \$59 and the standalone Square Terminal costs \$299. There is no monthly fee. Congregations must remember to collect the personal information needed to issue tax receipts.

As the church experience goes through adjustments in 2020, churches may need help keeping up. Stewardship & Planned Giving is here to offer guidance and support.

If your church needs assistance setting up PAR, online giving or getting a Square Terminal device, contact Jim MacDonald at jmacdonald@presbyterian.ca.

COMMITTEES

The Assembly Council



Members of the Assembly Council gather online for their spring meeting.

The Assembly Council is the committee of the General Assembly that is responsible for ensuring that the work of the church is carried out efficiently, effectively and within the policies established by the General Assembly. The membership on Assembly Council is drawn from across the country and includes representatives from the Atlantic Mission Society, the theological colleges, the Life and Mission Agency and the Women's Missionary Society, so that the church benefits from the broadest possible viewpoints and inputs on matters.

The Assembly Council was created to be both a coordinating and prophetic body that seeks to fulfill these principles in all its discussions and decisions. Attending to the Strategic Plan of the PCC is one way the Council does this work.

In its coordinating function, the Council keeps the national agencies and committees of the church running smoothly, recommends policy and prepares national budgets. Among the subcommittees of the Assembly Council are: Archives and Record Management, Audit, Benevolence,

Commission on Assets of Dissolved and Amalgamated Congregations, Commission on Proxies, Church Architecture, Ewart Endowment for Theological Education, Finance, Management Team, Nominating and Human Resources Policy and an Executive.

As a prophetic body, the Council seeks to accomplish the work that stands before it today, while seeking a vision for mission and discerning an image of what the church might be in the future.

The Assembly Council meets twice a year.

Attention Treasurers Sign Up for Automatic Withdrawals Today!

With everything happening across the globe over the past few months, leaving the house to pay bills may feel like a daunting task. We want to make paying your Pension and Health & Dental premiums as easy and safe as possible. By switching to our Automatic Withdrawal payment option, you have one less reason to leave the house. It takes just minutes to sign up, and you will never have to worry about missing a payment again!



To sign up, all you need to do is download our **Automatic Withdrawal Authorization Form** at presbyterian.ca/finance. Once completed, email the form to onawar@presbyterian.ca or mail it in to:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada
Attn: Omnya Nawar
50 Wynford Drive
Toronto, Ontario
M3C 1J7
1-800-619-7301



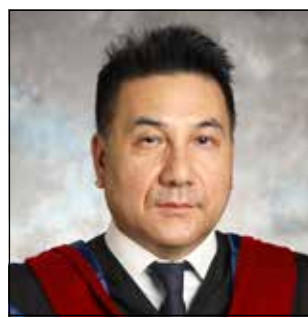
Presbyterian Theological College Graduates

KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO

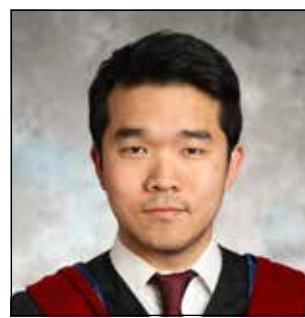
Congratulations to the 2020 graduates of the three Presbyterian colleges. The colleges of the church prepare new ministers and scholars for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ.



Chad Walter Dennis Bolton
Master of Divinity



Ku Ja Uk
Master of Divinity



Dave Lee
Master of Divinity

Learn more about the colleges:

Knox College
knox.utoronto.ca

St. Andrew's Hall
standrews.edu

Vancouver School of Theology
vst.edu

The Presbyterian College
presbyteriancollege.ca



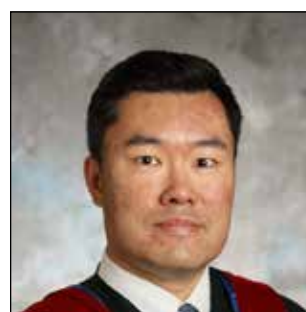
Mary Pik Chun Lee
Master of Divinity



Ha Na Rosalyn Nah
Master of Divinity



Debora Ann Rolls
Master of Divinity



Edward Jooman Yoo
Master of Divinity



In Myoung Hwang
Master of Theological Studies



Hyo Jae Lee
Master of Religious Education



Angelica Atkins
Master of Pastoral Studies



Susie Soo Yeon Choi
Master of Pastoral Studies



Tyler Scrivens
Master of Pastoral Studies



Hongfang Wang
Master of Pastoral Studies



Anita Maureen Evans
Certificate in Theological Studies



Joshua Ratzlaff
Master of Arts



Seungpok Ham
Master of Theology



Piljae Lee
Master of Theology



Munsu Son
Master of Theology



Sanghun Steven Yoon
Master of Theology

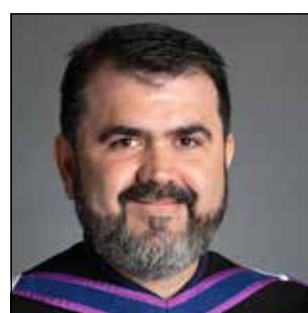


Sanghak Kim
Doctor of Philosophy

THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE



Edythe Arnott
Master of Divinity



Silvio Esteves
Master of Divinity



Kathy Parks
Master of Divinity



Oliver Ndula
Master of Sacred Theology
(McGill)



Stephen Azundem
Master of Sacred Theology
(McGill)

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY/ST. ANDREW'S HALL



Steven Bell
Master of Divinity



Hwikyung Kim
Master of Divinity



Samuel Andri
Master of Arts in Theological
Studies



Janet Eastwood
Master of Arts in Theological
Studies



James McDevitt
Master of Arts in Theological
Studies



Chanil Lee
Master of Theology



Jaeun Moon
Diploma in Theological Studies



Shin Hwang
Diploma in Presbyterian Studies



Seungho Lee
Diploma in Presbyterian Studies

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.

Living Faith, 7.2.1



St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver
New Certificate in Missional Leadership
AVAILABLE ONLINE ANYWHERE IN CANADA



St. Andrew's Hall is excited to announce a new Certificate in Missional Leadership for congregational teams (available hybrid – in person and online) beginning September 2020. Under the direction of CML Associate Rev. Dr. Tim Dickau, the program is designed to help congregational leadership cohorts take bold new steps in Christian witness across the country.

The first-year theme is "Missional Foundations for Covid 19 and beyond" with a focus on neighbourhood engagement, forming thicker community life, fostering affordable housing, enacting justice, forming leaders and making disciples.

For more information or to register please see www.standrews.edu/cml, email tdickau@standrews.edu or call 604.822.9372

St. Andrew's Hall is preparing missional leaders for Christ's Church of tomorrow, today.
JOIN US ON THE ADVENTURE OF FAITH THROUGH THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION!
Generous bursaries for education and housing are available for you.
Contact Professor Ross Lockhart for more information at rlockhart@standrews.edu

Thank you. COVID-19 has altered the way we offer classes – but Knox College is still going strong, equipping leaders for service. Thanks to donors like you, learning continues.

Called to serve?



Now more than ever, we need people equipped to care for our broken world.
Which program connects with your calling?
Start at knox.utoronto.ca/program. Apply by September 30 to begin in January.



KNOX COLLEGE
www.knox.utoronto.ca



Worship resources, mission and ministry news, pulpit vacancies, directories... find it all at presbyterian.ca

JUSTICE

A Call to Commitment and Accountability



By Carragh Erhardt, Justice Ministries

In June of 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its 94 Calls to Action after receiving testimonies from Indian Residential School survivors for six years. The Calls to Action provide a well-rounded pathway for Canada to redress the legacy of the Indian Residential School System and work to ensure the dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples well into the future. The Calls are aimed at addressing gaps in the provision of basic services in the

realms of health, education and child welfare, and at reforming inequities in the justice system. As well, they call for important steps, including apologies, the making of a new Covenant of Reconciliation and work to appropriately commemorate the children who went to residential schools.

This spring marks the five-year anniversary of this important milestone. However, a December 2019 report by Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby for the Yellowhead Institute found that only nine of the Calls to Action had been completed so far, despite signifi-

cant commitments from the federal government toward reconciliation. Some of the Calls to Action that are considered complete are 13 (federal acknowledgement of Indigenous language rights), 49 (rejection of the Doctrine of Discovery by churches and faith groups) and 72 (federal support for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation). While these are promising steps, there is much more to be done.

Notably, the Calls to Action that would amend the institutionalized inequities between how the government provides care for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children need significant work. For example, while Jordan's Principle—a child-first principle used to ensure First Nations children have equitable access to health care—was passed in the House of Commons in 2007 and Call to Action 3 urges all levels of government to fully implement it, this has not been achieved yet. Call to Action 8 calls on the government to eliminate the discrepancy between federal education funding for First Nations children. There should not be questions about whether there is enough money to fulfill these calls; access to health care and education are human rights.

One critique of the government's approach to the Calls to Action is that

it has positioned some of them, such as the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in competition with “the public interest.” The Calls to Action are rooted in a desire to see the rights of Indigenous Peoples taken as seriously as the rights of non-Indigenous people. The lack of meaningful progress calls into question why Indigenous rights are not seen as an inherent part of the public interest.

As we learn how to live well and seek justice in a time of pandemic, we need to be creative and vigilant in how we approach reconciliation. We are all facing different pressures and strains because of COVID-19, but it is also imperative that we recognize the ways that First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities are disproportionately vulnerable to the pandemic because of generations of underfunded services and dispossession of land. While responding to emergent needs, we should also keep in mind ways that we can contribute to all sectors and levels of Canadian society doing the necessary work of responding to the Calls to Action. Implementing the Calls to Action is not only important for reconciling the past; doing so would also ensure Indigenous communities have access to what they

need to be better prepared for future emergencies.

No single person can address all 94 Calls to Action alone, but if we each choose one Call to work toward and check on regularly, we might stand a chance at making meaningful change. Even as we are physically at a distance from one another, we can seek ways to form communities of accountability. Will other members of your congregation read and pray with you? Are there local Indigenous organizations or movements you can follow on social media for updates and that you might work alongside?

I invite you to spend time on this fifth anniversary by reading the Calls to Action. Whether it is your first time reading them or your 10th, it is an act of solidarity to choose to remember that there is still work to be done and to find ways that you can get involved. You do not need to read all 94 Calls in one sitting; take your time. Pray while you read. Pray for those who are tirelessly seeking justice and reconciliation. Ask how you can be an instrument of God's peace in righting the wrongs that Indigenous Peoples still live with every day.

To read the TRC's Calls to Action, visit trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Humanitarian Concerns in Palestine

By the Rev. Helen Smith

A KAIROS Canada Church Leaders Delegation to Israel/Palestine last November to witness the effects of the occupation there, particularly on women and children, followed up with a trip to Parliament Hill in early March to urge the Canadian government to address the worsening humanitarian crisis in Palestine and support conditions for a just peace. The crisis was made even more pressing by the widespread emerging threat of COVID-19 and its effect on the West Bank and particularly Gaza, with its limited infrastructure. The delegation was able to get up-to-date information from their partners in Bethlehem via videoconferencing before they met individually with MPs, Senators and staff. They also spoke at a Parliamentary Breakfast sponsored by the All-Party Women's Caucus.

The members of the delegation who

travelled to Ottawa focused on what they had seen and heard during their time in Israel/Palestine, where they spent time with women's groups, visited community development and infrastructure projects and met with civil society organizations, Canadian government representatives, human rights groups, and religious and community leaders both in Israel and Palestine. They met courageous Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders and witnessed the extreme suffering of Palestinian people and the impact of continued occupation on both Palestinians and Israelis.

The delegation presented three specific and attainable recommendations to the Canadian government:

1. Support local women's peace-building efforts by increasing long-term funding to grassroots women-led organizations in Palestine and Israel.
2. Appoint a special envoy to

monitor and report on the Israeli military arrest, interrogation and detention of Palestinian children.

3. Increase its financial assistance to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to \$50 million annually, including a dedicated fund to provide schools, hospitals and services for children in Gaza.

The key question put to the politicians was “How can you help us move these recommendations forward?” Using the feedback received, KAIROS Canada continues to work on urging the Canadian government to support these recommendations in the spirit of a long-term, sustainable and just peace that is acceptable to both Palestinians and Israelis and has the full participation of women.

The members of the delegation were the Rev. Rosalyn Kantlaht'an Elm, Anglican Church of Canada;



Jennifer Henry, Susan Johnson, Lori Ransom, Helen Smith and Andreas Thiel, along with KAIROS staff Rachel Warden and Cheryl McNamara represented the group in Ottawa.

Father Paul Hansen, Roman Catholic priest of the Redemptorist Congregation; Jennifer Henry, Executive Director of KAIROS Canada; the Rev. Susan Johnson, the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; Lana Robinson, the Re-

ligious Society of Friends (Quakers); Lori Ransom, United Church of Canada; the Rev. Helen Smith, The Presbyterian Church in Canada; and the Rev. Andreas Thiel, Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Anglican Church of Canada.

JUSTICE

Creation Care and Loss of Biodiversity



By the International Affairs Committee and Justice Ministries

The creation stories in Genesis are well-loved and frequently cited in creation care theology. Genesis tells us much about God's intentions for creation: we know from Genesis that God is the creator of all things; that everything created by God is good; and that humankind was given specific responsibilities to care for creation. It is clear that God loves and delights in creation, yet the capacity of humankind to influence the natural world has reached an unprecedented scale that has pushed natural sys-

tems to their limits and had a devastating impact on this beloved and biologically diverse creation.

Over the past three decades, more and more scientists have begun to express concern that the world is on the brink of a mass extinction event of anthropogenic (human) origin. Peter Sale, a Canadian oceanographer and ecologist with a lifelong study of coral reefs, states humans "are responsible for most of the extinction occurring today, and the rate is somewhere around 0.1 percent of extant species per year... [This means that] species are now disappearing at a rate of about a thousand

times faster than the average rate of extinction over the last five hundred years."

While climate change is a growing threat, overexploitation of species, agricultural activity and land conversion are still the dominant causes of current biodiversity loss. Unless steps are taken to protect currently unexploited land, it is projected that only 10% of the Earth's land surface will remain in a natural state by 2050. Wetlands around the world are estimated to have declined by more than 50% since 1900. The increasing expansion of commercial agriculture has resulted in the loss of 40% of all tropical and subtropical forests. In the Amazon rainforest, approximately 6 million hectares, an area of rainforest equivalent in size to the American state of West Virginia, is deforested every single year.

It is not only land that is affected: biodiversity in the world's oceans is threatened by climate change, overfishing, acidification and pollution. At the present time, an estimated 90% of seabirds have fragments of plastic in their stomachs, while in 1960, it was only 5%. Additionally, the world has lost almost half of its shallow water corals in just the last 30 years and unless current levels of global warming, ocean acidification, bleaching and overfishing are

addressed, it is projected that coral reefs will cease to exist by the end of this century. They will have become the first full ecosystem in the world to have been totally destroyed and eliminated by human activity. This would have a significant effect not only on biodiversity but also food security: coral reefs provide habitat for one quarter of all marine species and millions of people depend on coral reefs for food.

As Christians consider the mounting ecological crises, it is easy to despair and ask ourselves, why must we deal with this? The challenges are of course too complicated for any one person or any single group to tackle, but the call to serve and love God includes all creation and us among it. Environmental degradation, including pollution, climate change and declining biodiversity have multi-generational causes and impacts. These challenges are bound up in the snare of global politics, and Canada's actions contribute to these challenges on a global scale.

Despite this, there are many actions we can take to address biodiversity loss both as individuals and churches. We can write government ministers in support of biodiversity efforts. We can "biodiversify" our homes: use environmentally friendly products and dispose of chemi-

cal and hazardous materials safely; landscape using native trees and plants that attract beneficial insects and bees; plant more flowers than grass. If we choose to eat seafood, we can seek out sustainable options, avoiding endangered species like Bluefin Tuna or North Sea cod and instead purchase seafood labelled with the blue MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) logo or Ocean Wise Seafood (a program founded by the Vancouver Aquarium) symbol.

Church properties can also make a difference. Churches can plant a bee garden or build bird houses or bat boxes; they can partner with other groups to encourage and support local government initiatives that protect habitats and support biodiversity; they can use locally and ethically sourced seasonal food for church meals.

Actions Christians take to support biodiversity honour the love and delight God shows for creation and take seriously the responsibility humans have to treat creation—ourselves included!—as beloved by God.

To learn more about biodiversity and access the sources of the statistics quoted here, see the 2020 interim report of the International Affairs Committee to the General Assembly, posted on the PCC's website at presbyterian.ca/ga2020

YOUTH

C.Y. We are Waiting

By Jo Morris, CY2021 Coordinator

But those who wait upon God get fresh strength.

*They spread their wings and soar like eagles,
They run and don't get tired,
they walk and don't lag behind.
(Isaiah 40:31, The Message)*

Little did the planners of Canada Youth 2020 know how ironic the theme for the event (No End in Sight) would turn out to be. At the time of writing, there is no end in sight to the shifting new normal that we are all experiencing through this pandemic. And so, we are waiting.

The CY events have been responsive, flexible and always attentive to the needs and curiosities of our denomination. At the height of a Canadian refugee response, CY2016 investigated the complexity of "Home"

and what it would require of us all to welcome neighbours to their new home. We were feeling "Rooted" and grounded at CY2009, having found a secure place within the life and times of the denomination. In 2003, when CY was still in its infancy, the event looked to the future and stood "On the Edge of a Wave," reflecting on how the still-new millennium was impacting our PCC congregations. With each turn of the calendar, CY was willing to look wide-eyed into the current times and then choose a direction for its focus.

The same is true now. The decision to postpone CY2020 was made carefully, taking into consideration a variety of important factors: Brock University's cancellation of third party events until June, the need for congregations to focus on the immediate pastoral considerations without distraction, and the reality that it was

simply time to pause and wait. It was clear that attention needed to be on more pressing considerations.

It is difficult to wait—especially for something as vibrant and unique as CY. Congregations across the country have been fundraising for many months. Travel plans were underway, roommates were being chosen, expectations were high. We were in the final stages of confirming all program elements, and event registration was about to be launched. And then suddenly, the future was unclear. Our quick march toward July 6, 2020, slowed to a crawl.

We have to wait.

We will make good use of this waiting time. We have been given the gift of an additional year to make CY2021 strong and exciting. The extra time allows us to focus on the current needs of the future CY2021 participants—listening, collaborat-



ing, asking some smart and difficult questions and discussing the possibilities. Staying engaged and connected in the life and work of our congregations as they re-imagine their ministry will be so important.

CY has a lengthy list of extraordinary leaders and the event has been blessed by the wisdom and talent of these folks. They come from all places within our PCC family: youth, elders, teachers, clergy, seniors, staff and volunteers. They will inspire and connect the CY plan-

ners to the present realities of our PCC family. It is not simply a case of pushing Play on the schedule that had been designed for CY2020. CY2021 will be redesigned to be responsive, flexible and attentive to the current needs and curiosities of our denomination.

We will share new information about CY2021 as it becomes available. Please pray for the planners and participants who are waiting.

We can hardly wait to be together at CY2021.

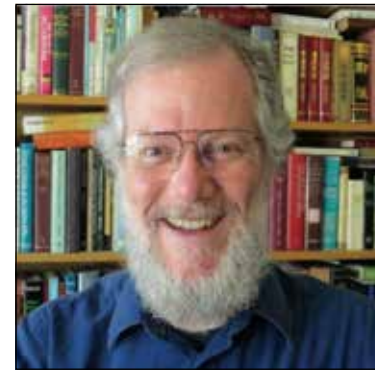
INTERNATIONAL



The Rev. Jeanie Lee



Nora Martin and Steve McInnis



The Rev. Dr. Paul McLean



The Rev. Dr. Blair and Vivian Bertrand

Mission Staff in 2020

By the Rev. Glynis Williams,
International Ministries

We call them the “living links,” the individuals and families who sense an urge to leave home and discover God’s realm outside Canada. They experience the Spirit calling them to learn what faith and life are like in a different environment. They share their skills and learn new ways of worshipping and being the church. Most often, friendships form that continue long after leaving. And the astonishing diversity of the body of Christ is revealed.

Who would have imagined that the lives of most of the Presbyterian mission staff—serving in Hungary, Malawi, Taiwan and Japan—would be abruptly uprooted by a global pandemic? Below is an update of their situations in the time of COVID-19.

The Rev. **Jeanie Lee** was serving in Budapest, Hungary, in a refugee ministry called Kalunba Social Services, the implementing partner of the Reformed Church in Hungary. Jeanie had only arrived in November 2019 and was just starting to find her role in this often unpredictable environment. As a former fashion designer, she was teaching tailoring skills to refugees, but Jeanie noticed that they

were eager to talk and be listened to as well, even with the language barrier. Her pastoral presence drew many refugees to her. Jeanie also worshipped with many of the refugees at the Scottish Mission Church, where they feel welcomed. Jeanie was given only two days’ notice that she was to return to Canada. On March 21, she left Hungary and presently lives in the PCC mission residence. She has been spending her time there making face masks. She is worried about her refugee friends in Hungary as they face discrimination toward “foreigners,” but she looks forward to reuniting with them in Budapest.

Nora Martin and Steve McInnis arrived in Toronto after leaving Blantyre, Malawi, on March 23. Their 11-month volunteer assignment as teachers officially began in January 2020. They are the first international couple appointed to teach at the Chichiri Prison school, an initiative endorsed by the prison wardens. Nora taught English and Steve taught mathematics and chemistry.

Nora and Steve were supported by three dedicated volunteers of the Friends of Prisons, who visit 20 prisons weekly. The majority of the teachers at the prison school are inmates, some of whom are well edu-

cated, raising the question of why so many are imprisoned. To this, Steve was told that prisons are crowded because even a minor offense such as stealing a cell phone can result in a long-term sentence, and few people are able to afford a lawyer. Nora and Steve had just begun to understand the challenges of this deeply religious country before having to leave, and hope that they can return someday.

The Rev. Dr. **Blair and Vivian Bertrand**, and their three children, were appointed in September 2017, to the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. They were scheduled to return to Canada in August 2020, but when the president closed the borders of Malawi abruptly, they were required to leave within two days, on March 29. For almost three years, Blair has taught at the Zomba Theological College, preparing women and men for congregational ministry and supporting PhD candidates, who are also lecturers at the college. Blair worked with Theological Education by Extension in Malawi, offering education for school teachers, prisoners, elders and others who are eager to understand the Bible. Blair also supported the work of the Synod Youth Department. Viv-

ian worked with Churches Action in Relief and Development. When Cyclone Idai hit Malawi in March 2019, Vivian’s relief and fundraising efforts and first-hand stories were greatly valued. Blair and Vivian maintain close contact with their partners. They will not be returning to full-time work in Malawi, but other options are being considered.

The Rev. Dr. **Paul McLean** is a Bible Translation Adviser based in Canada, who travels to Taiwan quarterly. He works with nine dedicated Indigenous teams, translating the Bible into their Indigenous languages. Paul returned to Canada from his first five-week trip in 2020 on March 7, and voluntarily went into quarantine at home. Paul noted that there has been a marked contrast in the spread of coronavirus in China, Japan and Korea compared to that of Taiwan and its successful protection of citizens against the spread. He maintains regular contact with the teams in Taiwan, using specialized software. The Bible Society in Taiwan and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, together with the PCC, will make decisions concerning upcoming travel to Taiwan.

Louise Gamble is safe in Taiwan, working with her colleague, Chen



Louise Gamble



David McIntosh

Kuan-chou (James Chen) on transcribing and translating the reports and correspondence of the Canadian Presbyterian North Formosa (Taiwan) Mission. This includes over 7,000 documents from 1868 to 1923. Having completed this enormous task requiring many years, Louise will return to Canada this summer.

David McIntosh serves the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ), as the co-director of the Center for Minority Issues and Mission (CMIM). This mission is jointly supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and The United Church of Canada. His home is in Japan.

The mission staff are safe in Canada, which is not the reality in every country, particularly Malawi. Please pray for their friends and colleagues, so we can all be the living links.

To learn more about PCC mission staff, please read their blogs at pccweb.ca/missionblog.

ECCLESIASTICAL INSURANCE OFFICE PLC

The best insurance claim is the one you don't have.

Access materials to **keep your flock safe**

Learn more at ecclesiastical.ca/riskcontrol/faith

INTERNATIONAL

The Last Kindness of a Child

By Mark Dodge, PhD, Buffalo Public Schools, and Aletheia University, Tamsui campus, Taiwan.

In November 1878, the former *Presbyterian Record* magazine published a letter from the Rev. K. F. Junor, describing his family's arrival in Tamsui, Taiwan, to assist the famous Rev. George Leslie Mackay. The letter, written on July 6, boasted the "simply marvelous" success of the Canada Presbyterian Mission in Taiwan, and described with wonder the size and beauty of Northern Taiwan, especially its principal city Bang-kah, the city that is Taipei today.¹ The Canada Presbyterian Mission had already built 14 mission posts in and around the city. "Her [the Church's] first missionary went through untold labour, anxiety, and suffering, to give it to the Church in its present state. The Lord has preserved his life through it all, and on every hand are signs of great hope and promise for the future."

But the hope and promise of Junor's first letter had already vanished by the time it was printed. Shortly after Junor's arrival, Northern Taiwan was devastated by a wave of malaria unlike anything they had experienced before. So many people were sick for so long, that although Junor and Mackay both wrote regular reports to the Foreign Mission Committee, it was October before these letters were mailed out. They were published in the *Record* together in December, in an extended article that allowed the missionaries' supporters to relive the tragedy much as they themselves had experienced it.

On September 2, Junor wrote, "Since I wrote, and even a few days before, we have had a grievous term with sickness. No one here has seen such a time among the foreigners."² Mackay, who had been travelling around the countryside with several of his students, tending to the growing number of Taiwanese who were falling ill during Taiwan's hottest summer on record, was the first and hardest hit at the mission. Malarial fever sent Mackay to bed for several weeks, and when he began to recover it was followed by a bout of boils. Malaria was common in Taiwan, but it was stronger than usual in 1878. "Neither Mr. Mackay nor Dr. Ringer have seen such a summer as this before," Junor wrote on September 11. "Nearly all the foreigners have been down with fever, and as for the Chinese, they have been dying by

scores. Hardly a day passes that we do not hear the music of a funeral, some days two or three times in our own neighborhood."³ Junor's home was on a hill overlooking the harbour, just a few hundred yards from the British Consulate and within earshot of one of Tamsui's three large temples, so it is not surprising that he should hear funeral music from his home. But even a large village of four or five thousand, such as Tamsui was in 1878, should not have to host two or three funeral processions in a single day.

On September 8, Mackay and his wife moved into the Junors' home, a recently completed manse that was much larger and higher above ground than most local accommodations. In 1878, the best educated people believed that disease was caused primarily by miasma—bad air—that rose from the ground and infected all around it. The idea that disease was contagious and should be quarantined stretches back into the middle ages, but most people thought that disease was in a place, carried by the air, not by people. The idea of "Germ Theory" had been proposed several times but most people rejected it. In 1878, the idea of inoculation was 80 years old, but no one was quite sure how it worked. Sir Patrick Manson, a British physician who spent six years in Southern Taiwan, had even suggested that malaria was spread by mosquitoes, but Mackay and Junor were not familiar with "Mosquito Manson's" widely rejected theories.⁴

The prevailing wisdom, when it came to preventing disease, was to stay surrounded by clean, fresh-smelling air, as high above the ground (from whence the bad miasma came) as possible. The Junors' new house has been specifically constructed with this theory in mind—built on high ground with a well-ventilated crawl space beneath, and high second-story bedrooms with large windows to maximize fresh air. When Mackay fell ill, the best course of treatment known to the missionaries was to move him into one of these high, clean rooms as far from the disease-producing miasma as possible.

It was in one of these "healthier" upstairs bedrooms that four-year-old Frank Junor spent part of his last night bringing supper to the convalescing Mackay. On Aug. 31, Mackay had written of how supportive the Junors had been during his affliction, and that,



"they are getting along famously here. May God bless them abundantly in all of their labours." Two weeks later he reported, "Frank, just the evening before he died, carried a plate with food into my room, got up on the bed and sat beside me. He spoke to me of God, Jesus, and of heaven in such a way that although my own poor head was throbbing with pain, I listened with intense interest... When going out of the room he turned around several times and said, 'Do call me if you want anything, I'll come at once.'"⁵ Despite the long talk of heaven beyond, Mackay did not even realize Frank was sick until the next day, when he was gone.

Twenty-four years later, when Mackay died from throat cancer in 1901, Junor wrote a letter to the Dominion Presbyterian, correcting several parts of their obituary. "You say McKay was buried in the grave yard purchased by himself. This is a mistake. I purchased the grave yard, fenced it & laid it out. My own boy was the first buried in it & in it I buried Mrs. Fraser. Dr. M. would have nothing to do with it."⁶ Junor's words, underlined in his own hand for emphasis, connote a sense of resentment toward the colleague that he once took in "like a brother." In 1901, after having spent years in medical school following the death of his son, Junor surely had a more developed understanding of contagious disease than he did in 1878. He never overtly alleged that Mackay brought into his house the illness that took Frank's life, but it is clear that he felt Mackay had not been adequately supportive while he was grieving for his child.

But Junor was the one who was mistaken. He had purchased land and built the foreigners' graveyard himself, but Mackay had been buried outside of its walls, in a plot he had reserved for himself and his Taiwanese wife and children, who were not allowed to be buried in the cemetery Junor

had built. In Junor's grief he had built a wall to separate the foreigners from the Taiwanese. His cemetery was not just a place of Christian burial, it drew an explicit division between "Western" Christians and Taiwanese ones—a distinction which Mackay refused to support, even in his death.

Over the last few weeks, I have heard lots of Junor-like resentments, and seen lots of walls going up. I have heard Chinese blame Americans, and Americans blame Chinese, and many, many wild claims that the recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus is the result of some nation's nefarious plot. I have seen scared leaders close their borders, shutting their people in with the virus, building walls they think will protect them from the accusation of not having cared enough, even though everyone knows it is too late to stop the disease from coming in. At best we, and the rest of the world that already has it, are selfishly proclaiming that we are going to take care of ourselves and only ourselves, from now on. In America, where I am from, we won't take care of everyone, because so many are still without health insurance.

Mackay did not bring malaria into Junor's house, mosquitos did. In the hot summer of 1878, even the high healthy bedroom that Mackay occupied was unlikely to deter them from taking Frank Junor back to God. Blaming Mackay or the Taiwanese certainly didn't help. Locking me or anyone else out of America today will not stop COVID-19 from running its course. The only thing that can slow it down is if we all work together to reduce its opportunities to spread, and pointing fingers just doesn't look like working together.

Ironically, in a recently released package of emergency measures, the rules that govern the licensing of new medications by the Food and

Drug Administration in America were greatly relaxed in hopes of speeding up the quest to find a vaccine for COVID-19. Perhaps these measures will also help to speed up the process of bringing a malaria vaccine to market. Malaria kills nearly half a million people (mostly children in poor developing nations) each year. Despite the fact that a malaria vaccine has been one of the Gates Foundation's top priorities for more than a dozen years, there is still no effective vaccine against it.

Hopefully the vaccine for COVID-19, which has already killed several thousand people, will not take so long to produce. If we work together, instead of levying blame, if we err on the side of caution and if we remember to be thankful rather than resentful, I am sure that we will emerge from this trial stronger and wiser than we were before.

I pray you all are safe and well, and that everyone remembers Frank Junor, the four-year-old whose selfless last words were, "Do call me if you want anything, I'll come at once."

¹ K. F. Junor, "Formosa: Letter from K. F. Junor," *The Presbyterian Record*, November 1878, 300.

² K. F. Junor, "Formosa," *The Presbyterian Record*, December 1878, 322.

³ Ibid. 323.

⁴ Katz Paul R. "Germ of Disaster: the impact of epidemics on Japanese military campaigns in Taiwan, 1874 and 1895." In: *Annales de démographie historique*, 1996. *Morbidity, mortality, santé*. 207.

⁵ Mackay "Letters from Reverend G. L. Mackay," *The Presbyterian Record*, December 1878, 323-5.

⁶ Junor, "Letter of Aug. 10, 1901" in *North Formosa Mission Reports* ed. Louise Gamble and Chen Kuan-chou. Series 1 Vol V. Toronto: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2012. 232.

HISTORY

Faith on the Front Lines

By Robert Gee, retired educator and member of Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira, Ont.

This is a compilation of some of the stories of Regimental Sergeant Major (R.S.M.) John (Jack) S. Gee, a long-standing member of Knox Presbyterian Church in Listowel, Ont., and former clerk of Session.

Jack was born on March 25, 1913, in Listowel, Ont. He was the only male child in a family with four older sisters and four younger. He was a focal point in his family, especially after his father abandoned them and he was the “man” of the family.

Jack helped out by delivering for the drugstore in his old Model T. He also trained with the 100th field battery in Listowel. When war was declared, Dr. Gordon Kirk was helping to organize the 24th Field Ambulance unit with members from the Kitchener area. Jack was able to hold his rank from the field battery and transfer to this new unit. He was a natural leader and organizer and was soon promoted to Regimental Sergeant Major (R.S.M.).

Jack was a very religious man who took his faith seriously. He felt strongly about duty, family and country, even after hearing the horror stories of World War I from his uncle Sidney Gee—an air force observer.

The lonely sentinel

As an R.S.M., Jack was expected to travel close to the front lines to set up the Aid and Dressing stations to support operations. One cloudy day in Italy, he was travelling quickly on his Harley motorcycle over some rough terrain that was pocked with shell holes of previous battles. He found himself on a ridge looking out over a small valley. Much of the vegetation was destroyed with only sticks and some skeletons of trees remaining. Jack stopped to take a drink of water and survey the area.

Suddenly, he heard the lonely haunting strains of a solitary crow. It seemed to be calling to him. He put down the kickstand on the bike and got off the machine to stretch his



Regimental Sergeant Major John (Jack) S. Gee of Listowel, Ont., next to a shrapnel-filled ambulance after a battle in Holland.

back. As he did this, his eye caught the unmistakable pimpled ground array which took his breath away. He was in the middle of a minefield. Sweat started to bead on his brow. He raised his head to the heavens and asked God to deliver him from this peril. Jack grabbed the handlebars of the bike and slowly retraced his path under the scrutiny of the crow, who sat quietly as though it understood the gravity of the situation. After what seemed like hours, he was able to back out of the minefield. He marked it with a large branch. Before leaving, he said a prayer of thanks and called to the crow sentinel, who in his mind was an angel watching over him.

After the war, Jack did his best to feed the birds, especially in the winter.

The promise

Scouting out positions for new dressing stations close to the front continued to be a dangerous deployment for Jack. This particular day, he was accompanied by an army First Lieutenant who was new to the front. They were travelling in a jeep and decided that they had come close enough to the action, so they parked the machine and slowly crept to the brow of a hill. Everything seemed quiet and so they slowly moved around some rock outcroppings and into a gently rolling meadow.

Suddenly, the ground erupted with artillery shells. The men dove for the



ground and buried themselves into the soil. The lieutenant wanted to make a run for it, but Jack felt that their best option was to hunker down and wait. He thought that the enemy crew would not waste too much of their ammunition on two soldiers. He was wrong. The shelling continued, following a pattern that he was familiar with from his days in the 100th field artillery unit.

There was no cover. They were pinned down. There was nothing to be done but pray. In those terrifying moments, Jack asked God to save them. He also made a solemn promise that if they were spared, he would work hard to serve the Lord in his community.

Jack knew that the next two shots would land directly on their position. But, inexplicably, the firing stopped. He and the lieutenant crawled quickly



Jack Gee in Kitchener, Ont., receiving the Military Medal presented by His Excellency Viscount Alexander of Tunis on behalf of King George on May 31, 1947.

out of the area and ran to the vehicle. What had just happened?!

After the war, Jack returned to Listowel and became the postmaster. He and his new wife, Dorothy, raised three children, John, Bob and Susan in this community. The promise that was made that day was upheld by Jack as he became a tireless leader in his church. He was a long-standing member of Knox Presbyterian Church, where he served as clerk of Session, Sunday School teacher and superintendent. He conducted ministerial visitations for the church

at hospitals and retirement homes for 20 years.

Within the community, he coordinated the Emergency Measures Organization for the town of Listowel, served on the school board and initiated and organized the St. John's Ambulance brigade. He served on many committees within the town. As well, he found time to be an inspirational father and a fine husband to Dorothy until her death in 1990. Jack continued his journey of service to others for another 20 years until his death in 2010.

WOMEN

Regional Presbyterian Women's Gathering

By Colleen Wood,
Women's Missionary Society

After the success of the Western Presbyterian Women's Gathering in May 2019, the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) is excited to announce our Regional Presbyterian Women's Gathering from March 19 to 21, 2021, in Montreal, Que., with the theme, Together in Joy!

This exciting event will feature the Rev. Dr. John Bell as our keynote speaker. The Rev. Dr. John Bell is familiar to many for his work in the area of music and worship with the Iona Community and Wild Goose

Resource Group. He has produced many collections of liturgy, scripts, sermons and reflections, original hymns and songs, as well as three collections of songs of the World Church. His work is primarily concerned with the renewal of congregational worship at the grassroots level.

As well, we will welcome the Rev. Prudence Sirri Neba as our mission speaker and workshop leader. She will encourage participants to use their gifts with joy to impact the world. Prudence was ordained in 2009 with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. In 2019, she completed her Master of Sacred Theology

(STM) from McGill University, and she is currently pursuing a doctorate in Philosophy of Religion at McGill University.

At the event, we will raise our voices together, led by Eli Adzogan and Joanne Massoud, the Praise Leaders at Côte des Neiges Presbyterian Church in Montreal. We will continue to worship through the inspiring words of our preachers—the Rev. Linda Park, Lead Minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont.; the Rev. Dr. Lucille Marr, Chaplain and Academic Dean at The Presbyterian College, Montreal; and the Rev. Sybil Mosley, Minister at

Livingstone Presbyterian Church in Montreal.

The event will include a variety of interesting and challenging workshops. The Rev. Dr. J. Dorcas Gordon, Knox College Principal Emerita, will help us to learn more about our brothers and sisters in Palestine/Israel and the troubling situations they face. As well, Paul Clarke, Executive Director of Action Réfugiés Montréal, will help us to understand his work with "Refugeed People." We will also enjoy the Afrika Gospel Singers, a group of young people who praise the Lord through hymns taken from the vast repertoire of African melodies.

The Eastern Women's Gathering will be held at the Westin Hotel in Old Montreal, March 19–21, 2021. Women from across Canada are invited (and a few men have also attended in the past). Come and celebrate, enjoy the beautiful city of Montreal, participate in great conversations over meals as we all gather together in joy! Although shorter than the National Gathering, it is hoped it will be every bit as exciting with excellent speakers, engaging workshops and meaningful worship.

More information can be found at womensgathering.ca.



GATHERINGS



The congregation at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., held an Easter Bonnet challenge as a way to keep in touch with each other through Holy Week.





GATHERINGS



The children of First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., had lots of fun on a January PA Day, doing puzzles and making crafts for Valentine's Day.



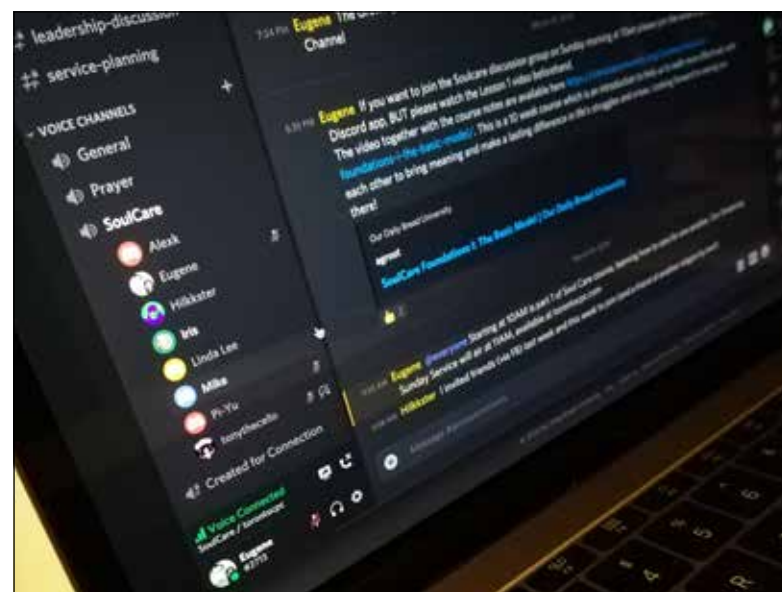
Petawawa Presbyterian Church in Petawawa, Ont., celebrated Royce Slater's 91st birthday on February 9 with a special cake.



The First From Pictou team represented First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S., on February 22 at the Coldest Night of the Year fundraising walk. The church raised funds for the Roots for Youth program which works with homeless youth between the ages of 18 to 24 to provide them with shelter, counselling services, mentorship and work placements. Pictured left to right: Lynn MacDonald (Sunday School teacher), Vicki Campbell (elder and AMS team leader), Peter MacKay (elder), Carol MacKay (AMS), David Munro (elder), Laura Rowan (Sunday School teacher), Linda Johnson (elder and First From Pictou team leader).



Westminster Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., posted this sign to ensure that people remember that God is still God.



In response to the pandemic, Toronto Chinese Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., conducted worship services through videos recorded from members' homes. The videos were then edited together and combined into one worship service. It was released at the regular service time on Sunday morning, and everyone tuned in to watch it together. There was even a "coffee time" held after the service in a voice chat channel. Visit torontocpc.com to see what the services are like.

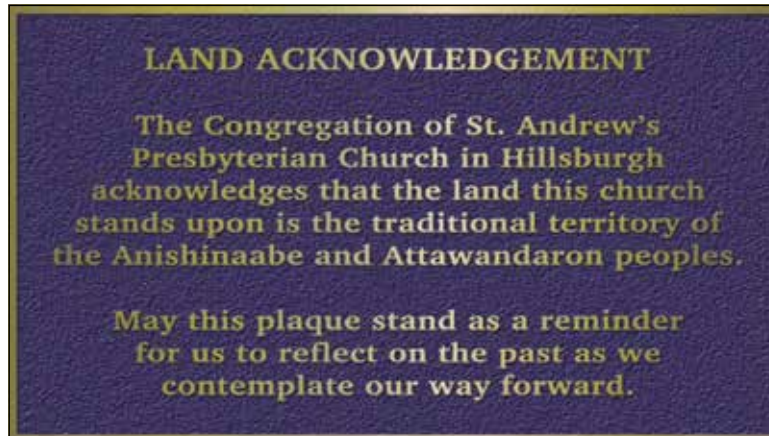


Caven Presbyterian Church in Caledon, Ont., posted a special message on their church sign addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.



St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., used their church sign to not only let people know that worship would continue online, but to also thank local health care workers.

GATHERINGS



On October 6, 2019, as part of the 150th anniversary celebration of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh, Ont., a land acknowledgment plaque was mounted and Indigenous speakers addressed the congregation.



Willie Wiebe, a member of Stamford Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls, Ont., found a way to ease some of the discomfort of physical distancing due to COVID-19 by talking on the phone with others who were also alone, as well as getting some fresh air with friends (keeping at least six feet apart at all times). Willie tries to walk twice a day, and at night she says her prayers, expressing thanks for all the people she connected with that day. By doing something kind for someone else and getting exercise, she feels as if the Lord has given her some control over her own life.



Will Clarke, who is completing his first year at the University of British Columbia, coordinates the Socks for Souls program at Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, B.C., which collects socks and money for the foot care program at First United Church in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Over the past six years, Brentwood Presbyterian Church has donated over 20,000 pairs of socks.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hespeler, Ont., adjusted their church sign during the church closures due to COVID-19.



An important summer event at Glenview Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., is the Outreach Barbecue. Friends from Evangel Hall Mission, Portland Place and Glenview's Grocery Card and Out of the Cold ministries all attend. Many people from downtown are brought to the event by bus. There is a time of worship after the meal. Pictured are participants from last year's barbecue.

GATHERINGS



The Sunday School at Knox Presbyterian Church in Ross Ferry, N.S., learned about maternal and child mortality rates in Malawi and Afghanistan from a PWS&D program, and decided to help. They began fundraising with the goal to buy one bicycle ambulance, but ended up raising enough to buy two. The money was matched by the Canadian Government for a total of four bicycle ambulances. Way to go, Knox Sunday School!



Five new elders were inducted into service at Kings Presbyterian Church in New Minas, N.S., on February 2. Pictured (left to right) are Alice VanHatten, Jeff Brown, Debra Hutten, John Steenbeek and Andrew Hartlen. The Rev. Dr. Laurence Mawhinney officiated the induction service.



Two men from our choir, Klaas and Richard, combined their vocal talents during Karaoke Night at Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont., at the beginning of March. Their chosen song was "To All the Girls I've Loved Before" by Julio Iglesias and Willie Nelson. We are blessed to have access to a professional karaoke system, so we hold karaoke nights a couple of times a year. It's a wonderful family event often attended by many members of our junior Glee Club. The kids also love to sing. Music unites us all. Whether one sings or not, Karaoke Night is fun for everyone who attends.



Once a month, the staff, participants, volunteers and friends of ARISE Ministry in Toronto, Ont., have been gathering around the table for LunChurch. At LunChurch, participants share a meal, stories, laughter and sometimes tears. Together we engage in conversation, reflection, prayer and friendship. Gathered around the table from many places and backgrounds, in all our diversity, is where we find healing, hope and wholeness.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., made sure their church sign informed people that the congregation's mission and ministry would continue.



The church sign at First Presbyterian Church in Regina, Sask., let people know that worship was taking place online, and offered words of encouragement during a difficult time.



Stamford Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls, Ont., shared this message the very first week that social distancing measures went into effect. Every week, Stamford Presbyterian Church changes their sign to display a new message of hope from a place of faith.

GATHERINGS



As a result of temporary closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., placed a message on their church sign to remind people to keep their faith and trust in God.



Although the church sign at Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont., could not provide a direct line to reach God during these trying times, it did provide a direct line to God's people.



Campers and staff enjoyed summer fun at Camp Geddie in Merigomish, N.S., last summer. Camp Geddie is owned and operated by the Atlantic Synod of the Church.



Pictured are some of the couples who participated in our "Not so Newlywed" Game, held on Valentine's Day at Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont. We had a potluck supper (a cheap date night!) and asked attendees questions like, "How well do you know your BFF?" We were very intentional in not limiting this game to romantic couples, as we also have singles in our faith family. It was a delight to have a pair of good friends join in the camaraderie. We had a great time, with lots of laughs and sharing (and lots of food!).



Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., hosted its annual Rabbie Burns supper in the William Wallace Memorial Hall. The hall was packed as attendees enjoyed a wonderful dinner with music provided by the York Region Police Pipe Band and dancing by the Richmond Hill Celtic Connection. CREDIT: SNAPD RICHMOND HILL.

GATHERINGS



First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., advertised on their Facebook page and website that palm fronds and crosses would be available to pick up at the church for Palm Sunday. This made it possible for people in the community to come by and simply help themselves, while observing proper physical distancing measures. Following Palm Sunday, it was communicated in the church's Easter newsletter that, if anyone would like leftover palm crosses, they could contact the church office to have them packaged and put outside for pickup.



Every year, with the participation and help of the community, the local Ministerial Association of First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., assembles a large cross for a "Walk of the Cross" through downtown Brockville. During the walk, readings and scriptures are done before the cross is carried into the church that hosts the Good Friday service. This year, in light of the COVID-19 situation, a scaled-down version of the walk took place indoors at Bethel Christian Reformed Church. The indoor "Walk of the Cross" was recorded and circulated to congregations in the area through YouTube, and broadcast on the local TV station on Good Friday. This year's Cross (pictured) was made by First PC congregant, Ross Butler.



This picture was taken at the farewell event for Jim and Darlene Aldridge of Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont. Jim was a devoted member of our faith family, who served as clerk of Session and as our presbytery representative. Pictured (left to right) are Darlene Aldridge, Pastor Janice Doyle and Jim Aldridge cutting the farewell cake. We wish the Aldridges all the best on their move to a new town and new adventure from God. Our loss at Caledonia Presbyterian Church will definitely be another faith family's gain.



Members of First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., enjoying the church's Pancake Supper, pictured alongside the volunteers who helped to organize the supper on February 25.



In February, participants of Messy Church at Avonton Presbyterian Church in Avonton, Ont., worked to build a structure similar to that of the temple Jesus and his parents visited when he was a child.



A performance was given by the Handbell Choir of First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., on March 8.

GATHERINGS



This April, the PCC national office at 50 Wynford Drive in Toronto served as a distribution point for the COVID-19 local food drive and delivery service organized by Toronto Cares, a community support group dedicated to helping those in need during COVID-19. A number of health and safety protocols were performed throughout the building to ensure that social distancing measures were in place. National office staff worked with volunteers of Toronto Cares from a safe distance to put together packages of food and other essential goods, which were picked up by the group's delivery volunteers and brought to the homes of families and individuals throughout the Greater Toronto Area.



On March 1, seven men from Glenview Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., fed the congregation in the second annual Men's Soup Contest. In the end, every soup chef was declared a winner. Pictured here are Donald Chu (who made two soups!), David McIntyre and Masoud Shokrohalli, whose Persian chicken soup was a big hit.

Shrove Tuesday Dinner at Stamford Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls, Ont., is put on by the Session for the congregation and the community every year. It is an opportunity to invite families, friends and the community into the church for some fun and fellowship at the beginning of Lent.



In early February, Saint Columba Presbyterian Church in Saint John, N.B., hosted a Saturday seminar on Presbyterian governance, with a focus on the responsibility of ruling elders. Approximately 30 people participated, representing five congregations from the Presbytery of New Brunswick. A blend of thoughtful questions, happy laughter and a delicious lunch contributed to the success of the event. The Rev. Don Muir, Deputy Clerk in the General Assembly Office, was the facilitator.

NEWS

27 Years at SNCM

By Sharon Nixon, Board Chair and Treasurer, Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry, Saskatoon, Sask.

For 27 years, the Rev. Dr. Stewart Folster made Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry (SNCM) his calling, his mission and his second home. Through his unique style of aligning Christ-centred mission and Native Spirituality side by side, he touched countless lives and became an almost-permanent fixture at the mission on "20th Street and E" in Saskatoon, Sask.

When asked about his ministry of following the ways of both the church and his tradition, he said: "I follow both, but I don't blend the two. They are not in opposition. The God of the Bible and the Creator God of Native

Spirituality are one and the same. But now we tell people He has a Son, Jesus Christ."

On Sept. 1, 1992, the Rev. Dr. Folster, his wife Terry, and their two children (Andrea and Jeff) arrived in Saskatoon to begin their ministry. They shared worship space with Circle West Presbyterian Church until April 1, 2005, when they moved SNCM into a rental space on 20th Street W. The mission felt they could reach more people in need at this location in the inner-city of Saskatoon. On Nov. 1, 2008, SNCM moved to its present location at 450 20th Street W., after the building was purchased by Canadian Ministries. This allowed them to expand existing programs and add new ones.

Now, over a decade later, the Rev. Dr. Folster was set to retire. Two farewell events were held in his honour—one at Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry and the other at his favourite restaurant, "Jeju Korean BBQ." Both events were joyfully and tearfully attended. Members of the community had a chance to say goodbye and share in three decades of stories over cake and coffee on Sept. 27, 2019, his last official day at SNCM. Then on Oct. 26, long-time colleagues and friends from the Synod of Saskatchewan, the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan, local churches, and the dedicated board and staff of SNCM gathered to share a meal and give their best wishes to the Rev. Dr. Folster on his retirement.



Hear the Good News



By John Barrett, Clerk of Session, Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Hear the Good News was a project initiated and published by the Session of Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., with the goal of sharing the best ideas that the Atlantic Synod member churches had to offer. By "Good News," we meant any special services, fellow-

ship events, fundraising projects and other initiatives that have worked well for these congregations. We felt that every congregation had at least one unique and successful idea that was worthy of sharing with our brothers and sisters within the Atlantic Synod.

Zion Presbyterian Church is delighted to report that we have completed collecting, formatting, printing and sharing this valuable information with every Presbyterian church

in the Atlantic Synod. Through this publication, we believe that services, events and projects that have worked well in one part of our Synod can be adapted and tried elsewhere with shared success. The Session of Zion Presbyterian Church is hopeful that other Synods will seize upon the opportunity to do likewise and gain the mutual benefits that can be earned through congregational sharing.

The 68-page publication contains

best practice ideas from a vast majority of Atlantic Synod churches that are arranged in the book by category. The categories range from Advent to Easter, Youth Activities to Fundraising, Fellowship Events to Music, and so on. The complete publication is a great cross section of successful projects and services that we feel everyone can benefit from. As an added bonus, the publication is available as a PDF docu-

ment. The Session of Zion Presbyterian Church would love to share this "Good News" with any church in the denomination. To have a copy of *Hear the Good News* emailed to your congregation, please contact John Barrett, Clerk of Session, at john@veseys.com.

It is our prayer that the sharing of these great ideas will help strengthen us as a denomination as we learn from the successes of others.



One-time coaching sessions have been made available for ministry leaders attempting to faithfully navigate changing circumstances:
presbyterian.ca/coaching



NEWS

Messy Church Moves Forward in Lucknow



A finished Handprint Easter Chick. CREDIT: DAYLE TAYLOR.

Submitted by the Messy Church team, Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, Messy Church was cancelled in March at Lucknow Presbyterian

Church in Lucknow, Ont. The chosen Easter theme for Messy Church was "Easter: The Greatest Miracle." Though it was no longer possible to gather at the church and participate in the planned Easter activities, the Messy Church team was still fully committed to imparting the important Easter theme to the children of their congregation.

The team reached out to families online to let them know that an Easter Activity package had been prepared for them. The families were then given the option to accept or decline the offer. On April 4, 23 families received the Easter Activity package by doorstep delivery. The package included plastic Easter eggs containing chocolate eggs and a word puzzle that required children to arrange a se-



Children receiving their Messy Church Easter Activity kit by delivery and working together on the word puzzle. CREDIT: DAYLE TAYLOR.

ries of sentences in the correct order to reveal an Easter story.

As well, there were supplies and instructions on how to make a "Handprint Easter Chick." The chick was meant to symbolize new life and remind children of the new beginnings we were given because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Once they were completed, children were asked to hang the chicks in the window at their house. With the current situation around the world, the Messy Church team felt everyone needed to

have hope and the promise of a new beginning.

Messy Church participants were also asked to send in prayer requests, which Messy Church Committee member, Margaret de Boer and her husband, Fred, wrote on colourful paper butterflies. They then attached the butterflies to a large cross outside to remind everyone of the new life we have in Jesus. A picture of the cross with all the prayer requests was posted online for everyone to be able to see.



All the prayer requests received for the butterfly prayer activity were beautifully displayed on a large cross outside, just in time for Easter weekend. CREDIT: MARGARET DE BOER.

Sisters Make Easter Connections in Lucknow

Submitted by South Kinloss Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont.

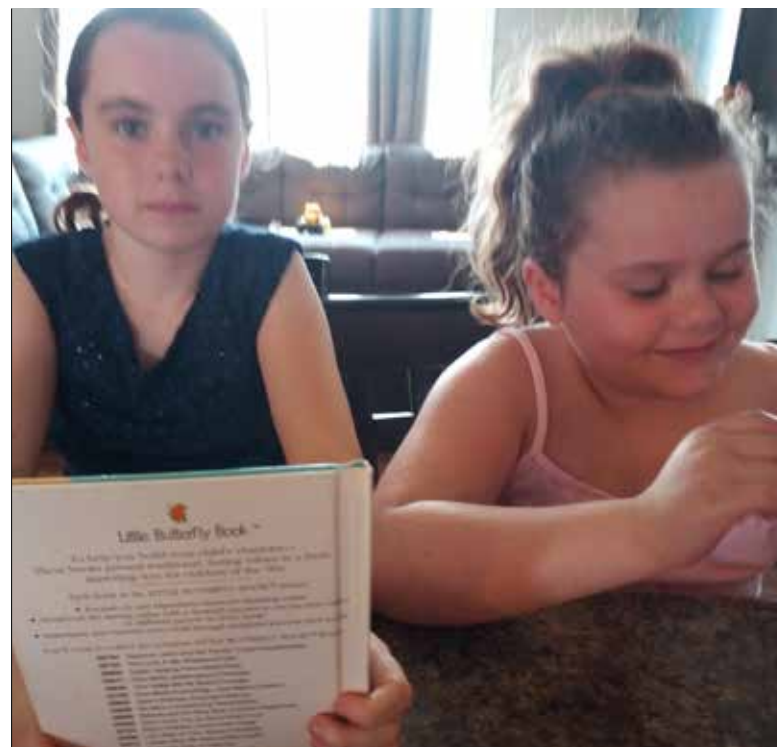
Two sisters (nine and seven years old), who miss going to church at South Kinloss Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont., have found creative ways to connect with their church friends at Sunday School.

With church being closed for Easter this year, their mom suggested that the girls make Easter cards and mail them to some of the senior members of the congregation. The girls jumped at the idea and got to

work right away. After mailing out their first batch of Easter cards, they thought that the response to their outreach was "cool" and continued drawing pictures and writing letters. They are especially mindful of people who live alone and may be lonely during these times of physical distancing.

The girls brainstormed other ways to connect with people and decided to bake cookies and squares. People were so surprised to find gift packages of treats from the girls in their mailboxes.

The sisters then found a book about Easter, which gave them another great idea to read the story for their church friends! They asked their mom to record a video of them reading the story. The video was then posted on the South Kinloss Presbyterian Church Facebook page for everyone to see. Their mom said that the girls have enjoyed reading the notes and comments that connect them with their church family. Many people have had their day brightened by the caring actions of these two sisters.



Making Music in Victoria



Jorge Carrizales, pianist, practicing for an upcoming recital.

By Christine Purvis, Director of Music Ministry, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C.

The Music Ministry at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C., under the leadership of Director Christine Purvis, saw growth and variety in the new year. While everything was eventually put on hold as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, it was a good opportunity to reflect on all

the wonderful things that awaited us when we were able to return to our proper church building.

The choir, the mainstay of the music at St. Andrew's, had the talents of three visiting choral scholars this year, who not only enhanced the choir's singing, but also added their instrumental talents to the worship service. There was growth in outreach with the expansion of a concert series, which previously featured a monthly



The Vancouver Island Bell Ensemble performing under the direction of Anne Hill.

organ recital, and now includes performances by community groups, as well as a number of young professionals, mostly drawn from the University

of Victoria's Music School.

We pray that our music ministry will continue to grow, long after the COVID-19 crisis is but a memory.

NEWS

Ministry in the Crisis of COVID-19



By the Rev. Dr. Devadosan Sugirtharaj, Memorial Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alta.

Millions around the world have been affected by COVID-19, and no one is immune to this pandemic.

When the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alta., became aware of

the coronavirus, they did not want to sit idly by. Rather they wanted to redirect the crisis as pastoral care toward the congregation. They came up with the following effective policies as a means to manage the growing risks of this pandemic.

First, praying about the pandemic's impact on the global community and Canada has become part of our

regular personal, group and worship devotions.

Second, the Session decided to implement a "No handshaking or hugging" policy. They encouraged everyone to verbalize their greetings with a smile. And at the peace sharing time, instead of getting up and offering God's peace around the room, the congregation was encouraged to re-

main seated and share the peace only with those sitting nearest them, all the while avoiding physical contact.

Third, information about the virus was displayed alongside recommended precautions to prevent the spread within the church and greater community. Hand sanitizer was placed in relevant places so that anyone entering the building could use it.

Fourth, as further health directives were issued and large social gatherings were banned, the Session decided to lead worship virtually. Every Sunday service is now being shared on YouTube and Facebook, so that church members and the community may still have worship services while exercising social distancing. Many members of the congregation have eagerly brought their talents and given their time to make this happen. The church choir director, choir members and musicians continue to make such an impact on our worship through music and through their digital skills. The music is recorded by a handful of people who practice social distancing at the church. Parts of the service are recorded at people's homes. The footage is then pieced together using a video-editing program.



Fifth, the fellowship time of the congregation is being held via web conferencing after the Sunday service, where participants share their hopes, joys, concerns and stories. Holy Week services were also held using web conferencing.

Finally, the church continues to demonstrate pastoral care through mindful prayer and thoughtful listening via online platforms, such as email and web conferencing, as well as over the phone.

As a small congregation, the crisis affects our finances, so we encourage people to support the church with offerings through direct deposit, e-transfers or in envelopes that can be passed on to the church office, which remains open three mornings a week. We pray that God may meet everyone's needs during this time of crisis, and that others may benefit from our experience.

Drive-Thru Church in Stittsville

By the Rev. Doug Kendall, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Stittsville, Ont.

It was Thursday, March 19. I was still working from the church office, and sitting in my study wondering (as I imagine most ministers and church leaders were) how we were going to do ministry in this COVID-19 wilderness time. We had already cancelled one Sunday morning worship service and we had no idea how many more would need to be cancelled.

As I sat in my study, the phone rang. It was a member of the church who was saddened by the cancellation of the Sunday service. But his main concern was not for himself—it was for the church. "How can I get my offering to the church? Can I do direct deposit? Can I drive by and drop it off if I keep a safe distance?" We talked about several options that got me thinking about other ways we could continue ministry and some aspects of Sunday worship, while still keeping a safe distance. That's

when the idea of "Drive-Thru" church came to mind. I remembered that in my first charge in Gananoque, Ont., the Pentecostal church used to hold "Drive-In" worship on Sunday evenings in a grocery store parking lot. Why not hold "Drive-Thru" worship?

As the idea began to come together, it became clear that we needed to have a meaningful form of worship that safely respected physical distancing measures. We decided on a set-up of several stations in the church parking lot. People would drive up to the first station, where I would hear any celebrations and prayer requests they wished to share. I would write those down to be shared by email with the whole congregation later in the day. Then the in-car worshiper would drive to the next station, where the envelope secretary would have an offering box and a bin for food bank donations on a table positioned a safe distance away. However, as we did the planning, it felt like something important

was missing (and I don't mean the sermon). One of the elders pointed out, "What is Sunday worship without coffee hour?" She decided to provide coffee and tea in take-out cups, as well as fresh-baked cookies and muffins. She would take the person's order (wearing gloves and a face mask), prepare their coffee hour items and place them on a final table safely positioned more than two metres away, after which she would step back, allowing the person to drive up and pick up their order.

Drive-Thru Church turned out to be a chilly, but safe and joy-filled morning of visiting and sharing our joys and celebrations as well as our prayers for others. And yes, there was a pretty good offering as well. Many in-car worshippers commented on how much they appreciated just getting out of their houses and having a chance to connect with their church family.

We were planning to continue Drive-Thru Church for a number of



weeks. Our music director was keen to come and offer the gift of music as well, but sadly, it was only two days later that Prime Minister Trudeau, on the advice of the health authorities and in an effort to flatten the curve said, "Go home and stay home." It is in our nature as the church to be together, to be a community, and in this challenging time when we are physically separated from one another, we find it difficult in part because it affects our very identity.

At our church, we have joked about how 2020 is the year we all gave up going to church for Lent, but another idea has been helpful for me in this time of separation. It came from a friend in ministry in P.E.I. His congregation chose one Sunday a year when they did not have worship



and, instead, found other ways in the community to be the body of Christ for others. He said the worship theme for that Sunday of the year was, "Don't go to church...be the church." I find those words to be comforting, inspiring and a good challenge. We cannot go to church right now, but we can still be the church in new and creative ways. And being the church right now is more relevant than ever.

NEWS

Family in Crisis: Prayer is Love in Action



Our last family selfie in Ghana.

*By Robert Thiessen, Elder,
St. John's Presbyterian Church in
Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont.*

In July 2019, my family and I set out on an adventure to Lagos, Nigeria, to adopt our second son, Samuel.

In preparation for this trip, I left my job as a general manager, we sold our house and we put all of our belongings in storage in order to live in Lagos for an extended period of time.

After arriving in Nigeria, the adoption process proceeded without any issues. We met Samuel for the first time on July 8, when he was a toddler. We visited him daily at the orphanage, until July 17, when we took him to our then home in Lagos. Two days later, a social worker from the Nigerian government ministry visited us and made an assessment of how our adoption was progressing. We appeared before a magistrate on July 23, and in a small office ceremony, a Nigerian magis-

trate pronounced the adoption legal and formally named our son, Samuel Adeoye Mandela Thiessen. The adoption process was complete.

The next significant step was to submit all of the adoption paperwork from Nigeria to the immigration office at the Canadian High Commission (HC) in Accra, Ghana. On September 9, our family flew to Accra, where we planned to wait for the final approval of Samuel's visa. We were not allowed back in Canada without this visa.

When we left Canada, we knew that this would be a long trip. Fortunately, Ghana is a wonderful country to wait in. We enjoyed our time there tremendously, visiting historical sites, museums, galleries and the ocean. The boys particularly enjoyed the local markets and the swimming pool we had access to.

In December, I read about a virus in Wuhan, China. At the time, I did not think anything of it or anticipate that it



Our first family picture with our second son, Samuel.

might impact our plans. By February, it became apparent that the coronavirus was spreading into other countries.

In March, we became impatient with how long it was taking to process Samuel's visa. We made an appointment with the consular at the Canadian HC to express our concern over the spread of the coronavirus. Our meeting did not go well. We were given a polite "we'll look into it" and told to wait for a phone call. Two days after our appointment, the Canadian HC closed its doors due to the coronavirus.

We then heard rumours that Ghana was going to close its borders to all travel in and out of the country. It was crucial for us to get home.

On March 20, we prepared a letter to Canadian MPs and government ministers, describing our situation and asking the Canadian government to help us. We sent this note to our friends and family, soliciting them to send it to their MP on our behalf. Many of our friends are members of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont. The response from St. John's was overwhelming. They sent our letter to their MPs, as well as called them to let them know that we needed help urgently. The Session at St. John's formally contacted the MP for York Simcoe, asking the office to help our case. Within days, I was spending 5 to 7 hours a day responding to emails from MPs and the offices of

the Immigration Minister and Foreign Affairs. We were being noticed.

Our friends at St. John's also shared our situation through social media. A local movement was gaining momentum on our behalf. Government ministers and MPs were receiving so many letters, that they could no longer afford to just brush them off.

On March 24, we finally received an instructive note from the Canadian Immigration Office, informing us that more documentation was required to support the legality of our son's adoption. We briefly panicked, but thankfully we had the required information in a detailed report from a Nigerian case worker to provide the immigration office with. The very next day, we received approval for Samuel to become a Canadian citizen; and the following day, while on an errand in the city, I was urgently summoned to the Canadian HC for Samuel's visa to be processed.

The Canadian government notified us on Friday, March 27, that a repatriation flight had been arranged. The following Monday, the day of our flight, Ghana implemented a lockdown of Accra and other regions affected by the coronavirus.

To ensure that we had a driver to take us to the airport, our hired driver spent the night in our compound in order to avoid being delayed by the police or military. We drove to the air-



Back in Canada!



Samuel took full advantage of the swimming pool during our long stay in Ghana.

port, with a letter from the Canadian government, explaining why we were out during the lockdown. We boarded our repatriation flight on March 30, and landed in Toronto the next day.

When we left on our family adventure, we never expected it to end with us being repatriated due to a global pandemic. Back then, we dreamed of returning to a big welcoming party for Samuel at the airport. Instead, we entered an empty hall, got into our vehicle and drove to the Airbnb we rented.

However, something else we never expected was the tremendous outpouring of love, concern and prayers from friends, family and particularly our St. John's community. Our hearts are full of gratitude. Our friends taught us something valuable about prayer: that prayers are answered when people act in love.

If you are interested in learning more about our family adventure, please visit my website robertthiessen.com.

Doing Church Differently

*By Sheryl Smith, Chair, Board of
Managers, St. Paul's Presbyterian
Church in Peterborough, Ont.*

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Peterborough, Ont., is a congregation that is getting used to change. In the last year, we have moved from being owners of a landmark building in downtown Peterborough to a rented facility in another notable historic building in the city's west end, the

Mount Community Centre.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, we wondered how we could keep in touch with each other. Some churches were doing worship through Facebook Live, others streamed to a website from empty sanctuaries and some from ministers' homes. But our congregation has a large population of seniors and not everyone has a computer or an email address.

What we do have is a conference

call account! One of our members made the use of the account available and now we get together, by telephone, each week. A short service of scripture, music and meditation takes place at our regular 10:00 a.m. time. In fact, our conference call worship services are even better "attended"! People who might not have been able to get out to church can sit in the comfort of their homes and take part. We estimate our attendance has gone up



at least 40%!

Feedback has been very positive. People tell us that they feel connected; they enjoy hearing each other's voices as we sign in. The Word is

preached and we find reassurance in knowing that we are together in God's care. We save time at the end for sharing news with each other. It's not perfect—but it works for us.

NEWS

Soothing a Community's Soul During COVID-19

By the Rev. Dean Adlam and the Music Committee, Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church in Mount Pleasant, Ont.

In times of trial, music soothes the soul, gives hope and draws people together. That's why the Presbyterian church in the village of Mount Pleasant, Ont., has joined a community effort to recognize the essential workers who staff hospitals and nursing homes.

Dent McIntyre, a member of Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church, was scrolling through the Mount Pleasant Village Group Facebook page when he noticed a posting from a local resident suggesting that Mount Pleasant villagers go out to the ends of their driveways every night at 7:00 p.m. and make noise with pots and pans as a tribute to first responders.

"Someone else replied to the post suggesting that rather than noise, people make music," said Dent. "I immediately thought of our church carillon that normally plays every day at noon and on Sunday mornings before the service."

Dent suggested playing the chimes and received positive responses. He then contacted Janet Franklin, another church member, who programs the carillon. She jumped on the idea and by the end of the day had the carillon programmed to chime the hour at 7:00 p.m. and play a different song each evening. The pianist also plays O Canada at the end of each service to show "Canada strong" and another way to show support to frontline workers.

"We try to play a mix of songs so there's something for everyone," she said. We play both modern and



traditional sacred songs, but we mix in a bit of classical music and a few secular songs."

Although the carillon cannot be heard throughout the entire village, some villagers drive their cars to points where the music can be heard.

Responses from other villagers have been equally positive.

The church is also reaching out to the community through its website with weekly messages from the minister, the Rev. Dean Adlam, and the music director, Amy Groleau. Thanks to the technical savvy of Nadine Adlam, the weekly Sunday service is available online. Musical contributions from church members have come from as far away as Texas. This has been a new initiative for this small community church that usually averages between 60 to 80 worshippers on a Sunday. The first Sunday service that was uploaded online had 250 views!

People who have never attended a service before at Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church have been sharing on our church Facebook page how much they are enjoying the

services. Previous members, from as far away as Texas and Vancouver, have been viewing these services and commenting on how it reminds them of home during this difficult time. In fact, a church member who now lives in West Texas sent a video of himself playing guitar and singing as a contribution to the special music portion of the service.

The closure of our church for services as a result of COVID-19 has not stopped us from reaching out and finding ways to touch the souls of those in the Mount Pleasant community and beyond. When this period of self-isolation is over, it will be exciting for us to see who God may bring inside our doors on a Sunday as a result of this ministry. It will be equally exciting to see how God gives us new ideas for continuing this ministry in our community.

Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room at Knox Stratford



By Kathy Baker, Knox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont.

Throughout February of this year, the Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room of Knox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont., was overwhelmed with generosity, love and support as a result of the hard work and dedicated efforts of many in the Knox Stratford community.

Knox Presbyterian Church's Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room offers a selection of wigs, hats, scarves, shawls and other accessories free of charge to cancer patients in Southwestern Ontario.

Since its inception in 2004, Knox Stratford has provided this care and comfort to more than 1,000 cancer patients—and the numbers only continue to increase. This mission has helped patients from Perth, Huron, Oxford and Bruce Counties and surrounding areas as well as Kitchener and London.

The Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room currently operates with approximately 20 volunteers, including two licensed hair stylists who assist with the wig fittings. The mission's only sources of income are personal donations or fundraisers.

On Feb. 7, 2020, a Spaghetti Din-

ner Fundraiser was held for the Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room. The mission team was completely blown away by the extremely positive response and support they received. Many people volunteered to help with every stage of the event—from setting up, preparing and serving the meal and cleaning up, to overseeing the silent auction. The Spaghetti Dinner raised a grand total of just over \$5,000! Words cannot express the gratitude for all of the volunteers and support from individuals and businesses. The money raised through this event enables the mission team to continue to assist those diagnosed



Spaghetti dinner volunteers peeling apples (the best apple peelers in Perth County!) and posing in front of the dinner spread (left)—ready to be served!



A savvy Girl Guide collecting donations for the Knox Stratford Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room at the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper.

with cancer in the community and surrounding areas.

The Cancer Care Mission/Wig Room was blessed with another outpouring of generosity and support on Shrove Tuesday when the Girl Guides based out of Knox hosted a pancake supper, during which donations were

taken at the door. Following the supper, the girls were so happy to donate \$720 to the Cancer Care Mission.

It is our hope at Knox Stratford to always be able to offer this complementary care program to cancer patients. We are so grateful to be able to continue assisting those who call.

NEWS

Community Pancake Dinner in Almonte



By Claire Marson, St. Paul's Anglican Church in Almonte, Ont.

The Community Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Almonte, Ont., on Feb. 25, 2020, was a huge effort by many people around the region with one goal—to help the most vulnerable in our little town.

Thanks to the generosity of the parishioners of Almonte's Community Presbyterian Church, St. Paul's Anglican Church, Hillside Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church, along with the Lions Club and the Civitan Club (not to mention Paddy Mann Clothing in Pakenham, Ont.), the Community Pancake Dinner

Fundraiser was a huge success! Before even one pancake was served, over \$500 had already been raised for the Lanark County Food Bank. But that was just the beginning.

When Shrove Tuesday rolled around, a bevy of volunteers leapt into action, equipped with the amazing gluten-free pancake batter donated by Jodie Bowen from the Heart & Soul Cafe in Dunrobin, Ont., and maple syrup from several local producers. The ovens were fired up at Stonebridge Haven in Pakenham and three men were tasked with cooking the pancakes. Then, for almost the full two hours of service, a trio of octogenarians served stacks of pancakes along with maple syrup, 400



sausages and baked beans. With people lining up outside, we opened the church so they had somewhere warm to wait.

At the end of the day, over 200 people were fed. We delivered loaded plates to all the residents at Lanark County Interval House in Carleton Place, Ont., as well as to some people in Pakenham. When the dust settled and the last dishes were washed, tired but happy volunteers counted the take from ticket sales and added up the few receipts for things that had to be purchased (almost everything was donated). Altogether, \$1,458.38 was raised, all going to the Food Bank! What an amazing day and an amazing community.

Helping Where It's Needed Most

By the Rev. Barry Carr, Community Presbyterian Church in Almonte, Ont.

We at Almonte's Community Presbyterian Church have recently devoted our fundraising and outreach efforts to provide assistance for those most affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its socio-economic impacts.

In the early days of the business shutdown, ordered in response to the outbreak, members of the congregation were worried about those who would be out of work and losing most of their family income as a result. Several members made themselves available to help with groceries or pharmacy errands. Our Pastoral Care team contacted as many of our members and adherents as possible to ensure families and folks felt heard and supported. From those check-ins came the idea to establish a Special Assistance Fund. Those financially able contributed a substantial amount of

money to the fund, allowing us to help many people significantly affected by the shutdown.

We also offered financial support to the Lanark County Food Bank, which was experiencing food shortages and increased demand for services. Altogether, Community Presbyterian Church has been able to offer over \$2,000 in assistance for those struggling the most and we are still working to help and support people however we can as the weeks stretch into months.

When both of the local long-term care facilities—Almonte Country Haven and Stonebridge Manor in Carleton Place—had an outbreak of COVID-19, we partnered with Home Hospice North Lanark to arrange food deliveries for staff working to care for those ill with the virus.

Like many congregations, we began doing online worship services, which has grown from being sim-

ply audio-only services to including music and video as well. This may sound ordinary for some, but for us in a small-town congregation in Eastern Ontario, sharing our worship with friends and family around the globe is a big leap forward.



Opening the Door to Parish Nursing

By Laura Van Loon, RN, Parish Nurse/Pastoral Care Nurse, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask.

Being called by God in 2011 to serve as a parish nurse for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask., opened my eyes to a way of serving the Lord that I had not imagined. This opportunity came about when our current moderator, the Rev. Amanda Currie, suggested to Session that we add a Youth Ministry and Parish Nurse Ministry to the staff complement.

As a registered nurse in various capacities of work since 1970, I realized that the care and healing within the context of my life's vocation had prepared me for parish nursing. Serving the body, mind and soul of those whom the Lord leads me to assess and assist gives me joy and thankfulness. Parish nurses care and help in many ways, but they need the training and skill set to carry out the services they provide. There is prayer, ongoing theological reflection and discernment involved. There is understanding of being called by the Lord, and an affirmation of the call that comes in an instant or with time, thought and contemplation.

What exactly is parish nursing? Parish nursing is a service of ministry by a registered nurse with unique and specialized knowledge, who is called to ministry and affirmed by a faith community, thus validating the nurse's call to promote health, healing and wholeness. The Inter-Church Health Ministry educational program, which is offered through the Lutheran Seminary at the University of Saskatchewan, is rooted in the vision of Christ as Healer. The Candidates must fulfill the requirements of core learned competencies as developed by the Canadian Association for Parish Nursing Ministry, a specialized branch within the Canadian Nurses Association.

I serve within the Pastoral Care Committee at St. Andrew's, which developed the following mission statement in 2011:

"St. Andrew's Pastoral Care Committee is committed to share the love of God by accompanying individuals on their journey to wholeness in mind, body and spirit by ministering through prayer, service, education, caring and support."

The chair or convener oversees my position. I have fulfilled all re-



Laura Van Loon, Parish Nurse at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon. CREDIT: AMANDA KIRKPATRICK, RELISH PHOTOGRAPHY.

quirements and professional status as a registered nurse within Saskatchewan. In this ministry, I work with the Rev. Roberto DeSandoli and the staff to help integrate faith and health in the wellness continuum. The Volunteer Committee includes the minister and myself in ex-officio capacity. My many roles include teaching; health counselling; providing community resources and referrals; being present at the bedside in health care facilities; praying in person, on the phone, or through technology and the printed word.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Pastoral Care Committee increased their phoning ministry, initiated a new walking group through a virtual journey, continued our card ministry and expanded the prayer shawl ministry. We have recognized all St. Andrew's health care workers, including doctors, nurses, personal care workers, a registrar and a physiotherapist by labelling prayer shawls with their name and a heart. Each prayer shawl is dropped off on the person's porch: a never-before-heard-of porch ministry instigated in times of crisis that continues to open doors through our care of weaving faith, religion and health.

More information is available by contacting Laura Van Loon, Pastoral Care Nurse, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 436 Spadina Cres. E., Saskatoon, Sask., S7K 3G6 or by phoning the church at 306-242-0525.

NEWS

When a Virus Turns Church Life Upside Down

By Lynne Allan, Elder, St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L.

Our world at St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., was turned upside down last October when fire destroyed our sanctuary. Since then, our congregation has been blessed with offers of venues for our monthly services until our own building is restored. While one meeting place was too big for our relatively small number, another was not quite big enough. It wasn't long after we'd found a chapel that was just the right size that our world was sent spinning again, this time by COVID-19.

As of mid-April, much work has been completed by a handful of volunteers to repair the fire, smoke and water damage. Before COVID-19 arrived in the province, it was hoped that the sanctuary would be ready for use for our June service or, at the latest, by September when St. Matthew's will mark its 110th anniversary. Now work is officially suspended and we do the responsible things—we wait... and we continue to attend services. In this time of "new normal," we have been welcomed into the fold of the other two Presbyterian congregations in Newfoundland and Labrador as we

attend their weekly online services.

Both churches are located in St. John's, which is 430 kilometres from Grand Falls-Windsor. St. David's Presbyterian Church is led by the Rev. David Sturtevant; St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (The Kirk) by the Rev. Derek Krunys. Both ministers have preached from the pulpit of St. Matthew's once David assumed the interim moderator position in May 2019. Both have provided comfort and leadership to our congregation since the fire. Now, with COVID-19 dictating that we must not gather to worship, David and Derek are ministering to all three churches, having brushed up on their technical skills to bring worship services into our homes via YouTube and web platforms.

On his technical skills, Derek says he wasn't starting from scratch, but he has spent hours learning how to accomplish certain things he wants to do. His first online service was recorded in The Kirk with Glenn Chafe providing both vocal and organ accompaniment for the hymns. When Derek's wife, Yasmin, returned from out of province, both were in self-isolation for 14 days, during which time the service moved to their home.

After doing more research and some test videos, Glenn has contin-



Much has been accomplished by a very small group of volunteers in restoring the sanctuary of St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor following the fire of October 2019. Work has officially been suspended in response to the COVID-19 virus.

ued to play and sing for the services from his own home. Those who attended Derek's live web service on Easter Sunday received Communion, having been asked in advance to have bread and wine set out for that purpose. Afterwards, there was time for a virtual coffee hour, giving congregation members a chance to see and have a visit with each other.

David's services from St. David's have been no less uplifting and comforting in this uncertain time. As of mid-April, he has been alone in the church when recording his services. On Easter Sunday, he was not only alone in the sanctuary, but also in the dark and cold—not unlike a tomb. The only light came from three small candles representing Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James) and Salome, the three women who came to the tomb.

Online services are just one way the ministers have been reaching their congregations. David encourages his congregation to email and telephone to keep in touch. The Kirk has been emailing a weekend newsletter and transcripts of services to congregation members and mailing paper copies to those members who aren't online. Elders have also been stepping up to keep in touch with those on their lists.

Both St. John's churches have Facebook pages, as does St. Matthew's. The page administrators keep followers advised of church news. St. Matthew's follows up its Facebook posts with emails and texts to congregation members. Many members of the St. Matthew's congregation are related and take care of each other, but for those who need help and support, the clerk of Ses-

sion and treasurer have offered their assistance.

There are other challenges to be faced when congregations aren't allowed to gather. Offerings tend to be down and fundraisers have either been cancelled or are in limbo. The Kirk's annual moose supper couldn't be held in March and its lobster dinner set for June is "very much up in the air," according to Derek.

It's hoped that congregations will continue to facilitate giving by using such means as CanadaHelps and e-Transfer. For those who don't do online banking, St. Matthew's has suggested that its members continue to put their offering in an envelope each month. It will then be ready to put in the offering plate when the time comes where we are once again allowed to worship together. When that time comes, we will be sure to say Hallelujah!

Supporting Our Most Vulnerable

By Rebecca Sherbino,
co-founder of The Raw Carrot

Are you feeling socially isolated and distanced right now? I know I am. This feeling is certainly more prevalent as we all face the new realities of life amidst COVID-19.

Fortunately for many of us, this feeling of social isolation will be relatively short-lived. Before we know it, we will be back at work and spending time with family and friends again.

For staff at The Raw Carrot Soup

Enterprise, the feeling of social isolation is a much more familiar feeling. Staff members, like Monica, Nick and Lori, all face different challenges that create isolation; from physical, mental and developmental disabilities to living in poverty, they've often struggled with finding a supportive environment to thrive in.

Through your donations, prayers and congregational support of Presbyterians Sharing, a supported job at The Raw Carrot has given amazingly talented people a place to belong,



a community of friends and, more importantly, the means for food and income security.

Because of COVID-19, we temporarily closed the four kitchens that you have helped to create, that employ 27 staff. Just a few weeks into the closure, some of our staff

already had to access emergency supports—mainly food.

Individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program receive approximately \$1,169 per month, far below the poverty line of \$1,767 per month. Their job at The Raw Carrot provides between 15% to 25% in additional income per month—ensuring that they can pay rent and meet their basic needs...all because they are capable of working in a supported work environment. Your financial support (and volunteer time!) has provided that environment.

It's at times like these that we can clearly see the impact of not having a job and the additional income that employment at The Raw Carrot provides.

We know that Raw Carrot staff on social assistance don't want to

have to access food banks and crisis supports, but their meagre income leaves them little choice but to ask, or beg, for help.

Your gifts of time, talent and treasure over the past six years have allowed The Raw Carrot to grow. YOU are part of the many congregations in Canada that give to Presbyterians Sharing, which helps to support this ministry.

During this break, we are taking time to be grateful; to reflect on all that your support has accomplished, and all the amazing and powerful ways that God has moved in this ministry.

We can't wait to get back to the kitchen, back to friends and colleagues, and back to work!

To learn more, visit therawcarrot.com.

NEWS

Re-Imagining Ministry—Online



By the Rev. Dr. Tim Archibald,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
in Calgary, Alta.

I was beginning my annual Silent Retreat at a local retreat centre on March 15. I had settled into my room, had my first meeting with my spiritual director—and then everything changed. The Government of Alberta announced the indefinite closure of all schools in the province and mandated citizens to stay home as much as possible. The Silent Retreat was postponed, and the next morning our staff at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., met for the last time in person until further notice.

That first week we devised a plan and set priorities for our next steps in ministry. It was time to re-imagine and implement our whole ministry—ON-LINE! Our staff began meeting online each day through Google Meet. Although the building was closed, our ministry was open as staff adjusted to working from home—answering calls and emails as if we were in the office. Every major crisis brings with it unexpected problems, and also creates unprecedented opportunities. We wanted to be able to deal with the problems, and yet seize on the new opportunities that were before us.

Daily video devotionals

Our first priority was communication. It was crucial to keep our congregation engaged, connected, informed and inspired. Many of our families already receive weekly congregational emails. We set out to expand our list and committed to sending five daily

video devotionals each week. Our three ministers took three days of the week, our director of music ministries prepared a musical devotional for one day, and every Monday a different person from the congregation offered the devotional. The response has been enthusiastic. People who live alone find that it has given them an everyday connection to community and to people they love. It has also helped to keep the congregation better engaged in Sunday's live-streamed service by maintaining a flow of ongoing connection and engagement.

Our New Normal of coming together—online

Our Family minister began a "Life Online" study on Philippians every Thursday. One Friday night, younger families were invited to get together and unwind at an "On-wine and Cheese" evening. The youth group, Session and ministry teams began to meet regularly online. Our website was totally reworked to be the central hub for the ministry of St. Andrew's. "Our New Normal" is a section on our website dedicated to all relevant information for ministry in this new season.

Live-streamed worship

Our second priority was planning weekly live-streamed worship. We had experimented with this earlier in 2020. At that time, we had 10 to 15 people connect with us—mostly seniors from our congregation who were unable to physically attend Sunday worship.

In preparation for our first live-stream-only Sunday, we engaged a sound technician who assisted our A.V. coordinator in improving the quality of our audio and visuals. Our communications coordinator dispensed with the Sunday bulletin in favour of spending more time on slides and visuals for the online ser-



vice. We sought to keep the number of people in the sanctuary for the live stream to five. A greeter was designated to welcome and engage with people during the service through the chat mode of YouTube. People from the congregation read, lead prayers and share pre-recorded testimony. Since our first live-streamed worship experience, we have included more videos and preaching, as well as live singing and accompaniment for congregational song and special music.

Our Faith Formation team collaborated on a number of ways to ensure children were also included in the live stream:

- Each Sunday, prior to the start of the service, one of the Sunday School teachers tells a pre-recorded "Children and Worship" story, employing visual aids.
- Our Family minister also pre-records a "Children's Time" that is incorporated into the online service.
- Activity sheets related to the scripture reading for the day are sent out by email. These can be printed off for children to engage in during the online service.

The response to online worship has been amazing. It feels as though the walls around our ministry have fallen away, and we are now transparently available everywhere. Our average in-person attendance on Sundays is 250. Through live streaming, we now connect with anywhere between 550 to 750 people—from every province in Canada and beyond. Members have been sharing our worship services over social media and email. On

Easter Sunday when we shared communion, one new guest commented, "Thank you for allowing full participation in the grace of communion in a safe place. Wonderful." Visiting a new church just got a lot less threatening.

This new season is an important ministry opportunity for us—not solely for keeping connected with our own congregation, but also for developing new relationships with those who are seeking spiritual sustenance. In a crisis, people are often more aware of a need for God. We want to be available to minister to them and fulfill our vision of **Growing. LIFE. Together. With God.**

Pastoral care

Pastoral care has been our third priority. We began by phoning every household on our list to check in. Volunteers continued to call those who required regular check-ins and wrote notes on a regular basis to those who are not online.

One couple in our congregation initiated a ministry called "Through the Window," where they would visit a home and conduct a video-recorded interview from a safe distance, through the window and over the phone. People would answer questions related to how we are "Growing Life Together with God" in the time of COVID-19. The interviews are then sent out through our congregational email.

Our Pastoral Care minister has initiated "Wonderful Wellness Wednesdays," where anyone can join online to learn about wellness and spiritual care during this season, or to simply



talk to some other folk from our community of faith.

Our Side by Side ministry, although on hiatus, has found ways to remain connected with the families in the program who are living with dementia.

Giving and being the helpers

Giving and being the helpers was our final priority, because mission and ministry are even more crucial at a time like this. Online giving was encouraged through our website, through signing up for pre-authorized remittance and through the old-fashioned mailing of cheques.

Volunteers in our congregation have been active throughout this season. The St. Andrew's Depot of the Calgary Food Bank was reopened to help the considerable need in our community. Health protocols were developed to protect our volunteers and neighbours in need. Our Benevolent Fund is aiding our neighbours who find themselves in greatest need. Some volunteers have been dropping off groceries at people's doors or doing pharmacy runs, while others have been assisting those who need computer or tech support to connect online. Among the donations St. Andrew's received was \$600 in Walmart gift cards, which were distributed to families struggling to find work in this difficult economic season.

We are excited by the many ways God is using us in **Growing. LIFE. Together. With God.** As a community, God is making us more flexible, open and creative—all crucial qualities for growing the church in this new era.

Our Daily Bread: Sharing God's Word

By Phil Benjamin, Coordinator of
the Our Daily Bread distribution at
Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande
Prairie, Alta.

About four years ago, Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta., received a bulletin from Our Daily Bread Ministries—a non-denomi-

national, non-profit organization that produces an extensive range of materials to help people grow in their relationship with God, the most notable being the devotional, Our Daily Bread.

The bulletin identified a gentleman in Vancouver, B.C., who was distributing Our Daily Bread devotional booklets around the city. We thought



it might be the kind of outreach our church could try.

We started out small, with an order of 500 booklets per quarter and one person to deliver them. Today, our distribution of Our Daily Bread has grown to 2,300 booklets per quarter with five people who deliver the booklets, as well as the added help of a group of dedicated people who



stamp our church information on the inside prior to distribution. The booklets are delivered to about 40 businesses, usually once a month. However, some businesses require refills every week. A small plastic box with about 15 to 20 booklets is provided to the businesses depending on the demand.

The Word of God is now in many

hands. We are farmers, planting seeds. This is a very low-maintenance method of doing outreach. I encourage your church to consider this endeavour. Since we started distributing Our Daily Bread devotionals four years ago, we have stamped and delivered over 22,000 devotional booklets. Who would have thought that God would use our small church to put out God's Word in our community? Trust in the power of prayer!

To learn more, visit the Our Daily Bread Ministries website at ourdailybread.ca.

NEWS

Resurrection People in a Good Friday World



Pictures of the Congregational Pen Pals program in action!

By the Rev. Mavis Currie, Knox Presbyterian Church in St. Thomas, Ont.

Easter at Knox Presbyterian Church in St. Thomas, Ont., usually means a full church. It usually means spring flowers, lilies and several dozen helium-filled balloons decorating the front of the sanctuary. Easter usually means an egg hunt for the Sunday School, and hot cross buns for the congregation.

This year, Easter looked different at Knox, as it did for so many churches across Canada, and indeed the world. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that Christians could not gather traditionally for celebrations. However, thanks to the ingenuity of a number of members at Knox, the good news of the resurrection was still celebrated in this southwestern Ontario community, and continues to be celebrated in the weeks that have followed Easter.

After the announcement from the federal and provincial governments that places of worship must be closed to the public, Knox members quickly mobilized to stay connected and to find meaningful opportunities

to be an Easter people even in the midst of the Good Friday of COVID-19. Here are a few of the ways this congregation has sought to be a people of joy and hope during these months of pandemic.

Online worship

Fortunately, Knox was accustomed to live streaming their services and so with just a few tweaks, the Sunday morning worship schedule continued. Worship is offered on YouTube and Facebook and can easily be accessed through the church's website. By the time Easter Sunday had rolled around, our A.V. wizard, Dion Vansevenant, had figured out a way for older members who were not computer savvy to phone a toll-free number to listen to the service. The service includes music recorded by the Music Director, Martin Anderle, in his own home, scripture and reflections from the Rev. Mavis Currie and music from previous services recorded in our church building. The broadcast also includes photos of our church building and of nature taken in past years by church members who are gifted at photography.

Weekly communication

The Rev. Mavis Currie sends out a weekly newsletter to the congregation via email and older members have a hard copy dropped into their mailboxes by elders. These weekly updates include a daily scripture and prayer guide for the congregation. Every day, members have been praying for a different leader and for front-line workers from their own congregation. Knox, St. Thomas, has also been praying through their church directory. The prayer guide includes four or five church members to pray for during the pandemic. The congregational updates and prayer guides are available on the church's website. Every Sunday night, church members are invited to light a candle in their front window and offer a special prayer for those who work in the health care system.

Catching faith

Allison Bell, a schoolteacher who offers leadership in Christian Education programming at Knox, has created a weekly Sunday School program for our families. This straightforward sheet provides resources for families based on scripture. A colouring sheet, word search and fun activity are included to help parents nurture faith at home.

Caps and masks

"Sew It Seams," a talented group of sewers who usually meet weekly at Knox, have quickly mobilized to address the needs of our local hospital. When concerns were expressed that the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital was running short on masks, and desperately required surgical caps to help nurses and doctors cope with the skin irritation around their ears

from constantly wearing Personal Protective Equipment, the Sew It Seams members set to work. They quickly delivered almost 150 masks. News spread to neighbours, friends and beyond. Donations of leftover fabric poured in. Other members of the wider community began to sew as well. A drop-off fabric system was established on each other's doorsteps. To date, this community collective of sewers has donated over 700 caps and masks.

The Great Toilet Paper Challenge

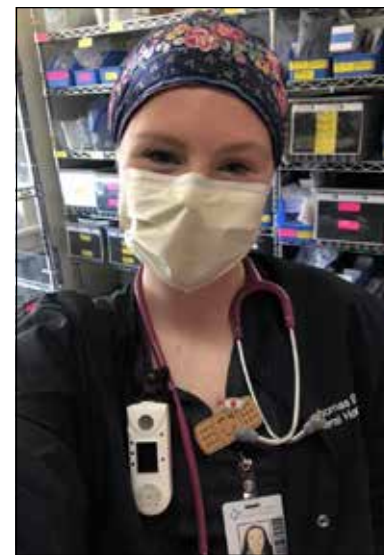
Anna Russell, a creative member at Knox with a mind for trivia, decided early on that this was an opportunity for our congregation to have a little bit of fun. Every day, she has been sending out half a dozen trivia questions via email. Members are invited to answer the questions without using the Internet for help. When COVID-19 ends, the winner will be awarded... a roll of toilet paper! (An item that's become an especially valuable commodity during this time.)

Singing telegrams

Linda Todd, a member of the Knox Choir, started a trend that a number of choir members are continuing. Every week, various congregation members are surprised by a choir member phoning and singing a verse or two of a favourite hymn. One choir member has been calling people on their birthdays. Her granddaughter plays a verse of happy birthday on the piano, followed by a sung version and a short phone visit.

Pastoral connections

Elders have been regularly connecting with their districts on the phone.



Chelsea Jones, a nurse at the local hospital and a member of Knox, St. Thomas, is sporting one of the surgical caps sewn by the Sew It Seams group.

Those members who live alone have been paired with an additional contact from the church's Pastoral Care team to ensure they have a listening ear during this difficult time.

Congregational pen pals

A number of children in the Sunday School have been matched up with an adult in the congregation to be pen pals. This exercise encourages children to keep up their writing skills, and creates new bonds across the generations at Knox.

"I miss your face" photo gallery

A page has been designated on the church website for members of the congregation to send in photos. The challenge is for people to test themselves—how many faces can they name? When COVID-19 ends, these photos will be used to create a congregational collage.

Knit and Natter at West Vancouver Presbyterian Church

By Jean Lawrence, Communications, West Vancouver Presbyterian Church in West Vancouver, B.C.

West Vancouver Presbyterian Church in West Vancouver, B.C., has a Knit and Natter Group that normally meets in the church hall every Monday morning, with coffee, baking, knitting and lots of nattering.

A recent group project was knitting prayer shawls that were to be donated to local charitable organizations, as well as to the Cariboo Ministry.

One of our members, Betty Far-

row (formerly of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Abbotsford, B.C.)—an excellent knitter—was given some beautiful wool by her daughter, Trish Armstrong, for an afghan, which Trish was looking forward to wearing when it was finished. But as Betty's memory started to slip, knitting even a simple dishcloth became a challenge.

Betty passed away in early October 2019. A few weeks later, Trish came to a Knit and Natter session to donate the beautiful off-white wool that she had previously given to her mother. I used some to knit a baby

blanket as a gift, but there was still lots of wool yarn leftover. We decided that it would be a wonderful idea to surprise Trish by presenting her with something knitted with her mother's wool.

One of our members, Muriel Whitlock, has a sister who is an amazingly talented and fast knitter. She visited a recent Knit and Natter session, and we showed her the donated wool. We talked about patterns and away she went. Much to our amazement, a beautiful shawl (which Trish is pictured wearing) was knitted by



Pictured are Knit and Natterers, Anna Brown, May Loudon (group leader), Trish Armstrong, Jean Lawrence and Muriel Whitlock.

Fran Heaney in less than one week!

We invited Fran to attend the following Monday with the finished shawl, and also invited Trish—a non-knitter—who arrived with cinnamon

buns for all of us to enjoy with our coffee. She was so surprised when Fran presented her with the beautiful shawl, and so grateful to have it as a lasting memory of her mother.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

From a Global Challenge, a New Start

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

There is so much turbulence in our world and so much uncertainty. By the time you read this, much will have changed again. Our global community is facing a common challenge and has been forced to take unprecedented measures to protect people's lives. As with most sudden onset disasters, the world's response is prompt. It puts into perspective the fact that we have neglected to care for the most vulnerable on our planet and deal with protracted situations that have left us unprepared as a global community.

As things progress internationally, we are particularly concerned with how the most vulnerable people will be affected by COVID-19. In Canada, we wonder if our health system, one of the best in the world, will have the capacity to deal with the potential number of people who might need ventilators or beds in hospital intensive care units, and fear that many could die if the system falls short.

At the same time, we think of those who live in the developing world, where health systems are overstretched at the best of times, where facilities are inadequate or simply non-existent. We imagine the potential disastrous scenarios that might emerge should COVID-19 spread in refugee camps, such as Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. A government enforced lockdown, in a district where over a million refugees are crowded,

means that no one can enter or exit the camp in an effort to prevent infection and spread.

In Africa, equipment is scarce. The World Health Organization says fewer than 5,000 intensive care beds are available across 43 of the continent's 54 countries. This is about five beds per million people, whereas in Europe there are 4,000 beds per million people.

When it comes to functional ventilators in public health services across 41 African countries, there are fewer than 2,000. At the time of writing, Ontario alone has 2,000 beds equipped with ventilators. We need to keep these numbers in mind when assessing how the world is doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This pandemic has hit everyone somehow. Some PWS&D staff have lost relatives to COVID-19 and our partners have requested help to assist their staff and the communities they serve.

PWS&D endorsed a letter initiated by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation asking the government to ensure that sufficient resources be allocated to the global response to the pandemic, as most of the focus so far has been on the domestic response.

"We don't defeat COVID-19 if we don't defeat it everywhere on the planet," shared Minister of International Development, Karina Gould, at a recent online Town Hall. The government has been slowly increasing



Crowded refugee camps, like this one in Bangladesh, create ideal conditions for the spread of COVID-19. CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY/ACT ALLIANCE.

its international commitments, having currently provided \$50 million, mostly through the World Health Organization, to help poorer countries deal with the pandemic, with hopes for increased contributions by the time you read this.

PWS&D is working with our partners to adapt programming as necessary—reallocating funds planned for activities that are not possible at this time and ensuring increased capacity to access supplies that will further prevent the spread of the virus and assist those who may be sick. We are also keeping in mind the safety and protection of partner staff and community members.

PWS&D has made an initial financial contribution to the Rapid Response Fund of the ACT Alliance,

specifically geared to proposals for urgent action and life-saving initiatives and, where appropriate, interventions for preparedness. PWS&D will support this global response to the extent made possible by resources provided by Presbyterians in Canada.

As I complete the reading of N.T. Wright's *Lent for Everyone*, I want to share a few lines that seem most relevant to today's reality: "There is every reason to hope that this year, or this decade, or this century, God will do new things. Jesus is still Lord—but he rules in the same way that he lived, taught and died. When his followers learn again to do the same, we shall see a fresh start... 'I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

Thank you for your solidarity, support and prayers, as we work toward



In Afghanistan, midwives raise awareness with community members about coronavirus. CREDIT: COMMUNITY WORLD SERVICE ASIA.

this new start.

To stay up to date on PWS&D's COVID-19 response or to make a donation, please visit [WeRespond.ca/covid-19](https://www.werespond.ca/covid-19).

Making a Difference in Malawi

By the Rev. John Bannerman, minister at Chalmers Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., and a PWS&D committee member.

I'm writing this just over a month after returning from a PWS&D monitoring trip to Malawi in February and yet it seems like so long ago now, as we deal with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. I worry that the coronavirus will lead to even greater devastation and death in Malawi. I pray that this will not be so.

As a member of the PWS&D committee, I had the great privilege to travel with PWS&D staff and visit with Malawian partners engaging in the crucial relief and development work that we are doing through PWS&D.

At each and every field visit to rural villages in the south and north of Malawi, we were welcomed with warmth, enthusiasm and often beautiful singing. Village leaders ex-

pressed their deep gratitude for the ways in which the projects and partnership with PWS&D have improved their quality of life. They told us that the very fact that we made the effort to be with them, to listen and to learn, was a source of encouragement and gave them hope for the future. And I learned so much from their strength, resilience and perseverance.

We gathered for a field visit in Mangwanani village. Standing before us was a 15-year-old mother in her school uniform. With tears streaming down her cheeks, Veronica shared her story, saying, "I love school."

With the support of her parents, village leaders and PWS&D's local partner, Veronica had been able to return to school after leaving when she became pregnant. What a difference this will make for this teenage mother, her child and their future. The hope is that through this project many other girls will either remain in or be able to re-

turn to school so that they may enjoy the benefits of a formal education.

As I reflect on my experiences in Malawi, I am left with the clear impression that we are making a real and enduring difference in the lives of the people supported by PWS&D projects. The work we are doing is making an impact and providing help and hope to families and communities in rural Malawi.

During another field visit to Kaweche in northern Malawi, the women of the village demonstrated how a new outdoor oven allowed them to bake bread for their community bakery business. Although we had a busy schedule that day, they insisted that we stay for lunch. The hot meal of chicken, *nsima* (thick porridge made of maize flour) and greens was delicious. Even with their limited means, the women of the village cooperatively generously offered their gifts of hospitality in a way that I



The Rev. John Bannerman with Dunny Lusale, a staff member at PWS&D partner Embangweni Mission Hospital.

will not soon forget.

The women and men we visited in Malawi taught me much about resiliency, leadership, hospitality and hope. May God inspire us as we



Veronica, a teenager who has been able to return to school after dropping out, with her mother and daughter.

strengthen our partnerships with the people of Malawi, and as we continue to be with and for our sisters and brothers there in the name of One who is with us always.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Maternal Health Today and Tomorrow

By Karen Bokma, PWS&D Communications

Ainafe Gordon knew things would be different with her most recent pregnancy. For several years, volunteers in her community have been travelling from home to home, sharing important information for new and expecting mothers. This was the 30-year-old's third pregnancy and while nothing had gone wrong with the first two, she knew things could have been better.

This time was already different because Ainafe and her husband had planned it. With simple and efficient access to birth control provided by local community-based distribution agents, she and her husband were able to plan to have their next baby when their family would be able to best care for her.

Spacing out the births of her children meant Ainafe was able to invest more time in her family's farm and start a small business selling vegetables. She could nurse her baby longer because she didn't get pregnant so quickly after giving birth. She and her husband were better able to support their family and meet their nutritional and health needs.

Once pregnant, Ainafe received a

lot of support from her community. Village safe motherhood committees, care groups and male motivators were just some of the pieces in place to support expectant parents.

Ainafe was encouraged to get frequent antenatal checkups with trained staff at health facilities. Her husband, encouraged by male motivators, accompanied her to these visits, which was a real change from her previous pregnancies. At the checkups, Ainafe received vitamins and health monitoring. Lessons on nutrition, kitchen gardens and cooking demonstrations allowed the family to improve and diversify their diet.

When it was time to deliver her baby, Ainafe and her husband felt as prepared as they could be. Unexpectedly, the baby had to be delivered by C-section, but because the safe motherhood committee and village leadership had instituted penalties for people not delivering at health facilities, Ainafe was in a place that was able to offer her the medical help she required.

Since baby Shalom was born, Ainafe continues to be supported by the project. Attending frequent health clinics, Shalom receives recommended vaccinations and her growth is monitored. If a baby isn't growing as it



Health workers educate and provide services to mothers and their children at mobile health clinics.

should, nutritional supplements are provided.

"I appreciate how this project has assisted me, but also so many in the community. Without it my family would not be in the position it is. Things are different now," shared Ainafe when reflecting on how things in her village have changed for pregnant women and their babies.

Malawi—with one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world—experienced 439 maternal deaths per 100,000 in 2015 (per UNICEF), as compared to eight maternal deaths per 100,000 in Canada.

In response, PWS&D began the second phase of a maternal, newborn and child health project in 2016. Implemented in both Malawi and Afghanistan, with generous support from the Government of Canada, almost 175,000 people will benefit by the time it concludes this year.

The project has worked to reduce maternal and child mortality through improving health services and en-

couraging their use; increasing the consumption of nutritious foods for mothers, newborns, pregnant women and children under five; and sharing necessary knowledge and information about maternal and child health practices.

The change created is significant and will be long-lasting. With the project coming to a close, sustainability is top of mind for community leaders and volunteers, as well as those who have benefited more directly.

Construction and improvement of labour and delivery wards will foster long-term change. Village systems and structures created to support expectant and new mothers and their babies will be sustained by the collective will of those who have seen the change that is possible when everyone works with a common goal. More than anything, communities are inspired to continue the work beyond the project because they know it is making a difference.

On a recent monitoring visit, stand-



Youth lead and educate on sexual and reproductive health through songs and plays.



Ainafe Gordon and her three-month old baby Shalom have received support through PWS&D's maternal and child health project.

ing in a house crowded with community volunteers, village chief Elizeo expressed the sentiment best. "This project has done a lot to fill a gap. We're singing a different song here now about maternal deaths. Even as the project ends, you'll remain with us because what you did in this village will stay and continue. We realize that what we are doing is for the benefit of this community, future generations and the nation of Malawi."



A young woman who is part of a peer education project stands with her mother at the family's market stall in Managua. CREDIT: REV. LAURA HARGROVE.

By the Rev. Laura Hargrove, PWS&D committee member and teaching elder at First Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man.

In November 2019, after the end of the rainy season, I accompanied John Popiel, PWS&D's program coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, on a monitoring visit to Nicaragua. While I have travelled a fair bit, I had mostly been to the developed

Hope and Resilience in Nicaragua

world. This was my first visit to Central America. It was also my first visit to a region where the political situation had been so recently unsettled.

Nicaragua had a revolution in the late 1970s, but there have been more recent protests with severe government repression. These things have an impact on the economy—not only does it keep tourists away, but many people in opposition to the government were killed, had disappeared or fled the country. There had been a high level of unemployment in the years prior to our visit. In addition, Central America is seismically active with many volcanoes and frequent earthquakes. All of these things affect the lives of the poor.

PWS&D works in many places around the world through local or regional partner organizations to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. When we work with others, our ability to impact people in

need is multiplied. We benefit greatly from our partner's local knowledge, but we don't get to see the projects we support every day. Monitoring visits are an important aspect of PWS&D's work, both for assessing how a project is unfolding and for building and maintaining relationships with our partners.

One of the projects was in the dry region working with small-scale farmers to improve soil and water conservation and increase crop diversity. Community members learned about nutrition, soil and water management, small business and marketing, as well as human rights, and sexual and reproductive health. By developing local leaders and empowering the entire village, knowledge spread broadly within the community.

The other two projects we visited are based in the capital city, Managua. A peer-to-peer empowerment project teaches sexual and reproductive

health, human rights, safety and nutrition to youth associated with some of the large open-air markets. Political strife in Nicaragua since 2018 has impacted the economy, leaving many financially insecure and their children more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The youth we met had benefited greatly from the project, evidenced by their self-confidence and knowledge about what they have learned.

The third project benefits teen mothers in a neighbourhood based around one of the Managua city dumps. The project provides nutrition education to improve maternal and child health—the women learn about their rights and responsibilities, reproductive health and child development. In talking with the mothers, it was delightful to watch the face of one mom as she realized her toddler, since joining the project, was bigger and stronger, walking and talking earlier than an older child had.

Each of our partner organizations



A woman prepares nutritionally diverse foods she learned about through a PWS&D-supported project. CREDIT: REV. LAURA HARGROVE.

clearly makes a connection between the work they do among the impoverished, to educate and empower, and their own calling as Christians. Through them, we are able to reach out to the world's disadvantaged in Jesus' name, empowering them to realize their value as human beings.

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Easy to Get Involved



Nasro and Cathrine Maskell.

By Cathrine Maskell, Brockville
Freedom Connection team member

In 2019, a lovely refugee family from Syria moved in next door to me. They had six children, spoke no English and were in awe of the wonderful life we have here in Canada. Everything was new for them. They were excited, timid, joyous and apprehensive. I had so much to learn about their culture.

Their arrival here in Canada had

been supported by the local imam, who had put together a group to help sponsor this family through the Blended Visa Office-Referred program. When he heard another team was being put together to assist some more new arrivals from Africa, he encouraged me to reach out. So I joined the Brockville Freedom Connection, a group of local people who bring a variety of talents to the table to help new refugees adapt to our community. *It was easy to get involved.*

I met Nasro in November 2019. She was young and beautiful, and wanted to tell us all about her life in Somalia. First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., had sponsored her to come to Canada. Our Freedom Connection team was committed to helping her settle into a new life. The Rev. Marianne Emig Carr of First Presbyterian Church was part of the team. She was encouraging—she was able to explain funding and systems because she had been

part of the sponsorship process for many families. The rest of us in the group were newbies, but we were up for the challenge. *It was easy to get involved.*

Nasro was in good hands. She would need to go to school, see a doctor and find a place to live. And as it was November in Canada, she would need some winter boots. So, we went to thrift shops and looked through donations at the church, and she was very appreciative. Her English was quite good, ensuring language was not an issue. But since she liked some uncommon kinds of food, groceries were sometimes a challenge in our small city. Undaunted, she cooked for us and shared her traditions.

Learning about Nasro's culture and traditions has broadened my life experience. It has allowed me to appreciate more of what we have here in Canada. It has helped me celebrate the giving nature of our team members and others in our commu-



Nasro experiencing her first snowfall in Canada.

nity. I feel humbled and honoured to have experienced many "firsts" with this young refugee: her first visit to a doctor's office, her first snowfall, her first pancake breakfast and her first time walking a dog. Thank you, Nasro, for making my life better.

I grew up in multicultural Montreal and have come to realize that some communities in small Ontario cities are not as diverse. But in helping Nasro, I found that link that I had been searching for—that world connection

to someone who will now have a better life because of the commitment of the people in our local Freedom Connection team. We are making a difference in my community with a team of others who are like-minded. *It was easy to get involved.*

**Nasro's sponsorship application was submitted through the Blended Visa Office-Referred program and supported by PWS&D's refugee sponsorship desk.*

Food is essential

Last year **821 million people** faced hunger around the world

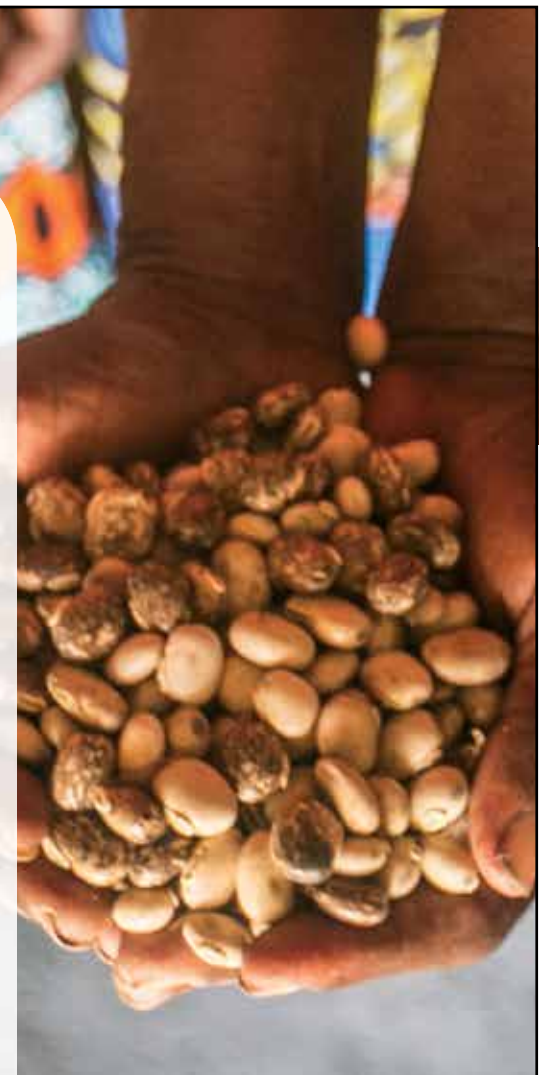
In 2020 that number will grow due to the coronavirus pandemic

As we navigate these uncertain times together, Canadian Foodgrains Bank is staying committed to supporting some of our world's most vulnerable people.

Since 1992, through the Foodgrains Bank, Presbyterian World Service & Development has worked with other Christian organizations to help end world hunger. Compassionate Canadians like you have made it possible to provide emergency food to refugees fleeing conflict, train small-scale farmers to grow more food for their families, and help mothers improve their children's nutrition.

Your support to end global hunger is needed more than ever

Together, we can make sure families facing hunger can access the essential food and assistance they need to get through this global emergency.



BOOKS

Celebrating in a Pandemic

By Laura Alary, religious educator and children's book author; member of Guildwood Presbyterian Church in Toronto

"Should I be celebrating?"

The question caught me off guard. "Is it tacky to self-promote right now?" Posted in a Facebook writers' group, it made me instantly self-conscious. One of the casualties of this pandemic for me personally was the launch party for my latest picture book, *What Grew in Larry's Garden*. While its cancellation was hardly earth-shattering, it was definitely a disappointment. Trying to make the best of things, I have been promoting the book in every way I can think of: grappling with technology to make a video; sharing reviews on Facebook; crafting a series of tweets connecting quotations from the story to our current situation (e.g., social distancing, supporting our neighbours). Until I saw the question it had not occurred to me that any of this was inappropriate.

Now I felt mortified. Had I been so steeped in my own particular blend of excitement and disappointment that I had been insensitive to the feelings of other people, especially those suffering from anxiety, anticipatory grief, worry over finances, exhaustion, or acute loneliness? Should I set my little book aside quietly until this crisis has passed?

The more I pondered these things, the more I began to hear my colleague's query as part of a bigger question: Is it wrong to rejoice in the midst of chaos?

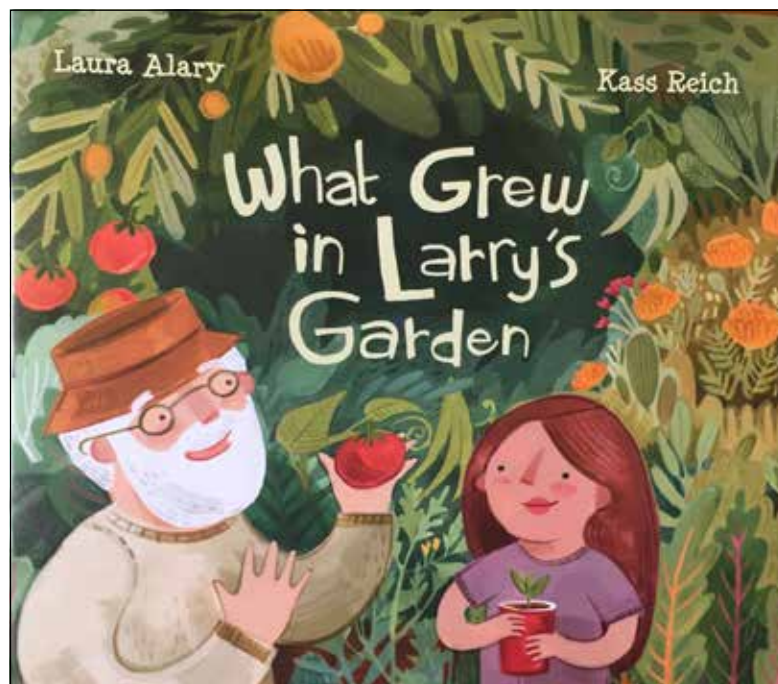
Feeling muddled, I decided to return to *What Grew in Larry's Garden* to see whether the story itself had light to shed on my dilemma.

We can figure this out

The intergenerational friendship at the heart of *What Grew in Larry's Garden* involves a lot of trouble-shooting. When their garden is beset by bugs, slugs, snails and squirrels, Grace and Larry figure out solutions together (with some help from the public library). Larry is open to the contributions of a child. This attitude serves him well, for in the end it is Grace who finds a solution to the biggest problem of all.

Little green tendrils

What Larry only hints at in the beginning is that he and Grace are growing more than vegetables. While Grace puzzles over what this might mean, Larry brings hundreds of tomato seedlings to school and challenges his students to give them as gifts to people in their community—but not to



friends and family. The students must look beyond what is familiar, pay attention to people they may have overlooked, and have the courage to reach out to strangers.

But a shadow fell

This whole community-building project is threatened by one person. The man who lives on the other side of Larry builds his fence so high it blocks out the sunlight on the garden. Although he claims the high fence makes him feel safe, his self-protection at the expense of others is an illusion that only destroys true community. Larry and Grace are frustrated, but instead of blaming or striking back in anger, they reach out in compassion, trying to understand the fear that motivates him.

Having good friends is the best way to feel safe

It is Grace who comes up with the fruitful alternative that eventually draws their reluctant neighbour out of the shadows of isolation into the warmth of shared feasting. She opens up a possibility beyond self-interest, and points to the truth that genuine and mutually supportive community is the best way to secure the safety and well-being of all.

Like it or not, we're in this together

Over the past weeks, our interconnectedness—for better or worse—has become undeniable. It feels like our global skin has been peeled back, revealing the fearful and wonderful intricacies of how things work beneath the surface, the complex and fragile tissue and vasculature of our social and economic systems. We have been forcibly confronted with a reality—we are all connected—that once seemed spiritually profound but now

seems both perilous and infuriating. Never has it been more apparent to me that my fate is tangled up not only with those I love and those strangers for whom I feel a general benevolence, but also the reckless partygoers, the swaggering politicians, the toilet-paper hoarders and those who deride social distancing as a mark of weakness or lack of faith.

What Grew in Larry's Garden points to some of the essential ingredients of a thriving community: co-operation, teamwork, patience, attentiveness, ingenuity, creativity, kindness and compassion. It reminds us that as this crisis continues to unfold we are going to need all the varied gifts that people (of all ages and abilities) can bring, including patience and wisdom in confronting ignorance and fear. It reminds us of the intricacy of our connections with one another. We truly are one body. What happens to one part is of vital concern to the whole.

So we return to the original questions: Should I be promoting my new book right now? Even when others are suffering? Is it wrong to rejoice in the midst of chaos?

Part of life in community is making space for people as they are and recognizing that even as we walk through similar terrains, we experience it differently. Our lives are never perfectly synchronized. Joy comes to one as sorrow visits another. Babies are born and people die. Books are written and contracts are cancelled. The holy challenge is to have hearts open wide enough to accommodate all. Rejoicing is a form of gratitude, and we can all share in appreciating and being thankful for the diverse gifts that enrich and sustain our communities in all times, especially difficult ones.

Someone once asked Martin Luther what he would do if he knew the

world would end tomorrow. His answer? He would plant an apple tree. What kind of answer is that? Does it display insensitivity to the gravity of the situation? Or is it a statement of defiant hope?

Surely it is best (to borrow a phrase from William Blake) to kiss the joy as it flies, because it is beyond capturing, and you can never be certain when it will pass so close to you again.

So make art, if that is what you have to give. Sing a song. Paint a pic-

ture. Write a story. Weep with those who weep. Be glad—if you are able—with those who rejoice. Give what you can, or receive with thanks what others have to offer. Plant an apple tree.

Or maybe start by growing some tomatoes.

What Grew in Larry's Garden is written by Laura Alary, illustrated by Kass Reich, and published by Kids Can Press. It is available online from amazon.ca or chapters.indigo.ca.

Children's Books by PCC Authors



Compiled by Canadian Ministries

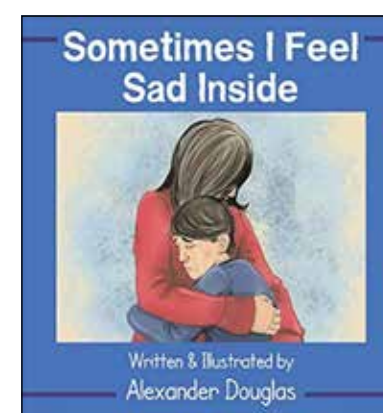
The Del Ryder fantasy adventure series by the Rev. Matthew Brough

The *Del Ryder* series is an adventurous and compelling tale of a young girl and her three best friends who stumble through a portal into the magical land of Azdia. There they discover that they are the long-prophesied heroes who will help save Azdia from the power of darkness. The power of darkness blocks them at every stage of their adventure, but Del and her friends persevere, following the clues of a cryptic riddle in the hope that it will help them save the land and lead them home.

Like the beloved *Chronicles of Narnia* series, *Del Ryder* is filled with religious themes and imagery that can be understood by older children and is sure to spark productive faith conversations.

Sometimes I Feel Sad Inside by the Rev. Alex Douglas

Sometimes I Feel Sad Inside is a children's picture book created to help families manage grief from a Christian perspective. Centred on the promises and examples found in God's Word, this book tells the story of a young boy grieving the loss of a family member. This is a resource



for young children who have trouble expressing grief; it names difficult emotions and ultimately finds hope in God's promises.

What Grew in Larry's Garden by Laura Alary Illustrated by Kass Reich

This sweet children's story teaches readers the value of empathy, perseverance, teamwork and the amazing things that can grow when you tend your garden with kindness. Co-written by well-known Presbyterian author, Laura Alary, *What Grew in Larry's Garden* takes children on an adventure as they read about a young girl and her neighbour caring for and protecting God's creation together. An added bonus is that the story might just teach your kids or grandkids to love vegetables!

REFLECTIONS

A Day in the Life of a Hospital Chaplain

By the Rev. Trish Archibald, St. Andrew's-Knox Presbyterian Church in Fort Erie, Ont.

This awful virus is responsible for changes in plans for many people. I'm sure you know someone whose vacation or wedding or other celebration has been impacted or even postponed. Part of my work is to serve as a chaplain at St. Catharines Hospital in St. Catharines, Ont., where I visit the COVID-19 wards every day. I thought I would give you an idea of what that is like.

First, the donning of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment): I wash my hands and put on a yellow gown that ties at the back and around my middle. It covers me from neck to mid-shin and down to my wrists. Then I wash my hands again and don my face shield overtop of the surgical cap and procedure mask I wear all the time. Because the virus is contained in droplets rather than air, the gear is to protect me from getting wet, rather than what I might breathe in.

However, if I am seeing a COVID-19 patient who uses a CPAP machine or is intubated, it means that the virus will likely have become

aerosolised and will remain in the air, becoming a source of contagion. In these cases, I swap out my pink procedure mask for an N-95 cone-style mask that protects me from breathing in the virus. I put my face shield on over that mask to protect me from my brow to my neck.

I wash my hands again before I put on my blue nitrile gloves. I write my name on the contact tracing list on the patient's door. Then I go in.

What I find varies. This virus is so strange. Some people struggle with it awfully, and then, miraculously recover. Some people seem to have very mild symptoms and are tired but cheery; and then, unexpectedly, they die overnight. Honestly, it leaves me stunned. Many of the patients are elderly, but some are middle-aged and younger.

I often go to see people at the request of their minister who, along with family and friends, cannot visit. I bring the love of the congregation to the ill person. Sometimes, I bring my cellphone, which is wrapped up in a baggie, and put the patient's minister on speaker so a familiar voice will be heard giving the comfort of a final blessing.



The Rev. Trish Archibald, hospital chaplain.

The story is often heartbreaking. One woman (aged 92) told me she had so much to live for: she and another resident at her retirement home had fallen in love after many years being widowed, and they longed for more time together. Another patient's family was too far away to be able to see their dying father. I held the phone to his ear so he could hear his daughter and grandchildren tell him they love him.

I sing hymns to patients who were

church goers, and English folk songs or Country/Western ballads to those who weren't. I recite scripture or poetry. I fetch ice chips or warmed blankets for comfort. And I pray and wait. There's not much else I can do.

Before leaving the patient's room, I remove the PPE in reverse order. I carefully peel a glove off of one hand, careful to not touch skin, and deposit it in the trash. Running that bare finger under the cuff of the other glove, I slide it off, inside out, and throw it in the trash. I wash my hands. I carefully untie my gown and, leaning forward, roll it inside out to keep any virus on the gown inside the bundle. The gown goes into the hamper to be washed. I wash my hands. I lean forward and remove my face shield but keep my mask and cap in place. I wash my hands and use my elbow to open the room's door.

Out in the hall I take an ammonia wipe and wash my face shield front and back, inside and out, and hang it to dry while I wash my hands and make notes in the patient's chart. As I chart, I chat with the nurses and see how they are holding up. Some have opted to live in a hotel room instead of at home with their kids during this

time. One nurse set up his trailer in his driveway. Most take off their work clothes as soon as they come in the door and shower before seeing anyone at home, just to be safe.

At the end of my day, I call the families of the patients I have seen and give them the comfort of an additional check-in with someone who can be there for the people they love. I think about the pale pink tulips I promised one patient I would plant this fall so I would remember her each spring.

Friends, the bottom line is this: please continue to take care to avoid exposure to this virus. We have done well to flatten the curve—our hospital has not been overwhelmed like we've seen in other cities. Even once things begin to open up again, the risk will still be there.

Remember, we show the love of God to our neighbours by keeping up good physical distancing practices. And this, too, shall pass. Maybe like a kidney stone, but it will pass!

I look forward to the time when we can be close again. I pray it will be soon. Meanwhile, may the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ abide with you all.

God is At Work

By the Rev. Kristine O'Brien, Director, Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Puslinch, Ont.

On Easter Sunday at 5:30 p.m., I was standing in the driveway at Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre, where I live and work, wearing a sunflower-patterned mask. Car after car arrived—more than 50 of them—and each driver gave me their name so I could give them their take-out Easter supper order. I was very excited to see familiar Presbyterian faces, friends who drove from Toronto, Milton or Paris (it was hard not to share any hugs!). But many were people I didn't recognize. "Are you local?" I asked them. Most answered with an enthusiastic "Yes," which was followed by the name of the sideroad or concession where they live. One person even said, "I've been here for years and I didn't know this place existed!"

Crieff Hills Community began its work as a retreat centre in 1975—but our version of community has never really been focused on geography. We regularly welcome guests from all over the world who need a place to gather and often stay overnight. World Vision hosted their global water conference here a few years ago, for instance, and the Canadian Council of Churches held a meeting here last year. Ministers drive from all over the province for study leave, and Presbyterians from across the country come for Assembly Council meetings. Staff and guests create community that is rich in worship, work and shared meals, but that doesn't often include people who live next door.

The people who live next door have begun to change, too. Families who farmed near here for generations have moved away, and others have sold small parcels of land for

single family homes. Gravel pits have displaced traditional farms and city people seeking a country life are moving into enormous one-of-a-kind mansions. The sense of geographical community is not as strong here as it was generations ago.

There are new connections that are developing around us in this time of COVID-19. Divine power is at work, transforming the pain of isolation into new experiences of community that may not have happened otherwise.

And it's not just that I'm getting to know a few neighbours in the driveway. This week, we received a message from a family who wanted to surprise their local teacher by paying for her order. Another couple bought dinner for an elderly neighbour and left it on their porch. One woman said she had a friend who wanted to help with our perennial



Caption: Kristine O'Brien, Crieff Hills Retreat Centre Director, on Easter Sunday.

gardens and asked how we could get connected.

As in so many places, the necessary closure of our retreat facilities here at Crieff Hills has been financially devastating. And yet God is at work in new and surprising ways. I find consolation in the unexpected friendships that are emerging and look forward to a future that includes a fresh sense of community for all of us.



Some of the delicious food provided to locals for take-out Easter supper.

ATTENTION CONGREGATIONS:

Access resources, links, guidelines and information connected to COVID-19 at presbyterian.ca/covid-19



REFLECTIONS

Fear and Faith

By Vivian Ketchum, originating from Wauzbusk Onigum Nation of Northern Ontario and now a member of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., and Life and Mission Agency Committee member.

I left the Life and Mission Agency Committee meetings in early March in good spirits. As I arrived at the Toronto airport to head back to Winnipeg, I noticed a few people and staff were wearing masks. I was cautious of my personal safety and used the hand sanitizers wherever they were placed. I went to my boarding gate and saw another Indigenous woman waiting there. She was with her teenage son, who was walking around exploring the airport. The woman told me she attended the mining conference in Toronto. We had a brief chat, then I moved to another boarding gate. My boarding gate was changed. I arrived home and went about my regular routine.

I went to work, but then read on the news about the mining conference. A man who attended the conference had tested positive for COVID-19. I was at my computer at home while I read the news. My heart stopped. I thought of the woman I met at the Toronto airport who attended the conference. The news of the coronavirus and how it spread through physical contact had me very concerned. I phoned my work immediately because of the memo that they had sent out regarding any contact or travel that any employees had recently. I was put on immediate leave for two



Celebrating communion at national office.

weeks. I had to self-monitor at home for that period. My regular routine had changed in a week. Drastically.

My first concern was about my health. I am over 50 years old, Indigenous and had a weakened immune system due to an autoimmune disease that I had recently. Scarred lungs from childhood TB and generally poor health put me in the vulnerable group of people that were easily affected by the coronavirus. It was a nervous two weeks as I stayed at home. My other concern was my financial situation. I had no income and applied for the special Employment Insurance benefit that the government set up for people that were off work because of COVID-19. I had to wait for over a month before getting it.

I ran out of food after two weeks of being at home. I have a special soft-food diet and the emergency food hampers the community was

sending out to people shut in due to the pandemic wouldn't help me. The stores were packed with shoppers. I couldn't risk going out in the crowded stores. One day, my hunger overcame my pride. I put out a post on Facebook about my situation. Within a day people sent me money online and others were dropping food at my door that suited my special diet. Friends and strangers helped me out. My cupboards and fridge were filled up in a couple of days. Enough to last me until I received my Canada Emergency Response Benefit payments from the government.

The pandemic has turned our world upside down and sideways. It won't be the same after this is over. I have found out that faith does overcome fear. Faith reaches out and lifts you up when you are at your lowest peak. Faith fills up your cupboards and your fridge. Faith and prayers come alive during a pandemic.

My Garden

By Patricia Schneider, Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta.

Years back, I had a rather large garden, filled to the brim with flowers and food. My favourite time of the day was spent there. But things change and the only garden I see now is a small space that encircles some of the rooms in our seniors residence. It is a poor replica of what once took all my attention and love, and that is okay—I am a poor replica of the gardener whose favourite hours of the day were spent summer-harvesting the flowers and veggies that I had tended so earnestly. This new small space holds some perennials, but also some sad pansies and snapdragons. I picked off a few dead-heads and actually tried to reach some dried-out species near the back but alas, I am as sad a specimen as they are. My body protested and my mind finally acknowledged that, “been there, done that,” would have to be my motto for the future. Some things we have to leave behind.

But there are times of triumph along with times of trial. Recently, my five great-grandchildren visited. They played under the big fir tree in this tiny garden and listened to the baby birds chirping in the wooden nest high above their heads. They had no trouble scrambling up the garden enclosure and were careful not to step on the pansies that seemed to smile back at them. I looked at them and realized that they were my garden—a living example of what I had planted years earlier; for all those years of tending and raising, their parents had given me this fine crop of children to love and to cherish.

My daughter insists I am a much more mellow great-grandma than I was a mother, but time now is short



and these little ones are meant for me to enjoy and, like an ice-cream cone, they too will disappear from my sight and I will have just a memory of their sweetness. They will return to their home many miles away, leaving me with remembrances of hugs and wet kisses.

Life is a garden and all our experiences will produce changes in our lives. We had looked forward to so many things and, now, in our senior years we look back and see what the final results of those struggles are.

I am so glad I have faith to fall back on. The challenges I met when I was younger were overcome because of the presence of the Lord. There were some very difficult times, as there are in all lives, but I was never alone. In my senior years, I feel God's presence as I struggle with things that were once oh so easy. The body is failing and sometimes the mind forgets things too, but the love of the Lord fills me with the assurance that God will never leave me or forsake me.

I am a part of the Lord's garden and God loves me.

Finding Spiritual Connection



By Ida Fedor-Baan, former congregational secretary at Gateway Community Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., for seven years and freelance typesetter/designer for the Presbyterian Record magazine for five years.

Most humans have a belief system of some sort—even if they call themselves atheists. I believe that faith is a religious, spiritual connection to God, demonstrated through prayer, meditation and, above all, trust that there is a God who assigns prophets, guardian angels or “spirit guides” to protect and help all.

In my Hungarian culture, the Taltos (similar to a shaman) is a spirit guide in human form, still consulted by some people for guidance. Some

may snicker at the dance, tambourine shaking or clicking of castanets carried out in the spiritual rituals of the Taltos. But, think for a moment. The priest, minister, rabbi and Imam perform the same rituals, just in different ways. During religious services, God is celebrated in prayer, sermon and song. Parishioners rise to pray and sing hymns, and sit to listen to God's Word, delivered to the faithful by the chosen individuals mentioned.

Our personal spiritual rituals are exactly the same: a prayer is a physical/spiritual thanks and request for guidance, repentance and answer to God's call. An unseen but spiritual

connection is felt.

You might ask: What prompted me to write this article? Well, a faded coin that was recently found among my mother's papers, bearing a man's head on one side with the word Taltos inscribed on it, and a falcon on the other side with a short grace to God and Man, is the reason. I believe that many people are Taltos or spirit guides—some aware of it, others not. My worship and work with the church has shown me some of these individuals. They work for all people, feeding and educating the poor, comforting the hurt and spreading the gospel during worship.

REFLECTIONS

Ministering to Three Congregations

By the Rev. Bruce W. Kemp,
WMC Pastoral Charge

I am the minister of a newly arranged 3-point pastoral charge. All three congregations have a long history within their communities. Financial constraints brought them together, but it is their willingness to be active participants in each other's ministries and outreach that keeps them together. They are not large congregations and they do not have a wide variety of programs, but they seek to do what they can, and do it well.

I will have been with these congregations for more than seven years when I will retire at the end of 2020. I have seen them grow in their commitment to be more involved in the life of their villages, and I have been delighted with the addition of new members, including several families with children in one of the

congregations.

My role has been to guide them, help them envision their future, and support them on the path that connects their faith journey with the needs from within and outside the church community.

I recognize that three churches can seem daunting to many, but while Sunday mornings are quite full, there are still opportunities at each service for me to connect with those who need to have more extensive conversations. Leadership within all three congregations is such that lay people have demonstrated that they are more than capable of starting or finishing services—as they often do—and are even capable of leading entire services.

I have been blessed with such leaders and the commitment of all three Sessions to make the schedule work, which has been wonderful.



Three congregations gather for a Mission Sunday at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Chesterville, Ont.

I will miss working with the people at these churches, but I know that God has a plan and a purpose for them. And I know that they will find the person who will be able to walk with them on the next stage of their faith journey.

If you would be interested to know more about the joys and challenges of this ministry, I would welcome the opportunity to share more about how I have managed to not only serve all three congregations, but also about how I have had a most satisfying ministry experience doing so.

I encourage you to prayerfully consider such a ministry experience.

PULPIT VACANCIES

To see all pulpit vacancies, visit presbyterian.ca/vacancies

Duncan, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – British Columbia

Bramalea, North Bramalea (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Kitchener, Doon (full-time minister) – CNEOB

Lakefield, St. Andrew's and Lakehurst, Knox (60%-time minister) – CNEOB

Port Perry, St. John's (40%-time minister) – CNEOB

Scarborough, Guildwood Community (full-time minister) – CNEOB

Toronto, Faith & Westview Pastoral Charge (full-time minister) – CNEOB

Thunder Bay, Lakeview (contract Summer Student Ministry) – Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario

Montreal, The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (full-time Associate Minister for Community Connections and Care) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Fonthill, Kirk on the Hill (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

Woodstock, Knox (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to
connection@presbyterian.ca

Answered by the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency

How can our congregation get help setting up "online giving" on our website?

Online giving and Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) are increasingly popular as the means by which people can financially support the ministry of the church. Staff working in the Stewardship & Planned Giving department provide one-on-one support to congregations to install and maintain online giving programs for their congregants. To learn more, contact Jim MacDonald at 1-800-619-7301 or jmacdonald@presbyterian.ca.

Who decides what time worship at churches begins and when church is cancelled? Why didn't the national office instruct all churches to stop gathering even before our Premier ordered that public gatherings stop?

The Session (consisting of each congregation's minister[s], active members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries and elders) decides the time when worship begins in each congregation and whether in-person worship should be cancelled for any reason, such as weather conditions, health, safety, seasonal cycles, etc. Sessions discern when gatherings should be cancelled in light of local conditions and the direction they receive from local authorities. The national office staff of the denomination do not have the authority to make decisions about the cancellation of

worship, as that right and responsibility belongs to each Session.

Since General Assembly was cancelled this year, what happens to the reports that were prepared for General Assembly, and can people in the church see the reports and recommendations?

The reports written by agencies, colleges and committees for the General Assembly have been made available for the information of the church on the PCC website at presbyterian.ca since early May. The reports have been redacted to remove recommendations, since they have not yet been adopted for the attention or action of the church. These reports will be expanded upon and submitted with recommendations to the General Assembly to consider in 2021.

OBITUARIES

Read all full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

Elizabeth Laity
Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.
Deceased April 17, 2020

The Rev. Ivan Sankey Gamble
Kelowna, B.C.
Deceased April 4, 2020

Audrey Marguerite Thompson
Pembroke, Ont.
Deceased April 1, 2020

Helen Mae Sand
Richmond Hill, Ont.
Deceased March 29, 2020

The Rev. Robert James Elford
Pembroke, Ont.
Deceased March 20, 2020

Diana Lynn Wright
Dunnville, Ont.
Deceased March 17, 2020

The Rev. Robert Little
Woodstock, Ont.
Deceased March 4, 2020

The Rev. Dr. John Simms
Montreal West, Que.
Deceased February 28, 2020

Grace Phyllis MacKenzie
Atholville, N.B.
Deceased February 24, 2020

The Rev. Dr. Theodore Olson
Richmond Hill, Ont.
Deceased February 21, 2020

The Rev. Ronald Douglas Sharpe
Windsor, Ont.
Deceased February 19, 2020

Dr. Margaret Jean Taylor
Guelph, Ont.
Deceased February 4, 2020

The Rev. Ian (Larry) Jackson
Richmond, B.C.
Deceased January 30, 2020

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Livingstone
Kars, Ont.
Deceased January 29, 2020

Agnes Gollan
Toronto, Ont.
Deceased January 13, 2020

The Rev. Joyce Davis
Cape Breton, N.S.
Deceased October 4, 2019

CROSSWORD

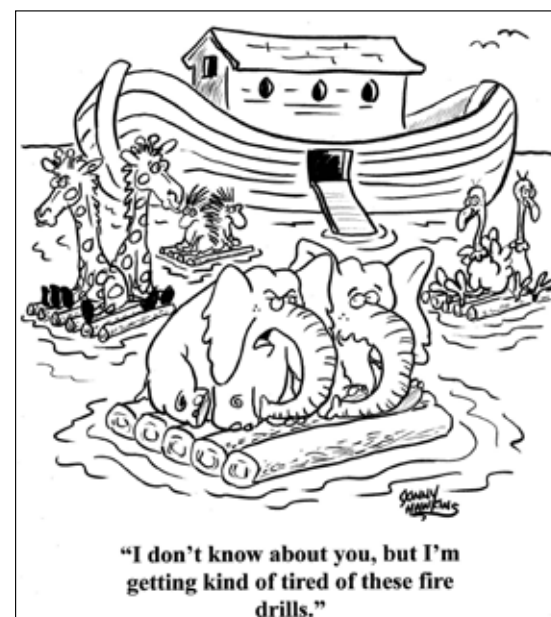
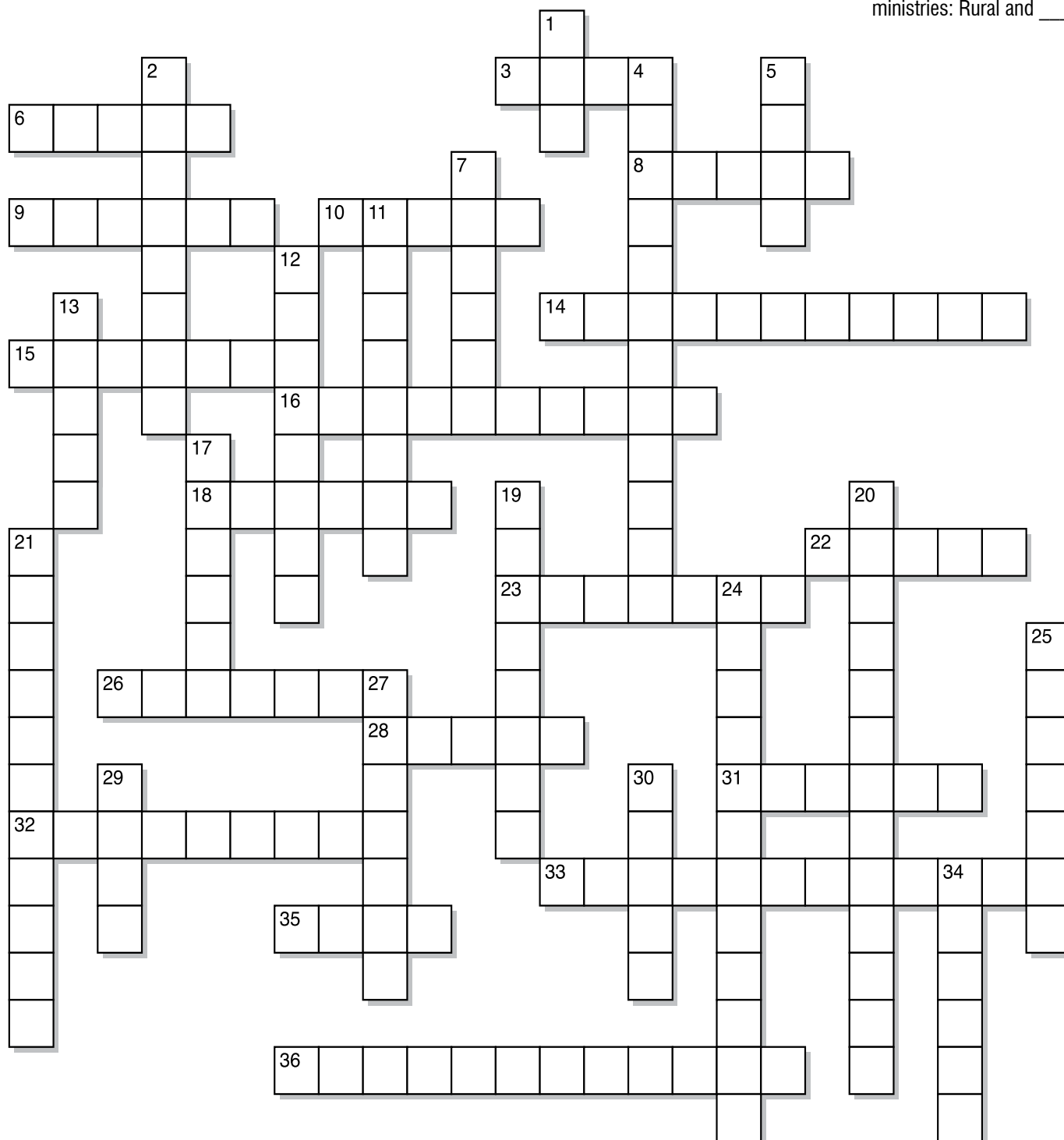
Test your knowledge with this edition's latest crossword puzzle.

ACROSS

3. The Presbyterians Sharing logo is made up of a gathering of eight _____.
6. Number of Synods in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
8. The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is _____ of them all.
9. The primary focus of the PCC's Leading with Care policy.
10. The country where the most Canadian mission staff have served.
14. Helping a refugee come to Canada and assisting them with resettlement.
15. Someone unable to return to their country due to fear of persecution.
16. Another name for Pentecost.
18. The Rev. Amanda _____, only Moderator of the General Assembly serving for two years.
22. "The _____ is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (Psalm 24:1).
23. Celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost, _____ Sunday marks a doctrinal truth rather than a historical biblical event.
26. Micah tells us we are to do _____, love kindness and walk humbly with God.
28. Scriptural song.
31. Name of an ecumenical coalition and an ancient Greek word referring to an appointed time in the purpose of God.
32. The quality of thankfulness: "Christians give generously out of _____."
33. The Canadian Peace Research Institute called Project _____, also a farming tool referenced in Isaiah 2.
35. Least of the Apostles.
36. "How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!" is the first line of the biblical book of _____.

DOWN

1. Jesus cursed a _____ tree because it didn't bear fruit.
2. God loves this kind of giver (2 Cor. 9:7).
4. To grant approval by an authoritative body after a decision has been made.
5. Scriptural garden paradise.
7. "Consider the _____, how they grow."
11. The name of the giants who were the offspring of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" in Genesis.
12. Like good _____ of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received (1 Peter 4:10).
13. PCC partner country with the fastest growing Christian community.
17. June 8 is World _____ Day.
19. Location of the 2021 General Assembly.
20. God worked extraordinary miracles through Paul so that the aprons and _____ he touched were able to heal the sick.
21. Presbyterian outreach ministry committed to bringing hope, peace and healing to Indigenous families in Vancouver.
24. Worshippers in Psalm 100 enter God's gates with _____.
25. One of two sacraments in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
27. The first church to receive a message in the Book of Revelation.
29. 2 Kings tells the story of 42 boys who were mauled to death by two bears after mocking Elisha because he was _____.
30. According to Proverbs, grey hair is a _____ of glory.
34. The PCC grant that supports student ministers serving in rural congregations and ministries: Rural and _____.



Generously provided by Jonny Hawkins,
author of *Doodle Through the Bible for Kids*.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 36. LAMENTATIONS | 35. PAUL |
| 33. PLOUGHSHARES | 32. GRATITUDE |
| 31. KAIROS | 28. PSALM |
| 26. JUSTICE | 23. TRINITY |
| 22. EARTH | 18. CURRIE |
| 16. WHITSUNDAY | 15. REFUGEE |
| 14. SPONSORSHIP | 11. NEPHILIM |
| 10. INDIA | 7. LILIES |
| 9. SAFETY | 5. EDEN |
| 8. MAKER | 4. HOMOLOGATION |
| 6. EIGHT | 2. CHEERFUL |
| 3. FISH | 1. FIG |

DOWN